

A Regional Vision for the New Jersey Meadowlands

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On January 13, 1969, using the dry, precise, language of the law, the New Jersey legislature passed the Hackensack Meadowlands Reclamation and Development Act (N.J.S.A. 13:17-1 et seq.). For the State and its primary contributors, the policy decision was seen as a necessary move to define and regulate the development of a marshlands area that had long been considered by many of its boosters to be “a land resource of incalculable opportunity for new jobs, homes and recreational sites.” Known as the New Jersey Meadowlands, this area is located at the bottom of the Hackensack River near the eastern shore of the State within a short driving distance of New York City. It is legally defined by the Act as an area of approximately 19,485 acres (or 30.4 square-miles). Believing that to be able to physically and socially shape the image of a place that had always been in the shadow of New York City, a place the plan called “New Jersey’s North-Eastern Front Door,” and avoid what they felt to be the haphazard development efforts by local municipalities, the heart of the Act was the creation of a regional government entity called the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission. Seen by many of the local municipalities and other concerned citizens as a radical, if not dangerous, new approach to governing land use decisions, the State Legislator knew that the Commission would need real power. Therefore within the Act, the State provided this regional governing body with the political power necessary to oversee the development efforts being undertaken by each of the fourteen municipalities and two counties located within its boundary lines. Some of that power came from its authority to prepare a Master Plan that would serve as the vision for future land use arrangements within the region. Some of it came from its ability to enforce and manage those uses by overseeing each building permit. And some of it came from the use of eminent domain to gain control of various parcels within its territory. Yet given the specific attributes of the place, the ideology of the people who formed the Act as well the discussion surrounding the early years of its implementation, one begins to see this vision as just the most recent attempt to define human’s relationship with the natural environment that ultimately serves as a tactical element by the

State to gain greater control over how to define the image of a city both locally and more importantly in relation to its neighbor to the East, New York City.

In studying the history of the Meadowlands and how the Act came to be, it quickly becomes clear that the efforts by the State and those behind it simply represent the most recent attempt by people living in the area to control a landscape whose geological history has made it rather difficult to control. If one goes back before the arrival of the first humans, to the last Ice Age, one would have found the place covered by a massive ice formation known as the Wisconsin Glaciation. According to geologists, about 20,000 years ago, when temperatures around the globe began to rise, this ice began to melt and recede away from the ocean's edge and the land mass known today as New Jersey. In the process of its recession, the glacier created in its wake massive shifts in the topography of the earth, carving out new lakes and streams and adding massive amounts of water that eventually drained into the ocean. Over time, as some of those lakes broke free and the sea rose from the melting ice from around the globe, the Meadowlands eventually became an amorphous zone of land and water, a place where the salt water of the sea and the fresh water of the river meet. <sup>1</sup>

With the arrival of humans several thousand years ago, one begins to see how this place quickly became a resource that people would rely upon in a variety of ways. For most of human's occupation of the area, the condition of that resource remained relatively constant, with Native American tribes living adjacent to the fertile region, hunting and fishing within it, or gathering up its natural materials, but never attempting to dramatically alter its basic shape and processes. Only with the first Dutch settlers, starting in the early 1600's did human's vision for the place shift to one that tried to "reclaim" these marshes by drastically altering their physical form and the way they functioned. Yet as the unusual physical conditions of the place suggest, many of those attempts at reclamation ultimately failed to change the way the place functioned. For some, the reason this occurred was the effort of reclamation became cost prohibitive. For others the technology often failed to stop the flow of water. And finally, when both of these were finally overcome, the land itself,

bountiful for certain types of marsh reeds and a wide range of wildlife, failed to be fertile enough to support the more traditional crops.<sup>2</sup>

Within those attempts to redefine the Meadowlands, one also finds that the ideas behind a regional form of government had actually been a point of discussion going back into the previous century and For instance, in late 1800's, the historian and geologist, C.C. Vermeule, suggested in the "Annual Report of the State Geologist for 1896" that the State create a centralized government agency that would control land use and development for the Meadowlands region with the private sector assisting with infrastructure. For Vermeule such an agency, by working in a centralized manner, would help to limit further expansion of manufacturing in the region while allowing for the growth of commercial enterprises.<sup>3</sup> Although one can not know for certainty what motivated such a suggestion, as a member of the ruling class that owned large tracts of land in the region for farming, he might have had a vested interest in protecting his land value and possibly his views of an open landscape.

