CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY DESIGN IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD
A Review and Outlook

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the planning and design of neighborhood open space in Taipei, Kyoto, Berkeley, Oakland, and Los Angeles. It presents critical questions about the outcomes of the participatory process in neighborhood space design including: the relation between local open space aspirations and design visions for an entire city, the reflection of values in the design of a neighborhood process, the roles of the many players who appear in the production of neighborhoods, and the need for community designers to address the impacts of changing populations and globalized commercialism in neighborhoods. Criteria for evaluating community design in the neighborhood are proposed.

OVERVIEW

The catalyst for this roundtable is our shared interest in the neighborhood as both a concept and an on the ground reality of the city. Our observations are based on teaching, field research, and community design practice in neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, Taipei, and Kyoto. They have led us to think closely about the form, components, residents, and conception of the neighborhood in the larger city, and the players who now shape the physical and conceptual neighborhood.

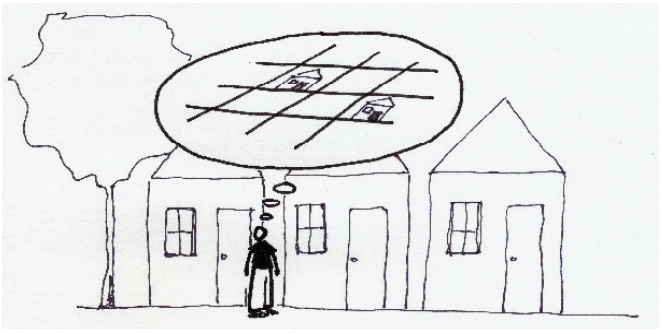

Figure 1. The neighborhood as both a concept and a reality. (Sarah Minick)

The Neighborhood

Though the neighborhood certainly existed as a daily reality before Clarence Perry, Perry's conception of the neighborhood unit as the basic building block of the city and city planning has had broad and profound influence in the Pacific Rim. Perry's conception of the neighborhood as limited in size (typically 160 acres) and population, and containing essential civic features such as neighborhood parks, schools and retail, displayed the hierarchical and rational precepts of early city planning in response to the advent of the industrial city. At the same time Perry's intent was a humanistic one: to foster a place of belonging through a human scale landscape that contained opportunities for casual yet intimate interaction with neighbors. Perry's neighborhood planning unit countered both the disorienting extent of the early twentieth century city and its tendency to generate anonymity and anomie among its residents.

While Perry's ideas were formulated in the U.S., a quick review of Taipei and Japanese urban history indicates the concepts may have migrated. United Nations experts introduced the neighborhood unit into the planning for new development in Taipei in the 1960s. It is likely, however, that the Japanese, who hugely influenced Taipei's twentieth century urban form, had already laid the groundwork for a neighborhood unit. For example, neighborhood-based primary schools (the centerpiece of Perry's concept) emerge in force in Taipei during Japanese occupation. Some time during this period the *gaku* appeared in Japan. An administrative unit, the *gaku* was determined spatially as the area served by the local primary school, typically with a 400-meter service radius (approximately 160 acres). Japanese occupation of Taiwan parallels the era of "westernization" and the introduction of city planning as a government function in Japan. It is also an era of planning proselytizing in the U.S. – the local histories of many major American cities during this time include a visit by one of the great planning minds of the day, often followed by a report that

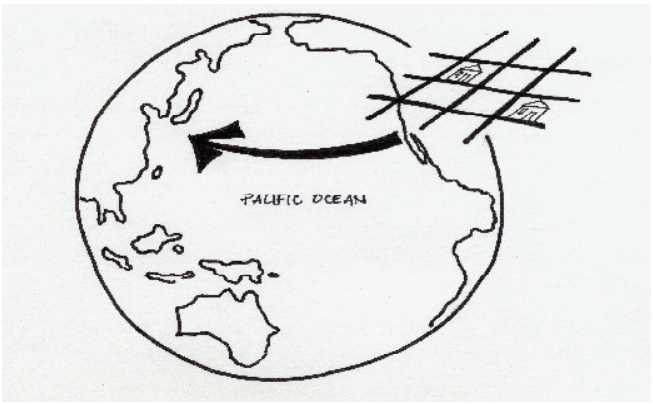

Figure 2. The neighborhood planning unit in its westward migration. (Sarah Minick)

included detailed proposals with small unit circles radiating around schools, playgrounds, and parks. Thus the image of migrating planning units establishing an east-west flyway over the North American continent and one across the Pacific is not farfetched.

