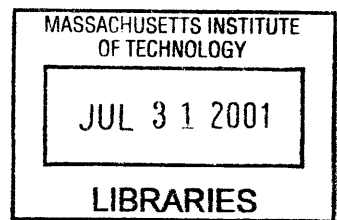# SPICKET RIVER GREENWAY PROJECT, Lawrence, MA:
Teaching & Learning Design with the Community

by

Manuel E. Delgado

Architecture Degree
Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1973.

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING

At the
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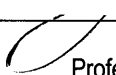Massachusetts Institute of Technology

JUNE 2001

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
on May 18, 2001 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Urban Studies and Planning

ABSTRACT

This research deals with three different issues. The first two, a site and a community, with their own possibilities and constrains, are going to be the protagonists of this adventure. The third one, the architect-planner, trying to play the role of a facilitator in the process, will translate their needs, rules and solutions into a comprehensive plan that should be suitable for the other two. Interpreting the rules of design, as a tool, the architect here would like to perform his role as a medieval alchemist, acting and waiting in expectation, trying not to interfere to allow the process to flow, but aware that transformations also involves oneself.

The main source for this research is the teaching-learning experience at the Young Architects Program, with whom the author is going to share the discovery of the site and the envisioning of a better future. His personal goal is to explore the intimate relationship between ideal form, originated in the minds and images of each one of us, compared with the possibilities for realization after the filter of social, political and economic forces. This will be a teaching and learning experience to confront utopia and reality, within a given urban design problem. The experience of the first four months has been recorded in seven chapters and six journals, that in the form of a diary, carry the observations and reflections of the first approach to the case studied, as the result of the everyday contact with the space and the people.

Thesis Supervisor: John De Monchaux
Title: Professor of Architecture and Planning

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Introduction

My participation in this project is the result of a series of significant coincidences that have driven me to choose it as my thesis for the Master of Science Degree at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning of MIT. First, was the opportunity, through an internship with *Groundwork Lawrence*, to be involved in the improvement and redevelopment of a deteriorated river in the heart of an 1840's planned Industrial City. The Spicket River is a natural resource, full of possibilities, which has been abandoned for a long time. This program aims to incorporate it into the urban fabric of the city. Second, was my engagement and identification with the people of North Lawrence, a community with great creative potential, seeking active participation in the decision-making of their own city. Third, my professional experience, successes and failures, in architecture, urban design and teaching, located in a turning point that allows me to ask the following questions: Is there a real possibility to transform the environment for better? Are there democratic ways to imagine and implement urban plans, landscape projects or architecture in order to be built? Is it possible to do it with the community, from the bottom up? So far, my experience in design has been developed from the top to the bottom, with the result that the decision-making has been relatively easy, but the implementation almost impossible. There must be a different way to build city and community, using design as a tool for the discovery and transformation of urban images into reality.

This research deals with three substantially different issues. The first two, the site and the community, with their own possibilities and constraints, are going to be the protagonists of this adventure. The third one, the architect-planner, trying to play the role of a facilitator in the process, will translate the needs, images and solutions of each, into a comprehensive plan that should be suitable for the first two. Interpreting design principles, the author here would like to perform as a medieval alchemist, acting and waiting in expectation, trying not to interfere and allowing the process to flow always aware that the transformations involve himself.

God enlightening the artifex.

Alchemist in the initial nigredo *state, meditating.*

From C.G. Jung Collected Works N° 13, Bolingen Series, 1942

Thinking about my role, I am open to realize that in every process of this sort, the subject becomes the object of "individuation", as Carl Gustav Jung called it. The analysis of this process was one of the achievements of the Swiss psychiatrist, who studied in depth and wrote extensively comparing the alchemical process with the changes that take place within the individual when consciousness arises. He wrote in reference to psychotherapy: "The alchemical operation consists essentially in separating the *prima materia,* the so-called chaos, into the active principle, the soul; and the passive principle, the body; which are then reunited in personified form in the *coniunctio* or 'chemical marriage.' In other words, the *coniunctio* is allegorized as the *hieros gamos,* the ritual cohabitation of Sol y Luna (Sun and Moon.) From this union sprang the *filius sapientiae* or *filius philosophorum,* the transformed Mercurius, who was thought of as hermaphroditic token of rounded perfection."[1] Design, like alchemy or psychotherapy, demands patience and expectation, making the simplest and most basic operations, to wait for the natural transformation of the elements. But, unlike both, the design process must be transparent and clear, capable of being observed and emulated by others.

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[1] Jung, Carl Guastav. *Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon*, Collected Works N° 13, Bolingen Series, 1942

The Site

The Spicket River urban basin seems to be the right theme and scale for an architect-urban designer to act and see results. It has the appropriate balance in between that of urban planning and architecture, in between ecological planning and city design. The city seems mature and consolidated, with enough tradition and opportunities. The people, full of energy and desire, seem to be ready to get involved in a process of deep transformation of their habitat. All those elements together offer the possibility to work and see results, at a short, medium and long period of time.

In terms of the site, the inspiration for this thesis comes from the design possibilities I observed in what has been transformed into the rear side or back façade of the city. Traditionally, the Spicket River has been a rejected space throughout the urban growth of Lawrence. The river is born in New Hampshire and develops through rural lands, flowing into the city just before it reaches the Merrimack River. Its passage through Lawrence brings an excellent opportunity to literally oxygenate the old urban structure with a breeze of natural life. I see the river as an integrated totality, capable of changing the environment from its interior out, through a sequence of places with their own unity and character.

The People

At community level, the thesis is inspired by the warmth and hospitality of the individuals who live and work in the neighborhoods of North Lawrence, mainly immigrant, whom I meet during a long New England winter, in a bleak contrast to Santo Domingo's Caribbean warmth. Other source of inspiration comes from the potential synergy that flows from the non-profit organizations working in partnership to develop a network of actions and resources for the benefit of this community. At the state level, they are The Riverways Program and The Merrimack River Watershed Council, and at the local level, they are *Groundwork Lawrence* and Lawrence Community Works Inc. (LCW), formerly Lawrence Planning and Neighborhood Development Corporation (LPNDC.)

In addition, Lawrence Community Works has organized an alternative educational experience called The Young Architects Program, devoted to teaching fundamental design skills to high school students growing up in the community. This program is in itself very young (it has been going on for two semesters) and its design and implementation have been put in the hands of graduate students from MIT, through an interchange with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning.

The main source for this research is the teaching-learning experience at the Young Architects Program, with whom I am going to share the discovery of the site and the envisioning of a better future. The methodology to catch the experience will be divided between reflection and action, as Professor Donald Schön developed.[2] Acting and building consciousness, using a set of tools learned from Professor Anne Whiston Spirn at MIT, at course 11.948 J, Advanced Seminar on Urban Nature and City Design, during the fall of 2000. In practical terms, the objective has been to put in place a community design strategy, starting with the youngsters. Hopefully, the result of this research will improve the program itself and will help to define a methodology for future programs of similar characteristics.

My personal goal is to explore the intimate relationship between ideal form, originated in the minds and images of each one of us and its realization, after it has passed through the filter of social, political and economic forces. This will be a teaching and learning experience, the confrontation of utopia and reality within a given urban design problem. What is especially important to me is to establish evidence of the process. The experience of the first four months has been recorded in seven chapters and seven journals which, in the form of a diary, carry observations and reflections about the case and the everyday contact with the space, the people and myself.

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[2] Schön, Donald. *The Reflective Practitioner.* New York, Basic Books, 1983.

1. UTOPIA: Ideal Images and Local Space

The first edition of Tomas More's Utopia juxtaposes an illustration of the island with a sample of its alphabet.

Utopia is a word of multiple meanings. Among them, the most recent one for a that just took place in New York City called: *Utopia, The Search For The Ideal Society In The Western World*, organized jointly by the New York Public Library and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France. The etymological origin of the word is ambiguous. The prefix "u-" coming from the Greek "eu-" means "good" as well as from "ou-" means "not." Consequently the word signals both good-place and no-place. It was used for the first time in a fiction book called Utopia, written by Thomas More in 1516. The name designated an imaginary island located somewhere on the western coast of South America, where "a perfect human society was to take place, without the intervention of the divine providence."[3] The writing of Utopia was the response, 24 years later, to the discovery of the "New Western Continent" by Chistophoro Columbus. The word has become to designate all dream forms of ideal society, containing in it the contradiction of being "no-place" and "good-place". This contradiction exemplifies the paradoxical relationship between the dream for a better society and the impossibility to reach it.

As architect and planner, two contradictory aspects of the word enhance my personal interest: In one hand, the continuous and permanent fact that "utopias" has always been accompanied by designed form, i.e.; form, in terms of specific shape, archetypal and architectural order with a particular lay out in geometrical and spatial terms. Some examples even with specified material and construction methods. Even the most literary or religious oriented utopias have been painted in real (like Jerusalem in the illustration) or ideal cities. These fact makes me think about an ancestral human need for architectural

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[3] Shaer, Roland. *Utopia: Space, Time, History*. Published in Utopia, The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World. New York Public Library, New York Oxford 2000

images, at least for shaping dreams. Like the setting in a theater play cant be separated from the plot, even when it is read as text, or like listening to a music piece is impossible without material space, even if it is electronic music. On the other hand, history shows that

Viaggio della terra santa di Jherusaleme. Italy, late 15th. century. NYPL, Spencer Collection

trying to implement a project based in ideal principles has always, either been a failure, or something totally different from what it was intended to be. The processes of adaptation to new circumstances away from the original intentions. It seems to me that, in the journey of carrying out an idea to its realization, architecture plays the role of the pilot, but legislation, economics, real state and politics are the engine, the chassis and the wheels in charge of carrying out the vehicle to its destination, most of the time, far away from what was planned.

One other aspect that attracts me about UTOPIA, as an American born citizen is the fact that, for the western world, this continent has been the perfect and continuous playground for all kind of utopians, in search for a perfect society. Pre-Columbian civilizations already dreamed about ideal societies in books like the Popol-Vu or in the myths of the Amazonian aborigines. The concept of the "New World" was first invented by Americo Vespucio (The sailor who gave the European name to the recently discovered land.) The search for "El Dorado", the ideal golden city in the middle of the jungle, was the inspiration that moved many Europeans to come to this continent in search of fortune and
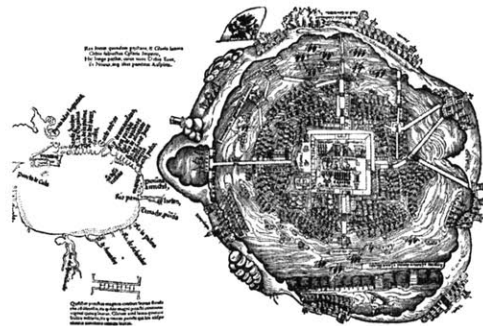
Anonymous woodcut of Tenochtitlán, the Aztec capital, after a drawing probabli commisioned by Cortez.
NYPL, Rare Books Division

made possible the discovery of the interior and more difficult parts of the land.

In terms of urban development, the construction of cities with a rigorous geometric order has been not only a tool for settlement, but also a way of worshiping god and to spread religion in a vast territory. It is also striking that the Hispanic colonization of such a vast territory happened through one single urban project called "The Laws of Indies", repeated more 800 times in different latitudes and conditions, with an amazing capability of changes and adaptation. During the last two centuries, this continent has been the "drafting table" for many projects of society set by the ideas of revolution and independence or work and a better society. In the nineteenth century, many cities in the United States, like Lawrence, were designed following new models of organization to promote industrial development. In the twentieth century Latin America, especially has been the laboratory for testing the "Modern Utopia", something that would have been almost impossible to carry out in Europe. From capital cities like Brasilia, industrial cities like Ciudad Guayana in Venezuela or Ciudad de los Motores in Brazil, to smaller scale projects like the University City of Caracas, they all represent in spatial form the modern dream for a better society transformed into space.

Early drawing of Bay State Mill (the first textile mill built in Lawrence) showing the difference between projects and reality. From *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts*. Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

Now, I will ask three questions: What is the dream of society that we envision now, when, as in the case of Caracas, as in many South-American metropolis, the percentage of extreme poverty in the cities is around 70%, or as in the case of Lawrence, and several North American cities, 70% of the population comes from Hispanic origins? What is the role of design in the present time, when every dream of society seems to be technically possible and economically impossible? And finally, what is the urban image that plays the role of the island of Utopia in our contemporary society?

JOURNAL #1:
San Agustín del Sur vs. West Philadelphia,
Two Sides of the Same Coin.

The first urban plan I conducted in my career was the master plan for the development of San Agustín del Sur, a poor barrio located in a transition site between the central financial district of Caracas and the poorest barrios that cover the south of the city. The plan was requested by the Centro Simón Bolívar, the city agency for the development of public project in Caracas. One of the hypotheses of our team was to build the services and institutions, with architectural quality and urban design criteria, hoping that those features will incorporate San Agustín into the urban fabric of the city.

