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2

Reconnecting with Place: Faculty and the Piedmont Project at Emory University

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An end-of-semester curriculum development project for faculty in urban Emory University is perhaps an unlikely context for a deepening connection with place. Since 2001, the Piedmont Project has drawn together cohorts of roughly 20 faculty from diverse fields across the university to learn about environmental issues and sustainability. Development of new courses or course materials begins with a two-day introductory workshop, including lectures on ecology, public health, environmental justice, and an overview of campus environmental efforts. Midday woods walks provide some recreation and an opportunity for experiential learning. The lectures, discussions, outdoor time, and workshop materials all highlight connections between environmental dimensions of Atlanta, the campus, and broader national and international issues of sustainability.

In formal evaluations immediately after the workshop, participants in the first three cohorts gave the Piedmont Project a level of approval not common among Emory faculty:

"I learned a ton in there."

"A wonderful group of colleagues."

"It was an intellectual feast."

"[The] discussion . . . was inspiring, informative, and joyful."

"Everything we did was important to me."

"This was the best faculty development activity I've participated in at Emory."

Why was the Piedmont Project so satisfying? Interviews with faculty a year after their participation revealed that one of the most valuable

components of the workshop was an enhanced sense of place. Place clearly has two overlapping dimensions for Piedmont Project faculty; it refers to both the natural world of woods, streams, and less disturbed ecosystems and to the built environment of Atlanta and the campus. Growing attachment to these dimensions of place and new understandings of how urban place is intertwined with biological and ecological processes seem to be central to the impact of the project and to go beyond new course development. The workshop is a time when awareness is seized, "when individuals step back from the flow of everyday experience and attend self-consciously to place" (Basso 1996:106).

Such enthusiasm for place contrasts with the dominant ethic of higher education that values a cosmopolitan placelessness (Zencey 1996). Professors "are expected to owe no allegiance to geographical territory . . . [they are] supposed to belong to the boundless world of books and ideas and to eternal truths, not the infinitely particular world of watershed, growing seasons, and ecological niches" (p. 15). Such a commitment to placelessness responds to the mobility of academic positions and the nomadic life that many experience. It also reflects the deep familiarity that some faculty have with cities and places far from where they teach, an expertise that may be part of why they were hired in the first place. David Orr, however, sees such emphases as "indoor thinking, careerism" (1994:28) and a barrier to greater environmental awareness in higher education. Such values are transmitted to students, who are commonly educated "to be mobile, rootless, and autistic toward their places" (Orr 2004). Thus, the enthusiasm for the Piedmont Project reflects a shift away from conventional academic reward systems. Indeed, participation itself reflects a willingness to resist the university politics that tend to devalue teaching over research and to emphasize specialization and productivity. As we will see below in their own words, faculty find intellectual and personal nourishment from the opportunity to engage with environmental issues, and the diminishment of their own "autism" seems to provide deep satisfaction.

The Piedmont Project participants reported ways that their experience built, renewed, or deepened their relations with the natural world. Low and Altman separate three dimensions of place attachment: the cognitive (knowledge, thought), the affective (emotion, feelings), and practice

(action, behavior) (1992:4–5). All three dimensions of place attachment emerge in the accounts of Piedmont Project participants, often from a particular emphasis on one or another dimension that was strengthened or engaged by the experience. Low and Altman's framework is helpful to organize what participants say about the impact of the project, though I do not intend to imply that all participants organize their experience in this way.

The interviews also revealed that context is important. Emory faculty emphasize that their engagement with the Piedmont Project, a combination of intellectual and embodied learning, is enhanced when it occurs within a safe and supportive group.[1] Other aspects reported to build an appreciation for place and expand the learning process are the opportunity to learn the names of species, face-to-face narratives, and connections with ethics and personal values.

Each of these aspects of the process of building awareness of place emphasizes interconnection and relationship and echoes other research on connections to the natural world. The importance of a supportive group context has been noted in many environmental literacy efforts (Barlett and Chase 2004; Bowers 1999; Thomashow 2002). Barry Lopez also articulates the importance of naming as a means of teaching about relationships, both between listeners and storytellers and between humans and the surrounding more-than-human world (1988). David Abram's analysis of human presence in narrative emphasizes that the breath and spirit of the storyteller enhance listeners' awareness of the aliveness of the natural world (1996). And many sustainability efforts on campuses around the country report that the reintegration of ethics and personal values into professional life is deeply rewarding to faculty and staff (Aronowitz 2001; Barlett and Chase 2004; Sabin 2002). Though there are undoubtedly other aspects of the Piedmont Project that contribute to its impact on participants, these four dimensions of the workshop experience—the power of the group, the naming of species, the use of narrative, and the integration of work and values—have emerged as enhancing the cognitive, affective, and practice dimensions of place attachment. Such insights may help explain some of the power in similar experiences of growing reconnection with the natural world around the country.

