Diversity and Neo-Traditional Planning

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INTRODUCTION

For more than 100 years, urban design strategies have been implemented to address America's physical, social and economic challenges. In 1880, the Parks Movement attempted to bring a day in the country to the congested immigrant city, and Social Reformers addressed the overcrowding and sanitary problems of tenement housing.[1] By 1900, the City Beautiful Movement encouraged raising the aesthetic level of America cities to that of Europe.[2] By 1920, Radburn cul-de-sacs reconsidered the relationship of the home to the street. By 1950, Levittown provided low-cost detached single-family homeownership. More recently, the search for answers to suburban sprawl and edge city development has turned to traditional town-making principles. as a means to develop coherent human-scaled development pattern, and respond to emerging economic. social and environmental trends.

The Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) argues for learning from the most enduring architectural types, as well as the best historical examples, as a means to making contemporary cities. Within the CNU's published documents are the politically correct catch phrases of smart growth, sustainability and diversity. Peter Calthorpe, a CNU Founder, states that "Diversity is the most challenging aspect of New Urbanism. . . . it (diversity) is essential to its philosophy."[3] In his writings, Calthorpe argues that sprawl is linked to racial inequity, and that "an end to inequity cannot be achieved without addressing sprawl."[4]

Despite the creation of legal and financial initiatives formulated to overcome residential barriers, racial segregation has been a dominant feature evident in urban and social landscapes. The solution must navigate a complex combination of factors. While the CNU acknowledges the problem of segregation, what does the CNU mean by diversity? Does diversity mean income, age or race? Where the original traditional models diverse? Are the CNU reinterpretations more or less diverse than the originals, or even the suburban sites they replace?

A HISTORY OF EXCLUSION

The traditional focus on land use regulations as a means to shape the built environment and stabilize land values obscures planners' social agendas. Including perspectives of race, gender and class in planning history (1) brings planning inline with contemporary analysts and urban historians, and (2) clarifies racism within the broader society. In the process, it balances the tendency to blame planners for decisions that often came from the top down.

In contrast to contemporary designers' search for inclusion. the history of planning demonstrates a search for exclusion. Marginalized populations have often been the subject for which zoning, redlining, interstate construction. urban renewal, or gating is needed. In the words of New York planner F.J. Popper "The basic purpose of zoning was to keep Them where They belong – Out. If They had already gotten in. then its purpose was to confine Them to limited areas. The exact identity of them varied a bit around the country. Blacks. Latinos and poor people qualified. Catholics, Jews and Orientals were targets in many places."[5]

Popper's comments are supported by Charles Haar's *Zoning and the American Dream*. Haar clarifies zoning's intentions in Southern cities. "While northern Progressives were enacting zoning as a mechanism for protecting and enhancing property values," Yale Rabin emphasizes that, "southern Progressives were testing its effectiveness as a means of enforcing racial segregation."[6] In Atlanta. after limited sections of the city were open for black housing. various responses were developed as part of the comprehensive spatial segregation process. Zoning ordinances, highway construction. street integration. street paving and street naming practices were all used to maximize the separation of races.

SUBURBAN EXCLUSION

Planning became more openly racialized with post WWII American suburbs like Levittown. NY: the long represented paradigmatic postwar American suburb. The small. detached. single-family houses were equidistant from New York City and the burgeoning defense industrial plants on Long Island. But. in the process of changing the American landscape. William Levitt openly barred African Americans from Levittown and his other developments.

At first. Levitt passed the blame to the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). which backed his financing and recommended against "inharmonious racial or nationality groups." The agency's underwriting manual at the time warned. "If a neighborhood is to retain stability. it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes."[8] Arguing that segregation was a common practice and good for business, Levitt stated that "I knew that if I declared for open housing. my worst enemies would be my colleagues in the building industry." Levitt told Newsday in 1977. 30 years after Levittown's founding. "It was a business decision. We would have been driven out of business if we were alone."

