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Managing Editor
Kelsey Johnson

Editorial Committee
Thomas Skuzinski
Deirdra Stockmann
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Neha Sami
Caitlyn Clauson

Funding
Elizabeth Schuh

Layout and Design
James McMurray
Caitlyn Clauson
Kelsey Johnson

Cover Design
Caitlyn Clauson
Cover Image: Crawford Market, Mumbai, India

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Agora
Letter from the Editor

The Agora was the center of civic life in Athens, Greece in the 5th century B.C.E. It was the physical space where goods and ideas were openly traded. It was the assembly of the people. It was the birthplace of democracy. The Agora of Athens is both architecturally renowned and hailed as the ideal by many urban planners for its accessibility and conviviality.

But for many, the word “agora” also brings to mind a more troubling notion: agoraphobia. We can see this fear of open or public space play out in many forms in contemporary society: the increase in the number of gated communities across the United States, the growing reluctance to share urban space with “Others,” and the increasing reliance on the convenience of modern communications technology at the expense of intimate face-to-face interaction. As planners, how do we reconcile idealized concepts of historical urbanism with the real conditions of 21st century life—and ultimately create better places?

To work toward answering this question, Agora: The Planning Journal of the University of Michigan was initiated in the Fall 2006 by the students of the Urban and Regional Planning Program. Through Agora we hope to encourage open and good-natured dialogue about planning issues across disciplines, as well as break down the existing fears and barriers that result from the convergence of disparate viewpoints.

Agora: The Planning Journal of the University of Michigan embodies this mission through encouraging a legitimate and open space for discussing planning. Agora set no themes or guidelines for this first volume and only encouraged students to submit original work that challenged ideas and explored issues related to urban planning. As a result we received work related to all areas of planning—from housing and economic development to international planning to literature and theory. This first volume of Agora emerged organically from this breadth of material.

Robert Fishman, Emil Lorch Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning, opens discussion with a provocation for the “Global Place: Practice, Politics and the Polis” Centennial Conference, held by the A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning in January 2007. The provocation was intended to challenge the scholars participating in the Conference to define and examine some of the most pressing issues facing our cities in the 21st century. Fishman’s piece serves as a thoughtful and provoking entrance into this first volume of Agora.

We then take a closer look at one of most timely issues facing planners today: affordable housing. T’Chana Bradford focuses on the Chicago Housing Authority’s redevelopment initiatives of the 1990’s and the implications of these initiatives for the future. Thomas Skuzinski addresses the controversial relationship between affordable housing and neighboring property values.

Traveling outside the U.S., we are taken through an eclectic mix of essays addressing planning in global cities. Tobias Wacker gives a first-hand account of his experience as a tourist in Malacca, Malaysia and analyzes some of the most common problems that developing countries face as they increasingly turn to tourism as a source of economic development. Tony DeLisi contemplates the role of religious spaces and historical preservation in Tokyo. Caitlyn Clauson explores alternative methods of memorializing the city in her piece on Argentinean tango lyrics in Buenos Aires. The highlights of this section on international planning are the design fold-outs by Emily Schemper and Peter Winch that depict their visions for Venice, Italy, in ten years time.
Charles Kaylor takes us back to the realm of theory as he looks at the faith that is at the very core of planning in his essay on planning as religion. A concluding set of book reviews explore a range of important texts. Thomas Skuzinski sheds new light on a classic planning text, Lewis Mumford’s *City in History*. Amanda Goski, Cassia Herron and Kelly Koss round out the section by introducing us to new literature concerning planning and urban design: *Sprawl: A Compact History* by Robert Bruegmann, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* by Margaret Kohn and *Design Like You Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises* edited by Architecture for Humanity.

Finally, we are re-grounded in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as Aaron Clausen demonstrates his sensory experience of walking along the banks of the Huron River in a graphic design exercise.

We now invite you to take a stroll through our *Agora*—to hear what our authors and designers have to share, and to join in the conversation.

This journal would not have been possible without the wonderful enthusiasm and hard work of the *Agora* Board, all the students who contributed their work, and the generous funding from our supporters. The *Agora* Board would like to give special thanks to Dr. Jonathan Levine and the Urban and Regional Planning Program; Dean Douglas Kelbaugh, Mary Ann Drew, Janice Harvey and the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning; the Swansons for the Saarinen-Swanson Endowment Fund and the student organizations of the Urban and Regional Planning Program, including the Urban Planning Students’ Association, the Martin Luther King Symposium Committee, and Planners Network. We would also like to thank those of you who gave your time and invaluable advice so that we might learn how to make this a quality journal: Dr. Scott Campbell, Dr. Rebecca Price, Dr. Paul Newman and Kelly Quinn. We are proud to present this first volume of *Agora* and look forward to many more in the future.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Johnson
Founding Editor
Contributors

Professor Robert Fishman is the author of *Utopias in the Twentieth Century* and *Bourgeois Utopias* and editor of *The American Planning Tradition*. He now holds the Emil Lorch Professorship at the Taubman College and was Public Policy Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson in 1999.

T’Chana Bradford is a second year Masters of Urban Planning student concentrating on Housing, Community, and Economic Development. She is originally from the City of Chicago, and hopes to return upon completion of her degree to work in the fields of community and economic development.

Thomas Skuzinski, J.D. is a first year Masters of Urban Planning student focusing on Housing, Community, and Economic Development; he is also pursuing a certificate in Real Estate Development. He is interested in Land Use Law, and his studies focus on Real Estate Development and Housing, Community, and Economic Development.

Anthony DeLisi is a second year Masters of Urban and Regional student. He is interested in sustainable development, international economics, informal markets, and housing issues in developing countries.

Caitlyn Clauson is a second year Masters of Urban Planning student. She is interested in physical planning, urban design, public spaces and issues of contemporary urbanism.

Emily Schemper is pursuing Master’s degrees in Urban Planning and Urban Design. She is interested in transportation systems and downtown streetscaping.

Peter Winch is pursuing dual Masters Degrees in Urban Planning and Urban Design. He aspires to do work that is both economical and inspiring, and that serves broad and multiple public goals.

Tobias Wacker is a first year Masters of Urban Planning student. He is interested in urban design responses that represent and respect local/global culture.

Charles Kaylor is a doctoral student in Urban and Regional Planning. His work generally focuses on public sector planning and implementations of technology including digital government, uses of technology for planners, information technologies and public participation.

Amanda M. Goski is a second year Masters of Urban Planning student. She is interested in land use planning for small cities and small towns, geography, Geographic Information Systems, and traveling to new places.

Cassia Herron is a Masters of Urban Planning student with a concentration in community economic development and a recipient of the HUD Urban Planning Fellowship. Her interests include regional food system planning, community organizing and neighborhood community development.

Kelly Koss is a second year Masters of Urban Planning student. She is interested in humanitarian design and issues of social justice.

Aaron Clausen is second year Masters of Urban Planning student with a concentration in physical planning and urban design. He is interested in the intersection between land use planning, regulation, and design to create urban spaces that encourage human interaction and civic vitality.
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I wrote these “provocations” to be superseded: their real value was to provoke the invited scholars at our “Global Place” conference to develop their own thoughts. Indeed, what is most important about any conference is not what is planned but what is unexpected: the unexpected themes and passions that only occur when people are brought together. For example, I certainly did not foresee the passion over preservation that Anthony Tung brought to the conference, and the way that passion became part of our concept of “global place.”

That said, I believe my “provocations” did anticipate many of the major themes of the conference, and perhaps of the Taubman College’s next century. I can see more clearly now what was perhaps implicit in my text: the overwhelming crisis of the next century will be the intersection of mega-city with climate change and resource exhaustion. The explosive urbanization of perhaps 3 billion people over the next fifty years – an urbanization concentrated in the already chaotic and overburdened megacities of the developing world – will demand massive resources just to provide for the survival of these billions, no less the better life that they have a right to expect. At the same time, the planet’s energy resources will be dwindling, and the real costs of using the remaining fossil fuel, mostly coal, will escalate with global warming.

This interlinked crisis will be for the next century what the world wars were for the previous century: the overwhelming test for civilization itself.

If the University of Michigan had marked the founding of the architecture program here in 1906 with a conference, the issues discussed would surely have centered on what we have learned to call modernism. One hopes the College would have recognized the importance of the young engineer whose factory only forty miles away on Piquette Avenue in Detroit was beginning to create the new era of “Fordism.” Ford and other innovators from Edison and Marconi to the Wright brothers and the Lumiere brothers were already building the new world of mass production, mass consumption, and mass media. The “second industrial revolution” had begun to produce in quantity the materials – glass, concrete, steel – that would re-shape the built environment. And prophetic voices in architecture and planning from Frank Lloyd Wright and Jane Addams in Chicago to Albert Kahn in Detroit to Otto Wagner in Vienna to Peter Behrens and the young Walter Gropius in Berlin had already understood that the question of the “machine age” – the issue of modernism – would dominate 20th century design debate.

A century later, the key issues for 21st century design seem to be encompassed in the word globalism. Like modernism, globalism is a cloudy, all-encompassing word that has nevertheless become indispensable. Arguably, globalism is nothing more than Modernism II – the realization of the potential for shrinking distance and time that was inherent a century ago in the new technologies of the internal combustion engine, the automobile, the airplane, the telephone, and the radio. But these technologies and their more powerful electronic successors are operating in a post-colonial
world unimagined in 1906. Globalism in part seems to mean a universal global economy and society – at its best a utopian realization of the Enlightenment dream of a universal humanity, at its worst a dystopian universal placelessness dominated by anonymous global capital. But globalism, paradoxically, also means that formerly marginalized and isolated cultures are no longer necessarily subordinated to those of the larger nation-states. Communications and transportation operate in all directions, so that a local economy can compete worldwide, a local look or sound conquer the world. Our conference title, “Global Place,” seeks to capture that paradox – the challenge of creating place in a world dominated by the forces of placelessness.

At the height of the modern movement’s heroic self-confidence, Le Corbusier proclaimed “Architecture or Revolution: Revolution can be avoided.” We have learned to mistrust the hubris inherent in this proclamation, yet the issue of architecture and urban planning as sites of action and resistance remains. What are the responsibilities of architecture and planning in the global era? That is, what can architecture and planning contribute that no other disciplines can toward the humanizing of a global society and its built environment? What are our strengths? Our weaknesses? Our blind-spots? Perhaps most importantly, what must we know to re-shape the world?

Environment and Technology

Although almost no one in 1906 foresaw this, the crucial issue for the twentieth century would be violence: surviving the World Wars that twice engulfed the planet and whose scars are still with us today. Violence remains a crucial issue, from terrorism to the threat of atomic warfare, but another issue has come to seem more pressing in an age of globalism: ecology. The threat of massive disruptions and ecological stress brought on by climate change and resource depletion is more widely recognized today than the threat of world war was in 1906. Yet we seem unable to organize a global effort to combat it, and the paralyzing fear grows that it might already be too late.

If there is to be a response equal to the potential ecological disaster, such a response would clearly involve a radical redesign and redevelopment of our built environment. Yet the practice and pedagogy of architecture, urban design, and planning have so far only begun to recognize this overwhelming issue. “Green” architecture and sustainable urban planning seem caught between an incrementalism that seems inadequate to the problem and an eco-utopianism divorced from practice. What are the strategic moves necessary for green architecture and planning to emerge as the major force they must become?

Integrally related to the issue of the environment is the issue of technology. A century ago Patrick Geddes prophesied that the nineteenth-century “paleotechnic era” with its ugly, unhealthy “Coketowns” would yield to a “neotechnic era” of technology in the service of sustainable energy, respect for the natural environment, and other humane goals. We are still waiting for the neotechnic era, despite enormous advances especially in information technology. As we accelerate from the personal computer to the world wide web to the emerging new world of universal Wi-fi and “ubiquitous computing,” what are the implications for community, design, and building global place? Are “ubiquitous computing” and related developments in information technology a step toward the neotechnic era, or do they reinforce global placelessness and anomie?
Politics

A century ago Lenin claimed that all of politics can be reduced to a single question: “Who/Whom?” Any discussion of globalism and the global built environment must still wrestle with the basic issues inherent in Lenin’s question. Who are the “Who”? That is, who are the people and groups who possess the power to re-shape the world? Who are the “Whom”? That is, those who are the objects of that power? And what is the crucial linkage – the missing verb – that defines how that power is exercised?

Globalism, almost by definition, seems to mean the erosion of the nation-state as a locus of power to reshape the world. But what is replacing it? The abstraction of “global capital” must be unpacked to understand the power relations that underlie it. As one critic has suggested, Wal-mart, by altering its buying policies, could do more to transform global working conditions than the concerted action of virtually all the nation-states on the planet. But Wal-mart and every other multinational corporation work within the institutional constraints of market competition that make such action unlikely or impossible. During the modern movement, architects and planners looked to many different sources of power, from “captains of industry” to labor cooperatives to bureaucrats and dictators. Most were disappointed, no doubt thankfully so. Nevertheless, we must continue to ask: who has the power to re-shape the global built environment, and how can that power be shaped for humane and just ends?

The City

A century ago the great issue for modernism was the “industrial metropolis,” the “giant city,” which for pessimists like Oswald Spengler promised the end of civilization, but which Le Corbusier and others believed could be transformed into the Radiant City – the first wholly human and rational city. But such centers as Berlin, New York, and Chicago are now dwarfed by the mega-cities of the developing world. The global world is rapidly becoming an urban world. For the first time in history, half the human population (now over 6 billion) lives in urbanized areas. As the population increases to an estimated 9 billion in the next half-century, almost all that increase will go to cities – especially the mega-cities. We are now at the equinox of the 8,000-year history of urbanization on this planet.

The prospect is not altogether a happy one. The industrial metropolises of a century ago were centers of slums and exploitation, but they were also the centers of innovation and wealth-production for the most advanced sectors of their society. By contrast, the largest megacities often have a marginal position within the global economy, and are thus unable to afford even basic sanitary infrastructure and utilities that would sustain their existing population – no less the millions more that are predicted.

As billions of people are uprooted from the only life they knew – the life of the village – and thrust into megacities at the height of their stress and disorder, there is the danger that the anger and fanaticism generated by this chaos will tear global civilization apart. Not only will the megacities of the developing world be at risk, but global immigration patterns will inevitably spread that chaos to the already-industrialized world.
At the same time, there is the immense historical experience of immigrant vigor – the capacity of the first generation off the farm and village to somehow make their way under the worst of urban circumstances and to build a new life for themselves and for their cities. This panel will consider the urban dilemma: can cities become “global places”?

**Practice**

From the “starchitects” crisscrossing the globe in pursuit of major commissions to the relentless spread of franchise architecture and standardized planning, the practice of architecture and planning from the highest levels to the most mundane has become global. For professionals with global practices or international outsourcing, the benefits are obvious – but so too are the dangers. As architecture and planning are more seamlessly integrated into the massive international flows of capital that define the global economy, their role inevitably becomes more instrumental: to lend a façade of uniqueness to projects that are relentlessly generic. Even the starchitect’s personal touch, however inspired by local culture and design, becomes just one more “brand” whose value on the global marketplace changes rapidly. Although globalism seems to expand this market for transnational collaboration and technical skills, it might at a deeper level signal the design profession’s final loss of control over the built environment it attempts to shape. This panel will attempt to bring the experience of those active in global practices to bear on these issues.
The Planned Transformation: A Closer Look at the Chicago Housing Authority

T’Chana Bradford

In the early 1990s, the Chicago Housing Authority began a wide-scale initiative to overhaul its public housing system by demolishing some of its most notorious high-rise towers to replace them with new mixed-income housing developments. This effort was a means of encouraging integration in some of the city's many segregated communities. The initiative, called the Plan to Transformation, was a highly controversial issue, and raised numerous concerns regarding residents of the high-rise towers. This paper attempts to analyze the initiatives of the Plan to Transformation and its implications for the future of housing and segregation in Chicago and its metro area.

Chicago is considered the cultural and economic hub of the Midwest because of its large population and rich culture. While the city's population of more than 2.8 million is about one third black, one third white, and one third “hispanic,” it nevertheless ranks 83 on the scale of segregation (Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance, 2001).1

If Chicago is such an economically successful and culturally diverse metropolis, one might ask how such intense segregation could exist. While there are many factors contributing to the existence and persistence of segregation in the City of Chicago, a partial response to this question can be found in the history of the Chicago housing project. Originally intended as transitional housing for predominantly white families thrown off track by the early periods of economic depression, the projects have evolved into permanent “vertical ghettos” that virtually imprison their inhabitants—largely, African Americans. Recently, policy makers, government officials, and select organizations began to question the merit of the public housing system in Chicago, and they came to the realization that it serves as merely a medium through which African Americans are ostracized from society and forced to remain in impoverished conditions.

