

## Environments Past: Nostalgia in Environmental Policy and Governance

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### Author Information:

Jordan P. Howell  
Associate Professor  
Dept. of Geography, Planning & Sustainability  
Rowan University  
[howellj@rowan.edu](mailto:howellj@rowan.edu) (corresponding author)

Jennifer Kitson  
Assistant Professor  
Dept. of Geography, Planning & Sustainability  
Rowan University  
[kitson@rowan.edu](mailto:kitson@rowan.edu)

David Clowney  
Professor  
Dept. of Philosophy & Religion Studies  
Rowan University  
[clowney@rowan.edu](mailto:clowney@rowan.edu)

### For all authors:

Rowan University  
201 Mullica Hill Rd.  
Glassboro, NJ, USA 08028

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Abstract: A variety of factors shape environmental policy & governance (EPG) processes, from perceptions of physical ecology and profit motives to social justice and landscape aesthetics concerns. Many scholars have examined the role of values in EPG, and demonstrated that attempts to incorporate (especially) nonmarket values into EPG are loaded with both practical and conceptual challenges. Nevertheless, it is clear that nonmarket values of all types play a crucial role in shaping EPG outcomes. In this paper, we explore the role of nostalgia as a factor in EPG. We examine literatures on environmental values, governance, and affect in light of their relationships to environmental policymaking, first as a means to decide whether or not nostalgia can be rightly described as an ‘environmental value.’ We suggest that, from a philosophical perspective, nostalgia is by itself environmentally neutral, and is not *usefully* described as a ‘value’. However, as an emotional state that longs to preserve or recover something of the past – whether fading or no longer present – that is fondly remembered, nostalgia does represent a potentially strong ‘motivator’ for EPG decisions. Despite this somewhat ambivalent assessment of nostalgia-as-environmental-value, we argue that nostalgia and nostalgic longing to return to the ‘better’ or ‘cleaner’ environments can lead to potentially significant impacts on ecosystems and landscapes, both positive and negative depending on what it is that people want to preserve or restore. Thus we conclude that we neglect understanding the role of nostalgia in EPG at our peril: first, because preservationist goals have always been an important part of environmental responsibility and second, because many people

will be swayed regarding environmental action through a mobilization of nostalgia by political leaders and interest groups alike. We end our article with suggestion of avenues for further empirical investigation.

Keywords: nostalgia, environmental values, environmental policy, governance

*“The 20th c. brought changes both benign and destructive...More than 20 million people live within 60 miles of the Pinelands. Residential subdivisions, shopping malls, offices and roads have eliminated and fragmented much of the original Pine Barrens ecosystem...Natural, cultural and historic resources have taken a beating across much of the Pine Barrens. And unlike colonial villages and industries, today’s development will never give way to nature again...”*

*“People, Life, Culture”*

*Pinelands Preservation Alliance (2017a)*

## **Introduction**

Whatever the future ecological benefits of preservation action might be in terms of cleaner water, species richness, or recreational use, preservation is fundamentally a question of looking backwards to times gone by. That is to say, preservation efforts are inherently nostalgic, and aim squarely at keeping a place ‘like it was back then’ in a time before anthropogenic degradation. In this article we explore the notion of nostalgia as an environmental value, and suggest some ways in which nostalgic longing might shape environmental policy and governance (henceforth, “EPG”) processes and outcomes. We aim to address a series of related questions: what is nostalgia, and what does it mean with regard to environmental management? Is nostalgia

an environmental value? If it is not (in philosophical terms), how can we more accurately describe this ‘force’? How can nostalgic feelings for environments past impact EPG processes and outcomes? We offer conceptual answers to these questions in this paper, and plan to empirically test the implications of those answers in a future study. This two-pronged approach is warranted because, while literatures on both EPG and environmental values have shown that a variety of perceptions and beliefs influence environmental protection outcomes, there is little research examining the concept of nostalgia as a factor shaping stakeholders’ decisions.

Accordingly, this article focuses on synthesis and analysis of scholarly work from policy studies, geography, environmental philosophy, environmental history, and related fields in order to establish positions on nostalgia as a factor shaping EPG that can be empirically tested with additional research. While we will discuss avenues for empirical research at the end of this article, we believe that a meaningful research agenda on the role of nostalgia in EPG will center on the literature of imaginative geographies (Gregory, 1995), or considerations of what people think a place ‘ought to be like’ and how this is operationalized through different stages of the policymaking process. Scholars could examine the possible disconnects between a nostalgic longing for environments past – cognizant that the idealized past may never have really existed in the form imagined, anyway (e.g., Cronon, 1995) – and EPG outcomes of varying benefit or detriment to the landscape in question.

