

**UNIVERSITIES, CITIES, DESIGN, AND DEVELOPMENT:  
AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF AESTHETIC EXPERTISE**

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A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

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In Partial Fulfillment  
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Doctor of Philosophy

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By  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Title: Universities, Cities, Design, and Development:  
An Anthropology of Aesthetic Expertise

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In this dissertation I explore the idea of “design” as a mechanism of aesthetic classification and control – what I call aesthetic expertise. This is to understand design not solely in terms of specialized knowledge, skill, or procedures, but as constituting relationships of power through claims to aesthetic or subjective authority. For this analysis I draw upon ethnographic fieldwork conducted among urban design faculty engaged in university-community partnerships. These designer-teachers are collaborating with urban neighborhood organizations to produce design services and unique learning experiences for their students. In addition to accounting for constructions of professionalism, urbanity, progress, and creativity in this process, I analyze the role of the university as urban developer, as well as contemporary discourses of community development and urban revitalization that promote the ‘arts and culture industries’ as economic development engines. I contextualize these phenomena within the post-industrial American city, and also offer a cultural analysis of the idea of design in the media, as these relate to late capitalist democratic society.

Appreciating design for its social and cultural effects, and for the ways it influences public policy, economies and technologies, allows us to see how aesthetic judgments, though very much the result of the creative endeavor, deploy accompanying (and often ulterior) cultural values and notions, that are rooted in the present (and contested) social, cultural, political, and economic milieu. The work of professional designers and educators may thus be seen as sites for the production and maintenance of meaning and authority, produced through the pursuit of design excellence and its application toward social change.

In a thriving and complex material economy like ours, which is increasingly dependent on the symbolic economy of consumerism, the ideas and activities associated with design have become ubiquitous, taking on an essential, but largely unquestioned role. Design has thus become a significant source of meaning and order, requiring an analysis that highlights its role in the relationships of power that form both the warp and weft of social practices, rituals, belief systems, and taxonomies of value and meaning, as these are lived in the context of everyday consumer-capitalist, liberal-democratic life.

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To my family.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Anthropological Preludes**

Anthropology can be characterized as the study of humans both as a species – therefore entailing the study of ecologies, related or dependent species, and ultimately the planet and all relevant systems; and as a producer of meaning and consciousness – entailing studies of belief, understanding, patterns of survival and meaning making, culture, society, and history. I consider this a foundational point of departure, even if my work strays into formally non-anthropological traditions, disciplines, or areas of concern. This dissertation is mostly a cultural critique of the *idea* of ‘design’, stemming from an ethnographic study of urban design and economic development discourses in a decidedly American context. And though my goal has been to provide observations, critiques, and ruminations that will be accessible and useful to more than just anthropology, I have tried to remain relevant to the discipline, and true to its principles and teachings.

As a graduate student, and through the work of my dissertation, I have come to greatly value certain traditional strengths of anthropology. These include the kind of deep qualitative research and analyses that ethnographic work in particular is well suited to, which is especially useful when trying to understand how meaning, values, perceptions, actions, and beliefs are produced and maintained within a socio-cultural context, at a specific moment in time. Another extremely valuable part of anthropology comes from its history of a commitment to cross-cultural comparison. Though this has traditionally meant a literal comparison of cultural traditions from around the globe, this has, for me, become something a little different. As a student of the anthropology of North America, researching university-community partnerships, urban development, and the activities of academic architecture, it has primarily meant striving to set aside one’s own perspectives, beliefs, and convictions enough to comprehend and value another’s. Luckily for me, anthropology is also a very porous discipline, open to suggestions, borrowings, (and lendings!) from many other methodologies and fields of study, most notably sociology, history, philosophy, literature, technology, and the visual arts. And finally, if we consider one of anthropology’s fundamental precepts, the study of all human activity throughout time, then many more schools of thought and practice are easily incorporated into anthropological analysis and participation. This dissertation then, is a product of that flexibility, porosity, and personal provocation, in that it has the fallibility of perspective, and often behaves like a work in socio-cultural anthropology under the influence of philosophy, architectural theory, or literature. I hope I have effectively turned this into an asset.

Ultimately, I see this dissertation as more of a proposition than a concluding statement. My foray into ethnography is a first installment, if you will, in what I hope will be an ongoing effort to explicate the more abstract ideas introduced herein. Though ethnographic data is one of the most difficult forms of data to work with (my shortcomings in this regard will, I am sure, speak for themselves!), it can also be some of the most compelling, not least because of its immediacy and grounded-ness in the messiness of real-life stories – something that, ironically for me, makes it a good tool for critical analysis of grand ideas and ideologies (a realm I am



dangerously attracted to, as you will see if you continue!). During the writing of this document, in fact, this visceral ability to relate ideas and analyses to the “reader” through the telling of stories was demonstrated to me several times. In one case, an architect who was part of my study read a very short vignette of mine and found a quote that startled her. She said, “It’s an image! It works just like an image!”

And yet this can be misleading. I treat ethnographic data not so much as evidence produced by experimentation, to be touted as physical proof of some hypothesis (though it is evidence of a sort, in that it ‘bears witness’, so-to-speak), but rather as the stuff of vignettes, collected in the real world, and used for demonstrating and illustrating the strata of social machinations. Their power to communicate should not be underestimated – images are powerful – but they are also viewed, translated, and interpreted from specific personally, culturally, professionally, and historically situated perspectives. This is why ethnography becomes an important tool for linking the micro processes of situated behavior with the macro processes of social change, helping us to understand the way things have come to be organized and understood through everyday practices. But, we must all the while keep in mind that there is more than one way to do this. Humans are both producers and products of their material existence; and behavior, meaning, and perception are conglomerations of our sociological and physiological contexts. Therefore, our collective efforts to build and to understand our existence is both what we study and what we author.

### **Architectural Inspirations**

As I’ve said, this dissertation is largely a cultural critique of the contemporary life of the *idea* of ‘design’, rather than criticism of the effort to design. And while researching and writing it, I often struggled with avoiding the vilification of those I worked with, while attempting to provide good critical analysis of the world we are all enmeshed in. For me it was in part a journey of self-discovery – I often had a feeling, as if remembering, that we cannot escape what has already shaped us. This feeling would then morph into the realization that some of us must then struggle to become, or accept, who we already are. And though it is arguably impossible to map the entire creation of an individual identity (thankfully!), we all have some group of memories recalling certain formative moments. Indeed, I was once a student of architecture; I once briefly worked for an architectural firm (though as an anthropologist); and I am an unabashed art, technology, and ‘design’ fan, so-to-speak. Which makes this dissertation indicative of some of my most influential and vivid values, proclivities, and memories – many of which are connected to powerful experiences from my childhood, of place, creativity, class, and politics.

For instance, I remember, as a child, being captivated by a museum diorama of an Egyptian plaza - pressing my face to the glass panes that separated me from a miniature idealized scene, so as to eliminate as much as possible of the real world in my peripheral vision, straining to my tiptoes in order to be at eye level with the tiny figurines. I then contentedly looked out over the tiny vast landscape of columns, paving stones and people, imagining myself to be there, taking in the details of the scene. Like my escapist efforts within the dioramas, I also responded viscerally to another experience of place afforded me by the many Frank Lloyd Wright-designed homes and buildings that littered my childhood haunts. I remember entering under the low slicing horizontal patio and car port overhangs, through tight entryways, and out onto the opening courtyards and living spaces of Wright’s prairie-style homes, just as if I were leaning

into a quiet, dioramic landscape. Of course, as a boy I didn't know they were his, I knew only that I related to these cool rooms, nooks and long hallways, which felt to me, in my child's mind, like forests, caves and airport runways.

Then, as an earnest teenager, I was awakened to a related passion through another medium: Ayn Rand's (1943) novel "The Fountainhead", a story of the infamously self-possessed hero-architect, Howard Roark. I remember feeling as if I knew this character like I knew the homes designed by Rand's purported model for Roark, Frank Lloyd Wright. I was drawn to the slicing integrity of Mr. Roark, and his warrior-like demeanor as a reclusive master of creative vision. In my naïve, romantic idealism, I was brought to tears by the images of him at one moment, an artist, piercing dusty rock as a working-class quarryman (a grand and beautiful anachronism), and at another, passionately putting lead to paper (elegantly disheveled in 1940's style clothing), all in dogged pursuit of a sacred individuality, and sophisticated creative vision. Of course, this imagery is entirely my own, but I know that I share similar feelings and experiences with some of those architects with whom I conducted this research (in fact, they confessed it to me!).

Though certainly not all architects have been inspired by Ayn Rand's novel in the way my childhood was, it is also certain that the character of Howard Roark is a well-known ideal-type – be it a hero figure or a derided stereotype – within the profession. Even among those architects who scoff at such an image and what it represents to them, there is recognition of the power of this mythical construct – essentially the creative, individualistic, difficult (sometimes almost mad!) and fantastic icon of the master architect (a recent film by Nathaniel Kahn, "My Architect: A Son's Journey" is an interesting study in this kind of iconic and iconographic mythos). Of course, Rand's novel dealt with more than an iconic figure written into a technically and creatively glorified profession. Hers was also a philosophical argument for individual expression, a rapturous zeal for creativity and the rightness of free will, and ironically, considering the criticisms utilized in this dissertation, a champion of capitalism! But despite Roark being a mythical figure, many of the principles for which he stands – like rigorous creative insight and bold individuality – are central, guiding values for the design professions in general, but also, and more importantly regarding my purposes here, for the global capitalist cultural context within which the design professions operate and thrive, whether they know of Ayn Rand, Howard Roark, Frank Lloyd Wright, or not. The principles of free will, creative genius, individual expression, and mastery of professional creative and contextual tools are all essential ideal elements of architectural myth, education and practice (even if differently expressed in each respective area). And though there are, of course, more principles and characteristics of architecture and urban design than these, few would, in my experience, claim that what I have listed here are not central elements of what they do, or what they have learned, either in practice or in principle.

Another important aspect of architecture (and by extension, design, as will be argued below) is what I would call its 'public life'. That is, what architecture and design mean outside of their respective professional contexts, among the general public, in the media, and in business, for instance – in other words, the discourse of design, in the broadest sense possible. Again, the icon of Frank Lloyd Wright, and other icons from their respective eras, act not only as Masters and teachers and stars in their own disciplines. Their fame and failures also take on meanings and values outside of their fields of action – in the case of architecture or design, becoming paragons of cultural achievement and professionalism, symbols for the engines of economic

development and national pride, as well as targets for the iconoclasts of intellectualism, artistic sophistication, or elite cosmopolitanism. And thus it is here, in this mix of “erudite knowledge” and “popular knowledge” (Foucault 1980c) that we find interesting struggles between disciplinary border patrols and the public, or the mass media, over the substance and importance of the icons, the disciplines themselves, and the meaning and significance of their contributions to society and history. Apropos questions from architecture would include: Who is a “legitimate” star? What should “the public” think about architecture? What role should architecture or design play in the built environment, the economy, the culture? Is the contemporary phenomenon of architectural fame, also known as “star architecture”, good or bad?

Thus, a central premise of this dissertation is that the group of designers and students I studied are all operating (including myself) within cultural and socio-political contexts from which we cannot extract ourselves. This is the same cultural and socio-political context in which “star architects” have been formed; the same context in which we find the championing of university-community partnerships through service-learning, and community-based research; and the same context in which technocratic expertise is losing its authoritative position among consumers and design-oriented professionals; and the same moment at which the symbolic economy of consumer capitalism is growing in stature; and when “Culture” or “The Arts” have been taken on as organizing principles for economic development; and the transformation of cities into destinations for the consumption of diversity, liberalism, creativity, and freedom has become the party line for almost everyone in the political, policy, business, and community development worlds. In all of these domains, it is increasingly common to find the *idea* of “design”, functioning as a social force and a structuring structure that shapes our views and understandings of the world and our place in it.

## **Ethnographic Projects**

Because this dissertation is about the social life of the *idea* of ‘design’, data collection could have taken place from within many venues. A general starting point for this work has been that ‘design’, in its many different forms, is pervasively present throughout much of contemporary American and/or Western life. It is acting as a product, a process, a commodity, and an element of personal and professional identity for a myriad of people and professions. It also acts as an organizing force in our economy, our public policy, the forces of globalization, and other systems of order and development as they are deployed around the world. ‘Design’ is thus, ubiquitous.

Nonetheless, for this dissertation I chose architecture as an ethnographic starting point, partly because I am a fan, and partly because I was able to find an open and generous group of university practitioner-professors willing to let me ‘hang around’ and observe what they did and said. Thus, it should be clear that I do not claim this to be a thorough going history of the ‘design’ professions, nor the profession of architecture or architectural education, nor the work of university-community partnerships, even though I touch on all of these and more. It is primarily a study of ‘design’ as a cultural force in the here and now – what Michel Foucault (1980c) might call a “genealogy of knowledge”, or “the combined product of an erudite knowledge and a popular knowledge” (83) – utilizing just one of many possible venues for studying such a force.

Hence, in this case, data collection largely took place in the form of participant-observation in architectural “urban design” classes, or “studios”, that combined university

education with community collaboration on urban revitalization proposals. Ultimately I have attempted here to utilize ethnographic methods to explore how “design” is constructed and deployed by the urban design professions of architecture, landscape architecture, and public art, through discourses of “place-making” and “community”. And though my point of departure is largely the study of an academic-architectural experience, I attempt to expand the analysis to treat design’s ideational existence beyond this venue.

In what I am calling the “Urban Fabric Studio” (a pseudonym), I studied practitioners, who are also university professors in their respective disciplines, teaching their students the skills and values of urban design, interdisciplinarity, and “place-making”. These practitioner-professors were also teaching community-client partnership through active collaboration with civic associations, churches, schools and businesses in low-income urban neighborhoods in post-industrial Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The studios have operated over the course of several different semesters, dealing with different projects and different professorial and university-community collaborations. (It is important to note that in what follows, I do not treat the various semesters or projects in sequential order. This is done in part to avoid a linear, evolutionary account, in favor of a synthesized analysis of the ideas, discourses, and processes mentioned.) Their ultimate goal in any project has been to generate several final products in the form of building designs, master plans, art installations, or zoning-change proposals for the communities they have engaged (not necessarily to build, per se, but to help move toward that possibility). In so doing, these professionals construct and deploy notions of community, prosperity, and sense-of-place which naturally contain some assumptions about the particular places and groups toward which they turn their attention. Frequently these assumptions conflict with social realities on the ground. And yet there are many cases where the assumptions have been validated, accepted, and internalized as legitimate representations of “community” and “progress” among residents and community leaders alike. This mechanism of legitimation and internalization is one of the primary concerns of my dissertation.

Though members of the group I studied often had very complex and sophisticated understandings of cities and the idea of “community”, for instance, there were others that did not openly question the “common sense” ideas that informed and guided their work; like, for example, the assumption that poor communities in cities are somehow “broken” (if they possess “community” at all), or that “dirty” places (trash and litter) must be experienced negatively by those that live there. In one instance, a group of landscape design students and teachers experienced this contradiction through their research, when, upon visiting a school in the area they were studying, they found that the kids who lived there, “actually liked their neighborhood”, and were not put off by big busy streets, trash, empty lots, or abandoned, crumbling buildings. (Of course, children are fleetingly free of prejudice and supposition, but nevertheless, their experience of place is as real as any other. Still, it could be argued that children are a special case – not representative of a sophisticated, abstract understanding of place.)

Nonetheless, in my studies I found that architects and designers are typically able to accomplish much in the way of educating people about architecture and design, to the extent that the architect-designer becomes an authority on the aesthetics of place, and the possibilities, and advisability, of many efforts to change those aesthetics. And I eventually argue that, coming to a project with a particular socio-cultural-economic disposition, architect-designers, in fact further their perspectives not only on design, but also in non-design matters, even if without ever intending to do so. Thus, in contrast to what they might think of their own work (as progressive

or innovative – which in fact it may be), their efforts can also (at the same time, though unintentionally) have the effect of demarcating the limits of change, and shaping the nature of proposals for the built environment along the lines of dominant opinions and values. This can then have the effect of transforming marginal places into better-controlled places, but through the legitimizing (and depoliticizing) aesthetic forces of the idea of “design”. Of central concern to this dissertation, therefore, has been documenting (in one of many possible contexts) how aesthetic judgment can become a form of expertise, and in this case, how this process is formulated and deployed through the training, socialization, and professional activities of designers and artists as they help to realize the goals of urban neighborhood revitalization.

The specific group of design professionals I have studied see themselves as engaging in a relatively progressive kind of community building and “place-making”, in neighborhoods most Americans would perceive as needing this attention. Many of the locations in which they’ve worked have been included in “empowerment zones” – a government designation which officially “provides localities with a federal grant and a set of tax and financing incentives to improve public safety, advance human development, create a welcoming environment and invigorate commerce” (The Philadelphia Empowerment Zone 2006). One of the neighborhoods this group worked in is also adjacent to an area designated as “blighted” in the city’s so-called “anti-blight campaign” – unveiled in 2001, the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) was designed “to counter the history of decline in the City of Philadelphia and revitalize its neighborhoods” through community planning, land consolidation, and the razing of condemned buildings (City of Philadelphia 2006).

Within this framework, these designers champion the values of interdisciplinarity, community collaboration, and community empowerment. They also value the opportunity to design and work in the built-environments of urban America, which they see as having been neglected by their professions in recent decades. But they worry too, about “improving” neighborhoods only to have them succumb to the forces of gentrification. Finally, working within the university milieu, these designers see themselves as enjoying a unique kind of freedom from the conventional needs of commercial design firms (though not free of the special constraints of pedagogy and bureaucracy in higher education, as discussed below).

It should be noted that these particular studios were considered by their professors to be very unusual compared to typical architectural studios. Involvement with actual (even if provisional) clients is highly unusual in architectural education, as is collaboration with the studios of other disciplines and even other universities. However, I was not interested in a holistic study of architectural education, and therefore, this did not impinge upon my general research questions. I was interested in being exposed to as many instances of the production of ‘design’ discourse as possible. Certainly, observing the day-to-day concerns and activities of a typical case of the teaching and learning of design would be apropos. However, in this instance, there was the benefit of another layer added to that process of knowledge transmission, which was the need to apply it, to deploy it into the real world in real time. Again, it could be said that this was thus such a rare occasion in architectural education that it was not appropriate for obtaining a rounded understanding. However, I would argue that its very unusualness afforded me a special opportunity to see the conceptualization of design in a more explicit, detailed fashion, in that their role as designers in society had to be discussed explicitly, in light of real scenarios (with real stakes), and effectively acted upon in the context of real world settings outside of the academic studio.

The endeavors of these designers and their students and clients were, in my opinion, commendable and worthy of emulation in other efforts toward “inner-city” change, architecture and design education, and university-community partnerships. Their work is an honorable example of professional concern with addressing poverty and discrimination through design practice and education. Unfortunately, I cannot claim to provide in this document, a thoroughgoing account of their productive accomplishments in education, community building, and professional development. Rather, the task I have set for myself here has more to do with the “genealogy” of the idea of ‘design’, both within and outside productive efforts like this one, thereby contextualizing the work of these designers within the larger structures of contemporary neoliberal consumer society. With this in mind, I have turned to an analysis that takes into consideration the operations of power, discipline, taste, consumption, and policy as it concerns “design”. Primarily, this research builds upon analyses of expert knowledge and its role in “translating society into an object of government” (Barry et al 1996:13; see also Cruikshank 1996; Rose 1990), by showing how design, artistry, and mastery of such skills plays a role in disciplining individuals and ordering society.

This analysis draws heavily on Foucauldian theory, but also on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, who offers a way to ethnographically investigate the interaction of power with the artistic judgment of “taste”, an interaction that produces the symbolic capital of “distinction” (Bourdieu 1984). This interaction of power and “taste” also helps to explain how the “fields of cultural production”, like art, literature, or architecture, contribute to a canon of ‘the genius’ in art, or of ‘professionalism’ in higher education, both of which help to legitimize their respective markets of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Johnson 1993). In trying, as I am, to understand “the shaping of the private self” in “advanced liberal democracies” (Rose 1996:4), I must address the ways in which the professional perspectives of designers, and their appropriation by non-professionals, construct and negotiate the political economic environment in which urban design, art, community, and economic development are shaped. I must also attend to the roles of institutions like universities, professional associations, and businesses.

By denaturalizing and interrogating the underlying cultural assumptions and social processes (in this case, of a group of design teacher-professionals), I can critically analyze the ways in which urban design is constituted by historically specific understandings of human nature, social change, community, civil society and creativity. This reevaluates the discourses of “good design” and the “insightful artist” as actually producing specific subject-positions within and through relations of power, thus contributing to the ways in which “place-making”, or urban design, “disciplines” individuals into particular roles like artist, designer, citizen, and consumer, to name but a few subject positions that are particularly useful to the project of neoliberal governance.

## **My Methods**

Having focused on the day-to-day activities of a university-community collaboration, I discovered that the construction and deployment of taste and expert-artistry in design education is realized through many forms - spoken, written and performed: in discussions with colleagues, lectures, and in “studio culture” (or the lived experience of the long-nights and days expected of architecture students); in “crits” (which are in-studio critiques of individual student work by professors), and “pinups” (which are in-studio group presentations and discussions of all studio work in progress); in other presentations, and through interactions with community members.

Grant proposals, competitions, articles and conference presentations are also shaped by, and in turn come to shape this notion of design. Equally important as this kind of ethnographic data, are the course materials, key professional resources, and the common comparative models used to conceptualize urban design and other “Urban Fabric Studios”. Thus, in addition to compiling print and web sources used by the designers I studied, I participated in meetings, classes, conversations, conferences, and field trips. I interviewed all of the core members of the Studio, the principle community collaborators of the projects that were in progress during my study, and the students involved over the course of three semesters and one summer break. The primary participants across the semesters consisted of approximately eight design faculty, 60 students, and six key community organization leaders, employees, and volunteers.

I participated as an observer and informal evaluator in three basic settings: meetings with the core faculty members of the Studio, which generally took place about once a week; meetings of the courses affiliated with the Studio, which met four times a week; and meetings and presentations with the community organization representatives, which varied from once to four times a month. In studio meetings I recorded, with consent, all discussions and debates, concentrating for my purposes on conceptualizations of design, professionalism, community, place, pedagogy, the meaning and role of artistry and expertise, as well as political maneuvering and community relations. In the academic setting, I observed professors guiding their students toward particular notions of aesthetic value, professional ethics and practice, and designer-community relations. Of particular interest here was how those students were being taught to see and communicate about the potential contributions of their skills and creativity, how they should conceptualize community and place, and how they should listen to their clients but also push for innovation, all the while adhering to professional standards (some implicit, some discussed). In meetings with community representatives I noted how design professionals couched the presentation of their interests, needs, and perspectives in design proposals, what kind of community input they asked for and how they asked for it, and what sort of input they got, and paid attention to.

Of concern, therefore, were the ways in which the skills and professional capital of these design professors were asserted and curtailed by them, as well as embraced and resisted by the neighborhood representatives. Interviews with students took place during the semester and focused on how the students perceived their personal and professional development in relation to the experience of these (granted, highly anomalous) studio courses, how their perceptions, goals, and priorities changed as a result of their involvement, and the role their personal histories and aspirations played in resisting or conforming to the standards being enforced by their professional education, and this experience in particular.

The research also consisted of several in-depth interviews among the core faculty members of the Studio, some of them repeated up to three times. These focused on the personal and professional intellectual heritage that informed each individual’s perceptions of architecture, urban design, urban issues, economic development, and the desired role of the Studio itself. I also asked these core members to discuss their disciplinary, political, and social positions and agendas within the project, as well as in the larger context of the university, and the city. In addition, I compiled the academic and web sources they used to conceptualize the Studio and strategize about its structure, process, and purpose. Interviews with the neighborhood organization representatives also took place during this phase, and focused on what they thought the designers and their students were bringing to the table, as well as some of the issues or

conflicts that came with these resources. Interviewing and conversing with these people, I paid special attention to appropriations of expert knowledge by non-experts, as well as resistance to the symbolic power of expertise (something that often took the form of asserting their local knowledge of the organizations and communities they represented). Ideally, the designers conceptualized the Studio as a model for this kind of work, applicable to multiple neighborhoods, or projects within a neighborhood, and utilizing the students from the courses designated to support the Studio in any given semester over time. Therefore, to understand the Studio, I observed its functioning within the context of more than one semester's worth of work. As mentioned, I was able to remain involved over the course of two projects, which spanned one summer break and three semesters. This enabled me to discern the consistencies and discrepancies from project to project, and semester to semester, regarding the construction and deployment of artistic expertise. And it also provided comparative examples of how neighborhood organizations appropriated or rejected design, pedagogy and social change discourses offered or assumed by these experts and their students.

## Theory

Under current neoliberal models of social and economic order, techniques of intervention (or governing) have had to take on an increasingly specialized and grass-roots approach to social issues, an approach that emphasizes the morals and values of civil society, while appearing to be distinct from the intellectual and practical techniques of state intervention (Barry, et al 1996; Fox 1991). 'Community development', for instance, has taken place mostly through the academic and social projects of universities, non-profits, foundations and philanthropically-inclined individuals, while direct government services and efforts to address inequity are largely scaled back in favor of market forces (Goode and Maskovsky 2001; Ong 1987; Sanjek 1998; Susser 1996). My research builds on these insights to analyze the role of artistic mastery as expertise within urban design, design professionalization, and the economic development efforts of university-community partnerships. This dissertation explores the ways in which particular bearers of design artistry, such as architects, landscape architects, and producers of public art (certainly there are many others), both form and are formed by these trends toward minimizing government and maximizing the role of for-profit market rules in the organization of 'civil society'. To do this, I have focused on the symbolic capital of the judgment of taste, aesthetic sensibility, and the icon of the creative individual within the professional fields mentioned (my analysis of the symbolic capital of "taste" draws heavily on Pierre Bourdieu 1984, 1989, 1996; Bourdieu and Johnson 1993; for more thorough analyses of the profession of architecture, see Judith Blau 1984; Dana Cuff 1991; and Magali Sarfatti Larson 1977, 1993). In this effort, I have tried to reconcile the social positions and dispositions of these expert-artists with the normative examples of technocratic expertise, and its efforts to produce knowledge, legitimacy, power, and capital (Epstein 1973; Ferguson 1990; Holston 1989). In other words, understanding how the fields of the designer-artist come together with the processes of "governmentality", particularly in a consumer based society, is integral to understanding further the role of design-expertise in governing "advanced liberal democracies" (Bourdieu 1984; Foucault 1984a; Rose 1996).

To explore these twining threads of art and government, I have brought two main bodies of thought together – literatures on "governmentality" and "discipline", and literatures on "taste", "distinction", class and consumption. Theorists of "governmentality" have called attention to the ordering of "structures of knowledge" into "disciplines" (Barry, et al 1996; Burchell, et al 1991;



Cruikshank 1994; Darian-Smith 1999; Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983; Ferguson 1990; Foucault 1980b, 1982, 1984b, 1990, 1991a; James Scott 1998; Shore and Wright 1997); the management of individualities or “subjectivities” via these disciplines (Rose 1990, 1996; Hacking 1992; Topalov 1993); and ultimately to the ways in which these disciplines are enmeshed in relations of power which promote particular technologies of governing, as in urban planning (Holsten 1989; Low 1997; Peattie 1987; Perin 1977; Rabinow 1989); self-empowerment ideologies (Cruikshank 1996); family planning (Donzelot 1979); construction of the poor as consumers (Maskovsky 2000); and the revitalization of low-income communities (Ferguson 1990; Gregory 1998; Maskovsky 2001; Sanjek 1998). Still others, like Escobar (1991), Pigg (1992), and Ferguson (1990) discuss the ways in which development and transnational flows are enmeshed in power. James Ferguson’s (1990) ethnography of ‘development’ in Lesotho, Africa, is an important example of the construction of the subject in this context. He states that,

Development institutions generate their own form of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs Lesotho as a particular kind of object of knowledge, and creates a structure of knowledge around that object. Interventions are then organized on the basis of this structure of knowledge, which, while “failing” on their own terms, nonetheless have regular effects, which include the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic state power. [Ferguson 1990:xiv]

What I hope to contribute to these rich sources is an analysis that looks at how subjective, artistic ‘opinion’, which can also act as a form of expertise when coming from the ‘right’ person, also becomes a tool for creating these structures of knowledge which ‘expand and entrench bureaucratic [which includes the regulation of consumer capitalist] state power’.

Another significant influence for me has been the work of both anthropologists and other social scientists on the commodification of place and on information flows (Castells 1989, 1996; Dorst 1989; Hannerz 1992; MacCanell 1992; Rutheiser 1996; Shields 1991; Zukin 1995). These sources, and the literature on governmentality, have been combined here with Pierre Bourdieu’s theoretical compendium. Bourdieu in particular, enables an analysis of the operation of “taste” and “distinction” as “symbolic capital” within the “fields” of design, education, and community development (Bourdieu 1990, 1991). But seeing aesthetic or artistic judgments also as markers of a Foucauldian kind of expertise allows design to be seen as a technology of subject-creation, which has the potential for being alignable and amenable to political and social aspirations, as it manifests in physical form, the values and perceptions that make up the “habitus” of dominant factions in society. Ultimately, this research helps to establish that any realm of expertise (importantly, to include artistic authority or aesthetic expertise) in the end becomes a part of real world places, communities, and people through its application, appropriation, and opposition, but also through its own vision, the choices made about its own foci, and through its own social reproduction (Orr 1996).

