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Persistence, Adaptation and Diversity

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Persistence, Adaptation and Diversity

Abstract
Traditions aren't static. They change and adapt over time to various circumstances. Cultures and identities are always evolving. It's instructive to look at what aspects of cultures and identities persist over time and what aspects of other cultures maybe 'assimilated' or 'acculturated' into the existing belief structure of another culture.

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Paxson, Lynn (Iowa State University, IA), Saile, David (University of Cincinnati, OH), Juhasz, Joseph (University of Colorado, Boulder, CO) and Martinez, Rubén (University of Texas, San Antonio, TX). PERSISTENCE, ADAPTATION AND DIVERSITY.

Traditions aren’t static. They change and adapt over time to various circumstances. Cultures and identities are always evolving. It’s instructive to look at what aspects of cultures and identities persist over time and what aspects of other cultures may be ‘assimilated’ or ‘acculturated’ into the existing belief structure of another culture. One often hears laments concerning globalization and the concern that it will result in the erasure of all diversity and difference. In fact the experience of much of the world’s colonized peoples demonstrates that this is not so. With increased globalization how do groups ‘maintain their identity’? How do issues like language, religion, spatial patterns, attitudes toward land or land ethics, and knowledge (or ways of knowing) figure into cultural identity and difference? What is fundamental or a fundamental part of identity as opposed to something merely on or at the surface? What role does education play with respect to the persistence of identity and diversity? The three presenters in this session will each explore these issues with different cultural or sub-cultural groups, and the presentations will provide material for launching a lively discussion amongst all the participants. 05-283a

- Paxson, Lynn (Iowa State University, IA) and Saile, David (University of Cincinnati, OH). AMERICAN INDIAN CULTURE AND IDENTITY.

For more than 500 years the native populations of the Americas have been impacted by contact from ‘outside cultures’. They have been subjected and impacted by very directed and persistent efforts geared to efforts have had enormous impact others seem to have hardly ‘made a dent’. This presentation will explore what aspects of various cultures have persisted, what aspects have been assimilated and which ones rejected as well as what has been transformed or incorporated in some mutated fashion. 05-283b

- Juhasz, Joseph B. (University of Colorado, CO). PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE: IMPLOSION AND MUTATION.

The balance between continuity and change that is required for long time viability of cultures brings into question easy and comfortable notions about diversity on the one hand and sustainability on the other. Although it is generally only in hindsight that one knows which is the right habit to change and what is the invisible underpinning of one’s actions that had better remain unexposed it is a known fact that cultures invariably change and that social systems have no long term sustainability in the usual sense; it is equally well known that one cannot keep exposing inconsistencies nor can one really create global uniformity or hegemony. For Environmental Design the significance of these well understood but often forgotten or ignored verities lies in the concepts of implosion and mutation both of which describe rapid and sometimes cataclysmic change from which or for which major new systems emerge. The concept of mutation brings into view the time-bound nature of human settlements and our need to be able to see them as processes rather than entities. 05-283c

Paxson, Lynn (Iowa State University, IA), Juhasz, Joseph (University of Colorado, Boulder, CO), Hohmann, Heidi (Iowa State University, IA), Kyber, Ashley (Iowa State University, IA), Robinson, Clare (Iowa State University, IA). NEGOTIATED STORIES IN PUBLIC SPACE.

Design professionals and environmental social scientists understand the human modified environment as a material production of cultures. As a result, we also support the idea of spaces as communicative. The contextually defined relations between objects, places, and people communicate the values, decisions, and choices made throughout a broadly defined process of placemaking. Places have meanings, they tell stories. Thus “narrating” is one aspect or part of deCerteau’s conception of spatial practices (de Certeau, 1984, xiv). Yet because values differ, the same place may tell different stories to different people. The site of a battle tells different stories to the victor than it does the vanquished. Who controls the stories that a site communicates, and how the spatial stories empower, or disempower, certain factions, groups, or publics is an issue of control and power in public spaces. Consequently, spatial stories are often contested and bitter battles can ensue when “official” site narratives conflict with “ unofficial” narratives.