In the early 1990s, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) and the federal government (through the Plan for Transformation and the Hope VI program, respectively) initiated a proactive campaign to rid the city of the monstrous public housing towers in the name of creating more viable, mixed-income communities. While the CHA has already demolished a great majority of the towers and is well into the middle stages of its attempt at urban revitalization, there are still major loopholes in the initiative. The most critical issue is that of placement of former high-rise tenants. What will become of the thousands of residents who were forced to leave the projects all at once? How will these abrupt changes contribute to the mitigation (or perpetuation) of segregation? What is the impact of these revitalization attempts on Chicago’s future? This paper attempts to analyze the initiatives of the CHA in urban revitalization and its implications for the future of housing and segregation in both Chicago and its metropolitan area. A brief introduction of the history of the public housing system in Chicago

1 The scale ranges from 0 to 100, with 100 representing extreme segregation.
will be given, along with a detailed description of the change in perspectives about public housing. Next, the plan’s impact on African Americans and housing will be assessed, along with current successes (or failures) of the program. Last, closing remarks about the initiatives will be given and areas for improvement will be considered.

Chicago public housing was formed after the Great Depression under the Housing Act of 1937 as a source of transition for middle-class families caught in the economic disaster (Atlas and Dreier 1994). Initially intended for whites, public housing was built in white neighborhoods and soon became the most desired form of housing, envied by all, including residents of private housing. Public housing was such a success because of the leadership and management of Elizabeth Wood, then Executive Director of the CHA (Fuerst 2003). Public housing had become popular, and everyone wanted to jump on the bandwagon for a better quality of life. This fascination with public housing had not become a problem until African Americans became part of the dream. Following the Second World War, there was an increased demand for housing to accommodate the enclaves of African Americans who came to Chicago to settle. Due to this mass influx, Chicago had to make some major adjustments because African Americans began to integrate previously all-white neighborhoods, much to the dismay and discontent of whites.

Despite the violent response of white city residents at large, the CHA managed to continue the integration of neighborhoods under the guise of “veteran housing” until 1948, when City officials intervened and started denying the CHA permission to build in white areas. In turn, the Authority was required to build all its public housing in black neighborhoods.

While the demographics of the City’s core experienced a drastic change, the Housing Authority’s representation endured a similar change. Over the course of two decades, Wood and her Board of Directors resigned, and a new Board of Directors took over. The new administration continued to build new high-rises, but the existing ones were no longer maintained under the new leadership. Rules were no longer enforced, the excuse being that no federal funds were available for upkeep of the properties (Fuerst 2003).

Consequently, people who had the capacity to do so left the projects and migrated toward the suburbs or to private landlords in other places in the City (Atlas and Dreier 1994). The exodus of working class families, in conjunction with the Housing Act of 1949 which established that the poverty-stricken should be the recipients of public housing, contributed to the demise of public housing projects. With the lower-middle class gone, there was no longer an incentive for property managers to maintain the units, which became centers of decay and, soon, sources of violence and illegal activity.

In 1995, however, there was a sudden interest in improving the conditions of the ghettos in which these monstrous towers existed. The public housing projects under the management of the CHA had

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2 Elizabeth Wood was the Executive Director of the Chicago Housing Authority for almost two decades. Under Wood, the staff of the Authority as well as public housing residents had to meet requirements. Tenants of public housing in Chicago were responsible for maintaining the appearances of their units on the inside and out, and if they failed to do so, they were fined. Chicago Housing Authority officials were dedicated to the preservation of these communities; some of them even arranged for health officials to provide services to tenants of public housing. They also provided after-school care for children whose parents worked.

3 Allan Spear, in Hirsch (1983), describes the conditions of public housing, mentioning that prior to World War II racial barriers had been “successfully defended,” but soon thereafter “the number of technically ‘mixed’ census tracts increased from 135 to 204 between 1940 and 1950,” and only 160 of the city’s 935 census tracts were without a single nonwhite resident in 1950, compared with only 350 such tracts just ten years earlier” (Hirsch 1983, 5).
become so horrific that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) took over the properties in that same year. HUD management would continue until the Authority could prove itself capable of effectively managing its housing again (Socialist Worker Online 2002). Not long before the takeover, HUD established the Hope VI program to help revitalize distressed public housing.

The following year marked the birth of the viability test, under which housing officials were given the authority to demolish buildings whose rehabilitation costs would exceed costs of complete destruction and rebuilding. Under the viability test, public housing officials would also be required to give displaced families Section 8 vouchers (now called “Housing Choice” vouchers) to subsidize their move to housing markets in the private sector. According to the results from the test, a total of 51 buildings of high-rise housing—18,500 units—throughout the City were considered damaged beyond the government’s ability to repair them (Whitman and McCoy 2000). The demolition began quickly, and in the midst of the chaotic frenzy of the wrecking ball, Chicago was able to regain its control over the Housing Authority. In 2000, the Housing Authority, backed by HUD and supported by Mayor Richard M. Daley, established the Plan for Transformation, which included a $1.5 billion plan to create mixed income neighborhoods in place of demolished high-rises over a period of ten years (Paulson 2003). A description of the future mixed-income housing communities is noted in Paulson (2003):

The vision is a grand one: new mixed-income neighborhoods replacing old high-rises. Homeowners living in town houses alongside public housing and affordable-housing tenants. A plethora of shops and diversions in now deserted areas. In the process, every resident will be relocated at least once, to transitional public housing or to the private market.

Although in theory these new mixed-income communities seem like ideal places to live, some are unmoved by the plan, and the general question among those who voice concern is: what happens to all of the tenants who are forced to leave the buildings? What makes this question even more valid is the Gautreaux decision of 1969. In this case, Dorothy Gautreaux and a group of public housing residents filed suits against the CHA and HUD, claiming that they allowed for discrimination against African Americans by placing nearly all public housing in all black neighborhoods. The plaintiffs were angry with HUD because they believed that although it was in a position to counter the actions of the CHA by withdrawing funding, it failed to do so and was thus promoting discrimination against these groups. The result of Gautreaux was the three-for-one rule. Under this rule, CHA was mandated to build three housing units in white areas for every one unit built in a black area, defined as those neighborhoods containing a population more than 30 percent black. Later, three-for-one was changed to one-for-one (see Oldweiler and Rogal). When Congress introduced the viability test in 1996, the previously established one-for-one replacement rule was suspended. This suspension could have huge impacts on the future of public housing residents. Without the existence of the one-for-one rule, the CHA could virtually wipe out all of the public housing units and would not be obligated to build any more to accommodate those low-income residents who were forced out.

Currently, the CHA is in the middle stages of the Plan for Transformation, and, by the end of the year 2009, it will have completely finished its goal of demolishing and rebuilding, or rehabilitating 25,000 units (Chicago Housing Authority 2003). At the time the Plan was being made, the CHA counted 6,100 units that would be redeveloped for mixed-income families, 9,500 units that would be rehabilitated and reserved for senior housing, and another 9,400 that would be “either reconstructed or rehabbed” (2003). Under the Plan, The Housing Authority intends to build one-third public
housing, one-third affordable housing, and one-third market-rate housing, all within the same complexes.

The CHA emphasizes “choice” in the Plan for Transformation. The CHA has prepared Relocation Rights Contracts for its tenants—one for those who lived in public housing before October 1, 1999 and one for those who came to the Housing Authority units after that date. The contracts inform tenants of their options for housing under the Plan. Lease-compliant tenants who lived in any of the public housing units prior to October 1, 1999 will receive “priority” in their choice. In their contracts, they have (1) a right to temporary housing, in which they will be able to live for one to five years, (2) a right to permanent housing, for which they would be given Section 8 vouchers, or (3) newly rehabilitated housing. It is necessary to note, however, that a disclaimer in the contract reads: “Preference to return to public housing = You can choose to come back to public housing, but there is no guarantee that public housing will be available for you” (Chicago Housing Authority 2003).

Rules for tenants that moved into the Chicago public housing projects after October 1, 1999 are somewhat similar. These tenants have (1) a right to Section 8 housing as a permanent alternative to public housing, with provision for temporary housing until such tenants find permanent housing of their choice, or (2) a “right to a preference to come back to public housing.” However, this second choice would be second in priority to those in the pre-October 1st cohort—only after they choose that they would not prefer to stay with public housing would priority be opened to those in the post-October 1st cohort (Chicago Housing Authority 2003). In both cases, tenants must be lease-compliant, and both cohorts of tenants will have the right to transitional services that would help them move, although, according to some critics, the services came too late (Rogal 2005).

According to a study conducted by Venkatesh and Celimli (2004), approximately 75 percent of CHA families would prefer to return to their old neighborhood. However, as the Relocation Rights Contract makes clear in the fine print, one’s preferences may not have much weight in the grand scheme of things. Furthermore, the rules and regulations with which tenants must comply before they are considered for return are quite stringent. Some of the automatic disqualifiers for return include (1) a tenant who has a utility balance with the Authority, (2) one who is not current in rent, and/or (3) a tenant who exercises bad “housekeeping.” According to Venkatesh and Celimli, this means that less than 20 percent of the public housing tenants expressing interest in returning would be able to do so.

While the Plan’s contracts seem rather inconsistent with realities in that there is really no “choice” for a majority of people, the Plan also has a negative impact on those tenants who actually would prefer to move to the private sector. While the CHA is informing tenants that they will have the right to temporary and/or permanent housing through Section 8 vouchers, the numbers of vouchers readily available for low-income individuals is insufficient to meet the current demands for subsidized housing. As of 2003, the number of families in line for Section 8 vouchers was documented at 56,417. There are only 76,803 vouchers in the state of Illinois, and a significant number of public housing agencies that provide Section 8 vouchers stated that their lists were closed, and they would not be opening them for the rest of that year (Rynell 2003). The CHA’s waitlist is among those that are currently closed. From these figures alone, it is evident that the Plan for Transformation is not as promising as its proponents would like to believe.

According to Laurene Heybach of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, “more than 260 families (a total of 800 people) were displaced from the proceedings of the Plan for Transformation and sought homeless shelter” (Heybach 2005). That number does not include the scores of former
tenants who had to move back with family members or friends in order to avoid being placed in the streets. One former CHA resident even crossed the line when she and her family moved into a vacant apartment in the Robert Taylor homes on Chicago’s south side without permission. When the police found out, they arrested the tenant and the family and friends that had also set up shop in the apartment. When asked about the ordeal, the tenant said that she had to do what was necessary to avoid the streets (Rogal 2000). As a result of the mass destruction of the public housing buildings, it is apparent that there is a mismatch between the availability of housing and the needs of displaced low-income families—there is simply not enough housing to accommodate the displaced.

Although a great majority of original public housing tenants are on waiting lists for Section 8 vouchers, some residents have been successful in obtaining the vouchers and are able to look for apartments in other parts of the city or even the suburbs. However, the process is quite difficult. In addition to the high rents charged in Chicago, some Section 8 tenants are met with opposition and hostility from neighbors and landlords (Thigpen 2002). Thigpen notes that the Lawyers’ Committee for Better Housing reported that “nearly 75 percent of the city’s landlords illegally refuse or rebuff apartment-seeking tenants who present housing vouchers” (Thigpen 2002, 3). Those who are able to overlook the disdainful glares of neighbors and the condescending speech of the landlords have managed to tackle a major obstacle. Sometimes landlords of Section 8 tenants may not even provide regular maintenance and upkeep to those apartments in a timely manner. The experience one woman had with a Section 8 landlord was described by Thigpen: “[The] landlord, she recalls, discouraged her from complaining about rats, telling her, ‘You’re from Cabrini [Green]; you should be used to rats’” (Thigpen 2002, 3)—as if the tenant’s poverty justified criticism and neglect.

While it is not always the case that former public housing tenants are forced to relocate to neighborhoods with less than mediocre buildings, it is not uncommon for these tenants to relocate to the same types of areas from which they moved, primarily because their low incomes limit the extent to which they can really choose where they would like to live. In order to qualify for Section 8, a one-person household must earn no more than $20,850, and a four-person household must earn no more than $29,750 (Rogal 1998). Under the Section 8 program, low-income families would be required to pay only the amount of rent equivalent to 30 percent of their income, with the remainder subsidized by the federal government.

With such low incomes, most of the time former public housing tenants are led to low-income, black communities to find housing. As noted in Rogal, a majority of the census tracts in the City receiving CHA families are at least 97 percent black and have per capita incomes of only $10,000 (Rogal 1998). Equally interesting are the findings of a study conducted by politics professor Paul Fischer of Lake Forrest College that looked at 1,000 public housing families and their relocation patterns. The study showed that “almost 80 percent of relocation families are living in census tracts that are over 90 percent black, and over 90 percent are in census tracts that are under $15,000 median income.” (Socialist Worker Online 2002). This re-concentration of low-income public housing tenants in neighborhoods similar to the ones they were so quickly forced to leave raises the question: why were they forced to leave in the first place? Allowing former tenants to re-concentrate in that manner defeats the purposes of Gautreaux and the three-for-one rule, or its one-for-one replacement, as well as the goals of the Plan for Transformation to create “mixed income communities.” If the CHA is adamantly about suddenly forcing these tenants out of the substandard public housing that existed for decades in order to “revitalize” the area, why would it allow tenants to jump right back into that hole of poverty? The intent of the CHA then becomes questionable. Toward what group or groups is the revitalization Plan truly aimed?
Critics use these examples to back their beliefs that City officials are just using the Plan to move poor people around—or rather, out of the way—so that middle-class whites can return to the center, where their downtown jobs and entertainment sources are a quick train ride away. Venkatesh (1997) comments on the revitalization initiatives of HUD by writing:

HUD likes to tout Chicago as a model for public housing reconversion in the rest of the country. But in the current environment, what assurance is there that the displaced tenants will be taken care of? Subsidies for low-income housing are being cut back. At this writing, the 1997 housing bill, calling for the demolition and dilution of public housing projects, has passed the House and is awaiting action in the Senate. The bill would remove large numbers of very poor people from public housing without providing for alternatives. Essentially, it ‘solves’ the public housing problem by evicting many tenants and importing a better class of poor people.

As reported in Claiborne (1999), Rich Wheelock, another critic of the CHA’s Plan for Transformation and a Legal Assistance Foundation Cabrini-Green tenants’ lawyer, suggested that in executing this Plan, the Authority is not really addressing the needs of the people; rather it is acting on the opportunity to seize “prime real estate on the western edge of the downtown residential and commercial” districts and adorn it with condominiums for “higher-income residents.”

As if to reinforce the doubts of skeptics, in February of 2005, newly developed apartments all over the city had gone untouched, awaiting public housing residents for months after their completion. CHA officials blamed the delay on court mandates establishing strict guidelines for move-in, based on previous court cases such as Gautreaux that encourage mixed-income communities, and the one-for-one rule, although that rule had been suspended well before 2005. One redeveloped site, in particular—Lake Park Crescent, along the Lake Michigan waterfront on Chicago’s east side—is struggling to meet the requirements of the courts regarding the income distribution of prospective residents. As of February 2006, the court required that one-half of the public housing units at this development contain families that earn between 50 and 80 percent of the median income. Another rule enforced by federal tax regulations prohibits the Authority from giving apartments to those families earning more than 60 percent of the area’s median income—$63,800 for a family of four (Olivo 2005). According to Gail Niemann, general counsel of the CHA, “That ends up being a very thin slice [of qualified applicants]!” (Olivo 2005).

On a more optimistic note, however, some CHA revitalization efforts have been successfully carried out, and some are currently underway. North Town Village, which is the redevelopment of the former Cabrini-Green site, located at a prime location in Chicago’s west side close to the loop, has already sold out. Most of the 93 market rate homes at this complex sold out within the first month, some at quite expensive prices (Grossman and Lawrence 2001). About half of the units at this site are being sold or rented at market rate. Another site in process of becoming a mixed-income community is the Shakespeare Townhomes in North Kenwood, a neighborhood on Chicago’s southeast side, close to Lake Michigan. These homes, like those at North Town Village, are selling at competitive market prices (63% of the homes have been sold at market rate).

While some apartments and homes at the redeveloped sites have been bought out, some people in their vicinity still have doubts. A contributing editor of Newsweek magazine states, “I don’t think the objection is as crass as ‘we don’t want poor people here,’ or ‘we hate people from the projects.’
It’s about whether my property values are going to hold, whether my kids are going to go to a decent school, whether my wife is going to be able to walk the streets.” (Grossman and Lawrence 2001).

Likewise, former public housing tenants are concerned about how they will fare in the new residences. For example, Rhonda White, a former tenant, feels “incarcerated” and “would rather live someplace [she feels] comfortable” (Grossman and Lawrence 2001).

There is no doubt that creating mixed-income communities in the midst of a city in which segregation has such firm historic roots is not an easy task, and some truly doubt its merit. If taken at face value—that is, if the CHA promoted the mere implementation of mixed income neighborhoods, neglecting to provide any additional transitional services to its former public housing residents—the initiatives would surely fail. Rosenbaum and colleagues prove this concept in their discussion of the geography of opportunity, which demonstrates that low-income individuals are better off in mixed income neighborhoods that provided access to services and other resources that serve as platforms to help them gain stability in the socio-economic realm (Rosenbaum 2002). This existence in mixed-income communities would help improve low-income individuals’ sense of self-efficacy, resulting in increased motivation for the individual to succeed. Thus, the immediate and continued provision of strong support programs and services for former public housing tenants in the new mixed-income communities is an essential component of the program. Although it took longer than it should have, the CHA is now very active in providing services for former public housing tenants, and CHA authorities understand the weight of this factor in creating successful mixed-income communities.

