

# PLACES

Participation  
with a View



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*About the cover: Grief and concern about the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin found an outlet in improvised monuments near Tel Aviv's city hall and in markings on the surface of the building and nearby walls. Photo: Effie Sharir, ©1995 Yediot Aharonot.*

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## CONTENTS

|   |    |   |
|---|----|---|
| DONLYN LYNDON   | 2  | CARING ABOUT PLACES   |
| MIRA ENGLER   | 4  | SPEAKING OF PLACES <b>A Living Memorial</b>   |
| <b>PARTICIPATION WITH A VIEW</b>                        |    |   |
| RANDOLPH T. HESTER, JR.                                 | 12 | <b>A Refrain with a View</b>  |
| MARCIA MCNALLY  | 26 | <b>Drafting a Regional Blueprint for Sustainability</b>                                       |
| RICHARD PIGFORD, KAREN WIGHT                            | 30 | <b>Sandy Vista Regroups and Rebuilds</b>  |
| ROBERTA M. FELDMAN, LYNNE M. WESTPHAL                   | 34 | <b>Participation for Empowerment: The Greening of a Public Housing Development</b>            |
| JOCELYNE G. CHAIT, MARGARET E. SEIP                     | 38 | <b>Response: Are We Prepared to Participate?</b>  |
| DAVID R. GODSCHALK                                      | 39 | <b>Response: Up with Collaboration</b>  |
| STEPHAN MARC KLEIN                                      | 40 | <b>Response: Five Proposals for Participation</b>   |
| <b>CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS</b>                             |    |   |
|   | 41 | <b>1999 EDRA/Places Awards for Design and Research</b>  |
| LAWRENCE HALPRIN, DEE MULLEN<br>RANDOLPH T. HESTER, JR. | 42 | <b>Interview: Lawrence Halprin</b>  |
| RON SHIFFMAN, TODD W. BRESSI                            | 52 | <b>Interview: Ron Shiffman</b>  |
| MARK FRANCIS  | 60 | <b>Proactive Practice: Visionary Thought and Participatory Action in Environmental Design</b> |
|   | 63 | <b>Interview: Linda Cox</b>   |
|   | 65 | <b>Interview: Paul Morris</b>   |
|   | 67 | <b>Interview: Diana Balmori</b>   |
| CERVIN ROBINSON   | 69 | <b>PORTFOLIO Photographing Fitchburg</b>  |
| KATHERINE W. RINNE                                      | 70 | <b>The Secret Life of Roman Fountains</b>   |
| <b>FORUM</b>  |    |   |
| AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS                        |    |   |
| JOHN MORRIS DIXON                                       | 82 | <b>Paris Album</b>  |
| ROBERT CAMPBELL   | 84 | <b>Laminations in the Cityscape</b>   |
| CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM                           |    |   |
| DANIEL SOLOMON  | 86 | <b>The Block: Enabler of Urban Architecture</b>   |
|   | 88 | <b>Contributors</b>   |

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To build a place requires the construction of agreements:

about where to build,  
how to build, what to build

about neighboring,  
sequestering, nurturing,

about resources and  
the expenditure of effort,

about limits,  
about imagined results.

## Place is inherently participatory.

To design a place involves the interests of many. Constructing agreements becomes a major part of the task — absorbing attention — demanding resolution, often taxing the limits of effort, ingenuity and patience.

Even to recognize a place involves the melding of physical conditions, personal observations and socially constructed meanings. To maintain, adjust and renew places so that they will remain important to the people who use them requires creating a pattern of engagement, of caring.

To become part of a place is to become part of a process. The place of community is constantly changing; the structure of relationships between people, things and ideas that makes physical settings effective must frequently be reconstructed. Both processes and forms can attract and focus community imagination; successful designers of place fuse the two.

This issue on participation was framed as an extension of Randy Hester's call for examining the ways in which the idea of participation in design, once seen as an avenue for the creation of opportunity, has often dissipated or been co-opted into paths of obstruction, confusion and neglect. Participation, to be effective in the construction of places, must be directed and energetic; it must be infused with strong and effective ideas about design possibility and the

willingness to engage, rather than to avoid, conflicting views. It requires real engagement in the design issues at hand; it cannot be reduced to the routine processing of information or a means of venting community frustration.

The issue includes provocative and thoughtful articles by Hester and Mark Francis, and a series of case studies that suggest the diversity of successful practices. There are also interviews with two people, Larry Halprin and Ron Shiffman, who have long, inventive and successful experience in the conduct of design and community processes that help people take part in understanding and shaping places.

The parts of the common realm can be conceived many ways, and they belong to many people. Designing, building and maintaining a commonwealth of spaces that can be shared that will become home to the life of the community means taking part in, not taking a part of, the places we inhabit.

—*Donlyn Lyndon*

# A Living Memorial:

Commemorating Yitzhak Rabin at the Tel Aviv Square

Mira Engler



*Above and opposite page: Grief and concern about the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin found an outlet in improvised monuments near Tel Aviv's city hall and in markings on the surface of the building and nearby walls. Above: Effie Sharir, ©1995 Yediot Aharonot. Opposite page: Mira Engler*

The Tel Aviv City Hall square, site of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination after a rally November 4, 1995, has become a stage to an extraordinary act of spontaneous public commemoration. In a country replete with official, iconic monuments to its past, this public place has witnessed the formation of a new kind of memorial — a stage for democracy, a place for public communication and action. The geography and the civic and symbolic nature of the site have nurtured the formation of a living memorial, a vital meeting place for political exchange and commentary.

Kikar Malchei Israel (Malchei Israel Square), as it was called before the assassination, is Tel Aviv's central civic square and has always been associated with mass celebrations, fairs and political demonstrations. It covers five acres (the largest paved public space in the city) and is surrounded on three sides by main streets with five- to six-story, mixed commercial and residen-

tial buildings. On the north side, a wide set of stairs connects the space with an elevated platform that bears the twelve-story, modernist City Hall building and bridges over a four-lane street. During mass gatherings, the platform serves as a stage, with City Hall as a backdrop.

The mass rally that day, called to support the peace process and uproot verbal and physical violence, stood in sharp contrast to its tragic end. Upbeat Rabin, who had just finished singing the famous Israeli "Song for Peace," had left the stage and descended the stairs through a backstage area toward his waiting car when three shots caught him from behind. The temporal, spatial and symbolic aspects associated with the event charged the site with intense feelings of humility, guilt and betrayal, as well as determination and hopefulness.

## The Evolution of a Square

A shocked nation, for the first time stricken by an enemy from within, witnessed an unprecedented collective grief, which was anchored to this particular place. The public trauma and grief were not followed, as in private mourning, by a sense of desperation and disorientation, solitude and social dysfunction. Rather, they were cast into new and evolving social, political and physical patterns. The square served not only as a container and anchor for mass commemorative activities but also as a scroll and canvas, as well.

*The first month: spontaneous commemoration.* The initial spontaneous commemoration was woven into patterns of imagery that were ritualistic, symbolic and emotional in nature. Groups of people, mainly youngsters who were later called "children of the candles," formed circles, recited poems and sang songs for peace around puddles of memorial candles, flowers, posters and portraits of the slain leader. The circles started at the point of assassination and spilled over to the main square area. Portraits and candles, some arranged in symbolic forms — the Star of David, the Menorah and the universal peace symbol — or as letters spelling words were the initial focus of these rituals.<sup>1</sup>

Before long, extemporaneous expressions of pain, anger, protest and shame mixed with a deep sense of guilt, found an outlet in the form of physical markings. People fastened their feelings directly to paving, walls and structures, creating a collage of highly emotional writings. The texts concentrated first on the walls and columns of City Hall that were underneath the platform and on the adjacent shopping center wall, but soon they spread outward.

Within the next few days an improvised monument, referred to by the Israelis as the *Gal'ed*, marked the place of the murder.<sup>2</sup> It began with modest, personal offerings and evolved into an assemblage of objects originating in Israel's national history, religious tradition and universal symbolism. The core of the monument constituted carefully crafted artifacts, such as a large basalt stone carved with Rabin's name, a metal drum pierced by bullets brought from a target practice range in Latrun (a site symbolic of Israel's War of Independence), the holy tablets of Decalogue with an inscription of only the Fifth Commandment ("Thou shall not kill") and a sculpture of a white dove. Other prominent objects included a clock standing still and marking the time of Rabin's murder, an olive tree symbolizing peace and the national flag. Newspaper pictures and stories about Rabin's life, memorial candles, flowers and personal notes were constantly added or taken away.



By the end of the month-long mourning,<sup>3</sup> horizontal surfaces stretching halfway into the square were covered with candles, posters, flowers and personal offerings with only narrow paths cutting through. Graffiti,

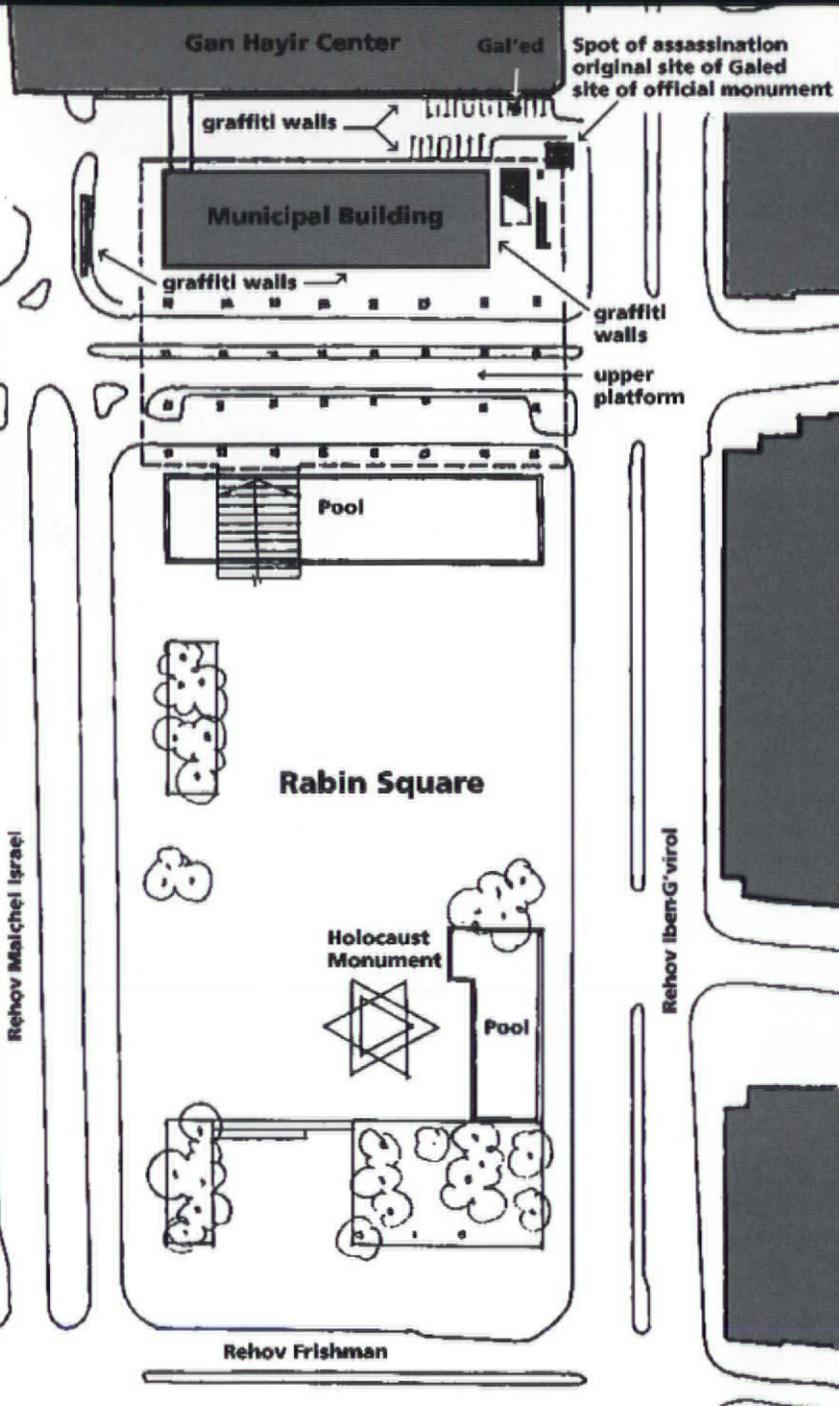


tattooed onto the skin of the place, reached out to the peripheries of the square. Every vertical surface within the boundaries of the square, including signage, rails, benches and the Holocaust Memorial, became canvas for a collage of text and images. Spray, brush paint and markers were collaged with notes, pictures, newspapers cut-outs, bumper stickers with fresh slogans, and poems typed on paper. The graffiti were created by thousands of individuals but seemed a coordinated piece, like a concert conducted by an invisible maestro.

*The first year: recovery and reorganization.* Following a mass memorial rally one month after the event, a stage of recovery and reorganization in the mourning process took place. On the one hand, the city government, whose officials had to make their daily path through the site to enter the building, sought to put things back in order, to return to routine. On the other, many citizens were determined to activate the place on behalf of Rabin's legacy.

In the name of good management and order the city began cleaning the layers of wax and removing the offerings from the pavement, erasing most of the physical traces. Most of the graffiti walls and the *Gal'ed*, however, remained intact due to constant presence and pressure of groups that began taking ownership over the place. After some of the walls were cleaned, they were covered with fresh messages.

Activists started using the site as a platform for new political organizations supporting the peace process and protesting against violence, such as Amutat Dor Shalom (The Peace Generation Association) and Mishmarot Hashalom (The Peace Guards). These



Plan of City Hall Square, with assassination site at upper right-hand corner.  
Graphic: Mira Engler

groups not only sought to advance their political cause but took it upon themselves to activate and tend the site of the assassination, to become a living memorial. The square became a stronghold of these groups and their political aims.

New rituals centering around the murder site were soon established. Most prominent were gatherings on Friday afternoons and holidays, which transformed the place into a hub of political activities with a core of dedicated activists, many of their supporters and curious passersby all involved in debates, discussions, petition signing and distribution of supportive material.

The conspicuous public geography of the space, its openness as well as intimacy, make it well-fitted for varying group sizes. Small groups congregate near the monument while large crowds spill over to the parking area. The surrounding walls, pillars and rails are used to hang banners and large placards needed for decor. During inhospitable weather the roofed area underneath the platform shelters people and information booths. Groups playing music and singing became a common scene as chairs are set up in a circle.

During the first year several events bestowed new meanings on the site. Rabin's governmental coalition was defeated in the May, 1996, elections, after which the place became associated with a sense of betrayal, defeat and victory to the cause of the murderer. People came to protest and ponder the sake of Rabin's legacy. In September, on Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, the site was filled with those who came to soul-search and reflect on past year's events. During the Jewish holiday of Succoth, a Succah (a temporary shelter symbolizing the Israelites' temporary dwellings in the Sinai desert during their journey to the promised land) was erected next to the makeshift monument endowing the site with religious authority. The Gal'ed was rearranged daily, while the graffiti grew thick with fresh layers of messages.

Simultaneously, there was an awareness of the importance of giving the memory an official representation and of the long-term effect that the values communicated by that representation would have. Shortly after the assassination, the Tel Aviv city government began receiving proposals for placing memorials to Rabin in the square. According to historian Batia Donner, most of the proposals were written by ordinary citizens and many were verbal and devoid of any visual illustration. Quite a few of those proposals did not discuss concrete objects, but advocated the establishment of a sort of Hyde Park in the square. One person wrote: "This suggestion is based on a fear that the abyss rent open by the killing would lead to a cultural battle and on a conscious perception of the need to reinforce the core of democracy, to allow divergent views to coexist along with openness and communication."<sup>4</sup>

Institutional commemoration commonly follows established national patterns. Official response to the assassination of Rabin, however, had to face new dilemmas with no precedent to follow. City officials — trying to respond to increasing public pressure but seeking to avoid any political orientation, fearing that it would

"Thou shall not Kill"



deepen ideological divisions — could only agree on a physical monument that describes the problem and represents a desire for national unity. They were unable to confront the more difficult underlying issues, or to rethink the process and consider the potential of a dynamic, polemical public commemoration.

As a result, the city acted in an undemocratic and careless manner. The process of artist and proposal selection was not made public and was hastily carried out through a process that, to an unknown degree, involved Rabin's family and some active members and artists of the peace groups. As it turned out, the so-called committee that was formed was merely presented with the final selection.

Then, in September, ten months after the event, the Gal'ed was moved to a parking space just across from the site of the murder to make space for the official memorial, which would be dedicated during an anniversary ceremony. Despite its very awkward location — tucked within a row of parked cars — people kept coming to the Gal'ed to reflect, extend offerings and messages, and take pictures.

*The first anniversary and second year: institutional commemoration.* The official monument, Yad Yitzhak Rabin (Yitzhak Rabin Memorial), located a few feet away from the point of assassination, was dedicated at an official ceremony on November 1, 1996, in the presence of Rabin's family members and many dignitaries.

The design, by architect Claude Grundman-Brigtmann, resembles a rupture in the ground. It comprises sixteen squares of rough-textured basalt stones from the Galilee (the northern region of Israel), arranged in a grid and contained by a steel frame. The stones protrude from the surface as if shaken by an earthquake. A soft light emits from below. According to the artist, the design represents the shock the nation has undergone and the necessary attempt to contain the evil. The steel frame represents a desire for a national unity and the light underneath the stones symbolizes eternal hope.

On the night before the dedication ceremony, the Gal'ed was removed — officials claimed it would be exhibited in a future museum dedicated to Rabin. The speeches made at the ceremony implied that the permanent, refined and stately monument would finally

**Graffiti spread onto numerous surfaces, including the walls of City Hall.**

*Photos: Mira Engler*



Activists began using the site as a platform for new political organizations supporting the peace process that Rabin championed.

Photo: Mira Engler

ensure that Rabin's memory would pass on to future generations in an orderly way. Nobody pondered the fate of the other existing forms of spontaneous public commemoration.

During the following year, the place acquired new routines and established its role as a seismograph for developments in the peace process. It continued to swirl with activists and supporters on Fridays and holidays. Following terrorist attacks, military tragedies and landmark government deliberations, the site became energized and charged with a greater determination to make a difference. Newspaper headlines were constantly pasted onto walls and became a changing scene, a reflection of the political state.

#### The (Hand)writing on the Wall

During this time a battle over the graffiti was carried between the city and the groups that inhabited the place. The graffiti have undoubtedly been a central, meaningful element in the mourning and remembrance processes, but no serious, open, public discussion concerning their role, meaning and fate has taken place.

To many people, graffiti connote social dysfunction, vandalism, street culture and urban ghettos. But motivations for using graffiti are quite varied, including venting aggression and protesting social oppression, transmitting political messages, marking territory, communicating with the dead and making memorials. Graffiti of extemporaneous emotional nature are a common response to sudden, shocking events.<sup>5</sup>

The graffiti on the Tel Aviv City Hall walls were different in nature and motivation from other graffiti in several ways. First, written words, not images, were used almost exclusively. For hundreds of years, the written word was almost the sole means Jewish people could use to express their culture, thus writing has a historic importance to Israelis, especially as a tool of spontaneous expression.

Second, graffiti are typically anonymous, hiding their creators' identities. But the writers on the walls in the square signed their names, indicated their affiliations (including schools and kindergartens) and the places they came from, and dated their comments. Because the texts included this personal information, they helped transform the square from a public space into an intimate place.

Third, the texts went beyond the urge to express emotions, or vent pain, anger and frustration. They were deliberate acts of public participation and communication; they offered a way for people to stop being quiet and passive, to take a stand, to fuel and reinforce the democratic process that became threatened. The graffiti derives further significance in this context as it became a concrete expression of what has since been called “the writing on the wall,” a maxim used as a metaphor for something whose unequivocal visual presence cried out to be noticed. It was a warning sign of fate, now ascribed to another pattern of reality perception.

The walls became a medium for pondering and taking a stand on human nature, right and wrong, national values, democracy, politics, war and peace. The messages were sometimes expressed as wall poetry (popular or amateur songs), sometimes as proverbs (“His death commended us peace”), sometimes simply as a declaration; often they included quotes from the Bible (particularly, the story of the attempted sacrifice of Isaac or Yitzhak, in modern Hebrew), and most notably, questions directed to God, to the people or to Israel’s leaders.

Early on, while the city was considering covering up the aesthetically disturbing graffiti, growing pressure from Mishmarot Hashalom and its supporters resulted in a decision to seek professional advice. Graphic designer David Tartakover was asked to examine the graffiti at the square and develop recommendations for handling it. Meanwhile, two picture books featuring the graffiti were published and an exhibit featuring large photos of the graffiti opened at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.<sup>6</sup> This exposure elevated the graffiti to the level of historical document and artwork, giving it added legitimacy. Nevertheless, for many people, the graffiti’s unofficial nature, unconventional aesthetics and uncomfortable connotations were still hard to tolerate.

In November, 1996, the city agreed to follow Tartakover’s recommendations.<sup>7</sup> He proposed leaving the graffiti (except for what he called “inappropriate messages”) on the concrete walls of City Hall, but erasing the text from all other elements — doors, rails and columns, and from an adjacent stone-covered wall (except for two boldly written words, *Sliba, Nizkor*, which mean “Forgive us, we’ll remember”). The erasure, Tartakover explains, “will help to accentuate the remaining parts.”<sup>8</sup>

The saved graffiti will be likely coated with a clear, protective cover and might be illuminated with special lighting. Short poles with connecting chains will distance viewers and passersby from the wall to help “frame” and “elevate the graffiti to a museum-like display,” Tartakover says.

The wide east column under the building and close to the point of the assassination will remain a surface on which people can continue writing messages. The wall will be painted over periodically. Though, “if hateful statements will be written, they will be erased,” Tartakover adds, unable to explain who will decide what is hateful or inappropriate.

Nevertheless, in January, 1997, without any notice, the city painted over city hall’s eastern wall, where the entrances to the building are located, with beige paint — forever sealing the writings. The following Friday, fresh graffiti reclaimed the painted wall, protesting the arbitrary act by the city. “You can paint the wall a hundred times but cannot erase the blood,” and “The walls, witnesses of the murder, cannot and will not be silenced,” two of the quotes read.

This marked the beginning of a battle between the city and the committed group that regularly occupied the place. The graffiti walls were sacred; their erasure was seen an act of desecration. Since then the eastern wall has been painted over twice again, yet fresh graffiti have persisted.

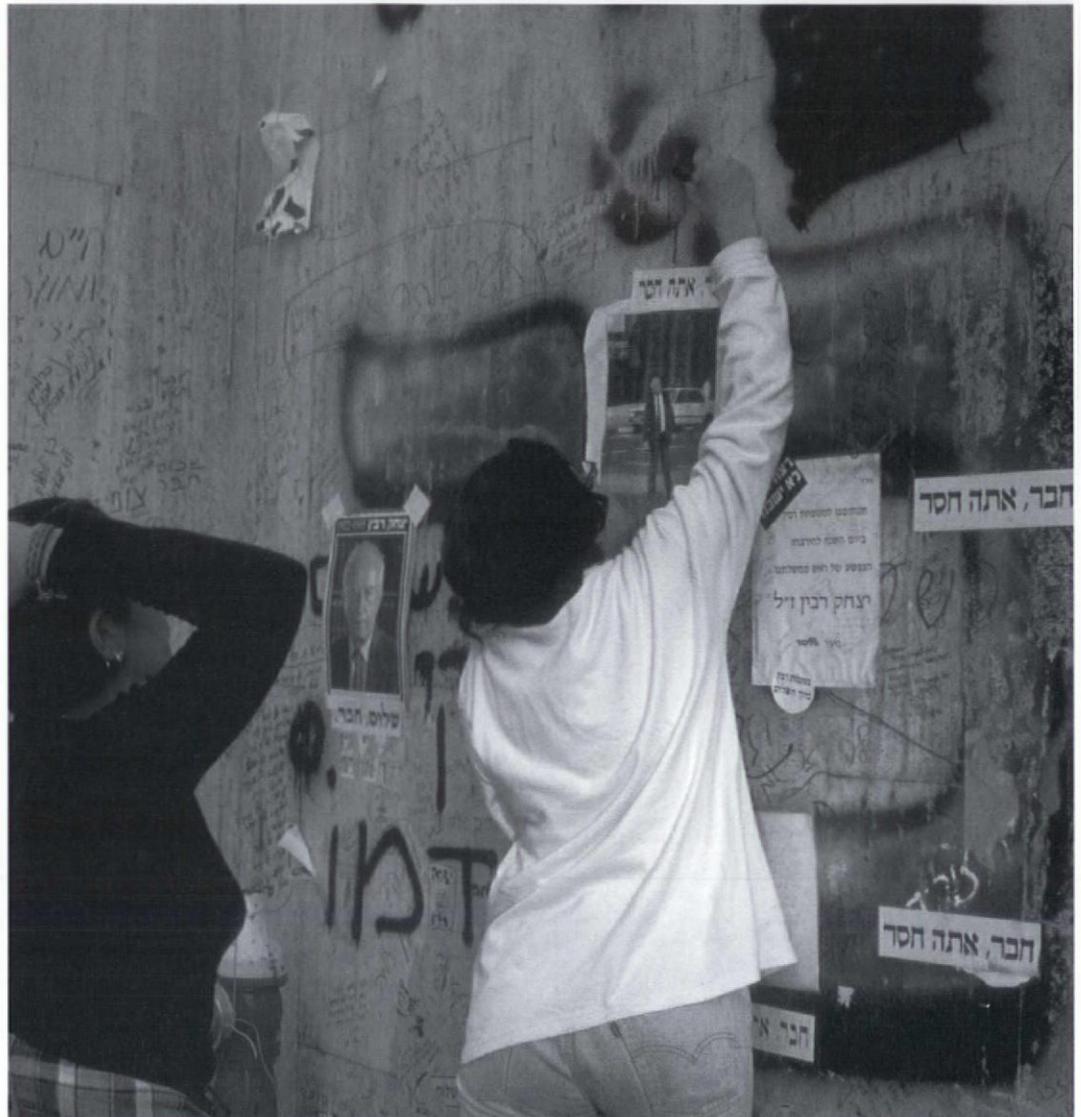
The second anniversary of the assassination, in November, 1997, was marked with an unprecedented mass rally in the square. The place is frequently attended by visitors and passersby who place flowers and candles on the outer edge of the monument.

The official monument, Yad Yitzhak Rabin, located a few feet away from the point of the assassination.  
Photo: Mira Engler



A year after the assassination, graffiti continued to grow thick with new layers of messages.

Photo: Mira Engler



Sometimes a busload of tourists stops for a visit, which often culminates in picture-taking in front of the monument, though many tourists spend time reading and sharing thoughts with others about the writing on the walls. Local youth groups and schoolchildren on class trips are often seen at the site, primarily engaging the walls. They write messages and poems directly on the walls, or notes that they paste on top of existing graffiti.

#### A New Kind of Monument

The power and importance of the Gal'ed and the graffiti are related to the emotional energy they embody and the degree to which that energy is accessible to ordinary citizens. The official monument, on the other hand, had the effect of detaching the memory of the assassination from any spontaneous intervention, of regulating the interpretation of that memory and adapting it to the needs of the established value system, of replacing memory with history.

Philosopher Pierre Nora claims that if we were living our memories we would not need to create monuments or sites of memory, or in his words, "*lieux de memoire*."<sup>9</sup> Memory and history are not alike, he maintains. Memory is a subjective testimony, lived tradition as passed on through story telling. History is an objective, factual order of past events or people formulated by the state and embedded in monuments to serve the national myth.

The myth of national unity, which the official monument commemorates, was assassinated and ridiculed on November 4, 1995. Rabin's assassination forced Israelis to confront two radically new national conditions and check them against the existing value system. The peace with Arab neighbors and the deep divisions within society redefined the enemy and shattered the base of national unity. The designer of the official

monument saw her role as merely giving the idea of a nation torn apart a symbolic, static form.

The assassination required a new kind of memorial, which neither city officials nor the designer of the monument understood. The artist missed an opportunity to act as a facilitator or a choreographer of energies and actions already shaping the place. The spontaneous commemoration (the Gal'ed and graffiti) succeeded where the institutional commemoration failed. Moreover, the civic, political exchange and organization and the rituals that were established serve as a viable, counter monument; a living memory alongside the official monument. The memory is kept alive by people who after two years still continue to inhabit the site, interpreting, activating and making the memory of the event a vital driving force for civic transaction and individual reflection.

The selected graffiti walls, however, will be censored and transformed from an active, living institution into a fixed, sacred element. Clearly, the criteria for the selection are aesthetic. The small wall section left for continuous, though regulated, public input is but a token to the idea of democracy.

The city government could indeed have a role as a facilitator. It should reap the opportunity to use the emotional energies to reinforce democracy and civic life in the city's most important public space. The memorial created by the public at the square should be seen as a strategy that re-engages the notion of citizenship and social responsibility as inseparable from the individual.

The physical space could enhance this endeavor. Graffiti walls should continue to serve and encourage future writings without censorship and new structures or partitions could be added for additional space for writings. The area around the site of the murder could be made a place for speakers and small gatherings, similar to Speakers Corner in Hyde Park, London, where podiums, steps and paved areas provide orators and audience with stages for verbal exchange and debates. The area could take the form of small circles for children's activities, for reading poems and stories. The city should develop a program of temporary art installations located throughout the square and dealing with social and political issues.

A meaningful monument to Yitzhak Rabin could only be based on a strategy that fuels communication and actions, that engages the cornerstones of democracy and the road for peace.