La Franja, San Agustín del Sur, Caracas, 1990. Built Part of the Project by the Author

As young professionals, all our dreams of utopia were displayed in this project that took 2 years to complete in paper, between 1986 and 86. The first and second stages of construction, containing the local authorities headquarters, a police station, a primary school and day care center, a public library and a church, including landscape design for the open space, ended in 1990. The third stage of the project that included a permanent marketplace, sport facilities and the pedestrian structures to link the barrio with the center of the city, remains unbuild, so far. Ten years after the inauguration, the buildings and the environment surrounding them, have become a ruin. Part of the services still work in isolation within their own walls, the landscape project and the third phase were never built, and the overall impression is that the project was always rejected by local authorities and the community with a main part being invaded by homeless with the permission of the government.

As a result of many problems that deserve further analysis, one of them was not allowing an active positive role of the community from the beginning. San Agustín del Sur remains poor and un-served and more isolated from the central district of the city than before. One of our mistakes was to consider this project as part of a broader social strategy that was out of our hands and never occurred. We always thought that we were chosen only as skilled professionals to develop an "architectural framework", as a model of "good environment" that was never possible. San Agustín is an example of the conventional top-down approach to urban planning.

La Franja, San Agustín del Sur, Caracas, 1990. Model showing the central plaza with pedestrian Terraces and bridge that was never built.

During the same period of time, another project was made also in a poor neighborhood, with the same range of problems (and probably, with the same budget) but in the complete opposite direction. The West Philadelphia Landscape Project represents a good example of what can be done in contemporary society integrating research, teaching, and community service. This project, based in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, was developed as a "framework for

action"[4], to organized a variety of small projects, including community organizations, neighborhood groups, teachers and students from the West Philadelphia public schools.

The West Philadelphia Landscape Project outlines a set of strategies for landscape improvement and establishes a new landmark in the contemporary approach of urban design. Three general goals have attracted my attention, before entering to comment some specific aspects of the "Strategic Landscape Plan." Those are its achievements on informal education, community development and landscape design. First, in terms of education, the possibility of working together, as a joint venture, two different levels of formal education that generally speaking have opposite interests: a local public high school and a Private University. Second, the successful results in terms of community development show that, when the people is organized with specific goals, no matter how diverse the community may be, the objectives are accomplishable. Third, the design itself, incorporating the small scale of landscape and finally the communication design strategy, including the use of electronic technology as an active media for interaction.

It seems to me that a great process of syntheses has been done to join such a large and varied set of problems, keeping the unity and the diversity of issues. It has also been very useful and enlightening to have the opportunity to analyze this case observing the three volumes and the material displaced in the WebPages, not only as a way to look and be informed, but also as a possibility for the community to update the results as a work in progress.

There are seven particular aspects of the Strategic Landscape Plan that I will like to comment:

ξ The strong relationship between the city and the community in several scales. The project allows several readings for further intervention, from West Philadelphia, to Mill Creek, to one particular block. This shows that a city can be planned as a mosaic of multiple layers of different sizes. It's interesting to see the community here, not as a whole, but as many small communities, that can still be reduced to a "block as the minimal cell."

ξ The integration of several histories, instead of the always taught "historic survey of a site", shows the richness of narratives that can be awaken in a community imagination. The evolution of a very interesting and tragic story about the Mill Creek itself and how it changed over time, modifying the behavior of the people, and the way neighbors acting together solved the problem, is one example of this multiplicity.

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[4] West Philadelphia's Mill Creek: Rebuilding Urban Communities and Restoring Natural Environments. (www.upenn.edu/wplp)

ξ The concept of "a place without a center" that can be interpreted as a place searching for a center. The interesting fact is that two different focus of activity were located along the two main axis of the site, one natural by the creek and one human by Market Street. This spatial differentiation permits the possibility of rethinking the city fabric as a polycentric organism.

ξ The broadest concept of landscape applied over many topics, from the park or the neighborhood to the streets, the sidewalks, the parking lots, the railroad tracks, and the creek itself, shows that there are more than one possible objects to be addressed by design. The rich and personal designs of the individual gardens, as a way to express individuality in the public space within a framework of collective urban design in a broader area. Even the WebPage is a lesson of good design.

ξ The variety of concepts of "Landscape improvement", bringing the benefits of agriculture to the city, for example. But the concept of re-urbanization with multiple meanings and scales raises in me a crucial question: Why is architecture not a priority in the Strategic Landscape Plan, considering that there most be demand for new housing and services?

ξ The possibility of restoring and revitalizing the Mill Creek housing project, an architectural landmark designed by Louis I. Kahn in the 1960s, would accomplish the portion of the plan that, from my point of view, is missing. Besides, at least one good new project for housing or community services could be built in the neighborhood to make a demonstration that architecture is valuable.

ξ Finally, the possibility that a successful plan can be a catalysts and inspiration in search of identity for other communities, for the central authorities, and for another cities as well. A plan at the end can be a catalyst to raise the identity of a community, if the people really identify with it.

2. LAWRENCE: The Spirit of the Place

The word 'Site' comes from 'situs', an expression that has a dual connotation: in one hand, it designates a space within a particular location, dimensions and other physical characteristics, in the other, also implies 'situation', which means some type of activity happening on a particular span of time. Webster dictionary defines it as "a place where something exists or originates." In the same direction, Anne Whiston Spirn points out in The Language of Landscape: "Territory is established by the limits of the processes, which create it. A watershed is a territory through which water flows to a particular stream or river; a tidal zone is a territory created by sea's ebb and flow. The boundaries of both are marked by extent of movement. A habitat is an area within which an animal forages and mates; a nation is the domain in which authority dictates that certain actions proceed in certain ways according to law. Paths, boundaries, and gateways are conditions, not things, spatial patterns defined by processes. Paths are places of movement, boundaries limits to movement, gateways places of passage and exchange. A path is maintained by movement. Once a process ceases, space becomes a shell of past practices."[5]
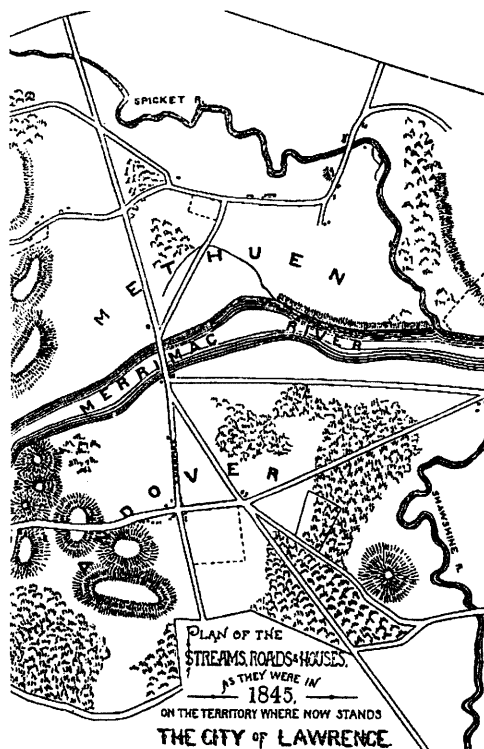
Lawrence, Massachusetts, as a site shares with other New England urban areas the quality of having been industrial cities that experienced enormous changes along a relatively short history. The city began in

From Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts. Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

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[5] Spirn, Anne Whiston. *The Language of Landscape.* Yale university Press, New Haven and London, 1998.

1845 as a planned textile new town organized by a corporation called the Essex Company. Its origin is described very nicely in one of the book of the series Images of America: "This well-planned and quickly growing industrial community became a thriving city in less than ten years."[6] The project occupied the territory on both sides of the Merrimack, originally part of Andover, at the south and Methuen, at the north. The more dense settlement was made in the northern part. The designers had the futuristic vision of making an experimental new textile city that would develop both, bringing profit for the investors and providing the best accommodation to the workers who will live within its boundaries.

LAWRENCE, MASS.

The same book continues expressing: "The men of the Essex Company were aware of the need to integrate immigrants and promote their assimilation in order to avoid conflicts at work sites and in the neighborhoods. They decided that public education would be the most effective way through which foreigners could be brought into the folds of established society."[7] But the workers knew from the beginning that education was not enough to ensure job security and progress. Further ahead, they developed a very good security

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[6] Dengler, Eartha and others. *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts*. Immigrant City Archives, 1995.
[7] Ibid.

system of mutual aide and labor unions that became the first community organizations to operate in the area and permitted the construction of new models of housing. As the textile industry expanded, the city experiences numerous problems that affected the physical urban structure recently created. Many newly arrived immigrant found their first settlement in this place, but the excess of new workers that came at the end of the nineteenth century, brought as a result the deterioration of living space in such a relatively small city area. Following the idea the book continues: "After World War II, Lawrence industry was confronted with new problems: obsolete building, machinery unsuitable for the production of artificial fibers, and increasing pressure from labor unions to pay better wages and guaranty job security. The southern states offered many appealing advantages, and by the 1950s almost all the textile mills had left Lawrence. Twenty thousand job had been lost."[8]

Images taken during the floodings of 1936 and 38. From *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts.* Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

The first flooding I have record of happened in 1880. In that opportunity the Spicket River flowed under the bridge on East Haverhill Street, between the intersection of Newburry and Avon. Before that, "the Spicket was a 'sluggish' river, slowly meandering through the Arlington District and the plains without ever flooding"[9] The solution provided by local engineers after that was to install a major sewer line for the northern part of the city, parallel to the overall length of the river in that sector. In addition to that, a project for straightens the river in that area was accomplished, leaving the alignment as it looks today. In fact, together with the unsuccessful intention of flood prevention, the other purpose was to increase by eight acres the land available for development. Besides the previous wrong

[8] Ibid.
[9] Lawrence History News. A Publication of Immigrants City Archives. Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2001

decisions, the engineers failed in the depth of the new channel to allow the same volume of water to circulate in a shorter length. The situation of the flood plain located in Arlington District has been worst during the twentieth century, bringing as a result the most deteriorated neighborhood in the northern part of the Merrimack River. Just recently, three major floods have occurred since 1987, the last of them in March 2001. The strategy that has to be implemented now is to remove all the structures from near the bank of the river in order to permit it to flood without damages to property. By doing this, the city would be allowing the Spicket to spread over its original channel .

Focusing on the surrounding area of the Spicket River, in the 1960s, just a few blocks away from the central Common, several housing projects in North Lawrence, changed the original grid of the city destroying many important buildings of the previous century. As always, the Urban Renewal program brought more problems than solutions, and as a result, the flooding risks increased. What we observe today is an amazing amount of abandoned industrial buildings and an increasing immigrant population living in deteriorated houses in the flood plains along the river. Surprisingly enough, the urban renewal projects, that in other places have been a failure, remain here in very good shape and most of them have made important contributions for the environmental improvement of the city.

Looking at Kevin Lynch again, I realize that one of his important lessons is that learning from a site means to sacrifice preconceptions in order to find original revelations: "Every site, natural or man-made, is to some degree unique, a connected web of things and activities. That web imposes limitations and offers possibilities. Any plan, however radical, maintains some continuity with the preexisting locale. Understanding a locality demands time and effort. The skilled site planner suffers a constant anxiety about the 'spirit of the place.'"[10] That is a challenge difficult to resist in this case.

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[10] Lynch, Kevin and Hack, Gary. *Site Planning.* The MIT Press, Third Edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1983

JOURNAL #2: Design Day

This journal will be a description of my first experience with the community on the site:

A creative partnership between the City of Lawrence, the community organizations and the site owner, provided the opportunity to acquire a vacant lot between Summer and Newborn Street. Lawrence Community Works Inc. (LCW), formerly Lawrence Planning and Neighborhood Development Corporation (LPNDC.), together with North Common Neighborhood Association, programmed a studio charrette at the Design Center, a multi-use space for discussion, participation and workshoping located in one of the old mills in the heart of Lawrence traditional industrial district. The porpoise was to shape the basic layout for the Summer Street Playground, to be located in a corner of one of the most popular districts of the city, in the midst of the most traditional residential area. The event was my first real opportunity to share with the neighbors a design experience at the Design Center.

A previous community accomplishment, in relation to this playground, had taken place during the summer of 2000, when the neighbors, guided by former LPNDC and *Groundwork Lawrence*, formally took ownership of the vacant corner to design and construct a public landscape playground. The partnership worked to acquire the lot, produce a community-based design and prepare for a voluntary build day, with a grant from the Forest Foundation. "Design Day" took place Saturday, January 20, 2001, as a full-day gathering of around 25 citizens of all ages from the North Common neighborhood. All of them came with their own background and new ideas in relation to the place. At the beginning there was a lecture, given by the two landscape architects in charge of stimulating participation and putting together all the information that was going to come out of that meeting. The two young professionals presented the site in plans and photographs and then showed several alternatives of possible organization for the three main functions that they had agreed upon before: access and circulation, a covered space for small events and gathering and the children's playground itself. After the presentation, the group split into three working teams and each one of them was suppose to define a part of the project.