## **Structure of The Dissertation**

In the chapters below I have generally begun with a macro perspective and moved to a micro perspective, while continuing to oscillate between the two as the chapters progress. This approach is repeated somewhat within chapters, as well. To start, and as a way of setting the scene, chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the city of Philadelphia as a historically thriving center of industry, later to become an iconic example of post-industrial economic depression and

neglect. In that context, I begin a discussion of current trends in economic revitalization that focus on the use of the arts or the “creative classes” as engines for urban economic development, pointing to the beginnings of what many are calling an “urban renaissance” (this term even has a Wikipedia entry: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban\\_Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urban_Renaissance)). In chapter 3 I focus within this context, by examining the current popularity of university led urban development, related examples of university-community partnerships, and a brief discussion of the development activities of the two major universities in Philadelphia. This chapter then begins to describe the specific “Urban Fabric Studio” I studied, focusing on the role of the university and the idea of “community”. Chapter 4 formally opens my discussion of expertise and how it was (or was not) conceptualized and deployed in my field site. In this chapter I provide an opening discussion of the role of expertise in ‘place-making’ and I examine a conference about architectural expertise at a prominent architectural school (an event that was not an explicit part of the Urban Fabric Studio). Chapter 5 continues my analysis of design as a form of expertise but shifts to an examination of its role in the media, focusing particularly on the formation of so-called “star architecture”. I believe this to be a very significant phenomenon, in that it represents a convergence or layering of the idea of “design” both from within the *profession* of architecture (not to be confused with architectural academia), and the ‘outside’ machinations of media and popular culture. These various convergences are excellent illustrations, in their respective ways, of the relational constitution of ideas like “design” and “expertise”. Chapter 6 is a continuation of the previous chapter’s ideas with the further application of Foucauldian notions of “discipline” and “governmentality”. It is here that I attempt to consolidate my central argument through the combination of the aforementioned literatures, arguing that expertise, seen as the effects of relationships of power (rather than solely as the possession of specialized knowledge or skill), can work to shape individuals and populations through subjective, artistic judgments of “taste”, operating as technologies of the self, and creating the subjectivities of consumer, citizen, community, and place, subjectivities which are more viable and governable in neoliberal democratic consumer-capitalist society. My conclusion summarizes these arguments and attempts to suggest how these ideas may be of use outside the confines of my dissertation.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

This chapter begins with a very brief historical contextualization of Philadelphia as a post-industrial city at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, typifying the contemporary urban infrastructural dilapidation and social segregation characteristic of many older American industrial cities. The chapter considers the contribution of the “culture of poverty” thesis toward erroneously explaining these and related conditions, but also, and perhaps more importantly, in continuing to generate justification and purpose for urban revitalization and economic development. I argue that champions of “the arts” as a progressive source of transformative, community, and asset building power, may run the risk of invoking this “culture of poverty” thesis as they push for what is generally seen as positive economic and community development. In addition, contemporary efforts to further the “new” urban economy, often view cities as ideal places for the development of tourism, shopping, and cultural consumption centers; and thus, using the arts as a poverty/pathology amelioration technology comes to be seen as “common sense”. But this may constitute a kind of “symbolic violence” as “taste”, via consumer behavior, becomes the target of social transformation. This chapter then considers an analysis of the Western notion of “the economy” as a cultural construct, and within that construct, the use of consumer desire and the economic potential of the “creative classes” as both mechanisms and justifications for the pursuit of arts development agendas. Finally, the chapter attempts to place an arts organization that acted as a provisional design client during my fieldwork, into this larger context of this post-industrial “new” economy of “neoliberal development” (Ruben 2001).

#### City of Industry and Post-industrialization

In his introduction to a book of the same title, Philip Scranton says, “*Workshop of the World* was the proud claim of Philadelphia boosters for the best part of the century after the Civil War. Though at present the city is best known for its vehicles of consumption (the Eagles, the Orchestra, fine restaurants, the Mummers) once not so long ago Philadelphia represented prowess in production, the American apex of skill, versatility and diversity in manufacturing” (Scranton 1990:ii-2, emphasis added). Borrowing this phrase, the city’s industrial past was recently celebrated again in a local public television documentary titled *Philadelphia: Workshop of the World* (Cunningham 2001). Utilizing the ever-popular “Ken Burns” style of documentary film making<sup>1</sup>, historians were interviewed and workers and residents were filmed as they reminisced over Philadelphia’s industrious past. Of course, historians and Philadelphia boosters alike would certainly not leave out the city’s pivotal role in American history, enduringly celebrated by memorialized places, such as the newly created Liberty Bell Center and Constitution Center, but also the historic preservation of institutions like Independence Hall, The City Tavern, and many others – so much so that many have claimed that it should have been

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<sup>1</sup> Ken Burns, creator of the TV documentary series “Jazz” and “The Civil War”, has come to be known, and copied, for his use of slow, pensive camera pans over still photos (now called the “Ken Burns Effect”), particularly in the case of any historical documentary where film footage is lacking. Often mood music and interviews are dubbed over this.

named “the city of firsts”, having had the first hospital, public school, library, botanical garden, volunteer fire department, corporate bank, brick house, and more (Independence Hall Association 2006). However, when speaking today of Philadelphia as an American city, though sports teams, universities, the arts, and other “cultural” attractions would certainly be high on the list, few would leave out at least some inferences, if not brash stereotypes, of urban issues like poverty, crime, and “blight” as well – something that continues to color the city’s reputation around the region quite vividly.

Geographically, Philadelphia started along the Schuylkill and Delaware rivers (convenient sources of energy and transportation), which generally flank its contemporary territory. Formally, the city was defined by the garden-city grid of William Penn, published in the early 1680’s. The city then expanded out from this grid both north and south. Having grown in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to its greatest size, population density, and level of industrial activity, through high concentrations of textile, garment, carpet, printing, publishing, foundry, and machine manufacturing, established in clusters all over the city, Philadelphia became a stronghold of industry and manufacturing in America from the 1830’s to the 1930’s (Hershberg 1981; Warner 1996). But as the globalization of commerce and manufacturing expanded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Philadelphia became one of the most pronounced victims of industrial decline, caused by the move of large and mid-sized manufacturers, first to the American South and Southwest, then Central and South America, always seeking out cheaper labor and less regulation (Adams, et al 1991). In addition to businesses and whole industries leaving the city, residents from the middle and upper classes flocked to the post WWII suburbs – a demographic change typically referred to now as “white flight” – just as poor laborers, primarily blacks responding to the mechanization of agriculture in the southern U.S., moved to northern cities seeking jobs (see Hershberg 1981; Raines 1982). This furious build up in response to the industrial revolution, and subsequent physical neglect in the wake of American deindustrialization, coupled with large population changes, has resulted in Philadelphia’s contemporary physical and demographic condition (a large dilapidated housing stock that is home to a large population of poor and working poor ethnic minorities, primarily African American).

One architect, referring to the state of Philadelphia’s housing stock, said during my field observations that “it’s almost as if Philadelphia grew too fast”. That is to say, that the high building density of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when left behind by deindustrialization, population loss and a shrinking tax-base after WWII, became an infrastructural and building maintenance burden on the city. This comment to a community member, made by an architect during an informal presentation of student research about the area under study, seemed at the time to simply be a novel way of understanding the historical development of the now typical “urban problems” at hand (fiscal crises, infrastructural decay, poverty, crime, even racism, and so on). However, this way of conceptualizing these problems also accomplishes interesting things within the context of the neoliberal valorization of economic growth. Through a kind of metaphorical transfer, the crumbling structures of an economically neglected post-industrial city, and by implication, all of its worst associated “urban” social problems, are put into the rhetoric of “growth”, rather than “decline”, and thus become much less threatening, stigmatized, and ugly.

Matthew Ruben (2001) offers a striking analysis of a similar transformation of meaning in his analysis of “neoliberal development”, where he looks at the phenomenon of the poor,

dilapidated neighborhood of Kensington playing the role of “rotting America” in Terry Gilliam’s film *12 Monkeys* (459). In this example, economic development is said to be the result of attracting filmmakers to the city, but in fact, “the Philadelphia region *depends* on Kensington being rundown and depressed for the whole operation to function properly” (Ruben 2001:460) – “the city” benefits but the poor do not. In keeping with the “millennial dreams” of globalization (P. Smith 1997), economic growth through freedom of financial markets, technological development, and the social change that supports this growth (valorization of individual accomplishment and consumption, while pathologizing those who cannot or will not compete in this contest) gains hegemony as inevitable, healthy and good. We thus find (however unintended or inadvertent it may be), a homology between the architect’s comments, and neoliberal development, bolstering the moral principles of modern capitalism, which are in fact largely responsible for the uneven development and inequalities that exist in many cities and elsewhere around the world.

Another compelling use of metaphor and imagery commonly invoked during my field observations gets even closer to the central concerns of this dissertation – how does aesthetic judgment influence the way we understand places, and their histories and futures? The very same conditions described above, of physical infrastructural decay in cities, and what is seen as concomitant (in the sense of “naturally” accompanying) social issues of poverty, crime, etc., were often summed up through a negative assessment of beauty, in the metaphor: “the toothless grin” of the city. This metaphor was used to refer to an overall visual quality produced by the randomly collapsed or demolished individual units within long blocks of row houses – missing teeth in what would otherwise be, by inference, a beautiful, pearly grin. Typically this phrase was not used in a pejorative way. In fact, for the most part it was seen as a relatively ‘neutral’ way of referring to the “decay” of “blighted” Philadelphia neighborhoods without using these latter, more charged words. It was used in a way that seemed simultaneously pleasant and tragic. However, one has to ask what this phrase really accomplishes, other than avoiding older terms or phrases more commonly understood as pejorative.

I believe taking a look back at the critiques of these older phrases can be instructional here. Ironically, it was a professor of urban studies and planning who became known for his critique of the use of “blight” in social policy literature to describe urban fiscal, physical and social problems. Donald Schön, drawing from the planning and policy literatures of the late 1960’s wrote that,

once we are able to see a slum as a blighted area, we know that blight must be removed... The metaphor is one of disease and cure. Moreover, the cure must not be a “mere palliative”; a particular, holistic view of medicine is involved in this metaphor. It would not be enough, the experts said, to remove offensive structures piecemeal... Effective prophylaxis requires an “integrated and balanced” plan. Just as in medicine one must treat the whole man, so one must “treat” the whole community (Schön 1993).

Here we see what the term accomplished in its use, and we must therefore ask what newer terms or phrases – those with less historical baggage – are accomplishing in the light of historical, contemporary and conceptual contexts. It is thus my contention that the “toothless grin” metaphor works to apply aesthetic, seemingly anti-pejorative, sensibilities to the perceived problem, in effect, working to de-politicize the actions and interests of urban designers. By associating the streets of Philadelphia with the universal human image of a smile, the “problem”

of abandoned or neglected homes becomes both familiar and, to some degree, happy (less intimidating) and cosmetic. By placing the “missing” buildings, and often-neglected empty lots, in the genre of dentistry or orthodontics, the task of “fixing” the problem becomes implicitly, a cosmetic one. So, if “blight” is a medical metaphor, validating the application of a medical paradigm for action, then this is essentially a beauty or aesthetic metaphor, which warrants the application of a design paradigm – that is, the application of legitimate, or authoritative aesthetic interpretations and tools to a ‘problem’ constructed in this manner. And to extend the metaphor: urban neighborhoods are expected to put on their best faces and compete for the attention of city, state and federal authorities for funds that can bring them into the new economy of technology, services, entertainment, and consumerism.

### **Culture of Poverty, The “New” Economy, and The City**

Another kind of metaphorical thinking that turns up in various incarnations, and is used to understand many of the urban social-welfare issues in America is, unfortunately, the “culture of poverty” thesis (see O. Lewis 1996 and Leacock 1971). Simply stated, Oscar Lewis’ “culture of poverty” thesis suggested that poor people learn from each other the ways and values that keep them poor. Essentially blaming the victim, the “culture of poverty” thesis ignores the larger social and economic structures that cause and maintain poverty and discrimination (Goode and Eames 1996). This conceptualization (which implies the need to fix poverty by rehabilitating the poor), or its descendents (for example, citing a lack of community “pride” as the cause of community problems), are often deployed in social services and policy language, as well as within urban renewal, or *revitalization* agendas (if we wish to utilize contemporary terminology). It is all too often offered implicitly and unproblematically as causation for the concentration of poverty in the cores of older cities, with concomitant racial segregation, resulting in crime, rising social service costs, and physical dilapidation (see N. Smith 1996; Susser 1996).

Among critiques of the concept, Hylan Lewis (1971) offers a particularly insightful observation in his article *Culture of Poverty? What Does it Matter?* Hylan Lewis’ main point is that “the idea of a culture of poverty is a fundamental political fact” (H. Lewis 1971:347). He points out that the ‘truth’ value of the “culture of poverty” thesis is not the only, and perhaps in the long run not even the most significant, aspect of the idea. Rather, it may be the way in which the idea becomes a ‘social fact’ – an idea that actually has to be understood in terms of “its force as a political idea – an ideology” (H. Lewis 1971:362). Hylan Lewis points to the importance of “associated assertions and inferences about the reasons why some Americans have failed and will continue to fail to make it in the system”, and says that this actually “constitute[s] a reality that matters” (H. Lewis 1971:347). Interestingly, this analysis foreshadows what Foucault would come to call “truth claims” (Foucault 1972), as he focused on the relationship between power and knowledge. Hylan Lewis ultimately highlights the importance of understanding the idea as a kind of technology, in Foucault’s terminology, a technology which will later demonstrate great utility as it is fused to the notion “that it [is] possible to engineer and administer a particular environment in such a way so as to ‘produce’ a specific sort of person” (Hyatt 1997:221). We could say that Hylan Lewis is speaking, albeit in his own idiom, of the establishment of a subject via discourse, which grows a structure of knowledge around that particular subject so as to shape the possible actions of that subject – and the expertise meant to address that subject (Foucault 1982). If we can view the culture of poverty thesis in this way we can see just how the idea serves as a technology of power, helping to lay claims to truth, create discourses, and in cases

such as economic or urban development, develop logical and commonsensical paths for “progress” that “target” the poor (and their spaces and places) for rehabilitation. The present challenge is to take this insight and ask: how does the culture of poverty thesis (as an ideology, a political fact) act on the abilities of designers to act, either positively or negatively upon their subjects, through their skills, authority, goals and values? I have hinted at the answer to this already, and below I attempt a more thorough response.

Despite the flaws in this “culture of poverty” thinking, Philadelphia is known, as many older larger American cities are, as a haven or a ‘breeding ground’ for poverty, crime, and ‘decay’. Travel into the city is often avoided by suburban residents, and only recently has the city experienced a slowing down of the population loss that has been going on since the 1950’s (U.S. Census Bureau 2006). The architectural critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer, Inga Saffron, noted this slowing in a talk she gave to a small group of Temple University students in the Spring of 2006, and attributed it to “a European-type interest in dining and cultural entertainment”, (adding the qualification that it was just a guess on her part). Ms. Saffron was noting the late response of Philadelphia’s economy to the growth of what is now known as the “new economy”. Mathew Ruben (2001) notes that Philadelphia’s response has been modest, and has come in the form of an “expanded “FIRE” sector: finance, insurance, and real estate; some high-tech and pharmaceutical; and a smattering of hospital systems and universities” (435).

It is important to note that the flourishing of capital flows, and the touted increase in “quality-of-life” benefits, all as a result of this transition from product manufacturing to services provision in regional and national economies, has been sporadic and uneven, both within cities and between them, as well as primarily in the so-called “developed” nations like the USA, Canada, UK, and other dominant financial economies, located mostly within Europe (Germany being a prime example) and around the Pacific Rim (e.g. Japan, Australia, and parts of China) (Castells 1999; Cannon and Jenkins 1990; Miles and Paddison 2005). In contrast, Philadelphia is a prime example of cities that are more a product of domestic shifts in production during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, than of globalization per se, even if it has also been subject to the disparities of “neoliberal development” (Ruben 2001).

Philadelphia certainly was hit hard by post-WWII de-industrialization, but it wasn’t until 1996 that, for example, the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the Pew Charitable Trusts funded the private, non-profit “Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation” to promote the city to tourists, and boost the city’s bid as a “destination” for shopping and entertainment (GPTMC 2006). Thus, one can see how this conquest of free market capitalism, popularly known as both the “new economy” or “globalization”, has not only shaped how economies and nations function, but also regions, states and cities as well – even those that have yet to make accepted claims to the moniker of “global city” (see Sassen 1994, 1999). It is within this shift that we can find both the neglected physical fabric of a city like Philadelphia, and the transformative, progressive, futurist vision of design and globalization coming together to form meaning, value, and neoliberal development agendas in a post-industrial urban landscape.

Much contemporary socio-cultural anthropology has focused on the political-economic shift to a “new” economy through ideas like transnationalism, globalization, development, resistance and power (Abu-Lughod 1990, Anderson 1983, Escobar 1991, Pigg 1992). In fact, this shift may even be linked to a multitude of critical analyses within anthropology itself, constituting what some have called a crisis of identity for the discipline – often referenced by the

term “post modernism” (Clifford and Marcus 1986). And though many of these analyses could be applied here, my present goal, as it pertains to urban economic development, is to build on work that has explored the application of consumerist models in public policy, particularly for the purpose of “reforming” the poor (see for example Hyatt 1997 and Maskovsky 2000). Within a “neoliberal development” model (Ruben 2001), reformation of the poor has increasingly meant the reformation of place, often through the deployment of urban design and architecture (and several other creative arenas rich with symbolic capital), which tends to impose consumerist and capitalist market-rules in the effort to spark economic development. But what this analysis reveals is that “design” can become a new form of governmentality, helping to render free populations governable, based on neoliberal ideas of individuality, free markets, the role of government, and the functioning of power in contemporary liberal democratic society (Barry et al 1996, Foucault 1990, Maskovsky 2006).

In this dissertation I assert that in terms of contemporary populations and subjects of government, there has been a shift from a focus on the citizen to a focus on the consumer. And consumer rights, advocacy, and law, allied with marketing and sales, have come to dominate, primarily through business models, as normalized and normalizing categories of subjectivity. As a result, government adaptation of these models for the management of economic growth and social order is also more and more the norm. In fact, functioning as a technique of neoliberal reform, consumerism has become the go-to model for advocates of both “small” and “big” government; “self help” and social responsibility; urban recovery and the suburban malaise of sprawl; progressive advocates for social change and conservative advocates for community and family values alike. Given consumerism’s increasingly hegemonic hold on ideas of social order in the West, analysis of the cultural structures and norms that perpetuate and justify this rationalization and construction of reality have implications not only regarding the poor, the inner city, or the urban, but also the malls, suburbs, elites, middle and working classes, and beyond. We are all, as citizen-consumers, both embedded-in and contributing-to the production of this form of order and rationalization. It is through this kind of cultural analysis of economics in the West that I hope to contribute to a better understanding of our contemporary situation.

### **The “Western Economy” as a Category of Analysis**

Riding high in the cockpit of this chariot of modernization, which rests heavy in the roiling waves of globalization, the “developed” nations intertwine their economies of consumerism and deploy their idea of economics out into the world through, among other things, the notion of “development” (Escobar 2005). As free market rules become the “modern” gospels of this missionization process, and the touted benefits of information and capital flow become the moralizing tools of globalization, consuming and consumership come to replace the older ideas of a public, or a citizenry. In this context, the shaping of the consumer experience, *and how this process is internalized*, become paramount to understanding the workings of society through the machinations of markets. And this, in turn, must become the focus of government, if it is to succeed in propagating a globalized economic consumerism. So much so that in “developed” nations the so-called “creative classes” have come to be seen as some of the most important drivers of economic activity, and hence indicators of the economic potential for the places they inhabit – they are becoming barometers of hip-ness, and thus, in the symbolic economy of consumer capitalism, the predictors of local, regional and national economic success (Florida 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Kunzmann 2002; Landry 2000; Markussen and King 2003).



Economists, policy makers, and developers champion the need to cater to ‘the arts’ and the ‘creative classes’ in their plans for development and growth in cities and regions throughout the United States (Bell and Jayne 2003; Heavens 2005; Miles 2005; Newman, Curtis, and Stephens 2003; Phillips 2004; Rosenberg 2005; Stern and Seifert 1998). Places now need to have the characteristics of “cool” in order to attract and hold onto these ‘copper-tops’ of our creativity economy: designers, architects, artists, writers, performers, programmers, and others dealing in the production and marketing of ideas, images, methods, and styles – ultimately an economy understood through the notion of ‘life-styles’ (see also Deutsche 1996 and Wynne 1992).

Within this context, of a “new” economy of consumption and consumer services – based more and more on a symbolic economy of materialism and individuality, touting self-help, self determination, and the “right” to consume – the ability to influence the meaning of consumption, as well as its patterns of market and identity formation, takes on a much greater urgency. Hence the importance of “creative classes”, of being “cool”, and of consumer rights and privileges as organizing mantras of both the left and the right. And within this matrix of the symbolic production of material consumption, there exists a parallel process of the atomization of society into isolated individual existences. More and more we consume the world through the “third window” of television (see Virilio 1991) and promote the establishment of identity and community on the unfettered flow of material commodities and media consumables. In the picture-windowed suburbs, where media and entertainment rooms are ‘where the heart is’, and in air-conditioned commuter cities where racism and poverty are politely ignored, pundits flail and fight over how and why “community” has become eroded, citing crime, teenage violence, political corruption, corporate unaccountability, and terroristic motivations as key elements in the loss of civil society. In community and urban development circles this is referred to through phrases like “urban blight”, “suburban sprawl”, a loss of “family values”, or “bowling alone” (see Bellah et al 1996, Duany, et al 2000, Putnam 2000).

However, it is in this mishmash of media blitz that we must take a moment to consider the ramifications of economic fundamentalism packaged deceptively, provocatively, and even nicely in the form of consumer activity, or consumer values – a consuming ideology, if you will. For it is here that an anthropological concept of culture meets mass marketed culture, and “the economy” is exposed as a Western construct “in the sense of a set of institutions, rationality, and practices, i.e. a way of organizing our perception of the world and our actions in it”, which is amenable to cultural analysis (Escobar 2005:141). As Escobar notes, “the primacy that the economic view has achieved in modern society means that this view is deeply rooted in the constitution of the modern individual, i.e. that it is embedded in the most basic practices of individuals and societies” (Escobar 2005:141). And it is my contention that design is one contemporary mechanism through which this embedding takes place, that design is a subject and a subjectivity-making technology, shaping our desires and our understanding of our selves and our worlds, simultaneously in terms of self realization, and in terms that produce governmentality. Again, Escobar:

It should also be pointed out that as labour power becomes commoditized, the market automatically expands because more people have to construe their needs more often as the need for a commodity, i.e. as individual needs. (It should be remembered that, for Marx, as human subjects objectify their subjectivity in the process of selling their labour, they treat their needs and capacities as if they were commodities) [Escobar 2005:149]

Following this line of analysis, we cannot afford to ignore the significance of desire producing technologies or systems which have the potential to fuel this “need for a commodity” through cultural processes of meaning making and value formation. But, just what is a desire producing technology? And how, exactly, is it connected to the contemporary human condition? The idea of “design”, and what it effects, is worth some attention if we are to attempt an answer to these questions.

### **The Manufacture of Desire**

Professor of architecture, urbanist, self-proclaimed “art critic of technology”, and Frenchman Paul Virilio can give us some tools with which to accomplish this archaeology of “design”, though the route may be circuitous. In line with growing concerns over both security and terrorism, Paul Virilio has taken on, among other things, what he calls the “synchronization of emotion” – in his case referring mainly to fear. In this section I will briefly explain some of Virilio’s work and how it is useful for my arguments. Simply put, I will borrow from him what I consider to be a set of provocative ideas in order to develop an analysis of the marketing and media-led manufacture of desire, particularly as it pertains to the idea of “design”.

In his latest book, *City of Panic*, Virilio asserts, in typically poetic polemics, that in a world dominated by mass media, mass transportation, and mass consumption, war campaigns like the recent Gulf War’s “Shock and Awe” really have more to do with imagery than with physical destruction (though the bombs and deaths, I am sure Virilio would concede, are very ‘real’) (Virilio 2005:32). But, for Virilio, in the “tele-presence” of the virtualized world (which for him is both immanent and always becoming) everything and everyone is always everywhere at once. His theorizing of high technology and its muse (speed) has led him to conclude that an aesthetic of disappearance (exemplified for him by the cinematic image, TV, and the computer screen, but also by the idea that destruction can today be an art form, and a consuming, disposable society is the norm) has replaced an aesthetic of appearance (exemplified for him by the creating urge/act in things like the material arts: sculpture, painting, architecture, etc.) Thus, Virilio says that,

Today, when all examples are followed in real time by the hyperpowerful mass media, an event is exclusively a break in continuity, an untimely accident, that crops up and breaks up the monotony of a society in which synchronization of opinion cunningly finishes off the job of standardization of production. [Virilio 2005:26]

He later explains himself just a little further with this statement:

After the long history of the standardization of public opinion in the age of the Industrial Revolution and its systems of identical reproduction, we are entering the age of the synchronization of collective emotion, with the Information Revolution no longer promoting the old bureaucratic collectivism of totalitarian regimes, but what we might paradoxically call mass individualism. The term is apt because each and every one of us, one by one, is subject to mass media conditioning in the very same instant. [Virilio 2005:39]

As stated, for Virilio, this emotional synchronization of everyone is centered on fear (evidenced for him by terrorism and the modern nation-state’s response to it). He calls this a

“total war”, where, in the battle between capitalism and terrorism, fought with “weapons of mass communication”, a Ministry of Fear will replace a Ministry of War, where war will “no longer affect nations and government institutions, but their populations, offered up to chaos in a holocaust.” (Virilio 2005:33). Here Virilio, again in Futuristic tones, speaks of the increase in surveillance, the increase in military spending, and the decrease in social services. He describes this turning of the “logistics of perception” (developed in a war context) in upon the civilian population as “endocolonization”. It is the reverse of “exocolonization”, only in that it taps the resources of a nations’ own people, rather than another nation or people, for the purpose of exploitation, the creation of wealth, and the perpetuation of domination (Virilio 2005).

In all of this, Virilio gives technology and speed near causal status, offering virtually no sustained critical analysis of concrete examples. He does, however, offer several tantalizing possibilities for a specific explanation of these mechanisms of control, or synchronization, but he never goes any further than the following.

Let’s not forget that, if mimetism is characteristic of the conditioning power of the mass media, it is primarily a mark of childhood, of the childishness of ‘art for art’s sake’ that, together with the rampant infantilism of advertising, is currently leading to the standardization of behaviour and, what is worse, to the synchronization of emotion [Virilio 2005:30-31]

Later he says,

After the ecstatic consumption of brand-name goods, denounced by Naomi Klein in her book *No Logo*, the time (real time) of ecstatic communication will be upon us, and, as well, often enough, of an hysterical commutation whose secret the sectarian gurus have mastered; public opinion suddenly morphing into a kind of transpolitical emotion on the scale of this self-styled ‘global civilization’ (Virilio 2005:38).

Here Virilio points to a possible locus of linkage between a choosing subject (the consumer) and the ordering powers of globalizing neoliberalism (consumption in a free-market economy). But for him it is technological speed that has performed this link, perhaps with the addition of human sin (Virilio often mentions, though rarely describes in detail, his Christian influences). However, I propose that instead of focusing primarily on technology itself, and its pursuit of speed as a muse – essentially, technological determinism – we should be looking also at social and cultural forces, like those discussed in this dissertation, which support the disciplining technologies that depoliticize community, consumerism, technology, and the media. Which brings us to one more critique of Virilio. In a kind of reverse logic, he risks becoming a priest in a cult of technological fundamentalism, the very thing he, himself, wishes to critique. Through his championing of speed as a medium, technological determinism, and war as an abstract kind of architectural form, appropriately viewed only through the lens of art criticism, Virilio offers up to a people obsessed with virtuality and the information revolution (relatively affluent and Westernized, mostly), intellectual scripture and aesthetic zeal. Virilio places the motor of History (of the present) in technology, and in human sin-lust, which effectively de-politicizes the political-economy of meaning and value, and strips neoliberal technological fundamentalism of its contours of power.

And though it is relatively easy in contemporary times to find examples that support Virilio’s arguments (certain “war[s] on terror” come to mind), there are other “synchronizing” technologies at work that may be accomplishing just as much as the cossetting of fear. Other

emotions are being synchronized and aroused – such as desire. In fact, with consumerism as its goad, desire is being synchronized through the consumption of the idea of design, be it technological, scientific, aesthetic, organizational, moral, etc. I would even go so far as to say that the success of neoliberalism’s aforementioned economic fundamentalism is achieved, at least in part, through the shaping of desire – that is, the shaping of consumer desire. In the consumer capitalist mode, nothing compares to the force of “design” in its contemporary form – melded as it is with marketing – for the manufacture of desire, both at the centers (or ‘cutting edge’), and in the isolated outposts (so called ‘backwaters’) of consumer or ‘life-style’ society.