Part of building a stronger relationship with the natural world is awareness of the interrelationship of humans, the earth's biological systems, and the impacts of urban life. As Piedmont Project participants try to make sense of how their disciplinary competencies intersect with sustainability challenges, they develop an enhanced awareness on many levels of ecological processes in the urban landscape, and larger global and regional implications as well. Project planners hoped such broadened systems thinking would emerge in many different kinds of academic course work, but the Piedmont experience suggests that it has in some cases carried over into other areas of personal and professional life as well. This chapter explores the practice dimension of a growing attachment to place, as well as the many ways the project supports connections to place through an intertwining of the cognitive and affective domains.

The Piedmont Project Approach to Environmental Literacy

The immediate goal of the Piedmont Project is to fulfill the university's commitment to environmental literacy (Mumford 2001) by bringing environmental issues into the formal curriculum. The format is based on the multiyear success of the Ponderosa Project at Northern Arizona University (Chase and Rowland 2004) and provides incentives and a support network for 18 to 20 faculty a year to explore environmental issues in their own fields.[2] Each participant is paid a small stipend and commits to developing a new course or a new module for an existing course. Participants commit to attending the two-day opening workshop, spending approximately three weeks over the summer in course development, and sharing their experiences in a follow-up lunch and field trip in August and a dinner the following March.

Influenced by bioregional perspectives, the workshop's planners draw resource people from both inside and outside the university to introduce environmental issues through a focus on the local context of Atlanta. Faculty hear an ecological lecture about the Piedmont bioregion and its native trees and plants. They learn about on-campus efforts to construct more environmentally sound buildings and to preserve remaining stands of hardwood forest. Discussions cover concerns about campus actions

that affect local watershed protection, erosion, and water pollution. Another lecture links patterns of solid waste disposal and sewer overflows to political processes, neighborhoods, and Atlanta's racial history. A lecture on the health consequences of urban sprawl also emphasizes that the form of the built environment can harm health as well as be a benefit (see chapter 11; Fitzpatrick and LaGory 2000:48).

The noon woods walk on the first day highlights an old-growth forest with huge beech trees and rare wildflowers, hidden behind a dense scrub of invasive privet. The ecologist leading the walk is one of the faculty members who successfully lobbied to shift the construction of the building in which the workshop is held in order to protect the forest. The second day's walk takes place across the street, in a small forest preserve along a major creek, and teaches about stream degradation in urban areas and the challenges of forest restoration.

This chapter presents information gathered in open-ended interviews with all 37 Piedmont Project participants from the first two years. Lasting from a half-hour to two hours, the interviews were scheduled roughly one year after the summer experience to discover what participants remembered from the workshop, what still resonated for them, and if the experience had affected any aspects of their lives in addition to their courses. Other data in this chapter are taken from verbal feedback and an e-mail survey immediately after each annual workshop and from an e-mail survey of all three cohorts carried out in the fall of 2003. In the second year, five administrators took part, and instead of a course change, their projects focused on campus operations such as paper use, energy consumption, or building renovation. Their responses are included in the analysis here where appropriate.

The Piedmont Project has been very successful in stimulating curricular change. Participants came from the full range of liberal arts fields, from English, history, philosophy, theater, art, and music to sociology, anthropology, chemistry, biology, and environmental studies. Professors from five language departments as well as physical education were involved. Professional school faculty from law, business, theology, and public health made up a fifth of the total. A number of faculty found that once they immersed themselves in the particular issues they wished to learn, many more opportunities emerged to incorporate

environmental issues into their teaching. Responses from 51 Piedmont Project faculty participants from the three years revealed that 59 percent had changed two or three courses, not just the one planned, for a total of 69 undergraduate and 22 graduate courses. A surprising number changed how they taught as well. Three-fourths responded that they used more experiential teaching methods as a result of the Piedmont Project, adding field trips, outdoor exercises, linkage to current events, and new writing assignments. Their own research and writing were affected. Of the faculty participants, 53 percent reported publishing an article or making a professional presentation as a result of their engagement with environmental issues. Said one, "I'm surprised I'm writing so much about place. I thought it would be teaching [that would be altered], but writing . . ."