I decided to sit and observe the three groups and only decided to participate actively with may own point of view when the discussion turned to its highest in regard to height and shape of the fence. The issue was that they assumed from the beginning that the lot had to be fenced, in order to be protected and they were discussing small details with a catalog of iron works to choose a model. Trying to be pedagogical and at the same time to taste their urban criteria, I asked why a small neighborhood park had to be fenced in the middle of a community that is in a process of improvement as a whole. I suggested if they had realized that the corner could be a good passage for

pedestrian. I said that the site could be the first step of a set of improvements for adjacent spaces, like the streets and sidewalks. I kept making tough questions. The fact was that everybody saw me as a disturber who didn't know anything about the life in a low-income neighborhood. The argued that drug dealing happens every day, that nobody is going to maintain the place and that they felt more secure that way.

My argument was not a position in regard to the fence itself. My questions were oriented for them to realize the significance of that decision. Even though I understand that the specific children playground part had to be fenced in order to protect the small children, the whole park, as an urban corner, did not necessarily need to be that way. Urban spaces are also statements about how the people want to live in the future and, in this case, they were wasting a good opportunity. We argued strongly, which I think is good, that this was a very small part of what they were claiming. I insisted that their objective was to take control and maintain the entire neighborhood, and the decision to close the corner acted against the possibility of making the whole city more secure and clean. Even though, I have seen many fenced places that are better for drug dealing than open spaces.

I pointed out that they could invest the cost of the fence in better lighting and use the park as a public plaza open to the people of Lawrence to show in small scale that public spaces could be maintained and would spread the positive initiative throughout the rest of the city. Well, my intervention was a total failure. After 15 minutes of hot discussion, the facilitator passed the agenda to a different point and after that the whole participants voted unanimously in favor of the fence. Finally, they agreed to make smaller, which I think does not make any sense. Probably is better to have something like a basketball court fence, at least could be aligned with the surrounding buildings.

One of the reflections that came out of that experience is that there is a clear misunderstanding in relation to public participation in design. It is important to open channels of participation, acknowledging that the community and their organizations have the best intentions and desire to make an input in the design of their city, but there are limits to all human actions that people have the obligation to know. Communities always think they have the right diagnosis of what their needs are, and who to solve them, but in reality, that not necessarily happens. Designing with the community has to be done together with a process of education that can be sophisticated and usually takes time. Design deals, not only with the everyday issues, also with problems and possibilities that our eyes are incapable of seeing at first sight. It is important to realize from the beginning that untrained people do not have the minimum skills needed to participate in a design team with the proper voice as community representatives. Some training has to be accomplished and examples of urban education have taken place in other cities, to show that it is possible.

3. THE INSTITUTIONS: Floodplain for Fundraising

The first two issues I observed upon arriving to Lawrence were the clear desire of the people for participating in shaping their environment and the high level of organization and coordination by the different groups that work for the community. This is something difficult to observe in other places, particularly in Caribbean societies, organization not being one of its most notable virtues.

Images of the textile strike of 1912. From *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts.* Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

Historically, Lawrence has been an example of community organization and labor association since it was founded. There were several important strikes for improving working conditions at the beginning of the twentieth century. The best known of them was the textile strike of 1912, involving more than 25.000 workers, for nine weeks in a harsh winter. The strike was remarkable for the cooperation among immigrant workers, for the role of women, and for the strikers practice of expressing themselves by songs. Women proclaimed "We want bred, and roses, too" symbolizing their fight for both subsistence and dignity. Thus the name, the "Bread and Roses Strike."[11] In recent years, the city that has developed a very well organized set of community groups that work in several areas in a combined way. One of them is Lawrence Community Works Inc. (LCW), formerly Lawrence Planning and Neighborhood Development Corporation (LPNDC.) This group, in partnership with other public and private organizations, proposed a "Community Renaissance Initiative", to develop several planning project to involve the community in the process of shaping their

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[11] Dengler, Eartha and others. *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts.* Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

environment.

Groundwork Lawrence, is one of the partner institutions that share a common vision for the

Image of a working family. From *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts.* Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

city. This is a private-non-for-profit organization linked to *Groundwork USA* and *Groundwork UK*, two non-profit organizations with similar goals at their country level. The second one has more than twenty years of experience in the United Kingdom. In Lawrence, Groundwork is carrying out a set of different activities related to the improvement of public and private spaces in several places of the city. Their goal is to improve the quality and increase the number of parks, playgrounds, community gardens and green spaces across the city through the creation of working partnerships with public and private organizations. *Groundwork* provides planning and development resources including community outreach, technical assistance, landscape design, contracting expertise and maintenance programming. Following there are a description of the organization and a set of directions that is carrying out a set of different activities related to the improvement of public and private open spaces in several places of the city.

Organization Description

Groundwork Lawrence was formally initiated as an independent organization in February 1999 by the City of Lawrence, the National Park Service and Environmental Protection Agency to be a catalyst for the improvement of open spaces in the City. Its goal is to improve the quality and increase the number of parks, playgrounds, community gardens, trees and improved business environments across the city through the creation of working partnerships. *Groundwork* provides a full service planning and development scope

including community outreach, technical assistance, landscape design, contracting expertise and maintenance programming. The organization goals are: [12]

ξ Being a catalyst, collaborator, and activist to make physical improvements to neighborhood based open spaces in the city.

ξ Providing leadership in citywide planning initiatives for comprehensive open space and natural resource development (including Brownfields, transportation enhancements, and master planning efforts).

ξ Creating open space stewardship through events, education, outreach and volunteer programs.

Groundwork Lawrence Accomplishments

The accomplishments of *Groundwork Lawrence* with its community based partners in conducting greenspace planning, creating environmental improvements, and contributing to community recreational and educational events include:

ξ West Island Planning Process -- Using an Urban Riverways Program Grant, Groundwork led a four-month visioning process with businesses and stakeholders on the West Island to reframe the City's Enhancement Roadway Project. The resulting plan envisions expansion of the Heritage State Park along the riverfront of the Merrimack, improved river access, increased open space and landscaped parking, and improvement of an existing boat ramp for fishing. Part of the grant has been used to launch the Festival at the Island's Edge, now an annual event.

ξ North Common Neighborhood Playground -- Through a creative partnership between the City, former LPNDC, North Common Neighborhood Association and Groundwork a vacant lot has begun to transform into a neighborhood playground. Residents were central in the

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[12] Parts of this section are drawn from a description of the objectives and achievements of Groundwork Lawrence by Marianne Paley, Executive Director.

design, planning and construction of the projects first phase. Over 400 volunteer hours were spent improving the lot and landscaping.

ξ Essex Art Center Art Alley -- Creation of the Art Alley was a dream of the Essex Arts Center. The project goals included upgrading the entrance to the gallery and classroom space, creation of a landscaped open space for programming, and incorporation of an outdoor performance space. Groundwork provided technical assistance and coordination of the volunteer build days.

ξ Mary Immaculate Community Garden -- Initiated on a vacant lot by the Lawrence Earth Day Committee, the Community Garden hosted 32 garden plots this past summer. For the first time management of the garden included standards, use guidelines and assistance in overall maintenance. Groundwork coordinated two youth community service programs providing students an opportunity to plant and maintain a garden plot, instruction on landscaping and gardening, and mentoring with gardeners. A Forest Foundation high school philanthropy program awarded Groundwork $1,000 for youth involvement on this project.

ξ Ferrous Technology Park -- Groundwork has taken the lead on the planning, public participation, access and use agreements, and implementation strategy to redevelop three acres of industrial land at the confluence of the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers for public use. Working with well-known public artists Mags Harries and Lajos Heder, Groundwork is considering the formation of a dramatic earthwork on the site utilizing casting sand from the foundry. A 30' spiral mound will be shaped providing access and views of the river and "miles of mills". The park will also include an open field, site interpretation, river access, and naturalized plantings. The site will remain in private ownership with public access and use restrictions. This site will be a future anchor for the Spicket.

JOURNAL #3:
The First Meeting with Students at Lawrence High School

Due to my insistent request to involve and educate the community in activities related to the planning of their city, I asked to be invited to present the profession of architecture at Lawrence High School Annual Career Fair. The event was organized to put in contact their huge freshman class with the open society. Very excited, I went to do my presentation in the one hundred years old high school, full of ideas to share with the students. The building is located in the corner of Lawrence and Haverhill Street was built in 1901.[13] Ingeniously, I imagined that I was going to convince a "virginal" audience, with a genuine desire for knowledge, to star participating right away in the process of shaping their public spaces.
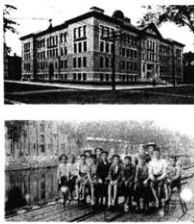
The event began with the gathering of all the speakers in the office of the director, and we were given of a very warm reception by the authorities of the school. Here I had the chance to meet a wide representation of professionals from Lawrence and the surrounding cities. Among them, there were represented all traditional professions: a lawyer, an engineer and a doctor, in addition there were some different ones: a mayoral candidate, a policeman and a journalist lady, who is the producer of a popular interview program on the Spanish TV station. I started my urban persuasion at the lobby, like in a political campaign, trying to involve the emerging professionals in our project for the revitalization of the river.

At the gathering place, we were assigned to a host student who took each one of us separately to make a tour into the labyrinth of spaces and facilities of the high school. From the beginning, the walk was a direct immersion into my own past. While I talked to Christine, my young host, down the corridors, a bunch of diffuse images and remembrances started to flow into memory. First, I realized that this was the first time I had entered a real high school institution since I was a teenager. The atmosphere inside seemed very familiar to me, like my own high school a long time ago. Incidentally, this one looked exactly as the high schools we see in the movies, with the real taste, noise and smell that are universal to this type of institution everywhere in the world. Second, I felt a dual sensation of familiarity and rejection, transported into my idealized years as teenager, but in the bottom of my mind, remembering the hard times, the loneliness and lack of freedom as of the so many years we spend forced to be in this type of institution.

Sincerely, I have to realize that inside, the building looked much better than what I was expecting. The enclosed corridors are the essential

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[13] Dengler, Eartha and others. *Images of America: Lawrence, Massachusetts.* Immigrant City Archives, 1995.

spaces of the building and the places of movement are those where students and teachers communicate, interacting with more freedom than in the formal spaces of the high school. At one point, the corridors seamed like an airport, with rivers of people running from one place to another. The library, in reverse, was quiet like a lake in its tranquility, something that surprised me in a good way. The library is placed in a new building constructed inside one of the courtyards. It has a high ceiling; full of indirect light and images that gives a modern sense of public space. I realized that one main difference between Lawrence High School and our tropical high school buildings is that ours are completely open to the exterior patios and courtyards and have the sense of nature somehow incorporated into the buildings. Instead, they have lockers in every wall, painted with different colors to identify each floor, as a substitution of the natural landscape.

Then I was assigned to a regular class of 18 students; almost all of them were from Republica Dominicana. The teacher presented me with very little attention from the students. After her kind introduction, I started to develop my plan of seduction with the excuse of talking about my similar homeland before entering into architecture and the city. I made a monologue for approximately ten minutes, talking about the relationships between my country and theirs, about our common culture. I synthesized it with the fact that we belong to a puddle of water, the Caribbean, that almost could be seen as a big pond that has been capable of transmitting our culture more efficiently than any road, rail or wire. In fact, as in the Mediterranean, that is the reason why since remote times, the people from this part of the world have so much in common.

As my talk went on, I could observe in their faces the lack of interest my speech produced on the students. I noticed it in some curious details: they never looked directly at my eyes, not even at my face; all the time they were looking down to the floor or up to the ceiling; some of the boys, especially, were not really seated on the chairs, they were literally hanging like a rug, giving the impression that they were staying there because they didn't have another choice. The girls seemed more active and some of them were chatting with each other while I was talking, and sometimes one or two walked from one end of the room to the other giving something to another girl. The overall impression was striking to me; they seemed not to be interested in anything else but themselves.

Because of the situation, I decided to skip the speech about architecture, and jumped directly from the waters of the Caribbean to the waters of the Merrimack and the Spicket River. With very little response to my metaphor, I felt I was totally wasting my time. At that point, what I really wanted to do was to interrupt the talk and walk away. Suddenly, I requested their attention to a large aerealphoto of the city I had posted on the lateral wall of the classroom, and proceeded with the last exercise I had designed for the event. They were requested to stand up and place on the photograph three

different colored-dot stickers: the first one, yellow, showing the location of their own house; then a blue one, showing the place they liked the most in the city, where they like to spend most of their free time; and finally, a red dot, in the place they hated the most, the worst place they knew in the city, the ugliest, the place they would never want to go.

After the chaotic response, at a request from the teacher, they all went back to their chairs and started a prepared interview that was assigned to them. They asked me, one by one, in an automatic order, a series of prepared questions related to my professional practice that I responded to, until the bell sounded and they all disappeared in less that 10 seconds, without even saying goodbye.

The final game on the wall was intended to engage them with their city in a playful way, making relations among the three types of spaces. When they went back, looking at the three dots from the distance, they had the opportunity to draw imaginary lines following their own promenade through the city. At the same time, they could start to realize the difference between their "real" transits and all the possible imaginary ones that we could figure out from the distance. It is important to realize that differentiation between the real and the imaginary is the first step in order to understand what design is all about.

