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New Orleans and Katrina: One Year Later
BARBARA L. ALLEN, Executive Editor

I am a native of south Louisiana. Every visit I have made to the region since Hurricane Katrina leaves me more disheartened than the last. It is indescribable, the mile after mile of abandoned housing, commercial buildings, and schools that, to the naked eye, look almost habitable. Additionally, there are entire neighborhoods that have been upended or destroyed by flooding and wind damage. Rebuilding these areas seems an enormous task. A year after the hurricane and the flood, rebuilding questions still abound, and the future of New Orleans remains uncertain.

The *Journal of Architectural Education* is publishing this special issue on the city, a year after Katrina, as a forum for architectural educators to think about the flood, the people, the buildings and infrastructure, the environment and, of course, the future. In my opinion, two issues loom largest: rehabitation of the city and environmental concerns. Following are my musings, motivated by distress, a great love for this city, and by a desire to see the city ''return'' in the fullest sense of the word.

The People Must Come Back
Louisiana (and New Orleans), prior to Katrina, had the highest rate of nativity in the United States—people who are born there tend to stay there. Their attachment to ''place'' is part of the identity of these citizens and is not easily changed. In the mid-twentieth century, the renowned Southern historian, C. Vann Woodward, wrote about what makes the Southern character and experience different from the rest of the United States. He cites four areas where the Southern ''consciousness'' differs from the rest of the United States. Succinctly stated, the first three of these are that Southerners, historically, have had their world shaped by poverty rather than by abundance, defeat rather than invincibility, and slavery rather than freedom and liberty.

The fourth difference that shapes the Southern identity is a connection to place rather than the disconnectedness and mobility that is more prevalent in the rest of the United States. This distinction is very much part of the public and private ethos of south Louisiana and New Orleans. Southern author Eudora Welty wrote, ''I am myself touched off by place. The place where I am, the place I know . . . place opens a door in the mind.''[1] This local ''world view'' might seem quaint to some and may not be appropriate when talking about the new ''sunbelt'' South (i.e., Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, Houston), but it is important to understand when thinking about how New Orleans should be rebuilt and who will be able to return.

Besides the issue of human dignity and individual rights—to have returned something so elemental to one's identity as their place of birth, ancestry, and heritage—there is another, much more public concern. What makes a place distinct from another place and gives it a specific regional identity is much more than local building types and historic coextensive urban fabric. Place distinction or regionalism is not a set of architectural types and urban forms but is, instead, a socially constituted phenomenon. It is a collection of shared identities, behaviors, and practices that circumscribe local public cultures and spaces. I call this concept ''performative regionalism'' and have argued elsewhere that regionalism is predominantly defined ''performatively''—by the local practices of people rather than the built fabric per se.[2] While the urban form can enable practices, people have an amazing ability to adapt and retrofit environments for their cultural needs. So although rebuilding New Orleans' beautiful historic urban fabric is important, it is a hollow victory if the people who were the primary enactors of culture do not return.

To date, over half of the residents of the city have not returned. And the people who have returned are not demographically representative of the pre-Katrina city. The city is whiter and wealthier than it once was. Entire communities such as the Lower 9th Ward and Gentilly, each contributing significant local practices and cultures to the city's gumbo, are noticeably absent. While it is unrealistic to think that everyone will return, an effort should be made to enable as many people as possible, from all socioeconomic and ethnic groups to return—the ''right of return'' should belong to everyone equally. The only way that New Orleans can be brought back to life is with its people and the vibrant civic culture that they bring.

Equal Access to Repatriation?
Much of the pre–World War II housing stock in New Orleans was built appropriately for a floodplain. Many houses in the Lower 9th Ward, for example, were constructed of rot-resistant cypress, raised two to four feet off the ground on piers, and built to flood and drain. This neighborhood ranges in elevation from a low point of four feet below sea level to a high point of eight feet above sea level closer to the river. The reason the area was so heavily flooded was because of a breach in the canal walls, not necessarily because of elevation.

Unfortunately, ''many of the houses that are good candidates for recovery have been labeled 52% or 56% damaged by FEMA.''[3] In order to get a building permit and thus money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and your insurance company to rebuild as is, your house must have sustained less than 50 percent damage. According to one engineer who has worked with community groups in the Lower 9th Ward, FEMA's experts have not only overstated damage, but in some cases, they have allowed further damage to occur by inaction. For example, FEMA would declare 100 percent roof damage when, in actuality, the damage was very slight. This declaration meant that FEMA would not provide blue plastic protective material for the roof, allowing rain to further damage the property.

To challenge FEMA's damage determination, a homeowner must be present in New Orleans and present evidence contradicting their damage determination. This is difficult as many of the residents are living in Houston or Atlanta and have no way to file a grievance. Furthermore, assembling a counterclaim substantiating a differing technological assessment of their property is complicated and deters many poor owners. In adjacent, majority white Jefferson Parish, many neighborhoods have street after street of houses with a small FEMA trailer in every yard, enabling the owner to rebuild while living on site. There is no such evidence of this scale of activity in Orleans Parish. Many neighborhoods still have no electricity or water that they could connect to a FEMA trailer, even if they had one. Where will these residents live while repairing their homes?

Another issue is: What happens when the residents of a community are dispersed and have difficulty forming a cohesive voice? This is one of the largest problems Katrina presents. Communities are asked to assemble a list of those willing to come back and rebuild in order to receive assistance. This task is much easier for wealthier residents who have Internet access and other means of communication. The poor are at a definite disadvantage here and that disadvantage may mean that their neighborhoods do not get needed funding and federal assistance.

Race, Class, and Color Coded Plans

Much has been written in the press regarding race, class, and rebuilding. Pundits have predicted everything from the developer-inspired Disneyfication of New Orleans to the "whitewashing" of the city, reinhabiting only those parts on the high ground in the historic areas of the city that are predominantly white. These are serious concerns, and I would like to illuminate some specific examples of neglected neighborhoods

as well as neighborhoods that may be receiving too much attention from developers.

When inner city "flight" happened in the late 1960s and 1970s, the white middle-class population moved west to the adjacent "whiter" Jefferson Parish (home of the infamous Ku Klux Klan–affiliated gubernatorial candidate David Duke) and the black middle class fled to east Orleans Parish, at that time uninhabited marshy land drained by Army Corps Engineers' projects. While the plight of the Lower 9th Ward, home to a large poor and working-class black population has received ample press, the plight of New Orleans East has been mostly invisible. It was, like the 9th Ward, one of the last sections of the city to open after the flooding and has still not had infrastructural services restored. Unlike the 9th Ward, however, the houses and apartment buildings in this large area of the city are still very much intact, having not suffered the ravages of turbulent water from a canal breach. Mile after mile of previously flooded slab-on-grade suburban homes are sitting vacant with no signs of life anywhere in this section of the city. No FEMA trailers as telltale signs of homeowners' return. What is to happen to this significant portion of New Orleans' black middle class?

Another curious issue was brought to light when New Orleans' mayor, Ray Nagin, unveiled the rebuilding plan generated by his "Bring New Orleans Back Commission." The plan organized the city into four zones: immediate rebuilding, targeted for new development, building moratorium, and new parks (drainage). Typically these zones followed the flood maps. Unflooded areas are slated for immediate rebuilding, and historically important flooded areas are targeted for new development. A building moratorium was put on badly flooded areas, some set aside for new parks to serve as flood control areas during heavy rains. Notable exceptions to this taxonomy were several poor, predominantly black neighborhoods on high ground that were not flooded, namely the stretch of communities near downtown along the river from the Lower

Garden District to the Irish Channel. Why would poor African American communities that were not flooded be targeted for redevelopment when similarly dry white middle- and upper-class communities were slated for immediate rebuilding? Will those of lesser economic means be pushed out making way for redevelopment and gentrification?

Floods, Faults, and Environmental Folly

In the myriad pre-Katrina hurricane predictions and disaster scenarios, the levees of the great Mississippi River are breached or the water of Lake Pontchartrain is dumped in the city by a huge storm surge. This did not happen in New Orleans. Instead, the catastrophic flooding was caused by a failure of a more mundane type—several of the city's drainage canals gave way. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (ACE) designs for these canals were flawed and evidence of the "slow failure" of these walls had been reported for years, if not decades. Seepage under the walls resulting in spongy bogs in residents' backyards was a common complaint—but no corrective action on the part of the ACE or levee board officials was ever taken. Was this criminal negligence, as Ivor Van Heerden, coastal geologist and Deputy Director of the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center, convincingly argues or was it something else?[4]

The ACE is certainly one of the main culprits in this disastrous event even though they have, thus far, escaped the public disgrace that FEMA's response to Katrina has evoked. Yet, year after year, the Congress' dependence on Corps projects to funnel money to their states often meant that funds went to states with powerful legislatures rather than to those with greater need. The problem was further compounded by President Reagan's 1983 executive order (trying to undermine environmentalists) which instructed the ACE to *only* consider economic development in the cost-benefit analysis of proposed projects. It was the Corps' drainage projects that promoted development on low-lying

land, and it was those projects that also helped destroy the coastal wetlands that were the city's natural protection system. What was the cost to New Orleans and the region, in economic terms, of the flooding? Will environmentalists' concerns, such as wetland protection, now be factored into ACE decision making? I am doubtful.

Paralyzing Politics

Local New Orleans and Louisiana politicians have a well-earned questionable reputation. In the 1960s, after Hurricane Betsy, funds earmarked by Congress for storm protection were partially diverted by state legislators for other ''pet'' water projects. The grandiose-scale dredging of tens of thousands of acres of wetland for the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet, designed as an alternative, but underused, route to the Port of New Orleans actually exacerbated the storm's effect. It seems that outside corporate interests, campaign contributions, and political pressure may have led to the construction of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet or ''Mr. Go''—the hurricane superhighway to New Orleans.

But the shipping industry and their local politicos were certainly not the biggest power players in south Louisiana. That distinction goes to the multinational oil companies. Extensive dredging projects, both along the Mississippi River (for oil supertankers) and along the bayous (to allow for pipelines and transportation) have hastened the loss of wetlands and exposed the city to more harm. There is a deafening silence as to the oil industry's culpability that speaks volumes to the multinational's political hold on the state and its people. At a conference I attended on disaster response shortly after Katrina, a Dutch engineer in attendance wanted to know why the oil industry was not being held partly financially responsible for the devastation. In the Netherlands, he explained, if you could prove that their actions (dredging) were partly to blame, they would share in the financial responsibility. This ''option'' is not even on the table.

Fast-forward to the politics of the post-Katrina city. Everybody has a plan for rebuilding the city. The mayor and the governor have competing plans. Others proposed alternative plans or criticized existing plans. Then, the mayor would shift his endorsement of certain plans, and the federal government shifted their endorsements too. Whose plan was more popular? Whose was affordable? Which citizens were shortchanged and whose voters were denied their reentry ticket—a home? The shifting sands of city plans are dizzying and, at times, appear to be a shell game.

Still Thinking about New Orleans

The thirteen OPARCH articles that follow are opinion pieces, treatises, musings, and even poems expressing a diversity of thinking about one of America's great cities. The standpoints of the authors vary greatly. Some write from New Orleans, owning flooded homes, some write as experts offering their professional opinions, some write as scholars and educated observers, and others, who have never been there, offer elegies for the city as national or global ''imaginary.'' I have also interviewed two people for this special issue to shed some light on both the precarious position of historic neighborhoods and the plight of the very poor.

As this issue goes to press, the future of New Orleans is still very much in flux. It is both troublesome and hopeful. Large developers have not (yet) rushed in building high-rise time-share condos adjacent to the French Quarter. The fate of many neighborhoods has yet to be decided and with each passing the month the likelihood of those residents returning diminish. Homes sit abandoned, and some lacking proper weather protection, will further deteriorate. The levee system is not completely repaired, and there has been no decision on its redesign to higher standards. The city's infrastructure is still in shambles—from schools, to telecommunications to power grids—none are close to being fully restored.

While it is true that the city is slowly coming back to life, the questions of what kind of city it will be and what kinds of culture it will support remain unanswered. The next few years will surely seal the fate of this unique city. We will all have to wait and see—and most of all, have our voices heard.

Notes

1. See C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1960, 1968). The Eudora Welty quote is cited from chapter 1, ''The Search for a Southern Identity'', pp. 23–24.

2. See Barbara L. Allen, ''On Performative Regionalism,'' in Vincent Canizaro, ed., *Architectural Regionalism: Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity and Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006), forthcoming.

3. Much of the information on rebuilding in the Lower 9th Ward was obtained from a phone interview I conducted with Elizabeth English on February 17, 2006. She is a structural engineer affiliated with Louisiana State University's Hurricane Center.

4. See Ivor Van Heerden, *The Storm: What Went Wrong and Why During Hurricane Katrina—The Inside Story from One Louisiana Scientist* (New York: Viking, 2006).

In Dark Waters: Opportunity and Opportunism in the Reconstruction of New Orleans

GRAHAM OWEN

In the flood of opinions, proposals, symposia, studios, competitions, charrettes, and essays on how to rebuild post-Katrina New Orleans, one question seems not yet to have been asked: How is it that, in a time dominated by neoliberal ideology, the public good could have become so quickly and unproblematically a widespread concern? Disasters, they say, bring out the best in people, but also the worst, and while no one would want to look gift horses of goodwill in the mouth under the circumstances, perhaps it is still worth considering that this gift horse is Janus faced.

In the aftermath of 9/11, many commentators observed that a spirit of community and mutual aid possessed New York, the country, and indeed many countries around the world usually less favorably disposed toward America. This spirit proved to be all too short-lived, perhaps because of the response of some of the other U.S. targets; but even at the time, the motives of some local pain-sharers came into question. Despite the SL 500-driving success of the legal profession in that market, ambulance chasing among architects has never been a pretty sight. With the flurry of pre-Libeskind proposals for more, bigger, more spectacular, or more hip buildings on and around the World Trade Center site, perhaps what we witnessed was the ''architecture op,'' a designers' version of the photo op for politicians kissing earthquake-orphaned infants.[1] Could it be that cultural citizenship called for *not* leaping forward to piggy-back one's career on the guaranteed visibility of a world-shattering event, *not* surfing into the media on the deaths of thousands of people, and not seeking to do (as Denise Scott Brown once put it, quoting an Israeli term) ''Shoa business,'' the business of making money from an American Holocaust?