The CHA’s revitalization of its properties for the creation of mixed-income communities, with the provision of social support services to those public housing residents moving into these communities, is an impressive step toward the social and economic restructuring of the city. However, the problem that arises concerns the process of this restructuring. In creating these mixed-income communities, the Authority had to demolish more than half of its units in which thousands of tenants resided. The Authority was somewhat remiss in carrying out this portion of its plan. A total of 14,000 units will be lost during this transformation process, and the CHA was not well prepared to handle the “what-if’s” of those tenants who would be left out. Authority officials say that if they could, they would redevelop more units, but the funds simply are not there because the government will not pay for it. This revitalization closely resembles the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe in that the poorest of the poor were left out of the plan. This concept is quite disconcerting, considering that HUD was the organization that initially and so frantically wanted to intervene in this “crisis.” Now, when the time to act has come, there are no funds available.

In order to amend this situation, the City of Chicago, as well as HUD, must quickly create funds for affordable housing in mixed-income, mixed-race communities for the tenants it displaced. One potential method for raising such funds is the imposition of a developer fee or dedication requirement for developers who want to build in or around the former public housing sites. Developers that choose to incorporate affordable housing into their sites could be rewarded with density bonuses. The Balanced Development Coalition of Chicago is pushing for such inclusionary zoning methods. Another potential method is to provide property tax incentives to landlords with well-maintained affordable housing, while giving tax penalties to those with poorly maintained units. (Nyden 2003). A traditional method for ensuring that the stock of low-income housing is not clustered in one area of the city is to update current zoning to include a variety of uses—multi-family with single-family, retail, and commercial.

While some of the above methods may spark controversy among NIMBYists and even political
figures in the City, something must be done quickly. It is not acceptable that former public housing residents are living in conditions similar to the ones they left when the intent was to create better opportunities and conditions for them. By creating relatively few spaces for public housing residents, the CHA may pacify some supporters of public housing and protect itself from major lawsuits. But if these tenants are simply left in similar low-income communities in the suburbs or in areas further away from their old sites, then the goal of the CHA may well have been gentrification rather than “transformation.”

Looking back on the past mistakes the City has made in public housing decisions, this revitalization effort marks a crucial point in time, and officials could potentially use this Plan as a model for cities struggling with the problems of segregation and concentrated poverty across the country. However, in solving these problems, authorities must be careful to include every detail of the situation—its origins, processes, potential weaknesses, and impacts on future generations. Mayor Daley, in his Inaugural Address of 1999, strengthened this idea:

We have challenged the old ways of thinking and fashioned new ways of solving problems…and today, Chicago is moving forward on many fronts. But there is always more to be done. We can’t claim victory until every community is liberated…and we can’t claim victory until every neighborhood enjoys a good quality of life.

Works Cited


Building Better Affordable Housing: A Survey of Existing Research on the Relationship Between Affordable Housing and Neighboring Property Values

Thomas S. Skuzinski

There remains a widely-held belief that affordable housing of various types, and under various federal programs, lowers neighboring property values. However, recent methodological improvements seriously undercut this conclusion. While gaps in the research remain, there is now a clear path for how future research in this area should proceed, and a better understanding of which forms of affordable housing might be more positive. This paper serves primarily as a review of the literature, with some conclusions about how the data impacts housing policy.

Introduction

In an economic climate in which the ranks of those classified as low or moderate income continue to grow, while market-rate housing prices also climb, the provision of affordable housing remains a key policy issue. Although defined in many different ways, affordable housing at its most basic reflects the need for residential development that will fill the gap for many citizens between real income and housing rents or prices. It is often justified as an equity concern: we should build affordable housing because this is fair and ensures property ownership is accessible to all. But embracing an ideal does not always translate to accepting the reality. Affordable housing is often stereotyped, sometimes rightly so, as poorly designed, out-of-place, and detrimental to its host community. It is viewed too often as the problem of “those people,” and proposed developments are frequently met with strong “not in my backyard” responses.

The need for such housing, though, is not abating. We may not be able to immediately impact the underlying socioeconomic causes. However, we can make decisions about the form and function of affordable housing projects, and we can help to break down the negative stereotypes that have developed. The question, therefore, is what is the best way to build affordable housing for its consumers while ensuring that any externalities experienced by neighboring properties are positive or neutral?

In attempting to answer that question, or at least start a discussion, this paper will first explore the relationship between affordable housing and neighboring property values. Many potential arguments exist in the toolbox of NIMBY activists—increased traffic, lack of community building, the appearance of a criminal element, a decline in school quality, and similar impacts. To varying degrees, all of these are reflected in property value, which has been a frequently-studied dependent variable. As
will be seen, the impact on property values is highly dependent on several factors: the design of the
affordable housing, its spatial concentration, and its compatibility with the neighborhood.

Having reviewed the relationship, the paper will shift focus to what policies would promote more
favorable forms of affordable housing. Some of the more innovative recent proposals will be
discussed. The literature is ripe with these; for the sake of brevity, the discussion will center on the
broad concept of what is termed “opportunity housing.”

The Relationship Between Affordable Housing and Property Values

Definitions and Background

Before embarking on this section, it is useful to clearly state the boundaries of this paper. “Affordable
housing” will not be clearly defined because empirical studies use varying definitions. However, it will
be delimited: manufactured housing, senior citizen housing, and housing for the mentally disabled will
be excluded. While these are important questions that typically overlap with the affordable housing
issue, they are outside the scope of this paper. Also, the paper will focus on urban areas because
these areas have been most studied in the literature. Save these limitations, a full range of affordable
housing types (privately-owned/publicly subsidized, publicly-owned and subsidized, HOPE VI, etc.)
and building methods (newly constructed, rehabilitated, and converted existing) will be explored. Host
neighborhoods vary from lower to higher income in several metropolitan areas.

Importantly, the studies being reviewed are also restricted to those that are somewhat current (post-
1990) and employ superior analytical techniques for relatively large data samples. To understand
what makes one statistical approach better than another, it is worth considering exactly what
information is desired. For a given property, one would desire a resulting number that captures only
the effect of affordable housing. Therefore, the model would have to control for the other attributes
of that property and of that neighborhood, while also considering the economic conditions in the
neighborhood before and after the entry of affordable housing. Research dates to the 1960s, but older
studies tended to use a matching approach whereby a neighborhood with affordable housing was
“matched” to one without. Apart from the difficulty of finding quality comparables, the method failed
to utilize structural and locational control factors and also disregarded conditions in the neighborhood
over time.

Recently, improvements have been made as multiple-regression techniques have been used, although
many of these were still cross-sectional rather than longitudinal (i.e. they also did not look at trends
over time). Two other critical flaws are noteworthy: First, many studies look at characteristics of a
census tract as a proxy for neighborhood characteristics. Because census tracts are roughly population-
based, densely-populated areas may indeed yield tracts that are “neighborhood-size,” but other times

1 While it is easy to discern the considerable differences in quality between studies, this section owes its clarity to Galster
(2002), who promoted his own improved techniques by examining flaws in those of his colleagues.
2 Actually, there are more than two flaws; these were simply the most obvious and critical. For example, many studies also
do not consider the dependence between house sale prices (in other words, the “there goes the neighborhood” phenomenon
whereby each low sales price has a cumulative effect, creating a depressed market) (Can 1997). Or, those that use distance
always employ a linear model (for example, going from 50 to 51 feet away from a development is thought of as having the
same marginal effect of going from 500 to 501 feet), when effects might in fact be non-linear (Green 2002, 13-14). There are
also overarching critiques about inadequate sample size, limited time frames, etc. that prevent generalized conclusions, but data-
based constraints are common across the social sciences.
a neighborhood will have unique features not experienced in the larger tract that influence property value but are wrongly attributed to the presence of affordable housing. While it would be tempting to disregard such studies, the definition of “neighborhood” is malleable. Moreover, the impact on property value is dependent on the size of the affordable housing complex. A large-scale apartment building might impact several census tracts and engender widespread NIMBYism; hence, the idea of “neighboring property values” would be quite broad. By contrast, rental certificates might involve a few low-income families per square mile, in which case the relevant “neighborhood” might be a single block or street.

A second common flaw is best thought of as a “chicken or egg” causation issue: do property values decline because of the presence of assisted housing, or do authorities locate assisted housing in neighborhoods already experiencing a decline? To overcome this quandary, a study would have to isolate price trends in neighborhoods before the presence of assisted housing; most have not. For example, a seriously declining neighborhood would have a lower price level regardless of whether affordable housing was built or occupied, but these downward-trending property values would be wrongly attributed in their entirety to the affordable housing.

The strongest approach to date has been developed by George Galster and colleagues. It ameliorates these critical errors by isolating before-and-after price levels and trends in a multiple regression technique. The resulting coefficient isolates more effectively the impact of affordable housing. The difference, not surprisingly, is captured best by Galster:

The previous method essentially produces a result like, “Within X feet of assisted housing sites property values are $Y different, though we can’t be sure what other factors within X feet may also be affecting values or whether these differences were already present before the assisted housing was present.” The new method produces a result like, “Within X feet of assisted housing sites property values are $Y different from what they would have been had the assisted housing not been developed” (Galster 2002, 22-23).

Because of a more rigorous approach, the results obtained by Galster et al. in their studies of Baltimore and Denver deserve top billing in the following review. However, other multiple-regression studies still provide useful insights, so long as they are viewed with the appropriate caution; they will be summarized more briefly in a following section.

**Results from Studies Employing the Superior Longitudinal Multiple-Regression Technique**

1. **Baltimore, Maryland** - In 1999, Galster, Tatian, and Smith studied the impact of the Section 8 certificate program on property values in Baltimore County for 1990 to 1995 (Galster 1999). In very basic terms, the study utilized three models focusing on the effects of different relationships to the affordable housing: first, a model for proximity to any Section 8 site; second, a model for proximity to a certain number of Section 8 sites; and third, a model for proximity to a certain number of units. The distinction between sites and units is apparent when one considers a neighborhood with single-family dwellings versus a large apartment complex. The former might have ten sites with ten units; the latter might have one site with 20

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3 These are the primary form of tenant-based subsidies offered by HUD. In the early 1990s, certificate and voucher laws were changed to allow movement into outside jurisdictions. In other words, recipients no longer had to live in the typically low-income areas where housing authorities were located, and such mobility was strongly encouraged (Peterson and Williams 1995).

4 887-90.
units. Proximity was measured by drawing concentric circles around each site at 500 feet or less, 501 to 1000 feet, and 1001 to 2000 feet. The data set contained 43,361 sales and the R-squares were .79 across all models, indicating that the models were well-specified.

Since this study looked at tenant subsidies (case in which the affordable housing was not being built), pre- and post-occupancy were the only relevant time periods. Though Section 8 certificates do carry certain rehabilitation requirements, this activity would not be readily associated with affordable housing since remodeling is a common occurrence. In short, host neighborhoods would likely have no “visual cues” that Section 8 tenants were moving in. Changes in property values, then, would have more to do with prevailing host neighborhood conditions and the behavior of the Section 8 tenants or stereotypes regarding such tenants.

An interesting finding was that before occupancy, the neighborhoods “were valued less and/or had lower rates of appreciation than other neighborhoods within the same census tracts that were not within 1,000 feet of [any sites]” (Galster 1999, 899). To use NIMBY terms, the “backyards” were not in great condition to begin with. Lower income residents were consistently moving into areas already in decline; perhaps they were being prompted to locate there due to outside actors such as participating landlords, or they were drawn by the presence of a family/friend network.

After occupancy, model one showed that within 500 feet (but not beyond) there was a positive and significant impact on neighboring property sale price levels. Model two, however, showed that within that same range, a certain tipping point existed at six sites (not units). While there was always an initial drop in price level, below six sites the post-occupancy trend in prices was positive. Six or more sites, however, resulted in a greater initial drop in level and a declining trend thereafter. Model three looked at units rather than sites and indicated that within 500 feet a higher number of units (not exceeding eight) led to higher sales prices.

Taken together, this implies that any clustering should ideally take place in the form of a single-site, multiple-unit dwelling (up to eight units), rather than a comparable number of individual households. This conclusion about dwelling form holds for the 501 to 1,000 foot distance: after an initial price level drop (which is larger with more sites or units), the price trend becomes positive when the number of sites exceeds 28 or the number of units exceeds 14.

However, at the 1,001 to 2,000 foot range, all results are negative. This seems counterintuitive: why would microneighborhood effects be potentially positive, while macroenighborhood effects were always negative? The answer was found when the results were stratified into census tract clusters according to median home value and change in real

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5 Stated differently, site corresponds to an address, while unit corresponds to a tenant (individual or family).
6 The authors never indicated why these values were chosen. This author views them as being somewhat arbitrary.
7 R-square is a percentage indicating how much of the independent variable the model explains. Here, the models are explaining 79% of the change in property values.
8 There were, moreover, proximity differences. Within 500 feet of future Section 8 sites, the market level of prices was 4.1-6.1 percent lower than in the census tract; the corresponding figures from 501-1000 feet are 3.0-3.5 percent. Beyond 1000 feet, there is no statistically significant difference (Galster 1999, 899).
9 Positive enough, in fact, that the initial drop is overcome within three and a half years and prices were eventually higher than they would have been without the affordable housing occupants. This might also point to greater permanency of affordable housing recipients than previously thought (a common NIMBY concern), although Galster et al. do not comment on this possibility.
median home value from 1990 to 1996, as well as by race. This revealed that high-magnitude positive impacts occurred in wealthier\textsuperscript{10} and predominantly white neighborhoods. Areas with low to moderate home values that had been declining and a mixed or primarily minority demographic, experienced small negative effects. In the 500 foot range, these small negative effects are masked by the highly positive effects in the stronger neighborhoods; outside this range, the effects do not counterbalance each other and small negative impacts are revealed. While the racial composition of the host neighborhood had an impact, the race of the Section 8 household had no significant impact at any distance in any neighborhood. In other words, racial bias did not seem to affect property values, which is perhaps the most significant finding in this study.

2. Denver, Colorado - Two years after the Baltimore study, Santiago, Galster, and Tatian applied the same basic technique to a small-scale, limited-density, dispersed housing subsidy program in Denver for the period 1989 to 1995; it included three models and the same distance rings (Santiago 2001). Whereas Baltimore experienced some clustering, the program by the Denver Housing Authority “evince[d] a remarkably uniform distribution of dispersed public housing units” (Santiago 2001, 74). Despite this, there remained “a systematic tendency for dispersed housing sites to be acquired in declining, lower-priced pockets within census tracts” (Santiago 2001, 75). Across all three distance rings, future sites were located in areas that had prices trending three to four percentage points below average. The reasons for this phenomenon were different than those hypothesized in Baltimore: here, housing authorities acknowledged the need to spread their limited resources, which often required purchasing vacant sites at a low cost per square footage. Naturally, these were located predominantly in declining neighborhoods.

Post-occupancy results reveal that within 500 feet, sale price trends were positive, enough to counteract preoccupancy decline within three and a half years. For greater distances, positive effects were also witnessed. This seems logical, since rehabilitating a vacant site, as was often the case, should be beneficial. In fact, the program on average spent $21,432 on rehabilitation per unit, by no means a small amount. Regarding the number of sites, the initial effect was a positive increase as the number of sites and units increased; however, no corresponding impact on price trends could be found.

As with the Baltimore study, the next step was to disaggregate by home value and race. Positive effects were strongest, once again, in the stronger neighborhoods: those with a mostly white population and with higher median home values that were appreciating. Interestingly, positive effects also occurred in lower-value neighborhoods but only at 1,001 to 2,000 feet; the authors posited that negative externalities counteracted the positive effects of rehabilitation at the microneighborhood level, perhaps because of tenant behavior or ingrained biases. Consistent negative effects were found at all distances for those host neighborhoods that were predominantly black.\textsuperscript{11} From these findings, the authors conclude that, while there are positive effects from rehabilitation, they are sometimes counteracted by negative externalities. In particular, weaker neighborhoods seem to experience an aggregate disadvantage from the increased concentration of poverty and its attendant socioeconomic problems, especially at the closest proximity.

