

Fall 2013

## An Anthropology of Urbanism: How People Make Places (and What Designers and Planners Might Learn from It)

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### Recommended Citation

Wortham-Galvin, B.D. (2013) "An Anthropology of Urbanism: How People Make Places (and What Designers and Planners Might Learn from It)," *Footprint*, issue No. 13, p. 21-39.

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# An Anthropology of Urbanism: How People Make Places (and What Designers and Planners Might Learn from It)

Brooke D. Wortham-Galvin

When subject matter is forced to fit into preconceived patterns, there can be no freshness of vision.

(Edward Weston)

## Introduction

The July 2013 edition of *Architect* magazine featured an article entitled 'Newest Urbanism'. In their word play on what design praxis might succeed the popular, late twentieth-century New Urbanism movement in the United States, *Architect* introduced to the uninitiated the concept of tactical urbanism. Their narrative rooted the contemporary origins of tactical urbanism in 2005, with the transformation of a parking space into a small park in San Francisco by the firm Rebar. Defining tactical urbanism as 'temporary, cheap, and usually grassroots interventions – including so-called guerilla gardens, pop-up parks, food carts, and 'open streets' projects – that are designed to improve city life on a block-by-block, street-by-street basis', the article claims that it took this approach to shaping the city less than a decade to mainstream into the practices of U.S. cities and firms alike.<sup>1</sup>

While *Architect* used the term 'tactical urbanism' to characterise this effort (borrowing it from the Street Plans Collaborative and their guidebook *Tactical Urbanism 2: Short-Term Action, Long Term Change*), other terms abound: participatory urbanism, open-source urbanism, pop-up urbanism, minor urbanism, guerrilla urbanism, city repair, or DIY urbanism.<sup>2</sup> The elision of these terms and their definitions does contain overlap, but they

are not exact synonyms. This essay will use the term 'participatory urbanism' to discuss how ordinary people are engaged in making place, and how designers and planners might learn from it.

This discussion of participatory urbanism will describe the context from which it emerged in the United States, define the term and its current manifestation, and describe an early example of participatory urbanism seeded by digital tools, in order to raise questions about the role of participatory urbanism in the making of place in the twenty-first century.

## The city by design

At the start of the twentieth century in the United States, urban design, under the aegis of the City Beautiful movement, focused its efforts on the city's aesthetics and infrastructure. Daniel Burnham's *Plan of Chicago* (1909) memorialised his rallying cry 'make no little plans' as it undertook to provide a monumental core framework for Chicago. The graphics of the *Plan* revealed his interest: the drawings focused their detail and energy on significant landmarks, whether boulevards or civic buildings. The rest of the city, where people spend most of their time living and working, was rendered in poche, disappearing into a subtly muted background. In fact, in the case of the Burnham-influenced McMillan Commission Plan for Washington D.C. (1901), the drawings cropped out the extent of the city, focusing solely on the monumental core. It was the federal and symbolic city they were designing: an urban

monument to democracy. Left out of the drawings was the metropolitan city: the District of Columbia as a lived experience.

In the post-World War II environment, concerned by the modernist-influenced *tabula rasa* approach to urban renewal, urban design scholars and architects, such as Colin Rowe, Fred Koetter, Léon Krier and Rob Krier, argued for a form-driven methodology that would shape the city into a sequence of public forms and spaces that were distinct and memorable when set in contrast to the private realm.<sup>3</sup> Conventions such as figure/ground, developed from Giambattista Nolli's *La Pianta Grande di Roma* (1748), were used to render the legibility of the public space as a figure in the ground, and the interconnectedness of this space with the streets.<sup>4</sup> Such conventions became the architect's criteria of well-conceived public space. This plan-based approach, while representing a radical rethinking of city design during the 1960s-70s American renewal-cum-destruction period, has now become a part of the canon. Its ubiquity among urban design firms no longer represents a hypothesis or theoretical speculation about the use of normative types and the figure/ground, but has been codified into contemporary practice and amplified by such phrases and practices as design guidelines, urban and architectural regulations and pattern books.<sup>5</sup>

Douglas Kelbaugh's adroit analysis of later twentieth and early twenty-first century urban praxis in the United States (and as exported globally) assesses New Urbanism as 'an explicit combination of noble ends and practical means' in contrast to Post Urbanism's 'argument that shared values or metanarratives are no longer possible in a world increasingly fragmented [...]'.<sup>6</sup> The former engages historical precedents, employs typology, and is stylistically neo-traditional (despite protestations of stylistic inclusion, this is the as-built reality of New Urbanism), while the latter manipulates topology 'without formal orthodoxies or principles', with a

resultant focus on surface and skin, in the name of newer freedoms for the twenty-first century global city.<sup>7</sup> Despite their varied aims and methodologies, both focus primarily on formal and spatial manipulations in order to create (or dismantle) the public realm that we understand as the city.

Despite the conviction of both New and Post Urbanism in their formally-driven design methodologies, it is difficult to ascertain what 'public' really means in the context of the increasing privatisation, globalisation, digitisation and commercialisation of urban space. The term 'public' is invoked often and easily within the design disciplines, and has been naturalised to assume that its definition is universal. The designed city is assumed to be a public space, but what precisely does that mean? It is certainly more than the mere spatial circumscription of a town square or piazza. By defining space as 'public', what are we referring to? Ownership? If so, how does a place like Times Square fit this definition? Even though most of the land that constitutes the space of Times Square is, indeed, owned by the city and is therefore 'public' terrain, the space is not publicly managed. All the structures that define the space are controlled by private interests, and the space itself is dominated by commercial messages and corporate slogans rather than a socio-cultural identity. In this context, it is difficult to distinguish Times Square, the Vegas Strip or Piazza della Rotonda from the shopping mall, which is completely privately owned and controlled. Does 'public' refer to activities? Ironically, in many (sub)urban places it is the shopping mall that has become the new forum, playing host to a myriad of 'public' activities that include senior citizens taking group walks in the morning, girl scout sing-alongs, flu shot clinics, job fairs, and teenagers working hard at doing nothing. Is the public to be found, then, not only in a physical circumscription but also in a set of activities that reinforce community and civic identity, and are therefore culturally conceived as public?<sup>8</sup>

Given that the physical and socio-cultural have

become inextricably intertwined in defining the public, participatory urbanism is useful in unravelling that knot. Even more so, since what is missing from synoptic accounts of the plurality of urban design mythologies in action at the turn of the twenty-first century in the United States, is a discussion of participatory urbanism.<sup>9</sup>

### Participatory Urbanism

Conversations about participatory urbanism in the past decade are often framed by unsanctioned efforts and/or by the temporary. Tactical urbanism, as defined by the Street Plans Collaborative, features short-term realistic actions, the development of social capital, a focus on the local, and a phased approach to permanent change. As Mike Lydon notes:

When you're yard bombing something, it's a really cool and interesting piece of public art and it can have some social and political commentary that goes along with it, but the intent generally is not to create a longer-term physical change. Most of the things that we include in the guide generally are aiming at doing something larger. They're not just for the sake of doing it. And of course in a lot of ways, to make that work, you need to have whatever you're doing to become sanctioned or supported, either with funding or with being allowed by the municipality.<sup>10</sup>

