



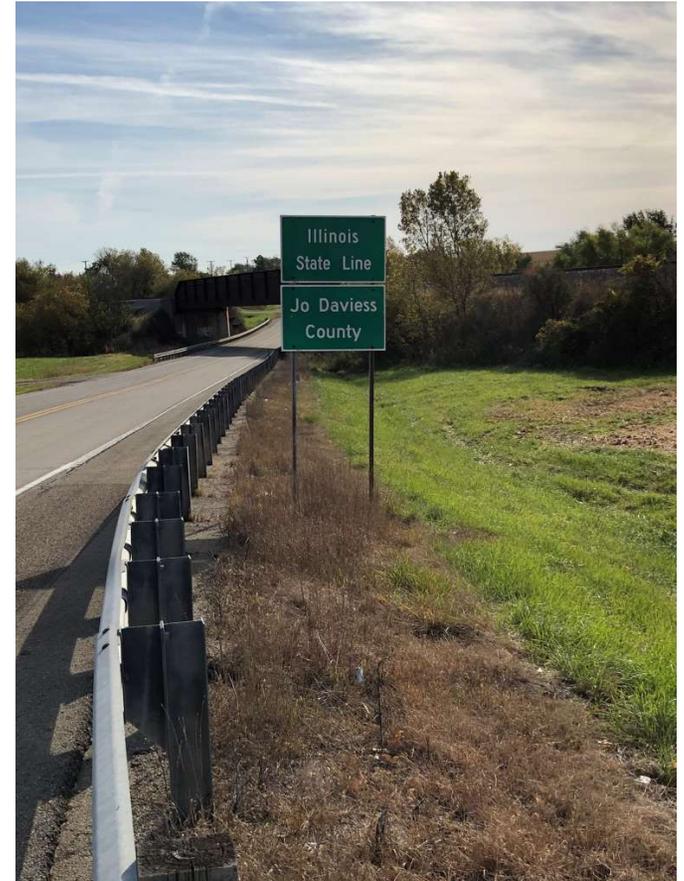
# Landscape Performance: Farmer Interactions Across Spatial Scales

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# Gameplan Slide

- Change is going to happen
  - What should that change look like?
- Farmers influence one another
- Implications



# Can't keep on keeping on



- Climate change is only going to make weather more erratic
- Soil is being depleted faster than it is being rebuilt
- Water is being polluted
- A change needs to happen



Photos By: Serge Koenig

# Landscape performance across spatial scales



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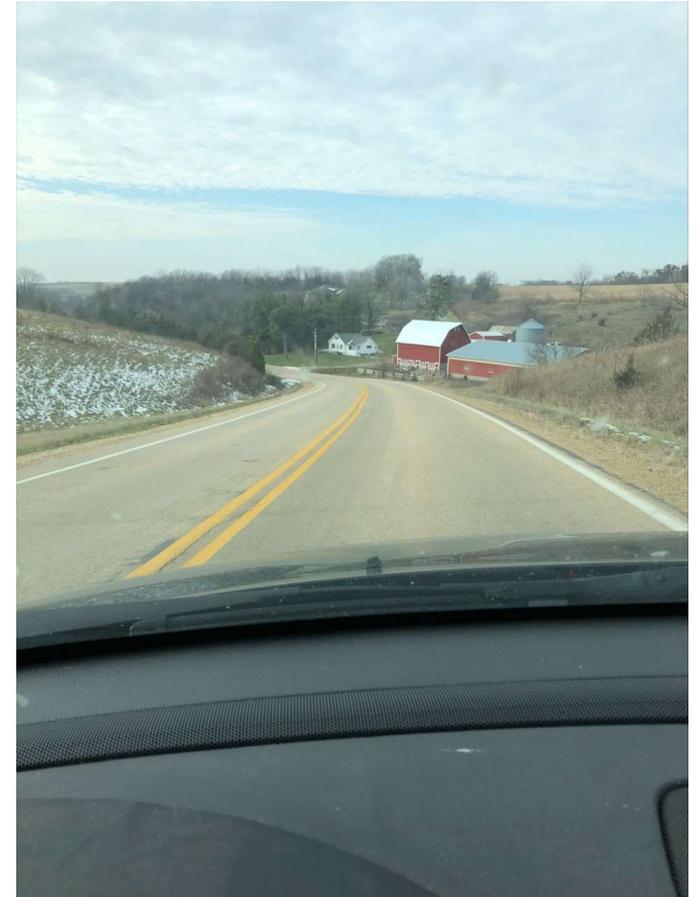
- Farmland is publicly visible
  - Road Farming
- Current place-meanings are normative and indicate farmland should be managed a certain way
- Conservation farming techniques require bio-physical landscape change

