Communities in Conflict:
Conflicts in Community

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The town-and-gown divide defines the spatial relationship between the university and its context. This paper looks at this relationship through a close reading of the term "community" as applied to a particular case study: the location and design of the University of Illinois at Chicago. It suggests that we must consider not only the physical and social relationship to the community in which campuses sit, but also the idea of community that the campus represents.

The paper provides a historical reading of the development of Netsch's "campus city" for UIC, offering a critique of the urban planning principles from which it is derived and an analysis of the conflicts over its siting. It looks at the work of early feminist activists who used the idea of community against modern planning's excesses but also the writings of contemporary feminist authors who question the ideal of social and physical community as they explore conflicting identities within urban space. This contemporary work can be applied to the recent redesign of the UIC campus and is particularly important today as "the campus" is increasingly held up as a model for urban design, and universities are engaged in urban development of their own.

INTRODUCTION

> What I really want to say is that I am truly sorry that we are in conflict. I have no stomach for battles with anyone, particularly with people like yourself who have devoted a lifetime to education. Unfortunately, we in the Near West Side are in the position of opposing the University and the city government. It is unavoidable. Naturally, our real quarrel is with the Mayor [Richard J. Daley] and his advisers, but he keeps aloof from it all and pretends not to notice us. We are forced to attack in another way and so we must challenge your plans. This must go on until one of us is removed from the scene.
>
> – Mrs. Florence Scala, April 9, 1961

The word "community" can describe both an organization of individuals with a shared identity or a discrete space shared by these individuals. The elision of the two definitions — one social, the other spatial — contains a contested condition. Early feminist critics such as Jane Jacobs promoted the idea of "community" as a response to the faceless and technocratic condition of modern society, but more recent feminist writings have begun to look at the ideologies and exclusions that lurk behind the use of this term. This paper uses the design of an urban campus, the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (UICC)[1], as a case study illustrating the nature of the contest over the public space of the city, our changing and conflicted notions of community, and the way these two affect the physical design of the academic environment and ultimately pedagogy itself.

In her "personal note" to the vice president of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Norman Parker, Florence Scala addressed the town-gown relationship made extreme by urban conditions. Scala, often described as a "housewife," was the vocal leader of the Harrison-Halsted Community Group that opposed the decision to devote a Chicago Land Clearance site to the new University. Her name will not go down in history in the same way as those of social worker Jane Addams or author Jane Jacobs. Yet for three years her organization in the Near West Side of Chicago, made famous both as the home of Mrs. O'Leary's hapless cow and Jane Addams' Hull House Settlement, waged a battle in the streets and press of the city to save their neighborhood from destruction. The battle came to an official end in May 1963 when the United States Supreme Court rejected the appeal to declare the government actions illegal. Scala, with whom the conflict was most closely associated, not only stands as one example of the radicalization of women during those tumultuous times, but her grassroots organizing, interethnic coalition building, and insights into the nature of urban conflict, help to identify sources of tension in our definitions of democracy, community, and the city that predate the contemporary discourse on spatial politics and the restructuring of cities. These discourses[2] gain greater strength when applied to an example explored over a period spanning both modem and postmodern planning and urban design.

COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT

The site selection process offers a way of reading conflicting definitions of the city overlaid on the urban map.' The potential to house the campus did not mean the same thing to all communities. The residents of Riverforest, a suburb at the western edge of the city, were overwhelmingly against acquiring the campus fearing a disruption of their neighborhoods which an influx of urban students and traffic would cause. Although the University of Illinois Trustees favored a suburban site, the focus turned to the city sites when the mayor offered to pay any additional land acquisition costs. Garfield Park at the western end of the city became the Trustees second choice but would have entailed a land transference that would have to be tested in court. The residents of the Austin neighborhood adjacent to the park were in favor of the campus because it was seen as a potential buffer between Austin to the west and an influx of largely African-American residents to the east. This community saw the revitalization potential of the university and no homes would be destroyed to build it. Although acreage and transportation were the initiating features of the site selection, economics, class, and race became the basis of the political conflict that ensued.