Interestingly, in some ways those ideas put forth by Vermeule probably represent the cross-fertilization of thoughts that had been carried over from the writings of such European thinkers as Auguste Comte and Saint-Simon. As someone who was educated in both the sciences and history and had likely read works by Auguste Comte and possibly Saint-Simon, Vermeule might have adopted their ideas in forming his own position. As John Friedmann claims, an entire body of planning thought owes itself to the ideas of these two men. Calling that type of planning, for lack of a better term, Sociology, Friedmann suggests that these two thinkers directly influenced planning theory through such figures as Mannheim and Max Weber as well as indirectly through several schools of planning though, including the Scientific Management work of Taylor, and Public Administration school established by Woodrow Wilson. As a discipline these schools were based upon a belief in a technocratic State that through the application of science towards governance, would provide for a more efficient and effective way of controlling nature for humanity's goals and desires. Clearly

Veremuele's ideas draw upon, or at least mirror such a belief system and undoubtedly they also serve as an important discursive foundation for the ideas developed in the 1960's by the various players involved in creating the Meadowlands Commission, even if only in an indirect way.<sup>4</sup>

Although such a position might be considered a limited, parochial attempt of one person to use foreign ideas to serve individual gains of the elite, other evidence taken from the history of suburbanization and urbanization of the United States suggests Vermeule is actually representative of a more general 19<sup>th</sup> century trend in America for the State to try and gain greater control over unincorporated villages and towns. As Kenneth Jackson has pointed out, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century municipal government was "imperialistic" and followed a trend towards "metropolitan government. As he states:

The predominant view in the nineteenth century was the doctrine of forced annexation. No small territory could be allowed to retard the development of the metropolitan community; the most important consideration was simply the greatest good for the greatest number.<sup>5</sup>

Putting aside whether the position taken by Vermeule can be considered as an effort to serve the "greatest good", the historical evidence does seem to suggest that his opinion was part of a larger trend in America to consider a strong role for the state in shaping how local areas would develop. His viewpoint, when seen in this larger historical context, also begins to provide important links between the past and the attempts in the 1960's made by the Commission to control development on a scale larger than the local municipality.

If Vermeule's position offers a 19<sup>th</sup> century connection to the ideas put for the in the Meadowlands Act, in many ways Regional Plan Association (RPA), and its sponsor, the Russell Sage Foundation offer a more contemporary and influential connection. The primary source for that connection was undoubtedly the "Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs" published in 1931. For its authors, who would later go on to serve as advisors for the Hackensack Master Plan document, the vision for the entire New York metropolitan region, an area extending over 40 miles outside of

New York and included parts of New Jersey and Connecticut, was meant to be one that was based upon a pragmatic, yet bold approach to regional development.<sup>6</sup> As part of that plan, the RPA saw the Meadowlands as an important area for physical transformation within the New York Metropolitan area. Specifically, they called for a centralized government agency in New Jersey that would help to develop a new “ideal industrial city” for the southern part of the Meadowlands based on manufacturing, a large residential community in the northern part, and the remaining land to be converted into a 3,000 acre public park “half again as large as Central Park.”<sup>7</sup> To achieve these massive development changes would require the almost complete infill and diking of the marshland. It was these massive land changes, in part, that led the RPA to consider some type of regional entity to coordinate those efforts among the various municipalities. Although the plan was never implemented, the ideas behind it do suggest that the authors of the Meadowlands Act were able to draw upon a rich theoretical discourse about how the State might play a role in controlling land use to create a physically improved world that they believed would be for the betterment of the whole of society.

