Negoiated Stories in Public Space

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Negoiated Stories in Public Space

Abstract
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.

Disciplines
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Comments
welfare regimes (Nordic – Sweden; liberal – UK; continental – Germany; transformational – Hungary, Latvia) within the ENABLE-AGE project, together with an evaluation of EU level initiatives. This involved a systematic review of policy, based on common data collection template, covering general health, social welfare and housing policies and policies relating to older people specifically. The policy analysis suggested five key issues: (1) How do barriers and accessibility in the home affect the lives of older people? (2) How does the home environment impact on health and well-being? (3) How does the home hinder or facilitate social participation? (4) Are community services effective in supporting independent living at home? (5) How do different welfare regimes impact on the housing circumstances of older people in Europe? Data from the ENABLE-AGE project provides the basis for evidence-based policy recommendations for the development of European policy on older people. 05-271f

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 ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturization’. While some of these 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. 05-283e

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 to 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.
perceived by other user groups. This symposium presents a number of case studies that examine the narrative nature of public space. Ashley Kyber will use a landscape scale public art installation and its accompanying community process in East St. Louis to examine some of these issues. Heidi Hohmann will look at the negotiated stories within a relatively new venue, that of ‘Cancer Survivor Parks’, while Clare Robinson will explore the stories being negotiated in the development and design of 9/11 memorials. Lynn Paxson will use the controversy over the interpretation and presentation in the recently opened Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian to consider these issues. Joe Juhasz’s presentation will consider the stories of several student community design projects from various points of view. In addition to examining different stories (What do sites say, and how do they “tell” their stories?) the session will examine the power relationships inherent in choosing site narratives and methods of site interpretation. Who gets to decide whose story is told? Can the narrating of stories be negotiated by multiple factions and if so, how? What methods have been used to express multiple stories in a single space and which of these have been most successful? This symposium will examine, these and other questions, and encourage audience participation and discussion in looking for answers. 05-284a

• Kyber, Ashley (Iowa State University, IA). SCULPTING LANDSCAPES AND SHAPING PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH RITUAL AND STORY.

In post-industrial landscapes, from the automotive industry to the meatpacking industry ritual is used to invoke a collective memory of the community ties these “working landscapes” provided in establishing a “sense of place” for factory workers manufacturing products for an increasingly global marketplace. Factories were often “cultural anchors” which defined the role of labor in a community. As global trade trends dislocated these neighborhood “icons of industry,” communities face a loss beyond economic and environmental degradation. This presentation will use the Rituals Rites and Reclamation project, a landscape scale installation sculpture series in St. Louis, MO./East St. Louis, IL that addresses these community development issues as a case study to further explore and discuss. These temporal and permanent works, set within the Eades Bridge Metro environment, act as one sculpture bridging the Mississippi and acting to reference the river’s presence in this community and the bridge’s influence on the social, environmental, and historical context of greater St. Louis. The undertone of the work is about just that, succession, ecological, industrial, and in turn cultural. As the riparian ecology of the Mississippi River has been shape-shifted from a dynamic living system to leved, channeled, canalled, and ultimately dammed, so has the living ecology of the East Saint Louis neighborhood. The installation works are accompanied by collaborative cross-disciplinary “community performances.” Performance work is choreographed in collaboration with ‘local’ musicians, storytellers, performing artists, community members and grass-root organizations. Communal acts bind individuals and therefore work to “heal” the fractured “postindustrial” state of community failed industry has left in its wake. In sharing story, communities honor and “bear witness” to their collective history. Additionally, installations and performances evoke a collective energy that can be focused into growth and development strategies. Neighborhood pride provides a “place” for future potential to take hold and prosper. Performances help diverse communities identify with their likeness in diversity rather than their competitive differences. In reshaping the frequency by which a community views its dynamic relationships, community members redefine their ‘place’ in the neighborhood as empowered community-builders. 05-284b

• Hohmann, Heidi (Iowa State University, IA). CANCER SURVIVOR PARKS: PUBLIC STORIES, PUBLIC SPACES AND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS.

