

INTRODUCTION

(RE)PLACING THE NEW URBANISM DEBATES: TOWARD AN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AGENDA¹

Karen Falconer Al-Hindi

**Department of Geography and Geology
University of Nebraska
Omaha, Nebraska 68182-0199
Tel: 402-554-3585
Fax: 402-554-3518
kfalconeralhindi@mail.unomaha.edu**

Karen E. Till

**Department of Geography
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
Tel: 612-625-0079
Fax: 612-624-1044
ktill@socsci.umn.edu**

Abstract: New Urbanism (NU) is a complex planning paradigm and social movement that has recently become influential in planning, residential development, and government housing circles. To introduce this special issue on NU, we describe the history and important figures of the movement and provide a brief literature review of popular, academic, and professional presses. Because NU is a multifaceted phenomenon, we advocate an interdisciplinary approach to understanding it, one that would promote constructive dialogue and a range of perspectives (and choices) within and between disciplines, professions, and communities. From the vantage point of the academic community (in particular, geography), we argue that various theoretical and methodological perspectives can contribute to a more progressive understanding and implementation of NU practices at various scales. We conclude by outlining three areas for future research: documenting how NU is understood and implemented by urban professionals, analyzing urban infill projects, and conducting ethnographies of neotraditional towns. [Key words: New Urbanism (NU), neotraditional towns, residential communities, interdisciplinary research.]

Although Seaside, Florida, was well-known to architects and urban planners prior to the release of the film *The Truman Show* in 1998, its neotraditional architectural style became more widely recognized by the general public following the film's debut.

I always thought of the film as taking place around twenty years or so in the future, and that Christof, the show's creator, would have created an idealized environment for Seahaven based on elements from the past that he particularly admired.

—Peter Weir, director, *The Truman Show*, quoted on *The Truman Show* website, n.d.

The film also occasioned a brief series of discussions in the popular press and among urban scholars, planners, and architects who interpreted it as an indirect or direct commentary on the New Urbanism (NU) (Rodriguez, 1998; Steuterville, 1998). Some authors argued that Peter Weir's film was actually a commentary on the controlling, oppressive codes and the quaintscapes of Seaside (and of NU more generally), whereas others argued that NU was directly critiquing the very nightmares of alienation and "geographies of nowhere" (after Kunstler, 1993) that Weir's film also (ironically) attacked. In other words, the social commentary on *The Truman Show* was as polarized as larger discussions about NU more generally have become.

NU has rightly garnered much attention in recent years. Certainly, NU has changed the ways landscapes "look" across the country since roughly the mid-1980s and more recently has begun to influence the built environments of Canada, Europe, and other parts of the world. In the United States alone, traditional neighborhood developments, pedestrian pockets, and transportation oriented designs (all concepts associated with NU) are located in at least 45 states and include such places as Celebration in Florida, Kentlands in Maryland, Blount Springs in Alabama, and Battery Park City in New York (Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue). While the NU movement is most clearly articulated in newly designed suburban developments, recent proposals and projects in progress include plans to redesign decaying urban downtowns, as in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and smaller urban infill undertakings (Dunlop, 1997). Furthermore, many other master-planned communities that are not explicitly designated as New Urbanist reflect the influence of the community designs promoted by this planning movement. These include Rancho Santa Margarita in California (Till, 1993) and Prairie Crossing in Illinois (Zimmerman, 2001, this issue). Other places are similarly marketed as "authentic communities" by their developers through an emphasis on nostalgic, small-town architectural styles, although they do not offer the movement's "planning substance" (Gerloff, 1997; see also Bressi, 1994).

As a means of introducing this special issue on NU, we briefly describe this complex planning movement in the next section and then provide a succinct literature review. In the concluding section, we outline what an interdisciplinary perspective has to offer to the debate about NU and suggest several possible research directions.

WHAT IS THE NEW URBANISM?

NU is the most recent appellation for an approach to architecture and planning that emerged in the 1980s with the work of architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (DPZ)—best known for their design of Seaside, Florida—and the work of architect Peter Calthorpe, known for Laguna West, California. An early response to the so-called "cookie cutter suburbs" and "unhealthy sprawl" of conventional suburbia was "neotraditionalism," a form of postmodern urbanism that evolved from the urban historic preservation movement of the 1970s (Ellin, 1996). Neotraditionalism as a planning and design approach was popularized with the traditional neighborhood designs of self-styled "town planners" DPZ (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1991; Katz, 1994); other well-known neotraditionalists include Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides (Los Angeles), Dan Solomon (Berkeley), Ray Gindroz (UDA Architects), Robert A.M. Stern (FAIA, New York City), and Jaquelin Robertson (FAIA, New York City) (Dunlop, 1997). Traditional

neighborhood designs are known for their pedestrian scale, romantic architecture, and clearly defined centers. Although neotraditional environments are not synonymous with NU (the newer concept of the two), many people use the terms interchangeably.