With such a variety of sources from the past to draw upon, only two of which I have highlighted here, one can now turn to the actual people involved in making the visionary Master Plan that the Meadowlands Commission was charged with creating under the regulations set forth in the Act. In analyzing those players it becomes evident that the regional planning approach, one that draws upon a rich history, still, given the controversy surrounding it, had four overlapping, yet distinct approaches motivating its vision for the region. Briefly stated, the first I would characterize as being about public works, the second is environmental conservation, the third is local autonomy, and the last, which in many ways tries to incorporate the first three, is a public policy and social engineering approach.

The first set of ideas behind the planning of the Meadowlands is one that I would characterize as being a civil engineering approach that in many ways was carried forward by the Army Corps of

Engineers. As a body of knowledge, this approach draws upon a rational, scientific way of thinking. More importantly, by emphasizing the physical, it also sees those engineering feats as being able to transform the landscape through spectacular public works. As Matthew Gandy has suggested these engineering feats represented the “emergence of a more sophisticated kind of urban society within which fragmentary and parochial perspectives were superseded by a more strategic vision.” Although he was speaking specifically about the New York water system, the same could be said of the Corps plan to transform the Meadowlands. Having for the past two hundred years followed what for them had been a long tradition of building the infrastructure and major public works for the United States, the Corps has consistently been focused upon a vision that was purely physical in character and purely functional in approach. In the Meadowlands, that engineering and physical planning history and experience would be used to stop the flow of water and reclaim the land. But more importantly it would then serve as a tremendous technical achievement for New Jersey that would be seen by the world as a means by which the modern metropolis could demonstrate through great public works, its vision of a new world.<sup>8</sup>

Enamored as they undoubtedly were by the technical power of the Corps, the Army Corps of Engineers was undoubtedly then able to use their role as technical advisors for the reclamation project to at least partially influence the land use plan. Two sources provide some evidence to support this. The first indirectly refers to this when the Assembly was debating the approval of the Act before the creation of the Master Plan. According to one New York Times article, when members of the New Jersey Assembly, in an effort to protect their local interests, tried to reduce the overall size of the development tract, the Army Corps of Engineers used their technical expertise to stop the removal of the land by simply stating that the reduction would “mangle and completely abort the overall development proposal.” Given the Corps influence over the Assembly, they probably had as much, if not more influence, on the tone and shape of the actual Plan.<sup>9</sup>

The second source of evidence is the role that federal seed money played in placing the Corps in the position of directing tone of the project prior to the creation of the Master Plans. According to the Master Plan, Section 4, entitled Implementation, “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is considering several schemes for reclamation and flood control in the lower reaches of the Hackensack River basin. The Land Use Plan for the Hackensack Meadowlands is based on a modified version of the scheme...” Further evidence of the influence the estimated \$300 million in Federal grant money had on the project can be found in the newspapers that consistently referred to this source of funding as key to the development project’s success and as the starting point for implementing the project. One article in particular, makes it clear that the Corps, through their initial work, had a significant influence on the scope and character of the plan when they write that the head of the soon to be Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, Mr. Ylvisaker, was submitting early development schemes to the Corps for their feedback on feasibility. Although the actual Master Plan did have the ultimate say over the shape and form of the development, it is telling that the Corps had such an early role to play in the project and it is therefore probably safe to say that given that early role as financier and technical advisor they had a rather influential role in creating a plan that emphasized the ability for technology to transform the landscape in dramatic ways.<sup>10</sup>

And it is just such dramatic transformations that in turn lead us to our second group, the environmental community. In many ways the approach taken by this group is in direct contrast to that of the Corps, which tried to conquer and control the natural realm.<sup>11</sup> In fact, for the Corps, the ideas being raised by the conservation groups were not part of their vision for the place.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as the historical record suggests, the times were changing in the late 1960’s and the environmental movement had begun to have a powerful influence at both the federal and state levels. Legislation such as the Senate Document 97 and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as well as the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency, all added to the growing general consensus that

the environment and more importantly, how we conceived of natural world, was undergoing dramatic changes.<sup>13</sup>