\textbf{Other Multiple-Regression Studies and Results}

The two studies discussed thus far offer the best statistical techniques currently being utilized; however, they suffer from an obvious limitation of scope. Specifically, the subject matter focuses primarily on dispersed housing. Baltimore had some clustering; for example, in a 500-foot radius circle, the maximum

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Those in the top third of median home value that experienced appreciation in median home value.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Unlike with the Baltimore study, the authors did not address whether the race of the head of the affordable housing household had any impact.
\end{itemize}
observation was 46 Section 8 sites with 206 total units. But this was the exception. Most sites were single-family or small-scale dwellings that involved rehabilitation or occupancy of existing sites rather than the medium-scale to large-scale developments that more readily engender NIMBY attitudes. Moreover, the Galster studies did not look at any one program across more than one city or multiple programs in one city. Researchers have broached these questions and, unlike in some earlier studies,\textsuperscript{12} employed a multiple-regression analysis.\textsuperscript{13} While imperfect, they still warrant consideration.

1. **Yonkers, New York: “Scattered-site” public housing** - Although the term “scattered-site” might appear to be a synonym for “dispersed,” here it referred to court-ordered desegregation of public housing simultaneous with that of public schooling.\textsuperscript{14} The resulting 200 units were styled as single-family townhomes. However, they were only scattered across seven sites in middle to high income, predominantly white neighborhoods, somewhat clustered on the east side of the city. The intent of a “scattered-site” strategy is to deconcentrate poverty. Nonetheless, as this case evidenced, it can still be somewhat clustered. Briggs, Darden, and Aidala examined seven developments in Yonkers, the largest city in mostly-suburban Westchester County (Briggs 1999). The data sample was 3,101 sales over a decade beginning in 1985. Their approach has the benefit of looking at pre- and post-price levels (but not trends); it also delineates between post-announcement of development and post-occupancy. Their method, therefore, comes rather close to the Galster approach.\textsuperscript{15}

The results evinced no detectable price effect, either after announcement or after occupancy. The authors note that prices do drop in the years following announcement, but that these appear in line with downward trends in the site neighborhood (again, this hearkens to the Galster analysis, which explicitly considered trends). The authors hypothesize that greater dispersal might have proven beneficial, but they lack any data to support this conclusion.

2. **Wisconsin Cities: Low Income Housing Tax Credit**\textsuperscript{16} - In 2002, Green, Malpezzi, and Seah looked at LIHTC developments in the Madison and Milwaukee metropolitan areas. The technique used here is unique among the studies in that it looks at repeat sales from 1991 to 2000 for Madison and 1995 to 2001 for Milwaukee.\textsuperscript{17} Therefore, it attempts to “build in” the controls for idiosyncratic house characteristics, including even less tangible ones such as “curb appeal.” The same property is generally assumed\textsuperscript{18} to have had no significant price-impacting structural or locational changes before or after the arrival of LIHTC development. By looking at the same house across time, this study has a partial advantage even over the Galster studies. Of course, it also has many shortcomings, the most important of which is its artificially restrained sample size.

\textsuperscript{12} These include seminal (for their time) studies by Nourse (1963), Schafer (1972), Baird (1980), and Sedway and Associates (1983), among others. Excellent synopses of these can be found throughout the literature. See especially Nguyen 2005, 17-18 and Galster 2002, 14-15. However, the author recommends reading the actual studies, especially as they provide an excellent understanding of any later studies are superior.

\textsuperscript{13} Unfortunately, the study by Goetz 1996 was not available for this analysis. Summarized elsewhere, it shows that in Minneapolis, those developments built by a Community Development Corporation yielded positive effects, while those that were public housing, or privately-owned but publicly subsidized, caused negative effects. The CDC properties were neighborhood-managed and therefore “fit” better with the neighborhood. Moreover, they had better upkeep in general (Nguyen 2005, 21). Another study was also unavailable by traditional means. Lyons and Loveridge in 1993 looked at various property types in Ramsey County, Minnesota, and found no effects from Section 8 vouchers, mixed effects from Section 8 certificates, and positive effects from public housing. Importantly, they found some negative effects from clustering (Nguyen 2005, 22, 23).

\textsuperscript{14} Interested readers can consult United States v. City of Youngers, 1985. However, the opinion reads 665 pages.

\textsuperscript{15} It is the only study to use a semi-longitudinal method applied to newly built public housing.

\textsuperscript{16} The Credit is awarded to developers under Section 42 of the Tax Reform Act of 1986 and is a primary funding vehicle for multifamily developments.

\textsuperscript{17} Over 3000 such observations were available.

\textsuperscript{18} Remodeling and other practices would undermine such presumptions.
For Madison, a quintessential college-town, the results are sometimes weakly positive but generally not statistically significant. Quite simply, LIHTC appears to have no impact. However, in Milwaukee, a larger and more urban area, “proximity to a development seems to matter, and seems to have a negative impact on appreciation rates” (Green 2002, 22). In two relatively affluent neighboring counties of Milwaukee—Waukesha and Ozaukee, where the median household income at the time of study was almost double that of Milwaukee County, the poverty rate was just three percent (more than five times less than that in Milwaukee County), and the population was overwhelmingly white—the impact of LIHTC development was near zero, and, most importantly, it was statistically significant.

3. Six Metropolitan Area Developments: HOPE VI - HOPE VI was a direct response in 1992 by the Clinton administration to a perceived need to create less dense, mixed-income affordable housing; it included both revitalization (new construction and rehabilitation) to meet these new goals and the Section 8 vouchers and certificates mentioned earlier. Bair and Fitzgerald in 2005 studied the revitalization program in several cities: Atlanta, Georgia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Boston, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Bair 2005). All developments were large—over 200 units—because data was aggregated by census block group, and data for block groups within 1.5 miles of the site was analyzed. The study has the benefit of breadth but lacks depth and has some quality issues. First, it aggregates, which may mask some localized effects. Second, it uses self-reporting from census data, which could be less reliable. It also garners its control characteristics from the census, which includes limited structural and locational characteristics and is more demographic in nature. Whereas the other studies had at least some mixture of host neighborhoods, the nature of HOPE VI necessitated that all the revitalization projects occurred in neighborhoods that already had affordable housing; not surprisingly, all were lower-income with declining price trends.

Ultimately, the study found that for every quarter mile away from a HOPE VI development, prices decreased 8.25 to 10.25 percent. Comparatively, other public housing caused a decrease of 0.5 percent. Thus, it would appear that the impact on property values from neighboring properties is always positive and is extremely positive for HOPE VI developments. This may indicate a significant short term benefit from rehabilitation. However, as already noted, this study is deficient in several ways.

4. Philadelphia Case Study of Various Programs - One of the more promising recent studies, conducted by Lee, Culhane, and Wachter, looked at the differential impacts of a variety of housing programs in Philadelphia. The affordable housing types included public housing developments, scattered-site public housing, Section 8 certificates and voucher unit rentals, Federal Housing Administration-assisted units (FHA), public-housing homeownership program units (PHA), Section 8 (HOPE VI) New Construction and Rehabilitation units, and LIHTC sites (Lee 1999, 75). A total of 18,062 sales within a relatively modest time frame, 1989 to 1991, were included. The approach was a basic cross-sectional, multiple-regression technique looking at sales within 1/8 mile or between 1/8 and 1/4 mile for traditional public housing developments, or within 1/4 mile for the remaining types (except for a fourth model, which looked at the 1/8 mile distance throughout). The most complex of the models specified for dummy variables such as “high-rise” or “large scale.”

The significant results indicate that only FHA housing, PHA homeownership sites, and Section 8 New Construction and Rehabilitation produce positive effects, while the remaining types have slight negative impacts. Surprisingly, a high-rise or large-scale development had no negative effect within 1/4 mile, and within 1/8 mile, with all results statistically insignificant. This perhaps runs counter to common stereotypes.

19 This is consistent with the preceding Bair study of HOPE VI, which focused on the revitalization aspect.
Insights for Future Research

Based on the above studies, one can draw a few important conclusions. First, affordable housing cannot be generalized as having either a negative or positive impact in all situations; this would be a great oversimplification. Second, the data consistently supports the idea that neighborhoods can absorb any negative externalities from affordable housing. Strong neighborhoods with higher incomes, home values that are appreciating at a market pace, and predominantly white residents, can experience no impact or even a positive impact from assisted housing occupancy or development of various types. By contrast, neighborhoods with low incomes, depreciating home values, and a more mixed racial composition—by far the most common current sites of affordable housing, for various reasons—suffer negative impacts. Third, while larger-scale developments do not seem to have an adverse impact, clustering of units or sites seems to reach a tipping point after which concentration of poverty produces negative externalities. Fourth, rehabilitation appears to have positive effects, at least in the short term and for the immediately surrounding area. Last, there was no indication that the race of affordable housing occupants had any impact or that a mismatch between the neighborhood and the site had any significant impact. One study also indicates that homeownership might be more positive than rental subsidies, but this is too isolated a conclusion to be useful.

Clearly, the scope of affordable housing demands increased research into this area. Some studies have the advantage of a superior statistical methodology, while others have superior breadth and depth. Ideally, future studies would employ the techniques developed by Galster et al., strengthened by a repeat sales analysis of the full range of affordable housing types or at least a subset that reflects important dichotomies. For instance, a study could compare dispersed versus clustered housing, homeownership versus rental subsidies, or newly-constructed versus rehabilitated/converted. In this way, sound conclusions about what is quantitatively “better” could be drawn. One could also argue that a single study with data from several cities would be useful. However, this might mask the importance of community-level considerations. Housing is ultimately a very local issue; therefore, a qualitative approach should be coupled with quantitative analysis. Some studies have already employed this technique somewhat by interviewing neighbors about their feelings, beliefs, and experiences. This approach enriches the level of understanding about why property values decline (or appreciate), and its continued use should be encouraged.

Balancing these considerations will require a careful approach that acknowledges local differences. Importantly, any policy changes must remain voluntary or else we risk imposing an entirely new set of inequities on the users of affordable housing. Uncertain conclusions abound with these questions; the clearest conclusion we can reach is that more research is needed. Fortunately, we now have a solid understanding of how the research should proceed.

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Cultural Resource Management in Malacca

Tobias Wacker

Many places in the developing world turn to tourism as a source of income and economic development. The city of Malacca, Malaysia, is blessed with a colorful history and many attractions that make it destined to be a major tourist destination in Southeast Asia. Yet a focus on short-term projects instead of long-term conservation efforts leaves this potential unexploited. Consequently, many tourists pass the city by completely or leave after a short stay. This case study explores some of the shortfalls of Malacca’s planning and heritage management efforts, which can be applied to many similarly situated sites throughout the developing world.

Introduction

Malacca, a small town on peninsular Malaysia’s west coast, is blessed with a rich history and an abundance of cultural tourist assets. It markets itself as the birthplace of Malaysia, filled with vestiges from the past. Yet the few international visitors it receives usually leave disappointed within one day. Where did tourism planning in Malacca go wrong? In the following pages, I will demonstrate how a focus on short-term investments rather than a long-term planning approach is responsible for missed opportunities in tourist and economic development and destruction of heritage.

The idea for this project derived from my first visit to Malacca in July 2004. After consulting my Lonely Planet guide, as well as several tourist websites, I wondered why Malacca was not on the top of each Southeast Asian travel list. As a former spice trading port that boasts Portuguese, Dutch, and English colonial architecture blended into a Malay city with Islamic influences, the city seemed to offer everything a tourist could ask for. Upon my arrival, however, the reasons for its obscurity quickly became clear. When I could find any described attraction at all, it was either in poor condition or had been replaced with a tacky-looking replica. I was bitterly disappointed. During the rest of my stay, I conducted some ad-hoc interviews with other travelers and soon realized that I was not alone in my opinions. I collected additional information during several field trips from August to November 2004.

After discussing the current situation and problems of several Malacca attractions, I will assess in detail the example of the Stadhuys Museum, followed by a brief overview of marketing measures. The paper will conclude with suggestions on how to improve the situation.

Overview

While conducting the previously mentioned interviews, two distinguishable groups of visitors emerged. The first consisted of Malay and Singaporean tourists who enjoyed coming to Malacca because of its history and good food; a visit to Malacca was a trip to the cities of their youth. The second group was comprised of international tourists who all shared a similar reaction—disappointment. The main reasons behind this discontent were lack of infrastructure and a feeling of “cheapness” of most sights. This pattern is reflected in statistics about visitors to Malacca. In
the year 1999, Malacca welcomed 555,028 local guests and 617,937 foreign guests, including 237,647 Singaporeans (UNESCO 1999, 106). This represents a serious problem for the tourism industry since the vast majority of visitors from Malaysia and Singapore still have close ties to the local population and commonly spend the night at the house of a relative or friend. Thus, they do not generate any hotel revenue. On average, a visitor spends only 1.5 nights in Malacca (Hin 1999, 108). A key to greater economic success would be to raise this number to an average of two nights per visit. Instead of leaving in the late afternoon, visitors should be encouraged to stay an additional night and depart the next morning.

Many foreign tourists complain about the virtually nonexistent public transportation infrastructure in the city. It seems close to impossible to get to outlying sights of Malacca. A bus system that runs on the basis of yelling at the driver to signal one’s desire to get off might be convenient in everyday life, but it is extremely intimidating and confusing to foreign tourists. Although young backpackers might consider these kinds of adventures pivotal to their experience, the target group in a higher spending bracket might not share this view. Hence, creating a public transportation system that connects the cities’ main attractions is an essential step to improving the tourist experience.

In 1982, the State Government recognized that Malacca’s biggest tourist attraction was its own past, and the government created an ambitious plan to commoditize its heritage (Moore 1986, 68). Unfortunately, the government had a different perception of the word “authenticity” than is generally recognized by the cultural heritage community; this resulted in a careless treatment of Malacca’s heritage. One of the major tourist draws is the old Portuguese Fort “A Famosa,” known as the most photographed structure in Malaysia. The Fortress was constructed in 1511 using stones from dismantled Mosques and Malay graves (Hayes 1993, 35), a delicate fact ignored by official information material. One might consider this a minute detail; yet, the otherwise in-depth description suggests that this fact was left out deliberately to foster an untainted national self-image. This practice, we will see, is quite common throughout Malacca and highly questionable.

Another example of misrepresented past is the replica of the Sultanate Palace. According to tourism publications, the palace was “built from information and data obtained from the Malay Annals” (Melaka Virtual Museum 2004a). However, comparisons of the original 14th century drawings with today’s replica show significant differences in the structure, once more implying deliberate policies to shape a national image through cultural heritage.

The “Sound and Light Show” attempts to recreate Malacca’s history as a multimedia spectacle. Instead of an accurate portrayal, the audience witnesses a kitschy show that demonstrates little regard for historic accuracy. Some of the show’s lighting equipment is directly installed onto original structures, causing irreversible damage. In addition, the imposing concrete spectator stand negatively impacts the visitors’ experience during the daytime; the view is obstructed and the scenery ruined. Even if those points of criticism were improved, it is still doubtful how big of a tourist draw the show would actually be, especially considering its dominant nationalistic message that might leave foreign visitors rather uneasy.

One more example can be found in the Maritime Museum which, according to the tourism guide, features authentic archeological artifacts from Malacca’s past as a sea trading port. Upon visiting, those artifacts turn out to consist mainly of cardboard cutouts and paintings. Once again, many visitors expressed a feeling of being cheated.
The Stadhuys Museum

Situated in the centre of town, the Dutch quarter, with its ensemble of dark red buildings, is often recognized as Malacca’s hallmark and drop-off point for most day tourists. When the main structure of the square, the Stadhuys, was under restoration in 1989, a task force of the Pacific Asia Travel Association issued a report, recommending that the restoration “needs to be handled with the greatest sensitivity, especially with regards to the original designs and material” (PATA 1989). Good advice, since the square is marketed with and famed for its original 18th century Dutch architecture. A look back in time reveals that today’s dark red color differs greatly from the building’s original 400-year-old facade. The original structure was faced with brick, which could not endure the tropical humidity. To solve this dilemma, it was sealed with plaster and whitewashed. Later, the British painted it salmon pink, and not until restoration was completed in 1989 did Malacca’s tourism authority change the color to its current dark red (Hoyt 1993, 54).

Inside, the Stadhuys hosts an exhibition portraying Malacca’s colorful history. In a series of rooms on the second story, paintings and historical town models explain Malacca’s history and development step by step. However, a local historian revealed that the portrayed history was not based on actual facts nor were experts in the field consulted during its compilation. Instead, the past had been created in accordance with the national agenda. Most notably, there is a gap between 1942 and 1945, the Japanese occupation during which many Malays lost their lives. If one were to base one’s knowledge on the Museum’s version of the past, one would think that the Japanese had never ruled Malacca. Again, it seems as if Malacca denies its own history. However, history is an all-encompassing whole that inevitably includes dark chapters, not a pool of information from which one can pick and choose.

This denial has implications for all involved. For example, school children visit the Museum on a daily basis to learn about their own history. The exhibitions, however, present a fabricated version of this past. The forces working in this scenario resemble the mechanisms described by Michel Picard in his article Cultural Resource Management in Bali (Picard 1977). Through constant reinforcement of a newly created history, it will eventually become internalized and accepted as a given. From this moment on, even the local population will no longer be aware of its actual background; history will be re-written and heritage lost. Even traumatic experiences like the Japanese occupation are parts of one’s heritage that must not be forgotten.