Ellin (1996) argued that neotraditional towns became successful on the marketplace in the 1980s and 1990s due to their romantic character and appeal to nostalgia (compare McCann, 1995).

The residents of Seaside conform to a unique building code, wherein each cottage is required to adhere to a neo-Victorian style of architecture—no ranch houses, no Colonials, no split-levels. Every home features a white picket fence, but no two fences on the same street are alike. And each of Seaside's streets lead to the ocean. The storybook cottages, which are all painted in cheery pastels, carry individual names, such as "Eversong" and "Ain't Misbehaving," and feature porches, ample windows, and wide eaves. (*The Truman Show* website, n.d.)

Although Seaside's whimsical cupolas and white picket fences have become the stereotypical image of the neotraditional built environment, adherents to NU claim to pay attention to region-specific vernacular architectural styles and are especially inspired by small towns of the 1920s (Langdon, 1994). Local history is considered to be present in town layouts (often based on the grid design), the colors used for buildings, landscape and environmental design, and place and street names. Public spaces are designed to be "legible" (after Lynch, 1960), that is, to create a strong sense of place-identity and to be easily recognized as community symbols by residents and visitors. Neotraditionalists also attempt to create livable spaces for humans (rather than focusing on cars) through planning codes that enforce on-street parking, locate commercial and civic centers at a walkable distance from most homes, and zone activity spaces for mixed- rather than single-use purposes. High-density housing with a mix of apartments, condos, and single-detached homes are supposed to encourage social diversity, provide more public spaces, and thereby promote a sense of community.

Another early approach was Peter Calthorpe's pedestrian pockets at the neighborhood scale and transportation oriented designs at the regional scale. In addition to creating pockets of new growth, Calthorpe retrofits existing suburbs; all projects are planned around public transportation hubs with architectural designs similar to neotraditional towns (Calthorpe, 1993; Ellin, 1996). "Real towns" for Calthorpe are communities that house a diverse population, provide a full mix of uses, maintain walkable streets and positive public space, integrate civic and community centers, are transit oriented, offer accessible open space, and honor the unique qualities of a place (Calthorpe, 1994).

Although these architects/planners have been designing New Urbanist style projects since the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was not until 1991 that a select group of architects and planners (who by then had gained positive reviews of their work in the popular press and professional journals) clearly defined the term "New Urbanism" with the publication of the *Awahnee Principles* (Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue).² By 1993, the Congress for the New Urbanism had been established by 120 of the country's best urban designers and architects and was chaired by Plater-Zyberk and run by designer/author Peter Katz (Landecker, 1996; Dunlop, 1997; Congress for the New Urbanism, 2000; Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue). By the mid- to late-1990s, a "second generation" of New Urban-

ists, including Lennertz Coyle & Associates, Dover, Kohl & Partners, Van Meter Williams Pollack, and Correa Valle Valle, had begun to plan for a wider range of projects in inner-city areas as well as in developing countries, and domestically they had clients ranging from federal agencies to “regular folk” (Dunlop, 1997).

According to Emily Talen (2000), NU offers more than just market appeal or nostalgic architecture; its main principles address the problems of the spatial separation of land use and the lack of mobility (or necessity of the automobile). Through its critique of modernist planning and suburban sprawl, this paradigm has directly influenced how places to live are produced today. For example, NU experts have created alternative zoning ordinances by emphasizing multiuse and higher-density developments. They have promoted governance structures for their developments that differ from those typical of planned urban developments or post-war master-planned communities. Further, they advocate an interdisciplinary brainstorming approach to solving problems by bringing the architectural tradition of the “charette” into planning circles. And by the end of the 1990s, the NU planning influence also had extended to the ways private-public partnerships were institutionally and legally structured in federal urban development and renewal projects. New Urbanist principles are now being employed in a number of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) projects for more affordable housing, including Hope VI, Homeownership Zones (part of former President Clinton’s National Homeownership Strategy), and public housing redevelopment projects (Dunlop, 1997; HUD, 1999).