For the conservationists who were interested in influencing the direction of the Master Plan, the 1960's undoubtedly offered them the opportunity to tap into the growing public concern and awareness about the environment and through that awareness help them to get a seat at the table and balance out the views expressed by the Corp. As Wolfgang Sachs has pointed out, between 1960 and 1970, the discourse regarding the land and the state of its resources went from a trickle to a torrent, as newspapers dedicated more and more words to places and conditions like the smog in Los Angeles or the slow death of the fish and fowl of Lake Erie.<sup>14</sup> With this rise in media coverage came a greater awareness on the part of politicians who were concerned that more and more people were expressing a concern about protecting the natural environment, whether it was air, water, wildlife, or simply green space for playing in. Although the Plan never mentions any specific environmental groups, at one article in the Times, entitled, "Meadowlands Plan Will Help Ecology", the role of groups like the North Shore Conservation Foundation undoubtedly had a major influence what land uses were included in the Plan as well as what areas of research needed to be conducted by the Commission as they put together the Plan.<sup>15</sup>

More importantly, the Plan itself seems to reflect that influence by the fact that a great deal of the document is spent outlining the both the natural features of the Meadowlands as well as the environmental problems that it faces. In Part 2 of the Plan, entitled, "Natural and Development History of the Meadowlands," several pages of the document are spent describing the geological history of the place. Several more are spent describing the conditions that make the site an estuary/marsh. And finally, one finds at the end of the section a detailed description of the water processes that underlie the Meadowlands. All together they are meant to amount to an effort that the plan describes as being primarily about the "restoration of the environment."<sup>16</sup>

Yet, even as the plan sets forth the guidelines for trying to restore and/or conserve the open space for the flora and fauna that use it to survive, it is also clear that those goals had limited influence in the shape of actual development patterns during the first couple of years of the Commission's existence. Evidence to support this comes from the amount of opposition from environmental groups that appears during 1972. During that time several local and national environmental groups, including the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, the North Jersey Conservation Foundation, and the New Jersey Audubon Society, joined forces to both stop what they considered to be environmentally unresponsive aspects of the plan. As one article, paraphrasing a representative from the national Audubon Society describes the plan this way:

The plan to construct 80,000 housing units for a population of 150,000 in the only open space in densely populated New Jersey would increase the dangers of floods, heighten fears of water and power shortages, increase air pollution problems in an area that already fails to meet Federal air quality standards and destroy an ecologically important marshland.<sup>17</sup>

For the environmental community, clearly the Master Plan did not go far enough in addressing what it considered to be the aspects of the place that needed to be preserved, protected, or restored. It would only be after a year of threatening to take the issue to the Supreme Court that forced the Commission to provide some concession in the form of cuts in the amount of housing and industrial development that would be allowed in the area and an increase in the amount of open space from 5,450 acres to 6,150 acres with modifications made to the proposed Sports Complex.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, the opposition that the environmental position raised also offers a useful connection to the third influence that can be found within the plan, local autonomy. As the environmental community was opposing the Meadowlands law on the grounds that it was environmentally unresponsive, local communities were expressing concern over the impact of the large increase of housing units they would have to support. As one mayor stated, his community would triple in size and make it impossible for the place to remain a "small town." Other mayors from larger cities like Newark and Jersey City joined in the opposition to the plan on the grounds that

the new housing would draw away “middle-class” people from their cities and siphon off the already limited amount of federal funding that they were receiving.<sup>19</sup>

At the same time, for the municipalities, an even bigger issue for them was the concern over taxes or ratables for new development being controlled by the Commission. Under the guidelines set forth in the Act, all of the money gathered from the 14 municipalities within the area would have gone into common pool using a tax rate schedule that was the same for each community. For most of the municipalities, such a plan was felt to be unduly burdensome and inequitable. It also led them to ultimately charge that the Act was unconstitutional. It also gave them additional reason for joining forces with the environmental groups in their efforts to change the Master Plan, which, as stated before, the gained by the end of 1972.

