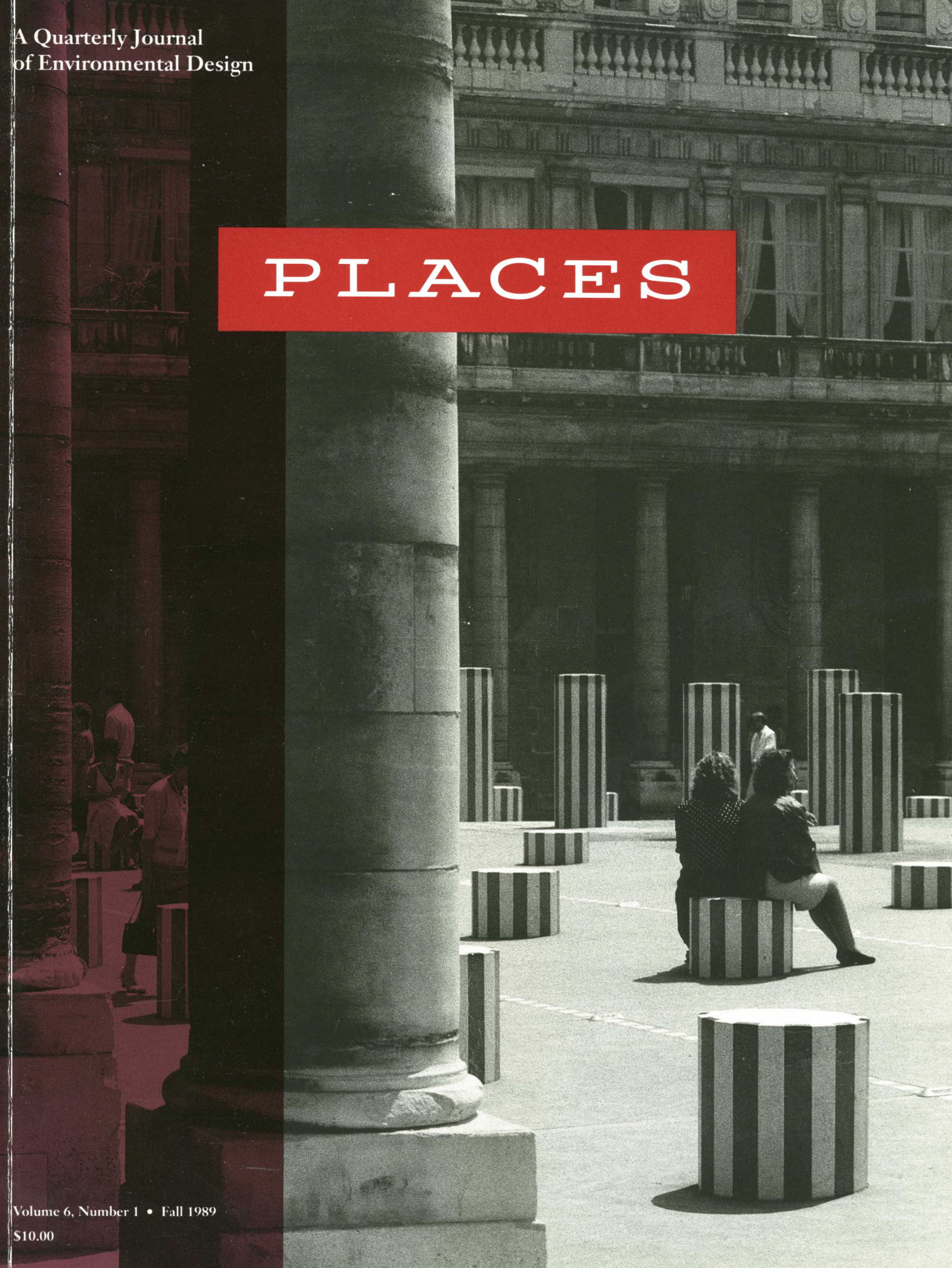
A Quarterly Journal
of Environmental Design

PLACES



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Caring About PLACES

With this issue we begin a new venture. Our new publisher, the Design History Foundation, will help us extend our reach to a larger audience while continuing our editorial commitments: to consider how places enter people's lives, to explore the means through which places are imagined and represented, to prompt discussion regarding the character of public environments, to nurture interest in the ways that people can care about places and contribute to their making.

In one sense *Places* is a journal that refuses to accept its place. We could have an easier time of it by targeting a professional group and playing to its interests, finding a niche and being careful not to stray too far afield. Should we focus on architecture, geography, social factors, public policy, environmental art, history, gardening? None of these alone will do. Places are inherently complex; they cannot be grasped from a single vantage point.

Our purpose is to confront this diversity and to make it the touchstone of our enterprise. We shall, however, consistently attend to certain things.

We shall always be interested in configuration. How does the specific shape of a place condition its use? What aspect of it sticks in the mind? What network of dimensions measures our relation to its parts?

Good places are memorable. They have recognizable forms that make it easy for us to think about them. Ideas adhere to things that are distinct.

We shall always be interested in how places sustain attention over time. What brings people back to a street, a square, or a shaded glen? How do the characteristics of a place invite and reward exploration, encouraging each user to construct individual experience within the common frame?

Good places embody thought, thought that can be retraced by the observer, yielding insights that surprise or confirming patterns of common understanding.

We shall always be interested in how people interact with a place. What opportunities does its physical structure afford those who use it? What makes it nice to move through a place? Where do people enjoy resting? How do different people respond to a place and to each other?

Good places are open to improvisation. They encourage imaginative use. Good places make people feel that they belong, that they have a stake in the world that they share with others.

We shall always be interested in how places come about. How does a group of buildings or a landscape develop over time; what are the elements, what processes are reflected in their forms?

Above all, good places embody care. In all its forms imaginative care must be cherished; it has the capacity to transform matter into spirit, solitude into community, space into place.

Join us in making *Places* be good. We need your comments and suggestions, your manuscripts and images. Argue with us, show us new ways to care, and help us construct new vantage points that are equal to the task.

—Donlyn Lyndon

THE FUTURE OF URBAN OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

Clare Cooper Marcus Guest Editor

Across the United States, master plans and zoning maps splashed with green attest to our commitment to "public open space." But rarely do we stop to ask the important questions: What is public open space? Who is "the public" it is intended to serve? And are the traditional forms of parks, plazas, and playgrounds relevant to late twentieth century life?

Scholars and designers from the U.S. and Europe debated these issues last fall at a two-day symposium entitled "The Future of Urban Open Space," held in conjunction with the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. This issue of *Places* comprises abridged versions of eleven of the papers presented at this event.

We start in the traditional location for public life—the streets and squares of the inner city. Such spaces in Copenhagen have seen a remarkable flowering of public life in the past 25 years. Jan Gehl was largely responsible for persuading the city to eliminate vehicular traffic from Stroget—the city's narrow medieval "main street"—to traffic in 1962. He and his students of urban design carried out studies of street life on this street in 1968 and again in 1986.

In his paper, "Changing Street Life in a Changing Society," Gehl recounts the substantial increase in public life in these downtown spaces, and suggests that the need for public life is even greater than it once was: families are smaller, working hours are shorter and more flexible, the proportion of retired people is growing. With relatively little expense, streets and squares in Copenhagen were converted to pedestrian use, and people poured into them.

The results confounded the critics who believed there was no tradition and therefore no call for public street life in Scandinavia. "The Danes are not Italians," skeptics argued. This phrase caught the imagination of many at the Symposium: could Americans "be Italians"? Is our Euro-nostalgia misplaced, or could we, like the Danes, be tempted into the streets, given the right settings and locations? Somehow, this Northern European success story excited the audience and counted for more than the inevitable slides of Siena, San Marco, and the Spanish steps. If a culture with a relatively short summer, no tradition of public street life, and a location far removed from the shores of the Mediterranean could so heartily embrace walking, sitting, watching, talking, and playing in downtown streets and squares, perhaps there is hope for a revival of traditional public life in North America.

As Gehl's work illustrates, public space is of little import without people. Two papers address the basic questions: What is public life? And how and where does public life occur in contemporary U.S. cities? Lyn Lofland discusses the history of public life before and after the Industrial Revolution and argues that public life has diminished as a result of the cult of domesticity. As private life and the family home rose to prominence in late nineteenth century America, the life and populace of "the streets" began to be denigrated, and fewer activities took place in the public spaces of our cities.

Mike Brill, while agreeing with this position, argues that the public life of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe never did cross the Atlantic and our nostalgia for what has been lost in the public sphere is somewhat misplaced: a vibrant European-style public life may never have existed in this country. A different kind of public life is emerging, however, in forms and places we hardly recognize as "public space." It is taking place via the media (call-in talk shows, interactive television, grand public events reported on the news); and it is taking place in shopping malls, flea markets, local festivals, beaches, and sporting events. Public life, Brill argues, is not dead, not diminished, but transformed. As planners and designers we must look at the places to which the public is attracted and enhance those settings if we want to support public life.

Also looking to the past and to Europe to understand contemporary public life in this country, Mark Chidister describes the use of city squares in medieval and later periods. He suggests that the modern day plaza can never be wholly successful because its very form is modelled on the piazza of long ago, when a multitude of activities and types of people called this space home. Now, in the homogeneous office districts of downtown America, the corporate plaza used by lunching bureaucrats for a short period each day is a pale reminder of what city public life once was.

But as Chidister was questioned after his talk, does this matter? If lunch-hour, brown-bagging is what we do in downtown plazas, let us celebrate, encourage and enhance it. Who knows what mental health benefits accrue to the office worker allowed one hour in the open air after four hours in front of a computer screen. Does it matter that city squares were once "something else" if the public life they currently foster benefits at least one important group?

While plazas based on models from the European past may be questionable in contemporary U.S. cities, so too may the parks we have inherited from the nineteenth century. Michael Laurie suggests it is time to rethink and redesign our monumental parks, often poorly maintained and perceived as unsafe. His controversial paper proposes we allocate land in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park for farms and affordable housing.

In research conducted and reported by Louise Mozingo in her paper "Women and Downtown Open Spaces," evidence is presented that indicates men and women perceive and use downtown public space in different ways. Although many designers are experienced in making adaptations to the environment for handicapped users or the elderly, very few are aware that certain environmental conditions are more appealing to women than to men.

The implications of Mozingo's findings are very significant if we plan to provide public space, as we must, for both men and women. She argues that we must provide a continuum of places from the very public to the quite secluded to allow freedom of choice for all users. What of other variables about which we know even less, one participant asked. Should we design for gender differences when we know little about ethnic, cultural, or personality differences? Hopefully, it was argued, the greater the variety of downtown open spaces, the more will each individual be able to find his or her particular niche.

Looking at the location of public life, Brill and Lofland describe human activities as falling into three broad categories: private, public, and parochial. The latter includes neighborhood, work, and school life, all those places that fall between the extremes of the private home (and automobile?) and the public realm which is accessible to all city dwellers.

This in-between sphere is given little attention by Brill and Lofland on the assumption that it is not truly "public." But perhaps it is exactly this kind of space that should be given more attention, just because it is in-between. As metropolitan areas become larger and more complex and their streets more difficult to negotiate, the neighborhood park and local sidewalk become more precious. These are the places where we casually meet strangers, drop by for an art show, or join in a basketball game. Visits to the Civic Center and the Town Square may become more rare as public life becomes reconstituted at a local level.

As designers we need to become more attuned to this reformulation of public life. Neighborhoods are rarely parochial anymore, but just as full of strangers as the traditional Town Square. We also need to become more sensitive to the subtle cues that designate space as shared. The plaza we understand; the neighborhood park is similarly a clear model, even if we might disagree with Brill and Lofland as to whether it is "public" or "parochial." Less clear are the spaces that are communal, or shared by a specific group: the gardens in a seniors' living complex; the pool in a condominium development; the play area and lawns in a public housing project. These are the outdoor spaces that are becoming more meaningful to many city dwellers —places that they feel they can appropriate, places for which they feel partially responsible.

We have few models to draw upon as we might draw on the

"piazza," for example, when thinking of the modern plaza. Hence, the shared or communal spaces of our cities are perhaps the least well understood in terms of design, boundaries, qualities, and appropriate use. We create a pedestrian walkway through a new housing scheme and then wonder why residents become upset and feel their territory is violated when neighbors use it as a short-cut. We create attractive courtyards in a condominium complex, and are surprised at family versus non-family conflicts over whether those spaces should be used for play. The new shared places in our cities offer a potential for local public life which is by no means understood or fully provided for.

But there are exceptions, local places that do work; all the more reason we should look at them very closely. Mark Francis reports on community gardens and on his own study comparing a Sacramento park and an adjacent community garden. The latter had more users, a greater commitment and involvement among its users, and cost less than the park to run and maintain. Tom Fox of the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition describes the use of "found" space in the city that can become locally valued for outdoor recreation places and form part of a network of open spaces running through the city.

All these authors focus our attention on places not generally thought of as "public" and on activities that may not be considered part of "public life." But instead of dismissing such places and activities as parochial, perhaps we need to expand our definitions, or at least embrace the possibility that urban open space and its use is changing more rapidly than we have imagined—or have models for, or words to describe.

Socializing and recreating with neighbors in shared outdoor space is one important role for public space in the city. Another traditional role is to permit contact with nature. The marked increase in the pursuit of urban gardening as a hobby and the passionate concern of many city-dwellers for the protection of threatened natural environments, attest to a re-arousal of interest in nature and natural processes.

Both Lawrence Halprin and Anne Spirn are deeply committed to the expression of such processes in their designs: Halprin looks, for example, to the forms of mountain streams and rock formations to inspire his work; Spirn seeks to honor and make manifest the natural processes of drainage, erosion, and deposition in policies and plans. Since people are also part of nature, culture, too, is place-specific and must be honored and expressed in the settings we create. Randolph Hester's paper echoes the sentiments of Halprin and Spirn, and offers socio-political arguments for consulting the user of new and modified environments so that their unique views are recognized and so that urban open space becomes meaningful—and accessible—to all.

Settings in the public realm may, in their most profound expression, enable us to glimpse the meaning of our lives, our place in the universe. Halprin, in an inspiring conclusion to the Symposium, proposed that the landscape architect may potentially fill the role of Shaman or alchemist—taking base elements and rearranging them so as to enhance a change of consciousness in the onlooker. If we are indeed to survive as a species, to recognize our role in the complexity of natural and human systems, perhaps this raising of ecological and metaphysical awareness in public spaces is the most urgent task of design. To quote Alan Gussow on place:

There is a great deal of talk these days about saving the environment. We must, for the environment sustains our bodies. But as humans we also require support for our spirits, and this is what certain kinds of places provide. The catalyst that converts any physical location—any environment, if you will—into a place, is the process of experiencing deeply. A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings. Viewed simply as a life-support system, the earth is an environment. Viewed as a resource that sustains our humanity, the earth is a collection of places.[1]

Note

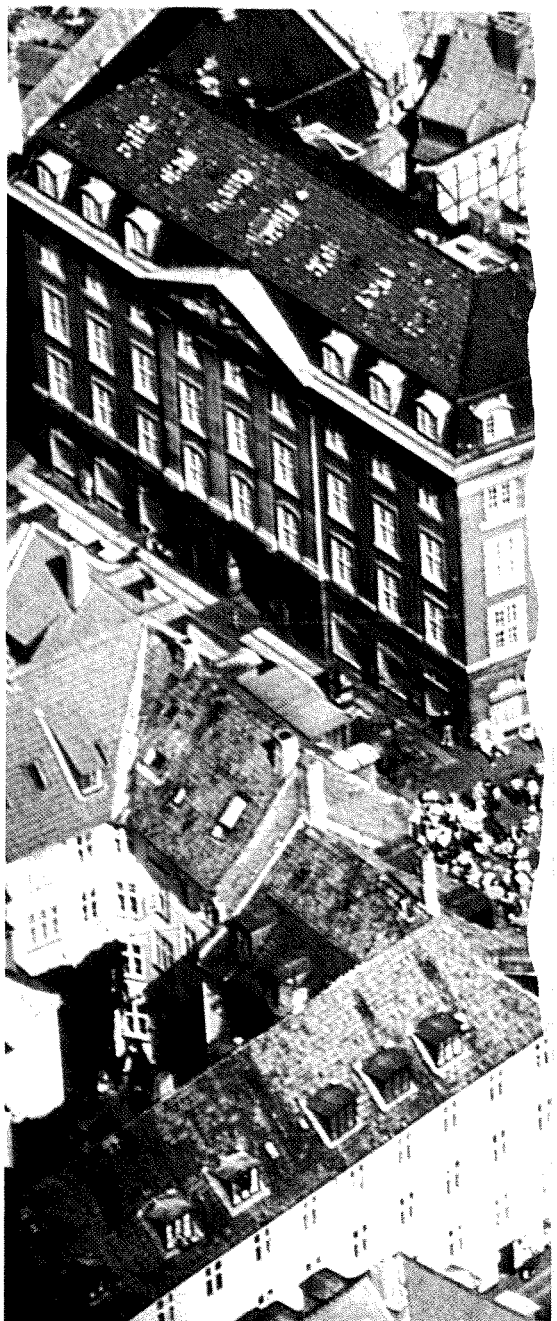
1. Alan Gussow, *A Sense of Place* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1972).

The Future of Urban Open Space Symposium was held in October, 1988, at the University of California, Berkeley, College of Environmental Design and was organized by Marcus and professors Michael Southworth and Peter Bosselmann.

Meeting other people, watching what is going on, seeing young and old; being entertained by street artists, ordinary daily street life, or the ever changing human scene: these are the subtle, traditional joys related to life in public spaces.

The squares of Rome and Siena; the streets of Venice, Europe, and North America; main streets, ordinary streets, and sidewalks: these are traditional open air public spaces, well known through history—and still around. Handed over from previous generations with their memories of days and life past, they are still, in varying degrees, part of urban life.

However, streets and squares, as well as street life patterns, are under heavy pressure from a number of directions.



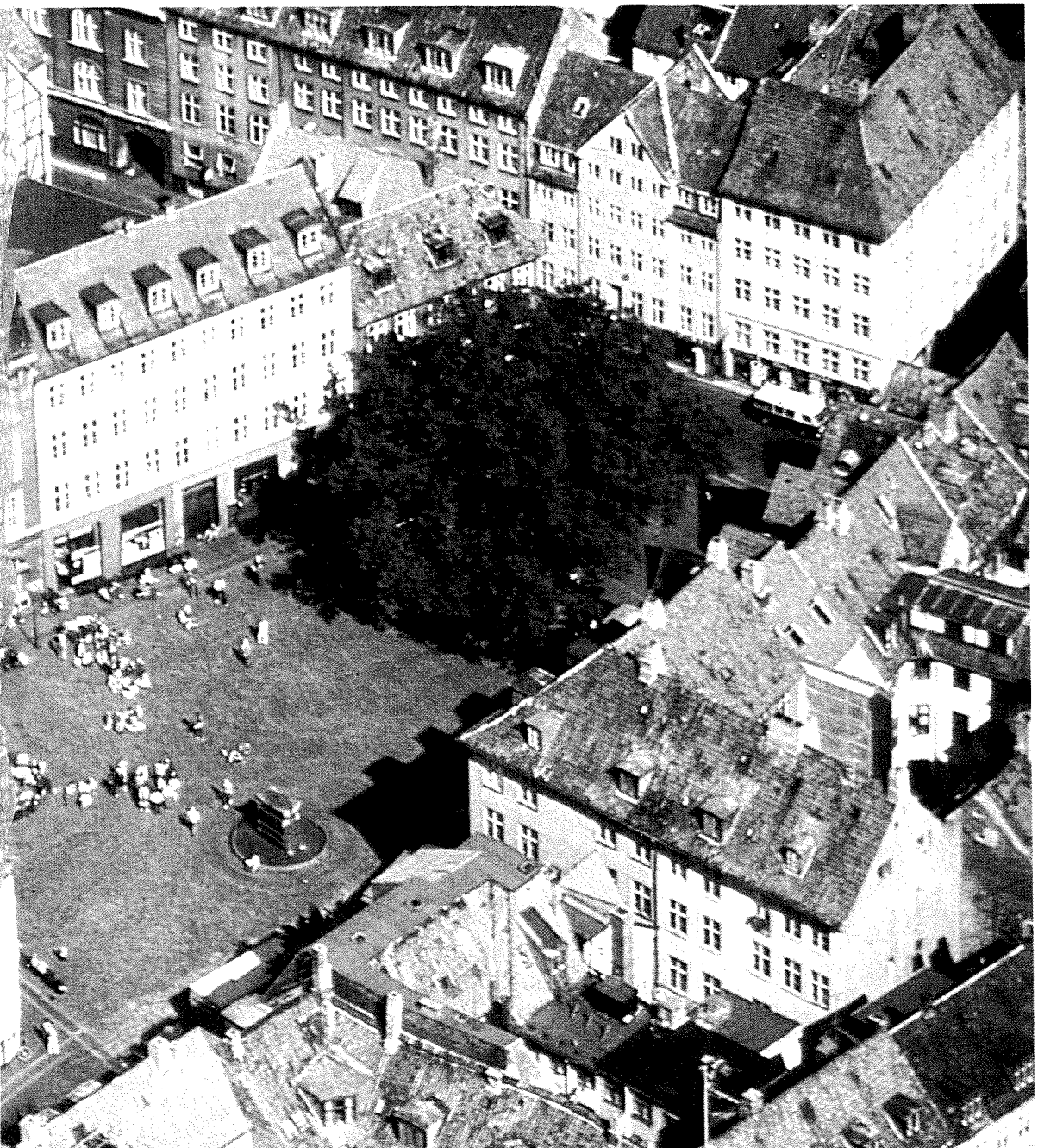
Car traffic and parking take up space, sidewalks become narrower; spaces are being filled with danger, noise, fumes, and rude "50 miles per hour architecture."

The number of diversions is increasing as well. The telephone, television set, 30 TV channels, and video shops offering a "six-movie Sunday pack" signal new eras. Spend the weekends at home and watch, passively, what others have personally seen.

Changing patterns of consumption from market to discount store and supermarket can be noted. Buying in bulk, or by mail or TV screen; new types of merchandise: these are the signs of growing overall consumption, but less street life is generated by these activities.

Traditional public open spaces have contemporary counterparts: shopping malls, arcades, and atriums; festival markets, underground cities, and skywalk systems. The innovations have tended to concentrate urban life in certain locations, certain hours, and certain categories of "acceptable" activities. These spaces are mostly indoor and nearly always privately-controlled, offering

A Changing Street Life in a Changing Society



The medieval city pattern of Copenhagen has been retained over the centuries, giving the city an abundance of well-defined spaces of pleasant, useful proportions. In 1968, Grayfriars Square served as a parking lot for some 60 cars. By 1986, the square had been transformed into a resting place for an average of 420 persons on summer days. Photos and graphics courtesy Jan Gehl.

Following page:
A summer afternoon at the Old City Square, Copenhagen, 1986.

privatized versions of the once public street life.

Will traditional, subtle, low-key street life and the public life associated with it become more or less redundant in this process? Will the free joys of public life become nostalgic leftovers from other days and times? A number of studies carried out in Copenhagen and several other Scandinavian cities may provide background for the discussion concerning present and future roles for the street as public space.

Street Life in Downtown Copenhagen, 1962-1987

Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, is a city of 1.5 million inhabitants, a figure that has remained nearly unchanged during the last 25 years.

The pattern of the downtown streets and squares as well as the dimensions of the individual spaces are more or less preserved from the medieval period. The majority of the buildings are four or five stories high, buildings dating from about 1780 to 1820, erected after a series of great fires. The main street throughout history, the Stroget, is still the main street, three quarters of a mile long and 32 feet wide.

In the 1950s, as car traffic in the city center increased, there was a rather constant decrease in the number of pedestrians using the Stroget's narrow sidewalks. The street quality was gradually decreasing and customers responded by avoiding the street or shortening their visits.

Some 25 years ago, in November, 1962, the Stroget was closed to traffic and turned into a pedestrian street.

The introduction of this, the first pedestrian street in Scandinavia, was met by widespread skepticism. Newspaper headlines such as "We are not Italians" and "Using Public Spaces is Contrary to Scandinavian Mentality" dominated the discussion prior to closing this important street to traffic.

Almost immediately, it became evident that the skepticism was unfounded. The first year saw a 35 percent increase in the number of pedestrians and entirely new patterns of street life started to develop in the traffic-free area. It appeared that a major reason for the lack of tradition of using urban spaces in Scandinavian cities was that spaces of suitable quality had not been available for a very long time because of the intensive automobile traffic.

In 1967 and 1968, five years after the introduction of pedestrian zones, downtown street life was minutely recorded during a full year by students and researchers from the School of Architecture of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.[1] This survey, carried out mainly by way of observation studies, provided very detailed insights into the use of downtown public spaces. More specifically, the study revealed that all established car-free spaces were being utilized to their capacity—and occasionally beyond.

A Changing City and a Changing Street Life

After the success of the initial pedestrian scheme the entire downtown of Copenhagen has, in a number of successive steps, been transformed. New streets and squares have been added to the pedestrian network, one after the other in a gradual process of improvements. When one space proved successful and was taken into use, new spaces were added. The entire city center has gradually been closed to all through traffic except busses and bicycles.

The total length of the pedestrian network has tripled from about two thirds of a mile to two miles. The total area of traffic-free streets and squares has tripled, to 14 acres. And because of the general reduction of automobile traffic in all the remaining streets, the entire city center has acheived a much gentler and more inviting atmosphere.

Paralleling these improvements, a gradual increase and change in people's use of public space is evident. New types of organized street life and events have evolved around the now available urban spaces: jazz festivals, theater festivals, concerts, and parades, as well as an annual grass roots carnival with a half million Copenhageners dancing, of all things, samba in the once quaint Copenhagen streets.

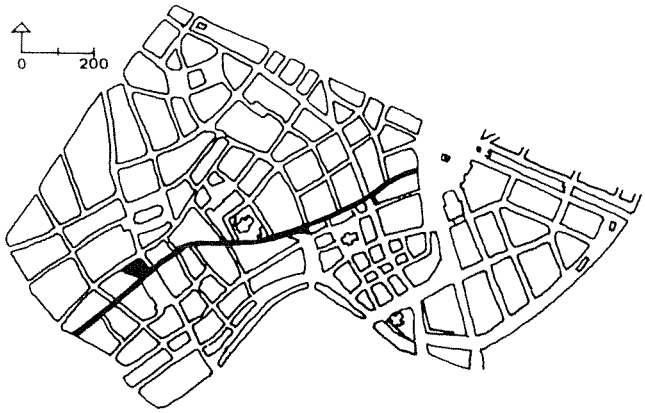
Such grand organized events represent the most easily identifiable changes to city life, but parallel to these developments, substantial changes to the ordinary daily patterns of public space use also have taken place.

A Changing Society: The Second Survey of Street Life in Downtown Copenhagen

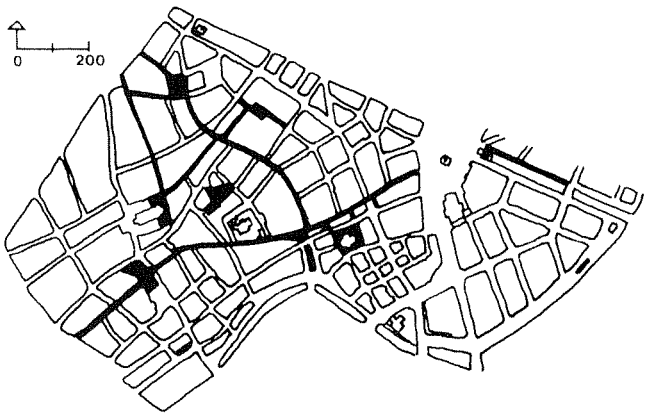
A second survey of downtown street life was organized in 1986, 18 years after the previous survey. It was conducted in the same areas, during the same periods of the week and year, and under the same weather conditions as in the 1968 survey—but in a society that had changed in a number of ways, which could be expected to influence the use of public spaces.

The average size of households in Denmark has been declining throughout the century. Around 1900 the average household size was 4.9 persons; by 1986 it had dropped to 2.2. In major cities like Copenhagen, the 1986 household size was 1.7 persons, indicating that the majority of all households are now made up of one or two people.

Important changes in the work place also have taken place. Many jobs have become more repetitious, mechanized and rationalized, and thus emptied of



The pedestrian street network in Copenhagen's city center in 1968. The total length of the pedestrian street is 1,100 meters. The total area of traffic-free streets and squares is 18,800 square meters.



Traffic-free streets and squares in 1986. The length of the pedestrian network has been extended to 3,115 meters, an increase of 183 percent. The network now contains 11 fully or partly traffic-free squares; the pedestrian area now totals 56,900 square meters, an increase of 203 percent.

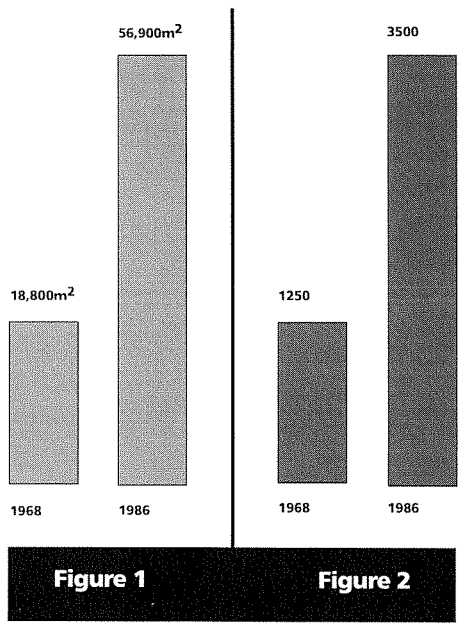


Figure 1 **Figure 2**

Figure 1. The total area of traffic-free streets and squares tripled between 1968 and 1986. Figure 2. During the same period the number of people standing and sitting in the area tripled, as well. (Average number of persons standing and sitting between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on summer Tuesdays).

1986. Copenhagen's public spaces are used in new, more active ways. The two photos are examples of small-scale, popular activities.

important elements of personal involvement and creativity. On the other hand, technical developments have led to a situation in which working hours are reduced and leisure time increased.

These changes mean that social and creative opportunities offered outside the home and work place are gaining increased importance.

The second survey was carried out between February and October, 1986—covering all four seasons.[2] As in the first survey, direct observation was the preliminary method. Every Tuesday with good weather, all the pedestrian streets and squares were surveyed from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The findings and conclusions presented here are based on activity observed in the summer, which, in the Scandinavian two-season culture, is the all-important period. The good summer climate allows city users to engage in a wide range of "optional" activities while "necessary" activities predominate in the other seasons.

A Spectacular Increase in the Use of Public Space

By 1968 the Stroget was filled to capacity. Most summer days pedestrian traffic was close to the point of serious crowding. By 1986, the Stroget was competing with more recently established pedestrian streets. However, it was still filled to capacity and beyond. A 10 percent increase in pedestrian traffic was recorded. The street simply could not accommodate any more pedestrians.

The other and newer pedestrian streets were found to be almost as crowded as the Stroget, and altogether the pedestrian traffic in the major streets of the city increased by 25 percent from 1968 to 1986.

The most remarkable change, however, was not the increase in pedestrian traffic flows, but the increase of the number of people staying in the streets and squares. All available squares of good quality were filled to capacity every day, as were all available outdoor cafes and benches. The number of persons standing, sitting, or lingering in public spaces on the average summer weekday had tripled. This indicates that the average time each individual used public spaces has increased considerably.

The situation of the city can be compared to a party. Some parties are considered not worth going to at all. Others turn out to be dull, with the guests leaving rather too soon. At best, guests will stay for a long time because they are enjoying themselves.

The tripling of the staying activities in Copenhagen indicates that the people visiting downtown have found many more places and opportunities for having an enjoyable time in the city. People

will choose to stop, stand, and sit for an extended period of time only where public spaces of reasonable quality can be found.

Public Spaces are Used in New, More Active Ways

In the 1960s, downtown streets were used almost exclusively for activities like visiting stores and window-shopping. Squares were used primarily for what could be termed "passivities," such as sitting on benches and standing around.

Today, a higher proportion of the people present on ordinary days are active: street vendors, theater groups, circus troupes, musicians; people with all kinds of talents, skills, and viewpoints are using public spaces as a forum for small scale exchange of goods, talents, and opinions.

The types of activities that flourish are the small scale events generated by groups and individuals from all over the city who have something to tell, something to show, or some small item to sell or exchange. Every tenth person standing or sitting in Copenhagen public spaces on an ordinary summer day was found to be actively involved in some small scale activity aimed at fellow citizens; many of the other persons and other activities were found to be centered around or oriented towards these new urban activities.

The city streets and squares have attained an extra role as a public forum for a very wide range of direct communication and cultural exchange, and as a meeting place and exchange point for the people of the city.

The Quality of Public Spaces is a Decisive Factor in Use Patterns

The third, and in many ways most important, finding concerns the spectacular correlation between the physical qualities of a public space and the volume and character of life there.

The survey found that a tripling of traffic-free open space had been followed by a tripling in the numbers of persons choosing to spend time in the city. A closer look at the data from the various spaces shows that this correlation is by no means arbitrary. A close correlation can be found right down to the individual street and square. All spaces of good quality in the city center are virtually filled to capacity every summer day, all day.