Anthropologist Benjamin Chesluk offers an interesting example that lends itself to this analysis in his ethnographic study of community policing in New York City. He observes that notions of cleanliness and aesthetic order, having been linked to ideas of safety and security, at least in part through the sociological theory of “broken windows” (Kelling and Wilson 1982), become political rallying points that shape the way residents think about, and act upon, the public spaces they occupy (Chesluk 2004). My work echoes this analysis, that the shaping of perception regarding a person or a community’s vision of itself, and its place in a larger social and cultural context, can be significantly influenced by the subjective authority of recognized expertise, not just in conventional arenas of “expertise” (such as public policy in the case of Kelling and Wilson) but also in the arena of aesthetic judgment (which the term “broken windows” happens to hint toward). Thus, urban designers like architects, planners, landscape architects, and public artists, can shape the perceptions of their audiences through aesthetic means, in such a way as to fulfill a disciplinary role within and through relationships of power. And this in turn can function to shape the subjectivities of individuals and groups to better fit the projects of neoliberal consumer capitalism, through the notions of civil society, safety, beauty, community, and place.

### **Design and The “Creative Classes”**

Building on this point, I will offer an analysis of the ever-increasing popularity of “arts as economic catalyst” or “arts development” in planning, development, and urban policy discourse, but particularly in already “developed” nations. In the US, Europe and Australia, the concept of the “creative city” has grown in popularity over the past decade (Florida 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Julier 2005; Kunzmann 2002; Landry 2000; Markussen and King 2003; Sandercock, 2003, 2004, 2005). This idea refers to the use of what are more broadly called ‘the culture industries’ as growth engines or development mechanisms for newer cities, but especially the revitalization of older, economically neglected post-industrial cities. Meant to cover the ground ranging from film, television and videogame production, to theatre, shopping, architecture, all forms of design, restaurants and more, the idea stems from an observed recent growth in tourism, entertainment, and technology, and is now being applied in planning and policy circles to propose and create enclaves of entertainment and consumption in urban areas – essentially the creation of “culture sectors” or “destination cities”, which rely on the “culture industries” to perform “place branding” (Julier 2000) – in order to attract both visitors in the form of tourists, and new residents in the form of what Richard Florida famously (or infamously, depending on your sources!) refers to as “the creative classes” (Florida 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Hannigan 1998; Ioannides and Debbage 1998; Judd 2003; Zukin 1995).

In the case of development, or *revitalization*, a common and popularly accepted line of argument goes this way: given that our sense of community in general is disintegrating (see

Putnam 2000 for a lauded explication of this position), and our most disintegrated communities are those within the poor cores of old urban centers (“slum”, “ghetto”, “inner city”), and the way of the future is through consumer activity (the “new” service or consumer economy) [which is embedded more and more in the symbolic economy of material consumption] then what needs to happen is this “new” economy has to be brought to those who “need” its benefits the most. It needs to be brought to those places that are most neglected, most decrepit, most fractured, most deviant, with the most untapped potential (Boston and Ross 1997; Halpern 1995; Initiative for a Competitive Inner City; William Julius Wilson 1987; Zielenback 2000). Put more succinctly by Jeff Maskovsky:

The neoliberal ideology of urban development ... provides a powerful rationale for poor communities to adopt the privatist, market-oriented priorities of capital. The “stick” of privatizing the welfare state is balanced by the ‘carrot’ of market-based policies designed to promote entrepreneurship, self-help and personal responsibility among the poor. Accordingly, the “ghetto,” a pathological, isolated and unproductive place, is now being recast as a potentially productive space, an investment frontier that can be integrated into the technological flow of information and investment that is now circulating at a global scale [Maskovsky 2001:218]

With this touted need for the “inner city” to be “developed”, to be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century of consumer fertility, to be “modernized”, there is concomitantly a trend among many to rediscover the city, to redefine the city as a newly urbane, diverse, multicultural, exciting, and vibrant place. Just as the “wilderness” or “frontier” is first conquered for its “natural” resources, in the form of timber, minerals, water, wildlife and slaves, and then later, to be conquered for its symbolic resources, as pure, natural, quiet, serene, untamed “wilderness” (we see here echoes of Virilio’s “endocolonization”, mentioned above), now, after having been made destitute by deindustrialization and “white flight”, the city is to be retaken as a play ground, a destination, a more permanent outpost of sophisticated living (having been cleansed of its industrial refuse, its purpose laundered and transformed from the working class clamor of manufacturing to the consumer class consumption of the quaint and the cutting edge). We need only turn to the “urban decay” entry on wikipedia.com, a publicly open and revisable online encyclopedia, in order to get a demonstration of the pervasiveness of this line of thought (wikipedia.com).

It is in this context that we find government officials, funding organizations, public health agencies, non-profits, and policy writers, persuading their audiences to invest in the optimism of design through creating ‘healthy communities’, ‘livable places’, ‘walkable cities’, ‘destination cities’, and vibrant arts centers – essentially, art and design (of places, communities, and experiences) as a development engine. And while an interest in the wise use of natural resources (“sustainability”), or the enabling of some sense of sociable and responsible “community” is commendable, we have to ask what other forces are at work if we wish to create effective, equitable and inclusive results.

A recent example of the promotion of arts development in the “revitalization” business comes from an “executive symposium” held recently in Philadelphia, which invited city, county, state and federal leaders, along with attorneys, architects, planners, and developers, to consider the future of public housing in America (Rosenberg 2005). The group of over 150 people, led by opening speaker Keith Godfried, the newly appointed General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), focused primarily on how to combine the private

and public sectors in housing development. Hosting this symposium was the Rosenberg Housing Group, a consulting, planning and housing development firm focused on promoting the use of private management techniques by public housing authorities. The group is led by Mr. Robert C. Rosenberg, a former NYC housing commissioner who is now part of Pennsylvania's Chester Housing Authority and a teacher of real estate economics at Hunter College. In Chester, Mr. Rosenberg is spearheading a new HOPE VI project that "will create a dramatic and inviting gateway with both affordable and homeownership units, a retail corridor and a cutting-edge arts and cultural center" (Rosenberg 2005:10). In a brief editorial published in the *Journal of Housing and Community Development*, Rosenberg explores "the arts as a way in which to revitalize America's urban centers" (Rosenberg 2005:6). He basically asserts that the use of arts and culture as part of public housing development is, like other arts and culture development, "destined to spark a renewed interest in our urban centers and to create a destination point or a reason to return to a city" (Rosenberg 2005:6). This governmental, and arguably mainstream application of the idea of 'arts development' demonstrates not only the pervasiveness of the approach, but also what Mathew Ruben (2001) refers to as "a distinctly *suburbanized perspective*: periodically or even frequently in the city but evidently no longer of it" (451).

Of course, the above example is a very particular one, but it is indicative of the general consensus at present, surrounding economic development in the United States, and particularly in urban areas. What is perhaps more interesting is that it not only argues for the neoliberal transformation of what have historically been "public" forms of urban investment (e.g. housing the poor) into privately financed forms, but importantly, undertaken in concert with government, not apart from it; it also develops the uncritical alliance of consumerism in the arts (broadly defined so as to be adaptive to any specific context) with economic development of and for the poor, in the mission to revitalize poor urban areas (and by implication poor urban people).

Another tacit message in this and other arguments for arts development, is that there is a particular form of commercial or retail development that is preferred over others. Arguably, among almost all free members of Westernized societies, there is some form of "consumership", but there is also a hierarchy of consumer tastes, a way of discerning the 'good' consumer from the 'bad' consumer, something Pierre Bourdieu studied extensively in his work on "taste" and "distinction" (see Bourdieu, 1984). And as Bourdieu demonstrated, "The Arts" help in discerning this difference. In the contemporary economic development context, bad consumers consume trash, or trash services, and cheap goods built by exploited people. Walmarts, Dollar Stores, and check cashing businesses are among the worst offenders of this unwritten rule. These are the businesses that offend a more sophisticated shopper/citizen (Zukin 2004). They fly in the face of urbane consumption, and exist by preying on either the aesthetic naiveté of the masses, or on their economic vulnerability (see Brett Williams 2004 for an excellent account of how corporate America seeks out and benefits greatly from the debt of the poor).

It was almost always the above described kind of 'bad' consumership enterprises that received the most criticism (explicit and implicit) among community members, designers, and students in my study – which is understandable, since they were designing for a commercial corridor in the "inner city". But in fact, among most proponents of good urban design and suburban planning, "bad", redundant, or "ugly" retail is often blamed for, or at least said to be symptomatic of, many of the ills of our built environment, namely "urban blight" and "suburban sprawl". And though discussion of the Rosenberg Housing Group, or of any other such entity, never emerged from the studios or the community groups engaged by the designers in my study,

notions of arts development are prominent and commonsensical in urban revitalization discourse, but also in wide spread in the media, and in urban consumer/citizen discourses. In fact, these ideas were often mentioned, in some cases borrowing from the rhetoric, and resisting it in other cases. The explicit, fundamental goal of the designers I studied was the application of their professional interests and skills toward the betterment of the city's built environment, thereby effecting the improvement of the quality-of-life of its residents. However, these designers also had to find a way to realize their goals within the contexts of meaning and significance that dominate contemporary American society at this time – which includes the economic, political and cultural environments described above.

Implicitly this group of designers held an idealized notion of sophisticated urbanity, toward which they hoped their design suggestions would move the communities they worked with – thereby “lifting them up”, “healing” and “revitalizing” them. This can be seen in their mention of coffee shops, book stores, restaurants, and theatres as the desired form of retail and entertainment (as opposed to hubcap shops, check cashing services, or too many barbershops and sneaker stores – in fact, in a candid moment, the group was not afraid to refer to \$200 sneakers in a pejorative way, implicitly referring to the legendary and assumed pathos of values that prioritizes athletic shoes over “good” values like better community health or education). However, despite the gradations of difference in consumer taste, it was ultimately assumed by the designers, their teachers, *and their clients*, that to better the streetscape, and thus the lives of those who live there, one must invite the kind of economic development that essentially sees the city as a destination for one or more of the following: tourists, shoppers, concertgoers, sports fans, or would be permanent sophisticates. That is, along with innovative child and elderly care facilities, community centers and business spaces, as well as artist lofts and performance spaces (all of which were included in the design proposals), there were also recreation centers, theatres, cafes, bookstores, computer centers, and “sit down” restaurants. And though for most people this sounds like a very pleasant proposal to redeem an area suffering from economic and social turmoil, it is also a proposal for enacting a kind of “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1991) upon the economy of “inner-city” retail, through transformation of the commercial built environment from a dominated one to a dominant one – all through the power of good design.

This form of development – investment in a certain form of retail, consumer activities, and lifestyle amenities – is perhaps attractive in part due to the failure of past forms of development. Historically, the government-led transformation of places characterized as ‘slums’ or ‘ghettos’ has taken the form of either razing and rebuilding, or containing and controlling (see Gans 1962; Jacobs 1992, Jackson 1987 Logan and Molotch 1987; Weiss 1985). This newer form of development, often dubbed ‘revitalization’, or as other specific kinds of ‘development’ (community, economic, etc.), or simply “re-development”, could be considered a better or more refined way of addressing urban poverty and physical neglect. Instead of deeming the poor themselves, or their way of life, as pathological, it seeks to build capital (often primarily social – a la Putnam’s ‘bowling alone’ – sometimes truly economic, but rarely political) in these people and places, thereby converting the poor and their spaces into productive agents and locations of consumption (see Maskovsky 2001 quoted above).

And though this may sound better than the former versions of social change, it could be argued that the same stigmatization and marginalization of the poor is accomplished, simply through different means. Urban renewal moved people to other locations, but urban revitalization transforms people into new subjects by transforming the poor or their habitus into

“matter out of place” (Douglas 1984), thereby enacting the symbolic violence of identity or subject transformation (rather than the physical violence of forced relocation) upon the poor and the places they reside, and continuing to use their own “pathologies” as justification for this symbolic violence. Social scientists and some planners have offered critiques of this process, under the rubric of ‘gentrification’ (N. Smith 1996; Zukin 1989), or even “the return of urban renewal” (Fainstein 2005), while many planners and policy makers have often viewed it as positive “transformation” of blighted areas (Frieden and Sagalyn 1989; Pack 2005). Regardless of the positions taken in terms of the goals or the ramifications of this neoliberal form of change, one can consistently find that the program always involves the symbolic violence of transforming existing value and meaning systems of the poor and their places into something “better”. What has changed are the terms or concepts through which it has been realized; in this case, of neoliberal development, primarily through the discourses of “life style”, “quality of life”, “consumer choice”, “community membership”, and “community health”, among others.

### **Community Arts Programs and The “NAC”**

The use of ‘arts and culture’ activities as a focus for after school programs, though very different from the ‘arts development’ described above, has become a common practice, particularly in cities, but also in rural areas (Halpern 2003; Rizzolo and Schuler 2005). A widely accepted premise is that exposure to positive sensory or aesthetic activity is generally healthy for emotions, intellect, and even morals (Mattern 2001; Newman, et al 2003; Social Impact of the Arts Project, University of Pennsylvania 2006). Thus, the arts are a popular (and popularly funded) way for advocates to engage youths in areas where they are statistically more likely to participate in illegal or health threatening activities (Binkiewicz 2004, Sousa 2004). Scholars too have turned their attention to these methods, praising them for their ability to garner the attention of youths, build self-esteem, and promote more socially acceptable uses of time, energy, and creativity (see for example Fliegel 2005; Larson and Walker 2006; Wright, et al 2006).

During my fieldwork, and along with a landscape architect who was in my study, I attended a talk organized by the Social Impact of the Arts Project at the University of Pennsylvania, as part of their Third Annual Urban Studies Public Conversation Series 2003-04. The talk was titled “Arts In Place: Philadelphia’s Cultural Landscape”, and included noted sociologist Sharon Zukin and other local activists and politicians considering the social change benefits of ‘the arts’ in Philadelphia (SIAP 2005). Though Professor Zukin attempted to add some critical analysis to the panel discussion, the overall consensus was that the arts were a positive force in the city. As this and other details presented suggest, arts programs, art festivals, mural painting programs, and many other arts initiatives focused on urban transformation, have become popular repositories of hope and optimism among neighborhood leaders, government officials, and policy makers (see also Gibans 1982, Golden et al 2002 2006, Miles and Paddison 2005, Twiss and Cooper 2000).

There are, of course, many social change initiatives that operate (in urban areas especially) as “community arts” programs, but the explicit melding of community arts and economic development is a more recent phenomenon. It is interesting to note that Christian-based Eastern University just recently launched a Masters of Arts in Urban Studies at their satellite Philadelphia campus, with concentrations in community arts, community development, and youth leadership (Eastern University 2006). And though the “transformation of community” through the arts has certainly been a part of the missions of most community arts organizations,



the explicit link of this with large-scale economic development is still a relatively new one. Partly it is my contention that these new approaches to community involvement are conceptually linked to current trends that promote transforming the city into a “destination” for arts entertainment, even if they are formally two separate activities.

During my fieldwork, the Urban Fabric Studio collaborated with a community arts organization, The Neighborhood Arts Center (a pseudonym), which is a not-for-profit after school community arts organization in Philadelphia, PA (hereafter referred to as the NAC), and has gained nationwide recognition for its work. In 2001, for example, the NAC was awarded the Gold Medal Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence. This award is given by the Bruner Foundation, which, according to their web page, “since its founding in 1963, ... has been known for innovative thinking about complex social issues, and for its ongoing commitment to meaningful social change” Bruner/Loeb 2006). The Rudy Bruner Award in particular is designed to “discover those special places” that “showcase the rich diversity, cultural achievement, and democratic values that characterize the American spirit” (Bruner/Loeb 2006).

However, and more importantly for my purposes, the NAC has become a unique example of community arts and economic development coming together, in that a large granting agency (the Wachovia Foundation), which specifically targets community economic and housing development, was convinced to fund an arts organization (the NAC) which had no specific experience in community development as it is most commonly defined today – generally economic, education, or real estate development. However, in their application for funding, the NAC very convincingly (and I would argue legitimately) couched their after school programs, sculpture garden construction, and mural painting initiatives within community development terms. This got them the funding, but as it turned out, this also created a certain amount of tension between the funder and the arts organization (all of which will be described below). What is important to note here is the fact that this funding combination was created at all.

In 2003 the NAC received this \$100,000 Neighborhood Planning Grant from the Wachovia Foundation, which was created by Wachovia Bank in 1998 to “support the revitalization of communities located in New Jersey, Delaware, and eastern Pennsylvania (Wachovia Foundation 2006). Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded over \$25 million in grants to more than 65 nonprofit organizations” (Wachovia Foundation 2006). On its web page the foundation clearly describes its interests in supporting “the development of resident-driven neighborhood plans that take comprehensive approaches to revitalization.” Though they do not describe what a “plan” is in specific terms, they do clearly indicate that they are thinking of it in the conventional sense of a long-term ‘master plan’, or a program for economic or community development of some kind; as for example in the above and in the following descriptions: “Neighborhood Planning Grants support direct expenses that are essential to the planning process such as: planning consultants and/or staff, outreach and neighborhood organizing functions, community meetings, and advisory group development” (Wachovia Foundation 2006).

The Wachovia Regional Foundation’s web page casts a rather wide net in terms of eligibility for these grants, deciding to describe primarily what should be in the final plan, rather than who is eligible for funding in order to create the plan. Nonetheless, this kind of funding typically goes to organizations that focus on economic or housing development, like Community Development Corporations (CDC’s) that deliver services for elderly, low income, or homeless populations. The Foundation’s web page does, however, list fairly specifically what they “do

not” fund; and among things like “general operating costs” and “debt reduction”, they say that they “generally” do not support “arts/cultural organizations”. Of course, funding organizations are often open to persuasion, and are sometimes willing to fund innovative approaches or creative interpretations of their funding guidelines. However, the fact that an organization with these guidelines was willing to fund the NAC does indicate a few things. Perhaps a unique or compelling case was made – a case that the bank could justify to its constituents for investment. But the ability to rationalize funding decisions is not created in a vacuum. A context in which to place the rationalization has to exist – in other words, those making the funding decisions have to feel that the proposals make some kind of sense in our contemporary context, in this case, the contemporary context of urban economic development. As this chapter notes, “the arts” as a catalyst for economic development has grown considerably more popular among those who make decisions about city centers, but the application of this model for the ‘revitalization’ of ‘inner city’ areas is relatively new. Nevertheless, this particular funding transaction demonstrates the growing interest or cogency of arts *as* development in socio-economically neglected areas – without this general commonsensicality, the funding decision would have been much less likely.

For the arts organization this opportunity actually created a somewhat unexpected situation – it had to respond to the requirements of a funder willing to invest \$100,000 in the organization, but through a specific form of community development in which the organization had no experience. The project director’s assistant, commenting on what had happened before he was hired, said to me,

It’s a grant that was written by people who didn’t know what it really was going to take to implement what they were claiming they were going to be able to do in a year. It was funded by a group of people who didn’t really understand that what was being claimed could be done was possible within certain set budget. And, it was then granted, and as far as I know its kind of like Oh Crap! So we got this... how do we do it?

The organization responded by hiring two experienced community organizers to run the project, in addition to one planning firm (whose principle partner also taught in a local ivy-league planning school), and by volunteering one architecture faculty member with extensive experience in community based urban design. The coming semester’s students, under the tutelage of their planning and architecture professors, would also be enlisted to help – this would count toward satisfying their semester-long studio requirements. The decisions to hire or partner with these various individuals and groups came primarily out of personal contacts of the NAC’s director, developed through past work with these individuals, or affiliation with these institutions.

Another key element of this funding originates directly from the requirements set down by the Foundation. They include seven “Principles for Grantmaking” which shaped the way in which the Village approached this opportunity. The seven principles are:

- Compelling – projects that are innovative, support residents of a neighborhood, and demonstrate the potential for significant lasting impact in a specific neighborhood.
- Comprehensive – projects that provide – or partner with other organizations to provide – services that address multiple needs in the neighborhood.
- Accountable – projects that can be evaluated with measurable outcomes.

- Collaborative – projects that make linkages in the neighborhood and partner strategically with other non-profits, schools, government agencies, local institutions, and public and private entities.
- Sustainable – projects that focus on causes rather than symptoms and demonstrate a sustainability plan including strong leadership, capable management and public and private resources.
- Replicable – projects that create prototypes that can be replicated in other low-income communities.
- Inclusive – projects that help build communities and support resident empowerment by cultivating local leadership and developing program strategies that organize and energize neighborhood residents to participate in the planning and to direct the change.

As can be seen from this list, many of these requirements could be met by various grassroots community organizations, including arts organizations. In fact, the NAC hosts several innovative programs, and the staff have been very committed to the local community (many of them come from the local community). They have partnered with many organizations in their neighborhood and the city, and their organizational mission is one of inclusion. My analysis of this funding agreement should not be taken as a questioning or a critique of the NAC, its efforts, or the intentions of the Foundation. It is meant more to demonstrate the fact that funders are becoming increasingly more open to entertaining the idea that “the arts” can act as not only a “catalyst for change” but also as an organizing structure for effecting city-wide economic and community development.

Presumably, part of what made this endeavor unique and exciting for those involved was the fact that the requirements were met by an arts organization, which has long been engaged in using the arts for the performance of community through after-school programs, mural painting, and other initiatives. But most interestingly, conceptually this fits very nicely into a contemporary outlook that sees the city as an ideal place for the consumption of art, culture, and diversity. And coupled with this is the idea that inner cities are fractured, injured, diseased places that are presumed by many to have nothing to lose and everything to gain from their involvement in arts and entertainment economies, and particularly in the case of “at risk” youth. In fact, this combination of views – a fractured, broken, exposed place mended by the arts – is very seamlessly put together in a description of the aesthetic/methodological philosophy of the director of the arts organization, here offered by the then financial officer of the NAC during a walking tour of their sculpture gardens:

For [the director] ... in part it's a, it's a methodological participation in a meaning, in that with mosaic you make use of fragments, pieces, uh... broken parts.. that are around one, or in ones life, and you make, well you can make something beautiful out of it. So that you just use the resources you have and some of them may not be the best uh, or just out of y'know, just bought from the shop, um, or may be broken, but together they can make something beautiful...

And in another instance, where the director very passionately describes the work of her organization in helping others through art, she says:

The reason the Village happens is because it is in the inner city where things are broken down, where the law doesn't choke everything. We are out in the

wilderness, where things are kind of quirky, where it's possible for wildflowers to break through.

Another essential ingredient for a full understanding of the Arts Organization's role in this story, is the relative notoriety obtained by the director of the organization, and in turn, by the organization itself. Having left a university teaching job in the arts in order to run the NAC, the director has since helped arts groups in several cities throughout America, and abroad. She has been an invited speaker at presidential dinners and has received numerous awards and grants for the NAC and her own work. Many articles have appeared in print and on-line exploring her work as an artist, a leader of the NAC, and the work of the NAC itself. As of 2005, the organization's budget had grown to \$1.3 million (Community Arts Network 2006).

In part because of the renown of both the organization and its director, another award the NAC received was for a research grant from the Leadership for a Changing World program at the Ford Foundation (Leadership for Change 2006a). As part of this \$100,000 award, the recipient organizations are expected to collaborate with a research team over the course of two years (for more information, see the discussion forum with the director which appears on their web page at Leadership for Change 2006b). These collaborations are meant "to develop new insights and understanding about leadership for social change, both through working with fellow awardees and through telling their own story" (Leadership for Change 2006c). The team that was assembled for the NAC job included two ethnographers, a professor and her Ph.D. student, both from the same ivy-league school that the aforementioned planners hailed from (see Hufford and Miller 2005, Miller 2005). Interestingly, the involvement of the ethnographers was welcomed by the director of the arts organization, but their presence in meetings with the steering committee and the assistant project manager created some difficulties. The assistant project manager said to me, "it's really hard because the process gets all out of whack due to the consciousness of having an observer." He also said he had

problems with the whole idea of it. Ethnography as a very voyeuristic thing, a white person of upper class sitting in the corner watching us, a bunch of black folks, talk about our problems, and they get paid for watching and studying us and our problems.

In the end, what is significant about this particular project, and the perspective of the steering committee and the assistant project manager, is that it demonstrates two closely related points: first, in yet another specific instance, a funding organization interested primarily in leadership and "social change" has seen in an arts organization the opportunity to pursue models of community and youth development; and second, that the arts are, indeed, viewed as a capable and desirable medium through which to change the places of the disadvantaged populations of cities and nations, and concomitantly, those populations themselves. This is not a new phenomenon – the reformist philosophy of the famous landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmstead, the civilizing missions of the World Exhibitions, and the "City Beautiful movement" also come immediately to mind (Scheper 1989, Nash 2001, Rydell 1984, White 1994, William H. Wilson 1989). However, this coming together of non-profit foundations, arts groups, and urban design entities, in the work of pursuing a development scheme that fits into the neoliberal discourses of cities and their arts and culture industries, is significantly new and different. And

in fact, understanding why these comings-together are seen differently compared to the civilizing missions that have come before, may help to illustrate how they are unfortunately alike.

## CHAPTER 3

### UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Within this context of urban development or revitalization through the arts, there is another force of change at work, one which has been present for some time but in varying forms; that is, the relatively new role of universities as community or economic developers. In the wake of the government land grabs of the 1960's (also known as "urban renewal"), public and private universities have had to become more creative about their development strategies, now that the use of eminent domain is more difficult to enact [though the June 23, 2005 Supreme Court decision to back forced sales for private development may change this] (*Kelo v. City of New London*, No. 04-108). Of course, university boards and trustees have not ignored current trends and business models for urban revitalization and economic reform. In concert with many federal and private funding sources, they have responded to trends toward community partnership, and envisioning the city as a destination by building and promoting the city as a hub for cultural, educational, and entertainment industries. It is to the roles of the urban university in the development and promotion of the city, and the effects of that context on my field site that I will now turn.

#### Cities and Their Universities

In May of 2005, Richard Freeland published a one-page letter in the *Chronicle for Higher Education* extolling the "need to change the way universities think about their cities and the way cities think about their campuses." He said that

Recently cities have begun to realize that successful universities can promote economic, social, and cultural vitality. The report "Leveraging Colleges and Universities for Urban Economic Revitalization," from the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and CEO's for Cities, concluded that "leveraging academic assets ... remains one of the greatest untapped urban revitalization opportunities in the country. [Freeland 2005:1]

Freeland lists three types of impact that universities have typically had on their local communities – "incidental", or the results of universities growing their facilities and thereby contributing to the economy and physical surroundings; "intentional", where universities invest locally (but Freeland points out that this is often self serving, i.e. 'blight amelioration' may also improve the university's image or neighborhood); and "extracted", which would be when a university "pays" a city with something like a park in return for a zoning change that enables university expansion. Freeland is critical of these types of interaction, saying that they reflect the all too often "obstructionist and coercive" relationships between universities and their communities. He says that, "historically the most-significant positive effects of universities on cities have been incidental impacts, and a large percentage of what we label intentional contributions have really been extracted benefits or substantially defensive in nature" (Freeland 2005:1).

Ultimately Freeland argues for a more intentionally integrated and collaborative relationship between universities and their neighboring communities, citing urban universities as

the most salient examples of both bad relations, and positive potential. He says that university officials should be “incorporating regional vitality into our planning for institutional growth [and] civic leaders should think less about what they can extract from local universities and more about how they can help those institutions flourish” (Freeland 2005:1). Freeland cites Philadelphia’s University of Pennsylvania and their physical and economic redevelopment of surrounding neighborhoods as a primary example of “constructive town-gown interaction” (Freeland 2005:1). (The University of Pennsylvania is a wealthy and prominent institution in Philadelphia. It is the city’s largest private employer (<http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/v46/n10/econ-study.html>) and has managed to make its influence so deeply felt in its surrounding neighborhood, as to have successfully renamed that part of West Philadelphia “University City”.)

Naturally, Mr. Freeland’s perspective is primarily an administrative one, suggesting institutional level collaborations for the purpose of master planning and physical development to the benefit of both universities and cities. He does not address debates about gentrification – or “Penrtrification” as it is, on occasion, referred to locally in Philadelphia. Nor does he address critiques of the neoliberal corporatization of universities (see Ruben 2000 for analysis of the corporatization of UPenn and its development practices). However, he does laud such current trends as service learning, universities working with community-based organizations, and cooperative education, as exemplary models of university-community collaboration. He also cites a few specific programs at various universities, finally mentioning Northeastern University, where he is president, and their collaborations with the Boston Housing Authority and the Boston Foundation.

Of course, this was merely a letter to an editor. However, I mention it for two important reasons. First, it demonstrates the growing acceptance and even popularity of looking at universities in this (relatively uncritical) way – as specific assets to their local communities and economies, but also, through collaborative relationships with their neighborhoods, cities, and regions, as potential agents of change, acting upon the social conditions of the world immediately outside their campuses, and their research and teaching agendas (particularly in the case of urban universities in economically neglected areas) (see also Behringer et al 2004, Wiewel and Knaap 2005). And second, though in my fieldwork there were most definitely collaborative relationships, on a local, grassroots level between academic experts and community organizations, who shared an interest in improving the “quality-of-life” in the so-called “inner-city”, the process I observed in my fieldwork uncovered no explicit attempts to perform “service learning”, “community based research”, or “cooperative education” per se. There was also very little direct on-going support from the universities involved (though the private, ivy-league university did have the administrative support of a center created specifically to assist other departmental efforts in this realm). And though the Studio did get one seed grant of under \$40,000 from a general university research initiative program, this came no where near to enabling a full-time commitment by all the professors involved.

