

urban logic(s)

syracuse and the post industrial condition

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
GRADUATE RESEARCH AND DESIGN

EDITED BY TERRANCE GOODE AND IVAN RUPNIK

THE UPSTATE INSTITUTE

The Syracuse University School of Architecture is committed to design as a creative practice and intellectual discipline at the service of the public realm. By creating UPSTATE: an institute for city and regional design, we aim to build stronger connections between our curriculum and the many communities of Syracuse and New York State.

This new institute is dedicated to exploring how architecture, urban design, planning, and landscape architecture can help identify and address the challenges faced by the city and its region. It will be both a conduit for local and state governmental initiatives, as well as for commercial development enterprises, and a hub for innovative approaches to urban and regional planning, housing, brownfield remediation, and community development. Its primary aim is to use design as a catalyst for revitalization.

This book was created to complement the first public program of the new institute: a conference examining the current situation and potential future of Syracuse and other shrinking cities. "UPSTATE:downtown" examines an experience common to cities across the nation: dramatic disinvestment in the downtown core, coupled with increased activity at the periphery. Like many other urban places, Syracuse has lost its traditional economic base along with much of its density, and it has yet to find a comprehensive strategy for a better future. By featuring transformative design projects from Oakland, Newark, Louisville, and other cities, the conference demonstrates how design can help restore economic and cultural vitality. By setting these projects alongside visionary proposals by students and faculty from the School of Architecture, it suggests ways that Syracuse can both capitalize on its historic strengths and pursue new opportunities.

The proposals for downtown Syracuse documented in this publication reflect the School's focus on the contemporary life of the American city. They demonstrate the productive potential of the critical stance and intellectual engagement that are the hallmarks of a great university.

Mark Robbins, Dean

THINKING THROUGH THE URBAN

The open and overlapping urban speculations documented in this publication pose two questions: what does it mean to "think through the urban," and how can such "urban thinking" generate design interventions that help to reconstruct the city?

For three decades the Syracuse University School of Architecture has held the curricular goal of understanding architecture in urban terms and creating designs that engage the complex social and physical phenomena of the city. This ambition has led students and faculty to pursue studio investigations in locations ranging from Binghamton and Seneca Falls to Florence and Hong Kong. Through a growing program of publications and exhibitions, this design activity is beginning to participate in the broader public debate on the city. This year, under the direction of Terrance Goode and Ivan Rupnik, the graduate design studio has returned to our home city to investigate how the university's study and creation of architecture can contribute to the development of Syracuse and its region.

URBAN LOGIC(S) aligns the work of the Graduate Program with the vision of our new dean, Mark Robbins. Under his new leadership many of the School's institutional activities are claiming a greater presence within the larger discourses of the discipline, the profession, and the public realm. This publication is the first of many associated with an emergent Upstate Institute that will generate both curricular and extracurricular research and design aimed at envisioning better futures and stimulating public debate.

The studio and subsequent publication are rethinking Syracuse. While the city of Syracuse is unique in its history, problems, and potential, it is at the same time a laboratory for experimentation on issues common to mid-size post-industrial cities. By studying Syracuse and offering design tactics for its revitalization, we are "thinking through the urban" for much of the country. The transformative design possibilities we identify will have relevance at local, regional, and national scales.

This commitment to thinking through the urban reflects our conviction that design makes a difference. If others can appropriate "architecture" as a term of war or cooking science, architecture can expand through the urban to touch many fields of inquiry, from geography to landscape practice. The university is ideally constituted for this kind of lateral thinking that brings together architectural and urban expertise from around the globe to foster interdisciplinary examination and informed speculation. For the architect, "urban thinking" is as much about materials, form, and light as it is about the subdivision of land or local demographics of ethnicity, income, or hunger. It entails looking at urban infrastructure and land use patterns in relation to local and global economies. It involves becoming a world citizen through an intensive and expanding design expertise.

T. L. Brown, Chair, Graduate Program

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