Following a review of literature on EPG and the ways in which values shape policy and governance outcomes, this paper examines the concept of nostalgia as it has been mobilized in geography and environmental studies literatures. We next consider nostalgia as an environmental value in the philosophical tradition, before suggesting some of the ways in which an

environmental nostalgia might play out in EPG processes and come to impact ecosystems and landscapes.

### **Values as a Factor Shaping Environmental Policy and Governance**

Roberts' primer (2011, p. 2) defines environmental policy as "a set of principles and intentions used to guide decision making about human management of environmental capital and environmental services." Roberts explains that environmental policies have as their explicit purpose, "...to change human behavior – to make people act in ways which do not generate environmental problems, or which generate problems of lesser significance than was previously the case." (ibid., p. 41) But how do stakeholders arrive at understandings of both environmental problems and ways in which to change the behaviors of individuals, businesses, and other entities within society? Roberts shows that the world of EPG is normatively based around the *economic* valuation of environmental services: the material inputs, harness-able energy flows, and anything else that has historically been value-able (e.g., recreational use). But even while attempts to order and organize EPG around economic concepts, whether through the probabilistic language of game theory (e.g., McCarty & Meirowitz, 2007) or the procedural, step-wise process leading to a comprehensive outcome (Doyle & McEachern, 2008; Rosenbaum, 2011; Vig & Kraft, 2013), EPG processes remain marked by great variability, improvisation, and at times, seeming randomness that defies economic logic. This owes primarily to the fact that policymakers are individual human beings embodying diverse and sometimes competing perspectives on how best to manage humanity's relationship with the natural world, perspectives that extend beyond market logics, and may encompass affective realms like ethical or moral considerations, imagination, and even memory.

EPG processes are laden with different types of values even as most models explaining and examining EPG focus only on economic or market values; from the perspectives of mainstream policy studies, exchange values or potential exchange values are particularly preferable because they are tangible (or potentially tangible) and measurable in money terms. Roberts (2011) argues that, despite some clear benefits, this has also become a major limitation for accounting for more abstract values (e.g., aesthetic or spiritual values) in EPG, which are harder to measure in money terms. And not without good reason: though economists have tried, it remains exceedingly difficult, for example, to assign commodity-style prices to intact landscapes (specifically *for* being intact), species biodiversity, and wholesale environmental processes like the hydrological cycle or carbon sequestration. It remains substantially more challenging to calculate the values of spiritual or cultural dimensions of the natural environment, as scholars from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds have shown. Peterson and Peterson (1993), for example, show that when employing orthodox approaches to economic modeling “natural resource managers privilege economic motives [and] trivialize other social functions such as education, politics, religion and law,” a point emphasized further by Beckermann and Pasek (1997) in their demonstration that environmental preservation efforts typically arouse motivations for action that escape the confines of conventional economic utility, thus warping market valuation in ways unexpected to policymakers (see also Douai, 2009; Lockwood, 1999). Vatn (2000) and Gatzweiler (2014) pose even more profound challenges to the notion that effective environmental policy can result from an exclusive focus on market values. Vatn (2000) exposes two of the most fundamental problems with applying market concepts to nonmarket values: first, that most environmental goods and services are not necessarily substitutable in the way that orthodox market theory demands (that is to say, most environmental goods and services

are intertwined with one another and not discrete entities); and second, that markets for most environmental goods and services don't have the same properties of marginality (that is to say, able to be bought and sold as discrete units, on the margin) as markets for other goods and services upon which models for orthodox economics are built. Thus models for markets of environmental goods and services built on orthodox economic logics have the potential to be highly inaccurate. These problems of incomplete and inaccurate information, Gatzweiler (2014) argues, are compounded by the fact that market valuations may not appropriately account for changes in human-environment relationships and resource use practices, meaning that institutions relying on conventional economic modeling are prone to act on outdated information, in addition to the errors raised by Vatn and others.

Even as economists have struggled to construct robust and complete market valuations of environmental resources, philosophers, geographers, historians, anthropologists and other scholars in the humanities and social sciences have demonstrated many different models for understanding the natural environment among societies across time and space, many of which focus extensively on the importance of 'nonmarket values' in environmental decision-making. Many of these are based in the perspective that environmental "problems" are fundamentally moral problems: scientific and technological knowledge can tell us which courses of action are possible, how to carry them out, which of them is least costly, and what consequences each possible course of action is likely to have. But science and technology can't tell us *why* to choose one course over others, which goals are worth pursuing, what sort of life is worth living, which costs are worth paying, or what sorts of actions are simply unacceptable regardless of the consequences (Jamieson, 2002, pp. 282-295).