While our experience has shown that many of Perry's precepts continue to resonate in Pacific Rim neighborhood form, it also shows that two phenomena of the last thirty years are changing the neighborhood. On the one hand, standardization of neighborhood form has increased. Mass produced housing built by corporate real estate interests and facilitated by local zoning reproduce well worn international building types. Changing consumer preferences replace local retail with international chain stores. Regulation play fields for team sports and liability safe playgrounds dominate neighborhood open spaces. On the other hand, community action to empower residents in neighborhood planning and design decisions is a vibrant and increasing force. Participation in the planning and design of neighborhood parks is common and engages people who typically in other circumstances may not have felt particularly empowered. A foreign nanny in Taipei is the instigator of neighborhood action for open space in Yon Kan. Housewives in Kyoto turned out in force to guide the design of neighborhood mini-parks. In Berkeley, community based design and planning is an expected part of all neighborhood level changes. The neighborhood is evolving as the basic landscape unit of globalization and resistant local action, in parallel. As such it should be a primary field of action for community planners and designers.

The Approach

Our paper discusses approaches to neighborhood community design in the U.S., Japan, and Taiwan. In thinking about how neighborhoods are shaped and reshaped through the community design process, we reviewed our own projects and research as well as case studies from previous Pacific Rim conferences. We considered the players, methods, and outcomes and looked at tensions within neighborhood community design with a global-local filter. Using this review we propose a way of evaluating whether or not community design is "good" at the neighborhood level. We conclude with a set of questions and initial answers that will shape our conference panel discussion.

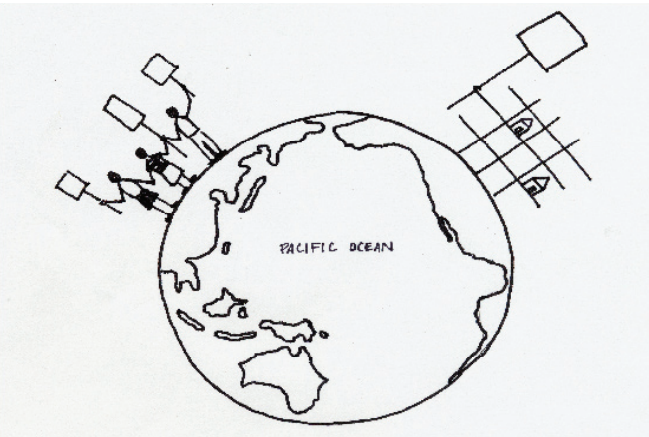

Figure 3. Neighborhoods are simultaneously units of globalization and resistant local action. (Sarah Minick)

THE PLAYERS: COLLABORATIONS AND COMBINATIONS

In considering the results we must first consider the players. Gone are the simple days of Perry, when these matters were left to rational planners, bureaucracies, and developers. Our research indicates that five sets of actors in *community* based neighborhood design are essential to understand as discrete and interactive entities: academic practitioners, local government, community-based organizations, professional designers, and neighborhood residents.[1]

Today

Though not all of these actors operate in every neighborhood community design process, at a minimum residents do. They can take on a multiplicity of roles. The most obvious is to express their needs in the neighborhood landscape and to evaluate proposals prepared by designers. But they take on expanded roles as well. In many projects residents actively shape the landscape by formulating design proposals themselves. Increasingly, neighbors provide the volunteer labor to construct community open spaces and maintain them. This has worked particularly well in Kyoto and Berkeley. However, democratic neighborhood activity requires assurances – that no member of the neighborhood is excluded; that design and construction have expert supervision from within or outside of the community. Otherwise the product can fall short of the quality needed for public spaces.

The experience of participation at the neighborhood level is the first step in citizen understanding of the larger civic role, and as such has an importance beyond the immediate community design process. In the case of neighborhood parks, for example, the participatory process both produces a place appropriate neighborhood space and catalyzes a wider city attachment and advocacy. This, in and of itself, is an evolution of the original neighborhood park idea that through participation in the activities benevolently provided in the park, community building would happen. The present process builds community by literally building the park, and beyond that wider empowerment.

Regardless of country of origin, local government plays an important role in the production of neighborhood space. Today we find many examples of government supported activity aimed at efficient delivery of services but also at an equitable

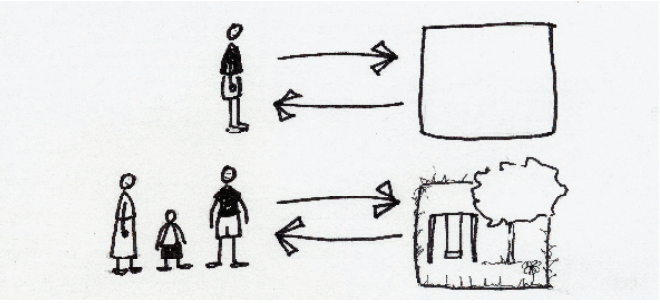

Figure 4. Space making and community building as a transactive pair. (Sarah Minick)

distribution of infrastructure to support high quality everyday life. Of course this is not a straightforward pursuit. In the neighborhood local government representatives are usually responding to political pressure from elected officials and from residents while trying to safeguard long-term institutional concerns. Often the individual city staff person regards community participation as a necessary evil, particularly in places like Berkeley where it is required by city policy. For their part neighborhood residents see staff as impediments to their dreams. Yet our research shows that where city staff and residents seem to be naturally, but not insurmountably, diffident of each other, through the community design process staff evolves in their position to the neighborhood and vice versa. In some cases a strong partnership emerges.