The distinction Lydon makes is an important parsing of the various participatory urbanism efforts. Activities such as guerrilla gardening, weed bombing, chair bombing, yarn bombing, ad busting, camps, food trucks, pop-up town halls, Depave, PARK(ing) Day, parklets, Street Seats, Open Streets, Build a Better Block and Parkways get merged together with no distinction. To wit, the Seattle chapter of the AIA held an exhibition in Winter 2013 that featured parklets, guerrilla gardens, yarn bombs, temporary infill, retail housed in shipping containers, sticker bombing and more besides, all curated as falling under the rubric of creative urban inventions.<sup>11</sup>

Many of these activities involve revising or reinterpreting existing infrastructures for alternative purposes, with a sense of socio-political agency underlying the action. They operate outside officially sanctioned structures as they temporarily claim public or private infrastructures for protest or other cultural practices. While these projects are communal, hands-on and sometimes critical, they are ephemeral additions to the built environment, not permanent ones. They eschew the slow moving and often costly bureaucracies of professionalised urbanism (proffered by planners, architects, landscape architects, preservationists and their ilk), for flexibility, rapidity, dynamisms, and what Kelli Anderson terms 'disruptive wonder' or I call 'making the familiar strange'.<sup>12</sup> They seek to disrupt naturalised assumptions and defy conventions about how and/or where we live. In this version of participatory urbanism, the city is seen as a (public) democratic process, not a (private) consumable product.

The difference, as Lydon notes, is that some of these activities, such as yarn, chair or weed bombing, ad busting, and guerrilla gardening, fall more into the vein of performance art and provocation than occurring with an eye to permanence.<sup>13</sup> These often illegal works are proffered to provoke conversation for a day, but once out of sight are often out of mind. At the other end of the spectrum, food trucks, pop-up retail, and Street Seats are ways for commercial enterprises to make private, entrepreneurial incursions into the city (whether selling food or jewellery for personal profit, or designing outside café seating in a former parking space as Portland's Street Seats process encourages). Somewhere in the middle of these examples are those activities that started as temporary – often political – stagings, which then became codified processes. PARK(ing) Day is one such example. It began as 'Portable Architecture', a performance art piece by Bonnie Ora Sherk in 1970, in which she began converting pavements into parks in San Francisco. This action re-emerged in 2005, again in

San Francisco, with the transformation of a parking space into a public park. Within six years this transformation became reified as PARK(ing) Day and had spread globally: thirty-five countries across six continents reclaimed 975 parking spaces.<sup>14</sup> The ultimate codification came in 2013 when the city of Portland established its Street Seats programme, which permits businesses to build small 'parklets' in current, on-street parking spaces. In the trajectory described above, municipal resources in the form of parking spaces are first transformed into an artist's provocation, challenging the use of those resources (should city rights-of-way be for cars or for people?); second, into small public spaces for people to use and share at will; and, finally, for private interests to expand their resources (café seating, while enlivening the pedestrian experience, is still privately managed and restricted in its inhabitation). Thus, while participatory urbanism in the media is often characterised as interventions within the city, instigated by activists who want to provoke the allocation of space and resources, it is also happening via government-sanctioned, private investment transforming city resources. The shift in the actors staging this urbanism has consequences regarding the actions themselves. While parking spaces turned into places for people to sit may superficially all seem alike, ownership of those parklets affects how public these spaces truly are. For whom are these Street Seats?

Participatory urbanism is therefore not only a subaltern cultural movement, but also a mainstream one. The 'who', or actors, of participatory urbanism range from those on the outside to those who are in power. Participatory urbanists are activists, neighbours, groups, non-profits, developers, businesses *and* city governments. The variety of actors represents a continuum of action, from the illegal and unsanctioned to those codified into regulatory processes and laws, with the former often prompting the latter, such as PARK(ing) Day, Build A Better Block, Depave and Open Streets. Moreover, these actions

take place on both public and private sites, often merging and/or conflicting the two interests.

Participatory urbanism as defined in this essay affirms much of what Lydon parses. It is urban action that is small and/or incremental, it responds to immediate needs that engage discourses of publicness, it stewards change that is wanted (defined by a specific group of people), and it can be implemented relatively quickly with low initial investment. Participatory urbanism is not defined by who is leading it (ordinary citizens, activists or professional experts), but by the actions taken (small, but tangible), how they are taken (quickly), and their tangible impact. Participatory urbanism is *not* professionally led charrettes stewarding large-scale development projects (often masquerading as community-based design).

The activism of the 1960s-70s in the United States prompted professionals interested in community-based design to co-opt the term charrette in order to promote a more public-oriented design process. The charrette has re-emerged with new strength from its 1960s-70s launching, in large part due to the success of the New Urbanism movement and, most recently, from a post-Katrina desire to help revive the Gulf Coast region. In the New Urbanists' desire to establish strong neighbourhoods, both formally and socially, they use the charrette as one of their formidable tools, alongside form- and typology-based codes. Within their paradigm, the charrette becomes a way to facilitate change in participants' perceptions and positions, with the end goal being the acceptance of a given design. But what does consensus mean when the desire is to change people's minds in order to have them agree to a design? Do the plan and its support derive from the charrette, or are they preconceived? And if the latter is the case, then for whose benefit are the review, critique and refinement that takes place during the charrette: only the participants and not the designers? Has the charrette become a

mode for defusing implementation disputes rather than one for collaborating on critical questions and seeking potential answers within a community? If public space and urban design are to be embedded in the cultural construction of place, then residents should not be seen merely as an audience to receive the wise wisdom of the expert, but as experts in their own right who bring a large body of local and social capital to the process.

This is why the charrette does not appear on the list of participatory urbanism activities; its use as a community-based tool is too broad in its implementation, too dependent on who is using it and, more importantly, to what purpose. Some design professionals who work intensively with communities seek alternatives to the charrette in order to design *with* not *for* communities. The work of designers like Teddy Cruz, Walter Hood, Bryan Bell and Maurice Cox in projects such as Crown Heights (initiated by architect Manuel Avila) engage alternative practices that elevate residents to experts and give them significant roles in the decision-making process of design.<sup>15</sup> While laudable, this approach does not meet our present definition of participatory urbanism, in which incremental, tangible, immediate action are paramount over (en)visioning and conceptual speculation.

Nevertheless, the critique of the charrette as an expert-driven, value-laden process can be applied to participatory urban activities as well. Certainly this is easiest to observe when the activities are supported by government sanctioned regulations and codes, such as the Street Seats programme. For whom is the extra café seating in Portland? People who can afford to frequent such upper middle-class establishments are the ones whose cultural values and assumptions are now literally expanding into the streets. These café parklets are certainly not mega-projects like Bilbao, and yet, because they belong to the same taste culture, it needs to be acknowledged that this type of urbanism often replaces existing

urbanism with the 'latest and greatest', leveraging the development of this kind of architecture in order to attract the accoutrements of a cosmopolitan experience: fine cuisine, global brand stores, and a thriving nightlight scene predicated on a new sense of 'safety'. And while this constituency has a right to lay claim to one of the city's cultures, this does not mean it should be reified into representing the city's dominant culture under the assumption that this is how all citizens would like to see the individual, 200-square-foot parcels put to use. And, in turn, this does not mean that activist-led urban actions are free from bias either. Activists, non-profits, community groups and similar organisations privilege their own value systems in their desire to transform the city according to their vision.