About half the Piedmont Project participants in the first year were drawn from faculty with prior interests or specializations in environmental issues. Later years drew more newcomers. But knowledge depth in a particular environmental field did not lessen the environmental learning from the program; most faculty felt they learned a great deal, often in areas they had not thought about before. Only one or two participants in each cohort expressed dissatisfaction, usually from the program's failure to provide curricular resources in their specific areas. Faculty came from all academic ranks, from lecturers to endowed chair professors, and spanned the full age range. One-third were women.

Building Community

New bonds of community and connection with others across university boundaries are the most common aspects of the project that stand out a year later for participants:

"The best part was meeting other faculty. It builds the collegial environment."

"The intense, sustained interaction with colleagues from different departments, ranks, and roles in the university. People coming together for a range of reasons, to discuss sustainability. I really took pleasure in the sustained interaction."

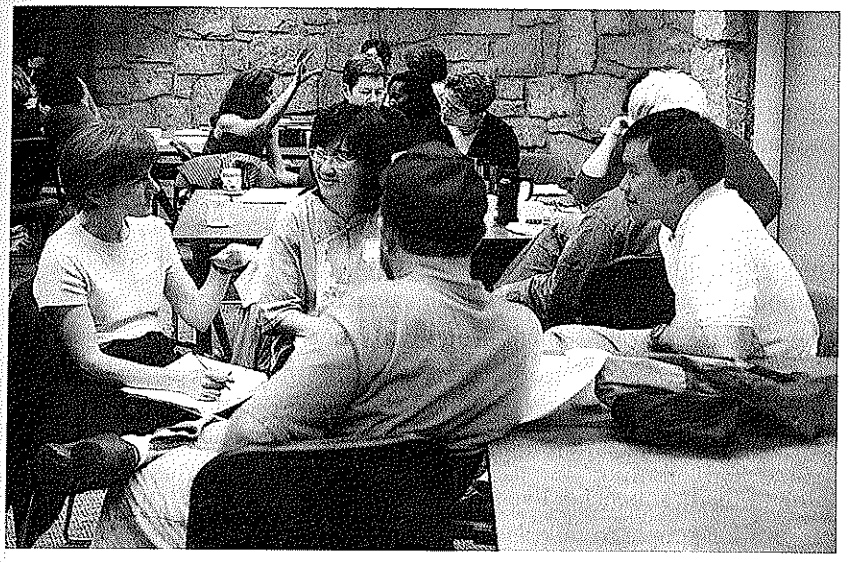

Figure 2.1
Small group discussions during the Piedmont Project (photo by Peggy Barlett).

"The excitement of having all those people in all those disciplines interested in environmental issues, that was a *huge* thing for me."

It is significant that words like *enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction*, and *excitement* were commonly used in response to the question, "When you think back on the two-day Piedmont workshop, what stands out for you?" Clearly, the workshop was a pedagogical exercise beyond most faculty members' expectations and constructed "centers of human significance and emotional attachment" (Tilley 1994:15).

For some participants, there was a sense of surprise to find so many knowledgeable, committed people across the university who shared an interest in environmental issues. It reduced a sense of anomie and isolation and reassured some that their concerns were shared. This sentiment was expressed by newcomers and long-time faculty alike. The interdisciplinarity of the dialogue enhanced participants' grasp of the complexity of environmental and sustainability issues and the importance of collaborative intellectual engagement in response. A few emphasized how their academic fields were normally cut off from

the rest of the campus: "I'm a little isolated, so that was a nice feature for me."

"Specifically, we became a functioning subunit of the whole intellectual community. We had all the principles of sustainability on the table in front of us all. Now, how do we bring our *expertise* to bear?"

The relatively egalitarian, democratic activities of the workshop fostered a climate of trust, a sense of safety. The workshop's leaders promoted a pattern of respectful engagement through alternating large-group discussions and small-group breakout sessions. The workshop combined abstract environmental issues with concrete pedagogical challenges and fostered a willingness to think together without competitive hierarchy (Barlett and Eisen 2002).