## Notes

1. This pattern, though at a much smaller scale, repeated itself at Rabin's grave site at Hertzl Mount in Jerusalem, in front of his Tel Aviv home and in many urban centers.
2. *Gal'ed* is a Hebrew term for a place that commemorate an event or a figure. It derives from ancient Hebrew and means a stone or a heap of stones that witnessed an event, have been marked off and have become sacred. It is close to the English term "cairn."
3. Jewish religious tradition prescribes several mourning periods: the first week of mourning following the burial, the *Shivah*, in which the family spends time together at the house of the dead while friends pay a visit; the thirtieth day of the mourning, on which the family reveals the gravestone; and the anniversary date, on which the family returns to visit the grave.
4. See catalogue of the exhibition "Map of Memory, Spectrum of Commemoration in Memory of Rabin," edited by Batia Donner, Eretz-Israel Museum, Tel Aviv, November 1996.
5. Robert Reisner, *Two Thousand Years of Wall Writing* (Chicago, IL: Cowles Book Company, Inc. 1971)
6. Hanoch Saar, *Shalom-Haver* (Tel-Aviv, Israel: Saar House, 1995) and Gadi Dagon (photographer), *Graffiti at Yitzhak Rabin Square, November 1995* (Tel Aviv municipality, Israel, 1996)
7. The tendency of the city to accept Tartakover's suggestions was clarified to me on a casual visit with Meir Doron, the city's general manager, on one of the Friday gatherings in the square on 8 November 1996. Meir Doron is also the force behind the establishment of and decisions about the official monument.
8. I spoke with David Tartakover on the telephone on 3 October 1996. He was then in the process of writing his recommendations to the city.
9. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," translated from *Les Lieux de Memoire*, in *Zmanim, an Historical Quarterly* 45 (Summer, 1993).

If hateful statements will be written, they will be erased.

Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

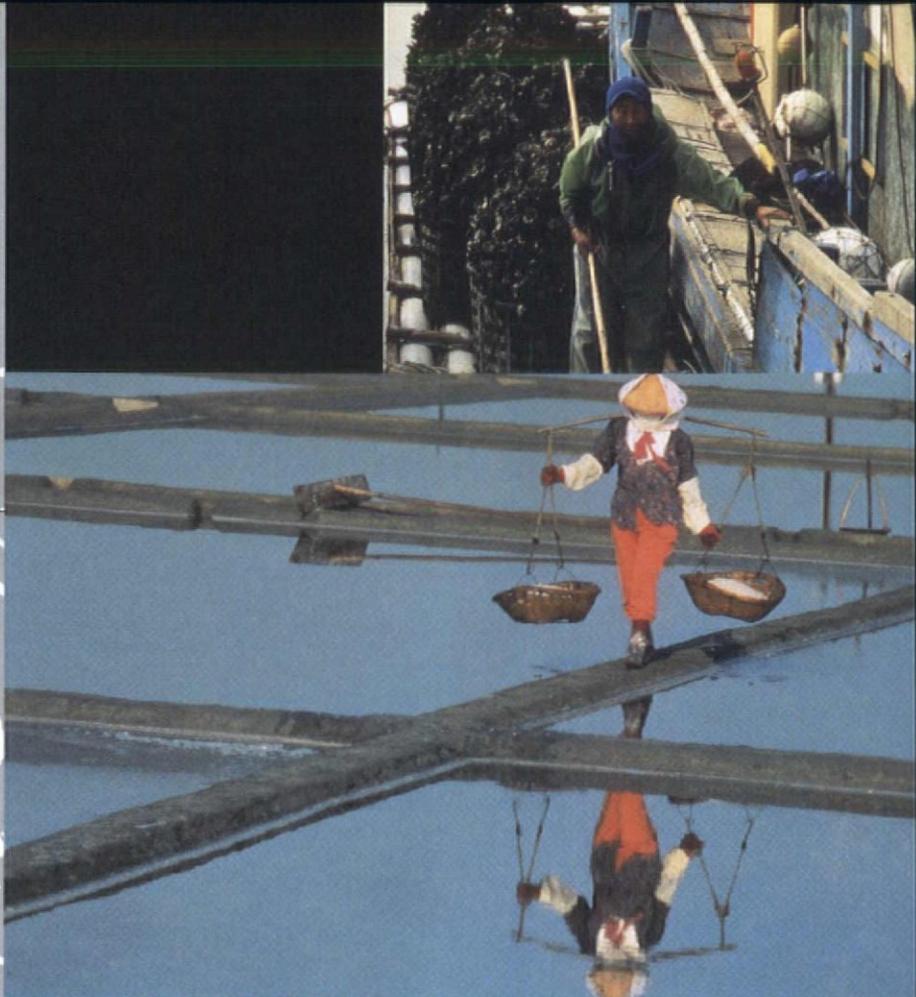
# A Refrain with a

Participatory design is rooted in fundamental American traditions of the right to assemble and civil disobedience. Protesting urban renewal as a scheme of Negro removal was a vital expression of the civil rights movement and the birth of advocacy planning.

*Photos and graphics: Randolph T. Hester, Jr.*

Citizen participation distinguishes placemaking in the United States. But the dominant form of participation, advocacy design and planning, is so institutionalized and parochialized that it no longer meets many of its goals. At best it subverts creative efforts through conflict mediation and, in fact, is a major contributor to several debilitating problems of our time. Therefore, I am issuing a call to supplant advocacy with a new approach to local citizen participation in community design.

# View



## Cultivating a Visionary Synthesis

Increasingly, American approaches to participatory design are being imported by new democracies around the world. The community design plan for the Tseng-Wein River area of coastal Taiwan illustrates the opportunities and challenges in emerging participatory societies that lack U.S. traditions of participatory planning. The text and photos that follow tell the story of that region and the plan. ▶

*Photos: Commonwealth magazine and Randolph T. Hester, Jr.  
Graphics: Randolph T. Hester, Jr.*

In this article, I trace the development of local participation<sup>1</sup> from its historical roots through the civil rights movement, and I examine the multiple impacts that movement has had on the way we make places today. I uncover a participatory gridlock that compels me to urge a new local participation with a broader view of the public good.

### The Roots of Participation

Participatory design in the U.S. is buttressed by principles on which our government was founded and values held dear since the inception of the nation. These provide both the ideological and operational underpinnings of local participation.<sup>2</sup>

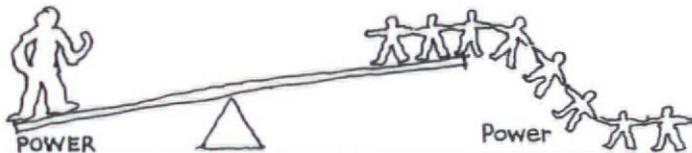
Much of the political discussion surrounding the founding of the U.S. centered on the role of local participation. Benjamin Franklin considered active partic-

basis of citizenship was also derived from face-to-face participation.

Not surprisingly, the Constitution's First Amendment grants not only freedom of speech but also the right to peaceably assemble and the right to petition the government to redress grievances. These rights, along with those embedded in the Tenth Amendment, which empower states and the people, protect local participatory activity.

Equally powerful in the nation's collective memory is civil disobedience. Henry David Thoreau posited a corollary to Jefferson's moral imperative to participate in government: as one must obey just laws, one must disobey unjust ones. This theme of civil disobedience is recalled repeatedly in local activism. It is the foundation of Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* as well as the central justification Martin Luther King, Jr., used in his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" and throughout the civil rights movement. It is one basis for today's militia movement.

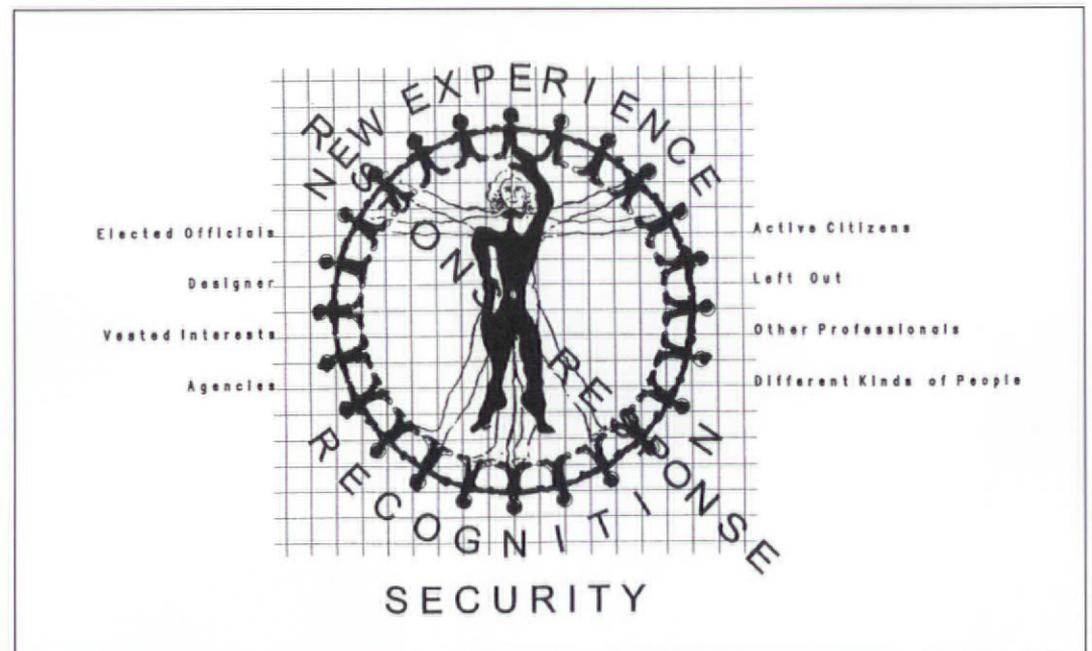
Americans have traditionally formed groups to solve problems. To objective observers this, as much as or more than the supremacy of the individual, distinguishes the U.S. from other nations. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that Americans of all ages, conditions and predispositions were constantly forming associations for great and small undertakings. He observed that Americans were unable to act in the public interest by themselves. Importantly, Tocqueville regarded these local associations posi-



Above: Saul Alinsky, in his book *Rules for Radicals*, defined strategies for equalizing power through direct participatory action — techniques that were useful in both labor organizing and city design.

ipation in government a moral imperative because every citizen's opinion was important.<sup>3</sup> The archetypal expression of this is the New England town meeting, at which attendance is expected and each citizen may voice his or her opinion. For Thomas Jefferson, the

Left: Participatory design is based on a particularly American characteristic of forming associations to reduce dependence on government. Human fulfillment and community development objectives are so defined that participatory efforts are the common ground of both progressive and conservative politics.



tively, because they replace dependence upon government.<sup>4</sup> Herein lies the philosophical common ground of progressive community designers and anti-government Republicans.

Andrew Jackson concretized the populist ideals for local self-help, private and public barn raising, and decentralization. Jackson held that the yeoman was more capable than the bureaucrat. The Agricultural Extension Service and early social work projects, such as settlement houses, put the principle of self-help into operation. They guided the making of civic works of all sorts, from town halls to streets to garbage disposal, through volunteerism.

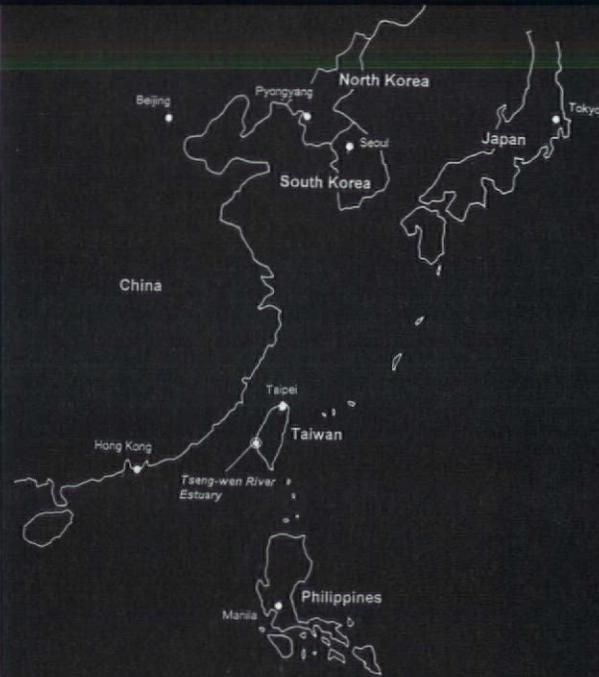
For more than a hundred years, the day-to-day operations of most American local governments were managed directly by elected officials, and most civil plans were created and improved through voluntary efforts. But by the late 1800s, the inability of elected officials to deal with increasingly complex urban problems and widespread corruption led to calls for local government reform. Ultimately, the city manager form of local government replaced elected commissioner-managers, professionalizing city management and reducing government corruption.

One of the unforeseen side effects of professionalized city management was the separation of citizens from decisions about their local environments. Professionals assumed more and more responsibility for daily operations and community design. Citizens gladly gave up the chores, and professionals gladly took over not only the chores but also the power associated with their execution. Thus began a long, slow decline in hands-on citizen control of local places, and an unconscious undermining of local participatory democracy, planning and design.

### Civil Rights

If participatory community design slumbered in the hypnotic trance of professionalized city management, it was reawakened with a start by the civil rights movement. Issues of racism and poverty unimagined by the authors of the Thirteenth Amendment exploded into the American consciousness. Civil rights leaders issued the challenge in the precise words of Franklin, Jefferson, the First Amendment and Thoreau.

In his April 16, 1963, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," King justified local civil disobedience by laying claim to the traditional tenets of participatory democracy — with Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego, Socrates and the Boston Tea Party supporting.<sup>5</sup> The challenge for



► The Tseng-Wen River area is home to a vibrant fishing and aquaculture economy that provides sixteen thousand jobs and a centuries-old way of life. People live in villages like Chi-Ku, Chiang-Chun and Pei-Men, which are surrounded by lagoons, mangrove forest and wetlands that attract more than two hundred species of birds, including the rare Black-faced Spoonbill. ►

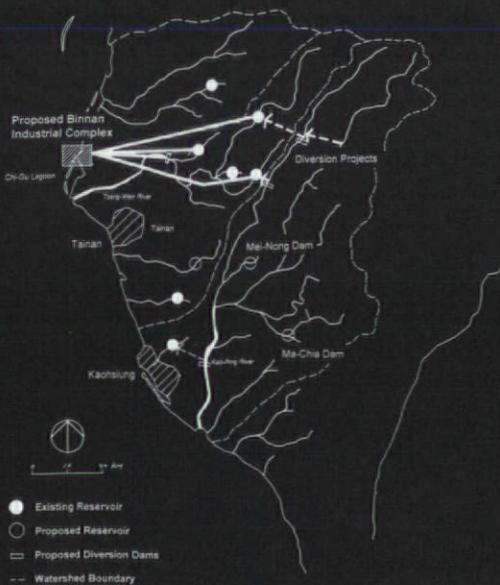


► Fishermen were shocked and outraged when an industrial complex, the Binnan project, proposed filling Chi-Ku Lagoon and thousands of acres of wetland. Their jobs and way of life were to be sacrificed for the Binnan Complex, supported by the President of Taiwan and powerful corporation. A government-sponsored environmental review seemed and seems likely to be rubber stamped in spite of serious conse-

quences like inadequate water and violations of Agenda 21 principles of biodiversity—two aboriginal village will be flooded to secure water from three watersheds away and the black-faced spoonbill will be sent into an extinction vortex from habitat loss).

But the fishermen had little legal recourse. Bloody protests resulted and continue. Simultaneously the fishermen and a local legislator ►

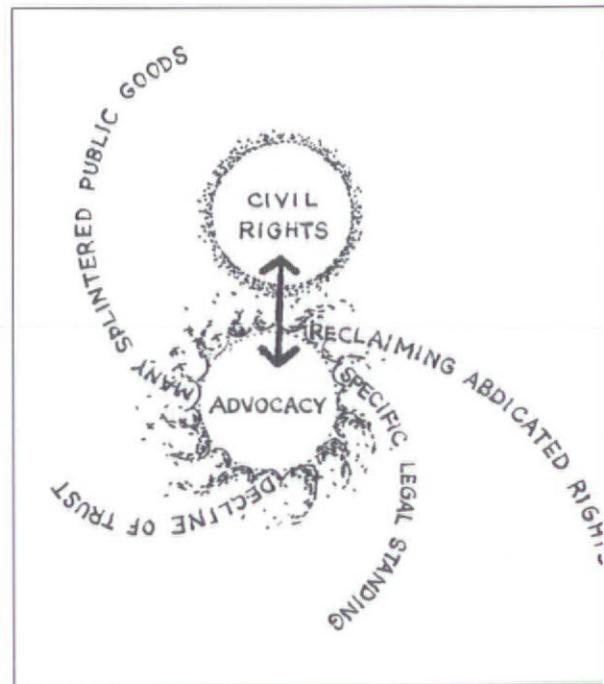
Map of Related Water Supply and Diversion Projects for the Binnan Industrial Complex



the white moderate, King argued, was his or her inability to choose justice over order. This could just as well have been a professional challenge to designers whose very work was creating order.

Although the civil rights movement attended primarily to legal, educational and social issues, the physical city was the battleground. Plans for urban renewal and freeways in low-income black neighborhoods became the focus of civil protests and local participatory design.

Advocacy planning was created especially to serve the civil rights struggle by preventing urban renewal (often called “Negro removal”) and freeway construction from destroying the neighborhoods of low-income



ethnic groups. An advocate planner, as Paul Davidoff described, served low-income ethnic clients as a lawyer who exclusively advocates his or her client’s interests.<sup>6</sup> Most of us who practice community design today were initiated into participatory design through advocacy.

Advocacy planning required extensive community participation, not only to create plans that met clients’ needs but also to empower low-income residents to improve their lives and environments and to be active in community life. This new approach to planning embraced disorder to achieve justice, forever changing American city design. Even more, the civil rights movement rekindled local participatory democracy in every aspect of city life and changed the way citizens participated in city making.

*Reclaiming abandoned rights.* When poor black people began protesting urban renewal, more affluent citizens smugly thought, "That couldn't happen to me" but were shocked to realize they, we, none of us, had power over our local environments. We couldn't get something as simple as a stop sign put up in our neighborhoods because we had given up the right. Six months of bureaucracy separated us from a decision and then the answer might be, "We'll study it." Citizens all over the country began reclaiming what Tocqueville observed was a characteristic of the U.S. — local associations doing what government might be expected to do.

*Specific legal standing.* During the civil rights era, national community development legislation required widespread and maximum feasible participation at the local level. The Model Cities Program ushered in institutionalized participation in poor neighborhoods and federal revenue-sharing required similar participation in each city.

This led to extraordinary local success stories. Yet in some cases, citizens attained more power than they were willing or able to assume responsibility for. Power required too much time, effort, unselfishness and vision to assume the responsibility.

The environmental impact review, part of the landmark National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) required citizen granted local citizen participation special legal standing. Unfortunately, it largely conferred the power to stop projects, an unexpected by-product of the legislation.

*Many splintered public goods.* Few people questioned the growth-oriented plans of cities until the civil rights movement ushered in advocacy planning, which called for planners to develop separate designs for poor communities and to argue for those plans regardless of the larger public impact. Citizens of all persuasions realized that the single city plan didn't represent them either. In fact, that single agenda didn't represent most people.

Advocacy, conceived to address issues of racism and poverty, inspired multiple city and neighborhood plans representing multiple vested interests. This effectively ended the idea of a single, citywide public good. These many splintered plans, each seeking positive outcomes for individual neighborhoods and homogenous cities, have debilitated wholistic, visionary public plans. Any broad city vision is likely to be attacked because it violates some narrow, vested interest.

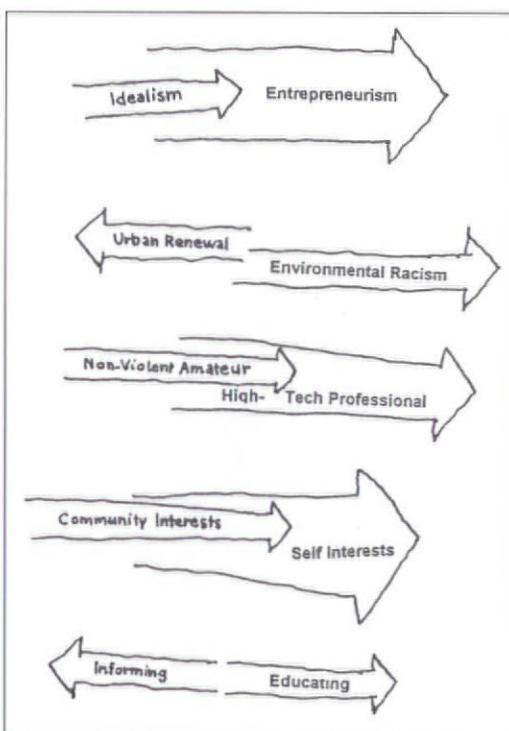
*Decline of trust.* Until the 1960s, citizens had increasingly trusted scientists, elected leaders, police authority, city managers and experts who formulated city plans. But the urban renewal and freeway battles associated with the civil rights movement called that trust into question, replacing it with skepticism. Bogus science justifying growth and environmentally disastrous projects turned skepticism to disdain; citizens began to dismiss science as relative in every case because hired-gun scientists gave competing scientific spins on almost every decision of short-term economic import. As a result, the value of science, truth, experts and rational planning was debunked.

This is worrisome because society has a desperate need to integrate the best available knowledge about biodiversity and sustainability into decision-making at the local level. The mistrust of leaders is shortchanging participatory efforts, since local participation never fulfills its potential unless there is strong local leadership.

#### Recent Shifts in Participatory Design

The civil rights movement impacted participatory design directly and profoundly, yet transformations in local participation since then make it wildly different than it was during the civil rights era. Although it is impossible to characterize participation throughout the country, five trends can be noted.

*From idealism to entrepreneurship.* For a moment, the civil rights movement held up local participation as



*Opposite page: Advocacy planning served the civil rights movement but it has had profound unintentional side effects that run counter to its original goals.*

*Left: Participatory design has been transformed dramatically over the past three decades. Some trends evolved, some revised, all became more complex and varied depending upon local context.*

*Opposite page, top:* Grassroots groups once were subjected to top-down, manipulative education programs. Now they use sophisticated educational campaigns to influence plans or introduce innovations.

*Opposite page, below:* Successful participation requires a careful balancing of private and public interest.

the great hope for equality and a just society. Early participatory designers, drawn to that hope, were extraordinarily idealistic. Most of us didn't know how to do what we were trying to do, but luckily the establishment people were blockheads, providing opportunities for grassroots action.

Doing participatory planning and community development now is extremely difficult compared to thirty years ago. Idealism seldom suffices. Bureaucrats seldom make mistakes. They protect their interests through risk management and standard operating procedures. Legal minutiae govern every aspect of collective action and community development. Moreover, community design now depends on knowledge of real estate, bank practices and housing loans, not just good intentions and protest. As a result of these factors and more, idealism has changed to entrepreneurship.

*From urban renewal to environmental racism.* Urban renewal and freeways were the main threats to poor

tance, and it remains much more difficult to accomplish any collective goal in a poor neighborhood compared to a wealthier one.

*From non-violent amateurs to high-tech professionals.* Participatory methods have transformed from unsophisticated techniques inspired by the non-violence of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., to high technology games, entertaining stimulations, mediations and modified nominal group techniques. Can you imagine Saul Alinsky's shock at this evolution? From baked beans to computer-generated alternatives and standard operating procedures. But with improved participatory techniques, designers are much better equipped today to design meaningfully with citizens.

*From community to self interest.* Local participation during the civil rights era revolved around community purpose, hence the name "community design." There was a sense in poor neighborhoods that "we are all in this together." The assumption was that if



*Above left:* Racial exclusion targeted by the civil rights movement evolved from color barriers to equally insidious environmental racism.

*Above right:* Today participatory design entails high technology games, simulations and mediation techniques.

neighborhoods thirty years ago. Now these places face new threats, as well as old ones only recently discovered. The power of advocacy to address issues of race and poverty has not only been diluted, but also is being used to exclude poor people of color.

For example, as wealthy citizens mastered local participation and environmental risks have become clearer, poor communities have received a disproportionate number of unwanted and dangerous land uses. Such environmental racism restricts access to desired resources and poses health risks unimagined several decades ago.

Issues like these have split the focus of participation between positive community development and resis-



leadership were developed in poor communities, then those people would stay and be leaders. But, many of those people, when they get resources, abandon their neighborhoods.

This is exacerbated by the fact that every community desires to achieve what the social class just above it has. The environments that people create represent the best possible life they can achieve. That life is often defined by others; environmental status-seeking results in a bigger house, a private pool, a wider street, a fancier gated neighborhood — all of which diminish community.

Public life in America is always a combination of community and private interests. The balance shifts from



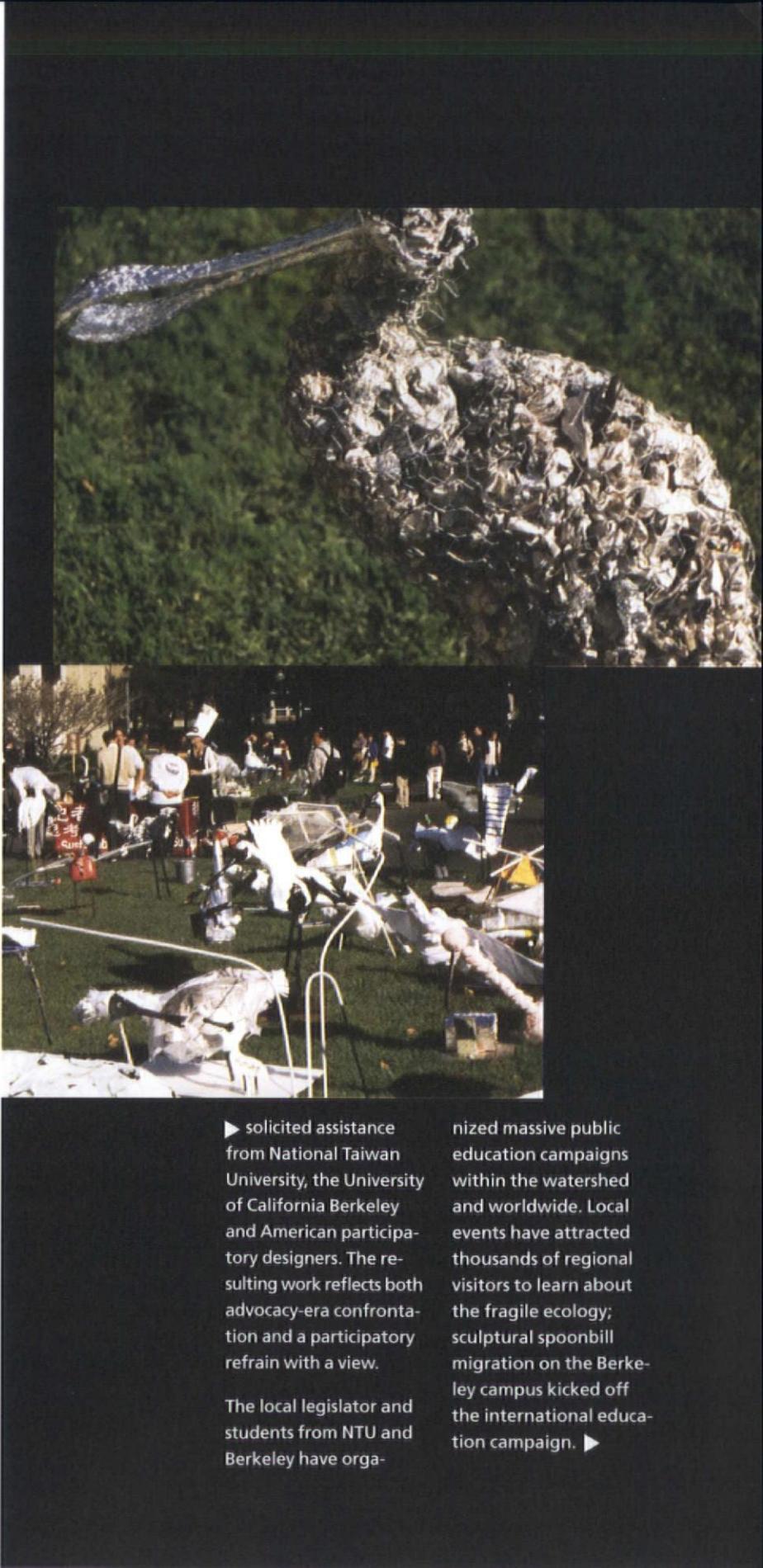
time to time in one direction or the other. Citizens today are more openly motivated by self-interests; they are usually short-sighted; local efforts are increasingly segregated along class and racial lines; citizens are increasingly sophisticated in their knowledge of participation law; and often they are fearful. NIMBY, LULU and NOOS actions, among others, motivate citizens; SLAPP suits counter.

*From informing to educating.* When Arnstein characterized the different degrees of citizen participation thirty years ago, she looked unfavorably on the use of participation as a process to inform or educate the public; after all, government representatives often simply informed citizens of plans after they had been finalized.<sup>7</sup>

Today grassroots groups use sophisticated educational campaigns themselves to influence the outcome of plans or introduce innovations. They frequently do research to discover what other groups have done in similar situations, using newsletters and computer networks that link thousands of local groups. In addition, they often do primary field research aided by scientists, specialists and advocacy organizations. Education, once aimed to manipulate citizens at the grassroots, has become one of the most powerful grassroots tools.