Out of the 18 students, only 12 responded with dots on the wall. At the beginning their response was very slow, and, as always, the girls reacted first, standing and with much difficulty, doing the "real" part of the assignment. Some boys didn't even wanted to stand up. I had to challenge a few of them to walk to the wall and to transpass the barrier of the scale, looking at the plan as a true representation of reality. At the end, as always happens with simple meaningful things, the event became a party and the joy of moving around and chatting among each other about places in the city brought the result that was expected.

The answers to the questions were not surprising: The yellow dots were all spread very evenly on the surface of the photo, gravitating around the school the school with different radius. Some of them even outside, in the margins of the plan, or even on the wall, showing the variety of locations and distances from their home. Some students really have to walk a long distance every day in order to reach the school. The blue dots were somehow spread in a smaller area around and within Lawrence Common, which is in fact a very nice park. Almost all the blue dots were there or in the sport facilities that surround the school, showing the lack of knowledge they have about other beautiful places the city has along the Merrimack River, for example. Very few of the blue dots were in their own high school, under the avalanche of red dots that covered the old building at the end, overlapping the blue dots.

As everybody could have expected, there was not a surprise that the school is the most hated place in the city, more than the jail. When I asked about it, nobody even knew where it was. Some, but very few, red dots went to remote places, and only one in particular pointed to the site, at the banks of the Spicket River, where there is a dangerous place with a deposit of trash. It is curious that the Spicket River is not even considered a bad place in the city, it is just ignored by the majority.

A side conclusion of the event is that the school is able to gather an important representation of the leading professionals of the community, each one with some responsibility in the planning of the city. At the end of the event, I proposed to organize a new meeting with the same group of people to discuss the preliminaries of the plan for the Spicket and to hear their suggestions for its implementation. I keep thinking we have to motivate the people of Lawrence in all possible ways to raise consciousness about the importance of their urban spaces and to make them feel truly that the city belongs to them. I decided to accept the invitation of Ms. Dalia Diaz, the journalist, to the television show for an interviews about the project, probably when we have the first results to interact to the community about their open spaces. Later, I realized that the best way to do it would be to take the students from the Young Architects Program to show their results in front of the camera.

However, it is important to realize that interviews in massive communication media have a risk. If the speaker does not bring anything, doesn't make any sense to go to the studio. If he seems too secure about what has to be done in this place and the project seems to be advanced, the community may think that a plan is imposed from the outside, and probably they could reject it from the beginning. The other fact that has to be prevented is the manipulation of the presentation by the journalists who may distort the real issues that have to be address, focusing on their own interest or the interest of the television channel. Instead, coming to the interview with the students of the Young Architects Program and showing their own ideas in drawings and models, everybody will have more fun and probably the audience will accept it better.

JOURNAL #4: Further Examination, a Journey into my Past

First, I lost a full day with the organized members of the community, who have great desire to participate but, neither know what they need, nor how to accomplish it. They lack the fundamental skills and probably it is to late for them to learn; second, my experience with the students was frustrating. Precisely, I envisioned that the youngsters, because of their age, were open to learning as they do with new songs or a new language, when they are exposed to it. They were not even interested in playing using their city as a toy. Then, what should I do?

After a depressive afternoon realizing that I wasted the morning acting as a circus-tamer and, even worst, that I was wasting my time and energy in this community; an insight appeared in the back of my mind. In a shot-back exercise into my years of high school, I recalled those days around thirty-five years ago, when life was boring and time passed by so slow. Just then I started to realize that, also for myself, nothing was exciting at that age. To my own surprise, I came to the conclusion that I use to behaved exactly as those teenagers do right now. Between 12 and 17, age that I suddenly remembered quite clearly, I was particularly apathetic, not interested in anything but myself. I used to consider weird my classmates who fought to be the N° 1, or were seriously engaged in sports activities or art. I started to discover some meaning in the outside world at 17, when I was a senior in high school. The lever for me was the discovery of Frank Lloyd Wright and his two books <u>The Living City</u> and <u>The Future of Architecture</u>. I would like to read these two books again to find out what exactly touched me and put me on the track of architecture. Perhaps I rejected those kids because I have been projecting on them my own lack of interest at that age. It was like seeing myself on a mirror that I had never seeing before.

My own example represents a common situation that has to be analyzed in order to start working with the community. Instead big displays, trying to do magic to enchant the community with ideas and images that might distract them, education has to focus their attention in very simple things. In another direction, a teacher must act like an ophthalmologist. The doctor, in order to exam the patient, has to turn out the light of his office, make him or her close one eye, focus the object, and concentrate the other eye on a simple letter written on the wall. The accuracy of this test depends on a simple ritual in order to find the right formula for the patient's view. Only after a sequence of focuses is the doctor able to get the right result from his exam and precisely determine the formula to be prescribed for the glasses. For the same reason, young children learn easier a new language because they don't have another reference to compare. In order to start learning something, you have to un-learn something else. It is necessary to get rid of the previous one and it is easier for somebody that does not have a previous languish to un-learn. Exactly the same way education works

in general. Before starting, the attention of the student has to be taking away from their everyday problems and concerns, and suddenly their senses will start opening and focusing on what the teacher wants.

That morning in Lawrence High School, the process worked the same. First, they had to get rid of their ordinary life; then, they could start listening about something else, like architecture for example. After a boring lecture that almost made them to fall sleep, they could concentrate their vision on the aerophoto, to began getting used to orientation and scale on the plan, and finally they started to search for their houses. This process took more than twenty minutes and probably should have been more. Later on, probably because the bell was going to ring, they took five minutes to play locating the places they liked the most, and finally, they were real fast and accurate in choosing the places they disliked, which was the more fun part of the game.

Another conclusion is that in order to focus their view; the teacher has to find real aspects that may catch their attention. It is very difficult to get people involvement departing from abstract ideas. Instead, it is easier to involve them when you are dealing with images that are able to touch their senses. I will like to bring a real example that comes from the working methods of social research. Recently, a good friend sociologist implemented a survey about human rights concerning married women. The primary goal was to get statistic data about women receiving bad treatment from their husbands, in order to implement social aid. As the survey was voluntary, they were surprised about the low response of the target population, it was submitted by a low percentage of women. Suddenly, the sociologist found out that the survey was not submited because the majority were afraid of punishment by their own partners. Later on, they discover that the real benefit of the survey has been to bring most of them into consciousness, for the first time in their lives, that they were not treated correctly by their husbands. At least this is the first step to change the situation.

Coming back to design, we have the opportunity in Lawrence to develop a new methodology for awakening the population, opening their sense of participation. Like in the case of the punished marriage women, they could start to realize that there is a "public space" and that it belongs to all of them. This is the first step to be aware that the space can be changed. After that, I felt better and could sleep well.

4. THE PROJECT: Spicket River Greenway

The objective of this research, with the support of *Groundwork Lawrence* and LCW, is to elaborate a long-term plan for the development of open spaces, services and improvement of the existing buildings located in the natural corridor along the Spicket River. The purpose is to create a comprehensive plan that will join the separated parts of the city and particular sites along the corridors with services and open space for the local neighbors that are spread along the northern part of Lawrence. The Spicket River Greenway Project is typical of the work Groundwork was initiated to address. The project demands technical skill, ability to engage the local community and creativity in project development and implementation. [14]

They envision a new Greenway along the Spicket River linking existing and potential open space resources from the Merrimack River Gateway across North Lawrence. The goal is to reclaim the Spicket River as a community asset, bringing the natural environment into this dense urban area. The Greenway will be developed as part of a greater neighborhood strategy, with *Groundwork Lawrence* and LCW providing the support necessary for the process to be driven by local stakeholders and residents. One final aspect that has to be included in the long term plan is the improvement of deteriorated houses and business, the demolition of extremely deteriorated houses in the floodplain and the relocation of those families in new housing projects in safe vacant land along the site. The new housing project should be developed as an opportunity for clear environmental and architectural achievements.

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[14] This section is drawn from the Spicket Greenway Summary prepared by Groundwork Lawrence.

According to Groundwork Lawrence, there are many complex project components including key riverfront Brownfields sites several businesses with "non-compatible" riverfront uses including auto mechanic uses and the city yard, and residential properties running directly to the river's edge. In addition, careful thought and community input must address water quality, dumping and public safety concerns in the river corridor. Yet, there are many opportunities to build on including city-owned parks and schools along the Spicket, and numerous bridges and public roadway providing some visual and physical access to the river.

There are currently several development activities along the Spicket River Corridor with critical environmental issues. The Spicket River passes through four significant Brownfields sites targeted for recreational open space and in one case, landscaped parking in the core mill district. In addition, through the Federal Emergency Management Agency the City is initiated a redevelopment plan for a residential area along the Spicket River effected by periodic flooding. The City has purchased 14 properties through a voluntary acquisition program, which will result in additional green space and a flood management buffer in the Arlington district. Although the acquired land will be used for open space, the process by which it is designed and implemented should ensure multi-stakeholder participation. Groundwork Lawrence and LCW are currently building a Spicket River Working Group and neighborhood stakeholder groups. Tools for community participation have been initiated including site maps, vacant lot surveys, water quality information, City and institutional development plans as well as the work of the Young Architects Team.

Target Audience

Continuing the description by the Executive Director of *Groundwork Lawrence*, the Spicket River Greenway Project is particularly challenging due to environmental justice issues of North Lawrence and the City as a whole. Lawrence is a densely developed city of 70,000 residents in 7.5 square miles with very few tracts of undeveloped land. Although the City

boasts of three rivers, there is little public access in the residential areas due to dumping, perceived danger and lack of available land. Given a citywide poverty rate of 27.8%, and plethora of urban ills, open space development is not high on the local agenda. According to the 1990 Census, the North Common and Arlington Neighborhoods shared a grim set of statistics:

ξ Nearly half of all North Common residents live in poverty

ξ North Lawrence unemployment levels are over 25%

ξ Over 68% of the housing stock (mostly triple-deckers) were built before 1950, only 22% of the units are owner occupied, and vacant lots or abandoned buildings abound.

ξ There are very limited recreational spaces in the North Common and Arlington neighborhoods, which have the highest density and largest concentrations of children under 18 in the City.

Yet, North Lawrence has many assets to leverage including committed neighborhood associations, several strong churches, private and public schools. Business and institutional stakeholders including Lawrence General Hospital, Malden Mills, and GenCorp Inc. are close to the river corridor and understand its value to their assets and the overall heath of the community.

Specifically, the funding requested will target (1) Approximately 10-12 North Lawrence high school students to participate in the Young Architects Team; (2) Each youth's friends, families and community members; and (3) Established neighborhood associations of North Lawrence (the North Common and Arlington Districts), riverfront business and institutional stakeholders, community groups, city officials, and public and environmental health officers.

Schedule

Although the overall Spicket River Greenway Project is a multi-year effort, this specific project will run the course of the fall 2001-school semester. Documentation of the Young Architect's environmental resource information and the results of community based programming will be completed by June 2002.

Results

The long-term goal of the Spicket River Greenway is the creation of a well designed, active and environmentally sustainable area along the Spicket River that acts as a catalyst for improvement and redevelopment of the neighborhoods through which it passes. To reach that goal we must build a broad-based group of informed stakeholders. The Young Architects Team will gather information, become trained in the environmental issues described above, and translate the data to community stakeholders through workshops, programs and activities conducted by the youth with assistance from project partners. A pamphlet will summarize the project history and issues, goals, methods and vision for design and development to be utilized in educational venues and to further promote the Spicket River Greenway.

Environmental Justice Goals

By its nature, every Greenway project necessitates coordination among many stakeholders and presents the opportunity for exchange of information, community-based consensus building, and creation of long-term partnerships. Environmental issues relating to water quality and large number of vacant parcels burdened with impacted soil and pollution can best be evaluated and improved on a system-wide level. This project intends to actively educate a small group of students, and then work as partners with them to communicate environmental concerns and opportunities to the larger community through

established neighborhood based task forces and a larger stakeholder-working group. The Spicket River Greenway is a high priority environmental justice project due to the high density of the area, limited open space, impaired quality of the natural environment due to historic uses and management, 70% minority population, and lack of ability of the population to participate in a knowledgeable and effective manner.

Directly, *Groundwork Lawrence* will meet the following two Environmental Justice Small Grant Program Goals by:

ξ Developing partnerships toward improved coordination of information, education and planning around the environmental concerns and open space opportunities of the Spicket River.

ξ Building community capacity to identify water quality and solid waste issues and involve youth and the community in the design and implementation of activities to address concerns. Active participation, programs, and critical path development will be central to the project.

