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Social Fermentation:
Sustaining the Identity of a Small Town in a Globalizing World

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Abstract

This thesis considers non-metropolitan, non-suburban small towns and their oft-neglected place within the architectural discourse. Issues include: resistance of physical homogeneity, authenticity as opposed to placelessness (inauthentic to place) and nostalgia (inauthentic to time), and the representation and stimulation of community values and character through built form.

Architecture can reflect the values and character of a culture; the evolution of both built form and social qualities can lead to renewed vitality in a place. An individual building project can participate in a community-wide effort to attract energy and business, which may in turn be part of a regional effort to attract attention at a larger scale. Any efforts that promote the unique aspects of place will distinguish strong communities from weak ones.

Away from the din of cities and the hustle of suburban shopping centers and highways, somewhere near fields of corn and stands of trees lies a place longing for a thoughtful architecture. In the village of Minster, Ohio, the community has realized a need to attract outsiders. Wooden Shoe Brewing Company, a local brewery that closed in the 1950's, has been resurrected, and the new owner is looking to reestablish brewing in Minster. The project is a brewpub for Wooden Shoe that also participates in the town’s redevelopment efforts. This thesis will explore how architecture can help a place communicate its identity and inspire interaction between insiders and outsiders.
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Introduction

This thesis is an opportunity for me to investigate small town design, realize special needs and goals that are distinct from cities and suburbs, and discover a design approach that is appropriate to the scale and typology of the small town.

Through my education in architecture, the way I view my hometown has evolved. It is one thing to be from a small town, and to have grown up with an ambivalent attitude toward the place. It is another to look at the place through the eyes of a designer, to understand what causes the town to function, how and why it exists the way it does. I have learned to look at the place more objectively, and have found a desire to understand how architecture might influence or be influenced by the unique challenges and opportunities of such a place.

The village of Minster, Ohio is located in the Middle West portion of Ohio, ten miles west of I-75 and 40 miles east of the Indiana border. The roughly one-square-mile grid is home to approximately 2,790 people.

Residents often have roots in the town that are several generations deep. Some families can trace their lineage in Minster back to the settlers in the 1830’s. Most residents can name at least one relative in town, if not multiple families. Naturally, most residents are invested in the fate of the town.

The town was originally founded as ‘Stallostown’ in 1832 along a native trail by a group of Catholic German immigrants, led by Francis J. Stallo. Nearby are villages and small
cities settled by other German Catholics, German Protestants, and French Catholics, as well as a small town developed as a military trading post. The segment of western Ohio where Minster exists is today still known as “The Land of Cross-Tipped Churches” because of the concentration of Catholic churches in the area. Minster, originally Stallostown, gained a stronghold as a mother-parish, hence the name derived from Münster, the German city and word for ‘large church.’ St. Augustine Catholic Church is on the long list of founding Catholic churches in the area. In the 1840’s, construction of the Miami-Erie Canal between Toledo and Cincinnati reached Minster, providing jobs for residents, and eventually inspiring related businesses to spring up along the route. Though the canal ceased operated in 1913, is allowed Minster to be established as an important economic hub in the region. Several businesses that started during the canal days adapted and evolved throughout the next decade and still exist today.

Minster’s decision-makers are aware of the challenges that small towns face in the current age of globalization, but also the benefits the small town holds in the environmental movement, such as proximity to food sources, walkability, and sense of place that many suburbs lack. Several small towns in Minster’s region are working together to attract businesses and population. As part of this, the Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA) is encouraging towns along the remnants of the historic canal towpath to provide tourist opportunities along its route. Minster has yet to engage the towpath trail, but in an effort to differentiate itself from neighboring towns, Minster is undergoing redevelopment
along Fourth Street.

My curiosity was struck when I learned of plans for the Wooden Shoe Brewery to be re-established in Minster by a local entrepreneur. From 1869 until 1954, the Wooden Shoe Brewery was a major feature and point of pride in Minster. However, the combined effects of Prohibition and rationing of the WWI and WWII deteriorated Wooden Shoe’s distribution networks, and the brewery closed its doors and was eventually torn down. However, stories and paraphernalia of the brewery’s heyday still remain as a point of pride. The re-establishment looks to enliven some the folklore and be a part of the town’s re-invigoration efforts.

I immediately saw this as an opportunity to connect the history of town to the new movement of localism, slow food, and microbreweries. It became a vehicle for me to consider how new projects might communicate something, reinvigorate a place with energy, or attract outsiders. The making of beer seemed an appropriate analogy for the stimulation of a social environment.