**Wanted: A Refrain with a View**

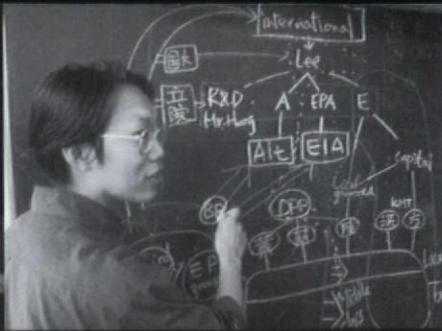
Participatory design today remains rooted in historic values dear to American citizens. Associations, civil disobedience, local control, populism and more are



► solicited assistance from National Taiwan University, the University of California Berkeley and American participatory designers. The resulting work reflects both advocacy-era confrontation and a participatory refrain with a view.

The local legislator and students from NTU and Berkeley have orga-

nized massive public education campaigns within the watershed and worldwide. Local events have attracted thousands of regional visitors to learn about the fragile ecology; sculptural spoonbill migration on the Berkeley campus kicked off the international education campaign. ►



► Alternative plans have been developed by a team comprised of Berkeley and NTU scholars and experts from various fields working directly with local fishing groups. Local fishermen had to teach scientists and designers about little-known patterns of nature and culture through many day-long boat trips to remote wetland locations (little scientific study had been done on spoonbill behavior but fishermen knew their patterns intimately). Local workshops are tedious, often going through three translations for each speaker. Scientific maps had to ►



alive in grassroots planning. More people participate in local planning than ever before, and more people volunteer their time, energy and talent. Local participation enjoys unprecedented legal authority, educative capacity and technology.

Unfortunately, the result in many cases has been gridlock, not participatory utopia. The capacity of participatory design to address issues of local environmental racism and poverty diminished as advocacy became the planning approach of choice for other interests. Effective advocacy allowed powerful, local interests — both new and old — to dominate, creating many splintered special interest plans, all empowered by participatory process and associated legislation with the capacity to block other actions. Conflict mediation, the best recent participatory innovation, is seldom able to do more than divide the public good among the most powerful interests.

This is due to more than advocacy gone mainstream. A second problem is that local control has become the political dumping ground for intractable problems. Third, local control has been illusory, granting the power to stop actions without investing localities with the powers they need to solve problems. As a result, citizens are unwilling and unable to accept responsibility at the neighborhood level. Fourth, non-local authority has not provided leadership to balance selfish neighborhood interests which, in turn, have discounted most attempts at visionary leadership. Fifth, advocacy planning was particularly ill-equipped to develop and use the integrated science and systemic interconnectedness required for ecological sustainability.

Advocacy served and serves a purpose. Otherwise, it would not have come to so dominate American city making. But we are faced with a challenge to invent new, local participatory planning processes that better address today's issues. I believe the new process most needed to replace parochialized advocacy creates what I call a local refrain with a view.

### A Refrain

The practice of local participation must be shifted dramatically towards a more holistic and inclusive view, which can be illustrated with a musical analogy. Advocacy encouraged the public to sing new, individual verses until no one remembered the words of the civic refrain — what we sing with everyone else in our communities. We need to learn how.

Certainly, methods that teach empathy and demonstrate systemic interdependence should be used more in participatory processes. Techniques such as role-playing, listening, Lost on the Moon and shared goal-setting shake participants out of their narrow, vested interests. Transactive, community-building techniques like these follow a welcome trend towards consensus building and away from adversarial planning and litigation. But they often create a refrain without a vision, uninspired status quo places.

### A View: Visionary Synthesis

To achieve a refrain with a view requires a visionary synthesis that takes into account various vested interests, their content, personality and power. This synthesis must reveal opportunities that most people have not recognized, extract broad civic vision from community participants and culminate in the creation of inspired places that touch the heart. This can be done by a visionary leader like Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, S.C., a citizen with public foresight like Zel Young in Mount Vernon, Wash., or a grassroots group with regional perspective like Friends of Runyon Canyon in Hollywood. But in many cases, multi-insightful participation depends on the community designer. This is a vital role, often abdicated in favor of facilitation or mediation.

Participatory vision can be nurtured through creative processes like synectics, Take Part workshops, getting a gestalt and other architectural approaches to problem-solving. Visionary consensus can be implemented incrementally by employing community building and visionary approaches in concert, simultaneously. For example, consider the use of cross-linked participation in contrast to segregated participation.

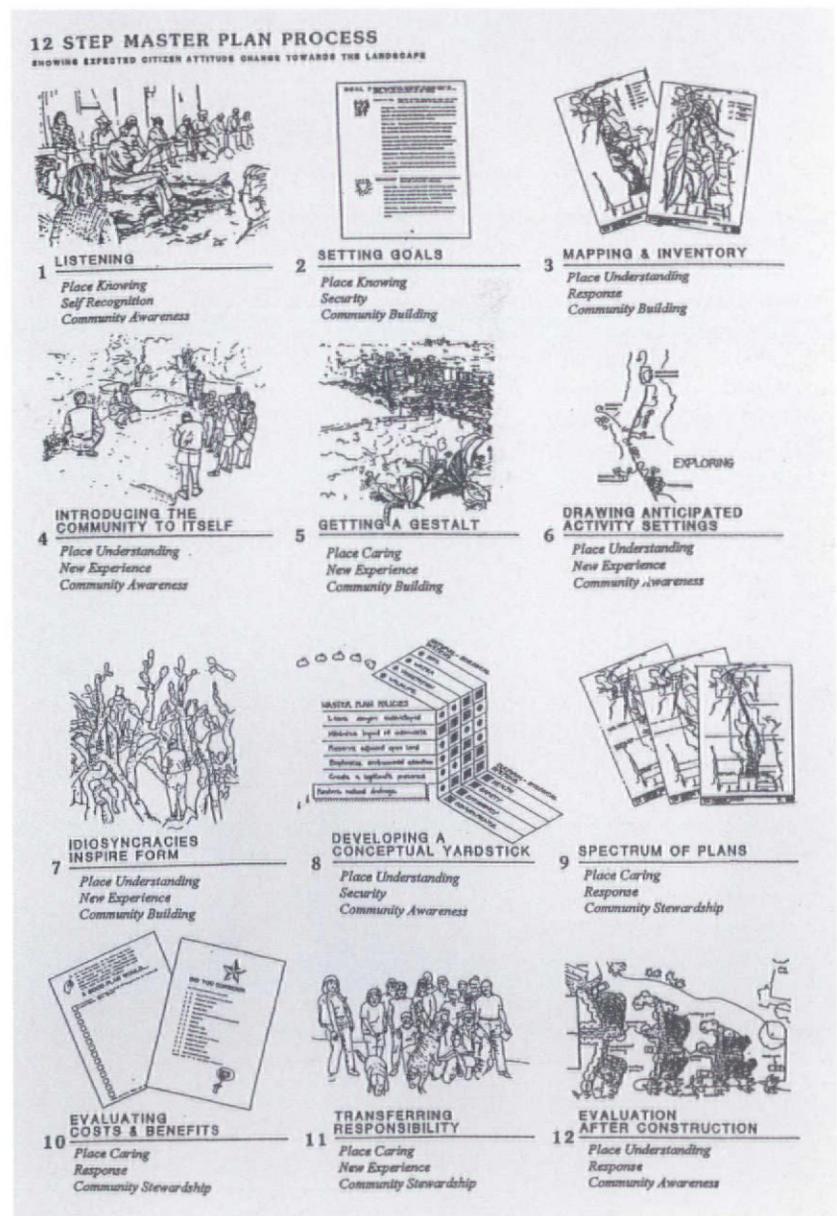
*Cross-linked participation.* Balkanized participation produces local groups with similar goals moving on parallel tracks without communicating or cooperating, and, in many cases, undermining outcomes that could be mutually beneficial. Cross-linked participation begins to stitch these efforts together, breaking barriers of locality, region, class, ideology and culture.

For example, the Chesapeake Bay experiment engages citizens throughout that watershed to cooperate to improve water quality by identifying local sacred places. The idea is that people who are at odds over local private property rights and no-growth battles will most often agree about the specifics of places that are sacred — unique to their locale and essential to

community life. When the discussion moves beyond the ideological growth — no-growth barrier to a place-specific dialogue, a strong consensus can emerge about what to protect and where and how to develop.

The first demonstration experiment was in Union County, Pa., a hundred miles away from the bay along its main tributary, the Susquehanna River. Local people, who had little interest in the bay's water quality, identified creeks and drainageways that were central to the community's identity. These watershed features were among the most sacred to people, regardless of their position on property rights. A first-ever plan is now being developed by the county in cooperation with local citizens to preserve the watercourses and manage water quality. In this way, non-

The twelve-step participatory design process used by the author has expected outcomes from each step in terms of design content, place relationship, human fulfillment and community development. The process relies on orderly steps to promote fairness and the use of science and more disorderly steps to encourage creativity and innovation.



Right: Community design workshop for a regional open space network in the Santa Monica Mountains.



Far right: Research on the Soquel Demonstration State Forest near Santa Cruz, Calif., depends on citizen science volunteers. The project seeks to restore steelhead trout and coho salmon to the Soquel watershed.



Below right: Workshops in the community design process in Yountville, Calif., involved citizens walking the town under scripted guidance to define what the most memorable images of town were, then developing specific design plans to enhance or improve those memories.

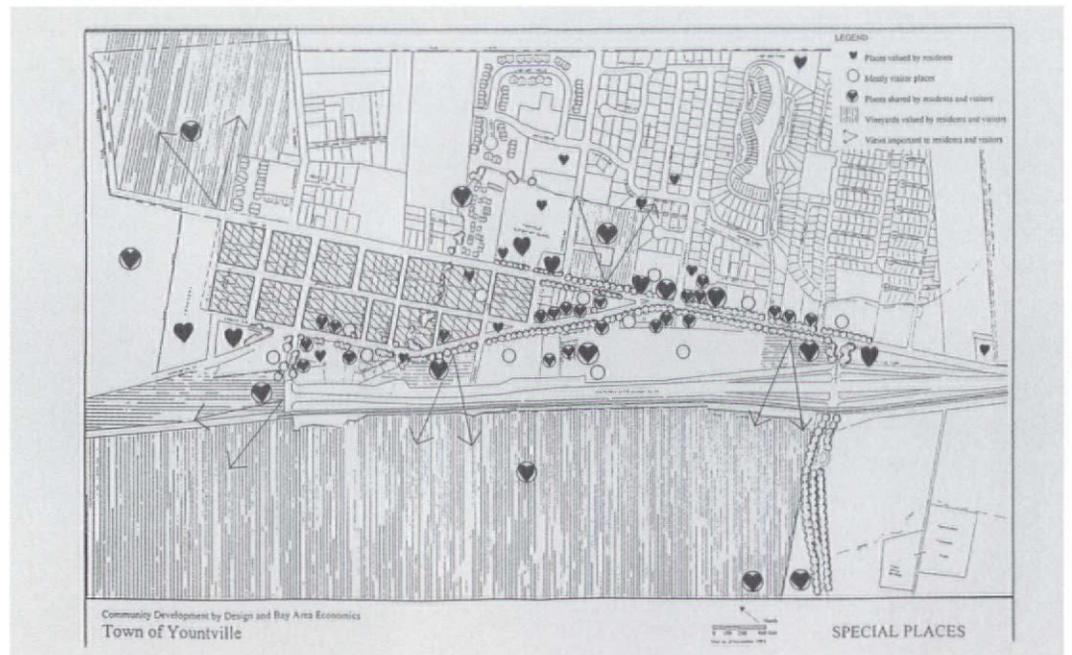
point source pollution problems can be addressed in many different communities, not by federal mandate, but by getting local people of different persuasions to jointly identify what is most important to their sense of place.

*Renewable participation.* To be relevant today, participatory design must be able to contribute directly to the creation of sustainable communities. Of all our institutions, local participation is best situated to help reform personal day-to-day unsustainable behavior because it represents the local part of thinking globally and acting locally.

The key is to institute participatory processes that help increase people's awareness of ecological implications of their choices about housing size and daily transportation; and that encourage people to consider the cumulative impact of their actions, confront local groups with their recent unsustainable politics, offer

concrete examples by building more sustainable local habitats, and create local institutions that can endure and thrive beyond knee-jerk crises.

Combining urban ecological science with participatory methods requires experimental approaches to city-making like Urban Ecology's *Blueprint for a Sustainable Bay Area*. The *Blueprint* was developed by hundreds of Bay Area residents working with international experts on various aspects of sustainability. The focus of these interactions between lay participants and scientists was a series of educational workshops in which experts made presentations then worked with citizens to apply scientific and technical principles to designing the Bay Area. This forces the science experts to turn their knowledge into specifics of city design and forced citizens to consider complex data rather than NIMBY approaches to urban development.



More importantly, an overhaul of NEPA to encourage sustainable innovations and discourage frivolous litigation would make local participation more sustainable. The EIR process that resulted from NEPA legislation has two major problems regarding creating a more ecologically sound city.

First, the act suggested that the preservation of nature is good, which works well in wilderness environmental reviews, but in urban contexts preserving nature is not the same as preserving biodiversity. As a result, the EIR review forces subdividers to set aside open space ("nature is good"), but most often the open space preserved is in fragments that do not link core habitats, eventually resulting in biodiversity loss. Or the EIR finds a low-density subdivision perfectly acceptable, although it violates many principles of sustainable city design. All you need to do to mitigate negative environmental impacts is widen streets. NEPA needs to be revisited to strengthen principles of urban biodiversity and sustainable city design.

Second, the EIR process needs revisiting to strengthen protection of poorer communities. At present, environmental review leads to dumping unwanted land uses in poor neighborhoods and prevention of social service uses and access to open spaces in wealthy neighborhoods. Wealthy and – or professional communities use the participatory of legal rights of NEPA to abuse its intents.

Third, the process is so bureaucratized that it stifles creativity in making cities more sustainable. Changing the rules would lead to a period of experimentation that is sorely needed.

Fourth, the citizen right to sue leads to frivolous suits that are driven by selfish interest, not the public good. A clarification of biodiversity and sustainable intents should limit legal action.

*Reflective participation.* The increasing ability to decentralize education provides the possibility to localize science and thereby reduce mistrust of it. More thoughtful, even meditative, local participatory design should result. One model is the Conrad, Montana, Study Group, which has met for years to research, discuss and think about alternative actions for the town. The step in conflict resolution of listing areas of uncertainty, the Agricultural Extension Service, Friends' meetings and citizen science create foundations for other reflective participation.



► be localized. Decisions are infrequently made at workshops, requiring instead thoughtful family discussion out of public view.

The alternative plan rejects the petrochemical complex and reallocates water to fishing, aquaculture, ecotourism, value-added industry

and high technology. A coastal highway is likewise rejected because of damage to the wetland upon which the existing and future fishing economy depends. Wetland critical for the spoonbill survival are set aside for conservation and fishing.

Urban development is directed to existing ►





► towns and away from fragile habitats. Eco-tourism experiments have been widely popular. An ecological center is on the drawing boards and a salt museum has been proposed. Local organizations have been strengthened though the participatory effort and have made unusual cross-linked coalitions with competing towns and the few supportive government agencies.

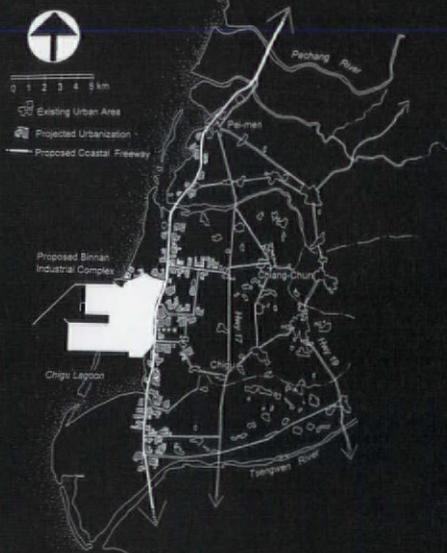
In spite of all these participatory success, the environmental assessment of the petrochemical complex is still likely to be approved. It is not clear what action will then be required but the combination of international outrage and local empowerment constitutes a new force in grassroots community design in Taiwan.

—Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

Projected Growth with Ecotourism and Green Industry



Projected Growth with Binnan Industrial Complex



To elaborate on one example, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology brings together ecologists and volunteers who are trained to do research in complex processes like the dispersal and spread of diseases. Important discoveries about conjunctivitis, among other research topics, have been made through this program.

Neighborhood science similarly monitors water quality, tree health and toxics in communities around the country. In the Soquel watershed near Santa Cruz, Calif., the state forestry department is engaged in ongoing research to determine how to improve the salmon habitat. Citizens volunteer to do fish and insect counts under the supervision of field scientists. Improvements to streamside vegetation, gravel and stream banks and changes in forest practices have significantly improved fish habitat and urban water quality.

*Refocused participation.* We need to refocus on the fundamental reason participatory design was embraced thirty years ago: environmental justice. Readjusting the vision of “Letters from a Birmingham Jail” in today’s light offers three day-to-day practica:

- (1) Local participation can best enhance a sense of community when that intention is consciously pursued, even at the expense of other worthy objectives.
- (2) Local participation can overcome environmental injustices only when the process precludes pushing those injustices onto a less powerful locality.
- (3) Local participation can empower the disempowered only if it does not continually empower the already powerful.

Advocacy alone cannot be expected to solve environmental injustices. Approaches like filing *amicus civicæ* briefs and cross-linking to benefit poor communities need to be championed.

*Local checks and regional balances.* For a refrain with a view to work most effectively, however, new forms of governance are required. Effective community participation depends equally on local empowerment and strong non-local authority — with a dynamic, continuous tension between the two.

This requires two counteracting forces, one closer to the grassroots, the other closer to the top than present city and county government. The grassroots must be empowered with the authority and responsibility for positive local action. This empowers neighborhood

government with some of the authority of present city and county government, which it would replace.

The non-local balance to local control is best situated at both the national and regional levels.

This requires empowerment of regional government with a clear delineation of jurisdiction, preferably along bioregional lines, to balance parochial interests and to enforce ecological sustainability and environmental justice.

This duality should spawn visionary, self and community interest planning that engages people at the grassroots with real power, face-to-face decision-making and caring, yet is balanced with bioregional authority. This would place appropriate value on incrementalism, yet prevent narrow, local focus without larger public vision.

### Conclusion

There remains extraordinary power in collective, grassroots participation. Groups still are able to do things together that they could never do independently.

Although there is nothing inherent in the process of local participation that guarantees positive change, it is one of the best investments of time and energy in effecting positive personal and city metamorphosis.

But local participatory design needs another major reformation. We must invent techniques, processes, policy and legislation that support that reformation. In this article, I have outlined the characteristics of a new form of participation in community-making.

Down with parochialized advocacy! Up with a refrain with a view!

### Notes

1. Local participation refers to citizen participation in community design, often called participatory design or grassroots design. Although each of these has a slightly different meaning, they are taken here as a single entity, more alike than different.
2. This section borrows heavily from lecture notes for a course, "Citizen Participation in the Planning Process," taught at the University of California, Berkeley. I am indebted to Marcia McNally and Ed Blakely for their ideas.
3. In practice, only the opinions and participation of land-holding white males counted.
4. How these ideas related to community development is described in R. Warren, *Perspectives on the American Community* (New York: Rand McNally, 1973).
5. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in T. Lowi, Ed., *Private Life and Public Order* (New York: Norton, 1968), 45-54.
6. Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31:4 (1965), 331.
7. Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35:4 (July 1969), 216-224.

# A Regional Blueprint for Sustainability

Marcia McNally

Working for fifteen years as a planner with expertise in citizen participation I have become annoyed, troubled and perplexed at how and why the advocacy approach has come to yield such poor results. So I took a break from private practice to pursue more proactive work with Urban Ecology, Inc., a San Francisco Bay Area-based non-profit.

people representing an array of interests. That remarkable effort of collaborative listening, learning and debate, resulted in the *Blueprint for a Sustainable Bay Area*—a book and vision that have a good chance of steering the region in a sustainable direction.

I began work after Urban Ecology had experienced a false start. Initial efforts to work on the book had stalled in age-old, inertia-inducing debates about population control and carrying capacity. The vision was having a hard time getting off the ground. My first few weeks were spent interviewing the previous participants to learn what went wrong:

- the process had not been much fun,
- the grassroots nature of the organization had resulted in a lot of discussion but not much production of a vision,
- a tremendous amount of work needed to be done in terms of content, and
- the group was nervous about putting its ideas out and being criticized.

Following this assessment I worked with a writer, book designer and researcher to propose a collaborative but product-oriented process. Visual in nature, the process involved the creation of a "thumbnail," or small-scale sketch of the book, that



Top: Vision forum walking tour of the Oakland Estuary. Photo: Marcia McNally

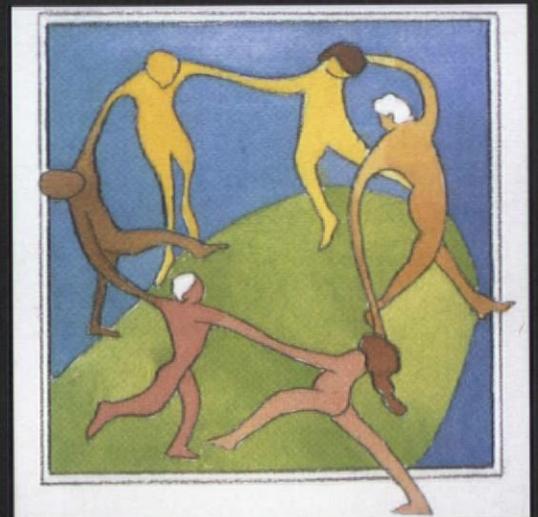
Right and below: Icons from the *Blueprint*.

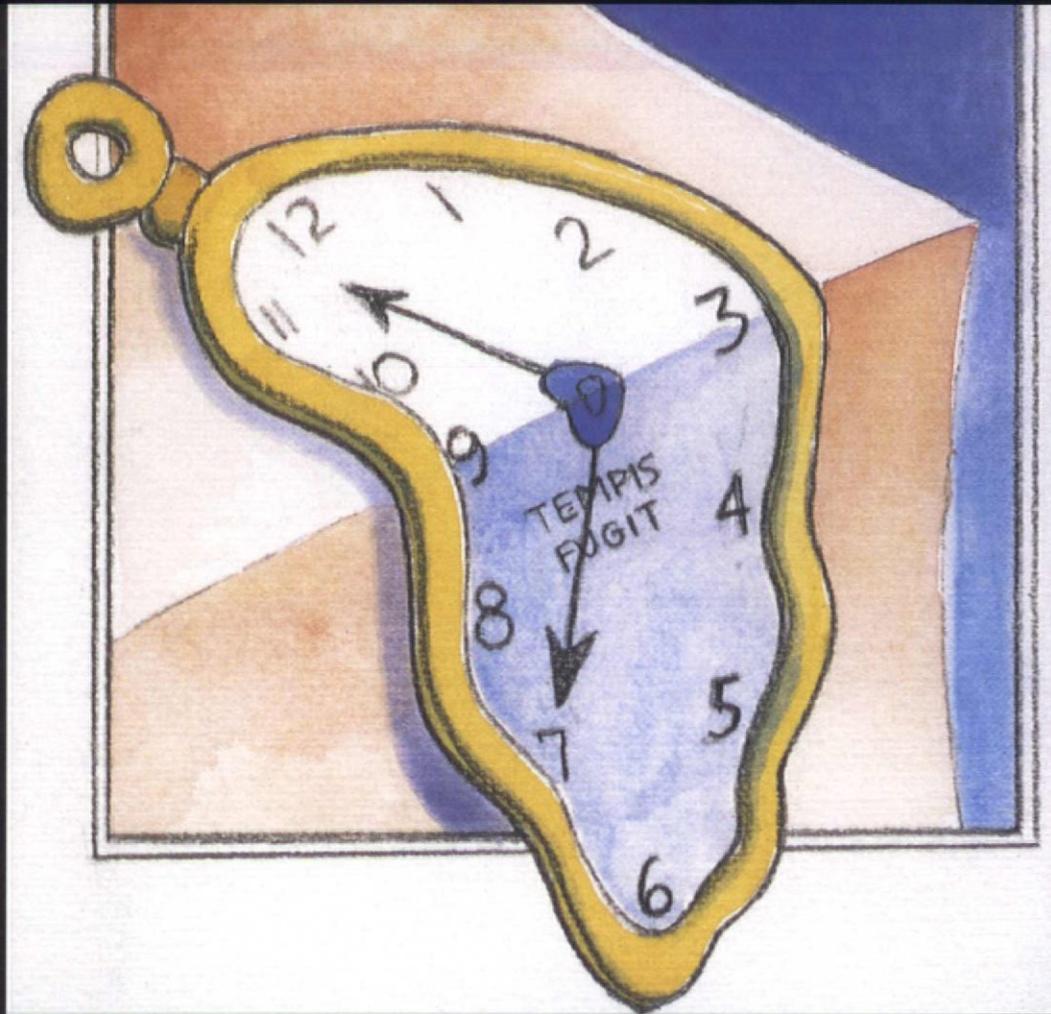
Graphics: Virginia Hobart, © Urban Ecology

My hypothesis was that the non-profit sector, while small, could be a powerful convener of non-traditional partnerships and a successful initiator of change. In the end, I learned that by reshuffling the actors, redefining the unit of analysis and reapplying my tool kit of techniques, I could once again tap the positive side of the human spirit.

For many years Urban Ecology has advocated for sustainable development. Yet the Bay Area faces significant issues of housing, natural resource degradation, traffic gridlock and economic parity. When I signed on in 1995 to direct the *Blueprint for a Sustainable Bay Area* project, the group had concluded that a vision and action plan were necessary to right the course, and that the region was the only geographic scale at which to stimulate civic discussion.

Being participatory in nature, Urban Ecology knew the only acceptable approach was the active involvement of a broad-based community of people in both defining issues and articulating solutions. A small team of us helped the group develop a highly structured process for reaching out to hundreds of





would evolve with input and ultimately become a master storyboard or illustrated manuscript.

The book-writing process was augmented with a series of ten vision forums, at which Urban Ecology members could put forward ideas and debate them with experts. Morning panels typically included people from sister organizations, university faculties, government agencies and the business community. These advisors, as they came to be known, were chosen for their expertise and because we knew they would be important allies in the future. Afternoon design charrettes, walking tours and facilitated workshops gave participants a chance to test ideas aired that morning.

Concurrent with the forums, Urban Ecology staff prepared research papers based on the literature and on dozens of interviews with experts in the field. This thinking was combined with forum data and graphic proposals to produce a preliminary storyboard. Then the Blueprint Team (a work group comprised of staff and board representatives) would meet for dinner and debate content. Once the entire book was outlined in this way, the master storyboard was sent to the advisors and the board for review.

This approach had several benefits. The members' desire to participate was satisfied, we were able to test ideas with our experts and we reached out to many people in the region engaged in sympathetic efforts, which gained recognition for Urban Ecology and created future advocates for the product. Furthermore, a clear process with measurable outcomes and products, deadlines and budget allocations guaranteed forward movement because it forced the Blueprint Team to come to agreement and move on.

Recognizing that building a sustainable Bay Area depends on engaging the region's residents, we knew the book needed to be written in a user-friendly, jargon-free style and we needed to check our ideas with typical residents before we finalized them. So we hired a lay focus group, eight people who represented the geographic, ethnic, age and occupational diversity of the region. The group met with project staff four times, during which members were taken through exercises developed to stimulate thought, focus discussion and gather input.

The reality of the choices faced by our focus group, primarily suburbanites, created empathy and gave the group a powerful role. Often, when haggling over a point, a Blueprint team member would ask, "What would the focus group say?" Probably the



a car-dependent suburb before they would be willing to act differently, and we had to show how our proposals would effect people's quality of life.

The Sustainable Seattle indicators project provided a good model for portraying the big picture in small windows that were understandable to lay people, because the indicators could be understood as symptoms of distress. Following this lead, the *Blueprint* depicts a region at risk in ways that ring true for most residents:

most substantive turnaround was the acknowledgment by the team that if seventy per cent of the region's residents live in suburbs, the book had to say something about these communities if it were to have any impact. (Initially, some board members wanted to call for tearing out the suburbs and replanting them as orchards).

Urban Ecology had known at the outset that many of the threats to the region were neither obvious nor personal. After all, the health of a region's air, water and land is hard to grasp, let alone get your arms around enough to embrace. Through the focus group, we realized that quality of life issues would provide a toe-hold for building a constituency and focusing the vision.