"One of the best benefits I've seen in Piedmont Project is that it provides a forum for people to talk, learn, without needing to be 'the expert.' It's a place to actually be safely curious."

Several participants reported gaining new hope from the experience. The interactions generated optimism that "we can create something new together." This statement reflects the way the experience of community is connected to potentialities of action, as well as to affective attachment.

Simply gaining new knowledge about environmental issues was important to many. The cognitive component of the workshop supported their intellectual curiosity and was satisfying because it was new, enriching. "I never took ecology," said a natural scientist. "And to sit down and hear from experts was a wonderful thing . . . the knowledge of ecosystems and the interplay of us and the environment." However, the way in which community was also emphasized by nearly all the participants suggests that the context of a supportive group enhances the cognitive learning of environmental issues and the meaningfulness of that experience.

Place: In the Woods

Piedmont Project faculty commented on their new awareness of the built environment of Emory and Atlanta, but foremost in their accounts was the power of the lunchtime woods experiences.

"But the most fun was the experiential thing. . . . It was something new. And being in a city with woods; that's really unusual. The experience was operating on many levels."

"It was eye-opening to me."

"Really educational."

"Being outside together . . . it was great. I'd love to see tons more."

"*This* nature was what deepened. That's why I loved the walk—drinking in the new environment *here*."

How faculty learned was also important. The education in the woods walks was embodied, sensory, and rich. It combined fun, outdoor exercise, and hands-on learning in a way that evoked past childhood time in nature. "Getting out in nature and putting names with the things, learning special things about what we saw—it was *wonderful*! It revived an interest from my childhood."

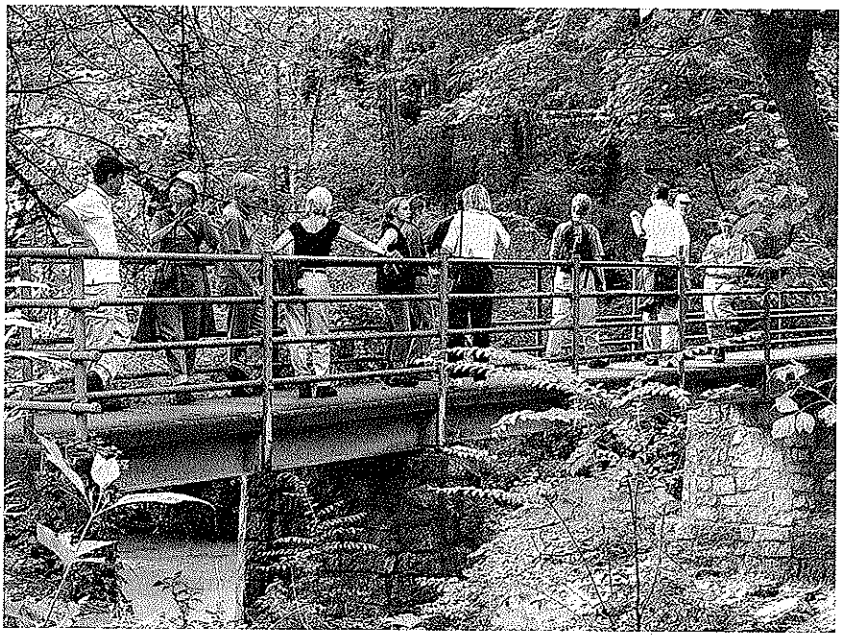

Figure 2.2
Field experience to a nearby park (photo by Anne L. Hall).

For several faculty, the woods walks awakened a dormant engagement with the natural world that had been very important in early years. Several were reminded that they had once thought of being ecologists or botanists, and one rediscovered the love of the outdoors felt in scouting. Adult life, family obligations, and academic pressures had driven these experiences underground, and the embodied learning of the woods walks brought back important memories, a common dimension of attachment to place (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:20).

The time in the woods slowed the hectic academic pace. The celebration of the remaining stands of forest was playful and also somewhat reverent. For a few, the time in nature joined the academic life with spiritual commitments. One participant commented that finding peace in nature was a lifelong pattern, but it had never been before connected to professional activities with colleagues. Being able to share religious language for experiences in nature with a theology professor was gratifying, said one scientist. Another said, "Looking at the trees—and just slowing down, taking our time—it was invaluable to me. It changed my perspective." Those who reported the woods walks to have had a profound impact were more likely to adopt more experiential teaching methods in their classes.