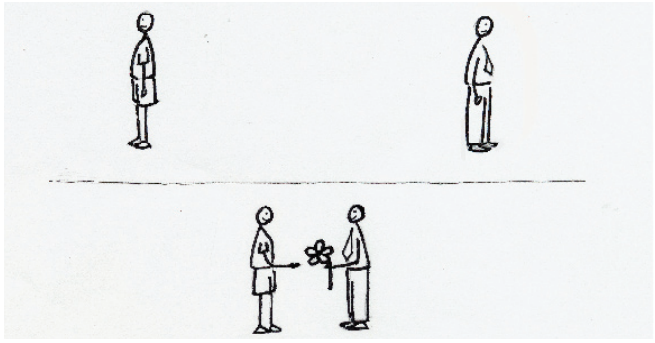

Figure 5. Diffidence can become partnership through process. (Sarah Minick)

Beyond these two essential ingredients (residents and government representatives), the players vary. Since the 1960s the role of the academic practitioner in the neighborhood has been to critique norms and to propose innovation for both process and urban form based on the conclusions of research. In the university studio, for example, academic teams of faculty and students marshal extensive resources to provide the many hours of organizational work needed to both systematically analyze existing conditions and involve a broad spectrum of community residents in the design process. In resource strapped cities, the careful analysis necessary for successful neighborhood park design would not be possible without university involvement. Very often academics take on a strong advocacy role as well – this has consistently been a crucial involvement. In many cases their interests have had a direct influence on politicians and local government officials who, wanting to appear different from their competitors, are naturally interested in innovation, not institutional norms. Through creative neighborhood design and policy planning, local government can appear to be directly responding to their constituent citizens with the support of the academy.

For-fee professional designers are least often involved in community-based design in neighborhoods. Their typical role is often provided by academic practitioners, city officials, or in the case of community construction efforts, residents themselves. The extended commitment of time and effort to complete neighborhood-based design does not fit easily into the strictures of professional practice and the fees are often considered too small for the bother. Most often, professionals enter into the final implementation phase of the process, the construction itself. An exception is a particular hybrid of professional and neighborhood resident, i.e. professional designers, who take an interest in their own neighborhood landscape. In Setagaya, Japan and Berkeley, California there are numerous cases where professionals have taken leadership roles in neighborhood design ensuring a robust community process, design quality, adequate funding, and long-term stewardship.

Our research shows that involvement of community-based organizations (CBO) can be a prerequisite in neighborhood based design processes. These intermediaries can provide outside actors, whether academics, government officials, or professionals, with a way into the neighborhood and connections to key informants and neighborhood activists. They sometimes can bring warring or previously unknown key players to the table, often lending credibility to the outsiders and in turn focusing neighborhood residents on the issues at hand.

Concerns

One issue that is receiving increasing scrutiny is the appropriateness of any intermediary involvement in neighborhood affairs. We saw how in the Kyoto parks initiative the faculty-student team showed citizens and the City how to establish a good relationship. The community process designed by the university created many opportunities for face-to-face, side-by-side communication. We observe, however, that intermediaries are particularly concerned with neighborhood-based community design as an end in itself – they build their own legitimacy through their role in the process. This is fine as long as their interests reach a confluence with those of the neighborhood. We find that if this does not occur, projects can take much longer than needed, are much more costly,

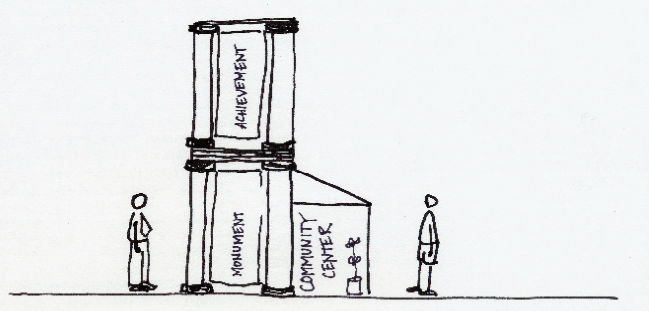

Figure 6. When an intermediary's interests and the interests of the community diverge. (Sarah Minick)

and sometimes the final product (through the multi-layered implementation by too many actors) is far removed from the design agreed upon through the original community process.

One indicator of a good match is a high level of geographic and issue correlation between the intermediary and neighbors. For example in a community design process for Bushrod Park in Oakland, the grassroots organization North Oakland Voters Alliance was able to bring out record numbers of residents to review and evaluate design proposals, while continuing to be active in a range of neighborhood quality of life issues such as traffic calming, clean-ups, and billboard removal. The Alliance also maintains a web site that posts planning analysis and alternative design proposals currently underway.