Very early on, focus group members made it clear that our argument had to be non-threatening. As far as they could tell, we were asking them to recycle (which they already did) and "freeze in the dark." We had to provide a compelling alternative to their dream of a single family-detached home in

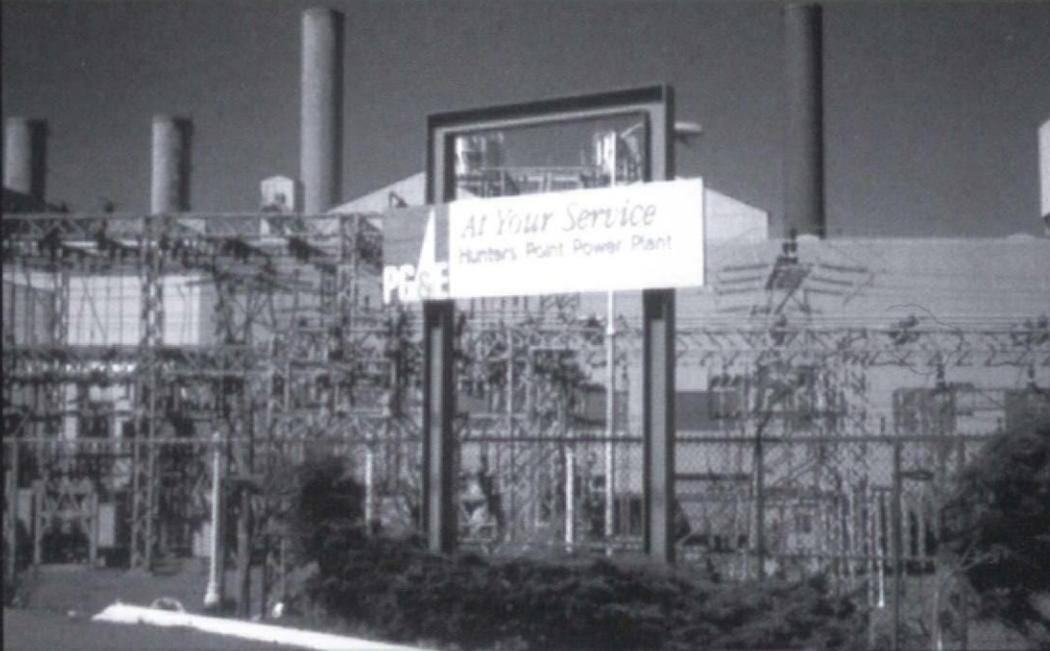
- In 1995 the Bay Area median house cost was the country's highest, and the average-size house cost \$188,107 to build. This makes it difficult for many residents, such as librarians, bank tellers and teachers, to afford decent homes.
- Freeways are near gridlock, with congestion having increased by 200 per cent between 1980 and 1990. By 2010, the average speed in Napa County, a predominantly rural part of the region, is expected to be eighteen miles per hour during peak commute.

In addition to conveying the risks, the *Blueprint* profiled local success stories to help catalyze action. The best cases illustrate how people with different agendas came together, agreed on what they had in common and defined a project that was mutually beneficial. Anticipating that some readers might want to get involved in similar projects, the *Blueprint*

*Above:* Typical land-use/ transportation pattern in newly developing areas.  
Photo: David Early

*Below:* Volunteers working on the Bay Area Ridge Trail.  
Photo: Steve Fiala, East Bay Regional Park District





Vision forum tour of Hunter's Point, San Francisco. Industrial and military uses have contributed to environmental contamination, raising public health concerns. Photos: Marcia McNally

offers action checklists, labeled "What You Can Do," on the same page.

About one year into the project we received a call from an Urban Ecology member requesting a community presentation on sustainability. The process of condensing the book into a 45-minute talk forced us to look ahead and develop an outreach strategy. Before the book was finished, we developed a presentation and field-tested it twenty times, using a feedback form to solicit audience input. From this process came the goal of giving one hundred talks this year (there are 100 cities in the Bay Area) by trained volunteers. Many of the audiences have their origin with people who participated in some way in the book-writing process.

The current challenge is how to respond to and direct the overwhelming enthusiasm for the ideas put forth in the *Blueprint*. Another challenge is to define implementation projects that forge new partnerships to address the larger social, economic and environmental challenges of the region. Urban Ecology has launched a "Progressive Developers Initiative" this fall through which infill developers, bankers, local government planners and affordable housing advocates will join the organization to develop a set of model ordinances to take to Bay Area cities for adoption. The seeds of this project came from a developer attending one of the 100 talks.

In the course of directing the *Blueprint* project, I have been reminded that planners must work hard to exploit hopeful optimism, that we must seek to capture the hearts and spirit of a place and its people. I think that visioning is today's best available form of



advocacy. But visioning must go further than developing a mission statement. It must involve collective identification of issues, broad-based participation in creating the solutions and negotiation of responsibility for implementation.

As advocacy planners, we must force ourselves to meet challenges that that didn't exist in Davidoff's time. We must recognize that the neighborhood is no longer the only important unit and learn to zig zag effectively across jurisdictional lines. My experience with the *Blueprint* gives me confidence that we can adapt our training and tools to this new field of action, but we need to have a strong infrastructure of regional groups like Urban Ecology behind us.

*For more information, or to purchase a copy of the Blueprint, contact Urban Ecology at 510-251-6330.*

## Sandy Vista Regroups and Rebuilds

Richard Pigford  
Karen Wight

Sandy Bottom, a six-square-block section of Birmingham's Ensley neighborhood, was once a thriving place with a strong black community. It was part of a segregated "company town" where black families lived a short walk from the Ensley business district and directly adjacent to the extensive steelworks of Tennessee Coal Industry (later part of U.S. Steel).

But the steelworks closed in 1984 and the neighborhood suffered years of disinvestment, unemployment and rising crime. Retired steelworkers moved out and their children left to pursue better prospects. Institutional apartment buildings served as public housing. By the early 1990s, only the poorest and most elderly residents remained, and the area was dominated by vacant lots and dilapidated shot-gun shacks. Buildings owned by absentee landlords became havens for drug activity and storm

Thirty new and renovated homes fronted by airy porches and well-kept yards testify to the turnaround in the community's outlook. Residents are becoming homeowners and the neighborhood has changed its name from Sandy Bottom to Sandy Vista. With housing construction expected to be complete in 2002, the neighborhood-driven revitalization process has extended to the historic commercial district nearby.

Work began in 1990 when the Bethel-Ensley Action Task Force (BEAT), a local church-neighborhood alliance, was founded. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose brick building stands at the center of the neighborhood, was one of the few institutions remaining in the area. Many members of this long-established church had grown up in Sandy Bottom and were committed to reviving their childhood home. In a door-to-door survey, BEAT learned that residents considered decent housing their most urgent priority. Lacking experience in matters of housing or development, they asked Tuesday Group for help.

Tuesday Group is a non-profit organization of Birmingham architects, planners and engineers who provide low- and moderate-income neighborhoods with design services. Working in partnership with grassroots organizations, its mission is to use the planning, design and construction processes as a means of building true community.

Work began with a visioning and planning process. Between thirty and fifty volunteers from Tuesday Group, BEAT and the neighborhood met in the Bethel Church basement every Tuesday evening for more than a year. The first and most important question was "What is important to the members of this community?" The most important thing that Tuesday Group designers did at this point was to listen.

It was important for everyone involved to understand there was no quick fix. Residents need time to become comfortable with participation and decision-making. This was the first time that many had publicly expressed their concerns about the neighborhood's decline or their vision for its future. Indi-



One of the weekly community meetings held at the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

drains were so inadequate that every rain brought significant flooding.

Now that is changing, thanks to a revitalization effort led by two nonprofits: a community development group known as BEAT and the volunteer design professionals of Tuesday Group.



Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church.

viduals began to realize the extent to which their values were shared by the larger community. Children saw their parents discuss their responsibilities and aspirations, and watched them take charge of their neighborhood's future. In the process, residents overcame fear and distrust, coming to know and recognize each other as neighbors.

Many design professionals approach this type of work on a consultation basis. They come in, blow out some ideas and leave believing they have done their part. Tuesday Group feels strongly that participants must invest themselves in a community long enough to understand its unique history, personalities, forces and resources. Only this kind of long-term commitment can result in the frank communication and trust essential to making a community design process work.

At the same time, residents with a long memory for broken promises needed immediate, tangible signs that change was underway. Events such as a clean-up day were important morale builders, attracting attention and participants from throughout the city, particularly from Birmingham's large religious community, which became a strong supporter of the effort.

During the first few months, BEAT participants and neighborhood residents identified five community goals that are still used to evaluate every design proposal. No one goal is considered any more important than the others:

- The church is the center of the community, both literally and symbolically.

- Safety, and the security it builds, is vital.
- The project must be inclusive: No one should be displaced by development, and the neighborhood should actively welcome newcomers.
- Children are important.
- Individuals must act together as a community.

These goals made it easier to evaluate the neighborhood's strengths and weaknesses and to propose development that would serve the community's best interests. Residents formed committees to explore appropriate solutions to issues like parking, street lighting, trees, setback distances, the orientation of houses and so on. Culs-de-sac were rejected in favor of retaining and strengthening the existing street grid. To encourage neighborliness, each new house would have a porch overlooking the street. Security alarms were chosen over burglar bars, which were considered inappropriate for the tone residents wanted to establish. With each decision, the residents were declaring their trust in and reliance on each other to provide security and a sense of community.

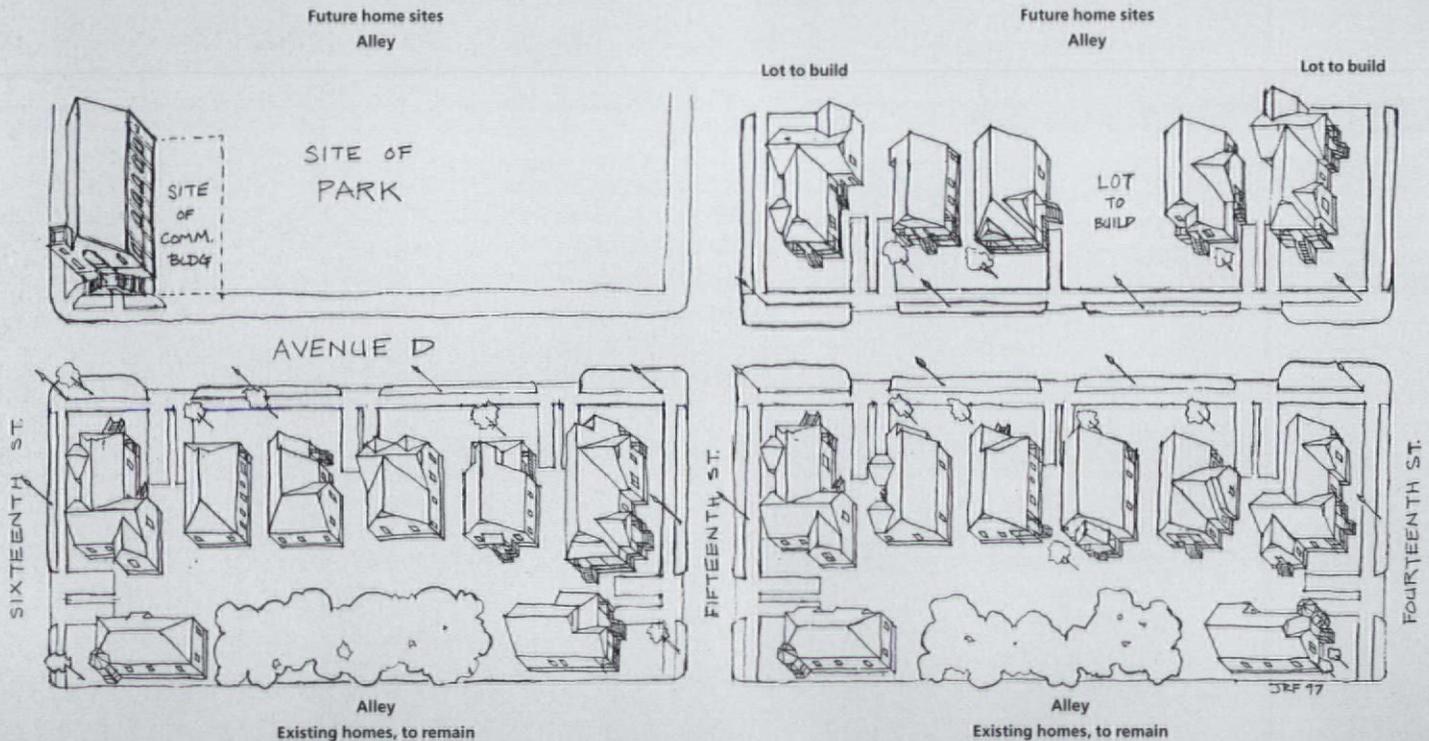
Tuesday Group's role was to organize these decisions so they followed a logical sequence. We were advising the community on how to become its own developer: we helped residents analyze the community's problems, understand specific design issues, set realistic goals and develop effective strategies. We also helped them network with other housing professionals, open doors to funding sources and negotiate with city officials and departments.

Land acquisition was an important early decision. Often groups acquire property in a scattered, piecemeal way, never putting together the critical mass necessary to make the significant, highly visible impact a revitalization effort requires in its early stages. We helped residents develop a master plan for the entire neighborhood first, then advised them on how the project could be accomplished in phases. When a single landowner effectively blocked development by holding out for an exorbitant price, the neighborhood was able to convince the city to exercise eminent domain.

With community input, the Tuesday Group developed design standards for new housing. For instance, standing-seam metal roofs were rejected because residents associated them with slave and low-income housing. Later, Tuesday Group architects worked one-on-one with each qualified homebuyer to design houses sensitive to their individual

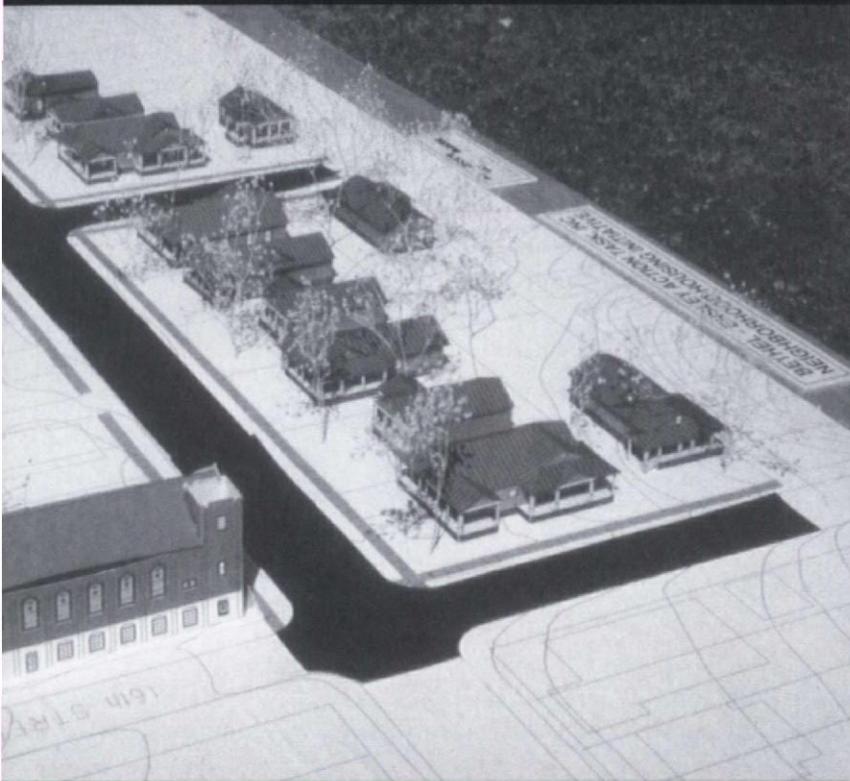
As families were moved from old to new housing, substandard buildings were torn down to make way for new development. Volunteer labor (much of it donated by local churches and corporations), discounted and donated building materials, and continuing oversight by Tuesday Group architects and engineers helped keep costs down and quality high.<sup>1</sup>

Collective decision making took longer but did not pose a hardship. Discussion simply continued until consensus was reached. Sometimes this resulted in better solutions than professionals might have conceived on their own. For example, debate regarding housing for the elderly continued for months. A mid-rise building had been proposed, but it did not fit the neighborhood's scale or character. A resident finally suggested building rental duplexes at each corner. With porches facing two streets, the duplexes tie the neighborhood together, encouraging development to round the corners and prevent-



needs and values while staying within the parameters of affordable housing.

ing any one street address from becoming dominant. They integrate elderly residents into the fabric of the neighborhood and give them strategic positions from which to act as a natural block watch.



Tuesday Group is often approached by community groups that want it to provide a recipe for doing what was accomplished in Sandy Vista. Frequently, these groups want to focus on housing or some other highly visible aspect of the work, believing that if they only had a better physical environment the social benefits would somehow follow.

What they, and too many design professionals, fail to recognize is that the changes in Sandy Vista have their foundation in intensive, continuing community organizing. Sandy Vista's vitality depends on residents building relationships with each other, establishing a consensus about the kind of neighborhood they wish to live in and working hard—independently and collectively—to make it happen. The physical changes were not simply good choices from a menu of design options, but an outgrowth of specific community imperatives formulated by the residents themselves.

The biggest challenge and continuing struggle for every initiative Tuesday Group undertakes is convincing people to become and stay involved. In Sandy Vista, continual, basic community organizing was the responsibility of BEAT. This was combined with a “show, don't tell” approach in which patience with long-term planning was combined

with visible short-term accomplishments that demonstrated change was underway.

Every community is unique, and the methods used and solutions reached must suit the circumstances. Design solutions must be sought in the context of the other dimensions of a community's physical and social experience. This work is not a project to complete, it is a commitment to a different way to live.

#### Note

1. New single-family homes were subsidized in part through the use of grants from local, regional and national foundations, churches and civic groups. The city government helped by contributing land. When combined with the numerous donations of labor and materials, such cost reductions allowed low-income families to purchase homes worth approximately \$65,000 for about \$42,000. As each family assumed their new low-cost mortgage, money rejoined the revolving development fund.

*Left: Proposed build-out of Sandy Vista neighborhood.*

*Above: Examples of newly constructed and rehabilitated homes in Sandy Vista.*

# Participation for Empowerment: The Greening of a Public Housing Development

Roberta M. Feldman  
Lynne M. Westphal

Participatory design and planning can help restore the balance of power in favor of people who typically have had the least power to effect environmental decision-making and exert control over the physical settings of their everyday lives. When misapplied, participation may become just another part of the status quo, and practitioners interested in social justice may unwittingly sabotage social change. Empowerment-oriented practices help avoid this trap.

social influence, economic resources, political power or legal rights.<sup>1</sup>

To achieve empowerment goals, participation must do more than merely inform citizens of new policies and programs; it must create opportunities for citizen control of programs and designs to ensure that they meet peoples' needs and reflect their values. At the same time, professionals must understand that they cannot simply endow someone or a group with



Lathrop Homes, a  
Chicago Housing Authority  
development on  
Chicago's north side.

Photo: © 1994 Richard E.  
Carter.

These empowerment practices place participation in the context of grassroots activism to understand the assets that people bring to their efforts, how people are already handling their own problems, what activities and outside resources are necessary to further peoples' aims and how their current efforts extend their capabilities for future action.

Empowerment is developed through an ongoing, accumulative process: experiences build up through repetitive cycles of action and reflection, which help people cultivate individual and collective skills and resources that help them effect positive changes in their environments and lives. These skills and resources can include psychological sense of personal control or influence, knowledge and skills,

power. Rather, design and planning practices can support specific strategies that people can use to improve the conditions of their lives.<sup>2</sup>

In our work, we use several objectives to guide our empowerment-oriented practices. These objectives overlap somewhat, and meeting all of them in any given project, although desirable, has not been possible. Moreover, not all are required to achieve empowerment outcomes.

*Exchange knowledge.* Professionals bring different types of knowledge to projects. The most obvious is the technical information necessary to undertake design or planning work, another is the knowledge to create alternative designs or plans that may not be readily apparent to the lay person.

The ability to innovate alternative futures, however, invites the possibility of abuse. Obviously, using professional knowledge to exert power over clients is antithetical to empowerment-oriented practices and is a pitfall practitioners must assiduously avoid.

Client groups also have critical knowledge—about their needs, interests, community history and other issues critical to a successful project. Thus, the essence of a successful participatory collaboration is effective two-way communication and exchange of knowledge.

*Contribute to the production of useful and satisfying material and spatial resources.* Does citizen participation result in better design and planning products? While participation may complicate and slow down the process, it also increases the likelihood that users needs and interests will be recognized and incorporated into designs and plans. Even with a superb built project, if completed without participation, the opportunity for cultivating other individual and collective resources is truncated.

*Attract other professional knowledge.* Groups need to know where to turn to answer critical questions and get necessary information. Environmental designers offer not only knowledge about their fields but also access to other expertise through their connections with other professionals. Lawyers, city agencies, nonprofit groups and universities all have expertise that may be vital to community projects.

*Support and build political resources.* Supporting clients in finding a voice that can be heard in the courts, city hall and other arenas is also inherent to ongoing empowerment. Assisting clients to build networks with people or groups that already hold power can help assure their current and future successes.

Political strength is not solely dependent upon relationships with politicians and bureaucrats. Community groups can gain power from the bottom up, through protests and other everyday grassroots activism.<sup>3</sup>

*Support skill development.* “Knowledge is power” the adage goes, and so, too, are skills. New skills, whether in fundraising or tree planting, support empowerment. Participation itself is a learned skill—one that designers and planners can share with their clients.

*Build organizational capacity.* Power is often exercised through organizations, so the development of organizational capacity is critical to empowerment.



Lathrop residents take part in the greening project.

Photo: Ellen Glantz

Practitioners can support community organizing efforts either by acting as organizers or by being aware of how their actions support or hamper existing organizing efforts.

*Garner economic resources.* Empowerment includes gaining greater control of resources—from paint for a mural to empowerment zone funding. Designers and planners can assist communities garner economic resources like funds to complete a project, opportunities for employing community members in the project and donations of materials.

*Cultivate a sense of efficacy and critical consciousness.* Empowerment involves gaining a psychological sense of control and efficacy, as well as actually exerting control through political and legal action, economic strength and social influence. Practitioners can support this objective by identifying opportunities for modest victories that can bolster confidence or organizational capacity.<sup>4</sup>

#### **The Lathrop Homes Beautification Project**

Lathrop Homes, a Chicago Housing Authority development on Chicago's North Side, is home to approximately 3,000 people in twenty-nine low-rise buildings built in 1937. Its northern section is built around a large open area roughly the size of two football fields. Former residents report the area was park-like and used by residents for picnics and play decades ago.

But disinvestment has taken its toll. The buildings require substantial rehabilitation; chronically flooding basements and leaky roofs are just two major problems residents report. The central open space has also suffered; in particular, garbage trucks routinely drove across it, creating deep ruts and mud, ruining the area for resident use.

The Lathrop Beautification Project, begun in 1992 and completed in 1994, revitalized the central area and others in the development. The project grew from a partnership between two professionals, Ellen Glantz and Lynne Westphal. Glantz, who was a staff



Lathrop Homes, after the greening project.

Photo: Lynne Westphal

member at the Lathrop Boys and Girls Club, had completed several small greening projects with the children of Lathrop.

Westphal, a social scientist with the U.S. Forest Service, learned of these projects when Glantz participated in one of her research studies. Soon after, Westphal brought Forest Service outreach funds to Lathrop for another small greening project. This, in turn, caught the attention of Chicago's Department of Environment (DOE), which had recently received Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for environmental projects. Lathrop looked like a good candidate as DOE did not want to force projects on unwilling neighborhoods.

DOE chose a project site at Lathrop from a map, picking a riverfront location where officials thought they could improve river access and create a mini-park. Glantz and Westphal were concerned because this site was unimportant to Lathrop residents, particularly considering the degradation of the central open space. They were successful in shifting the agency's attention, and DOE allocated \$100,000 to revitalize the central space and other areas.

Glantz contacted resident groups and area churches to ensure the project was one the community wanted to pursue. Residents were enthusiastic and formed a new group, the Lathrop Beautification Committee, to work on planning and implementing the project. Glantz hired two residents as community organizers and brought in other organizations, notably Openlands Project, an open-space preservation group experienced in grassroots projects. These actions laid the groundwork for active resident participation with greater control over the design and implementation of the project.

DOE and the landscape architecture firm it hired, Tesca and Associates, held participatory design workshops in which residents indicated what landscape features they wanted; for instance, they specified no "messy" fruit trees. With this information, Tesca created preliminary design drawings for the residents' review. Residents then suggested changes, such as moving play areas for small children further from the existing basketball courts to give each age group their own recreation space.

Before planting could begin in the central open space, the garbage trucks had to be rerouted. This was a painful, year-and-a-half long process that nearly doomed the project. Ultimately, a new access road and Dumpster pads were built; the new plantings would be safe from trucks, and garbage collection for this section of the development would be greatly improved, something else that was very important to Lathrop residents.

#### Outcomes

In summer, 1994, the greening of Lathrop finally took shape. Residents, other volunteers and staff from DOE and Openlands Project worked together to plant trees and shrubs in the rock-hard soil. The entire central open space was tilled and reseeded, berms were built to act as natural seating around a revamped ball field and play areas, and a spray pool was built. One hundred trees and two hundred shrubs were planted.

The Lathrop beautification project was particularly strong in achieving several of the empowerment objectives discussed above. Professional and technical expertise poured in, and residents developed new, strong relationships with several agencies and city departments, most notably DOE.<sup>5</sup> Many of these

partnerships still thrive. The CDBG funds, significant new economic resources in their own right, were parlayed into funds that are still coming to the community. Not only was the central open space improved, but Glantz also recognized the tangible and symbolic value of a clearly visible physical change that reflects the residents' successful organizing skills and self-efficacy.

Several years after the planting, the trees and shrubs are doing very well. Residents, together with dedicated professionals, have changed and maintained a space in their neighborhood, once a neglected eyesore; now it is a safe and useful place, one where children play and adults socialize.

Ultimately, the beautification project has contributed to Lathrop residents' ongoing efforts to meet their need for safe and decent homes. The skills and resources they developed have helped them pursue new projects and in their quest for resident management. Residents and their partners in the beautification project have gone on to further environmental work, including projects along the river. One resident said "watching this development come back alive, it's really touched my heart."

#### Conclusion

The social justice goals of participatory decision-making echo the tenets of empowerment theory: citizens must have control over resources to effect their quality of life. Environmental designers have a significant role to play in contributing to social justice, particularly as they shape their practice to support empowerment. By focusing on empowerment objectives, rather than processes or products alone, designers and planners can help advance the social justice outcomes that first sparked interest in citizen participation, outcomes Hester and others feel we have lost.

#### Notes

1. See Julian Rappaport, "Terms of Empowerment/ Exemplars of Prevention: Toward a Theory for Community Psychology," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 15:2 (1987), 121-148; Sandra Morgen and Ann Bookman, "Rethinking Women and Politics: An Introductory Essay," in Morgen and Bookman, *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 3-29.
2. Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35:4 (July 1969), 216-224; Judith Gruber and Edison J. Trickett, "Can We Empower Others? The

Paradox of Empowerment in the Governing of an Alternative Public School," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 15:3 (1987), 353-371.

3. People with few economic and conventional political resources (e.g. women, minorities, low income people) rely on protest to gain some measure of control over their lives. Participatory design and planning can bolster expressions of empowerment and help prepare groups for further acts of everyday resistance.
4. Roberta M. Feldman and Susan Stall, "The Politics of Space Appropriation: A Case Study of Women's Struggles for Homeplace in Chicago Public Housing," in Irwin Altman and Arza Churchman, eds., *Human Behavior and the Environment: Advances in Theory and Research 13, Women and the Environment* (New York: Plenum, 1994), 167-199.
5. The following outside groups, agencies and individuals contributed to the Lathrop Beautification project:

*Nonprofits:* the Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicago, Openlands Project and its corps of TreeKeepers, Chicago Community Trust's Urbs in Horto project.

*Private firms and individuals:* Tesca and Associates, Waste Management Corporation, Adidas/World Cup Soccer, Cornerstone Partners; David Cotter, Cotter and Company.

*City agencies:* Department of Environment and North Park Village Nature Center, Chicago Fire Department Engine 56, Department of Streets and Sanitation, Department of Cultural Affairs, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Park District, City of Chicago/Cooperative Extension Service Green Corps.

*Public officials:* Mayor Daley, Congressman Gutierrez, Alderman Occasio.

*Other public agencies:* USDA Forest Service North Central Forest Experiment Station, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois Department of Transportation, USDA Americorps.

*Local groups:* Friends of the Chicago River, Lakeview Citizens Council; Lathrop Local Advisory Council, Lathrop United for Resident Management, Mary Crane Nursery, Church of Good News.

## Are We Prepared to Participate?

Jocelyne G. Chait,  
Margaret E. Seip

Randy Hester's assessment of citizen participation is timely in light of the current proliferation of community-based planning initiatives across the country. These efforts, whether spurred by foundations, governments or universities, or stemming from good old-fashioned grassroots activism, could be considered harbingers of a resurgence of popular democratic activity. Meanwhile, more and more mainstream planners and designers are embracing participation as a means to assure and improve the outcomes of their work.

Yet these efforts may not be leading to more democratic, equitable and sustainable solutions to the problems confronting society. For example, there is an inevitable tension between streamlining a project and democratizing the planning and decision making process. Invariably, those directing the effort abbreviate the time allocated to building relationships and engaging in dialogue. Mutual learning, so critical to this work, is cut short, and professional elites and narrow local interests often dominate.

In reminding us that participatory practice is more often used today to promote the interests of powerful and affluent citizens, Hester calls attention to another problem. Participation is not only misled at the top, it is misguided at the bottom. But is advocacy to blame?

In his critique of this tradition in planning practice, Hester equates advocacy and the participation that empowers it with parochial power politics. The problem, however, is not necessarily with advocacy, but with the cultural environment in which citizen participation occurs. If we are unable to establish a culture of participation, the parochial planning Hester characterizes as advocacy will prevail.

Are we prepared to participate? Our "winner-take-all" society values individual achievement and material wealth above collaboration and collective endeavor. As schoolchildren, we are taught to compete and protect our self-interest; as adults, our waning interest in political engagement has weakened our ability to identify ourselves as members of a broader community.

Calls for broad inclusiveness too often assume community participants come on equal footing. In reality, while they contribute their life skills, experiences and crucial knowledge about their neighborhoods, they are often disadvantaged in terms of access to resources, time, technical skills and knowledge of government practices and terminology.