What also distinguishes participatory urbanism in the United States in the early twenty-first century from other community-based/public interest design is the socio-economic and technological contexts that have fostered its current surge: the economic recession and the emergence of accessible, portable, digital technology. The economic downturn abruptly interrupted big development projects, both public and private. The disappearance of these large-scale projects left communities with a bevy of vacant and abandoned properties, which was further compounded by the demise of smaller businesses caught in the wake of the big money disaster. This made it easier for insurgent intervention to take hold for two main reasons: projects with a small budget could make an impact now that big money was no longer available to overwhelm them, and municipalities were more forgiving of the unsanctioned because these undertakings filled a void of inaction and/or displaced, negative, crime-related activities.

While the economy took a precipitous downturn after 2008, the increase in the proliferation of social media orientated platforms, and the ubiquity of portable devices on which to access them, meant it was easier to mobilise people and resources. As

quickly as one can tweet, one can gather people and resources for action. Facebook was founded in 2004, Twitter in 2006. San Francisco's first renewed interest in turning parking spaces into parks began in 2005 and has reached global proportions in less than a decade. These are not coincidences. This is the foundation for the twenty-first century version of participatory urbanism, which mobilises quickly and disseminates its actions digitally for easy replication – with the Occupy movement as the highest profile example.

Jonathan Massey and Brett Snyder rename participatory urbanism under the moniker 'open-source urbanism' because of how mobile devices and their applications allow 'non-experts' to become authors of how urban spaces are enacted and how public dialogues are shaped.<sup>16</sup> Open-source urbanism takes place in both physical and digital spaces and, as the Occupy movement demonstrated, often a simultaneous dialogue and overlapping between the two creates the participatory realm in which people actively engage their cities, neighbourhoods, and physical public spaces through collecting and sharing data and ideas via digital methods. Massey and Snyder note that the Occupy movement existed virtually before it did physically:

In the months leading up to the first occupation [...] Occupy established an online presence unmatched in the history of social action, leveraging multiple online spaces to stage protests and to generate a distinctive counter-public and alternative polity. [...] In the summer of 2011, before the first protesters had set foot in Liberty Plaza, the Occupy movement was evolving toward a model of General Assembly that hybridized online and offline discourse. While street activists in New York were practicing consensus decision-making in public parks, online participants were responding to a poll Adbusters created using Facebook's 'question' function [...] Through this asynchronous online polling, Facebook supported a weak form of political

discussion that prefigured the stronger and more interactive deliberations that filled Liberty Plaza.<sup>17</sup>

The Occupy movement created physical civic infrastructures (temporarily permanent) entirely generated by the participants. What arose across the United States was 'complex, open-source, user-generated urban infrastructure, where creative participation, collaboration, generosity and self-reliance are privileged over the more traditional urban imperatives of commerce and efficiency'.<sup>18</sup> But can Occupy offer a method for bridging the gap between the ephemerality of some participatory urbanism and the desire for *permanent* change in the city? And can these bottom-up approaches ultimately situate everyday people as equal authors in the design of the built environment, alongside architects, landscape architects, planners and preservationists? What really happens when citizens take the shaping of the city into their own hands? And are these citizens just as guilty of leaving people out or behind?

Starting in fall 2011, the mythologies of whether or not the Occupy movement represented 'the 99%' in its entirety gained traction. Two surveys taken that fall were widely reported in the press and opposed some of the myths (the former involving 1619 people responding online and the latter involving 198 people responding in person).<sup>19</sup> Both surveys determined that the Occupy Wall Street participants constituted a mix of ages, wealth, employment and history of activism, and that no one group dominated in any of these categories. Two categories, however, had clear majority constituencies: firstly, on the issue of political identification, 70% claimed to be politically independent; and secondly, 92% were highly educated – defined as having at least a college degree. Not reported in these surveys were gender, race/ethnicities, or place-based identifiers. The purpose here is not to parse the reality of the Occupy constituency, but to acknowledge that the Occupy leadership and 'citizenry' had its own value systems that were physically manifest

in the camps: having libraries, community gardens, and/or day-care in a camp were considered value-laden choices. It is the recognition of value bias in the implementation of city-making processes that is key. Perhaps participatory urbanism is more transparent because its decisions are made out of doors and in view of all, whereas top-down processes opaquely embed values in dense codes, regulations, and Byzantine elisions between public and private ownership and occupation.

Participatory urbanism as currently described, and particularly as framed by the Occupy movement, focuses on actions that impact the perceived publicness of space. But if one follows Léon Krier's formulation, healthy urbanism relies upon a symbiotic relationship between both the *res publica* and *res privata*.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the physical fabric of the places where we live and work are just as significant in supporting the physical voids where the public unfolds. It is in the private sphere of urbanism that the nascent intersection between digital and physical participation in enacting the city has also developed – through the reinvention of urban homesteading at the turn of the twenty-first century.

### Homesteading in the city

In his 15 September 2005 speech in response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina, George W. Bush, president at the time, made a series of proposals that included an urban homesteading initiative. He asserted:

Under this approach, we will identify property in the region owned by the federal government, and provide building sites to low-income citizens free of charge, through a lottery. In return, they would pledge to build on the lot [...] Home ownership is one of the greatest strengths of any community, and it must be a central part of our vision for the revival of this region.<sup>21</sup>

When President Bush proposed that Congress pass an Urban Homesteading Act (that was

ultimately abandoned), he was implicitly invoking a tradition of the homestead as the gateway to community building in the United States. But did Bush understand this intersection and its historical underpinnings and policy implications when he suggested homesteading as a possible means by which residents could participate in the rebuilding of the Gulf Region?

President Bush's homesteading proposal was built on the historical precedent set by President Abraham Lincoln.<sup>22</sup> In the face of a socially and economically conflicted nation on the brink of dissolution, Lincoln dramatically altered American domestic development policy by signing the Homestead Act on 20 May 1862.<sup>23</sup> The Act allowed any head of a family aged twenty-one or older to receive a 160-acre parcel of undeveloped land to farm in the American West.<sup>24</sup> The first successful applicant was a farmer named Daniel Freeman, who took his family to the Nebraska plains.<sup>25</sup> In order to own his homestead outright under the Act, Freeman had to build a home, dig a well, plant crops and live on the land for the next five years.<sup>26</sup> Out of over two million homestead claims filed in the 123 years of the programme, more than three-quarters of a million were successful. By the time the Federal Land Policy and Management Act ended homesteading in 1976 (with the exception of Alaska, where homesteading continued until 1986), the Homesteading Act had provided for the settlement of over 270 million acres and affected public lands in thirty states. It also represented the first instance of the U.S. government transferring large tracts of the public domain to individuals. In initiating a homesteading programme, the government staged a participatory process wherein homesteaders ultimately, and probably unwittingly, fulfilled a government driven political agenda about how citizenship would be defined in the United States in terms of both who would own land and what would happen on it.