Levitt incorporated the FHA position in his deed covenant stating: "The Tenant agrees not to permit the premises to be used or occupied by an person other than members of the Caucasian race but the employment and maintenance of other than Caucasian domestic servants shall be permitted." However. in 1948. the U.S. Supreme Court declared such provisions "unenforceable as law and contrary to public policy." A year later. the FHA announced that beginning the following year. it would not back mortgages linked to segregationist covenants. Levitt eliminated the racial covenants, but pledged to practice discrimination nonetheless.

When Levitt & Sons moved to Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Levitt unsuccessfully sued New Jersey over its newly enacted antidiscrimination law. saying it interfered with his constitutional rights to engage in private enterprise. Levitt again incorporated restrictive covenants in his 1963 Belair, Maryland development. To a 1966 U.S. House Committee weighing antidiscrimination legislation. Levitt testified that "Any home builder who chooses to operate on an open-occupancy basis, where it is not customary or required by law, runs the grave risk of losing business to his competitor who chooses to discriminate".[9]

JACOBS AND INCLUSION

While Levitt's capitalist mission pursued a segregated landscape. Jane Jacobs socialist perspective encouraged a more integrated community. In her 1961 text. *Death and Life of Great American Cities.* Jacobs launched her defense of the traditional city. along with a blistering attack on the "anti-city" forces. She identifies two important factors in maintaining the social capital: 1) settings for casual public contact. including good sidewalks. public spaces. and neighborhood stores. and 2) a great deal of diversity on the district level.

According to Jacobs. two of four conditions must be present "to generate exuberant diversity in a city's streets and districts". The district. must serve more than one primary function and the "district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition." While Jacobs does not initially list age and income diversity as a neighborhood requirement. she clarifies their value in her colorful descriptions of urban residents. which includes blue and white collar residents. and young and old residents.[10] For safety. she indicates that "storekeepers and other small businessmen are typically strong proponents of peace and order themselves."[11] For trust on a city street. she indicates that children. teens. adults. and elderly are needed. "It (trust) grows out of people stopping by a the bar for a beer. getting advice from the grocer and giving advice to the newsstand man. comparing opinions with other customers at the bakery and nodding hello to the two boys drinking pop on the stoop. eying the girls while waiting to be called for dinner, admonishing the children, hearing about a job from the hardware man and borrowing a dollar from the druggist. admiring the new babies and sympathizing over the way a coat faded."[12]

In contrast to the increasing trend to gate or mall public space. Jacobs welcomes interaction with the "other." A diverse neighborhood includes both residents and non-residents. She states that "The buildings on a street must be equipped to handle strangers and to insure the safety of both residents and strangers."[13] While Jacobs comments on age and income diversity, the Founders of the Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) go further and include race in their discussion of diversity.

CNU FOUNDERS AND THE CHARTER

Robert Davis. Doug Kelbaugh. and Peter Calthorpe have all made statements that clarify the CNU's meaning of diversity. Davis. the developer of Seaside stated that "Sustainability means diversity. complexity. and exclusivity. We cannot build

sustainable communities based upon monocultural exclusivity." Similarly, Kelbaugh stated that New Urbanism "aspires to a social ethic that builds new or repairs existing communities in ways that equitably mix people of different income, ethnicity, race and age."[14] He later states that "It (new urbanism) is structuralist in the sense that it maintains that there is a direct, structural relationship between physical form and social behavior. It is normative in that it posits that good design can have a measurably positive effect on sense of place and community, which it holds are essential to a healthy, sustainable society."

Like Kelbaugh and Davis, Peter Calthorpe includes race in his understanding of diversity. In *The Next American Metropolis*, Calthorpe states "I believe a diverse and inclusionary environment . . .. is inherently better than a world of private enclaves dominated by the car."[15] Later, he states that "with the coming of the next century we must attend to the new geometries that emerge and make sure that they form communities that are equitable, sustainable, and inclusive."[16] According to Calthorpe, diversity is fundamental and a traditional value[17] and that "A fundamental tenet of the Regional City is the pursuit of diversity . . . in a way that is meant to combat inequity as well as sprawl." While he initially dances around the issue, he later clarifies his position by stating that inequity is not caused by the physical environment, but "human feelings such as greed, elitism, and racism." Calthorpe clearly links sprawl to racism and recognizes that combating sprawl will not end inequity. But, "an end to inequity (racism) cannot be achieved without addressing sprawl."[18] Later, Calthorpe becomes even clearer about his meaning of diversity. He no longer clouds race, with the term "inequity" and defines diversity as physical and social principles. He describes social diversity as "creating neighborhoods that provide for a large range in age group, household type, income, and race . . . today we have reached an extreme: age, income, family size and race are all divided into discreet market segments and locations." He closes by providing a list of factors that lead to housing integration. He states that "complete housing integration may be a distant goal, but inclusive neighborhoods . . . broaden the economic range, expand the mix of age and household types, and open the door to racial integration."