Structure

Part one will describe and define the theoretical basis that will support the design project. The theoretical basis includes the effects of globalism and localism on a place, methods and reasons to resist placelessness and inauthenticity, a discussion of how values are read from and inscribed into the built environment, elements of the narrative display of
the small town. These will be the building blocks for how the design should be done.

Part two will describe the process of analyzing the context and extracting important values, and synthesizing methods of inscribing the architecture with character. To understand what is involved in the representation of the place, we must first understand the region, the town, the site, and the needs of the building. The process in the building creates a product that aims to reflect the heritage of the place. The building will reflect the character and history of the town as well as the goals and aspirations of the business it houses. Each element is a synecdoche of the next – the part represents the whole, and vice-versa. “The world which a thing gathers is its meaning” (Norberg-Schulz 192).

Part three will include examples of results from the design process.
Part One: Theoretical Basis

Chapter 1: What, Why and How

The Wooden Shoe Brewing Company’s desire to exist in Minster is an opportunity; this establishment could be a mild gesture if done without careful consideration, or it could be strong, supporting the needs of the community, stirring interest, and acting as a piece of public art in the form of deliberate architecture. The history of the previous brewery is something that people in town still remember and talk about. A new version of the brewery could be a future point of pride for the community, a talking point for people outside of town, and a place for outsiders to meet town residents. The architecture could be a reflection of the qualities that the town would like to promote. It is possible to satisfy the precepts of new development in a small town with a better understanding of the context.

I want to find a way to design that is both meaningful for the town’s insiders as well as accessible for outsiders. This manner of design will support the local and the unique and combat the loss of meaning from pressure to adopt global design principles. This design will operate between the overly complex universal architecture, the overly simplified value-engineered architecture, and the false vernacular of nostalgic architecture. Instead, the architecture will highlight the conditions of its place’s climate, history, context and inhabitants as a way to share those qualities and connect the users.
Chapter 2: Place-ness and Authenticity

Authentic generators of meaning in architecture are derived from actual connection to context, history, and subtle qualities and moods evoked by built form. Inauthenticity occurs in respect to place in the form of placelessness, and to time in the form of nostalgia. As our society develops, we are able to advance technology and rely on a global distribution of resources. We are also able to communicate rapidly and inexpensively regardless of distance through various medias. In turn, while our technology and communication and way of life speeds up, we often lose touch with the actual places in which we exist. We supplement climate with air conditioning and irrigation. We replace local gardens and farms with imported crops, regardless of the growing season. At the touch of a button, we can share an idea with thousands, yet we are also expected to be reachable at all times. Certain aspects of life are remarkably improved, but many still yearn for the perceived best qualities of the past. Connection to place, neighborliness, proximity to food sources, and slowness are all qualities which globalization has made scarce, yet are still evident in many small towns and places where what is local is appreciated.

Technology/economy

One form of placelessness is derived from the overly technocratic response to building. When economics and technology are the primary drivers of built form, they will dictate a response that evokes little attachment to the context, which can lead, ultimately,
meaninglessness for the users. “Utility established as meaning generates meaninglessness” (Frampton 79). We risk physically homogenous built environments, and oversimplified universal architecture. Technology may be used in buildings to counteract site conditions, including topography and climate. For example, a flat site and air conditioning are easier to design for than a building on a hilly site with proper ventilation. Economics may determine building material, area, structure, etc. But when monetary capital influences design, often human and environmental capitals are neglected.

In places designed for a motoring public, James Howard Kunstler argues in The Geography of Nowhere that little thought is placed in the spaces between things, the manner in which buildings interact, or the way people engage with buildings. Space-efficient buildings occur in seas of excess parking, surrounded by snaking highways that accommodate the car foremost. Further, the ubiquity of cars in our commercialized society has reduced opportunities for social interaction on a pedestrian scale, thus depleting a sense of community or a sense of place in many locations across the country. Environments designed for machines rather than for people will fail to nurture a public life or a connection to the place.

For example, in his essay Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance, Kenneth Frampton describes the flaws in technocratic response to lighting; the use of artificial lighting in art museums eliminates the problem of direct sunlight damaging the art, and allows the curatorial staff to have control over art placement and appearance.
However, Frampton argues that this approach prevents the viewer from experiencing the art in its full spectrum of color, and prevents the art from being at all influenced by the location and season in which it is viewed. Carefully designed light filters, instead, allow the changing light in the place to affect the moment a viewer experiences the artwork. This ties the user to the place and time of their experience in a subtle way.