In a more general sense, the opposition raised by the local groups reflects what has really been a long-standing battle between the State and local government to define itself. As Kenneth Jackson has pointed out, in explaining the history of annexation, local communities probably never wanted to give up power to larger government entities, but the lure of better infrastructure and various social services often made it easier for many of them to willingly join in the process. It was only after the forces of population increases from the cities during the 1920’s and 30’s became so great and the associated racial/ethnic fears that came with it that the towns began to consider trying to survive on their own. It is at that point that we begin to see the shift towards greater local autonomy and it is that history that the 14 municipalities within the Meadowlands have imbedded within their viewpoint regarding regional government.<sup>20</sup>

The last approach to the planning of the Meadowlands could be one that described as being influenced by the public administration tradition. As epitomized by the works of people like Herbert Simon and his highly influential book, *Administrative Behavior*, this tradition focused on the behavioral model of a top-down, hierarchical, approach to governance that focused on the structure instead of the products.<sup>21</sup> It also drew upon an established way of thinking about development that

first rose to prominence through President Harry Truman. As Wolfgang Sachs has argued, Truman was the first to define certain countries “underdeveloped” and in need of redevelopment based solely upon economic measures. By redefining development according to these economic goals, Sachs believes that the primary metaphor of development fundamentally shifted from one that was about civilizing places through colonial responses to one in which countries or places within countries were now seen as part of an economic race, with groups like the US at the front of the pack and places like Africa or Central America economically at the back of the pack. Within such a framework groups at the back of the pack would then need to be “developed” along a “progressive track” that the US would define using their own definitions for economic goals and ideals.<sup>22</sup> Together, the focus became less about physical and social changes and more about economic processes made more efficient through the rational organization of the State.

Although several groups undoubtedly subscribed to such an approach, including the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Government Research (GR) within Rutgers University and Paul Ylvisaker, the chair of the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission seem to epitomize this tradition the best. Having originally been given a grant by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to propose an intergovernmental mechanism for the redevelopment of the Hackensack Meadowlands, the researchers at the GR found themselves placed in the position of having to consider giving up on their “ideal” document when they found themselves offered the chance to help design the actual legislation that would define the legal mechanisms by which the Commission would operate. Faced with having to choose between the two, the researchers went with the latter and thus placed themselves in a key position to shape the tone and character of the governmental mechanisms by which the Commission would operate on a daily basis.<sup>23</sup>

For the Rutgers research group, the tone and character implicit and explicit in their report suggests that the values they imparted to the Plan were primarily economic in nature. Applying those same principles to the urban area of North Jersey, the Rutgers group saw the existing conditions of

North Jersey and the Meadowlands as one of those places at the back of the pack that had the opportunity to economically advance to the front and become a place that could transform the entire Northeast section of New Jersey. As they state:

The development of the meadowlands offers an opportunity to substantially affect the allocation of residential, industrial, commercial, and recreational land uses in the heart of the Core and Inner Ring of the New York Region, a factor of great importance to the Region as a whole, to its central cities and to the inner and outer suburbs of the entire Northeast section of the State of New Jersey.<sup>24</sup>

To take advantage of the “undeveloped” quality of the Meadowlands, the researchers saw the regional government body as the most appropriate institution to organize and manage this place according to what their report set forth to be good development practices and goals based upon rational economic factors. Yet, unlike Ylvisaker’s plan that emphasized the physical and social engineering aspects, this report spent most of its efforts on the mechanisms needed to bring about the changes and thus ultimately did not care exactly what form or in what arrangement those changes would occur.