What began as a political agenda aimed at populating the western territories with settlers who might spread the influence of the Union and contain slavery and secession, ended up dramatically shifting settlement demographics in the United States, and concomitant conceptions of home and community. The Act led to more than the cultivation of crops unsuited to the east, such as corn and wheat, it contributed to the political and regional development of the nation. Homesteaders were a more diverse property-owning constituency than was present in the original colonies, with single women, former slaves and newly arrived immigrants among those filing claims.<sup>27</sup>

The Act also reinforced American mythologies of manifest destiny and home ownership. It represented a *tabula rasa* attempt to make America not only a geographical reality but also a conceptual one.<sup>28</sup> The Act may have attracted a relatively diverse set of people for mid-nineteenth-century America, but its purpose was to mainstream them into a cohesive American polity. It was a way of populating a nation with a fiction more real than the historically available reality: Americans would make communities based on individual stakes. Community would be derived not through physical proximity and socially established and locally based ritual, but through a collectively held identity: the farming pioneer.

When Thomas Jefferson envisioned a thousand-year expansion of America's yeomen farmers cultivating a pastoral landscape (via the Louisiana Purchase), he still feared the influence of mills and factories, not just in their potential urbanisation of America, but also for what it would mean for the polity of the nation. Jefferson's vision for America was expansive in geography but static in spatial form and cultural implication, and actively excluded the urban in the establishment of an American community made up of individual homesteaders. But Jefferson's exclusions would not

matter: modernisation came quickly in the nineteenth century, and this meant that the city became an active site for cultivating the idea of home. As America modernised and the Western frontier closed, issues of home and community moved back to the *urban* frontier. Buzz words such as 'city beautiful' and 'garden city' surrounded these early twentieth-century conversations on how to define home and community in the city, with the discussion reaching its peak after World War II and invoking a new nomenclature: urban renewal.

Urban Homesteading programmes were established in 1973 in the east coast cities of Wilmington, Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York as one of the myriad responses to urban blight and destabilised neighbourhoods. The basic idea of urban homesteading was to infill city-owned vacant lots and/or fill abandoned homes with families. A year after the programmes started in these east-coast cities, the federal government passed the Housing and Community Development Act, which allowed the stockpile of federally owned homes to join the numbers of municipally owned, tax delinquent buildings populating the homesteading programmes. By 1975, programmes had expanded to twenty-three cities around the country.<sup>29</sup>

As opposed to the bureaucratically sponsored response to urban renewal, which demolished neighbourhoods in order to build anew, New York's Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), founded in 1973 by young architects, urban planners, and activists living and working in lower Harlem, supported self-help housing. Formed in the midst of housing abandonment and neighbourhood deterioration, the UHAB set out to help low-income community residents gain control over abandoned, city-owned housing and become cooperative homeowners with a long-term stake in their neighbourhoods. Through UHAB's efforts, New York City now boasts the largest community of affordable housing co-ops in the country, with 1,200 buildings

housing approximately 100,000 low-income people.

In this configuration of home and community, home was a means for social and economic empowerment. Instead of a top-down vision of how to make place in the United States, it was a bottom-up effort that focused more narrowly on making neighbourhoods. Here, home and community did not serve as tools to cohere a broader polity and/or to define what it meant to be American. Instead, community meant a specific group of people whose common bond was their relationship to a specific, physical place. Home was the means by which they would not only *not* be displaced from that specific place, but could, in fact, reinforce and solidify their previously tenuous relationship to place. This configuration of the home-community dialogue took those who dwelled precariously on the margins and reinforced their patterns of culture into ones that were legitimised and stable. Here, a public-private partnership (where publicly owned property has been transferred to private ownership with the assistance of a professional class of experts), achieves parity in the staging of the participatory process by determining who owns the property and what they want to happen on it.

Like New York, Baltimore has been praised for successfully piloting urban homesteading programmes in the 1970s. The Baltimore experience was more typical of city-based programmes than New York's community-based approach, which was less common. In 1975, Baltimore's mayor William Donald Schaefer helped stay the impending destruction of the Otterbein neighbourhood by establishing a homesteading programme. Winners of the August 1975 lottery were able to purchase one of the 110 dwellings for one dollar. Otterbein became America's largest one-dollar homesteading community at the time. Originally home to thriving immigrant families of newly arrived Italians, Greeks, Germans and Poles working on the waterfront, Otterbein is now an upper middle-class

neighbourhood, having pushed out these lower-class residents. In 2002, U.S. Congressman Elijah E. Cummings wrote in the Baltimore *Afro American* newspaper that urban renewal in Otterbein had 'displaced these original, South Baltimore residents [...] with little compensation and almost without a trace that they had ever lived there.'<sup>30</sup>

Baltimore's engagement with homesteading provided a different penetration of the home-community dialectic, and a different relationship between those staging the participation and those invited to participate. In fact, Cummings' concerns about the changes in Otterbein are not unique to that neighbourhood, with many east coast cities concocting a similar recipe of existing nineteenth-century housing stock and imported twentieth-century residents, now served up as a twenty-first century, upper middle-class enclave. This type of revitalisation was, and no doubt is, good for Baltimore's economy, but what does it mean for the way people participate in the making of community? In Baltimore home(steading) became a vehicle for displacement. Whereas in New York a sense of physical and cultural sustainability was woven into the implementation of homesteading, in Baltimore (and in other places), homesteading was a mechanism for the creation of a *new* community rather than the re-establishment of an existing one. The participants are not from the place but relocate there in order to create a new place more acceptable to the public sector's vision of the city. For a community in the process of becoming rather than surviving, home was the mechanism by which a *new* Baltimore (as envisioned by city leaders) could come into being.

### **Virtual homesteading**

The new Baltimore at the turn of the twenty-first century, however, retained many of the problems of the 1960s and 70s city. Beset by drugs and concomitant crime problems, which began in the 1980s with crack cocaine and have continued unabated,

Baltimore's historic fabric remained largely intact while its social tapestry was unravelling. Areas around the inner harbour thrived with a limited revitalisation from the 1990s, but those beyond walking distance from the harbour remained impoverished. With Baltimore ranking second in the U.S. for abandoned buildings at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the city needed a revised approach to its thirty-year-old homesteading programme in order to continue to reinvest in both the city's social and physical capital. This twenty-first century version of urban homesteading came to Baltimore not from the city government, but as a grassroots effort that demonstrates an early intersection of physical and digital participatory urbanism.