Given the influence of NU in planning, residential development, and government structures, it is not surprising that much has been written about the movement in the popular, academic, and urban professional presses. In the following section, we overview the literature on the movement, which has largely been either positive or critical; it has rarely been neutral. As we discuss, in more recent years many scholars (including those in this special issue) are beginning to offer more sophisticated and nuanced analyses of NU.

WHAT ABOUT THE NEW URBANISM? A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The suburbs we build are fostering an unhealthy way of life.... It is no coincidence that at the moment when the United States has become a predominantly suburban nation, the country has suffered a bitter harvest of individual trauma, family distress, and civic decay. (Langdon, 1994, p. 1)

To date, most contributions to the literature on NU have come from popular writers and from architects; the former have brought the general ideas and even language of the paradigm into everyday use. Magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* have featured various dimensions of the urban and suburban “crisis” in recent years. *The New York Times* as well as other major U.S. newspapers frequently print relevant stories, and NU has even been featured on the news program *Nightline*. Travel and lifestyle magazines including *Condé Nast Traveller* and *Southern Living* often highlight NU resort communities. Authors including James Kunstler (1993, 1996), Philip Langdon (1994), Roberta Gratz (1998), and John Norquist (1998) have written books that explore the problems of contemporary urban life and their connection to the built environment in more depth. It is no surprise, then, that many people whose professions have nothing to do with architecture or urban planning know at least something about NU.

Architects, with whom NU originated, have written the most about it. From the early (1993) debate in *ANY* through Heidi Landecker's (1996) and Nina Verrege's (1997) critiques to the "New Urbanists: The Second Generation" treatment by Beth Dunlop (1997), architects have discussed, argued about, and—most frequently—endorsed NU. More thorough presentations, complete with sketched renditions and photographs, are available in books by Duany and Plater-Zyberk (1991), David Mohny and Keller Easterling (1991), Peter Calthorpe (1993), Anton Neleson (1993), Peter Katz (1994), Duany et al. (2000), among others.

Until recently, planners and builders have not weighed in very heavily in the professional discussion on NU, even though the movement is at least as concerned with urban planning and the building trades as it is with architecture. Urban planning contributions have tended to be short (e.g., Ellin, 1996) and frequently have been cautious (e.g., Kaplan, 1990). A number of short works also have been published on a regular basis by the American Planning Association and the Urban Land Institute. Publications that target the building professions focus on pragmatic aspects of marketing and construction (e.g., Fletcher, 1989; German, 1994).

More recently, planners have taken stands for or against NU. When Alex Krieger (1998), for example, addressed a closed conference on this topic, he highlighted the broad consensus that affirms the New Urbanist critique of sprawling development but noted that this critique has been appropriated—not originated—by the movement. Further, he emphasized that this tactic is symptomatic of the group and its claims as a whole and warned that the group and its projects should be judged by results, not aims. Not surprisingly, Krieger found these results disappointing. A second example is Ivonne Audirac and Anne Shermeyen's (1994) "Evaluation of Neotraditional Design's Social Prescription," in which the authors were anything but sanguine about the generalizability of the traditional neighborhood design model. In particular, they suggested that Columbia, Maryland, which is not a NU development but was designed to foster community, has succeeded in this aim only because its community-oriented design failed. Prototypical NU, the authors argued, must be diluted to be palatable in the majority of American (sub)urban settings. In contrast to these works, Talen (2000) was more positive in her evaluation of NU, even though she recognized problems with implementation. In general, she argued that the underlying framework is sound and reflects a long-standing and history-based reformist perspective on urban problems and their solutions. Talen questioned the utility of dominant theoretical perspectives in human geography (including critical theory, positivism, and humanism) in evaluating NU and argued that more pragmatic approaches would analyze the movement in terms of its prescriptive concepts for good urban form (e.g., mixed land use, functional public spaces, compact development, accessibility, public transit). She insisted that urban experts must first agree that it is possible to develop and implement a normative framework for "good" urban design (part of the tradition of planning as reform) and then acknowledge that it is possible to separate doctrine from application before discussing NU. "If, for example, a critical theorist does not agree with the notion of normative town planning to begin with, what then is the point of analyzing the flawed implementation particulars of a new urbanist project, such as Seaside, Florida" (Talen, 2000, p. 319).

In recent years, social scientists have begun to investigate the relationships between design, the built environment, human behavior, and sense of place at NU developments.