But, inevitably, Katrina has been hyped as New Orleans' 9/11. And with that hype has come the hyping of commitment: narratives of heroism abound. By this, I mean not the local record of day-to-day heroism of the disaster's first responders, but the tales of heroism retold at every opportunity by bold administrators of the corporate variety—ever mindful of the Giuliani Effect—eager to tell of the ''tough decisions'' they had to make about recovery. Recovery? No, *transformation*—the narratives of heroism joined to the rhetoric of transcendence in adversity. Transformation, of course, as in ''this changes everything,'' and all conceived (or reconceived) and pursued in the absence of most of the city's population.

Neoliberalism's championing of self-reliance, of the individualization of fortune, of bootstraps-tugging ''personal responsibility'' found its negative apotheosis in the days immediately before and after the storm. ''Everyone for themselves'' in evacuation—those without cars or credit cards had no means to leave—became everyone for themselves in looting. Though the media reports sometimes turned out to be biased and sensationalized, this descent seemed nonetheless both cautionary and prophetic. Some might have hoped that the storm would not only have foregrounded once again the racist bases of urban poverty in America but would also have brought to light the endgame of individualism, a Hobbesian nightmare of the shattered social contract: the kinder, gentler, chastened, and co-operative dawn that followed 9/11 was now New Orleans' due. For others, though, the images of a devastated city may have brought on different visions, visions of a new, even Darwinian frontier: all that was once obstructed would now be possible.

The issues, at least at the surface, in which this conflict has been playing out were observed early on by Ronald Utt:

> [T]his is the first time in a long time that there has been an opportunity to rebuild an entire city, and everybody wants to participate. America has built a lot of cities from scratch but not with any ideas as to where they were going to go . . . . Everybody that has a certain interest in something wants to chime in with their proposals—if for example you're a trolley advocate or a light-rail advocate, you see in New Orleans a showcase for transit, or if you're a new urbanist you see an opportunity for new buildings and architecture and increased walkability—everyone who has an interest sees this as a captive experiment . . . . That's what we need to avoid. We need to get out of the way and let the individuals rip . . . . [T]his is more of a bottom-up approach than other proposals, in that it recognizes that New Orleans is a group of citizens who are chiefly responsible for how the city is rebuilt. This is in contrast to the top-down proposals,

1. Airline magazine advertisement, Fall 2005. (Copyright Toshiba America Consumer Products, L.L.C.)

where people are vicariously imposing their preferences on what's happening.[2]

Faced with a *tabula inundata*, he suggests, we are tempted to see it as the long-lost *tabula rasa*, and by the opportunity to experiment—as architects, contemplating the destruction in post–World War II Europe, were also inspired to do. Here, one is reminded of a magazine ad running in airline magazines since the storm (Figure 1): a conservatively dressed, short-sleeved white professional, hesitating in front of a typical New Orleans commercial side façade, contemplates a stray Toshiba HDTV box on the sidewalk. "They got theirs," entices the caption; "What's stopping you?" The ad, though tongue in cheek and more than a little cynical, points to the widely publicized rips in the fabric of the social contract of the city and the region. In a sense, though, it also addresses us. Well, architects: what's stopping you?

From Utt's populist point of view, local knowledge should trump expert knowledge and the rebuilding of the city take shape as the coalescence of community responses to incentives and opportunities. From the point of view of some design professionals, though, such an approach risks becoming a Trojan Horse for the development industry, enabling ill-conceived profit-driven ventures to proceed without benefit of more thoughtful and prudent plans. The ethical hazards, however, run deeper and more extensively, and the line between opportunity and opportunism may have become so blurred as to be almost invisible. Petty and not-so-petty corruption have, of course, followed the storm: despite continuing and legitimate concerns about their adequacy for the broadly agreed-upon tasks at hand (e.g., levee and wetland reconstruction and homeowner compensation), private insurance and federal moneys have already been flowing through the region in substantial quantities. In such circumstances, the predatory entrepreneurialism of deregulated market capitalism (the instant markups of motel rates as the evacuating hordes headed into

Texas, fly-by-night home repair contractors) shades into the at-the-trough graft more characteristic of welfare states gone wrong (the too high prices paid for government-outsourced debris removal and temporary roof sheathing, often in no-bid contracts with the all too familiar corporate operators).

More than this, some local architects embraced early on the "diaspora-as-silver-lining" view of the city's post-Katrina depopulation. Low-income African Americans are better off (so the story went, without hard evidence) in the places they were trucked to, finding by happy accident the life chances so long denied them at home. Regardless of their contribution to New Orleans' culture and neighborhoods (not to mention its own economy), why should they return (it continued) to the Lower Ninth Ward or St. Bernard Parish if Houston offered such sterling opportunity for self-improvement? This attitude, of course, has drawn much fire as disingenuous cover for a long-standing desire to whiten the city. But consider: In a market economy, who make better clients for new houses (particularly pseudo-Dutch neoMod houses)? The eagerness of design professionals and academics to step forward and devote their skills and knowledge to the rebuilding task is presumed to be pro bono, a guarantee of virtue; but when is this *pro bono publico* and when *pro bono solo*? Selfless and altruistic commitment to a cause deserves recognition, no doubt. But what mutations of commitment and recognition emerge in the strange atmosphere of our time, a neoliberal market economy turned security state?

Paradoxically, the storm that wiped much of New Orleans off the map put it back on the design map nationally. For those who watch that map anxiously, Katrina created a crucial window of opportunity: *visibility*. As I write in March 2006, that visibility is concentrated initially on solutions to reciprocal questions of urban planning and urban design: Who, from among the evacuated masses, should be encouraged to return, and by what means? What kind of city will best encourage that

return? What rights of reconstruction should the poorest, most tightly bonded, yet most devastated and at-risk neighborhoods have? How should the return-motivating opportunity to reconstruct one's own property—even if in such a neighborhood—be balanced against the good of the city as a whole? And, particularly important for design professionals, what essential aspects of New Orleans' culture can be understood as embedded in its architecture and urban patterns? How much change can it absorb, in a new vision of the city, before that culture is irreparably altered? Tackling some of these questions, the Urban Land Institute's November 2005 proposal for the city, the first comprehensive plan for reconstruction, envisaged extensive green spaces—parks doubling as flood buffers—in the worst-affected neighborhoods, recommendations that acted, predictably enough, as political explosives. The City's more cautious endorsements of such principles were moderated by its proposition that neighborhoods would have four months, from January 2006, to organize and commit to repopulation, a commitment that would entitle them to selected professional advice on how to do it. But the funding for such advice has been delayed, and the program has been disintegrating: several of the neighborhoods have already engaged the donated services of planners—of their choice, not the anticipated consultants to be chosen by, and funded through, the Mayor's advisors.

At this juncture, two significant issues appear. First, in the gap between the neighborhood associations' pressing need and the City's intended program has arisen (in some eyes) the specter of an evil empire—the New Urbanists. Andres Duany and a swiftly assembled crew of Congress of New Urbanism (CNU) *charrettistes* have already produced the widely publicized Mississippi Gulf Coast reconstruction plans and, at the invitation of the state reconstruction authority, have since been working in Louisiana as well, with current activity around, but not yet in, New Orleans' central parish. For some in the architectural scene, this turn of

events is akin to the sweep of Genghis Khan and the Mongol hordes across the steppes of Asia toward Europe. More intriguingly, this line of characterization, as it has proceeded, has implicitly invoked tropes both more contemporary and more architectural. The New Urbanists, it is said, are not only fanatically fundamentalist in their convictions (no style after 1919 allowed) but also frighteningly well funded and extensively established as infiltrators into government. Maybe George Clooney was right: a tendency to latter-day McCarthyism is never far from the surface in our time, and Edward R. Murrow had some points about open debate that are indeed worth remembering. For architects (and that 1919 date is convenient), this is also the trope of the hidebound conservative academy, the one that robbed Le Corbusier of recognition in the League of Nations competition. Modernist innovation, it seems, is in danger of being submerged in this Manichaean conflict between darkness and light.[3]

But it may be that New Urbanism's greatest threat is its assertion that architecture and urban design of quality can be executed by those other than celebrity architects, celebrities actual or would-be. With the post-Katrina opportunity for visibility came a second key opening, which was that for brokerage. The careerist strategy *par excellence,* brokerage directs, assigns, reserves, or withholds opportunity for others. Some might counter that cultural opportunity has always had middlemen—journalists, dealers, critics, juries, and theorists—so why should the active channeling of opportunity to preferred candidates be a problem? Because, when that channeling occurs as brokerage, the selection is made on the assumption of a commission, *a piece of the action*, now or later: the preference for certain candidates is predicated primarily on their usefulness in advancing the broker's own interests, not those of clients or users. Economies of favors rule the day. Again, we might protest that surely such

economies are crucial to cooperative behavior, to the building of trust? Robert Putnam, in his controversial but still telling study of the variable grounding of democracy in various regions of 1970s Italy, suggests an answer to the question. In the North, networks of trust were open, facilitated by substantial reserves of social capital. In the South, networks were closed, manipulated by the local strongmen: *i notabili*, "the notables." Cooperative networks of mutual support, characterized by transparency, were contrasted with cronyism and mafias, modes of operation whose beneficiaries could nonetheless build and maintain their reputations as "men of honor."

In our South now, how the economies of honor—deserved and otherwise—play out is crucial to the future of New Orleans. In November 2005, Xavier University, Tulane University, and the Tulane/Xavier Center for Bioenvironmental Research held a conference on "Reinhabiting NOLA." Among its many recommendations, "all groups emphasized the importance of insuring that the economic and educational opportunities generated from the rebuilding effort will be equitably distributed."[4] Earlier the same month, the Urban Land Institute proposal, knowing the potential for the seamier side of the city's governmental history to undermine the best of intentions, had noted the necessity for "greater integrity, transparency, and communication," and recommended "effective audit mechanisms," including a Board of Ethics. The admonitions were modest and diplomatic, but the city's rescue-by-design corps would do well to note the subtexts. Pro bono work's guarantee of virtue can sometimes turn out to be a mask; and fame, as Nancy Levinson reminded us in her trenchant recent essay on the subject, is "not so much a gratifying result of doing a good project as a project of its own."[5] What needs to be asked in New Orleans now is: in which project are the greater investments being made?

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Notes
1. Here, I exclude the serious and intelligent early contributions of such participants as Frederic Schwartz, Michael Sorkin, and Office dA.
2. Ronald Utt, Senior Research Fellow for the Thomas A. Roe Institute for Economic Policy at the Heritage Foundation, quoted in Aaron Kinney and Page Rockwell, "How to Rebuild New Orleans," *Salon* (September 30, 2005), http://dir.salon.com/story/news/features/2005/09/30/rebuild_reaction/print.html?pn=2.
3. As I submit the final version of this text, DPZ are working at their own cost in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans.
4. *Reinhabiting NOLA* Conference proceedings, p. 30.
5. Nancy Levinson, "Notes on Fame," *Perspecta* 37 (2005): 21.

A Cry for a City: What Is Happening to New Orleans
EDWARD J. BLAKELY

New Orleans is an image and not a place. It is a spirit and a song. So, it is hard to see it in its current wrecked self. It is almost like seeing someone you knew before they became terminally ill. But this is the sadness that now falls over New Orleans. Hopefully, a new blues will be spawned from the havoc that has destroyed this great city. Only time will tell if New Orleans can be resurrected to it old grandeur. Cities are resilient. Many cities have been near the brink of extinction from war or severe natural disasters, and they have come back. Chicago and San Francisco rebuilt grander cities after fires that destroyed them in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. London was deeply scarred by bombs as was Berlin, and Stalingrad (now Volgograd) was on the brink of collapse from artillery shelling. More recently, our own Darwin (Australia) was leveled by a hurricane, but it is now thriving again. But these places all came back. However, unlike New Orleans, none of these cities were entirely

abandoned. This is the drama and trauma of New Orleans. Most of its citizens have fled the city and have no place to return to. So, even if the city were opened, there is very little to build on. The historic French Quarter survived but with limited hotels and fewer visitors. It is a ghost of its old self. But the real tragedy is the desperate political quagmire that surrounds the rebuilding. In this tale, there are lessons for regions, cities, and metropolitan areas around the world.

Who is in Charge?

Like many metropolitan areas, New Orleans is a collection of small jurisdictions that all form a larger metropolitan area. But unlike most cities, local government is totally uncoordinated by anyone and certainly not state government. There are five or six different police departments, even more school districts and an array of different agencies with responsibility for the levees that are supposed to protect the city of New Orleans from floods. The local Emergency Management Agency with the responsibility to plan and manage disasters is fraught with infighting and corruption with some $26 million in emergency planning funds that went missing before the storm hit. So, it is little wonder that things seemed chaotic. They were. Now, this same myriad of agencies and local bodies is reassembling in the form of more than five different task forces and commissions to oversee the rebuilding process. The mayor of New Orleans formed a commission but so have the City Council (separate from the Mayor), the Governor, the Chamber of Commerce, and Neighborhood Organizations. They are all taking charge of rebuilding the city or the region or both. At some point, this will be sorted out, but now it is cumbersome to say the least and perplexing for all those who genuinely want to help. The insurance losses alone is estimated in the mega billions as shown below. Many property owners in New Orleans did have insurance, but the city has a very large segment of renters who have to wait and see what owners rebuild and when and where, if at all. Flood insurance even with federal coverage is expensive for modest income groups who had little coverage. So recovery will be very slow.