The university's desire for a low-rise campus necessitated a large, clear site. The mayor officially offered the Harrison-Halsted land clearance site in the fall of 1960 when it became clear that none of the other urban sites could be delivered in time for the campus to open in fall 1963. Portions of the site were already cleared for neighborhood initiated residential redevelopment, an effort begun the late 1940s. As the university began to analyze the site the local community began their protests, and Scala, who was already active in the earlier community projects, rose to a position of leadership. The protests were not against the university per se, but over the loss of homes, the Hull House Settlement, and most importantly, self-determination. The Harrison-Halsted Community Group organized marches in the neighborhood and the loop, met with the mayor, held sit-ins in the mayor's office and protests outside his home, attempted to attract the attention of national leaders, and ultimately raised the funds and organized to mount the legal battle. The group consisted of Italian, Mexican, African-American, and Greek residents," but the Italian women were out in front and the fight was closely identified with the person of Scala. The press portrayed their battle as one of neighborhood bound tradition versus progress, and images of the women's protests (occasionally the suppers served at their sit-ins were described in the news accounts) were often contrasted with images of the students.

Although we tend to see the use of the media as adistinctly postmodern political condition, it played an important role in this conflict, if not in the final outcome.[5] For the debate was fought as much in and for the press as in the spaces of the city. The battle was seen as one of a new university versus dilapidated homes, students versus women and Mexicans (standing for the "ethnics" of the neighborhood), the city

Fig. 1. Harrison-Halsted Community Group Protest.

versus the neighborhood, rationality versus emotion, and progress versus the past. As the feminist author Iris Marion Young has pointed out these terms are typically seen in opposition and given a hierarchical reading: "The first term designates the positive unity on the inside, the second, less-valued term designates the leftover outside."[6] The women — "Our Bodies Will Block Your Bulldozers"[7] — brought "emotion," "desire," and "affinity." previously seen as private, into the public realm threatening its unity and reason. (Fig. 1) The protests introduced identity and the body into a space that was supposed to be ruled by impartiality. After the bombing of Scala's home in fall 1962, WBBM-TV (CBS) commentator John Madigan called for restraint and respect for law and

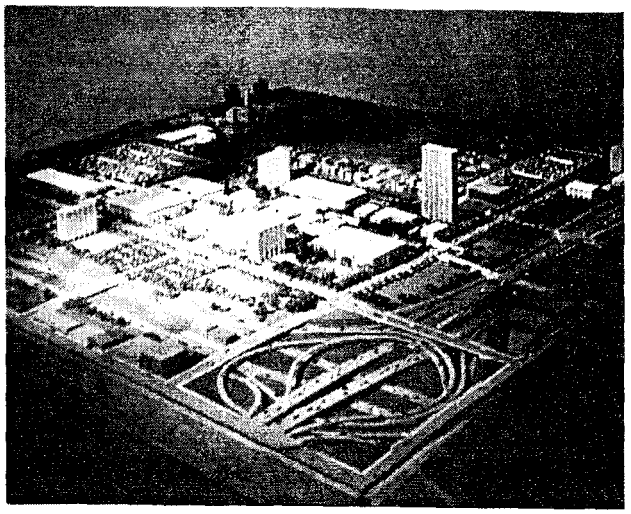

Fig 2. University of Illinois at Chicago Circle model (UIC Archives).

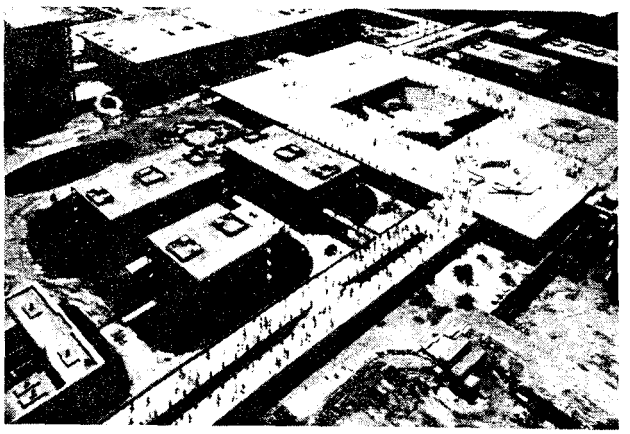

Fig. 3. Campus Forum and Walkways (UIC Archives).