Psychologists Jeanne Plas and Susan Lewis (1996) studied the relationship between design and sense of community in Seaside and were laudatory about the correlation they found. Empirical studies that focus on particular design features thus far have been mixed. Barbara Brown and her colleagues (1998), for example, determined in their behaviorally oriented examination of front porches that NU designers seem to have a limited and limiting view of this architectural feature. In contrast, Larry Ford (2001, this issue) argues that the alley is a good design element. His findings support his positive assessment of NU according to a framework he developed using criteria from the work of Kevin Lynch (Ford, 1999; Lynch, 1960, 1972, 1981). Ford (1999) suggested that NU developments (as well as other planned communities) be evaluated according to spatial imageability, temporal depth, and performance (a place's vitality, identity, fit, access, and control). Finally, Paul Adams (2001) argued that a multisensory appreciation of one's surroundings—one that includes walking—offers a more profound mode of experiencing place (after Tuan, 1990). The NU textual expression of pedestrian space that is also a good social space is a new normative ideal according to Adams. Historically, peripatetic imagery has represented the pedestrian as straying, deviant, or mad, or at least as an extravagant wanderer. In contrast, NU rhetoric presents the pedestrian as a respected community member. Adams applauded this image as an antidote to the fragmentation of American society by the automobile and virtual space, though he does not comment on the degree to which NU space actually succeeds or fails in concretizing this image.

Unlike the recent contributions of Ford (1999, 2001) and Adams (2001), geographers in general have tended to be critical of NU. In particular, they have used structural, symbolic, deconstructive, and qualitative analyses to make their arguments. Neil Smith (1993), for instance, maintained that the problem with Seaside (Florida) was its relationship with difference (interpreted in several ways). Karen Till (1993) elaborated on this theme, arguing that underlying the creation of neotraditional histories and traditions is a social-spatial hierarchy of "good places to live" (neotraditional towns) morally positioned in opposition to "bad places" (the dark city or the suburb). Eugene McCann (1995) traced the cultural and professional roots of NU and found them in two planning traditions, urban aesthetics and social utopianism, both of which have been drawn upon inconsistently by neotraditionalists to create housing for a select market. Karen Falconer Al-Hindi and Caedmon Staddon (1997) followed Smith (1993), Till (1993), and McCann (1995) with their deconstructive analysis of Seaside. Their paper works at different spatial scales to take apart the symbology and thus the multiple meanings of this prototypical NU community. The first attempt to assess NU according to its own criteria was made by Owen Furueth (1997), who argued that the NU "equation is too simplistic" (p. 211) and that its emphasis on representation effaces any possibility of the authenticity it claims to provide. Robyn Dowling (1998) examined the influence of neotraditional beliefs beyond NU and the traditional neighborhood design. She argued that neotraditionalism—defined by Dowling as a set of conservative reactions to current economic and social changes that upholds ideals of the past as solutions to problems in the present—is transforming the production and consumption of "ordinary" suburban and urban landscapes in North America (see also Duncan and Duncan, 2001; Leslie, 1993). Finally, David Harvey (1997), while finding much of merit in the paradigm, is concerned that in NU the moral and aesthetic are legislated through spatial order (this theme is at least implicit and sometimes explicit in the other articles).

The articles in this special issue build on this body of literature but reflect a need for future research that eschews binary arguments (for example, arguing either “for” or “against” NU) and embraces more constructive discussion that includes various theoretical and methodological perspectives. Karen Falconer Al-Hindi’s article leads off this special issue with an empirical analysis. First, Falconer Al-Hindi situates NU from the points of view of several current social and political trends, helping to explain why this planning movement has gained popularity now. After describing the history of NU as well as analyzing its spatial pattern in the United States through a sequence of three maps, she discusses “for whom” the residential developments are built. She concludes by arguing that while NU may benefit various social groups in the long term, currently the beneficiaries of NU appear to be design professionals, developers, and upper-class homebuyers.

Both Karen Till and Jeff Zimmerman examine NU claims to build ecologically sound and sustainable communities. Till argues that NU planners’ ideals of nature may be socially and spatially limited for at least two reasons. First, planners may uncritically adopt mainstream environmental understandings of nature to promote their own agendas; second, the historical and institutional structures of planning have restricted understandings of nature to those of utopian garden, mappable data, and marketable commodity. Till argues that if NU is to become a socially inclusive movement, planners must rethink their designs, rhetoric, and marketing strategies to include multiple social understandings of nature, environment, and community. Whereas Till’s goal is to orient NU environmental rhetoric within the history of American mainstream environmentalism and planning, Zimmerman examines the interrelationships between the sustainable development and NU movements. Through the analysis of an empirical case study—the traditional neighborhood design and conservation community of Prairie Crossing, Illinois—Zimmerman argues that the ideal of sustainability is defined by middle-class lifestyles. While Zimmerman acknowledges the new and positive environmental and social aspects of Prairie Crossing, he questions whether this form of “development through nature” is the most democratic and sustainable path for urban developers and planners to follow.