Now this does not mean that no service learning was, in fact, taking place. Nor do I mean to imply that the universities did not have any programs like this in existence. On the contrary, many such programs do exist, but not in direct support of this studio’s activities, which were replete with what I would call an “organic” variety of service learning/community based research/cooperative education. Primarily, this was a product of personal relationships among colleagues and between academics and specific community members, who shared like-minded

interests in community welfare (though conceptualized in various ways), in the empowerment of disempowered groups and individuals (also variously conceptualized), and in a not always equally shared but often referred to, aesthetic and technical ideal regarding the look, feel, function, and meaning of the city – a complex and layered conceptualization, often generalized and essentialized by the designers through the idea of an “urban fabric”.

This chapter explores these relationships, not only between those involved in the processes observed, but also between, on the one hand, what these professional designers and educators thought about what they were doing, and on the other hand, the overall political and pedagogical environment in which universities, their surrounding communities, and their host cities must function. That is to say, in a social and academic context, where service learning and community base research are thought to be generally positive, at least in principle, I found a group of professional designers and educators who were not advocates, per se, but were simply following their personal interests through personal connections, with no reference to official institutional paradigms of pedagogic interaction, and without any official institutional support. (In fact, in the ivy-league case, there was instead a contractual business relationship between a professor’s firm and the engaged community organization, with the professor’s studio students participating as unpaid, unofficial, academic laborers).

Thus, in many ways this chapter serves as an example of how some university-community partnerships are actually operating under the radar, so-to-speak, of official institutional involvement, though this does not, of course, omit the significance of official efforts in areas like service learning or community collaboration. And perhaps more importantly, it does not omit the importance of the institution’s role as a symbol of either good or bad portent in work that is not officially a part of that institution’s agenda or plan, but is somehow linked to the institution in the minds of participants. This chapter also helps to illustrate the context in which these designers deployed their notions of design and aesthetic order, for the purpose of differentiating and acting upon social health and ailment, as well as economic waste and vitality. And in this, it is important to note that the design professionals and their students were always seen as part of their universities, for better or worse, whether they were under the university’s control or not. This meant that the force of their “expertise” was colored by that relationship – something I will explore further in later chapters.

Returning to Mr. Freeland’s letter for a moment, there was a book he mentioned entitled, “The University as Urban Developer” by David C. Perry and Wim Wiewel, which can serve here to further explore this university-community partnership idea within the specific context of economic development, but in this case, expanding into its generally accepted role of paternalistic cultural husbandry. In their introduction they describe this basic premise:

The university has long been one of Western civilization’s key institutions. Along with local government, the firm, and the church, among others, universities contribute in multiple ways to modern urban society (Van der Wusten 1998). The university is a significant source of received knowledge or wisdom, the primary site for the debate over change in the intellectual order, and an incubator of revolutions in science and technology. Just as important, the university is considered a center of culture, aesthetic direction, and the moral forces shaping the “civilized” society. Universities also contribute in important ways to the economic health and physical landscape of cities, serving as all but permanent fixtures of the urban economy and built environment [Perry and Wiewel 2005:3].



These authors then go on to say that despite this, universities have all too often had contentious relationships with their cities and communities. Actually, this is nicely illustrated visually and spatially in the normalized landscape design concept of the “campus”, which developed, in America, toward a pastoral and internalized aesthetic that tends, in the contemporary urban context, to isolate its users and alienate its neighbors (Dober 2000).

Again, part of my purpose here is to illustrate that the design group I studied, whether they are explicitly engaging these ideas or not (and they were not), are operating in the context of these institutional and intellectual forces, be they forces from the university, the government, developers, the economy, consumer practices, or design trends. At a grassroots, or near grassroots level, I witnessed professors engaging specific contacts within community organizations in order to pursue an agenda of social and built-environment change. But at an institutional level we have service-learning and community-based research programs being implemented by research centers, and university-community partnerships, executed through university boards and administrations. And finally, we have city, regional, and federal money and programs being deployed all over the nation for small and large scale partnerships, all guided by principles of collaboration and development (economic, cultural, and ‘civilizing’) that are built on the premise that universities have expertise and other resources to be tapped for the benefit of their local communities, regional economies, and the betterment of society in general. (In fact, fieldwork for my own dissertation was funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through their Office of University Partnerships, under these same parameters).

Within this context, the socio-cultural phenomenon of “design” as a technology of political economic ordering and discipline, comes into view. Whether or not the group I studied made explicit connections with the notions of university-community partnerships, service-learning, universities as urban developers, or policies that promote the arts as a revitalization engine, they still operated within and through the university and the city, and their surrounding neighborhoods and discourses, which are shaped by contemporary understandings of cities, schools, governing, economies, the arts, development, and more.

For instance, the general attitude of careful mistrust exhibited toward the university, something that resulted from the large-scale changes of urban renewal in the 1960’s and 1970’s, could still be easily heard in meetings that included residents or community representatives and university designers or researchers. In addition, the explicit goals of benefiting students and community members alike, described by service-learning and community-based research advocates, were an important assumption upon which all the Studio’s efforts were based, though many members claimed only general awareness of pedagogical movements focused specifically on university-community partnerships. And though several of the design professionals went so far as to scoff at such trendy movements as New Urbanism, or popular arguments like those of Richard Florida and his “creative classes”, these designers still promoted (in concert with their clients) mixed-use development, creation of a sense of place through design principles, and the establishment of artist communities, coffee shops, theaters, and book stores as fixes for the “inner city” – all proposals that reveal the embeddedness of designers, their students,

and their clients within larger academic, university, cultural, economic, policy and public debates.

## **Community Based Research and Service Learning**

Partnerships between universities and community groups are often enacted through pedagogic models like Community Based Research – which pairs trained experts in the university with community groups or neighborhood organizations to work on community designated projects; or Service Learning – which is an explicit linking of classroom work with service work in a community setting; and other forms of experiential or collaborative learning (from here on referred to collectively as CBR/SL) (see Speck and Hoppe 2004, Strand, et al 2003). In their recent book, *Community-Based Research and Higher Education*, Strand et al (2003) write that “over the past two decades, many higher education institutions... have begun to rethink their institutional missions and implement a variety of community outreach efforts” (1). They see this as a response to

widespread criticism of higher education’s disconnection from communities and growing concern about the professorate’s exceedingly narrow definition of research... [and as] recognition of the need to develop student’s civic capacity and prepare them for active democratic citizenship [Strand 2003:1]

The creation and funding of Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through their Office of University Partnerships (OUP), and several other university-based programs and research centers provide some prominent examples:

The Policy Research Action Group (PRAG) and Loyola University’s Center for Urban Research in Chicago, The University Community Collaborative of Philadelphia (Temple University), The Edward Ginsburg Center for Community and Service Learning at the University of Michigan, the Community Partnership Center at the University of Tennessee, the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization Project in Minneapolis-St. Paul... and a host of smaller efforts [Ferman and Hill 2004:242]

In their analysis of the increased interest in university-community research partnerships, and whether or not they have been effective, specifically from the “community’s perspective”, Ferman and Hill conclude that

Community-Based Research (CBR) is a response to the growing animosities between universities and their neighborhoods, but more importantly, it is also an effective way to address the imbalances of power between universities and their (primarily) urban neighbors, through the respectful and flexible deployment of university expertise and resources in service of community needs [Ferman and Hill 2004:242]

Although it is in this context that the Studio members functioned, they did so on their own terms, almost never referring to the growing body of knowledge and activities associated with CBR/SL. I believe this is largely because of the already normalized model for professional work, in architecture especially, but increasingly so in other design disciplines, which is “client-based” or “client-driven”. In this model the person who has hired the architect (the client) is

ostensibly in control of what the architect will ultimately produce (though this is an ideal scenario, which does not do justice to the complexities of professional practice). This control is most grossly executed by power of veto, ranging from refusing design proposals to simply firing the architect. However, it is also more often and more subtly controlled through relationships of collusion, resistance, coercion, or even passion (see Blau 1984, Cuff 1991).

In other words, most architects expect, and most architecture students are taught to expect, that business relationships and negotiations with clients, which include compromise and sacrifice (and if one is lucky, passion and vision), will be a large part of their work. In fact, the relative freedom from these complexities that the rarified environment of education provides, was commonly mentioned by professors (often as a warning to their students, admonishing them to appreciate their college days), and by the students (as a demonstration of that student's appropriating the affects of maturity and professionalism). But, in general, architects are acclimated to providing a service that is of immediate, material use to clients, while at the same time committing to the long-term dynamic relationships necessary to accomplish the building of even one major structure. Thus, the way in which architects are trained to work in a professional capacity can look very much like a service-learning or a CBR model of community research – in that there is generally a service to be performed for a client, which requires some degree of extended collaboration and relationship building.

However, there are significant differences between CBR/SL and client-based work that are worth noting, foremost in order to better understand the context and workings of this particular Studio in its university-community setting, but also to understand the broader goals of this dissertation – exploring the potential disciplining forces of a media-rich, consumer driven capitalism at work through the concept of design, both within university-community partnerships and society in general. One important difference between CBR/SL and client-based work is that of working with a diverse, likely contentious, and often power-starved community group, compared to working with an individual or a board of directors with the capability of hiring and firing an architect. Of course, boards of directors or married couples, for instance, can have their own political and power machinations, but even in these cases, architects generally do not have to face public dissent and conflict in the same way they do when working on publicly funded or community driven projects. Another huge difference between CBR/SL and regular professional practice has to do with what I would call the learning vs. earning environments. To begin with, university requirements, academic calendars, expectations of students, and working in a rarified learning (as opposed to earning) environment, all conspire to shape what final products can actually be delivered to the provisional design “client” (setting aside for the moment, neoliberal transformations of higher education into a complex of business transactions, where the student is the consumer or client, and the education or the degree is the product).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, because of the similarities discussed above, I think it was easy for many teaching architects to think about and process their CBR/SL-like work in terms of client-driven work – not being explicit about their engagement with CBR/SL, and working off of assumptions and standards commonly employed in for-profit firms. For instance, in one case the design skills and products offered by the Studio were accepted by a politically savvy and resource-starved neighborhood organization, and later that organization quickly took up the offer of another design group with better political connections in the city. These actions were then interpreted by the Studio's architects as ungrateful or even disloyal *client* behavior.

They were not, at least initially, seen as a strategic use of resources by the organization, required for survival in a marginalized and relatively powerless position.

I bring this up because when so-called client-driven services are offered in the context of neoliberal consumer capitalism, they can all too easily be mistaken for and negotiated as contractual relationships, thereby forming those relationships in terms of neoliberal capitalist meanings and values. And if these client-driven design services are easily subsumed under the rubric of CBR/SL, then the “training” or “educating” of individuals and groups about and through design, ultimately teaches the capitalist values and dispositions that make design legitimate, all through a subjective, aesthetic, and thus, for the most part, depoliticized apparatus of individual creativity, professional competence, aesthetic judgment, and, ironically, community partnership and empowerment. In general, Studio members were not comfortable with the idea of doing design work and not being compensated for it, either monetarily or symbolically (i.e. getting credit for it). Thus, if the Studio were to do work and not get either kudos, or more work, the neighborhood organization was seen, at best, as disorganized, or at worst, as greedy and disloyal. So, in the end, though this is purportedly a collaborative relationship, with mutual benefit, if conventional corporate ideas of compensation and contractual agreement are flaunted, the project is seen as a failure or a burden. Thereby, the validity and values of consumer capitalism are “taught” to the would-be clients, as well as the student laborers and professional designers in the university-community partnership.

### **The University in Philadelphia**

In her analysis of the political strategies behind university-based development in Philadelphia, Elizabeth Strom compares the activities of the city’s two major universities, Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania. Though very different in terms of their traditions and constituencies (Penn having been founded in the eighteenth century, serving “high-achievers”, and being Ivy League; Temple catering to working people, having started in 1884 with religious roots, but now affiliated with the state system), they nonetheless have both engaged in campus planning through urban development and community partnerships (Strom 2005:119-121). Historically, neither university escaped the typical American pattern of expansion among urban universities in the 1950’s and 1960’s, utilizing the federal urban renewal programs to acquire land around their campuses (Strom 2005:119). “Partnering with city officials who could use the local eminent-domain powers and federal funds to acquire and clear sites, [Temple and Penn] benefited enormously” (Strom 2005:119). However, this strategy did backfire, so-to-speak. By the late 1960’s and 1970’s opposition grew to the heavy handed urban clearance that was taking place under these auspices. And as a result,

lacking a pool of redevelopment funds, scrutinized by wary elected officials and viewed suspiciously by neighborhood interests, development-oriented universities have had to reassess their expansion needs, forge new relationships with public officials, and reconsider their posture toward their communities” [Strom 2005:119]

Of course expansion did not stop, and despite this backlash, and in response to lagging enrollments, Temple again sought expansion in the 1980’s, when then President Peter Liacouras announced that Temple was seeking the city’s support (with the help of then Mayor Wilson Goode) to expand athletic facilities, generally improve the Broad Street Corridor, and create a

high-tech industrial park out of Temple's Campus (Temple University 1986). This resulted in what is today Temple's main stadium venue, the Liacouras Center, and its neighboring retail spaces, known simply as 1700 N. Broad St.

Today growth is still very much a part of each university's campus agenda. Temple recently began a \$75 million project to move the Tyler School of Art into a new building on their main campus (Carson 2005), and they're building a new \$150 million building for the medical school (Temple University School of Medicine 2006), as well as a new \$78 million building for the Fox School of Business, all as part of a \$400 million facilities improvement program. (Ironically for me in this dissertation, the Fox building is to be designed by "star architect", Michael Graves (<http://sbm.temple.edu/alter/>)!) It is worth noting that in all these latest cases, no displacement of residents has taken place, since the sites were either empty, or Temple buildings were or will be demolished to make room for new construction.

A similar pattern has taken place at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn, as it's known locally), in that it has been expanding, but primarily building on land it already owned. However, in his essay examining the corporatization of Penn, Matthew Ruben points out that much of Penn's "development" has been on land that was taken during the urban renewal of the 1960's (Ruben 2000:205-206). In the late 1990's Penn completed their \$120 million Sansom Common, a shopping, retail, restaurant and hotel complex on the northern edge of campus. In addition, they will soon open a new building for their veterinary school, which received a \$13.5 million grant from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to enhance the facility (Penn Veterinary Medicine 2006), and they recently published a 30-year development plan produced by Sasaki & Associates of Watertown, Mass. which includes the acquisition for development of over 27 acres of land now owned by the U.S. Postal Service (University of Pennsylvania Executive Vice President's Office, 2006).

In general, both schools began in the late 1980's to enact programs for university expansion including parking, housing, facilities and retail, as well as to improve general safety and the attractiveness of their respective neighborhoods. These efforts have grown through the 1990's and into the 2000's. Due in part to its relatively greater pool of resources, Penn developed a robust community service portfolio, including the internationally recognized Center for Community Partnerships, led by the highly lauded academic Ira Harkavy (Center for Community Partnership 2006), and several programs for partnering with local businesses to provide university and student services.

Temple's smaller, more modest attempts include programs like "adopt-a-block", and the "Welcome Wagon", which, while requiring less economic capital, still seek to wield the same kind of symbolic capital. On September 30, 2004, a story in *The Temple Times* described the Welcome Wagon, which that semester "distributed practical tools for responsible living, such as trash cans and cleaning supplies, to more than 60 student homes" (Temple Times 2004). This program was described as part of Temple's efforts to "reach out and form partnerships with its neighbors in North Philadelphia" through their Tuttleman Counseling Services office (Temple Times 2004). The article said that the coordinator of the program liked to use a gardening metaphor to describe Temple's interaction with the surrounding areas, citing one of their transformations of an abandoned lot into a garden, constructed near a mural at the edge of campus. The article ends with this cultivation metaphor, and only slightly veils a condescending paternalism:

In keeping with [the coordinator's] doctrine of North Philadelphia as a garden

benefiting from Temple's attentive cultivation, all parties agree that the University's service initiatives must be undertaken with an eye toward stretching its roots deep into the community [Temple Times 2004]

These are just a few examples of the methods and discourses through which universities, and Philadelphia's universities in particular, deploy their agendas and notions of progress and reform. There are of course, other ways in which universities become forces of change – most interestingly for this dissertation, those instances when the vector of change is not explicitly part of any program, but rather a by-product, if you will, of the presence and activities of students, professors and administrators, as well as of this overall discourse on the role of universities in their cities.

Finally, it is important to note that this promotion of universities as positive forces in community and neighborhood development is not exclusive to certain cities, university newspapers, or the CBR/SL community. For instance, in an interview with Clark University's president John Bassett, published in the Spring 2005 issue of *Communities and Banking*, Clark is portrayed (in progressive financial parlance) as a university that made a choice:

It could turn its geographic focus toward Park Avenue, expanding its campus westward toward Worcester's more prosperous neighborhoods, or it could continue to invest its future in the distressed Main South community. ...The resulting University Park Partnership is today a national model of successful university/community collaboration. [Communities and Banking 2005]

This general conceptualization, with variations in tone, of post-industrial urban neighborhoods and their universities, is replicated throughout many narratives of university-community partnerships, urban economic development initiatives, business and capital investment interests, and community and political activists, in Philadelphia and elsewhere, and it demonstrates the pervasiveness of corporate models of free market capitalism, and "new economy" models of cities (and university campuses) as destinations, and it hints at the crucial role of design expertise in all of this rhetoric about community, place, and development.

### **“Community” as a Thing**

While there have been several important anthropological studies about the functioning of expert knowledge in the creation and contestation of community (Darian-N. Smith 1999, Gregory 1998, Holsten 1989, Low 1997, Peattie 1968, Perin 1977, Sanjek 1998), few have focused on the specific relationships between experts and the communities upon which they act (Ferguson 1990 is a notable exception); and fewer still have used experts, not simply as a cadre of technocratic force, only to be understood through their arrogant or reckless passage, but as themselves constituting a subject for anthropological research (Gusterson 1996, another notable exception).

However, some qualification is needed here. When looking for scholarly work in anthropology having to do with experts and expertise, one is hard pressed to find a body of literature that focuses on this subject per se. Nonetheless, there are subject areas of anthropology and the social sciences in general that deal with the idea of expertise or experts as an integral part of other projects, such as the history of science and technology, law, medicine, globalization, or international development. For example, "science studies" is well developed through the work

of sociologists and historians (Collins and Pinch 1993, Fleck 1979, Latour and Woolgar 1979, Shapin and Schaffer 1989), and many excellent ethnographies of science by anthropologists have helped to show how science, technology, and culture are mutually constituting, and intertwined in the production of meaning (Knorr 1981, Lynch 1985, Martin 1992[1987], 1994, Rabinow 1996b, Rapp 1999, Star and Griesemer 1989). Medical anthropologists have dealt with expertise too, looking at the lines of demarcation between physicians, scientists and the public (Hogle 2002, Parsons 1969, Freidson 1970, 1986, Timmermans 2000). And there is also a long tradition of anthropologists studying jurisprudence and how anthropology and law can both conflict and collaborate (see Moore 2004, Nader 2002). Finally, the role of expertise in globalization and international development has received attention from sociologists and anthropologists, particularly in the last decade or so under the rubric of transnationalism (Phillips and Ilcan 2002; Appadurai 1996, 2001; Isin 2000; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Sassen 1994, 1999; Castels 1997). Still, all of this work has not given rise to, for instance, an ‘anthropology of expertise’; and few have looked at the functioning of the idea of ‘community’ in expert discourse (Emily Talen 2000, is one exception, as she focuses on the use of the idea of ‘community’ in the planning profession).

Given the growing popularity of university-community partnerships (and their experts), and the couching of these enterprises in the terms and images of “community”, one would think that there would be a more critical analysis of what exactly “community” means, or doesn’t mean, in this context. Now, the designer-professors I studied did explicitly acknowledge that when they referred to “the community”, they were aware that this was not one singular thing, with one singular “identity”, but rather a complex conglomeration of several individuals and groups, all vying for position within a greater whole, struggling with limited resources, and coming up against seemingly impenetrable barriers. In fact, after witnessing a passionate and sometimes chaotic community meeting, the students of the Urban Fabric Studio looked to their professor for reassurance, and she told them that in communities like this,

They often have to ask for everything instead of generating it from within. And it puts them in a very frustrating position between a rock and a hard place, that people without power have. It’s like, the only place I can get what I need to do is from outside and above. Which is different than many of the neighborhoods that most of you grew up in, and me too. So they’re fighting for limited resources...

Still, Studio designers and students quite often would use the term “community” uncritically, as well as the commonly used biomedical metaphors of “blight” and “decay” (which I deal with below), and the more popular presumptions about social disorganization and lack of networks, identity, and order, said to be characteristic of the “inner-city” as much as, if not more than, geography or poverty (“inner-city” too is a term that is full of contradictions, since many “inner-cities” are not geographically central to their respective metropolises, and, like the word “urban”, “inner city” tends to reference black communities – ‘urban’ music, ‘urban’ fashion).

Nonetheless, it was the perceived conditions of poverty, neglect, and exclusion that generally made the “inner-city” of interest to these designers. Without exception, they wanted to do something good, something that might help those people (or those places) with limited resources, through either preserving or creating “community”. Of course, they knew it was necessary to turn their activities into products that proved their academic worth and validity as well, in the form of articles, studies, reports, etc., but this was for the most part treated as more of a requirement for continuing the work, rather than an end in itself. And still, due to their having

to operate in an academic climate, and being interested in academic questions, they identified and addressed questions or ‘problems’ about social change, disempowerment, and unequal distribution of resources through the academic paradigms of their day. This meant that their approach, their research questions and observations, their day-to-day discussions of field work, Studio work, and political positioning, all tended to put them in a stance that necessarily treated the “community” as a singular, self-contained, and even knowing entity. In addition, they assumed that this entity tended to think similarly to the way professionals thought about human nature, goodness, needs, and problems, even if there was a lack of knowledge or understanding of the larger picture on the community’s part. That is to say that, though the designers meant well, they approached things from their own points of view, which tended, even needed, to gloss over the complexity of “community”, and assumed that everyone basically wants the same thing (i.e. a universal kind of happiness), and that if given the same tools and knowledge, members of the “community” would come to the same “conclusions” as the designers would about their place of dwelling and how to “improve” it.

For example, in an early part of the planning process for one of the Studio’s first projects, the group of designer-professors circulated through email a list of questions they drew up for their target “community”. In many ways it was conceived as a list for their would-be “client”, in this case a non-profit civic association. However, it was also assumed to some degree, that the community organization would be able to speak for the community at large, and thus the list was also for the “community” as an identifiable whole, and, perhaps more importantly, as a thing or a “knowing” entity. Working from that presumption, there were varying approaches to this task of how to find information. Some design faculty clearly thought of “the community” as a definable and all-inclusive entity that suffered from physical and personal trauma (“How does the community intend to educate residents to promote a cleaner environment and build a sense of ownership and pride?”). Others came from more technical angles, from which they sought statistical understandings of the area (“What is the ratio of vacant to occupied structures in the neighborhood? What parts of the neighborhood have the highest vacancy rate?”). And still others were focused on the specific elements of the place, recognizing in their questions that their target for design was made up of the various physical and organizational parts included in the area or neighborhood – this could range from schools and churches, to other community organizations and institutions, to houses, families, alleys, parks, ethnicities, architecture, jobs, economics, youth, elderly, festivals, gardens, open spaces, chain link fencing, and trash. For instance, in the question below there was an effort to focus on specific people or things:

Can interviews with block captains who have some jurisdiction over the lot(s) in their area be arranged? There were a number of questions students had about the lots. Some in terms of what might be done in one or more that would have recreational value. Some in terms of the fenced lots: how they actually are presently used, who controls the keys, whether anything could be done to transform the dreariness of the chain link uniformity. List of Block Captains and their thoughts on lot reclamation: green spaces or games/ do people on the block want to team up to build?

Though it would be easy to see these different questions as layers or levels of specificity and nothing more, and some accounting for the sources of each question must also be done (for, different designer-professors had different approaches to the same task due in part to differences in personality, goals, discipline, pedagogy, etc.), none of the questions included here were



interrogated by the group as to what assumptions were imbedded in the questions, themselves. Nor was their notion of “community” interrogated based on the discourse they were creating. And to be fair, this may in fact be the result of the need for actionable decision making, understandably prioritized over the theorizing of epistemology. However, the way in which knowledge is created and deployed is still tied to relationships of power, and in need of critical analysis.

Another illustration may be of use here. Below I compare two questions from the list which are both about essentially the same thing – gentrification. The first, “What is the community doing or thinking about to prevent gentrification?”, is demonstrative of a presumed condition of encapsulated, homogenous, and frozen-in-time community identity. The second example poses the same question, but in a way that does not see the neighborhood as a thing, possessing agency or subjectivity, (“Are there areas of [the neighborhood] that are already showing signs of gentrification?”). Though the difference may seem subtle, it can be traced through over fifty questions composed for the purpose of understanding their intended research/design subject. And though the participants (again, all faculty members) in this discussion were quick to recognize the complexity of their subject (more so when they began to engage community members, but even in the early stages when they came up against the complexity of their own disciplinary collaboration) they still operated on a day-to-day basis with this assumed generalization of the community as a tangible, immutable, query-able thing.

But, of course, the important question here really has more to do with the results of this phenomenon. Understanding its effects means understanding that it may actually have been the mutability of the word or concept of “community” that best served the interests of the designers, their subject, and their client-collaborators. Vered Amit offers a useful analysis of “community” as it has been used within anthropology, where he points to the commonly noted ‘slipperiness’ or ambiguity of the notion, but importantly notes that “the very features that tend to produce this ambiguity also help to ensure the persistence of a notion of community both within scholarly literature as well as in popular vernaculars” (Amit and Rapport 2002:13). Drawing on Anthony P. Cohen (1985), Amit says that, “like symbols, key lexical terms such as *community*, *nation*, *culture* persist in usage because they evoke a thick assortment of meanings, presumptions and images” (Amit and Rapport 2002:13). She goes on to say that,

as Phil Cohen (1996:69) and Anthony Cohen (1996) have noted, an indexical term like *nation* is most persuasive politically when it can be refracted through the symbolic intimacies of hearth and home, personal and local experiences.

Similarly the resonance of a term like *community* makes it a useful rhetorical adjunct to a wide variety of public appeals seeking to exploit the term’s generally positive connotations of ‘interpersonal warmth, shared interests and loyalty’ (Bauman, 1996:15). [Amit and Rapport 2002:13-14]

The term “community” was often invoked in my field site as an ideal condition, but one that was also immanent in any geographic area of the city or neighborhood by virtue of there being people in a place, a history, and a will to identity of some group claiming membership or ownership. More often than not, “community” represented something that was possible but not fully achieved. Perhaps in the light of the national rhetoric bemoaning the “loss of community”, or perhaps in the assumption that a place that is dirty or harbors criminal activity or poverty is somehow lacking in this ideal of “community”, more often than not the places these designers

focused on were spoken of as if they had latent, neglected, damaged, or at least beleaguered “community”. This played out in at least two interesting ways, both of which involved interaction with neighborhood residents, and one of which involved the invited critique of a local Reverend (these are explored further in later chapters). Suffice to say that the ability of the term “community” to refer to the ‘interpersonal warmth, shared interests and loyalty’ that most people feel positively toward, made the term a very good mediator between people who may presumably want the same thing but who hold differing tastes and sensibilities regarding the realization of those apparently similar aspirations. In other words, everyone generally values a sense of community, but just what makes up community in terms of the specific members, aspects, qualities, and responsibilities, may vastly differ. The idea of “community” nicely knits these two, often opposing forces into an illusion of synchronicity, and this was the real accomplishment of the use of the term.

### **Under The Radar With The Urban Fabric Studio**

A defining characteristic of the Urban Fabric Studio was that it was created and maintained through a great amount of both group and individual effort, guided by personal motives and interpersonal contacts. Its core was a small group of just a few people interested in applying urban design to what they saw as pressing social and infrastructural issues in the urban environment. These personal, individual alliances meant that the group was very much out on its own, both in terms of being progressive and creative, and, unfortunately, in terms of access to resources. They had great difficulty securing funds from the university, getting only the small seed grant already mentioned. The work of this group was therefore very much the result of personal effort, contacts and interest in collaboration, coupled with neighborhood organizations interested in the potential of procuring services from professional designers. The added element of student involvement was both a positive thing, in that it was essentially more and “fresher” minds working on a problem, but also negative, in that it necessarily involved the sometimes chaotic activity of lots of inexperienced students generating ideas, walking around a neighborhood with cameras and note pads, and calling on residents for interviews (sometimes resulting in redundancy at the resident’s expense).