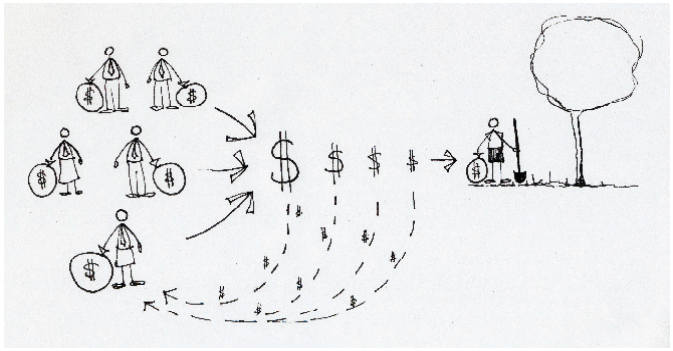

Figure 7. The new cost of doing business in the neighborhood. (Sarah Minick)

Another indicator may be that the scale of the problem is in balance with the scale of the resources expended. In the case of Sanborn Park and Union Point Park (Also in Oakland), the neighborhood-based process was undertaken by faculty-student teams from the University of California, Berkeley in conjunction with the Unity Council, a local but highly sophisticated and well funded CBO. The projects were paid for by monies received from the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund (a national foundation) and federal HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development) grants, funneled through the university, Trust for Public Land (a national environmental organization), and the City of Oakland. Both cases are examples of imbalance. In both, large sums of money were paid out long before construction. In both, the designer supervising construction was different than the designers who worked with the community. In one case the design changed completely, and in the other the materials used were compromised. In both cases the projects went on for years. And they were "just" neighborhood parks.

We have begun to research Taipei's Neighborhood Improvement Program and the Citizen Planner system. In recent years Taipei City has invested a lot of money in people-based infrastructure such as neighborhood parks and pedestrianscapes. It has funded white paper research to sort out how best to make government accessible to citizens. The proposed Community Planning Service Center system will hopefully be more consistent with people's natural "life circles" and avoid the pitfalls associated with administrative districts and old political patronage of the *Li* system. The City has also created a training program to activate young professionals to become part of the community design movement. Recent first hand experience with graduates of this program has given us pause, however. In the Shi-lin night market neighborhood we observed the community planners, who work on neighborhood level planning issues (for fees paid by the City), sounding eerily like local *Li* leaders and city district bureaucrats. While too soon to tell, it made us aware of how important it is for this new cadre of planners to develop an identity and working relationship with residents independent of the City, and to take all precautions that they don't become fiduciaries of the status quo.

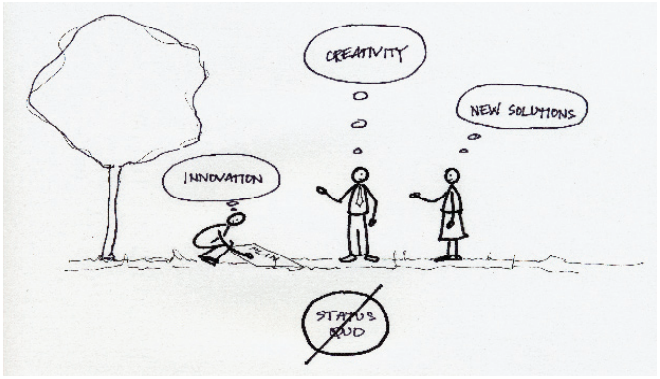

Figure 8. Value-imbued process produces personality. (Sarah Minick)

METHODS: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE OR LITMUS OF VALUES

One fundamental element of the neighborhood unit conceived by Perry and others is the neighborhood park. Every neighborhood was to have one, and for many that do today, parks provide places in neighborhoods to recreate, express local character, and exercise the democracy of daily life. Using the research on neighborhood parks initiatives in Kyoto, Taipei,

Values	Intention of community design	Technique or method
Japan		
Community and family (citizen value)	Build social capital and diminish old hierarchies	Workshop
Respectful communication	Find a shared vision expressive of shared values	Use humor and cartoon graphics, Goal setting, Good process
Partnership (City value)	Find a way to engage citizens in long term stewardship	Good process
Craft	Overcome alienation through hands on engagement	Work day, Fund raiser
Place as expression of nature and culture	Improve the environment of people's daily lives	Town watching, Producing traditional crafts to express sense of place (postcards, quilts, etc.)
Taiwan		
Community	Help citizens find their voice	Events showcasing local culture
Empowerment	Force institutional reform to give people priority over economy (overcome insufficient public services)	Protest, NEIP, community planner system, community planning service center
Professional knowledge + local wisdom	Create new role and style for planning and design professions	Pattern language (not sure how this actually happens)
Cultural preservation	Resist globalization in built form (city should be a spatial support for local culture)	Events showcasing local culture, pattern language (not sure how this actually happens)
Quality of life	Enhance city livability (city should be a spatial support for daily urban life)	Neighborhood design improvement activities
U.S.		
Community	Create a sense of belonging through process engagement that has long term effects	Anything that brings people together, stewardship projects
Private property rights	Protect property values	Protest
Survival (City value)	Do what it takes to get citizens to sign off	Hire experts
Empowerment and equity	Give voice to those previously excluded	Organizing
Knowledge	Use or acquire skills to have control over technical decisions, develop leadership	Technical training
Quality of life	Improve the environment through active engagement (not passive consumption)	Neighborhood design improvement activities

Table 1.

and Berkeley we would like to zoom in on the methods used by community designers to produce these parks and discuss them in the context of participant values. Table 1 begins to bring these things into focus.