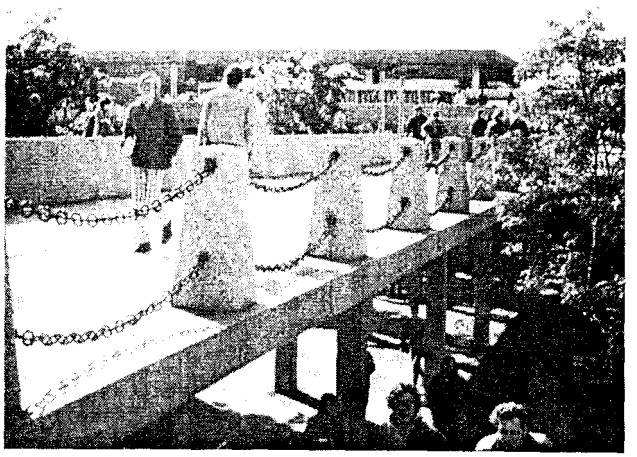

Fig. 4. Walkways (UIC Archives)

order, directing his comments at Scala, not the unknown bombers.[8] Scala, however, was a woman of reason. and the document attached to her letter to Parker carefully deconstructed the root of the problem: an urban site within a dense city and a nonurban organizational model were mutually exclusive. She and her advisors suggested that for an urban campus the University should consider urban architectural form, adense collection of mid- and high-rise buildings, better suited to integration with the space of the city and easier to site.'

If we construe the campus as its architect, Walter Netsch of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill did, not only as a "microenvironment of a twentieth-century city"" but as a unique opportunity to test the planning principles that might underscore such a city, we may note a number of relationships between UICC and the last moments of modern urban planning. The campus was analogous in form and function to an "open city," first conceived in response to the transformations of the nineteenth-century industrial city and culminating in the downtown business centers and residential suburbs of the modern American city in the middle of this century. It featured a focus on circulation. buildings as objects rather than fabric. functional differentiation of building types, a "hub" that is an empty center, and most importantly commutation from outlying suburbs. (Fig. 2) The UICC campus sat within the regional city enabled by the National Highway Act of 1956. No direct connection or integration was made with the surrounding neighborhood; elevated walkways formed bridges from the peripheral parking lots and the el to the center of the campus.

The design of the campus itself devolves into a utilitarian solution hardened into a monumental environment. As no single solution would resolve all problems of propinquity, the solution renders the problem obsolete by ordering the campus by use rather than discipline. *Architectural Forum's* feature article on the campus aptly described each major element: "the hub," "the tower," and the "walks." The hub consisted of the centralized lecture centers bracketed by the library and campus center buildings. Students would remain relatively motionless while the faculty, all of whose offices were housed in the tower with the University administration, would travel to them. The express walkways. raised one story above the ground, were intended to speed students to the center, where sitting atop the lecture centers was a new urban forum, a large exterior amphitheater. (Figs. 3 and ***3)***

CONFLICTS IN COMMUNITY

As initially conceived and built, UICC could not be more different from Jefferson's University of Virginia," the embodiment of the campus ideal. Yet both are conceived as institutions of education within contemporary democracy. The lawn at U. Va. structured a series of open yet hierarchic relationships in which the example of the professor was held up as both a physical and pedagogical model and knowledge was embodied in the library whose facade was directed at a seemingly boundless continent. Jefferson's students were his ideal citizens, not the unruly urban masses whom he feared. But "the campus" has also been offered as an ideal urban planning tradition:

> Despite the Elysian connotations of the word campus, American universities have until recently been among our most original and poignant models of urban form. ... Like physical mirrors of the American Constitution, these campuses projected an image of balanced reciprocity between the public and private realms, between the ideal and the circumstantial.[12]

Given that Jefferson's writings and ideas about the spatial organization of the landscape are typically used to argue that an anti-urban pastoral agenda is at the root of American democracy, and campuses themselves are held up as ideal environments because they are not cities, it is unclear how the campus can be suggested as a model for urban form.