Another element of this collaborative effort between the professors and their community contacts involved the sometimes-burdensome task of managing both real and implied connections to a major university in the region. Sometimes this connection could be called upon to elicit a kind of legitimacy of expertise: ‘here we have two distinguished professors from University X and their creative students to offer us their ideas for our neighborhood’. And in other instances, when certain neighborhood cynics wanted to know when University X was going to invest some money into the community, or wanted to know if the University was planning on buying up more property for their own use, the connection became complicated and required diplomatic segues. Thus, along with utilizing the symbolic capital that university affiliation sometimes provided, the Urban Fabric Studio members, on occasion, had to explain that they weren’t in charge of any money, and that they weren’t involved in any official program of development sponsored by the University.

As mentioned before, one of the major obstacles of this particular effort was logistical. In one university, three of the disciplines involved were located on three different campuses – one in the city at the main campus (adjacent to the research site); one on the edge of the city, some 7 miles away (which could take over 40 minutes to reach, driving through the city); and the

third in a rural area 15 miles out of the city. This physical distance proved challenging for the two or three all-discipline meetings that took place per semester (not least of which was the problem of driving in snow storms and trying to make up canceled classes). In addition to this problem, the scheduling of classes could not be coordinated between departments and campuses in such a way as to benefit the Studio. Though for a prior project, one architect and one landscape architect were able to use a federal grant to “buy out” some of their time from full teaching loads, this was not the case during my fieldwork. In addition, credit loads were different between departments, as were the student skill levels and expectations. In one instance a professor also voiced frustrations over the inability of non-tenured professors to allocate time and energy to “pet-projects” like this one, where collaborative, long-term, grassroots work demands much more time and energy than typical teaching (setting aside the risk of not having the work officially recognized as legitimate by the university or the departments).

In the end, much was still accomplished by the members of these collaborations, despite all the structural obstacles and relative independence from university auspices that they both benefited from and struggled under. Designs and plans were produced, which later became useful to the provisional client organizations for further attempts to procure funding for development projects, recognition, and community clout. A very unique learning opportunity was provided to the students of the various studios, some of which have gone on to pursue related senior thesis projects. And designer-professors benefited by adding this experience to their resumes of professional and community involvement.

However, as it is my charge in this dissertation to analyze the uses of the *idea* of design, and the functioning of expertise within certain non-traditional realms of ‘truth claiming’, I will turn now to the *idea* of expertise in this context, offering the beginnings of an archaeology of the idea of design, interrogating its role in the formation of habitus, the notion of the city, the profession of architecture, and the governing of freedom through consumerism in late capitalist, advanced liberal democratic society.

## CHAPTER 4

### WHERE CAN WE FIND EXPERTISE?

Today the terms expert and expertise are commonly understood as references to the possession of skill sets, knowledge, mastery, or perhaps capability. Generally, skill or knowledge possession is presumed to precede and constitute the authority of an expert, rather than expertise being an expression of authority, wielded through sanctification of particular skills and the validation of specific knowledges. An interesting illustration of this is the assertion that a “local” person can be an “expert” on local needs, patterns, or traditions by virtue of their possessing an insider’s knowledge or experience. What this misses, however, is the functioning of power in expertise. In other words, expertise is the performance of relationships of power and authority in the realm of knowledge production, not simply the product of knowledge or skill possession.

Understanding expertise requires an understanding of its deployments, and analysis of the construction of the *idea* of expertise, as much, if not more, than reifying its contents. Susan Hyatt (1997), in her analysis of the implementation of state-subsidized housing policy during the 1980’s in Great Britain, shows how,

implicit within those post-welfare policies characteristic of ‘advanced liberalism’ is the presupposition that ‘expertise’ can be regarded as a readily transferable commodity which, once bestowed upon groups like council tenants, will automatically render them capable of significantly altering their own environments without interference from the outside [224]

Hyatt demonstrates that these neoliberal policy and development efforts to ‘empower’ the poor to become ‘self-governing’, actually work to “link the subjectivity of citizens to their subjection, and link activism to discipline” (Cruikshank 1994:29). The authority to bestow ‘expertise’ is herein deployed as a kind of governmentality, inculcating the poor with a sense of responsibility for their own fate, and ignoring structural inequalities and uneven distribution of resources.

Another facet of expertise that requires exploration is the idea that expert knowledge is presumably universal (i.e. scientific), or has the potential to be universally applied (Choy 2005). In a world dominated by scientific ideals, knowledge that reaches the status of universal applicability becomes authoritative and law-like. Of course, experts don’t deal exclusively with universals, particularly as specialization becomes the norm, and knowledge need not be universal to be employed by the authority of experts. In his discussion of “transnational environmental politics”, anthropologist Timothy Choy interestingly shows how the *particular*, most often invoked to battle the *universalizing* discourses of science and expertise, is actually taken up and deployed in service to expert models of environmental change and policy (Choy 2005). He shows how “the very concepts of “universality” and “particularity” are in a constant process of self-conscious deployment, production, and articulation” by both the scientists and the “locals” (Choy 2005:6). The following chapter turns to this kind of an analysis of the production of expertise, universality, and aesthetic authority as it relates to design and architects.

## Anthropology, Place, and Experts

Of course, anthropologists and others have highlighted the cultural conditions of knowledge production (see Martin 1992[1987], Rabinow 1996b, Rapp 1999), as well as the dangers of elitism when policy and expertise collude (see Jasanoff 1990, 2003, Mitchell 2002, Fischer 1990, Fortun 1998), but there are two characteristics of anthropological studies of place that have, while serving the discipline well, also limited the inquiry. Gupta and Ferguson, and many other ethnographic treatments of place in general, tend to focus on how place is made in situ, so-to-speak, when they address the idea of 'place making' (Altman and Low 1992; Liebow 1967; Low 2000; Stack 1974). By this I mean that they see the making of place as most genuinely the domain of 'the native', that indigenous 'experiencer' of a particular place, as an effect of 'the native' knowing the "presence of diverse absences" - or the memories and meanings given to locations that hosted some event or held some past significance for that 'native' (de Certeau 1984: 108). The important corollary to this, which is also well explored in anthropology, is the construction of place from the outside, by the dominant 'other' (see for example Gregory 1998; Liebow 1967; Pigg 1992). Most often these are situations of expertise being forced onto a place from on high, through policy or financial capital.

Though I concur that these approaches are essential for a more complete (and egalitarian) understanding of place, at the same time I would also say that these ways of conceptualizing "place making" actually limit the scope of inquiry. The making of place, from both of these perspectives of 'insider' and 'outsider', actually include, I would argue, the processes of professional 'place makers' as legitimate players (and not necessarily always the 'bad guys'). Rather than relegating these groups to the amorphous battalions of myopic policy makers, legislators, and technocrats, as they often are in the perspectives mentioned, they should be recognized for the real, critical, and effective roles they play. Though the range of place making studies is vast, from anti-academic 'earnestness', to a more traditional treatment of the "inscription of nostalgia" (Davis 1990; Feld and Basso 1996), few incorporate, for instance, the ways in which communities often enlist expertise from non-profits, universities, and local residents, in order for those communities to forward and enact their own agendas, or the ways in which experts of varying types battle to establish dominance in a particular area of representation or classification.

The appropriation of expertise (often through coalition building) is quite evident, though not thoroughly explored in Steven Gregory's (1998) ethnography of Corona/East Elmhurst, for instance. It has been the organizing focus for only a few ethnographic explorations of place and place making (see Gusterson 1996; Holston 1989; James Scott 1998); but none have attempted to focus on the integration of designer-artists and the specific communities to which they apply their attention. Cultural anthropologist Charles Rutheiser (1996) turns his attention to "the manifold labors of public relations operatives and other 'creative specialists' working in the seemingly boundless and placeless spaces of the mass media" (4), but even he admits to not focusing ethnographically on these professionals, so that he might specifically place their competing 'world views' and identity politics into the discourse of place.

Finally, there are studies from other disciplines like sociology or political science, such as Logan and Moloch's (1987) *Urban Fortunes*, where groups dubbed "place entrepreneurs" are recognized, and said to be crucial players in place making (29). However, in this work, and others like it, relatively elite groups are often not given the kind of attention that ethnography lavishes on the disenfranchised (with good reason, I concur), but attention that might uncover the

cultural and social processes by which other people engage in the discourses of professionalism, expertise, and artistry, which they use to understand and explain their own purposes and involvement.

A more holistic understanding would be fostered with more attention paid to why and how experts, and particularly designer-artist experts, lend their energies, skills, and symbolic capital to the shaping of place and space. Some examples which do invite this focus are Paul Rabinow's (1989) book *French Modern*, Charles Rutheiser's (1996) look at how Atlanta is to be 'thought out', and Constance Perin's (1977) look at the ideologies behind land use in America. Certainly, of vital importance to this kind of holism is the understanding of how communities at or near the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy experience and create place. Roger Sanjek (1998) and Steven Gregory (1998) are two anthropologists who have given us seminal ethnographies illustrating how important this kind of work is for understanding place, particularly in urban America. In the case of Steven Gregory's (1998) *Black Corona* we see the struggle of activists to preserve neighborhood political identities which have for decades been elided by the dominant society's constructions of place, race and class, often in terms of individual or family pathology. Sanjek (1998) continues this vital exploration of how neighborhood groups and organizations among the historically disenfranchised struggle to have a voice against the waves of 'economic development' meant to 'clean up', 'globalize', and 'beautify' New York City. The readings in Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky's (2001) *The New Poverty Studies* also work to show how neoliberalism drives economic and social policy toward the depoliticization and displacement of the poor through, for example, insidious uses of discourses surrounding self-empowerment and multi-culturalism.

Another important facet to contemporary analyses of space and place is the 'marketing of space as place', one example of which is gentrification. In his book, *The New Urban Frontier*, Neil Smith (1996) speaks against an overly simplistic argument, which sees gentrification as simply a new middle-class interest in urbanity, born of consumer demand for commodified place (in the form of the 'gritty' city). Smith sees this argument as having essentially come out of a postmodernism "run amok" (N. Smith 1996:43). He states that,

far from opposing the evictions, rent gouging, displacement, homelessness, violence and other class-exploitative and class-abusive practices that gentrification brings, more extreme proclamations of a postmodern urbanism simply gentrify the working class out of the picture [N. Smith 1996:44]

In this configuration the 'hero' becomes the middle-class 'frontiersman' of the urban jungle.

Smith's book is of course an analysis of political economy and cultural change in the late twentieth century city, an account which "explores the interconnections of urban policy, patterns of investment, eviction and homelessness" (N. Smith 1996: jacket). And I would argue that this is essential, though still, "only ever part of the equation" (N. Smith 1996:44). In fact, Smith does advocate attempting to 'reverse the machinery' of socio-cultural research and turn the focus toward the 'gentrifiers', but within the scope or scale of this particular work (covering gentrification primarily within a global political economic context but through the use of the local as case study), Smith cannot hope to accommodate a nuanced ethnographic look at the 'gentrifiers'. He thus limits his analysis to the 'gentrifiers' as 'rentiers', financiers, and developers, to be understood by the results of their actions – the mechanisms and effects of gentrification. The designers, architects, or any other of the "creative classes" do not make the cut.

All of these efforts significantly contribute, in one way or another, to the ethnographic project of “examin[ing] the ways that macro level social and economic factors and society wide models of difference play out in the thought and action of individuals in [their] communities” (Goode and Schneider 1994:24). And as Judith Goode and Jo Anne Schneider (1994) did in their study of the changing relationships between newcomers and established ethnic groups in Philadelphia ten years ago, there is still a need to “explore the contradictory messages that people encounter in their lives and how individuals use experience and ideas as they move through different settings” (25). However, the designer-artists, or aesthetic experts, who apply their knowledge and symbolic capital to the ‘creation’ of place should have equal billing here. In a world where expertise as a social phenomenon is appropriated at the most ‘rudimentary’ levels of analysis (e.g. the ‘medical reporter’ on the evening news), as well as within the struggles over material community resources (as in the political battles chronicled in several of the ethnographies mentioned above), and in the highest halls of policy writing and ratification – and whether expertise is appropriated as antagonistic technocratic ideology, capitalist development rhetoric, or strategic collaborative tool – we must recognize that the ‘experts’ who contribute to the production of these discourses of knowledge, legitimately possess their own kind of ‘emic’ view, which should not be neglected if we are to understand material and social consequences within the struggle of power.

### **Placing Expertise in Place Making**

In their critique of anthropological conceptualizations of place, anthropologists Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997) show how “approaches to the relation between “the local” and something that lies beyond it (regional, national, international, global), have taken the local as given, without asking how perceptions of locality and community are discursively and historically constructed” (6). They remind us that “place” is bound up in how culture has been conceptualized – “as a series of discrete, territorialized” units (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:3). They also insist that one must look at the “issues raised by relationships between culture and power” in the effort to understand place (Gupta and Ferguson 1997:3). Reformulating this a little for my purposes, we could say that the discourses and constructions of locality emanating from various sources throughout society (academic, popular press, television, politics, communities, movies, business, etc.), are very much a part of how place is conceptualized by all of us, including designers of place. However, as mentioned above, centering the socio-analytic gaze on those who use design to affect place, and the ways in which their embedded-ness in professionalism, academia, and their conceptualizations of art, politics, community, and change, has not often been the concern of anthropologists, and only minimally the focus of disciplines like sociology, cultural studies, or those few academically “reflective practitioners” (Schön 1983). At the same time, in late industrial capitalism (modernity), where expertise has long established its “lines of penetration” (Foucault 1990) into the everyday lives of the citizenry, expert opinion about place is as much a part of what residents make of place as anything else is. Steven Gregory’s seminal ethnographies have demonstrated this, even if expertise is colored by Gregory as a vector of power infecting every effort a community can organize to resist its disciplining discourses about urban form and those who live in it (see Gregory 1998).

Others have analyzed how locality relates to the global (place to space) in light of ‘poststructuralist’ thinking about the subject of place within ‘modernity’ (as essentially commodified). Thinkers like Michel de Certeau and Manuel Castells have put forward the idea

that modernity is a “space of flows”, in which ‘place’ must somehow be symbolically marked as meaningful memory in order to survive global flows of financial capital (Castells 1989:351, see de Certeau 1984). This calls back to the aforementioned need to deconstruct the relationships between culture, place, and power. Arif Dirlik and Arturo Escobar have both taken this thread up in their discussions of ‘development strategies’ to suggest the use of “place-consciousness” and “subaltern strategies of localization” in an effort to work against the subjugation of place to space (Dirlik 1999; Escobar 1998, 2001). Escobar looks at how place is often dropped off in discussions of modernity; place is subordinated to “capitalism and spaceless and timeless globalization” (Escobar 2001:156). These are suggestions for using place as an organizing, identity-forming construct in an effort to circumvent the effects of the power that leave those in dominant positions unchallenged.

Doreen Massey makes an important contribution to this discussion as well, showing how place has been treated as colloquial in discussions of ‘modernity’. She writes about the polarization of the local and the global – place and space – as actually an organization of polarities not unlike that between female and male, private and public, static and dynamic (Massey 1994). She says that,

within the academic literature as well as more widely there has been a continuation of the tendency to identify ‘places’ as necessarily sites of nostalgia, of the opting-out from Progress and History... It is a view of place as bounded, as in various ways a site of an authenticity, as singular, fixed and unproblematic in its identity [Massey1994:5]

These various discussions of the cultural and social construction of place highlight the contextual and malleable nature of the concept. They show the transformations of place within modernity as commodity and object of nostalgia. Current trends in urban revitalization, gentrification, suburbanization, or tourism would seem to corroborate this (see Perin 1977; Rutheiser 1996; N. Smith 1996; Soja 1989; Zukin 1989). These works also help to understand how power is implicated in the processes of place commodification, place understanding (or attachment), and the process of place conceptualization by a confluence of place ‘experts’, place ‘dwellers’, and place researchers. They demonstrate the need for analyses that center on expert design discourse, particularly that of place and community “making”, which would help to better understand the authority of design expertise, but also the conceptualization of place in contemporary society. Understanding place as enmeshed in power, often being created, contested, and changed as part of power, is necessary, but place must also be seen as a result of power’s positive and productive force (Foucault 1980b), embodied in and enacted through design discourse.

### **The Study of Professions and The Profession of Architecture**

Anthropological studies of the architecture profession, or other professional design disciplines, are uncommon, though not unheard of (Peattie 1987 is one eminent example). Many analyses of design disciplines come from scholars within those professions. Sociologists Judith Blau, Robert Gutman and Magali Larson have all written books about architecture (Blau 1984, Gutman 1988, Larson 1977, 1993, 1996), and Dana Cuff (1991), though a professor of architecture, is often included in this group.



Other critical studies of the profession from within its ranks have focused on its historical development (Kostof 1977), or have come in the form of polemics of reform (Schön 1983, R. Lewis 1998, Forester 1999). Many of these studies have been made in an attempt to assess the contemporary state of affairs of architecture at that given time, or to offer predictions about where it might be going, or prescriptions of where it ought to go, and in so doing they generally consider the historical, economic, political and cultural climates of the professions in general or architecture in particular.

Most, if not all of these works view the system of architecture either from within, or with the goals of affecting change within the system (even if perhaps by changing things outside the system first!). Few have treated the design disciplines, and architecture in particular, with a critical eye toward understanding them as systems of power production, with a view to deconstructing their roles as structures of meaning making, social reproduction, the production of symbolic capital, or fields of relationships within larger fields of power (one notable exception is the too little noticed book by a virtually excommunicated architectural academic, Gary Stevens, where he provides a fantastic Bourdieuvian analysis of the profession of architecture: *The Favored Circle*, 1998).

Lisa Peattie (1972, 1990) is perhaps the first anthropologist to complete a full-fledged ethnography of a design discipline – planning – set within a larger context of social change and relationships of power. And though there have been other anthropological studies concerned with the built environment (Ferguson 1990, Darian-Smith 1999), they have not focused primarily upon the professions that physically (and in concert with everyone else, symbolically) produce the built environment.

Though I can by no means claim to be documenting how an entire profession establishes and reproduces itself, this study is an attempt to observe and to problematize how a particular group of people negotiated their professional identities, and presented their professional goals, values, and processes to each other, their students, and the rest of the world. In so doing my goal is to theorize what role this plays in the larger context of neoliberal consumer capitalism, by exploring the role of a central concept or idea (“design”) within that profession and how it constituted or contributed to a technology of governing (“expertise”) in advanced liberal democracy. To that end, I now turn to an ethnographic example not from the Urban Fabric Studio, but from the field of architecture more widely conceptualized, and an event held nearby at the prestigious Princeton University school of architecture – later I will continue the exploration from within the Studio.

### **Conferencing to Find Expertise**

On a foggy evening in the early spring of 2004, the wet walkways of Princeton University’s campus scratched and crunched with sand that had been spread to eradicate the creeping slipperiness of late winter nights. Through the mist, an esteemed group of elite professor-architects, their students, and other interested citizens gathered in a lecture hall on campus, to begin a two-day conference on “Design Intelligence”, organized with another famed architecture program at Cooper Union, and the renowned Museum of Modern Art in New York City. This inaugural event was a panel discussion addressing the question, “What is architectural expertise?” As a spectator to the event and an outside visitor to Princeton, I worked my way through the mist, half-guessing at which gothic arch to pass under and which thick wooden door to pass through, which embellished staircase to climb. Pedestrians were difficult to see in this

cool, damp evening, so I paid attention to the general direction of travel that some few couples and small groups were taking, gathering and collecting as they came closer to what must have been the correct entryway. I must confess: to me they looked like architects. Armed against the cold, and the provincial, most coats and jackets were black – those I came close to were a black wool or felt, which ever so slightly glistened with the fog caught during the crossing of the quad. I noticed too that most were coming from a modernist building adjacent to the ancient gothic catacomb-like-castle that harbored the lecture hall. I ascended granite stairs, feeling the smooth cup-shapes my rubber-soled shoes molded into, and hearing the crisp crunch of those flat leather soles around me that ground the grains of sand into the granite.

This was not to be a tradeshow presentation that told its audience of the requirements of licensing exams or industry standards. No, in time I would realize that the conference organizers seemed to ask this question about expertise as if to give themselves an opportunity to rail against any attempts to categorize what they do. Stanley Allen, Dean of Architecture at Princeton, introduced the event with this statement:

Our intention with these conferences was to initiate a kind of extended conversation among the people that we think are the most innovative design practitioners and design thinkers today. We want to take stock of what we see as the most innovative of contemporary design practices. Our ambitions are high. We're convinced in fact that it is the people in this room, by that I mean not only the people who are participating but also the people who are sitting in this room, who will define the issues and set the stage for the debates in the coming decades.

And later...

The people we've invited are a diverse group, but um, I think they're united by certain shared ideas, and by a loose generational identity. I include Peter [Eisenman] in this category, which makes it a very loose generational identity [laughter]. But, you're as young as your ideas and Peter continues to keep us young with his ideas and his thinking. They're all creative practitioners and thinkers who are committed to high-level design practices, but this commitment extends to innovative strategies of realization, and parallel operations of research and publication. Everybody here works, writes, teaches, lectures and participates in this discourse. We're here over the next day and a half to exchange ideas and work collectively to move the discipline forward.

With his introduction, Mr. Allen positioned the speakers, the panel, and the conference in a larger field of symbolic production – these are some of the undisputed important living figures of their discipline (Peter Eisenman, Robert Somol, and Jeffery Kipnis), consecrated to perform their creative selves by the rules of success. With this establishment of the honor of the guests of honor, and the audience, as at least significant, if lesser possessors of legitimate symbolic power, Allen had done his duty of pointing to what Bourdieu would call the 'robes of nobility', or the "cursus honorum founded upon educational credentials" – the legitimacy of the symbolic power of those present to take the positions of symbolic domination they occupy (Bourdieu 1998:50). Now the participants were free to demonstrate their excellence in insight, abstraction, and sardonic humor.

As was appropriate to this market of symbolic power, the panelists for the most part explored the current state of affairs of their personal journeys through the calling of architecture, relating this as best they could to the panel topic. There were few attempts to actually define expertise as a concept, though Stanley Allen did try, placing it in the architectural arena as a synthetic or projective capacity that belongs uniquely to the design disciplines. It recognizes, I think as well, if we're putting this in the architectural context, that there's a specific form of visual or material intelligence... ..geometry, construction, organization, materiality, technique and pragmatics

For Robert Somol expertise was an external label, or a borrowing from other fields. Later Mr. Somol said,

to me architecture is less about technical expertise than about projecting arguments, alternative arrangements, and offering polemics. If this conference then suggests that design intelligence is formed by the accumulation of what Stan called little truths, I would like to at least make the case for an architecture corollary project ... architecture's ability to project the big lie, on occasion at least. Which is to say the capacity of architecture to materialize the improbable or for the improbable to become real.

The third panelist, Jeffrey Kipnis, interestingly compared buildings to background music, saying that buildings could be written not just to command your attention (as is often the case in architecture) but also as movie soundtracks, in that they can "produce an effect [a feeling] without you noticing [because you're giving the film] a close reading". From this, Kipnis argued that it was necessary to have an architect pay attention to how the pieces of a building produced those effects. Thus, Mr. Kipnis concludes that a discussion of architecture should be a discussion of the multitude of effects of architecture, and therefore,

... one of the things I began to realize about architecture is it can't possibly evolve an argument about expertise, because the term itself is so utterly generic as to not be able to circumscribe any sufficient body of effects and claims. For example, it would be impossible to talk about an expert writer. And the reason for that is because an expert poet is rarely an expert critic, an expert critic is rarely an expert novelist, an expert novelist... so you have to understand within the general field of competency, expertise belongs not only to the specificity of the medium it belongs to the specificity of the genre. More and more I began to see in architecture a distribution of consolidated genres.

Finally, it is useful to return to Stanley Allen's introduction where he set the tone by setting architecture outside of expertise. He said,

Architecture's not about technology, it doesn't comment on technology, it deploys technologies. Architecture's not about politics but it has the potential to construct new political spaces. Architecture's not about media, it in fact is a medium. It's a medium with very specific properties. ...This is not a conference about the message it's about the medium.

In the various statements above, we can see several patterns of presentation and conceptualization. First, creativity is here active as much as it presumably is in the designing

practices of these panelists – their ability to play with the ideas, reconceptualize the parameters of an argument, or reach into different fields for ideas and inspiration (film being one of the favored areas to borrow from) demonstrates their professional proficiency according to the values of the discipline at this time. Second, the notion of expertise, though very creatively addressed, is never itself questioned. Again, expertise is essentially conceptualized as the possession of a particular specialized knowledge or skill. In fact it is by that definition that the idea is deemed inappropriate for application in architecture, due to the discipline’s poly-generic nature. But if we view expertise as the ability to deploy symbolic capital in such a way as to make it appear naturally and simply as the prowess of creative expression, and the ability to navigate the complexities of a disciplinary discourse with ease (what Bourdieu would call ‘knowledge of the game’ or the “field”, and the ability to effectively deploy one’s capital in that field) (see Bourdieu 1983a), and to deploy these abilities as mechanisms of symbolic power, which work to establish the symbolic dominance of those who wield it, then we see here a powerful demonstration of the ability to impose one’s categories, perceptions, and classifications of the world through virtuosic performance of creativity and ingenuity – ultimately establishing their positions by declaring claims to truth, or what Bourdieu called “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 1991).

Returning to the talk for a moment: in the question and answer period afterwards, a member of the audience asked why the “expertise” of residents, as locals who know the area, was seldom consulted. At first, Peter Eisenman simply ignored the question jumping in to address an accusation from a fellow panelist that came earlier. After Peter was through, and before anyone could respond to him, Jeffrey Kipnis acknowledged the audience member’s question and reinterpreted it to say “why do architects get it wrong”. I believe this in part reveals the conceit of the particularly stereotypical architect, in that the architect takes a question made to recognize lay, or non-professional knowledge, and reformulates it to focus on how the professional can do better in the professional realm. However, Kipnis, and later Somol, essentially answer that architects must be the risk takers, and that certain things have to be given up for the greater (read aesthetic or architectonic) good.

Now, this brings up an important point about the conceptualization of expertise. Often champions of the everyday, or of the masses, so-to-speak, lament that the locals are not being consulted for their “expertise”, or rather, the knowledge that they possess by virtue of their being locals. The ease with which the panelists first ignored, and then later reformulated the question, is indication of the fact that the panel of experts may not explicitly state, but is implicitly running on the assumption that the legitimacy to speak authoritatively on matters of design is limited, and were it possessed in a form recognizable to the panelists, it would have made the specific views of the audience member more pertinent to them and their profession. That is to say, only certain forms of knowledge, consecrated and sanctioned by recognized authorities, thereby legitimated and given the position of authoritative import, and recognized as such by those with the ability (or authority) to do so, may act or function as expertise functions – with the force of recognized professional orthodoxy.

Finally, there is one more analytical facet to explore in terms of the expert navigation of these panelists through their disciplinary discourses and position takings within the architectural field of symbolic power. Throughout the talk, the panelists distanced themselves from the expert as technical (hinting of the failures of structuralism), as well as from the image of the self-centered artist (explicitly, but also hinting at the failures of post-structuralism), and they did so

by deploying their symbolic capital on the market of creative prowess through an “economic world reversed” (Bourdieu 1983a) – in much the same way as Bourdieu and Johnson (1993) described in their treatment of contemporary art and artistic circles, observing that it is often fashionable to associate with anti-establishment, or even anti-avant garde camps, all in an attempt to create more symbolic capital derived from standing apart or being different and unique (see also Stevens 1998). Stanley Allen, at the end of his introduction to the panel, described a need to move

away from the kind of neo avant-garde position, or even today we might almost have to say the kind of neo neo avant-garde position... [which] is invested in a kind of hero version of individual genius, in short of inspiration and exclusivity, as opposed to a sort of shared collective intelligence.

Thus, trying with his architect colleagues, to not be a technocrat, and to not be an artist, Allen actually approached a potential critique of his discipline (in the form of “star architecture”), but in fact he did so through creating misrecognition (Bourdieu 1984) of the real authority that his status in society grants as a creative or aesthetic expert. He expertly built symbolic capital by expertly navigating the convolutions of his profession, to position himself as distinct from even the ‘cutting edge’ of that profession, which brings me to another ethnographic example of how the edge is sharpened, but this time, in the context of the Studio.

### **Being a Valid “Threat” to Architectural Distinction**

In a meeting with the faculty members of both universities, convened to discuss their plan of action regarding the coming semester of design and teaching, I was asked to take a moment to explain what I was doing. I briefly said that I was chronicling the group’s process. The first response to this was a joke that I was “chronicling the chroniclers” and this was “o-so-post-modern”... “so much like a Jerry Seinfeld episode” someone else said (to be fair, this was a newcomer to the group, from the planning department in the more prestigious school). Nonetheless, this was met with a round of laughter, and at that moment I did feel a sneaking sense that the joke was at my expense, or at the expense of my work (had my dissertation research just been reduced to nothing more than a joke about narcissistic standup comedy?). I went with the laugh, casually. Only later did I realize that I had used the term “chronicling” nearly unconsciously, as a way to make my research sound un-intimidating, so as not to make my subjects feel they had something to hide, or to be threatened by. In that brief exchange I indirectly devalued my work, and let the implication pass that it was intellectually unsophisticated or theoretically unchallenging – effectively nothing more than an ‘anecdotal case study’ at best, or ‘pomo’ gibberish at worst. My response was intuitive, even involuntary. At the time I thought I made this ‘devaluation’ without thinking about it, as a matter of course; but later I realized too that it was part of an intuitive strategy, intended to help these designers feel comfortable with me and what I was doing there.