The Assurances of Process

It is our feeling that the real craft of community design method is found in Japan. This is certainly the case in Kyoto, where the City worked with the community directly to develop plans for neighborhood mini-parks known as *hiroba*. This was a government – initiated process, the City's goal being to develop partnerships with citizens where none had previously existed. To that end the City engaged a Kyoto University team of faculty and students to develop a step-by-step method which they then taught city staff. The result was open "machizukuri communication" between participants.

We found that use of the round table workshop – taking off one's shoes, sitting around a table, working on a task in a small group – was key. The workshop was a face-to-face venue where people who didn't know each other (and maybe were apprehensive because of the dictates of old hierarchies) could in fact communicate respectfully and deeply. This should not surprise us because participants in this initiative repeatedly mentioned how important it was to find a setting in which to feel comfortable disagreeing. Venue alone was not enough, however. It was important to weave in techniques such as goal setting that would empower participants to speak their minds because they had the assurances of structured process. Goals yielded a collective, big picture context to work in, making it easier to negotiate the details in a pointed way. The workshop process was powerful enough in one case that neighbors today use it to elect new *jichi-kai* officers.

In all of the Kyoto projects reviewed the hands-on workdays where citizens, city staff, and the university team worked together were effective. They were satisfying practice grounds for overcoming the barriers of traditional rigid, no-touch sense of *machi*. Revisiting some of these sites a few years later we observe that the City's desire to get citizens to take responsibility for the parks on a day-to-day basis may have taken root. Two years after the Yanagatubo Tibikko Hiroba process neighbors were found making a tarp to cover the sandbox at night. In Sakura Hiroba residents continue the annual cycle of propagation, planting, and viewing of flowers grown for the pleasure of neighboring Alzheimer's patients. These activities occur without City assistance or funding.

One aspect of the Kyoto example that is important to discuss is the City's commitment to monitoring the effectiveness of the effort. Today the City has a growing cadre of trained and dedicated staff advancing partnerships in other arenas. In a recent workshop, over 40 participants from the City discussed new collaborations with citizens and with staff in other departments. This is only because the City has been willing to adapt the process, which was immediately imperative because the first year of the *hiroba* initiative was quite painful. Early on staff owned up to being scared of going out to meet the public. The university team had to adjust the method, adding role-playing to show staff how to anticipate and handle confrontational situations. They also created new techniques to reach out to residents who were being excluded, such as children and young mothers.

It is possible that the park partnership process is indicative of a larger movement afoot in Kyoto. One of the City's primary goals was to advance citizen participation in order to decrease the budget by increasing the efficiency of the city, in other words making a better match between citizen needs and city expenditures. As part of the effort to match needs and expenditures in 1999 the City of Kyoto conducted a survey of 3,000 citizens in four languages. According to staff, the most surprising finding was the answer to the question, "What do you think is a good way for citizens to be involved in the city administration." The desire to engage in direct democracy in Kyoto seems to be taking hold, as seen in Table 2.

	Response
Communicate, collaborate, and suggest ideas directly with city administration	35.5%
Represent own opinions and ideas through the *jichi-kai*	34.3%
Represent own opinions and ideas through city council members	12.0%

Table 2. Method of involvement.

The Peculiarities of Place

In Kyoto we found that nearly all of the values of participants were manifest in the park design process. In Taipei the parks created out of the Neighborhood Improvement Program reflect a match between resident desires to improve the quality of their daily living environment and the City's capacity to respond quickly. The result is a neighborhood open space system with a lot of personality. One common community design activity that can be credited is showcasing local cultural resources (puppet theatre, outdoor film viewing, banner making) to inspire imagination and mobilize participants. It is interesting then that in talking about the production of neighborhood parks in Taipei community designers discuss them as a venue for the urban social movement. Instead of design or process detail the tales emphasize the struggle. The use of press conferences,

signature drives, and petitions form the main of each story. One observer described it vividly, "…the urgency of a situation often forces devoted members to become effective forces for mobilization for short periods: notifying people, calling meetings, deciding action strategy, dividing the execution of work, and reviewing and discussing results…within a short time, the residents' relationships change from unfamiliar neighbors into familiar comrades in arms."[2]

One would expect the story of the Berkeley parks initiative to be characterized by a well-crafted exercise in democracy. Instead it conveys the pluralism that defines Berkeley politics today (indeed one senior City official has said that there is no such thing as a majority vote in Berkeley – for every citizen there is a different point of view and they are all given equal weight). Perhaps this explains the recent top-down, structure-light design process used by City staff in retrofitting the parks. They knew that no matter what approach they took citizens would make it political. Perhaps this also explains the relative blandness and ubiquitous aesthetic of the parks.