Marketing

The Tourist Information Center provides several brochures with slogans circling around the buzzwords “heritage,” “historical,” and “authentic.” While the brochure titled Malaysia’s Historic City from Tourism Malaysia points to attractions like “Peacock Paradise” or “A Famosa Water World,” it does not mention any exemplary conservation work by the NGO Badan Warisan Malaysia, which has painstakingly restored such sites as the House 8 Heeren Street or the Malaqa House (Tourism Malaysia 2003). Furthermore, none of the brochures mention directions on how to reach the described attractions.

Internet resources are abundant, though it is almost impossible to determine who is responsible for which site. Extended searches for an official tourism authority site were unsuccessful. At some point, I reached the homepage of the governmental Melaka Museums Corporation (PERZIM 2002), which gives information only in Malay and provides a link to the “Virtual Museum Melaka.” This site claimed to be “a world class expert in digital conservation and digital reconstruction of historical and
cultural assets” that provides “invaluable assistance to historians and students involved in research on Melaka” (Melaka Virtual Museum 2004b). Curious about such bold claims, I tried to contact the creator of this site to inquire as to whether any professional conservation specialists were involved. The site posted no background information, nor were my emails regarding the issue answered. However, several links refer to a hotel directory. I can only assume that it is more a commercial marketing tool than a serious research attempt.

**Conclusion**

Malacca has enormous potential to develop into a major tourist destination. Before achieving these goals, however, the town must reconsider several of its approaches towards tourism development and its own history. An important first step would be the creation of an integrated, all-encompassing image of Malacca as an historic site that goes beyond mere slogans. Upon arrival, the visitor faces attractions and semi-attractions that do not seem to have any connection with one another. Even more important, a changed approach towards cultural heritage management is needed, one that is more sensitive to careful restoration of historic structures. Whereas projects like those of Badan Warisan Malaysia show the right direction, ideas like the Sound and Light Show promise only short-term revenues. Indeed, long-term success depends on careful investment to restore and highlight the uniqueness of Malacca and its past.

**Works Cited**


The Venice Strips
Emily Schemper & Peter Winch

Based on the MUD Intermediate Studio’s visit to Venice, Italy, in November 2006, Professor Roy Strickland asked students to develop concepts and create narrative strips for the entire city reflecting the following scenario:

“In ten years, Venice will host a year-long celebration of its history, urban form, architecture, and culture. The city is to create the venue for interventions that highlight Venice’s past, present, and future. More than showcasing the city’s history, these interventions will also suggest means of expanding Venice’s economy beyond tourism and re-introducing a live-work population. Concepts consist of both temporary and permanent interventions, accommodating the millions of international tourists who are expected to attend the celebration, as well as the tens of thousands of people who will return to Venice to live and work during and after the event.”
At the regional scale, a new subway system encourages circulation between the mainland city of Mestre, Marco Polo International Airport, and all Venetian islands, encouraging regeneration of business development in the historic core.

Above historic Venice and the surrounding islands, a system of aerial gondolas introduces a new perspective on the city, as well as an alternate means of transportation. From above, the twists and turns of the Venice streets become more legible, and both monumental and intimate spaces are experienced at a different scale.

And on the ground, two new bridges reflect the grandeur of Venice’s original bridges and create more integration between the city’s districts.

-Emily Schemper
**SCALE**

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<th>AREA</th>
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**SPEED**

- LOCAL: SLOW
- REGION: FAST

**ABOVE**

Gondola: central area connectors. Aerial perspectives of the whole of Venice assist people in forming a useful cognitive map of the city.

**SURFACE**

Boat and pedestrian traffic: new bridges complete a clear hierarchy of streets based on the path of the Grand Canal, lighting and special pavement improve definition.

**BELLOW**

Subway trains: High speed connections across the lagoon reduce the perceptual size of the area, providing accessibility both physically and mentally.
I propose a series of interventions that respond to the particular beauty and dynamics of this city, and that build a socially and economically reinvigorated Venice.

These proposals generally have to do with the difficult relationship between tourism and residency.

Some are large - a consolidated transport hub, and redevelopment of today’s rail and bus areas. Others are small and dispersed throughout the city, or acting through its citizens.

An exhibition by the IUAV in the 2006 Biennale presents Venice as an “isotropic environment,” a continuous, complex system in which the sponge, and not the network, is the more apt analogue for the way parts relate.

Small actions percolate, and affect the whole. The process is boosted by strategic, large moves, to improve and synthesize infrastructure. This is the grain of my project for Venice.

Large moves are in the upper half of the page.

Small moves are below.
**Grand Canal Bridges**

Today’s three Grand Canal crossings dictate that some lanes are used intensively, others not at all.

Two more bridges will be part of a larger circulation network - and an historic addition to Venetian urbanism.

**New Route**

New bridges over the Grand Canal and another over the Santa Chiara Canal (pictured) will anchor a clear path across the city, connecting the new transport hub with San Marco.

**More Space for the Water**

Venice is threatened by high water. Major engineering solutions are in play to keep the water back.

These will be complemented by the reintroduction of canals in some of Venice’s rio terre - a small part of a regional move to partner with natural systems.

**More Space Along the Water**

The Grand Canal is the great spine of Venice, but for long stretches there is no way to walk alongside it.

Tomorrow’s Venice will be marked by new access to the precious waterfront.

**International Trade**

On land now occupied by Piazzale Roma’s transit center, Venice will build a new leg for its economy, one for which it is historically well-suited.

**21st Century Walking City**

New housing, restaurants and shops will be thoroughly mixed into this business district, and across the canal on today’s rail yards.

These neighborhoods will be model urban environments for the 21st Century.

**Open Shutters**

A simple change of habits will assert the presence of proud Venetian residents.

**Residences for Residents**

The conversion of apartments to temporary lodging, all over the city, eats into the viability of neighborhoods. The trend will be reversed.
VENICE FOR TOMORROW
Bounded by a mountain range and the ocean, Tokyo occupies an intensely developed pocket of land. With 12.5 million residents in Tokyo proper and approximately 35 million in Greater Tokyo, it is the most populous metropolitan region in the world. That population lives at an incredibly high density of 5,655 people per square kilometer. For a city of this size, however, Tokyo has a relatively short history. Although the village that preceded Tokyo was founded in the twelfth century, Tokyo did not become the capital or a major city until 1603. Additionally, the firebombing of Tokyo during World War II destroyed most of the city's physical structures. As a result, the city of today consists largely of modern structures built in the last 50 years.

As the commercial and governmental center of Japan, much of Tokyo appears ultramodern, with high-speed rail lines, electronic billboards, and the accoutrement of technology everywhere. Yet, nestled within the towering buildings and rushing trains lie many artifacts of traditional Japanese culture and architecture. These temples, graveyards, and shrines form a surreal landscape interwoven with the modern urban infrastructure. The presence of these spaces raises the following questions regarding the form and culture of Tokyo:

- How do religious and historic spaces fit into an ultra-modern megacity like Tokyo?
- How do the Japanese reconcile these disparate forces in the city?

Japanese cities generally lack distinct public spaces in the Western sense, with large, open squares or other spaces for gathering. Instead, the Japanese often utilize dense urban spaces for multiple purposes, with the meanings of physical space changing depending on the context. This analysis will address the previous questions by examining the cultural and physical qualities that shape the distinctly complex form of Tokyo. In order to ground this discussion, we will study how these common themes apply to the specifics of Senso-ji, a famous temple site in Tokyo, and its festival activities. Although some of the Japanese perspective on space comes from its unique cultural and religious background, much of the shape of the modern Japanese urban environment has come from a practical need to accommodate high densities and varied needs for public spaces. This approach has the potential to teach the West lessons on how to create flexibility in our own complex urban future.

Mixed Uses

As noted in the introduction, Tokyo has many mixed elements in its urban form, with serene gardens and temples alongside bustling shopping districts and towering office buildings. Nowhere is this contrast more evident than on the grounds of the Imperial Palace, which lies in the traditional center...
of Tokyo, amidst the central business district. Due to its location, the Palace has the world’s highest real-estate value, but most of the property remains inaccessible to the public except on a few days of the year. The idyllic gardens, historic buildings, and moat all stand in sharp contrast to the busy office buildings of the surrounding business district. This contrast is common in Japanese cities, but it is especially pronounced in Tokyo due to the high density of development. Despite the high density and land values, these religious and traditional spaces remain within the city. In the case of the Imperial Palace, this is probably because the Emperor is not subject to the same Japanese laws and influences, but for many spaces, their place in city life is not immediately clear to the foreign viewer.

The long-held Japanese tradition of using spaces for multiple uses may set a precedent for the modern city. These mixed uses are visible in a number of formats. Most clearly relevant to this discussion are the multi-religious functions of many temples in Japan. Temples frequently serve both Buddhist and Shinto purposes. Often a Buddhist temple has a Shinto shrine attached or both services occur in the same space, varying based on the date and the type of worship. This adaptation of use depending on time and necessity is common in Japan. Another example is the traditional Japanese room. In a land with limited private space, these rooms have a flexible design to accommodate a variety of purposes. Fred Thompson describes this flexibility well in his article “Japanese Mountain Deities:” “A Japanese room, for instance, can be used simultaneously for living, sleeping and eating, and is called an eight mat ma.” (Thompson 1997, 82). The mats refer to the different placements possible for eight different uses.

Public Spaces

This mixed use of spaces in Japan, particularly Tokyo, seems to derive partly from the density of development, which limits the availability of space. Another consequence of high densities is that people live very public lives. Because private space in the home is limited, residents of Tokyo spend much of their time in public, whether working, eating, shopping, reading, relaxing, or simply walking down the street. Describing this public life in “Japan on the Edge,” Catherine Slessor writes, “People tend to live their lives in public: in cafés, bars and restaurants, in shopping malls, parks and temples (even the unabashed love hotels fulfill an essential function). This animated and inhabited public realm generates a strong sense of community and encourages social cohesion.” (Slessor 2001, 44). In addition, the density means that time spent in public is usually spent in constant contact with other people.

Surprisingly, despite this public life, Japanese cities lack large public spaces in the Western tradition, and foreigners often view them as lacking a center or distinct focal point. Slessor notes this distinction and identifies religious spaces as fulfilling the traditional roles of Western public plazas: “Historically, there is no Japanese tradition of large urban spaces comparable to the civic squares and piazzas of Europe. Public activities were held in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, and more importantly, on the streets. These were the setting for the events, festivals and activities of daily life.” (Slessor 2001, 43). The important point to recognize is the association of space with activities. Thompson points out that the Japanese conception of public space is much more amorphous than that of the West, viewing this realm as “kaiwai, or an activity space.” (Thompson 1997, 82). Like the usage of temples, this activity space “changes with the activities of its users and their intentions.” (Thompson 1997, 82) and is not defined by its physical features. Similarly, as Slessor noted, the street becomes an important part of this activity space, by linking private and public space and transforming from day to day depending on the need.
The importance of the street as activity space also arises from its role in a common use of public space in Japan: religious festivals. Temples frequently have festivals associated with them that occur throughout the year. During these periods, streets are closed off and transformed into part of a procession route, through which crowds of people move toward and through religious space. An example of this in Tokyo is Sanja Matsuri, the spring festival associated with Senso-ji temple that will be discussed later. An interesting aspect of Japanese festivals is their integral motion and direction, which makes them more like a parade than a Western-style public gathering.

These processional spaces make Japanese religious environments distinct from Western urban spaces. Although Japan does not have squares and plazas as in many Western cities, Thompson notes that:

Japan does have great temples and shrines, which are, in many ways, equal in scale and grandeur to Western architecture. There are also great open spaces in front of and around buildings; yet, as Itoh Teiji points out, these spaces were to be experience by moving through them rather than by viewing them from a fixed vantage point: “Sequential spaces”, he says, “may be understood as a distribution of memories of the experience, noting that the content of memory includes not only the beauty of physical space, but also the story, or legend concerning the elements along the path.” (Thompson 1997, 83).

These sequential spaces reflect the multiple uses associated with spaces and the temporality of meanings associated with these changes.

**Temporal Meanings of Spatial Form**

The multiple activities associated with public and private spaces in Japan highlight the temporal meanings imbued in urban forms. At one moment a room could be the living room; the next it could be a bedroom. Similarly streets can switch from busy shopping corridors to religious processions at a moment’s notice. This lack of fixed meanings comes partly as a result of the dense living environment of Japanese cities, but it also results from cultural perspectives on life and meaning. Thompson beautifully describes this perspective in the following passage: “The public spaces are streets rather than a central square because the Japanese perception of street and private spaces is a part of an integral space-time continuum or ma. Life is seen as a process of ebb and flow, rather than a series of events; it changes metamorphically just as nature does from season to season, age to age, birth to death, in endless rhythms of renewal.” (Thompson 1997, 82). This perspective helps explain how religious spaces and activities can fit into the urban fabric in apparent contrast to the everyday uses and meanings of space.

This understanding stems partly from Buddhist philosophy, which regards life and its trials as temporary and emphasizes the connectivity between all elements. Buddhist philosophy takes shape not only in use of activity spaces but also in traditional Japanese architecture. Though famous for its serene sense of order, traditional Japanese design also focuses on the relationships between design elements and flexibility for infinite possibilities. In *Form and Space in Japanese Architecture*, Norman Carver eloquently elucidates these principles:

Of all the principles discernible in Japanese architecture, the most visible is the pervasive sense of order. It is an order so thorough and yet so innately flexible and energizing that its integration of the inherent complexities of form and space
appears almost effortless... Perfection of a system of asymmetrical order may be Japan’s most significant contribution to architecture. For, in contrast with symmetry, the inherent vitality of asymmetry requires participation in the experience of form—by suggesting, by directing the mind to complete the incomplete, and by providing a constant source of ever-changing relationships in space. Asymmetrical order is not an externally imposed finality, but an extension of the process of life. Asymmetry recognizes that life is not static or perfectible, but that its essence is growth, change, relatedness. (Carver 1993, 27).

These principles clearly inform the arrangement and use of public space in Tokyo, allowing for a diversity of uses without contradiction.

**Senso-ji**

A famous example of flexible religious space in Tokyo is Senso-ji temple. Supposedly constructed in the late seventh century, Senso-ji enshrines a statue of the bodhisattva Kannon, which according to legend was found in the river by two local fishermen. Located in the central district of Asakusa, the temple serves multiple purposes. It is a popular destination for both international and Japanese tourists, the site of a vibrant marketplace, and the focal point of the boisterous Sanja Matsuri. In addition to the central Buddhist temple, there is an attached Shinto shrine, the Asakusa Shrine, dedicated to the two fishermen who found the statue and the village chief who constructed the temple.

The temple complex is laid out with a long arcade, the Nakamise-dori, leading from the entrance to the central temple. On most days this arcade is lined with merchant stalls selling a variety of traditional handicrafts and tourist souvenirs. Following tradition, this site is designed for procession rather than static observation. The intention is to move pilgrims through the arcade and past the temples and shrines. During the Sanja festival, the processional nature is enhanced by temporarily closing the streets surrounding the complex and the shops on Nakamise-dori.

The festival draws thousands of visitors and participants, who move through the streets carrying and shaking *mikoshi* (portable shrines) combined with lots of shouting and applause. After movement through the crowded local streets, the shrines are carried through the temple complex and displayed before the Asakusa Shinto Shrine. After the three-day festival, the temple reverts to its nominal usage. Interestingly, located with the densely developed Asakusa district, this site provides both a valuable public activity space and a prime example of superficially conflicting modern and traditional spaces.

**Conclusion**

Although religious spaces appear to sharply contrast modern development within Tokyo, a deeper analysis reveals the integral role that these activity spaces play in the public lives of Tokyo’s residents. The disparate forces of the traditional and the modern in Tokyo appear to reconcile themselves as a function of both high densities and cultural attitudes. A recognition and acceptance of the temporality of meanings and spatial needs allows for flexible use of limited spaces. Through this perspective on physical space, Tokyo has emerged as a unique city, seamlessly blending seemingly disparate elements by adhering to traditional design standards concerned with flexibility and relationships rather than fixed meanings and static protection.
The model seen in Tokyo has a number of interesting implications for development. The city has successfully connected the formal, static infrastructure and built environment of the city with the more informal uses of everyday life and special occasions, such as festivals. This is achieved by allowing for flexibility in the usage of streets and public areas in city codes and regulations. This strategy of recognizing multiple uses is particularly useful in dealing with changes occurring as a result of development and globalization. As change comes, this approach allows for simultaneous occupation of space, which permits the city to adjust more smoothly and allows the informal to cope with change.

The West could take some lessons from the Japanese experience. As property values increase in American and European cities and urban populations continue to grow, Western cities will feel more pressure to increase density and make more dynamic use of urban public spaces. Large public squares only used at certain times of the day or year could be reconceived to contain a multitude of meanings and uses, maximizing their potential to serve the public all day and all year. Similarly, designers of new buildings or public spaces may allow for greater flexibility and adaptability. The strongest lesson derived from the experience of Tokyo, however, is how an evolving city can preserve its cultural and architectural heritage in the face of the seemingly hostile forces of modernization and growth. By keeping an open mind regarding the purpose of public space and a willingness to allow the outward juxtaposition of forms, one can form a more complex blend of the old and new, creating a continuously intriguing and livable city, like Tokyo.