Young's critique of our conceptions of the civic public allows an analysis of this space from a political perspective:

> Modern political theorists and politicians proclaimed the impartiality and generality of the public and at the same time quite consciously found it fitting that some persons — namely women, nonwhites, and sometimes those without property — be excluded from participation in that public."

She links these exclusions back to Jefferson's fear of the urban proletariat and the early republicans' promotion of a homogeneous citizenry: "They defined moral, civilized republican life in opposition to this backward-looking uncultivated desire, which they identified with women and nonwhites."[14] Jefferson's campus and pedagogy informed by enlightenment knowledge did not embody or embrace these differences, but, rather, cast its gaze and conquering ambition upon them. Its form reflected this enlightenment education, which, although devoted to the idea of universality, excluded any perspective that did not fall within its unified boundaries.

UICC's mission was an attempt to offer higher education to those urban masses whom Jefferson's model excluded. By the 1950s even the mission of the land grant university, "...the promotion of practical education, the right of education for all social classes, and the freedom of students to choose their courses of study,"[15] had shifted from agriculture, the mechanical arts, and the economy of the home toward an education that could address the needs of a contemporary urban industrial society. At the root of the new campus were two not always mutually supporting goals: to provide an inexpensive education for students who could not afford to attend college away from home and to provide the region and its businesses and industries with skilled and educated graduates. Later still, the mission began to embrace the education and training of urban specialists in a tone not unlike the rhetoric of Lyndon Johnson's Model Cities program:

> ...the more immediate task at Chicago Circle is to continually identify its additional unique concerns as an urban campus. Higher education must be available to the urban student at relatively low cost and within commuting distance. Simultaneously, such education must be pertinent and specifically related to the problems of contemporary society. The culturally and educationally impoverished are of special concern. Broadly based programs must be developed and implemented....[16]

By mission and not just architecture and planning UICC was designed to offer education to the masses ordered around their movement and commutation rather than communality. Netsch's "campus city" codifies relationships based on pragmatics rather than affinity or association. The community is not formed through identity but as a collection of atomistic individuals.

The campus design itself was an embodiment of the image of the city Scala and her neighbors were struggling against. Her work is an example of the kind of community backlash against modern urbanism theorized by Jacobs." Marshall Berman writes of Jacobs' 1961 work:

> *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* gives us the first fully articulated woman's view of the city since Jane Addams. In one sense Jacobs' perspective is even more fully feminine: she writes out of an intensively lived domesticity that Addams knew only at second hand."'

Berman notes that her work not only inspired a generation of feminist activists but also created an opening for the domestic and everyday within the modern city. But Berman also distinguishes a latent reactionary tone behind her celebration of dense urban life. The neighborhood that she studied so intently is diverse but relatively homogenous racially and economically.[19] He notes that the potential link between the preservation of things as they are and the potential exclusion of minorities for the sake of the preservation of the neighborhood makes her theories readily accessible to the New Right.[20] On the other hand Berman misses a critical point by contrasting Jacobs' "domestic," which he reads as purely feminine, to her modern position. For Jacobs was not attempting to substitute the domestic or private for the public but using the former to examine the exclusions inherent in the latter, suggesting a more complex relationship between the public and private spheres than modern urbanism, with its focus on the diagrammatic, could contain.

Jacobs' writings have also been embraced by New Urbanists attempting to recreate community within the context of the postmodern urban condition through the reappropriation of images and urban forms based on an imagined communal past.[21] But to read these past forms of community as somehow more perfect and intact is to ignore the considerable number of individuals whom they left out. This urge to recreate urban space in the image of an idealized communal past is a significant component of the redesign of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) campus beginning in the mid 1980s. The first reflection of a changed urban condition was the appearance of dormitories to accommodate the growing population of suburban students and the perceived need to recreate the campus in the image of recognizable typological models in order to attract a middle-class student body seeking a