All types of environmental values frequently have a strong affective dimension to them. Whereas emotions generally encompass socially recognizable and conscious states of feeling, affect refers to the barely sensible or unconscious intensities and forces circulating between bodies of all kind, human and nonhuman. Generative for understanding relations between people, objects, and environments, affect is the *capacity* for something to affect (or be affected by) something else. The question, from this vantage point, becomes less about what something is (what is nostalgia?), and more about what something can *do*, how it affects - what can nostalgia do? (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). We can characterize nostalgia, then, as having strong affective power – the capacity to affect people and place – with the potential to shape stakeholders’ decisions about environmental issues in the same way that other environmental values might.

### **Nostalgia in/and the Environment**

Nostalgia names the longing for a lost, idealized, or wholly imagined past time; a longing for *pastness*. Nostalgia can, and has, been mobilized in countless ways around issues of race, gender, economy, and landscape, among others. Our purpose in this section of the paper is to offer an overview of nostalgia and identify the strands of a specifically environmental, geographic, and place-based ecological dimensions of the concept.

The hallmark of the expression is a seemingly impossible desire for, or memory of, a past that never existed. Even the word *nostalgia* performs the paradoxical experience it names. The Greek roots *nostos*, “to return home,” and *algos*, “a painful condition,” from which the word is derived evoke an ancient etymological and geographical lineage. But the word, *nostalgia* was actually coined by a Swiss physician in 1688 to sound “nostalgically Greek” (Boym, 2002, p. 3).



In his doctoral dissertation, Johannes Hofer introduced the term to diagnose a form of homesickness (*heimweh*) experienced by Swiss soldiers stationed in foreign countries. “It is possible,” said Hofer, “from the force of the sound Nostalgia to define the sad mood originating from the desire to return to one’s native land (Hofer & Kiser, 1934, p. 381). Although he was not the first to diagnose the feelings of loss and longing experienced by displaced people, Hofer’s neologism had profound effects by at once articulating nostalgia as deadly medical pathology *and* evocative, wistful emotion (Starobinski & Kemp, 1966). Much like hysteria and other socially contagious emotional states of the period, the very usage of the word in medical and popular discourse was influential in the ‘transmission’ of nostalgia (Fuentenebro de Diego & Valiente Ots, 2014). The experience and expression of nostalgia would become a preoccupation of physicians and poets alike.

While early medical diagnoses of homesickness, melancholia, and nostalgia were often interchangeable, a distinction eventually emerged between homesickness, that which held the possibility of return, and nostalgia, the idea of a “lost” home (lost in time). Rapid socio-political change fueled this transition from homesickness to nostalgic longing for a lost, idealized home (and homeland) characterized by stability, rootedness, and tradition (Boym, 2002; Matt, 2007). Nostalgia, for many, names the existential homelessness integral to modernity; colonization, modernization, industrialization, and urbanization created the very conditions through which nostalgic longing emerged. But for others, nostalgia is fundamental to the human experience, a ritualized and strategic form of remembering past suffering as pleasurable, often traced to Homer’s *Odyssey* over two thousand years before Hofer coined the term (Boym, 2002; Dames, 2010).

A consequence of nostalgia's medical history is the tendency for writing on the subject to simply "diagnose," and most often admonish, the presence of nostalgia in other people, places, and things (Dames, 2010). Fortunately, scholarship on nostalgia has shifted away from diagnostic approaches to the study of nostalgia's functionality in diverse and varied contexts (Atia & Davies, 2010). No longer perceived as a regressive mental state, nostalgia is understood to be a commonplace higher-order emotion and affective force. In the cognitive sciences, nostalgia is a highly inspirational and motivational experience with a range of positive outcomes for psychological health, wellbeing, and the pursuit of goals (Stephan et al., 2015). Leading experimental psychologists on the topic conclude that, "nostalgia has remarkable implications for one's future. It strengthens approach orientation [motivational drive], raises optimism, evokes inspiration, boosts creativity, and kindles prosociality. Far from reflecting escapism from the present, nostalgia potentiates an attainable future" (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2016, p. 319). Positive feelings about the past function as a coping strategy in the present against existential psychological threats (anxiety, stress, loneliness, loss) often resulting from change (Routledge, Wildschut, Sedikides, & Juhl, 2013).