The presence of a number of factors determining the quality or "usability" of each space was found to be closely correlated with the large number of persons using a place day after day: location in relation to main pedestrian flows, the local climate, the spatial qualities, the dimensions, and, foremost, the provision of furniture and details supporting staying activities.

"The New Street Life"

The Copenhagen street life survey from 1986 describes an interesting success story. The quality of city spaces has improved as a part of a long term strategy—making the city center somewhat better each year.

Demand for using the city has been growing annually. Any space cleared of traffic and given over to popular, pedestrian use has been utilized, indicating that it is the number of public spaces and their quality that have determined the volume and character of street life. The crowded spaces found in the 1986 survey indicates that quite a few additional spaces appear to be required to meet existing demand.

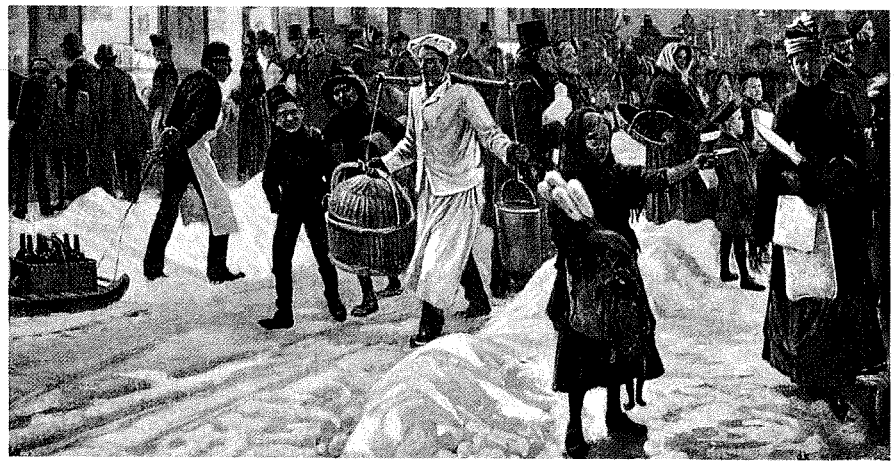
It is evident after a closer look into the character of street activities that the new activity patterns are related to a changing society, one in which leisure time is increasingly important. The boundaries between working hours and leisure time have become increasingly fluid. Many people work harder and with more enjoyment in their "non-working" time. In this new situation, public spaces can be seen to have a new and very important role.

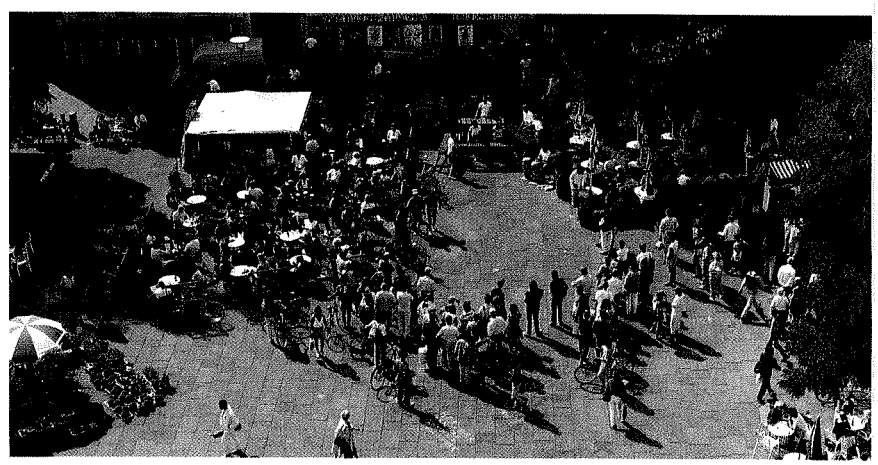
Three factors can be seen to have played a major role in the public's increasing use of open space. First, the development of the pedestrian street network has been gradual, giving people time to find out step by step what public spaces can be used for. A "new" street life culture has had time to develop subtly. The Danes indeed were not Italians, but given the spaces and the time a very Italian street life has certainly evolved.

Second, the development has been carried out very inexpensively. The ordinary city fabric has been cleared of traffic and suitably furnished at no great cost. No huge private investments have necessitated the immediate influx of vast numbers of customers to generate income to pay for the investment. This slow, low-key development has given a freedom to experiment, and the street life in any given space has been allowed to develop at its own pace.

The extensive new Copenhagen street life has been taken from nowhere. No draining of users and customers from surrounding areas has been necessary. Basically, the increase has come about—not by having more visitors, but because the visitors now spend many more joyful hours in the city. Cost-intensive enterprises would surely rather welcome more visitors than see the normal crowds settle down and stay.

A final and important point will be that the development has been public. Public spaces have been changed from one public use to another. Traffic streets have become people's streets. The municipal supervision of the urban spaces has enabled a general policy of allowing and encouraging a wide range





Stroget, 1890.
The street life closely reflects the social situation at this point. For many people the street was a necessary place of work, while for more affluent citizens it was used for shopping and promenades, to see and be seen.

Stroget, 1968.
Hardly any work activities are left in the street. All commercial activities have moved indoors and the street space functions primarily as a shopping and window watching street, a corridor for consumption, window shopping, as well as the ever present "to see and be seen" function.

The "new" street life, 1986.
The old pattern of public space as a necessary place of work is being superseded by new patterns in which popular cultural activities play an increasingly important role. Public space has taken on a new role as an arena for popular social and cultural exchanges in a society in which non-working activities have gained increasing importance.

of persons and activities to use city spaces, making them truly public, in accordance with a democratic tradition. This policy regards urban spaces as a valuable social and cultural meeting place for the general public, but does not neglect commercial interests.

The Street as a Public Place

Far from being phased out by societal changes, life in public spaces can—given the necessary support—grow and develop. Traditional uses centered around working and trading have been supplemented and to a wide extent superceded by social and creative activities.

In a "leisure time" society, public spaces serve an important role as the most easily accessible places to go, to meet people and to take part in public life. Public spaces can be seen as the important first link in a chain of places to go. Further links are community buildings, schools, cultural institutions, sports facilities, and all the other facilities offered to people seeking company and opportunities for being active.

But public space can be the attractive and necessary first link. It is the easiest place to go. It is a place for everyone. It is a place in which you do not have to know anyone, or do anything in particular, except be there. It is a place where no tickets or bookings, enrollments, or invitations are needed. You can just come along in the course of your daily activities and take in the scene. If you have something to communicate, talents or viewpoints to display, you can likewise just come along.

The street is the largest stage in the city, and the most used. No other facility will—for a very moderate expenditure—offer opportunities and pleasures for a wider number of persons, from the youngest to the oldest.

Just as Frederick Law Olmsted responded to social needs of cities in the previous century by creating urban parks that gave citizens opportunities to escape the dirty and crowded city and get in contact with natural elements, a likely response to present social conditions would be to create public urban spaces, where people who are part of small households and have more leisure time, as well as all other citizens, can meet on democratic terms and function together, enjoying their cities and each other's personage. City streets and squares may in this context be seen as the urban parks of this century—much needed amenities which ought to be generally available.

Knowing the close correlation between the quality of a space and the public life that develops there creates quite a challenge—but it also creates a firm base: given careful consideration and sensitive designs, public street life can be substantially supported. On the other hand, if negative factors are allowed to take over, and the qualities of urban life are shaped by carelessness, neglect, or adverse planning, public life can rapidly be chased off the streets.

Given positive and negative cycles, given carelessness and neglect, and given the pressures and competition levelled on public spaces and public life, this area of concern ought to be treated in a much more conscious way than is generally practiced today. A carefully considered and implemented public space/public life policy ought to be as commonplace as are traffic, culture, and recreation policies.

I started by describing the subtle, free joys of urban life. I shall conclude by pointing to present trends that in my view constitute the most serious threats to these very free and very public joys.

One of the first and most important issues to be addressed in a progressive public space policy must be the increasing number of enterprises offering privatized versions of "street life." Street life indeed has been found to be so popular that this attraction has been given a major role in making private shopping centers, shopping arcades, indoor "squares," festival markets, and skywalk systems popular. All of these ambitious, privately-operated projects need extensive numbers of visitors and generally spare no effort to divert people away from public spaces.

It does not have to be an either-or policy, but a better balance between public interests and private enterprises will have to be worked out in order to ensure that the invaluable free joys of *public* urban life will be available citywide to all of us in the cities of the present and future.

Notes

1. Jan Gehl, "Mennesker til fods" (Pedestrians), *Arkitekcten* (Denmark) 10, 1968.

2. Bergdoll, Gehl, and Stessen, "Byliv 1986" (Street Life 1986), *Arkitekcten* (Denmark) 11, 1987.

THE MORALITY OF URBAN PUBLIC LIFE:

The Emergence and Continuation of a Debate

Lyn H. Lofland

In The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs remarks:

Reformers have long observed city people loitering on busy corners, hanging around in candy stores and bars and drinking soda pop on stoops, and have passed a judgement, the gist of which is: "This is deplorable! 'If these people had decent homes and a more private or bosky outdoor place, they wouldn't be on the street!' "[1]

A somewhat different but related message is to be found in the oft-repeated homily I recall from my youth:

Fools names and fools faces are always seen in public places.

I want to use Jacobs' wry insight and the message of that little piece of "folk wisdom" to chart a path through the enormous country formed by the topic "public life in the city: past, present, and future." I shall pay particular and focussed attention to the moral tensions and debates that, at least for the past several hundred years, and at least in North America and Northern Europe, have been the recurring companions of that public life.

Before I can meaningfully get to this matter of public life and moral tensions, however, I must lay some conceptual and definitional groundwork. I am going to propose that it is useful to conceive of the city as a settlement form that provides three different "kinds" of social psychological space: the private, the parochial, and the public realms of urban life.

The Three Realms Of Urban Life

My definitions of "private" and "parochial" realm are borrowed and adapted from Albert Hunter's work: my definition of the public realm is more clearly my own. Following Hunter, then, I will define the *private realm* as characterized by ties of intimacy among primary group members who are located within households and personal networks, and the *parochial realm* as characterized by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within "communities."[2]

The *public realm*, in contrast, is defined as non-private sectors of urban areas in which individuals in co-presence tend to be personally unknown or only categorically known to one another. That is, while it is not quite accurate, it is nonetheless fair to say that the private realm is the world of the household and intimate network; the parochial realm is the world of the neighborhood, workplace, or acquaintance network; and the public realm is the world of the street.

Using these definitions, then, and conceiving of the city as a collection of social psychological spaces, we can see that the city differs from other sorts of settlement forms (for example, the tribe, the village, the small town) in at least two important and highly interrelated respects.

First, the city is characterized by a diversity of social psychological spaces. In the city, one can often locate the equivalents of the tribe, the village, the small town. That is, tribes, villages, and small towns consist primarily of the social psychological realms of the private and the parochial. The city, in contrast, contains private and parochial realms but is not limited to them.

Second, the city, in addition to possessing private and parochial realms, a characteristic that it shares with other settlement forms, generates a unique kind of social psychological space: the public realm. This realm, as we can infer from the way it is defined, is made up of the public places or spaces in a city that tend to be inhabited—and I underline "tend to be"—by persons who are strangers to one another or who "know" one another only in terms of occupational or other non-personal identity categories (for example, bus conductor-customer). In short, cities have public places that, because of their stranger-filled and apersonal character, are simply unlike, in a social psychological sense, the public or communal areas of other settlement forms.

All of this leads me to a final definition. When I speak of the "public life" of cities my referent is quite restricted. I am not talking, for example, about economic and political life broadly conceived, but am referring only to the interaction, to the sociality or sociability, (which may, of course, be of an economic or political character) that occurs within the public realm.

Now, if we accept these distinctions, if we grant their utility as working analytic tools, it becomes possible—though granted, in only a very rough sort of way—to sort among cities, or among city areas, in terms of the patterns formed by the relations among the three realms.

For example, one might note that a crucial difference between pedestrian-scale cities, such as San Francisco, and automobile-oriented cities, such as Houston or Phoenix, is that the former have robust public realms, the latter, less well developed ones. Similarly, one could argue that in parts of many American cities, the private realm flourishes but the world of the parochial realm, the world of "commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks located with 'communities,' " is truncated. Manifested as neighborhood community, the parochial realm is radically anemic.

As another example, Donald Olsen's argument in *The City as a Work of Art*[3] that nineteenth century London was far more "domestic" than were Vienna and Paris in the same period can be translated as saying that in these latter cities, for whatever reason, the private realm took up a smaller portion of the "life space" of its inhabitants than it did in London.

Or, as a last example, one can contrast the worlds of varying segments of the populace of, say, eighteenth century London, by noting that elite females were heavily restricted to the private realm, while working and lower class men and women, and middle and upper class males (such as Samuel Johnson) spent a great deal of time in the parochial and public realms.

The Pre-Industrial City and its Transformation: The Strengthening of the Private and Parochial Realms

What I want to do now is review a major historic shift in the relations among these realms that occurred in the cities of Europe, particularly Northern Europe during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, and then discuss the moral debates that this shift made possible. As an aside, I'll just note that while the shift can be observed to a degree in the cities of North America, their births primarily in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries makes them better exemplars of the outcome of the shift than of the shift itself.

A cardinal characteristic of the preindustrial city—wherever located—is the fact that a significant portion of its social life occurs in the public realm. That is, social life and public life overlap in the preindustrial city to a degree unmatched by any other city form.[4]

I don't know whether this arrangement was supported by cultural values extolling the moral superiority of being "out and about" in the public realm, but even in the absence of such sup-

port, our urban ancestors didn't have much choice in the matter. Like their tribal and village counterparts who lived in "communities" whether they wanted to or not, preindustrial city dwellers, given the technology available to them, lived in the public realm out of necessity. Let me provide a few examples of why this was so.

With a largely illiterate population, and lacking a technology for the broadcasting of pictorial messages, if news were to circulate in the preindustrial city, it had to do so by moving among co-present human beings via the spoken word. A single person communicating to many others simultaneously proved, of course, more efficient than one-to-one communication; thus the very widespread institution of the town crier. To find an audience, the town crier went into the city's public realm; to hear the news, announcement, and pronouncements, the city's populace did likewise. Similarly, without telephones or telegraphs and, again, with a largely illiterate population, most personal messages had to be delivered personally. To communicate to anyone outside of one's own household, one had to leave that household and walk through the public realm until one reached the home or workplace of the message's recipient.

Note that I said walk. Elites, who represented a very small portion of the total population, could afford litters or horse-drawn conveyances that allowed them to encase themselves in cocoons of privacy and thus insulate themselves from the public realm—just as modern affluent Westerners do by means of their private automobiles. But most people, in moving from one place to another in the city, had to walk and they had to be both in and of the public realm when they did so.

Not only the movement of messages required one's presence in the public realm; for everyone but elites (all of whom had servants and some of whom had quite advanced plumbing systems) the securing of water and the disposal of garbage and body wastes did so as well. The necessity to be in the public realm was true for a myriad of other activities: shopping, political action, entertainment, religious devotion, and so forth.

Add to this the fact that again, excepting some elites in some places, private space was crowded, even by the standards of the time. For many people, to be in the public realm was to be warm instead of cold, cool instead of hot. It was to breathe air, however bad, less fetid than the air of one's private quarters. It was to move into space, however teeming with people, less cramped than home. In sum, the preindustrial city was overwhelmingly characterized by the dominance of public life.

However, as that complex of events and conditions and phenomena and actions and choices we choose to encapsulate by the term "Industrial Revolution" began to unfold, new possibilities for enlarging and strengthening the city's private and parochial realms emerged.

Two characteristics of late eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century cities were especially relevant: innovations in forms of transport allowed these cities to be much larger in area than their preindustrial ancestors, and innovations in construction and communication technologies allowed these cities to enclose many more activities than had cities of the past. To put it briefly, these two characteristics—enlargement and enclosure—together made possible the separation of workplace from residence, made possible the development of highly specialized and large work places (e.g., factory districts), made possible the development of homogenous and large areas of residence (e.g., working-class neighborhoods), made possible the siting of much round-of-life activity within the place of residence or neighborhood, and, eventually, with the introduction and widespread personal ownership of the automobile, made it possible for an individual to connect pieces of widely dispersed space without the necessity of actually being, in any socially meaningful sense, in the intervening spaces.

It truly became possible for large numbers of late eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century city people, as it had not been possible for preindustrial city people, to spend significant portions of their lives entirely in the private and/or parochial realms. As this possibility emerged, so did debates about where city people ought to be—debates, to go back to my opening comments, about getting people "off the street," about whether only fools' "names and faces are seen in public places."

Domestic Intimacy, Community, and Urbanity: The Assault on the Public Realm

During the past few hundred years, the debate over the morality of life in one or another of the realms of city life has pitted the private and parochial realms—the worlds of domestic intimacy and community—against the public realm—the world, we might say, of urbanity.

Neither the origin nor the terms of the debate have come from celebrators of the public realm. Instead, there has been an assault on the public realm by those who define the private and parochial realms as morally superior. To oversimplfy just a bit, home and neighborhood have united to oppose street.[5]

Let me try to give you some of the flavor of this assault on the public realm by describing briefly three of its numerous themes, three themes that seem to appear, by the way, regardless of when or where one looks: "unholy" and "unwashed" presence, indiscriminate and inappropriate mixing, and irresponsible or even sacriligious frivolity.

The theme of "unholy" and "unwashed" presence asserts that the public realm is the home of "the wrong kind of people"—however "wrong kind of people" may be defined. Eighteenth century London's defenders of domesticity warned women to stay at home in part because the streets were filled with men, but even more importantly, because they teemed with the contaminating presence of the "lower orders" of both sexes. In nineteenth and twentieth century New York, "proper" men and women were encouraged to stay out of the public realm because of the disgusting ethnic character of its denizens.

The theme of indiscriminate and inappropriate mixing asserts that, in the public realm, various types or categories of people whom a deity, or nature, or tradition, or whatever, had intended to remain forever separate are allowed—God help us—to mingle. Critics of the newly emerging cafes and cabarets pointed with disgust to the fact that they allowed virtuous women to be in the same room with women of "easy virtue." Worse, these public institutions—as did movie theatres and dance halls—actually or potentially brought together men and women, persons of the working, middle and upper classes, blacks and whites, Southern and Northern Europeans.

The theme of irresponsible or even sacriligious frivolity complains that in the public realm the unquestioned virtues of sobriety, industry, rationality, diligence, are not only challenged, they are discarded. Two examples from criticisms of public realm institutions will, I hope, suffice to make the point.

Describing the vision of the masquerade held by its critics, Terry Castle writes:

At the classic eighteenth-century masquerade...a distinctly ungenteel liberty was the goal: liberty from every social, erotic, and psychological constraint. In this search after perfect freedom—a state of intoxication, ecstasy, and free-floating sensual pleasure—the eighteenth century masquerade demonstrated its kinship, however distant, with those rituals of possession and collective frenzy found in traditional societies....Ecstatic rituals transport their participants into another world, in which time and space are magically altered. In its most fervent stages, the masquerade held a similarly labile and convulsive power. With its scenes of manic, impetuous play, the masquerade often seemed to contemporaries to induce a kind of hallucinatory state: a collective ilinx.[6]

Writing about critics of Coney Island, John Kasson sounds a similar refrain:

The response of James Gibbons Huneker (to Coney Island) is especially interesting. What disturbed Huneker...was precisely the surrender of reason, even of repression that Coney encouraged. From this perspective, Coney's topsy-turvy entertainments and fantastic architecture were not harmless pleasures but evidence of cultural delirium. Unreality is as greedily craved by the mob as alcohol by the dipsomaniac; indeed, the jumbled nightmares of a morphine eater are actually realised by Luna Park.

In articulating these opinions, Huneker was not merely voicing idiosyncratic fears, but expressing concerns frequently advanced by the leading behavioral scientists of the period. According to the dominant school of American psychiatry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the genteel virtues of sobriety, diligence, thrift, and self mastery, safeguarded not only family and society but sanity itself. By encouraging sensuous self abandon, then, Coney Island in a very real sense promoted lunacy.[7]

If you will review in your mind recent media discussions of such matters as homelessness, the wisdom or foolhardiness of locating "upscale" establishments in "downscale" areas or the "unseemly" behavior of youthful audiences at rock concerts, you will find that these themes are still very much with us. The worlds of domestic intimacy and community challenge the world of urbanity just as much today as they did in eighteenth century England or nineteenth century New York.

Prospects For the Public Realm

The vital question, in making assessments about the state of public life today and predictions about public life tomorrow is this: to what extent can we say that the champions of domestic intimacy and community have won the debate they themselves engendered and framed?

We don't know the answer to this question and answering it must surely be very high on our research agenda. My very tentative guess is that while the enemies of the public realm have not yet registered a definitive win, they are currently far ahead, particularly in North America, but in some parts of Europe as well. I offer two kinds of evidence to suggest that this is so: the character of the residential built environment, especially in North America, and an emerging form in the built environment of public places in North America and Europe.

Residential Areas and the Public Realm

I want to make three points about the scale and design of residential areas and public life.

First, to the degree that the urban landscape is being shaped by large-scale housing developments—and in the United States this is certainly the case—larger and larger portions of that landscape seem to contain little, if any, public realm at all. Claims of a central city renaissance and the enthusiasms of some urban planners notwithstanding, the dominant urban settlement experience in the United States is suburban and seems likely to remain so.

The suburban landscape favors the private and, possibly, the parochial realms over the public. Once the requisite parks and playgrounds (for supervised neighborhood-centered recreation), community halls (for sedate neighborhood gatherings), and malls (for controlled consumerism) are in place, suburban developers/designers have shown no interest in building in a public realm—in creating locales that would contribute to a lively public life or encourage public sociability. In Britain, Milton Keynes, can stand as the epitome of planning exclusively for private lifestyles and, to a lesser degree, parochial interests.

Second, even where the public realm exists (as in sections of older, high density cities), the location and arrangement of housing areas and, increasingly, of work sites preclude many persons from encountering it as a normal part of their round of life. Automobile usage is both cause and consequence of the scale and location of much post-war housing and, of late, office complexes, particularly in North America. As such, automobile usage has been transformed into automobile dependence. For many North Americans, the normal round of life consists of moving from one's suburban park-like neighborhood, via private automobile, to one's suburban office park and back again. Only one's consumer demands force one to enter the public realm and then, only in its most sanitized and highly controlled form: the suburban enclosed shopping mall.

Third, even those who savor the pleasures of public life, may find them inconvenient or dangerous to pursue. In his book *Steppin' Out*, Lewis Erenberg describes the lively nightclub "scene" that flourished in New York City in the 1910s and 1920s.[8] Drinking was an important element in the scene, of course, but more crucial elements seemed to have involved the pleasures of public sociability, including brief encounters with strangers, many of whom were unlike oneself in class, ethnicity and lifestyle. The vitality, indeed, the very existence, of this scene was importantly linked to the fact that the New Yorkers who participated in it did not rely on personal automobiles for transport. When they went home, they walked or rode a trolley or other public conveyance.

In contrast, the situation of the urbanite living within the dispersed settlement pattern of the North American post-war city seems almost designed to preclude participation in such a scene. Limited public transport, the scale of housing tracts and thus the distances between a nightclub district and home, and, most crucially, the very high speed highway systems which link the various parts of the metropolis make public sociability involving drinking a very dangerous pleasure, indeed.

The Design of Public Places and the Public Realm

My second piece of evidence that the champions of domestic intimacy and community are well ahead in the debate is the phenomenon that Mark Francis might call the "undemocratic street,"[9] that Mike Brill has described as "bourgeois boutiquesville,"[10] and I have called the "counter-local." That is, many recently created public and semi-public spaces seem designed specifically to appeal to persons like this correspondent to the San Francisco *Chronicle*:

A previous letter writer is quite correct when he says, "We must find alternatives to the endless proliferation of automobiles." Unfortunately, the only way this will ever happen is by reducing the inexorable (they say) tendency toward increasing population in the area. I, for one, despise riding on public transit, even BART, because I am forced to be in the midst of strangers whose behavior I can neither predict nor control. When public transit runs from my door to my destination (or within a block of it), provides me with a private, lockable compartment, is there when I want it, and costs no more than driving, I will use it. Until that magic day we must accomodate the automobile or travel like cattle. I prefer the auto, thank you.

From Covent Garden to Ghiradelli Square; from the newly built hotels in New York's Times Square area, whose lobbies are on the second or third floor, to the Gallerias sprouting up in every metropolitan center; from the widely acclaimed new "downtown" of San Diego to the Downtown Plaza area of Sacramento's K Street Mall; from Utrecht's shopping mall to Milton Keynes' covered city center, we are creating purportedly public spaces that are only marginally in the public realm.

These creations proclaim loudly that criticisms of the public realm are valid but the problems pointed to by critics have been solved. The solution has been achieved by ensuring —through design and through the action of security guards should design prove insufficient—that such spaces will not be "contaminated" by the presence of the "unholy" and the "unwashed," will not be scenes of indiscriminate and inappropriate mixing, and will not allow irresponsible, and certainly not sacriligious, frivolity.

But this is mere speculation, and the question at issue is too important for that. To know if, and the extent to which, champions of domestic intimacy and community may be said to have won the debate over the morality of public space—won it, not only in the hearts and minds of contemporary urbanites, but in the physical structure of our urban areas as well—we need serious research—a lot of it. Assuming all is not lost, we also need to discover whether it is possible to design public places that are truly in the public realm, and to design them in such a way that even persons like our correspondent to the San Francisco *Chronicle* will be enticed to enter and convinced to tarry.

Notes

1. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).

2. Albert Hunter, "Private, Parochial and Public Social Orders: The Problem of Crime and Incivility in Urban Communitites," in G.D. Suttles and M.N. Zald (eds.) *The Challenge of Social Control: Citizenship and Institution Building in Modern Society* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 1985).

3. Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986).

4. The argument that the public spaces of pre-industrial cities constitute the public, rather than—as might be imagined—the parochial realm, is developed in detail in my book, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). In bare bones form, the argument is that the population of preindustrial cities was too large, too hetrogenous, and too mobile for high levels of personal knowing to develop among their citizens.

5. Serious response from defenders of the public realm seem not to have appeared until rather recently. The literature of this response includes Jacobs (1961) and two books by Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (New York: Vintage, 1970) and *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Knopf, 1977).

6. Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1986).

7. John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Millions: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

8. Lewis Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

9. Mark Francis (1987), "The Making of Democratic Streets," in Anne Vernez-Moudon, *Public Streets for Public Use.* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987).

10. Michael Brill, "Transformation, Nostalgia, and Illusion About Public Life and Public Environments" Keynote Address, 18th annual meeting of EDRA, the Environmental Design Research Association, Ottawa (1987).

An Ontology for Exploring Urban Public Life Today

There is a common and historic assumption that open space is where public life occurs. But this historic relationship between open space and public life may no longer be so true, and may now be too constraining an assumption to be very useful in thinking fully about public life.

Public life has had a 300-year transformation, seen by most social critics as a "decline," or worse, a "fall." I don't really agree. Rather, I believe we tend not to recognize some of the public life we do have or many emerging forms of public life. Nor do we honor those forms we do recognize, because they are not for purposes that we esteem or not for everybody.

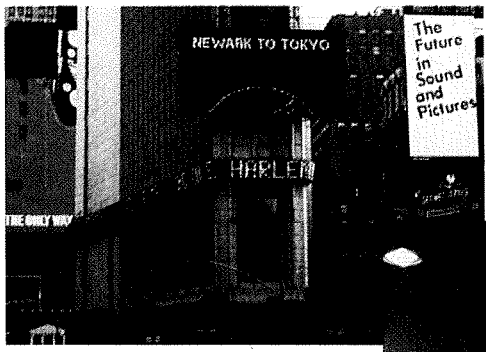
In fact, there is a rich component of public life that occurs in spaces that are not publicly owned and are not the "classical" urban open space of the dense street, the enclosed square, or the park. Examples include the "strip," the indoor and outdoor mall, the atrium, the skyway system connecting a second level public world, the vacant lot, the abandoned highway fragment used by skateboarders and sunbathers, community gardens, the boardwalk and the beach.

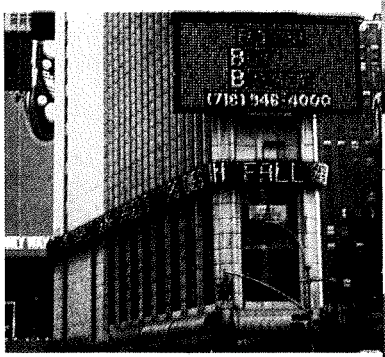
Moreover, there is still a vigorous public life in the discourse about politics, morality, and religion, but in space that isn't a physical place at all: the "virtual space" of the interactive media, of text, image, and voice communications.

Nevertheless, the literature generally accepts the idea that there has been substantial loss of public life. This supposed loss generates strong nostalgia for an image of a dense, diverse, classless, and democratic public life lived in our streets, squares and parks, an image that was probably never true for us here in America.

The literature that couples public life with public space often contains a condescending attitude: if we Americans want to see how public life and public place is done really well, we must go to Europe's historic urban centers (always, it seems, to the Piazza Di San Marco, the Piazza Navona, or Milan's Galleria) and, if we would only

Times Square's famous "zipper" brings New Yorkers information through the "virtual" space of the mass media. Yet Times Square is still a gathering place for sharing extraordinary events, from New Year's Eve to the Mets winning the 1986 World Series. Photos by Todd W. Bressi.





The New York Stock Exchange ticker is broadcast in the World Trade Center concourse. People can use computer terminals to obtain up-to-the-minute financial news. We receive more and more of our information from the printed and electronic media, and less at the coffeehouse, or on the street.

re-create these, we might be able to have that kind of public life here. That vision of public life is partly an illusion, sustained by our movies, publications, theme park "businesses," and by travelers who are charmed by Italy's piazzas but who don't recognize that these places are part of a non-transportable ecology. Most American cities, and most parts of even our great ones, are spatially distinctly different from European cities. They have different densities and different ways of organizing use-locations.

Other discussions of public life are really about neighborhood life, about networks involving a community psychology of the "parochial realm"—not about public life, which is social life with strangers. Since much of urban life's social support now occurs within freely chosen sub-cultural networks rather than ethnic enclaves and neighborhoods, there is some loss of neighborhood life. When public life is mistaken for neighborhood life, and if both are seen as being lost, then the mourning and nostalgia may be for both, and may be very powerful indeed.

Finally, while a rich public life is generally considered desirable, it is seldom actually described. There may even be an underlying and simple assumption that what happens in public places is public life. The literature generally bypasses descriptions of public life, and seemingly has no systematic structure within which to talk about it. These writings tend to leave aside the question of what public life is, and what it is for.

All this conspires to prevent us from seeing our real public life more clearly. Our mass nostalgia for the "good old days," the old forms of public life, fuels attempts to recreate it through a simplistic historicism in which we build again the classic forms of public places. In much current design for public places, we do not acknowledge that American affluence has spatially dispersed, stratified and segmented its population, reducing both density and localized class diversity, which are necessary for a public life based on streets, squares, and parks.

This might not be a problem in itself, but these attitudes and assumptions guide public policy, which may prevent us from using our scarce public resources more wisely. Incentive formulas that bring public open space into existence as an automatic by-product of every development have littered downtowns and business districts with little used and poorly conceived spaces. Other schemes involve the re-pedestrianization of streets and banning cars from parts of the city, a nostalgic return to the pre-automobile age. We are saddened when public life doesn't blossom anew in these newly created squares and plazas.

Watching other people haggle with street vendors can be as interesting as shopping oneself. When consumption becomes public theater, it is a form of public life.

Crowds throng to Baltimore's Harborplace, a private place where the public experience is packaged and managed.

The Transformation of Public Life

There may be a crisis, but I do not think it is about the loss of public life. It is about not paying enough critical attention to what public life really is, or its long-term transformation. We do not think often, systematically, comprehensively, or well about public life.

Public life here and in Europe has gone through a transformation, not necessarily a decline. This has not been recent but has taken, so far, 300 years. The high density, socially diverse public life that many mourn as if it had been lost was already in decline in Europe when the Mayflower landed, never actually made it here in the first place, and has since then taken uniquely North American forms. We've not had the density to obtain this older public life, nor the physical form to contain it, nor the socio-economic structure to sustain it.

How can one describe the urban public life that we do have, and will have in the future? It seems possible, but silly, to say that all life in public is what public life is. That cannot be true, for it would mean that everything that takes place outside the home or other private places is public life, and it would classify as public life the everyday relationships we have with people in our neighborhood. Lyn Lofland argues convincingly that public life is the form of social life that occurs with strangers, my position as well.

Trying to describe public life requires some structure, some method of categorizing phenomena as public life or not, or at least a way of saying something is more truly public life than is something else. For several reasons, I propose an ontological perspective, which tries to understand the "nature," the "essence" of public life, in order to describe it. From this perspective, we can consider a number of possible elements that may be said to characterize modern public life, and what they offer the individual. Given one's response patterns to strangers, public life can be approached as a labyrinth to be negotiated, a text to be read and a mosaic to be appreciated.