The Role of Planners and Architects

New Orleans and the Gulf Coast have become the battlegrounds of professionals. Local planners are scattered across at least a half dozen states from Texas to North Carolina and Chicago, Illinois. The local planners with the best knowledge and expertise are not on payrolls because the governments are cutting budgets and planners are considered a luxury but police are essential. One planner pointed out to me that there is not much for police to protect at this point. But local planners are not being paid to plan, and state government is hiring or using pro bono and in some cases high profile and highly paid international name architects and developers on contract to replan Gulf Coast communities. Outside of the region, planners and architects are bringing new ideas, some interesting and perhaps refreshing like new building and design principles, but these ideas are being shaped in the absence of the local planners and local people. Most New Orleans residents who need to be engaged in the planning process are scattered across forty-four U.S. States. This is not to say that there are no efforts to reach ''evacuees'' as they are being called. But replanning is not the highest priority for evacuees who have no jobs and no income other than a small stipend from the federal government. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has become the biggest obstacle to people returning with an on and off again approach and no central directions. Over 22,000 people requested trailers on their homesites, but few trailers have been delivered because of bureaucratic red tape and inadequate infrastructure. It is difficult to plan if you are not on or near the land. The mayor's commission proposed that the city be subdivided into small planning districts so that the planning process will have some coherence and so that areas that are not viable for physical or economic recovery can be identified. The reaction to this sensible proposal is very negative on the part of local residents. First, they gear that the planners will plan them out and not into their

Loss component	Gross industry loss range	Notes
1st Landfall in Florida	$1–2 billion	Predominantly wind loss; <$100 million from flood
Offshore energy	$2–5 billion	Loss of production could be substantial, $1–2 billion in platform losses
2nd Landfall Wind and surge	$20–25 billion	Wind component approximately 2/3 of total gross loss
New Orleans flooding	$15–25 billion	Excludes expected losses of ~$10bn to National Flood Insurance
Additional loss sources	$2–3 billion	Marine, aggravated fishing business and shipping losses, off premises power, localized flooding
Total estimated loss	$40–60 billion	

Source: Risk Management Solutions Inc., October 2005.

neighborhoods. There is good reason for this skepticism since the same commission has announced the concept of shrinking the city—or code for reducing the low-income neighborhoods.

What Kind of City?

The burning issue in New Orleans is not physical planning but social engineering. Both market and environmental rhetoric is being used to suggest that the old residents should not return to the city. Some political leaders are advancing the specious logic that the low-income residents are better off in richer states. This almost sounds like the words used to drive Native American from their lands on the East Coast in the hope of starving them in the Western deserts. But no one is suggesting that anyone who is higher up on the income ladder should be relocated. In fact, extraordinary efforts have been taken to reopen the colleges and universities but no efforts have been extended as of January 2006 to reopen hard-hit neighborhoods.

Another more profound issue for planners and architects is that, outside of the French Quarter, the Garden District, and a few select areas, New Orleans and environs were a planning nightmare. The downtown was dilapidated and dying for years with little new investment. Attempts at urban renewal in the central core area have not been successful, and immigrant waves have not altered the shabby character of much of the city, unlike the immigrant-induced revivals in the Bronx, Chicago, Los Angeles, and many other places. Central New Orleans needs architectural help. So, it is important for New Orleans to look at a much broader plan of recovery focused on the total physical enhancements of the central city, like Oakland and San Francisco did post the 1989 earthquake.

New Orleans has no architectural theme, so where does one start? Furthermore, there is no urban design logic for New Orleans. Good landscape and urban design skills are needed now to alter the nature of the recovery so that the same

anything-goes logic does not govern the future of the city. Finally, each neighborhood has the opportunity to develop a real new neighborhood that can withstand the ravages of the future. New Orleans needs a building system that is based on steel frame construction and composite materials to withstand termites, sun, and future flood damages. It is not too late to even think of raising areas of the city using the rubble from the storm and other materials like many European cities did after World War II. Now is the time to think about bigger visions for New Orleans, not small ones as the mayor's commission is proposing. There is nothing in the commission report about climate change and building a better safer city to face these future dangers. The report, led by real estate developers, proceeds not from grand vision but from the cheapest land use solutions. There is much to learn from the Europeans in this regard and from the book *Resilient Cities* (Oxford University Press, 2005) by Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella in rebuilding New Orleans.

Clearly, the lesson here for all cities is to have a comprehensive regional plan and a regional governance mechanism that can both respond to disaster like New York with the Regional Plan Association and San Francisco with the Bay Area Council of Governments. In San Francisco and New York local plans and planners were in place to coordinate across the region to do the post-disaster work the day after the emergency.

Where to from Here?

New Orleans will be rebuilt but for whom? Already, speculators are offering to purchase land at any location—flooded or dry—at handsome prices. Low-income residents are tempted to sell at prices they never expected for their land. They need the money now to defray living expenses and to perhaps even buy in their new displacement communities. As a result, the gentrification process

is already under way. Even flooded areas will be valuable because they may become areas of environmental restoration, and the government will pay handsomely for the new flood plains as parks or open space. So, the speculators cannot lose. Some local planners, like me, have proposed a strong land transfer moratorium until land use regulations are in place. This would be in the form of some kind of reverse mortgages operated by the state as loans to locals based on the value of their home with the state holding title until the land uses are made clear and then allowing sale or repayment of the mortgage at low-interest rates. If the so-called free market prevails, the poor will as usual be the losers. For some, this is a good outcome. But this would be truly sad for a city that has so much true cultural diversity even with its poverty.

Even in this situation, I worked for several days on two occasions at the invitation of the American Planning Association in one workshop and in another workshop with local planners, architects, and community leaders who spent their own money to come to sessions in Shreveport and in New Orleans to work on the city's recovery. But how and when any of these local planners will become engaged in rebuilding their communities is very uncertain. In fact, many fear they will be displaced by the outside pro bono and paid contract experts. Once money starts coming in, the outsiders will become resident experts with the confidence of local politicos, while the native planners will be literally on the outside.

The mayor of New Orleans and Council members are making the rounds to see their far-flung constituents in Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, Nashville, Memphis, and other places to urge them to return. But if they have to return to political chaos and a city they did not plan, they may find where they are to be better choices. The city elections that have just been held for mayor and council will have a dramatic impact on what happens in the near term. But the fragmentation these elections brought to the

surface are deep, and it will take skillful politics to put this wrecked social and physical city back together again. They may, like me, shed a few tears for the old New Orleans and play a little slow mournful jazz.

It is very clear that natural disasters and their consequences are escalating. We can debate the forces of climate change or other sources but we should research and understand natural and other risks. We have to realize that sea rises, floods, bush fires, and hailstorms are hazards to our communities. We can provide planning research on better risk assessment, and planning systems to reduce the consequence of disasters with new building design, street patterns, and other mechanisms. Good planning and coordinated governance are the best protection for an uncertain future.

We can apply any of these lessons to crafting better and safer communities on the Gulf. We need to prepare for climate change and other natural disasters here before it is too late and too expensive.

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A Proposed Reconstruction Methodology for New Orleans
RICHARD CAMPANELLA

The number of commissions, panels, symposia, and workshops convened recently to discuss the reconstruction of New Orleans is exceeded only by the number of proposals offered on how to do it. Should certain neighborhoods be demolished? Should they be rebuilt? If so, how? What if residents want to return but engineers recommend against it? What if the housing stock is severely damaged, but historically and architecturally significant?

Every New Orleanian, from layperson to professional, has ideas on how to resolve these colossal problems. Most are well worth discussing, and many are downright compelling. What has been lacking is a sound methodology, through which these ideas may be passed, to ensure in a *fair*, *consistent*, and *repeatable* manner, that all stakeholders and values weigh in toward making the best decisions and applying them to the right places.

As a geographer and long-time New Orleans historical researcher, I offer the following straightforward reconstruction methodology. It does not address important engineering issues such as levee reinforcement, sea wall installation, canal closures, or coastal restoration, but rather the mending of the city's urban fabric. The methodology is based on one overriding principle—that the best decisions are based on solid, scientific data rather than emotions or politics—and tries to balance four fundamental (and sometimes conflicting) values:

1. That all New Orleanians have the right to return to their city, and if at all possible, to their neigh-borhoods and homes;
2. That homes be structurally safe to reinhabit;
3. That the historical and architectural character of the neighborhoods be maintained to the utmost degree possible; and

4. That the neighborhoods be environmentally and geographically as safe as possible from future floods, contaminants, and other threats.

Here it is.
Step 1: Determine who wants to return and to where—Conduct a scientific survey of residents (both returned and evacuated) regarding their intent to return and remain in New Orleans. Record the respondents' pre-Katrina addresses, and map out the results by census tract. Code to red those with return rates of less than 25 percent, yellow those with return rates of 25–50 percent, and green those with return rates of 50–100 percent.
Step 2: Determine structural safety—Conduct an engineering survey of all residential structures regarding physical damage and salvageability, and map the results by census tract. Code to red those with more than 75 percent condemnation rates, yellow those with 50–75 percent condemnation, and green those with less than 50 percent condemnation.
Step 3: Determine historical/architectural significance—Conduct a historical/architectural survey of all structures, and map the results by census tract. Code to red those deemed to be historically/architecturally less significant, yellow those deemed fairly significant, and green those deemed highly significant.
Step 4: Determine environmental safety— Conduct a survey of elevation, vulnerability to flooding, subsidence, and environmental/human health conditions. Code to red those determined to be well below sea level and highly vulnerable or contaminated, yellow those near sea level and somewhat vulnerable, and green those above sea level and relatively safe.
Step 5: Tabulate data—Take the results from all four surveys and map out the patterns. Some areas will be coded all or mostly green, some will be all or mostly red, and some will be mixed. Below are

a set of potential recommendations for the most likely combinations:

For Those Tracts Coded "Green" in All Four Surveys

- These are safe, historic areas to which residents want to return. They will rebound on their own. The city should rezone certain blocks to allow for intensified residential development and accommodate a higher population density.
- "New Urbanism," using traditional building styles and typologies (and recycled historical building materials), and a healthy mix of modernism and new ideas should be encouraged to fill open lots and mend the historical urban fabric.
- Historical structures from devastated areas should be moved here, whenever possible.
- Residents should be involved in all zoning and design decisions.

For Those Tracts Coded "Red" in All Four Surveys

- These are dangerous, heavily damaged, nonhistoric areas to which residents mostly do not want to return. Sad as it is for those few who do, it is not worth the tremendous societal effort to rebuild in these unsafe areas. They should be bought out, cleared, and returned to forest to serve as (1) flood-retention areas, (2) green space and wildlife habitat, and (3) Katrina memorial parks. Some may be used for appropriate commerce or industry, possibly as tax-free zones.
- Former residents of these areas who desire to return should have "first crack" at renting or buying parcels in nearby areas.
- Selected houses that survived in reasonable condition should be moved to other areas to preserve their place in the architectural record.

For Those Tracts Coded "Yellow" or "Green" in the Resident-Return Survey But "Red" in All Other Surveys

- The neighborhood should be cleared and then rebuilt, simply because a significant number of residents demand it.
- Experts and community representatives should meet and agree on new construction styles, designs, and typologies.
- All new structures should be raised on piers and reinforced for maximum flood and wind protection. Those few salvageable homes should be saved to preserve architecture representation.
- Old street networks and names should be maintained in their entirety, but the lowest blocks should be reserved for green space and parks.

For Those Tracts Coded "Yellow" or "Green" in the Architectural/Historical Survey But "Red" in All Other Surveys

- The neighborhood should be saved at all costs, regardless of other factors. Historically and architecturally significant neighborhoods are absolutely critical to maintaining the city's character and tourism economy. Tax credits and other mechanisms should be established to encourage restoration.

Such a methodology offers numerous benefits. It respects and balances four fundamental values. It is easily communicable to the public. It provides a citable, accountable basis for difficult and controversial decisions. It relies on science and engineering but not at the expense of humanistic, historical, and aesthetic values. The methodology's details, percentages, and proposed recommendations are all subject to rigorous debate. Perhaps, the survey data should be aggregated by

blocks or by the 70-odd official neighborhood boundaries, rather than by census tracts. Certain elements are admittedly subjective, time consuming, costly, susceptible to abuse, and overly simplistic. I offer this "road map" not as *the* methodology but merely in the hope of convincing the powers that be of the need for *a* methodology.

Richard Campanella, a geographer and mapping scientist, is the author of Time and Place in New Orleans: Past Geographies in the Present Day *(2002) and* New Orleans Then and Now *(1999), both published by Pelican Publishing Company. His next book,* Geographies of New Orleans: Urban Fabrics Before the Storm, *will be released by the Center for Louisiana Studies in 2006.*

Renewal Architecture
MARK J. CLAYTON

For many of us on the Gulf Coast, a sense of foreboding pervaded the summer of 2005. Unusually high water temperatures in the Gulf of Mexico initiated powerful hurricanes more than a month earlier than normal. Hurricanes Dennis and Emily hammered Florida and Cozumel. In Mexico City during June, I expressed my anxiety in a presentation focused on the future of architecture. I used New Orleans as an example of a city that could likely be destroyed by global warming, not realizing that its destruction was merely ten weeks away.

When temperatures in some areas of the Gulf reached the point of hot bathwater, it was impossible to ignore an increasing sense of doom. On August 25, Katrina became a category 1 hurricane and struck south Florida, but as it slipped past Miami into the Gulf of Mexico, the enormous but disorganized storm drew upon the warm waters to grow into one of the most powerful hurricanes of all time. Even before Katrina became

a category five hurricane on August 28, the imminent destruction of New Orleans was predictable. Although the hurricane swerved east before reaching the coast, reassuring some people that New Orleans had dodged a bullet, the landfall may merely have increased the impact of the surge. The levees collapsed on August 29 and the city flooded, devastating the homes and livelihoods of more than 400,000 people in the city and more than one million in other communities.

In comparison to previous seasons, the hurricane season of 2005 caused more damage, lasted longer, and included more powerful storms. Although there is debate among scientists whether the season was a result of global warming, the trend is clearly toward more severe storms striking more heavily populated areas of the Gulf Coast. That trend is consistent with predictions under global warming scenarios that warn of greater intensity of storms.[1] Because of melting polar ice packs, receding glaciers, and thermal expansion of oceans, sea levels are likely to rise, compounding the dangers.