- Research Question: How do normative place-meanings that are regional in scale influence site-based farming decisions?
- Study Site: Grant and Jo Daviess Counties
- Mixed Methods
  - 21 Interviews
  - 2 Focus groups
  - Survey of farmers



# Road farming: Social pressure

*We were driving past one of my friends' house and I said, "Man, I am glad I don't farm on this section of (highway) 81, because it is large crop farmer, large crop farmer, you know, and everyone has got the big, shiny equipment and the, you know, the latest planter and whatever. And she said, "Why is that so?" It is just so much pressure to have that perfect stand of corn and everything, you know.*



# Road farming: Maintaining an aesthetic

*Farmer 1: If you have got a good planter, whether it is corn or beans, you do not need to do tillage.*

*Researcher: Why do they (farmers) want to till it (the land)?*

*Farmer 1: It looks nice.*

*Farmer 2: They want that ideal picket-row fence stand of corn, or whatever crop it is, you know.*

# Road farming: The bad neighbor

*There's a farmer not too far from here that I struggle with what happens there. The last couple years, we've had to clean the ditches out of mud. He's stuck in his ways and he hasn't changed a thing... that's (soil) your most important investment, and you're not protecting it, you're not taking care of it. I don't understand it... I just cringe when I drive by. I can't believe you (neighboring farmer) let that happen... The people who drive by and see it and are aware of it, it gives all us farmers a bad rep.*

# Road farming: Conservation as a distinct aesthetic

*I think a lot of people think I'm a little odd, what I'm doing... What's this guy doing when he's hooked onto his corn planter in October and November. I plant cover crops with that. 15-inch rows... It's pretty private up in this area, there isn't a whole lotta people that ask a whole lotta questions. I get more questions about the corn planter than anything else. 'What the heck's the matter with him, what's he doing out there in the corn planter in November?*

# Land-based learning dictating “what should be”

*Why do we do that (plant corn)? Why do you drive here instead of walk here? It's what you do. It's faster, it's more income, it's more income. You can do a tremendous amount of things with corn... Livestock, nothing wrong with livestock. We need more livestock. We need more perennial lands, but it's the idea.*



# Land-based learning disrupting “what should be”



*I would rather see farmers get together and say, “What can we do to improve our sustainable type practices in this county?” ... One of the best things I’ve been at are pasture walks which we have periodically... this is a group of farmers who feel the same way, they’re kind of innovators as far as, “We’ve tried to do this and here’s how it worked.”*

## Means for Demonstrating Good Farming Practices

Farm Area	M(SD)±SE
Crop Area	4.03(.51)±.06 <sup>a</sup>
Living Area	3.82(.57)±.08 <sup>b</sup>
Buffer Area	3.53(.64)±.08 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup> Denotes statistical difference in mean scores

$\rho < .001$ ; n=75

Measured on a five-point response from strongly disagree to strongly agree

### Demonstrating vs. Observing Good Farming

Demonstrate vs Observing	Comparison	Within Subject Mean Differential
Crop Area- Demonstrating vs. Observing	$F(1,57)=0.05, p=.825$	0.02
Living Area- Demonstrating vs. Observing	$F(1,51)=11.10, p=.002^*$	0.34
Buffer Area – Demonstrating vs. Observing	$F(1,59)=16.94, p<.001^*$	-0.27

\* $p < .01$ ; n=75

Measured on a five-point response from strongly disagree to strongly agree

# Discussion

- Farming practices developed and reinforced regional identities
- Crop area (compared to buffer or living) considered most important for demonstrating good farming
- Demonstrating and observing good farming are not reciprocal for buffer and living areas



# Redefining Farming at a Regional Scale

- Structural reasons that underlie the uniformity
- Regional approach recognizes social, political, and economic contexts
- Place-making framework as a strategy to disentangle “what is” from “what ought to be”





*Wisconsin Landscape, 1939*  
John Steuart Curry

# Thanks To All Who Helped

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