Public life is one with strangers, distinctly different from both private and parochial life. Public life does not necessarily supplant private and parochial life, but rather supplements them. Engagement in public life is now a matter of choice, where once it was an obligation of all citizens.

Freedom to assemble and associate gives everyone access to interactions with and/or observations of strangers, in space that all may use. The role of observer, or audience, is by far the most frequent for most people. These interactions are relatively free of social control and surveillance by the primary groups of kin and local community, and often, quite free of control by institutions and the state. This freedom confers anonymity, an ability to play with identity and to test alternative visions of the self.

Conversely, many interactions in public life are more guided by social control from participation in one of the cities' collection of expressive subcultures.

Social experience is expanded through finding satisfaction and pleasure in relationships with strangers, even though they seldom share our values, history and perspective. This occurs in a variety of ways: within expressive subcultures; as vehicles of public opinion; in surface, fleeting, and restricted relationships; and in situations in which we gain some knowledge of strangers through appearance, location, or limited interaction, a kind of "categoric knowing" rather than a personal knowing.

Confronting the unknown is something that part of us enjoys, and it helps us grow. There can be excitement and pleasure even when no attempt is made (or none is successful) to "know" or to categorize the stranger, when the pleasure derives from the stranger remaining extraordinary, a marvel, a spectacle, an unknown, a possible source of adventure or risk.

Social learning is accelerated through an awareness of the remarkable diversity of strangers and a civility towards this diversity. This awareness, coupled with the loosening of social controls, enables individuals to form and test new opinions, attitudes, and values.

Public opinion about matters of social significance can be expressed by individuals who freely assemble and associate in groups. Public opinion, once only the task of criticism and control that a public body practiced in relation to the state, has now expanded to become a field for the competition of interests of many groups and subcultures.

Coming together in numbers great enough to be "a public," and a public with an opinion, confers upon the individual *the power to "count" for something*, and for something that counts. If each individual voice or body "counts," and somewhat equally, then power and status inequities diminish, if only temporarily. Public life acts as a social leveller and a reminder of the roots of "democracy."

Individuals and groups can offer social presentations or productions and respond to those offered by others, often in ways that can alter the character of those presentations, in freely available public space. They can seek and find excitement and extraordinariness in the productions and presentations created by strangers, and in those they create themselves.

Commerce can be framed within a social mode of organization. Commerce becomes a form of public life when its exchanges are social ones, malleable, unique, and personal, as opposed to economic ones, which are impartial, impersonal and inter-changeable with all others.

Individuals can act as components of an information network, facilitating the exchange of news and information, acting as components of a network, both receiving and transmitting, and often altering both the communication and the network.

Describing Urban Public Life Today and its Transformation

I'd like to test this framework by using it to suggest aspects of contemporary social life that seem to be most truly characteristic of urban public life, and to describe how they are changing.

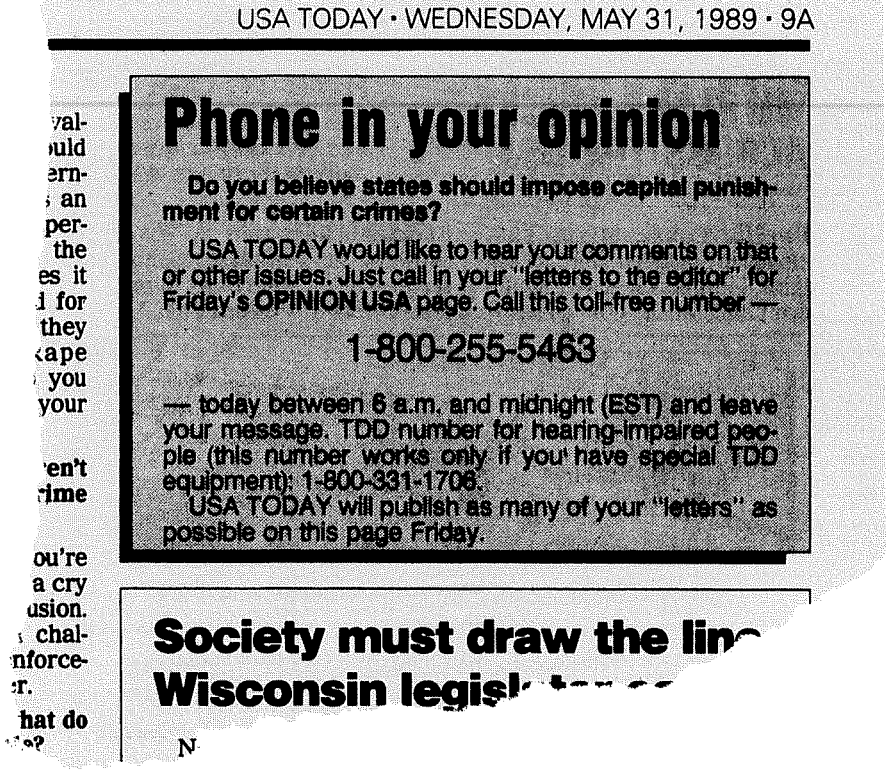
More of public life now involves passive spectating rather than active, direct interaction with others. For several hundred years there has been less individual oratorical, theatrical expressiveness. People choose to be "unavailable" to others in public situations, a function of the (recent) right to be left alone in public. Conversely, much more of individual expressiveness and subcultural identity is gained through dress and body adornment, and display of artifacts and conveyances.

In fact, much more of public life utilizes the medium of images rather than words, with images taking on far more power than before. We are becoming very sophisticated in the use of visual language, which is not just a shift of mode, but has a profound effect on content and meaning. There is rich opportunity for the designers of public images.

There are highly imageable, publicly offered presentations and productions made by individuals and subcultural groups, including showing off and personalizing mass-produced things and re-presenting them. These are especially public life when they can be altered by the responses of an audience of strangers, when there is an interaction. Examples include: street entertainers; skateboard and roller-skating daredevils; dressing up and strutting, strolling, and cruising; customizing cars and vans; street gambling and street scams; sidewalk portraitists; spray-on graffiti; and acting out the Rocky Horror Picture Show. Most people act the obverse role in public life, as audience, and are best when being evaluative, responsive and expressive.

Mass subcultures are often publicly expressive. The forms of expression stem from innovations or borrowings, not from tradition; they exhibit minor variation over space and major variation over time. Both the forms of expression and one's tenure in a subculture may be short-lived, contributing to the often-seen stridency of public expression in their dress and behavior. Obvious examples of these urban subcultures would be Bohemians, skateboard "packs," bikers, Eurotrash (who all look like Giorgio Armani clothing ads), preppies, and punks.

On the other hand, such free use of public open space necessarily involves offense, for we prize the right to speak and act as



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Society must draw the lin
Wisconsin legis

N

Media are becoming interactive and can serve as "virtual space" conduits for discourse that formerly was conducted face-to-face, in public spaces. Several days after this announcement was run, the newspaper published people's responses. USA Today.

we wish. Sometimes there are confrontations among subcultures and, more often, between subcultures and institutions or the state. Also, an open society makes open space the "natural home" for the homeless, vagrants and ambulatory psychotics, whenever the society provides no alternative. Moreover, free use may involve danger, because access to victims is a requirement of certain criminal tasks and because expressive subcultures may be volatile when their ways are publicly challenged.

At times we are one public. Public remembering of real history through the making of public remembrance rituals and public monuments continues to tie strangers together with the idea of a common heritage and a common covenant to remember that past. Examples include the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the July Fourth Liberty Weekend television extravaganza in 1986, and John F. Kennedy's funeral.

We can use our bodies symbolically to count for something. This happens when we attend a political, religious, or social rally, or a protest where a head count will be of public interest. By marching on City Hall for any reason whatsoever, marching in the Doo-Dah parade as a critique of the Tournament of Roses parade, and standing between strangers as one link in Hands Across America, we make ourselves count.

Extraordinary events are, by definition, public events. These have been often noted as events that make all strangers somehow more available for interaction and more reciprocally empathetic. Examples are urban techno-disasters such as blackouts and transit strikes, natural occurrences such as blizzards, triumphs such as winning the playoffs, and public spasms such as assassinations.

When trade has a social emphasis, commerce, and consumption can become public theatre. There is theatre in watching others bargaining with street vendors, at flea markets, and at block-long garage sales—anywhere prices aren't set. There is theatre in how items of material culture are used in public—dress, adornment, mode of personal transit, ambient entertainment, and pets. These may be used to follow a trend, to be personally creative, or to make a social statement. There is theatre in the multi-level shopping architecture of the giant malls and the Festival Markets, making us both spectators and audience in a "spectacle of consumption," the only built expression of Saint Elia's architectural visions.

Urbanity breeds enormous choice among a dizzying range of public life opportunities. We want trusted scouts. And so we have critics, interpreters and commentators, most often specialized in particular areas. In some ways, they can alter public opinion, and thus alter the nature of upcoming presentations. Most of this takes place in the "virtual space" of media, and not in the coffeehouse or on the boulevard, as it once did.

We are building very few more large, permanent, public open spaces in the middle of cities, where the highest natural densities are, because we cannot aggregate land there. Instead, city governments have been using incentive formulas embedded in zoning laws to encourage developers to provide, at first, outdoor open space and, now, indoor spaces. In fact, the revenue potential of indoor public space gets them built without public incentives. Consequently, a substantial portion of urban public life is shifting from parks and streets to indoor spaces, tending to decrease the density and diversity of activities outdoors.

These indoor spaces, which tend to be privately held and managed, are harbingers of the increasing privatization of places offered for public use. There is an increase in the scale of and concentration of control over the private places offered for public use. Malls, atriums, and festival markets are getting bigger; and most are packaged and managed as "experiences" under a single entrepreneurial vision. In private spaces social controls operate so as to reduce diversity, often by excluding "undesirables" with subtle and not so subtle cues. While lauded by most citizens, this is an erosion of civil liberties that will not be redressed in a right-wing climate.

Public life is moving not only to indoor, privately-controlled places, but also to the "virtual space" of media—a publicly accessible space, but not one in which you can see or touch the strangers with whom you interact. Media mediates more strongly than it did in previous social learning; we don't learn much any longer from political rallies in the square or gossip in the coffeehouse. While there is much more information available in the public realm, our "consumption" of this information is now much more efficient, and more private. And with the remarkable specialization of media catering to expressive subcultures, information is also more tailored to individual tastes.

The public forum has not been lost, but relocated. Print and electronic media, once operating only in the one-way "broadcast" mode, have become fairly interactive, permitting audience members to reverse roles and be heard. Moreover, media distribution networks extend the numbers of people an individual may reach, creating a more powerful form of public expression. Examples are "man in the street" interviews, letters to the editor, radio call-in shows, and some forms of anyone-can-broadcast cable television and desk-top publishing.

Except for the proliferation and vitality of subcultures, urban public life seems now to provide us with a less than a full range of experiences of social groups, classes, and values, for at least four reasons. First, as subcultural life becomes increasingly validated by the media, more prominence will be given to a multivalent public life catering to and structured by distinct but class-blind and expressive subcultures; less prominence will be given to a public life for either a diverse, democratic public or one segmented by class. The design of public space may well start to reflect this particularity of publics, as in Charles Moore's Piazza D'Italia.

Second, because of the spending power of young people, their tastes for high stimulus levels, and their energetically responsive subcultures, a fair portion of public life will be stratified by age and thus be less age diverse in any one place or time.

Third, urban housing economics act to force many households that have children or are middle class from the city. This tends to concentrate elite groups and the poor, and thus, for social learning, public life presents only certain behaviors and values, rather than a continuum of them all.

Finally, fear of crime, especially at night, and of offense by alien subcultures empties public open space of certain classes. The space in turn becomes "home" to undesirables who naturally try to extend their control to the daytime, further reducing use. In the absence of any humane and reasonable strategy to prevent this, more and more public life will have social controls which represent private values, furthering segmentation, and making a diverse public life less probable.

Consequently, a narrower range of "strangers" are met in public space, and, increasingly, experiences of public life are with a more homogenous group of others.

Some Conclusions: Using the Ontology as Framework

Trying to draw conclusions about the complex mosaic of public life is a risk, taken in public, and thus appropriate here. It is a risk since the phenomena are, with the resources available, sensed rather than measured. For every conclusion, one can find evidence of its opposite, but in general, I sense the following:

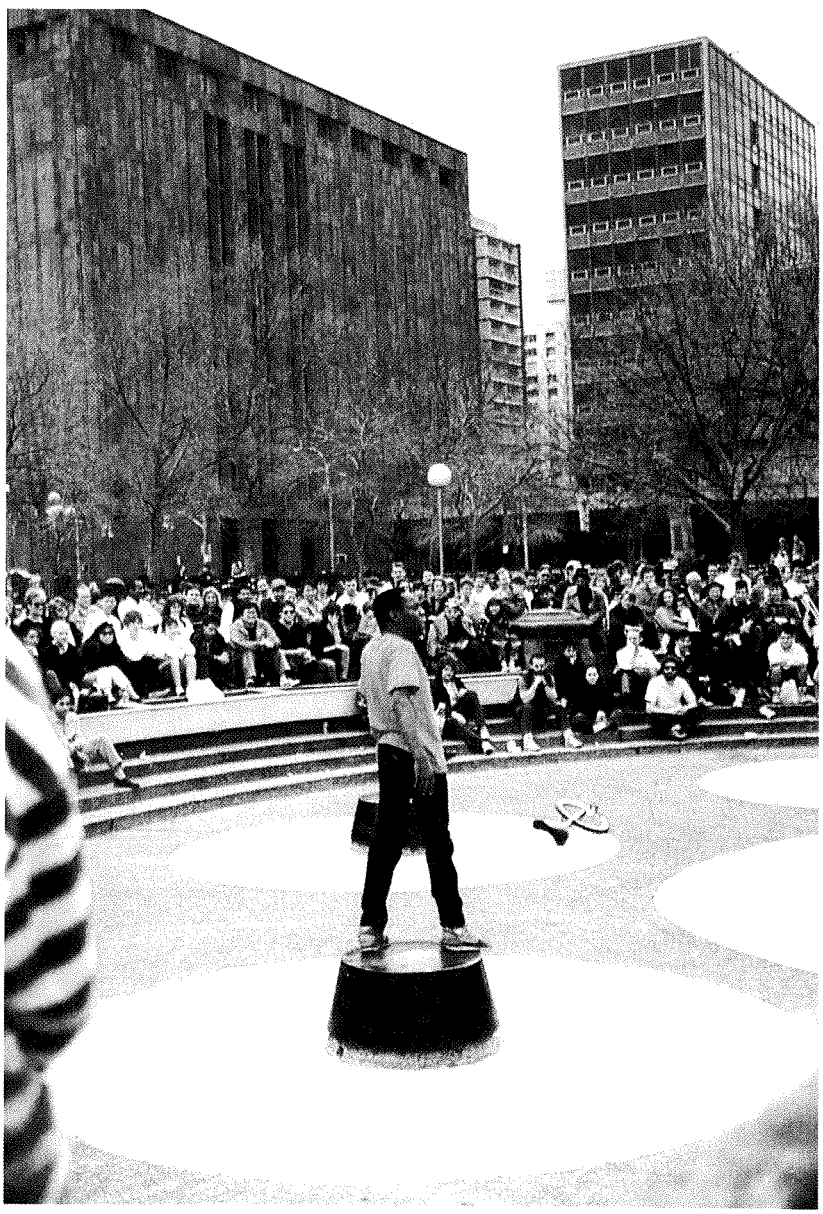
The relocation of much of the Forum, the discursive and interactive part of public life, to the "virtual space" of electronic media has given us access to more strangers and more information about them; but we have less interaction with them (for they are images) and we both mistrust the information and misuse it to reinforce our stereotypes. The increased emphasis on public as audience, on spectating, has dampened verbal interaction, and the increased richness, power, and sophistication of visual images have deverbalized public life. Thus, fewer public behaviors and presentations are altered by evaluative and expressive interaction. Much public place architecture is like theatre-without-stage, audience-viewing-audience.

Public expression of opinion is increasingly geared to its reportage in media and the actual locations of events less relevant. "Stand up and be counted": using your presence as empowerment, rekindles the desire for direct participation in public protest, but insulation from antagonists removes any doubt or complexity about positions taken, which become simplistic and stark....caricatures.

For many, participation (even short-lived) in publicly expressive subcultures is a continued emancipation from tradition, a major energizer of today's public life, and a revitalizer of public place. Consumption-as-public-theatre seems on the increase, authentically in flea-markets, block long garage-sales, Renaissance fairs, and farmers' markets, and inauthentically in Rouses' Festival Markets, but most of it in a way which reduces offense and increases pleasure in strangerhood.

America's economic and class segmentation and stratification reduces localized diversity, offense, and danger, and unfortunately, adventure. It makes much of our social learning about a narrower range of strangers. The parallel privitization of public spaces and their use by fairly homogenous groups leaves tolerance of diversity somewhat untested, and makes moot the anonymity gained through the freedom from social controls that public life can confer. Our much-vaunted cultural pluralism has seemingly enhanced civility towards diversity, but may simply be masking geographic segmentation, and a loss of diversity.

A comedian uses a fountain in New York's Washington Square Park as a stage and can hold the attention of hundreds of onlookers. Public presentations are a common form of public life, and many allow the audience to respond and express themselves.



Hands Across America, an attempt to raise millions of dollars to battle hunger, momentarily joined thousands of people in a human chain across the country. The assemblage and cooperation of people who were stangers to each other was a public expression that reaffirmed the individual's ability to "count," as well.

Mark Chidister

PUBLIC PLACES, PRIVATE LIVES: Plazas and the Broader Public

Plazas today have little in common with those of ancient Greece and Rome and medieval Europe. On the whole, they have been cut from a different bolt of urban fabric. Civic plazas are, to an extent, an exception. What connects them with the Greek agora, the Roman forum, and the medieval piazza is the image of the plaza as an open-air, heterogenous concentration of activity and focus of the city.

Yet, the potential of realizing that image in American cities is severely limited because of greater opportunities for a private way of life and the fragmentation of the city. Both civic plazas and privately developed corporate and commercial plazas have much more limited roles. They are more local and homogenous, more amenity than necessity.

Privacy, Public Obligation, and the Traditional Plaza

The public, corporate way of life in ancient Greece and Rome and medieval Europe was not simply the result of a societal conception of how people should live together. It was largely a matter of necessity. The need to survive, the need to defend, and the need to maintain order all factored into this way of life.

Barrington Moore Jr., studying the concept of privacy in several extremely different cultures, concluded that opportunities for privacy are determined by the character of society's obligations, that the need for privacy amounts to a desire for socially approved protection from painful social obligation, and that the desire for privacy can be extinguished by an acute awareness of the need for dependence on others.[1] These conclusions illuminate the difference between public life then and now.

Social obligations were considerable in ancient Greece and Rome. Participation in public and political life was required of citizens. Withdrawal from that life made one immediately suspect. Wealthy citizens were required by very strong social sanctions to spend their personal wealth on public projects ranging from buildings, monuments, and public works to supporting a city chorus or outfitting and maintaining a warship.

Waldshut, West German Federal Republic. The most important street in town recently was repaved and designated for pedestian use only. A nearby stream was channeled through the center. Photo by Donlyn Lyndon.

Crystal Court, IDS Center, Minneapolis, before new owners devoted more of its space to commercial kiosks and began to discourage lingering. Photos by Mark Chidister.

In Greece, where cities were independent political entities, this involvement was vital for governance, administration, and keeping peace. In Rome, where cities were part of a larger government, involvement was mandated by the Roman Senate and Emperor. The dream of a "pax romana" or "peace in Rome," under which people could live in cities without walls, required an impressive and oppressive military in which participation was not voluntary.

In medieval Europe, extensive sets of rules and codes of behavior were necessary to keep order within the city. Cooperation was necessary: communities could not call out the National Guard or the Army, and residents relied on each other to ward off enemies such as the Turks and the Vikings.

The agoras, forums, and piazzas in these cities generally were the only places where all the citizens could gather at once; in the absence of mass media, they were vital. These places were the focus of the political scene, the places where speeches were delivered, laws and edicts announced, elections held, and battle plans made.

The public way of life in medieval streets and piazzas was also fueled by the primary role of the city as a market place, the inadequacy of homes (by our standards), and the familiarity among city inhabitants. Goods and supplies were either produced within the city, brought in by traveling merchants, or, in the case of food and some raw materials, produced in the surrounding countryside. Because venturing outside the protective walls meant risk, most trading took place within.

Those same walls restricted horizontal growth of the city, forcing dense patterns of buildings and, in turn, small homes. This premium on space and the inadequacy of homes for much of anything except sleeping forced people into the street and the piazzas that were built

when the streets became too cramped.

These streets and squares were filled largely with familiar faces; cities had much smaller populations concentrated into small areas and people generally lived their whole lives within a single city. There were plenty of strangers, but there was a stable group of well-known people and a strong sense of corporate ownership of the public spaces that made coping with strangers manageable.

Life in all three societies was a corporate, public affair. The agora, forum, and piazza were the equivalent of our family room, grocery store, shopping mall, restaurant, central business district, courthouse, television, telephone, newspaper, theater, sports arena, and city water supply all rolled into one. Life was lived in the streets and plazas because of the inhabitants' acute awareness of their dependence on one another and the societal obligations that dependence spawned.

Fragmentation of the City

The inability of plazas to be the focus of cities today and the more limited role of plazas parallels the dramatic changes in the city center and changes in our conception of privacy. During this century, the city has been fragmented: roles once associated with and vital to the city center have been dispersed.

Teaford's work shows that the fissures along which the city would break apart were well established at the century's advent. They city then had the appearance of a unified whole. The city center was shared, common ground. It was the focus of political, social, and religious life.[2]

Yet the neighborhoods around this hub were clearly defined homogenous enclaves, sorted out along social, economic, and ethnic lines. Numerous reforms that attempted to redress inequities and create unity failed to have more than local effects. The city would not subject itself to one common moral standard. Thus, the city was unified only by its transit lines, common water supply, and shared center.

The car and the highway have often been blamed for the breaking apart of the city center. Rather than being the cause, they simply allowed deep-set divisions that already existed fuller spatial expression. Middle-class families moved out of the city center. Stores, theaters, schools, and later major employers, clinics, and their likes followed.

Consequently, the role of the city center has narrowed. It is no longer, even with all of the new festival marketplaces, the retail center. It is one of many retail centers and many entertainment, business, and cultural centers. It has been transformed into a specialized district and attracts a narrow sector of the population: the poor elderly, young middle class singles, and childless couples attracted to fashionable city life.

The role of plazas is intertwined with the role of the city center. Because the city center is no longer the focus, plazas can no longer be the heterogenous, central places of history. They are specialized places serving the limited population of those who live downtown and those who work downtown. Roles once inherent to the plaza are now taken up by the myriad of outdoor and predominantly indoor spaces for public meetings, shopping, performances, sporting events, and celebrations that are dispersed throughout the city.

The Changed Conception of Privacy

Public life in ancient Greece and Rome and medieval Europe was the result of a profound interdependency felt among city inhabitants and the societal obligations that directed all energies to the common good. Changes in our system of dependency, the dominance of home, and the need to cope in a much different world of strangers has led to many greater opportunities for a private way of life.

Our system of dependency is at a much larger scale than ever before. Theoretically, we still depend on our neighbors for protection and the goods we need to survive. However, our defense against war is provided nationally; our food, clothing, and all the other paraphernalia with which we surround ourselves come from national and global systems of production and distribution. Cooperation among city inhabitants is not as necessary as it once was.

In the past few centuries, the home—as opposed to public places—has become the primary domain. It has become increasingly more comfortable and more specialized. From our homes we view the world through the window of our televisions and the printed media. From them, we contact our friends and relatives with the telephone. We no longer need the plaza to visit each other or to keep up on the news.

Finally, our conception of privacy is, in part, linked with our ability to cope in a much different world of strangers. Most clearly seen in Lyn Lofland's work on urban public space, people privatize public space as a way of enabling one to live with and relate to much larger numbers of strangers than previously known. The privatization occurs both in the sense of personalizing a portion of public space by regular use of an individual or group and in the sense of learning how to manage one's body to create a symbolic shield of privacy in public. The first type of privatization holds the potential of excluding other individuals and groups from using the public space. The second holds the potential of living in the midst of the throng in total privacy.[3]

Today, we are much more able to

choose a private life. That is not to say that opportunities for being in public are absent: they abound. But, our decision to go to a public place and to engage in its publicness is a matter of choice, not need or obligation.

The Role of the Contemporary Plaza

Plazas in many cities not only provide a more narrow sector of the population with a more limited palette of options, but also are used only by people who choose to do so. Plazas are no longer integral to a way of life.

To begin to define the role of plazas, a distinction needs to be made between those that are privately developed and managed and those that are publicly owned and managed; more simply stated, between corporate and civic plazas.

Corporate plazas that are used most frequently host a lunchtime crowd of office workers watching each other or a staged event planned and provided by the corporation. Occasional special events, those outside the 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. frame of lunch time, seldom fail to draw a crowd. These plazas have also served as the forecourt of a corporate tower, a form or vessel of public art, symbol of corporate power and wealth, and means to a taller building through incentive zoning. Those that are used are close to a constituency of office workers and are designed and managed to encourage use.

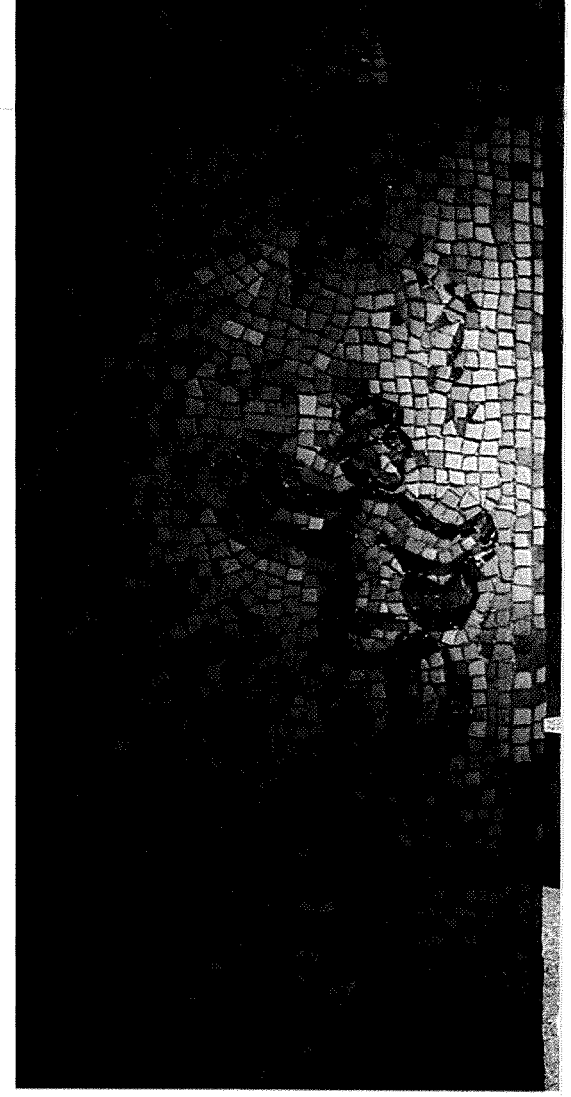
The ability of these plazas to be truly public is highly dependent on the owner's attitude. Poor location, insensitive design, or a defensive management policy can hamper publicness. City government, in most cases, has little control over these and, as a result, many have an uncoordinated collection of open spaces that serve the public in a piecemeal fashion, often discouraging use of particular classes of people either overtly or by design.

Private provision and management of public space is fraught with problems. Even when it is done right, maintaining responsiveness to public need is vulnerable. A case in point is the Crystal Court of the IDS Center in Minneapolis. The Crystal Court occupies the 100 percent location downtown, the junction of the prime corner and the skywalk system. It can be used year round, which, given Minnesota winters, was a wise choice of design. IDS was not required to provide the space and did not receive any zoning bonus for providing it.

For many years the Crystal Court served as Minneapolitans' town square, the kind of place in which one could sit for hours watching the passing show. But several years ago, IDS was purchased by Oxford Development Group. The new owner proceeded to rent the observation deck on the top floor to a law firm, remove the information booth at the entrance, and remove public seating from the court. Instead, kiosks for selling merchandise were constructed in hopes of generating more income. Now standing still in the court for more than five minutes will draw an inquiry from security. A change in management dramatically changed the role of the court. The city has no recourse; the matter is out of its control.

Civic plazas also have the potential of being a lunch spot and a place for performances. Because access to all is inherent, these spaces tend to be more heterogenous. This became apparent to me a when I compared the use of the First National Bank Plaza, Standard Oil Plaza, and the Civic Center Plaza in Chicago. The first two were populated by groups of young, mostly white, office workers; but the people in the Civic Center Plaza represented a wide range of ages, race, and economic status.

Civic plazas are distinctively different because of their potential of being a symbolic and ceremonial space for the



entire city. Even though the entire citizenry can no longer gather in these places, they can become symbolic centers for key events in a community's life. In that same vein, the civic plaza can become a repository of collective memory for a community, not only by sparking recollection of events it has held, but also as the vessel for monuments and tangible reminders of the past.

Implications for Design, Planning, and Research

There are four conclusions and a number of directives for future action that can be drawn from this. First, public life no longer occurs exclusively in plazas. Decline in the centrality and use of plazas has not meant, nor is it a sign of, the death of public life. As Michael Brill has written, public life hasn't disappeared, it merely has been transformed, manifested in a broad range of spatial and non-spatial settings.[4]

Privately-owned and managed plazas, such as Chicago's First National Bank Plaza, are likely to attract a less diverse crowd than public plazas.

Second, plazas are one part, one option in a vast inter-connected network of public spaces. They can no longer be conceived as singular, stand-alone spaces. They must relate and connect.

Third, the ability of a plaza to unify a city or foster a sense of community merely by its presence is a myth. Forces that shape or break down a sense of community are determined by much more than architecture.

And fourth, plazas are very local, specific places. They must be shaped with a close understanding of the context in which they will be placed and the people who will use them.

New plazas should be planned and designed as part of a large, complex network of public spaces. Planners should build a knowledge of existing spaces and exercise more control over the placement and program of new ones. Reliance on private developers to provide public space and on competitions to provide designs weakens the ability to fine tune new places and to incorporate public input.

This planning can be undertaken only with a clear understanding of the way public places are used, the amount of use they receive, the way they are perceived by both users and non-users, and the characteristics of users. This would allow identification of populations not being served in the existing network, options not presently available, and barriers to use. From this information, a clear conception of the purpose of these spaces and the population that should be served could be developed.

Finally, past thought and studies have conceived of the plaza as the primary public place in the city. This myopic view needs to be corrected to one that encompasses the broader public landscape and its purpose and meaning in people's lives.

Notes

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3. Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

4. Michael Brill, "Transformation, Nostalgia, and Illusion about Public Life and Public Environments." Keynote address, 18th Annual Meeting of the Environmental Design Research Association, Ottawa (1987).

Women and Downtown Open Spaces

A variety of users participate in the public life of downtown open spaces: the employed and the homeless, young and old, shoppers and tourists, and men and women. My interest is in how men and women perceive and use public space differently; my focus here is on issues designers should consider in order to make downtown open spaces more acceptable to women users.

I shall examine these issues in three ways: by reflecting on the historic division of the city into separate sexual realms, by reviewing the literature discussing psychological factors that effect the perception and behavior of women in public settings, and by reporting on survey and observational research designed to reveal any differences in men's and women's attitudes towards downtown open space.

The Sexually Divided City

To appreciate the cultural context of women in downtown public environments, we must look first at the forces that have shaped the American city—a city divided into male and female realms. Women in downtown public spaces are in the midst of a cultural environment that is the product of a powerful historic dichotomy.

In the late nineteenth century the orientation of American society and economy changed from rural and agrarian to urban and industrial. Cities of a few square miles, "walking cities," evolved into cities of 20 to 50 square miles or larger. As cities grew, land uses became specialized into residential, commercial, and industrial zones.

One by-product of this sorting out was the central business district, which was the center of the new industrial economy. An equally specialized area was the residential district, or suburb. Homogenous residential neighborhoods were built at the edge of the city, initiating a housing pattern that remains dominant to this day.

A perhaps unconscious but not (to nineteenth century Americans) unwelcome result was the sexual segregation of the American city. In the walking city, the jumble of commercial, residential, and industrial uses, all proximate to each other, did not establish clear definitions of separate sexual realms. But the central business district, public, and powerful, was a place by and for men.