Each of these insights points to ways in which nostalgia acts as a 'force' that could shape EPG outcomes. In particular, and in slightly different terms, nostalgia might be considered a potent mechanism for coping with environmental change of all kinds. For geographers, nostalgia, like other types of remembering, is materialized and practiced *through* place, landscape, and environment (Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004; Lowenthal, 1975). Sentimental longing for the past, however fleeting or imagined, engenders sensitivity to loss in the present, to the barely perceptible changes in our modes of habitation, dwelling, and community. Thus, nostalgia is most often activated, expressed, and practiced through aesthetic modes (sensing,

feeling, affect) (Seremetakis, 1996). The widespread success of heritage tourism, for example, has repeatedly been attributed to tourists' desire for visceral—even numinous—experiences with *pastness*, for historic atmospherics more than historical accuracy (Cameron & Gatewood, 2000; DeLyser, 1999). Within local historic preservation policy and practice, nostalgia can engender a highly romanticized depiction of the past and local history that also contributes to the making of very meaningful places through an ethic and aesthetic of care for old and neglected objects, homes, and landscapes (Kitson & McHugh, 2014).

Nostalgic narratives and aesthetics can be deployed in myriad ways, for political gain and exclusion as well as critical and productive outcomes (Lowenthal, 1999). From the humanities and social sciences vantage point, longing for the past raises complex questions about nostalgia's effects socially, culturally, politically, economically, and environmentally. Selective and simplified perspectives of the past can have real world consequences for the perpetuation of social inequity, exclusion, and discrimination, as recent debates over the removal of Confederate monuments evidence. Whose past or feeling of *pastness* is inscribed in place and institutionalized in practice? How is the “past” wielded for profit and political gain? Such questions are taken up in exploring, for example, the nostalgic longing for home and homeland that results from displacement, colonization, and political revolution (Blunt, 2003; Della Dora, 2006; Winkler, 2011) as well as the significance of urban nostalgia manifested in the everyday construction of domestic and built environs: homes, neighborhoods, subdivisions, and cities (Cashman, 2006; Duncan & Duncan, 2003; Farrar, 2009, 2011). There is also growing evidence for the therapeutic role of nostalgia in certain kinds of health and medical spaces (Wood et al., 2015), but nostalgia's effects in the built environs, cultural landscapes, and public places are varied, complex, and dynamic.

At a time of global-scale anthropogenic impacts, nostalgia is increasingly surfacing in response to environmental change, such as ecological and biological loss. Albrecht (2005) introduces the nostalgia inspired neologism, “solastalgia” to refer specifically to the trauma (“lack of solace”) of losing one’s sense of place and home through environmental degradation. Emotional geographies of loss and displacement resulting from climate change, such as those evidencing solastalgia, are increasingly observed, documented and expected to become ubiquitous on a global scale (Albrecht et al., 2007; Tschakert, Tutu, & Alcaro, 2013). But environmental nostalgia is not merely a backward-looking or debilitating sense of loss; it inspires practices that shape the present and future. Drawing on the work in memory studies, Davies (2010, p. 264) argues that the pursuit of sustainability in theory and practice *is* “a nostalgia for the future. Its fundamental desire is precisely that which the nostalgic yearns for: a stable home, free from the losses of time.” Nostalgia can be a powerful motivational force and ethical principle, concludes Davies, attuning bodies toward nuanced sensory environmental change. But if nostalgia is not consciously and seriously considered, he reminds us, there is risk of myopic obsession with past sensations and rosy memories that might preclude diverse goals and necessary actions in the present. Ultimately, the effects of environmental nostalgia warrant further study, especially among restorative practices and policies for “lost” natures, ecosystems, and environments. In this moment of environmental change, the therapeutic dimensions of nostalgia, for people and place, are consequential.