Adam Meister, a native of Reistertown (a Baltimore suburb), had grown up watching Baltimore's constant struggle against urban decline.<sup>31</sup> A young professional, he decided to do something about it by posting his thoughts on the web:

There is an old saying that goes a little something like this: 'You can't choose your neighbours'. Most of the time when a person or a couple moves into a neighbourhood they do not bring along a friend to move next door. But what if you could do this? Not only would you and a friend move in at the same time, but there would be 15 other friends moving in also. I have been thinking and I realized that Baltimore is the perfect city for such an event to take place ... If 15 to 30 other people just like me, people who were willing to take chances and work hard, bought some of these cheap homes at the same time then we could change the area right away. The fact that somebody with the same goals in mind as you is right next-door will provide an immediate sense of security. Once people heard of these pioneers who resurrected these dead blocks then others would move in and fix up properties.<sup>32</sup>

What Meister proposed was urban homesteading, but instead of the homesteaders buying vacant

properties one by one in various locations, he envisioned a collective move into abandoned properties within the same neighbourhood. The project, which garnered the moniker 'buy-a-block' began in the spring of 2002 and was publicised through online forums, in local papers, fliers and through word of mouth. Meister received an immediate response by people intrigued with a collective rehabilitation effort and who felt that the approach would offer safety in numbers as they moved into a blighted neighbourhood. The majority of those attracted to Meister's vision were young, white, urban-oriented professionals looking to live closer to the urban core of Baltimore. Meister coined the term 'rybbie' – risk-taking, young, Baltimorean – to describe the members of his homesteading project. The rybbies focused on location as their project got off the ground. The location issue included not only what was literally available for purchase, but also what they deemed was appropriate and desirable. The group decided on Reservoir Hill, a thirty-two block, residential neighbourhood with little new development, but plenty of vacancy and abandonment since 1940. On the positive side was the architecture. On the negative side, rampant drug dealing and the perilousness of walking to a nearby grocery store.

Despite the deterioration of the neighbourhood, the rybbies were concerned that real estate speculation might drive up the costs if their plans became too public and attracted developers, so they operated as a virtual community with an invitation-only mailing list. Meister believed they distinguished themselves from ordinary real estate investors by their desire to live in the neighbourhood. They were not interested in flipping the properties for profit, but in creating a community with shared values and a liveable environment. To turn their virtual community into a physical one, the rybbies made an offer on the 2200 block of Linden Avenue. All properties but one in this initial phase were abandoned or vacant.

During their physical renovations, the rybbies also formed a block group that actively engaged with existing residents, and sponsored regular neighbourhood 'clean-ups'. Without many years of hindsight it is hard to know whether this homesteading effort will displace the current residents, as occurred in Otterbein, or weave new threads into the old, creating a revised social tapestry. However, because these homesteaders formed their community online it is possible to follow their discussions on the type of urbanism they were trying to create.

### **Virtually a community**

What exactly did Meister's homesteaders mean by community? And how could that fit into the existing neighbourhood in Reservoir Hill? The on-line discussions often focused on common urban amenities like walkability, proximity to recreational open space, ease of commute, retention of the architectural character of Baltimore and proximity to retail establishments. As it became a physical reality, discussions of what they wanted for their virtual community often invoked the brand of Starbucks as a way of circling around issues of gentrification.

mmm...I don't want 'a Starbucks on the corner' I want a community. Proximity to chain restaurants and coffee shops is not a concern of mine at all when it comes to picking my future home. As for commercial businesses in Bevedere Square they are not next door to residential areas the way that Laundromats, Bail Bondsman, check cashing places and the like were in SoWeBo. I do not wish to live next door to a business that is open 24 hrs a day! I can't imagine many people do when there are so many other choices available...The whole idea behind this project is that we are building a community, not a business venture. I want to live in a neighbourhood where I can take advantage of all it offers and quite frankly if being near a Starbucks is your first concern, Baltimore might not be the best place for you to live. I look forward to becoming a member of one of these communities and continuing to do my part to patronize locally

owned businesses and I would hope you want to do the same.<sup>33</sup>

While there was a clear dislike associating chain stores and the commercial enterprises with the Baltimore suburbs, it was less clear where the group stood on the issue of gentrification. Although most expressed a disdain for it when directly posed the question, some still expressed a desire for a boutique commercial culture associated with upper middle-class urbanism. In other words, what appealed to some of the group was the type of neighbourhood Otterbein had become. Other postings were more vocal and pointed out the distinction between revitalisation and gentrification.

I think there needs to be a better understanding of what true 'urban living' is before some of you decide to make this life alternating move. Urban living is a mixture of homes, parks, retail (both chains and local) as well as dogs and 24 hour stores. Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't the goal to revitalize a city?? I ask because diversity is the key to doing this and trying to build something Walt Disney would of [sic.] been proud of will never work.<sup>34</sup>

This poster recognised that 'chain' versus 'locally owned' was still being framed from a suburban, upper middle-class sensibility. The poster's notion of urban living meant an inclusion of chain stores, 24 hour stores, and locally owned business that would support existing needs as well as the growth of those needs. In other words, his/her notion of urbanity was less about a community of shared values than about a heterogeneous civility. In the end, the poster represented what the homesteaders would advocate: an arresting of the potential cultural co-opting of the neighbourhood before it began.

The homesteaders were aware and concerned about their role in the displacement of an already established community. Since the premise of the project was the collective move of an online

'community' formed in cyberspace into real-life geographic proximity, there was a distinct sense of 'us' (the online community) and 'them' (the existing residents). For many, the notion of a collective move into a neighbourhood smacked of a 'white invasion' or neighbourhood coup. Opinions about the legitimacy of such concerns, the quality of the existing culture, and assumptions about how they might be perceived by residents varied greatly, with most agreeing that gentrification was not the goal, even though some viewed it as inevitable. Nevertheless, as the online community discussed their future neighbours, they qualified whom they would be willing (and, perhaps, eager) to have displaced from Reservoir Hill: those who did not own homes.

One thing that must be considered if we're gonna move [...] is NOT trying to get those who own and live there to move out. I have met and talked to a few of them, and they hate living amongst that scene as much as any of us would. [...] My point is that the owners should be thought of as our future neighbours, not those that we need out of the way so we can move in. But of course the renters must go, or be encouraged to join us, so they can own their own home.

The biggest and most effective solution is, was and always will be home ownership... Home ownership is the only way to have a population invested in its city. 20%-30% aint gonna do it. Look at neighbourhood clean ups, get out to vote drives, community gardens, neighbourhood policing. Who is it that participates? Home owners [...] not landlords, not those who rent from them. Are the problems caused by the homeowner/resident? No, of course not [...] property value and quality of life is too important. Landlords, land bankers, low quality renters [...] now, therein lies the problem [...] too many people just passing through.

I will say this, and this is me being frank and honest but some of the comments made about 'lower class' or 'section 8' or 'those people' that you guys in here

refer to is a bit disheartening, teetering on the verge of classism and I'd dare say ra ... you get my point. Not all of 'those' people are lazy, crack dealing, thieving, polluting, section eight receiving, eyesores that some of us tend to describe them as. Just like all of 'you' people aren't really contributing to the upliftment of the community through blindly pointing the finger ... yeah, you see that word, COMMUNITY. A group of people living in the same locality and under the same government. Sharing, participation, and fellowship. PEOPLE make the community, all PEOPLE ... poor, middle class, and upper class.<sup>35</sup>

The distinction that many online members made between owner-occupants and renters carried value-laden assumptions about who would be an asset to their enterprise, all centring around the notion of home as conveying legitimate membership to a community. Their perception of the existing community relative to their homesteading project is not unique. As Sean Zielenbach notes:

Americans desire to help the less fortunate members of society, yet they also hold strong beliefs in the primacy of the private sector and the importance of individual autonomy and responsibility. Public opinion surveys continually illustrate a widespread belief in hard work as a predictor of success and unyielding faith in the free market as the best means for promoting economic gain.<sup>36</sup>

In the us-vs-them paradigm, American society makes distinctions between the deserving and undeserving, as evidenced by the commentary surrounding the Hurricane Katrina disaster. Hence the deserving poor of Reservoir Hill are those who demonstrate their worthiness via homeownership, given that forces outside their control have caused the decay of their neighbourhood. The undeserving poor of Reservoir Hill are renters, who are often associated with a culture of crime, seen as causing neighbourhood deterioration and perceived

as lazy and/or morally weak because they have failed to accumulate the wealth necessary for homeownership.