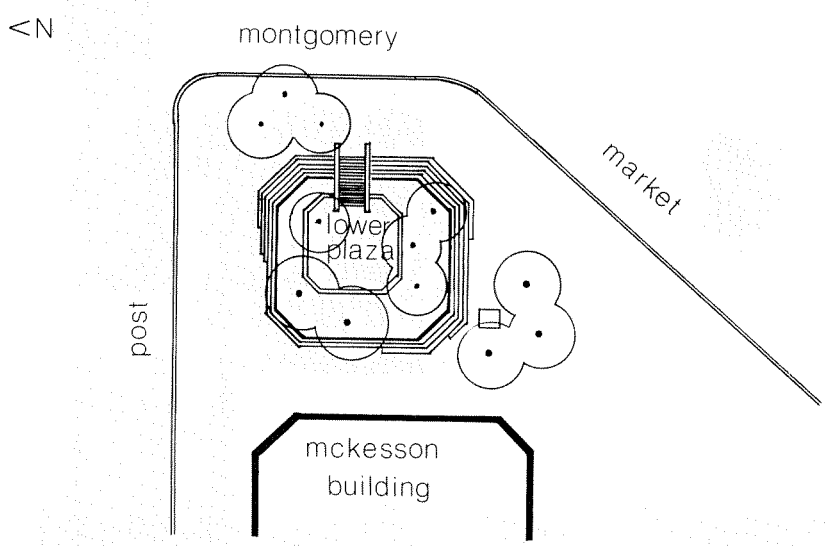
♀

Moreover, the growth of the suburbs coincided with societal and institutional support for what Rothman calls the concept of "educated motherhood."[1] A myriad of social reformers, municipal agencies, and settlement houses, armed with new knowledge of germ theory and nutrition, set out on a crusade to ensure the well being of the urban mother and child. The gist of this social movement is the cliched but apropos phrase, "a mother's place is in the home"—a home that was in the suburbs, away from the germs, congestion, and moral corruption of the central city.

The 1950s and 1960s suburban explosion and reciprocal "Manhattanization" of the central business district built walls where there had been fences of sexual segregation. Even the one enclave of women downtown—the department store —moved to the suburban shopping mall.

Seagert states: "Urban life and men tend to be thought of as more aggressive, assertive definers of important world events, intellectual, powerful, active, and somewhat dangerous. Women and suburbs share domesticity, repose, closeness to nature, lack of seriousness, mindlessness, and safety."[2] The downtown and the suburb became more than manifestations of sexual segregation and a male-empowered society; they became sexual symbols.

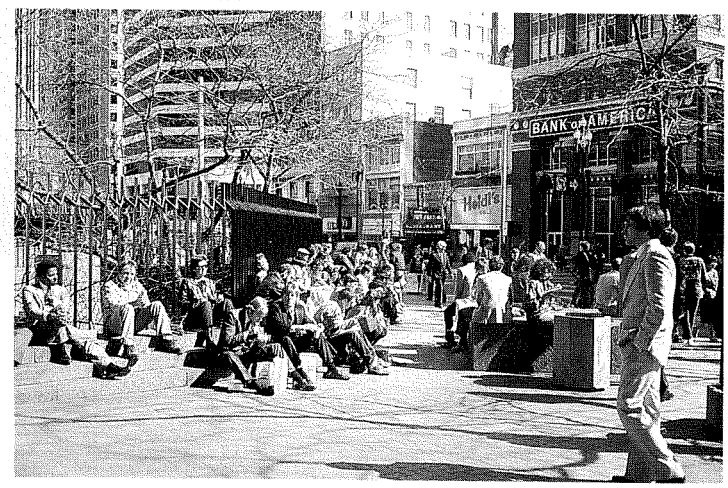
Crocker Plaza site plan.



The Psychology of Women in Open Spaces

Little research on people's behavior in or reactions to public space has used sex as a primary differential, and specific studies on women and environments are limited. Nevertheless, some general conclusions have been made: women have smaller personal space bubbles than men do (people stand closer to women), women find crowded situations less stressful than men do (and may even find some crowded situations pleasant), and groups of women have smaller territories than groups of men do.

Crocker Plaza,San Fransisco. A rise with steps provides an area for viewing the action on the street. This row of steps is favored by men. Photos by Louise Mozingo.



Graphics by Louise Mozingo.

Henly, researching women's personal space, noted that women move out of the way of other pedestrians more often than men. Women in public environments are touched more often than men, and, quite predictably, usually do not reciprocate the touching when it is initiated by men.[3]

Nager and Nelson-Shulman found that women's personal space and anonymity are invaded twice as often as men's. Moreover, men are approached with requests for information (what time is it?) while women most often are encroached upon with intrusions of a sexual nature. They found that "gaze aversion, stiff carriage, susceptibility to invasion, and the tendency to condense space by holding one's arms close to the body are signs of deference and submission communicated non-verbally" by women.[4]

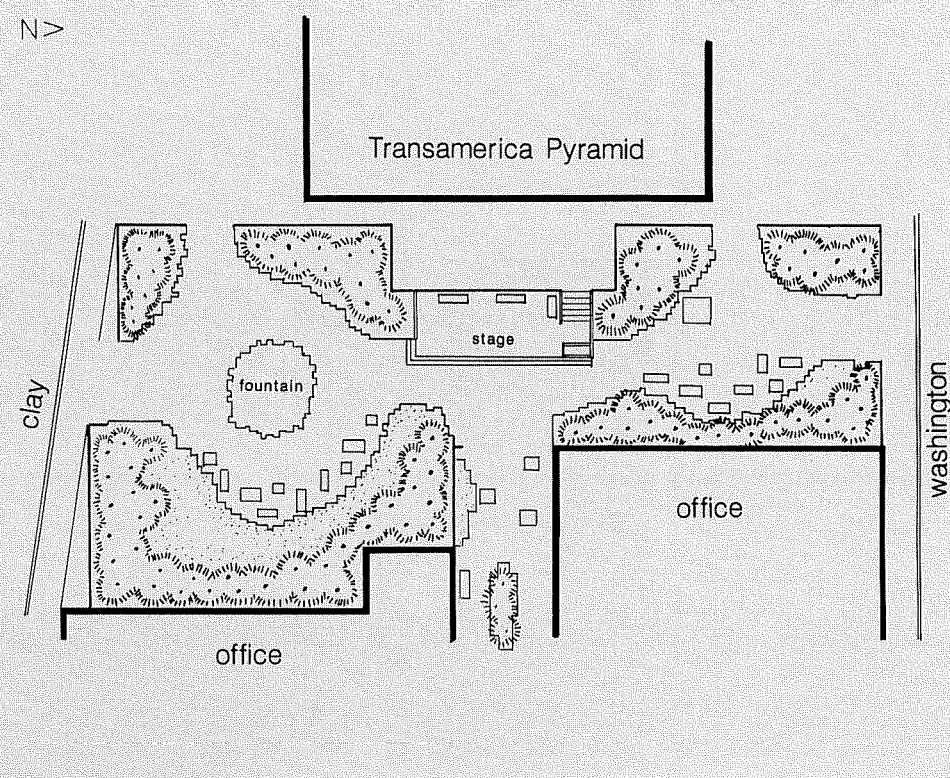
These results make it difficult to say whether women indeed have smaller personal space bubbles and territories, or whether, through constant violations of these psychological boundaries, women learn to adapt while remaining fundamentally uncomfortable. Their personal psychological boundaries are uneasy and undefined.

Proshansky, Ittelson, and Rivlin propose that comfort in regard to these boundaries involves maximizing people's "freedom of choice"—that is, environments with a range of physical settings can provide varying degrees of privacy, territoriality, and crowding. [5]

The small numbers of women in downtown open spaces suggests these environments do not provide women with range of settings that make them psychologically comfortable.

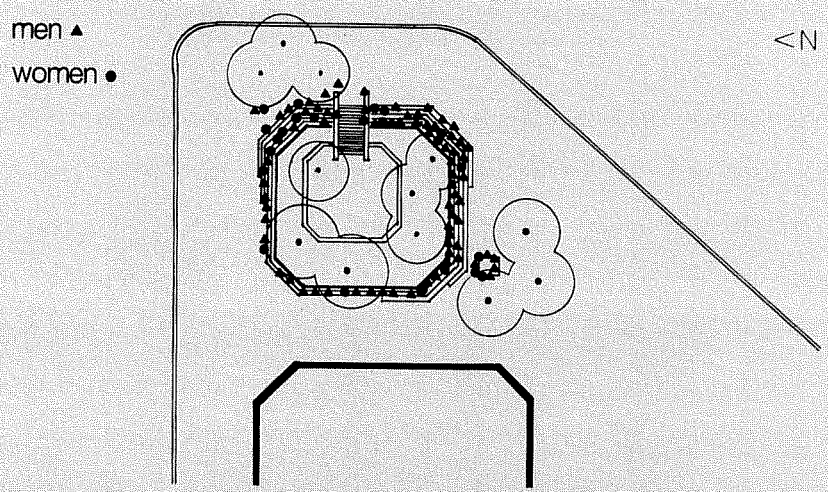
This research leads to two questions about sexually integrating downtown open spaces: How do we manipulate the physical environment to acknowledge appropriate degrees of privacy, territoriality, and crowding? What kind of environments reinforce the psychological boundaries of women?

Redwood Park site plan.



Redwood Park, San Fransisco. Trees create a physical barrier between the park and the street while the rumble of the fountain overwhelms the noise of traffic. This secluded place is favored by women.

Men established a 100 percent corner at the southeast edge of Crocker Plaza. Women established a 100 percent corner at the northeast edge.



Case Study: Crocker Plaza and Redwood Park

To understand the factors critical to women's use of downtown parks and plazas, I studied two specific places: Crocker Plaza and TransAmerica Redwood Park, both in San Francisco's Financial District. Skyscrapers are the dominant building type in this area, with concomitant high density and crowding.

Crocker Plaza,[6] situated in an odd, leftover wedge of space created by the intersection of north San Francisco's grid system and diagonal Market Street, is very much part of the street. The main feature is a forty by forty foot octagonal arrangement of sitting steps, which surround a sunken plaza that functions as a Bay Area Rapid Transit station entrance. Because of a slope on the site, there are six steps along the Market Street side and only one step on the side nearest the McKesson Building (which defines the plaza's western edge).

Redwood Park, six blocks north of Crocker Plaza and at the base of the TransAmerica pyramid, is a mid-block open space enclosed by skyscrapers and surrounded by large, mature redwood trees. The principal entrances lead from Washington and Clay streets, although the little-used Merchant Street alley, which terminates in the park, also serves as an entryway. The entire park is unobtrusively fenced with gates at each entrance.

Twenty-three backless benches, three park benches, steps, and an irrigated lawn provide places to sit within a backdrop of tall redwood trees. A splashing fountain is located at the south end of the park and a raised stage is located in the middle, at the base of the pyramid. The edges of the park are densely planted with redwood trees, which soften the visual impact of the surrounding high rises, provide human scale elements, and add visual richness to the park.

The combination of gated entrances, dense vegetation, and mid-block siting removes Redwood Park from the street, unlike Crocker Plaza, which accepts the street as part of its essence. This lends Redwood Park a more intimate quality than Crocker Plaza, even though it is considerably larger—23,850 square feet, compared to 3,725 square feet.

I casually observed the users of Redwood Park and Crocker Plaza numerous times over a year and a half. Two things became very obvious after spending time there. First, women tended to come in groups, rather than alone, and if they did come alone they clustered together. Second, women had an extremely difficult time sitting comfortably and modestly on the steps.

I also systematically observed and surveyed users of Redwood Park and Crocker Plaza. At each of these open spaces I conducted detailed behavior observation (15 minute behavior mapping, noting sex, location, and activity of each user) between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on two warm, sunny weekdays in October (San Francisco's "summer"). I also distributed questionnaires during warm and sunny weekday lunch hours in October and the following March. The questionnaire included both multiple choice and open-ended questions to

obtain as wide a range of responses as possible.

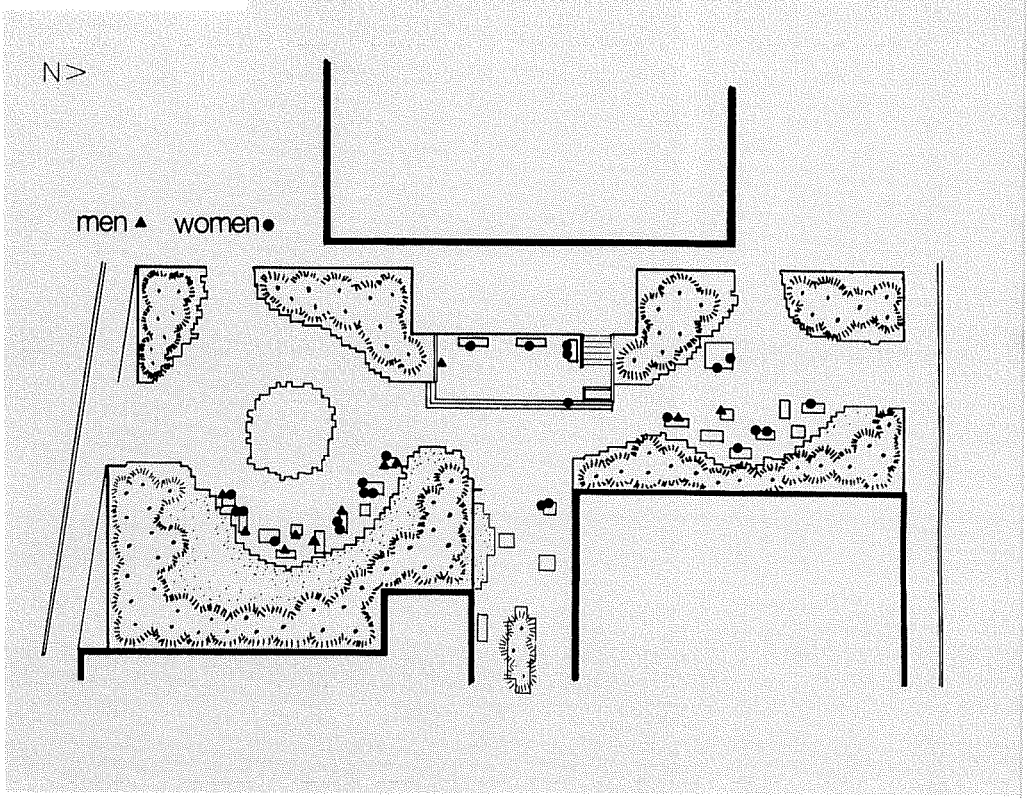
Finally, I surveyed 32 men and 47 women employees of one of the corporate office towers of downtown San Francisco, some of whom used downtown spaces, some of whom did not.

These observations and surveys yielded the following results:

Number of users: These spaces differed dramatically in their use by women. At best, 20 percent of the people using Crocker Plaza were women, compared to at least 40 percent, and sometimes 70 percent, of the people using Redwood Park. Peak use at Crocker Plaza was at 12:45 p.m., but at Redwood Plaza there was a double peak. During the first peak, at 12:15 p.m., there were one third more men than women in the park; however, during the second, peak at 1:30 p.m., there were twice as many women as men in the park.

User distribution and location: People filled Crocker Plaza from its southeast corner back towards the north side and the McKesson Building. The southeast corner of the plaza is what one might call the "100 percent corner," the area where pedestrian traffic is heaviest and which (designers might say) is the most desirable sitting space. However, this is a male "100 percent corner." Women distribute themselves evenly around the plaza and, if anything, seem to have a separate "100 percent corner" of their own towards Montgomery Street.

Both men and women are evenly spread throughout Redwood Park.



At Redwood Park, behavior mapping showed no "100 percent corner," no discernable center of people and activity for either men or women. People sprinkled themselves throughout the benches and steps.

Liked areas: Users of Crocker Plaza, asked to circle their preferred areas of the plaza on a map, reinforced the results of the behavior observation. Men more often chose the "100 percent corner" near Market Street, and women more often chose the corner towards Montgomery and Post. Explaining their reasons for choosing this area, women stated "sun, not too windy," "quieter," "great view," and "fewer weirdos on this side." The men consistently stated that they chose their corner because it was the best place to watch people.

Women users of Redwood Park revealed preferences that were not manifested in the behavior observation. They clearly preferred sitting near the fountain, stating reasons such as "the fountain," "come watch people, yet private, kind of secluded," and "partial sun, some seclusion." Women may prefer the plaza's combination of noise mitigation, sun, and the chance to watch people from a secluded vantage point. Men at Redwood chose areas all over the park and consistently stated what they liked about the park was the sun.

Disliked areas: At Crocker Plaza, both sexes disliked the side nearest the McKesson Building, and each disliked the area corresponding to the "100 percent corner" of the opposite sex. To a more subtle extent, this was the case at Redwood Park. Men dis-

CROCKER PLAZA

Catchment area
Men

Catchment area
Women

N

liked the fountain area, considering it noisy. Women disliked the raised stage with park benches, declaring it "too conspicuous" and "uncomfortable," even though behavior observation showed they sat there regularly. This is the only place with park benches, so women may be trading off psychological comfort for the physical comfort afforded by benches with backs.

Catchment Areas: In both open spaces, the catchment areas of women were significantly smaller than those of men. Women, apparently, are unwilling or unable to travel as far as men.

Preferred activities: Users of both open spaces indicated their principal activities there were eating, talking, and watching other people. However, more men than women said they preferred watching people, and more women than men said they preferred eating and talking. This seems to support the results of the behavior observation, which indicate that women tended to come in groups with whom they socialized.

Disliked factors: Male and female users expressed clear differences about factors they disliked in and around Crocker Plaza. Women were more annoyed by noise, traffic, litter/dirt, and crowded conditions than men were. Men, however, were more annoyed by the presence of derelicts than women were. At Redwood Park, both men and women cited far fewer disliked features, indicating a higher degree of satisfaction with their experience there.

Men were able to travel further than women were to visit Crocker Plaza at lunch time.

Lacked features: Both men and women using Crocker Plaza said they would have wanted more trees, sun, and grass there. Most of the women noted the lack of benches while only about one of four men did. A similar number of men even said the plaza was "just right," while no women did, and in general had fewer responses to the question, indicating men had a higher degree of satisfaction with the plaza. At Redwood Park, the most frequent answer for both sexes was "just right," indicating again that the park provided a great deal of satisfaction for people of both sexes who use it.

Alternative lunchtime destinations: Women at Crocker Plaza, asked where they went when they did not come there during lunch hour, said they either stayed in their office, went to restaurants, or went to other open spaces. Women at Redwood Park said they either stayed in the office or went to restaurants. Men in both spaces said they went to restaurants or to other open spaces; none opted to stay in their office.

A common assumption is that women do not go to downtown open spaces at lunch because they have errands to run. But women said this was the least of their reasons for not coming. In fact, more men than women stated this as a reason for not coming to the plaza. The primary reason all users gave for not coming to the spaces was weather.

Office survey

The results of the survey of office workers reiterated many of the the behavior observation findings and the survey of open space users.

More men said they were habitual users of open spaces than did women. Fewer women went to open spaces alone, and more went to an open space with a friend or a group.

Women said the primary reason they did not go to open spaces during their lunch hours was that their jobs (generally lower-echelon) allowed them only short lunch breaks. They do not have time to travel as far as men do.

Women said they preferred to use open spaces for eating, talking, and, to a lesser extent, watching others. Men said they preferred watching others and, secondarily, talking. Again, women tended, more than men, to say they use open spaces as places to interact socially with friends. These results are simliar to the results of the surveys of open space users.

Both men and women said litter and dirt were the most annoying characteristic of open spaces, but they differed about other factors they did not like. Men expressed annoyance at derelicts, crowding, pigeons, lack of sun, and too much concrete. For women, annoyances were crowding, no comfortable seating, and, to a lesser extent than men, derelicts. Many more women than men thought San Francisco needed more downtown open space.

Conclusion

To begin creating downtown open spaces that are more woman-friendly, designers and planners must consider what experiences women are seeking in open spaces, and they must determine which design features support these sought-after experiences. While the scope of this study is limited, it does indicate that men and women perceive and appreciate public open space in different ways. The differences suggested by the results of this research are indicative of other areas for study and exploration.

The difference in character of Crocker Plaza and Redwood Park may be a paradigm for the different kind of open space experiences women and men accept and prefer. Crocker Plaza overwhelmingly accepts the dynamic yet inherently noisy and distracting urban environment. To be there means to appprecíate and want to be a part of this type of urban expression. Redwood Park rejects the dominant urban environment, its stress, and its ever-changing, unpredictable nature. Crocker Plaza is outward reaching, socially interactive, and enmeshed in urban life. Redwood Park is enclosed and self-contained, inwardly oriented and far less interactive.

Men and women may have not only different preferences in downtown open spaces but also different concepts of optimum open space experiences. Men may be seeking environments that provide intense and unpredictable social interaction, connectedness to the street and its activity, urban stimuli, and publicness. They are not as bothered by stresses that usually accompany such an environment, and, perhaps, consider such stress as part of the exciting urbanness they seek.

Women may be looking for relief from environmental stress, and view downtown plazas and parks as places that should be removed from but not isolated from the dominant urbanness of downtown. Women seem to prefer open spaces that emphasize a filtering or mitigation of negative factors, psychological familiarity and comfort, places to socialize with friends, and spatial control. In a sense, women may be seeking "back yard" experiences and men may be seeking "front yard" experiences.

Although this study confirms some of Whyte's findings in *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*,[7] it raises some fundamental differences. Whyte's model of urban open space advocates business, activity, and connection to the street. It is steeped in the historic precedents of the male-dominated downtown. The model creates forums for stranger interaction, where it is more likely that women's psychological boundaries would be violated.

I would suggest this model represents only one part of a range of valid and successful forms of open space. Although Whyte states, "A good plaza starts at the street corner" and advocates designs in which "it is hard to tell where one ends and the other begins," the results of this study suggest otherwise: spaces that are distinctly removed and oriented away from the street can be particularly successful for women. By their less public and less connected nature, these spaces help women more easily maintain their vital psychological boundaries.

This research suggests several specific issues designers and planners must consider if downtown open spaces are to become more woman-friendly:

The assumption that women use downtown open spaces less frequently because they are not interested is not true. For both men and women, going to an open space is important—it can provide relief from the office environment and a chance to be outside.

Women are more sensitive to urban annoyances and environmental stresses—noise, crowding, dirt, and traffic—than men are. Features that mitigate these stresses will make downtown open spaces more amenable and attractive to women.

Women often go to downtown open spaces with friends with whom they socialize. People-watching forums suitable for strangers sitting side by side, such as Crocker Plaza, are not well suited for the experiences women tend to seek in open spaces.

Women do not prefer to be "on display" in downtown open spaces. They probably perceive that their personal or psychological boundaries may be more easily violated in such a situation.

The perception of both physical and psychological safety is important to women. Women may perceive safety not merely as a lack of

"undesirables" (an issue that has risen to the forefront because of Whyte's work) but also in the degree of spatial control they feel: the maintenance of territoriality, lack of crowding, and degree of group control.

Getting to an open space is a problem for women. People of lower employment status, mostly women, are unable to travel as far during their lunch breaks as men are. Providing access for women will mean a re-evaluation of the usefulness of larger open spaces intended to serve larger catchment areas. Clearly, open spaces need to be distributed much more frequently throughout downtown.

Steps, sculptures, and sitting blocks of other than standard height will produce in many women an unsolvable conflict between standards of propriety, physical comfort, and the desire to be in open space. For whatever historical and cultural reasons, women wear skirts; therefore, considering a six-inch riser and 14-inch tread as adequate seating space is an insult to them.

By building downtown open spaces that are woman-friendly we would go much further in building spaces that are people-friendly. The key is viewing prefered open space experiences of women and men as taking place not in separate spheres but on a continuum. Designers and planners tend to classify types of downtown open spaces into rigid categories that imply uniform degrees of publicness. For example, the San Francisco Downtown Plan equates plazas with being "very public" and parks with being "less public." We need to re-evaluate such classifications in favor of more integrated concepts.

Such concepts would permit design flexibility and allow people to choose the comfort level they prefer in urban settings. Such concepts recognize that both men and women have preferences along a *continuum*, and allow for the transformation of stereotypical sexual roles as socialization patterns change. The next generation of women may well move farther into the "front yard" of downtown open spaces.

The downtown environment is, by and large, a grim, alienating place. Open spaces are so vital to rehumanizing downtown that it is essential they be places for all people. Designers and planners must become aware of the "mass of social images and symbols" that are imbued in our culture and which pervade the process by which our cities, and the open spaces within them, are built. We must look forward to environments that accept and acknowledge both men and women.

Notes

1. Sheila M. Rothman, *Women's Proper Place* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

2. Susan Saegert, "Masculine Cities, Feminine Suburbs," in *Women and The American City* (1981).

3. Henly, from Anita Nager and Yona Nelson-Shulman, "Women in Public Places," *Centerpoint* (New York: City University Graduate Center, 1979).

4. Anita Nager and Yona Nelson-Shulman, "Women in Public Places," *Centerpoint* (New York: City University Graduate Center, 1979).

5. Harold M. Proshansky, William H. Ittelson, and Leanne Rivlin, *Environmental Psychology* (San Francisco: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1976).

6. Since this study, Crocker Plaza has been given an official name, McKesson Plaza, reflecting the name of the building in front of which it sits. Many people still use the name Crocker Plaza to refer to the plaza.

7. William H. Whyte, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1980).

ECOLOGY AND AESTHETICS

The healthy city is a concept addressed by all utopian futurists from Thomas More to Anne Spirn. Every notion of ideal city form has included gardens and public open spaces of one type or another. The symbolism of nature and the environmental benefits of shade trees, fountains, and sports fields have been the basic motives for including open space.

The value of urban open space has always been recognized by society; however, the quality, form, and function of urban open space has varied with time and place, embracing such diverse types as the sacred groves of Athens, the fora of Ancient Rome, church places and markets of medieval squares, plazas of the American Southwest, pastoral parks of the nineteenth century industrial city, and sports fields, playgrounds, and civic spaces of the twentieth century.

These open spaces, not always green, are a reflection of a society's vision of how life in a city should be at a particular time. As cities grow and change these open spaces are not always where we would like them to be. For example, we know how random the original location of large pastoral parks was in the nineteenth century; they often were sited where no other land use was profitable, such as places with rocky terrain, marshy ground, or sand dunes, and typically at the edge of the then built-up area. We know, too, that the justification of expenditures for public open space in the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century was based on theories, philosophies, and needs that are no longer self evident or realistic.

The two chief measures of the effectiveness of a city's open space have been traditionally the ratio of total acres to total population, e.g. 10 acres per 1,000 people, and the distribution of those acres according to population density and service area distance. Few cities have achieved the quantitative standards they adopted or set themselves and where they have, equitable distribution is not achieved.

As we approach the next century, enough has changed in our cities and in our way of life and in the globe and universe for us to reconsider the form and content of urban open space as part of an evolving urban environment whose population is constantly changing in numbers, ethnic origins, attitude, work routines, and recreation preferences.

Boston incorporated a series of streams and ponds used for flood control into its Emerald Necklace. Photos by Michael Laurie.

Three Principles

I propose three principles as a method whereby change in open space design may be brought about with a degree of rationality. They are: ecological expressionism, economy, and social satisfaction. *The principle of ecological expressionism* is based on the belief that contact with nature in some form is symbolic and significant in everyone's life. In addition it recognizes that the city is not separate from natural processes. *The principle of economy* implies productivity made possible by accessibility of open space, multiple use, and integration of objectives. The conservation and renewal of resources is a related broader goal. *The principle of social satisfaction* responds to the pluralistic nature of American society and the spectrum of interest groups in any society. It recognizes that different communities have different needs, that new forms of recreation may emerge, and that new minorities such as the elderly may need special consideration.

The three principles are interdependent and together are likely to result in a new look, a new aesthetic, for public urban open spaces.

There are two ways in which the principle of ecological expressionism can be applied to cities. First, the ecosystem can be adapted as a theoretical model in which the city is seen as a family house with various private and public rooms, halls, courtyards, and gardens. (A healthy house would be a beautiful one.) As the ecosystem embraces slow change and adaptation proceeding according to self sustaining processes, so the city, to remain healthy and beautiful, would have to change and adapt to new circumstances to survive and maintain itself as a viable environment. There is plenty of evidence that this occurs, as, for example, in the recycling of warehouses into shopping malls, the conversion of houses into apartments, and the redesign of public squares.

A second way involves identifying actual natural processes and features and developing city form with respect to these in such a way that the resulting open space associated with streams, flood plains, and unstable land structures the city. Boston's Emerald Necklace and Minneapolis' park system are two good examples from the nineteenth century. This approach applies most obviously to the planning of new towns and the expansion of existing cities.

In retrofitting older urban areas it is rarely possible to reinstate altered or eradicated natural processes. Nonetheless, such processes, however altered, exist: for example, rain falls, wind blows, waves wash, and seasons change. At a regional and global scale, the city makes its contribution of wastes, heat, smoke, and other forms of pollution while drawing a variety of resources from distant environments. The ecological attitude would concentrate on the provision of conditions for human comfort for citizens with the least adverse impact on the supporting environment.

Washington Square, San Fransisco. The neigborhood square is a setting for organized exercise classes and other activities, an expression of ecology through diversity and economy through multiple use.

Ecological expressionism responds to the importance of a sense of place and expression of the original natural processes of a site before urbanization. These can be revived in symbolic segments to remind us where we are, serving an educational purpose and "framed" as a work of art so that there is no confusion about what is nature and what is not.

The principle of economy is similar in some respects to that of ecological expressionism. As ecology is the study of the house, so economy is the management of the house. Productivity is an essential characteristic of economy and of a healthy ecosystem. Multiple use of space by different groups at different times of day and year is a specific aspect of economy with definite implications for design. Single purpose places are not only wasteful but likely to be dull at the same time.

The principle of social fulfillment is clearly related to economy and aesthetics, leading to an index of urban livability. The livable city has been described as a city of distinct neighborhoods with a sense of pride, place and history, safe streets, good housing, friendly playgrounds, parks, and open spaces. Each city will have its unique characteristics and opportunities and what may be apropriate for one may not be for another. The principles are therefore likely to result in a variety of solutions suited to time, place, and people.

Appraisal

If we return to the typical hierarchy of open spaces in mature cities, we will find a few neighborhood parks that contribute to livability and many that do not. Those which do tend to be high density areas with a mix of age and ethnic groups and a variety of land uses, and are physically located in hollows rather than hilltops.

The large pastoral parks have passed through a period of neglect and misuse. To some extent they turned around during the environmental movement. Some, such as Central Park in New York, have undergone restoration and have resumed an important function in high density urban areas. But few find themselves as appropriately located or with as significant a heritage to merit restoration.

Because of demographic change, new forms of recreation, and water conservation, it may be that the nineteenth century pastoral park is no longer the jewel in the crown of park systems that it once was. More important may be village greens, town squares, flower gardens, and street trees, because they are closely associated with and in scale with residential neighborhoods.

The large parks that remain in cities of the future may need to be changed in order to serve environmental roles such as waste recycling, urban forestry, community gardens, and microclimate modification. In addition, open spaces will need to respond to the new social values, urban pleasures, and tastes of a pluralistic society. Undefined and flexible space suitable for any recreational or social purpose that comes along may be the most sensible solution.

While few people actually advocate the dissolution of the large parks, their tradtional pastoral form and their strict separation from the city around them has been criticized. A good case could be made for the development of some portions of these parks in low density

Marina Green, San Fransisco. A formal green along San Fransisco Bay is transformed into a beach—an adaption of place for social fulfillment.

areas for housing. Golden Gate and McLaren Parks in San Francisco and Franklin Park in Boston are two likely candidates for this idea. All are large enough to stand carefully designed town house developments along the edges or in the case of McLaren Park in the middle, providing a close fit between dwellings and open space designed for sport, community gardens and the like.

Several advantages would accrue from this idea. The use of the park would likely increase because of the close proximity of potential users and a perceived greater safety would result due to overlooking windows. The park land space would be reduced, to say 600 acres in the case of Golden Gate Park (now 1,000) and 300 acres in the case of Franklin Park (now 500), still a very substantial size capable of including city-wide recreation functions and representing nature.

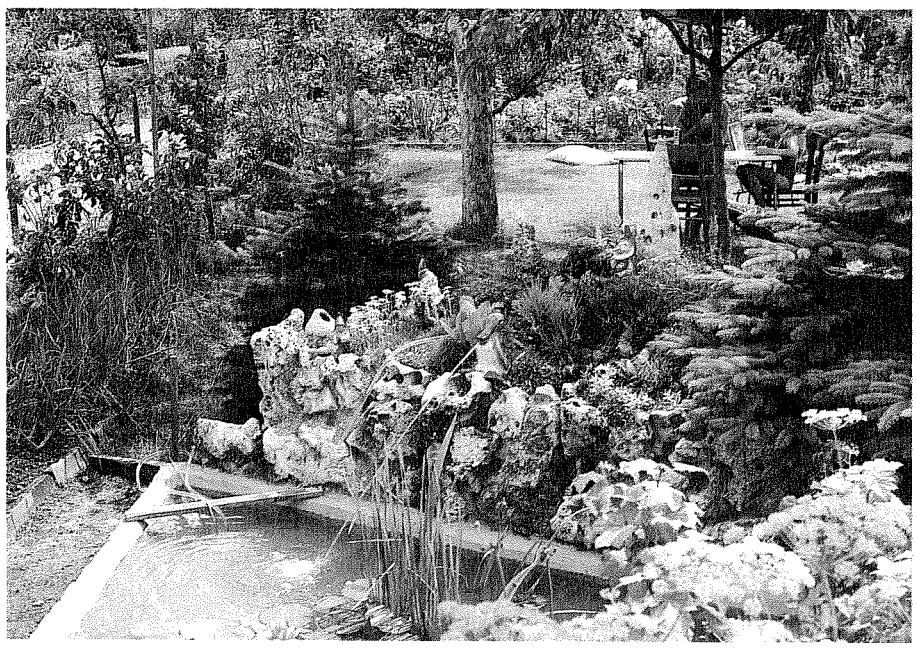
With the funds raised by the city from such development, suitable lands would be purchased in those neighborhoods now deemed under provided with open space or to relocate inappropriately sited parks, with a resulting overall city-wide increase in the provision and use of parks.