The development of technology has allowed designers to solve problems actively with systems rather than passively utilizing careful orientation and understanding of the site and climate. Certainly eliminating some design challenges through a technological response gives the architect freedom in expression. However economics and value engineering eliminates some of that freedom. A climate-controlled, economical box can be placed anywhere, but leaves the user wanting something to connect with. Technocratic and economical design has a reasonable place in certain building types, but the spaces we spend most of our time in should be designed for us.

Avant-garde

Another form of placelessness comes from design that is promoted as progress for no reason but for the sake of progress. Modernism has toted a banner of progress, and this tenet is seemingly ever-present. Architecture that only architects can understand is undemocratic. Further, design derived from theoretical discourse alone ignores the unique character of place and of the users. In effect, the avant-garde is placeless. As
communication is global, so is the discussion of how we should build. Though forward movement of the discourse on a global scale relates to globalization and the universal civilization, we risk creating overly complex universal architecture. The field of architecture benefits from a wide breadth of responses to a variety of design challenges, but design must also consider how the users will benefit in unique conditions. While there is justification for the avant-garde and progress-minded design in the discourse of architecture, it often fails to serve the general public. Progress should not be simply for the sake of progress, but to better reflect the evolution of a place, and any changing goals and values of its users.

**Nostalgia**

Nostalgia can be described as inauthentic or placeless in time, as it may relate to the place but not to the current time period. Often, a longing or appreciation for the past is manifested in the commoditization of history as a marketing tool. A new building combined with nostalgia is inauthentic to the time it is actually put in place. Frampton argues for a more “critical perception of reality” in place of the nostalgic “sublimation of a desire for direct experience through the provision of information” (Frampton 82). Those who long for the past wish to experience it somehow, though creating mere scenery of how a place previously appeared is falsely communicative. Building methods evolve, buildings age over time, and context changes. “Simple-minded attempts to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular” are theatrical, and inauthentic to the evolution of a place’s built
environment, while Critical Regionalism (as coined by Tzonis and Lefaivre) utilizes “elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place” (Frampton 82).

The use of nostalgia in the built environment can be seen in the comparison of two wineries in Woodinville, Washington. The main building at the Chateau Ste. Michelle Winery theatrically evokes an 1800’s French-style chateau; it was constructed in 1976. The building and grounds capitalize on false age value to market their brand. The winery was established in 1954, and bases its operations on traditional French viniculture. Prior to 1976, American wines were considered inferior to French wines, and so American wineries often took on French names and identities. However, American white wines won in a blind taste test against French wines in the 1976 “Judgment of Paris” wine competition. Subsequently, American viniculture gained a foothold in its own right, and the prior nostalgia for 1800’s France began to fade.

Across the road from Chateau Ste. Michelle sits the Novelty Hill-Januik Winery, constructed in 2007. It is a depiction in built form of the current state of America’s wine identity. True to Pacific Northwest regionalism, the winery makes use of exposed concrete, steel, and warm Ipe hardwood to tie the industrial functions and context of the site to the experience of the wine from barrel to glass. The outdoor patios do not recreate a vineyard, but recall the agrarian beginning of winemaking in the landscaping. The design refers to the architecture of the region, the industrial context, and the current identity of American viniculture.
Resistant Architecture

The triumph of technology and economics in our built environment has pervaded industrial buildings and has crept toward the institutions that may better be served by humanistic, artistic, place-related buildings, such as our homes, schools, places of leisure.

Somewhere between utilitarian placelessness, progress-oriented placelessness, and nostalgia lies resistant architecture, which is a call to resist the extremes, using subtle qualities of locale as a guide and generator of meaning, rather than the economy, technology, and discourse alone. Frampton uses the term arrière-garde, a position that must “remove itself from both the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency to regress into nostalgic historicism or the glibly decorative” (Frampton 81). “Only arrière-garde has the capacity to cultivate a resistant, identity-giving culture while at the same time having discreet recourse to universal technique” (Frampton 82).

Universal civilization, which is all the more accessible thanks to globalization, still needs to be acknowledged as being formed by many unique parts. The architecture of resistance takes into account any benefits of universal architecture while creating built form that resonates with its home. This thesis aims to exist in this category, with a restrained expression of local character.
Chapter 3: Deconstruction and Synthesis of Values

Critical Regionalism is a vehicle for mediating between local building tradition and forms of universal architecture, while being aware of the impact they have on each other. Frampton calls this ‘double mediation.’ “In the first place, [the practice of critical regionalism] has to ‘deconstruct’ the overall spectrum of world culture which it inevitably inherits; in the second place, it has to achieve, through synthetic contradiction, a manifest critique of universal civilization” (Frampton 82). Architects must have their feet planted firmly in both understanding implications of globalized design and in understanding the values and character of the place and culture they are designing for, being careful not to slip into any form of placelessness described above. The architecture must be connected to the time, the place, and the discourse all at once.