The original homesteading act was about changing the nature of the cultural landscape of America via publicly owned land on which *citizens* would take government sanctioned action. The first *urban* homesteading initiatives of the 1970s vacillated between changing who and what contributed to community in the city and stabilising the extant communities – with the former taking precedence over the latter. Primarily, the twentieth-century urban form of homesteading was a response to the middle, upper, and primarily white, class flight to the suburbs. In order to lure people back into the downtown neighbourhoods, publicly owned property was made available for next to nothing. But the people who invisibly occupied this world of the next to nothing were not a factor in (re)building the city's communities (with the notable exception of UHAB) and were not allowed to participate in their own urbanism. Instead, new participants constructed a government-sponsored vision of urbane living. In the twenty-first century, Meister and the rybbies changed the homesteading paradigm away from publicly sponsored programmes to a citizen-generated shaping of the city. Yet this private effort did not come from the existing urban dwellers but from a group of self-declared 'pioneers', who struggled with issues of inequality among their digitally formed community and the neighbourhood's residents. Although their aim is to create an urban place of heterogeneous civility, their methods and tactics have yet to engage others outside their cultural group.

### **An anthropological urbanism**

The physical deterioration of many of America's cities is not only due to unique circumstances fashioned by natural disasters, but also to an ongoing series of systemic problems: poverty, gentrification,

population decline, vacancy and abandonment, and conflicts in cultural values.<sup>37</sup> And although neighbourhood revitalisation usually focuses on physical improvements, it clearly has a social impact. Physical interventions do indeed transform the built environment but they do not necessarily eliminate poverty, nor do they address the socio-economic disparities prevalent in many major (and minor) American cities and suburbs.

The politics of culture are just as important as aesthetic considerations in the complex efforts to revitalise cities. As Roberta Gratz notes: 'No one should want to protect the status quo of a deteriorated neighbourhood. If all change is mislabelled as gentrification without distinctions, the problem of gentrification is not addressed, just ignored'.<sup>38</sup> It is important to be aware that many physically deteriorated neighbourhoods can, in fact, be vital as communities if they 'possess viable social networks that function to meet the needs of their populations'.<sup>39</sup> Is there a way to balance the micro and macro effects of revitalisation? Is there a middle ground between whole cloth demographic change of the community and stopping the continued deterioration of blighted neighbourhoods? How can cities address these issues to encourage good subcultural networks without exacerbating the segregation of economic classes or discouraging private investment? The answers to these questions need to be made manifest not only through the physical rebuilding of homes, but also through the rebuilding of institutions (both from the top-down and bottom-up), and adjusting public policies and other governmental frameworks to reinforce the viability of subcultural groups within the mainstream polity.

As in 1862, but under very different circumstances, American municipalities today have large tracts of land that are underutilised: primarily, vacant or abandoned ones. Sites in the public

domain could be activated by hosting a variety of groups to stage 'urbanisms', supported by the use of digital and traditional mechanisms to create feedback loops on uses and practices. Privately held sites could be incentivised beyond the current regulations that make lot parking the most profitable use, to promote instead temporary and tactical physical installations that might catalyse more permanent vitality. Participatory urbanism's ability to supplant the few with the many, both in terms of who makes the city and how it gets made, might provide a guiding methodology as long as it is critically assessed: firstly, to understand who the actors are and for whom the actions take place; and secondly, in the case of officially sanctioned provocations, to determine if issues of public and private ownership and the right to inhabitation are being lost in the translation to regulation. Participatory urbanism can promote an anthropologically rich city, a city with a plurality of rituals and dwellings, when it transparently acknowledges who owns the land, who acts on it, whose values are being preferred and how these factors correlate to the physical publicness and occupation of the city.

What participatory urbanism ultimately highlights is the disparity between professionalised discussions of place and those that derive from its inhabitants. Occupy Wall Street was too preoccupied with its agenda – which Kenneth Stahl argues persuasively was the occupation of place itself, not an ambiguously undefined socio-political or economic aim – to worry about how Zuccotti Park would be writ large with stereotypes, good and bad.<sup>40</sup> If, as Edward Weston says, participatory urban groups achieve a 'freshness of vision', it is when they are not forced to fit into preconceived patterns. The Occupy movement did not reify its creation of an urban realm (or its digital discussions of that creation) into The Paradigm for the built environment; instead, the environments that were made, mapped or recorded revealed the patterns of lived and built culture in their urbanisms.<sup>41</sup> And

perhaps to the frustration of the professionalised built environment disciplines, what they produced, during the conscious participation and documentation of their everyday lives, is often more compelling than the over-planned downtowns or the fictionalised 'new' urbanisms being designed and built all over the United States in the context of local and global development pressures.

In his essay 'The Stranger's Path', J.B. Jackson parses both the elements of distinctiveness and ubiquity in discussing mid-twentieth-century American cities. In this piece he notes the fondness of planners for using Italian public spaces as exemplars for how America should be designed:

I am growing a little weary of the Piazza San Marco. I yield to no one in my admiration of its beauty and social utility, but it seems to me that those who hold it up as the prototype of all civic (traffic-free) centres are not always aware of what makes it what it is.<sup>42</sup>

Jackson's message is that one can admire the Piazza San Marco, but the reason it works physically, economically, and socio-culturally is because it is deeply embedded in Venetian patterns of living, and that when transported to another locale it loses its deeper meanings and *raison d'être*. It becomes lost in translation when mimicked in various socio-cultural milieux. Like Jackson, we too should be weary of the spread of an American-influenced global approach to urban design, whether within or beyond the borders of the United States. The danger of predetermined formal paradigms, or charrettes that masquerade as community-building exercises, is that place becomes disconnected from people. This disconnect can be seen most vividly in the empty town squares that have littered the New Urbanism, or in the newly branded old urbanism of Quebec, London and Rome, all with their Starbucks, Barnes and Noble and McDonald's. In this context, the space is rendered neutral and devoid of place-ness; it is the global brand that leads to similar

experiences across continents and cultures – as well as prompting the ire of the Occupy movement. In the twenty-first century, public places have become both privatised and commercialised to the detriment of the people who occupy them (the very point made, ironically, by those who encamped in Zuccotti Park). This approach belies that the people are the place. Participatory urbanism demonstrates that urbanism can and needs to be fabricated on more than form alone: it requires transformation rather than imitation, a synthesis of local practices and global economics. And most importantly, it does not need to use consensus building as a means of resolving potential development obstacles, but should instead elevate all involved to the simultaneous roles of expert and audience. In this way place will thrive because it will be derived from an extensive collaboration that raises process over product.<sup>43</sup> It is these contemporary examples of place conceived as product rather than process that served as a core rallying point for the Occupy movement, and they also serve to illustrate the disconnect that emerges when designers and planners focus exclusively on the physical.