There are several important exceptions. The most exuberant example of intentional process and method is that of Halcyon Commons. It was internally initiated and led by neighborhood activists with professional design degrees. They employed the standard tools of the community design trade – surveys, design charettes, community fact-finding expeditions, consensus building, community workdays. Instead of plurality the goal was to avoid *polarization* (all of those interviewed used the same word). To accomplish this unity the group set up committees to investigate concerns and addressed them one by one. Would a park increase crime? Noise? To answer these questions the group conducted a case study of a similar park nearby. They interviewed people who lived around the park, asking about homeless and criminal behavior. They observed behavior and took measurements of the decibels when kids were playing. Their commitment to consensus paid off, as one person reflected, "We really listened and took concerns seriously no matter how little they seemed. We did reality testing. This really helped – it made us unstoppable. This rarely happens in Berkeley."

Speaking the Unspoken

We wanted to revisit of the conclusions of the Huang-McNally paper from the 2002 Pacific Rim conference, which assert that process tempers the impact of uniformity. Perhaps this should be modified to say value-imbued process produces personality. If we look at the parks designed during this time in all three countries we can conclude that in spite of the neighborhood park being a standardized unit, parks are in some way a place of local expression. On the other hand, it is important to wonder if the process or technique itself is a localizer or globalizer. Maybe both. Japanese and Taiwanese

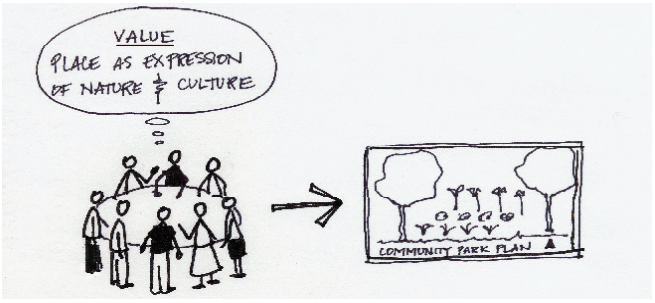

Figure 9. Value-imbued process produces personality. (Sarah Minick)

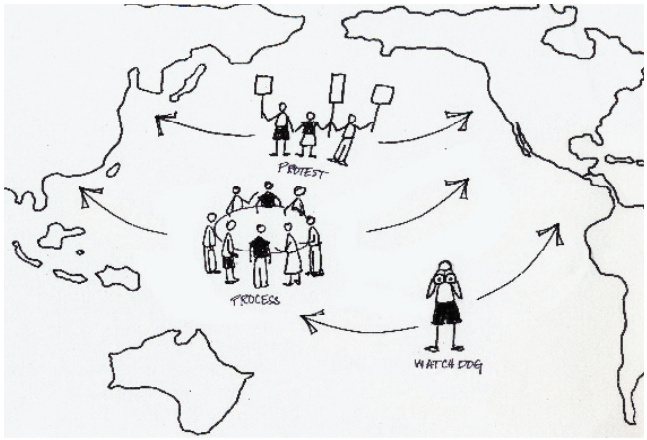

Figure 10. Community design process migration. (Sarah Minick)

both use events and activities to draw in citizens by playing on local history, culture, and craft. Americans and Japanese both use processes and workshop techniques that emphasize structure and information. Taiwanese and Americans both use Alinsky-style, confrontational tactics when needed. Everyone makes murals or tiles, has work parties and opening day events. Community design is an expression of culture. It is an expression of designer personality and creativity. It is also the result of process migration.

COMMUNITIES AND GLOBAL CHANGE: NEIGHBORHOOD LANDSCAPES IN AND OUT

During the past four decades of the twentieth century community design served as a tool to help neighborhoods improve the quality of public spaces, empower the grassroots, and encourage the expression of local identities. However, when it enters the new century, the social context and the parameters of shaping our neighborhood landscape have shifted dramatically. We see those phenomena as a reflection at the local level induced by acceleration of the global agenda. These social changes are massive and cut deeply into daily life, and can no more be overlooked by us, community designers, researchers, and planners. Here we argue from three dimensions, including spatial structure, neighborhood economy, and population composition to see their impacts on our neighborhoods.