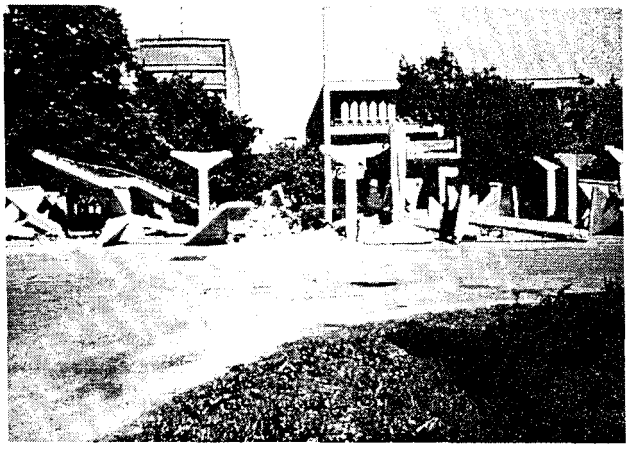

Fig. 5. Walkway destruction (UIC Archives)

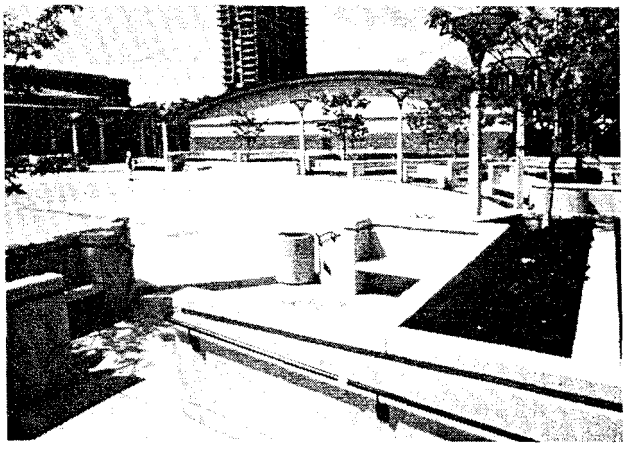

Fig 6. New Campus Center-(UIC Photo Labs)

recognizable "college experience." As opposed to the original "open" campus, the dormitories and their associated facilities. designed in a lightly conceived historical style, encircle the campus, keeping the students within the self-contained community.

The final blow to Netsch's "microenvironment of a twentieth-century city" came in the early 1990s when the campus' infrastructure — its walkways and forum — were removed and replaced with concrete paths and a plaza at grade, a liberal sprinkling of concrete benches and planters, and low-maintenance flowers and trees. (Fig. 5) The renovation was couched in a language of consensus and community, although it was also a quick-fix solution to a long-delayed maintenance program. The local architectural press favored the redesign. chief among them Blair Kamin of *The Chicago Tribune* who stressed its new humanitarianism: "Lovers nuzzle. People people-watch. Friends stop and schmooze. Students kick back in the crisp fall air, pretending to pore over books." Hc continued: "but at its revamped core, UIC is a place transformed, a change that emanates from a rejection of modern urbanism and a return to a traditional way of making cities."[22] (Fig. 6) Only the Chicago correspondent of *Architectural Record* pointed to the ironies:

> The pressures on the university are very real but this solution is very banal. This is not a traditional campus and planting a quadrangle in the middle of it won't make it one. If it once had the proud air of architectural militance, it now seems reduced, shriveled, as though it would like nothing better than for some vines to grow over it.[23]

More important than a debate over the architectural merits of either the original or the redesigned campus are a series of questions that the redesign of both the University and its campus sidestep, but already present themselves on campuses around the country.

Chief among these is the idea of a unified community of students and scholars — reflected in the historical lawn, the facades of "college row" building. football fields, or newly minted urban plazas — with the suggestion that differences can be abandoned or at least made transparent in a homogeneous, embracing space. American universities are experiencing a new round of building and expansion, and we might ask what form does this expansion take internally and how does it articulate with neighboring communities'! Young writes:

> In community persons cease to be other, opaque, not understood, and instead become mutually sympathetic. understanding one another as they understand themselves, fused. Such an ideal of the transparency of subjects to one another denies the difference. or basic asymmetry, of subjects.[24]

These new campus spaces deny the very real differences within increasingly diverse student bodies, which hate speech issues, affirmative action battles, and identity oriented conflicts between various student groups reveal. Instead of "community," which she sees as distinctly antiurban, Young substitutes urbanity, which she sees as more truly representative of modern and postmodern societies whether housed in the huge metropolis, the suburb, or large towns.