If we assume that cities are a cultural construct and not a just a physical fact, then what is it that we are trying to make when we place-make? And are there people, buildings, landscapes, sites or other aspects being left out or left behind in the construct of place making? In other words, for whom are we engaging in urban design?<sup>44</sup> Although those engaged in urban design may believe their values are ‘objectively right’, place-making judgements can be neither objective nor universal because the designers themselves are ‘part of a class group with its own distinct values’,<sup>45</sup> as are the activists engaged in participatory urbanism. An anthropological urbanism calls for self-awareness by all parties participating in the politics of urban design. In other words, what is the nature of the knowledge base that informs what we mean by place making? What are the assumed values in this knowledge base and

how can we sharpen our skill in recognising potential bias? What are the unintended consequences of expertise-driven design decisions, of grass-roots urbanism that becomes codified, and of issues of equity in the process and products of both top-down and bottom-up urban methodologies? How do we challenge cultural assumptions to ensure the ‘universal’ is not being imposed on the local? And how do we learn to think beyond the replication of a paradigm in order to embrace the particular and let the peculiar thrive? These questions should not be aimed solely at the New Urbanists, Post Urbanists, planners and other professional designers, but also at those who frame and therefore reify participatory urbanism as an alternative, for they also participate with their own preferred set of values in the production of a value-biased city. As Matthew Passmore notes:

[...] technocratic and participatory approaches to urbanism, when combined, offer an extraordinary range of tools for improving the social and ecological health of the city. [...] as San Francisco prepares to spend billions of dollars to upgrade its combined sewer system, it may consider funding—for a scan fraction of the larger project—community groups to build neighbourhood gardens, pocket parks and other landscapes that reduce the flow of rainwater into the water treatment system. The strain on this major infrastructural project could be reduced by some well-planned, small-scale urban interventions.<sup>46</sup>

If place offers a realm of conflicting simultaneity between ideal forms and performative tactics, then an anthropological urbanism offers the ability to understand how people enact places to reveal the politics of context, both to instil and destabilise beliefs and values, and to rebel against tradition. Understanding participatory urbanism as an anthropology of urbanism has the potential to allow a plurality of people to become equal partners with form and space in the making of place, instead of being subservient or non-existent. In establishing



an anthropology of urbanism, participatory urbanism acknowledges that the role of architecture extends beyond object making and puts the maker inside the place rather than removed from it, thus inverting the customary primacy of product over process. The methodology is to make the familiar strange: to allow us to recognise ourselves, our ways of living, our conflicts and our traditions by rendering them legible, neither hidden nor – as is even more often the case – assumed and generalised. As long as participatory urbanism honestly and openly acknowledges the issues involved in who makes places, who occupies them, and the potential contestation that may occur between and within these groups, then, by asserting an anthropology of urbanism, participatory urbanism offers a way of ‘broadening good design practice into good cultural practice’.<sup>47</sup>

### Notes

1. Kim O’Connell, ‘Newest Urbanism’, *Architect*, July 2013, <[www.architectmagazine.com/architects/newest-urbanism.aspx](http://www.architectmagazine.com/architects/newest-urbanism.aspx)> [accessed 11 July 2013].
2. *Tactical Urbanism 2: Short-Term Action, Long-Term Change*, ed. by Mike Lydon and others, [published online as a PDF by the Street Plans Collective], <[http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical\\_urbanism\\_vol\\_2\\_final](http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final)><[http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical\\_urbanism\\_vol\\_2\\_final](http://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol_2_final)> [accessed 15 February 2013].
3. Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1984). Rob Krier, *Urban space = Stadtraum* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1979). *Leon Krier: architecture and urban design, 1967-1992*, ed. by Richard Economakis, (London: Academy Editions, 1992).
4. Thomas Schumacher, ‘Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations’, in *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture: An Anthology of Architectural Theory 1965-1995*, ed. by Kate Nesbitt (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), pp. 294-307. Wayne Copper, ‘The Figure/Grounds’, M.Arch Thesis, Cornell University, 1967. Wayne Copper, ‘The Figure/Grounds’, in *Cornell Journal of Architecture*, no. 2 (1983).
5. A lengthier discussion on this topic can be found in B.D. Wortham-Galvin and Isaac Williams, ‘Walking the City: The Physical and Social Urban Form Made Public’, in *Proceedings from the ASCA 96th Annual Conference* (Houston: University of Houston, 2008).
6. Douglas Kelbaugh, ‘Toward an Integrated Paradigm: Further Thoughts on Three Urbanisms’, in *Places* 19, 2 (2007), pp. 13, 15.
7. Ibid.
8. An in-depth discussion of both the notion of the public and of place can be found in: B.D. Wortham-Galvin and Isaac Williams, ‘The Stranger’s Path: The Cultural Landscape of Urban Form’, in *Instant Cities* (Sharjah: the Center for the Study of Architecture in the Arab Region, American University of Sharjah, UAE, 2008), pp. 365-80.
9. Doug Kelbaugh’s ‘Toward an Integrated Paradigm: Further Thoughts on the Three Urbanisms’, and Harrison Fraker’s ‘Where is the Urban Design Discourse?’, *Places* 19, 3 (2007), pp. 61-63, are examples of such synoptic accounts.
10. Nate Berg, ‘The Official Guide to Tactical Urbanism’, *The Atlantic Cities Place Matters*, 2 (March 2012), <[www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/](http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/)> [accessed 5 August 2013].
11. Lindsey M. Roberts, ‘Design Intervenes to Save Our Cities’, *Architect* (exhibition review), <<http://www.architectmagazine.com/exhibitions/examples-of-city-saving-design-shown-in-aia-seattle-exhibition.aspx>> [accessed 5 August 2013].
12. Kelli Anderson’s ideas about ‘disruptive wonder’ can be found in her TedTalk <[www.ted.com/speakers/kelli\\_anderson.html](http://www.ted.com/speakers/kelli_anderson.html)> [accessed 29 January 2013]. For a discussion of the concept of ‘making the familiar strange’ see B. D. Wortham-Galvin, ‘Making the Familiar Strange: Understanding Design Practice as Cultural Practice’, in *The Urban Wisdom of Jane Jacobs*, ed. by Sonia Hirt (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 229-44.