In addition to the work of the Rutgers group and building upon their suggestions was the Act’s chief architect and the Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission Chairman from 1967 to 1970, Paul N. Ylvisaker. As a well-educated planner and bureaucrat who had received his Master of Public Administration and Ph.D. in political economics and government from Harvard University during the late 1940’s, Dr. Ylvisaker undoubtedly embodied an ideology of “good government” that would have been a central influence in shaping his “radical” ideas regarding the Meadowlands. But, as several of the quotes that he made to the New York Times suggest, his vision was also a physical one that relied upon the tools of administration to achieve those physical transformations. For Ylvisaker that vision entailed the complete redevelopment of the Meadowlands through reclamation of the site. On this reclaimed land, drained of its swampy marshes would rise a new city that provided a place to live for several hundred thousand people.

To help control and shape this development, Ylvisaker did not see the local governments having the capability to solve these physical problems. Instead, he felt a new regional agency would

need to have primary control over the shape of the city. Using the principles of urban planning, this agency would not lay out the physical uses for the place and through those changes provide the form necessary to then control the mix of social and economic groups that would live and work in that place. As he states, “American society now has to accept livability as an economic asset. This would be the first time in history that social and physical planning on this scale would go hand and hand.” Although the measurements for conducting this urban planning project were meant to be based upon scientific principles and rational planning ideologies, in essence Ylvisaker’s radical plan would be controlled almost entirely by the physical transformations that would define who and what would go where in this new city and then allowing capitalism to grow within that defined structure.<sup>25</sup>

Given these diverse set of opinions about the natural world, what a city should be, and how a state defines itself in relation to other states, it is not surprising that within the introduction of the Plan, the Commission cited a wide range of municipal, county, and State agencies, including the New Jersey State and Regional Planning division as providing a great deal of background support for the document. Support in the form of consulting services for portions of the Plan came from a long list of planners, real estate professionals, geologists, and engineers who specialized in fields like sanitation and transportation. Larger entities like the New Jersey Turnpike Authority, the Regional Plan Association, as well as United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare all were mentioned as important contributors for certain aspects of the Plan. Given the large number of groups directly involved, it seems certain that the Commission wanted to show the general public that its work was the result of a team effort that included a variety of players at all levels of power and with a variety of backgrounds and possibly even different ideologies.<sup>26</sup>

With such a variety of opinions and positions included within the plan, what then, was the final position of the Plan, one that the newly formed Commission was able to produce in a relatively short period of time? In looking the document’s own introductory text, it is clear that the plan was

meant to serve as a vehicle for managing the physical planning of uses in what it considered to be a rational, balanced manner that tried to meet the needs of the “natural” world as well as the needs of the people or “man”. Taking ideas that clearly came from Ylvisaker as well as the conservationists, the Plan stated, “The real issue, in the case of the Meadowlands as in all the urban areas of the country, is whether man can respect his environment yet live pleasantly in close proximity to the industrial sinews of his civilization.” Later on in the same section the Plan further explains how the vision might be measured a success not unlike the Rutgers group when it states:

The solution is genuine. It has been tested economically by the same rigorous analyses on which businessmen have made multi-million dollar investment decisions. It has been looked over carefully by eyes that know a killifish in the murky waters of the tidal creek. And while it may be provocative to postulate all sorts of ultimate designs for the Meadowlands – to talk of desired effects with no thought about causes, to advocate ends with no worry for means – in reality, the range of choice is narrower than either side would wish.<sup>27</sup>

For the Commission, the vision for this place was one in which a group of fourteen municipalities, under the direction of the Commission and sanctioned by the State, would be able to guide physical construction so that the “natural world” could coexist with humanity’s world. At the same time, the plan believed needed to be based on the realities of the present conditions and allow for economic prosperity without creating major harm or nuisance for both worlds due to the “industrial sinews” of capitalism.

Yet, implicit in this “balanced” approach where everyone got a small piece of the pie was still the underlying belief that making this place an economically competitive hub for the State would make it a source of competition to New York City just across the water. As several newspaper articles have shown, everyone seemed to see this place as “the most valuable piece of real estate in the world.” As such it was important for the architects of the plan to create a place that would make in a new city for the future.