Spatial Policy

Community is not a self-determined concept nor does it have its own isolated boundary. Local government policy today can have ramifications at many scales within and beyond its borders – regional, global, and neighborhood. This is especially true for communities under high development pressure. For example, Taipei in recent years has accelerated large scale spatial restructuring to push a new urban economy and promote its identity as a global city. The most cited example is the Sin-yi District. As a symbol of Taipei moving towards becoming a global financial center, it has completely revamped its image from a military village, with an historic type of housing rich in its unique community solidarity and characteristic spatial forms, into the site of the world's tallest building and the city's most luxurious residential accommodations.

Another example illustrating the restructuring of space and economy is the idea of developing tourism in the city as the new economy, brought into focus by a recent cross-cultural research exchange between Huang and McNally's students. While studying the neighborhood surrounding the old Shi-lin night market we learned of Taipei City government's plans to promote the area as the biggest night market in Southeast Asia, supported by huge public investment. Despite the fact that the business sector in this area welcomes this policy, most neighborhoods anticipate suffering from problems such as parking, noise, and crowds in the future. The massive change would also alter the neighborhood fabric. The heart of the night market is a set of spatial arrangements composed of traditional cultural, social, and economic elements such as the Tsu-chen Temple square, the river, and shop house streets. Its already tarnished place identity would be further eroded under the strong pressure of development.

Additionally, the new economic activities bring land speculation and destroy the original neighborhood spatial form. Interestingly, the neighborhoods surrounding Shi-lin night market still carry a very livable mixed street network formed by low-to-medium density Ching dynasty housing, Japanese shop houses, and Taiwanese open neighborhood apartments. Yet the success of the MRT makes Shi-lin a 12-minute ride to downtown and vice versa, which has stimulated a new form of high rise, gated community in Shi-lin. It is our expectation that the push to use the city's night markets as a global tourism draw is or will have similar impacts in other night market neighborhoods before the urban design regulation necessary to protect them is in place. Indeed the English language tourism material, from the *Lonely Planet* travel guide to the MRT maps, features them prominently. Community designers beware!

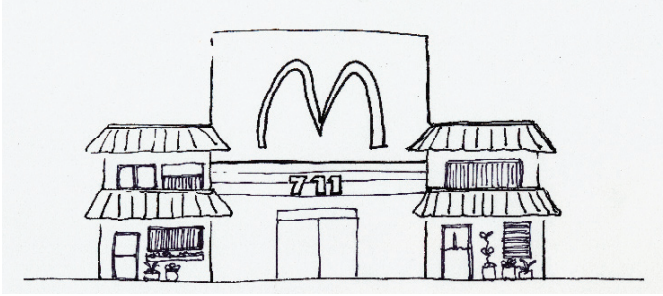

Figure 11. Neighborhoods as the new frontier of the global economy. (Sarah Minick)

Neighborhood Economy and the Civic Spaces

The discussion above leads us to another force altering the neighborhood landscape, the presence and power of non-local capital. This issue is especially significant for neighborhoods in Taiwan and Japan, where residential and commercial land-uses are usually mixed, which means inviting economic activities into the deep reach of people's daily living space. Stated differently, mixed-use neighborhoods with dynamic local economies are the very frontier for the global economy to engage its consumers.

The best example to understand how the organized retailing economy threatens the traditional community economy is to look at the impact on diversified and self-owned shops. Huang lived in the Yon Kan community for almost one year, which allowed her to witness this transition first hand. It was interesting to see the ins and outs after a neighborhood park process made the neighborhood famous. First and foremost, independent grocery stores quickly converted to either convenience stores or venues for higher value craft goods. Cheap dining spots were replaced by chain coffee cafés for customers from elsewhere in the city or even abroad. One small and bustling local hardware store at the corner of the park became an eyewear shop with bright and beautiful interior design.

So we observe the disappearance of barbershops, markets, and tailor shops that used to double as community information centers, chatting rooms, and emergency stations, in other words informal civic space that maintained the social network within the neighborhood. But people nowadays shop less within their communities than before – shopping centers, hyper-marts, and convenience stores are on the rise.[3] With the arrival of global franchise stores, choosing commodities and services now relies on the brand recognition promoted by faceless corporations rather than the trust of the local owners. This new phenomenon begs the attention of community designers, who drink Starbucks coffee, wear Nike shoes, and read books purchased at Borders or Eslite.

Interestingly, Berkeley neighborhoods are vulnerable to the same gentrifying effects of strong local retail, however they have been more successful at fending off chain stores. Indeed

city policy promotes neighborhood retail areas for both livability and tourism purposes, but advertises the unique, locally-owned businesses. Parking and traffic are issues. But according to neighborhood studies conducted by McNally's class, the strongest local commercial areas also have the highest rates of residents walking (as opposed to driving) to shopping, and the highest level of satisfaction with the neighborhood generally. In the Elmwood neighborhood shopkeepers sit outside in lawn chairs on sunny days so they can visit with locals, residents report neighboring more at their local cafés than their local parks. Reading the survey data one gets the sense of the commercial district functioning as neighborhood front porch or living room.