> I propose to construct a norniative ideal of city life as an alternative to both the ideal of community and the liberal individualism it criticizes as asocial. By "city life" I mean a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness.[25]

The UIC campus embodies the spatial and temporal environment that Young valorizes. The tension between its modern buildings stripped of their organizing infrastructure and the vast unprogrammed plaza at its center and dormitories at its peripheries is overlaid with aconiplex of websites, homepages, and paperless communications tentatively anchored at WWW.UIC.EDU a new space of academic interaction. (Fig. 7) Young's image of a democratic polity is a complex network of spaces and fora — physical and mediated — through

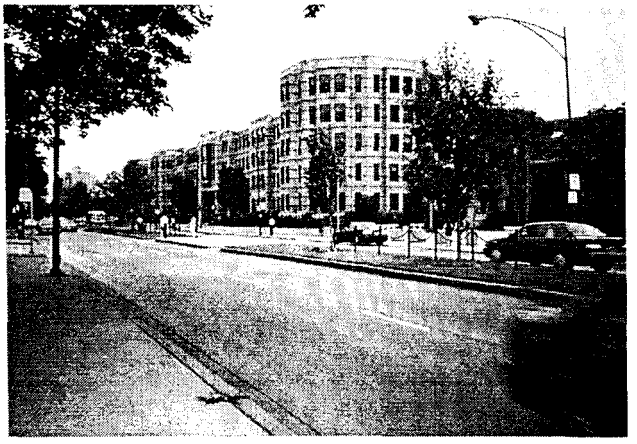

Fig. 7. New Dormitories on north edge of campus

which differences and intersubjectivity are experienced and conflicts are not repressed. But if "in the normative ideal of city life borders are open and undesirable,"[26] the self-contained form of campus, which excludes the city in which it sits, will have to be questioned as well.

CONCLUSION

The study of the UIC campus does not resolve problems of identity orcommunity withincontemporary urbanism. Rather, it simultaneously presents a case study illustrating conflicts between urban communities for the image and form of the city, the interaction between physical and pedagogical models in the formation of the academic community, and the conflicts and exclusions that exist within our campuses. It also raises problems and opportunities for architectural education: the need for students to reflect upon the environments within which they study rather than uncritically accepting them as normative models; a concern for the physical effacement of difference within the academic environment at the same time that the academic community is diversifying; the possibility of engaging the "local community" as something less than an abstraction but more than acollection of undifferentiated "others" both in studio projects conducted "in the community" and in the campus' engagement with the local community; the need to engage new forms of interactivity and communication as an architectural environment rather than just an instrument of representation and communication; and the need to question historical precedents as unproblematic prototypes for urban design.

In the latter half of the twentieth century the term campus has begun to lose its tie to higher education and is often used as a spatial model for the organization of the sub- and exurban corporate landscape." These complexes of office buildings, parking lots, and other facilities are set within the diminishing agricultural landscape. It is this new form of city that Dennis suggests should be organized along the model of the campus, and, indeed, components of them are, as discrete and disconnected entities. These projects do not resolve urban conflict; they merely keep constituencies apart and maskdifferences using the guise of an ideal past. In addition, the popular author, Witold Rybczynski has observed a new urban form that he calls "college cities." Former "college towns" have grown exponentially as businesses and families fleeing traditional cities organize around college campuses for the economic, cultural, and physical experience these spaces provide.[28] This grassroots form of New Urbanism, in which the campus and the student oriented services that surround it form the set-pieces for a small city, is also being engaged by the urban universities as they initiate local development projects." But the universities need to consider the new communities that they build in relation to the existing communities in which they sit. The campus, as much as it provides "a place apart"" for diverse students and faculty to form new communities organized around education, is also modeled on exclusions that threaten the ideas of democracy they seek to advance. Perhaps this is the moment to reconceive the campus not as a discrete community set apart from others but as an urbanity capable of engaging both new forms of cities and city living brought about in physical and mediated space.

NOTES

1 The Chicago Undergraduate Division was originally developed as a two-year branch of the University of Illinois after World War 11 and was located on Navy Pier in Lake Michigan. When it moved to its new location in 1965 it was renamed the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle (UICC) after the highway interchange it sat astride. The university has subsequently been renamed the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). In this paper, both names will be used, the former to indicate the campus as originally designed, the latter as a general designation and in discussion of its current physical form.