However, this also brings up interesting analytical questions. If we assume for a moment that this was not so much me having ‘caused’ the reaction I got, as having brought it into expression, or invited a pre-existing proclivity to be revealed, we can make some important observations and assertions about designers in this particular instance. A central question then arises as to the degree or nature of self-reflection and how it is valued in everyday practice by these professionals. Another regards whether or not they even recognize a non-professional

assessment of their performance as a valid source of insight, a threat, or as insignificant. Their casual response would seem to suggest that only one who is ‘qualified’ (that is, seen as having a sense of and a stake in their field) is worth taking seriously. In other words, only one who operates in their own field, with the same general sense of it that they have, that is, with the same perceived goals and risks, strengths and strategies, has the potential to be a threat to their command of the situation, the field, or their prowess in it – a measure of ‘threat-validity’, if you will. I use the term to express the notion that these professionals operate in a field where they have to constantly demonstrate their ‘insight’ or mastery over the creative process (in a field that relies on reputations of creativity, this is yet another expression of expertise). They have to constantly show that they are masters of their field, knowledgeable about general cultural trends and subjects, and creative and insightful regarding their particular specialization. Their insight and creativity is expressed in the things they produce, but also in their person, their dress, their wit, humor, and knowledge, and this continuously demonstrates the validity of their work, their training, their teaching, and their designs, their person. Concomitantly, this is constantly under attack by others seeking to demonstrate the exemplariness of their own skills in these areas. In fact, the value of those skills, or the product of the skills, is understood only in comparison with other worthy examples (which primarily if not exclusively emanate from colleagues) – hence competition for proving self worth; and hence my concept of “threat-validity”. I was not a valid threat. In fact, it was often difficult to describe my work in any way that might matter to architects, which brings me to one final statement regarding the topic of this chapter: expertise.

### **“Expert” as a Dirty Word**

Among the general public and in professional circles, expertise is generally defined as it is in the dictionary – a set of specialized skills or knowledge and the attendant authority granted by the possession of that knowledge. However, the term also takes on unique characteristics dependant upon the context and history of its use in any given field. This is certainly true in the field of architecture, where the term is most significantly linked today to the historical development of the Modernist, or International Style of architecture and the implementation of modernist notions of technical, scientific, and universal notions and methods to the organization of physical and social space. Among the architects and designers I interviewed, there was a general aversion to the idea of expertise, so much so that the word “expert” or “expertise” was often avoided, and granted certain excuses or caveats when no substitute could be readily thought of. One notion or idea that often replaced that of “expert” was “artist”, though this also had its attendant problems, with architects complaining of the implications of self-centered, self-expression ruling out over more technical or professional proficiencies and practices. Of the architects interviewed for this study, many insisted that they were generalists, in that there was no one set of skills which made them good architects (though most had constructed some idiosyncratic label or concept to represent their own personal notion of what they do, presumably describing or implying what a fellow designer or academic or potential client might reasonably expect from them).

Generally, as planners, politicians, policy makers and others have reacted to what are seen as the massive failures of modernist architecture’s cooptation by 1960’s “urban renewal”, through the design and construction, and perceived failure of public housing high-rises, and the failures of architecture and planning to deal successfully with suburban sprawl, “urban blight” and even “white flight”, the idea of expertise, especially of a technocratic sort, became

particularly unpopular. Many of the architects and designers I interviewed preferred to use terms like “problem solver”, or even “problem creator”; one young architect said to me that “there’s this thing that often you read in professional literature that says that architects are not just problem solvers but we’re problem makers, not meaning that we’re difficult, which we can be, but, also that we’re trained to seek the problems and bring them to the attention of our client”.

When asked about what specific skill sets an architect must have, most mentioned “communication skills”, “being a good listener”, “being able to understand what the client wants or is trying to say”, or “being able to turn a client’s desires into a form or a space”. I do believe that these responses were in part a product of these architects speaking to a non-architect (me), who was observing them during an urban planning studio, which had a “real” client in the form of a community organization in a low-income urban neighborhood, as part of that semester’s curriculum. In other words, these architects were in the mood for community collaboration and may have been responding from within that mood. Nonetheless, almost all the architects I ever engaged and asked about “expertise”, visibly squirmed at the use of the term, and often offered some other replacement term or altogether alternative perspective.

Aside from the ability to communicate and to translate client desires into architectural form, there was a more implicit but always present item in each architect’s list of important skills, or abilities. Once having listened, one had to be able to turn that information (be it explicit, implicit, or completely unarticulated) into something architecturally pleasing (and in most cases useful). And it is here that we begin to see the ways in which creativity, ingenuity, and ultimately aesthetic interpretive expertise (a hybrid, if you will, of artist and expert), sneak into architectural “identity”. It must be said that, even regarding creativity, I often got responses to the skill-set questions that betrayed a reluctance to focus too much on individual skill or creativity. Training, teamwork, good clients, and other such factors were often cited. However, based on my observations and participation, it is readily apparent that qualities or accomplishments always desired and/or striven for include ingenuity, creativity, “vision”, expression, insight, but above all, masterful design solutions with sophisticated aesthetic execution – in fact, these latter qualities seemed to hold an almost magical position in the idealized world of the architect-professors and their students. It is of course conspicuous that these qualities were not to be explicitly valorized, but teachers especially were always impressed or thrilled at their presence, albeit with a dash of pessimism, irony, or caution tossed in. In many faculty discussions there were references to a student’s designing skills, and those with excellent talent were often given special consideration (this could be seen in teachers being more strict with the student, selectively placing the student in a particular studio section for strategic teaching reasons, or allowing a degree of inefficiency to pass in some other areas).

Another very common demonstration of this reverence for design prowess was the standard and frequent reference to well-known architects or teachers (with due mention of the notable firms and schools from which they hailed) in studios, meetings, lectures, and casual conversation. Icons in the profession were used in an effort to refer to something or someone that everyone present was familiar with (or should be!). Books or videos by or about famous designers or teachers were often brought into studio in order to look them over or to illustrate an idea. However, the “expert” or “expertise” is rarely invoked to describe or refer to these famous or at least respected figures in the fields of design or design education. When trying to highlight or describe the importance of a person or firm and their work, the idea of “expertise”, and quite often the label of “artist”, are both essentially set aside for less historically and/or ideologically

charged images which are currently more amenable to being absorbed into one's identity, like designer, for instance.

In any case, whether one was attracted to the notion that architectural design should be granted the status of an art because of its sophistication, and the brilliant creativity of its heroes, or whether one was attracted to the notion that architectural design was an exacting science that required the professionalism and controls of other 'harder' sciences, most would agree that a holistic description would portray architecture as some kind of mixture thereof – and I believe this is why the term “design” is so very attractive. Neither solely artistic, nor solely scientific, not necessarily performed by the triumphant individual genius, nor the common masses, “design” is the perfect blend of artistry, precision, spontaneity and professionalism. But does this escape the functioning of expertise? Is design free of the conundrums of power that those who shun “expertise” wish to avoid? Are the designer's trappings of fame free of the conceits of artistry?



## CHAPTER 5

### DESIGN AS COMMODITY

In keeping with my earlier assertion that the ‘public life’ of ideas like ‘design’ are as important as their ‘professional life’, of you will, I turn in this chapter to an analysis of the “popular knowledge” about ‘design’ and relate it to authoritative or “erudite knowledge” of the same (Foucault 1980c). I also propose that “starchitecture”, though lauded by some and abhorred by others, actually plays a key role in the production of contemporary architectural symbolic capital, particularly outside the profession of architecture. Finally I look at the role of “creativity” as a form of symbolic capital within architectural education, noting that it is one of many forms of capital that is constructed both through that education, but also through the larger forces of cultural and consumerist notions of success, freedom, and individuality.

#### Design in The Media

In October of 2003, Newsweek printed it’s first ever “design issue”, with a cover montage sporting the Mini Cooper by BMW, the latest Samsung cell phone, a teapot designed by architect Michael Graves, a digital camera “with a PC inside”, and a “designer” lamp. The cover story was titled “Design Gets Real: How It’s Changing The Way We Live” (Newsweek, October 27, 2003). In the business section was an article about Apple’s move to make their iTunes and iPod compatible with Windows computers. And in the feature section, called “Design 2004”, were articles about “how design is changing our lives”; “titans of taste”; “design literacy: names to know, objects to crave”; “upscale discounting” at Target; “maverick stylists”; “design cities”; and finally, an article with the subtitle, “I may not need them, but I love them”. In the opening article Dorothy Kalins says

design has never been more accessible (Crate & Barrels sprouting like Starbucks; restaurants and hotels could be design museums) or more emotional (technology so friendly you want to pet it instead of hurling it across the room in frustration; color so buoyant it makes matte black and titanium look so ... dot-com) (58)

She then explains that

“On the following pages, you’ll encounter not just cool new objects but a welcome optimism that’s driving both the folks who design the lamp and the folks who switch it on. Everyday tools pack such high good humor, they put the fun back in function.... The best furniture honors its roots – and ours. (What was up with those chairs that were so edgy you could cut yourself on them?) Rooms are illuminated by the inevitable signs of life within. Controlled messiness, we’ve discovered at last, is far preferable to airless perfection.” (58)

Kalins continues with predictable enthusiasm, but I want to highlight the unproblematized coupling of two things here. First is her celebration of the ubiquity of design – notice too, that it is not an oppressive or controlling omnipresence; it is welcome and inviting; she uses broadly inspiring phrases like “life within”, or warm, natural images of our social “roots”. Second, there is an implicit recognition of distinction and sophistication, though

presumably without pretense; being entertained, comfortable, and having fun are ostensibly the most important things (unlike past – or passé – forms of design, which were apparently brutal and elitist). The notion of a “democratization” of design is implied here, through a claim that the ability to distinguish (or set oneself above) is available to all – the contradiction goes entirely unacknowledged. And finally, this all has to happen effortlessly, almost without us knowing (or at least being preoccupied with why). Of course, Kalins and her colleagues spoke to the best and brightest, the most elite designers, all in order to verify the platitudes of design. For instance, she interviewed the chairman of the famous design firm IDEO, David Kelley (also a Stanford University teacher), who lent the symbolic capital of his fame to the verification that austere designing is out, and ubiquitous design is in. Thus Kalins and her fellow journalists explicitly point to the fact that design is everywhere, while implicitly acknowledging our reliance upon genius in order to create and maintain the distinctive, fun lifestyle that knows and uses “good design”.

The New York Times Magazine took perhaps a slightly more cosmopolitan approach with their “Annual Design Issue” of November 2003. They began with contributing editor Arthur Lowe’s contemplation of the word “inspiration”, where he explores the difference between “the artist” and “the designer”. This exploration ends with the assertion that the designer is indeed an artist, but more – something akin to “the greatest artists of the Italian Renaissance – Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael, Piero della Francesca – [who] were also engineers, architects, mathematicians, inventors”. And thus, “because design stands at the intersection of artistry, engineering and commerce, ideas can blow in from many directions.” After mentioning the inspired solutions to many a “functional impasse”, such as the car-boat, the new \$20 bill, and the drip-less popsicle, as well as examples of designers creating “statements” for their clients, ranging from contemporary English department stores to 16<sup>th</sup> century Dutch carrots, bred for the House of Orange, Lowe says that what ever the inspiration – function, beauty, security - “novelty is the main note.” But in the very next sentence Lowe also says, “the most impressive designs are those that seem naturally right, unimprovable, inevitable”. Thus, Lowe accedes to the same contradiction that Kalins leaves unquestioned; namely that ubiquity and genius are the two essential ingredients of “good design”.

One of the longest articles in this annual design issue is about the “Aura”, “Surface”, “Guts”, and “Core” of Apple’s successful digital music player, the iPod. In this article, author Rob Walker interviews two New York City iPod DJ’s who dress alike, are both named Andrew, and together throw “iParties” through their business dubbed “Andrew Andrew”. Walker explains that he went to them to understand the aura of the iPod, because

they’ve probably seen more people interact with the player than anyone who doesn’t work for Apple. More important, they put an incredible amount of thought into what they buy, and why: In a world where, for better or worse, aesthetics is a business, they are not just consumers but consumption artists. (New York Times Magazine 2003)

As experts in the aesthetics of consumption, the two Andrews both agreed, it was the click wheel on the iPod that did it for them. Later, Walker consults popular recording artist Moby and gets this quote: “The kind of insidious revolutionary quality of the iPod is that it’s so elegant and logical, it becomes part of your life so quickly that you can’t remember what it was like before hand”. Walker also explains that what seems to have made the iPod so popular, despite Apple having come late to the digital music scene, was its “over simplicity”, its ability to make digital

music so fun through powerful and sleek technological gadgets like the iPod, that seamlessly integrate with storage and organizing software like Apple's iTunes.

Going on to celebrate the design of political buttons and posters, houses, handbags, and flat panel TV's (with an accompanying how-to for the buyer deciding between LCD and Plasma technology), these journalists of design and consumption uncritically celebrate aesthetic expertise under the hubris of a ubiquitous (read democratic) capitalist utopianism. Consumers are to seek their individuality through turning to either the products or advice offered by the creative founts that are designing geniuses – and their retailers. By implication, we are all expected to seek comfort in the realization of “life style”, not just in a materialist sense, but also, as Rob Shields explains in another context, through “the expression of continuous social change and the development of unreified, affective groupings... which emerge through the medium of shared symbolic codes of stylized behaviour, adornment, taste and habitus” (Shields, 1992:14).

For a final fantastic example, I turn to the “international discursive project, Massive Change: The Future of Global Design”. This is essentially the inaugural project of an ambitious interdisciplinary post graduate program called “The Institute Without Boundaries” (IwB), created by Bruce Mau of Bruce Mau Design, and in collaboration with the School of Design at George Brown College, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and Phaidon Press. It is intended to “produce a new breed of designer, one who is, in the words of Buckminster Fuller, a synthesis of artist, inventor, mechanic, objective economist, and evolutionary strategist” (Bruce Mau Design 2004). At massivechange.com the IwB explains that their effort “is an ongoing project which includes an internationally touring exhibition, a book, a website and speaker series.” They say that the web page is “a pilot project... aimed at high school students and teachers who want to produce a new breed of change maker – citizens who think as designers”. Included on the web page are links to stories of success and how-to “tool kits”, aimed at the effort to “make positive changes in your community and around the world”. On one page their pronouncement of commitment to positive change states that,

Design has emerged as one of the world's most powerful forces. It has placed us at the beginning of a new, unprecedented period of human possibility, where all economies and ecologies are becoming global, relational, and interconnected. In order to understand and harness these emerging forces, there is an urgent need to articulate precisely what we are doing to ourselves and to our world. This is the ambition of Massive Change. [Bruce Mau Design 2004]

And;

No longer associated simply with objects and appearances, design is increasingly understood in a much wider sense as the human capacity to plan and produce desired outcomes. Engineered as an international discursive project, Massive Change: The Future of Global Design, will map the new capacity, power and promise of design. [Bruce Mau Design 2004]

The accompanying book is essentially an edited volume with 32 nicely profiled and photographed “experts” writing about their views, experiences, and ideas, organized into eleven different “systems of exchange, or design ‘economies’”. The introduction explains that these “design economies” came from Bruce Mau and two cohorts of the IwB, having “abandoned the classical design disciplines” and then turned to the exploration of these economies. They are: urban, movement, energy, information, image, market, material, military, manufacturing, living,

and wealth and politics (Mau 2004: 24-25). As part of the editorial introduction and organization of the book, there are several more ardent claims to power by the matrix that is design. Heading the market economies section is this statement:

The initiative that emerges in the open market – the notion of the intermodal, the idea of seamlessly integrating one system with another – became the central ambition of design in the last half of the twentieth century. The resulting global infrastructure for moving matter and energy – money and goods – is the accidental avant-garde of a new global politics of ecology. [Mau 2004]

Through this messianic, utopian, and totalizing manifesto of “intermodal” complexity the idea is reiterated that “the secret ambition of design is to become invisible, to be taken up into the culture, absorbed into the background.” And that “the highest order of success in design is to achieve ubiquity, to become banal.” Again we see this unquestioned contradiction of ubiquity and brilliant innovation; a utopian notion of the invisible and omniscient (but presumably benevolent); the genius (or team of geniuses) and their plan for the rest of us. The tone of the IwB’s publications intimates a post facto kind of design empire that has simply to mature into its own realization of its brilliant omniscient rule.<sup>2</sup>

Though it may be that these three examples all legitimately point to some sort of “massive change”, and many of us may be able to agree that much of it is afoot at the hands of designers, doesn’t that preclude their disappearance, rather than their ascendance to dominance? But more importantly, if we are to go by these examples, “design” is suppose to become so much a part of our lives that we do not notice it. It becomes a structuring structure that forms our identities, our sensibilities, our tastes and proclivities – our habitus (Bourdieu 1977). And as such it creates meaning, boundaries, and perceptions. It categorizes, classifies, and defines the world around us. Thus it produces the subjectivities that fit the field of its making: liberal democratic consumer capitalism. In fact, design is already gospel – or dogma – for those enculturated to the consumer-capitalist economy, and we already look to its icons for salvation - or revilement.

### **“Starchitecture” or The Symbolic Economy of Architects**

An end of the semester ritual for the architecture school students and professors is the performance of a “final jury”. This involves the presentation by the students of their semester’s work to a small panel of about 2-4 professionals, with the rest of the students as audience. Jury members ideally come from other schools or from local firms and through this ritual modestly

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, Bruce Mau Design (BMD) has been redesigning the web page of one of the largest and most prominent architectural firms in the world – the American firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM). According to an article in *architectmagazine.com* (October 15, 2006), Mau appears to be applying similar principles for establishing discourse dominance: “In the end, Mau's team decided that the site should be three things: an evolving story, a campus for learning, and a cultural player. It should be a reflection of what Mau called “design excellence”—a 60-year legacy of 10,000 projects coupled with forward-looking initiatives like *SOM Journal*, hundreds of education programs, and in-studio learning. The site needed to take possession of architectural discourse by constantly publishing perspectives on architecture and planning.”

perform the function of peer review and professional inculcation. They generally are not familiar with the work of the students they evaluate but are often colleagues of the host professor. As is the custom, host professors usually invite their jury members out to lunch after the day's proceedings, to thank them for this 'pro-bono' professional service. I had the chance to take part in this ritual during my fieldwork, and one particular lunch serves as a nice illustration of at least part of the symbolic economy of architects.

The host professor for this jury was one of the architects I worked beside in my participant observation of the Urban Fabric Studio. She also taught another first year studio that I had never visited, but she felt my perspective would benefit their work. Her other invited jury members consisted of one professor from another local architecture school, and another from her own department (not an uncommon occurrence if the host professor could not secure enough outside jury members). In my notes after the lunch I wrote this:

Who knows, you know? We just came from a jury, the purpose of which was to discuss architecture, very intensely, and you know, the three of us were among people we didn't know [the host architect knew all of us but the three guest jurors didn't know each other prior to this meeting]... so, maybe there was nothing else [but architecture] to talk about. They were somewhat curious about what an anthropologist might be doing, and... I was asked to explain my work – but this was interrupted by a waiter who came to take our orders. Interest in what I had to say never came up again – there were no follow-up questions or comments, no sustained interest. Now, part of what I think was going on was that one guest juror was older than the other two, with much more experience, and a more prestigious alma mater. I had the distinct feeling that because of this, there was some kind of respectful silence paired with attentiveness on the part of the two more junior architects, who were both careful to not interrupt her, and to make sure they heard everything she said, and heard it correctly. It felt as if the topic of anthropology was just an appetizer. ... soon after ordering our food, each architect began, in turn and in response to each other's queries, to role out the details of their education and their mentoring pedigree. "Did you study under [so-and-so] when he was there?" "No, I studied under [so-and-so]" "Who did you study under?" "Well, nobody famous, but X, Y, and Z were there." [Field Notes]

As an observer, I found that casual conversation among architects, particularly those who either didn't know each other, or were only professional acquaintances, almost always included some bit of discussion like this – references to well-known practitioners, buildings, schools, or firms and each individual's place within that context. So much so that I began to take any chance I could to ask architects about the "star system" in architecture (referring to the phenomenon of architects as celebrities). Most would respond with a role of the eyes, some with comments like "yea, if we could all be stars" and others saying "well, you know, that's only a recent thing". One architect who had taught as an adjunct professor for 15 years (not uncommon, as teachers often practice full-time) was careful to point out to me that there was a difference, that she experienced, between South American attitudes toward architects – her husband was very respectfully addressed as "Senior Arquitecturo" – and attitudes here in America, where architects are "famous". Saying the word "famous" with derision, she then said, "There, they treat you with respect, as if you were, like, nobility." Ironically, just to the side of

our conversation, a visiting architect acting as a member of an external review team for the national accrediting organization, asked an adjunct “was [so-and-so] there when you were there?”. The frequency with which these kinds of questions were asked prompted me to take note of many such small remarks, questions, and casual conversations, particularly among architects who had not met before, or did not know each other well enough to know the details of each other’s professional lineage.

Drawing from those notes, it became apparent to me that stardom proved to be a kind of reference system. Stars often act as pillars of a canon, or figures of an age, or markers in the markets of symbolic capital, cairns in the architectural field of symbolic power. They can be referred to for the purpose of codifying other things, positioning other architects in the field of architecture, but also establishing the context or reference points for the profession as a whole. Often the punch lines of jokes are simply a famous architect’s name, or the placing of that architect in a context or position that is antithetical or derisive of his or her known style. These architects are stars because they represent success, or greatness, or innovation, which everyone (other architects more specifically) knows about. All architects can pick their favorite stars, as well as the ones they love to hate. Most architects would likely know who these stars are, and why they’re important. They would also likely argue about who should or shouldn’t be in the ranks, and if the star system is good or bad. Nonetheless, stories of famous architects and their quirks, their mistakes, and their habits were often told like myths or anecdotes, jokes or proverbs. On at least three different occasions I heard the story of a famous architect’s taxonomy of “architects that matter” – it was Peter Eisenman, legend has it, who would tell his students at Princeton that, in the world of architecture, the best were silver backs (like him), but most others were “mere monkeys”.

A distinction has to be made here, however. There are those architects who are seen as founding figures, who may not be as famous in the general public as they are in the profession of architecture. One such architect affectionately called “Corbu” is a primary example. Corbu (pronounced “Korboo”) is a nickname among architects for Le Corbusier, known as one, if not the, founding father of Modernist Architecture, or the International Style. In contrast to this kind of historical significance, is the recent phenomenon of the celebrity, or the “star architect”, which has key differences due, I would argue, primarily to the effects of forces outside of architecture. A “starchitect” is a more popularly known, and generally living, architect who’s work has become so famous that buildings done by that architect are generally seen as landmarks or “destination architecture”, that is, architecture that the general public will flock to see for its own sake (or simply because of who designed it), and that pundits of design and architecture will lavish with attention (some positive, some negative). Subsequently, these examples of architecture carry a lot of symbolic capital, which owners can attempt to deploy for the purpose of building an image for themselves, their company or an entire city. A current example of this is Frank Gehry, the architect who designed the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, among others. Mr. Gehry has also designed watches for Fossil, jewelry for Tiffany & Co., and a teapot for Alessi. He has won many prestigious architectural awards and also has several honorary doctorates. It is interesting to note that at the time of this writing, if one navigates to the very popular on-line and publicly edited encyclopedia, Wikipedia.com, there is an entry on the page for Frank Gehry titled “celebrity status”, whereas this does not appear on le Corbusier’s page.

Now, these two categories, what I am calling “star architects”, as opposed to “historical figures”, were never distinguished from each other in the conversations among architects that I heard, but the difference was implicit. And most “star architects” really are quite good, or ground-breaking, or at least famous! But it is also often implied in conversation that star architects are sometimes merely famous, not foundational, in the sense of Corbu for instance (though it is often difficult to know if this is or is not simply a bit of stardom envy!). Nonetheless, the conversations I witnessed and participated in, that referred in some way to a famous architect as a reference point, or an implied measure of quality, seriousness, depth, or fame, all relied on this star architect function, this discourse about architecture and design that relies on the idea of the singularly brilliant architect, even if those same conversationalists criticized the idea of the “genius”, or the “exceptional talent” of some designer-architects.

Of course, as a discipline, architecture is not unique in this tendency to trace professional and pedagogical genealogies through the mapping of individual careers. Most fields of study have this habit, and it is likely more a product of how History is written, or how fields of practice are established and maintained, than it is about architecture per se. However, one element of tradition-building which is particularly strong in architecture, and that gives the tradition a larger public profile, is the profession’s public presence (both through its buildings, but also through its symbolic power, showcased by the iconography of star architecture). Though, of course, not all buildings involve architects, most architects are concerned with buildings, and buildings are in general, publicly prominent, visible and relatively permanent. Also, in general, the average person’s exposure to architecture is through high profile buildings, which take large amounts of money (often public, corporate, or famous) to erect – often more so when a famous architect’s services are employed. Thus architecture (of the public or corporate variety, as experienced by the average person) is generally in the lime light. And even if one wishes to criticize the profession of architecture for not solving the problems of the built environment, through being reclusive or elite or protectionist, or if one wants to criticize architectural education for its abstraction and formality, one has to also acknowledge the significant presence and influence of architecture external to the profession and its educators. Robust is the socio-cultural production of symbolic consumables having to do with architecture, in the form of books, magazines, journals, TV shows and fame. Books like Ayn Rand’s “The Fountainhead”, magazines like *Architectural Digest*, and several newer publications, as well as journalistic coverage of the buildings and the people who design them, as well as cable TV shows and networks dedicated to design, urban design, and architecture, all of which go into creating what I am calling the “starchitect-function”.

In his essay, “What is an Author?”, Michel Foucault explores what he calls the “author-function”. This is essentially an effort to see “the “author” as a function of discourse” or a way to “characterize the existence, circulation, and operation of certain discourses within a society” (Foucault, 1977:124). In this case Foucault narrows his focus to books and texts with authors, and offers four different features that distinguish the discourse of the “author” from other discourses (he is careful to point out that though the same features may not apply elsewhere, this kind of analysis could be applied to other areas). But in this case, he gives the following four features:

the “author-function” is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given

culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy [Foucault 1977:130-131]

In what follows, I hope to use Foucault's method of analysis to analyze what would have to be called the "star architect-function" or "starchitect-function" as it relates both to those professional and neophyte designers I studied in my fieldwork, and to my central theoretical arguments regarding design, authority, discipline and society.

Foucault says that authors are "objects of appropriation", that is, speeches and books were assigned real authors, other than mythical or important religious figures, only when the author became subject to punishment... at the moment when a system of ownership and strict copyright rules were established (toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century) [Foucault 1977:124]

In addition, he says, the "author-function" does not operate the same way, everywhere, all the time, but changes through time and between discourses. His primary example is that of Western scientific texts, which, in the Middle Ages, were true by virtue of their simply having an author. Foucault says, "statements on the order of "Hippocrates said..." or "Pliny tells us that..." were not merely formulas for an argument based on authority; they marked a proven discourse" (Foucault 1977:128). However,

in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a totally new conception was developed when scientific texts were accepted on their own merits and positioned within an anonymous and coherent conceptual system of established truths and methods of verification [Foucault 1977:126]

This is roughly the current system within academia, governed by, among other things, peer review. As a comparison, Foucault offers the "literary" example of a discourse that came to depend on a specific statement regarding author: "date, place and circumstance of writing. The meaning and value attributed to the text depended on this information" (Foucault 1977:126). Of course, we can point to instances where both the agreed upon merits of the work *and* the name of the author play crucial roles in the relative success or notoriety of a given work, but the central two insights remain: the discourses of author (or artist, designer, doctor, etc.) are products of their social and political-economic contexts (while also enabling the discourses that establish that context); and they change through time and space, never remaining the same in all cultures.

Foucault's third feature of the "author-function" is that it is not created by merely attributing a work to an author, but rather, "it results from a complex operation whose purpose is *to construct the rational entity we call an author*" (emphasis added) (Foucault 1977:127). He goes on to say:

Undoubtedly, this construction is assigned a "realistic" dimension as we speak of an individual's "profundity" or "creative" power, his intentions or the original inspiration manifested in writing. Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual, which we designate as an author (or which comprise an individual as an author), are projections, in terms always more or less psychological, of our way of



handling texts: in the comparisons we make, the traits we extract as pertinent, the continuities we assign, or the exclusions we practice. [Foucault 1977:127]

If we take this analysis as example, and step into the realm of architecture, we can say that star architects, though their fame is presumably a product of their skill, are actually more than this; more than the sum of their designing selves, or their public selves, or their work. Instead we can say that there is a “starchitect-function” which has the feature of organizing relationships between star and non-star-architects, as well as architecture as a field, and in relation to other fields. The star architect contributes to the architectural field through the massive deployment of resources available to a select few. But the function of the star architect goes beyond this, to influence the determining characteristics of famous architecture and architectural personality. The star architect becomes a guidepost for students as they navigate the inculcation of a professional architectural habitus. The star architect also becomes a primary reference point for what the public thinks architecture is, or ought to be (or not be). But most importantly, “starchitecture” becomes both an object of and a means by which we can understand the progress and greatness of a globalizing consumer capitalism – it has the power to convert on a huge scale, forms of symbolic capital into forms of economic and (and hence political) capital in the form of “destination architecture”, “experience architecture”, or “the Bilbao effect” (some of which I discuss below).