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The Tango Archives: Lyrics and Collective Memory of Buenos Aires between 1890 and 1940

Caitlyn Clauson

The Tango Archives evolved out of the Mega City Form course. This paper investigates issues of collective memory and the appearance of unconventional archiving methods so prevalent in mega cities. This paper explores how these issues play out in Buenos Aires, where tango lyrics serve as an archiving phenomenon.

Immigrant Era of the Late 1800s

While the history of Buenos Aires began in 1536 with Don Pedro de Mendoza and the arrival of his Spanish fleet, the Buenos Aires of this paper awoke in the late 19th century with the thousands of immigrants streaming in from Europe and Africa. Seeking opportunities to work and own land, immigrants flooded the 77 square-mile region of the Rio de la Plata at a rate of three immigrants for every one porteño—a Buenos Aires local. This eclectic populace not only laid the groundwork for what would be an illusion and the city largely forgotten.

Before the immigrants arrived, the landscape existed as la gran aldea—or big village (Keeling 1996, 20). It was not until their arrival that Buenos Aires shed its parish cocoon and came into its own. Portenos attribute their city’s maturity to the barrio—or local neighborhood unit. The immigrants, especially European immigrants, carried with them the essence of this unit.

Aside from the energy and activity, the principle feature of the city was the changes in lifestyle along the [road], those changes as you go from one neighborhood to another. This is a peculiar characteristic of Buenos Aires, which distinguishes it from other major capitals in the western hemisphere. The quality of neighborhood life, lacking in most other large cities, is, I believe, very important for an understanding of contemporary Buenos Aires (Tulchin 1982, 153).

Ubiquitously superimposed upon the city’s landscape, the barrio single-handedly chiseled neighborhoods out of an undifferentiated terrain, reshaping the urban landscape of Buenos Aires.

The barrio, however, did more than merely dissect the city. Like a phoenix, out of this partition emerged a pulsating neighborhood scene—the kinetic city brought to life. As foreigners attempting to acclimate, they fused their familiar habits from home with their new foreign posts. The immigrants made Buenos Aires a place worth remembering and preserving. This world of 19th century immigrant celebration reigns as the golden era of the city.
Paris of the South

Unfortunately this reign was short-lived and, in a way, mutinous. While the lower class immigrants brought Buenos Aires to its apogee, the wealthy immigrants simultaneously dismantled their framework. It was the upper class’ attempts to mimic their European counterparts that instigated the mass homogenization of Buenos Aires.

As students of Parisian trends, the upper class immigrants revered Haussmann’s massive overhaul of 20th century Paris. If Buenos Aires was to be considered the true “Paris of the South” it required a trans-Atlantic Haussmann. While no one in particular filled those shoes, “Baron Georges Haussmann’s late nineteenth century Parisian designs provided a template for urban renovation. Portenos expressed their admiration for French culture and society by attempting to give the Hispanic colonial city a more Parisian feel” (Keeling 1996, 28).

Architects inundated the landscape with grand boulevards, European architectural styles, sidewalk cafés, and street trees. The landscapes of Buenos Aires and the landscapes of Europe were synonymous, like “a mirage; we could be either there or in Madrid, Palermo, Paris, or London” (Borinsky 1996, 419). But such glory was predictable and routine—a successful European xerox. With every grand boulevard, the fabric of the city became a composite of homogeneity and concrete perversion—the austere staleness sanitizing the city of immigrant electricity.

Asphalt and concrete covered the barrios, the neighborhoods that were half-city half-country, where local soccer teams played in empty fields on weekend afternoons while families drank maté under grape arbors, and sweethearts arranged to meet in the evenings in entryways beneath the streetlamps (Taylor 1987, 483).

Urban growth coated the barrios, immobilizing their pulse; their boundaries became more nebulous and their culture more tenuous. This imprisonment inevitably prompted an immigrant reaction and a verbal revolution.

Lyrical Lamentation

Armed with words, text became the conduit to both commemorate and resuscitate the beloved Buenos Aires of the barrio era. This text took the form of tango lyrics.

There is no possible return to that intimate Buenos Aires. Its recovery is left up to memory; reliving it is left up to nostalgia... Nostalgia for the things that have happened, Sand that life carried off, Grief for the barrio that has changed, and bitterness for the dream that has died (Arocena 1982, 172-73).

Thompson punctuates the interconnectedness of nostalgia and tango stating, “If nostalgia is a country, tango is its capital” (Thompson 2005, 25). Not only does the aforementioned tango lyric explain the origins of the nostalgic phenomenon, but as a literary form, tango also functions as an outlet to document the vanishing city.

Tango was the obvious outlet as it had served a similar purpose in the past. Tango emerged in the backstreet brothels of Buenos Aires. There, forlorn and disconcerted immigrants commiserated, washing away their disappointments of relocation with rum, camaraderie, and song. The tango
emerged from their cries for a sense of belonging. Over the years, tango lyrics continued to serve as vernacular release valves for the immigrants—only this time their words decried the destruction of, rather than the adjustment to, their newfound homeland.

Their cries, however, were bittersweet. Their lyrical angst not only lamented the deleterious effects of urban growth, but they also celebrated their darling city. “In fact, between the 1920s and the 1940s, the best efforts of Argentinian lyricism dealt with the rediscovery of the city” (Arocena 1982, 1976). The following tango by Enrique Cadicamo reads like a postcard from a distanced porteño to her beloved Buenos Aires and attests to the impression that her cherished city bestowed.

**Anchored in Paris**

Distant Buenos Aires, how pretty you must be!
It's going on ten years since you saw me weigh anchor.
Here, in this Montmartre, sentimental district,
I feel that the memory digs its dagger in me.

How must have changed your Corrientes Street!
Suipacha, Esmeralda, your very own suburb!
Somebody has told me that you're flourishing
And a set of streets run in diagonal.

You don't know the desire I have to see you!
Here I am stopped, without money or faith.
Who knows, one night death takes me away
And...so long, Buenos Aires, I don't return to see you!

**Soft City**

Tango documents the rediscovery of the city through its texts, and succeeds because of the images they invoke. The images of the tango, however, are different from standard photographic images. Like the glossy finish of a photograph, the text coats an image with an additional layer of meaning. It constructs a more holistic image, providing insight into artifacts, meanings, sounds, smells, and memories. Text paints a personal history of the city, where a bound collection of lyrics acts as a biography of the city. The text of tango taps into the individual's city, the city of memories, the seemingly ethereal and kinetic city, the city Jonathan Raban describes as the soft city—“the city as we imagine it, the...city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare” (Raban 1974, 10). But this city “is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture” (10).

Cities exist as a composite of complex layers—layers that become increasingly more intricate in mega cities. In cities of such magnitude, the boundaries between the static and kinetic collapse—distinctions blur. While national archives document the administrative city of Buenos Aires and picture books capture the aesthetic elements of its static city, the soft city gets lost. The seismic conditions of a mega city prohibit the comprehensive preservation of its past, while conventional means assuredly neglect its soft memory.
According to Jonathan Raban, “There is no single point of view from which one can grasp the city as a whole. That, indeed, is the central distinction between the city and the small town. For each citizen, the city is a unique and private reality; and the novelist, planner or sociologist finds himself dealing with an impossible tessellation of personal routes, spoors and histories within the labyrinth of the city” (Raban 1974, 272). Extrapolating from Raban’s juxtaposition of the city to the small town, a similar relationship emerges between the mega city and the city. The dynamic complexity of the mega city defies singular vantage points and singular histories. What emerges within this “labyrinth,” rather, is an intense collection of unique memories and individual experiences. Any effort to record this city, therefore, demands alternative archiving methods. For Buenos Aires, tango lyrics do just that.

The lyrics capture personal accounts of life—irreproducible memories specific to the history and evolution of the city. Tango serves as an archiving method unique to Buenos Aires that suggests an alternative way to record and read the soft traces of the city. While Buenos Aires appears to be an impenetrable mass, beneath its calcified armor brims a city whose pulse enlivens its authoritative veneer. While conventional means of archiving cement images of the concrete city, the text of tango—in its typically sinuous style—maneuvers its way past those walls into the soft city and records the often-neglected and otherwise-forgotten undercurrents of the kinetic city and its evanescent form.

**Tango as Documentation**

At times it seems as though there are as many tangos as there are memories, and these memories are bound up in text, memorialized. “City and personal life constitute an inseparable whole in the portenos’ experience. The city is not just a physical environment for the events of city life; it is more, much more. It is felt as part of life; it is life itself in the expression of its efforts, achievements, and failures. This communion between portenos and their Buenos Aires has been offered up, and is offered up, as a constant in many fine examples of Argentine [tango]” (Arocena 1982, 170). “Much more” here refers to the soft or kinetic city, which coats the text of tango. For instance, in *La Musa Mistonga*, Julian Centeya documents a series of personal, kinetic memories:

**La Musa Mistonga, (The Muse of the Poor)**

The muse of the poor in the barrios
Writes in a droll fine vernacular...
Unaware of the glories
Of life in Versailles,
She goes out happy, when the night comes,
To watch the boys’ street games
To study the smiles of couples sitting down
And the face of heaven, turning dark with the stars
And listen to old tunes.
An organ-grinder plays, inspired by Carriego.
The muse of the barrio is quite unaware
Of the grief of a princess
Who had an affair
With a blonde, handsome pageboy
But she will get upset
At a milonguita’s misstep
And weep, crying outrage.
(Thompson 2005, 34)
Centeya provides images of “boys’ street games,” “couples sitting down,” and an “organ-grinder” playing Carriego. Standard archival methods fail to detect these undercurrents, inadvertently eliminating the city’s memory. However, in this instance, the kinetic city lives because of Centeya’s personal documentation of this barrio.

Tango not only records the kinetic city, but it also creates it. In the barrios, especially the barrios of La Boca and San Telmo, tango escapades break out in the streets and plazas. There, every additional onlooker contributes to the creation of an informal stage. Only occasionally does a member of the audience cross the threshold and brave the pseudo-spotlight. Homero Manzi and Carlos Cesar Lienzi document this phenomenon in Tango and Adios Arrabal.

Tango

Lamplight at the corner, male serenaders, calling out
Compliments to good-looking women
Dance and song.

Adios Arrabal, (Farewell, Suburbs)

The dancing at “Rodriguez Peña”
Mocho and Cachafaz
Of the milonga of Buenos Aires
That will never return
Carnivals of my life
Brave nights and at the end
Being stood up by the women
In that old Buenos Aires suburb.

Celebration

What initially emerged as a form of lamentation evolved into a means of celebration. The street games, the organ-grinder, and the dancers compose Buenos Aires’ soft center—the vanguard of the kinetic realm. These images and their kin repeatedly appear throughout tango lyrics as well as the physical city. So persistent is their presence that they, at times, outlast their static incubator. Neglecting to document these images would leave but a shell of the city’s history and remnants of a truncated mythical identity. Traditional forms of city archiving cannot keep pace with the exponential speed of mega cities, but the tempo of tango catches its slack, documents the memories, and memorializes the city.
Works Cited


Losing Its Religion: Planning as Faith

Charles Kaylor

This paper makes the claim that planning is fueled by the same optimistic faith in human reason as the modern sciences generally. At times, this faith takes on the contours of a religion. The excesses of urban renewal projects challenged the core of this faith, however, serving as planning’s reformation. Planning remains heavily indebted to its central tenets. Science remains the lodestar, but this is placed in dynamic tension with an effort at making decisions that comport with the public interest, which is difficult if not impossible to measure via the tools of science. As a result, planning remains animated by a progressivism that resembles faith, but one that is thoroughly demystified.

When the devout religion of mine eye
Maintains such falshood, then turn ye tears to fire.
-Shakespeare, Romeo & Juliet, Act I Scene ii

Part I: Introduction

In this paper, I argue that planning is impelled by an optimism that mirrors faith. Like a religion, planning has an historical cannon and, mirroring the trajectory of the Reformation, survived a crisis of faith—the urban renewal of the post-war years. Latter day planning is no less driven by its convictions, but it is far more modest regarding doctrinal certainty. As I explore below, planning’s origin in the modern project implies both its certainty and its skepticism. For just as surely as the early moderns were driven to create a new science as a bulwark against the arbitrariness of the divine right of kings, they also recognized the need to create a new authority—a new god as it were—that could supplant the hegemony of church and throne that had erstwhile served as the sources of social coordination. Planning is heir to this optimism. Planning is animated (if not haunted) by the specter of its scientism, blind adherence to which is the source of many of its woes. At the same time, planners have come to recognize the limits of their discipline and the pitfalls of blind adherence to its faith.

My argument advances as follows: I first outline (or is the proper word “caricature”?) the approach to knowledge and science to which planning is an heir. I then show the limits of the scientific model as they pertain to the world of public affairs. If the model is taken to be the statement of faith, the recognition of the limits of this faith is planning’s moment of reformation, which I outline next. Finally, I reflect on the utility of the analogy of religion and whether planning fits into this idiom.
Part II: Baptism in Modernism, Or the Articles of Faith

Modernity, of course, did not simply awaken one day. The steady erosion of despotic kingly rule and the grip of the church in Europe was punctuated with cataclysms and acts of violence too numerous to mention. That said, the turn that unquestionably occurred was a gradual awakening to the power of human knowledge and the capacity of ordinary people to create a legacy of understanding—an episteme—far more powerful than the capriciousness of kings and clerics. For, as the early proselytes of this new faith understood, this new way of being was centered, not on inflexible dogmas, but on the extraordinary power of the scientific method. As Descartes argued, the old order placed God at the center. Human knowledge was dictated (if not held in check) by the Holy Scripture as revealed to and interpreted by the ecclesiastical authorities. Audaciously, Descartes declared that the old order should be sloughed off like tattered rags and that a new science should emerge that allowed humans to take their rightful place as the “masters and possessors of nature.” Descartes and others who sought to establish this new way of being succeeded in subverting the powers that had jealously guarded knowledge as a means of keeping the masses in their thrall. Indeed, the subversion would be accomplished by radically democratizing access to knowledge.

The cornerstone of this new secular order is the scientific method. As Descartes proclaimed, “In order to make our knowledge complete, every single thing relating to understanding must be surveyed in a continuous and wholly uninterrupted sweep of thought, and be included in a sufficient and well-ordered enumeration” (Descartes 1985, 25). The goal of human liberation was to be accomplished, in Descartes’ view, by unleashing the human intellect and imagination. This required the foundation of a new science, meaning a commitment to the rigors of a new, non-religious discipline. As Bacon, a contemporary, put it, “There was but one course left, therefore,—to try the whole thing anew upon a better plan, and to commence a total reconstruction of the sciences, arts, and all human knowledge, raised upon the proper foundations” (Bacon 1980, 2). Bacon’s optimism that human reason could create certain knowledge upon which to base decisions is the hallmark of modern faith. That faith was far from unchallenged prior to the dawn of the social sciences in the nineteenth century. Notwithstanding much refinement and agonizing introspection, the commitment to human reason remained intact.

The centrality of self-critique is vital. Unlike blind faith, the goal of perfected human sciences articulated by Descartes and Bacon rests on the ruthless scrutiny and introspection that make discovery possible. The ideology of science is not wholly inflexible and resistant to change. However, the people and institutions that operate in its name often are. As Kuhn points out in his account of paradigm change, “concepts—whether in the natural or social world—are the possession of communities (cultures or subcultures)” (Klemke et al. 1998, 130). The embeddedness of science in human discourse and the shifting sands of politico-academic intrigue mean that new knowledge necessarily dislodges and disrupts. The authority of old ideas begins to break down and new ones arise to take their place, often only with much anguish. (Bernstein 1976, 84-93).

Popper idealizes an organic model of human inquiry that challenges any specific instantiation of science while retaining the optimistic article of faith. For Popper, the “truth” that science constantly reveals is that “Truth” is never to be attained. “I too hold that hypotheses cannot be asserted to be ‘true’ statements, but that they are ‘provisional conjectures’ (or something of the sort)...” (Popper 1935, 264). As such, the god of the new science is a constantly evolving and moving target. A science
that is worth its salt is constantly undermining confidence in itself. And the sort of truth that emerges is never hard and fast: “Our science is not knowledge (epistēmē): it can never claim to have attained the truth, or even a substitute for it such as probability…We do not know: we can only guess” (Popper 1935, 278). Despite this cautious and self-critical core, truth remains the lodestar for the sciences. Even though truth is elusive and certainty is always in doubt, the goal of truth (provisional though it may be) still impels the sciences. We may dislodge such certainty with a new one, à la Khun, but, until disproved, the provisional truths function as tenets and justify action by their adherents. Even though foregrounded by Popper’s methodical skepticism, the social sciences are not immune to the allure of provisional truths. As Bernstein explains, “[a]t the core of this realist interpretation is the conviction that the aim of the social sciences is the same as the natural sciences…. At the heart of scientific explanation there must be discovery of and appeal to laws or nomological statements” (Bernstein 1976, 43). Naturally, there are questioners and critics of importing the natural scientific method wholesale into the study of human affairs, events and institutions. For example, Kuhn argues that there is no guiding paradigm in the human sciences, meaning that the attachment to the naturalistic approach is incomplete (if not improper) (Klemke et al. 1978, 133). Notwithstanding such trenchant accounts of the tensions and dualities at its core, the scientific paradigm reigns supreme across the contemporary academy and within the planning practice. As such, the faith at the core of this method continues to animate the approach of social scientists, planners among them. And, as we shall see below, the wholesale application of this faith in addressing the pathologies of urban living was prone to the same metaphysical myopia (and violence) that plagued the rest of the sciences.