2 Important authors in these discussions include: David Harvey, Frederic Jameson, Michael Sorkin, Rosalyn Deutsche, and Iris Marion Young, not all of whom agree with one another.

3 Although the analysis of the site selection process and the formal and pedagogical development of the campus forms an important portion of this study space does not allow for a detailed discussion of these issues in the context of this paper. George Rosen, *Decision-Making Chicago-Style: The Genesis of n University of Illinois Campus* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980) provides considerable material on the history leading to the location of the campus (although not its design) but analyzes the material from the position of "a theory of public-policy decision-making" (p. 7) rather than the spatial political of urban planning anddesign. Nonetheless, it provides an important chronology for a complex set of events summarized in this paper. My study is also drawn from a careful reading of the site selection process as it was covered in the local and city presses.

4 One suburban leader, trying to attract the university to his region wrote: "On whose hands will the blood and agony for the crimes to be committed on co-eds, male students, faculty members and their families by the criminals who are on the increase downtown? Most of those who want to give up Garfield Park do so because it is over-run by criminals. Harrison-Halsted is bad now and would be worse if the university went there and upset their churches and business district. I do not think we should antagonize 200,000 Spanish-descent people, or any other people." Campus Planning and Development files, UIC Archives, r.g. 3/1/1.

[5] Authors such as Rosalyn Deutsche argue for the need to see the media as a continuum of public space from the perspective of democratic debate.

[6] Iris Marion Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public," *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 97.

[7] "U. of I. Site Hassle in Mayor's Office," *Chicago's American* (April 19, 1961).

[8] John Madigan, "Editorial," WBBM-TV (October 19, 1962).

[9] Campus Planning and Development files, UIC Archives, r.g. 31 1/1.

[10] See John Morris Dixon, "Campus City Chicago," *Architectural Forum* (September 1965), pp. 23-44.

[11] Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1984) is still the definitive book on American campus design.

[12] Michael Dennis, "On Campus Planning," *Modulus 23: Towards A Civil Architecture in America* (University of Virginia, 1995), p. 109.

[13] Young, "Impartiality and the Civic Public," p. 100.

[14] Ibid., p. 102.

[15] Turner, *Campus*, p. 140.

[16] Norman A. Parker, *Mission Statement,* undated (1965?), UIC Archives, ready reference.

[17] Jacobs and Scala knew of each other's work and appear to have met at some point in the early 1960s. Georgie Anne Geyer, "The Heritage of Jane Addams: Florence Scala Fills the Void," *Chicago Scene* (January 1964), pp. 22-27.

[18] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (NY: Penguin Books, 1988 [1982]), p. 322.

[19] Ibid., p. 325.

[20] Ibid., p. 324.

[21] For a close reading of the limitations of this model from the perspective of community see Rosalyn Deutsche. "Agoraphobia," *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 267-327.

[22] Blair Kamin. "The Transformation of UIC: Design Puts Humanity Back in the Equation," *The Chicago Tribune* (October 29, 1995).

[23] Cheryl Kent, "Softening Brutalism: Is Anything Lost?" *Architectural Record* (August 1996), p. 22.

[24] Iris Marion Young, "City Life and Difference," reprinted in Philip Kasinitz, ed., *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times* (NY: New York University Press, 1995) p. 256.

[25] Ibid., p. 264.

[26] Ibid., p. 266.

[27] See for example, Peter G. Rowe, *Making a Middle Landscape* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).

[28] Witold Rybczynski, "The Rise of the College City, the Best New Place to Live," *The New York Times 144* (September 17, 1995), VI: pp. 58-61.

[29] At this time both IIT and UIC are involved in large development projects in their respective neighborhoods in Chicago. These projects deserve closer scrutiny and analysis which cannot be accomplished in the space of this paper. Dean MacCannell offers a strong critique of the postmodern community strategized around tourism. Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (NY: Routledge, 1992).

[30] The phrase is Robert A.M. Stern's. Public Broadcasting Service, "The Campus: A Place Apart," *Pride of Place: Building the American Dream* (1986).