Apart from addressing the global discourse, architecture must address the values of the population it represents. “Architectural impulse seems connected to a longing for communication and commemoration, a longing to declare ourselves to the world through a register other than words, through the language of objects, colours and brick: an ambition to let others know who we are – and, in the process, to remind ourselves” (de Botton 126). This is especially important for the small town, as stereotypes and generalizations hinder the perception of actual characteristics. So how is character communicated through buildings? How is a collective identity of a group of people cemented in a work of architecture?

“Buildings speak – and on topics which can be readily discerned. They speak of
democracy or aristocracy, openness or arrogance, welcome or threat, a sympathy for the future or a hankering for the past” (de Botton 18). Even more importantly, the ways in which buildings speak support or challenge the values of the users. The attitude that a building evokes can subconsciously affect its users. It can remind them of values to strive for, a collective goal, or a feeling of community.

Alois Riegl discusses values and meanings associated with monuments in *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin*, which can be applied to pieces of the built environment in small towns. Everything that once was gains a historic value. We tend to limit our range of consideration to those things that are distinct in the course of human development. Some things are built with the intention of commemorating or recording a point in history. For example, the gazebo in Minster’s Centennial Park was built in 1975 to commemorate the history of Minster and the first annual Oktoberfest. Likewise, a 1937 sculpture of a tree stump in the St. Augustine cemetery honors the victims of the great cholera epidemic of 1849 that nearly wiped out the town. As time passes, these monuments both record the conscious acknowledgement of a specific event as well as an unconscious record of the attitude of the culture at the time the monument was put in place. Some things are built for a specific use regardless of commemoration, but have historic value because they communicate history. For example, Saint Augustine Catholic Church is as old as the town of Minster, and represents a very important facet of the town’s founders in their spiritual capital. Further, the manner in which the church was built acts as a record
of the building practices of the time, and the upkeep of it shows the perpetuation of the institution. Age value grows as a building or monument gains signs of the passage of time. We can appreciate the time that has elapsed since the thing was made. “These monuments are nothing more than indispensable catalysts which trigger in the beholder a sense of the lifecycle…” (Riegl 624). For example, an old canal warehouse on the alley between 4th and 5th streets seems as though it may fall down any day, the bricks showing the erosion of a hundred years of weather. Now an abandoned shed, the building hasn’t been preserved and may soon be lost, but the discernible age evokes a response, just as the overgrown remnants of the Miami-Erie canal do, that this unintentional monument has existed for a long time and ties us to a distant past that we can claim as our own.

Age-value often conflicts with use-value. Use-value comes from a building’s ability to be used for a purpose without endangering its inhabitants. If it is allowed to deteriorate and gain significant age-value, it loses use-value. While use-value diminishes, and if the use still exists, then the building must be replaced. So age-value can only exist in limited circumstances where the use need goes away or is accounted for in some other way. Many of the canal era buildings in Minster have outlived their practical use-value and therefore have been torn down or replaced. Of the few that remain, the shed along the alley holds no prominent location and can be free to weather until it becomes a hazard. Meanwhile, most structures in town are held to a practical level of usability with little regard to any age-value. The Dutch Mill building, once a dry goods store on the canal route, is as old as the shed
but has been maintained to some level of usability. There is a balance between the use-value and the age-value. The building is used as a small bar, providing enough use to justify the upkeep of the building. Still, the hooks and toggles in the side of the building’s foundation which were used to anchor canal boats while loading and unloading goods remain intact, reminiscent of a time long ago, thus establish age-value.

Art-value comes into play as each new thing participates in the modern Kuntswollen, or artistic ambitions (Riegl 642). The newness-value of a work is the unattainable goal of flawless form and color as the work is intended. Some institutions benefit more from being perceived as new rather than old. For example, the Minster Local Schools update their facilities regularly. The oldest school building has been maintained for historic value, but no longer suffices the use-value required by the institution. Instead, the schools require state-of-the-art updates every several years to stay current and relevant with modern education. A school that appears to be 100 years old may seem behind the times. Therefore, the school values newness and over age.

We read these values in the pieces of our environment. The perception of these values changes with the attitude or spirit of the times. But our environments are ever evolving along with these adjusting values. When we build, we situate the work in both the physical and cultural contexts.