Aesthetic Implications

The planning criteria that emerge from this appraisal in terms of the three principles are, I think, quite obvious. The aesthetic effect requires slightly more imagination. For the neighborhood park I foresee a minimalist approach resulting in undifferentiated space with a variety of surfaces with a rich edge of symbols and activities, shade and sun —a sense of incompletion, flexibility, and ongoing process. I liken the future neighborhood park to the mantelpiece in a house, supporting an ever changing set of objects, invitations, and memorabilia, and capable of being swept clear for special occasions or of including an increasing number of treasures.

The large park, however it may be reduced or left alone, will lose its picturesque woodland and meadow character and take on some of the qualities of a productive farm. A million trees planted systematically for biomass or to improve air quality will require management and appropriate organization. Wastewater management might require structured ponds of water hyacinth. Community gardens would equally impose a new order. In other words, picturesque landscape might only exist in a small portion of the park while the rest, still accessible for recreation, would exhibit either a more rectangular form related to function or irregular forms adopted from natural processes.

Aesthetic appreciation of both these new landscapes will be the result of a combination of knowledge and experience with an improved sense of nature as process and ecology as concept. The artists and designers of the day in cooperation with the people will put it together in stunning compositions which will be considered art in the twenty first century just as Central Park was in the nineteenth century.



Each garden in the Kleingarten,
an urban garden in Munich,
can be designed to meet
the user's needs and tastes.
Photo by Mark Francis.

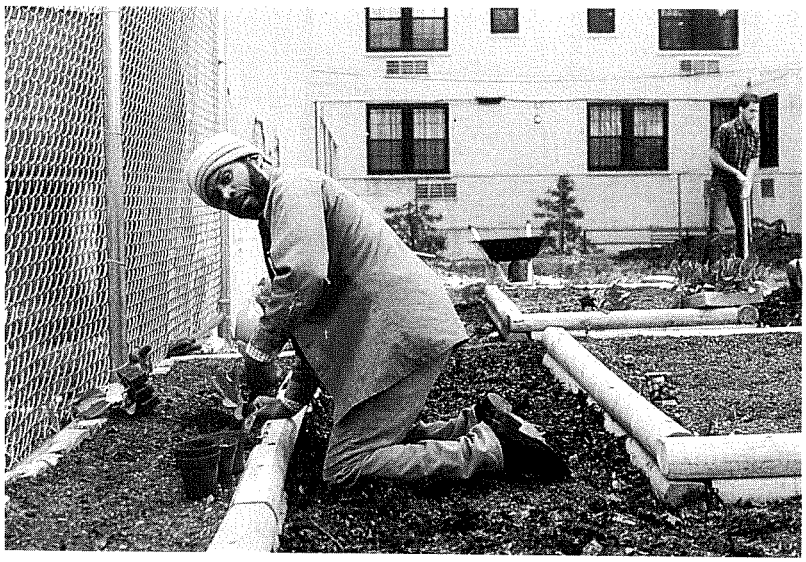
THE URBAN GARDEN AS PUBLIC SPACE

A garden is a powerful metaphor for our relationship to ourselves, to nature, and to our everyday environment. The urban garden often serves as an archetype—an icon through which people come to identify with and attach meaning to the landscape. When people become directly involved in landscapes, responsible for designing, building, managing, or maintaining gardens, a deeper meaning may be attached to them than to professionally designed and maintained places. The garden becomes an extension of the gardeners and the infrequent visitor or occasional passerby. When the garden becomes part of what Lyn Lofland calls the "public realm,"[1] it takes on significant meaning for both users and non-users. It becomes part of the public life of a neighborhood or downtown, offering important individual and group benefits. The garden takes on a "spirit of place"—a connectedness to the built and natural world.

In recent years, urban garden projects have expanded in influence and importance. They are a central part of what has been characterized as the "community open space" or "urban greening" movement. The growth of urban gardens has been inspired by dual opportunities of enormous areas of vacant land in cities and the failure of traditional open spaces, such as parks and playgrounds, to meet the full range of recreational and community needs.

The impact of the movement has been significant both in number and quality of new gardens created in the past two decades. In New York City more than 600 community gardens totalling more than 143 acres were identified in 1987.[2] In San Francisco, more than 60 community garden projects have been assisted by the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners with a goal of establishing 100 gardens by 1996. Philadelphia has more than 1,000 community greening projects developed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Philadelphia Green Program. In some cities the number of community gardens are starting to rival the number of projects included in the official city park system.

The garden has expanded beyond the home to become part of the neighborhood, the park, the workplace, the condominium, the everyday housing project, the school, the prison, and even the hospital and hospice. Community gardens, urban forests, school gardens, nature parks, and wildlife habitat are examples of the expanding community open space movement.



Above, a homeless shelter garden in Washington, D.C.. Photo by Suzanne Wells.

Below, residents in New York's Clinton neighborhood organized to protect this garden against redevelopment.

Gardens in Public Life

Our growing public appetite for gardens and gardening is a reflection of the changing nature of public life. Urban gardens result from a reaction to the privatization of public life, from the need for spaces that support social contact and publicness, and from an interest in urban spaces that invite ongoing change and modifications through public stewardship and local involvement.

Urban gardens differ from other types of public open spaces in several significant ways. Gardens frequently are designed, built, or managed by the people who use them. Gardens are valued by their users as places to work, meet people, and socialize as well as places to grow vegetables or flowers. To discourage misuse or overuse, gardens often limit access, using devices such as signs, gates, and locks. Yet the amount of use gardens receive is not substantially different than nearby parks receive, and a greater variety of activities often takes place there. Gardens often take on a diverse and ever changing set of aesthetics with a greater variety of materials and plants used than in traditional parks and open spaces.

Changing Types of Urban Gardens

Changes in public life have given rise to new and expanded types of gardens, which illustrate the changing nature of urban open space in cities. These projects exist at a variety of scales and in diverse settings, including the neighborhood, the downtown, the workplace, as city-wide networks of open space, as regional gardens, or as arboretums.

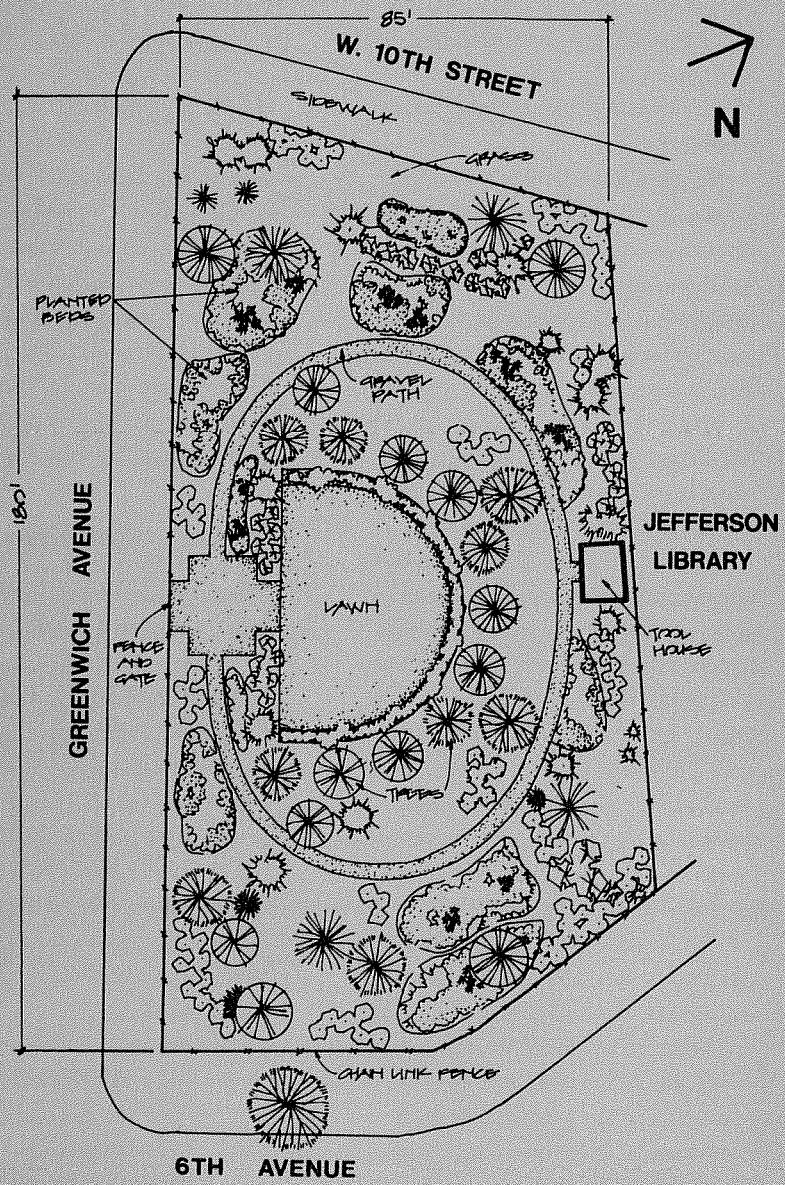
The Garden as a Nearby Neighborhood Place: The neighborhood garden is one of the most established and refined forms of urban gardens. With names like El Sol Brillante Garden in the Lower East Side in New York City, the Dogpatch Garden in San Francisco, and the Ron Mandella Community Garden

in Sacramento, these neighborhood projects are now valued parts of their local landscape.

Neighborhood gardens can include a variety of elements, such as individual or community vegetable areas, flower beds, lawns, sitting or socializing areas, areas for ball play, and play areas for children. They range in size from a small lot sandwiched in between buildings to a multi-acre garden. Such gardens often become a valued element in the neighborhood, increasing residents' attachment to their neighborhood.

The Garden in the Workplace: The "corporate garden" is a new type of urban garden created by corporations that modify their grounds to provide gardening space for employees. Examples include Fireman's Fund and Amex Life Assurance Company in Marin County; the Hewlett Packard Headquarters in Palo Alto, where more than 450 employees garden on six acres; and the MITRE Corporation in Bedford, Massachusetts, which has 450 garden plots for its employees. According to one employee at the Fireman's Fund, "the garden is one of the reasons I work here." At Reader's Digest headquarters in Pleasantville, New York, a vice-president states, "community gardens have proven to be a visible benefit which returns high dividends of employee satisfaction."[3] While the benefits of these corporate gardens need to be more systematically investigated, they reflect the expansion of the garden into the workplace.

The Garden in the Park: The urban garden also is slowly moving into the public park, with some park areas being made into gardens in which residents plant, maintain, and control space. For example, Chicago Botanical Garden is working with the Chicago Parks Department to transform some areas of city parks into community garden areas. In many cities, "Friends of Parks"



Plan of Jefferson Market Garden, a community controlled and maintained garden in New York's Greenwich Village.

groups have created garden areas within parks. Imagine the impact on the urban landscape if city park systems provided gardening spaces for all residents that requested them.

The Garden in the Plaza: The garden is becoming part of some downtown plazas, where garden elements replace hardscape elements as the dominant design form. Many plazas now have planting areas with seasonal color and diverse vegetation. There is a potential to expand the garden into new or existing plazas by allowing building occupants to participate in both decision making and actual gardening.

The School Garden: The garden is transforming some schoolyards into green settings for environmental learning and education. Robin Moore, Susan Goltsman, Daniel Iacofano, and Moura Quayle have successfully transformed school grounds into gardens where students participate in construction and gardening. Several European countries have a tradition of school gardening programs on school property.

The Hospital in the Garden: Gardens can play an important role in the healing process. R. C. Ulrich, in one of the few empirical studies of the relationship of vegetation to health, studied open-heart surgery in a Maryland hospital, comparing recovery rates for patients who had views of trees from their hospital windows with the rates of patients who did not have views. He found that patients looking out on a natural scene had shorter post-operative stays, received fewer negative evaluation comments, and took fewer drugs.[4]

It may be a wise investment to reduce hospital and health costs by having hospitals surrounded by gardens. Hospital design could visually connect rooms with the landscape, providing green and colorful views for patients. Plants in containers or small planting areas could even be provided for patients who desire to care for plants.

The Garden as Home: Some community gardening programs in cities such as Washington, D.C., Seattle, and New York, are actively involved in the problem of homelessness by providing food, involving homeless people in growing food, and even letting people set up temporary shelter in the gardens. Since the setting of choice for some homeless people is the vacant lot, transforming lots into garden homes may be one way to provide appropriate shelter until livable housing can be provided.

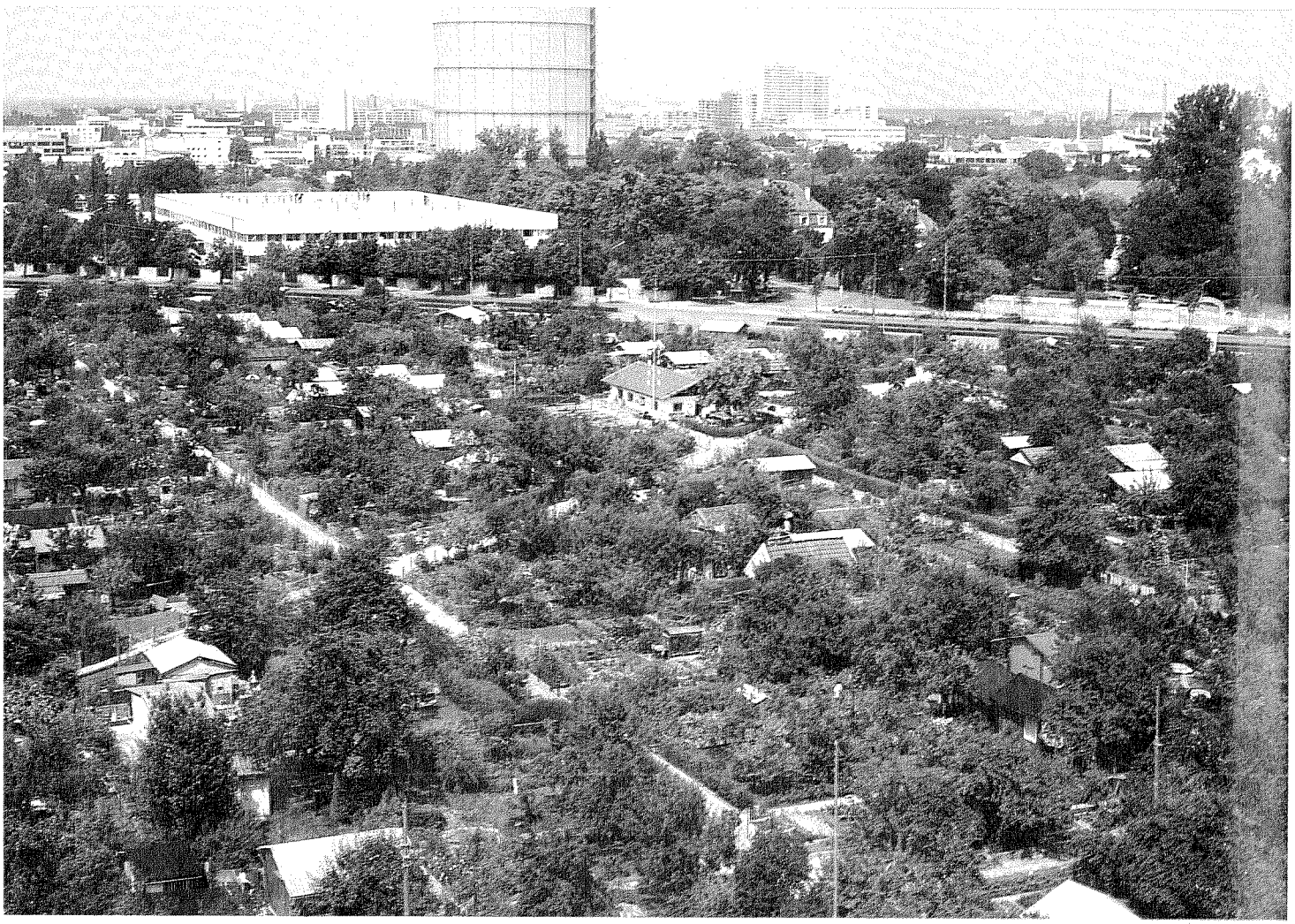
The Urban Garden and its Meanings

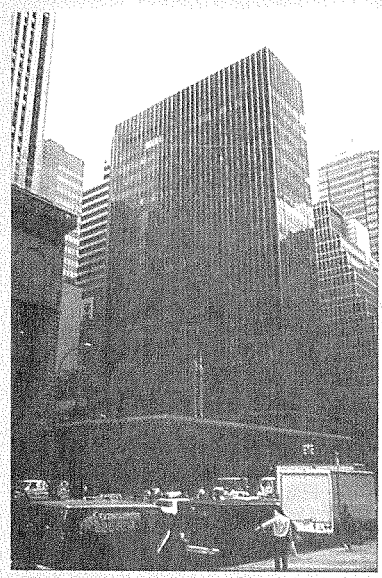
The urban garden has different meanings that can be examined along individual, group, neighborhood, city-wide, regional, and aesthetic dimensions. On a conceptual level, urban gardens exist as democratic space—reflections of local culture and values. They invite direct participation for some, while for others they become valued visual elements in the workplace or community. Gardens can be democratic reflections of conflict and change in neighborhood and urban life.

Gardens also contribute to what Brower has called "familiar place," a mark of local identity and pride. Gardens provide individual benefits, such as reduction of stress and contribution to wellness. For example, the activity of gardening involves exercise, can result in weight loss, and can contribute to an individual's sense of peacefulness or tranquility. Urban gardens also can provide a recreation resource for people desiring more active engagement with the public environment. In our Sacramento study, we found that while park users use other parks, garden users typically do not use parks.[5]

For non-users, people who may only pass by as outside viewers of the garden, there may also be important benefits.

Aereal view of the Kleingarten. Photo by Mark Francis.





Lever House, in New York, is a landmark example of a garden in the workplace. The roof garden is solely for employees of Lever Brothers. Photos by Todd W. Bressi.

The garden serves as what psychologists Rachel and Steve Kaplan have called a "restorative experience," or an opportunity to recover from the fatigue resulting from "the everyday demands of living in the modern world."[6] Gardens offer residents an opportunity for passive engagement through looking at and viewing nature. Part of the high ratings gardens receive from non-users may be attributed to gardens being "cared for places" that communicate a sense of stewardship to outsiders. There is some evidence to suggest that gardens may also contribute a perception of safety for neighborhood residents, especially for children and women.

Finally, gardens offer urban residents a connection to nature. Vegetation of the kind found in community gardens has been highly valued in a number of studies comparing different types of urban form.[7] The people-plant relation, as some call this interaction between nature and people, is an important value of gardens for both users and non-users.

The Future Urban Garden

Gardens as public space raise several critical research, design, and policy issues. One of the most critical needs is for management policies and designs that establish gardens as permanent open space. Because many garden projects are not considered part of official open space systems, their long term future is often in doubt. Increasingly, urban gardens are being recognized as part of the offical city park and recreation master plans and policy. Boston, San Francisco, and New York have made significant progress in this direction. Bond issues and park acts may be excellent vehicles to expand the number of gardens and public access to them.

Design has an important role to play in creating meaningful urban gardens. Designers can avoid creating cute and superficial gardens by directly engaging the users of the garden in their design and planning process and providing ways for them to control the sites once they are completed.

An expanded research agenda for urban gardens also needs to be developed and adequately funded. Some of the agenda items for research include systematic investigation of the benefits of urban gardens. By their very nature, gardens are fragile places in need of extra care and loving. How these qualities can be preserved and expanded within the limited resources of garden managers needs to be addressed. Horticultural training along the lines of that provided by technical assistance groups has proved successful in addressing this need.

I do not mean to suggest that the urban garden become the dominant form of future open space. The urban garden is only one of a number of open space types that will make up the future urban landscape. The complete network of open spaces such as the street, the square and park, the sidewalk, the street corner, and the garden must comprise the open space system of cities.

Urban gardens will contribute increasingly to the quality of future urban life. We will need to continue to examine their meaning. To be successful, they must extend their tradition of inviting use and participation, providing a connection for people to nature and natural processes, and being beautiful places near where people live, work, and play.

Notes

1. Lyn H. Lofland, "Social Life in the Public Realm," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, (January 1989).

2. New York City Open Space Task Force, *Open Space and the Future of New York City: Summary and Recommendations* (New York, 1987).

3. L. Sommers, *The Employee Gardening Handbook*, (Burlington, VT: National Gardening Association, 1984).

4. R. C. Ulrich, "View Through a Window May Influence Recovery from Surgery," *Science*, 224.

5. Mark Francis, "Some Different Meanings Attached to a City Park and Community Gardens," *Landscape Journal*, 6:2 (101-112), 1987.

6. Rachel and Steve Kaplan, "The Garden as Restorative Experience," in Mark Francis and Randy Hester, *Proceedings of the Garden Conference*, (Davis, CA: University of California Center for Design Research, 1987).

7. H. Schroeder, "Research on Urban Forests," in E. Zube and G. Moore, *Advances in Environment, Behavior and Design, Vol. 2*, (New York: Plenum, 1989).

DESIGN AS A VALUE SYSTEM

I want to describe design not in its usual meaning but as a value system. We are quite clearly in the grip of a real dilemma of goals and objectives in our society, if not in the world. Certainly we are in our profession.

On the one hand, there is great affluence. Materialism is rampant; money-making is a primary motivation; and the Harvard MBA is everywhere. Because of the primacy of television as a source of information we are surrounded by surrogate experience, not real-life experience, and it is hard to tell what is real or unreal anymore. As a columnist has said, "something is horribly wrong." Everything is packaged these days and the packaging has become the real reality.

We are surrounded by image-making architects who design very special places where columns are hollow. It's hardly a good idea to lean against them because you could be sued for denting them. The entire project, actually, has a hollow ring. Everything seems to be designed to evoke a stage-set image these days, having very little to do with the actual activities going on within the building or the landscape.

Everywhere developers are hiring architects and landscape architects to authenticate their deals by making buildings and open spaces which, like advertisements, call attention to the project. It has become a form of corporate pimping, if you will. It leaves the architect to serve out his role as what Philip Johnson calls "a design whore." The designs are profoundly phony, Disneylandish structures and landscapes without meaning, or profundity, or sense of value. They are full of sound and fury, but signify nothing socially relevant.

At the other end of the scale, as Randolph Hester points out, are the homeless, the disadvantaged, the socially burdensome; the planet's ecological balance is threatened. Real-life communities and small-town neighborhoods are disintegrating in the face of shopping centers full of silly shops selling trendy knickknacks and doo-dads and taking over from the authentic downtown of the village or town.

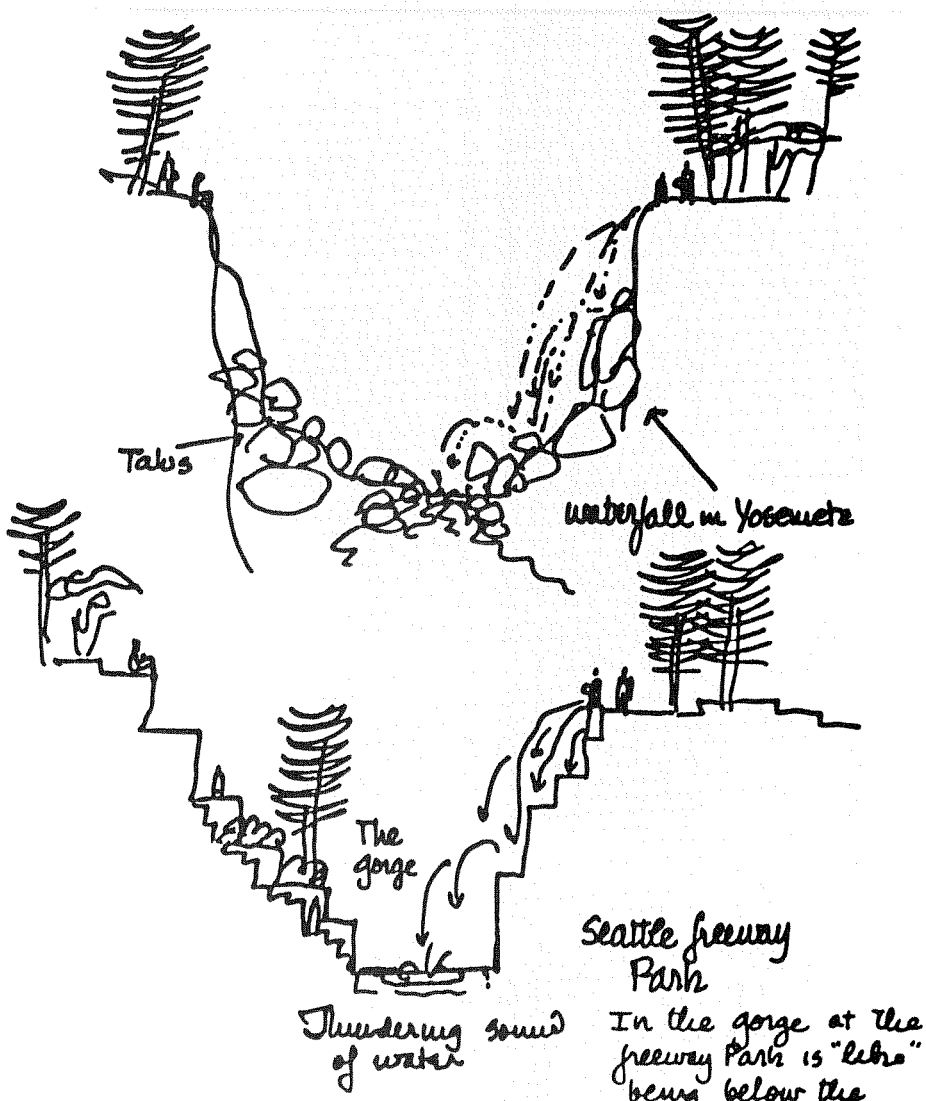
I get the impression that most young people these days are bemused or despondent rather than appalled at the directions that we are going in or what our values are and how to achieve them. What is design really all about? Design, particularly environmental design, has a profound responsibility. It is, in a sense, the bearer of the cultural value system of a community. For that reason, environmental design goes way beyond the visual; it is much more pervasive. It deals with cultural issues, with context, with lifestyle, with social and economic issues; it has profound ecological ramifications and influences on the future of the planet; it deals with the whole community as well as the individual; it is contributing to a human ecology and, in that sense, it must be multi-sensory and holistic. And, I think, holistic is the operative word.

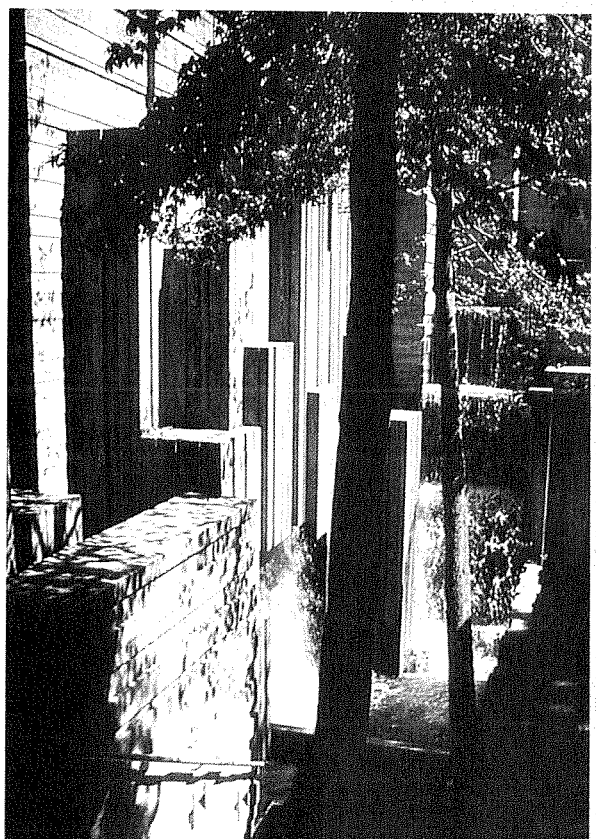
Perhaps more importantly, landscape design must go much deeper than image-making, which simply trivializes it. It is, after all, not a matter of constantly changing style, as some people think—like the redesign of new fashions each season. It has nothing to do with old-fashioned carpet bedding or modish, intricate gridded patterning on the ground, which is the more recently stylish way of doing things.

Landscape design *is* about social relevance. It can become poetic and symbolic, but, perhaps most importantly, it can articulate a culture's most spiritual values.

For its best meaning, it can strive to externalize and make feasible spiritual values—for individuals, for a community, and for the whole planet. The role of the landscape designer, can be similar to the role of a Shaman who, in the Dutch teacher Beuy's words, "can transform base materials into mystical touchstones." Beautiful term.

In that way, landscape design is like alchemy. That is what makes it an important art form, and why, in fact, it is worthy for us to pursue this particular profession.



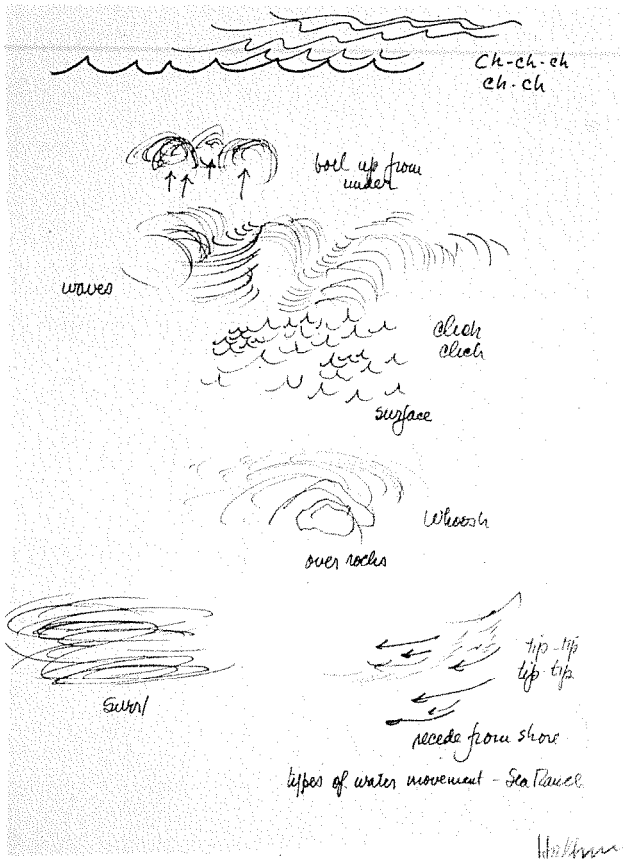


Seattle's Freeway Park, inspired by the landscape of Yosemite National Park. Photograph and drawings by Lawrence Halprin.

Some of the most remarkable transformational environments I have personally experienced exhibit manifestations of spiritual values. They have altered my life.

What they seem to do is release in people something inherent inside them, something that is already there. They evoke some basic need, which lies dormant until it is evoked.

These environments speak to us at a basic, human, archetypical level, revealing to us our latent human and spiritual values.