13. A discussion of participatory urbanism as performance art in San Francisco can be found in Matthew Passmore, 'Participatory Urbanism. Taking action by taking space', *Urbanist* (February 2010), <[www.spur.org/publications/library/article/participatoryurbanism/](http://www.spur.org/publications/library/article/participatoryurbanism/)> [accessed 15 February 2013].
14. Lydon (n.d.), *Tactical Urbanism 2*, p. 15.
15. All information about the Crown Heights Participatory Urbanism project can be found on its website, <<http://participatoryurbanism.blogspot.com/>> [accessed 23 January 2013].
16. Jonathan Massey & Brett Snyder, 'Occupying Wall Street: Places and Spaces of Political Action', *The Design Observer Group*, posted 17 September 2012, <[www.places.designobserver.com/feature/occupy-wall-street-places-and-spaces-of-political-action/35938/](http://www.places.designobserver.com/feature/occupy-wall-street-places-and-spaces-of-political-action/35938/)> [accessed 20 February 2013].
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. The first survey was published by Hector Cordero-Guzman, PhD, a sociology professor at the City University of New York and included 1619 online respondents. The second survey took place in person with 198 people present in Zuccotti Park (the site of Occupy Wall Street) conducted by Fox news analyst Douglas Schoen's polling outfit. Press coverage of these surveys can be found at the following websites [accessed 5 August 2013]: <<http://gawker.com/5851376/the-demographics-of-occupy-wall-street/>>, <<http://www.fastcompany.com/1789018/demographics-occupy-wall-street/>>, <<http://theweek.com/article/index/220529/the-demographics-of-occupy-wall-street-by-the-numbers>>, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/29/occupy-wall-street-report\\_n\\_2574788.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/29/occupy-wall-street-report_n_2574788.html)>, <<http://www.statisticbrain.com/occupy-wall-street-statistics-and-demographics/>>, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/opinion/sunday/who-is-occupy-wall-street.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/opinion/sunday/who-is-occupy-wall-street.html?_r=0)>, <<http://idealab.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/10/occupy-wall-street-demographic-survey-results-will-surprise-you.php>>.
20. Both of Léon Krier's books, *The Architecture of Community* and *Architecture: Choice or Fate* deal with his concepts of urbanism.
21. President Bush addressed the nation on 15 September 2005. The transcript of this speech was released by the Office of the Press Secretary, entitled 'President Discusses Hurricane Relief in Address to Nation' and can be found at <[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)> [accessed 5 January 2006].
22. For a broader historical discussion of homesteading and its relationship to the Katrina disaster see, B.D. Wortham, 'Home Sweet Homestead: Remaking the Gulf Coast After Katrina', in *Battleground States: Scholarship in Contemporary America*, ed. by Stephen Swanson et al., (Newcastle, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), pp. 160-82.
23. By the time Daniel Freeman filed the first claim under the Act in 1863, eleven states had seceded from the nation. Good references on the Homestead Act include: Everett Dick, *The Lure of the Land: A Social History of the Public Lands from the Articles of the Confederation to the New Deal* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1970); Paul Gates, *The Jeffersonian Dream: Studies in the History of American Land Policy and Development* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996); Harold Hyman, *American Singularity: The 1787 Northwest Ordinance, the 1862 Homestead and Morrill Acts, and the 1944 G.I. Bill* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), and Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942).
24. The 160 acres (ca. 65 hectares) was equivalent to one quarter of a section of a township. The unit of the township became relevant in the settlement of land in the United States with the Land Ordinance of 1785, which implemented a standardised system of Federal land surveys that eased boundary conflicts. Prior to settlement, territories were divided into 6-mile squares called a township. The township was subdivided into 36 sections, each measuring 1 square mile or 640 acres. At the time, the sale of public land was viewed more as a means of generating revenue for the government than as a means for encouraging settlement. With the cost of a section set at \$1 per

- acre for 640 acres, the price was often inaccessible. It should also be noted that in the 1860s the West began in what today would be considered the Midwest (i.e., the American West began to the west of the original colonies).
25. Daniel Freeman made the first claim under the Homestead Act on 1 January 1863.
  26. Other homesteaders were permitted live on the land for just six months if they paid a \$1.25 per acre fee. The Act was later modified to make it easier for Civil War soldiers and former slaves to qualify. The number of acres on which a family could homestead was also increased.
  27. More famous claimants included inventor/educator George Washington Carver, the parents of author Willa Cather, author Laura Ingalls Wilder, musician Lawrence Welk, and the grandparents of contemporary musician Jewel Kilcher.
  28. This blank slate approach of the United States government toward land development was accomplished by ignoring the existing Native American settlements already populating the land.
  29. *Mother Earth News*, Issue 65, September/October 1980.
  30. Elijah Cummings, 'Baltimore's Urban Renewal', in *Baltimore AFRO American*, February 2002. <<http://www.afro.com/afroblackhistoryarchives/>> [accessed via AFRO Black History digital archives 17 January 2006].
  31. Baltimore exemplifies many of the social and economic problems that plague American cities. It has been affected by the nation's trend towards increased suburbanisation and a severe decline in city population. According to the 2003 Census, the population has dropped from a 1950 all-time high of almost 950,000 to 628,670, more than a 30% population decline. The racial composition of the city has also changed dramatically since 1950, when it was composed of 76.2% white, 23.7% black and 0.1% other. In 2000 it was 31.6% white, 64.3% black and 4.1% other. The population decline has resulted in the widespread abandonment of housing units. Baltimore currently has around 16,000 vacant properties and 14,000 vacant lots. There is a 7.2 vacancy rate for residential properties.
  32. Yahoo Groups, 'TechBalt Yahoo Group'. (Restricted Access, invitation only), <<http://groups.yahoo.com>> [accessed September-December 2005].
  33. Ibid.
  34. Ibid.
  35. Ibid.
  36. Sean Zielenbach, *The Art of Revitalization: Improving Conditions in Distressed Inner-City Neighborhoods* (Cleveland: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), pp. 7-8.
  37. In its 20 March 2000 issue, *USA Today* published a list of American cities with the most abandoned buildings. Topping the list of the cities that provided data were Philadelphia (27,000), Baltimore (15,000), Houston (8000), Detroit (7500), Kansas City (5000), Indianapolis (3400), San Antonio (3000), Jacksonville (2800), Louisville (2200), Mobile (2009) and Los Angeles (1800)
  38. *Gentrification, Displacement and Neighborhood Revitalization*, ed. by Bruce London and J. John Palen (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 7.
  39. Ibid, p. 10.
  40. Kenneth Stahl, 'How the Occupy Movement Changed Urban Government', *The Atlantic Cities*, 6 February 2012, <[www.theatlanticcities.com/politics/2012/02/how-occupy-movement-changed-urban-government/1130](http://www.theatlanticcities.com/politics/2012/02/how-occupy-movement-changed-urban-government/1130)> [accessed 20 January 2013].
  41. The term 'enacted environment' is borrowed from James Rojas' work.
  42. J.B. Jackson, 'The Stranger's Path' in *Landscapes: Selected Writings of J.B. Jackson*, ed. by Ervin H. Zube (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), p. 92-106.
  43. A broader discussion of this topic can be found in: B.D. Wortham-Galvin, 'Mythologies of Placemaking', *Places* 20, 1 (2008), pp. 32-39.
  44. I address the 'for whom' question from another point of view in: B.D. Wortham, 'Cultural Sustainability and Architecture', *Design Science in Architecture, GAM.02* (2005), pp. 62-77.
  45. Catherine Bisher, 'Yuppies, Bubbas, and the Politics

- of Culture', *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, III, ed. by Thomas Carter and Bernard Herman (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1989).
46. Passmore, 'Participatory Urbanism. Taking action by taking space' (2010).
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### **Biography**

Brooke D. Wortham-Galvin is an assistant professor in the School of Architecture, Portland State University and director of the non-profit Urban Dialogues. She teaches a variety of subjects including history and theory, adaptive reuse, urban design, and community engaged design. Her scholarship focuses on how theories of the everyday can be applied to the design and stewardship of the built environment.