New Populations, New Immigrants, and New Users

The final point is to observe how neighborhood needs for public space change along with the changes of the population. Perhaps the most dynamic conditions surround neighborhoods with foreign immigrants and laborers. How they have access to the public space becomes an issue of environmental justice, which we cannot overlook in conducting participatory design. From our Hong Kong planning friends we know the story of how, after a participatory design process, one neighborhood expressed its desire to exclude local Filipino maids from access to 'their' neighborhood park. In a predominantly Latino neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, teens try to play soccer in the only park within miles. The City installs boulders and "No Soccer" signs. The youth adapt, using the rocks to delineate goals. In Taipei, in many types of civic spaces, such as MRT stations, urban parks, neighborhood parks, sidewalks, and churches, conflicts occur between local groups and foreign laborers, maids, and new immigrants. One can only expect this tension to rise as in Taiwan one out of eight new babies is born of a foreign spouse, and one out of every three marriages is international (mainly from mainland China and Vietnam). Los Angeles is almost 60% Latino, in fact it is the second largest *Mexican* city in the world. This raises the obvious questions: who are the user groups of neighborhood space and what are their space needs, how do we empower those invisible ones, and how can we create a space to foster dialogue instead of exclusion? We must stress the importance of inclusive planning in neighborhood design to safeguard public spaces for those disadvantaged groups.

DISCUSSION

To write this paper we asked the following question: at the neighborhood scale, and with community design instincts and values, how do we design in the neighborhood and what are the results? Assessment is critical so let us look at a proposed set of criteria for evaluating community design based on the issues discussed (the reader is encouraged to complete the matrix in Table 3).

At the neighborhood scale, good community design…			
	Yes	**No**	**Irrelevant at this scale**
Produces space that is needed			
Produces quality design and construction			
Produces space that fosters neighboring			
Gives all neighbors access to the activity			
Employs techniques that capture local personality and translate it into built form			
Uses methods that match the values and intentions of the participants			
Finds ways for neighbors to have partners to work with (i.e. they don't have to go it alone)			
Makes sure the self interest of the actors find congruence, as opposed to drive the process at the expense of each other			
Ensures that the scale of the problem is in balance with the scale of the effort (including resources expended and players involved)			
Watchdogs that neighborhood intermediaries are advancing the ideals of democratic design (rather than reinforcing the status quo)			
Understands and is addressing the breadth of issues with spatial implications			
Yields a citizen understanding of the broader process of the production of urban space and governance			

Table 3. Community design matrix.

Given the cases discussed we need to ask the question, are the right players at the table? Developers and property and business owners have to be brought into the fold otherwise we'll be eaten alive. They may control economic decisions, which in turn control land use, but we control the making of

quality spaces that ensure strong property values and happy local customers. Why not work together?

Perhaps the most fundamental question is–are we working in the right space when we work on neighborhood space? Our research indicates that the neighborhood park's role in the park system is undergoing significant evolution. We should not think of neighborhood parks as fixed elements in the open space landscape but consider their role is to evolve as neighborhoods and urban circumstances evolve; they are funkier and more idiosyncratic. They stand as local place specific symbols of neighborhoods as well as serving user needs. But is park space the only space to consider? Indeed many stated user needs are symbolic rather than actual. The impulse of Taipei City when negotiating with a developer over the reuse of an old mill site in Shi-lin was to lop off 20% of the land for a park to satisfy perceived local needs. The neighborhood studies conducted by the Huang-McNally student research team revealed that resident needs would likely be better served with a number of small spaces in various forms scattered throughout the neighborhood that were linked in such a way to satisfy daily life needs *and* connect to nearby larger systems of urban nature *and* address the pressures of night market tourism takeover.

Thus we conclude that the neighborhood is an appropriate place for flux and change in the urban landscape and an essential means of place identity in an increasingly homogenized and globalized urban landscape. We as community designers, planners, educators, and researchers love it because it is such a perfect scale for us to play with our tools and share them with others. They are undeniably good stepping stone habitat for democratic learning and greater civic engagement. City government should recognize this evolutionary process and formative role much more explicitly and build it into neighborhood management. We would contend that community designers need to take part in this process by taking the time to inventory these conditions and adjust our methods as needed so that when the opportunity (or threat) arises we can guide a process and outcome that makes the best fit.

ENDNOTES

[1] To start we are intentionally excluding a sixth actor, the private business and development sector, but return to this very important force later on in the paper.

[2] Taken from a keynote speech given by Shu-cheng Tseng, Taipei Forum, June 2001. Full text found in: Liu et al (Eds.). 2001. Building Cultural Diversity through Participation. Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs, The Executive Yuan, 489-93.

[3] According to the statistics, Taiwan presently ranks as the country with the highest density of convenience stores in the world. In the past five years land-use deregulation has further boosted shopping malls in the city and suburban areas. The rise is so prominent that the central government recently designated a shopping mall as the core of the life circle in a plan for a new suburb.

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