How then would a brewery and gathering space be situated in the current physical and cultural contexts of Minster? The Wooden Shoe Brewing Company, with all of its
cherished artifacts and storied past, is a historic entity. But the new re-establishment of it is very tied to the current microbrewery movement and the re-attachment to localism. The mission statement of the reopened company speaks of promoting the heritage of the town, but also of inviting people to visit and participate in the community. The historical-value of the town and age-value of the former brewing company are important, as is the use-value and newness-value of the new brewing facility. The design may acknowledge each of these values.

**Chapter 4: Small Town Requirements**

No two small towns are just alike. However, the unique identities of small towns across America are often disregarded, perhaps due to the sheer number of places that can be counted as ‘small’ in the space between bigger places. The perceived identities of small towns are pervaded by generalizations and stereotypes, which give outsiders a false idea of the place, and give insiders a distorted view of their own communities. Repeated generalizations lead to an “unconscious absorption of many of the standard myths about small-town complacency, neighborliness, Godliness, stupidity, provincialism, loyalties, unity, freshness,” (Fazio 105.)

In reality, the broad ‘type’ of town is readily identifiable: agricultural center, industrial center, company town, tourist destination, arts center, colony town, etc. However, the unique values are more difficult to identify correctly. When a number of people live in the
same place, they collectively form a set of agreements about what is important to the group. There are always outliers to the standards set by the majority, but overall, the character of a place is determined by this set of agreements. Whether these agreements are visible to the outsider is determined by the symbols the places uses to communicate both consciously and unconsciously. The stronger the agreements, the stronger the symbols may be.

Commemorative landmarks deliberately depict something of importance to passersby. Town festivals or other public occasions intentionally communicate a common heritage or mood. Unconscious symbols can also be read in the built environment, primarily indicated through size and centrality, spatial relationships and orientation, and care and attention (Fazio 120).

Cultural homogeneity in small towns is in large part a result of the development patterns in the rural Midwest and a cause of many defining traits of small towns. Rather than to discuss the benefits and faults of monoculturalism in society, it is important to realize it as a unique parameter that shapes place and the general rules in those places. In culturally homogenous places, it is in effect easier for those who live there to agree on how they will live together.

“The Fit”

To best communicate identity, the physical and social character of a town should be in harmony. Barker describes the concept of ‘Fit’ in The Small Town Designbook.
as a design methodology (Barker 19). ‘Fit’ is a way to record the relationships between physical and social constructs by applying a score and then analyzing a series of scores, making adjustments in either the physical environment or the social setup as necessary for improvement. While this is a very technical approach to solve issues in the small town, the elements defined by ‘The Fit’ give insight into how a small town can communicate its characteristics and the values that are important to the people there.

Physical elements act as infrastructure for social elements and are described by physical qualities such as anticipation, tension, undulation, focal point, and pause, which complement social qualities, including varying degrees of public and private and the corresponding social significance.

The Announcement is the first glimpse of a town; in the case of Minster, the announcement occurs from the east approach as the country road curves around a tree and farmhouse, revealing an expanse of trees ahead, with two water towers and the twin steeples of St. Augustine Catholic Church.

The Entry of the town is a gateway or point of transition between outside and inside; the entry to Minster is an exacting line where country roads between fields turn into town streets with curbs, sidewalks and lawns on each side.

Arrival immediately follows entry, and the visitor realizes they are immersed in the town. In Minster, several blocks of well-kept lawns, large trees, and local organization signs begin to describe the town.
Links to Place draw the visitor in and give more clues about the place, while Place is the heart of town, or the place where the action is. Along Fourth Street, there are several links and place. Place occurs at two or three points along Minster’s Fourth Street with contextual building and open spaces linking between: the intersection of Main and Fourth, Centennial Park, the old downtown area of Fourth Street, and potentially, the intersection of Fourth and the Miami-Erie Canal. Each is activated at different times of the day and different times of the year. For example, Centennial Park is activated primarily during the annual festival, Oktoberfest, as well as during events at the Gazebo. The downtown is partially activated during the week as people run errands at the bank, insurance offices, post office and village administration building. Main and Fourth see the heaviest traffic and is the location of the public library and a handful of bar/restaurants. It is most active on evenings and weekends, especially after church on Sunday.