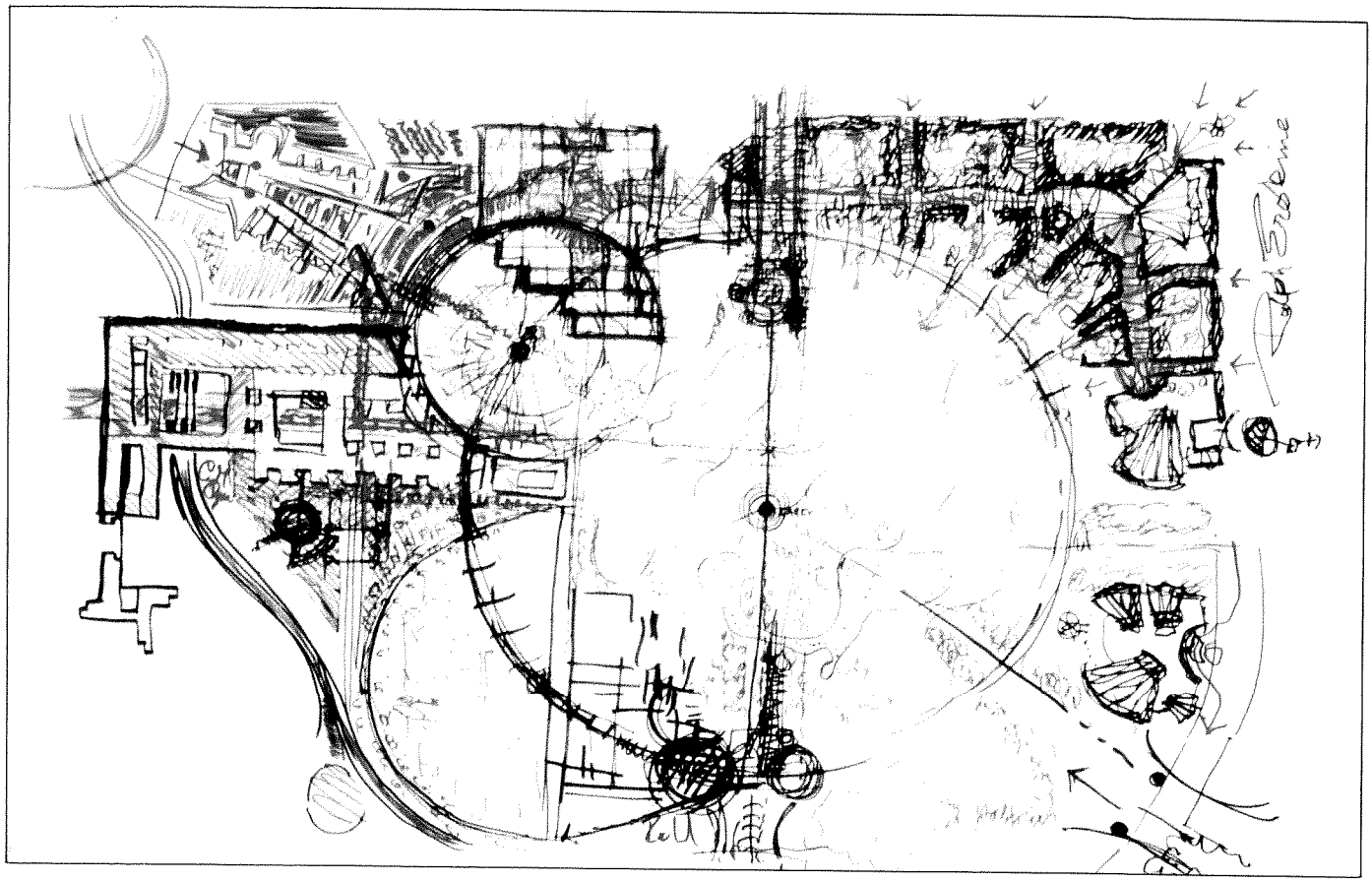


Types of Water movement —Sea Ranch.

Late October on the Tucker Trail, at Camp Tucker.

Lawrence Halprin's drawings are a very special record of his search for forms that can call forth a spirited response in public urban places. Most frequently his studies of natural form and process have captured attention; they reveal, in notations and graphic gestures, the complexity of responses that are so characteristic of unfettered natural environments. The drawings also shed light on how Halprin, time and time again, has been able to shape places that embody the wonder and fecundity of nature, that invite exploration, and that touch depths of feeling that conventional wisdom would not acknowledge.

When I asked for a set of drawings to include in this issue, Larry invited me to go



Fiat Novoli.

through his most recent sketch books. As a preliminary, we discussed the points included in this issue's editorial: that good places are distinct and memorable, often with characterizing silhouettes; that it is important that places sustain exploration and continuing attention; that places should allow for personal interaction; and that places derive from multiple sources and are open to continuous change.

"Yes," Larry said, "that's what I've been trying to get across. Those are all versions of natural processes applied to building; it doesn't matter what you build it out of. We like such things because they come out of biological processes. But I would add that good places always have responded to humor and fantasy."

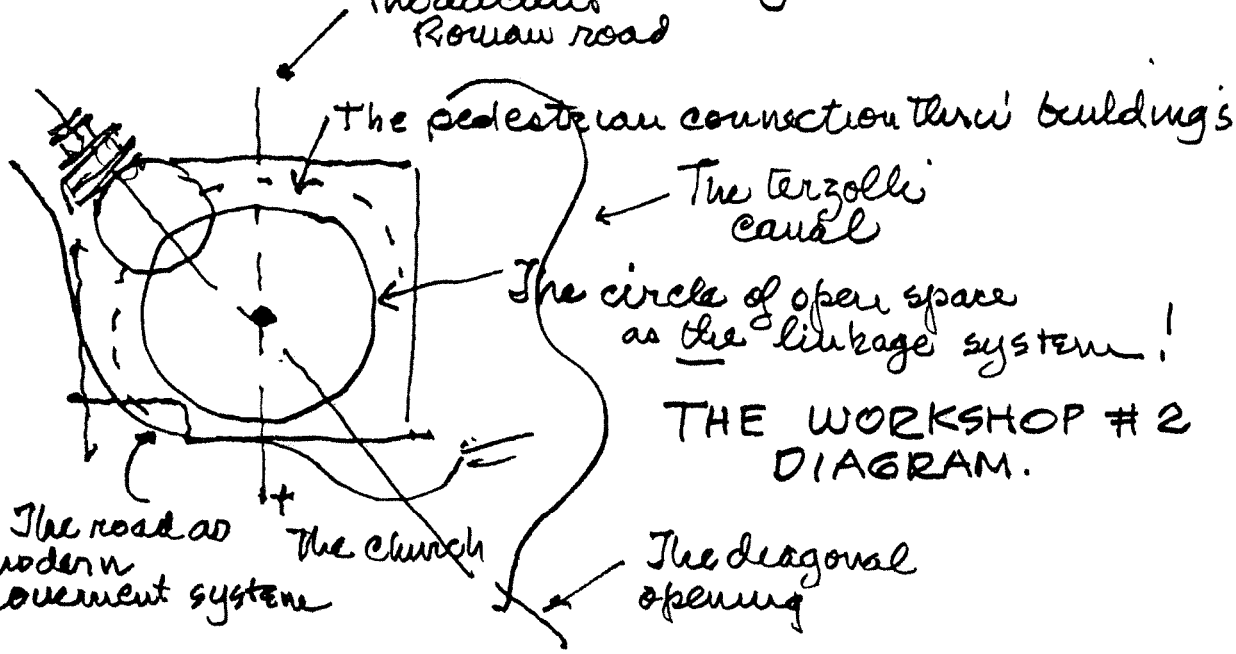
"Or," I suggested, "to aspiration. All are involved in making something more out of the world than it is."

Leafing through the sketch books, it was clear to me that natural forms were not the only ones that Larry explored, and that humor and fantasy were also constant companions. Midway through a recent notebook was a letter to Bruno Zevi outlining some thoughts on a recent project for Florence, the Fiat Novoli. The letter, which we have reproduced on the following pages, offers a nice glimpse into the evolution of an idea. We have also reproduced above the drawing generated from the workshop to which the letter refers as a starting point.

—Donlyn Lyndon

Villa Garzoni.

Dear Bruno -- I am sorry not to have been able to show you the park myself but have asked Italo to explain it to you for me next week -



THE WORKSHOP #2 DIAGRAM.

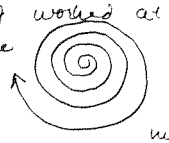
At the end of the 2nd workshop the "collective drawing" which was arrived at by a great burst of intense emotion and consensus of the group working as a whole - set the central open space as a park. The park was left to be designed as a great modern garden serving the needs of the public and there was a strong feeling that its proposed circular form be broken and eroded at the edges so that it not be static!

When I came back to San Francisco I started working with the ○ & it continued to confuse me because it seemed to remain static and too introverted

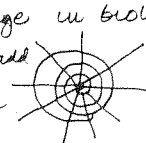
One of our constant requirements for movable is that it be able to reach out and include the neighborhoods and relate to the outside world as well. The ○

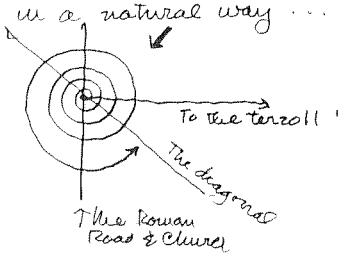
seemed to exhibit that as well as being fixed and immutable.

So I worked at a way to break out. And the spiral form seemed to do that for me.. Its organically (rather than intellectually) derived geometry seemed to both hold the architecture together and at the same time its increasing circular lines are based on forces of growth and change in biology and space.

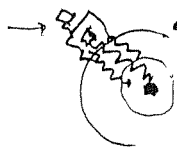


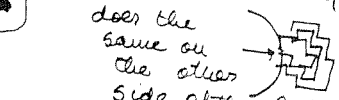
If you add the radial axes based on .618 the gradual increments of .618 modules inherent in all living forms - these gave me the opportunity to reach out into the surrounding areas in a natural way ... all these could be brought together in the Park.





Additionally I have "fretted" (de-composed) the edges of the spiral form to increase the penetration outward & inward. For example the source of the water fountain Eats into the outer spiral & the outdoor amphitheater does the same on the other side of the lake.





One of the main spirals becomes the major pedestrian promenade (and will in addition serve for service vehicles: fire, police etc.) on the park side of the buildings And the next spiral links all the buildings together as a continuous (moving also up & down) pedestrian linkage system. Along this way internal gardens, plantings and trees will climb through and around all the buildings and up on balconies washing the park and the architecture into a total integration of inside and outside of architecture & landscape.

The spiral is both vertical & horizontal..... SECTION..

Along the pedestrian spiral linkages are to be public uses both in the park and within the building groupings. At the Nodal points of spiral and radial paths will be activity centers for various age groups - small childrens playgrounds, TEEN-age centers and seniors ... in addition all along the walkways will be food kiosks sidewalk cafes, gallery spaces, bookstores etc. etc. I am working with the planning department to define these needs and recreational facilities such as boccie ball etc. as well. Thus the park will be able to be not only a physical but a truly social center for the entire area.

I am writing these notes in my notebook for you on a morning flight home to San Francisco & will send them by FAX (as soon as I arrive) as additional descriptions of the material Italo will show you. Hope you are well again & all my best until I see you in April ...

Shalom. P.L.B

Larry

BA Flight 287
Tues. Mar. 8 - 88.

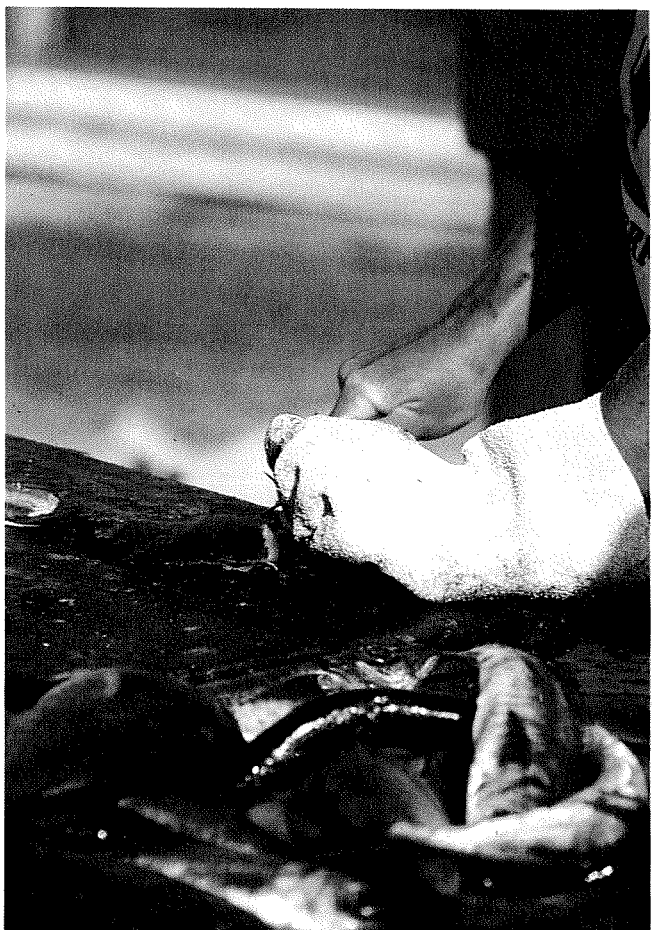
Halprin's letter to Bruno Zevi describing the evolution of the design of a park at Fiat Novoli. Courtesy Lawrence Halprin.

SOCIAL VALUES IN OPEN SPACE DESIGN

I am going to pose a question and answer it straight away. Is the designer's contribution to urban open space all decorative? I believe very firmly that it is not.

I propose six characterizations of open space that is being designed today. Each seems to be both class-based and related to emerging patterns in society. All of these types of open space, all of these designs, are inspired by social values in many ways.

The first is open space as a machine for recreating. The second is open space as a consumer item. The third I call "juxtapositions," things that are turned on their heads. The fourth is open space as an economic resource. This is related to poorer communities, where the task is turning metaphorical waste products such as "fish heads" into useful community resources. The fifth is open space as a medium for reconnection, primarily to the natural environment, to natural processes, and to the community. The sixth is topophilia.



All graphics and photographs by Randoph T. Hester, Jr.

Landscape Design, Social Values, and Innovation

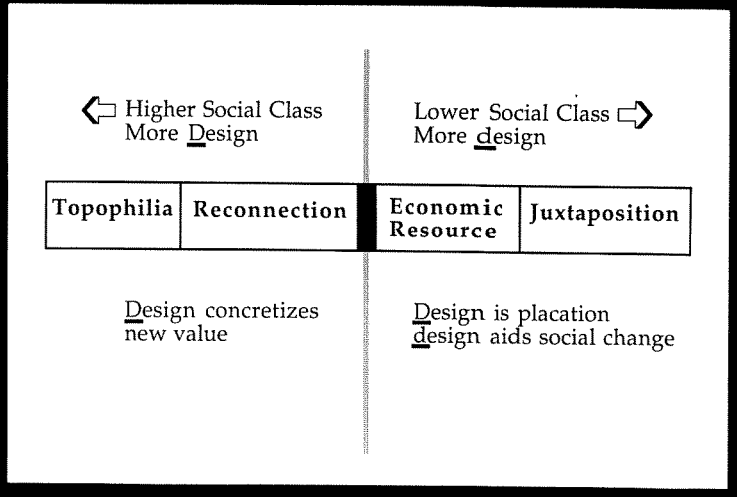
If we talk about the designer giving form to spoken or prevailing social values, then for most landscape architects open space design has become very repetitive, copy cat, largely superficial, and merely decorative. But it does not have to be that way.

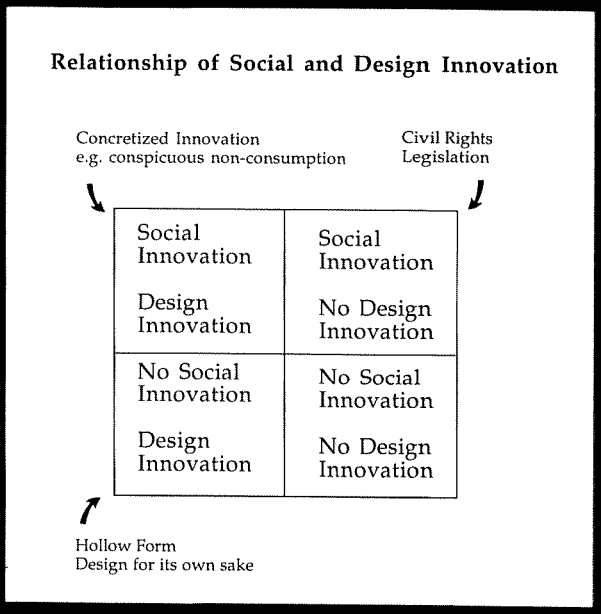
Designers can give form, for example, to unspoken social values, or values of which people are unaware. Giving form to these is clearly not a decorative exercise. We can give form to the social values of those who cannot speak or, in our society, are not empowered or listened to when they do speak: the poor, the old, the young, minorities.

The designer can give form to unspeakable values, those related to sex, particularly to the sensual landscape, and social change—radical, in however modest a form. The designer can give form to the values of ecology and nature. And finally, the designer gives form to unthought values. These may be emerging in the literature or in philosophy or even childrens' books, novels, theatre, or other art forms that a designer actually embodies.

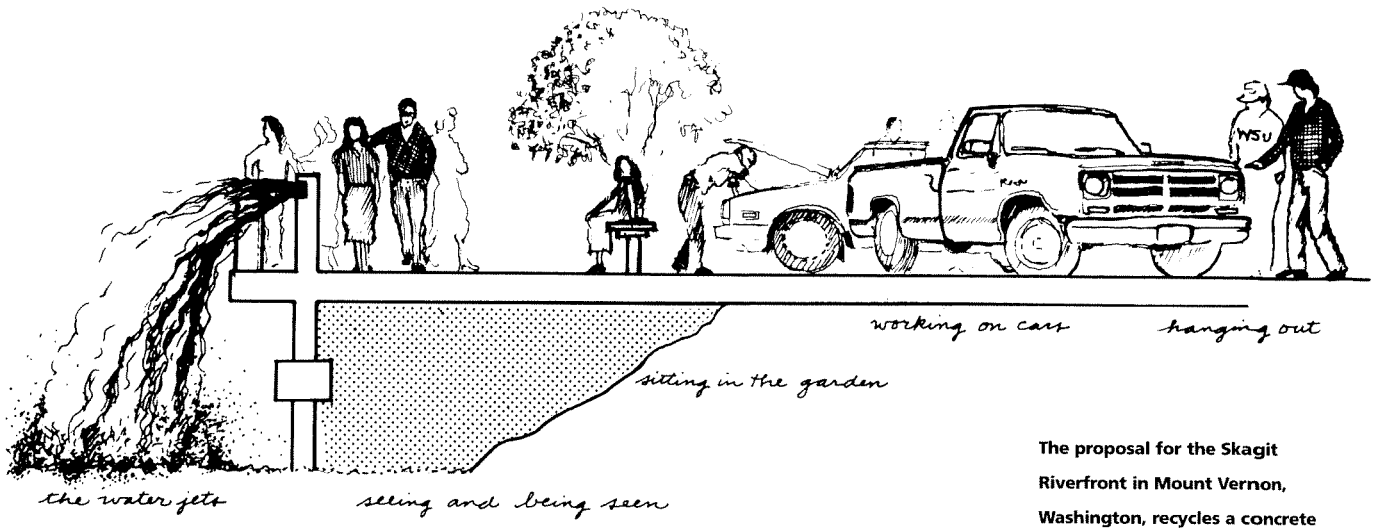
It is clear there are opportunities for social change that are not related to design innovation. But there are plenty of cases in which social innovation is accompanied by design innovation. Rob Thayer offered a simple example of this when he wrote about what happened at the solar community Village Homes in Davis, California. Residents of Village Homes, which Thayer described as a community of "conspicuous non-consumption," created an image of a different way to live. The concretization of their ecological values in an alternative environment became a very powerful precedent, an image that could be seen by others and understood, not just by talking about it but by seeing the image. Social change may be transmitted to others more readily when it is accompanied by a concrete design precedent.

Landscape architecture is divided between serving the haves and the have-nots. For the lower social classes, the landscape can provide a financial resource for place-appropriate economic development; the upper classes yearn to reconnect with the landscape and natural processes from which they are divorced.





When design innovation accompanies social innovation, the social ideal is concretized, providing a powerful precedent that speeds the acceptance of the social change.



The proposal for the Skagit Riverfront in Mount Vernon, Washington, recycles a concrete revetment as a parking garden, an unusual juxtaposition of people and cars. A pedestrian promenade, water sculpture, and flowers are intermixed with traditional working class uses, such as viewing from and repairing automobiles.

Many of the works landscape architects are producing are machines for recreating. Whether or not they are richly textured—in many cases they are still sterile—they are very segregated, largely insulated from natural processes, and in many ways contribute to the alienation that we feel from both other people and the natural environment.

The other very powerful negative type of landscape that is being produced is open space as a consumer item. The value of open space as a consumer item has as much to do with its status as it does with its function. This open space must continually be changed, because, as soon as those in lower social classes have adopted it and incorporated it into their lives, it loses its status. This is what we call "designer design," which cannot be ignored.

To focus on characterizations that are more hopeful, although still difficult, I shall use projects on which my firm has worked as illustrations. Open space as juxtaposition and as economic resource are characterizations primarily related, in the work we do, to the lower social classes. On the other side of the class barrier are the two other characterizations: reconnection to community and to natural processes, and topophilia.

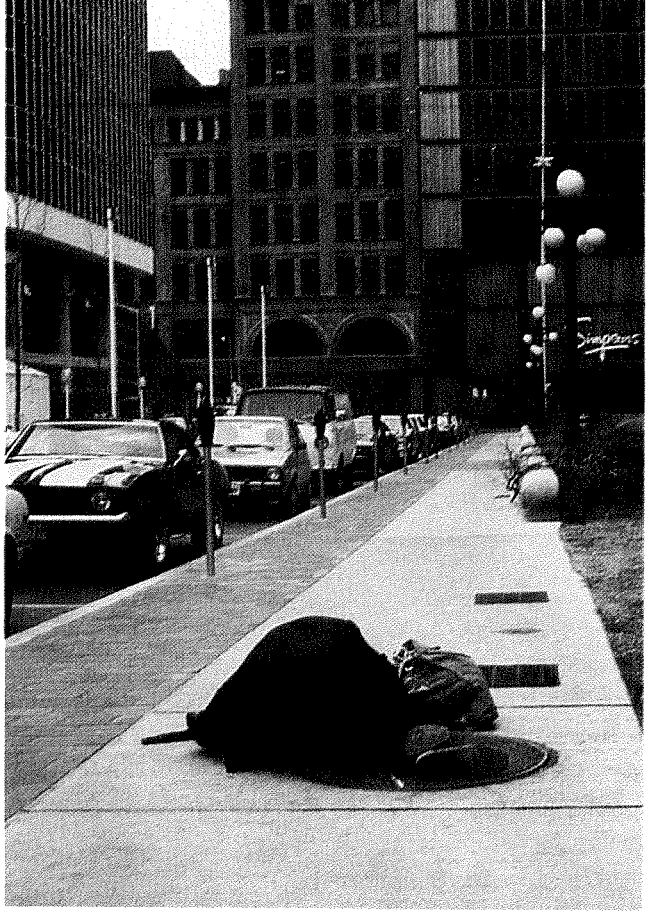
Juxtaposition

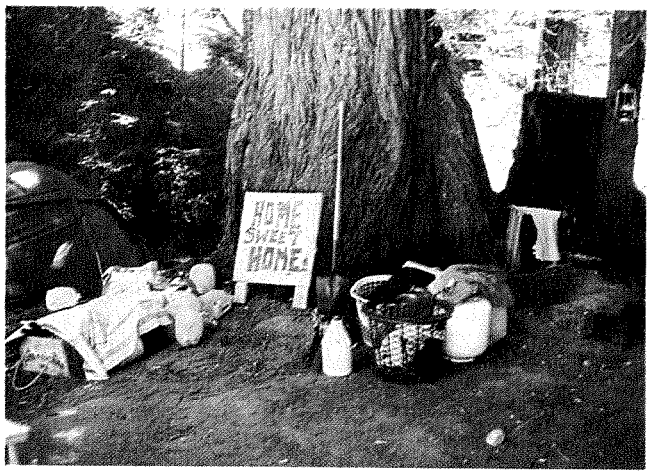
"Juxtaposition" means turning something on its head. The revetment in Mount Vernon, Washington, along the Skagit River, is a project on which we are working. The revetment was built in the 1950s as a parking lot, during an era when townpeople turned their backs on the river, dumped their garbage in it.

Today, everyone in Mount Vernon has an opinion about the revetment. There are people who would like to reclaim that space. There are people who say it should be torn down. There are people who think it is one of the most sacred of places in the community, and should remain totally parking.

What we've proposed is a people and car garden that takes in the entire revetment. Rather than separating the automobile from the pedestrian space, the pedestrian actually becomes a part of the parking lot. Granted, we have given the pedestrian almost all the space next to the river for strolling, but we have acknowledged that working on the automobile or simply sitting in the car and viewing the river also is important. That is what is different: turning the idea of a parking lot into a garden. We are acknowledging the automobile as an important part of recreation by putting those two functions, which are normally segregated, together.

Another juxtaposition: every project on which we are working, every open space project, is home. The people who live there do not become homeless, in fact, until we start working. We found a home while working in California's Jackson State Forest, almost an archetypical home. There was a "Home, Sweet Home" sign and a clothes line. It was very ecological; the clothes line was in a sunny spot. There was a fire pit and a living room. It was a three-bedroom home, tents separated by trees for





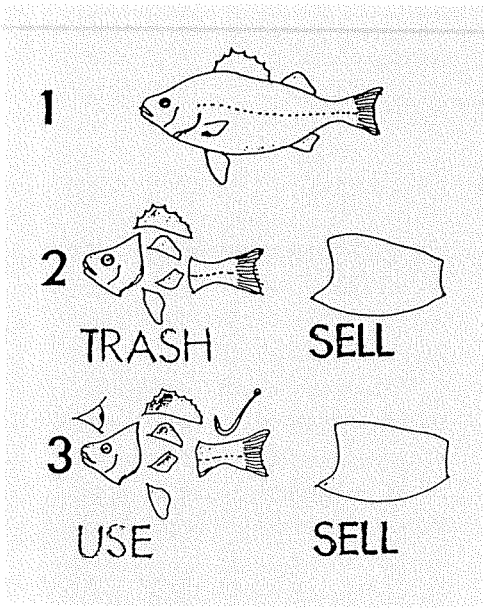
One of the most troubling juxtapositions is the use of public open space as home for the homeless. In central cities, people sleeping over hot air vents are an all too familiar sight. Amidst the redwood trees of California's Jackson State Forest, homeless set up housekeeping out of broken vehicles and define territories that include room delineations and recreation space.

privacy. There was an open garage area for working on vehicles. This home was complete with a dog pen, a mother, and a whole litter of baby pups.

What does the designer do about this? In Jackson State Forest we refused to say that our research suggested that recreation visitors were put off by the homeless living there. The people who manage the forest were trying to reduce the length of stay allowed there, and we refused to write a letter saying that our research suggested that the recreation experience was diminished by the presence of the homeless. That's not very much. But it points to the difficulty that we have, as designers, in addressing this kind of problem.

In Los Angeles, when we started designing the 133-acre open space where Runyon Canyon comes down to Hollywood Boulevard, we found immediately the primary users were people who lived there. We talked to each person who lived there and came to understand the differences in their motivations. Some considered themselves permanent residents and were not going to leave under any circumstances, if allowed to stay. Two people were passing through, pimping and prostituting.

One thing designers can do in these kinds of situations is simply not to design anything in those areas in which people are living. The transition chaparral in Runyon Canyon happens to be a place where some people live, so we are not proposing anything there. My partner, Marcia McNally, disagrees about whether this policy of benign neglect will work. I am arguing it is likely that people will continue to live there, even after the open space is developed. Marcia argues our intervention will make it impossible for people to continue to live there, even though there will be some places left undeveloped.



In poor communities, the landscape architect is often called on to discover previously unrecognized environmental resources, which can be used to benefit the poorest citizens by providing new jobs or diversifying a stagnant economy. The task is to turn such metaphorical fish heads and tails into something as valuable as filets.

Landscape as an Economic Resource

Whatever the resources are in any poor community, the most obvious marketable ones have already been taken. Often they are being exploited by companies from outside the community, which remove the resource without concern for the community or the landscape itself.

When doing community development work, then, the goal is to find things that seem to be worthless and make them into something that benefits the people in the community where it is needed. This is what I mean by fish heads—when all the filets, the most obvious resources, are taken, the role of the landscape architect is to find the fish heads and tails and turn them into some profit for the community. Half the work that is being done in our office is helping communities find fish heads and tails in the landscape.

The "fish head" terminology comes from a project we did in Astoria, Oregon, some years ago, in which we observed the place at which visitors most frequently stopped was where the fish heads and tails and guts came blasting out of a processing plant. We literally centered our design around the fish heads. There is a linear park along the railroad tracks connecting the Maritime Museum and the Port of Astoria, two major attractions in their own right. On this park, however, is the central attraction: the backs of the fish processing plants, where visitors get a sense of the real work done at the docks.

Now, people who work in those industries can't imagine why other people would want to see those things. So there is always a roar of laughter when we say that people who work on the thirtieth floor of a high rise building in San Francisco or Seattle, for whom work is pushing paper, going to the Xerox machine, talking on the phone, or faxing, are really starved to see real work. And they will pay.

Another project typical of finding an unused resource is one I started a long time ago in Raleigh, North Carolina, in a neighborhood that was scheduled for urban renewal clearance. In this case the fish head was a huge amount of open space in the interior of each block, space that had largely been abandoned.

We said, "You don't have to do urban renewal clearance. In that inner block you can build new housing on new streets. The people who you were going to clear can actually move into those new units. You can tear down the old units at that point, if you have to, or you can rehabilitate them." The whole idea of urban renewal was demolished by a fish head, the simple recognition that there was open space that could be used for the community's benefit, to temporarily relocate people while new housing was built on each block.

Reconnection to Nature and Community

We have clients on the other side of the class line, people like us, who want to be connected to natural processes in the worst kind of way.

What typifies our work in Runyon Canyon is the creation of wild nature in the city. Our plan called for making an urban wilderness in Hollywood by re-establishing more than a hundred acres of native chaparral. The primary problem was applying appropriate technology to revegetation and flood control.

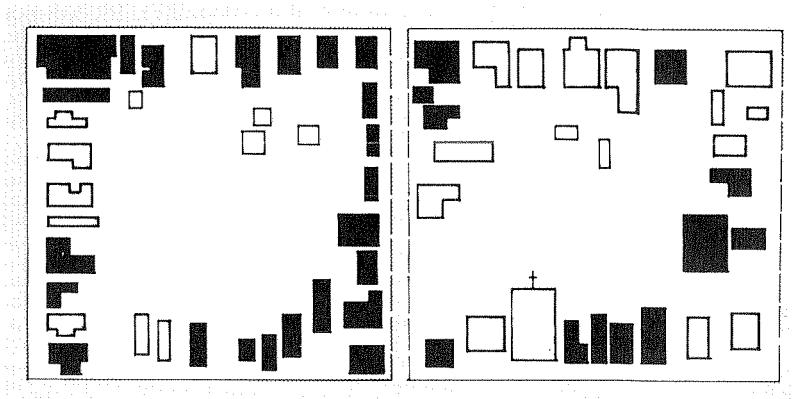
The plan for phased block-by-block street rearrangement and housing infill capitalized on the unused interior open spaces and prevented urban renewal clearance of the black Chavis Heights neighborhood. The plan ultimately led to the rehabilitation of substandard housing as well as renewed sense of pride among the residents.

Existing Block Conditions

Existing deteriorated structures

Existing repairable structures

Existing right-of-way



Phase 1
Block Rehabilitation

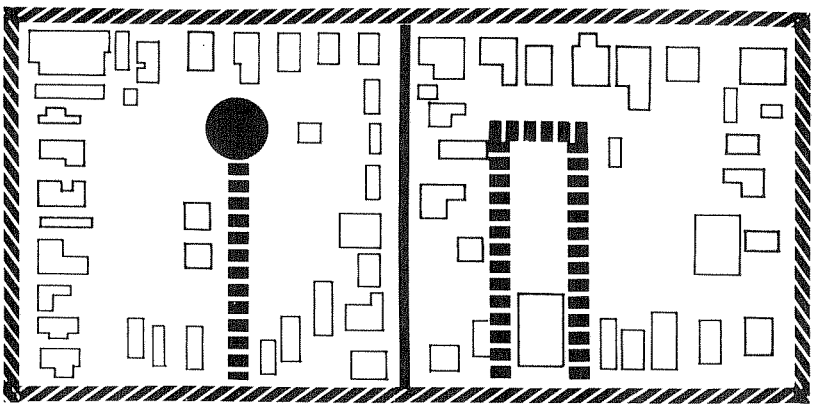
Existing right-of-way

New right-of-way

Abandoned right-of-way

Repairable structures to remain

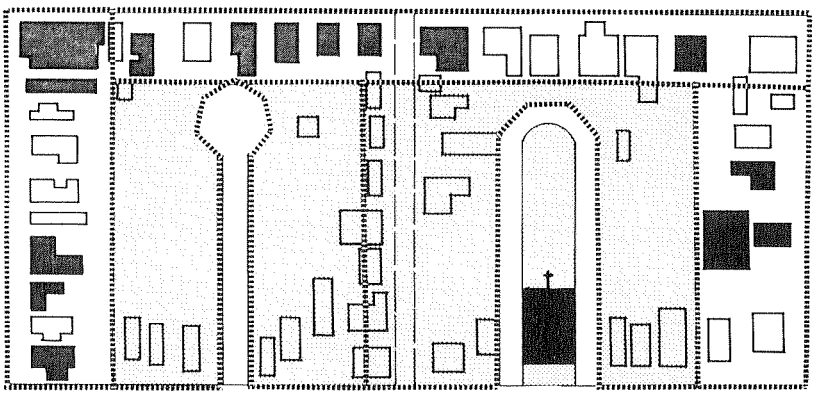
Turning circle



Phase 2
Block Rehabilitation

New streets built in block interiors.
New houses constructed in gray areas,
and sold to residents.

