

Citizens , Experts

&

Local Environmental Knowledge

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Personal Introduction

- B. Science and Masters in Public Law (LLM);
- At Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) I founded a cross campus Environmental Unit to promote PAR protocols with urban poor people
- I currently, teach a workshop and courses on Int Urban Environmental Conflicts, Social Inequalities and Right to the City.

Outline

1. Introduction of key debates on the role of expert and local env knowledge (LEK) for public health and planning practices
2. Case study:
 - Context: N. Champaign
 - Community client: CUCPJ
 - Conflict: environmental health risk assessment of an abandoned

Key Debates

- How can local, experiential forms of knowledge and expert, scientific knowledge (of env health) interact in ways that neither exclude nor exploit/romanticize local knowledges (beyond the binary of experiential v expert knowledge)?
- How do dissenting social movements make visible the structural inequalities in urban landscapes and promote democratic models of decision making?

LEK Debates in Public Health

- Recognize that scientific risk assessment's (SRA), are contextual and contingent on the willingness of citizens to accept expert scientific framings.
- Emerging hybrid models call for : analytic-deliberative processes of decision making.

LEK Debates in Urban Planning

- Collaborative/Insurgent planning orientations argue that (techno-scientific) planning practices produce “instrumental” effects and unstable spaces.
- Stable spaces are the temporary outcome of struggles between formal actors and informal social movements over equitable ways to share space.

Urban Health Movements in US

- Urban Sanitary Movements (Jane Addams's 1895 Hull House Maps)
- Neighborhood Health Center (pre WW1)
- 1960's Civil Rights Movements (Highlander Folk Center, TN ; Young Lords in E Harlem ;
- Anti-toxics, Env Justice and Right to the City

LEK Debates in UP 478 workshop

- UP 478 engages a community client (CU Citizens for Peace and Justice) in debates on how poor people participate in reshaping urban inequalities in CU.
- Advocates that planning is normative field and planners should mediate between scientific experts, policy analysts and local communities in ways that promote democratic, cross-cultural dialogues.

Case study and

Context:

- Context: N. Champaign
- Community client: CUCPJ
- Conflict: environmental health risk assessment of an abandoned site
- Outcomes of the university-community collaboration through UP 478 Workshop

Contested re-representations of case study context

- N End as segregated space due to suburbanization ,white flight and urban renewal projects;
- Douglass Park Neighborhood as socio-cultural center
- City District 1 connected to campus via 4th Street and downtown via N First Street development corridor;

Case Study

CUCPJ's FOIA request to the IEPA in response citizen concerns about health risk of vacant lot.

UP 478, 2007 adopts CUCPJ as community client.