Partnership and Support

Formation of a Spicket River Greenway is a challenge we will meet through positive existing relations with the City, strong partnerships in the North Common and Arlington neighborhoods, productive ties to local institutions and businesses, and expertise in planning, implementation and watershed restoration. Groundwork will partner in this effort with the Lawrence Community Works (LCW), a local community development corporation working primarily in the North Common Neighborhood on neighborhood planning, housing and open space development. LCW will use their expertise in establishing the stakeholders, providing community outreach, and developing the community based neighborhood strategy. In addition, involvement with the Young Architects Program, discussed below, will be under the guidance of LCW. The initial list of partners associated with the Greenway includes:

ξ North Common and Arlington Neighborhood Associations

ξ Local Institutions on the Spicket including Lawrence General Hospital and Central Catholic High School, as well as two elementary schools

ξ Local Businesses including Ferrous Technology, Malden Mills which anchor each of the Lawrence ends of the trail

ξ City projects including the targeted FEMA area, several parks and public roadways

ξ Merrimack River Watershed Council

ξ MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning

An Urban Fellowship for the Spicket River Greenway

Starting in January 2001, the initial development of an institutional partnership with MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning has brought the opportunity to open an internship program called "Urban fellow for the Spicket River Greenway." Groundwork Lawrence gave me the opportunity of working in this program to analyze the potential for the formation of a Spicket River Greenway. Spearheading formation of a Plan for a Spicket River Greenway addressing directly each of the Groundwork Lawrence goals. We have established targeted partnerships (discussed below) to ensure that the Greenway evolve as a grassroots initiative, establishing a long-needed resource in North Lawrence. The Urban Fellowship has provided central information and analysis to the process together with design direction or recommendation.

Tasks, Role and Results of the Urban Fellow Contribution

The basic tasks of the internship are set in Spicket Greenway Summary prepared by Groundwork Lawrence. [15]

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[15] Ibid

"The Urban Fellow would be a central member of the Groundwork staff, housed at the Groundwork/MRWC office. Planning, design and landscape ecology skills would be desirable to complement the staff expertise. The Urban Fellow would perform the following tasks:

ξ Investigate and confirm the ownership of parcels along the Spicket River.

ξ Compile and update information on planning and development activity in the target area.

ξ Map the potential physical path of the Greenway from the Ferris Technology Site to Methuen's Riverwalk Park. This work could be performed with assistance of 2-3 participants in the LCW's Young Architects Program.

ξ Participate in community focus groups on the Greenway concept.

ξ Participate in the planning and accomplishment of community education programs, i.e. Earth Day on the Spicket, shoreline survey with the MRWC, storm drain mapping, "Hope Floats" community event.

ξ Assist Greenway partners and staff in initial formation of the program and design concept for the Greenway.

Groundwork Lawrence is very interested in utilizing computer mapping and design tools in conjunction with LCW to create a virtual model of the Spicket River. The river is covered, fenced, or overgrown along most of its banks which alters the perception that it could be an asset versus a public health and safety hazard. A virtual model could "uncover" the potential of the River and allow process participants to test interventions and plans. LCW has initiated the Young Architects Program, establishing a fully appointed architecture studio in Lawrence for 15 Lawrence and Methuen High School Students. The students will work on a landscape design for a significant site on the Spicket, historically know as "the laundry site". This work will be factored into the planning process and interested students

will be retained to assist in the Greenway process. The studio will provide the computer technology to accomplish a virtual map.

The results of the Urban Fellows work including the property data base, mapping information in various formats, computer virtual tours of the Spicket resources and initial design concepts will all be used in the community based planning and visioning process. It is our vision that we will be able to present a grassroots plan that is compelling enough to provide a backbone for action and pilot projects the length of the river with public, business and institutional partners."

Environmental Benefit

This project is particularly challenging due to environmental justice issues of North Lawrence. Lawrence is a densely developed city of 70,000 residents in 7.5 square miles with very few tracts of undeveloped land. Although the City boasts of three rivers, there is little public access in the residential areas due to dumping, perceived danger and lack of available land. Given a poverty rate of 27.8%, and plethora of urban ills, open space development is not high on the local agenda. Groundwork Lawrence has been active for the past year building partnerships to plan, design and develop new and revitalized open spaces in the city. The addition of the Spicket River Greenway would provide an open space assets of the city, and improve community understanding and involvement with the degraded area of the river.

JOURNAL #5: Space and Place in Search of a Definition

Teaching design has always been a paradoxical experience. In the process, the roles can be easily interchanged between the two participants. An activity that is initially oriented from one focus; that of an individual who teaches, to an audience who learns; is able to switch at some point in the opposite direction, producing the most fantastic discoveries. If the alchemy works, the enlightenment comes when there is a product and both, the student and the teacher, suffer an individual transformation that can change the way they approaches his profession.

Herman Hertzberger, a well-known architect from Holland, in his Arthur Schein Memorial Lecture at MIT, made a few statements that deserve further considerations. He said that internationally renowned architects seam to be competing among themselves to make the most beautiful objects just to be published in the magazines, forgetting that the main purpose of their work is to design space. Space is intangible, very difficult to catch in a photograph, but it is the primary material of architecture and urban design. To describe with words or images a good space is almost impossible. Paradoxically enough, it is easy to describe a bad space. Remarkable spaces are difficult to describe in rational words, they can only be perceived in site as you visit them. Meanwhile, places are described by the activity that takes place within those spaces. Good houses or a cities are able to be narrated better as a place, though the activity, than as a space in pure form. People interacting with a space, makes the place.

Hertzberger described the case of an architect who was designing a beautiful garden for a certain place. He waited until the project was finished to show it to the community, and they completely rejected. The people's reaction against the project came about because they were not taken into account. So, the community decided to design the garden themselves, and they did it very nicely. The incident was painful for the architect, who lost his job, but it was god for the people because from there, they had to learn the basic tools for designing their own garden. This shows how an individual failure can be transformed into a collective success.

In the case we are involved there is a consensus that the Spicket River project has to be accomplished. As the process goes on, it is important to find a new methodology, one that shifts to the people the responsibility of making it while learning. Meanwhile, the architect has to learn to take into account this variable. In the process of teaching the community, both have to be open for learning. The architect has to read and interpret how the community acts to space, translating into their own language all his knowledge about natural and urban space, construction techniques and materials, in such a way that can be transformed and incorporated as a tool for themselves to use.

Hertzberger also said in his conference, "the new paradigm in education is a social one." To teach the people to get along with each other, to teach communities how to live together; only then, can space be shaped. He said that every building should be approached as urban design. "To design a school is like designing a city." School is the space where students learn to relate with each other and with their community. The opposite can also be said: designing a city is like designing a school. The purpose is to educate the people to live together, to value the space and to be able to become better individuals. As an architect, knowing the tools of shaping space, we have the responsibility to shape a community, and as for the community, it has the responsibility to show the architect how to do it.

Coming back to the topic in Chapter 2, Herman Hertzberger also talked about the difference between place and space. Space is an abstract concept and can be empty, as architects like their buildings to look in the photographs. Places add all the possibilities of human activity in different combinations that can make a place unique every time. Again as in the alchemical process, the right measures in the proportion between activity and space makes the difference, transforming a rough element into gold. Empty spaces will always be looking in search of people to become places.

Just to mention a close example: Commonwealth Avenue in Boston is a remarkable public space maintained by the people who have lived there for many years, and also by the will of the city as a hole, through laws and regulations that have kept this space almost as it was one hundred years ago. Humans made it, house by house and tree by tree. Before building and planting, there was a plan, which was the product of the desire of different generations of people at the end of nineteenth century, including politicians and developers. None of them imagined that such quiet and traditional space would be transformed into something completely different, every third Monday of April, by the celebration of the Boston Marathon. Within a few days in the spring this historical site becomes a feast of energy and life, when 20000 runners pass though it in search of the final line. A few days letter, it is followed by the spring blossom of the magnolias in the edges of the street, bringing a sense of renascence every year. A similar transformation happens in the fall at the Charles, when the Head of the Charles Regatta transforms a quiet river into a big party of life, colors and movement that is followed by the foliage of the trees in the Fall. Both events, at the peak of two opposite seasons, worship the triumph of a good relationship between human and nature in a city that attracts more tourists for the variety and energy of their people and nature than for the beauty of its monuments. A good space does not necessarily know what type of space it is going to be, but it has to have the conditions to accept to be invaded by any activity that brings it to life. A beautiful space without people means nothing and a potential community without space does not have the chance to exist. Community, communication and communion have the same origin.

5. SEVEN SITES: Urban Design Guidelines for a Long Term Plan

Having been involved in this case for the last four month, I have come to the conclusion that there are two scales of actions that have to be accomplished in order to design a comprehensive plan for the Spicket River. I the urban scale, I have realized that the urban portion of the Spicket River is one environmental unity in itself, within the limits of North Lawrence, between Stevens Pond and its mouth at the North Canal. Its influence, as well as its basin affects the whole urban area of North Lawrence, between the limits of the city of Methuen and the Merrimack River. As an environmental unit itself, it has its own character and limits and its own possibilities and constrains. This is a fundamental issue in regard to the criteria that has to guide the project from now on.

PLAN
of the
SPICKET RIVER
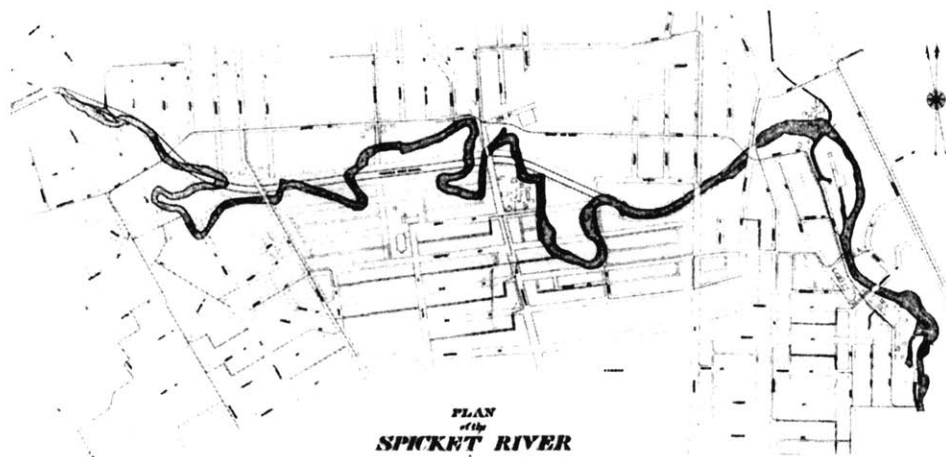
The alignment of the Spicket River after and before 1880. Immigrant City Archives.

From the geographic survey, carried out by the Merrimack River Watershed Council, but also walking many times along the site, and from the historic survey, carried out at the Immigrants City Archives, with the assistance of Patricia Jaisane and Katherine Reinhardt, director and archivist of the mentioned institution, there are several layers with different processes that have to be matched in order to capture the natural patterns of the site and how they have changed over time.

1. The evolution, natural and man made alignment of the river across the city.

2. Flooding patterns and periodicity.

3. Watershed, subwatersheds and sewers.

4. Evolution of different uses along the river basin.

5. Housing and occupation patterns.

6. Survey of the roads and bridges that surround and cross the river.

Coming down to the local scale, I have come to the conclusion that there are seven sites along the portion of the river, configuring each one of them one smaller environmental unit in regard to physical characteristics, type of neighborhood and uses and type of construction in each one of them. Another facts that have been taken into account to define the seven units are related with the potential of each location, opportunities for future development and type of partnership to accomplish the objectives.

1. MALDEN MILL INDUSTRIAL PLAZA
2. ARLINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD
3. ERVIN AVE. RIVERSIDE SITE
4. NORTH - NORTH COMMON
5. BROOK - PROSPECT (FLEET) SITE
6. LAWRENCE GENERAL MEDICAL SITE
7. GREEN CORP / GATEWAY
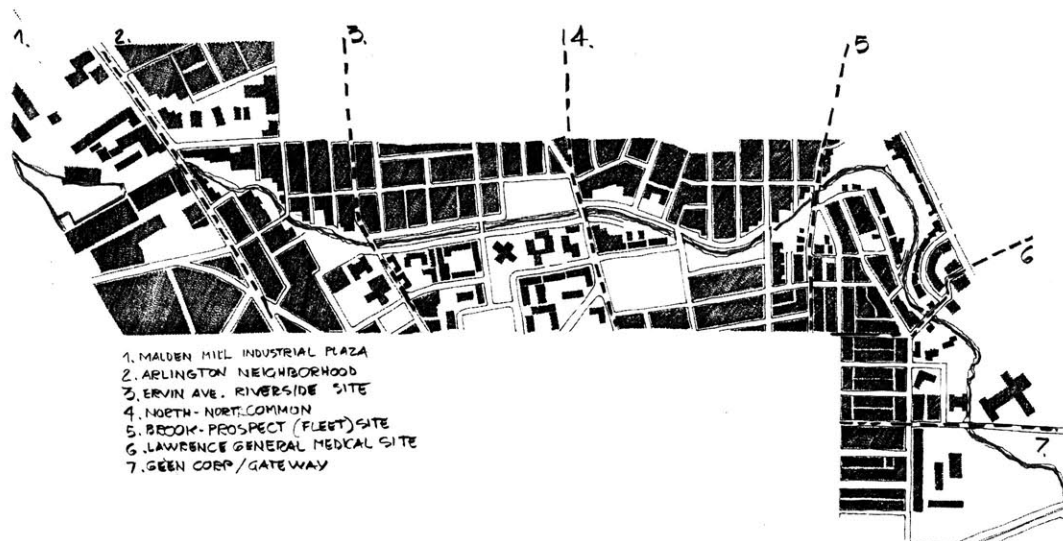
Seven Sites as Environmental Units along the Spicket River. Preliminary Sketch

Spicket River Greenway Seven Sites and Principal Features

1.MALDEN MILL INDUSTRIAL SITE. Located west of Broadway, this place preserves the atmosphere of a nineteen's century industrial complex, still in production after it was restored due to the big fire a decade ago. The site incorporates a unique open space between the old brick buildings, a clock tower, a water reservoir, a dam and the beginning of the urban section of the Spicket River. The main feature for this site would be the **Industrial and Commercial Plaza.**

2.ARLINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD SITE. Located between Broadway and Hampshire Street, including Central Catholic High School, this is the most deteriorated site along the Spicket River basin. This area, the most affected by the recurrent floods, needs to be restored mainly as open space. The purpose is to let it work as the flood plain it used to be, transformed in a public park related to the high school and open to the river. In such a way, the site will preserve the atmosphere of the traditional neighborhood improving the open spaces and the un-existing playground of the school. The main features for this site would be the **Arlington Promenade and Central Catholic High School Park**.