For participation to be more than hollow rhetoric we need a serious reconsideration of our educational underpinnings—the values, ethics and principles we learn in our homes, communities and schools.

We should begin at an early age to develop the awareness, skills and capacity necessary to serve as responsible, entitled members of civil society and participate effectively in the development of our communities. Education for participation should include critical thinking, organizing, listening and negotiating skills. It should build environmental literacy, understanding of government process and appreciation for the interrelationship of issues and problems in our society. Above all, it must inculcate tolerance, compassion and caring.

Several efforts to do this are currently underway in primary and secondary education. They include the Urban Network national curriculum project for elementary schools, the City of Neighborhoods program of the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, and several of New York City's "New Visions" public schools, notably the El Puente Academy for Social Justice and the Benjamin Bannecker Academy for Community Development.

Citizen participation must be informed by a broader ethic concerned with equity and social justice in order to avoid more regressive outcomes, ranging from "not-in-my-backyard" efforts to the establishment of local militias. Respect for diversity and embrace of difference is not simply a matter of political correctness, it is the fundamental key to prosperity in a heterogeneous society.

## Up with Collaboration

David R. Godschalk

Responses

Randy Hester's call for a new approach to citizen participation strikes a responsive chord in those of us who have been frustrated by the subversion of advocacy planning. I, too, have seen misguided middle-class radicalism undermine broader community objectives in many places, including my home town of Chapel Hill, N.C.

Like Randy, I argued for more inclusive citizen participation in local planning in the 1960s and 1970s. My 1972 dissertation called for a collaborative paradigm that shared community decision making in order to facilitate innovation in design and planning. I initiated a popular course at the University of North Carolina on the theory and techniques of public involvement. But by 1985 my graduate students had convinced me to switch the focus of my course from participatory planning to development dispute resolution.

What had happened? Not only had the dominant view of governments as benign (if paternalistic) stewards of the public interest been shattered by the civil rights, environmental and anti-war movements, but also the middle class had been mobilized and learned all too well the techniques of advocacy planning. Instead of awakening an apathetic public to its community planning responsibilities or empowering those not being heard, local planners found themselves struggling to create enough consensus to gain approvals for comprehensive plans and to add enough community value to development projects to overcome stalemates.

I agree with Randy that structural reform of our governance system, at both regional and neighborhood levels, could be useful, but I do not expect it to happen soon. My prescription for dealing with the dilemmas of contemporary participation is less grand: focus on collaborative planning. Substitute consensus-building with affected stakeholders for divisive and adversarial advocacy tactics.

Design is a constructive act that speaks to positive human emotions and needs-creating versus tearing down, cooperating versus competing, rationality versus ranting. Opening the design process to include

people directly affected by a proposal can be a powerful lever for generating trust, credibility and consensus.

This can be difficult for professionals used to creative autonomy. But the fates of two 1990s mixed-use neo-traditional development proposals in the Chapel Hill area highlight the power of collaborative planning. One, University Station, was planned without involving residents of adjacent low-density subdivisions. County planners supported it as an antidote to rural sprawl. However, the proposal became mired in mean-spirited opposition over issues like density and traffic. Despite efforts to add buffers and reduce density, the neighbors had hardened their opposition and plan was replaced with a large-lot subdivision.

The other, Southern Village, was proposed in an area where residents, adjacent property owners and Chapel Hill planners had already hammered out an areawide land-use plan. The mixed-use proposal, which fit neatly into the plan, was approved without significant opposition and is well along in development.<sup>2</sup> The residents' involvement in the areawide planning process gave them ownership in the overall plan—enough to overcome Chapel Hill's no-growth syndrome.

Initially, participatory planners looked for answers to dilemmas of conflict and consensus in new theories of governance, innovation diffusion and social psychological exchange theory. The actual answers may be much closer to home, in the common-sense sharing of community form decisions with stakeholders through open, collaborative design and planning processes.

### Notes

1. David R. Godschalk, "Negotiating Intergovernmental Development Policy Conflicts: Practice-based Guidelines," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58:3 (1992), 368-378.
2. J. Earnhardt, "New Urbanism in Practice," *Carolina Planning* 22:2 (1997), 20-27.

## Five Proposals for Participation

Stephan Marc Klein

Responses

Randy Hester's article raises necessary, important and timely issues. I would like to expand his critique of participation and suggest additional directions that participation might take to achieve its original goals of a just, equitable and humane society.

*Participation as social control.* In addition to the benefits Hester mentions, it is also claimed that participation can ameliorate dissatisfaction and bind users to the goals of a project or its sponsor. Unfortunately, these goals are often contrary to the interests of those affected by the project and those who will use it. Participation initiated and controlled by organizational managers can deflect participants from focusing on critical, sometimes uncomfortable (for the sponsor) issues, such as class and other differences. It can also serve (as it has in many workplaces) as a form of confessional and a means for identifying dissidents and controlling or purging them.

*Participation that reinforces social inequalities.* Hester points out some of the benefits of collective action, such as redressing power imbalances. However, it is important to not lose sight of the differing, conflicting interests and power imbalances that can occur within participating groups. Too often participation functions to blur these differences, and thus reinforce them.

It is important to understand who participates in or dominates the process. If participation is to address meaningful social change it must not essentialize the community but, rather, develop means for empowering the disempowered within the community and for equitably negotiating differences.

*Compartmentalized participation.* Despite the putative intentions of the Founding Fathers, the U.S. is not a very participatory society. Most education in the U.S., from beginning grades on up, teaches people not to participate, to accept authority and the world as it is presented. Advocates of participation in design and planning should conceptualize strategies for implementing participation that connects to every aspect of life, especially work (including the workplaces of designers and planners) and education (including education for the architecture, design and planning professions).

Most education in the U.S., from beginning grades on

up, teaches people not to participate, to accept authority and the world as it is presented. This holds true for education for the architecture, design and planning professions. Proponents of participation, particularly those who teach, need to explore new pedagogies that encourage participation in decision making by students, that empower students to engage in such activities, and that motivate students to incorporate participation in their designing. In education, as in practice, process and product must be conjoined.

*Participation with a view.* Can there be an aesthetics, or perhaps multiple aesthetics, of participation? Projects that have incorporated participation tend to look rather ordinary, not unique. Issues of aesthetics and the symbolic power of the material world are, for the most part, missing from the discourse of participation.

Numerous studies in recent years from feminist and other perspectives have focused on the power that the built environment has to influence the thinking and actions of users, and how the environment has functioned in this capacity to reproduce inequitable social relations and support power interests. To fulfill an emancipatory agenda towards creating just and joyful environments, and not inadvertently produce a built world which undermines this agenda, proponents of participation must become concerned with formalist issues.

*Participation and social imagination.* Vision is often missing in the discourse of participation. If we harbor broad social goals, we need to articulate and discuss them, and then devise participatory strategies for achieving them, realizing that the social imagination is a moving target, not a fixed one.

# 1999 EDRA/*Places* Awards for Place Design and Place Research

## Call for Submissions

The Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) and the journal *Places* announce their second annual awards program, which recognizes the best in environmental design research and practice and will especially highlight the relationship between place-based research and design.

There are two award categories. **Place Design** awards recognize completed projects that demonstrate excellence as human environments. **Place Research** awards recognize projects that investigate the relationship between physical form and human behavior or experience. Up to three projects in each category will be recognized.

Anybody can submit a nomination. We encourage nominations from designers, scholars, researchers, public officials and citizens; especially from the fields of architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, planning, interior design, lighting design, graphic design, environmental psychology, sociology, anthropology and geography. There is no limit to the location of research or design projects. Projects must have been completed within the last five years. Projects that have already been published can be nominated.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at a special event during EDRA's 1999 annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 2-6. Winning entries will be published in the Fall, 1999, issue of *Places*.

### Sponsors

EDRA is a national organization of design professionals, social scientists and scholars. Its conferences and publications explore the relationship between people and their physical surroundings, suggesting how environmental design can be more responsive to human needs. Launched in 1968, it is the largest organization of its kind in North America.

*Places*, a *Forum of Environmental Design*, is an internationally circulated journal that covers architecture, landscape architecture, city design and environmental art. Its goal is to shift the debate about environmental design from the discussion of buildings, landscapes and art projects as singular, visual objects to the consequences they have in the environments that surround our lives. *Places* is sponsored by Pratt Institute and the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley and published by the Design History Foundation.

This program is supported by Funding from The Graham Foundation.

### Place Design

Place design awards recognize projects that help improve their setting by advancing a larger plan, repairing an unsatisfactory relationship or adding something that a previous design failed to provide. Place design projects should address a question of social importance, involve a place that is meaningful to a community or advances a societal goal, or explore how design can be configured to serve a broader constituency. They should address the interaction of people and the built environment.

Nominations can consist of individual structures, spaces or elements, or of multiple structures, spaces or elements that work together as a unit. They can involve the design of something new or the reuse of existing resources. Places must be recognizable as distinct within a larger fabric of relationships. The scale could be large or small, ranging from a local street to a civic boulevard, a community park to a regional greenway, a single room to a cluster of buildings and spaces, a monument to a family of streetscape elements.

Projects must have been completed within the last five years, with preference for those completed long enough to assess how well they function for inhabitants and/or users.

### Place Research

Place research awards recognize projects that study the design, use or management of places; pay special attention to the relationship between physical form and human activity or experience; and seek to inform design practice. Place research projects should enrich our understanding of how people interact with places from a behavioral, social or cultural perspective, how people experience places, or processes through which places are designed, occupied and managed.

All types of research can be nominated, including studies that provide background for specific designs or plans, evaluate recent projects, or document the form and use of established places. Projects should consider traditional public places like streets, parks and squares; quasi-public places like campuses, religious or commercial facilities; or private places that have a social nature or purpose, such as offices or special housing facilities. They should address a question of social importance or explore how designs can be configured to serve a broader constituency.

Research methods and findings should be carefully documented and clearly communicated. Projects should be grounded in the context of recent literature and practice, be repeatable and be able to be validated by peer review. Projects can revisit previous research, confirming, extending or challenging earlier findings. They should have broad applicability, informing design practice or teaching or setting the stage for further research.

### Jury

John Zeisel, Director, Heartstone  
Alzheimers Care; Winner 1998  
EDRA/*Places* Research Award

Mark Francis, Professor of Landscape  
Architecture, University of California,  
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Anne Vernez-Moudon, Professor of  
Urban Design and Associate Dean,  
University of Washington

Harvey Gantt, FAIA, architect, Ga

Frances Halsband, FAIA, architect,  
R.M. Kliment & Frances Halsband  
Architects; publisher of *Places*.

### Address questions about your entry to:

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### To obtain a complete set of rules and an application form, or to submit an entry, contact:

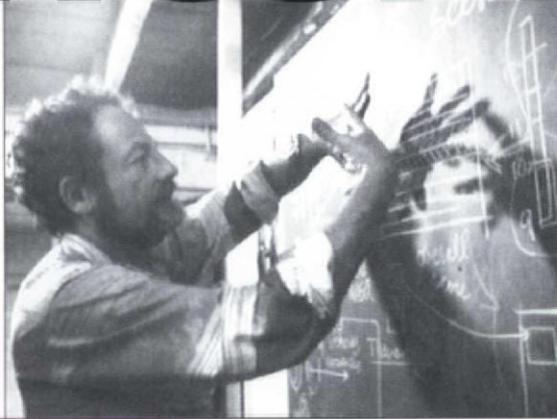
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Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

Dee Mullen

# Interview



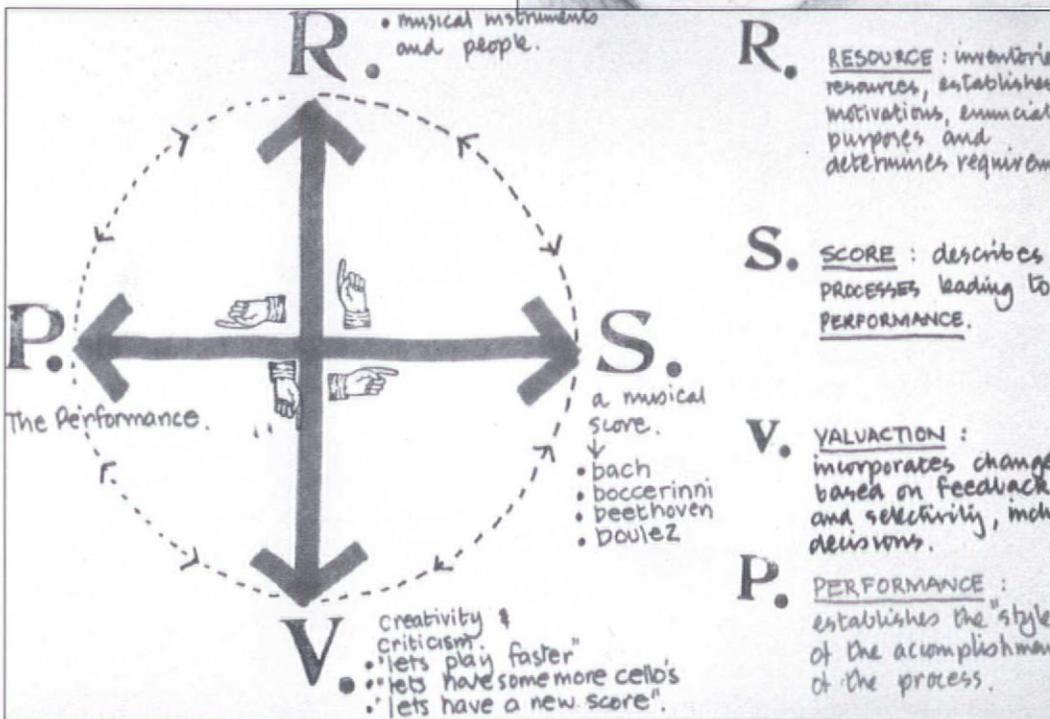
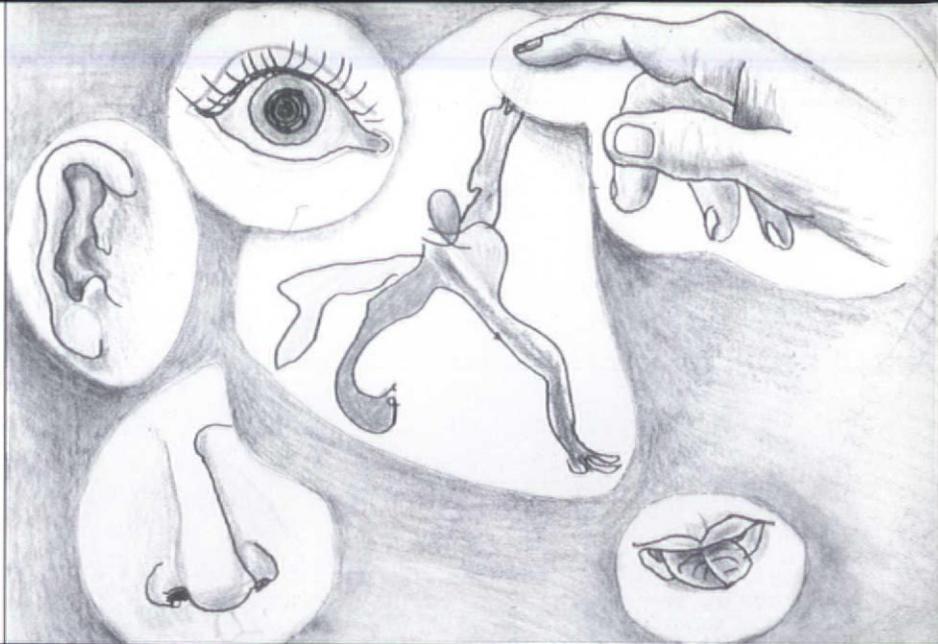
**with Lawrence Halprin**

**RANDY HESTER:**

The stereotype of participation is that the designer is just a technician and that there's a will of people, which is expressed through a workshop. A lot of designers and planners don't bring their own agenda to a workshop, they simply facilitate.

**LAWRENCE HALPRIN:**

I'm afraid that participation has gotten a bad name because if not done well it can hurt rather than help. It gets to the point where some workshops simply argue about things and don't get anywhere at all. Or participants say, "All we've run into is people telling us what to do or that we can't do what we want to do."



Above and below: Halprin's workshops encourage people to discover through their own experiences, using all their senses, and to think holistically. Left: Diagram of Halprin's RSVP Cycle.

Photos and graphics: The Office of Lawrence Halprin

Workshops for me are a way to reveal deep seated needs and desires about people's lives. When these are revealed they then need to go on and creatively accomplish a way to execute what people desire to have done. In that sense they are action oriented. But they start with a search for enrichment.

**HESTER:**

It's clear that the stereotypical way is not the way you operate.

**HALPRIN:**

The basis of our workshop is a sensory-emotional experience process, which uses all of the senses. The workshops are based on the idea of experience, interaction and communication, not just talking. They become more profound because the approach knocks out the usual seminar or lecturing

process that gets in the way of most creativity, because it informs people rather than allow them to discover through personal experience. The RSVP cycle represents a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, not a specialized one. The R, of course, is "resources." The S is "scores." The V is a term that I coined, "value action." It's a sharing and an evaluation that lead to an action of some kind. And P is "performance."

"Resources" are subjective and objective. The objective ones everybody knows about, like the location of the workshop, the economic base, the physical conditions. But when you get down to it, these are far less important than the subjective resources people's expectations, their feelings, their hang-ups, their attitudes, their hidden agendas.



# The four components of RSVP

RSVP Cycles are broken into four clearly defined components:

RESOURCES

SCORES

VALUATION  
and  
PERFORMANCE

For further reading see Lawrence Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment*, New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1980.

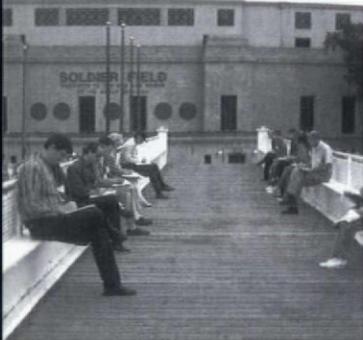
## RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE ←

→ SUBJECTIVE

existing physical conditions  
landscape of the area  
geology, geography,  
soil types, water  
topology, aquifers,  
fauna & flora  
population, ethnic  
mixing, social  
configurations,  
cultural/religious  
patterns  
economic base  
work habits & patterns  
shelter  
networks, transport,  
communications...  
Location of workshop  
workshop participants

Expectations  
Objectives  
Feelings  
Hang-ups & biases  
Attitudes  
Life-styles  
fantasies & dreams  
hidden agendas  
drives, ambitions,  
Ego trips  
Hopes & fears  
inhibitions  
Energy



Top: Chicago Lakeshore Drive workshop awareness walk, November, 1990.

Above left: Diagram of the "Resources" stage of the RSVP cycle.

Above: Oakland workshop awareness walk, July, 1994.

When you start with a project or a design, both kinds of resources are operating. Most people spend their time worrying about the objective form, but that isn't really what counts. In workshops where you're working with communities or there is an issue to resolve, the main reason people don't agree is they have different opinions, different relationships, different takes, particularly different life experiences. So we start off with an "awareness walk," which gets people on a common ground. We urge them to have certain common experiences during the walk or tour, but we don't tell them what the common experiences ought to be.

### HESTER:

This is the most widely copied of all the things you introduced. But firms that do participation now may not do it with the same objective.

### HALPRIN:

That's right. It's easy to copy the form. But I don't know whether people understand the reason for doing awareness walks, which is to build a common language of experience.

### HESTER:

I think people do. I think people have learned that, for example, if you get a group of people together,

they all disagree because they haven't experienced the place. They have an abstract preconceived attitude about it. "Oh, it's riddled with crime," or, "No self-respecting people would go there." And after you've gotten them to have that common language, they are more in agreement because they've experienced the real place.

### HALPRIN:

What is not understood is that scores are the core of what we do, of how we conduct workshops. Score is a term I use to generate an activity. It is based on the musical analogy of a composer putting notes down on a piece of paper to be handed to a musician to play. The aggregation of notes is called a score, if you extend that to an opera the score also can include other elements like words, costume, activities on stage, etc.

The elements of the score are location, time, space, people, activities and other things, too. Everybody has a different way of writing a score. In an environmental workshop, most people would say "Describe it," or "What does it look like, what is it made of?" But we ask, "What are your feelings about it?" "Make a sketch of the environment.

la re il mio pen-sier, dee vo-lar, dee vo thoughts-fly i-dly a way, fly a-way, i-dly

lar fly. (End on the left) FINE DELL' ATTO PRIMO

Left: Musical score from La Traviata.  
Below: Score from Chicago Lakeshore Drive workshop.

TIME-LENGTH SCORES (MUSIC & ACTION)

ENVIRONMENTAL SCORE

DRESS SCORE

ACTIVITY SCORE

DIALOG SCORE

MUSIC SCORE

ACT II.  
SCENE I—A country house near Paris. A salon on the ground floor. At the back facing the audience, a fireplace over which is a looking glass. A clock hangs between two glass doors, which are closed. There are also two side doors, one of which is open. Lights, and waiting-maids.

(Alfred enters, in sporting costume.)  
Out from her presence, for me there's no enjoyment.  
(Exit, drawn by Carl.)  
Three months have flown already  
Since my beloved Violetta  
So kindly left for me her riches, admirers,  
And all the haunts of pleasure,  
Where she had been accustomed  
To homage from all hearts, for charms transcendent.  
Yet now contented in this retreat, so quiet,  
She forgets all for me. Here, near my loved one,  
New life springs within me.  
From the trials of love restored and strengthened,  
Ah! in my present rapture past sorrows are forgotten.

ACTO II  
SCENA I—Casa di Campagna presso Parigi. Salotto terreno. Nel fondo, in faccia agli spettatori, è un camino sopra il quale uno specchio ed un orologio fra due porte chiuse da cristalli, che mettono ad un giardino. Al primo piano due altre porte, una di fronte all'altra. Sono tre luci, qualche sedia, l'uscio aperto per servitori.

(ALFREDO entra, in costume da caccia.)  
Alfredo  
Lunge da lei per me non v'ha dilette!  
(Depone il fucile.)  
Volaron già tre lune  
Dacché la mia Violetta  
Agi per me lascio, dovizie, onori,  
E le pompose feste,  
Ove agli omaggi avvezza,  
Vedeo schiavo ciascun di sua bellezza—  
E dal soffio d'amor rigenerato  
Solo esiste per me—qui presso a lei.  
Io rinascor mi sento,  
E dal soffio d'amor rigenerato  
Scordo ne' gaudj suoi tutto il passato.

DI MIEI BOLLENTI SPIRITI—ALL MY IMPULSIVE ECSTASIES (Alfred)

Di miei bol-len-ti spi-ri-ti il gio-va-ni le-ar-do-re, el-la tem-prò col  
All my im-pul-sive ec-sta-sies, Sprung from a youth-ful ar-dor, She hath sub-duc-ed soul

Note your feelings about how it should be used.”  
We score every single workshop all the way through. If anything influences people in this process most, it's how you write the score.

**HESTER:**

My sense is that when I write a score, it is leading people to some likely observations that may lead them to a conclusion. That is, I have some idea of what I think the outcome should be, or a direction. I might, on a scored walk, get people to stop where there is impossible traffic congestion, or where there is a beginning of a little park, and they would say it's obvious we should extend this greenery.

**HALPRIN:**

I face the same thing. I'll use a recent project as an example. The rest room looks terrible. There are twenty people standing outside all the time. And it's in the wrong place. Here is the most spectacular view in the world, right? and a rest room is stage center. So, naturally, my feeling is that it should be moved. Not only that, there's so much traffic and so many cars and busses parked around.

I don't have to say to people that this has to be taken out. I have to get them there so they will themselves understand, unless they disagree, that this is terrible. When we went there, we put them in a position where they would observe this park and this clutter. We used words like, "How does this make you feel?" We didn't say, "Take it out."

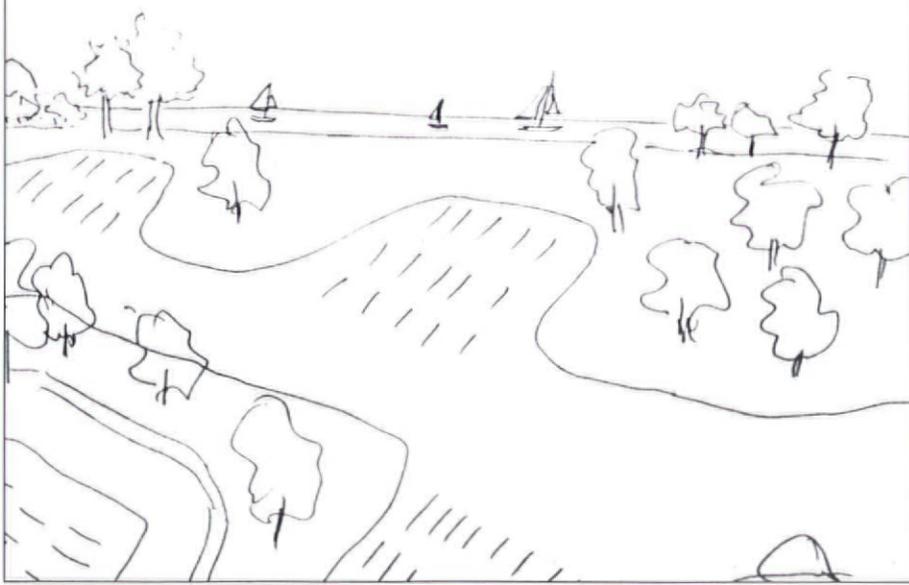
**S5**

around you. What activities are occurring around you?

(Continued)  
Traffic north & south on the drive, men working at a yellow truck, people parking a car, green bus going by on Waldron, flags blowing over Soldier Field, men mowling fencing, gulls flying, activity in lot by harbor. Feel like traffic is surrounding me, vehicles moving constantly on all sides, continuous roar of vehicles.

Imagine what you would like to see here in the future and include a view of the skyline. Use both words and drawings.

more green - grass, shrubs, flowers tree - buffer from traffic  
Better view of lake. More attractive approach to Soldier Field  
or McCormick Pl.





they have a common language. They've exercised their own creativity, not only personally but in small groups. They've had a chance to express themselves and be listened to. This point of course is absolutely vital, that is for people to feel they are really being listened to. And then, what is there to be contentious about? Maybe somebody doesn't quite agree with somebody else, but now they understand why they did this and why someone else did something else.

**HESTER:**

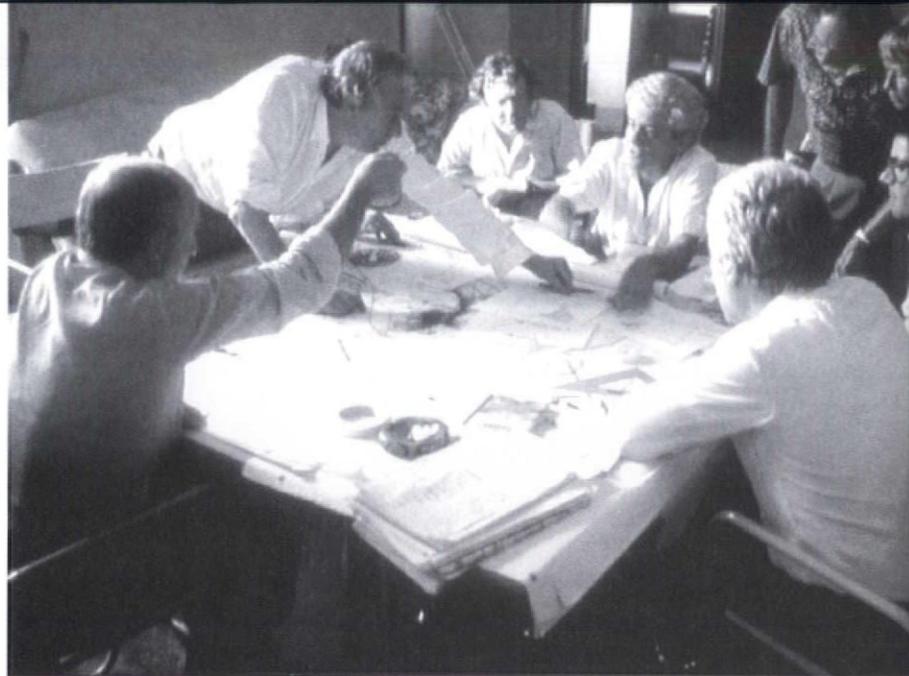
How is conflict mediation different from your collaborative design approach? Are there instances in which one is more relevant than the other?

**HALPRIN:**

As a workshop leader, I would say why don't you tell me what you think first.

**HESTER:**

My sense is, frequently, it means getting people to come together and divide up the pie. Now, they even train Forest Service personnel to do conflict resolution, like with the spotted owl and the timber industry.



Novoli workshop.

**HALPRIN:**

It's a compromise.

**HESTER:**

Somewhere, recently, I read that you don't like compromise.

**HALPRIN:**

Compromise means the outcome is not as good as anyone wants it to be. No, I don't like it. The trouble, of course, is that the spotted owl is not the *real* issue. The owl is being used as a manipulated device to save what should be saved. You have to get at the core of the real issue and develop something that will work and be creative. I don't know how I would approach that particular case, but a workshop would be a completely different way of working at it.

**HESTER:**

So it's not a compromise in your workshop?

