

## Weekly Reading Assignment- Brandon Young

### **The City of Bits**

Mitchell discusses the reinvention of architecture and urban design in cyberspace in this reading. I believe there is a vast difference between the urban environment in cyberspace and the reality of it. Most notably is the lack of anonymity in cyberspace. It's as if everyone is walking around with billboards attached to them. People capitalize on the ability to distinguish themselves as something they're not. We affiliate people with labels and judge them by their profile picture and "status updates." With social networking sites, "match-finding" sites, and the convenience of search engines, we can find information on almost everyone without ever meeting them. The evolution of virtual cities has brought with it this fear and reluctance towards real life engagement. We have created virtual environments in replace of physical environments. If this doesn't help influence urban sprawl I don't know what does.

On the other hand, it is tempting to see the growth of virtual cities to be a new type of planning. They help to ground, quite literally, the extremely complex atmosphere of relationships and place into one integrated city. They also help to experiment ideas at low cost and are easy to reconfigure. Virtual cities can be used to test scenarios and provide applications for new learning techniques, urban solutions, and help test prototypes. So in many ways, virtual cities could potentially be helpful to urban designers.

### **Concrete and Clay**

It is interesting to note the effect the Cross Bronx Expressway made on the East Tremont district. It decreased the value of the land, split the city in two, and eventually the district became a slum. I am interested in learning more about the assets/liabilities of highway proposals. It seems that different types of people look at highways differently; in the case of New York in the 1930s and 40s, Robert Moses was a prominent figure, but over the years, the community became more involved and it seemed as if decisions were much harder to make. What is the deciding factor in the case of a modern highway initiative?

I believe that if you are trying to make a city for people, you should not run highway systems through it. As Jacobs makes very clear, New York would become a city for vehicles and not people in the case of Westway. The highway does too much to a city for it to be a benefit in the urban atmosphere. It will divide a city, cause pollution, contamination, noise and segregation. Highways should run along the perimeter of a city core rather than through a city. All cities should be able to maintain a center without it being interrupted by a highway.

## LA

The river in LA is not a river as we know it, it is a drainage ditch. As a result of overdeveloping and engineering, natural and cultural applications have become integrated with the urban infrastructure rather than unique in its own way. A river should be natural and free-flowing and attain its own status. With the application of concrete the river became a manmade form and lost its identity. It seems very clear in all three readings the effect that development has on cities; effects that are often ignored.