3.ERVIN AVENUE SITE. Located between Hampshire and Lawrence Street, this site is a product of the alignment of the river, with new housing typologies resulting from the Urban Renewal Program of the sixties. This site has as an existing attraction in the open space of the Heyden Schofield ballpark. The main features for this site would be the continuation of the **Riverside Boulevard and Playground Enhancement**.

4.NORTH COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD. Located between Lawrence and Jackson Street, this site brings the opportunity to continue the Riverside Park with potential lots to explore new types of urban housing and open spaces. The main feature for this site would be the continuation of the **Riverside Boulevard And Creation Of The Immigrant Park.**

5. BROOK-PROSPECT SITE (Old Laundry/Fleet Site). Located between Jackson and Haverhill Street, this site has a great potential for improving and restoring existing houses and developing a park to link the North Common and Prospect Hill neighborhoods, both located in opposite sides of the river. The main feature for this site would be the **Old Laundry Park, Open Amphitheater and Pedestrian Bridge.**

6. LAWRENCE GENERAL SITE. Located between Haverhill and General Street, including Leonard Primary School and the back facade of Lawrence General Hospital, this site brings an opportunity for open spaces for health and contemplation. Today it is mainly parking space with a good slope and vegetation for the natural expansion of the hospital. The main feature for this site would be a **General Hospital Health Park**.

7. GEN-CORP SITE/OXFORD GATEWAY. A site located between General and Canal Street; today it is mainly parking space for the industrial buildings. It has the potential of an important entrance to the city to connect Prospect Hill with Downtown Lawrence, incorporating Storrow Park to an urban park system. The main feature for this site would be the **Gateway Park And Ecological Parking Place.**
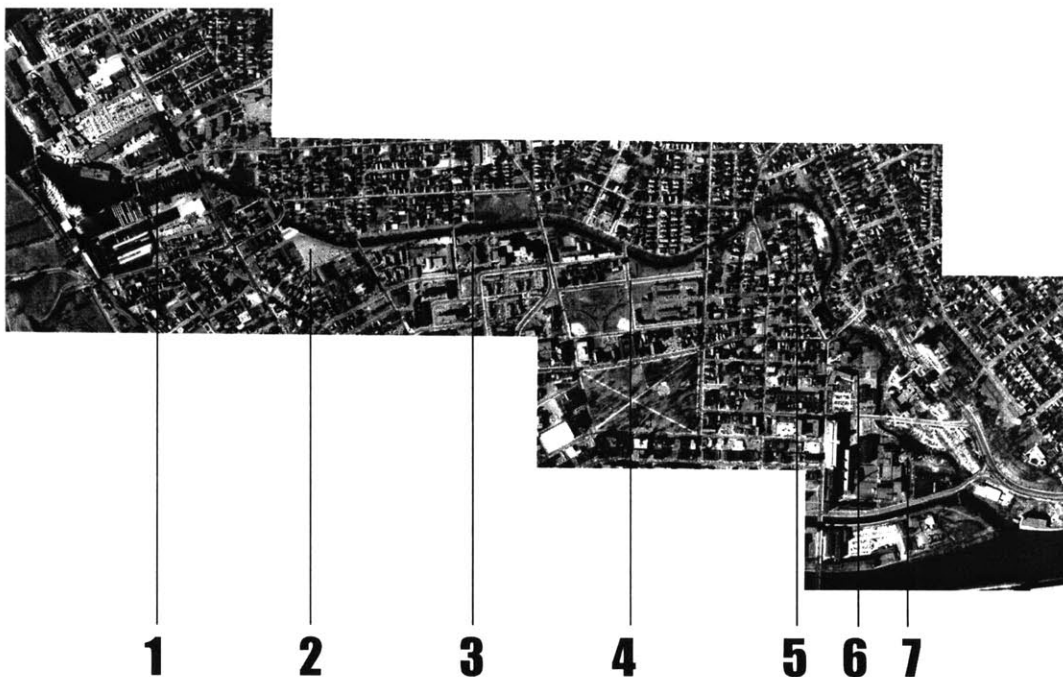
1   2   3   4   5 6 7

SPICKET RIVER GREENWAY PROJECT SITES AND PRIORITIES

SITE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Name:	INDUSTRIAL SITE	Arlington Neighborhood /Central Catholic H.	Urban Renewal Sector	North Common/Lawrence High School	North Common /Prospect Hill	Health Site	Gateway Site
Principal Open Space	Arlington Industrial Plaza	Fema Site, Central Catholic Park	Hayden Schofield playground	Imigrants park	Old Laundry Site	Leonard School Playground	Gen Corp-Oxford Site Park
Location:	West of Broadway Street.	Between Broadway and Hampshire Street.	Between Hampshire and Lawrence Street.	Between Lawrence and Jackson Street.	Between Jackson and Haverhill Street.	Between Haverhill and General Street.	Between General and Canal Street.
Today Function:	Industrial textile and parking	Housing, private education and parking.	Housing, old in the north and new in the south	Housing and Public Education	Traditional Housing and Small Business	Medical facilities and Primary Education	Old industries, New Office Space and Parking
Institutions:	Arlington Mills, Malden Mills and Private Business	Central Catholic High School	Lawrence Public High School	North Common Neighborhood Association	North Common Neighborhood Association	Lawrence General Hospital, Leonard School	Gen Corp, Everet Mills and Private Business
Population:	Workers and employees	Neighbors and students	Neighbors	Neighbors and Students	Neighbors	Neighbors, patients and students	Employees
Overall Physical Situation:	Good conditions of construction and infrastructure.	Flood plain area, deteriorated houses and other type of low quality constrain along the river.	Straightened part of the river, roads on both sides and housing (new and old) in good conditions.	Straightened part of the river, road on north sides and housing (new and old) in good conditions.	Changing topography, deeper part of the river, deteriorated houses along both sides.	Good for the buildings and bad for the exterior open space	Remediation land in the process of cleaning.
Architectural Values to Preserve:	19th. Century Industrial Mills	None	Urban promenade and Sport Facility	Urban promenade	Traditional align houses along Brook St.	The original hospital building and the old school buildings.	19th. Century Industrial Mills, Storrow Bridge
Environmental. Values to Preserve:	Stevens Pond, open space and contained part of the river	Flood plain, open space and vegetation	Alignment of the river, playground and vegetation	High School playground and open green space along the river	Steep topography, natural meander and vegetation, open corner.	Good atmosphere for children and health care facilities	The natural flow of the river, the relation to the north canal.
Views:	Contained within the site and open view to the west towards the cemetery	Street perspective towards Malden Mills and St. Mary Church	Open at the highest part of town from the south towards the north over the river.	Short views in the streets perpendicular to the river	Self-contained within the site.	Nice view of downtown from the slope on Prospect Hill.	Nice view of the industrial area the canal and Prospect Hill.
Functional Connections	Commercial strip along Broadway neighbor access from Park St.	Pedestrian flow from and to Catholic High School and Church.	Little north-south connections, mainly car access and parking	The more dens pedestrian area, High School students	Little connection between the two neighborhoods	The best possible connections between Prospect Hill and Downtown.	Transition point between Downtown and Northern New England.
Development Status	Recently restored industrial area.	Fema Area and renovation of Central Catholic Parking lot	Stable situation, no major changes has been done	Stable situation, no major changes has been done	Old Laundry Site Remediation, Our House Project	Masterplan for the Hospital Area	Gateway project, Remediation and infrastructure project.
Partnership:	Privately owned public space.	City and community driven project	Typical city project in public space.	Typical city project in public space.	Private Partnership in Community Driven Project.	Privately owned public space.	Privately owned public space.
Type of Development:	Removal of a parking lot and construction of a plaza.	Cleaning, demolition and restoring open space. New parking and housing to be built within the community.	Urban improvement, north-south bridges for pedestrian communication.	Urban improvement, continuation of the street in the south side and pedestrian communication.	Housing improvement cleaning and landscape project	Street pedestrian improvement, removal of a parking lot and construction of a park.	Road whiteness, parking lot, and landscape project.
Cost:	Low.	High.	Low.	Medium.	High.	High.	High.
Community Outreach or Education	Corporation Outreach	Community and education Outreach	Community and education Outreach	Community and education Outreach	Community and education Outreach	Corporation Outreach	Corporation Outreach
Environmental Considerations	Historic Preservation and Open Space Improvement	Flooding Prevention, Planting and Housing Improvement	Pedestrian Access and planting	Pedestrian Access and planting	Environmental Cleanup and housing Improvement	Environmental Cleanup and Open Space Improvement	Site Remediation

JOURNAL #6: Photography as Inquiry

Following there is a visual journey throughout the seven sites across two seasons, between January and April 2001. The method of photographing landscape started the previous fall, under the supervision of Professor Anne Whiston Spirn, in MIT course 11.946: Reading and Telling Landscape, Photography as Inquiry. Further research in this direction contemplate the possibility of editing the Spicket River Website, working with high school student from the Web Masters Program, also organized by Lawrence Community Works, Inc.

Visual Transparency

Real Enclosure

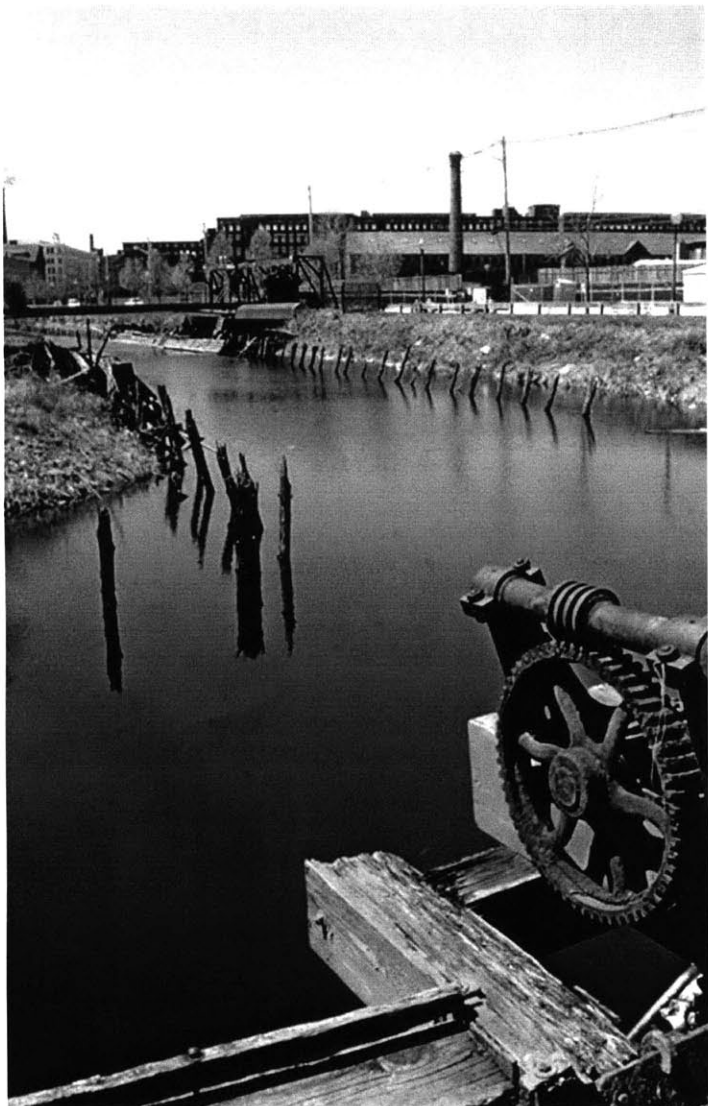**Private Spaces in Struggle with Nature**
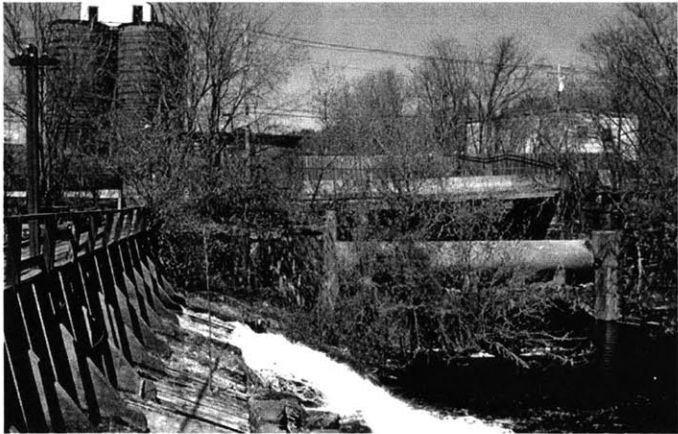

