Diversity and its importance to achieving equitable and sustainable environments

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Diversity and its importance to achieving equitable and sustainable environments

Abstract
It is interesting that in the field of ecology the importance of diversity—of species, and genepools within a species, etc.—to form long term sustainability or viability of ecosystems has long been recognized while in social, cultural, and political areas the importance of concepts such as diversity or plurality seem less universally recognized. Equitable environments are at least in part those which support and encourage diversity. At EDRA 20 the issue of diversity was a reoccuring theme of many of the working groups. They envisioned diversity as an important aspect of EDRA, our future work (research, practice, etc.), and the potential relevance of each of these aspects. This workshop will provide one potential forum for the continuing exploration of this issue. In order to launch the workshop discussion organizers will make brief presentations to introduce the concept of diversity as an important issue in numerous specific aspects of the creation and maintenance of both equitable and sustainable environments.

Disciplines
Architecture

Comments
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DIVERSITY AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO ACHIEVING EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

It is interesting that in the field of ecology the importance of diversity - of species, and gene pools within a species, etc. - to long term sustainability or viability of ecosystems has long been recognized, while in social, cultural and political areas the importance of concepts such as diversity or plurality seems less universally recognized. Equitable environments are at least in part those which support and encourage diversity. At EDRA 20 the issue of diversity was a reoccurring theme of many of the working groups. They envisioned diversity as an important aspect of EDRA, our future work (research, practice etc.), and the potential relevance of each of these aspects. This workshop will provide one potential forum for the continuing exploration of this issue. In order to launch the workshop discussion organizers will make brief presentations to introduce the concept of diversity as an important issue in numerous specific aspects of the creation and maintenance of both equitable and sustainable environments.

"The Importance of Being Diverse - Publicness in Public Space[J]." Public spaces vary in the degree of publicness they possess and exhibit; the greater the diversity of people and activities allowed and manifested in a space, the greater its publicness. Diversity of activities and people means that a range of diversity is tolerated and encouraged, including some users and activities that would be considered on the things of acceptability. The concept of publicness is based in part on the assumption that face-to-face interaction between diverse types of people is valuable and that many different public spaces should provide for such interaction or, at least, for the co-presence of such diversity. Culturally we do not tolerate a celebration of difference very well and our knack record for designing spaces that "afford" encourage, or support homogeneity seems boundless.

Equity Problems When Using Suburban Development Models: Based on research efforts over the past few years, it has become obvious that suburban cultural characteristics of anonymity and privacy are recurring factors in examining rural, small town, suburban and urban environments in the Midwest. As population declines, rural and small town lifestyles more and more resemble suburban patterns of activity, differing only in distance, as people rely upon an enlarging geographic area for factors normally associated with neighborhoods. The transfer of suburban models for development by both public and private agencies has resulted in economically and socially segregated urban centers. Suburban characteristics are apparent in all three scales of environment, acting to diminish regional identification and contributing to a difficulty in place-making. In contrast to the concept that place does not matter, as it has been replaced by a world of electronic communications, emerging research concerns the design of urban settings that strengthen community identity and that serve as learning environments for regaining the civility and positive cultural development associated with urban life.

The Legacy of Cold War Architecture in Shaping Our Communal Sense of Diversity: What is the legacy of cold war architecture. How has it affected the definition and desirability of 'diversity' in our society/culture. How will this impact our ability to create equitable and sustainable environments in the post cold war era.

Diversity of Housing and Households as a Necessary Component of Both Equitability and Sustainability: The demographics of America indicate that more than 75% of all households are not "nuclear" families with one working parent, and there is great variety in the types of "households" that do exist; yet the options for housing including type, location, access, and availability are quite limited. More diverse options both in terms of type and policy do exist as models, especially in other locations. No equitable or sustainable long term communities or environments are possible without addressing housing issues.

Following these brief presentations the workshop organizers will facilitate a discussion among all the workshop participants, of the wider implications and importance of diversity. In order to facilitate the chance for all attendees to participate in the discussion, depending on the size of the group size, the workshop organizers may opt to break into smaller groups for a portion of the session and then regroup for a final overall summary. It is hoped that the discussion will be broad (diverse). While the discussion alone is valuable and would have potential impact through the future work of participants, it is also hoped
FIRST AMENDMENT USES OF PUBLIC SPACE: MANIPULATION THROUGH DESIGN?

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ABSTRACT

The concept of the free exchange of ideas, as embodied in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, underpins our notion of a government that works not by consensus or fiat, but by conflict between differing opinions and resolution by secret ballot. Part and parcel of that concept is that not only the vote but the information that leads to decisions in the country ought to be open to all and all should be able to express their opinions. In this way anyone may be able to influence their fellow citizens, regardless of the speaker’s resources and station in life.

Access to others is critical in order to influence fellow citizens, or “petition for redress of grievances” to the government. Technology and population growth in the country have drastically changed access to others, but the bottom line for those with the funds to reach out through the mass media is still where citizens move in public. Public thoroughfares and gathering places where masses of people pass by or through are the poor person’s podium, where his or her message can be presented to others in hope of generating support. It is always those most marginal persons who, having limited resources, who make use of these spaces that have multiple purposes. As non-dedicated space it poses issues in terms of appropriate uses and allocation of space among persons using limited space resources. It is those who, what, when, where, and why issues that rest most heavily upon the simple phrase of the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Until the 1930’s questions of First Amendment activity in public places seldom came before the U.S. Supreme Court. In the 1930’s it was evangelical groups whose activities became the focus of the initial cases of a ground swell of speech activity cases that came through the Federal Courts. The were followed by cases dealing with ethnic and racial friction in the late 30’s and 40’s, then a number inspired by the Civil Rights movement in the 1960’s, the Anti-War movement in the late 60’s and early 70’s, and so on until today.

The movement of the judicial decisions in these cases has been to line out the grounds for deciding the appropriate limits, if any, to the individual’s expression of his or her ideas and what constitutes protected activity under the First Amendment’s notion of expressive activity. If one were to define the course of legal doctrine it would have to be that of a slow movement towards clearer and more exhaustive grounds for making determinations in these situations. There is an accretive character to the law relying as it does upon precedent and tradition. When this pattern is combined with legal trends to avoid precedent unless necessary and to rule on the narrowest grounds possible in the question it is possible to understand the conservatively glacial and, at times, convoluted nature of legal doctrine.

One implication of this means for rendering intelligible and consistent of group decisions is that the process and concepts used in the decision making process will always lag behind changes in the structure and ideas of the social system, along with the technologies that it will use to construct itself and its environment. The gap that occurs between the legal process and the society in which it exists provides opportunities for exploitation and administratively capricious decisions. It is at one of these gaps that our current society stands in reference to First Amendment activity.

A factor compounding this gap are conflicts in the legal community about how to treat the language of the Constitution. There are proponents of strict construction and original intent now on the Court, who are now amongst those on the Supreme Court, something distinctly at variance with what I would characterize as the historic context interpreters of the Constitution who have been on the bench for the past 40 or more years. These alternate approaches open the possibility of even wider gaps between the everyday reality of the social world, and legal doctrine. Taken even to a limited degree, an original intent approach to First Amendment activity would look at what the writers of the Constitution had in mind when writing the