**Part III: The Engineering Model, Or Planning’s Blind Faith**

So far, I have discussed in general terms how planning is heir to a tradition that functions in many ways like a community of faith. The next matter is to explore how planning does or does not follow the same trajectory of other sciences. Planning is at its heart an ambiguity, straddling as it does the border between physical sciences (given its focus on land use and rationalization of space) and the social sciences (given its simultaneous focus on social institutions and improvement). Insofar as planning has tended to uncritically embrace the modes of inquiry and action it has inherited, its adherents fall prey to the same excesses as its cousins. As was the case with the other social sciences, planning’s attempts to establish itself as a rigorous discipline in the twentieth century led it to the limits of its foundational optimism.

From the outset planning was prone to embrace the positivist method. The consequence of such an embrace is summarized by Bernstein: “Anything that cannot…satisfy the severe standards set by these disciplines…is to be viewed with suspicion” (Bernstein 1976, 5). The clearest embodiment of the positivist approach to planning is the movement toward synoptic planning, a notion that the planner can understand (or should even attempt to understand) all the contingencies and vagaries that surround a plan and that the scientific method will produce “rational” plans that function to fulfill “the public interest.” The scientific ancillary to this comprehensive approach, of course, was the folly of policy analysis or the basic concept that social scientific methodology can produce certain absolute, theoretical understanding, distilled through the apolitical sanctity of the academy. Indeed, by the mid-twentieth century, planners were captivated by the model of bureaucratic and scientific perfection that would enable science to distill unified “goals for society” from the cacophony of needs, interests, and voices that make up the public sphere. As Altshuler describes it: “Comprehensive planning requires of planners that they understand the overall goals of their communities…. [T]he explicit claims of practicing planners often suggests that a fair approximation of genuine comprehensiveness is currently attainable” (Altshuler 1965, 186-187). Thus, the importation of positivism into the applied
social sciences was essentially the re-inscribing of the engineering model into the social domain. Harris explains the stakes: “The desires and goals of society as a whole are the controlling factor in the whole planning process” (Harris 1967, 324), which, of course, presupposes that the planning process can comprehend and operate on the basis of these goals.

When planning’s hubris finally reached its apotheosis in the urban renewal experiments in the ‘50s and ‘60s, many recognized that the headlong embrace of modern science’s articles of faith may have been in error. The ballyhooed role for a perfected science of planning and social engineering was a product of its time, of course. With the combined awesome displays of social and physical engineering that put an end to the Depression and harnessed the power of the atom, it is understandable that such optimism carried the day. And, as was the case with Icarus, such hubris must ultimately be visited by a painful crashing to the recalcitrant ground of stubborn human nature.

The conflict between doctrinaire adherents of the scientific approach and advocates of a “normative” approach (Bernstein 1976, 42-45) was not simply academic. At the same time, the capacity of either entrenched system of belief and practice was only to provide questionable assistance to practitioners at best. At its worst, blind adherence to technocracy and the dictates of science turned cities to rubble in the hopes of recreating and perfecting them. But when the realities of the political and budgetary processes set in, science was only able to deconstruct and rubble was all that was left.

**Part IV: God is Dead: The Crisis of Faith**

It would be an error to say that social scientists failed to see the crisis coming. From the very outset of the social sciences, foundational thinkers recognized the limitations inherent in their approach. For example, Weber was quite aware of the limitations of a dogmatic and inflexible positivism. Weber claimed that social solidarity is built upon a basic unencoded code of what is reasonable (Weber 1978). On his reading, modernity is characterized by a near-universal internalization of instrumental rationality—we are unified via various formalizing things, such as the market, in which we operate to maximize our individually determined best interests, and the state, which treats us as abstract bearers of rights and organizations. Without thinking about it, we understand ourselves as our social security numbers and our credit scores. This cognitive glue that cements modern societies is in many respects the same form of rationality that enables its intellectual pursuits (i.e., the instrumental reason of positivism). Thus, Weber suggests that the embrace of positivism is hardly a necessity, but it is the stubborn frame of reference for the denizens of the modern world and is therefore difficult to displace. In fact, alternative forms of rationality and solidarity do, or at least should, exist (as we shall see below through Habermas). The challenge is for social science to explain the residual: that which remains unexplained by its tools.

We can see that, far from being unified and unequivocal, the proselytes of the new sciences, especially those applied to studies of humans and their institutions, recognized the checks on their approach. This cautionary posture is certainly at the heart of much of the debate regarding planning’s role in the post-Urban Renewal years. Indeed, public policy and planning professionals took great heed of Simon’s denunciation of a “comprehensive science.” Against this, Simon argued for a concept of “bounded rationality,” the notion that “one doesn’t have to make choices that are infinitely deep in time, that encompass the whole range of human values, and in which each problem is interconnected with all the other problems of the world” (Simon 1983, 19). As Forester describes, this recognition relieved constraints for policy developers, as it legitimated the already existing practice of “satisficing” or modifying decisions “to meet lowered expectations, expectations that could then be satisfied rather than optimized” (Forester 1993, 7).
Similarly, Lindblom famously argues for attenuating the goals of planning. The incremental approach he advocates lowers the sights from the ideals of the scientism that had carried the day earlier in the century. Lindblom denounced the hubris of synoptic planning: “Achieving impossible feats of synopsis is a bootless, unproductive ideal” (Lindblom 1979, 318). Lindblom’s articulation of this quietistic approach suggests that the large-scale, comprehensive vision of planning was too prone to make large mistakes. His essential understanding is that administrators are not in a position to act upon the plan that maximizes benefits holding all things constant, because things are never constant. Decisions do not occur in the perfected vacuum of the laboratory. Rather, “prescribed functions and constraints—the politically or legally possible—restrict their attention to relatively few values and relatively few alternative policies among the countless alternatives that might be imagined” (Lindblom 1959, 80). Since this fact of life for decision-makers always and everywhere is the one that is practiced, students of policy should focus on such institutional frameworks and constraints rather than the idealized possible set of alternatives. Thus, Lindblom was at the vanguard of a movement to push social scientific thinking away from the heavens of the theoretically possible into the mundane world of actual decision-making frameworks.

Both Lindblom and Simon owe a debt to the pragmatism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As is the case with these post-religious inclinations in planning in the ‘50s and ‘60s, pragmatism attempted to steer clear of certainty in the social sciences, offering instead a vision for understanding the connection of the past to what we can do in the present. In a deeper sense than that of the contextualism inherent in Lindblom, Dewey and others recognized that experience is always embedded in tradition and language in ways that make it inextricable. As such, apperception is always already determined (or at least influenced) by “the ways in which a common and objective world is enmeshed in our experience” (Bernstein 1966, 67). In making such assertions, Dewey separates himself from the scientism of Descartes and Bacon and the trajectory of modern science, which so often occlude the potentially dislodging problem of the perspective of the scientist. Pragmatists sought to focus on the “hereness and nowness”—i.e., the non-metaphysicalness—of decisions. In so doing, they distinguished themselves from the strand of modern science (i.e., methodology) that persistently focuses on the means by which knowledge is attained. For Dewey, experience is always borne by language, institutions, and, most importantly, schools. This means that no “pure” science is possible. Rather than putting stock in this false idol, Dewey hoped to return to an Aristotelian notion of experiential wisdom. This meant being steeped, not in the timeless truth of scientific “law,” but in the everyday meanderings of politics, the mechanics by which actual decisions are made, and the particularities of historical context.

Hoch explains the effort at driving the gods from the temple: “The pragmatists, like many current postmodern thinkers, worry that the quest for certainty becomes a power trip as those with little democratic sensibility use Rationality to subject others to purposes that masquerade as necessary and inevitable conditions” (Hoch 1984, 55). Against this, pragmatists stressed the need for a dialogical path, engaged with the world in which person and person forge decisions through the practice of decision-making. As they saw it, focusing on such matters was essential to safeguarding democratic institutions from the creeping despotism of technocracy, which stresses the conformity of a decision to the calculus of costs and benefits at the expense of its conformity to the democratic process.

Of course, the pragmatists have been roundly and rightly accused of blindness to the essential ontological position that inspired their attempts at deontologizing the sciences. In other words, while hoping to purge the false god of scientific certainty, early pragmatists were simultaneously engaged in an attempt to foundationalize a form of practice that could only be sustained by a notion of
timelessness that borders on the divine. White convincingly argues that “individual pragmatists have not all been consistent about the scope of science and because the movement as a whole has been divided on this question, pragmatism has never been able to present a single face to the world on one of the central problems of modern philosophy” (White 1973, 109). As such, early pragmatism, on which the knee-jerk position of much post-war planning theory has rested, has itself rested on a shaky foundation. The effort to dislodge the hegemony of the “god of science,” then, has always been weakened by its own inclinations. As we will see, there are some grounds for thinking that more contemporary versions of pragmatism, particularly that of Habermas, might provide a relief from this metaphysical mushiness.

**Part V: Redemption via Ecumenism: Planning’s Deontological Turn**

In the post-halcyon days of urban renewal, planning retreated to a less certain (but probably no more modest) position. Planning (and academics who study planning) attempt to put into motion processes that occur in the real world of human affairs. There are manifold and complex organizations, institutions, histories, and legitimate claims for what ought to be done. With such complexity, no certain science of the “right” or “rational” plan is possible. The real question is how we create consensus regarding what is best, given that trade-offs will always have to be made. After the excesses of planning’s “engineering” misadventures, alternative paths were explored that attempted to broaden participation and, ideally, conformance of plans to the public interest. This trend was occasioned (and foreordained) by trends in the human sciences that attempted to historicize and contextualize knowledge, “bracketing” what is known and knowable and thoroughly problematizing the possibility of a “science” of the social world.

A crucial insight into the curious position of planning (and other applied social sciences) was a return to the basics of democratic politics (and theory). As an antidote to the univocal authority and manifest excesses of statist planning (as conducted both in the West and in Eastern Europe) in the early- to mid-twentieth century, a variety of voices arose to assert the importance of civil society. As part of this general tendency, many planning theorists see in Habermas’ theory of civil society a middle path between abandoning the hope for a legitimate role for a robust public sector and the uncritical embrace of western science and metaphysics. For Habermas, first and foremost, the public sector engages a world that is always operating in ways that no public official can fully address (or plan for), nor any science ever adequately characterize. “The public sphere cannot be conceived as an intuition and certainly not as an organization. It is not even a framework of norms with differentiated competencies and roles. The public sphere can best be described as a network for communicating information and points of view” (Habermas 1996, 360). Habermas sees this extraordinarily complex and functionally inchoate mass of communicative acts as forming a “far-flung network of sensors” that effectively alert the state to the wishes of the various individuals and organizations that constitute it and, simultaneously, render transparent to the latter whether or not the state is functioning legitimately (i.e., with respect to ensuring democratic access and procedure in rendering its decisions) (Habermas 1996, 1984).

For Habermas, the measuring stick by which we can evaluate the legitimacy of decisions (and therefore the validity of the planning process) is not the degree to which it squares with technical, scientific rationality. Rather, what is crucial are the procedures by which decisions are rendered. As Bernstein describes it, Habermas is attempting to create a modern standard for inculcating the civic discourse with a shared notion of experiential wisdom: “The capacity of practical philosophy is
phronēsis, a prudent understanding of the situation, and on this the tradition of classical politics has continued to base itself, by way of the prudential of Cicero, down to Burke’s “prudence” (Bernstein 1976, 186). That practical wisdom is grounded in an understanding common to all the denizens of the modern world, according to Habermas. Following Weber’s notions of rationality and the ubiquity of the understanding of instrumental reason, Habermas posits a parallel and equally ubiquitous form of reason—communicative rationality. According to Habermas, we moderns evaluate the truth of fact claims via the extraordinarily powerful methods and syntax of scientific reason. When we are disputing an empirical question, then, it is always sufficient to appeal to facts. But when the time comes to address the “wicked” problems of overlapping and contested questions of politics, we appeal to a different standard. Namely, when facts are insufficient to forge a common understanding and consensus, all we have left is the legitimacy of procedure.

As such, Habermas argues that a “universal pragmatics” pervades, providing us with the potential means to measure the legitimacy of procedures and outcomes rendered by public authorities. For example, planning encountered its limit during urban renewal precisely due to technocratic myopia that systematically excluded input from those who were most affected. Since the process of planning and decision-making made no effort to accommodate these voices, the outcry of the public was sufficient (albeit too late) to stop the process dead in its tracks. The critical theory of Habermas, then, is an effort to check the authoritarian inclinations of religion as science: “Theoretical work is, like religion or art, an activity distinguished by its reflexivity; the fact that it makes an explicit theme of the interpretive processes on which the researcher draws does not dissolve its situational ties” (Habermas 1984, 126). By this reading, the very scientific approach that earlier planning took to heart as its identity is a form of bad faith.

Habermas’ basic premise is that science cannot redeem validity claims regarding norms. No amount of laboratory research will yield truth in such matters. Rather, “the Habermasian rational actor is a practical communicative agent who makes claims in a community of affected persons, claims for which he or she would be willing to offer justifications and arguments in discourses where (in principle) only the force of the better argument may prevail” (Forrester 1976, 78). For Habermas, decisions are never (or very rarely) actually made in such a manner, of course, but such a counterfactual provides a background idealized procedure that we more or less embody as citizens in a democratic society. The standards, rights, and freedoms in which citizens are steeped require at least the veil of legitimacy (sometimes called window dressing) that we see in the effort to encourage public participation in the planning process. To fail to do so runs the risk of a legitimacy crisis—the undermining of public support.

As critical as he is of the modern project, Habermas remains true to its optimism. As such, Habermas is a thinker of profound faith. The central tenet of faith is the capacity of human reason, even if based on an understanding of reason quite different from that of Descartes. For Habermas, we all act on the basis of communicative and instrumental rationality, balancing the two in our everyday lives. But the core, the principle of faith, is that reason permeates all. Habermas is unapologetically an acolyte of modernity’s faith in this regard.

**Part VI: Faith and Religion**

So, is planning a religion? The answer seems to be “yes, no, and maybe.” There are certainly times (and always will be) when the planner approaches the challenge of providing for the public benefit with a certainty that approaches the fervor of the converted. And, indeed, that fervor’s origin in the
dawn of the explosion of scientific progress continues to enthral us. The advances made possible by the steady evolution of the sciences have made even the most modest among us live better than the pharaohs (at least by some measures). But the enticing patina of that approach also fails to capture the complete story. A crucial distinction should be made between faith in the tools and techniques that have evolved since modernity’s dawn and adherence to the strict doctrines of religion. Planning’s overweening devotion to its science led to the disasters of urban renewal. To carry the analogy, then, planning’s elevation to a doctrine fell short. Continued faith in the progress science can make possible, however, is the crux of planning’s relevance.

Rittel and Webber speak of “wicked” problems. They claim that in their haste to cure the abundant problems of urban life, planners at the dawn of the profession latched on to the scientific engineering approach. By doing so, they were able to resolve many of the problems that conformed to these rigors. But “now that these relatively easy problems have been dealt with, we have been turning our attention to others that are much more stubborn…The professionalized cognitive and occupational styles that were refined in the first half of this century, based on Newtonian mechanistic physics, are not readily adapted to contemporary conceptions of interacting open systems and to contemporary concerns with equity” (Rittel and Webber 1973, 166). The zeal and fervor with which early planners meshed the gods of the scientific approach to the manifest pathologies of urban life met their limit. No amount of demolishing in order to rebuild a better inner city could overcome the violence inherent in urban renewal. No calculus of “rationality” in the best-trained planning mind could overcome urban civic complexity. As such, planning had to abandon its god—the facile embrace of Newtonian physics as a panacea for social ills. A latter-day, demystified god has transcended this inevitable twilight of the idols. Planners are still motivated by the conviction that attempting to address these “wicked” problems is their vocation. It is obeisance to the mundane that now serves as planning’s sublimation.