Strong Defense from the River

Every time one space is protected
another one is rejected
BOUNDARIES AND BORDERS

STABILITY AND MOVEMENT
Water in its flow and
quietness allows permanent
reflections of labor traces
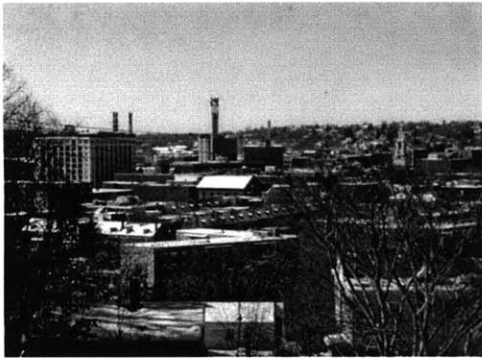that remain

Storrow Canal Without a Bridge

Spillway... Aliviadero

General View from General Street

PERSPECTIVES AND LANDMARKS
Extended views searching for paths
to interact with space

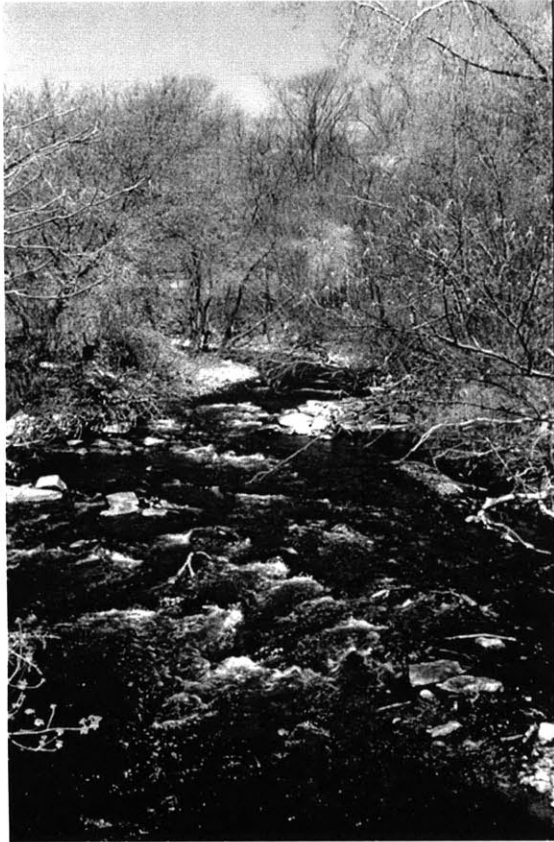**Urban Pastorale**

The Cattle

Short Views

Reviviendo

Scene by the Brook

URBAN TEXTURES
Different types of surface
that break the light
in order to perceive scale

In Brook Street

51

Along the River, Alone

During Winter in Company

Mental Health Center

Beginning of the Spring

Where is Pedro?

OPEN SPACES FOR THE PEOPLE

Floodplain waiting for a Plain Flood

Central and Catholic

The American Corner

El Rincon Dominicano

6. THE YOUNG ARCHITECTS PROGRAM: The Germ for Community Education in Urban Design

There is a substantial difference between the capacity, in terms of diagnosis and ideas, that a community has to solve their everyday problems and the vision needed to accomplish meaningful solutions for their environment. This chapter describes a method for working with the community to transform urban problems in opportunities for further development.

Experience has demonstrated that there are sources of information and basic design skills that play an important role when people want to participate in a design process. Regardless the simplicity or complexity of the problem, it is important to realize that the participation of untrained people in a design team makes very difficult for the community to raise its voice in issues related with their own space. Some training has to be accomplished and examples of urban education have taken place in other cities, to show that it is possible.

First, I will analyze one historic example related to Daniel Burnham's 1909 plan for the city of Chicago, to show how education can play an important role in deffinnig the participation of the people in the development of a plan. The plan itself came about in response the 1892 World's Columbian Exhibition, as a very good example of modern urban design. Afterwards, The Chicago City Council created the Chicago Plan Commission, with the participation of the Chamber of Commerce, representing at that time Chicago's leading citizens. The commission's sole function was to educate the population about the advantages of expending huge amounts of public money to reconstruct the city. The recommendation of the commission was to publish a simplified version of Daniel Burnham's revolutionary plan in the form of a textbook, to become obligatory in public high schools and teach the children the advantages of the plan and how they could participate

"in creating the greater Chicago of the future."[16] Charles Walker, the chairman of the Chicago Plan Commission, knew that many young students would become the future businessmen and professionals of the city, and he wanted them "to become devoted and passionate about their plan for the city." The task became a successful experience and, not only Chicago made the first comprehensive plan for a large American city, but also it is one of the few cities that have carried out the same plan until today, involving society as a whole. As an example, Lakefront Millennium Project is a contemporary intervention been developed with private initiative, that follows the same plan and tradition that started in 1909.

One of my tasks as part of *Groundwork Lawrence* "Urban fellowship" was to organize the program for the second semester of the Young Architects Program. The program, founded by formerly Lawrence Planning and Neighborhood Development Corporation (LPNDC) in the fall of 2000, is clearly to me, the first and definitive step in order to educate the community to begin the transformation of their own city. At family level, the original excuse to send the kids to this type of activity might be to keep them busy during afternoon hours, in a secure place where there are not to many opportunities for them to occupy their free time. At the end, this type of program might become the germ for the community's awareness about their city and their environment. YAP started, as a vocational curriculum, to orient teenagers in the choice of their future career, but the overall benefit will be seen later on, when those students start to go into different careers that, in one way or another, will influence the future of the city.

Goals

The Young Architects Program pursuits four goals in the same direction: first, to educate high school students to appreciate their city and their public spaces, in order to multiply that sensibility to their family and friends; second, to show them that the city can be transformed through a good plan and a creative process of implementation; third, to teach

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[16] Walker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago: Municipal Economy Especially Prepared for Study in the Schools of Chicago.

them the fundamental design skills and the basic ways of representing and transforming space, first in their minds and then in reality; and finally, to introduce them to work in teams and to have a productive dialogue with the other professionals.

Course Description for the Spring 2001

The syllabus for this semester intended to initiate the students in new ways of seeing the natural and man-made world that surrounds them, allowing them to open their eyes as they walk in the city, to let ideas and images appear by themselves. That way they are supposed to discover the best solutions in natural and man made environment. The course began understanding interior space through finding location and starting with perspective drawing. The experience continued with more complex surveys of the open spaces along the Spicket River. At the end, the students are expected to draw and constructed a scale model of the whole site. That way the semester aims to open their minds on landscape and urban design issues in an environment of creativity and imagination, with a high level of participation and enjoyment.

## Some examples of the semester achievements

Three design problems were addressed over the semester:

ξ *Understanding Interior spaces*, through the representation of the unique interiors of one of Lawrence's industrial mills.
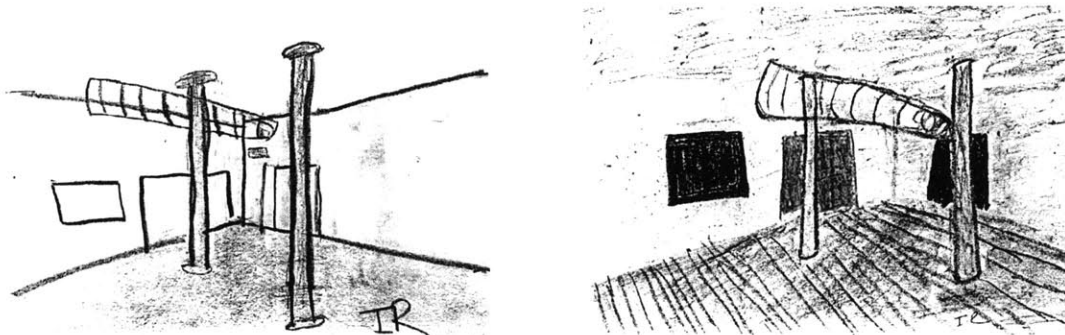
ξ Site analysis of *open spaces and parks* along the Spicket River, through the study of the river bed, topography, vegetation, sunlight, housing patterns, traffic and movement.
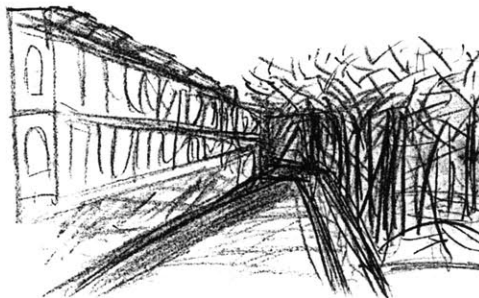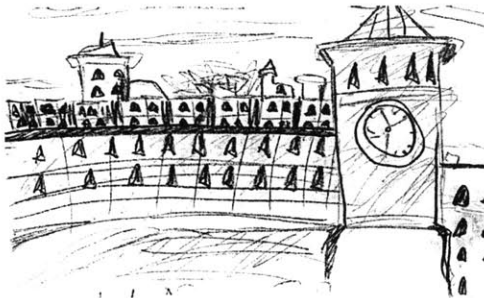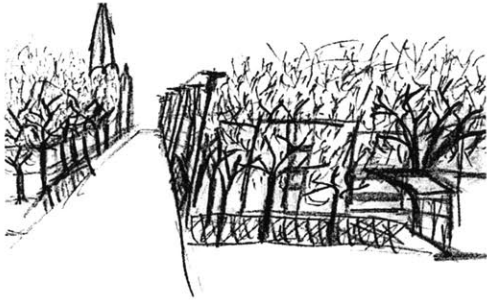
ξ *Urban design Proposal*, through the exploration, re-imagination and modeling of one of the sites of the Spicket River.

All three exercises were explored with the basic architect's tools: learning to see through observation, drawing, environmental appreciation and modeling space. At the end of each project students presented their work to the class and invited guests with the desire to transmit discoveries to other members of the community.

Young Architects Sylabus

Exercise I:
REPRESENTING INTERIOR SPACE

> WEEKS 1 and 2:
>> Introduction/ Individual exercises in two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional space. Pick a spot and draw freely (graphite and paper) exploring and representing an industrial building, horizontal and vertical relations.

> WEEKS 3 and 4:

Individual exercise in color representation. Working with tone, texture, shadow, proportion, interior and exterior representation of an industrial mill. They choose one of the empty spaces at 60 Island Street.

Exercise II:
THE SPICKET RIVER SEVEN SITES AND ONE IDENTITY PROJECT FOR ONE SITE.

WEEKS 5 to 8:
Every Monday (rain or shine) the group will make a field trip to each one of the seven sites on the Spicket River. Using different tools of analysis and representation (drawing, photographs, interviews) the students will catch the inner forces and demands of each site. Every Wednesday, the students will work as a team at the studio in the Design Center to express the qualities of each space and to propose an identity project for each site.

WEEKS 9 to 12:
Select a site and imagine a space proposal. This proposal has to contain a set of activities to keep the site busy during different hour a day, and a design alternative for the open space including the following issues: orientation, proportion, rhythm, texture, color, vegetation and people.

The future of the Program

In the fall of 2001, the Young Architects Team will gather environmental information along the Spicket River, concerning water quality, impact of pollution and run-off from adjacent uses, soil conditions, vacant properties and the potential impact of increased open space. This information will be a valuable resource for educating the community and jointly developing sustainable and environmentally sound designs and strategies for the Spicket River Greenway.

The Young Architect Team will be assisted in their environmental investigations by staff of the Riverways Program of the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement, MIT instructors and guest faculty. Evaluation of the Young Architect team will be ongoing, and *Groundwork Lawrence* and LCW will oversee all workshops and programs involving the neighborhood task forces and project-working group.

Tasks for the summer term

ξ Involve an active group of 10-12 participants in the Young Architects Team for the Spicket River Greenway Project.

ξ Prepare a scale model of the total length of the urban Spicket River Site, including topographic contour lines, building volume and open space.