Many faculty commented specifically on the value to them of learning to name and identify local trees and rare wildflowers.

"The nature walks—I remember really enjoying that. Telling me what the trees here are called. Different types of forest—trees, rare plants—it was very entertaining."

"I knew nothing about the South when I came here. . . . This was one of the best things for me: learning about the trees."

"The most fun, memorable part was going on the hike. Learning to identify native plants. . . . It really *did* change the way I think. Down toward the Village [the campus-edge shopping district], I notice now the row of magnolias, and I think, 'There's a planted row. And we have our own species of magnolia—*grandiflora*—that we saw in Hahn Woods.'"

Barry Lopez suggests that naming both evokes and strengthens relationships. Showing the connection of one thing to the whole "holds the human imagination" (Lopez 1988:149). To explain the power of

spending time in nature with children, Lopez says, "An extrapolation from a single fragment of the whole is the most invigorating experience I can share with them. I think children know that nearly anyone can learn the names of things; the impression made on them at this level is fleeting. What takes a lifetime to learn, they comprehend, is the existence and substance of myriad relationships: it is these relationships, not the things themselves, that ultimately hold the human imagination" (1988:149). Echoed a language professor: "The lectures and explanations, and I guess I should say the *names*, definitely showed me I should learn factual things. It becomes more concrete and maybe means more to me."

These comments support the work of scholars who have highlighted the restorative experience of time in nature (see chapter 13; R. Kaplan 1984; S. Kaplan 1995; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989; Talbot and Kaplan 1986). As Jacobson argues, building a relationship with nature "conjures up the sacred eternal" (Jacobson 2002:194). Time in the natural world also counteracts the speed-up and "compression" of a globalized society (Robertson 1992, cited in Milton 1996:164–166), thereby providing a kind of time out, a pause, in the rhythm of the university life. The restorative quality of the woods walks brought a vitality to the whole workshop, as well as building attachment to place. Faculty enjoyed the new knowledge learned, enhanced especially by the opportunity to learn new names, leading to a new awareness of teaching method.

"[It was] really educational. I *could* have learned that, I suppose, from reading but I *wouldn't*. I may not act on it, but I realized I *should* be more concrete in my courses."

Stories and Breath

In a symposium at Emory University in 2002 that formed the genesis of this book, David Abram spoke of the importance of a living narrator as a critical dimension of connection to the natural world. A sense of place, with a connection to the animate world, is both an oral and aural experience. Abrams argued that connection to other species is evoked by the breath of the narrator, whose voice as well as story content heighten a sensibility of the aliveness of the world around. The spoken breath—

echoing the gust of wind, the anima of spirit—supports the sharing of mind and echoes the shared ecosystem around us. Knowledge has historically been held in stories where animal characters often provide a timelessness, an association with the natural world, and an easy mnemonic for oral lessons. Basso also has found that the landscape can carry stories and reinforce an intimacy with place through its daily reminders (1996). Narratives that bind us to the city, to the place that we live, said Abram, can counteract the deadening sensibilities of a globalized, dis-placed, digital culture.

David Abram argues that current global environmental crises make a renewal of this layer of oral/aural language and the accounts of place that they convey "absolutely necessary." Children need to see adults engaging with story, using the breath, bringing knowledge together with human presence in the landscape. The practices of a more environmentally aware society are embedded in bodies and in the sensory experience of people in the community—people in communication. A focus on the ecology of sensory experience and kinesthetic, embodied ways of experiencing the natural world are connected to our survival as a species (Abram 1996).

These insights suggest a number of fruitful directions for research, and they suggest another possible understanding of the power of the Piedmont Project. Although participants had readings and heard lectures, what they remember most are the shared conversations and the learning in the woods. What has evoked new engagement with campus and Atlanta landscapes seems to be more what they learned from the stories of presenters and less from their handouts. As many hint in their memories of the experience, it is the combination of knowledge and emotion and the context of a growing sense of community that results in something new. The guidance and enthusiasm of the ecologist storyteller enhanced the woods walks. It is perhaps the sharing of breath in the sense of active narration and engaged participatory listening, as well as the sensory experience of the woods, that allows a more self-conscious attention to place.

