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Post War Destruction and Construction in the U.S.: Shaping a New Landscape and Way of Life

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Post War Destruction and Construction in the U.S.: Shaping a New Landscape and Way of Life

Abstract

After World War II, the U.S. embarked on a massive building initiative, creating housing where little or none had existed before outside of cities and tearing down existing housing in cities to replace it with new housing and commercial and cultural centers. Without the destruction of entire sections of cities wrought by the war in Europe, we created our own forms of destruction and (re)construction, significantly changing the landscape and, for many, the way of life.

Disciplines

Architecture

Comments

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public health fields each conceptualize and measure the built environment as it relates to health. The review across fields reveals not only gaps in scale and spatial boundaries, but also different conceptualizations of the mechanisms between place and health. To address these gaps, we explore possibilities for integrating methods across fields, as well as taking into account the structural and socio-demographic factors to come to a more holistic and picture of people and place.

Mobile Session

Chicago, My Retirement Community: Assessing Sustainable Aging in a Major Urban Center

Amber Joplin (Washington State University)

By 2030, the median age of Chicago residents could be over age 60 (overall US, the median age could be 65). How can this City sustainably prepare for 1.4 million aging retirees, considering individual well-being, economics, and the existing built environment? Unlike newer cities, Chicago has important walking and public transportation infrastructure in place; however, it also has older buildings and many stairs. Additional social realities include higher than average poverty, and diversity that includes many foreign born.

Sustainability concepts which seek to shape development by balancing the needs of people with those of the natural environment ought to provide a basis for design of built environments that meet human needs throughout the human lifespan. However the literatures of sustainability primarily address long-term impacts of the social, built and natural environments and largely overlook life-span needs of persons related to aging. Aging includes gains and losses in physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual arenas. Sustainability addresses economic, environmental and social spheres. Linking these contexts suggests a holistic approach to assessing the potential of a community to sustainably provide for residents over their life span.

This mobile session will take participants on a tour of a Chicago neighborhood in order to collaboratively assess sustainable aging potential. Participants will be given the option of using devices to simulate typical aging deficits, and will use public transportation. The

session will begin with an introduction to the *Sustainable Aging Matrix* (SAM), and will conclude with a debriefing session for feedback on the experience and the assessment tool.

Symposium

Post War Destruction and Construction in the U.S.: Shaping a New Landscape and Way of Life

Joseph Juhasz (University of Colorado),
Robert Flanagan (University of Colorado),
Karen Franck (New Jersey Institute of Technology),
Te-Sheng Huang (New Jersey Institute of Technology),
Lynn Paxson (Iowa State University)

After World War II, the U.S. embarked on a massive building initiative, creating housing where little or none had existed before outside of cities and tearing down existing housing in cities to replace it with new housing and commercial and cultural centers. Without the destruction of entire sections of cities wrought by the war in Europe, we created our own forms of destruction and (re)construction, significantly changing the landscape and, for many, the way of life.

In this symposium, presenters will explore different cases of such construction-destruction-and attendant changes in ways of life: Lincoln Center as an urban fortress, now perhaps with a slight door ajar to its neighbors; the attempt to "resettle" "Indians" in urban centers; and the Electric Remote Automatic Garage Door Opener as a fact and metaphor for a way of life that eliminated and destroyed neighborhoods.

The purpose of the symposium, aside from presenting these case studies, is to have a vigorous discussion of why these post-WWII initiatives of destruction and construction were considered, at the time, good things to do and why now we see them as serious problems that need addressing. How has the ideology of city and suburban life, of assimilation and separation, changed? And given the new beliefs, how are we attempting to change the landscape and way of life, and are we having any success?

Presentation #1: Once Closed, Now Open? The Case of Lincoln Center

Lincoln Center was a key and much acclaimed four-block section of an urban renewal project that, between 1958 and 1960, destroyed 48 acres of tenement housing on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The full 14-block Lincoln Square Urban Renewal Project also included Fordham Law School, the high-rent Lincoln Tower apartments, middle class housing, and the headquarters for the American Red Cross. The first building in the arts complex, Avery Fisher Hall was designed by Max Abramovitz of Harrison & Abramovitz and opened in 1962. When Lincoln Center was completed as a modernist super-block in 1969, following the master plan of architect Wallace Harrison, the buildings ringed several open spaces and largely turned their backs (and sometimes blank walls) to the adjacent neighborhood streets. One exception to this walling off of the city was the generous opening of the main plaza in front of the Metropolitan Opera House to Broadway, but even this was partially obscured by a double row of trees.

Originally a citadel in the city, the complex has recently been redesigned with the purpose of opening parts of it to adjacent streets. The designers are Diller Scofidio Renfro, allied with Fox & Fowle Architects, Cooper, Robertson & Partners as planners, Olin Partnership as landscape architects, L'Observatoire as lighting designers, and 2 x 4 as graphic designers. This presentation will give a brief social and design history of Lincoln Center, examining its original design features, the recent design changes, the rationale for both, and other possible reasons for the original and the new design features.