Both backward- and forward-looking nostalgia may have clear linkages to EPG processes, then. For example, a recent study (Baldwin & Lammers, 2016) found that when asked about environmental policy, conservatives are more strongly motivated by a desire to preserve good things from the past, and liberals are more strongly motivated by a desire to make a better

world for the future. For this reason it is perhaps not surprising that many environmental laws are written with the express purpose of preserving and protecting nature in the way that it used to be, or even of restoring natural areas to the way that they were at some ‘remembered’ time in the past, with the result that public support for environmental protection is often permeated by nostalgic longing. Nostalgia, as a longing for a ‘remembered’ past, usually implies that that past is better than an inferior present, but this may play out in a number of ways, each glossing over negative features from the past in different ways. At an extreme end, for example, nostalgia might draw upon an un-remembered past, as in the case of rewilding: that process involves returning a given biome to an approximation of some past state that no-one now alive remembers. At the same time, approximations of a ‘sort-of’ remembered past abound: returning wolves to Yellowstone is an example of this, since some living people may remember what things used to be like before wolves disappeared from the park. A longing for a past that no-one actually remembers also seems to be a factor in forward-looking nostalgia: dreams of a past golden age, including for an age when humans and nature were more in harmony than is now the case, can spur plans for utopian communities, back-to-the-land movements, and so forth. It’s easy to identify the converse, as well, where forms of nostalgia might be counterproductive to achieving environmental goals by motivating a resistance to necessary change: for example, longing for an ocean view without wind turbines, for roofs without solar panels on them, or for high power, inefficient, ‘hot rod’ cars. ‘Conservative’ types of nostalgia might likewise engender positive changes by enlisting youthful memories of wooded areas, pristine streams, (organic) family farms, and old or historic buildings to protect environmental resources from various destructive forces. Our point in introducing these various scenarios is that nostalgia is frequently unrealistic, with important impacts on the world of EPG: whether the force of nostalgia is good

or bad for us and for the environment no doubt depends on what past we are longing for, and why.

### **Is Nostalgia an Environmental Value?**

All that is to say, nostalgia shares much with other non-market values shaping EPG. But is nostalgia a value in the philosophical sense? Perhaps, by itself, it is not, but rather a certain kind of affective attachment to past experiences and circumstances. It can be a very strong attachment, and a strong motivator. It functions regularly both to shape and to motivate acceptance of environmental policy. To neglect it when speaking about environmental values seems foolish. But how can it be properly included in that discussion as more than a useful motivator (provided it is nostalgia for the right sorts of things)? The theory of the virtues, or excellent traits of character, can help us here. Christine Swanton has helpfully distinguished the field of a virtue, the modes of excellent response to items in that field, and the justification for calling a character trait a virtue (Swanton, 2003, pp. 1-4). For example, when thinking about Biophilia as a candidate virtue, one might consider its field (the diversity of living things), the modes of excellent response to items in that field (for example, loving life's diversity, acting to preserve that diversity, respecting and preserving the value of individual living things, species, and ecosystems), and the justification for calling it a virtue (for example, that possessing it is part of human flourishing, or that it promotes the creation and preservation of value in the world; see also Clowney, 2013). Nostalgia might be considered a legitimate dimension of our response to the demands of the world on us. It might, for example, make up part of the love for natural diversity, as we look back with affection and longing to the past diversity of a now barren area in our neighborhood.

Perhaps a more interesting question is whether we *should* think of nostalgia in this way. Is it a necessary, or even a legitimate part of environmental virtue? It seems that the latter option is the most plausible: nostalgia is not *necessary*, but it is a *legitimate* part of environmental virtue. Desire to *preserve* natural sites, or for that matter farmland, in relatively pristine condition does seem to be part of environmental virtue. But there are other reasons for wanting this besides a nostalgic longing for the past; to lack nostalgia is not a defect. A young person may not have lived through enough changes to have much of it, and the nostalgia of individual persons will differ depending on their personal psychology and their experience. It cannot be a necessary motivator for environmental restoration in all cases, since restoration often aims to take a particular bit of land or ocean back to the way it was many thousands of years ago (see, for instance, Rewilding Europe 2015) And since one *could* be nostalgic for the ‘wrong’ things, environmental nostalgia by itself is not automatically a good thing. At the same time, nostalgia is frequently a strong motivator for environmental preservation, and is one among many motivations that may be enlisted to support environmentally friendly policies. For example, nostalgia for a past local environment that contained more open space, more biodiversity, and more opportunities for (non-destructive) human interaction with nature is surely a legitimate part of the desire for environmental preservation, which in turn is surely part of environmental virtue. Nostalgia of this sort is definitely operative in the move to preserve the Pinelands that we discussed at the beginning of this article. The value and importance of nostalgia in this role can be reinforced by noticing that virtues are generally defined in terms of generalities. Words like “love” and “fear,” for example, cast a very wide net. A nostalgic attachment can be part of love.

