



Community & Culture Project

Reference e² design episodes “Bogotá: Building a Sustainable City” and “Affordable Green Housing”.

1) Read the background essay and discussion questions for e² design episodes “Bogotá: Building a Sustainable City” and “Affordable Green Housing”. Watch the episodes and discuss the post-viewing questions.

2) For one week create a community and culture journal- take time to be more aware of your surroundings. Write down all your observations about your town or city as you go to school everyday, spend time in your neighborhood, go out at night, take transportation, etc. Be specific in your notes. Questions to consider include:

- What types of public places are available, including bike paths, parks, public transportation, etc? Are they being used? Are they safe? Clean?
- What types of people are using the public places (e.g., young, old, children, students, families)?
- How many people are out walking around? Inside cars? Do people drive a lot or take public transportation? What about bikes?
- What are some of the places within walking distance of your home and school (e.g. stores, parks, theaters, community centers)?
- What types of people (e.g., young, old, students, etc.) are present in the places you go outside school? Do you feel there is a sense of diversity?
- Do you feel safe in your town and community? Why or why not?
- Who are your neighbors? Do you spend time talking with them?
- Is there a particular culture to the people or buildings you observe?
- Are the buildings you spend time in inviting? Is there diversity in the design?
- Do you spend most of your time indoors or outside?

3) After noting your observations, partner up with one other person or in groups to discuss your notes. Did the journal exercise make you think any differently about your interaction with other people and your environment? Were you more aware of the thread of culture possibly present? Do you wish there were more or less public places? What about the design? Have you spent time in another city that was very different from your own? If so, what did you like and not like about it?

4) Write an essay about your findings and responses to the journal exercise above, including your discussion answers in #2. What would you design or re-design in your city or community (e.g., transportation, public spots, neighborhood)? How and why? Include what you currently enjoy about your city and community, and any changes you



think you could make to interact more with the natural environment and the people in your community.

5) Exchange your essay with classmates and teachers. Share your essay with your peers and community through the school newspaper, local papers, and/or blogs.



e² design “Bogotá: Building a Sustainable City”

Background Essay

As few as 10 years ago Bogotá, Colombia was characterized by drug cartels, senseless violence and a 30-year civil war. Every three hours someone was kidnapped. Every 15 minutes someone was murdered. At one point there was not an upper- or middle-class Colombian family that did not know somebody who had been abducted.

Today as you move around the city you'll see mega-libraries, greenways, 1,000 parks, over 70,000 trees and a state-of-the art transportation system called the TransMilenio, meaning “transcending the millennium”. The TransMilenio is an alternative to the chaotic, independently operated bus service that dominated the city in the past. Along with this infrastructure, you'll see people from all walks of life out of their cars, enjoying their city space- parents strolling with their kids, co-workers eating lunch outside, neighbors meeting and talking with one another.

How did this remarkable transition happen to the city of Bogotá? It came out of the vision that Enrique Peñalosa, Mayor of Bogotá from 1997 through 2000, had for his city. He wanted to reverse the decades-long norm of poverty, drug cartels and violence and make citizens proud of the metropolis in which they lived. Peñalosa believed that cities should encourage walking and biking, which would in turn promote community and make the streets safer for children. With these ideas in mind he reformed public transportation, added greenways, built mega-libraries and created the longest stretch of bike-only lanes in the world. Peñalosa's commitment to getting people out of their cars even led to a program called the “pico y placa” (“peak times and license plates”) that greatly restricts the use of private automobiles at peak times.

This episode highlights the story of how one man's vision transformed one of the most chaotic cities in the world into a shining model of urban planning, community development and public transportation. Although by his own admission there is more work to be done, the transformation that has taken place thus far is remarkable and has been lauded as an example for the world to follow.

For more information about Enrique Peñalosa, visit www.planning.org/enfant/aboutpenalosa.htm



e² design “Bogotá: Building a Sustainable City”

PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. What types of public spaces exist in your town (e.g., bike paths, parks, public transportation)? Are they being used? If so, by who primarily? Are they safe? Clean?
 2. What issues do designers need to address when thinking about urban planning? Where do interest groups and policy makers come into the picture? What challenges and influences do they have on urban planning designers?
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POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. How did the reforms made by Peñalosa unite the poorer and more affluent citizens of Bogotá?
2. What risks did Peñalosa take in regards to public interest and policy?
3. What was the link Peñalosa made between creating walking and biking lanes and fighting violence?
4. Do you think your community and policy makers would be happy to build more walking and biking lanes in your town/city? Do you think they would invite policies to regulate cars on certain streets during certain times? Why?



e² design “Affordable Green Housing”

Background Essay

While the modern definition of community focuses on the commonalities between its members, the scientific definition puts more emphasis on the variety of the individuals living within the community. Jonathan Rose, a third-generation New York developer, has built his philosophy around the concept that the diversity and complexity of a community is what provides its strength and ultimately its sustainability. New York City is known for its diversity, which is probably why there are so many strong communities in the city, but this diversity hasn't always been reflected in its low-income housing. In an effort to provide as much housing as possible at the lowest cost, affordable housing projects have often ignored the social and cultural aspects of the community. Jonathan Rose has been striving to create a different approach by rethinking what affordable housing could and, in his opinion, should be.

The mission of Jonathan Rose's company is to “repair the fabric of communities”. He attempts to accomplish this goal in many ways, only one of which is by building affordable housing projects that respect the natural environment around them, the people who will live within them and the existing communities that will welcome them. This episode follows Mr. Rose through three neighborhoods in which his sustainably-designed housing projects are changing people's perception of what affordable housing is. The projects explored include the Burnham Building in Irvington, New York, the Joyce and David Dinkins' Gardens project in Harlem, and the as-yet-to-be-built mixed-income development Via Verde that will ultimately find its realization in the South Bronx.

To find out more about Jonathan Rose's companies, visit www.rose-network.com



e² design “Affordable Green Housing”

PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. What do you think of when you hear the term affordable housing? What images come to mind of both the buildings and its tenants?
 2. What makes a neighborhood a community? List some of the elements in your opinion that are essential to a community.
 3. Do you live in an area/community that is mixed-income or level income? Do you think much about it? If you experienced the opposite how do you think it would influence you?
 4. What are some places within walking distance of your home (e.g., stores, parks, theaters, community centers)? What are some places you would like to have and not have within walking distance of your home? Why?
 5. Do you learn more when you talk to a person that is more or less like you? What about when you visit a place that is more or less like your hometown? Why?
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POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. According to Jonathan Rose, how does diversity strengthen a community? What different types of diversity does he talk about?
2. Why does Jonathan Rose believe that a community is more likely to be sustainable if it's diverse? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
3. How can a real-estate developer “repair the fabric of communities”? What types of buildings contribute to the fabric of a community in a positive way? In a negative way (e.g., homogeneous vs. heterogeneous population, commercial vs. residential, shared space vs. private space)?