

The Collect Pond: New York's First Source Of Water Was Filled In To Become "Five Points," The Worst Slum In American History



Lopsided buildings along Mulberry Street, a legacy of the soggy ground on which they were built.

18th-century Manhattan was a decidedly beautiful and peaceful place. Home to roughly 30,000 people in the years just after the Revolutionary War, New York was a far cry from the glass-and-cement jungle of 8 million it has become today. It was a relatively pristine utopia of rolling hills, old-growth trees, and babbling brooks ambling into a series of small ponds.

One of the more notable of these ponds, which was actually fed by an underground spring, became known as "Collect Pond." For nearly two centuries after the Dutch first settled Manhattan Island, Collect Pond was the bustling village's main source of water. It covered approximately 50 acres and was up to 60 feet deep in places. For a growing town, nothing was more important than a constant supply of clean, drinkable water, and the Collect Pond provided just that. And, as an interesting note, it was in Collect Pond that, in 1796, Connecticut inventor John Fitch tested the first successful steam-powered paddle boat. Later

iterations of this invention would revolutionize American industry.

Read & see
more: <http://keithyorkcity.wordpress.com/the-worst-slum-in-american-history/>

Kate Tissington On The Right To The City In South Africa

Urban land is of symbolic significance in South Africa because it is land that people of colour were historically denied access to. But the historically privileged still own, occupy and enjoy the best urban land.

The question is, why hasn't our government been able to unlock well-located land in urban areas to provide housing for the people who need it most?

The historically disadvantaged continue to live on marginal land on the peripheries of South Africa's cities and the apartheid city remains untransformed.

Both The South African Civil Society Information Service (SAC SIS) and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung South Africa Office (FES) wish to promote discussion about the transformation of the apartheid landscape in an effort to foster social cohesion in South Africa's still largely racially and economically segregated society. The organisations co-hosted a panel discussion to interrogate the issue on 17 April 2014.

The event was opened by Renate Tenbusch, Resident Director of the FES South Africa office and the panellists who spoke at the event included, Mark Napier: Principal Researcher at the Built Environment Unit of the CSIR and co-author of the book, "Trading Places: accessing land in African cities"; Thembanani Jerome Ngongoma: Member of Executive Committee of Abahlali baseMjondolo (shack dwellers' movement); Louise Scholtz: Manager at World Wildlife Fund South Africa and leader on joint project with National Association of Social Housing Institutions; and Kate Tissington: Senior Researcher at the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa.

Overall, as a result of the contributions of this panel as well as questions and comments from the floor, it became clear that there is stasis, a lack of imagination and a lack of political will to house the poor and to transform South Africa's apartheid cities. Much of this is happening within a highly corporatized free market environment where municipalities would rather sell off their land for short-term profit than invest in the long-term sustainability of their cities for inhabitants and future generations. Rent collection and maintenance of rental housing stock are activities that South African municipalities simply do not want to burden themselves with.

Kate Tissington argued that her organisation's work was to help extend poor people's right to the city. For example, by resisting evictions and pushing local government to provide alternative accommodation when people are being evicted or when shacks are being demolished.

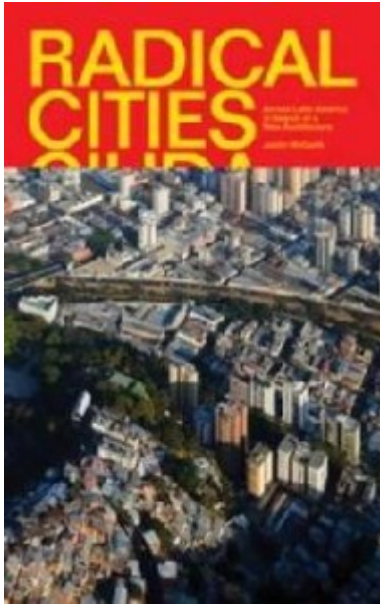
The absence of a pro-poor developmental local government perspective to deal with the housing backlog is a fundamental problem, she argued.

The odds are against the poor in terms of improving their access to the city. There is major contestation over well-located land. But those with money are winning, as the drive towards gentrification targets better off residents.

Consequently, affordability is a major constraint. For example, more than half of Johannesburg's inner city residents earn less than R3,200 per month. They are typically employed as domestic workers and security guards. Thus, there is a massive gap between what people are earning and what is made available to them in terms of housing options.