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“It Takes A Village...”: A Personal Response to Lewis Mumford’s City in History

Thomas Skuzinski

The City in History is most often used as an historical catalog for understanding how we have arrived at our modern urban form. However, its more important use is as a guidebook for recognizing what makes our cities “good” or “bad” and why. The essay briefly explores the broader themes of Mumford and concludes that it is the incorporation of so-called village attributes into the metropolis that create a more positive urban environment.

What is wrong with cities today? As inhabitants of a world that appears destined for conurbation, in which more of us each day live an urban existence, we could provide a ready litany of responses. Invariably, our answers would include congestion, gentrification, sprawl, environmental non-sustainability, and the like. However, when asked how to fix the modern city we become more uncertain, for these problems do not admit of easy solutions. Just as the scale and scope of the city have grown, so too has the inability to effectively comprehend, much less address, its many quandaries. As a result, it appears easiest to either blindly accept what is wrong or to conveniently start with a clean slate by destroying the old or expanding into virgin territory.

Lewis Mumford wrote The City in History as a pragmatist, but he never embraced such a fatalistic worldview. Despite everything he had witnessed firsthand or learned as a student of urbanism, despite the transformation of cities into ever more inhumane containers, he still believed that the course could be reversed. “It would be foolish to predict when or how such a change may come about; and yet it would be even more unrealistic to dismiss it as a possibility, perhaps even an imminent possibility…” (Mumford 1961, 574). Mumford takes on the role of not only a fascinating educator and thereby learn from our mistakes and successes. Upon reading Mumford, then, the inevitable next step is to look around and say: what is good and what is bad?

One often hears in planning circles that the chief problem of the modern city—and the bane of our future existence—is its “sprawl,” which gobbles up the surrounding countryside and obscures the city’s edge. Mumford, too, appears to embrace this misconception, when discussing the threat of “universal conurbation” (Mumford 1961, 540), but he fortunately recognizes that the real issue is not expansion itself, but rather the underlying features of the expanding organism. “[T]he urban growth becomes more aimless and discontinuous…. Old neighborhoods and precincts, the social cells of the city, still maintaining some measure of the village pattern, become vestigial” (Mumford 1961, 543). However unwieldy our metropolises become, however complete a conurbation we might experience, the human scale and the social fabric in which we thrive will never change. This scale must remain at the heart of urbanism.

Mumford elsewhere speaks in terms that reinforce the classic dichotomies of urban/rural, city/village, or town/country, but here he recognizes that it is when these distinctions break down that
the city realizes its highest potential. To appreciate the beauty and potential of the city, one must be able to recognize in it the familiarities of neighborhood and shared experience. This is evidenced by his affinity for the Greek polis and the medieval town. These may have been small in scale, but as Mumford reminds us, “contrary to the convictions of census statisticians, it is art, culture, and political purpose, not numbers, that define a city” (Mumford 1961, 169). The city is a concentrator of people, but its chief function is to “convert power into form, energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity” (Mumford 1961, 571). The beauty of the polis was in its nascent freedom, its promotion of a public and civic pride, and, perhaps most important, its appreciation of the human measure (Mumford 1961, 124), which Mumford terms the “village measure” (Mumford 1961, 128). These features resulted in a “collective life more highly energized, more heightened in its capacity for esthetic expression and rational evolution” (Mumford 1961, 125). The same energy characterized the medieval counterpart, which is praised for promoting an education of the senses in both the social and biological respects (Mumford 1961, 296-99).

But is the modern city devoid of such attributes? One need only travel to the nearest metropolis to witness a diversity of cultural opportunities or to titillate the senses. Yes, our cities still have a pulse, and during the festivals we still celebrate one cannot deny that the heart of the city is strong. A pulse, though, is simply the clinical, base indicator of life. What marks a higher form of vitality, and what many of our cities lack, is a healthy rhythm (Mumford 1961, 444-45). The downfall of Rome points to this distinction. As Mumford speaks of the devotion to arena, theater, and bath (Mumford 1961, 230-32), he reveals that, while urban circuses may be used to resuscitate the city, they cannot cure the underlying disease. Museums and stadiums may appear lasting, but kill the city and they too will decay. Rhythm, by contrast, develops in the intimate relationships between people, among the workaday interactions of family, friends, and even strangers. As these associations form neighborhoods and boroughs and create their own variety of space and meaning, they become more profound than even the grandest of spectacle, and they create a permanent, living link between our current existence and the generations of the past.

The true crisis, then, is that too many of our cities have broken from their pasts; they have forgotten that they sprang from a field of villages. The core city of any large metropolis may function as the center for transportation, business, or public spectacle, and we gather there as passers-through, workers, or tourists. But the gathering is only numerical. Our skyscrapers, arenas, marketplaces, and thoroughfares can accommodate a greater concentration of people than ever before, and still the association feels forced and hollow. Our relationship with the city becomes at best an illicit affair, at worst a one-night stand, and we inevitably return to our true home in some far-flung suburb. And there the situation is barely better, for in attempting to find freedom from the anonymous congestion and impersonal crowding of the city, most have accepted a suburban fabric marked by anonymous houses in an impersonal landscape. Mumford witnessed this devolution and reacts to it with an affecting sadness, captured best when he quotes Alexis de Tocqueville: “Each of them living apart, is a stranger to the fate of all the rest—his children and his private friends constitute to him the whole of mankind; as for the rest of his fellow-citizens, he is close to them but he sees them not; he touches them, but he feels them not; he exists but in himself and for himself alone” (Mumford 1961, 513).

At this juncture it is tempting to object that advances in communication have largely cured this condition. Indeed, the symptoms have somewhat subsided. The “whole of mankind” is now potentially as broad as one wishes—indeed, it can span the entire globe. The ability to engage as an informed citizen, even if less directly than in societies past, is at least more accessible. But what has this freedom brought? As of yet, very little. As Mumford points out, “freedom” in the Middle Ages...
meant freedom from feudalism, to favor the communal activities of the town; under capitalism, it meant freedom for profit, “without any reference to the community as a whole” (Mumford 1961, 415). In the information age, we now have the advantage of a worldwide community, but our reference to it is so attenuated that it only marginally impacts our rampant individualism, if at all. We have an unprecedented freedom of thought and expression, but our world does not foster the creativity and intellect needed to give full meaning to this freedom. Mumford frequently emphasizes the importance of the quality and quantity of human interaction because “the dramatic dialogue is both the fullest symbol and the final justification of the city’s life. For the same reason, the most revealing symbol of the city’s failure, of its very non-existence as a social personality, is the absence of dialogue—not necessarily a silence, but equally the loud sound of a chorus uttering the same words in cowed if complacent conformity” (Mumford 1961, 117-18).

Yet there is something to be said for the knitting together of our world, even if by electronic, impersonal means. For as we face “what is wrong with our cities,” the question is now more universal than ever before, and perhaps the solutions likewise become more recognizable. The agents of globalization—the domination of capitalism, the multinational corporation, the rise of the internet, and the increase in rapid travel—have drawn metropolises worldwide into closer resemblance. When writing The City in History, Mumford may have concentrated on western civilizations, but in a world without borders—and, more importantly, one in which the western model of urban and regional form has been the most heavily exported—his observations remain universal.

For all the efficiencies and profits of the unbridled capitalist city, we now see that it has had less-tangible, long-term costs. Mumford was acutely aware decades ago that the capitalist city relied on creative destruction as its lifeblood (Mumford 1961, 414-15), and now we appear to be realizing that the collection of our self-centered actions ultimately damages our planet, our cities, our communities, and—by logical extension—our individual selves.

In the final analysis, then, Mumford does his readers an important service by reminding them that the good of a city lies less in its ability to produce profit or be an efficient laborer in the global market, than in its ability to nurture the human person in all his various associations and enterprises. In short, it must embrace the village ideal in order to move beyond it. This was Mumford’s key observation; his greatest gift is to invite us to share his passion—to not only examine our urban surroundings, but then to act on these observations by using the vast potential of our technologies, ambitions, and connectedness for the greater good (Mumford 1961, 570-71). Importantly, this invitation is not for the cavalier urban planner, crusading as one man against the tide. The sheer size of the urban complex demands a more unified front. For while “responsible public direction working for well-conceived public ends is essential for the foundation and development of all urban communities” (Mumford 1961, 444), “[t]he solo voice of the planner … could never take the place of all the singers in a civic chorus” (Mumford 1961, 350).

Works Cited

Sprawl: A Compact History

Robert Bruegmann’s *Sprawl* adds a necessary, though not flawless, point of view to the historic debate about urban growth and the implications of sprawl. Bruegmann’s extensive literature review—which also provides the reader with a useful compendium of resources on the topic—details several eras of sprawl and in a three-part historical narrative focusing on three broad periods of debate: pre-World War I, the Postwar Years through the 1970s, and the years following the 1970s. Examples include arguments from the United States and countries from all over the world, but the book focuses on affluent society in the United States, Paris, and London.

While previous literature by seminal authors such as Lewis Mumford attacks sprawl as the root of all that is aesthetically unpleasing, criminal, and diseased, Bruegmann, quite refreshingly, does not believe sprawl deserves the negative connotation historically attached to it. It is also quite apparent from each new wave of sprawl that its combatants had learnt little from previous campaigns. Although opponents of sprawl tell us it is undesirable and that people prefer high densities and city sidewalks, Bruegmann demonstrates that all countries mentioned in the book contain sprawl, and he posits that it would not be as prevalent if it were not the lifestyle preferred by many residents throughout the world.

Bruegmann does an excellent job pointing out the shortcomings and faulty viewpoints of others; however, he provides no empirical evidence to support his own assertions. Many of his statements throughout the book are too idyllic. For example, Bruegmann declares technology, rather than resource conservation, to be the savior for the future of mankind. In many instances it appears that he believes in a dream where all the development on exurban and rural land uses green technology to decrease negative impacts on the natural environment.

Members of the planning community should make themselves aware of the attention this book received. Activities of planners and the traditional causes they support are frequently criticized in many sections of the book. For instance, Bruegmann makes many comments on the lack of efficiency and effectiveness of policies regarding transportation and defends the use of the automobile as a primary mode of transportation. He downplays the role the automobile plays in contributing to pollution and places doubt in the minds of readers that using public transportation is a solution to pollution problems.

If for no other reason, planners should add this book to their collection to serve as a reminder that most anti-sprawl policies and plans of the past have been championed by what Bruegmann and Michael Poulton deem the incumbents’ club—those who reside in the more elite and powerful echelons of society. This reminder challenges planners to develop creative solutions to land use problems that can benefit society as a whole rather than a select few.

- Amanda M. Goski
Brave New Neighborhoods – The Privatization of Public Space

In her book *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*, Margaret Kohn suggests that democratic politics are threatened by the disappearance of public space. By public space, Kohn means “a place that is owned by the government, accessible to everyone without restriction, and/or fosters communication and interaction…places that facilitate unplanned contacts between people” (11). The book is organized around three themes: privatization and political activity; segregation and public space; and the increasing difficulty of distinguishing public and private spaces. Throughout her work, Kohn uses case law to argue that taking away public space is an attempt to silence political views and ideas often not represented in the “corporate-dominated media.” From colleges and universities to airports, malls, post offices, parks, and ordinary city streets, Kohn forces her readers to think about how the privatization of space closes democratic discourse.

For planners, her critiques of New Urbanism, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and the regulation of homelessness should be of particular interest. Kohn sees New Urbanism as more than an architectural design (126). She challenges the notion of public space in New Urbanist developments as they are in fact privately-owned, and they often restrict access to parks, town squares, and other traditional public spaces from those who live outside the development. The author suggests that BIDs challenge democratic polity in that political influence in BIDs is a direct reflection of property values; they increase the business community’s political influence; and their private or non-profit status enables them to create more prohibitions on civil liberties. In her discussion of homelessness, Kohn takes a different direction in articulating how political and public discourse fades away. She critiques the practice of zoning homeless people out of public view by forcing them into certain areas of town (Los Angeles’s “Skid Row,” for example) and the practice of outlawing homeless behaviors, such as panhandling and begging. Here, Kohn attests that if the homeless are not provided opportunities to come into contact with other people, then “there is no chance that they will convince others to make the social changes necessary to meet [their] needs” (184). Planners often are influential in creating policies to address these issues, like the connection between New Urbanism and HUD’s HOPE VI public housing program, or the quasi public-private entities of BIDs and strategies to end homelessness. Kohn’s work provides useful insights to planners and others into how to assess these topics as they relate to restricting access to public space.

The only drawback of this work is that the author is too theoretical in discussing democracy, religious freedom, and the difference of opinions about how to address homelessness. Readers would benefit from examples of planning or design initiatives that work to preserve public space—something that Kohn omits.

Otherwise, Kohn’s account of the different ways in which the privatization of public space infringes on American notions of democracy is well-crafted, smart, and vital to post-911 conversations that center on questions of democracy. What is particularly enticing about her work is that she challenges those seeking to preserve democracy to think about how restrictions on public spaces narrow our traditional ideas of democracy and how important the judiciary is and will be in determining what limitations we will accept. This book could be useful to many—audiences, architects, developers, planners, public officials, special interest groups, legal scholars, and everyday citizens.

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1 Margaret Kohn is an Associate Professor of Political Science at University of Florida, Gainesville.
Design Like You Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises

In his introduction to Design Like You Give a Damn, Cameron Sinclair explains that the purpose of his organization is to demonstrate, “that for every ‘celebrity architect’ there are hundreds of designers around the world, working under the ideal that it is not just how we build but what we build that truly matters” (31). Design Like You Give a Damn offers readers a summary of the last 100 years of humanitarian design and a sampling of recently-implemented or proposed design solutions for important social problems. Many of the concepts featured in this volume focus on issues related to rebuilding after disaster and upgrading slums. The use of visual and verbal information engages both architects and persons not formally trained in architecture who are interested in exploring humanitarian design concepts.

The “Housing” section comprises the majority of Design Like You Give A Damn. The summaries accompanying designs related to emergency and transitional housing solutions help explain the difficulties architects encounter when creating new housing of these specific types. Emergency and transitional solutions are critical to improving the quality of life for those displaced by natural disaster or war. However, the book’s emphasis on these particular forms of shelter overlooks important issues involving sanitation and reasonable permanent housing for the one billion people who live in slums worldwide. The Clean Hub System proposal, by John Gavin Dwyer of Shelter Architecture, is an example of a feasible sanitation project—a building powered with solar energy that provides clean water, toilets, and bathing facilities for hundreds of slum dwellers. Such solutions remind us that we must continue to generate new ideas and create solutions for the problems faced everyday, not just when isolated episodes of crisis occur.

Design Like You Give a Damn provides an introduction to both historical and recent humanitarian design projects for non-designers and highlights some of the difficulties architects encounter when trying to create feasible and affordable designs. The volume also provides professionals interested in humanitarian efforts with ideas for potential design partnerships and funding sources, and provides insight on construction-related costs and the viability of specific projects. Although each project is only briefly discussed, the information presented enables one to visually understand and respond to the work of others, allowing for a dialogue to unfold about the significance of design in the larger world.

The book does not directly offer advice about how to get involved in specific humanitarian efforts, but it provides a good overview of the impact design can have when searching for solutions to social problems. Cameron Sinclair’s introduction convincingly explains the importance of groups like Architecture for Humanity; he emphasizes that the design profession needs “to create an open-source network for innovative solutions while still protecting the rights of the designer” (31). If this occurs, Sinclair believes more architects will become involved in efforts to create more meaningful designs; architecture will do more than construct prettier places, it will improve lives.

- Kelly Koss

1 Architecture for Humanity is a charitable organization that was founded in 1999 to promote architectural and design solutions to global, social and humanitarian crises. More information is available at: http://architectureforhumanity.org
Nortonopolis is an exercise in organic urban design. That is, this figure/ground drawing was designed with no set plan or concept. Rather, the design and scale of each block is informed by the theoretical needs of its immediate surroundings. As a result, the urban street and block structure is irregular and highly responsive. Inspired by Christopher Alexander’s *A New Theory of Urban Design*, the drawing is meant to clearly communicate an example of “slow urbanism.” As finished, I was surprised and pleased to see that Nortonopolis has elements of Rome, New Orleans, Portland, and Venice.

- Mike Lydon
Graphic Notation of Vulnerability
Aaron Clausen

The project represents the various sensory experiences encountered while walking along the Huron River from the Medical Center to the Argo Dam. Using graphic notation, I documented and represented the sense of vulnerability as I moved along the river, specifically observing shadows, confinement and supervision—supervision that effectively prevents vulnerability from assault.

I chose graphic notation that was intended to mimic musical notation to illustrate the modulation of senses as one moves along the river, specifically the building and releasing of tension. I employed a five-line staff, using notation of vulnerability much like the musical symbols of crescendo and diminuendo to represent the modulation of the senses.
Agora: The Planning Journal of the University of Michigan is a publication of student work from the Urban and Regional Planning Program and the Urban Design Program at the University of Michigan. The Journal is intended for students to share their work within the A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning and with others outside the University. We encourage any and all submissions that explore and challenge issues related to planning in the good-natured spirit of a “marketplace of ideas.”

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