In addition, the stories that accompany the Piedmont Project readings, lectures, and discussions contribute to a sense of comfort with environmental issues and their implications for daily life. The oral/aural

component of narrative in the workshop seems to build a sense of competence as well, as participants come to "read" the landscape of Atlanta and to act on it, as discussed below. Narrative and personal encounter have been noted to strengthen environmental learning and psychological comfort in other settings (Dwyer et al. 1993; Geller 1994; Silko 1996), making people more receptive to change.

Place: University and City

The power of connection to place goes beyond the species living in woods and creeks to the relationship of the earth's living systems with the built environment of Atlanta and Emory. The workshop lecture on sprawl, health, air quality, and transportation issues connected many of the most difficult aspects of faculty daily life to larger issues of global climate change, the U.S. obesity epidemic, and deforestation. The presentation on campus sustainability efforts brought forward changing policies in building construction, a campuswide environmental mission statement, and other efforts to weave environmental issues into the fabric of everyday campus life. A growing awareness of Atlanta and Emory was reported by many participants in response to the question, "Did the Piedmont Project change in any way your sense of place or your connection with this place?"

"I think about land use and city planning more."

"I never drive down Buford Highway without thinking about what Howie said about that walkway."

"Now, I never have a visitor in town without pointing out Baker Woods, pointing out the old forest on Clifton Road. . . . My sense of place, the urgency of ecological responsibilities in Atlanta right now, was informed."

"I have a heightened perception, sense of Emory as a campus. I go with friends and point the greenspaces out. I'm more conscious of that."

"On my way home, I go past Peavine Creek, and it feels like a creek I have responsibility for. In my neighborhood . . . it's Emory's creek."

These dimensions of place intersect and build on each other, joining perceptions of the natural world with the built environment. Place attachment provides a kind of rootedness and stability (Thomashow 2002:76) as daily contact with creeks, buildings, or shuttles serves as reminders of the environmental lessons of the project.

Piedmont Project participants also learn that the community includes individuals with active engagement in protecting and restoring the woods and in seeking appropriate policies and practices on campus. The linkage of interdisciplinarity and the democratic sharing of expertise go one step further into a history of human agency on campus. This is a new awareness for some faculty. It echoes Low and Altman's assertions that place attachment, through opportunities to relax from formal roles, can foster creativity and imagination about aspects of one's life (1992:10). Said one previously unengaged faculty member, "[The workshop] alerted me to people out there working." Said another, "I'm excited about the momentum—people [acting] around the campus."

Part of the impact of the project is the intersection of intellectual curiosity with ethics and personal values.

"It matters to me that I sense a certain *moral commitment* [among participants]. This was not just CV fodder. . . . Everyone who signed up for this workshop believed these things *really matter*. It let me throw myself into it."

"Very quickly, I felt I belonged with them and they with me. Even though it wasn't mentioned much, we had a kind of a cause. We all cared really passionately about something, and I enjoyed being part of that movement, that cadre. I felt more effective because we were banding together."

Another faculty member mused, "I had had a lot of doubts about my life . . . teaching rich kids," and course revision for the project allowed a way to integrate personal values, "which is very positive for me personally." One faculty member struggled with a desire to know more about Emory's surroundings that conflicts with the reward system in his profession for "maintaining a portable currency. . . . The base emotion is toward indifference to the current campus. . . . Maybe how we identify as a *person* and as a professional are separate, and maybe with environmental issues, they're brought together."

The accounts suggest that the Piedmont Project shifted "people's relationship to the world, motivated by concern and subsequent involvement," as Heidegger would expect (Gray 1999:449). A part of the satisfaction of the workshop was a sense of shared commitment and the fact of engagement by the university with critical urban problems and issues. People feel they can contribute something of value and are not condemned to passivity (Nicholsen 2002:166).

"I get a sense of satisfaction of being part of an institutional process dedicated to positive ends. It feels good to be a part of an environmentally friendly institution."

