

In 1661, Peter Stuyvesent annexed an area originally tricked from the Lenape natives by the Dutch West India Company. This new land was called Boswijck, and it contained what is now considered the boundaries of Greenpoint, Williamsburg and Bushwick. The area was originally colonized for the streams and fertile marshland surrounding Newtown Creek: a twin draw for the ease of transport for nascent industries and farmland.

Two-hundred years pass, and warehouses for all of those goods being produced are now clustered around the creek's tendrils, a hodgepodge that spreads itself to what is now known as the Morgan L train stop.

Brooklyn in the 1880's was actually divided into two municipalities with their own separate governing bodies: Kings County in the north and Brooklyn in the south. Greenpoint, Williamsburg, and Bushwick all belonged to Kings County, and at this point have each evolved into their own distinct villages. The industrial cluster of western Bushwick comes to an abrupt halt once one crosses over Flushing heading east. The looming, desolate canyons created by industry's necessities give way to regimented, block-upon-block of townhouses.

These blocks stack steadily, and dependently at a south-west angle from the Cypress avenue Queens border to Broadway Avenue. Only mercurial Myrtle is allowed to break through the grid with its 45-degree conduit slashing between Forest Hills and Fort Greene. Tree-lined streets for mom and pop businesses flourished separate from, but owing their existence to, the industrial sprawl to the west. German and Italian immigrants settled to work on the nearby factories and warehouses, eventually giving away to the latino population that we know today.

Eastern Bushwick's tidy grid was an ecosystem that grew up under its own rules & social and topographical cues. Meanwhile, another ecosystem was flourishing south of the all-diving line of Broadway (which was once known by the name of 'Division Avenue') in the separate municipality of Brooklyn. The villages of Bedford and Stuyvesant had a later start than their neighbors north of the dividing line, but were growing at their own pace. Bedford-Stuyvesant had one of the first New York community of post-civil war free blacks. And, once the A line was extended, middle and upper-middle class black families began to migrate to the pleasant neighborhood - bringing their own shops and businesses.

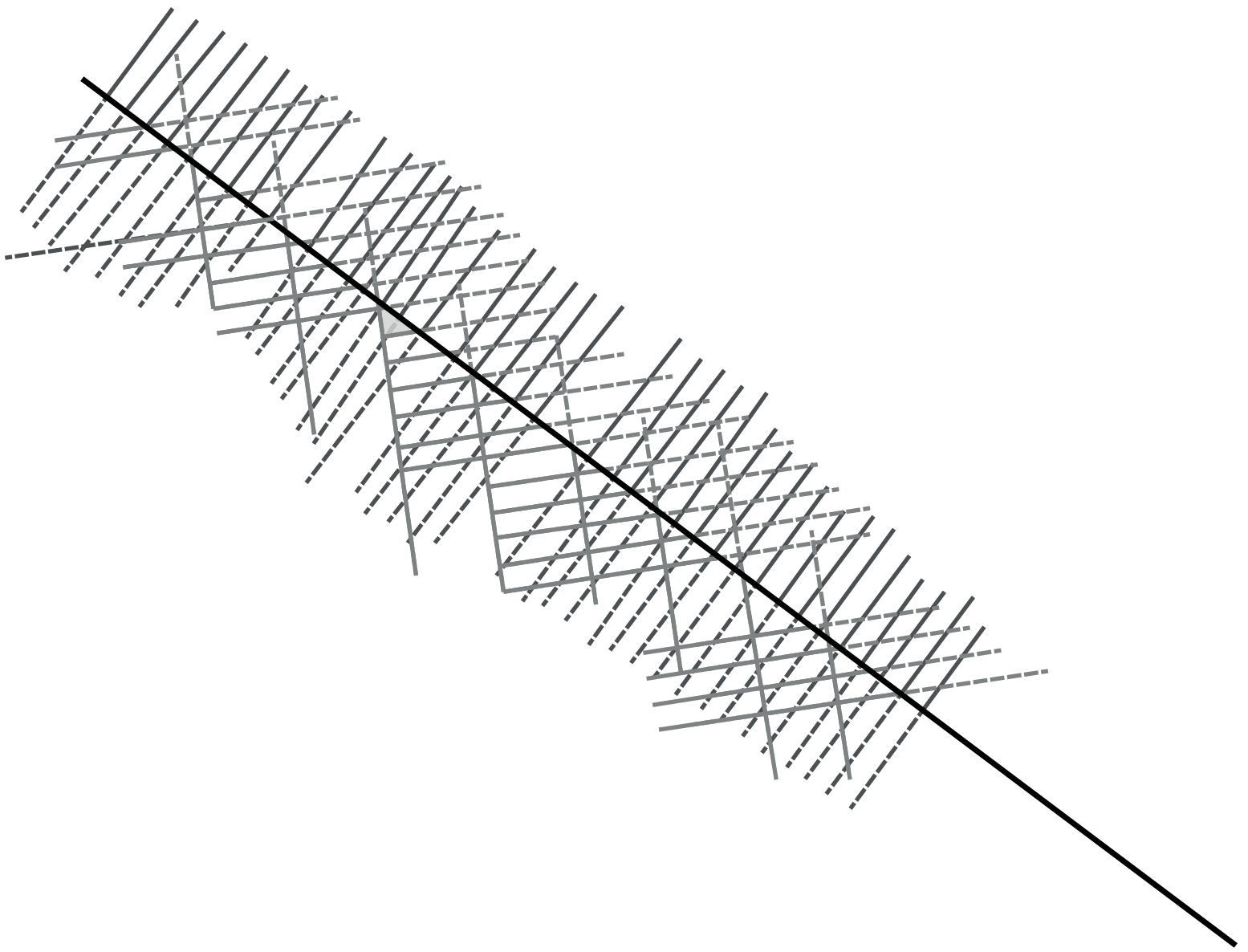
Broadway avenue is Bed-Stuy's ceiling: the grid structure is left broken and gaping because block corners were lopped off. Nothing could impede Broadway's mighty flow - a flow originally designated by the growth of Bushwick. Naked triangles were birthed from that carnage. Lacking the stolid third dimension on the pyramid, the triangles became islands for concrete, gravel, and vigorous urban topiary. The different municipalities, with their different governing bodies were knitted by frankenstein stitches. The result of this union are triangular castoffs that line the south side of Broadway - unfortunate protrusions that our square grid obsessed society have no plans for.