Evacuation of the Gulf Coast is not an option without crippling the national economy. In 2003, eight of the ten busiest ports in the United States for import and export were on the Gulf Coast. Clearly, our nation, our leaders, and our architects must find ways to renew the Gulf Coast region even in the face of the most powerful storms on earth.

Although the disasters of the hurricane seasons of 2005 were long predicted, the predictions were also long ignored. The flooding of New Orleans was inevitable for a city built largely below sea level, protected by aging and inadequate levees and pumps, managed through nineteenth city political mechanisms, and suffused with a combination of optimism in engineering technology and a devil-may-care habit of living in the present. Sadly, the flooding of New Orleans is a metaphor for the decline of American culture in general. As a society, we have neglected our cities, taken for granted the infrastructure, clung to unsustainable life patterns, and defiantly challenged nature and science.

Many of the problems of our nation are architectural. We live in fantasy architecture, believing that the moment is happily ever after. The leadership across the nation appears uniformly unable to grasp what is needed or to follow a productive course. Business as usual, with sweetheart contracts, heavy-handed undemocratic policies, and myopic, rose-colored visions of the future cannot correct the mistakes nor can an embrace of escapist traditionalist rules. Architectural and planning ideals of neo-Victorian ornament and recreationally oriented subdivisions are as much the problem as the solution. Needed is a renewal of spirit, democratic zeal, and problem-solving intellect that can rethink the patterns of our cities.

Michael Neuman, professor at Texas A&M University, coined a phrase ''re-New Orleans'' that has led to a moniker for a comprehensive way of addressing the design challenges of the Gulf Coast. The renewal of New Orleans has been a catalyst for formulating a more coherent set of principles for what we profess both as teachers and as citizens. *Renewal Architecture* is a way of thinking about our homes, our cities, and our nations that synthesizes a variety of potent ideas about the physical form of our society. The concept is summarized by five principles:

- Scientific
- Sustainable
- Comprehensive
- Holistic
- Innovative

First, Renewal Architecture is scientific. Architecture as a profession and discipline has long avoided the adoption of rigorous methods of analysis and hypothesis testing, too often hiding behind manifestos of strongly held but shallow convictions. Renewal Architecture builds on a foundation of valid and verifiable evidence. Kirk Hamilton has elaborated ''evidence-based practice,'' an exemplar for health facilities design.[2] A practitioner who is committed to the cutting edge of responsible design is compelled to base decisions on the careful review of literature, formulation of testable hypotheses regarding design alternatives, valid measurement of data regarding the design, and peer-reviewed publication of results. The solutions for New Orleans must be grounded in science and fact, not in fantasy or willfulness.

Second, Renewal Architecture is sustainable. Solutions must respect a ''triple bottom line'' of environmental, social, and economic viability. The New Orleans of the future must live harmoniously with the river and the Gulf; provide good homes, schools, and opportunities for its inhabitants; and command enough economic resources so that it can defend itself from domination by faraway governments and institutions.

Third, Renewal Architecture is comprehensive across scales. Renewing New Orleans requires us to think about the individual as well as the community. Security requires individuals to have working cell phones, buildings to provide shelter and services during storms, and neighborhoods to have transportation that is needed for evacuation. The architectural detailing must be adequate to withstand wind loads and resist moisture damage, while space planning should locate essential resources in flood-resistant positions. At the urban scale, adequate levees are essential but neighborhoods should be planned with full cognizance and public awareness of risks. At the regional scale, measures must be implemented to conserve the wetlands that protect the urban settlements. There must also be constraint on the waste and pollution of the Mississippi River and the diversion of floodwaters downstream. Because more than 41 percent of the contiguous United States drains into the Mississippi River, the stress

on the South Louisiana environment can only be addressed at the national level.

Fourth, Renewal Architecture is holistic. It is concerned with the totality of people's lives. Healthy cities are those that encourage walking and healthy personal practices. Extensive mass transit liberates us from the false freedom of the highways that strangle the city and raise the cost of entry into markets and decrease economic opportunity. Local production of food and goods empowers us to achieve prosperity, efficiency, and identity as well as local political control. Renewal Architecture is an understanding that our built environment largely determines the patterns of our lives. Careful design can eliminate pollution, reduce poverty, invigorate home life, make work life more productive, enrich school life, improve our health, and reduce crime.

Fifth, Renewal Architecture is aligned with technological innovation. It does not seek to preserve outdated forms and traditional ways of building. Instead, it is constantly searching for better materials, better processes, and better business relationships. Supply chain management, alternative delivery systems, and computer-aided fabrication are integral to the architectural solutions for the Gulf Coast. Renewal Architecture is high tech, digital, futuristic, cutting edge, and modern.

Renewal Architecture is offered as a complement and a refinement to New Urbanism. New Urbanism has received much attention as a theory that can contribute to the reconstruction of New Orleans and other Gulf Coast cities. Although New Urbanism has evolved from its original planning rulebooks for neotraditionalist coastal resort communities, it still conveys an allegiance to nostalgia and historic precedents. Renewal Architecture, in contrast, is based on a firm commitment to innovation, technology, and change.

New Orleans needs new levees, better public schools, a transportation network that enables evacuation, and political leadership that is responsive to the needs of constituents. The city needs residential neighborhoods that encourage community, tradition, and identity. It needs homes that can withstand the forces of hurricane and flood, while remaining affordable and attractive. It needs economic security, health care for all, equal protection under the law, and a pollution-free environment. It needs a Renewal Architecture that brings together principles of design, urban planning, construction, sociology, psychology, law, political science, and other fields into a gumbo that is better than anything ever built before.

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Notes
1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ''Summary for policy makers,'' in J. J. McCarthy, O. F. Canziani, N. A. Leary, D. J. Dokken, and K. S. White, eds., *Climate Change 2001: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1–18.
2. K. Hamilton, ''The Four Levels of Evidence-based Practice,'' *Health-care Design* 3 (November 2003): 18–26.

Washed Away by Hurricane Katrina?
ISABELLE MARET

Many people knew that a strong hurricane could lead to catastrophic flooding in New Orleans. Nevertheless, Hurricane Katrina showed that the responsible authorities were woefully unprepared for such an outcome. New Orleans is now facing a major crisis, as 80 percent of the city was flooded for several days to several weeks. Because of this, many of its residents are still displaced throughout the United States.

Hurricane Katrina also cast light on the limits of a disjointed system. New Orleans is fragmented in many regards. Regional governance, for example, is highly fragmented, with each parish comprising the metropolitan area acting independently before the hurricane, as well as for the rebuilding. The consequences are many. Due to the lack of a comprehensive regional rebuilding strategy, many people are leaving Orleans Parish to live in Jefferson and St. Tammany Parishes, impoverishing the central parish, Orleans, in need of its tax base. The absence of comprehensive regional management also takes a toll on one of the most crucial tasks facing the area: flood control. Within New Orleans, fragmentation of the rebuilding process leads to unproductive competition among the neighborhoods within the central city. Moreover, there seems to be no collaboration between the rebuilding teams created by different levels of government: Louisiana Recovery Authority launched by Governor Blanco in October 2005, the Bring New Orleans Back Commission appointed by Mayer Nagin in October 2005, and, lately, the city council planning team. The Bring New Orleans Back Commission gave a deadline of May 20, 2006, for each neighborhood group to submit a rebuilding plan. These groups have to show who can and/or wants to come back and how they envision the rebuilding of their neighborhoods. The task is a major challenge as many residents are unable to return to their communities. The difficult question is how to rebuild a city in a sustainable way when the fragmentation of its governance and its vulnerability to risks are so high. How to respond to a major disaster and include the needs of the different citizens of the city, especially if they are not there to speak for themselves? City leaders will need to learn how to include these displaced citizens into the rebuilding process.

Yet, despite the difficulties, New Orleanians are showing a strong attachment to their culture and the importance of its preservation in these difficult times. Mardi Gras, music festivals, and the early return of the city's most celebrated local restaurants all indicate the strength and spirit of the

people able to return. The culture of New Orleans is unique. It is a mix of ancient heritage with layers and adaptations added by successive generations, resulting in a singularly beautiful cultural mosaic of elements. Hurricane Katrina destroyed buildings—though not in the city's historic core—and displaced hundreds of thousands of people, but it cannot wipe out the memories and spirit of the citizens. It is necessary to enable every citizen to come back to this exceptional city if they so desire.

Seven months after the hurricane, there is a great need for housing to facilitate the rebuilding. If not for blue roofs or the scattered carcasses of homes damaged by fire, the Garden District and many parts of uptown are the only neighborhoods that present the appearance of normalcy. The same goes for the French Quarter, Algiers Point (on the west bank of the river), the Faubourg Marigny, and Esplanade Ridge. These neighborhoods may actually have a higher density than before the storm—as traffic seems to indicate—because family ties, solidarity, or survivor's guilt have led many residents to take into their homes people from the hard-hit areas.

My middle-class neighborhood of Gentilly, on the other hand, presents a more forlorn image. Most houses are still standing, but they have the common telltale tattoo line, a lingering evidence of the long-standing floodwaters (Figure 1a, b). No one in my neighborhood, including my family, was aware of the flooding that was possible. Just one week before the hurricane, we had asked for a flood elevation survey to be able to get a sewage permit for the bathroom we were building in our new backyard cottage. The result was most interesting: the line was drawn at six feet off the ground for the cottage, and thus 4 feet for the house that is on higher ground. When you look at the water line on my house and the state of the furniture in my living room, it is clear that even the city's permitting office had no idea of the flooding possible. Our damage assessment report states that the estimated flood depth was 9.5 feet of water after Katrina—and the water stayed eighteen days!

Imagine miles of blocks with empty houses like mine. However, even here, I observe some signs of the urban revival. A handful of trailers (Figure 2), slowly appearing in families' front yards, illustrates the return of the most resilient residents. The neighborhood planning initiatives are strong. While living out of state for four months after the hurricane, I was able to stay in contact with my neighbors via the Internet. We were constantly being updated on the new requirements needed by the city, the new permits necessary, the grant possibilities, and the trailer process.

New Orleans residents are resilient. Families have lived in their neighborhoods for generations, and they intend to come back to try to rebuild their

2. Resilient residents living in trailers while rebuilding their homes. (Photo by the author.)

3. Raised house in Gentilly. (Photo by the author.)

community networks. They have to learn to adapt to major changes and the new architectural paradigms that are emerging. With no real guidance on rebuilding requirements months after the hurricane, families in love with their neighborhoods have been taking the lead. The belief at that time was that each house that was declared more than 50 percent flooded after Hurricane Katrina needed to be elevated higher than the flood level: Figure 3 shows one of the first houses raised in Gentilly, standing 12 feet above the ground, a possible precedent of the future design of the neighborhood. Is this new style attractive and inviting—or is it ugly? Gentilliens will respond: at least it is dry!

Our damage report states that our house has been 53.13 percent damaged. We could dispute

1 (a and b). Author's house in the neighborhood of Gentilly. (Photo by the author.)

the damage assessment, try to get a damage assessment of 49.9 percent, and be able to rebuild as is. The Federal Emergency Management Agency rules for rebuilding were presented on April 12, 2006. The recommendations affirm that the most damaged homes should be on piers at least three feet above the ground or meet the base flood elevation requirements, which are surprisingly the same as before the hurricane for areas inside the levees. These standards are based on the dream of an efficient improved levee system by the next hurricane season. In the lowest lying areas, such as Gentilly, houses would have to be elevated up to eleven feet. The recommendations are still advisory, and homeowners do not have to comply at this point. Interestingly, many neighbors are choosing to build even higher, up to twelve feet to be safe; others want to rebuild as is and try to dispute their damage assessment. Homeowners can get up to $30,000 grants to raise their house from a federal program. For wood frame houses, this amount is adequate but, unfortunately, it costs from $50,000 to $75,000 to raise a slab-on-grade house so those residents may need to reconsider if they want to rebuild. In all cases, the cost of rebuilding these ''Katrina houses'' is very high and many are still wondering what to do: raise the house, build a second floor, tear down and rebuild higher, or relocate. Homeowner insurance companies are raising their prices, and many do not want to insure new contracts within Orleans Parish.

As a faculty member in the College of Urban and Public Affairs of the University of New Orleans, I have been taking part in the planning process of this community with my colleagues. Gentilly is a neighborhood that lies south of the university's campus, and we are working with the Gentilly Civic Improvement Association to build a comprehensive rebuilding effort by providing data, creating surveys, and making recommendations that include citizens' input.

Other areas, notably the Lower Ninth Ward, are not at that stage. Granted, the damage was far

4. Destroyed houses in Ninth Ward. (Photo by the author.)

more severe here than in Gentilly. Surging water through the massive breach in the Industrial Canal totally obliterated some of the structures. Houses not reduced to splinters were swept off their foundations, borne by the water and dropped in the middle of streets, atop cars, in canals, or piled onto other houses (Figure 4). The rebuilding challenges and efforts in the Ninth Ward neighborhood are plenty, and it will take time to recreate a sustainable community, especially since most residents are still residing in other cities or Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer parks. Eastern New Orleans and Chalmette are other examples of neighborhoods challenged by the overwhelming amount of work, energy, and government intervention required to make them livable again.

The real beauty of New Orleans is in its culture and tradition that make neighborhoods strong and resilient. The visual urban landscape will be even more unique after Katrina, given the housing adaptations necessitated by federal mandate, private insurance companies, and the need for residents to feel safe. Federal Emergency Management Agency's rebuilding requirements released in April 2006 depend on an efficient levee system, which might not be completed before 2010. The Army Corps of Engineers has to take into account many factors in their equation. Not only do we need a comprehensive regional levee system but

also we have to take into account the land subsidence and the crucial need to rebuild barrier islands, marshes, and coastal wetlands. The safety of our region is more complex than it seems and the city's rebuilt landscape needs to recognize its dependence on surrounding sustainable wetlands and coastal habitats. Creative environmental thinking needs to be a key element in any comprehensive plan to rebuild this important region.