Larry Ford’s article concludes this special issue with an empirical study of perhaps the most controversial element associated with neotraditional design—alleys. In contrast to the other authors in this issue, each of whom takes a “big picture” approach to NU (albeit in different ways), Ford scrutinizes just one aspect of the NU prescription. Thus, his analysis is consistent with a technocratic planning and design approach to NU. Based on the results of his study of four established communities in San Diego, California, that have alleys, Ford argues that most people, regardless of their income, appear to like and use their alleys. He suggests that geographers should conduct more research about specific features and how people use them because the findings of such studies are likely to be helpful to planners as they modify, improve, and implement NU codes and designs.

In sum, a wide variety of authors have contributed to the existing literature on NU. Popular writers and most architects have lauded NU, reviews from planners and builders have been mixed, and geographers and other social scientists have in general been skeptical or even negative. The diversity of methods and approaches, as well as the differing assessments, is not unexpected as scholars have confronted what has been until now a new phenomenon. At this point we may assert, however, that NU is no longer “new”; as Falconer Al-Hindi (2001, this issue) argues, NU has emerged and become a prominent

feature of many contemporary landscapes. Thus, we expect research on NU to become focused on a specific set of research questions.

TOWARD A RESEARCH AGENDA

Although we acknowledge there is much of value in the NU paradigm, we, with other authors, believe that there are a number of questions that must be considered in future research (compare Gerloff, 1997). Todd Bressi (1994), for example, has argued that NU has not directly addressed the two “fundamental metropolitan [American] development issues,” namely, ecological concerns at local and regional scales, and social and economic (and we would add spatial) segregation and divisions (p. xli). Rather than “conclude” this introduction, therefore, we outline some possible directions for a future research agenda. Because NU is such a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, we emphasize the need for an interdisciplinary approach that can contribute toward a progressive, or “true,” urbanism (compare Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue; Till, 2001, this issue). At the same time, we suggest that the widespread influence of NU demands analysis from experts on human-environment interactions and landscapes—geographers, in other words.

In order for future NU research to be as useful as possible, we must find a way to bring various perspectives within and between disciplines, professions, and communities into conversation with one another. Talen’s (2000) argument for a theoretically layered orientation to the study of NU may be interpreted as a call for just this kind of approach. Perhaps thinking about NU in this fashion will help organize and focus research efforts at one level of discussion or the other. We must disagree with Talen, however, when she maintains that a primary level of analysis (whether or not normative planning is acceptable) must be addressed before a second level of evaluation (whether or not a particular application or implementation of NU principles is desirable) can be discussed. Questions about how to define and evaluate NU, including Talen’s suggestion for establishing a hierarchy of discussion, are themselves political. In contrast to Talen, therefore, we argue that interdisciplinary dialogue offers the possibility for a range of questions to be raised, precisely because various disciplines offer distinctive perspectives on their objects of inquiry. We urge scholars to investigate any and all dimensions of NU, whether they accept its prescription or not. Rather than dismissing, for example, geographers’ critical perspectives on NU developments, we support such efforts as exemplary of integrative, interdisciplinary study. Further, we argue that questions about power and representation are as important as are those about normative design theory. Indeed, struggles over how societies think about and represent certain normative ideals (e.g., “community”) do have direct material consequences (often uneven ones) for various social groups (after Till, 2001, this issue). Critical theorists in geography (as well as in other disciplines) should be seen as supporting, rather than working against, attempts to develop theories and plans that create more equitable social and spatial relations in cities at various scales. Such contributions will be needed on a continuing basis as NU evolves.

As the articles in this special issue demonstrate, geographers in particular are making larger arguments about social-spatial relations and about normative assumptions underlying NU through multiple methodological approaches. An understanding of those methods (and their respective goals) is, of course, important. Scholars examining cultural texts, for example, do not naively look at advertisements. Rather, scholars situate texts within var-

ious contexts of production, dissemination, and interpretation and try to understand how texts become accepted as forms of knowledge by various social groups. To contextualize their studies about places, environments, and landscapes, geographers may examine regional histories (requiring archival research), organizational structures and power relations (often entailing expert interviews), and/or cultural and experiential frameworks (through participant observation, informal conversations, and/or surveys). Our point here is that for many geographical studies about the city, the theoretical, methodological, and empirical are mutually informative.