Connections to Practice

The Piedmont Project expands faculty awareness of the biological cycles that support human existence and of the full ecosystem costs of contemporary urban lifeways, thereby bringing environmental challenges into sharper focus. Grounding these issues in local places and seeing connections to ethics and personal responsibility fosters for some participants a reflection on daily life (Thomashow 2002). Such expanded consciousness serves the university's goal of building environmental literacy among employees as well as students and is an essential precursor to the creativity that will bring societies—including universities—into more environmentally sustainable practices. In nearly a third of the Piedmont Project interviews, evidence emerged of a growing systems perspective. For example, one faculty member who rides a bike to work talked about how the Piedmont Project changed his sense of geography: "Travelling along the major watersheds—I can feel that."

"[I'm] worrying more now about what I throw out. Wondering where does it go? I see the street lined with washers, dryers, stoves, air conditioning, hoses. Sooner or later, that all has to be a problem."

A newcomer to Emory notes, "My neighborhood has terrible sidewalks and that's an individual concern, but now I see the issue of walking versus driving, and it has a broader, institutional contextualization."

One administrator recounted a campus effort supported by others for economic reasons that he advocated instead because "this is a more

responsible way; it's a *green* thing to do—to think about the long-term impacts. . . . The Piedmont Project was a reinforcement of the perspective I was developing. I think differently about what comes across my desk." Said another,

"I saw that our growth [as a college] had economic ties to the town, and it began to dawn on me. Sustainable living—other forms of living. Beyond saving money, this [sustainable campus project] is about the palpable, lived, learning outside the classroom. I realized we ought to work to make this place [the college] a sustainable way of living."

Almost half of the participants reported some kind of new action flowed from their new or strengthened awareness of environmental issues. A few talked about changes in current household behavior, such as more careful recycling, planting more indigenous species in the yard, saving electricity, considering a pervious surface for a new driveway, and reducing grassed lawn. Many cautioned that the effects of the Piedmont Project were combined with other life influences in these new behaviors. However, one family began to include hikes and other nature experiences as part of family vacations, something they had not done prior to Piedmont and a direct result of the sense of fun rekindled by the woods walks. For others, past household decisions became a focus for reflection: "I got really upset about where I'm living [in a distant suburb]. . . . I ask myself now: 'What was I thinking?' I didn't see the big picture. It made me sad."

Several people reported undertaking new local political action. "I talked to my hiking group about environmental issues. It was [somewhat sheepishly] *empowering*! Expressing views and hearing others' views—I didn't do that before."

"I got involved because I had been in Piedmont," said one young professor whose suburban community faced controversy over a housing project planned for a nearby farm. Raising issues of density, sprawl, and green space, she transmitted Piedmont lessons to neighbors and eventually organized a citizens' group to support more thoughtful local planning. "It [the Piedmont Project] made a really, really big impact."

Another faculty member reported that learning more about neighborhood walkability and its connection to health helped him participate for the first time in county and state civic groups: "It changed my priori-

ties." He and his wife had previously not seen the need to be engaged in an organizational way; "it increased our neighborhood activism."

Conclusion

The Piedmont Project introduces an experience of place that is new for most participants in this curriculum development workshop. The enthusiasm with which faculty embrace and build on it in their work and their personal lives offers an opportunity to understand more fully dimensions of place attachment that occur in many chapters of this book. For some urban residents, developing a relationship with the natural world allows cognition and action to join with meaning.

It is interesting that neither academic discipline nor longevity at Emory seemed to make much difference among Piedmont Project participants in the importance given to the interdisciplinary community and experiences in nature. Among both newcomer faculty and those who had lived in Atlanta for decades were individuals excited to learn the names of trees or the health consequences of urban sprawl. Only among the small group (less than a fifth) who were already teaching environmental subjects or carrying out research in these areas was the new knowledge relatively unimportant; these individuals emphasized more the value of community and the joy of the woods walks, and a few also reported feeling more deeply connected to Atlanta or the campus. Since Piedmont Project faculty are self-selected, their experiences are not generalizable to all professors, but prior interest in environmental issues might also have worked against the impact of the program, since information might be less new or the experience less stimulating. As we have seen, the combination of the two-day workshop and several summer weeks of independent reading and course revision, together with an end-of-summer field trip and a spring check-in dinner, had an impact far beyond curriculum change.