And finally, Foucault’s last characteristic of the “author-function” stresses the fact that “we are not dealing with a system of dependencies where a first and essential use of the “I” is reduplicated, as a kind of fiction”, standing for the writer, the narrator or the time in which the writing took place. Rather, the “I’s” refer to a kind of “second self” whose similarity to the author is never fixed and undergoes considerable alteration within the course of a single book”. That is, “it would be false to seek the author in relation to the actual writer as to the fictional narrator... The “author-function” arises out of their scission – in the division and distance of the two”. The various egos that go into the creation of the idea of an author –

the person who writes, who narrates, who reflects on their own work, who critiques and categorizes a work using the idea of an individual author as a unifying principle, explaining discontinuities in terms of that person’s evolution and development, as well as the pantheon of authorship that constitutes a comparative and constituting context [Foucault 1977:128-129]

– are all a part of the author as a function of discourse. Of course, I would submit that the “authorship” of buildings in the star system would work in very similar ways, foremost of which is the need to separate the “starchitect-function” from the author, and to then map the discourses, and the “series of precise and complex procedures; ...[that give] rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy” (Foucault 1977:131).

Foucault goes on from here to explore the difference between foundational or “fundamental” authors and “mediate authors”, drawing the central distinction along the lines of how these two relate to each other. First there is the difference between “transdiscursive” authors (Homer, Aristotle, the Church Fathers and the originators of the Hippocratic tradition are Foucault’s examples) and the “initiators of discursive practices” (such as Freud or Marx) (Foucault 1977:131). According to Foucault, “the distinctive contribution of these [later] authors is that they produced not only their own work, but the possibility and the rules of formation of

other texts” (unlike a novelist, “who is basically never more than the author of his own text”) (Foucault 1977:131). This is also different from scientific “founders” in that these are simply initial acts, which make subsequent modifications or falsifications possible.

There are no “false” statements in the work of these initiators... Stated schematically, the work of these initiators is not situated in relation to a science or in the space it defines; rather, it is science or discursive practice that relate to their works as the primary points of reference [Foucault 1977:134]

To close this ‘discursion’ of Foucault’s methodological example of the discourse of the author in the field of literature, we need only visit one more point – the significance of the “return to the origin”. Foucault makes a distinction here between “rediscoveries” or “reactivations”, which are the “effects of analogy or isomorphism with current forms of knowledge that allow the perception of forgotten or obscured figures”, and “the insertion of discourse into totally new domains of generalization, practice and transformation” respectively. “Returns”, however, are an “effective and necessary means of transforming discursive practice”. Foucault says “a study of Galileo’s works could alter our knowledge of the history, but not the science, of mechanics; whereas, a re-examination of the books of Freud or Marx can transform our understanding of psychoanalysis or Marxism” (Foucault 1977:135-136). And importantly, “these returns, an important component of discursive practices, form a relationship between “fundamental” and mediate authors, which is not identical to that which links an ordinary text to its immediate author” (Foucault 1977:136).

Now, in this dissertation, I take from Foucault this basic suggestion, which comes at the end of his essay:

Perhaps the time has come to study not only the expressive value and formal transformations of discourse, but its mode of existence: the modifications and variations, within any culture, of modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation. Partially at the expense of themes and concepts that an author places in his work, the “author-function” could also reveal the manner in which discourse is articulated on the basis of social relationships... rather than delimiting psychological and biographical references... like the typical questions: how does a free subject penetrate the density of things and endow them with meaning; how does it accomplish its design by animating the rules of discourse from within? Rather, we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and what rules does it follow in each type of discourse? In short, the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse. [Foucault 1977:137-138]

Thus, Foucault challenges us to address these questions: under what condition and through what forms can an entity like the “starchitect” appear in the order of discourse? What position does the “starchitect” occupy? What is the “starchitect-function” in today’s media-consumer-design-scape? In short, the subject-position of “starchitect” must be stripped of its creative role and analyzed as a complex and variable function of discourse. Though I believe this could constitute another book entirely, this dissertation does attempt some provisional answers. And though I realize that there is a difference between architecture and design, I also

feel that this method of analysis yields some very similar conclusions in both areas of inquiry. I thus am willing to explore these ideas in terms of architecture, but easily move into the realm of “design” (perhaps too easily for purists). And let me also say that the purpose of this analysis is to establish the context in which all designers and architects and their audiences function. As demonstrated above, stars in the star system (and the system itself) become reference points for the stars and non-stars (“mediate” architects, in Foucault’s terms), and thus reference points for all architects and architects-in-training. And finally, this system relies upon and is in part constituted by the non-practicing architectural world, through systems or structures of fame, consumption, and other symbolic economies like those of cities, consumer economies, place, art, and progress.

As with Escobar’s analysis of the idea of a uniquely Western notion of “economy” (Escobar 2005), I assert that the symbolic economy of liberal democratic consumerism “is [also] deeply rooted in the constitution of the modern individual, i.e. that it is embedded in the most basic practices of individuals and societies” (Escobar 2005:141). Our habitus are formed through appropriate consuming, through the establishment of our selves in the social space of consumerism. The “starchitect”, as an entity, expresses in iconographic form, some of the most powerful forces of value and law in liberal democratic consumer capitalist society. As with famous designers, actors, writers, musicians, film directors, and others, “starchitects” embody the valorization of individual merit and achievement (i.e. genius). For architects they embody the idea of creative progress and experimentation in several ways: through the use of ever developing material technologies, theoretical paradigms, and the crushing of stylistic ossification, by validating the processes of distinction and the realness, if you will, of “taste” and “good design”, and as examples of success in the effort to convert symbolic capital to material capital (though this must ultimately be down-played by stars in the field of symbolic power, as I will explore below).

An example of this can be seen in what is called the “Bilbao effect”, which refers simultaneously to Frank Gehry’s architecturally ground breaking design for the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, and the phenomenon of “star architecture” or “destination architecture” or “experience architecture” rejuvenating depressed economies, and thereby becoming a dominant and dominating mode through which the meaning and role of “place” is made and transformed within consumer-capitalism. This is actually a profound statement about the role or the function of place in contemporary society, and the presumed goodness of globalization, or the rightness of a proselytization of the masses into a fundamentalism of meritocracy, the rightness of material technological progress, and the sacred canon of individual creative genius in the profane, presumably ‘godless’ world of free-markets and secular nation-states. “Starchitecture” is increasingly playing a significant role in the distribution of resources – both material and symbolic – and yet it is wholly depoliticized through the discourses of talent, genius, success, and celebrity. “Starchitecture” has become a kind of gold standard in the public realm for the power of architecture to realize the values of consumer-capitalism, perhaps most poignantly so when it is used to colonize the badlands or frontiers of financial-capital: i.e. “inner-cities” and “the third world”. And though this is criticized by many in the architectural profession as a kind of commodification of their craft, or a giving in to the cult of individual genius, success is still admired and sought by most architects (it at least helps to pay the bills!), and it still acts in many ways as the symbolic scale by which to measure the value of architecture

as a discipline, schools within the discipline, firms in the working world, *and* individual designers.

### **Bourdieuin Notions of Taste**

An even deeper understanding of this can be gained through exploring Pierre Bourdieu's notions of "habitus", "field", and "capital". Most of Bourdieu's works can be seen as various efforts to work out the many aspects or facets of his theory of power, and his three books, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, *Language and Symbolic Power*, and *The Logic of Practice* are excellent sources for honing in on some of the most significant and useful parts of this larger theoretical project. Part of what is unique about Bourdieu's effort is the degree to which he integrates his ideas about power into a description of social praxis. He does not theorize power itself in the way one might think of Foucault as doing (taking power as his field of inquiry on an institutional, historical scale), but rather, he theorizes (and ethnographically researches) the lived, 'commonsensical' organization of our conceptualizations of reality and, as a result, the de facto reifications of relationships of power, particularly class, material, or political power. Bourdieu describes this relationship between practice and power as the labour of dissimulation and transfiguration (in a word, of euphemization) which secures the real transubstantiation of the relations of power by rendering recognizable and misrecognizable the violence they objectively contain and thus by transforming them into symbolic power, capable of producing real effects without any apparent expenditure of energy. [Bourdieu 1991:170]

With the research in his book *Distinction*, Bourdieu establishes the fact that the relatively unimportant differences among people understood as simply 'personal taste', are actually not mere innocent expressions of self – they are this but, in being so, they are also more than this. Taste is ultimately a marker of class rank, obtained through the cultural "titles of nobility – awarded by the educational system – and its pedigrees, measured by seniority in admission to the nobility" (Bourdieu 1984:2). However, Bourdieu goes past this to explore why so simple a mechanism has yet to be obsolete. What Bourdieu offers is a system of relationships between the organization of reality extant in the domination of the dominated and the organization of reality extant in the field of symbolic production. This relationship exists because the production of symbolic capital necessarily causes a 'misrecognition' of the hierarchy of class domination (Bourdieu 1989, 1991).

Essentially, the interests of the 'pure producers' of symbolic capital (artists, writers, social analysts, designers, etc.) seem as if they are of their own making and justification (e.g. competition over who is best, or most worthy of the recognition of "success", or professional kudos). However, these 'fields' of 'position-takings' are actually 'over-determined' by the social structures in which they are produced (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Johnson 1993). Bourdieu uses the term "structural homologies" to describe this. He states, "it is the logic of the homologies... which causes works to be adjusted to the expectations of their audience" (Bourdieu 1984:239). He says that,

the partial objectifications in which intellectuals and artists indulge in the course of their battles omit what is essential by describing as the conscious pursuit of success with an audience what is in fact the result of the pre-established harmony between two systems of interest... or, more precisely, of the structural and

functional homology between a given writer's or artist's position in the field of production and the position of his audience in the field of the classes and class fractions. [Bourdieu 1984:239-240]

Of course it becomes obvious that to grasp this argument and its machinations (hence its implications and effects) one has to understand certain other key elements in Bourdieu's thinking – namely, “symbolic capital”, “fields” and “habitus”. For Bourdieu power is really just the possession and ability to efficiently mobilize symbolic capital;

The field of power is the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural)” [Bourdieu 1996:215]

These same relations of force are in action in any field. It is a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself [Bourdieu 1991:170]

However, Bourdieu contends, this power must remain unrecognizable, and it does this by being “misrecognized as arbitrary” (Bourdieu 1991:170). What this means is that belief in the ‘truth’ value of any declaration depends on who says it (their authority to judge) and on how well it actually coheres to ‘reality’ (or appears to be un-opinionated), which makes the successful constitution, or construction of an explanation of reality of utmost importance.

Another important aspect of this is that in ‘modernity’ domination cannot, at least ideally, function continuously or exclusively as brute force – brute force is seen as primitive, oppressive, or immoral. Evidence of this can be seen in the explicit derision aimed at nation-states or other entities that function by the will of brute force without reasoned morality; they are considered ‘backward’ or ‘under developed’ (i.e. nations run under dictatorships, despots, and even demagogues or ideologues). Particularly in the case of our notion of liberal democratic society, domination is seen as undesirable except in the most extreme conditions (the ‘war on terror’, again, is a compelling contemporary example – national debates tend to be about whether it is ‘justified’ or not). In addition, our way of thinking about domination, as the overt use of force or the explicit abuse of power, is such that domination without brute force is to some degree counterintuitive. However, we see all around us, locally and globally, great deprivation alongside great excess, without much relative change in those objective conditions. The contention here is that there must be some system in place to maintain the relationships of power that manage to justify this kind of social inequality.

Bourdieu offers us ‘symbolic capital’, functioning in various systems or fields, and the struggle or relative success of actualizing the habitus as a way of explaining this. By virtue of the fact that there is a homology, or a kind of co-occurring structure, between the various fields, one finds that the strategies of “social investment... and strategies of sociodicy which seek to legitimize [the dominant group's] domination and the form of capital on which it rests”, will be seen to be active in all fields (Wacquant 1992:27). Through this we can understand how the organization of hierarchy in all the fields of symbolic power actually serves to legitimize the organization of hierarchy in principle, which then has the effect of maintaining that hierarchy in the class structure. In other words,

the different classes and class fractions are engaged in a symbolic struggle properly speaking, one aimed at imposing the definition of the social world that is best suited to their interests... These classes can engage in this struggle either directly, in the symbolic conflicts of everyday life, or else by proxy, via the struggle between the different specialists in symbolic production (full-time producers), a struggle over the monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence (cf. Weber), that is, of the power to impose (or even to inculcate) the arbitrary instruments of knowledge and expression (taxonomies) of social reality – but instruments whose arbitrary nature is not realized as such. The field of symbolic production is a microcosm of the symbolic struggle between classes; it is by serving their own interests in the struggle within the field of production (and only to this extent) that producers serve the interests of groups outside the field of production. [Bourdieu 1991:167-168]

This, coupled with the idea that ‘taste’ is also distinction, or classification, which is another facet of social hierarchization, means that by pursuing ‘proper’ or ‘tasteful’ or ‘intelligent’ or ‘innovative’ design – design which has ‘honesty’, integrity’, ‘panache’, ‘insight’, ‘brilliance’ – one is establishing ‘distinction’ within a field of symbolic capital, but also one is establishing class difference and therefore, albeit only as a side effect, class domination. Again, the short list of distinctions mentioned here do not have to be made between classes in order to have this function. The competition for a “monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence” can occur within a class, between competing members, for distinction within that class – who is the ‘best’ designer, for example, and how that is established. By competing thus, those who can compete in this field, establish their right to define the field, to demonstrate the ‘greatness’ that the field contains, and to thereby legitimize the dominant position of those who succeed in the field. Bourdieu says,

the dominant class is the site of a struggle over the hierarchy of the principles of hierarchization... The dominated fraction [of the dominant class] (clerics or ‘intellectuals’ and ‘artists’, depending on the period) always tends to set the specific capital, to which it owes its position, at the top of the hierarchy of the principles of hierarchization. [Bourdieu 1991:168]

However, Bourdieu insists that these ‘dominated fractions’ of the dominant class “never really serve the interests of the dominant class except as a side effect”, due in part to the “homologies” mentioned above (Bourdieu 1991:168).

Finally, we must look to the idea of habitus. We can see from this writing that it is quite difficult, and even undesirably artificial, to separate habitus from field and these two from symbolic power. Bourdieu stresses that to analyze in the terms he suggests, one must look at “the position of the field [of production] vis-à-vis the field of power”, the “objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority [symbolic capital]”, and,

one must analyze the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find a definite trajectory within the field under consideration a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized. [Bourdieu 1992:105]

The idea of habitus is an attempt to go beyond the overly determined dichotomy of agency versus structure by showing how they are ‘interpenetrated’ and mutually structuring. Of critical importance here is the understanding that the “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” which are the habitus, tend to make the “practical world that is constituted in relationship with the habitus... appear as necessary, even natural, since [the world is] the basis of the schemes of perception and appreciation through which [the habitus] is apprehended” and vice versa (Bourdieu 1990:53-54). In other words, (and there is no ‘beginning’ or ‘end’ to this) the agent’s understanding of the world is created (structured) by the world itself, and the world is then explained through an understanding which the world itself created (in the agent). Thus, there is a kind of ‘natural’ feeling of ‘one’s place in the world, which is based on one’s experience of the world, which is tied into the objective reality of economic and cultural hierarchies of distinction (class structure) which have shaped your sense of the world – molded your feelings of naturalness, if you will.

To use this amalgamation of processes and influences it is necessary to see it ‘in motion’ so to speak. This is achieved by looking at the relations between all the parts. Bourdieu again:

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways: On one side, it is a relation of conditioning: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of a field (or a set of intersecting fields...). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and value, in which it is worth investing one’s energy. [Bourdieu 1992:127]

As part of this is the flow of symbolic capital, the value of which is determined by and through the field and the habitus interacting. In an effort to understand a field of action in which the designer-artist as urban planner is constituted, Bourdieu’s ideas have many potential uses and implications.

One possible application of Bourdieu’s ideas in my work would be to ask the question of how the efforts of a specific group of designer-artists, despite their avid commitments to quite philanthropic goals and left-leaning progressive values, are actually furthering the hierarchies of distinction (and in effect, division and domination), by justifying the use of their recognized skills in an effort to ‘improve’ the physical appearance and functioning of a specific part of the urban built environment. This would necessitate a look at both the designers and the communities that are both their objects of study and their explicit collaborators. To follow Bourdieu’s lead, one would have to look at “the position of the field [or multiple fields] vis-à-vis the field of power” (Bourdieu 1992:105). This means understanding the relationships extant between the several fields of urban design (architecture, landscape architecture, public art, urban studies, and multidisciplinary paradigms) and the sources of funding for projects, the rhetoric of urban ‘economic development’ (locally, regionally and nationally), as well as the specific legal parameters within which must operate any effort to realize urban design. It would also require an understanding of the relationships between the designer-artists and the real communities to which they commit their professional attention, and the ways in which designer-artists are conceptualized by others through media and popular culture.

One would have to look at “the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for the legitimate form of specific authority” (Bourdieu 1992:105). Here we would have to understand the specific disciplinary fields and

their particular kinds of symbolic capital, position-takings and hierarchies of distinction. Of course the field of academia would need to come under scrutiny, specifically as it pertains to the design disciplines, as well as higher education as a whole. Also, it would be necessary to understand the political stances and humanist philosophies that contribute to inculcating the expressed moral, ethical, and social values of these particular designer-artists. Though I think a thorough going treatment of this research agenda is beyond my dissertation, I have attempted to reach in this direction. From Inga Saffron's attribution (mentioned in Chapter 2) of the growth of interest in dining and cultural entertainment in Philadelphia as simply a fashion sense brought over from Europe, to the intricate strategizing of the presentation of visual information by the architect-professors in my research, struggles over how to view the elements of any field reveal struggles over the right to control the legitimate symbolic capital of those fields.

One of the most important forms of symbolic capital functioning in this market of symbolic producers is creativity. This idea goes by many names and comes in many incarnations, such as innovation, experimentation, risk, genius, insight, mastery, or vision, to name a few. This idea also is relative to its context, and in fact, the person (I use the singular because often groups are in fact involved, but possession of creativity is more often than not conceptualized in the singular form of an individual) who is successfully able to respond to a context or set of problems or contingencies in a way that others have not thought of, is considered the most accomplished – as a thinker, a designer, an architect – of those that have addressed the problem. As with the professors in this study, providing a “vision” for what could be in a place was their primary objective: “For right now, our focus is, creating enough... a vision that inspires people that they can do something”, said one architect. And as with the esteemed Princeton Panel, innovation, or risk taking, was viewed as the hallmark of good architecture: “The architect is someone that must realize the situations and opportunities, misuse objects and systems, and ultimately risk failure”, said one panelist. Another panelist speaking about architecture said this:

the goal of the work is to look for greater profits through trade-offs. So, we cannot for example walk into a building and get incredible views across long distances if we have stuff in the middle... the goal of the academy and its... if we could constantly experiment with giving up a known value in order to see if a greater value can be achieved. More often than not – failure. But it has to be tried... for example, do you like indoor plumbing? That was considered such a radical idea, that Edward Crapper was sent out of court for seven years, and was put into exile. Until he was forced to come back for reasons I won't discuss with you. [laughter] The quotidian things you like about houses now were achieved through architectural experimentation. [field recording, March 7, 2004]

Thus, I would argue, that using one of the main forms of symbolic capital available to them, namely, some form of recognized and valued creativity, architects and other design professions, both explicitly and through effects, work to change attitudes and sensibilities of their audiences and “users” in order to accomplish their greater goals, be they maximizing a theoretical assertion, a sense of community, a consumer's desire, a government's effectiveness, an economy's reach, or a corporation's profits. Thus it becomes essential not only to understand how these experts of the subjective deploy their symbolic capital of legitimized creative insight, but also to what end. It is to this question that I turn in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 6

### DESIGN AS DISCIPLINE

This course is an introduction to the discipline of architecture. Becoming an architect is an incredible journey. The way that architects think and operate in the world is unique, and this uniqueness comes from their training. The German term *Weltanschauung* refers to the way an individual comprehends and thinks of their world. It refers to a person's attitude, and specific point of view. An architect's point of view is built over time through their experiences with design and their education. The goal of this course is to start you on the journey to your point of view, as a beginning architect. It has been said that architecture is frozen music. Take a moment to consider what you think Architecture is; do you think of it as buildings? floor plans? space? design? It is all these things and much more. This semester we will be expanding and challenging your preconceptions of what it means to be an architect, and how one makes and studies architecture. This is part of the journey. [introductory paragraph from the syllabus for a first-year architecture studio (not "the Studio" studied herein)]

#### Convincing Visions

In a mid-semester strategy session, where architecture, landscape architecture, and sculpture professors were working out the best order of student presentations, the professors discussed a concern over how to address issues of race in their student's proposals. One professor apologized in advance of the upcoming all-discipline meetings, for a student that was going to do a "travel poster" kind of presentation (in the case being referred to, the student later presented statistical data about Puerto Rico in the format of, "the Puerto Ricans like spicy food, music, and dance..."). In this discussion one architect said:

Architect: Well, I mean, like we were saying last night... that, I mean, those of us in the visual arts...

Sculptor: That was really important.

A: Yea... that we can be interpreters and mediators. They don't have a language. They say they want to express it but it comes out in travel poster kind of stuff.

Landscape Architect: Oh yea.

A: ...instead of it being something that really, actually is an offering to our overall culture... of some patterns or symbolic stuff that's really significant.

Though they saw this treatment of ethnicity as very problematic, the architect went on to defend the student, saying that this was not their fault entirely, because it's so endemic in our culture ... we deal with images. When we buy things and we slap them on. It's not their fault! ...that they woke up one day... I mean, that they were born and immediately blasted with this imagery!

It is in this kind of relatively common exchange – of professors understandably and commendably lamenting the naiveté of their students regarding race, and their conceptualization of culture as bounded and timeless (ironically, something familiar to anthropologists!) – that I saw in action, the basic conceptualization of the artist/designer/architect as interpreter and mediator. And though in this specific case, the mediation was in part for the benefit of the students and their anticipated audience (the client/community-group the professors were collaborating with), this exchange also demonstrates the concerns and intentions of architecture professors to address a larger audience in society itself, both in their work and through their students.

On another day, a small group of students were discussing a general feeling of confusion and frustration, which they presented to the architect-professor when she arrived for the Studio session. The architect-professor then gave a lengthy response that adroitly and respectfully explored the complexities of working in the public realm, recognizing the confusion wrought by the ambitious ideas of their would-be client, the non-profit art center located in an “inner-city”. The professor was keen to make the following point:

For right now, our focus is, creating enough... a vision that inspires people that they can do something. That something that they've been looking at for years, that looks like, dead, and all they can see is, this is a drug house, or all they can see is [a neglected old dollar-store], and they don't look above [at the architectural merits of the building itself], all they can see is empty lots that pick up trash. ... so our job is to give ideas about use and activity from the pretty substantial research that's been done. And then to help them visualize how that might be, MIGHT BE, and it's a... that's what this studio is about. It's a little bit of a risk. It may set off an argument about something you had nothing to do with. So in a way it's meant to be a catalyst for discussion. And what you're to take back from it is, first of all, the experience of seeing the power of architecture, and visualization of this... It's so powerful. It's political; it really is a political act. So you're going to take that away, and you're going to come up with a way to synthesize that, to weed out the stuff that's just somebody beating a drum vs. what is a thoughtful, considered response. [recording, February 22, 2004]

As mentioned above, the architects and students I worked with often said that their most important skill was being able to listen. They said that it was their job to hear and understand the ideas and wishes of their clients and then transform that into good designs. I believe that their intentions were and are commendable, and that in many cases their efforts had very positive effects. On another occasion this architect told her students: “architecture is a political act, at every level. Because to build something, it takes resources”; compare this to Princeton professor Stanley Allen's complete abdication of the political in architecture. The last thing I want to do is intimate that I am skeptical or unimpressed with the work of those designer-professors I worked with. However, I also feel that neither them nor I can escape the fact that we work within a social, historical, and material context that is not under our control; that we operate with the habitus or sensibilities we have acquired and that this often means we contribute to the fields or systems around us in ways that we both intended and did not intend, and that this is in most cases also out of our control. It is here that we can find actions and ideas that actually become unintentionally incorporated into the ways in which clients see their situations and themselves, and I would also caution the reader with this observation from Bourdieu: “there is a tendency to

reduce what is and should be an epistemological questioning to a political questioning” (Bourdieu 1998:36). I do not intend to question the politics of those I studied, but I do intend to interrogate the epistemology of the tools they used to do their jobs, and the effects these tools had inside and outside their direct application.

While we’re talking of tools, an increasingly popular method for dealing with the “division between “experts” and audience” is the use of “visualization techniques” (Al-Kodmany 1999:40). As urban designer and educator Kheir Al-Kodmany (1999) puts it:

What is needed is a language that can bridge the gap between the vision of the community resident and the technical thinking and jargon of the architects, one which can turn the intuition and knowledge of the public into a workable idea.  
[40]

Al-Kodmany cites other scholars advocating similar uses of “visualization” in various styles of planning practice (King et al 1998; Barndt and Craig 1994; Craig and Elwood 1998; Krygier). In his example, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) was engaged by a local development corporation that had just received \$500,000 in Empowerment Zone funding for neighborhood “rehabilitation”. UIC then joined in this effort, garnering additional resources from several university, city and federal programs (including some funding from HUD’s Office of University Partnerships (OUP) and their Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) grants) totaling over \$200,000. Essentially,

a planning team was formed that included 25 community residents, including representatives from two of the community’s CDCs [community development corporations], and, from the university, two architects, two planners, and one artist [Al-Kodmany 1999:43]

Their process was simply to gather residents from the area proposed for “rehabilitation”, solicit and record their knowledge, observations and comments, and then make this an integral part of the designing work. To do this they employed an artist trained to quickly sketch realistic urban scenes based on an audience’s input, and with “a human scale”, “depicting activities” and taking other notes on related non-visual information expressed in the sessions (Al-Kodmany 1999:47). These were drawn on an electronic “white board” which could then save the drawings to a computer, facilitating both a record of the session and a reference for future design decisions.

Like many efforts of this kind, reports were generated from the work, though no master plan has been formed. Nevertheless, according to Al-Kodmany this was a very successful project (though not without its problems, of course), and I have no intension of questioning the usefulness of this undertaking. My questions have more to do with the techniques, or technologies employed to make the process successful. Why did this technique of visualization work? Is it really “empowering”, or a way of “leveling the playing field”, or is it a renewed way to shape and negotiate relationships of power through a tool that depoliticizes, or is it both? What is it accomplishing in terms of social order and meaning, and how? In the analysis that follows, I use an example from my own field work to explore these questions and offer some form of answer to the challenge that: empowerment can also be a way to impose dominant subjectivities, in this case through a desired internalization of aesthetic norms, or, to use Bourdieu’s terms, through the symbolic power of being able to define what is good and what is bad planning or urban design (see Bourdieu 1999:115).

## The “Ghost Town” Affair

At the start of the semester, the architecture students of the Urban Fabric Studio were charged with walking around the study area, an area designated through the collaboration of their professors and the Studio’s provisional client, the Arts Organization. After doing so, the students noticed that on Sundays, and also after 5PM on weekdays, most of the businesses closed and pulled down their corrugated metal security doors. The students also noticed that when this happened, most sidewalk vendors packed up and left for the day, and the few pedestrians that remained congregated around the one or two Chinese take-out restaurants, or the sit-down pizza parlor that was known as a drug house. Based on these observations, the students felt that the place turned into a kind of “ghost town”, and they used this phrase to literally create a community “problem”, and hence a potential design “solution” (which I’ll get to later). So the Studio went forward with this item in a list of many community “issues” generated through research and interviews, and deemed eligible for design attention, issues that one professor later said, “just sort of came up... writing in the margins, so-to-speak”.

As part of their research, the students were tasked also with documenting some historical context for the area in which they were working. They did this by finding what information they could about the specific streets and intersections of their study area, and they then represented this graphically in the form of a large, 10 foot-long timeline with text and photos. On a few occasions the professors were able to get people from the community to come into the Studio and offer feedback. Typically, professors were able to get visitors only a few times per semester. On one successful occasion, the Director of the Art Center, which was this Studio’s provisional “client”, and a local Reverend were able to come to the Studio’s mid-semester pinup. The first draft of the timeline was finished and printed in poster size pieces that were tacked up in sequence in a hallway. This was the first time either of the guests had come to this Studio to see their work, but the Art Center Director quickly took on what had become a familiar role for her, as visionary, occasionally going off on near tirades of very engaging inspiration and encouragement. The Reverend, however, tended toward the practical and took on a role as realist, and fount of local knowledge. From this point of view the Reverend very skillfully began to offer a critical response to the work.