Isabelle Maret is a French national who teaches planning at the University of New Orleans. She specializes in geographic information systems and sustainable development and is currently working with a grant from the French government to help the rebuilding process in the city of New Orleans.

The Trailerization of New Orleans
GREG BARTON

Photo-Essay Annotation
Born in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Federal Emergency Management Agency trailer has emerged as a new typology. This insertion into the New Orleans landscape has produced countless ''moments'' and iterations of the house-to-trailer relationship. For example, in some neighborhoods, the placement of the trailer perfectly mimics the traditional single shotgun house, while in others, it creates dynamic gestures through its diagonal positioning. The introduction of an estimated 30,000 trailers into the New Orleans fabric will force the city and its residents to reexamine the definition of the vernacular.

Greg Barton is a second year architecture student at Tulane University, where he is completing research in Professor Stephen Verderber's Social Responsibility class.

American Urbicide
ANDREW HERSCHER

In the mid-1990s, the term "urbicide" began to circulate in accounts of the destruction of cities in the former Yugoslavia: cities under relentless siege, such as Sarajevo; cities divided by a front line, such as Mostar; and cities overrun and ruined, such as Vukovar.[1] The genealogy of the term reaches back to the late 1960s in North America, when it referred to modernist urban renewal schemes initiated by the razing of historic cityscapes.[2] Resuscitated in the context of post-Yugoslavia's violent conflicts, however, the destruction signified by urbicide radically expanded. Against the idea that post-Yugoslav cities were destroyed because of military necessity or through collateral damage, urbicide posed the target of destruction as the city itself— as an ensemble of architecture, a community of citizens, a medium of collective memory, or even the site of civilization as such.

The concept of urbicide provided a new category to conceive of political violence, a violence that could be framed as at once urban, deliberate, and illegitimate. Thus, urbicide has increasingly been used to recategorize urban violence, especially violence carried out by states as a component of counterinsurgency campaigns or the "war on terror," such as, for example, the Israeli Defense Force's assault on the West Bank city of Jenin or the U.S. Marines' assault on Fallujah.[3] Defined as urbicide, the injuries, deaths, and destruction in these assaults are deemed to be drastically disproportionate to their stated aims and to comprise violence inflicted not on explicitly defined enemies, but on a city and its citizenry.

The so-called natural disasters, it may seem, are far from urbicides. Though both yield urban destruction, the destruction of the disaster seems to be unplanned and accidental, caused primarily or only by natural forces, while the destruction of urbicide is planned and deliberate, aimed precisely at the violent transformation of the city. In what follows, I want to challenge the conventional understanding of the disaster and to reflect upon the way that the effects of "natural disasters" such as Katrina are mediated by public policy and social ideology. In so doing, I will pose the destruction that Katrina precipitated as both a component of and a conceptual frame for a paradigmatically American variety of urbicide, a form of urban destruction that occurs through the confluence of racial segregation, structural impoverishment, urban disinvestment, and natural hazard.

In contemporary public discourse, both within and beyond North America, representations of disasters typically rely upon and reproduce two profound social imaginaries: first, the city imagined as a stable site of safety and order, and second, the disaster imagined as an unpredictable situation of chaos. Laminated together in the discursive representation of a disaster, the disaster is staged as an exceptional event, an event that interrupts, disturbs, and damages an otherwise-secure urban status quo.

The imagination of the city as a site of order and safety is one of the most well-established tropes of Western urbanism. From Max Weber's notion of the city as the origin-place and site of "civilization," through the Chicago School's still-referenced geography of "urban heterogeneity," to Jane Jacobs' celebration of urban vitality, the city is typically conceived as a refuge from the force of nature, the violence of war, and the threat of the barbaric. In its normal, ordinary, everyday state, the city is understood to offer protection, to provide order, and to produce culture, with "culture" here conceived in its most anodyne version as elevated collective achievement.

The disaster, by contrast, is an event that seems to render the city's protection inadequate, its order precarious, and its culture fragile. Disasters seem to appear more or less unpredictably; the effects of disasters seem to defy planning and preparation, and the victims of disasters often seem to be random and innocent. "Everyday life and disaster are treated as opposites," Kenneth Hewitt observes. "The ongoing conditions that provide the setting for disaster are inferred to be 'stable', 'orderly', 'and predictable', or at least sufficiently so to be called 'managed' and even 'planned.' "[4] These "ongoing conditions" are both located

within and produced by cities; as a collective home, the city appears to offer both a minimization of risk and a maximization of security.

So-called natural disasters thus seem to disorder, disturb, and disrupt the sites on which they intrude. ''A juxtaposition of the violence and disorder of nature with the order of human culture and civilization,'' writes Anthony Oliver-Smith, leads to the representation of disasters ''as disorder, as interruptions or violations of order, by a natural world that is at odds with a human world.[5]'' Hewitt describes the result as ''an archipelago of isolated misfortunes. Each is seen as a localized disorganization of space, projected upon the extensive map of human geography in a more or less random way due to independent events in the geophysical realms of atmosphere, hydrosphere and lithosphere.''[6]

Representations of disaster thereby confirm both the potential security of the city and the absolute exceptionality of the disaster. What we appear to be witnessing in these representations are cracks and fissures in the city's otherwise managed space of control and regime of order: something gone very wrong and so something capable of correction and elimination. The staging of the disaster as an interruption of the secure and ordered urban status quo confirms that status quo as secure and ordered—a confirmation that fundamentally circumscribes our ability to understand what, where, and when a disaster is. Allen Feldman thus describes prescribed forms of representing and remembering disasters as the ''suture (of) an existential wound with a logos that forges an interventionist memory, a memory that both shows, screens and eliminates, and thereby denies disaster itself as open-ended historical experience.''[7]

As ''open-ended historical experience,'' however, the disaster allows for, and even prompts, the emergence of new mediations, new ways of seeing, and new processes of social self-formation. Against the conventional exceptionalization of the

disaster, then, Oliver-Smith defines the disaster as a product of otherwise-hidden social contradictions: ''contradictions in social relations are expressed through material practices as contradictions within the environment. Disasters are perhaps the most graphic expression of these contradictions.''[8] Framed as such, the disaster can be read anew, no longer as the destruction of the urban status quo but as the exposure of an urban status quo that is itself destructive—that is, in other words, urbicidal.

The destruction wrought in New Orleans after Katrina is a case in point. This destruction has sponsored debate on such topics as the past and future adequacy of New Orleans' protection from hurricanes and other environmental hazards. Such debates assume, however, that Katrina was an ''equal opportunity disaster,'' a disaster whose destruction was determined only by the force and power of nature. But counterreadings of New Orleans' destruction have seen in that destruction real contradictions in social relations—the parceling out of urban security and safety according to class position and racial identity, and the concomitant inequitable distribution of vulnerability to natural hazard.[9]

As many accounts have made clear, Katrina's impact was shaped by the extreme poverty of the Gulf States in general and New Orleans in particular, a poverty that was itself concentrated in African American communities. Flooded areas of New Orleans contained 80 percent of the city's African American population and only 54 percent of its white population, while the average household income in flooded areas was $17,000 less than in the rest of the city.[10] The concentration and segregation of poverty in New Orleans, however, were not a result of either individual decisions or the relative poverty of the city and state; rather, it was the result of long-standing national and municipal policies and politics that served to racialize poverty and to confine the poor to underdeveloped inner-city locales. On a national

level, the Interstate Highway Act facilitated the growth of suburbs, the accompanying white flight from city centers, and the corresponding decline of inner cities; through the 1950s, the Federal Housing Administration red-lined inner city minority neighborhoods, intensifying their decline; and federal public housing policies have furthered the concentration of poverty by siting public housing in already-impoverished neighborhoods.

On a municipal level, suburbanization rendered New Orleans one of the most segregated cities in the United States, and, against national trends, the city's segregation actually intensified over the past twenty years.[11] Given that poverty was concentrated in the city's African American population, the segregation of this population rendered many neighborhoods in New Orleans ''extreme poverty communities'' where at least 40 percent of the residents have family incomes below the national poverty threshold.[12] Comparatively, New Orleans ranked second among large U.S. cities in the amount of its population living in such communities; one of four neighborhoods in the city, home to nearly 100,000 citizens, comprised an extreme poverty community at the time Katrina struck.

At the same time as New Orleans' most impoverished citizens were concentrated in neighborhoods cut off from economic development, educational opportunity, and social entitlement, neoliberal urban disinvestment led the infrastructure protecting these neighborhoods to be underserviced and neglected. Levee raising and other flood control work in New Orleans, begun in 1965 and funded by the federal budget, was inhibited by reductions in the budget of the Army Corps of Engineers and finally stopped in 2001 before this work was completed according to project specifications.[13] At the same time, the erosion of the Gulf Coast was intensified by development, such as canals for ship traffic and oil exploration and the conversion of wetlands into agricultural, industrial, and residential fastlands.[14]

This development, facilitated by federal policy, served to diminish the coastal wetlands that furnished New Orleans with crucial buffers against storm surges and hurricane winds.

In short, Katrina's ruination exposed such phenomena as the systematic disenfranchisement of New Orleans' poor and African American citizens, the destruction of urban social services, and the neglect of municipal infrastructure. These phenomena, each a product of an eviscerated public sector's lack of capacity for responding to social need and social suffering, were components of a chronic urban disaster. To the extent that disasters are represented and understood only as punctual events interrupting urban regimes of stability and order: however, the possibility of comprehending such a chronic disaster is excluded; the exceptional disaster, that is, displaces the chronic disaster that we usually regard to be hardly disastrous, if we regard it at all.

To perceive the chronic disaster that defined urban life for many of New Orleans' citizens is to perceive these citizens as pre-Katrina survivors—survivors of long-term structural and everyday violence whose effects were just as pernicious, if less immediately visible, than that of the hurricane itself. This chronic disaster was the crucial mediation of Katrina's effects, a mediation that determined what those effects would be and upon whom they would be inflicted. Katrina's effects, that is, were but the last and most visible traces of a chronic disaster, an urbicide fabricated not by military action but by policy and ideology.

What does it mean to include New Orleans among the list of cities in the global atlas of urbicide? It demonstrates that everyday life in New Orleans before Katrina was, for many citizens, already marked by violence—a violence that confined the majority of the city's poor and African American citizens to neighborhoods of extreme poverty. It demonstrates that the injury and destruction wreaked by Katrina were not the result of a natural disaster, but rather a disaster that

was shaped by political decisions and social ideologies. It demonstrates that the effects of urban violence include not only damaged and destroyed buildings but also social vulnerability to hazard, both cultural and natural. It demonstrates that the instruments of urbicide include not only procedures for destroying cities but also procedures for producing cities, cities where safety, security, and protection are allocated as commodities and entitlements.

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Notes

1. ''Mostar '92—Urbicide,'' *Spazio e Società* 16:62 (1993): 8–25; Association of Architects Das-Sabih, *Sarajevo-Urbicide* (Bordeaux: Arc en Reve Centre d'Architecture, 1994); Bogdan Bogdanovic, *Grad i Smrt* (Belgrade: Beogradski krug, 1994).

2. See, for example, Ada Louise Huxtable, *Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard? A Primer on Urbicide* (New York: Collier Books, 1972).

3. Stephen Graham, ''Lessons in Urbicide,'' *New Left Review* 19 (January–February, 2003): 63–78; Stephen Graham, ''Remember Fallujah: Demonising Place, Constructing Atrocity,'' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23,1 (2005): 1–10.

4. Kenneth Hewitt, ''The Idea of Calamity in a Technocratic Age,'' in Kenneth Hewitt, ed., *Interpretations of Calamity: From the Viewpoint of Human Ecology* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 21.

5. Anthony Oliver-Smith, ''Theorizing Disasters: Nature, Power, and Culture,'' in Susanna M. Hoffman and Anthony Oliver-Smith, eds., *Catastrophe and Culture: The Anthropology of Disaster* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1999), p. 31.

6. Hewitt, 12–13.

7. Allen Feldman, ''Ground Zero Point One: On the Cinematics of History,'' *Social Analysis* 46,1 (2002): 112.

8. Oliver-Smith, 36.

9. See, for example, James Carroll, ''Katrina's Truths,'' http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0905-26.htm.

10. See Alan Berube and Bruce Katz, ''Katrina's Window: Confronting Concentrated Poverty Across America,'' Brookings Institution, October 2005, http://www.brookings.edu/metro/pubs/20051012_concentratedpoverty.htm.

11. ''Who Are Katrina's Victims?,'' Center for American Progress, http://www.americanprogress.org (accessed September 6, 2005).

12. On this dynamic, see William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), and Paul Jargowsky, *Poverty and Place: Ghettos, Barrios, and the American City* (New York: Sage, 1997).

13. Sheila Grissett, ''Shifting Federal Budget Erodes Protection from Levees; Because of Cuts, Hurricane Risk Grows,'' *Times-Picayune* (June 8, 2004).

14. Louisiana Coastal Conservation and Restoration Task Force and the Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Authority, *Coast 2050: Towards a Sustainable Coastal Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, 1998).

To Live *or* Die in New Orleans
AKEL ISMAIL KAHERA

> The powers that be are attempting to create a [new city] from above.
>
> The state has always had its [architect] who paints on demand.
>
> El Lissitzky, 1925

In light of today's hyperrationalist perspective about the praxis of architecture, educators, practitioners, and students alike remain confused and troubled about ways to address urban dilemmas, not withstanding a major environmental disaster. The destruction of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast emphasizes once again the difficulty of deciphering the efficacy of architecture and urbanism.

The significant power imbalances among the many ''actors,'' together with local politicians, the state, federal government, and corporations bidding to profit from the reconstruction campaign, may lead to architectural firms sponsoring solutions that are counterproductive to the interest of the people.

On the other hand, if architecture is viewed as a vehicle for ''social construction'' rather than an elitist aesthetic solution to the problem, two evils must be confronted: first, the proliferation of postmodern ideas that have transformed our sensory perceptions concerning both the meaning and the value of human existence; and second, the virtual design media, which supersedes primary

forms of design communication. This means we must talk to and listen to the people on the ground, and this must include the old, the young, the poor, and the disenfranchised. And while we cannot forget about technology, the many kinds of ubiquitous images that are easily downloaded and digested can lead to more visual disorder and a distorted sense of reality.