To this end, the Commission attempted to introduce a variety of recreational proposals that, although on the surface might have seemd to be mostly about open space, were really more abot

economics and challenging New York City. As Reiss has suggested, the desire to introduce a Sports complex was another way for New Jersey to truly put itself on the map and provide a valuable piece of development that could leverage other sources of finance for development purposes.<sup>28</sup> Given such a desire, it is no surprise then that the Master Plan actually begins with a map showing two green rectangles, the larger one being the Meadowlands and the smaller one being Central Park. Although one might simply attest this graphic to a simple comparisons of green spaces for the sake of understanding the scope of the site, given that the primary uses for the Meadowlands would not be open space as well as the consistent comparisons between New York and the North Jersey in the papers, one can speculate that the root of this graphic was meant to galvanize for the reader the immense opportunity for development that could not be equaled by Manhattan.

So what were those desires? At the risk of oversimplifying an answer to that question, I would suggest that the distinctly American strands of those feelings have long been tied up with a pastoral ideal that tries to reconcile seeing Nature as a Garden of Eden with the image of it as a place of evil that must be contained through the technological impulse of humanity. Take for instance an article from an 1868 Scientific America regarding the efforts by some residents to dam the Meadowlands during the late 1800's. It states:

The draining of the swamp lands is not a new idea. Such lands are not only unproductive of anything which can sub serve any important purpose, but they are productive of numerous evils. Teeming with miasma, the home of mischievous and annoying insects they are blotches upon the otherwise fair face of nature. To render them fruitful, and productive of good rather than evil, is a problem for which a solution has been anxiously sought, but heretofore only partially obtained.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear from the evocative use of words like “unproductive”, “evil”, and “teeming with miasma” that many people of that era saw certain aspects of nature needing to be changed through the use of technology. Yet, in trying to “render” those places to human ends, they ultimately fell back upon the same imagery i.e. “fruitful and productive of good” to describe a return to that Eden, one that technology supposedly took them away from in the first place.<sup>30</sup>

So what conclusion can one begin to draw out of this vision for the Meadowlands? The Master Plan served as a tool by which the State would be able to define itself as an economically viable place that was better than the existing “urban blight” of its older cities as well as a new rival for New York City. With the rise of the environmental movement and a broad public concern for the environment that they helped influence, the State and the Commission found themselves in the position of having to address at least some of those concerns in their Plan. At the same time, working with a model of development that conceived the world almost exclusively in economic terms made it paramount for the Commission to consider the development process and its products according to economic goals and “rigorous analysis.” To minimize the potential for public debate regarding the negative consequences of guiding development in that way, it use the iconography of a new city, a green orderly place, clean and safe, and juxtaposed it against that of the urban nightmare of the existing cities and its much larger sibling to the West, New York City. Appealing to the public with comparisons of a better version of Central Park or the removal of nuisances like the more noxious industries that currently resided on the site, the Plan wanted to develop a place in which people could live, work and play.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey; Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970), p. 10
- <sup>2</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey; Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970), p. 14-15
- <sup>3</sup> New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, *NJMC Master Plan 2004:Chapter 2*, p. 2-6
- <sup>4</sup> For the history of Vermeule see Dunellen Centennial Celebration (<http://www.dunellen.com/history.htm>). For the ideas of Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte and how they influenced the United States see John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p 63-73.
- <sup>5</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 146-147
- <sup>6</sup> Thomas Adams, “A Communication: In Defense of the Regional Plan” in Carl Sussman, Editor, *Planning the Fourth Migration: The Neglected Vision of the Regional Planning Association of America*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), p. 261-263
- <sup>7</sup> Lewis Mumford, “The Plan for New York” in Carl Sussman, Editor, *Planning the Fourth Migration: The Neglected Vision of the Regional Planning Association of America*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1976), p. 237 and New Jersey Meadowlands Commission, *NJMC Master Plan 2004:Chapter 2*, p.8-9
- <sup>8</sup> Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p. 34.
- <sup>9</sup> Ronald Sullivan, “Plans for Jersey Meadowlands Approved by G.O.P. in Assembly, (New York Times, November 16, 1968), p. 42
- <sup>10</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey; Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970), p. 46 and Ronald Sullivan, *Jersey Presses for U.S. Approval of Meadowlands Development Project*, (New York Times, November 27, 1968), p. 49
- <sup>11</sup> Editorial Staff, *Planning for the Meadowlands*, (New York Times, November 29, 1968), p.32
- <sup>12</sup> Ronald Sullivan, *Two Meadow Units Urged in New Jersey*, (New York Times, February 7, 1968), p. 1
- <sup>13</sup> Martin Reuss, *Shaping Environmental Awareness: The United States Army Corps of Engineers Environmental Advisory Board, 1970-1980*, (Office of Administrative Services, Historical Division: Army Corps of Engineers), p. 3-4