After having looked over the materials pinned up, and had some informal conversation about it with the professors, the Reverend asked who was going to be the point-person with the community on these design ideas. She then said,

the reason I ask that question is that who ever is doing the presentations to the group, needs to think about language a lot. So when I came in I’m reading everything... and I’m thinking, wow, group needs to see all this stuff... Because we need to, you know, we just need to start capturing a vision. [but then addressing the students] Be careful how you use words. When I came through... I’m fine... I’m like, oh, cool, cool, cool, cool [reenacting herself viewing the timeline]. I got over there and I saw “ghost town” and immediately I was offended.

After some further elaboration, the professors began to see that this was a wonderful teaching opportunity, and taking a bit of care to not discourage their students too much (since this was their work, being insightfully critiqued by a respected member of the community) they asked the Reverend to go on. Warning her audience that she was going to “talk race here”, she said this:

If you look at this, the story that... [is told, is] white people[‘s] story of north Philadelphia, ... from the time of white flight, [pointing at the 1950’s and then back into the timeline’s past] it’s positive, positive, positive, positive, positive, positive, positive. African American and Latin community moves in about in here somewhere, it’s negative from here on out [pointing in the other direction]. I mean... so what I recommend is get rid of all of this, get the positives continuing... it’s not like nothing positive happened in North Philadelphia.

The group then proposed other alternatives and the agreed upon action was to search for negative things to put in the earlier part of the timeline, and positive things to put into the latter part of it, so as to balance the portrayal – at one point the Reverend said, in a gentle tone:

I think the issue that’s hard to hear though, is that decline is relative to who’s defining it. And it’s not to say that there hasn’t been decline. I’m not looking through rose-colored glasses here... but that decline has happened from the beginning to the end. ... Are you telling me that nothing bad happened between 1860 something and 1955?

It was also agreed that some room would be made in the latter part of the timeline for community residents to physically add their memories to the document, as a way to provide a sense of ownership and involvement.

Later in this conversation both architecture professors voiced their excitement and pleasure over the fact that this critique was taking place. One professor told the students that this was a good lesson for understanding the limitations of internet research and other standard sources for news and information. The other architect said this:

this is an important object lesson for our students. I mean, this is the most important thing... [drinks being passed around] but they need to hear this because this is, this is an anthro... one of the things that I said.. and not just because of the sort of profound offense, to the African American community, but the fact that if they are designers you cannot design on a base of negativity. You have to be the most profoundly optimistic person in the world. The only... we only do this because we’re optimists. And so then if you don’t design from... from where you see potential, then you have no... you’re creativity is... [to students who have returned from a break] we’re talking about the same thing that we talked about before they arrived [the Director and the Reverend]. About the issues of how, you know, the stuff that comes up here, is, its negative, but its not.. this is the stuff you got, from... from the um... that’s out there.

Among these discussions, the phrase “ghost town” finally returned, because, after all, it did accurately describe the way the students felt when they walked in this community, off-hours. Although the phrase was often spoken as if it had virtual quotation marks around it, the Reverend’s critical response to the phrase elicited signs of discomfort in the group. At it’s first mentioning within the pinup discussion she cringed and said, “ghost town, oh, man, that just really bothered me. For all the reasons I think ya’ll could fill in the blanks on.” She then said

I’ve had the chance so far in Philly to live in three communities. ...on all of those avenues the stores were closed on Sundays. ... when I lived in the community, that was not seen as a negative. That was seen as a positive. Like, here’s at least

one place in America that honors (see I'm a preacher) Sunday! [laughter] But this was true, growing up, as an adult, raising kids... so it really wasn't seen as a negative that stores were closed on Sundays ...If ALL the stores closed... ah, Christian shop owners, cool. So it wasn't necessarily a negative. And it wasn't like if the stores were open on Sundays, the stores were going to be particularly used on Sundays. That was another reality.

Of course, the long-term effects of these lessons on complexity, history, race, and discourse domination are difficult to measure. However, interesting things happened with this phrase during the project. First, in response to the particular observations and feelings that gave rise to the phrase, several students worked together to propose that murals be painted on the metal security doors so as to offer some cheerfulness when they were all closed. And though the label "ghost town" garnered much attention as problematic for its potential to stereotype the neighborhood, its proposed design "solution" had another fate. The Art Center Director recognized quite quickly that this idea of murals on the doors was both logistically and financially doable for her organization. She also recognized that it was in many ways politically brilliant, especially when one considered, as she did, the potential for symbolic significance if the neighborhood youth were organized to do some of the work. In fact, this did become a living project, and weather and funds permitting, continues to this day, over a year and a half later.

And though the phrase "ghost town" was never spoken again by students or professors without explicit qualification, it did remain in use because of the ideas and activities it spawned. Everyone agreed that the phrase was problematic, some only because the Reverend said so, others because they understood the power that a place's label can have upon the people who live there. Still, the Art Center Director very unabashedly used the phrase as she promoted and began her project to paint the doors. And storeowners, who more often than not lived in other neighborhoods, tended to agree with the description. Some time later in the Urban Fabric Studio, the architecture professor noted to her class, in a discussion about their design efforts, "Isn't it funny how that phrase was so bad before and now everyone is using it?"

Another element of this that is worth noting is the topic of retail activity. It is interesting that the students, steeped as they are in the "imagery" and activities of a consumer world, picked up on the closure of stores, or, more precisely, the lack of transparency in the storefronts after having been closed, as an aesthetic "problem". For, it was not a lack of access to the stores and their goods that the students thought was responsible for the "ghost town" effect; they took issue with the street not having the feeling of a retail corridor, that is, displaying wares and offering gazes through plate glass that framed the objects of retail fetish. It's as if they felt robbed of the aesthetics of proper off-hours retail ambience. One need only compare this area to another such street that does not use rolling aluminum doors at night or on weekends.

In Philadelphia a comparable architectural scale and general façade style (though it has few or no abandoned buildings) is found in Manayunk. "Main Street" in Manayunk consists not of stores for check cashing, athletic shoes, or used stereo equipment, but is filled with upscale boutique shopping, mainly frequented by middle and upper middle class suburbanites, due in part to the store types, but also the ease of access to regional highways. This shopping street is all a glitter at night, even when its shops are closed, in part due to hip restaurants and bars (though these are not the sole cause of the area's general feeling at night). In the store windows merchandise is lit with halogen bulbs and gobo lights, and streetlights make the windows

themselves seem to glitter. This place would not have received the label “ghost town” by the students because this was, to them, proper off-hours retail ambience.

I have described this “ghost town” affair in an attempt to demonstrate through example how even the most well intentioned efforts of reform (revitalization would be the more widely accepted term) cannot escape the conditions of their production. Even here the social processes of interaction between experts of the subjective and the non-experts they “serve” can act as structuring forces, disciplining individuals and social groups into roles and perspectives that “make sense” within contemporaneous moments and agendas. Even if it was offensive, or insensitive, the term “ghost town” was not seen as irrational, as it might have been, were it used to describe Manayunk.

In the end, it was indisputably an influential perspective, which both moved people to do good things, and moved perspectives of the place closer to the norm (“in need of attention” and “going in the right direction” – that is, toward Manayunk, so-to-speak). On one occasion a resident of the neighborhood, who was also a staff member of the Art Center, and was fairly critical of the process, said that not all those who should have been involved were there, and that, from his point of view, some very practical things were not addressed. Still, he also said that he thought the students and professors were helping the community to have a new vision for itself – to see the place as something he would never have dreamed of. Another community resident who was one of a few retail shop owners along the commercial corridor of the area, said “the overall plans were beautiful. It gave us an idea of what could really happen.” And upon reflection at the end of that semester, while complaining of the absence of a key community leader, one architect had this to say:

I think that... it’s important to keep in mind how much we’ve changed their thinking about their community and the process of their community, just by being involved with them. And I think that that’s a huge success. If [a certain community leader] came to the review, she would have seen ... or you know, if they’d paid a little more attention, they would have seen a more comprehensive plan that offered alternatives to the one they had. That’s my little stick in the air for design work.

### **Foucauldian Notions of Expertise**

I wish here to use the idea of expertise not in terms of what it “is” (its definition, or its “contents” if you will) but rather in terms of what it “does” (its results or effects). By doing this it becomes unnecessary for the disciplines or the researcher to agree on a definition of content, and whether or not it applies to any given profession, genre, or situation. This is not to say that definitions are unimportant, but rather that how definitions are used, justified, legitimated and deployed is more the point. If we understand expertise as a relationship of power, or power relations (within which definitions play a key role), we can look at the effects of these relationships within and in relation to the context of any discipline or profession to see how power is structuring social processes, and both enabling and hindering individual and group agendas. Ironically, this has been done in areas that are more traditionally thought of as ‘expert’, such as medicine, social administration, or law, for example. However, seeing expertise as what it “does”, rather than for what it “is”, has not been widely applied outside areas like these, areas commonly thought of as technocratic, technical, or scientific. That is, in areas where knowledge and skills are subjective, malleable, or unregulated, the idea of expertise is not usually applied. It

is my contention, however, that we can indeed look at relationships of power, negotiated through the deployment of specialized subjective skills like aesthetic judgment, the building of symbolic capital, and the effects of deploying that capital in fields of symbolic power, and how this might also help to “misrecognized” that same influence in those fields (Bourdieu 1991).

This study focuses primarily on a group of architects and landscape architects, but one need only remember that these groups operate within larger contexts of influence and multiple contingencies, social trends and paradigms. One could focus in many areas and on many processes and have important contributions to make to the study of architecture or landscape architecture, or any of a number of other design oriented disciplines. I have simply chosen to focus on a common thread, a thread not only common to these disciplines, however, but commonly used, defined, and deployed outside these disciplines as well. I have proposed that the phenomenon of “design” in contemporary consumer capitalist society is a crucial area of activity to put under scrutiny, because it in many ways is the central activity and mode of expression of value in these disciplines, but it is also shaped by the flows of symbolic, economic, and political capital outside these disciplines, and even in dialogue with these and other areas of symbolic production and exchange. A final step in my exploration of this argument comes from visiting the ideas of Michel Foucault. Primarily I borrow his analysis of how ‘technologies of the self’ become essential techniques of governing in advanced liberal democracies, which overlaps a great deal with Pierre Bourdieu’s notions of power and symbolic domination, but gives the argument that slight little edge as it links it more thoroughly to the functioning of the modern nation-state, globalization, and the spreading of a consumer capitalist ideology.

Much of Foucault’s project was an attempt to carve a space outside of the notion of ‘juridical power’. For Foucault, juridical power is power “in terms of legislation and constitution, in terms solely of the state and state apparatus” (Foucault 1980b:158). For instance, in his discussion of Machiavelli’s “The Prince”, “a treatise about the prince’s ability to keep his principality”, Foucault says that

for Machiavelli, the object and, in a sense, the target of power are two things, on the one hand the territory, and on the other its inhabitants. In this respect, Machiavelli simply adapted to his particular aims a juridical principle which from the Middle Ages to the sixteenth century defined sovereignty in public law: sovereignty is not exercised on things, but above all on a territory and consequently on the subjects who inhabit it. [Foucault 1991a:93]

It was this way of conceptualizing power that Foucault wished to question; not necessarily as a way to debunk it, but as a way to bring into relief the fact that this particular formulation actually elides the functioning of power that followed it. That is, the technologies of power, which, for Foucault, came into existence around the end of the seventeenth century with a focus on “the administration of bodies [and actions] and the calculated management of life [and thus, all of reality]” (Foucault 1990:140).

Foucault therefore offers the notion of ‘disciplinary power’, which “is quite different from and more complicated, dense and pervasive than a set of laws or a state apparatus” (Foucault 1980b:158). This power

is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility. Such a power has to qualify, measure, appraise and hierarchize, rather than display itself in its murderous splendor; it does not have to draw the line that separates the enemies



of the sovereign from his obedient subjects; it effects distributions around the norm. [Foucault 1990:144]

It was this kind of conceptualization of power, as a technology of classification and legitimization, which Foucault and others have so effectively used to show how power actually works through (and lives in) the delineation of the individual subject (see Foucault 1982, 1990), through the production of discourses like “public health” and “empowerment” (see Cruikshank 1994), or “experience” (Joan Scott 1992), and through the regulatory control and organization of populations (Shore and Wright 1997).

To look at power in this way, as “disciplines” that bring together, “technical capacities, the game of communications, and the relationships of power”, is to look beyond all of these things toward “power relations” (Foucault 1982:219). Power “is a way in which certain actions modify others... an action upon action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future” (Foucault 1982:220). Therefore, power is not the forcing of someone’s hand or the use of force against another, but instead it is “a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions... a way of acting upon an acting subject by virtue of their acting or being capable of action” (Foucault 1982:220). In other words, “power is exercised only over free subjects, and only in so far as they are free” (Foucault 1982:221). This is the conceptual basis of Foucault’s notions of governmentality. This creation of ‘discipline’ (in both senses of the word as intellectual field and as self control) is necessary for the effective governing of populations in modernity.

While looking at power as a diffuse, multi-centered and multi-focal process, which has as its charge to define the ‘subject’ for the purposes of demarcating its possible actions, Foucault advises two “checks” upon any investigation of power. Checking on the “conceptual needs” or “historical conditions” of any conceptualization of power, and checking on “the type of reality” or the circumstances or context envisioned by or targeted by this conceptualization of power (Foucault 1982:209). In other words, Foucault advocates the analysis of the ways in which a subject is created by or through relations of power; and this has to account both historically and contextually for the creation and maintenance of those relations of power. He offers us three examples of processes of “objectification:” the first being “the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of science;” the second, he calls “dividing practices,” as in differentiating between the ‘sane’ and the ‘insane’; and the third a kind of self-objectification (Foucault 1982:208). Given this, we can see how any endeavor to ‘improve’ a condition necessarily starts with the identification of a subject, thus invoking the need for Foucault’s ‘checks’. What any given expertise defines as its area of application, its ‘subject’, is an area where we can find the structures of knowledge created to address that subject, and hence the functioning of power. We can then take as example, any effort to shape the physical world either through materially changing it, or symbolically appropriating it, and say that fields like urban design, architecture, or planning, are equally technologies of governmentality, both as practices, which embody power relations, and as pedagogies which position disciplines and individuals within and in relation to those disciplines. In light of this, one question that must be asked is how these technologies are actually deployed? Who is benefiting from this and why does it work?

Many efforts to conceptualize and codify problems perceived within the social fabric of the urban can be profitably explored using the ideas of Foucault and others. For example, several scholars have explored how the subject can be created through discourses on sexuality

(Foucault 1984b), public health (Hacking 1982; 1992), statistical analysis through documentary photography (Tagg 1993), control of urban populations (Topalov 1993), and performing nation-statehood (Urla 1993). All of these works look toward what Foucault calls “interventions and regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population” (Foucault 1990:139). These authors show that the creation of a subject of study (which can have technologies of power like efficiency, cleanliness, rightness, and productivity applied to it) ends up creating the inroads, or “lines of penetration” for power (Foucault 1990). In other words, the application of any kind of expertise (or even resistance to it) has the mark of complicity in this matrix of power, regardless of its political agenda, moral stance, or technocratic virtuosity (Abu-Lughod 1990). Thus, the hyper-individualistic virtues of creativity and artistry can also be included in this matrix, and I submit that “design” is an important area for understanding contemporary and widely accepted modes of subject creation, and therefore, the ‘lines of penetration’ for power.

Further discussion of Foucault’s notion of governmentality may help in this endeavor (Foucault 1991a). In the edited volume, *Foucault and Political Reason*, by Barry, Osborne, and Rose (1996) we are offered critical analyses of the forms of ‘governmentality’ through a ‘history of the present’, which is concerned with the vicissitudes of liberalism in the shaping of the political contours of the present” (4). Responding to Foucault’s influence, these authors turn to “the analytics of liberal political reason” (in its present manifestation - neoliberalism) by investigating “the relation between the mutations of politics and the history of systems of expertise” (Barry et al 1996:7). This ‘history of the present’ brings

attention to the intellectual and practical techniques and inventions via which civil society is brought into being as both distinct from political intervention and yet potentially alignable with political aspirations. [Barry et al 1996:7-9]

Thus, “rather than conceiving of the relation between the technical and the political as an opposition, [one can] highlight the variable ways in which expertise plays a part in translating society into an object of government” (Barry et al 1996:13). Hence their assertion that the possibilities for liberal forms of freedom may historically depend upon the exercise of discipline [through expertise]... [and that] freedom is thus neither an ideological fiction of modern societies nor an existential feature of existence within them; it must be understood also and necessarily as a formula of rule. [Barry et al 1996:8]

Here we must consider the possibility that “renewal”, even if at the hands of well-meaning design academics and practitioners, necessarily works within this context. Thus, one must ask to what extent urban design is, to borrow from anthropologist Eve Darian-Smith, an aesthetic technology of liberty (Darian-Smith 1999).

Of course, anthropologists have investigated the ideas, “intrinsic to modernity”, which deploy the notion, “that it [is] possible to engineer and administer a particular environment in such a way so as to ‘produce’ a specific sort of person” (Hyatt 1997: 221). Cruikshank (1996), Donzelot (1979), Maskovsky (2000), and Hyatt (1997) all provide excellent studies of the application of expertise through the making of, and the subsequent management of, ‘subjects’ through self-empowerment, ‘healthy’ children and families, the poor as ‘consumers’, and the ‘management’ of low-income communities. However, it is important to note that in most of the ethnographic studies utilizing the concept of governmentality, the process of the designer-artist is not an integral part of the researcher’s focus. One might be tempted to cite Hugh Gusterson’s

study, for example, of the designers and technicians in an American nuclear weapons laboratory. However, Gusterson's "designers" are of a more scientific or technical sort, rather than those who imagine colors, patterns, shapes, experiences, uses, and images for the masses. Still, even Gusterson was questioned as to his interest in these designers. He writes that, "Many sociologists and political scientists have asked me why, if I was interested in understanding the arms race, I chose to study a nuclear weapons laboratory rather than, say, the Senate Armed Services Committee or senior officers at the Pentagon"; and Gusterson's reply is: "because of the importance of looking at the production and contestation of power, knowledge, and belief at the local level in order to understand national and global political processes" (Gusterson 1996: 5). I would add only the clarification that expertise of all kinds, including emerging or recently emerged forms, should qualify here. Gusterson goes on to say that he has "tried to suggest that, far from standing outside politics, experts are inextricably enmeshed within it, their knowledge and authority being vital in the construction and maintenance of regimes of truth" (Gusterson 1996:223).

Nikolas Rose has perhaps been able to get a little closer to the expert designer-artist, with what he calls the "experts of subjectivity" (Rose 1996:58 and 1990). Describing the role of experts in "advanced liberal rule", Rose says that expertise is connected differently into the technologies of rule. It seeks to de-governmentalize the State and to de-statize practices of government, to detach the substantive authority of expertise from the apparatuses of political rule, relocating experts within a market governed by the rationalities of competition, accountability and consumer demand. [Rose 1996:41]

However, an important question is, in the case of designer-artists who are doing their best to positively remake the pedagogies of the disciplines and institutions that harbor them, and to address, with fresh and innovative approaches, the 'problems' that their respective disciplines, grantors, students, clients, and publics have placed before them, just how is what Rose talking about enacted? Providing we can safely assume that those designers I've dubbed "aesthetic experts", see themselves as, with good intention, creative, liberal, sophisticated, and morally sound – not vessels that enable the "construction and maintenance of regimes of truth" (Gusterson 1996:223) – then how do we account for their involvement? Well, as Rose indicates here (1990, 1996) and elsewhere (Miller and Rose 1997, for example), and I have attempted to demonstrate, the technologies of governmentality work at the levels of play, consumerism, aesthetics, materialism, community, or design, just as well as they work at the levels of sciences, statistics, or measurement. And as Bourdieu indicates (mentioned above), due to the "structural homologies" in any field of symbolic power, the 'dominated fractions' of the dominant class "never really serve the interests of the dominant class except as a side effect" (Bourdieu 1991:168). Thus what we see is simply the functioning of habitus in fields of symbolic power, which are structured by the values and practices of an evolving consumer capitalist paradigm. Rose again:

Contemporary political rationalities rely upon and utilize a range of technologies that install and support the civilizing project by shaping and governing the capacities, competencies and wills of subjects, yet are outside the formal control of the "public powers". To such basic nation-forming devices as a common language, skills of literacy and transportation networks, our century has added the mass media of communication, with their pedagogies through documentary and

soap opera; opinion polls and other devices that provide reciprocal links between authorities and subjects; the regulation of lifestyles through advertising, marketing and the world of goods; *and* the experts of subjectivity. [Rose 1996:58]

Design is part of this too.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

To keep myself on the right track (though I couldn't tell you if I'm still on it!), I sometimes returned to this overly simplistic bit of verse:

Symbolic Violence explains the battles  
Governmentality explains the war.

And though this verse eventually implodes upon itself conceptually, it does nicely knit together, at least on the surface, what I have tried to accomplish here. For me the operation of symbolic violence, as in the ability of dominant groups to establish their sensibilities as the norm, while making this dominance appear to be quite natural and thus non-dominating; coupled with the advantages this provides, in the form of technologies for governing, which assist in the task of retaining the legitimacy to rule, was nicely summarized in the verse. I'm quite sure I will abandon it, but perhaps it will be of some use to the reader.

Nonetheless, this dissertation has primarily been an attempt to understand the place of design within this larger socio-cultural, political-economic context, and to in essence propose that the discourse of design has specific controlling and conditioning effects which have gone largely unnoticed or at least unquestioned. My specific study was of the urban design initiatives of an interdisciplinary group of professional designers and teachers, working through their positions within the university to partner with the leaders of community-based organizations in order to come up with urban designs and master planning documents for future use. Working within particular historical iterations of the economic, cultural, professional, and the educational, as well as media, and globalization, these professionals work from and are exposed to conditions that shape their premises, approaches, analytical tools, proposals, processes, and outcomes, in very specific ways.

Explicitly guiding their work from the start and throughout all the varying stages and modes of their work, "design" has been a central concern, principle, concept, and goal. Yet "design" as a domain cannot be claimed only by this group of designers. The idea itself is partly a product of their construction, but also of the discourses of myriad institutions, disciplines, practices, and agendas alongside and outside their purview. "Design" is a word that slips quickly and deftly to and from many reference points and systems of thought. From the flashy and hyped world of popular magazines and television, to the hallowed pillars of principled and structured thinking, training, and innovation in the halls of architectural "high-design"; from the secret drawing boards of nuclear physics to the humble drafting rooms of mechanical and electrical engineers; from the reams of paper and eraser tailings to the virtual realms of digitized space. "Design" morphs as a concept, a process and a product, describing the things people do, the values they possess, the tricks of the trade, and the objects of desire they produce. The idea of "design" allows taxonomies of value to be established, histories and traditions to be exonerated, abstractions to be debated, and camps to be created.

But the analysis should not end here. If "design" plays such an integral role in so many processes and domains, then how does it shape our thinking, our lives, and our relationships, or more precisely, how does it work to generate and maintain the ordering structures of society? I

have attempted here to answer this question through the application of concepts like habitus, taste, distinction, and the symbolic economies of power, in addition to the notions of governmentality, discipline, and expertise. Through the use of these terms I have asserted that the structures of hierarchization and relationships of power can be established and deployed as effectively through the concept of “design” and the disciplines of “design” as they are through law, medicine, or the ‘hard’ sciences. In fact, in the current context of neoliberal consumer capitalist globalization, I argue that social technologies like “design” become effective and essential technologies of synchronization and desire production, creating the proper subjectivities for “governing advanced liberal democracies” (Rose 1996).

In these consumer democracies the gurus of the consumer market play the role of expert, in that they present suggestions, through advertising and other media, for how one ought to choose (to decorate one’s home or one’s self, for example). They then point to the apparent plethora of products available to perform these tasks. (In today’s world, where savvy consumption is paramount, few can support the employment of a personal decorator or stylist, so the media/market does this for them – since they have to address this “problem” of style and the discerning judgment of good design, in order to be cool, stylish, up-to-date, not stupid.) So, as architects distance themselves from the notion of expertise as, essentially, technocratic, they more and more fulfill this role of architect as master of aesthetic judgment (brilliant successful designing talent), and hence they more and more become the neoliberal expert – one who influences judgment, desire, perception, sense of duty or attainment of sophistication through aesthetic or cultural means. Some architects also distance themselves from the idea of being “artists”, fearing that this does not do justice to their technical skills, or that it portrays one who is self obsessed with personal expression and nothing more. However, this distancing from art, accompanied by a distancing from technocratic expertise, becomes a perfect place for a concept like “design” to take over. “Design” is art *and* science. It occupies a middle ground of creative accomplishment and technical prowess.

Thus I have argued that within the growing significance of a symbolic economy (tourism, “culture” consumption, arts development, etc.) bolstered by neoliberal forms of “free market” valorization (especially the ideology of possessive individualism through consumer choice), the technologically and aesthetically sophisticated activities of areas like architecture (more broadly conceptualized simply as “design”), become prominent modes of social reproduction, organization, and differentiation - but also of proselytization to a “consumer’s republic” (L. Cohen 2003). If aesthetic endeavors like design play a role in differentiating society through “taste” and aesthetic judgment, and there are professionals who construct and maintain standards of design within various areas of specialization, then these professionals could be seen to be acting as experts (in the Foucauldian sense of what expertise does, rather than what it is) who help to maintain authority and veracity within fields of knowledge/judgment, therefore, they help to maintain technologies of governmentality, in that they contribute to the validation of expert action or guidance in aesthetic judgment, the hegemonic idea of consumer choice, and the material importance of the symbolic economy.

This approach has to recognize, however, that the architects are not operating in their own invented genre (some form of response to modernism, for instance) but are operating within the context of “design” as a cultural force or milieu. Despite their efforts to not be “experts” in the technocratic sense, they have fallen into the larger flow of “design” as discipline within the cultural context of consumer capitalism. They are not modernists, post modernists, super

modernists... they are subjectivities working to further the subjectivities of others through the device of “design” and the consumption of its idea(s) – (place, community, civil society, success, quality of life, life style). This argument is significant because it opens up areas of inquiry that can begin to explain social control within the context of contemporary consumer capitalist cultures, which presumably are based upon and driven by the principles of individual choice and freedom (personal and economic), and particularly with regard to the contemporary role that the idea of design plays in this process.

If aesthetic expertise can be thought of as a form of governmentality, then we must ask how expertise is linked with neoliberal governance, or how expertise is linked with consumer capitalism? The concept of expertise itself needs to be rethought in order to recognize the effects of it functioning in areas where we would not typically think of finding it at work – that is, not only in the form of professional skill sets and scientific knowledge. Expertise is capable of taking on many forms if we see it as this relationship of power, rather than only the skill and knowledge sets of institutionalized professionalism, which can be applied either from a top-down technocratic position or a grass roots democratic position.

In most treatments (such as the special issue of the Journal of Architectural Education, for instance: JAE 2000) expertise is conceptualized for the most part as simply the instance of “specialized knowledge or competencies”, which have had the historical misfortune of being applied to social and built environment issues in a top-down, technocratic way. In the articles of that issue, the question of authority or power is acknowledged and sometimes even critically analyzed, but is often nonetheless conflated with the possession of specialized skills or knowledge sets. By not completely separating and treating these areas of authority and knowledge as independent elements in the concept of expertise, these analyses perpetuate a misrecognition of the knowledge/power relationship and the effects and production of relationships of power.

Rather than provide yet another example of how experts have ignored or appropriated the knowledge of non-experts, this dissertation is attempting to highlight the functioning of power within the concepts of expert and non-expert in order to begin to see those relationships of power within contexts not typically seen as expert-non-expert interaction. In efforts to patch past transgressions of experts and expertise, the architects and educators in the JAE special issue push for the recognition of local knowledge and the importance of democratic processes of design. But in doing so, they fail to critically challenge the idea of expertise itself, and how it functions within society as a technology of governmentality through a deployment of its symbolic capital in relationships of power.

I believe that an understanding of the particular convolutions of fields of action, and the resulting interactions of varying species of symbolic capital enhances our understanding of the design disciplines, urban design and economic development, community identity and political activism, and also the role that design professions play in establishing and furthering social hierarchies, especially when these ‘differences’ are the very target of reform, through design, at which these professionals take aim. One has to ask, how does the situation in most post-industrial American cities (poverty, racism, consumerism, relationships to the suburbs and their residents) get transformed into aesthetic problems that can be addressed by design through the ideologies of place making, blight, destination-hood, art, etc.? It begs another question, which is: can we think of the changing of people’s minds toward a particular mode or perspective of what is attractive, what visually indicates safety, community, or prosperity as a form of symbolic

violence? And to explain why this might take place, can we then see this symbolic violence, this change of aesthetic sensibility, as a means to an end, the means being a kind of “synchronization of emotions”, ala Virilio, to a mode of desiring (all of this happening through the functioning of design as gospel), toward the end of proper productivity, properly motivated by an ideology of meritocracy and free market rules, in a consumer based capitalist economy?

It seems to me that in answering, we cannot see “design” as merely innovation, or fascination with new materials and technologies, or even scientific concern with aesthetic interests, or as only the marriage of commerce, creativity and industry (product design). Even if “design” is these things, it must also be seen as a technology of power. It is a social force, which happens to use objects, things, materials, consumption, etc., but puts more than these at stake. Design is a form of social control. Design is gospel. It is repentance from all things ugly, inefficient, disorderly, and mundane.



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