Houses to be replaced

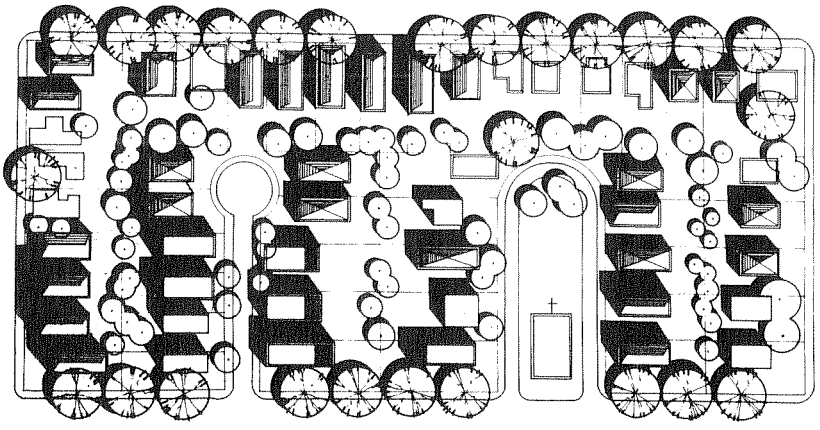


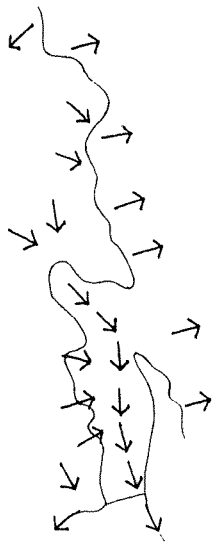
Phase 3
Block Rehabilitation

New structures

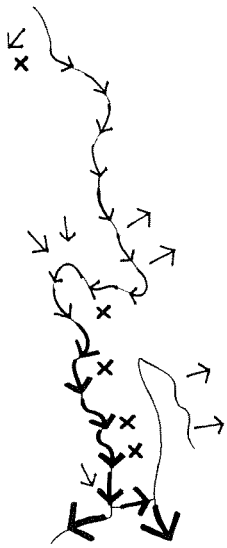
Rehabilitated structures moved

Rehabilitated structures

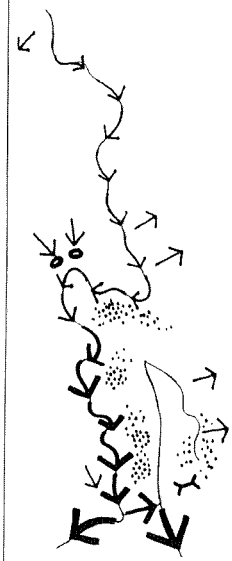




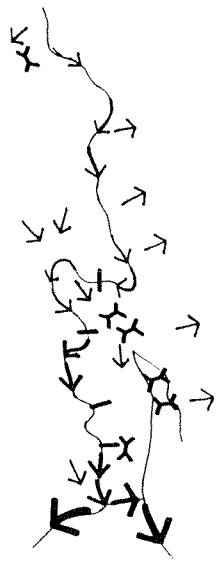
1900
No road; no development; water flows evenly distributed in natural watersheds.



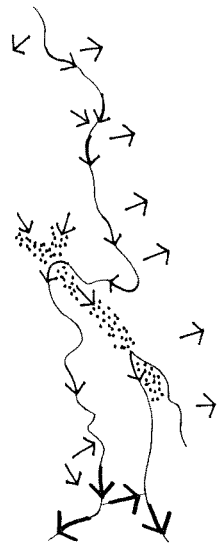
1985
Runyon Canyon Road channels water: preventing natural flow; exacerbating peak flow damage; serious gully, flood, and mud damage; R & P does emergency maintenance.



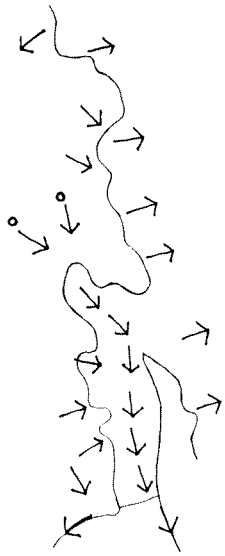
1986
Fill gullies; replant eroded areas; install guzzlers for wildlife; build parking lot as series of check dams.



1988
Install downdrains to return 30% of water to original subwatershed; build small check dams to control peak flows.



1989
Replant riparian vegetation along restored valley; return 60% of water to original subwatershed; discontinue irrigation of first-year plantings.



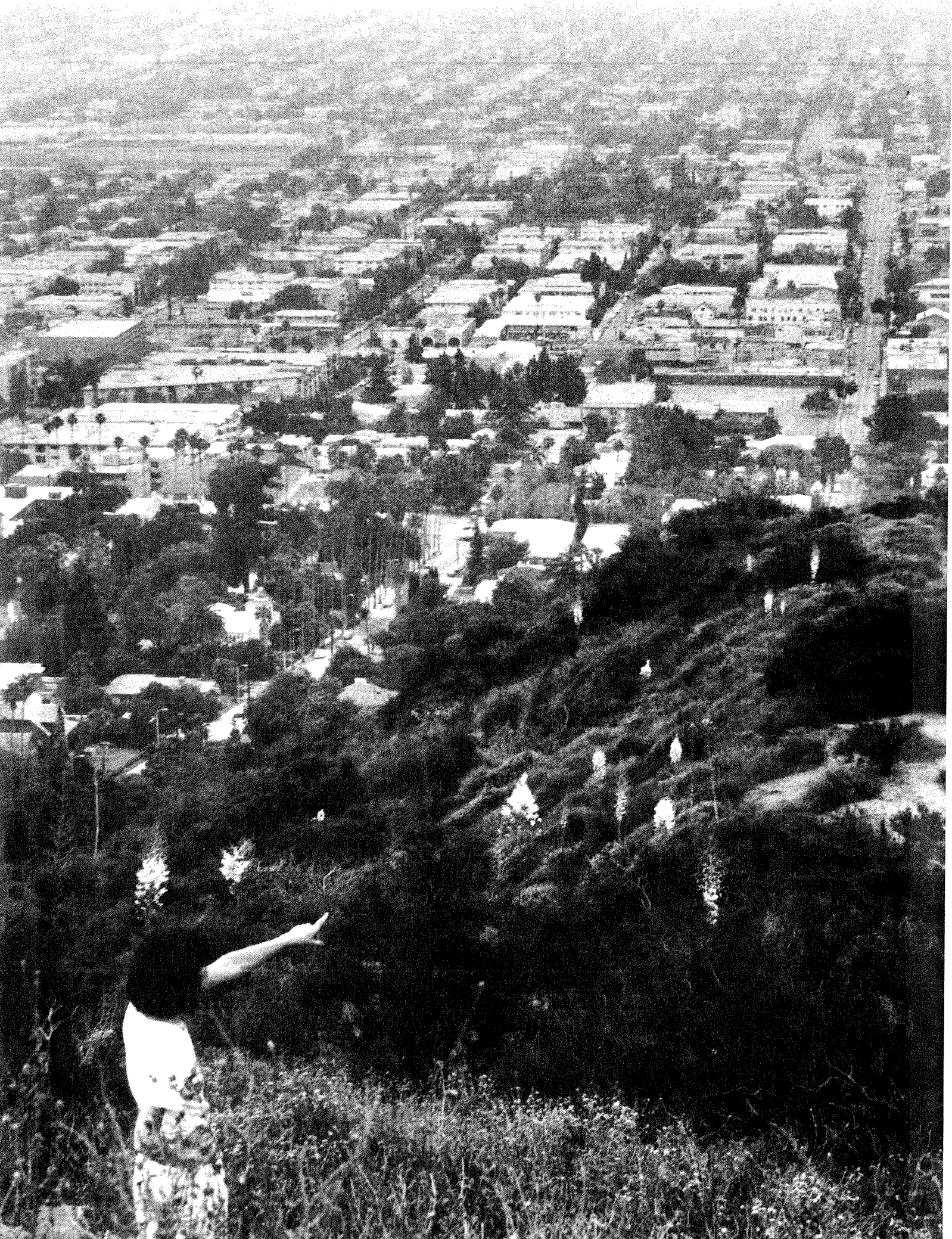
1992
Return 90% of water to original subwatershed; possibly restore springs.

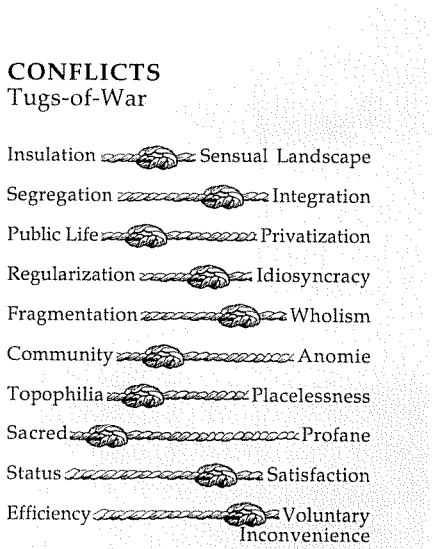
For years, citizens fought the developers who wanted to bulldoze the canyon. The city got the land and decided it had to bulldoze the canyon to create a huge dam so there wouldn't be flooding downstream. The alternative, then, that we had to come up with was: How can you manage water so it won't destroy homes down the hill, manage fire so it won't be a threat to people, and manage mud slides so they won't kill people? People had been opposed to the wilderness because of these inconveniences and life-threatening situations. Our plan showed them how to use simple check dams, labor intensive revegetation, and erosion repair to create an urban wilderness.

Another type of reconnection comes with saying, in some dramatic way, "Hey, look at what you've done, and let's think about how it can be done differently." One of the opportunities in Runyon Canyon was juxtaposing the wilderness with the city below. So we designed a path that keeps giving you the feeling that you are about to fall off it into the city. With each turn that feeling is dramatized. In the botanical art garden we designed a water feature in which the user controls the flow, heightening the awareness of the need for water conservation.

Another thing we realized is people want us to teach them about natural processes, and they want to re-establish a sense of community. In Runyon Canyon, people said at the end of the planning process,"The best thing about this is that we learned who our neighbors are." That's a rather terrible condemnation of the state of our society. In a sense it is also a hopeful thing that designers, by going through the design process, can actually play a role in re-establishing community.

Runyon Canyon, Los Angeles. In order to make residents more aware of the landscape that naturally surrounds them, paths were designed to lead the walker to precipes. The urban wilderness and the city are dramatically juxtaposed.





Society seems particularly conflicted about the landscape today, on the one hand becoming more insulated from it than ever before, on the other hand wanting its sensual pleasures. How the landscape designer resolves this and other value "tugs-of-war" is critical to the future relationship between people and nature.

Topophilia

Let me finish with a reconnection to the extreme: topophilia, our desire to be connected to places in an emotional; loving way, to make some very sacred places. In Manteo, North Carolina, we mapped the sacred structure—places people were unwilling to see changed in order to receive economic benefits for the community—and used that to inspire a downtown revitalization plan. In our concept, the sacred places stayed and we fit other things around them: attractions, points of economic growth. The shipbuilding industry had been dead there and we re-established it. This became a major attraction, turning that community around.

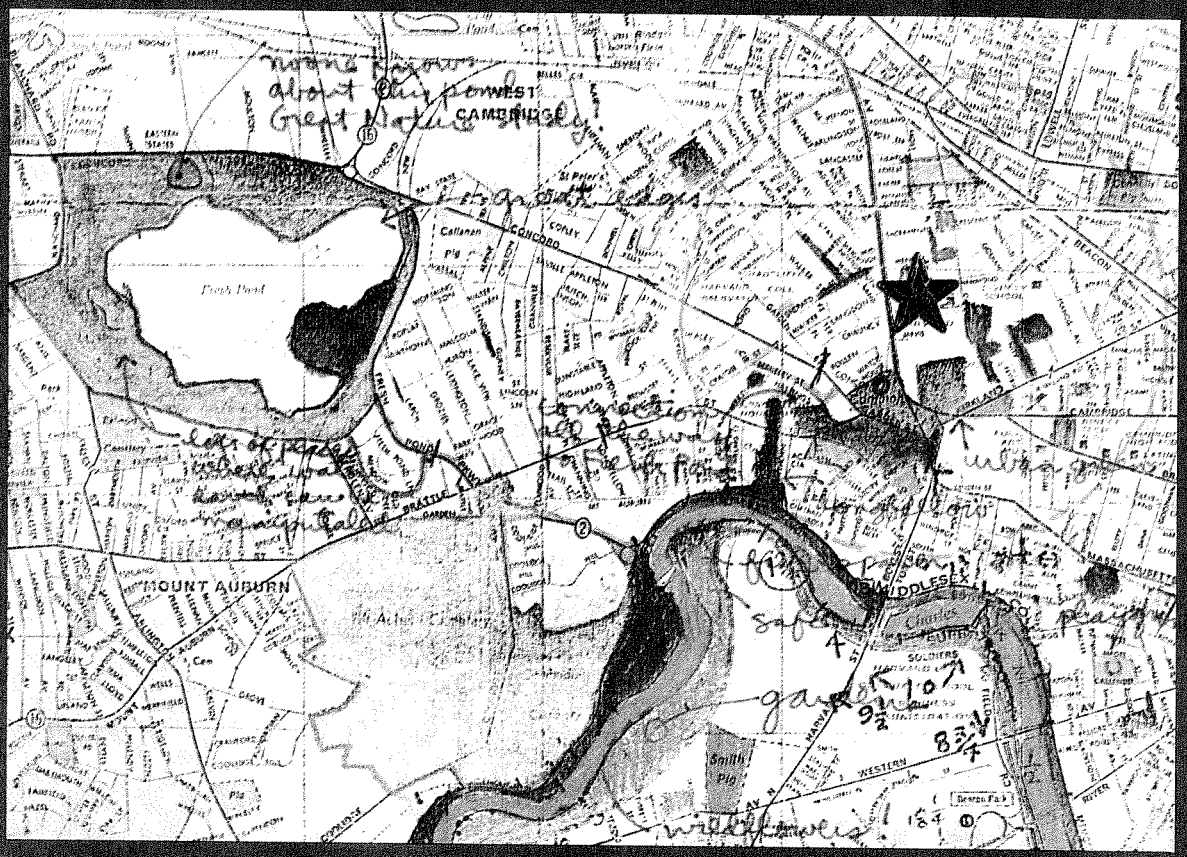
Users appear to be despairingly confused by conflicts between landscapes that are isolated and those that are sensual, landscapes that are fragmented and those that are holistic, and landscapes that are efficient and those that require voluntary inconvenience. What are designers to do? If the designer says something is beautiful, it is likely to go into the category of beauty and be preserved as something beautiful. If the designer says that something is ugly, it is likely to go into the category of the expendable and be expended.

Connecting Social Values to Landscapes We Love: A Hopeful Future

People express their values and tell us what they want when we engage them in a participatory process. When designing the Harvard Law Child Care Center some years ago, I surveyed the parents, who described what they wanted in perfect detail: a top-of-the-line child care center, like one that had just been built nearby. I was suspicious; every time the Harvard Law Child Care Center obtained extra money, it hired more staff. It never made physical improvements.

So I said, "Let me ask you again what kind of environment you would like to have at the center for your children. But I do not want to conduct a survey; I want you to tell me under hypnosis." The parents and the teachers did this, and gave us an entirely different set of answers. Rather than demanding a reproduction of the top-of-the-line center, they decided the first thing that had to be done was to plant a tree that was big enough for kids to climb on immediately. Then we identified all the natural remnants within a five- or ten-minute walk: riparian areas, streams with fish and frogs, creepy mud and sand to play in, and hideways to explore; all of the places to which staff could take children to play. We identified those, and they became the playground.

I close with this because it makes the point that designers can move beyond obvious, prevailing social values and help people express unspoken, unarticulated, or suppressed values—values they don't know they have. By doing this, design can transcend being pure decoration and help people reconnect with landscapes and natural processes they deeply value but from which they have become estranged. To the extent we can do this, we may present a future landscape that is much, much preferable to the one in which we live today.



Under hypnosis, staff and parents of the Harvard Law Child Care Center established an entirely different program for their facility than they had described through a survey. The result was a redesign that identified wild natural remnants, such as streams with fish and frogs, close enough to the center that children could use them as a playground.

Using Vacant Land to Reshape American Cities

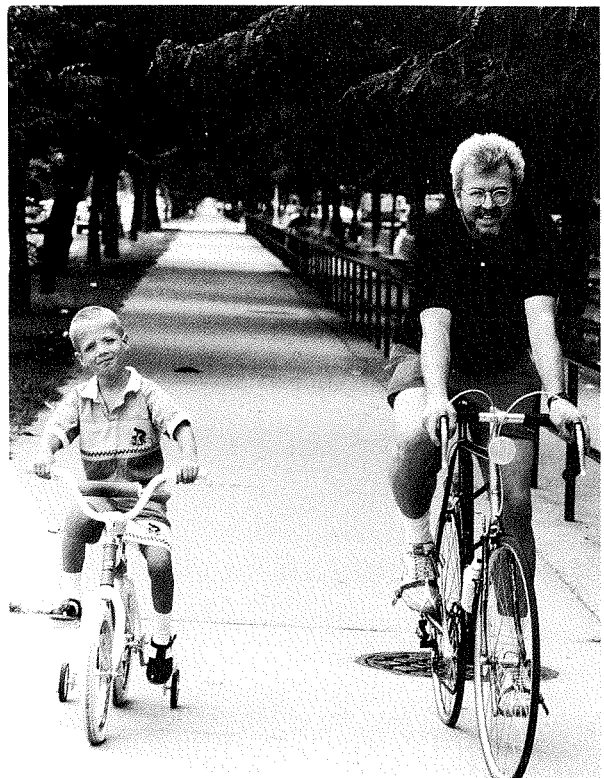
The revitalization of vacant land in cities is a new frontier for landscape architecture. It also is a new frontier for real estate developers, urban planners, municipal managers, and elected officials.

Most American cities have "filled their development envelope" and most will not be expanding their boundaries. However, urban renewal, changing land use patterns, and urban flight have created an incredible resource that provides a new opportunity for reshaping cities: vacant land.

At the turn of the next century there probably will be a new dynamic between cities and suburbs. Suburbanites are experiencing the same pressures that pushed them from cities: increased density, traffic congestion, crime, and air pollution. The resurgence of interest in many cities, gentrification, is evidence of this new dynamic.

Cities already are developed for greater density. Many have mass transit, sewers, water systems, hospitals, and schools that represent centuries of public investment. They generally are located on waterways, which allow for alternative forms of both transportation and energy generation.

But cities aren't as livable as the suburbs. One of the major differences is the amount of green, open space. Using vacant urban land to create a wide variety of open spaces would complement the redevelopment of many cities, reduce some of the pressure on surrounding metropolitan suburbs, and provide a more benign environment for urban residents. The open space system is a major organ of the city, affecting the desirability of housing, the health of residents, and the quality of water and air.



The Open Space System

What comprises an open space system?[1] In New York City, the open space system is parks and parkways—more than 26,000 acres—zoos, botanical gardens and community gardens, plazas and promenades, playgrounds and beaches. It is streets and sidewalks, vacant lots, sandlot baseball diamonds, and schoolyards.

And there is more: it is sports stadia and the grounds around housing projects, hospitals, and other institutions. It is all the back yards and front yards, terraces and rooftop gardens, the cemeteries, more than 500 miles of shoreline, the harbor islands, the natural areas that are still with us, and the dozens of rivers and streams that flow through and around the five boroughs.

In short, open space is all those thousands of outdoor places, designated and informal, where people congregate to relax, to exercise, and to restore themselves.

What makes open space so important? It is well known that active and passive recreation—jogging, ball playing, biking, tennis, and swimming; relaxing, sunbathing, hanging out with friends and family; quiet contemplation; and communion with nature—are important factors in reducing health care costs.

It is well known that the availability of parks and open space affects decisions that families and corporations make about where to locate. It is no coincidence that the most desirable address in New York City is Park Avenue. It is also well-known that great parks and open spaces draw tourists in droves, and that tourism is increasingly important to the economic health of New York and other American cities.

But it is not as well known that properly designed and maintained open spaces function as places where city residents can encounter people of different social, economic, and ethnic groups, and begin to see the common humanity in strangers around them.

Nor is it widely known that open space can save the city millions of dollars. For example, the capacity of open space to absorb storm water and provide natural drainage means that preserving a system of parks and natural streams can substitute for or supplement sewer systems. The urban forest cools city streets in the summer and acts as a windbreak in the winter, cutting energy consumption. Urban street trees and parks absorb glare, reduce noise pollution, and clean the air. A mature, one-acre stand of trees can filter 20 tons of particulate matter from the air each year. In New York City, there are more than 2.6 million trees.

The author and his son bicycle on the Brooklyn/ Queens Greenway. Photo by Misha Erwitt.

Working in a Partnership

To reap the benefits of an urban open space system we will have to forge new partnerships. This became apparent to New Yorkers in the late 1960s and the 1970s, when long-delayed urban renewal plans, followed by the fiscal crisis and widespread disinvestment in neighborhoods like the South Bronx, had devastating effects on open spaces and on people's lives. Many neighborhood parks were abandoned, maintenance in larger traditional parks was severely reduced, rubble-strewn vacant lots became commonplace, and street trees—unpruned, unwatered, and unfed—died by the thousands.

The impact of this neglect did more than decrease real estate values, create public health risks, and deprive young and old alike of recreational resources: it caused neighborhoods to lose hope, and even made the whole city, for a time, begin to assume that the only choice was to leave or to endure.

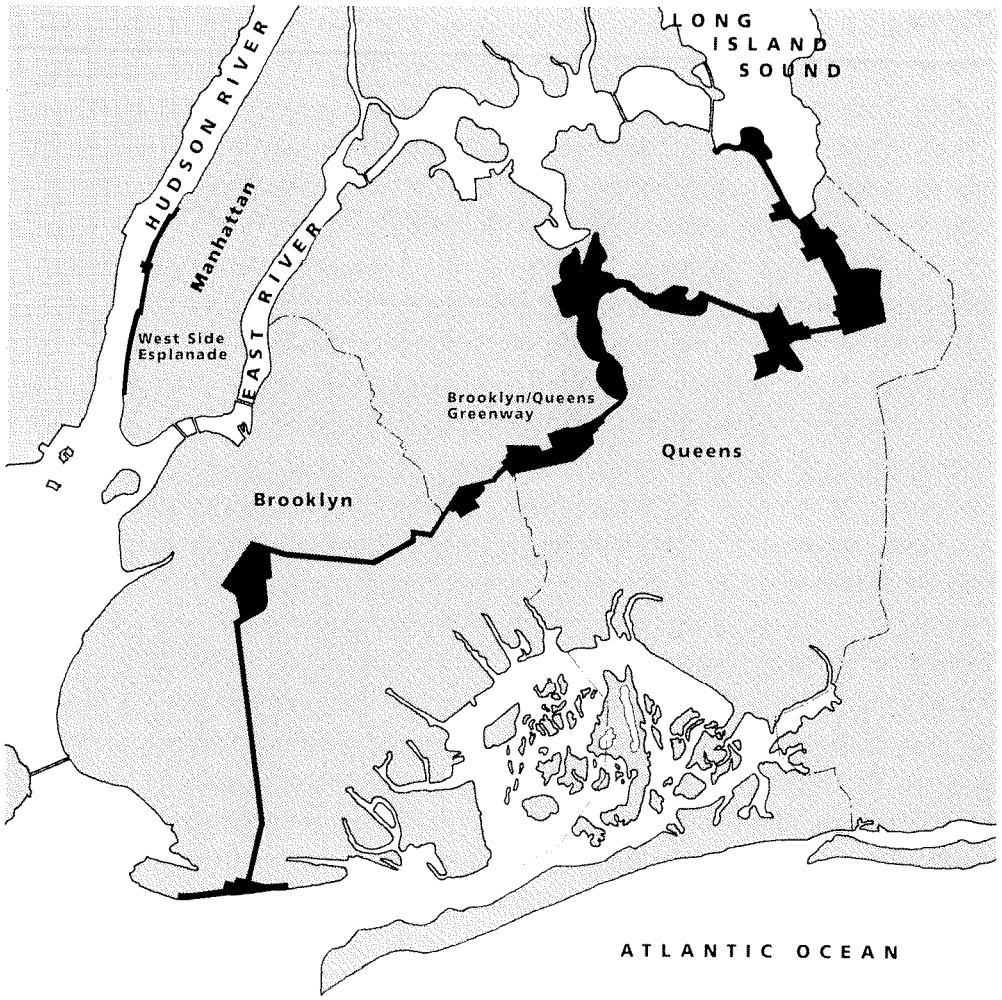
But the spirit of New Yorkers reasserted itself. Neighborhood residents—supported first by non-profit organizations, then by the city and federal programs—banded together to start clearing the junk from vacant lots and turning them into community gardens. In the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, and ornamentals, they rediscovered the ability to take control of, and pride in, their own neighborhoods.

New organizations began to clean and take care of abandoned parks and to replant street trees. Traditional park and garden groups helped local communities with organizing, fund raising, site planning, horticulture, construction, and land acquisition. With the generous support of foundations, corporations, and government; technical assistance and local community groups have shaped a citizens' support network and eased the impact of fiscal crisis on the city's open spaces.

Building the System

Twelve years were spent planning Westway, a highway that would have been built by dumping landfill in the Hudson River and tunnelling a new road through it, creating land for a park and commercial and residential development. The landfill, however, would have destroyed marine habitat, and environmental and neighborhood advocates filed lawsuits that stalled the project. The city and state, facing federal deadlines for trading Westway funds for mass transit funds, feared they would lose all the money and abandoned the project.

In 1986, Governor Mario Cuomo and Mayor Edward Koch established the West Side Task Force to recommend an alternative to Westway. This 22-member panel, led by Arthur Levitt, then chair of the American Stock Exchange, worked with business, civic, environmental, business, and neighborhood representatives. Within six months they reached consen-



The West Side Esplanade and Brooklyn/Queens Greenway.

sus and recommended a surface boulevard with a 60-acre, four-mile esplanade between the boulevard and the river. Cuomo and Koch accepted the recommendations but waited a year to proceed, and then only with the boulevard. Developers began to eye 150 acres of underwater property and piers along the river's edge.

More than 50 civic organizations joined together, arguing that the esplanade should be combined with the piers and underwater property, protecting the shore and giving New York a new world-class waterfront park. The governor and mayor established a panel to design the esplanade and determine the future of the underwater property. Recently, Cuomo suggested to Koch he would be willing to establish a scenic easement over portions of the underwater property to prevent development there.

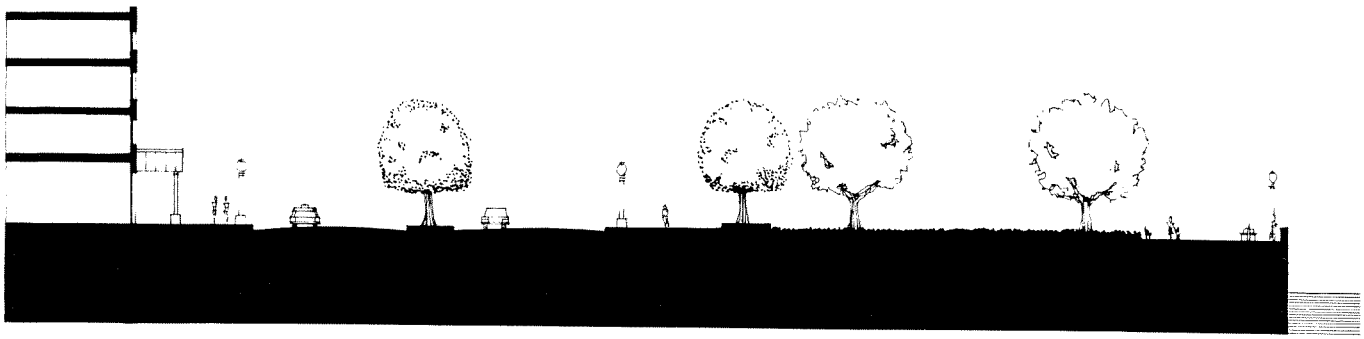
In Brooklyn and Queens a similar partnership has been instrumental in creating a new open space system. Three years ago the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition proposed the Brooklyn/Queens Greenway, a 40-mile bicycle and pedestrian path that would run from Coney Island to Fort Totten, connecting 13 major parks and a host of cultural facilities along the way. The idea is not new; rather, it continues the work Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux began a century ago when they built Eastern and Ocean Parkways, which extend from Brooklyn's Prospect Park into surrounding neighborhoods. Robert Moses expanded the concept when he created Flushing Meadow-Corona Park, Kissena Park, and the corridors connecting these two facilities to Cunningham Park. The Greenway would build on their visionary work, completing a chain of green from the Atlantic Ocean to Long Island Sound.

Support for the Greenway has been overwhelming. The city's parks and transportation departments have allocated a total of $10 million to implement the greenway, and last November Mayor Edward Koch officially opened the first ten miles, which connect Coney Island and Brighton Beach to Grand Army Plaza, on Prospect Park's northern edge. A New York *Daily News* editorial called it "the urban equivalent of the Appalachian Trail."

The Challenge for Landscape Architecture

Landscape architects are playing a role in this process of reclaiming vacant land and reshaping American cities. However, to strengthen their role, they must adapt to the realities of contemporary urban development. Function is as important as form. The client is everyone and the process can be as important as the product.

The design of the future is an interdisciplinary one. Professionals who understand the strengths and weakness of



Graphics by Suzi Marzuola.

other professions are most successful and useful. Yet, landscape architects, engineers, architects, and planners seldom interact in educational institutions.

My observation is that landscape architecture students are overworked and insular, seldom getting the time or the push from their institution to get out to reality and solve problems. Design is important, but without understanding economics, community dynamics, and the realities of substandard plant material, tardy contractors, and regulatory restrictions, the carefully prepared studio designs will never become reality.

Therefore, it might be useful if students could become involved in one municipal or non-profit project during the three years they are studying for their degrees. This might give them a more realistic sense of the constraints (financial, social and political) that influence design.

Another role for landscape architecture schools is to research the contributions that open space systems make to the viability of cities. Once we understand the value of the system, we must market it better. We must convince municipal managers, corporate executives, homeowners, and elected officials that open space is worth the investment. New York, for example, spends only 0.7 percent of its budget to manage the 13 percent of the city that is mapped as parks. The open space system must be packaged and sold, and kept high on the public and private sector agendas, if we are going to reshape cities.

Most landscape architects have not excelled at public participation, though the profession has improved in the last 15 years. Involving the public is a long and cumbersome process, but worth it. The final designs will work better, the local residents will understand the function of the landscape in their lives, and, if people are really involved in creating a landscape, they will protect the site from fire, vandals, and all other forces. Public participation is the insurance that what we create today will be there tomorrow.

Finally, we must approach urban open space as an interrelated system. The downtown plaza and traditional park, cemetery and schoolyard, vacant lot and playground, shoreline and city street are all part of an open space system. If this system were expanded and nurtured by a partnership of government, business, and community, then we could truly reshape American cities.

Cross sections of the West Side Esplanade. Photo courtesy of the Environmental Simulation Laboratory, University of California, Berkeley.

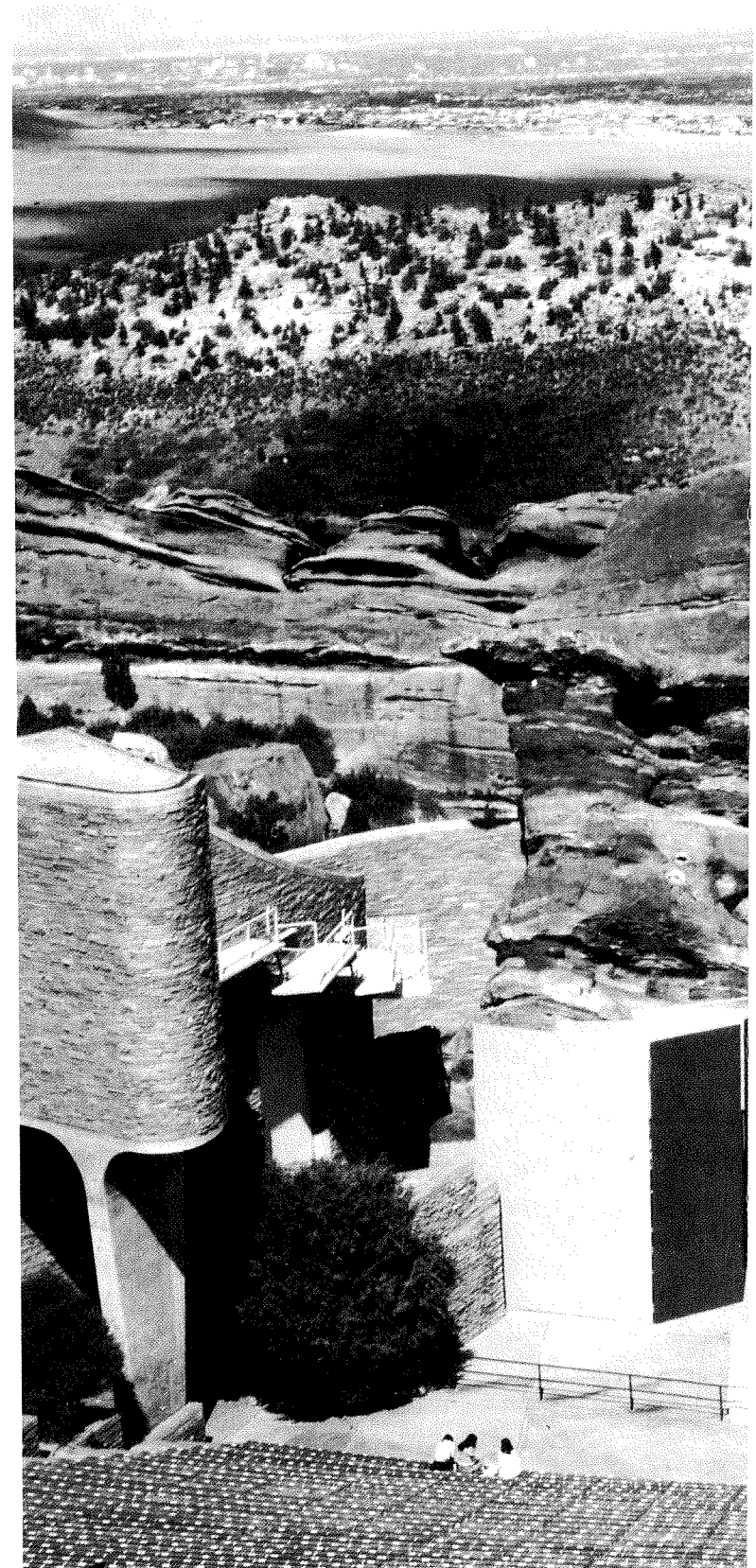
Note

1. This description is taken from the Mayor's Open Space Task Force report Open Space and the Future of New York, which the author helped draft in 1987.

