

Claire Mookerjee ~ Five Urban Design Mistakes That Create Unhealthy And Inactive Communities

We all want to be fit, healthy and happy but the best intentions - whether it's to jog to the shops, eat a balanced diet or strike a better work-life balance - can often elude us.

At least some of the blame can be laid at the feet of those who design the city spaces some of us call home. Many aspects of city living discourage the kinds of lifestyles that can contribute to our health and wellbeing. We know that car-dependent, city suburbs struggle to create neighbourhoods that encourage walking, but they're not the only ones.

Here are five mistakes that are often made when designing new developments in urban areas — and suggestions for how to create healthier communities.

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/urban-design-mistakes>

Marielle Mondon ~ Designing A Future Of Plastic Roads



Ills.: VolkerWessels

No more potholes? No more worrying about woefully underfunded crumbling highways? That's the future European construction company VolkerWessels sees in its plans for recycled plastic roads.

VolkerWessels' concept, aptly named PlasticRoad, is a lightweight streets material made entirely of recycled material. The firm stresses the design would take a fraction of the time to construct and last about three times longer than typical road asphalt. Maintenance, too, would come cheap (or even free) because of the plastic's increased durability.

Read more: <https://nextcity.org/designing-a-future-of-plastic-roads>

Reinier de Graaf ~ The Smart City Blinds Us To The Possibility Of Political Action



Urbanisation was supposed to be the world's quick ticket to prosperity. The average urban dweller (on paper) represents five times the economy of the rural dweller. If a rural nation becomes urban in the space of a decade, its economy - at least in theory - doubles every two years. That statistic, however, can hardly conceal the more grim reality. Over the last few decades we have seen that the spectacular growth of cities by no means entails greater and more widely shared prosperity.

What we refer to as “megacities” are mostly cities with the common feature that their development is outpaced by their growth. A lot of these cities exist in a state of almost permanent crisis, where “urbanisation” (literally: the step towards the urbane) has come to signify the exact opposite. In the absence of even the most basic infrastructure and provisions, many of its inhabitants find a decent urban life beyond their reach.

Read more: <http://www.dezeen.com/reinier-de-graaf>

Barcelona, Medellín And The Right To Housing



Pilot Project pop-up studio hosted at the same time in Barcelona and Medellín.

Barcelona and Medellín are miles away from each other. You might think there is little in common between them. But the truth is there are plenty of similitudes; they are both cities of comparable sizes that have been cooperating mutually for a long time and have been acknowledged for promoting an inclusive urban planning strategy that puts public spaces at the heart of social redistribution.

Nonetheless, both cities suffer from the same problem of guaranteeing the right to housing. And this is exactly what is presented in the exhibition called *Piso Piloto*, or Pilot Project, hosted at the same time in both cities: Barcelona and Medellín.

Barcelona City Council and the Mayor's office of Medellín, in association with The Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) and the Museo de Antioquia launched the exhibition last month, which will be displayed until October 2015 in both cities.

Read

more: <http://www.sustainablecitiescollective.com/barcelona-medell-n-and-right-housing?>

Joseph Erbentraut ~ Groups Bring 10,000 Affordable Toilets To Rural India So Women Can Relieve Themselves Safely



An Indian woman walks in a field after relieving herself in the open, on World Toilet Day on the outskirts of Jammu, India, Wednesday, Nov. 19, 2014. U.N. figures show of India's 1.2 billion people, 665 million, mostly those in the countryside, don't have access to a private toilet or latrine, something taken for granted in developed nations. Some villages have public bathrooms, but many women avoid using them because they are usually in a state of disrepair and because men often hang around and harass the women. (AP Photo/Channi Anand)

For many women in poor, rural parts of the world, a lack of access to a private toilet is not just a matter of inconvenience, it also puts her at risk of diseases, sexual assault and ridicule.

But in the poverty-stricken Bihar region of India, a unique partnership between non-governmental organizations and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has resulted in the construction of 10,000 new toilets allowing women to relieve themselves in a more secure and healthy way.

To kick off the project, Population Services International, a global network of locally-based groups, worked with partners including PATH, a global health organization, and Water for People, a water access group, in order to design a toilet that low-income people in the area would be able to buy and install in their homes.

Read more: <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/toilet-initiative>

Anthony Flint ~ Is Urban Planning Having An Identity Crisis?



Photo: Anthony Flint

PRAGUE—Call it post-planning, planning 2.0, or maybe un-planning. And the crazy thing is, this revolt against traditional approaches to planning is being conducted by planners themselves.

At the annual convening of the Association of European Schools of Planning here,

there was no little soul-searching about the practice of the craft. Europe has been an undisputed leader in attempting to guide urban growth in an orderly fashion. European Union members have not only set down rules, regulations, and policies for each nation, but created what has been called “territorial cohesion” between nations, seeking to build on economic agglomerations across cities along a high-speed rail line, for example.

Read more: <http://www.citylab.com/housing/urban-planning>