It’s important to recognize that the optional role of nostalgia in environmental virtue is not due to the fact that it is a feeling. Virtue always involves feeling, and one can be responsible

for one's feelings. There is a long tradition, going back at least to Kant, that implies that this is not so. But it rests on a misunderstanding about human ability to control our feelings and beliefs. On any given occasion we will be unable to avoid feeling what we feel, and believing what seems true to us. It is possible, however, to open oneself in a way that leads to changed feelings and opinions, or to close oneself off from experiences that might produce this result. And as Aristotle famously taught, it is possible to become habituated both to a dysfunctionally vicious set of feelings and beliefs, and to a healthy set of these. If nostalgia is a potentially positive motivator for environmentally friendly action and policy, but not required as an element in environmental virtue, does that mean that appealing to it is in some way morally questionable? That is *possible*, for it is possible to appeal to base motives in order to get good results, but such an appeal arguably lacks the respect for moral agency that ethical integrity requires. The problem need not arise in the case of nostalgia, however, unless the nostalgia is for a previous evil but attractive state of affairs. That would be a special case. Environmental nostalgia often accompanies a longing for a more harmonious relationship with a more pristine natural environment, and as such it is surely an appropriate part of environmental virtue. By the same token, re-creating a more harmonious and in many ways, primitive, set of human-environment relationships could entail rejection of many of the technological advances that have improved health outcomes (e.g., wastewater treatment facilities, medications based in bio-prospecting), something which may have significant ethical implications.

Environmental pragmatism provides another framework for thinking about nostalgia as an environmental value. Environmental pragmatists typically refuse to prioritize values in a hierarchy, but prefer to let all the values that might bear on an issue battle it out on a given occasion, with no predetermined result. Anthony Weston defends this view well in "Beyond



Intrinsic Value: Pragmatism and Environmental Ethics” (1985), where he argues for an “ecology of values.” This approach is especially helpful in formulating public policy, since it does not immediately privilege the views of any of the groups that might come to the table, and allows room for specific compromises that will work for the issue at hand, even if no general reconciliation of the views of the various parties seems likely. As in the case of environmental virtue ethics, so with environmental pragmatism: environmental nostalgia might often play a legitimately powerful and helpful role in formulating environmental policy and winning support for it, without being an essential ingredient in every such negotiation.

We may say, then, that the role of nostalgia as an ingredient in environmental value is legitimate. It is also frequently of central importance, since it is so important that we conserve our natural environment. At the same time, while nostalgia may be an important motivator, it cannot reliably tell us what to save and what not nor can it prescribe the ‘best’ course of action for any issue.

### **How Might Nostalgia Shape Environmental Policy and Governance?**

Nostalgia is tough to pin down, in many ways. But regardless of whether nostalgia meets the criteria for environmental value, environmental virtue, or another philosophical category, it is clear that the longing for particular ecosystems or landscapes to return to ‘the way they used to be’ is a significant affective force in some EPG processes that emphasize protection and preservation. At the same time, it remains unclear to this point in the paper how nostalgia might actually *function* in stakeholders’ decision-making processes. What follows are some suggestions as to how, specifically, nostalgia factors into EPG processes. As mentioned earlier, we aim to empirically test the following conjectures about the role of nostalgia in EPG in a subsequent

study (and would invite other scholars to do the same). In preparation for subsequent empirical research into the role of nostalgia as a factor shaping EPG processes and outcomes, we posit the following four claims.

First, we argue that, given its essentially affective and nonmarket nature, nostalgia's greatest role in EPG is ideological, and not technical. For example, Judith Layzer (2012, p. 16) generalizes the environmental policymaking process into five steps: agenda setting, formulation of alternatives, decision making, implementation, and evaluation. It is possible to imagine a role for nostalgia in each stage, though perhaps it seems most salient in the agenda setting stage, for which Layzer describes the main aim as "getting a problem on the list of subjects to which policymakers are paying serious attention." (ibid.) In any of stage of the policymaking process, however, we suspect that nostalgia will be most visible in two forms: first, as a tool wielded by stakeholders to convince others that their issue is worthy of support; and second, as a 'force' spurring implementation of actual policy directives. Given the state of knowledge regarding nostalgia's affective power, we would not anticipate nostalgia being mobilized very effectively in the more technical "policy design" stages of the policymaking process. That is to say, it is hard for us to think of an example of nostalgia being a factor in determining the ideal amount for a license, fee, tax, or enforcement action. We would not anticipate finding evidence of nostalgia shaping decisions in these aspects of policymaking because nostalgia is very much a nonmarket value (as discussed earlier in the paper) and thus, like all nonmarket values, we would expect it to be excluded from economic and cost-benefit oriented analyses that typify contemporary EPG decision making as well as other technical dimensions of policymaking (e.g. drafting language for an ordinance or rule).