This presentation will examine a recent design phenomenon, the Cancer Survivor Park, as a locus of negotiated stories in the landscape. These urban parks, funded by the R. A. Bloch Cancer Survivor Foundation, propose to bring the triumphant story of cancer survivors to light by building six to ten parks nationwide every year. While well-intentioned, the resulting parks, which follow a rigid interpretive dictate by the foundation, raise important questions about how stories are told in public space. For example, whose cancer stories should be told and how should they be told? Can a private message create a truly public space? Can a park convey potentially frightening information about health concerns? And finally, are the stories being told the stories the public is hearing? To examine these questions, this presentation will compare the Cancer Survivor Park ‘typology’ to other interpretive spaces and to other ways of communicating medical information to the public. 05-284c


On September 21, 2004 after more than a decade of planning, preparation and design, the Smithsonian NMAI opened its doors. Although there has been some
controversy over the building design itself, there has been some greater controversy over the “content” of the museum – the displays the choice of objects and the interpretation provided. This presentation will present and discuss some of the stories told, as well as some of those that are not told. These controversies swirl around the differences in worldviews (epistemologies) between Native Americans/American Indians/First Peoples/First Nations and mainstream/non-indigenous people as well as around the diversity among Native Americans/ American Indians/First Peoples/First Nations groups.

Juhasz, Joseph B (University of Colorado, Boulder, CO). BLOOD AND SOIL IN DENVER. This presentation will discuss the stories of six student projects in Colorado. The projects will be used to explore the concept of “Community Development” from the perspective that “community” should refer to something stronger than temporal affinity, that “development” should refer to something other than short term economic gain, that “conflict” is not a sign of “lack of development” nor of “lack of community”, and that perceived differences between human beings need not merely be “social constructions”. 05-284d

Rottle, Nancy (University of Washington, WA). URBAN ECOLOGICAL DESIGN: EXPLORING POTENTIALS OF BIODIVERSITY AND HUMAN CONNECTION TO PLACE.

In our increasingly diverse cities a new aspect of diversity is gaining ground—that of ecological and biodiversity. The need for contact with nearby nature is a growing theme in the literature, with documentation of restorative benefits, stronger self-esteem and mastery, increased attention and enhanced learning capability (Kaplan and Taylor et al, Kuo and Faber Taylor). Connections people make with nature through direct experiences are necessary for building ecological literacy (Orr). Concurrently, there is concern that people, especially children, are spending less time in natural environments (Moore), that as we lose biodiversity places over time we won’t know the difference due to “environmental generational amnesia” (Kahn); and that urban children may develop phobias of natural environments (Bixler et al), subsequently missing a lifetime of nature’s potential benefits. Equitable access to healthy ecological environments often is lacking for people who live in highly urbanized environments, an issue of environmental justice. How do designers create appropriate ecological diversity for urban environments, while optimizing opportunities for citizens of all ages, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to engage in, learn from and benefit from contact with such settings? Design that effectively enhances biodiversity and habitat while connecting people to it demands site-particular knowledge of natural processes, ecological parameters and biological requirements. Similarly, grounding in human needs, preferences, perceptions and learning is required to inform design that will engage diverse users. The urban ecological designer aims to synthesize the ends of the spectrum. While research informs design, the iterative actions of design can also act as a form of research, providing new ideas and environments for empirical testing. This symposium explores ways that urban biological diversity can be created and enhanced, experienced and understood by diverse users through the design of parks and outdoor spaces. It underscores the role of research in supporting design, and the use of design as a research tool. Laura Ballock (University of Washington, WA) considers an entire watershed as an organism, seeking to both heal and reveal its relationships. Taking a phenomenological perspective, she offers a framework of systems designed to incite interactions that mend healthy natural processes and catalyze human connections to the creek and watershed. Nancy Rottle and Julie Johnson (University of Washington, WA) describe development of design for biodiversity and environmental learning in one of Seattle’s large urban parks. They introduce their study of a pilot outdoor learning program in habitat areas—a “pre-occupancy analysis”—to inform park design that fosters multicultural educational engagement with new wetlands. Marin Bjork (University of Washington, WA) examines elements of ecocitizenship through a project that incorporates history and estuarine processes into a design for an ecorevelatory shoreline park with innovative nearshore habitat enhancement and interpretive methods. Jan Satterthwaite (Bruce Dees Associates, WA) balances oft-opposing values in designs for four police station demonstration gardens, exemplifying design that functions as habitat but also addresses security needs, providing a multi-faceted model for urban nature. (ecological design, biodiversity, ecocitizenship, pre-occupancy analysis, outdoor environments). 05-263a

• Ballock, Laura (University of Washington, WA). FREE WOODARD CREEK! POETRY, LOGIC AND DESIGN FOR HEALING AND REVEALING A WATERSHED.

Like biological systems within the human body, systems of an urban watershed serve diverse, yet complementary functions that amount to more than the sum of their parts. No one piece can be understood in a vacuum. Designing with a watershed perspective considers the human community, the animal dwellers, the hydrology, the topography and their collective interactions as diverse players in the organism of a watershed. This design aims to heal and reveal an urban watershed as a holistic physician would seek to understand the poetry and logic of life while healing the human body. Conditions of Woodard Creek Watershed in Homer, Alaska drove the design concept of healing and revealing the landscape,