The Place within Place is the “heart of physical and social interaction within a small town…It must be a spot where people can comfortably meet, wait, rush, think, relax, observe, arrive, depart and know they are someplace special” (Barker 24). The Place within Place embodies many of the defining characteristics of small towns, such as neighborliness, social interaction, and slowness. While there are several Places in Minster, none act as a constant Place within Place. There are few places to sit or observe that are connected to outside activity.

Place (Exit), Link to Exit, Outlet, Exit, and Departure are respectively similar to the
previously mentioned elements except in reverse. Overall, they should lead to the exit of town, but provide an image of the town that the visitor can leave with (fig *).

The Social Elements are a little less defined than the Physical, and are related to the perceptions of the residents and visitors. *Country* describes the area surrounding the town, distinct from the social environment, yet meaningful to the context and image of the town. Many residents of small towns identify closely with the countryside that surrounds their home. *Edge* as a social element is the mental border that relates to the entry. It delineates the area understood as ‘town,’ whether derived from actual physical borders, such as a river or railroad track, or from abstract perceived borders.

*Mainstreet* as a social element is “the major social traffic and communication artery” in a small town (Barker 28). In Minster, Fourth Street is the primary commerce artery, while Main Street is the primary residential and traffic artery. *Downtown* is a centralized segment of *Mainstreet*. In Minster, the downtown contains many of the civic institutions, but few social institutions. The *Center* of town should be the focus of most social interaction and activity, a place where people commonly go to meet. In Minster, this is a frequently changing focus, again depending on the day of the week or time of year.

In reverse, *Downtown (Exit)*, *Mainstreet (Exit)*, *Edge (Exit)*, and *Country* provide the social transition towards departure.

These elements help to paint a picture of how the small town can be understood as a narrative. The built environment should support the social constructs of the town.
Important social agreements should be made manifest in the built environment on the scale of the town as well as in the scale of individual institutions. Disparities between social and physical compositions should be remediated in design.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

How must a new design exist in Minster, Ohio? The design goals can be framed using the theories set forth above.

Preserve and promote culture. The covenants of the small town are continually tested and reinforced. The designer can become aware of these unspoken agreements in order to better support or challenge them. Often, the identity of a place is most evident in the interactions of its population. Understanding these interactions and providing a setting for them to develop is the best way for a designer to encourage culture.

Resist physical homogenization. If the town of Minster wishes to retain and embellish its unique qualities, its inhabitants must be careful not to succumb to the compromising effects of thoughtless developments. It would be a shame for a place with a distinct personality to begin to resemble a less distinct, unrelated place. The place must be conscious of the qualities it values and the qualities it would like to get rid of or avoid. In a small town, where change happens slowly, foresight is important.

Resist physical alienation. While a designer should question the status quo of the built environment, he or she should not stray turbulently from the context. For example,
in a place where all buildings address the street at a right angle and have gabled roofs, a designer should critically evaluate deviations. Again, where change is slow, design should evolve critically. Especially in building that may act as a public face for the community, a design may cause a commotion and inspire discussion, but should resist public upheaval.

Inscribe the architecture with character, and express the place in which the work is situated. A thing should always be designed for the next largest thing. For example, a chair should be designed for its room. A room should be designed to be appropriate in its house. The house should be designed for the street it is on, the street in the neighborhood, etc. Kunstler captures a facet of the small town succinctly:

“The organic wholeness of the small town street was a result of common, everyday attentions to details, of intimate care for things intimately used. The discipline of its physical order was based not on uniformity for its own sake, but on a consciousness of, and respect for, what was going on next door. Such awareness and respect were not viewed as a threat to individual identity but as necessary for the production of amenity, charm, and beauty. These concepts are now absent from our civilization. We have become accustomed to living in places where nothing relates to anything else, where disorder, unconsciousness, and the absence of respect reign unchecked” (Kunstler 185).

Using the physical and cultural contexts as a guide, the architecture can make sense in and of the place.
Part Two: Understanding the Context

The Region

Description

Certain types of small towns rely little on cities. In 2003, the U.S. Government began to recognize small-town clusters and counties that have their own economies and supply of jobs as *Micropolitan* Statistical Areas. One in 10 Americans lives in the micropolitan areas between metropolises (USA Today). This designation sets small towns apart from suburban areas and bedroom communities that feed off the jobs and economy of cities. Minster is in the center of four micropolitan counties.

The region may be limited to a 20-mile radius around Minster. This range includes four small cities, ranging from 8,000 to 20,000 people, and several villages similar to Minster’s size. Two lakes (both part of the Miami-Erie Canal feeder system), acres of farmland, and many manufacturing plants supply the area’s economy.