As a teacher and a practitioner, I often ask myself a crucial question: Are architects deaf, dumb, and blind? Is it too late for us to promote solutions that clearly challenge economic forces and the building industry? Those questions lead me to an even bigger question when pondering how to rebuild New Orleans. Can we realize once again that the mission of architecture is service to community and society for the benefit of the people we saw on CNN in the aftermath of Katrina?

These people were begging for help, but then again they were begging for help way before Katrina. For obvious reasons, the following statistics paint a sobering story of the people who are in need of the very service I suggest. Surely, we are prepared to recognize that one in one hundred households in the most affected areas did not have hot and cold water, a shower or bath, or an indoor toilet. A similar condition is reflected in one of the worst-hit neighborhoods in the heart of New Orleans, where the median household income was less than $7,500. Likewise, nearly three of every four residents existed below the poverty line, and barely one in three people had a car.

Katrina has forced us to ask a critical question: how will we respond? Undoubtedly, the *raison d'etre*, the building process, the choice of building materials, and the resulting aesthetic image are part of a web of relationships centered around the forces of sustainability. But again, let us not forget the people of the Ninth Ward and the other devastated areas. Will they have a voice? Will architecture remain ignorant of that reality in the interest of profit? By deciding to make decisions that are

reflective of a particular community, we can help depoliticize the issue on behalf of the people.

And so the question remains, is it possible that architects and planners can resist the temptation to be purists and absolutists while opposing ideas that are conveyed in such circles? In other words, can we establish a "counterspace," an edifice and a master plan endowed directly or indirectly with a set of cultural values? Still, in order to do so, we must ask a crucial question: What does it mean to actually *live* day to day in a community? Since meaning is dependent on context, visual expressions of land use and the way it is read by the public are deeply embedded in the identity of a community. Identity is not merely the drawing of boundary lines; identity, I want to insist, is based on the human realm, everyday practices, which are often problematic, disturbed, interrupted, and even contested. The failure of architecture and urbanism to respond to the human realm and everyday life can result in the displacement and disorientation of people. And as such, architecture and urbanism have a didactic role in responding to the problem of reconstruction; it is not merely how to take an idea to form. Here, again we may question the extent to which an architectural firm controls the final product and the extent to which those forms engage in a viable process of cultural production.

Achieving this purpose will require a dissent from postmodernity and a return to the debate about place making. In other words, there are no forms of cultural production that exist outside of politics or economy and indeed outside of everyday meaning. The postmodern mind has failed to realize this fact because it has no clear focus that leads to an informed understanding of people and the environment. It is for this reason that we must study the many ways architecture can enhance ecological equilibrium to avoid disruption of the natural environment.

Postmodernity, structuralism, and poststructuralism have provoked new definitions

and new meanings; yet, we are forced to question the built environment. We should question honestly the value placed on the rich traditions and history of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and the way people live or die in distressed places. New Urbanism has brought to our attention a sense that uncontrollable rapid change is occurring in a manner that is no longer prohibited by slow accretion and we have undoubtedly come to recognize the shortcomings of technology. Yet, the altering of space under the New Urbanism manifesto serves a largely secular fulfillment for a particular class and income bracket. How many people can afford to live in places with names like "celebration" or "seaside"? The dichotomies of race, class, and gender, which persist in communities throughout America today, must be dealt with in order to avoid a new brand of "environmental racism." The most urgent of these problems is the question of public housing. It is easy to forget that the way we live has been a major factor in the organizing of human space, either through communal agreement, human commitment, or the spoken word. Katrina demonstrated, through its own impact, a reality about life and death beyond the mere utterance of the words itself, inasmuch as political solutions to the disaster will always be suspect because such programs usually support business interests for reasons that have nothing to do with the people who have suffered most. Architectural solutions may also remain suspect, given the influence of big business, because the architect may be the weakest among the actors—ready to create on demand. For architecture to be completely successful, it must be environmentally correct and we must not forget the people, "we are the people."

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The Katrina Solution: Force or Formula?
CARMINA SANCHEZ and VIRGINIA PRICE

In a Lebbeus Woods world, the new architecture would not deny the violence wreaked by Hurricane Katrina. We would stare aghast at the artistry constructed on every street corner, inspired by natural force and unnatural opportunity. The devastation of the gods and the advantage of man would be equally evident, like a stripped, then ripped Las Vegas. Nature would remain decimated, oiled, and toxic; yet, allowed to regenerate its own select green spaces over time, a kind of wisp of hope in a field of despair or a statement of tolerated difference.

Instead, they will create place-making master plans for imagineered districts, sprout greenscapes, and propose pedestrian-friendly dreams unauthored by the diaspora that tried in vain to walk over a bridge or along an interstate. But can the new really restore the old? Can a city effectively be rebuilt using only a shallow layering of a less diverse human strata? Is not that, at best, merely a single community with a gate? Do not the cities we relish comprise onerous oppositions and dynamic differences? Is it a city without the clustering of rich and poor, normative and eclectic, doers and followers, blue and red bloods, and alien and ancient forms? Would a wealthy be able to bask fully in its charming sense of power without a poor to observe and serve it? It is doubtful.

A requisite in the definition of truly great cities is the depth and breadth of its range of peoples, existences, efforts, and ideas. Clean up the messiness, and there will no longer be a vibrant city. It is swapped for a bland landscape consecrated by its contagious shopping mall of pods and pads and its eerily coifed sidewalk cafes for the perfectly staged stroll into the sanitized city.

In 1896, a cyclone of monumental proportions ripped through the city of St. Louis, killing hundreds and destroying vast areas, including its remaining affluent residential districts. The disaster accelerated the exodus from the city to the new suburbs, of those with good jobs and middle-class lifestyles. The city effectively began its bifurcation, which has reigned over its sense of self well into the twenty-first century: a middle class that would not live there and a poor class that cannot get out of there. New Orleans faces the inverse—an outside wealthier class able to invest and rebuild on land laid vacant; a working and poor citizenry ignored during reconsideration and reconstruction.

Woods' violent perspective opens the ruins to all. Those who see the city as virgin land ripe for speculation will seize the opportunity to remove the waste and dust its carpet. They will build pristine quaint neighborhoods unabashed about their histories. The new will be the paradigm, and the old strangers in their own home. Whose memories will shed light on the past? Whose ancestors will be remembered? Whose dreams are reconstructed?

In theory (and hopefully never practice), the neutron bomb kills all life while keeping the city intact for the enemy. Katrina destroyed parts of the city but left the fortitude of its survivors. A city abandoned loses its soul, it becomes relic. On the contrary, a wandering community makes its city wherever it stops. The displaced people of New Orleans must come back to rebuild or their city will be no longer. Even so, it will be a different place sensitive to its weaknesses and consumed by its uncertain future. Yet, a formulaic reconstruction may breed a Katrina of a different sort. When some filter back, as they must, the design flaws of a complete plan will be glaringly evident.

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Citizen Architect: An Educator's Response to Crisis
ROBERT R. BELL JR

I am old enough to have seen the whole of New Orleans, taking in the Creole nature of the different districts, but I have not. I am old enough to have seen the view from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center towers, looking over the entirety of the architecture that makes up Manhattan, but I have not. And I never will.

Change is an inevitable part of life. We hear it in cliché proverbs. We see it in the development of our neighborhoods. We know it by new technology we are forced to learn. Even though the computer on which I write this essay is beginning to feel outdated at a young age of two years, change has always seemed incremental. The small things like phone technology change swiftly, and we expect a new toy every holiday shopping season. But these are small things we can hold. We may not be proficient in their use, but there is a scale to them that allows us a perception of control. Larger scale changes like development move slowly through their processes of discussion, planning, design, permitting, and construction. As we move through our daily routines, we experience the changes on the land. Our bodies have a relationship to change that we have become accustomed to. Recent history has destabilized that relationship.

Our lexicon for change has been edited to include abrupt change on a massive scale. Icons can be felled, neighborhoods flooded, and cities swept away, all before we have the ability to respond . . . or understand. We often look at our students as marshaling in a new paradigm. However, as an architect and an educator I have seen how students are struggling with how to respond to this change. I have seen the mix of desire, empathy, confusion, and of being overwhelmed. I found a gap between

knowing and understanding. Knowing something has changed, but not understanding what this change means to them personally for their career or for their generation. I sensed that the students especially needed time to figure it out and to understand the changes taking place.

I taught a seven-week one credit hour course on Hurricane Katrina to students from throughout the university across disciplines. The course looked at culture, racism, historic government responses to disaster, media coverage, the weather event, and plans for reconstruction. I had never been to the area. I had never done relief work. As an educator, I knew the initial conversations of the issues people began informally with friends and family needed to be continued. As an architect, I knew how to design the course. An architect facilitates, so I facilitated the conversation, developing the issues that needed to be addressed, bringing in ''consultants'' in the form of other faculty and relief workers to address the topics in which I was not qualified. I believe it is our duty as educators to allow students to understand their world from an experienced perspective. As architects, we can take on many roles to this end.

There is a calling I hear. As an architect, as an American, as a father, as a son, and as a husband, there is a calling I hear to go to New Orleans, to Gulfport, to Biloxi, to see, to witness, and to help. As I struggle with work, family, and life schedules and responsibilities trying to find time and courage to go, I also struggle with the many needs here in my own community that would be laid bare if disaster struck. Small or large, steeped in history or newly developed (of virgin land), this is a call that we all should heed. A call to check in with our fellow citizens. I finish this essay while in route to Biloxi to spend my Spring Break volunteering. Knowing the service of our profession is needed, and understanding we must serve leading with our hearts.

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Survival City
GUNTIS PLĒSUMS

No vision of a plausible city is able to compete with the fabled mythical past—the Tower of Babel, the hanging gardens of Babylon, cities along the Silk Road . . .. A city designed to survive a disaster will give form to a city at the beginning of the third millennium. Natural and man-caused disasters have destroyed cities and civilizations throughout history—Mycenae, Alexandria, Dresden, Hiroshima . . .. Global warming and the resultant climate change, melting of the polar icecaps and glaciers, bring unpredictable consequences. Must Boston and all coastal cities build sea walls? Can Beijing stop the encroaching dunes? Can the rebuilt New Orleans wards live with hurricanes?

Paralyzed we watch continuous news reports, engage in investigations yet ignore recommendations, and most likely stick to established ways of rebuilding and restoring. Our strategies of sustainability are based on existing and no longer valid building types and ownership patterns. The tendency to stay with the known provides only temporary and illusory comfort and security. The next hurricane inevitably will result in a similar loss of life and property and more suffering. Katrina provided the clearest imaginable demonstration of a coastal disaster; yet, in this country, we fail to see the state of our planet and lack the will to act upon it. Capitalism resists anticipatory planning and associates it with socialism. Is this a nation in denial? Are we asking the big questions?

There are precedents worth recognizing. Japanese villages on the island of Shikoku have survived centuries of typhoons. The Netherlands would not exist without the determination and effort of the Dutch. Walled cities from Europe to China were built for protection and control. In many ways, the conditions of New Orleans are unique. We can learn from the past and discover ways to sustain a city.

Cities were established and grew as centers of administration and control, production and trade, transportation nodes or pilgrimage destinations, fortresses and defensible outposts, and enclaves of learning and enlightenment. Some cities were deliberately laid out based on sacred symbolism, while others emerged due to discoveries of natural resources. The city is the ultimate human product— the setting for intellectual stimulation, excitement, and opportunity, including profit. It is a place for betterment and livelihood and also a work of art. This we know.

A great many other cities were built in vulnerable places or reclaimed from the sea, such as St. Petersburg, Venice, Amsterdam, and much of Hong Kong, to name the most obvious. Now we are confronted with a building and planning problem on a scale quite different from that of the medieval walled cities. Today's cities, regions, and even countries and subcontinents face problems and forces that are unprecedented. It would take centuries to reverse the greenhouse effect and other processes that accelerated with the Industrial Revolution, but there is not even an agreement that the present course is unsustainable and no concerted effort to change it. The consequences of some of the problems are irreversible.

Global warming is the new form giver of cities and most other human endeavors. Survival rather than sustainability of the earth is the preeminent issue. Sustainability has already been subverted.

Everyone claims to be engaged in it. It is not enough to focus on the use of renewable resources, energy conservation, and recycling. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) ratings are already a marketing tool—the Good Housekeeping seal of our times. All the best intentions and sustainable approaches will not restore Ward 9 to a ''viable'' new suburbia; likewise, New Urbanism will not withstand the next cycle of super-sized hurricanes. No known strategy will save the delta of Bangladesh during the next flood and storm. How do we replace glaciers and the Alpine snowcap to restore the water source? How do we avert the impending climate-based economic collapse of much of Europe? The consequences of changes in the sea current on cities and habitats are currently beyond our ability to predict and understand.

Some observations and prerequisites for survival planning:

Survival city does not replicate past city forms but develops patterns and strategies that best answer the particular new demands.

Existing building codes protect vested interests. Performance requirements specify safety goals and provide construction options—even by using unproven methods.

Zoning is suspended. New occupation and use relationships govern nonhazardous processes.

Mortgage institutions and insurance companies no longer control design and are rendered obsolete by cooperative resources of the community.

Survival city builds a new relationship with its context.

Detrimental land-use patterns are terminated and damaging installations destroyed, returned to the ecologically sound state, or modified according to the latest scientific knowledge.

Hitherto unprecedented protective barriers and envelopes are built to protect the city.

All world cities are part of a network, and world resources are reallocated and monitored.

The city is energy independent. All unessential energy-depleting activities are curtailed.

Survival city does not include suburbs. These can exist only outside the barriers as during medieval times.

The city fabric is a continuous high-density framework. Town and building becomes an indistinguishable unity.

Open space is accessible in multiple dimensions—balconies, rooftops, courtyards, ''vest-pocket'' parks, streets, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and plazas, major open spaces, and the open landscape beyond the barriers.