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- <sup>14</sup> Wolfgang Sachs, *Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development*, (London, England: Zed Book; 1999), p. 56-61
- <sup>15</sup> David Bird, *Meadowlands Plan Will Help Ecology*, (New York Times, November 24, 1970), p. 45, Editorial Staff, *Planning for the Meadowlands*, (New York Times, November 29, 1968), p.32
- <sup>16</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey; Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970 , p. 4 and p.9-32
- <sup>17</sup> Special to New York Times, “Environmental Groups Opposing Plans on Jersey Meadowlands”, (New York Times, February 27, 1972), p. 29
- <sup>18</sup> Special to New York Times, “Environmental Groups Opposing Plans on Jersey Meadowlands”, (New York Times, February 27, 1972), p. 29
- <sup>19</sup> Fred Ferretti, “Meadows Plans Adds Open Space”, (New York Times, November 9, 1972), p. 51
- <sup>20</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 148-156
- <sup>21</sup> John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p 149-152.
- <sup>22</sup> Wolfgang Sachs, *Planet Dialectics: Explorations in Environment and Development*, (London, England: Zed Book; 1999), p. 3-5.
- <sup>23</sup> Ernest C. Reock, Jr. and Stephen A Decter, *Techniques for Intergovernmental Redevelopment of the Hackensack Meadowlands*, (New Jersey; Bureau of Government Research, Rutgers University 1973) p. ii-2
- <sup>24</sup> Ernest C. Reock, Jr. and Stephen A Decter, *Techniques for Intergovernmental Redevelopment of the Hackensack Meadowlands*, (New Jersey; Bureau of Government Research, Rutgers University 1973) p. 28
- <sup>25</sup> See the Harvard University Archives, Papers of Paul N. Ylvisaker, 1939-1992: An Inventory (<http://oasis.harvard.edu/html/hua04998frames.html>) Harvard University 1998 for further details about him. In choosing to put the term radical in quotes, I am referring the New York Times article Ronald Sullivan, *City of 300,000 is Urged for Meadows*, (New York Times, May 15, 1967), p. 1 that characterized Ylvisaker’s proposal as being radical for people and visionary in approach.
- <sup>26</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey; Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970), p. 4.
- <sup>27</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey; Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970), p. 5.

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<sup>28</sup> According to Steven A. Riess, the Meadowlands Sporting Complex was one of the “most ambitious and successful publicly-owned stadiums” in history. It also appears to have helped expedite investment in the area. Steven A. Riess, *Historical Perspectives on Sports and Public Policy in The Economics and Politics of Sports Facilities*, editor Wilbur c. Rich, (Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books, 2000), p. 35

<sup>29</sup> Hackensack Meadowlands Development Commission, *Hackensack Meadowlands Comprehensive Land Use Plan*, (State of New Jersey: Lyndhurst, NJ, 1970), p. 15

<sup>30</sup> Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (London; Oxford University Press: 1964), p. 93