In addition to the writings of Kelbaugh and Calthorpe, the *Charter of the New Urbanism* itself, recognizes the issue of diversity in its preamble, Principle 13, and in its afterward. The fourth paragraph of the Preamble states that "neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population."[19] Principle 13 clarifies the CNU intention by stating that "Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community."

RESEARCH QUESTION

While the CNU acknowledges the problem of segregation, are CNU places diverse? If the CNU principles and techniques lead to a more diverse residential population, then demographic differences will be evident in U.S. Census data. Collected every ten years, the U.S. Census connects geographic information (where things are) with descriptive information (what things are like).[20] Specifically, race, income, homeownership, home to work commute and other personal information is collected.

In theory, a diverse condition has an equal distribution of income levels, races, ages and education attainment levels. For example, the utopian census tract would have an equal number of households earning $20-39,000 per year as households earning $100-110,000 per year. Regarding education, the same census tract would have as many high school graduates as PhDs. Since the Census responses would be equally distributed across all possible responses, the graphic representation of the data would be a level or horizontal line; the flatter the slope, the greater the diversity.[21] Once the data is plotted, it can then be summarized as a single line.

The data for a segregated or non-diverse census tract would have an irregular concentration of responses to income levels, races, ages and/or education attainment levels. Regarding income, the non-diverse condition would have a high level of either, high or low income responses. Graphically, it would be represented as a very sloped line; the greater the slope, the lesser the diversity. For the purposes of this research, the angle of the slope is not an issue.

The goal is not to match the utopian condition, but to examine a site's diversity along two lines of inquiry; the current and historic context. The current context is the diversity of the United States, the American South, the State of Florida and the sites' County level data. How do the CNU models perform, in relation the places around them? The historic context is the diversity of traditional street car suburbs that the CNU models emulate. Are the historic models still diverse? Do the new developments miss or match the diversity performance of the older urban models?

CASE STUDIES

The research question will be examined through six study areas: three new urban sites and three historic sites. The most comprehensive list of new urbanist sites in the United States is published by the *New Urban News*.[22] From the list, developments were identified in north and central Florida: Seaside[23] (outside Panama City), Celebration (outside Orlando), and

Haile Plantation (outside Gainesville). The sites illustrate a "mix of uses and housing types. interconnected network of streets. a town center. formal civic spaces and squares. residential areas, and pedestrian-oriented design."[24] The new urban design characteristics are based on the traditional street car suburbs developed at the beginning of the century. Therefore. tree historic street car suburbs in north and central Florida will be compared to the new urbanist sites: Riverside (outside Jacksonville). Lake Eola (outside Orlando) and Hyde Park (outside Tampa). A quantitative morphological comparison clarifies the structural parallels between the old and the new sites.

The morphological analysis is a graphic and numeric comparison of the blocks and streets of the six sites. The blocks. intersections. access points. and loops or cul-de-sacs are represented as figure/ground drawing. and then calculated per unit area. The characteristics are significant because they directly impact the number of route options, the ease of moving about and the quality of the neighborhood. The numerical comparisons provide an empirical basis for criticisms of the how the new urban sites replicate the street car suburbs.