Transportation network is hierarchical but based on walking rather than cars. Intracity and intercity mass transit is the generator of the city structure, and personal modes of transportation are integrated into the city fabric.

The framework of the dwelling units and public buildings is built to last centuries. People can put down roots and make changes over time.

Real estate is no longer speculative investment property.

Survival city relies on defensive systems that are activated against hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, fires, earthquakes, and other hazards of a particular region.

City and smaller settlements do not consume agricultural land and other resources. Air and water quality is strictly maintained.

Institutions, schools, hospitals, and other support services, as well as commercial and entertainment facilities, are an integral part of the city fabric.

Participation in civic activities demands a high level of responsibility. Duties are shared, and rewards are visible to the inhabitants.

No imaginable city of the future is likely to be as bleak as the present city—built pollution, endless megalopolis defacing every country and every continent. Material values, polarization, and greed at all levels dominate cultures and political

systems. Yet, the opposite is also true. Pockets of resistance remain and provide strength to search for alternative modes of living. There is still compassion and hope—two essential ingredients for making architecture, building cities and sustaining life.

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The Gift of Poetry En Route
KIRIN J. MAKKER

Maps can powerfully illustrate traumas to our landscape. One of the most compelling maps I have seen displays ''Katrina's Diaspora'' with a spattering of black ink in different concentrations all around the United States. This map communicates the devastation on New Orleans as a place. More than two thirds of New Orleans' citizens now live away from their city. Journalists, practitioners, and academics have espoused the idioms of James Kunstler's *Geography of Nowhere* in discussions of suburbia and strip malls echoing Gertrude Stein's lament that ''there is no there there.'' Yet, despite all the frustrations we may have with the anaesthetic aesthetics of sprawl and Disneyesque development, the people who live in these areas arguably have more community than New Orleans at this moment. The depletion of this city's population means that instead of an architecture of sameness and a ''geography of nowhere,'' they have a diasporic community of nowhere. Does it matter if New Orleans is Disneyfied with new en-masse construction projects, becoming a landscape of predictable sameness, if the population has imploded? This story is ultimately not about urban renewal. This is about community renewal. With good reason,

Mayor Nagan's administration has been worried that if the people do not return, there cannot be a city. But what about the culture of New Orleans' people? Is not this the greater concern—not the death of a city, but the potential lifelessness of a community? What happens to the culture of a scattered people?

In the late twentieth century and up through today, worldwide there is a diaspora—wherever the British and French colonized, the people of those countries have been relocating for decades, divorcing themselves from the built environments of their birth and the landscape of their ancestors. Their stories are told by some of the world's most famous writers: Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, and Jumpa Lahiri. These and other writers depict the postcolonial subject's identity as multitudinous: his or her identity is full of fault lines, fractures, and marginal bits. This is not necessarily tragic; the pieces of a diasporic life are poetry en route. Yes, the sudden scattering of a people implies some level of destruction. But while there is a decline of community in one region, there is also the movement of culture where it has previously not been and in unanticipated forms.

When we hear about the destruction of New Orleans, it is the loss of homes that tug at our heartstrings. A family unable to return home and children unable to inherit their ancestors' residence are tragic. But people have a way of passing their cultural roots along in material form, even when a house is washed away. Instead of buildings being passed down from father to daughter, the children of a diaspora are handed a few material objects, sometimes miniscule compared to the volume of a built structure. I am one of these diasporic offspring: my father came from India to this country in 1965, bringing with him only enough to get through one year of work. Ultimately, he stayed in this country and raised his family here. When my grandparents could

no longer take care of their house in Kaithal, India, the house my father grew up in, they sold it. All seven of their children had immigrated to the United States. When my grandmother passed, all the grandchildren received one piece of gold from my grandmother's jewelry set. I look at this gold bangle and think that it used to reside on her wrist; it is smooth from years and years of wear. It is just an artifact, but to me it is a piece of not just my grandmother's life but also my father's life in another place. It is a piece of the cultural landscape in which they grew up.

Is it a tragedy that this family of nine is scattered around the world so far from the homes of their ancestors? Or is it a gift, like the bangle I now wear, a bit of a faraway place that I can share with those I know?

I hear people talk about how the most horrifying thing in the aftermath of Katrina is that a dispersed population has no city to return to and that the people of New Orleans are particularly tied to that piece of earth on the Gulf Coast and to the structures that are now flood damaged or flattened. Yet, when we consider this story in the larger context of human history, we can see the potential renewal in the lives of these scattered people and how little of it relies on the presence of a well-crafted built environment. Of course, the hurricane's destruction is a tragedy, but perhaps we are now far enough away from it that we can consider what the gift might be of this nationally scattered community. This may be an opportunity for other places and other communities to gain a kernel of New Orleans and listen to a previously unheard line of poetry en route.

Kirin J. Makker is a lecturer in Art at Smith College and a PhD candidate in Planning at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research focuses on the fabrication of the cultural and physical identity of the American small town.

The Water Was There . . .
BETH LEWIS DOBSON

The Water Was There . . . .

Water in my veins,
Water in my soul,
The water was there . . . .

Bayous, levees, and canals,
The mighty Mississippi and grand Pontchartrain,
The water was there . . . .

Sugar cane, cotton, and Dixie,
Crawfish, gator and shrimp,
The water was there . . . .

Diversity, poverty, and struggle,
Heritage, jazz, and celebration,
The water was there . . . .

Floating in mother's womb,
Surfacing to memories, rituals, and blues,
The water was there . . . .

Water in my veins,
Water in my soul,
The water was there . . . .

The water is rising, the warnings are clear,
The water has risen,
The water is here . . . .

Diluting innocence, memories, and blood,
Fleeing souls, lost lives, and instincts exposed,
The water was there . . . .

Meaning devalued, nature obstructed,
Respect neglected and memories tainted,
The water was there . . . .

Influenza built ancestor's cemeteries,
Rising tides and graves remind us,
The water was there . . . .

Darkness and silence in the great city,
The music is quiet, the big easy is veiled,
The water was there . . . .

Water in my veins,
Water in my soul,
The water was there . . . .

The challenge is here,
Responsibility, sense, and need,
The water was there . . . .

Restore innocence, memories, and blood,
Preserve heritage, character, and soul,
The water was there . . . .

Diversity valued, nature respected,
Sense of place, comfort, and character,
The water was there . . . .

Water in my veins,
Water in my soul,
The water was there . . . ..

Beth Lewis Dobson, AIA, LEED AP, was born in New Orleans and attended Newcomb College of Tulane University and later Washington University in St. Louis for her Master of Architecture degree. She teaches design at Florida A&M University School of Architecture in Tallahassee, Florida.

Interview with Gene Cizek
BARBARA L. ALLEN, Executive Editor

Gene Cizek is the director of the Preservation Studies Program at Tulane University and is a leader in historic neighborhood conservation in New Orleans. He is a licensed architect and has won numerous awards for the restoration of many older urban homes as well as plantation estates. He has been teaching architecture since 1970 and has developed a uniquely popular studio on low-income housing in historic neighborhoods. He has two master's degrees from MIT (planning and urban design) and two PhDs, one in planning from Technische Universiteit Delft in the Netherlands and the other in environmental social psychology from Tulane.

BA: How did you become one of the leaders of historic preservation in this city?

GC: In 1970 or 1971, the director of planning in New Orleans asked me to investigate, with my students, the possibilities of using historic zoning as an alternative to developing an historic district. So we did that for the neighborhood adjacent to the French Quarter, Faubourg Marigny, where ironically I had just bought a house. We started working and created a new historic zoning plan and the city thought it was great. It was implemented by 1972. By about the mid-70s, I helped found the Preservation Resource Center (PRC) of New Orleans which has been a leading force in the preservation of all types of buildings and neighborhoods throughout the city.

Today in the Tulane School of Architecture we have a new city center, and we also have a new urban design-build program that is actually funded by a $300,000 grant from HUD. And we are very Katrina oriented, the whole University, every student at Tulane has basically picked up on that thing we started back in the '70s. Because every student at Tulane will have a role in rebuilding New Orleans, whether they are in English or math or science or architecture—they will have a role.

BA: Can you speak a bit about Katrina and its aftermath.

GC: New Orleans was not destroyed by the hurricane. By the time it hit, it was less than a category three hurricane and it did some wind damage. My block here suffered very little damage but my neighbor down the street, his building got caught up in one of those downdrafts and it is all over the ground—three quarters of it is destroyed. But as you go away from the river, you begin to find the flooding that came in from the industrial canal and the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. And then, of course, you have the breach in the 17th Street canal. Ironically, that canal had been reported, and reported, and reported, as water was coming up into people's backyards for years and they reported it to the Army Corps of Engineers and they did nothing about it. They would come look at it and say "Oh that's natural." Well as we now know, it wasn't.

So I came back to a very strange place: The old city along the river was basically intact and then five blocks away the water lines start to appear and the place is deserted. A lot of houses can be repaired but it is like driving in a nightmare—you leave the edges of the river and you go into an abyss, with no lights and this feeling that something is very, very wrong. And then once the daylight comes you realize you have been driving through a dead city. A city that wants to come back to life again but there is a fear here—"what about the next hurricane season?" The utility company has gone bankrupt, and all of this was caused by improper canal and waterway design and installation by the federal government. This is not the fault of Hurricane Katrina—this is the fault of the Army Corp of Engineers. And then this disaster we are living in now is also the fault of FEMA.

BA: The city didn't lose that much of its pre-WWI architecture with maybe the exception of Tremé. Can you address the city's early building fabric?

GC: My students and I discovered a map from 1878 a number of years ago while working on a project. If you look at that map, that is the part of the city that made it through the storm. It does not include any of those very low swamp lying areas in town that were not opened up for housing until the early twentieth century. So there is something to be said about the way we were building, such as raised houses because it floods here. The suburban expansion with slab houses had not been developed until later. Prior to WWII builders were still using very good wood, houses were raised up off the ground, usually at least three feet.

I went to see a lot of houses after Katrina. We set up a "national trust" kind of board for the volunteers who would come in and actually provide some expertise for the communities that were trying to do some rebuilding. And we found that the old plastered houses with the old cypress lath, even if they sat for a week or so in water, you could do certain things to them like take the base boards out and let them dry. But

don't throw them away, like all the FEMA engineers were telling people to do, because it was made of cypress there is no reason to throw any of that away. So a lot of people actually ruined their houses by listening to what the so-called FEMA experts were telling them.

BA: Because cypress doesn't grow mold or mildew?

GC: It will grow mold or mildew but if you take it out and stack it and let it air dry again it is going to be as good as new again. The one thing we are really waiting on now is the FEMA level at which houses have to be built. Now why we should trust that level, I don't know, but you have to have it for insurance purposes. And now the insurance companies are threatening to raise the rates. My house didn't flood and the insurance company wants to raise my rates 40 percent and then refuse to cover wind damage. So what is the point? My insurance is already close to a thousand dollars a month. So I can't afford to go any higher. So I may be forced to sell my house and move somewhere else. And of course the real estate values in New Orleans—in areas that didn't flood—they're incredibly expensive. They said New Orleans was improperly flood insured—not so. We have one of the highest rates of flood insurance in the whole United States. In general we are a very highly insured city. So all these things that people were saying were not true if you look at the statistics.

BA: One of the oldest neighborhoods in the city, Tremé, adjacent to the French Quarter, was not damaged so much by flooding but by wind. This was one of the few older, "high ground" neighborhoods that was still predominantly African American. Can you talk a little about this neighborhood?

GC: The buildings in Tremé, many in various states of disrepair, were weakened before Katrina by rot or termite damage. The area flooded a little bit, but the water came in and went away—it didn't sit. And so the biggest problem in

Tremé was wind damage and you had roofs that blew off. Unfortunately, FEMA would not put a blue roof or tarp on a hard surfaced roof, which meant that any roof that was slate or asbestos, which many of our early buildings are, sat exposed to rain for months after Katrina. The Preservation Resource Center and some of my students tried to fill in as much as possible where FEMA failed on "tarping" older roofs.

BA: What about the housing stock that was built between the wars such as the 9th Ward and Gentilly? It doesn't fall into historic preservation categories in the traditional sense but it is still part of the city fabric.

GC: Some of those neighborhoods are now National Register Historic Districts and some of them are local historic districts. There are other neighborhoods from the '50s that have been examined by the people from the National Register. Huge numbers of volunteers have come down here and done a lot of the survey work. The housing in the 9th Ward and Gentilly is mostly raised. If it was raised up three feet, which most of the houses from that period are, the water can drain out and you can go in and refurbish.

Now, let's switch over to the lower 9th Ward, which is predominantly black and predominantly poor, but there were a lot of homeowners. This is a neighborhood that starts developing in the early twentieth century mainly with black people that want their own place. It was heavily flooded by Hurricane Betsy in the 1960s, and it has been flooded several times in the past. It is very, very low—most of the plans call for that not to be rebuilt. But a lot of people feel very close to that neighborhood because it has been their home for the last almost hundred years. And a lot of the housing, while initially not well built, had been improved over time. These homeowners used grants and other assistance to upgrade their houses. But the main reasons there were such heavy losses was because they had flooding from the industrial canal and they got incredible wind damage. There is still no electricity there. There are

only a handful of houses that might be refurbished. So most of that neighborhood needs to be wiped clean and then if they rebuild there they need to rebuild on stilts and they need to rebuild a city or neighborhood that embraces the fact they are probably going to flood again. It is going to be costly and they are going to need help with it. Now, the planners say, "why don't we buy their houses and allow them to build on higher ground." There is enough land available for anybody that wants to rebuild fairly close to their old neighborhood on higher ground and so that is a possibility. But it hasn't been marketed in the right way.

BA: Before Katrina, there had been estimates that there was a huge amount of vacant and abandoned houses in the city. What is happening with those properties?

GC: 37,000 vacant and abandoned units—this was several years ago. Out of that 37,000, I would say we had probably reduced the number to 10,000–12,000 units out of either demolition or renovation. Many are historic and 60 percent of that housing was from the nineteenth century, which means it is built well and raised off the ground—it would probably make a wonderful house if you could get it away from the owners. Often these properties belong to slum landlord owners or people who live in suburbia somewhere and don't care. And many of these houses are in high ground areas.