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Bushwick and Bed-Stuy's growth were initially under separate conditions and different populations. But, they both shared the 20th century brunt of neighborhood disinvestment, red-lining, and overall discrimination. A forgotten triangle is extrapolated to a forgotten grid. Except, those that lived there didn't forget; they just couldn't get any loans for new businesses, couldn't convince the Manhattan-centric city to come and fix their aging infrastructure.

A new wave is now transforming both neighborhoods. It is a tale that has been told again and again in the NYC narrative: the poorer bohemia pick up stakes and head into the unfortunate mind-set of "unknown territory." Intrepid trailblazers, who usually have salivating real-estate developers nipping at their heels, find homes among the apartments cheapened by neglect.

Communities of young artists become locus points for societal expectations of "doing what's right." Guilt and expectations are muddled as neighborhoods become carved up. I believe that this guilt is exploited by the hegemonic-powers-that-be as they expertly tip the responsibility of neighborhood investment and multi-cultural awareness into the hands of the artist. Art in the 21st Century now must bestow itself in an almost essayistic quality. Artists are now the bearers of a creative capital flag that is expected to knit together the disjointed boundaries of race and class, all while the pall of globalized economies of precariousness grows more and more robust. Is it up to the artist to forge a happy Utopic vision?



The show “Public Sculpture” is squatting in the fenced-in triangle created by Malcolm X Boulevard and Dekalb crashing head on into Broadway. Everybody is excluded from wandering between the sculptural forms in the triangle. Everybody is equally locked out of meandering, but we are all allowed the privilege of gawking. Investment in this triangle is temporary and the show is not making any promises. The equal denial of access flies in the face of the “public space” of the shopping mall, the corporate atrium, and more specifically, the Highline.

“Public Sculpture” acknowledges the fence and the territory around it. It is not breaking boundaries or remaking form. People can pass by, climb in, add on. Everyone can collectively infringe with their eyeballs. Bed-stuy and Bushwick are free to be their own forms, there is no interest in bringing the triangle back into the grid.

Rem Koolhaas, in *Delirious New York*, showed how the 1811 grid plan of Manhattan was a grand projection of perpetual manifest destiny, “the most courageous act of prediction in Western civilization: the land it divides, unoccupied, the population it describes, conjectural; the buildings it locates, phantoms...”

But, historically, because Brooklyn was an outlier to the future, there was no need to impress progress. This triangle is not being occupied as a harbinger for things to come. There is no intention to fill in a broken grid.

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A version of this essay was published for the show *The Hand Presents: Public Sculpture*