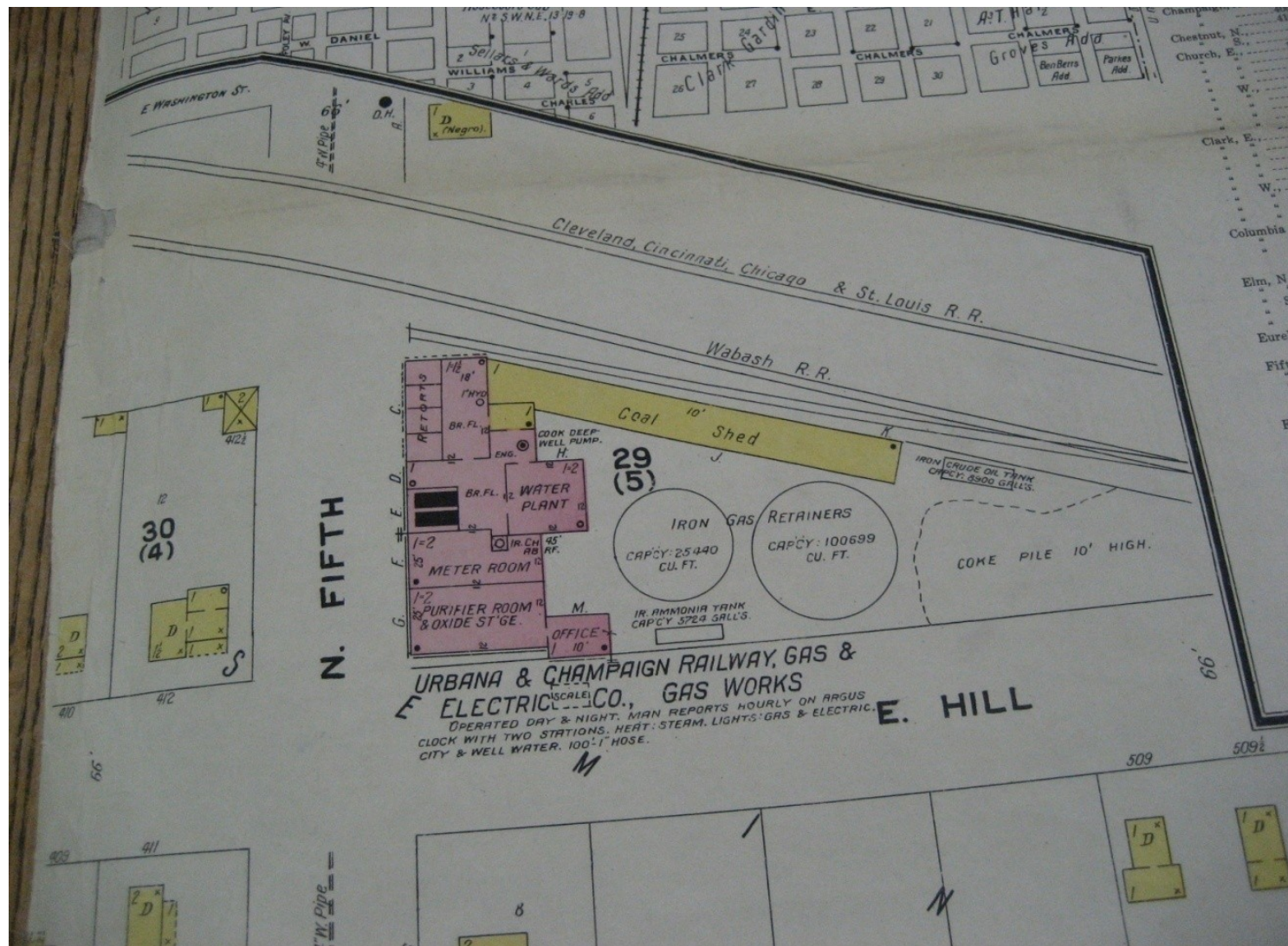


UP 478 activities

a) Archival search:



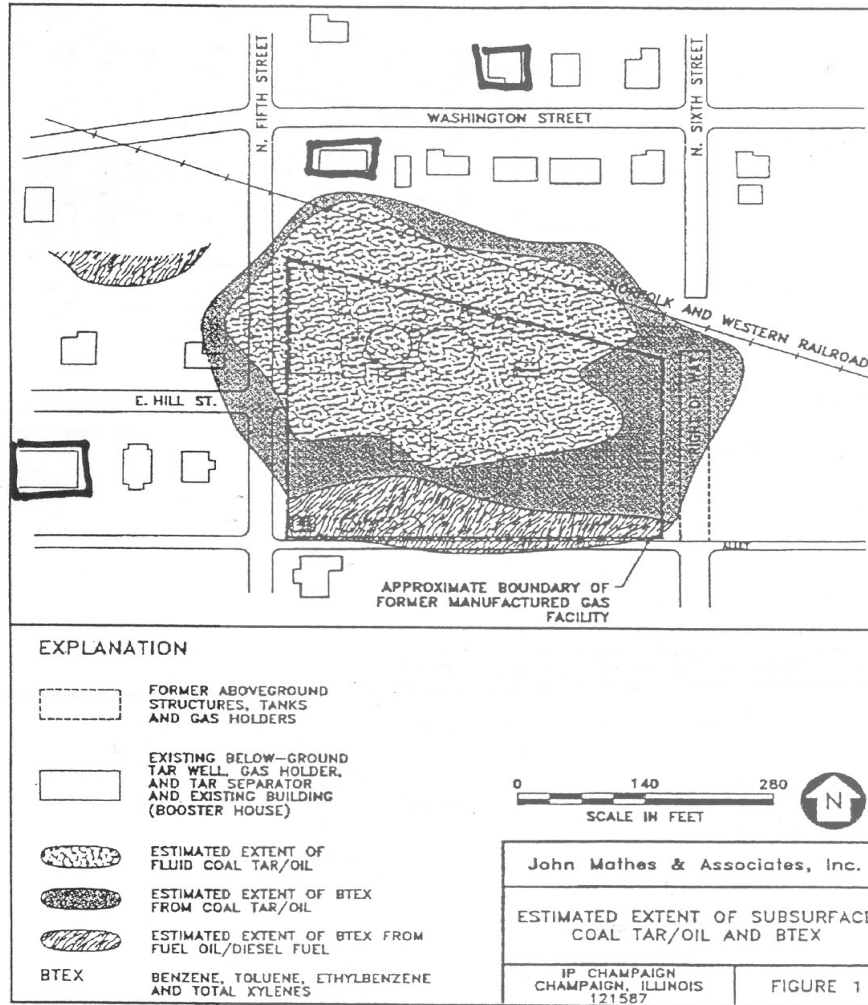
Former Manufactured Gas Plant in North Champaign, image circa 1953



Sanborn map of the FMGP Site, circa 1892

UP 478 activities

b) Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request



Ameren-IP map of underground toxins,
1990

Other UP 478 workshop activities

- c) Attending closed meetings and open houses;
- d) Organizing public meetings;
- e) Toxic tours;
- f) Radio programs, focus groups and face to face interviews;
- g) Organizing health-justice coalitions;
- h) Mapping local knowledge of health concerns
- i) Revealing contrasting evidence for counter claims.

Ameren's positions and practices

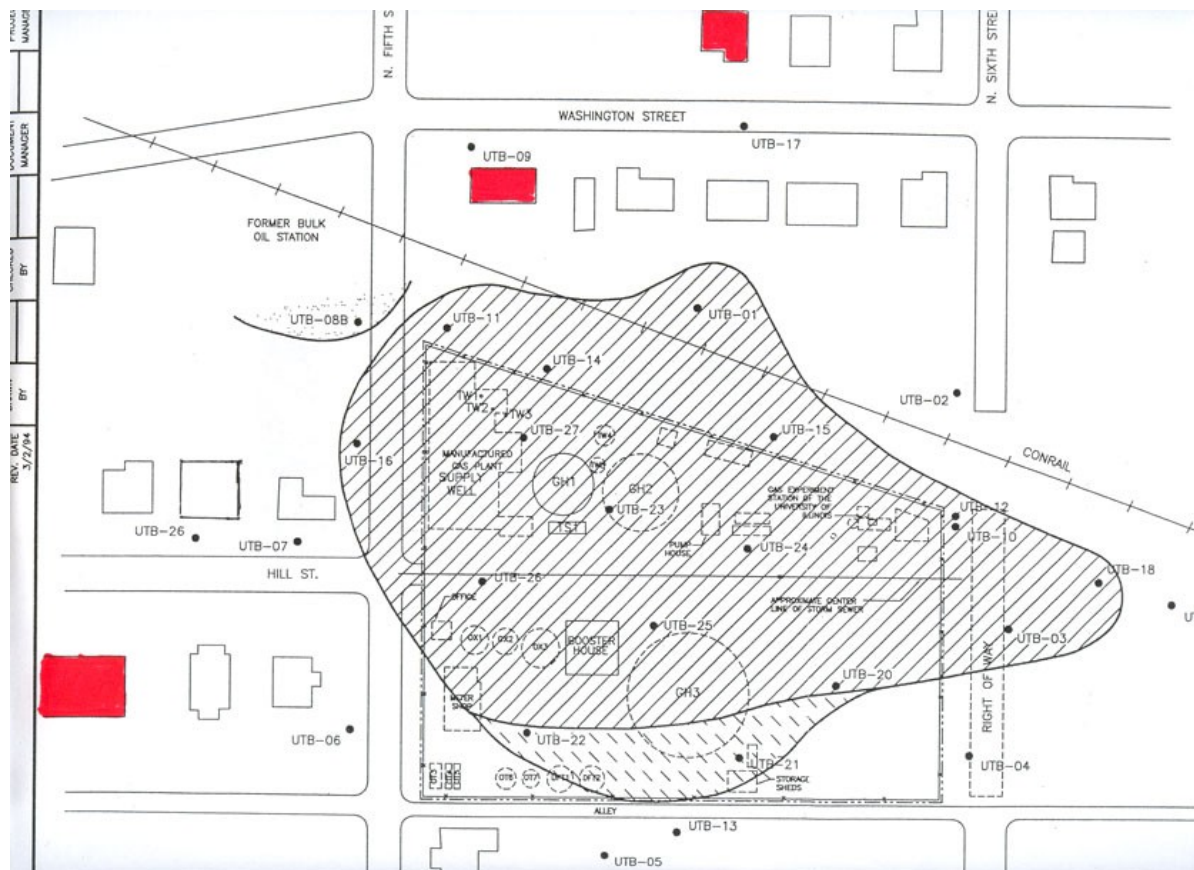
- Ameren IP claims that their voluntary site remediation project (VSRP) is compliant with federal and state laws and in progress since 1990's.
- Their community relations protocol has put information in public domain.