**HALPRIN:**

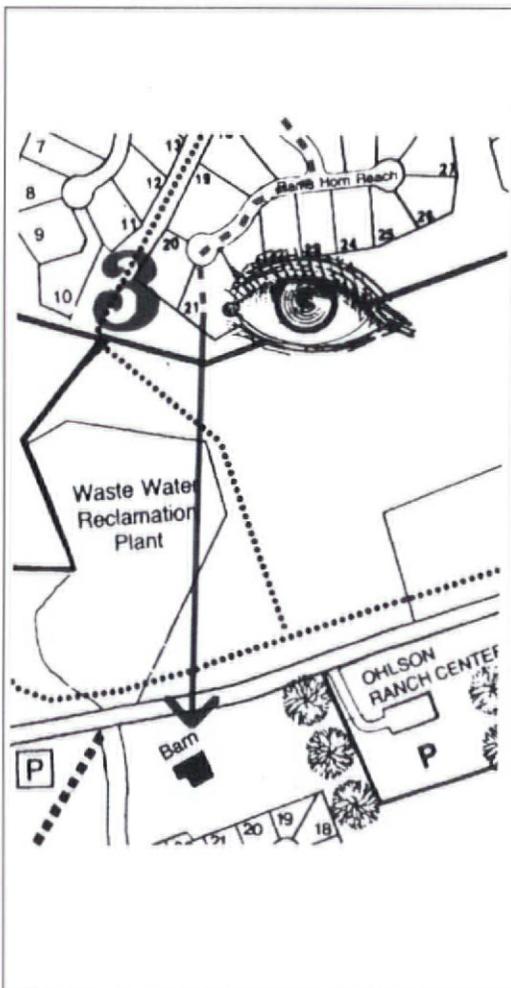
It's not a compromise at all. What you do is come to a creative consensus based on the situation, having worked through (in the awareness walks and other parts of the workshops) all the issues that people have confronted. Then based on the consensus, we design something that is wonderful for the situation.

**HESTER:**

What about situations in which you are fairly certain that something needs to be done, but the consensus is not to do it, or that it's a low priority?

**HALPRIN:**

We always have a resolution workshop at the end where we report back to people. If there are things



that still need to be resolved, or some things that I think ought to be resolved, we bring them up again.

Sometimes in a summary, I will say "Now, not very many people mentioned it and so I'd like to see if I have your agreement to add this to the list that I'll be working with."

If someone on this project had said, well, "It's very important to keep this parking," I would have felt that's wrong. I would have said, "Let's look at this more carefully and see what the implications are of keeping the parking where it is and what other possibilities there are. Often, in fact usually, other participants in the workshop make that kind of point. You're not passive in that sense during the workshop. And you're not saying, well, "Gee, this is a terrible idea. I think it's awful." All you really have to do is get people to see what this looks like in reality on the ground.

Sometimes we'll want to emphasize something because it doesn't feel right, or change the score to

ask people to look at it more carefully because of the implications of what they are doing.

**DEE MULLEN:**

We'll interject a new score.

**HALPRIN:**

And maybe a completely separate workshop at which we look at a particularly important and unresolved issue.

**HESTER:**

Have you ever gone through a workshop and had an outcome with which you really disagreed?

**HALPRIN:**

No. I try to keep, as much as possible, a passive attitude at the beginning and don't come up with all kinds of solutions that I have to defend that are then violated by the workshop. But what I won't do is, I won't take a point of view that forces the workshop to come up with a predetermined conclusion. I do not use workshops to manipulate people's thinking.

**HESTER:**

You really do learn from the workshop?

**HALPRIN:**

If I don't, then it's not a good workshop from my point of view.

**HESTER:**

I urge students to do participatory design because, for me, the most critical aspect is that it teaches them about working with other people. It teaches them about their own human ability. It reinforces democracy. But I think that there are few people who are able to use participation to produce extraordinary projects.

**HALPRIN:**

Participatory workshops are important for anybody to do. But there's a difference between the workshop and the final design. In a workshop we are not having group design. We're dealing with concepts, philosophy, attitudes, points of view. That's where a lot of this goes wrong, because any facilitator may get as far as this and then, if he's a lousy designer, it doesn't turn out well.

**HESTER:**

I think this is a serious problem. Participation now is contracted out just like hiring an engineer or an architect or whatever. And it's frequently completely separate.

**HALPRIN:**

The planning field has lost a lot of power and acceptance because planners are mostly people

Novoli workshop, Florence, April 1988.



who don't know how to design. They show people ideas and then it turns out to be completely different after some designer takes it over and does a poor job designing it. That's why we don't want to act as consultants. There's a lot of work between a general concept and what it looks like at the end.

**HESTER:**

So you want to do the project from participation all the way through the design.

**HALPRIN:**

I could never do a workshop and turn the design over to somebody else. I can imagine working with an architect whom I admire as part of a workshop, then carrying out the design together. But working with the design is a very important part of this process.

**HESTER:**

If participatory workshops are such a good thing, and other people want to do it, why isn't more of it good?

**HALPRIN:**

There is an issue of talent and training that nobody is willing to raise. An awful lot of people who go into facilitation aren't terribly well trained or able to extend the workshop from concept to reality.

**HESTER:**

To do the kinds of workshops you do requires a complexity of thinking, a capacity for different modes of thinking, and more ability than most people have. I'm not saying talent, but maybe that's the word for it.

**HALPRIN:**

If the workshop involves a design, then you either have to have talent as a designer or somebody else participate with you in the workshops, somebody to whom you can turn this over to and motivate from then on.

Talent infuses both. Running a good workshop and understanding all the elements that have to go into it and having the ability to bring the best out of people and so forth, is a talent. Setting up a workshop, designing the scores, running the summaries all require a lot of ability and training. Designing is also a talent. The two are separate talents, and they can be meshed. If the process is going to lead to a design, you need to link the two talents up. Bear in mind that workshops demand knowledges that are called upon continuously — psychology, active listening, empathy with others, score writing.



Sea Ranch design workshop, January, 1983.

**HESTER:**

Well, if you think about an artist, and you think about a person who leads workshops, those require very different sets of skills and place different sets of demands on a person. That's the combination that is unusual to find.

**HALPRIN:**

You can train someone to be a good workshop leader if they are an artist or designer and want to subject themselves to learning that. And some facilitators can design.

**HESTER:**

But they are different. For an artist, there can be a huge risk in opening up the process to all these other people. Professionals are also threatened; a transportation engineer is threatened by a workshop in which citizens are actually questioning traffic standards.

**HALPRIN:**

Also, a workshop is very difficult for professionals in other fields because they tend to want to take over. If somebody raises an issue, they say, "Well, we know that," and so forth. We always make the point that there are no experts. We're not asking you for your expertise. We're asking for your participation. As in a democracy, expressing opinions are not based on expertise but on human desires, programs, attitudes and intentions.

**MULLEN:**

We don't let them divulge all their information. We'll ask them at the beginning, as part of the discussion of resources, to present what we need to link up with, to discuss what's going on. Then, if a question comes up in the workshop, maybe we'll ask them to change hats and explain.

**HESTER:**

What about all the citizen participation today that really is blocking good stuff from happening? What would you do about it?

**HALPRIN:**

I would advocate this process. I'd insist that people come with an open mind, that they understand they will go through this process and abide by it. The guy who's preventing things usually won't participate in a workshop. Those activists and NIMBY's try to destroy situations by not participating.

**HESTER:**

You avoid that confrontation by creating a situation that diffuses it and turns it into a creative act. That's been your approach and it's very different than other people who have done participation.

**HALPRIN:**

I suppose there are times that confrontation has got to happen if people won't get together. But the more people that can be brought into this elective process of creativity, the more you can make it visible to people that this is joyful and that it results in adding a wonderful quality to people's lives, then more things could get resolved in a good way. But you can't force people into it. You know, the odd thing is that on a personality basis, I'm not really suited to do this, to doing participation.

**HESTER:**

Why not?

**HALPRIN:**

Like any designer, I want to take a pencil and design the thing. I don't like to be seen as a do-gooder, soft-hearted, sweet man because I'm not any of that. But I learned the hard way. Taking part in workshops is a remarkable process.

I first started on the RSVP cycles as a design tool. Not so much for myself, but for my wife, Anna. It happened because she went to Stockholm to do a performance. We got there and she had some people helping her from the outside who need to learn how to do it. She said I can't explain to these people what they should do. I had been working on scoring, so I said I'd run a score for them, and it worked. They could follow the score.

Then, I decided for fun one summer to do some workshops with students from different disciplines, starting with sculpting, painting and architecture. That was incredibly creative from my point of view. We weren't solving any problems. We were just doing creative things, and the experience was wonderful.

Following that summer's creativity workshop, which was titled "Experiments in Environment," I was in Texas developing a downtown master plan. Nothing I proposed seemed to work. The mayor, city council, developers and others who had commissioned the study resisted any real change to their city. I perceived they had problems which did not seem to them to need improvement or change.

At an elegant dinner that night I proposed we all enter into a workshop together to advance our planning effort. For some reason they agreed to try it and fortunately it was a resounding success. I remember some of the scores from that summer. I started with an awareness walk downtown. It was a very hot day, well over 104 degrees in the shade. Instead of driving around in their air conditioned cars they had to walk. Instead of eating lunch in an elegant restaurant they ate in a cubby hole that was hot and uncomfortable.

When the day was over they came back dog tired and demanded air conditioned buses, better transit, cooling fountains and trees. Their real life experience showed them what they needed to do.

**HESTER:**

Most of us who came into participation from civil rights came in from very different concerns. It was about empowerment, about activism. If you hadn't been doing participation already, it would have been much more difficult for us to convince cities to use it to address issues of justice and injustice. But we came at participation from a different angle, and I think that is why, in the end, that you, Larry, still get extraordinary pieces of landscape or city built that touches people's hearts, and the rest of us are still out here going over the next social issue or whatever.

**HALPRIN:**

It probably is, and I hadn't thought about it that way.

**HESTER:**

You saw participation as clearly a tool to improve design. I saw it as a tool to get in civil rights agendas. And the students today, many of the students today, see participation as a way of getting a job.



**HALPRIN:**

Yes. I think that's true. It concerns me because I can see what it means, what I do is very different. They're not wanting the same thing. They simply want to have some town meetings.

**HESTER:**

That's what is most distressing about the state of participation today. Because NEPA and other legislation requires citizen participation and gives people the right to use it to sue, eighty percent of the citizen participation in this country today is blocking actions.

**HALPRIN:**

That's right. It's engendering terrorism, a form of environmental and NIMBY terrorism.

**HESTER:**

It is really counter to getting creative solutions.

**HALPRIN:**

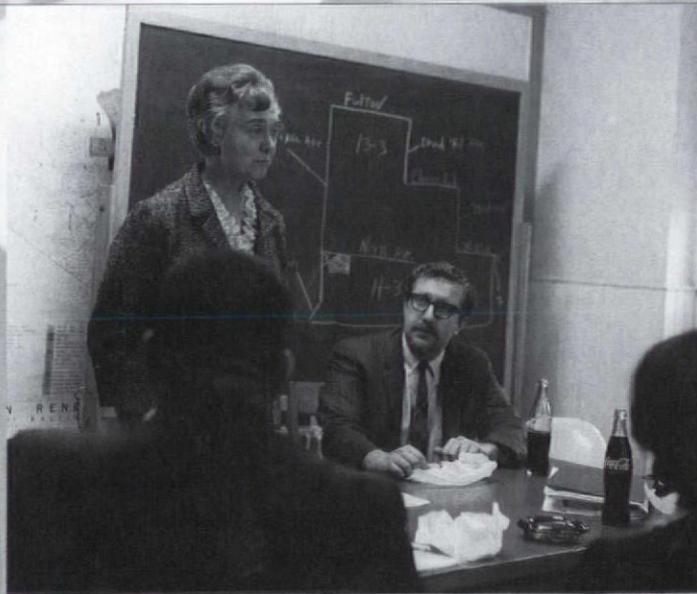
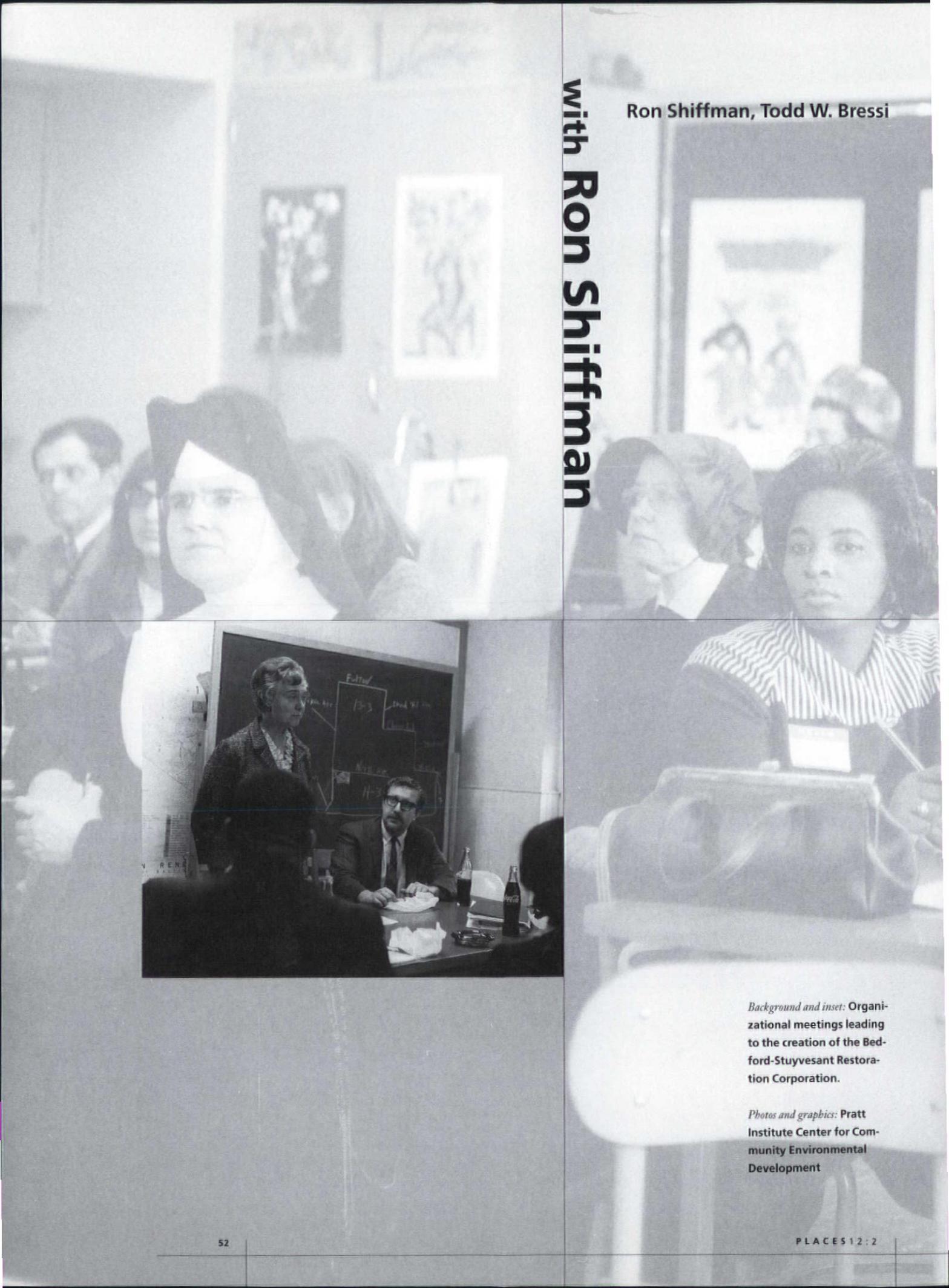
I agree. True participation is a process which takes issues of some complexity where there are different points of view. Within this kind of real-life situation our workshops allow people to understand, to experience, to carefully listen to each other and then allow them to creatively develop solutions

which are positive, perhaps different than anyone has thought of, and thus arrive together at a consensus of what and how to do what they have decided needs to be done. We constantly hear from workshop participants that in addition to solving what seemed like insurmountable problems the workshop process has changed their lives. It has opened them up to different and new methods of creativity — it has enriched their lives. Participating can be a joyful process!

Yosemite workshop, July, 1997. Photo: Jesse Stoudl

with **Ron Shiffman**

Ron Shiffman, Todd W. Bressi



*Background and inset: Organizational meetings leading to the creation of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.*

*Photos and graphics: Pratt Institute Center for Community Environmental Development*

**TODD W. BRESSI:**

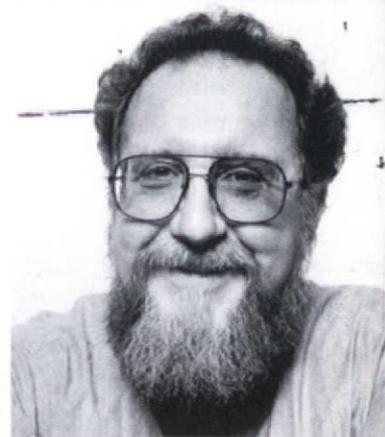
Describe your approach to advocacy planning.

**RON SHIFFMAN:**

Principally we are continuing to do what we started doing in the early 60s. We feel that there are groups of people whose voice is rarely heard when it comes to planning and development issues. And we feel

our earliest grant, we called our first two staff members "urban agents," based on that idea.

At the same time, one of my colleagues at Pratt, George Raymond, was concerned that communities needed better education in order for planning to take place in New York, that there was a lot of opposition to planning because people didn't understand it. He



*Left: Organizational meeting for Greenpoint, Brooklyn, 197-a plan.*

*Above: Ron Shiffman.*



that it is incumbent on professionally trained planners, architects and urban designers to work with those folks in an honest way so their needs and their goals can be expressed. This approach is rooted in our belief in a multicultural and pluralistic society. Different groups have different needs based on income, class, race and ethnic background, and those needs have the same legitimacy to be expressed through the planning and development process as those of the middle class or the elites.

This is not an approach that says the since the community feels a particular way, that is necessarily the right way. Instead, what is right is to listen and to hear what people have to say. We view participatory planning as a way of people engaging in civil society.

**BRESSI:**

What was the model for participation that you used when you set up the Pratt Institute Center for Community Environmental Development.

**SHIFFMAN:**

Our initial model was the writing of Paul Ylvisaker at the Ford Foundation. He was looking at the role of land grant colleges in working with rural areas, where they sent out rural agents to advise farmers. In

had more of a informational agenda in mind than a participatory one, or a mutual education process, or an empowerment model. He was a progressive planner and running into opposition on projects where he thought he was doing good.

Once we started, we quickly encountered the reality of the urban context, of people who had great deal of suspicion about how government had performed, people who were demanding their rights, particularly those who had been denied a voice for a long time and were saying that urban renewal programs and the ruling population of the city were ignoring their needs and goals. The education and learning process we experienced in working with people helped us formulate PICCED's three basic strategies:

One is direct technical assistance, providing expertise in analyzing statistics, coloring maps or carrying out day-to-day tasks of planning and development. Another strategy is training and education — demystifying what planning is all about, asking the simple questions people are afraid of asking, translating jargon and, most importantly, sharing other experiences with people locally — not for the purpose of copying it, but for the purpose of liberating people, so they can come up with their own answers.



Community-based organizations have developed increasing skills at housing and economic development, but may be moving away from their roots in community organization.

The third strategy is shaping public policy. Sometimes it seems the work people want to do can't be done because the right policies, the rules and regulations aren't in place. But if people mobilize, they can initiate change. That has led to things like the Community Reinvestment Act and federal programs that put greater stress on rehabilitating housing.

**BRESSI:**

PICCED also devotes a lot of energy to helping create new community groups.

**SHIFFMAN:**

That's part of what I referred to as community assistance. We've helped nurture dozens of organizations. One thing that led to formation of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation was the issue of problem solving. If we didn't like what the city was doing, we had to come up with an alternative. Although our proposals went beyond physical plans and addressed social and economic issues, the answer from the city was no. Years later, when the Model Cities program came down, the answer from Washington was no, Harlem needs it. So we decided that if the government wouldn't do it, and the private sector wouldn't, we needed a third way, a new entity, one that was locally accountable. We enlisted Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and Bed-Stuy began to emerge.

We are still taking that approach with institution-building in communities, where people see a need for education, primary health care, day care or cultural institutions that are missing.

If you believe in empowerment, then you have to have a structure that can implement things, institu-

tions that will sustain things over time. It's amazing to look at The Point [profiled in *Places* 10:3]. It has organized an environmental program and an asthma program; it has inspired a 197-a [community planning] program for Hunt's Point. Its cultural programs are so successful they are looking at renovating a theater. All of a sudden that little effort is starting to burgeon. It's husbanding, rather than constructing.

**BRESSI:**

What is your approach to working with communities?

**SHIFFMAN:**

Often planners or developers come with a preconceived plan or development, and they will try to engage people in a process primarily to sell what they are trying to do. There has to be a different attitude. You have to recognize that they are part of the team, as important as any trained technician, because they have an insight and perspective into the community, into the issues that affect the community, that is far different than you will get from any trained professional.

Planners tend to look at problems and how to solve them. But when you put things in a problem framework, you also put people into a situation where they need to be treated, rather than looking at how people can be part of the solution or the remedy — or how they can remedy a society that needs to be treated.

This doesn't mean that you abdicate your own opinions, your own training, because that would be as dishonest as meeting with a group and not listening to them, not really telling them what you're doing. So participation is a dialogue, between you and the people you are working with.

**BRESSI:**

How does this translate into a planning process?

**SHIFFMAN:**

There are certain fundamentals. The first one is to listen, be honest and engage people in a dialogue. You must realize that the process is going to take time; it's not a quick engagement and a quick release. If ideas are constantly challenged, that makes the process more dynamic.

The second is to engage people in a multi-level exchange. You're educating people that you work with, you're bringing them up to capacity to understand information from different perspectives. But at the same time, you're a student of theirs and you're learning about their lifestyle, their priorities, their needs.

If you truly look at it that way, without sacrificing your principles — issues of equity and certain other issues — you sometimes learn that what you think was

inequitable is somebody's fear, and you learn how to address that fear, and equity is easier to achieve.

The third issue is language. We planners and architects really need to demystify what we are talking about. We need to come up with language and concepts that can be understood by everybody in the room. That means picking concepts apart and not using the kind of language that gives different people the ability to have different images.

**BRESSI:**

Do you have a standard process that you follow?

**SHIFFMAN:**

When we work on planning issues, the first thing we try to do is expose the community-based group to the range of policies that exist. We discuss what we feel are the inequities are, what the benefits are; what they perceive as the positives and the negatives. We train people in housing and community development processes and laws, through what we call the Pratt Community Economic Development



working with people in caucuses or separately before they can sit down and enter into the dialogue.

One of PICCED's strategies is to assist in the development of new community-based organizations, such as the El Puente Academy in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

**BRESSI:**

Does a citizen's ability to participate in planning and decisionmaking also come with responsibilities?

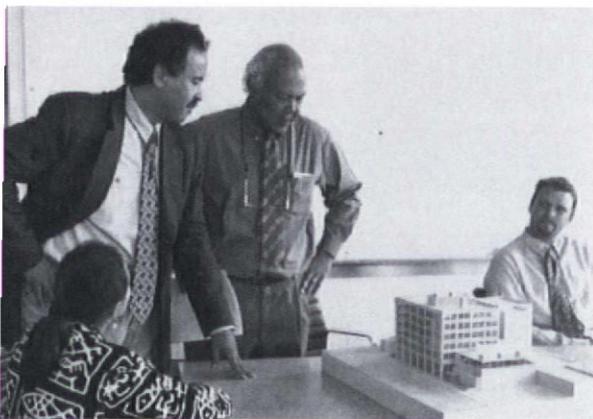
**SHIFFMAN:**

Absolutely. One is that people have to make sure that they don't speak for themselves, that they try to engage their neighbors in the process. There's an obligation to be consistent and to be engaged. You don't want people tuning in and out; they must be willing to listen to others the way they would expect to be listened to.

There are also prerequisites and values that people must have. One is that they have to live up to the letter of law, at least laws that are socially just. Of course, if people are discriminated against, if racism is involved, if there is gender discrimination or choice issues, those things have to be confronted.

People also have to understand the value of what they value. A lot of groups come to the table angry because they don't feel people will listen to them, or fearful that they don't have much to offer. Really, they have absorbed in many ways the judgment of the majority culture, so that on one level they reject the majority's judgment but on another level they accept it. And in doing that there is a conflict within themselves and therefore they're uncomfortable around the table.

For example, we worked with a public housing project in Red Hook, Brooklyn. The residents were very annoyed that they weren't part of the process that was leading to a plan for that particular neighbor-



Internship. How are deals made? How do you build housing? How do they finance things? So people can really understand.

The other thing we do is bring people together to start talking about their goals and their visions. Where vision and the means of implementation diverge, we try to talk about programmatic and policy changes.

And we try to work the whole process as building the civil society. By that we mean that if people are going to engage in decisions, then they also have to have the power with which to influence those decisions. Not the control always, but the power to be part and parcel of the debate that leads to a decision — parity of power and parity of knowledge with the other partners that are at the table. Sometimes that means

Training and public policy advocacy are part of PICCED's program.



hood. We also found they were afraid to be included because they felt once at the table their lack of education or whatever would hinder them from developing ideas. They felt that they misunderstood what planning was about, that it didn't appear that any of their ideas could be meaningful.

Within a couple of meetings, people began talking about this protest and that protest they had organized. So we asked, "Well if you had all these petitions and all these protests, why don't you bring them all out, let's look at them." We took the petitions and began to put them down on a map, to translate these ideas, these feelings, into place. Where there were locations we identified locations, where there were needs we started discussing those needs.

Too many kids hanging out on the street. Do you get the police to chase them away, or are there other places they can go? Well, there's no other places. What are the kinds of places kids like to go to? What if we had a couple of new ones — kids could hang out, listen to a jukebox, or go and do quiet study, or learn from peers? All of a sudden the idea of "Education Way" emerged, named after a series of things we plotted along it.

They wanted more access to the waterfront. So we asked where is there good access to the waterfront? Well, there's going to be a park at Coffey St. Maybe we need to create a priority path that would bring them through a neighborhood that was strange, a homeowner part.

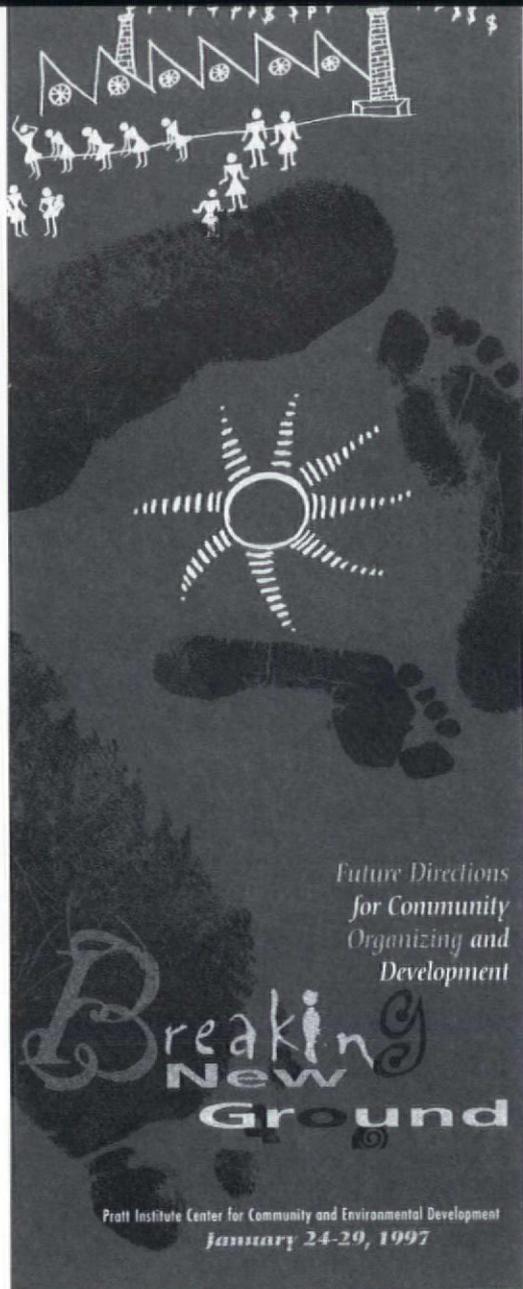
This whole discussion emerged from the petitions. Everybody at that table felt that like they designed it. And then they met with the community board, and their plan was almost adopted in its entirety. A big reason was that it seemed so natural. The community came to the same conclusion, maybe, that the board did, but they came from their own knowledge base.

**BRESSI:**

Should participatory planning be regarded simply as a set of professional techniques, or must it be motivated by deeper values about society and the built environment?

**SHIFFMAN:**

I cannot see this work proceeding without a commitment to economic and social justice. The work is not just technical, there has to be a value system implied; we are dealing with economic, social and environmental injustices. Unless we are concerned with environmental equity, our efforts are going to be very short lived.



**BRESSI:**

But how can planners put their ideas and experience on the table, and talk about values, without leading the discussion, especially if you are dealing with people who may not have much confidence in their ideas in the first place?

**SHIFFMAN:**

In our case what leads the discussion, usually, is that we are asked by the community and help them with a problem. The Red Hook residents said, "Hey, there's a 197-a plan in this area. Can you help us think this through, can you tell us what it's about so we can participate?" So they have defined the problem. What we are doing is to help tease out the solution from them, or the ideas from them. Rarely do we come in with a preconceived development project, that we've developed or that a client of ours is developing.