The components of the Piedmont Project affect the diverse group of faculty and administrators in many different ways. For some, most satisfying is the intellectual stimulation, and particularly the science, the facts, the issues they now understand. Transcending the silos of knowledge in the university builds partnerships. For others, the connection of

environmental concerns with social justice is central. Once they hear about the differential impact of Atlanta's sewer or landfill woes on racial and income groups in the city, environmental issues have more meaning. Others begin with an aesthetic engagement with the natural world. They have a passionate attachment to landscapes where they grew up, and they come to transfer some of that connection to the land around Emory. Some people love to connect the local issues with the wider international ones. Others love the reverse—to see global greenhouse gas emissions as tied to the existence of local sidewalks or campus shuttles. Both contribute to a sense of "rootedness and stability in a world of dynamic environmental change" (Thomashow 2002:76).

Interestingly, for all of these groups, the naming of trees and wildflowers is often mentioned spontaneously as an important gift of the Piedmont Project. Though Pretty (2002:23–24) and Thomas (1983) argue that systematic botanical knowledge has historically undermined local knowledge of nature, naming for the faculty at Emory provides a language of reengagement. As in many universities, faculty come from many locales and from other countries as well and thus lack any local solidarity based on a shared taxonomy. Learning the names—oak, beech, bloodroot—eases the transfer of knowledge from the workshop to other outdoor opportunities to become more familiar with nature. The workshop's scientific education helps create group knowledge, shared understandings that deepen the human relationships.

Conveyed through narrative and experiential learning, the naming of species shifts teacher to learner and simultaneously evokes the challenge of teaching—a primary, day-to-day preoccupation for faculty. As they learn about environmental issues, their curiosity and excitement are validated by the other members of the group. For some, new scientific and social facts are connected with personal values and ethics. Self-consciously reflecting on their own embodied, sensory learning in nature brings stimulating insights about methods of teaching. As participants experience a deeper connection to the natural world, they also have a means to bring that to their students, thereby combining the professional and personal around issues of societal urgency.

Some faculty at Emory embraced the Piedmont Project out of a simple desire to get help in changing their courses. In the end, the program spoke

to deeper frustrations with the closed, disciplinary focus of much of academic life and the hunger to talk of significant issues in informal settings. Since sustainability efforts in higher education focus most commonly on campus operations, the Piedmont Project experience suggests that curriculum development can be a fruitful alternative that strengthens knowledge of environmental issues, systems thinking, and experiential learning. With its grounding in the local, place-based faculty development also enhances positive experiences with the university itself. The Piedmont Project embodies a liberal education (for professional school faculty as well as for college instructors), supporting personal as well as intellectual growth, for faculty and for students.

In the process, the experience of place—the woods, the city, the campus—comes to hold new meanings. Whether a recognition that most of Atlanta's forests are second or third growth, that the stream they love has signs of degradation, that the campus is home to fox and beaver, that hundreds of people die each year from the city's smog—the engagement with the natural world has changed. Naming the oak or the bloodroot seems to be connected for some with taking pride in a green building. A sense of reverence for majestic beech trees combines with admiration for taxonomic expertise and for the campus committee work that kept the trees from destruction. A deeper relationship to place fosters an ethic of care for both local species and the emerging community of concerned faculty and administrators. Knowledge and emotion are then, for almost half, connected to practice and emerge in new personal actions, large and small, toward a more sustainable way of life. New forms of action reinforce and extend the learning from the Piedmont Project and, often, the connection to place. These dimensions of place attachment are enhanced by the power of the group, an emerging sense of community that is the most valued aspect of the program. The trust and respect for each others' efforts as scholars and administrators broadens to include efforts as citizens and family members. The breath, the spoken word, carries the message and grounds it in place.

"Seems to me that's, like, the university at its highest level—that's what it's all about. Moments like this don't happen very often."

"The overall sense of satisfaction. I wouldn't have anticipated that . . . it's just wonderful. Unexpected."

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Notes

1. Dualisms between mind and body, built environment and natural environment, humans and nonhumans emerge in almost every Piedmont Project interview from open-ended questions about what people remembered and the impact of the program. This project was not focused on whether or how some participants transcended these dualisms, and therefore this analysis represents my own understandings of their accounts.

2. The Ponderosa Project was established to build environmental literacy at Northern Arizona University under the leadership of Geoffrey Chase, Paul Rowland, and others (Chase and Rowland 2004). For five years, a summer program like the one described for the Piedmont Project brought together faculty and administrators, and over one hundred new or revised courses were added to the curriculum. The Ponderosa Project was part of a shift in the university's identity at that time, as it distinguished itself among the other Arizona schools as "the environmental university."

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