Second, we argue that especially in multi-stakeholder governance scenarios (that is, pretty much everything except authoritarian regimes), nostalgia will more likely be mobilized by interest groups, activists, businesses, and other ‘policy entrepreneurs’ *external to* the apparatuses of government itself, as opposed to state officials and agencies that comprise government, with two notable exceptions discussed in our third point below. Interest groups eager to get their issues on the policymaking agenda could certainly wield nostalgic longing to convince specific policymakers to take up their concerns, but we argue that it is much more probable that interest groups would mobilize nostalgia as a way of generating public support for a cause. One can find numerous instances of nostalgic longing for the idealized cleaner, quieter, and more intact environments of the past as components of fundraising and education campaigns for environmental interest groups. As Jennifer Ladino (2012 preface) writes regarding some of the ways in which nostalgic longing for an iconic, lost, American wilderness has been mobilized in literature, “nostalgia can aid in environmental movements by invoking an organic or unspoiled natural world in order to enlist sympathetic proponents of preservation... American nature narratives are often infused with nostalgia – for the western frontier, for unspoiled landscapes, for a preindustrial golden age, or for pastoral communities with close connections to their environments.” Preservation-oriented interest groups could arouse these feelings among voters to build public pressure for or against a particular policy option. Similarly, it is instructive to imagine how most private businesses and their lobbying representatives could mobilize nostalgia in their *political* advocacy for or against environmental issues; examples of firms tapping into the types of imagery Ladino suggests as part of *marketing* campaigns are plentiful. In contrast to the ways in which many environmental interest groups may wield nostalgia, but perhaps with equal potential as far as impact, it is interesting to consider whether or not businesses might utilize

*negative* nostalgic longing as an argument for *greater* resource exploitation. Though it is unclear if this would qualify as ‘nostalgia’ in the ways we described earlier, we suppose that it would be possible for a forestry or mining company to invoke longing for ‘good old days’ when resources were more abundant and able to be extracted at higher rates as a spur for changes to existing environmental policy. This could be framed as a longing for an industrial or extractive ‘golden age’ aimed especially at countering efforts to enhance land and species preservation.

Third, *within* the apparatuses of the state itself, we argue that generally it will be unlikely to find evidence that components of government – with the exception of an entity like the National Park Service (Ladino, 2012) – would actively wield nostalgic longing to develop support or prompt action on a particular environmental issue, because this would inherently suggest that government in the past (or currently) had done a poor job protecting environmental resources. To the extent that nostalgia shapes EPG decisions within government, we suppose that it will be most clear among executive and legislative-level decision makers and specifically during election campaigns. Our reasoning for this stems largely from the perspective described earlier relating to interest groups and development of public support for a cause. Elected officials might mobilize nostalgia as means for framing both particular issues and their own candidacy, or perhaps as a means to shame or pressure rivals into accepting responsibility for previous poor performance. For example, one official could make comments accusing another of destroying American wilderness, and draw upon the types of nostalgic longing that Ladino describes to position her- or himself as a more reliable custodian of environmental resources. One possible parallel to this could be drawn with Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again” as a form of nostalgic longing for a time when (apparently) the US was ‘better’ than it currently is. Generally speaking however, we suggest that the current political climate of

the US does not seem to lend itself directly to strong environmental platforms among officials from either major party. Regarding other, more mundane, components of the state, we would not anticipate evidence of nostalgic feelings shaping environmental decisions and actions among administrators, bureaucrats, and technicians, because these groups focus more on the implementation, enforcement, and assessment of policies rooted in conventional economic and market valuations of environmental resources.

## **Conclusions**

The potential ramifications of allowing nostalgia to shape EPG decisions are clear enough in both the positive and negative cases. It seems likely that nostalgia could be effectively used, or perhaps more accurately, manipulated, to stir up support for action on a particular policy issue, with the assumption that most uses of nostalgia would be to the benefit of ecosystems and environmental protections. As we have argued in this paper, we suspect that nostalgia in EPG will most likely be wielded as a ‘marketing’ tool aimed at connecting with and mobilizing stakeholders’ identities in relation to agenda-setting goals. In addition, Certomá (2009) and Halfacre (2016) write about the potential for nostalgic longing to work alongside the concept of place and authenticity to mobilize groups that might otherwise be indifferent to environmental (and historical) preservation projects.