When I go out the community I try to be more of a facilitator and less of a solver. We train people, the professionals, to ask the questions they feel people aren't asking themselves. People, particularly adults, are very concerned about looking foolish in front of other people. We don't want to put people in that position, we want them to relax. So if there's a meeting going on, people sometimes get annoyed at you because they think you know the answer, but at least you open up and set the tone for the meeting.

**BRESSI:**

Have there been times when the values you would like to advance as a planner squarely conflict with those of the people you are working with?

**SHIFFMAN:**

In one community where we've worked, many people feel the residents are racist or exclusionary. So we designed our engagement there not only to address their needs, but also to confront their fears. The community was white, so I brought in Latino and African-American trainers for training about how to undertake civil disobedience, on how to deal with power in relationships.

We ran into another circumstance once where we were very nervous. We had fought for replacement housing for everybody in one neighborhood. Now, there's a liberal perspective that if people are working class and white, then they are probably bigoted; in a lot of cases that is because those people are a lot more honest about the language they use. We felt that way about that community in the beginning; we thought that when we had to enforce the affirmative action rental requirements in some of these buildings that we would run into difficulty with the group.

So a half dozen or so Latino families applied for the 42 spaces, but not one of them was turned down. What happened was that people met people face to face — we did some careful planning about it, ori-

ented everybody to what the law was in regard to discrimination. In the end, the group was against only one couple, who were elderly and both Polish and Catholic, because they weren't married. And they didn't want to get married because they would lose their Social Security benefits.

**BRESSI:**

Have you ever by choice not worked with a group?

**SHIFFMAN:**

Yes. We will not work on anything that is exclusionary in its entirety. So we won't work on churches, religious institutions, nor will we work on housing unless they agree before hand there will be equal opportunity.

**BRESSI:**

Compared to thirty years ago, when you started PICCED, do you think community participation puts you in a better or weaker position to achieve the kind of social, political, economic and sustainability goals that you are working towards?

**SHIFFMAN:**

I think the situation is better today in ways. The processes are more sophisticated, our technical capabilities are better. But I regret that sometimes our desire to meet another goal sometimes doesn't directly engage us in the kind of participatory, community building processes that we want to. The need for the production of housing led to some of that, particularly for homeless families.

A few years ago we began to realize that and tried to put a stop to it. We needed to take a strong look at the processes we were involved in, whether we were contributing to the building of a civil society, whether we

**PICCED works as an advocacy planning organization by helping New York City communities prepare neighborhood plans that can be adopted by the city council.**

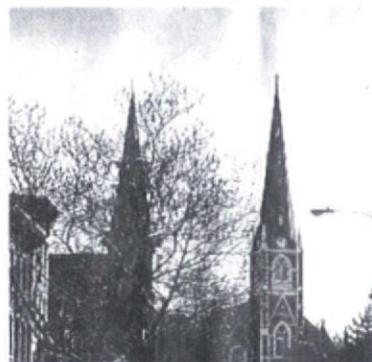
# GREENPOINT 197- A

## The Greenpoint Community Prepares a Draft Plan for Public Discussion

**INTRODUCTION**

Greenpoint located in the northernmost portion of Brooklyn, earned its name from the fish grocery covering its expanse before early nineteenth century development. It lies on a peninsula joining northwest onto the East River towards Manhattan, and is bounded on the north and east by Newtown Creek which separates Brooklyn from Queens. Greenpoint, only a short distance from the central business districts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Manhattan, has always maintained a distinctive small town identity. It has a history of neighbors knowing neighbors and a sense of mutual caring often not associated with communities in big cities.

Greenpoint has a variety of neighborhoods and together by a sense of community identity and a common future. They share a vibrant and active commercial strip that reflects the diversity of Greenpoint's ethnic population. The Manhattan Avenue commercial



**communities**

The Greenpoint 197-a Plan offers recommendations for the entire Greenpoint community which include East River Bushwick Inlet, McJ Park, and Newtown Creek. It also recommends areas industrial zone commercial strips. The Plan adds all major aspects of Greenpoint I focuses on the areas demographics, labor force, housing, industries, commercial uses, its environmental use and zoning, its parks and open space and the facilities service infrastructure it offers to the people who live and work there.

The Plan outlines the many opportunities that exist to preserve and enhance what is good and to revitalize what is weak. The major objectives listed are aimed at strengthening and diversifying Greenpoint's economic, cultural, and cultural base and integrating Greenpoint into the broader New York City community. They are:

were doing things the private sector didn't do. By that I mean the private sector isn't necessarily going to include a diverse group of people in decisionmaking, it doesn't deal with issues as aggressively around class or race that we know are all critically important.

We recognized that as our organization shifted from being funded by general support funds, which enabled us to respond to requests from local organizations, to being funded by contracts, that the contract began to take you away from the advocacy. Now we're trying to build our general support to the point where we don't turn down someone because they can't pay and the issue may be more important than the contract.

**BRESSI:**

Are there any changes in national or local development politics, or the economy, or the ways in which our cities have evolved, that make grassroots organizing and community building more or less difficult?

**SHIFFMAN:**

Obviously, these last ten years were the first time in New York that we had city, state and federal governments that were all conservative. You used to have enough differences between the city and state and federal levels that you could play one power off another. If the feds weren't accommodating, you always had the state. If the state wasn't accommodating, you always had the city. Now you have the three, but they all think alike. It's a lot harder to operate in that venue.

In fact, external factors — changes in the economy that make communities more dependent on the corporate, private sector, and changes in governmental attitudes — have in many ways weakened the structure of social change organizations. Foundations don't recognize the value of organizing and community building and engaging people in their own lives. The welfare system is very corrupt in terms of being dehumanizing; where there's reform it makes the system further dehumanizing. The level and incidence of poverty continues to grow while wealth continues to grow; it's a contradiction in our society. It makes everything a lot more difficult for us.

**BRESSI:**

Over the last thirty years, what changes have you seen in community development organizations and participatory planning?

**SHIFFMAN:**

One thing is that more community groups have become development oriented as opposed to policy oriented. The problem is that some community-based organizations engage in doing commercial

revitalization, rebuilding housing, and then all of a sudden we are launched into a franchise project — a Pathmark, McDonald's or whatever. There is no planning or strategy, they go after the deal, and the store opens up five or six blocks away, unanchored from the commercial strip they are revitalizing.

So now we take this up in our training. Are we just following the resources, or is there some overall strategy? Is revitalizing the strip just fixing up the facades, or do you repopulate them? We need to raise questions about the quality of that development; too often people see the quality of development the way society as a whole sees it: if it's development, it has to be good — without making any qualitative judgment about the development.

This is an example of how planners also have to have a strategy, and have to put what they know on the table, with their design values and their aesthetic. These ideas may be rejected, but at least out of the debate, something better will come.

**BRESSI:**

You've also mentioned that community groups have largely abandoned the work of organizing.

**SHIFFMAN:**

For a long time, there was a belief that there was a linear process from organizing and action to economic development, that was a growth pattern. I think that's absolute hogwash. You always need organizing and animation around particular groups that are disenfranchised and those that are poor. Without struggle, we aren't going to get any kind of social change. We haven't reached the point where we don't need to continue to have social change.

We've learned a lot. We've learned how to negotiate, we've learned techniques of development, and technical aspects of economic development. We know how to innovate, we know how to come up with finance, we know how to solve problems we didn't know how to solve before.

Although we can probably do the same things we did thirty years ago, then they thought we were crazy, and now we can sit down in the mayor's office or the governor's office and deal on behalf of our clients on a slightly different level. Before we had to stop traffic on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway for anybody to listen to us. Now we can just place a phone call.

There are far more community-based organizations that are self-sufficient in many ways, both financially and in terms of volunteers. And in contradiction to what I said before, there are many groups out there — so there is a constituency, and there are support institutions like the Local Initiative Support

Corporation, and the Enterprise Foundation, which have been very good in serving as a meeting ground where the private sector can come face to face with community-based organizations. These support institutions have brought to the table resources that we could never reach because members of their boards are banks and others.

**BRESSI:**

It sounds like community development groups have become part of the establishment.

**SHIFFMAN:**

In some ways the movement has become more of an industry than a movement for social change. So that has allowed us to move to scale and have more impact on one level, but on another level we're not engaging people the way we did before, leading in some cases to communities to look at some of these development corporations and entities as being as much a part of the problem as they are part of the solution.

And the field has become professionalized, so it's no longer rooted in the community, community-based people. We can't grow the expertise the way we did before. We don't have the Comprehensive Employment Training Act programs, the action programs, the anti-poverty programs, that allowed enough support to nurture somebody from the street so they could participate.

**BRESSI:**

Randy Hester argues that advocacy planning and participation have backfired — empowering so many narrowly focused groups that all we have is participatory gridlock.

**SHIFFMAN:**

I don't subscribe to that. One of the real problems is that a lot of groups have abandoned their advocacy positions because they are afraid of losing their donor base. A lot of groups have become builders, not community builders in that they are feeding people into a civil society. But it's hard now for groups that do real community organizing, building broad-based coalitions, to raise money and sustain themselves, whereas in the 1960s the federal government had the VISTA program and universities trained organizers.

You move from period of action to period of consensus to a period of modeling; maybe there should be a new generation that gets back to advocacy. Some of the greatest energy we do see is in the environmental justice movement; those groups are going back to the people and energizing them around issues like environmental quality and health. The issues of welfare to work and equity in transportation are also helping.

**BRESSI:**

Citizen participation in community development has also been institutionalized in a number of administrative and political processes. Does that contribute to the sense of gridlock?

**SHIFFMAN:**

I have mixed feelings about that. If you hold public hearings that draw in different levels, people do come out and officials are expected to hear them. I think that works well and is important to do.

But if people believe that that is participation, they are wrong. Those are comment periods and should be looked at as such. They give the general public a chance to review what the participatory process wrought. There may be others in the community who were not involved and have the same right to speak out on the issue. One can't object to the process, but one should understand clearly its limits.

**BRESSI:**

It seems to me people can be frustrated by processes like that because it's not clear how their participation will affect the outcome.

**SHIFFMAN:**

New York City's planning department has developed no real working relationship with any community other than the business community, no relationship where they sit, roll up their sleeves — other than what took place with Nos Quedamos, a group in a Bronx neighborhood where an urban renewal plan needed to be revised. Some broader-based advocacy groups came together to support Nos Quedamos, and it became a vehicle through which the community could plan with the involvement of the city.

**BRESSI:**

But Nos Quedamos had a tremendous struggle at the planning commission, which tried to eliminate all the design guidelines it proposed.

**SHIFFMAN:**

Well, when the plan went to public hearings, it became codified, with no obligation to implement. And it is only because of the struggle of the individuals who went through the process in that neighborhood that Nos Quedamos was able to sustain the identity of the plan, and to get the first projects underway. That's what I mean by the movement and the civil society: Groups in place who are able to carry out an agenda. You need to sustain that.

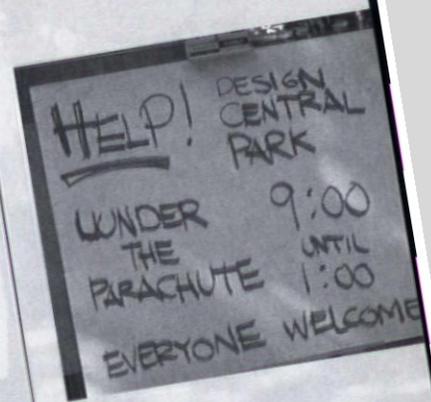
Mark Francis

# Proactive

Visionary Thought and Participatory  
Action in Environmental Design

# Practice:

Community participation in design and planning had its beginnings in the advocacy planning movement of the 1960s. Its promise was that by involving and empowering citizens, planning and design would become more socially and environmentally responsible. While community participation has become firmly institutionalized, it also has become more of a tool for defending exclusionary, conservative principles than for promoting social justice and ecological vision.



Participatory design charrette for Davis' Central Park, held in the park.

Photos and graphics:  
Mark Francis/CoDesign



Above: Farmers market, Central Park, Davis.  
Below: Plan for the Davis Greenway.

The problem lies not in the concept of participation but in the roles that designers and planners have taken in relationship to their clients and projects. The traditional culture of professional practice can be characterized as client serving rather than vision making, based on the premise that clients come to a designer seeking professional assistance.

Firms propose, then negotiate, a scope of services with their clients. The boundaries and problems are narrowly defined to avoid conflict and make channels of control clear. Participation is usually done to satisfy mandated requirements and is not intended to fully engage the community. In this process, the professional is an advocate for the client, whether public or private, and the relationship is restricted by the culture of practice, contract law and concerns with liability.

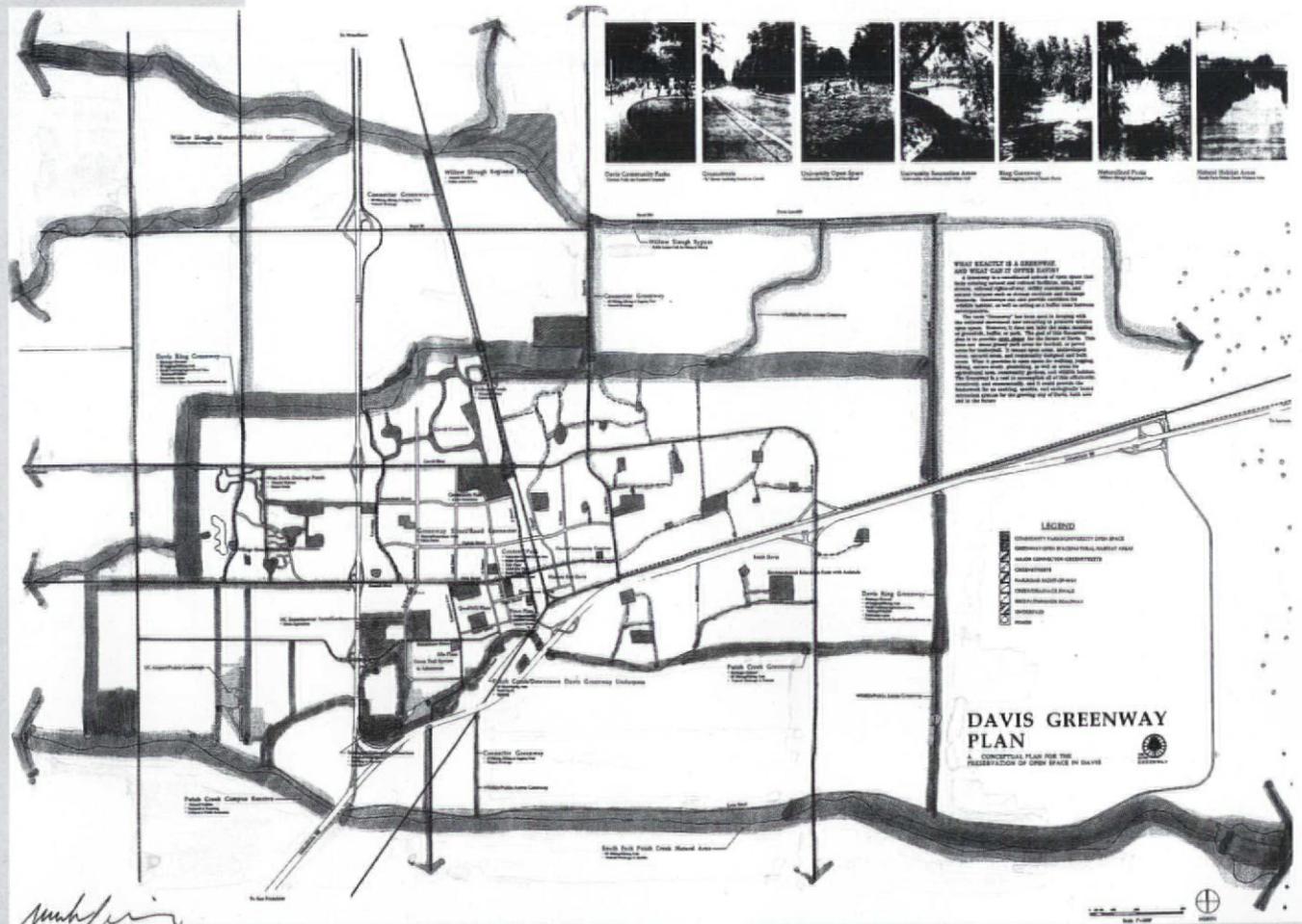
The problem with this approach is that usually the client comes to the designer or planner with a solution, not a problem. The charge to the professional is to give form to the client's preconceived solution, and the visionary hands of the professional are often tied. For example, a client may want a design for a park or plaza,

but does not ask the professional to spend time defining the problem or exploring whether theirs is really the best solution for the problem. Research may reveal that a garden would address the community's needs better than a formal park would, but the designer is unable to explore alternatives beyond the narrow scope predetermined by the client. Professionals may involve the community, as they are often required to do, but their allegiance remains firmly with the paying client.

### Proactive Practice

I propose a fundamentally different approach to professional practice than traditionally taught and practiced in environmental design, one in which design professionals take a stronger visionary, problem-solving role. Proactive professionals can be distinguished from their traditional counterparts by their visionary approach and their commitment to a participatory process through which the community can modify or enlarge the vision.

Proactive professionals use skills in risk-taking, negotiation and entrepreneurial enterprise, base their thoughts and actions on strong social and environmen-



## Linda Cox

*Linda Cox, AICP, directed the Municipal Art Society's Planning Center, which provides technical assistance to community-based planning efforts in New York City, through last November. Since 1994, she had been working on the issue of urban manufacturing, most recently helping to strengthen links between New York's design firms and production firms.*

### **How did you become interested in the issue of manufacturing?**

In recent years New York City put out two reports concerning industrial land. One was the waterfront plan, which forecast a lot of industrial waterfront converting to some other use. The other was the superstore policy, which was predicated on idea that there was a lot of vacant, industrial land that could be given over to other uses.

That made us wonder about the future of these industrial areas. We decided to look at future of manufacturing and discovered that while manufacturing has clearly diminished, and industrial areas are clearly ready for change, there is still manufacturing activity that should be reckoned with.

### **Why have you stayed with the issue?**

I find the people and the topic endlessly engrossing. The manufacturers, the designers I've begun to work with in the design-production project and the people who are fighting to keep a place for them in New York City are fascinating—their ingenuity, their entrepreneurial energy, their very often unexpected level of dedication to their workers and the city, and their frustration that no one has noticed what they add to the vitality of the city.

Also, focusing on this issue turned out to be a way of focusing on some of the most critical issues for the future of New York. Where will the next generation of jobs come from? What is the future of all these industrial neighborhoods where homes and factories are intermingled? Although we don't always feel we are the ideal organization to be examining this issue, there don't seem to be other groups who are.

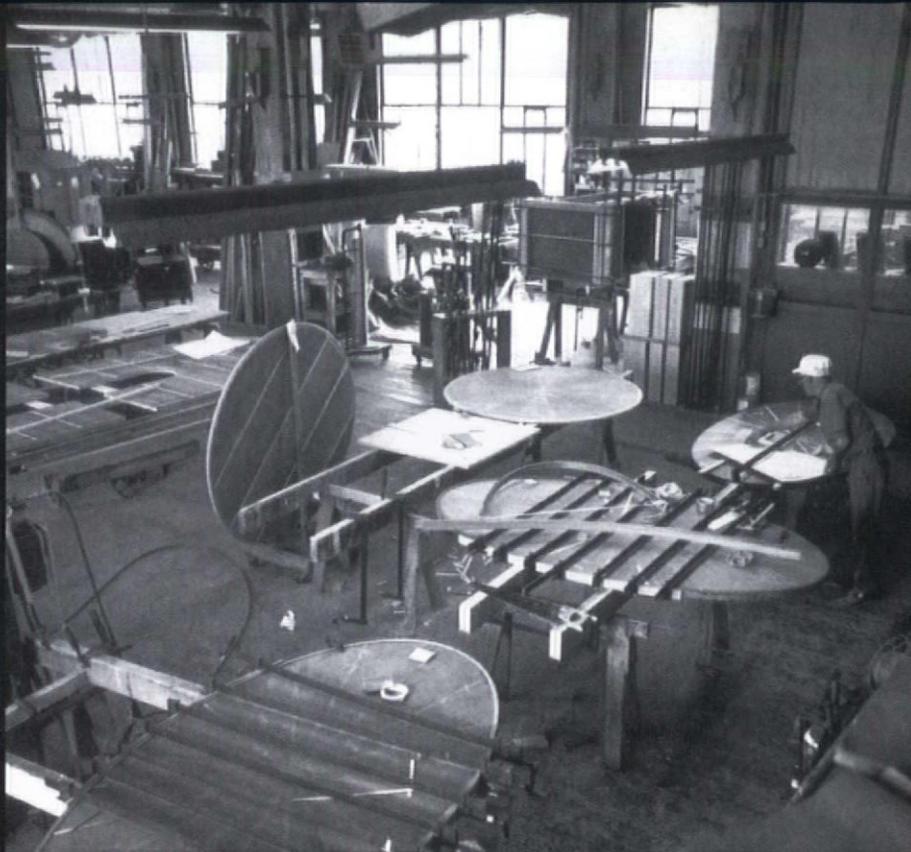
### **How did you define a community or a constituency for this project?**

One of the things we know about manufacturers is that they are not organized as a community, nor are they well represented as a group, and they don't often turn up at urban policy discussions. That's part of what attracted us, that this group is not being heard in the public domain.

But it's also a two-way street. We did not start out with the idea of the design-production link, not even the idea of focusing on manufacturing. We just heard that it still mattered and there were issues worth focussing on.

### **How does this project compare to a traditional advocacy planning process?**

We don't claim to be directly representing the point of view or interest or any particular group or community. That has risks. But it also frees us to bring a particular



point of view and to acknowledge the complexity of these issues. We can search for what makes sense, what seems possible, and look for how that links up with what other organizations are trying to do.

We can do that without having to check back to see whether we've mirrored the interests of a defined community. Many times, a community group is stymied from taking a strong stand because the points of view of various board members, or the group's constituents, cancel each other out.

### **Does a planner have to have a vision in mind for a process like this to be successful?**

One of the hardest things about working this way is that it isn't obvious what to focus on or why, or what's the next step, so you want to be attuned to your surroundings and what they're telling you. You don't want to be driven only by some inner vision. I don't see myself as a visionary planner in that sense.

But you cannot operate without some kind of a gyroscope, or some sense of what its all for, what is the public good you have in mind. There has to be some set of preoccupations that drive this kind of work. For us, it has been the discovery that there is a sector of the economy that wasn't being worried about well, and should have been. By extension, this also concerns the physical well-being of the city, neighborhoods that are in the process of sorting out their future.

Woodshop, New York.

Photo: Walter Sauer Courtesy:  
Municipal Art Society

tal values, employ advocacy as part of their approach and are skillful in implementation to make sure their vision is realized. They often employ sound research and analysis and are involved long-term — from a few years to the length of their careers — to realize a vision.

Proactive practice has a long precedence in the history of environmental design, with many advances in design theory and planning practice coming from proactive practitioners. Frederick Law Olmsted, the founder of modern landscape architecture, was a proactive practitioner of great vision and strong will. Olmsted, in the design of New York City's Central Park as well as many of his later public works, pursued a vision of addressing broad social and environmental problems. He and other landscape architects following him, such as Jens Jensen, Ian McHarg, Larry Halprin and Rich Haag, expanded not only the boundaries of their profession but also the way society looks at the possibilities of urban life.

CoDesign, the firm my colleagues and I started in 1984, is an example of a proactive practice. We named it CoDesign based on our conviction that design should be collaborative, cooperative and ultimately build community. We have always tried to be proactive in putting forth visions of the community and environment that becomes a framework to others to follow.<sup>1</sup> For example, in 1987 we put together a proposal for an integrated regional open space system called the Davis Greenway. We started informally one evening over a few beers, sketching on layers of trace laid over aerial photos. No one asked or paid us to do this, but we felt it was a missing element in the planning for Davis's future.<sup>2</sup>

We presented the greenway concept in environmental forums and refined it in participatory planning workshops. The idea caught on and ultimately became the open space element of the city's general plan. Our proactive effort established a clear vision of the future that generated substantial community involvement and developed an ongoing open space constituency.

Proactive practice is taking place today at a range of scales, from homes and gardens to cities and regions. Projects that lend themselves particularly well to proactive practice include community gardens, regional planning efforts, citywide open spaces systems, new forms of transportation, urban infill and sustainable development. Even "middle places," new public places such as neighborhood meeting places



and outdoor hang-outs that are neither parks or plazas but are becoming important settings for public life, can be a focus of proactive practice.<sup>3</sup>

### Cultures of Proactive Practice

Designers and planners are becoming increasingly engaged in proactive practice through in a variety private, public and academic settings. Some professionals may combine several of these approaches in their practice.

*The private visionary.* Most proactive practitioners work as part of a private, for-profit firm. It may be a one-person office or a team of professionals, often from several disciplines, working toward a common vision. The private proactive practice is often underfunded and may not be highly profitable for the professional.

That is not to say proactive work is necessarily pro bono work. I estimate that our greenway concept in Davis led to more than \$750,000 in paid work for planning and landscape architecture firms, which were hired to examine and implement its details. Very little of this work went to our firm, but the effort allowed us to develop expertise in this area of practice and we have since been hired as paid consultants to do similar plans for other communities.<sup>4</sup>

These professionals not only contribute to improving their local environment but help to create more sustainable communities or regions. Over time, as their visions take hold, they can expect recognition and support for their efforts, often in other settings or communities. Offices that have successfully adopted proactive practice as a central focus of their firms are presented elsewhere in this issue.

Another kind of private visionary is one whose proactive work involves one project over a long period of time as a labor of love. Randy Hester has characterized these as "labors of love in the public landscape."<sup>5</sup> These are often lifetime projects that serve as the

Below and right: The Davis Greenway protects open and agricultural space at the edge of suburban development.



## Paul Morris

*Paul Morris is a principal of McKeever-Morris, a design and planning firm in Portland, Ore., whose practice focuses on projects that support the region's growth-control initiatives.*

### How did you become interested in growth management issues?

Ten years ago my partner Mike McKeever and I were involved in a regional energy conservation planning project, designed to protect solar access to homes in new residential development. One lesson was that energy issues were not being considered in discussions about community development and growth management. Another was that it was easier and cheaper to develop on the fringe because projects there could escape some of the costs associated with development.

At that time, the Portland region was beginning to have substantive discussions about growth pressures. We obtained a grant from the local electric company to study how you could design neighborhoods, communities and regions in an interrelated fashion that would be more energy conserving, efficient and more livable.

Ultimately, we realized that urban design and regional planning go together. We developed a modeling process that lets us show the relationship between site design and regional growth policy, giving policy makers the ability to understand—in a tangible fashion, using energy, land use, transportation and infrastructure costs—the implications of one development on the region.

### What impact has this research had on the work your firm does?

It has defined our practice. We don't take part in a lot of the commercial development, like shopping centers, that perpetuates the impacts and cost of suburban sprawl, that take a short-term view of community benefit and is not willing to reinvent itself to be more urban oriented.

In our residential and mixed-use planning and design services, we work only with progressive developers who want to build lasting communities, not just sprawling subdivisions. We've also oriented our practice around natural resource conservation, management and restoration.

This has kept us from being considered by the developers who don't produce these kind of projects or care about these issues. Any developer has a product they sell, one that is very carefully crafted. We try to show them the potential savings and added value this approach can bring to their projects, but for them to change would mean reinventing their business.

In hiring staff, from administrative support to senior managers, we don't just look for people who are experts in their field; we look for people who share our philosophy about community and growth. That provides stability for our company and confidence for our clients.

### Do you work proactively, as well?

We've continued our research. There is a raging debate about expanding Portland's regional growth boundary to accommodate new development. We analyzed data from our regional government (Metro) and found that half of the development in 1996 occurred on land that Metro already considered developed—which meant that a lot of land within our growth boundary was not built to its full potential. People who wanted to maintain the identity of their local city cores began to see that there was a lot more potential than they had realized.

Sometimes we create projects. For example, in Oregon, most school districts haven't done long-range facility plans,



and cities or no-growth advocates have used inadequate school capacity as a no-growth mechanism. We felt that school districts and local communities should work together to have their plans integrated.

So, about five years ago, we teamed up with the planning director in Beaverton, where this issue was at a high pitch. She went to the state, which funded research we did about how to do integrate city, school and county planning. That led to the passage of legislation requiring that integrated planning be done statewide. Now school districts and communities are working together to establish when and where they're going to need schools and how to fund them. Using school moratoriums to stop development is not an option anymore.

### What is your approach to participation?

To find ways to involve broadest range of people throughout the planning and design processes. Not everyone wants or is going to participate in same way or at same time. Some might be on a steering committee. Others might attend a focus group. Still others might respond to polls or come to open houses. Others may simply follow media reports.

Ultimately, the question is how much decision-making authority is given to participants. The biggest problem is setting out, up front, what the limits are; many community leaders do not define who will make decisions or how they will be made. People aren't scared of being told what the limits of their participation are; they're more frustrated by a lack of clarity—when it gets to the end and they don't have as much of a role as they thought.

In any process, it is imperative to communicate early and often what the roles and responsibilities are in a process, and who has final decision making authority. Then, always allow free and full access to the process.

### How do you balance your vision versus the goals of the community?

The issue is not us instilling our beliefs in people, but us providing the best technical research information, full information disclosure and an understanding of the implications through common-sense communication techniques. This way, people can make their own best decision. Our experience has consistently illustrated that, given all the information in a clear decision making process, clients (whether public or private) make the best decisions.