Historical Overview

Small towns differ from suburbs and cities in their development. Many small towns in the American Midwest began during the conquering of the West. Unsettled land claimed by the government was charted by a Jeffersonian grid, and then parcelled out to pioneers and groups that were willing to brave the thick forests and swamps that covered much of the
Ohio region. The grid was an abstraction of land into segments that were understandable, but failed to take into account the topography. Distinct units of immigrants, often bound together by a common nationality or religion, founded many of the small towns in Midwest Ohio. Immigrants in the 1800’s typically traveled from their home countries in town groups, bringing a sense of community and common customs along with them to the New World. These community networks were important and gave strength and comfort. In addition, isolated pockets of vibrant customs were able to flourish in a new place. Religious ties were perhaps the strongest factor in uniting immigrants. Networks between adjacent villages added another level of support in settling the Ohio wilderness.

As parts of the wilderness were cleared to make way for farms and homes, roadways and other forms of transit developed. Supply chains were slowly established, businesses sprang up along those routes, and some small towns saw growth as a result of local industries, creating differentiation between hub towns, industry towns, and agricultural centers. Over time, decisions about infrastructure, trends in economics, and technological developments shaped the hierarchy of settlements in western Ohio. Some towns grew and became cities, or were swallowed by a city’s growth. Some towns dissolved as they lost businesses and population. But a number of towns have maintained equilibrium between having enough business and services to sustain the people living there and maintaining an appropriate population size to keep the characteristics of a small town.
The Town

Description

The village of Minster sits along the borders of three micropolitan areas in Midwest Ohio. Minster is 6 miles west of Interstate-75, at the intersection of OH-66 and OH-119. The town occupies approximately 1.9 square miles with a population of about 2,790. The primary streets are laid out in a grid, with most commercial zones along Main Street, running north/south, and Fourth Street, running east/west. Two residential subdivisions and a regional commercial zone stretch north of town towards the village of New Bremen. Industrial areas frame the town on the west and south borders. Agricultural land with dispersed stands of woods surrounds the town. Lake Loramie lies just southeast of town, and the village of Ft. Loramie is Minster’s neighbor to the south. The remnants of the Miami-Erie Canal runs north/south through town in the west side of town. Much of the building stock in town uses brick and gabled roofs. Though there is no defined historical district, the community does maintain several dispersed historic buildings.
Historical Overview

Minster was settled in 1832 by a group of German Catholic immigrants from the Osnabruck region of Germany, led by Francis J. Stallo. Stallo knew about the possible northern expansion of the Miami-Erie Canal and predicted (correctly) that it might pass through the area. A catholic mission was established, and a large log church was built. A building of its size in the wilderness was likely called Münster, the low-German word for important church, as well as the name of a city in the Osnabruck region of Germany from where many of the immigrants came. The mission was named St. Augustine and became a mother church for the area, and the village name was changed to Minster. The Miami-Erie Canal came to the area around 1843 and was a large source of jobs during as well as an economic generator. Businesses sprang up along the canal route through the west side of town, and though use of the canal ended in 1913, it allowed Minster to become established as a significant stop along the route from Toledo to Cincinnati.
7.4: Aerial view of area of study, Fourth Street

7.5: Age of Buildings

7.6: Use of Buildings

7.7: Panorama of Fourth Street between Frankfort and Hanover streets
The Site

Description of Current Conditions

Minster is in the process of redeveloping its 4th Street Corridor, which runs east/west through town. So far, the village is putting into motion several street improvements, including burying utilities, planting trees, installing hanging planters on new streetlights, and improving crosswalks and curbs. Local businesses are encouraged to participate by improving street frontages and adding outdoor seating where practical.

The Miami-Erie canal that runs north/south through Minster is in a state of disrepair. The berms are overgrown with trees and brush. The Miami-Erie Canal Corridor Association (MECCA), Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) are together encouraging towns along a 40-mile stretch of the historic canal between Delphos and Fort Loramie, Ohio to develop their segments of the canal to promote tourism along the towpath trail.

There is both a yearning for the past and optimism for the future. The residents of Minster are aware of the town’s rich history. The early successes of the town were due in large part to the construction of the canal, though it remains only as a remnant today. Both the village and its neighbors realize the importance of attracting activity and energy in order to maintain and embellish the character of the region.
Historical Overview

Main Street was the initial traffic artery through town when Minster was first founded, and the canal construction came soon after. Businesses sprang up along the canal route, and Fourth Street was developed as the commercial link between Main Street and the canal. There was once a large iron bridge at the intersection of the canal and Fourth Street that would lift the roadway when canal boats had to pass. The canal was eventually replaced by rail, and was disused by 1909 when a viaduct near Ft. Loramie collapsed. The ‘ditch’ that gave Minster its first major access to the outside world now works only as a part of the storm water drainage system. The canal towpath used to run on the east edge of the canal, but now the towpath trail is marked on the west edge, the alleyway between blocks.