The city has been compared to a poem, a sculpture, a machine. But the city is more than a text, and more than an artistic or technological artifact. It is a place where natural forces pulse and millions of people live—thinking, feeling, dreaming, doing. An aesthetic of urban design must therefore be rooted in the normal processes of nature and of living.

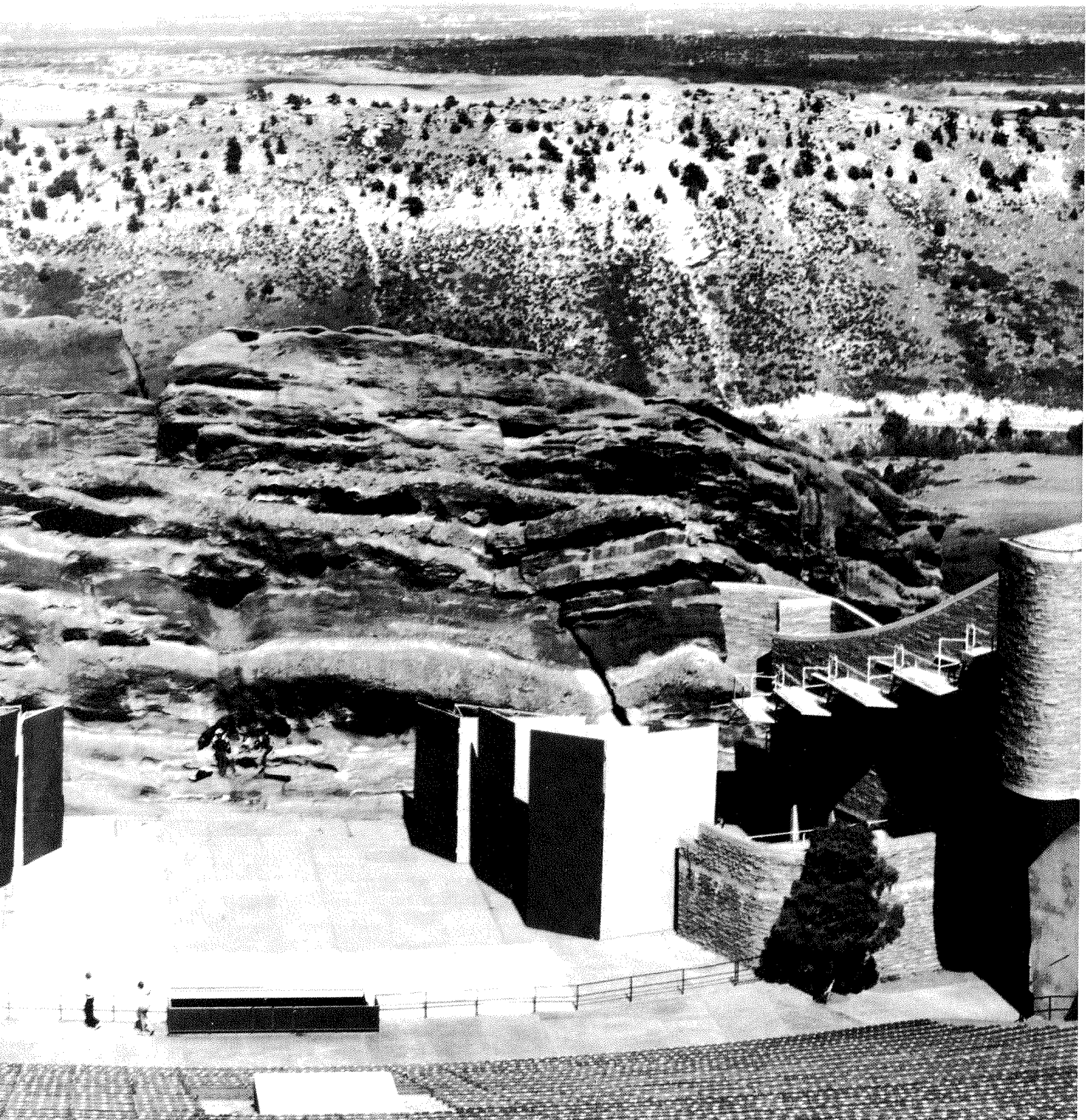
I want to describe the dimensions of such an aesthetic. This aesthetic encompasses both nature and culture; it embodies function, sensory perception, and symbolic meaning; and it embraces both the making of things and places and the sensing, using, and contemplating of them. This aesthetic is concerned equally with everyday things and with art: with small things, such as fountains, gardens, and buildings, and with large systems, such as those that transport people or carry wastes. This aesthetic celebrates motion and change, encompasses dynamic processes rather than static objects and scenes, and embraces multiple rather than singular visions. This is not a timeless aesthetic, but one that recognizes both the flow of passing time and the singularity of the moment in time, and one that demands both continuity and revolution.

Urban form evolves in time, in predictable and unpredictable ways, the result of complex, overlapping, and interweaving dialogues. These dialogues are all present and ongoing; some are sensed intuitively; others are clearly legible. Together, they comprise the context of a place and all those who dwell within it. This idea of dialogue, with its embodiment of time, purpose, communication, and response, is central to this aesthetic.



THE POETICS OF CITY AND NATURE:

Toward a New Aesthetic for Urban Design



Concomitant with the need for continuity in the urban landscape is the need for revolution. Despite certain constants of nature and human nature, we live in a world unimaginable to societies of the past. Our perceptions of nature, the quality of its order, and the nature of time and space are changing, as is our culture, provoking the reassessment of old forms and demanding new ones. The vocabulary of forms—buildings, streets, and parks—that are often deferred to as precedents not only reflects universal needs and values, but also represents a response to cultural processes and values of the time in which those forms were created. Some of these patterns and forms still express contemporary purposes and values, but they are abstractions. What are the forms that express contemporary cosmology, that speak to us in an age in which photographs of atomic particles and of galaxies are commonplace, in which time and space are not fixed, but relative, and in which we are less certain of our place in the universe than we once were? Conceiving of new forms that capture the knowledge, beliefs, purposes, and values of contemporary society demands that we return to the original source of inspiration, be it nature or culture, rather than the quotation or transformation of abstractions of the past.

Previous page:
Set in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Red Rocks Amphitheater affords a view out across the Great Plains and the City of Denver. Photo by Anne Whiston Spirn.

Time, Change, and Rhythm

"For the artist," observed Paul Klee, "dialogue with nature remains a *conditio sine qua non*. The artist is a man, himself nature and part of nature in natural space."[1] Before humans built towns and cities, our habitat was ordered primarily by nature's processes. The most intimate rhythms of the human body are still conditioned by the natural world outside ourselves: the daily path of the sun, alternating light with dark; the monthly phases of the moon, tugging the tides; and the annual passage of the seasons.

In contrast to the repetitive predictability of daily and seasonal change is the immensity of the geological time scale. From a view of the world that measured the age of the earth in human generations, we have come to calculate the earth's age in terms of thousands of millions of years and have developed theories of the universe that dwarf the age of the earth itself. The human life span now seems but a blip, and the earth but a small speck in the universe.

The perception of time and change is essential to developing a sense of who we are, where we have come from, and where we are going, as individuals, societies, and species. Design that fosters and intensifies the experience of temporal and spatial scales facilitates both a reflection upon personal change and identity and a sense of unity with a larger whole. Design that juxtaposes and contrasts nature's order and human order prompts contemplation of what it means to be human. Design that resonates with a place's natural and cultural rhythms, that echoes, amplifies, clarifies, or extends them, contributes to a sense of rootedness in space and time.

Process, Pattern, and Form

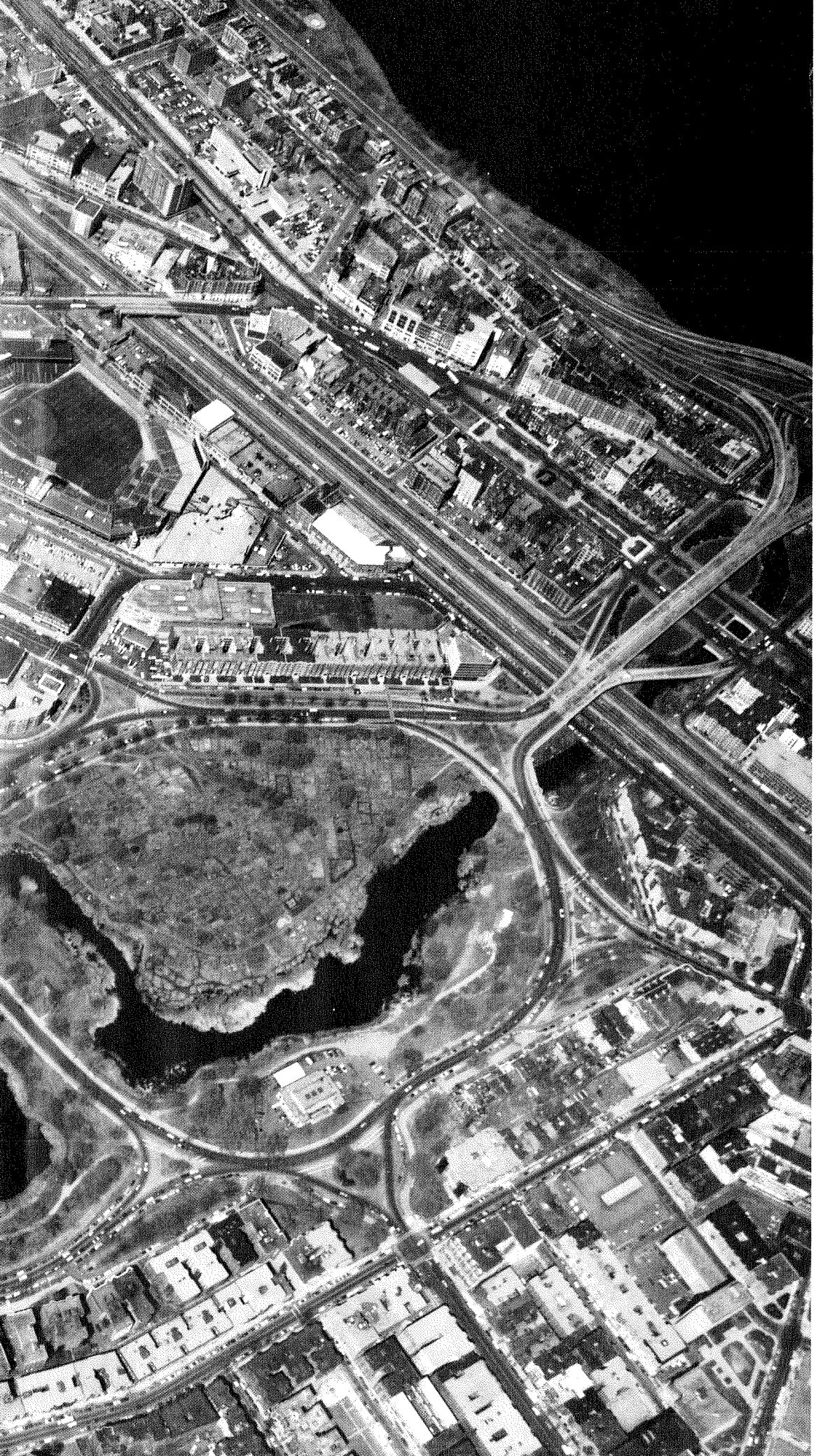
Great, upright, red rocks, thrust from the earth, rising hundreds of feet, strike the boundary between mountain and plain along the Front Range of the Rockies. Red Rocks Amphitheater is set in these foothills, its flat stage dwarfed by the red slabs that frame it and the panoramic view out across the city of Denver, Colorado and the Great Plains. The straight lines of the terraced seats, cut from sandstone to fit the human body, and the tight curve of the road, cut to fit the turning car, seem fragile next to the rocks' awesome scale and magnificent geometry.

These red slabs at Red Rocks Amphitheater are the remnants of rock layers that once arched high over the Rockies.
Photo by Anne Whiston Spirn.

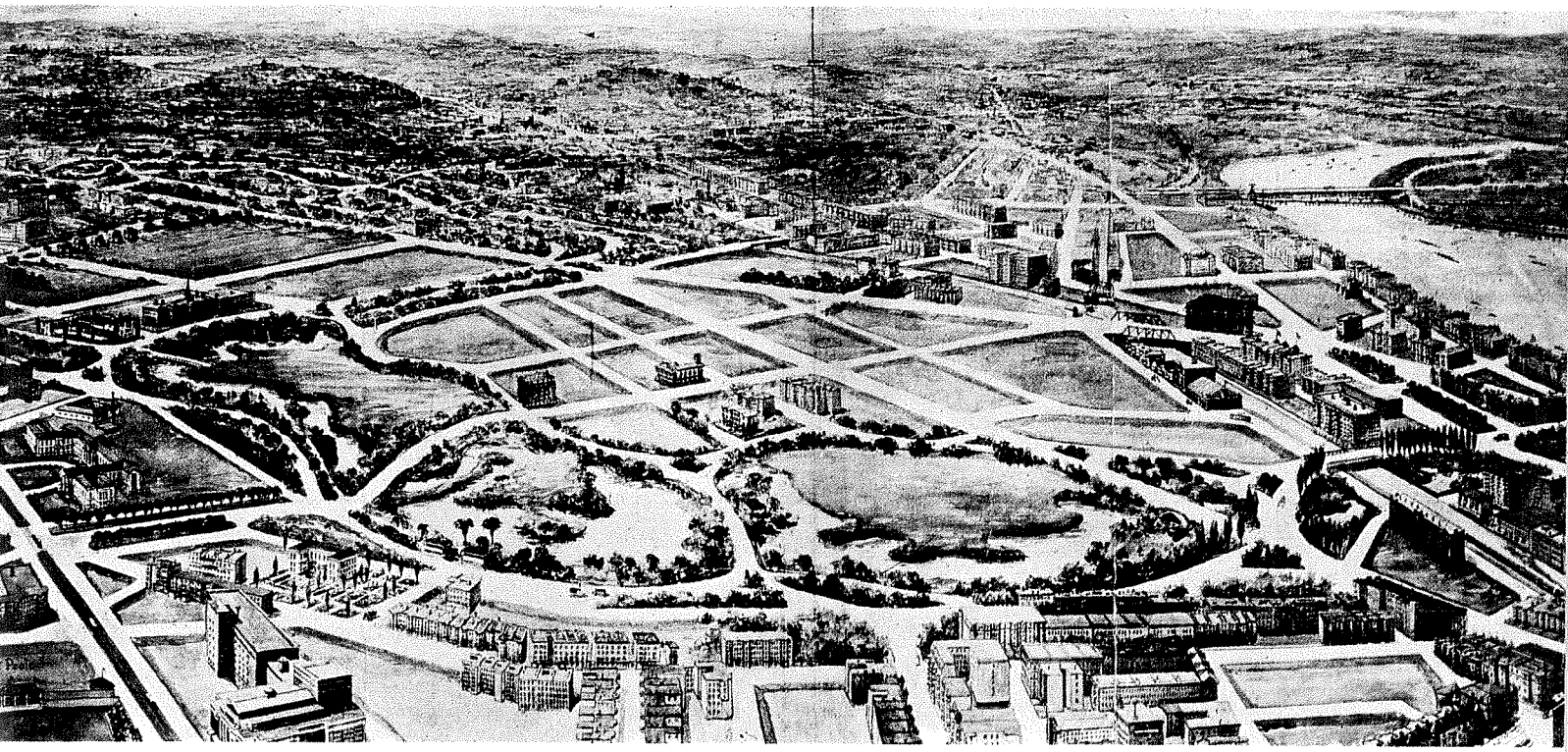
Denver is a city of high plains. Nestled up against these foothills, it rests on sediments many hundreds of feet deep, their fine grains eroded from the slopes of ancient mountains that once rested atop the Rockies, their peaks high above the existing mountains. The red slabs are the ruined roots of those ancient mountain peaks, remnants of rock layers that once arched high over the Rockies we know today. As the eye follows the angle of their thrust and completes that arc, one is transported millions of years into the past. This is the context of Denver, a context in space and time created by the enduring rhythm of nature's processes and recorded in patterns in the land. The amphitheater affords not only a view of the city, but also a prospect for reflecting upon time, change, and the place of man and city in nature.

When we neglect natural processes in city design, we not only risk the intensification of natural hazards and the degradation of natural resources, but also forfeit a sense of connection to a larger whole beyond ourselves. In contrast, places such as Red Rocks Amphitheater provoke a vivid experience of natural processes that permits us to extend our imagination beyond the limits of human memory into the reaches of geological and astronomical time and to traverse space from the microscopic to the cosmic. However permanent rock may seem, it is ultimately worn smooth by water and reduced finally to dust. The power of a raindrop, multiplied by the trillions over thousands and millions of years, has eroded mountains into plains. The pattern of lines etched by the water in the sand of a beach echos the pattern engraved on the earth by rivers over time.

These are the patterns that connect. They connect us to scales of space and time beyond our grasp; they connect our bodies and minds to the pulse of the natural world outside our skin. The branching riverbed cut by flowing water and the branching tree within which the



Aereal view of Boston's Fens and the surrounding city. Photo by Alex S. MacLean/ Landslides.



Aereal view of Boston's Fens, ca. 1925. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted Historic Site.

sap rises are patterns that mirror the branching arteries and veins through which our blood courses.

Patterns formed by nature's processes and their symmetry across scales have long been appreciated by close observers of the natural world. Recent developments in science afford new insights into the geometry of form generated by dynamic processes, be they natural or cultural, and point to new directions for design.

The forms of mountain ranges, riverbanks, sand dunes, trees, and snow crystals, are poised, jelled, at a moment in time, the physical embodiment of dynamic processes. Their beauty consists of a peculiar combination of order and disorder, harmoniously arranged, and the fact that their forms are at equilibrium, at any given moment, with the processes that produced them. Such forms and the phenomenon of their symmetry across scales of time and space, have recently been described by a new geometry, "fractal" geometry, which one of its originators, Benoit Mandelbrot calls "the geometry of nature"—"pimply," "pocky," "tortuous," and "intertwined."[2] A sensibility steeped in classical geometry perceives these forms as too complex to descibe. However, as fractals, such patterns can be described with simplicity, the result of repetitive processes, such as bifurcation and development. The variety of forms that stem from the same process is the result of response to differing conditions of context, or to the interaction with other processes.

Strange and wonderful forms, mirroring those of nature, have been created by repeating a single computer program. Early in the process, the resulting form, as seen on the computer screen appears chaotic; gradually an order unfolds. Such experiments are the subject of a new field, coined Chaos by its pioneers, who feel that they are defining a new paradigm. Their subjects are diverse, their objective is to identify the underlying order in seemingly ran-

dom fluctuations. Many of those working in field have expressed their aesthetic attraction to the mathematics of fractal geometry in contrast to what they term the "Euclidean sensibility."

This is a geometry foreign to that of Euclid, with its lines and planes, circles and spheres, triangles and cones. Euclidean geometry is an abstraction of reality; its beauty lies in smooth, clean, ideal shapes. It is a geometry based on the belief that rest, not motion, is the natural state; it describes three-dimensional space but neglects time.

That does not mean that we should avoid using Euclidean geometry in the design of landscapes. Indeed, such use may heighten our perception of the natural forms of rivers and trees and the processes that produce them, especially when it is employed as a visual counterpoint that both expresses and contrasts with those forms.

In Dinan, France, a monumental arc of poplars takes its inspiration from the sweeping meander of the River Rance, smoothing out the irregularities of the river bank. The arc represents the idea of that sweep. Through the abstraction and echo of the horizontal form in the vertical dimension, in what is clearly a line inscribed by humans on the landscape, the experience of the river's meander is intensified. Though set in a tight, evenly-spaced row along the banks of the river, the individual trees assert their own quirky growth, which is seen more clearly in contrast to the regularity of their placement.

The interplay of different processes is also a subject of current research on "chaos." Computer drawings illustrate the patterns that result when several rhythms, such as radio frequencies or planetary orbits, come together. Perhaps this is the contemporary version of the "music of the spheres." They resemble a topographic contour map, prompting the realization that landform results from a similar interplay among multiple forces and processes, including gravity, water flow, and weather. Cultural processes also engage natural processes on the land; the rhythms of food production and transportation, for example, interact with the flow of wind and water to mold a landscape. The patterns that result vary in response to the specific context of natural environment, culture, and the idiosyncrasies of individuals.

It is nature and culture together, as interacting processes, that render a place particular. Natural processes operating over time give rise to the initial form of the land and comprise the base rhythm to which the cultural processes respond, introducing new and changing themes, weaving an intricate pattern, punctuated here and there by high points of nature and art. Every urban landscape is a symphony of complex harmonies, which, although they can be savored at any given moment, evolve continually in time, in both predictable and unpredictable ways, in response natural processes and changing human purposes. It is a symphony in which all the dwellers of the city are composers and players.

Making, Caring, Thinking, Dwelling

The process of dwelling, an irreducible fact of every culture, is an aesthetic act, entailing being and doing, a correspondence between nature and culture. Through cultivation and construction, individuals and societies forge a place within nature that reflects their own identities—their needs, values, and dreams. Making and caring for a place, as well as contemplating these labors and their meanings, comprise the aesthetic experience of dwelling.

This concept, as explored by the philosopher Heidegger, has important implications for designers and planners of human settlements. A major issue for designers is how to relinquish control

(whether to enable others to express themselves or to permit nature's processes to take their course) while still maintaining an aesthetically pleasing order. The pleasing quality of the allotment gardens or community gardens that are popular in both European and North American cities depends upon a gridded framework of plots. Each garden plot is a whole in itself, an improvisation on similar themes by different individuals. Yet all are part of a whole unified by materials, structure, and the process of cultivation.

In Granada, Spain, allotment gardens lie within the Alhambra and Generalife. The gardens rest within a highly organized framework of walls and terraces, and enliven the scene rather than detract from it. They complement the formal gardens and courtyards, where vegetables and nut and fruit trees are planted among flowers and vines. There is no arbitrary separation in this Moorish garden between ornamental and productive, between pleasurable and pragmatic, between sacred and secular.

It is possible to create urban landscapes that capture a sense of complexity and underlying order, that express a connection to the natural and cultural history of the place, and that are adaptable to meet changing needs. The solution lies in an understanding of the processes that underlie these patterns, and there are some principles that can be derived for urban design: establish a framework that lends overall structure—not an arbitrary framework, but one congruent with the "deep" structure of a place, define a vocabulary of forms that expresses natural and cultural processes, then encourage a symphony of variations in response to the conditions of a particular locale and the needs of specific people. The result should be a dynamic, coherent whole that can contine to evolve to meet changing needs and desires and that also connects the present with the past.

The Fens, in Boston, is such a place. As originally conceived and constructed in the 1880s and '90s, the Fens and its extension in the Riverway were innovative models for public open space that integrated engineering, economics, and aesthetics. The Fens and the Riverway created an integrated system of park, parkway, storm drain, flood detention basin, and streetcar line that formed the skeleton for the growth of adjacent neighborhoods.

Frederick Law Olmsted and his partners designed the Fens as a salt water marsh that would function as a flood control reservoir and that would be a counterpoint to the surrounding city. This marsh was human construct dug out of polluted mudflats, but it was designed to appear like a natural salt marsh around which the city had happened to grow. Time and change, process and purpose are expressed by its shape—a bowl with an irregular edge—and the pattern of plants—bands of grasses and shrubs variably tolerant of fluctuating water levels; even when riverflow was low, its form recalled that it was designed to receive.

Olmsted's imitation of nature represents a divergence from the then prevailing pastoral and formal styles, both of which were domesticated landscapes and abstractions of nature. The Fens and the Riverway, in their time, represented a new aesthetic for the urban landscape. Juxtaposed with the urban districts which grew up around them, of sufficient scale to hold their own against the large buildings at their edge, and recalling the original condition of the land prior to colonial settlement, they initiated a powerful and poetic dialogue. Imitation of nature was, in this case, a successful design strategy. Today, one must know their history to fully appreciate them as a "designed" rather than

"natural" landscape. Olmsted's contemporaries, however, knew full well they were built, not preserved.

Function, Feeling, and Meaning

Just as an individual gains self-knowledge from an ability to perceive his or her own life in relation to the past, so does a city gain identity when the shared values of its residents, both past and present, are clearly embodied in urban form. The design for the Fens and the Riverway were not produced overnight, nor did they spring from the mind of a single genius. They were the culmination of public dialogue about the future shape of Boston that extended from 1860 to 1890. This dialogue consisted of published proposals by private citizens and of debates at public hearings, including one meeting in 1876 that the organizers called "Parks for the People." This sustained public dialogue not only produced ideas that were later incorporated in Olmsted's design, but also generated the support necessary to implement these ambitious projects.

Urban form that exploits and celebrates natural and cultural processes and the structure they create provides a framework within which the city can unfold, one that also reveals and intensifies the natural and cultural rhythms and patterns of the place. The overlay and interplay of natural and cultural processes can be employed consciously in urban design (whether in harmony or calculated discord), to fuse a connection between feeling, utility, and meaning. When the form of the city represents and reveals overlapping natural and cultural processes, the congruence of these processes adds layers of meaning, both functional and symbolic, thereby amplifying the aesthetic experience that each might engender alone.

Water and its use for human purposes have great potential to forge emotional, functional, and cognitive links between man and nature in the city. There is a patio in the Alhambra that is an economical, elegant, and powerful statement about the functions, meanings, and sensuous qualities of water. The sound of water spilling from a fountain is amplified by the surrounding walls. The water collects in puddles on the stone floor and, as it evaporates, cools the air. Small, river-worn pebbles, each embodying the action of water over time, are set in a tightly organized, geometric pattern. Elongated black stones are alternately ground and stars. The stones are set in packed earth that permits water to seep beneath them and irrigate cedar trees planted at each corner of the courtyard. The whole forms a deep congruence between sensual perception, iconography, and function. "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again." This line from Ecclesiastes and the Patio de la Reja are among the most concise and poetic descriptions of the hydrologic cycle.

Nature and its order, processes, and forms are an important source of inspiration for Lawrence Halprin. He makes a distinction, however, between mimesis and abstraction, between "copying nature's pictures" and "using her tools of composition."[3] Halprin's notebooks contain many studies of water movement around rocks and of the planes and fracture lines, ledges, and talus of rocky slopes.[4] In these drawings, he has recorded the progressive abstraction in the transition from mountain environment to urban plaza. At the Portland Auditorium Fountain, the progression from small source, to tributaries, to downstream waterfalls is telescoped into a small space. The fountain permits and even invites human participation. The sheer volume and force of the waterfalls, the mystery injected by the many water sources, some half-hidden, the steep drop from street-level to the base of the fountain, and the dense screen of pines all contribute to an experience of water that resonates with its importance as a source of electric power in this region of rushing rivers.

Like a primordial magnet, water pulls at a primitive and deeply rooted part of human nature. Water is a source of life, power, comfort, fear, and delight; it is a symbol of purification, of both the dissolution of life and its renewal.

Many advances to health and safety introduced in cities over the past century have distanced us from the water that sustains us and have disguised its cycling through the environment. As rain falls to the ground, it is quickly directed to drains and carried off; after we use water, it is flushed away into underground pipes and transported to sewage treatment plant, which, like garbage dumps, are touched into forgotten corners of the city.

Landscape architects, urban designers, and architects have progressively narrowed their scope of concerns. The aquaducts of ancient Rome were artistic monuments that celebrated the feat of bringing water into the city from afar; the fountains of Baroque Rome celebrated the reconstruction of that public water system. The monuments marked a connection between the people who dwelled in the city and the water that sustained them. They were utilitarian, a source of sensual pleasure and symbolic meaning. Today, few urban designers concern themselves with water and sewer systems. Yet the impact of these public works on the shape of urban form and aesthetic experience is too great to ignore.

In Denver, the metropolitan open space system is planned and designed to also function as an urban storm drainage and flood control system. The channels, reservoirs, and detention and retention

basins that structure the urban landscape are not only congruent with the natural rhythms of the region, but also make these rhythms legible within the city and provide a visible and tangible framework that links downtown, suburbs, and outlying farmland. The form of this parkland reflects the different neighborhoods through which it flows, whether a downtown plaza that is also a detention basin, accepting and revealing the rise and fall of water, or a suburban storm drainage channel whose sinuous landforms echo the movement of water, even when there is only a trickle flowing. The original plan for this drainage channel called for an underground storm sewer; now, the water emerges from under the street into a park. Where the level of the channel drops, a weir breaks the erosive force of the water. At high water the weir is exciting to watch, but even at low water its from is pleasing and meaningful, recalling the power of water at high flow.

Continuity and Revolution

The current understanding of nature and culture as comprising interwoven processes that exhibit a complex, underlying order that holds across vast scales of space and time not only demands a new aesthetic, new forms, and new modes of design, construction, and cultivation, but also prompts a fresh appreciation for the forms of the past and the processes by which they were created. Fractal geometry, for example, provides a means of understanding the geometry of old urban districts that evolved with a peculiar combination of order and disorder, through purposeful process and repetitive use of forms whose precise shape was varied in response to varying conditions of nature, culture, and individual preference. The complex order of such districts is now often highly valued for its variety and quality of "wholeness" in contrast to the order of new towns, where the form of houses and even of such details as exterior paint color and landscaping are prescribed, and to modern cities, which seem a hodge podge of idiosyncratic buildings and left over space. The insights gained through fractal geometry and recent work in chaos also provide the means to design new places can evolve and adapt to changing needs and that can embody both variety and coherence.

Such a proposition poses a challenge to conventional methods of planning, design, construction, and management of the urban landscape and the structure and spaces of which it is composed. It calls for a more inclusive dialogue about values and visions, and for tapping the invention and energy of individuals in small-scale construction and cultivation. For designers, new techniques of notation and representation are required. Conventional techniques are inadequate to the portrayal of time and change, and they encourage the continued focus on visible and static form. Designers may consider time and change and such sensations as sound, smell, and movement, but do not have the means to notate these ideas beyond the rudimentary level. Music, dance, and film are arts of movement, and contemporary modes of notation and representation in these fields offer inspiration, as do Lawrence Halprin's exploration of scoring. Jazz and modern dance, for example, employ a choreographed framework within which players improvise, expanding upon and exploring the themes established in the framework. The computer can also provide the means to display patterns generated by processes of nature and human culture to enable the perception, manipulation, and evaluation of patterns and forms as they emerge and change over time.

The issues of time and change, process and pattern, order and randomness, being and doing, and form and meaning inherent to the theory outlined here are also central to contemporary explorations in music, art, and science. Indeed, this theory and the aesthetic it embodies will bring urban landscape design in tune with theoretical currents in other fields.

Ultimately, however, the urban landscape is more than a symphony, a poem, a sculpture, a dance, or a scientific experiment. It is the setting in which people dwell, living every day. This aesthetic, as applied to the urban landscape, must provide satisfaction on multiple levels: on the level of the senses aroused, the functions served, the opportunities for "doing" provided, and the symbolic associations engendered. These multiple layers of meaning, when congruent, will resonate, combining complexity and coherence, amplifying the aesthetic experience of the city.

A longer version of this article appeared in Landscape Journal, *winter 1989.*

Notes

1. Paul Klee, "Ways of Nature Study," in *Notebooks, Volume One. The Thinking Eye*, edited by Jurg Spilier (London: Lund Humphries, 1961).

2. Benoit Mandelbrot, *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1983).

3. Lawrence Halprin, *R.S.V.P. Cycles* (New York: George Braziller, 1969).

4. Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), and *Notebooks: 1959-1971* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972).

The Patio de la Reja in the Alhambra, Granada, Spain. The presence of water imbues this patio, physically and symbolically. Photo by Anne Whiston Spirn.

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