Other actors' positions and practices

Coalition of IEPA/CCPHD/CC/ICC claims that

- Ameren IP's VSRP is legally compliant,
- Their SRA is adequate and confirms that underground toxins present no immediate threat to public health;
- VSRP adequate for non-residential development of urban Brownfield.

UP 478 mapping LEK of cancer cases



UP 478 mapping LEK of chronic health problems





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V

Reflection

- Challenges of working in segregated and fragmented communities:
 - difficult history of university engagement with the N. End community (eg Ken Reardon's project). Creation of CC neighborhood services and Neighborhood Wellness Plan;
 - politics of economic revitalization versus public health in city council;

Conclusion

- Participatory mapping of LEK can reveal structural inequalities
- LEK can offer opportunities for integrating local and scientific forms of knowledge when power disparities are not extreme;
- Dissenting practices of counter-hegemonic movements create moments for participatory planning practices.

Champaign, IL Toxic Tour Map

Citizen's Park



Citizen's Park is located in the Garden Hills Neighborhood. Thompson Park is located along Bradley Ave. These are only two of the many "mini parks" north of University Ave. which serve no functional purpose. Illinois State Law states that dealing drugs to a minor within 1,000 feet of any park is subject to an increased sentence, therefore the intention and placement of these parks in primarily minority neighborhoods is questionable.

ABC Sanitary



Situated in a residential neighborhood, ABC Sanitary raises zoning and public health questions.

Power line structure and power pad located on Goodwin Ave., one block North of University Ave.



Garden Hills

The odor in this area comes from the processing of soybean oil at ACH, causing concern to nearby residents.

Kraft Foods



ACH Foods



Alloy Engineering & Casting



University of Illinois



CU Citizens for Peace & Justice

Viaduct on 1st and Washington

University Ave.

Manufactured Gas Plant

Fifth and Hill site is a former manufactured coal-to-gas power plant. Site has been vacant for decades. Coal tar, a known carcinogen, was discovered on the site in the late 1980s. Illinois Power is still investigating the site and its potential health effects on the public.



Beginning in 1999, nearby residents complained of a gritty substance, later found to be a sand and metal mixture, on their vehicles and lawn furniture. 45 residents filed a lawsuit and the courts ruled in their favor, awarding them \$547,000.