GROUNDWORK LAWRENCE
Lawrence Community Works, Inc.
YOUNG ARCHITECTS PROGRAM

Present:

Talking about Parks

Conversando sobre Parques

"FREDERIC LAW OLMSTED AND
THE BOSTON PARK SYSTEM"

Lecture by Amy Brown, Doctoral Candidate
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Monday, April 9, 2001
Design Center: 60 Island Street, Lawrence.
5:30 PM
Light refreshments will be served

In addition to the program, in order to incorporate the student's family and friends, as well as other people from the community, I have proposed to develop a series of lecture that started last April. The intention is to have a lecture/party with one speaker and one title every time: *"Talking about Parks, Conversando sobre Parques"*, to be held regularly once a month in the Design Center to involve the community in landscape architecture and urban cases, related to the project we are involved. The first talk was given last April by Amy Brown, an MIT-DUSP Ph.D. Student, who presented: Frederic Law Olmsted and the Boston park System." The event, as I mentioned before, ended being like a party, with al the kids asking and being asked questions about cities and parks where Olmsted was involved.

JOURNAL #7:
"Die Tote Stadt", The Dead City

The city of Lawrence embodies a contradiction. Full of empty space that nobody uses, it has an unattached population transplanted from somewhere else. The challenge here is to build a community and at the same time to build places, allowing the people to become citizens of somewhere. The feeling I had the first day I visited was that both, human and spatial, are looking for each other, but they have not yet found the way to connect. A number of old buildings and natural sites are looking for human activities to become places. In the meantime, a population full of energy and rhythm is forced to remain within its own cramped walls away from their natural open life. The industrial buildings, the rivers and the streets are meaningless if they are empty, and yet, the people have the feeling that those spaces do not belong to them. There has to be a way to change this equation, improving job opportunities, stimulating the investment in the reactivation of the old mills, transforming them into offices, schools, apartments, hotels and shopping, without separating the population from the enjoyment of a revitalized city. Perhaps we need a fairy tale to tell us about merging of the two opposites.

Wondering in my solitude how to tell my pupils a story to make them think about the re-birth of the city, the feeling I had a cold day in January, when I first came to Lawrence, came to my mind. The city was completely white and empty, after one of those immense New England snowstorms. That Monday morning I realized that Lawrence was like the city in Erich Wolfgang Korngold's opera *Die Tote Stad,* the Dead City. Contemplating the different sites from Tower Hill, where the cemetery is located, I could clearly see the parallels between the two cities: resemblance of the rivers, the towers of the old chimneys and churches, and the loneliness of those spaces that were completely empty. Now, this coincidence appears to provide the right fairy tale to teach my students how the city can be re-imagined. The story and the music of the opera became another inspiration to continue this project, as I realize how its images and wonderful setting surrounded me every time I walked through those sad empty spaces.

Interestingly enough, Korngold himself was a musical child prodigy at the beginning of the century in Vienna. In his childhood he composed ballet music, chamber works and symphonic pieces, that were presented to Richard Straus and Gustav Mahler, who encouraged his father to give him musical training. In the 1950s, at the age of sixty, Korngold ended his career in Hollywood, as an influential composer of film scores for the recently expanded movie industry. He was, however, only 23 when he composed his best-known opera, *Die Tote Stadt*, in 1920. Close to the age of my young architectural students in Lawrence.

At the beginning, the relationship I saw between *Die Tote Stad* and Lawrence came from the similarity of their spaces: the rivers and channels, with the empty buildings in the background, are similar to the city of Bruges, Belgium, where the original Georges Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-morte* (1892), is set. Later on, having read the plot carefully and watched the opera live in New York City, I was able to see further meanings. I have to admit that they have more to do with my own life as an individual and as an architect than with its similarities to the city of Lawrence. The story of this expressionist opera, departing from a rather simple fairy tale, can bring insights in relation to human feelings, in our permanent struggles between past and present, ideals and reality. The city, in its emptiness, becomes the place for the encounter that enables consciousness to arise.

The story is about Bruges, a dead city at the end of the 19th Century – the time when Lawrence was only starting to be planned. - The male protagonist Paul, lives submerged in his own past, absorbed in the remembrances of Marie, his dead wife. The scene opens in the room in which Paul keeps her portrait and many of her personal belongings. Paul enters telling his housekeeper that he has met a woman in the city who uncannily resembles Marie and that he has invited her to visit him at the house. Marietta enters, a beautiful dancer from the Theatre Company, who is astonished by her resemblance with the portrait of Marie hanging in the wall. Paul is torn between his loyalty to his dead wife and his desire for a woman whom he has only recently met. In the meantime an apparition of Marie comes down from the portrait into the body of Marietta. Both roles are interpreted by the same soprano.

In Act II, Paul walks alone through the Dead City without direction, observing the empty buildings and wondering how to approach Marietta, standing outside her house, jealously spying, while she is having a party with her theatre troupe. When they leave, Paul fights with one of his friends who try to seduce her. She handles the situation while Paul realizes hi is after Marie. He is confusing his new desire with his old love. Marietta, complains that he is after a ghost and, challenging her dead rival, seduces Paul, insisting to go back to his house to banish the phantom for ever.

In Act III, the next morning, Paul finds Marietta in the room where he keeps his wife's belongings. They have a discussion and she seizes Marie's wedding dress wearing her golden strand of hair around her neck. She begins to dance frenetically around the room. At the same time, bells are heard coming from the old towers of the city with the sound of a distant procession and the voices of children, singing a hymn. Their song is a call for life that makes Paul to realize his mistake, while Marietta keeps dancing and joking with Marie's belongings. Paul does not resist the situation and finally kills her strangling her with Marie's thread of hair. When light arises in the darkened room, Marietta's body is not there and Paul finds that the bride is untouched and Marie's belongings are in the same place as they were. He realizes that he is awakening from a dream, at the

moment that the housekeeper announces that Marietta is back. She came to look for her umbrella and roses that have been forgotten a while ago, when she came to their house: "perhaps we should take it as an omen, a hint that I should stay", she suggests graciously, not hiding her attraction for Paul. When he does not responds, she leaves the room with an ironic smile, while Frank asks him "what was the miracle? I read it in your eyes", who now realizes that the mystery is gone.

Canceling the possibility of a "happy end", Korngold-Rodenbach's piece opens the imagination to further insights that expand the meaning of the story. The opera ends when Paul, at the request of his friend, decides to leave Bruges for a new destiny, closing away Marie's tangible memories and realizing that he will never see either woman again.

In my professional career, I have had the experience of many plans and projects that have failed. I seem always had the capacity, in defending myself, to blame somebody else; the clients, the institutions and the politicians; who never understood the marvelous designs I offered. Even so, I have decided many times to leave this profession, which is a waste of time since it does not permit to develop my own ideas. Many times, I have hidden myself in the search for the future, expecting as an artist to find a patron to finance my imaginary projects. Sometimes, I have looked for refuge in the glories of the past when I supposed I would have been able to communicate my ideas without compromise or fighting for their realization. My career as architect and urban designer has been guided for this dual ambivalence of either looking back in history or searching for utopia.

What is the meaning of the surprising ending of *Die Tote Stadt*? How can we leave the city of Bruges in search of new meaning to our life through the profession? Those are the real questions that deserve to be answered.

The last lines of the opera can point towards an answer: "Dear friend, I know I shall never see her again. A dream destroyed my dream of love; the dream of bitter reality destroyed a dream so dear to me. The dead send dreams like that to haunt us if we don't let them find peace in their slumber. How long shall we then mourn for them, how long must we grieve, we who go on living? It is a bitter dilemma we must face." Then Frank asks Paul: "I am leaving soon, tell me, will you come with me? Away from this city of death." He answers: "I will - I will try to... Joy sent from above, fare thee well, my faithful love. Life and death must part – heart is torn heart. Wait for me in heaven's plain – on earth we shall not meet again."

7. NINE EPHEMERAL CONCLUSIONS:

a. Every time I have done a public project I have had the feeling that the users rejected it. People always seemed to ask themselves: How does this architect know what we need and how we should accomplish it? Now I realize that this feeling is like having an architect to come into your house with a roll of plans under his arm with a solution for a new kitchen. The most beautiful and advanced design that nobody ever thought about and never asked for would be rejected. Even though, people don't seem to know what they want, nor to have any idea about how to design it; the best an architect can do is to let them participate in the solution as they are used to, by themselves, piece by piece as images start to appear. Probably, they will start copying ideas from a catalogue, then a good solution might come, let it flow.

b. Before coming to MIT, I would have faced this project in a different way. According to my previous experience, I would have started directly from a physical plan based on two sources of information: first, a planimetric survey of the site, evaluating graphically its topographic and spatial conditions, searching for contours, natural assets, consolidating existing features, such as trees, watersheds, bridges, historic constructions and pedestrian patterns on the place. I would also have analyzed the overall layout of the city, searching for views, major axis, boundaries and landmarks. As a synthesis, I would have produced a single "base map", laying out a summary of all the existing features and a series of particular maps, in different layers, to start adding all the components of the new project.

c. Then, I would have made a historic survey in order to find out the process of transformation of the site, traditional buildings and open spaces that have been lost, and to analyze the possibility of recapturing the spirit of what was there before. Right away, I would have come out with a first "image", synthesizing my first perceptions of the problem and a set of drawings that could represent the potential of the site for physical development. As a source for this imaginary pre-project, I would have trusted

to much my first visual appreciation of the site. On coming from another place, an architect has the advantage of seeing the problem for the first time, appreciating possibilities that perhaps nobody else can see, like the approach of the masters of modern architecture whom, at the beginning of the 20th. century changed many centuries approach to design.

d. Later on, as a further step, I would have reached the community, expecting them to identify with the architects intentions through a set of drawing and models that would catch their attention, showing them possibilities that they may have not seen. After convincing the community, and remaining open to all sort of changes according to their needs, I would have started a financial analysis to make the project feasible for private and public investment. All of these have to be done in order to continue the project. Probably now, I would invert the process starting from the last step.

e. There are two factors that still interest me from "modern architecture": First, from the beginning of the 20th. century, the fact that every design problem is always assumed as to be new, permitting the architect to face a program and a site starting from zero, as if nobody else had done it before, giving new answers to every issue. Second, from the second part of the 20th. century, the realization that urban typologies exist as models of human living and they have been assimilated for generations. Studying and incorporating them into a new project brings knowledge that could enrich the current case.

f. The economic revitalization of a city like Lawrence has to be based in a broader strategic plan that studies permanent sources of economic development in areas in which the city has potential advantages. The Spicket River project, has been so far an important lesson. From now on I can start using new sources of knowledge that have been developed in the last decade: landscape ecology and environmental studies, social studies at community level, public and private development, from financial analysis to political sciences and electronic media for understanding, representing and

sharing information. My current experience would permits me to apply these discoveries in any new problem that I could face from now on.

g. The only way to guarantee the acceptance of a project by the community is by demonstrating them that they need it and that their participation is important from the beginning. The hypothesis is that we have to implement unconventional strategies to involve the users in a meaningful way. The question is how? The issue I am trying to demonstrate here is that it is possible to engage people from the beginning, in partnership, taking into account their opinions and at the same time questioning their preconceptions, looking for the simplest way to satisfy their needs. I don't mean that we have to agree on every step and that every issue has to be solved in referendum. I am talking about a process of persuasion, seduction and rejection, loneliness and partnership, inspiration and reflection.

h. As architects, we trust to much in ourselves and, when having good education and success, we tend to believe to much in what our hands are able to do. Like to artists that have built a name, society sometimes supports that misunderstanding. I think this is a tramp that unable design to play its original role, from the bottom up, growing up to build self consciousness first. Like rivers, in nature the only force that comes from top to bottom is gravity. Design is an effort to brake it. For water to flow by gravity there are many forces that have to combine in order to rise it up. The relation between "ego" and "self" works the same way: the first one is secure, organized, hierarchical, assuming that he is always doing right; the second is insecure, unpredictable, flies by itself and never knows where is going to land. Ego has to be kept in the ground floor, as the concierge or administrator of the building, but the building has many other tenants and owners, always different and sometimes contradictory, let them assume their own place and don't let the concierge take property of the whole building because he can make the wrong decisions and the building may fall apart.

i. Teaching and learning is a work in progress. The rehabilitation of a river that is a
    wound in a city is just an example of the many possibilities that urban designers have
    to face. A city is like the ill that needs to be healed, lets be patient. When I started to
    work in this project, I thought it would be a landscape design for the urban
    revitalization of a diseased river. The project would have been relatively easy and
    predictable because I am familiar with this types of interventions and could easily
    obtain the right consultants to solve problem at every stage. In design, when you have
    a good diagnosis, the appropriate tools and the right people, with an open mind and
    willingness to make a good proposal, you can get the right solution in relatively short
    time. The challenge here is to share with the community, finding the right ways to
    involve them in the process, taking into account their comparative advantages and
    their weaknesses at the several stages of the work. More than prescriptions, this
    research attempts to formulate transparent questions, to open possibilities in order to
    approach similar projects in the future. Process is more important than solution.

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