BA: Is there any thought about reinhabiting these well-built abandoned houses?

GC: All of the recommendations that have come out of the Katrina planning groups, whether it be national, state, or city, have all said that the historic stock that is in good shape should be rebuilt. But there is a mentality here amongst the politicians about historic property. There are a few politicians that are sensitive to the fact that recycling buildings or environmental conservation should be taking place. Let's not use the word historic preservation, let's use the word

environmental conservation—because that is really what we are talking about, we are talking about recycling, we are talking about the reuse of existing well timbered structures—usually off of the ground, that could very easily and economically redone to FEMA or federal standards.

But there is another mentality here that was in place before Katrina, and that was that New Orleans was to become an adult resort community along the river. And that means developers want to come into neighborhoods like mine and build resort property despite all the historic zoning we have. They want to be next to the French Quarter. They could eventually destroy the Quarter and then they will look around and say, "Oh my God what did we do?" They don't realize that there is a context for this city that must be saved. New Orleans is potentially a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and that means a lot for us that live here and care about it and it means a lot for cultural tourism and economic development. But right now there is a threat of high-rise structures all along the river and those structures are not going to house any of our low-income people. They are all going to be high-income people coming in just to have a good time and not really to contribute anything. Now I don't mind those folks coming in, I love high-rise buildings if they are done well. But they should be over in the central business district—where the rest of our high rises are. There is plenty of space in that area to build on or near the river so that you can see the river and be near these wonderful old historic areas.

BA: What about, in the Bring New Orleans Back plan, I noticed something that gave me cause for concern. It looked like the fabric of the city was put into several categories, a sort of taxonomy of rebuilding. Some areas were slated to become parks because they were heavily flooded, other areas on high ground were slated for immediate rebuilding. There was a third area slated for redevelopment. What I noticed in looking at the plan was that one of the areas

that was not flooded but was slated for redevelopment was probably one of the few higher ground, predominontly black and mixed-race neighborhoods in the city, the Irish Channel to the lower Garden District. Why would that area not be slated for immediate rebuilding?

GC: The same "redevelopment" taxonomy was used for the riverfront on the down riverside of the French Quarter. There is nothing wrong with this neighborhood, it just needs to be, and in some cases has been, refurbished. There are places that rebuilding can take place just as in the Irish Channel, but they are not telling us what they really mean by that. They want to gentrify the whole edge of the river into places for rich people to live. Rich people who are not even going to be here all the time. And you don't build a city on time-share condos.

BA: There has been a lot of concern and citizen activism about rebuilding the 9th Ward. Is there some attention that is being given to the Irish Channel and to other low-income neighbor-hoods that didn't flood?

GC: Not nearly enough. There is—"oh they didn't flood," "They are all right," "They are coming back." But the rents have gone up. For example, three blocks from here, there is a row of early–twentieth century structures, all double shotgun houses owned by the same landlord. He has done no improvements to those properties and the rents have doubled from $500 to $1,000 a month. The next unit down, which is a little bit bigger, has gone from $650 a month to about $1,200 and then the third one which is on the corner and has off-street parking has gone up to $1,500 a month. Now, who can afford that on the salaries they pay here—other than maybe FEMA workers?

BA: I have noticed some positive effects as I was strolling through the French Quarter. I noticed more art galleries and artisan shops have opened and that there are fewer tourist tee shirt and sou-venir shops. Has this struck you?

GC: Well, shops in the French Quarter are closing rapidly. The biggest problem is the rents; they have escalated beyond what people can recover. But if you look at the edges there is a creative spirit that I think has been fueled by Katrina, in the art community. There are new galleries in Faubourg Marigny, Bywater, the Irish Channel, and Magazine St. as well as in the Quarter. The people that had the money to be resilient and hold out, they are doing fine. Those people that were very marginal they have not been able to hold on.

BA: This is great news for the arts community and others, many predominantly white, which can afford the risk and the investment in rebuilding the city. What about others, particularly the African American community—those with less economic means?

GC: Some of the black community has returned and many more want to come back. The problem again has been the lack of resources. Some owned their own homes and didn't have insurance and then you had lots of people in public housing or renters on Section 8 vouchers. Public housing has not reopened. And there are other issues with the proper infrastructure to accommodate the poor. For example, they are stalling on reopening Charity Hospital—where is that coming from? Charity is a part of New Orleans. A lot of poor people from other parts of the south come to New Orleans to go to this hospital. You have a lot of food service people here or tourist service people here, that come here because they know that if they get sick they can go to Charity and no one is going to turn them away.

BA: When I came in January and drove through adjacent Jefferson Parish, I noticed that every little house had a small FEMA trailer parked in front so the residents could live there as they were refurbishing and fixing their houses. How come we don't see little FEMA trailers around New Orleans so that people can come back and start fixing up their houses?

GC: Good question. And why are there 11,000 FEMA trailers sitting in Arkansas? They should be down here. You are finally beginning to see trailer parks being developed in the old city. There is one a few blocks from here that literally has just gone in and I am not even sure it is inhabited yet. There is a rule that you can't put a FEMA trailer on the street in New Orleans. You can't put a FEMA trailer extending over the sidewalk and most of the old houses in New Orleans don't have front yards or driveways—so where are you going to put them? The laws should be changed to accommodate the trailers necessitated by this disaster.

BA: Who is helping to rebuild the historic properties and the historic neighborhoods?

GC: The Preservation Resource Center and the various neighborhood organizations that are prepared to fight tooth and nail to rebuild the city. The big developers are all chomping at the bit right now, waiting to come in and develop the riverfront. There has been an attempt to disenfranchise the PRC and the neighborhood associations.

BA: Do you have any other concerns that the city's historic fabric may be threatened?

GC: The Historic District Landmarks Commission that controls the sixteen historic districts was almost done away with by Mayor Nagin before Katrina—and then after Katrina, it was further downsized. There are about four people running these sixteen historic districts when there used to be close to twenty. The Vieux Carré (French Quarter) Commission has two people and there used to be twelve. They are doing a miraculous job, but how are you going to run all these historic neighborhood organizations? In other words, the very commissions that were the most capable of helping us rebuild this city were stripped off their power—because they were impeding progress.

BA: Meaning developers?

GC: Yes, developers. New Orleans did not become what it is today without lots of folks like

me who banded together to preserve this great city. Luckily for us there are some on the city council that understand the importance of historical preservation and cultural tourism as an economic development base. I think New Orleans is probably the single most germinator of cultural ideas in the United States and that we are uniquely a part of the gumbo or jambalaya of people that the United States really is. And we celebrate it more than just about any other place in the world. There is more resilience here between the races and between the mixtures of people than any other place in this country.

Interview with Michael Kelly
BARBARA L. ALLEN, Executive Editor

Michael Kelly was the executive director of the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) for six years until 2000. In addition, he also taught urban studies classes at Tulane University's School of Architecture as the Harvey-Wadsworth Professor of Urban Studies. In 2000, he accepted the executive director position at the Washington, DC, Housing Authority, guiding that agency following a judicial receivership. A graduate of both Princeton University and the University of California at Berkeley, Kelly is a licensed architect and a certified urban planner. The interview was conducted, in person, in Washington, DC, on April 24, 2006.

BA: When you came to New Orleans eleven years ago, what was the state of public housing in the city?
MK: The Housing Authority of New Orleans had undergone a series of leadership changes. Prior to my arrival, there were eleven executive directors in a ten-year period. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was on the verge of taking it over as a receivership, because of failed past administrations. So it was an agency that had unfortunately gone through some pretty major systemic failures in its

accounting and back office activity. There were also basic maintenance and basic property management functions that had been neglected.

BA: Prior to New Orleans you had been at the Housing Authority in San Francisco. Describe the physical state of the public housing in New Orleans compared to what you had seen elsewhere.

MK: In other cities, concentrations of low-income people were less dramatic. In San Francisco, for example, public housing was scattered over forty sites and in Washington, DC, it is dispersed over fifty sites. For the most part in New Orleans, a city with a large low-income population, all the public housing was concentrated in ten sites. These sites averaged about 1000 units per site, with some public housing projects having as many as 1800 units. So the scale of it was one thing that was dramatically different than anything else I had seen. I was struck by the enormity of the housing projects, the large numbers of low-income folks, and the social problems that go with that kind of concentration.

BA: What about the actual condition of the housing?

MK: Well, it was definitely sturdy stock like a lot of public housing throughout the country. It was, for the most part, built in the 40s, early 1950s, so consequently on the outside they were brick and very solidly constructed. However, years of deferred maintenance had caused major deterioration of these buildings and their systems. Things like roofs and windows needed repair, and there was a very great backlog of other modernization needs.

BA: How did it change over your time in New Orleans? What changes did you oversee?

MK: I guided the HOPE VI urban revitalization demonstration project which was in its early stages in New Orleans. HOPE VI was an initiative funded through HUD that replaced dense low-income housing with mixed-income housing which had a private market component along with

its public housing mission. The Desire and St. Thomas public housing projects both received HOPE VI grants triggering major demolition and rebuilding. And these were to be the catalyst to reconstruct, not just these housing sites, but whole neighborhoods. Again, because of the scale of the public housing, to go through a revitalization process, it would impact more than just the housing—it would have to impact an entire neighborhood.

BA: Have these HOPE VI projects been completed?

MK: Yes. After I left, St. Thomas was completed.

BA: And the HOPE VI project at Desire?

MK: It was under construction and well on its way to completion. And then since I left there have been other HOPE VI grants that had been awarded to New Orleans. But again I think that the major contribution of my tenure there was being at the helm during the beginning stages of this public housing transformation period.

BA: And part of this transformation period was the dedensification of the poor?

MK: Yes, and the re-creation of housing stock that, from the outside you could not tell if it was a market-priced unit or public housing. Not only was it a deconcentration of the low-income residents, it was a rebuilding of a stock that embraced the idea of mixed-income communities.

BA: Hurricane Katrina hit in late August of 2005. How soon did you go back to the city? How soon did you start talking to people about the housing situation?

MK: I was actually down there the weekend that the hurricane hit. It hit on a Monday and I left on Sunday. So I was actually there while the city was evacuating and preparing for the hurricane. I had a chance to return again three weeks later.

BA: So were you there during the whole Superdome event and the occupation of the Convention Center that we saw on TV?

MK: No, but in my heart I was there. I have gone around this in my mind a hundred times, and in the final analysis, I would consider that I would just have been another person in the Superdome, as opposed to being able to help.

BA: What do you know about the housing condition of the poor, particularly immediately after Katrina? And what was the state of the public housing projects in the city?

MK: A lot of my friends from public housing that I have gotten a chance to talk to shared their horror stories of being at the Superdome during Katrina. So I would imagine that most of the public housing residents ended up in the Superdome, as they did not have the means to get out of town. Prior to the hurricane, there were about 30,000 residents of public housing in the city. Many probably ended up in the unthinkable conditions that we all witnessed on TV in the days following the flooding. As to the condition of the public housing, with one exception they have been closed and sustained major damage. The St. Thomas HOPE VI site I just mentioned did not receive major damage as it was on higher ground.

BA: In the media, there were stories about poor people living in cheap hotels in Louisiana, Texas, and Georgia. All the possessions they owned were in plastic shopping bags. What is to become of these people?

MK: They are in basic survival mode, moving to wherever they can, wherever they can be accepted. They are trying to assimilate as best they can wherever they landed. The other piece is still in doubt—about coming back to New Orleans.

BA: Have you had any meetings with your housing authority colleagues in Houston or Atlanta? Are the former New Orleans public housing residents being accommodated in public housing there?

MK: It is an interesting challenge. This event and human tragedy is pitting one displaced class of low-income customers against another. For

example, these cities already had a waiting list for critical housing needs. Now the tension is ''Jeeze these people just got here, why should they have services ahead of us because we have been waiting?'' So, this has really challenged the resources of a lot of local housing authorities. It just speaks volumes to the real issue which is the need for more resources for both displaced low-income Katrina evacuees as well as existing low-income families in general.

BA: Has there been any move to rebuild New Orleans public housing since Katrina?

MK: There has been a lot of dialogue about the future of public housing and who will be qualified to return. I think, in fact, that some sites have already been declared ''not rebuildable'' because lack of funds to rehabilitate them and the infrastructure and services around them. Even if they could rebuild them, there are no schools, no stores, no transportation—so they really are like pockets of isolation out there.

BA: How will the poor be accommodated back into the city? The majority of the lower class are probably not in the city because most of them didn't live on the higher ground. What does your best crystal ball prediction say is going to happen?

MK: I think it is going to require governmental action, leadership, and commitment and it is going to take, in the reconstruction process, a concerted effort to include low-and moderate-income housing opportunities along with the market-priced housing. Without government intervention, that is not going to be possible. However, I think it is also going to take leadership—it is going to take a type of zoning and a type of permitting process that will allow incorporation of the less affluent citizens. Right now, I think the there is just not enough high ground to go around. The other piece is jobs and schools—there is just not enough other triggers there to attract folks to return, to even begin the process of rebuilding. So it goes

beyond the actual housing—it goes to social infrastructure and it will grow to include physical infrastructure.

BA: From looking at the flood maps it is very apparent that the areas not flooded were the ones on high ground, on the city's natural levee. One of the areas on high ground that had been tradi- tionally a poor area was the predominantly African American ''Irish Channel'' neighborhood. Do you know anything about what is going on there in terms of development?

MK: It is interesting because that is an area that prior to Katrina was undergoing tremendous gentrification, tremendous redevelopment particularly in housing redevelopment. I think the law of supply and demand throughout the city is kicking in and because there is a scarcity of good, habitable housing and there is a better appreciation of high ground than there was before. My guess is that that Irish Channel area is going to continue to gentrify at an even faster rate. The property values and the redevelopment pressures are going to escalate. And again, back to your earlier question. You asked me if it would be difficult to ensure low-income folks the ability to return. The answer is ''yes.''