What was once the Sprehe goods store sits adjacent to the canal on the south side of Fourth Street. The canal-side wall has a door at the level of a canal boat meant for loading and unloading goods. The building is currently home to the Dutch Mill bar.
The southeast corner of Cleveland and Fourth, adjacent to the canal, used to be the site of a two-story, 60’ x 32’ home built in the 1860’s when the canal was flourishing. It acted as a rooming house for canal users for several years. In 1928, it was converted to a filling station, and gas pumps replaced the porch and lawn. After 1952, the Minster Oil Company purchased the property. The awning of the gas pumps was a frequent hangout for many men in town. In the 90’s, the Minster Oil Company closed this location, and in the early 2000’s, the property was sold to the Village of Minster and the building was razed. Currently the site is vacant. The annual Oktoberfest parade begins at this intersection.
The Third Place

The goals of the theories put forth in this paper could be executed in a variety of programs, namely a visitor center or commemorative park structure. However, the choice of an informal public gathering space that is also a business encompasses more opportunities. A brewery is a visitor center in a sense, but also a place where a product is made, and a place where people gather.

While beer does not have the same terroir as wine, what it is missing in the technical ties to the place, it gains in the setting in which it is crafted. The process of making beer from brewing to drinking will be experienced by the users, and tied to the place. The product will be distributed and will carry with it the significance of the place it is made.

A third place is an informal public gathering place separate from home (first place) and work (second place). Third places are important for fostering a sense of community. They provide opportunities for social interaction without planning. Locales without these gathering places are often wanting of a community network. “Joys of relaxing with people and social solidarity that results from it are disappearing for want of settings that make them possible” (Oldenberg xxix). What really make a place are the people. A third place acts as a public face, welcoming residents, neighbors and visitors to share space and communicate. No one is required to play host, all can come and go as they please, all feel at home and comfortable. The third place can occur in many forms, from Main Street to coffeehouses to taverns and can support inclusiveness of all classes, ages, sexes, and nationalities.
Part Three: The Design

The Brewery and The Taproom

Craft brewed beer is defined as “a beer with a distinctive flavor, produced in small quantities and distributed in a particular region” (New Oxford American Dictionary).

The process of brewing begins at the source of ingredients, primarily barley/grain, hops, and yeast. Land conditions, crop markets, and profitability for the farmers who may grow each crop determine where these sources will be available, but ideally, these resources will come from near the site to promote the connection of beer to the land and the place.

Next is the brewery itself, which envelopes the operations necessary to produce beer. Import of ingredients, connection to water and energy infrastructure, and the actual process of brewing take place here. This is the industrial component of beer making. Third is the distribution of the beer to the consumers, the hospitality component. At the most basic level, beer is served in house at the brewery’s taproom, which will highlight the process of ingredient to glass. The sense of place is developed through personal ties to the product, the process, other people who enjoy the product, and the layers of experience that these people collectively accumulate. Communal participation in this experience may foster the feeling of Gemütlichkeit, or good feeling/sense of belonging. Fourth is the creation of an identity through layers of experience and meaning. This component may occur beyond the location of the brewery, through distribution networks. When the product is consumed
elsewhere, it may travel with a story. The product, with proper quality and marketing, will act as a representation of the experience and sense of place of where it came from. The consumption of the product, even away from where it was made, should evoke the spirit of the place it represents.

**Basic Program**

**The Brewery**

- Brewhouse: 800 sf
- Fermentation Tanks: 640 sf
- Bottling/Packaging Area: 400 sf
- Cold Storage: 600 sf
- Dry Storage: 600 sf
- Mill: 40 sf
- Cleaning Storage: 80 sf
- Loading Dock: 500 sf
- Lab: 150 sf
- Office: 150 sf
- Restrooms (2 @ 80 sf each): 160 sf
- Entry: 100 sf

**Total**: ~5000 sf
The Taproom

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<tr>
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11.4: schematic perspective from Towpath Trail at 4th looking south

11.5: in-process site section looking south

11.6: in-process site section through canal, looking west
Bibliography

Oldenburg, Ray. The Great Good Place: cafes, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts and how they get you through the day. New York: Paragon House, 1989.