Adaptations of nostalgia to environmental conservation and preservation issues can be readily observed. In the interest of offering just one example of how this looks, we offer an example from the authors’ local region. The epigraph to this paper suggests a type of vanishing, the sense of ‘something-being-lost’ that can be identified in many of the mission statements, press releases, and fundraising campaigns of environmental protection organizations. Indeed, the

Pinelands Preservation Alliance – the largest environmental civic organization focused on the unique Pine Barrens ecosystem extending over 1 million acres in southern New Jersey – includes as the first goals on its mission statement to “**P**reserve the Pine Barrens ecosystem, its plants and wildlife, its water, and its landscape throughout the Pinelands National Reserve; **P**romote wide public awareness of the values of Pinelands resources and issues involved in their preservation; [and] **A**dvance permanent acquisition of land and development rights by private and public conservation agencies.” (Pinelands Preservation Alliance 2017b) The Alliance advocates against housing and infrastructure development in the Pine Barrens; monitors water quality, biodiversity, and other environmental indicators; and leads environmental education expeditions into the region’s more remote areas. As a summation of its advocacy work, the Alliance aims to:

...persuade government to protect the natural and cultural resources of this extraordinary region. We support the Pinelands Protection Act and Comprehensive Management Plan, and we seek to improve these and other environmental laws to better protect the Pinelands’ natural and historic resources. We serve as the public’s watch-dog over government, going to meetings and analyzing the actions and documents that most citizens cannot monitor on their own. Drawing on the energy and creativity of staff and volunteers, we focus on protecting the water, wetlands and forests that make the Pine Barrens a globally unique ecosystem. (Pinelands Preservation Alliance 2017c)

We identify the Alliance only because it is a familiar, local (to the authors) example of what is certainly rhetoric common to environment advocacy efforts around the world. In many ways the aims and scope of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance are similar to those of other preservation-oriented environmental organizations operating at local, regional, and even national levels. In principle, preservation-oriented organizations are guided by their desire to return ecosystems to an earlier state, before human-induced degradation and development; when this is not possible, preservation groups aim to at least keep things as they are and limit further damage (Brulle, 2009).

But drawing on nostalgia is also potentially problematic, for a number of reasons. As we have described in this article, nostalgia sometimes hinges on a version of the past that never actually existed. Several scholars in environmental history have pointed to how a *mis-remembering*, or *selective-remembering* of environments, landscapes, and ecosystems past has actually led to negative EPG outcomes. For example Diana Davis' *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome* (2007) explains how French colonial officials looked to the Classical, grain-producing past of the Maghreb – prior to alleging ‘ruination’ and misuse by Arabs, who the French charged with spurring desertification – as justification for both renewed attempts at environmental engineering (to return the landscape to its former greatness) as well as cultural and socio-ecological domination of North African cultures. Likewise, Robert Cabin's *Restoring Paradise* (2013) considers how the interplay of cultures and their distinctive memories of what Hawaii's landscapes ‘ought’ to be like, from indigenous Hawaiians to long-established white and Asian families to modern-day visitors, have impacted contemporary thinking surrounding ecosystem restoration. Studies like these point to the dangers of rooting EPG decisions in a nostalgic longing for lost ecosystems, especially when those memories are themselves ideologically charged.

In this article, we asserted that nostalgia is a ‘force’ impacting EPG processes and outcomes. Nostalgia is a ‘sort of’ affective remembering that plays to our senses and imaginations, and while not truly an environmental value in the philosophical sense, nevertheless is a component of larger systems of environmental values. Thus it is reasonable to assert that nostalgia and nostalgic feelings do certainly play a role in identifying and proposing solutions to environmental problem no differently than other components of any system of environmental values might. The next task in this process is empirical analysis of our main claim, which would

of necessity have two aims. The first would be to identify instances where nostalgic longing for environments past – real or imagined, correctly or incorrectly in ecological terms – has become a motivator for activity on some particular EPG issue. We suspect that episodes in land and wildlife preservation and restoration may be the most fruitful places to begin. The second would be to articulate ways in which this longing for past environments is ‘translated’ into specific moments of the policymaking process. That is to say, how thoughts and remembrances of environments past are made real. We believe that it is in the context of this empirical approach that greater understanding of the role of not only nostalgia, but affect and nonmarket values more generally, in EPG processes and outcomes, can be developed.

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