Presentation #2: Indians in the City: Another Attempt at Assimilation

While post-war development was reshaping mainstream urban and suburban environments and communities, there was also another parallel reshaping initiative going on with its own destructive and constructive forces. At this time, there was a large push from the federal government to get "Indians" to move off of reservations and into urban areas. Since previous government 'programs'—from wars to boarding schools—had neither eliminated nor assimilated Indigenous people, the 1940s introduced programs aimed at inducing them to move off reservation and into urban areas. Employment then, as now, was very limited on almost all reser-

vations, and treaty obligations were largely unmet. The carrot the federal government held out as inducement for relocating to large urban centers from largely rural reservation environments was well-paying employment and opportunities to improve the living conditions of one's family.

We see the impacts of these policies today in many western cities with relatively large indigenous populations, social and cultural breakdown issues from poverty, domestic violence, substance abuse, and suicide, to urban Indian centers, and cultural and language education and revitalization. This presentation will look at these policies, and retrospectively some of the social and cultural issues and some of the built environments that resulted from them, including some contemporary urban Indian centers.

Presentation #3: There Went the Neighborhood

The electric powered, remote controlled, power operated, automatic, no-hands, security enabled, garage door opener completed the total isolation of the American family. It was and is the key metaphor, the real technological gizmo, the "key" itself to understanding the disappearance of once vigorous neighborhoods in American cities. The drive-in house. The drive-in apartment house. The gated community... The Waste Land.

Indeed, central air conditioning, shopping centers, tearing up streetcar lines, suburban grids, super highways, etc, were of course additional factors—but the rumble of the opening garage door as mom drives up with the week's groceries in the trunk remains the death-bell. It is pretty clear that when "new urbanists" attempt to separate the garage from the house and re-establish the back alley, they recognize this problem. However, no amount of regressive utopian tinkering can undo the harm that has already been done. It is simply impossible to travel backward to formerly functional neighborhoods in this way.

It is easy in retrospect to see how the policies before and during WWII set in motion the destruction of previously functional urban neighborhoods. Back when they were functional, urban neighborhoods in North America had the characteristics of villages: racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural homogeneity and age, health, and life-cycle-stage heterogeneity. With the war, and especially after the war, policies led to a near inversion of these characteristics—with disastrous results.

The resultant is familial and individual isolation and alienation. The rumble of the garage door. Hermetically

sealed containers. Living in refrigerators. Solutions must be found that establish homogeneities and heterogeneities that are meaningful today and that unseal the dwelling and bring back the neighborhood.

Symposium

Bringing out the Best: Applying the Reasonable Person Model (RPM) in Educational Settings

Rachel Kaplan (University of Michigan),
Robert E. Grese (University of Michigan),
Abram W. Kaplan (Denison University),
Rebecca Ginsburg (University of Illinois),
Nancy M. Wells (Cornell University)

Well-intended efforts to make positive changes often leave considerable discontent in their wake. Examples can be found in many domains, including academic leadership, curriculum planning, teaching, designing public places, land use decisions, and even in soliciting public input. Conflict resolution may be useful, but avoiding conflicts would be better. The Reasonable Person Model (RPM) provides a framework for anticipating some difficulties and formulating mechanisms for avoiding them. RPM emphasizes the importance of sharing mental models, permitting meaningful action, and recognizing obstacles to clear-headedness.

While the presentations all concern aspects of educational contexts, they differ with respect to the domains of RPM that are emphasized and the degree to which the framework effectively meets the challenges of the situation.

Abram Kaplan offers a critical perspective of the model in the contexts of faculty working together to construct a new Environmental Studies Program and a course in which students use photography to conceptualize our food system. These disparate enterprises show commonalities in the art of administration and the administration of art: people do the right things for the wrong reasons, need a participatory process to foster clarity, and value sharing a piece of themselves in a public setting.

Robert Grese's presentation draws on landscape design studio approaches that encourage students to

involve users in the design process. Building skills for engaging people are as important as many other skills, but are often given little time in design studio teaching. Creative approaches for involving people in designs can be extremely rewarding for students and project clients alike.

Rebecca Ginsburg focuses on model building in the development and daily operations of a higher education program in a State of Illinois penitentiary. Program challenges include correctional culture itself, which privileges secrecy over transparency and obedience over exploration and questioning. Gaining the support of wary prison staff for the nontraditional program is made more difficult in this climate, which discourages both dialogue and innovation. The continuing disconnect between prison staff and educators threatens the program's longevity and success.

Rachel Kaplan considers the RPM framework in the context of designing and implementing the educational process of environmental design students. How can the curriculum be structured to build mental models? How does the process foster a sense of competence and assure that efforts help generate meaningful outcomes?

The discussant, Nancy Wells, will draw on some common themes: small steps and small experiments toward major outcomes; working with individuals who are impacted by plans; and the three domains of RPM for accomplishing desired outcomes. Respecting human nature may, in the long run, lead to achieving big plans without sacrificing goodwill.

Symposium

Bringing Out the Best in People: Can Urban Greening Help?

Stephen Kaplan (University of Michigan),
Gordon Bradley (University of Washington),
William Sullivan (University of Illinois), Robert
Ryan (University of Massachusetts, Amherst),
Lynne Westphal (USDA Forest Service)

"Make No Little Plans" describes the sweeping innovations that originated in Chicago, which likely began as "small steps that made a big difference." This symposium introduces the Reasonable Person Model (RPM) as a way of thinking about these accomplishments in