Alexandra Lange - Radical Cities: Across Latin America In Search Of A New Architecture By Justin

McGuirk - Review



theguardian.com. July 2014. "Considering ideal conditions is a waste of time," Alfredo Brillembourg and Hubert Klumpner write in their 2005 book, *Informal City*. "The point is to avoid catastrophe." The two architects, partners in the international practice Urban-Think Tank, are known for the cable car system they designed for Caracas, connecting barrios in the hills with the city in the valley. Part of the allure of these cable cars, and U-TT's work in general, is the way they make a virtue of leftover spaces. A shelter for a football field becomes a "vertical gymnasium". A shelter for street children, built under an overpass, gets

another football pitch on its roof. As design critic Justin McGuirk writes in *Radical Cities*, his survey of urban experiments in Latin America, in "engaging with the informal city, U-TT developed a methodology of maximising the amount of social activity that a tiny plot of land could deliver". They went small - "strategic" and "urban acupuncture" are the terms du jour - looking at what the city had become, and what individual neighbourhoods needed, rather than masterplanning a cycle of demolition and straight lines.

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/radical-cities>

Tamsin McMahon - The (Literal) Rise Of The Anti-Condo



Small-scale densification:
Alternatives such as tiny laneway
houses and ‘parasite’ buildings are
popping up in lieu of big-box condos.
(Curated Properties)

macleans.ca. July 2014. Stacked on leafy buildings, floating above an alley: creative expressions of urban density are popping up in surprising places.

Intensification is the mantra of today’s North American urban planners. In Canada, that increased density has inevitably come in the form of a big-box condo. Douglas Coupland dubbed Vancouver “the City of Glass.” Toronto is building more condos than New York. For many, the condo is the only route to affordable downtown living. Architects and home buyers alike still love the charm of houses, but sky-high land prices have put an end to new single-family homes in our biggest cities.

Gary Eisen and Adam Ochshorn of Curated Properties have found a creative solution to that problem. They plan to construct a dozen high-end townhouses on top of a vacant 1950s municipal office on Dovercourt Road on Toronto’s west side. Rather than try to blend into the muted brick exterior of the original, the ultramodern two- and three-bedroom townhouses will be clad in metal panels, with large, deeply inset windows that hang over the roof of the office below, so that the development has the feel of neither a loft conversion nor a glass-walled condo.

Read more: <http://www.macleans.ca/rise-of-the-anti-condo/>

Charles Mkula - Urban Disasters: A Challenge To Planning In Malawi



Photo: malawidemocrat.com

Urbanisation has outstripped government's capacity to provide services and guide urban growth in Malawi, a physical planning expert, Mphatso Kadaluka has said. "Inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure has exposed urban inhabitants to myriad types of disasters that leaves them vulnerable to inexplicable impacts," said Kadaluka, a northern region Acting Commissioner for Physical Planning in the Ministry of Lands and Housing.

Kadaluka said Malawi has been ill prepared for fires and other forms of disasters such as collapsing buildings, roads and bridges.

"The only disasters we seem to care most about are floods, drought and earth tremors and quakes," noted the planning official. He bemoaned the lack of a proactive stance to mitigate urban disasters which catch authorities and professionals off guard when they occur.

"Urban areas in Malawi are not spared of these natural and human made disasters," he warned.

Kadaluka said the most common urban disasters were fire outbreaks resulting

from faulty electrical installations, illegal storage and sale of liquid fuel. He pointed to the fires at the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (Escom) offices, farmers organisation warehouse, Blantyre Flea market, Bakers Pride, Ori cooking oil refinery, Keza building, Ekwendeni market, and the most recent at Mzuzu city main market in April.

“These fires led to disastrous consequences such as loss of goods and services, property, and people’s livelihood,” said Kadaluka.

Read more: <http://www.urbanafrica.net/challenge-planning-malawi/>

“Urbanized” - Full Length Documentary Movie (New Urbanism)

Urbanized is a feature-length documentary about the design of cities, which looks at the issues and strategies behind urban design and features some of the world’s foremost architects, planners, policymakers, builders, and thinkers.

Who is allowed to shape our cities, and how do they do it?

By exploring a diverse range of urban design projects around the world, Urbanized frames a global discussion on the future of cities.