While the morphological comparisons illustrate the connections between older and newer sites. the research questions are specifically addressed through a 1990 U.S. Census based comparison of the race, age, household income and education attainment levels of the six study areas. For each of the six study areas, data was gathered from the American Fact Finder section of the Census web site. First, the census tract and block group for each site was identified. The most efficient means involved using the address search tool, and then comparing a block group map to a traditional site plan drawing. With the study areas' block group numbers, the American Fact Finder site was used to search for various population characteristics (i.e. age. race, income, education level). Each characteristic for each block group was graphed as a series of points, and then converted to a single trend line. In the end, the trend lines for each site was compared to its context (i.e. nation, state, county) and then to its related predecessor (historic street car suburb).

CLOSING COMMENTS

As expected, the morphological analysis demonstrates that common patterns are shared by the new urban and historic suburb sites. As shown in the number of access points, the new urban street patterns illustrate that contemporary sites can successfully incorporate an interconnected street grid. The sites illustrate an alternative to the excessive cul-de-sacs of contemporary suburban development.

Also as expected. the demographic analysis argues that there is a lack of diversity in the new urbanist case studies. The graphs indicate that the new urban sites are not as diverse as their context (i.e. nation, state or county). In some cases. the new urban are significantly worse. In general. the data indicates problems with most of the CNU diversity arguments. It is a mistake to assume that varied housing styles and sizes equate to significant variations in household incomes, race, educational attainment and age.[25] It appears that Calthorpe recognizes the weakness of the CNU position in stating that ".. the challenge of creating truly diverse neighborhoods and sustainable region forms may remain an elusive goal for some time. . .."[26]

NOTES

[1] Mel Scott. *American City Planning since 1890: A History commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the American Institute of Planners*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1971. p 11-12

[2] Scott. 44.

[3] Randall Arendt . . . [et al.] *Charter of the New Urbanism*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2000. p 179

[4] Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton. *Regional City: Planning for the End of Sprawl*. Washington: Island Press. 2001. p 11.

[5] Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow*. London: Basil Blackwell. 1988. p6.

[6] Yale Rabin. "Expulsive Zoning." in Haar and Kayden. *Zoning and The American Dream*. Chicago: Planners Press. 1989. 106.

[7] Built by William Levitt. Levittown (originally Island Trees) capitalized on the housing crunch of the immediate postwar years by offering affordable housing to returning GIs and their families.

[8] Herbert J. Gans. *The Levittowners Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books. 1967. p 55.

[9] Rosenbaum, Ron. "The House that Levitt Built." *Esquire* December 1983: 391.

[10] Jane Jacobs. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House 1961. p 151.

[11] Jacobs. 37.

[12] Jacobs, 56.

[13] Jacobs. 35.

[14] Doug Kelbaugh. *The Essential Common Place*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

[15] Peter Calthorpe. *The Next American Metropolis: Ecology. Community and the American Dream*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press. 1993. p 10.

[16] Calthorpe, 10.

[17] In *The Next American Metropolis*. Calthorpe states that "Ecology . . . teaches that diversity. interdependence. and whole systems are fundamental to health." and in redefining the "American Dream." he states "Certain traditional values – diversity, community. frugality. and human scale – should be the foundation of a new direction." (16).

[18] Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton. *Regional City: Planning for the End of Sprawl*. Washington: Island Press. 2001. p 11.

[19] Arendt . . . [et al.], p vi.

[20] The U.S. Census 2000 gathered information from 115.9 million housing units and 281.4 million people across the United States. The short form asked a limited number of questions of every person and housing unit. A long form asked a sample group of persons more detailed information. The long form requested marital status. place of birth. citizenship and year of entry. school enrollment and educational attainment. ancestry. ability to speak English. place of work and journey to work. occupation. industry. and class of worker. work status in 1999. and income in 1999.

[21] The income data was plotted with the percentages on the y-axis and income levels along the x-axis

[22] The *New Urban News* began the survey of the communities in the in 1996, and lists of such projects were published in May/June 1996, Nov/Dec 1996, Sept/Oct 1997, and Sept/Oct 1998.

[23] Seaside was eventually eliminated because of a lack of appropriate Census data.

[24] "Traditional Neighborhood Development Projects in the U.S.," *New Urban News*, September/October 1997, p.10.

[25] Arendt . . . [et al.], 88-95.

[26] Arendt . . . [et al.], 180.