Having made the case for interdisciplinary work and multiple methodological approaches within a discipline, we nonetheless wish to emphasize three areas of future research about NU. Increasingly, planners and geographers are arguing for more empirical research, a point made by several attendees at the NU panel session at the 1998 AAG meeting in Boston (which led to this special issue). There are several possibilities for work along these lines. First, more information about how NU is understood and implemented by urban professionals should be documented. NU not only is a planning paradigm, but has become a complex social movement as well. Falconer Al-Hindi (2001, this issue) suggests that NU means different things to different planners (see also Ford, 2001, this issue). Till (2001, this issue) also found that urban and environmental professionals use aspects of NU and mainstream environmentalism selectively to realize their group's goals (see also Zimmerman, 2001, this issue). Future research could try to answer the following questions in a more systematic fashion: What are different understandings of NU for different urban expert groups (and within groups) and why? What principles seem to be accepted and which ones seem to be rejected? What institutional barriers exist at various scales that may result in poor implementation? Can the ideal of participatory, democratic planning processes be furthered through movements like NU (after Talen, 2000)?

Second, there is very little research that examines NU infill projects, despite the fact that there are at least as many completed urban infill projects as new greenfield developments (Talen, 2000; Falconer Al-Hindi, 2001, this issue; Ford, 2001, this issue). Early on, this could be justified because infill developments were small and difficult to assess apart from their surroundings. Also, greenfield endeavors were highly visible and almost demanding of attention. At this stage of the NU (r)evolution, however, ignoring infill is no longer acceptable. Research on NU infill will help to ascertain NU's contribution to urbanism as a whole.

Third, as more NU projects are completed and inhabited, ethnographies of neotraditional towns may evaluate the perspectives of prospective buyers and the experiences of residents (compare Till, 1993, 2001, this issue; Ford, 2001, this issue). These projects would complement existing case studies such as Zimmerman's in this issue. Because of the "newness" of NU, such projects to date have not been possible; analyses have tended to rely on information from individuals living in already-established communities or in communities not explicitly defined as NU (Till, 1991; Guterson, 1992; Dowling, 1998; Ford, 2001, this issue; Zimmerman, 2001, this issue). Studies about various kinds of traditional neighborhood designs, transportation oriented designs, and pedestrian pockets may help us understand not only how consumer-residents interpret the meaning of NU rhetoric; ethnographic investigations may help us assess how residents actually use the spaces of neotraditional towns. Moreover, the perspective of residents would be inval-

able to any study trying to understand how Americans (or other citizens elsewhere) think about the fuzzy concept of “community” and why this notion continues to be so central in moral and aesthetic urban discourse. Finally, such studies may provide practical information, including helping scholars and professionals promote such goals as providing transportation choices and accessibility for all social groups, a main tenet of NU doctrine (compare Talen, 2000).

At the risk of giving away the ending to those who have not yet seen *The Truman Show*, we found perfectly apt Truman’s response to his discovery that his world is not “fake... merely controlled.”³ The viewing audience cheered as Truman turned his back on Seahaven and stepped through the door into “the world—the place [we all] live in—the sick place.”⁴ Truman preferred to engage—as do we—with the world as it is. Urban professionals, in their efforts to make that world a better place to live, must remain open to the differences, creative impulses, and alternative understandings of “the real world” that are associated with its messiness and unpredictability (after Young, 1990). While we realize that planners and other professionals face institutional barriers to inclusivity, we maintain that nothing is more important than allocating time and space to the needs of those who have been systematically denied a voice in the planning process. As scholars, activists, residents, and professionals, we must continue to explore ways to ensure that a range of choices are available to all. We see this collection of articles, and the panel discussion that led to this special issue, as steps in that direction.

NOTES

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²According to Ellin (1996), however, the use of the term “New Urbanism” (as opposed to “neotraditionalism”) was “an apparent effort to pre-empt accusations of being regressive” (p. 81).

³Character Marlon, Truman’s best friend (*The Truman Show*, 1998).

⁴Character Christof, creator of the television series *The Truman Show* (*The Truman Show*, 1998).

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