It's also important to make small decisions incrementally, starting with the general and moving to the specific, not to expect that the whole decision can be made up front. It's a risk; you may end up with a community that says it wants one-acre lots everywhere. But ultimately, most people realize they aren't willing to pay the price for that, in terms of the impacts on their quality of life, loss of open space and agriculture, and the cost of infrastructure.

**Infill housing development in Portland, Ore., is important to the region's ability to live within its urban growth boundary.**

*Photo: McKeever-Morris*



*Left: Author takes part in the design workshop. Right: Participatory design process for Central Park in Davis.*



central focus or crowning achievement of one's professional career. This may be a single project, such as Gas Works Park in Seattle, or a combination of linked projects throughout a region, such as the Los Angeles Greenway.

My labor of love project has been the expansion and design of Central Park in Davis, which has taken more than fourteen years of my proactive professional involvement and is still not complete. It began as a modest studio project where I had students conduct a community survey and develop alternative designs for expanding the historic central park in the small college community I work and live in. A community group called Save Open Space (SOS) picked up on the idea and passed a voter referendum to defeat a proposed shopping mall to create the expanded park.

I was hired by the City of Davis in 1987 to develop a master plan and park design with extensive community involvement and a diverse program consisting of a permanent covered pavilion and market plaza for the popular Davis Farmer's Market, a public garden, a teen center, a cafe, a children's play area, a central lawn area, and a participatory children's fountain. The park today is the community's favorite public space and the project has become a community success story.

Most all design visionaries are proactive practitioners. It is important to distinguish among visionary, entrepreneurial designers who are focused primarily on a social, ecological vision, those who are focused primarily on the success of their practice, and those who place form and style above larger cultural or environmental concerns.

*The public professional.* This form of proactive practice typically takes place within public agencies. There is a long list of agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Interior and the U.S. Forest Service, state agriculture and natural resources agencies, and local planning and community development departments, that are

becoming involved in strong advocacy and visionary projects. It is often more difficult to be a proactive public professional than a private proactive professional, as the political agenda guiding public practice restricts both vision and action.

*The professional with the nonprofit.* Today many design professionals are working proactively with national, regional or local nonprofit organizations involved with environmental issues, community development, social issues, housing or other matters. They work as volunteers, employees or paid consultants on a vast range of projects — from recycling to creek restoration to community forests.

The dynamics that professionals working in nonprofit environments experience is often different from those that their public- and private-sector counterparts face. They, too, are often restricted by the agenda of the organization they work for but often have greater room to advance visions actively promote them over the long term.

*The activist university.* This form of practice may involve a center, institute, a department or, in rare cases, an entire school or college. It is where the academic mission of research, teaching and service is used to make positive change in the community and environment. An example of this is the University of Virginia's School of Architecture and Planning, which recently shifted its focus from historic preservation and high-style design to sustainable design at both the local and international level.

Many schools have established community design centers, which provide design services to low-income communities. They come from the advocacy planning tradition, allowing faculty and students to pursue visionary and socially and environmentally responsible projects in their community or region. Design schools have also begun to create professional offices, which provide an ideal setting for faculty and students

## Diana Balmori

*Diana Balmori, principal of Balmori Associates in New Haven, has advocated for linear parks in Baltimore, Minneapolis and New Haven. For background on the New Haven project, see "A Path in the City, A Path in the Woods," Places 6:4.*

### How did you become interested in linear parks?

A citizens' group asked me to produce a vision for an abandoned rail line in New Haven. They were trying to get the city to buy it but felt that without a vision it would never happen. They thought that having drawings and an idea about what could be accomplished would help.

### Why do you think linear parks are an important?

Their continuity, the fact that they go through so many different terrains. Old railroad lines bring you downtown, to the water, to suburbia, to open space. These narrow troughs offer a simple, modest tool for changing the quality of life. In Baltimore, one citizen put it beautifully: "We are prisoners of our neighborhood, and this would give us and our children the possibility of participating in the city."

### What has your role been as an advocate?

I've done master plans. I've written about them because I feel they need to be developed as an idea, not just as a form. I also advocate for their design: Unfortunately, most linear parks are being interpreted as prosaic things, built by engineers who do drainage and paving, ten-foot strips of asphalt with no further thought. Once a park is there, there will come a second stage in which design can take place.

### What are your goals for participation?

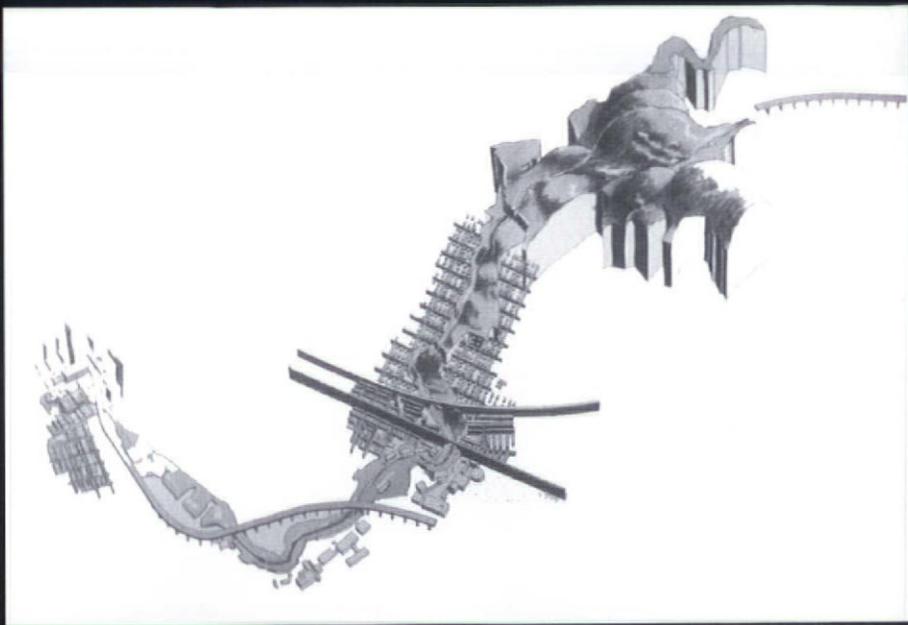
It's a two-way road. Citizens educate me about how they see their neighborhood, what they're interested in having and contributing to. It's my function to educate them to see beyond their neighborhood to the larger city. When I mark on map all the places they will be able to get to, a light goes on: "this could be much more than we ever thought."

Safety is an issue that dominates. The data that are emerging show these projects become incredibly used immediately, and once you pass certain density of use they become safer than the surrounding areas. Participation gives the neighborhood ownership of the trail; if it's going to be safe, the neighborhood needs to make it safe.

### Describe the participatory design process you use on these projects.

Baltimore and Minneapolis have established procedures. Minneapolis has very controlled and regulated process of showing the project and discussing it from the very beginning to the very end—what's happened, what's changed, how suggestions have been paid attention to or ignored.

In Minneapolis, people were convinced our work would have an effect on the authorities, but in Baltimore there was distancing; if people participated, they didn't know how this would ever reach the forces that make decisions. So we took a more proactive role. We started



a process of getting together all the organizations that had a role on that stream, they hadn't seen each other for years. In order to get things done, one should be able to get to these bigger problems. The designer is an intermediary, but has the role of making things understood, what the effect could be.

### Proposal for Gwynns Falls Trail, Baltimore.

*Graphic: Fran Leadon, Balmori Associates.*

### Does a designer have to have a vision in mind for a participatory process to be successful?

It's essential. Otherwise you are not giving people a sense of what is this for. If one can develop a vision of going toward something that is complete and clear, the response and support you get are more effective.

### If you bring a vision to the table, what do other people in the participatory process bring?

Different kinds of knowledge. These designs are composites. One can state a general vision or goal, but the parts of it are polished by everybody who is at the table. In Baltimore, I had no idea how important the water was. It was a place where people had gone to swim and fish; I learned about several secret fishing holes. One person pointed out sources of pollution we hadn't known about. Something emerges from the knowledge of everybody in the room.

### How does your participatory design approach compare to that of advocacy planning?

I question the whole process of design as its structured today, even in case of having public participation. The designer comes into a structured piece into which our formal understanding of how things work doesn't mesh, even at the simplest level. Designers should come in at the beginning, at the predesign phase, when one thinks about the site and interprets it. This discussion has to include many different professionals, like hydrologists and ecologists, as well.

to do proactive projects in communities. They are different from community design centers in that the internships are fully integrated into the required design curriculum. The value of this setting and experience for the young design student is that it exposes them to what proactive practice can be like.

Another type of practice involves the academic visionary, the single faculty member, who focuses on one or more central issues through creative research. Design schools tend to provide an excellent setting for this kind of activist, given that the faculty member's risk taking is sheltered by tenure and a regular paycheck.

### Implications for Design Education

Today most schools of architecture, landscape architecture, planning and urban design are structured around the traditional model of client-driven practice. Few prepare students to be visionary in both thinking and action. This emerging form of practice requires a fundamental change in design education.

Recent critiques of design education, such as the influential 1996 Boyer Report, point out the danger of continuing to train design students without inculcating a concern for larger social issues. "What seems missing, we believe, is a sense of common purpose connecting the practice of architecture to the most consequential issues of society," the report says. It proposes a medical school model of design education, where service-providing professional offices would be established within design schools to provide internship and training for design students.<sup>7</sup>

To develop skills in proactive practice, students will need to take more courses outside the normal boundaries of design education. These include criticism and design journalism, risk taking, negotiation, politics, cultural diversity, entrepreneurial management and leading cross disciplinary teams. Given that most design curricula do not have room for additional requirements, some traditional requirements must give way. The traditional studio sequence will need to give way for more community-based, visionary projects. More required reading, reflective seminars, interactions with people in everyday community settings and field courses can help inform the future proactive designer.

Effective visionary action requires a unique blend of training, values, determination, persistence and risk taking. Proactive practice begins well before there is a paying client and continues long after the contract

ends. Implementing the vision can often take years and even the full lifetime of the practitioner. Yet proactive practice can be a rewarding form of professional life that addresses the essential purpose of environmental design — to leave the world a better place than we find it.

### Notes

1. Architect James Zanetto and I originally founded this firm in 1984. It was soon joined by U.C. Davis faculty colleagues Kerry Dawson and Rob Thayer. Dawson left in 1993 to be dean of the University of Georgia's School of Environmental Design and Zanetto left to form his own architectural practice; landscape architect Skip Mezger joined in 1993. CoDesign has since focused largely on socially and ecologically responsible landscape architecture and community design.
2. I developed the first drawing of the Davis Greenway Plan as part of my contribution to the citizen advisory committee I sat on for Davis's general plan update. I later asked my colleague Kerry Dawson (who was also Director of the University Arboretum) to expand and refine the idea with help from Stan Jones, one of our students. Jones (who now teaches at the University of Oregon) developed the full plan as his thesis project and addressed many of the tough implementation issues we avoided in developing our early concepts.
3. Mark Francis, "The Middle Place: Rethinking Place and Space in American Public Life." Unpublished plenary paper presented at the Environmental Design Research Association Conference, Salt Lake City (15 June, 1996).
4. This is a common problem of being an advocate in your own back yard. Local politicians and staff often find they must bring in experts from outside the community to verify and legitimate ideas advanced by local professionals.
5. Randolph T. Hester, Jr., "Labors of Love in the Public Landscape," *Places* 1:1 (1983), 18-27.
6. C. E. Beveridge, P. Rocheleau and D. Larkin, *Fredrick Law Olmsted: Designing the American Landscape* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995).
7. E. L. Boyer and L. D. Mitgang, *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice* (Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996).

## Photographing Fitchburg

Cervin Robinson



How does one photograph a city and portray it as a place, not as an assemblage of separate buildings? How, to be specific, does one photograph Fitchburg, Mass., a factory town that, like many other New England cities, has seen most of its industry leave and has tried to save its main street by tearing down nearby blocks for parking, but still has lost its downtown business to malls?

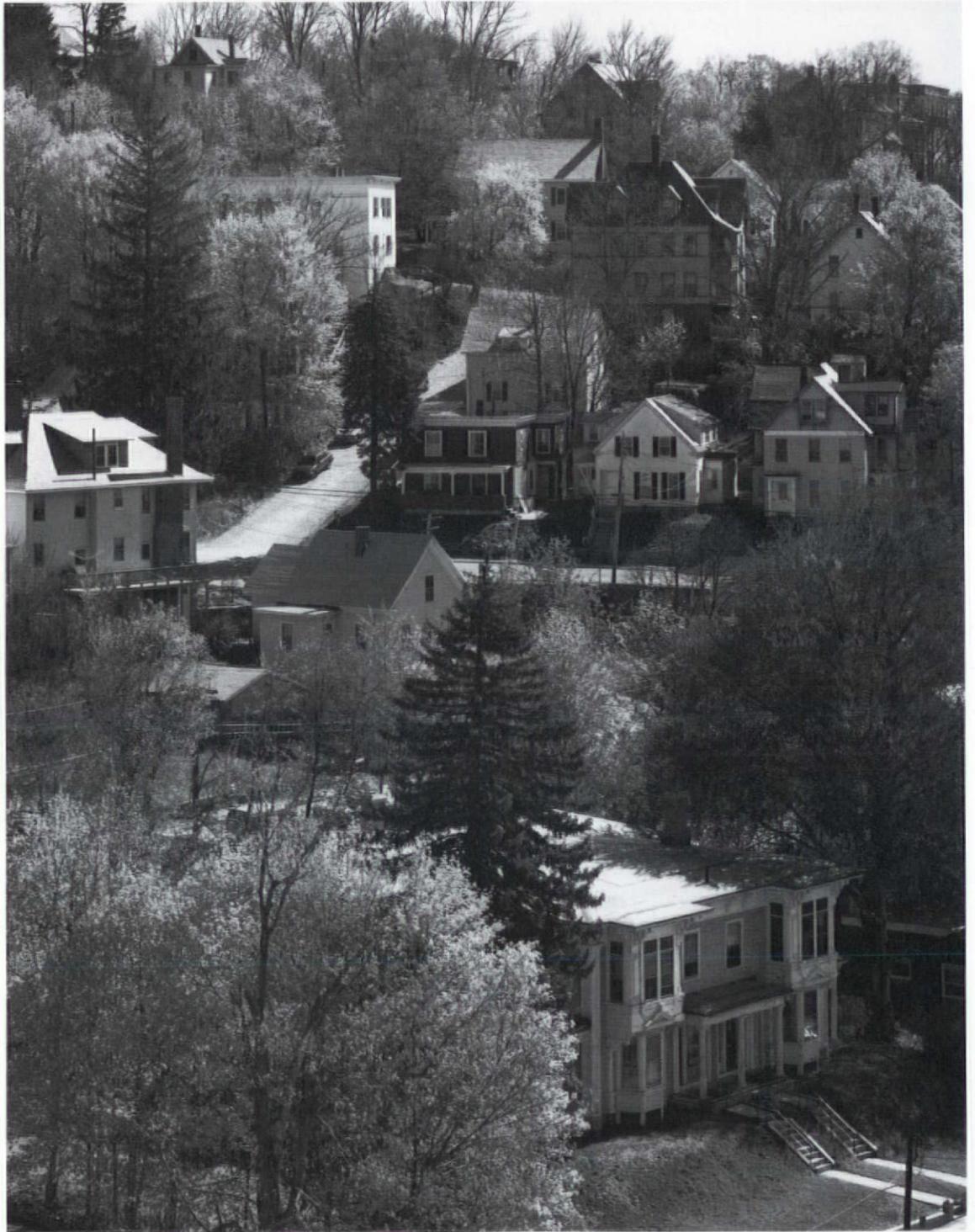
In one way Fitchburg was ahead in its misfortunes even of New York City: before Penn Station was razed, Fitchburg lost a station that should never have been torn down. Fitchburg, which depended in the last century on the power of its river and on its railway to Boston (the one that went past Walden Road), remains a hill town of remarkable topographical beauty, a city where just because of its unsolved predicaments, and unlike many formerly industrial towns that have succeeded in becoming tourist centers, what you see is still always genuine.

How to photograph such a city? Cataloguing, which is done with a view to completeness, is not the way to go. A standard architectural guidebook restates with local examples the accepted history of American building development but misses whatever is unique. And a landmarks commission must catalog valuable buildings, but it misses the sense of actual place (though it may create the illusion of another simply by its selectivity). Whereas catalogues of the parts of a city are factual, what one wants is a sense of truth, not necessarily unpleasant truth, but one with an edge.

One photographs a city like Fitchburg by juxtaposing essential parts that do not sing the same song, even better, ones that contradict each other. The point of truth with an edge is to earn the attention of the viewer's eye.

I took the photographs reproduced here during two residencies at the MacDowell Colony at Peterborough, New Hampshire.

Fitchburg from Rollstone Hill, May 1996



Jay Street neighborhood, May 1996



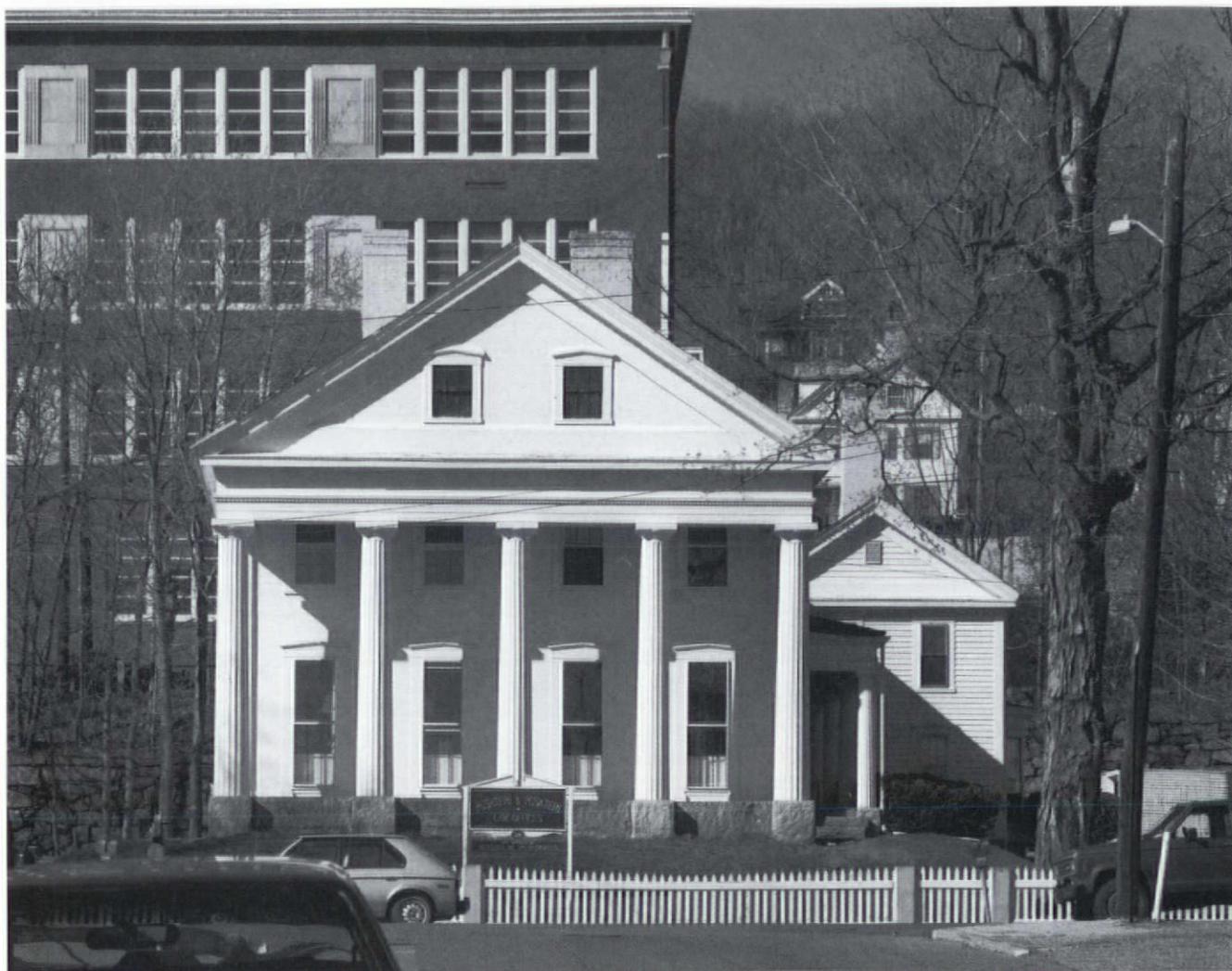
Moran Square, April 1996



Twin Cities Plaza, May 1996



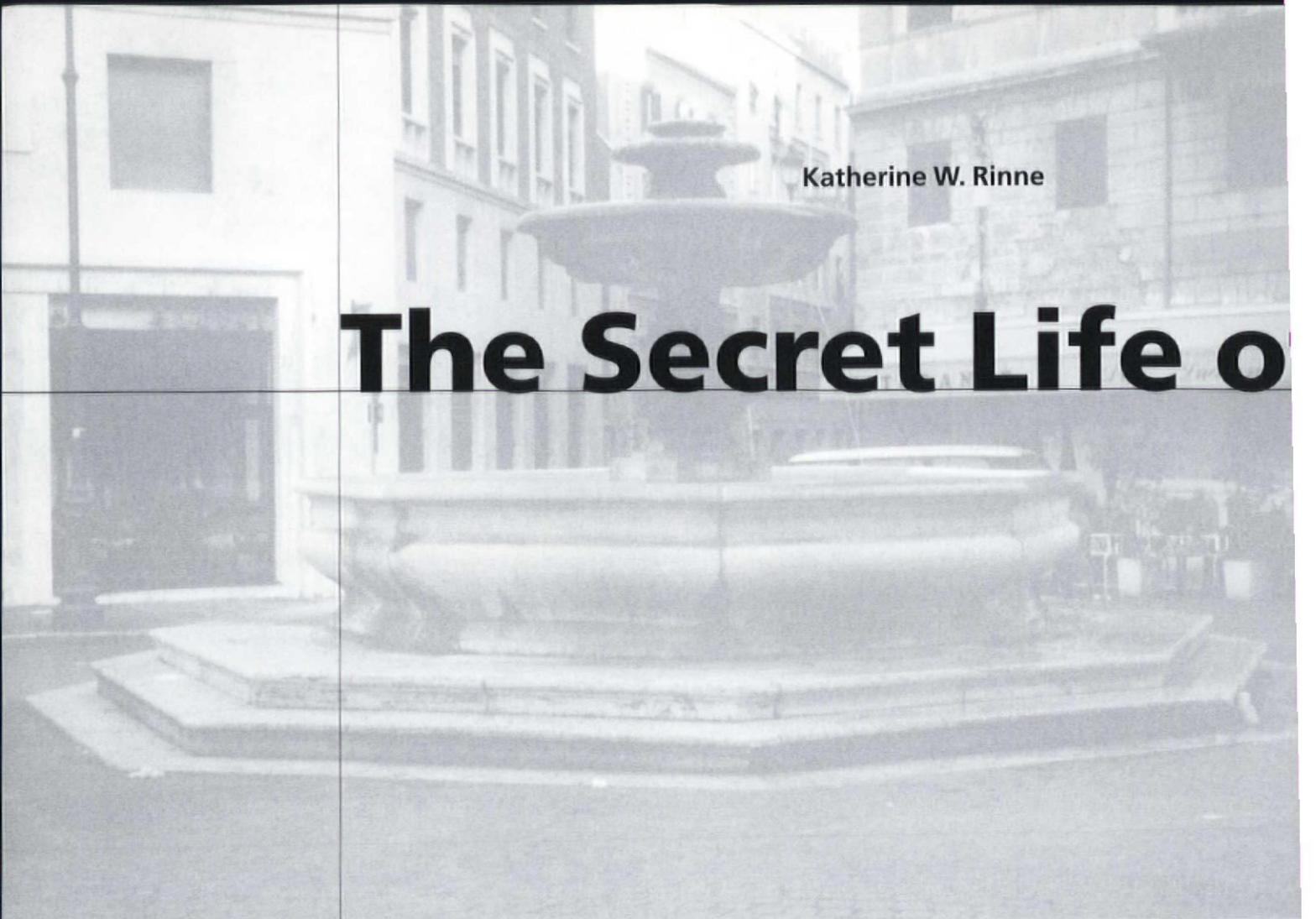
City Hall, May 1996



Law offices and high school, May 1996



Fitchburg Municipal Aripport, April 1998



Katherine W. Rinne

# The Secret Life of

Eleanor Clark, in *Rome and a Villa*, has rightly observed that the fountains of Rome have a visceral pull on our attention and emotions, equaled only by that of dreams and sex. She understood that fountains too, can be flamboyant, invigorating and life affirming; that they are immediate and physical; that they make us glad to be alive.

# Roman

# Fountains



*Left:* The low-pressure Piazza Colonna fountain, a member of the Vergine family.

*Below:* The restrained and polite Aracoeli fountain, located at the foot of the Capitoline Hill.



There is something deeply primordial about them. More than isolated monuments, they are integral elements of Roman identity, linked together by hidden, subterranean conduits of metal, stone and terra-cotta. Each fountain is part of a hydrological system that includes the Tiber River, springs, streams, swamps, sewers, aqueducts, wells, conduits, cisterns, floods and rainwater, all linked through topography. Together these elements weave physical and spiritual threads through spatial, social and historical spheres of the city and transform water infrastructure into art. They reveal the memory of the entire hydrological system and translate it through imagination, time, circumstance and gravity into the specifics of place.

### Three aqueducts

Roman fountains, at least until the twentieth century, were fed by a vast, yet simple, aqueduct system that exploited the natural law of gravity to distribute water. Water flowed freely within the aqueduct channel, but once it reached the city, it was constricted in underground pipes that created the necessary pressure for distribution. Unlike mechanical systems that force water into unnatural contortions, a gravity system nurtures, exploits and enhances water's natural abilities as it flows through its watershed. Allowing for seasonal variation in water volume, each fountain was designed around the distinct, inherent possibilities of the water at a specific location. Whether it shot in a lofty jet, fell in a rushing cascade, bubbled from a low nozzle or slipped slowly over a stone lip, it did so because the symbiosis between gravity and topography had been exploited by the design.

Three pre-industrial, gravity-driven aqueducts still operate: Aqueduct Vergine, Acqua Felice and Acqua Paola. The Vergine, based on the antique Aqua Virgo, was restored several times during medieval and renaissance times. By 1570 one branch arrived near the Piazza di Spagna, at 20.5 meters above sea level (masl). It served the low-lying, densely populated Campus Martius area. This supplemented an earlier branch that arrived at the site of the Trevi Fountain at 20 masl, and added a crucial half-meter of head to the water.



With only a seven-meter fall over the Vergine's entire distribution system, there was little pressure available, and every fountain endeavored to carry water as high as possible for the most impressive display. Sites were often regraded, or fountains partially submerged below street level, to create enough room to manipulate the water. This meant that once released, Vergine water did not rise in jets and sprays but typically fell in veils and cascades, most dramatically at the Trevi fountain. When there was a jet it was typically a short, fat tube of water, as at the Barcaccia and Piazza Colonna fountains.

The Felice, which exploited the antique Aqua Alessandrina was completed in 1587 and arrived at the Moses Fountain on the Quirinal Hill at 59 masl. It provided water to a variety of locations, including the Esquiline and Pincian hills, political and ceremonial centers such as the Capitoline hill and the Roman Forum, as well as the low-lying Velabrum.



With over 40 meters of elevation difference in this system, the water shot or fell depending upon the fountain location and purpose. On hilltops the water customarily fell, as at the Moses, Quattro Fontane and Campidoglio fountains. In the valleys, water shot in jets and sprays as needed in a particular setting — a five-meter high celebratory plume of water for the Barberini Triton fountain; a chaste spray for the Madonna dei Monti, Giudea and Aracoeli fountains.

The lofty and serviceable Acqua Paola, based on the antique Aqua Traiana, arrived in 1612 at the Fontanone, or "big fountain," on the Janiculum Hill at 72 masl. Unsuitable for drinking, it delivered water for industrial, irrigation and display purposes throughout Trastevere, the Borgo, the Vatican, Monte Testaccio and the Caelian, Esquiline and Aventine hills. With more than 50 meters of fall there was tremendous pressure in this system. The fountains in front of St. Peter's for example, were designed to shoot jets 6.3 meters into the air — high enough to appear to spray the feet of the felicitous saints stationed on the colonnades<sup>1</sup>.

*Left:* The small Campitelli Fountain (only three meters high) is one of the last "children" of the Acqua Felice.

*Right:* The Acqua Paola has been tamed by the time it reaches this Piazza Farnese Fountain.



*Above: The fountains of St. Peter's are fed by the high-pressure Acqua Paola system. Photo: Giulio Magni, *Il barocco a Roma nell'architettura e nella scultura decorativa*, 3 (Turin: Crudo, 1913)*

*Right: The Baraccia is another member of the low-pressure Vergine family.*



### Families of fountains

Each aqueduct generated a family of fountains, rather like far-flung siblings and cousins. The fountains in each family, while more or less distinctive in appearance due to functional necessity and propaganda considerations, shared behavioral characteristics that reflected the specific location of the fountain, both within the city and the individual aqueduct system.

Water spoke first in a roar, then a babble and, finally, a whisper as it moved through the city. Exuberant and flamboyant when released in ceremonial fountains, such as the Trevi, the Moses and the Fontanone, water typically became more reticent and polite as it moved through the city to smaller neighborhood fountains, which had less water and lower pressure. Hence each fountain told a topographic story that linked it simultaneously back to its aqueduct, back to preceding fountains and forward to subsequent fountains in its system.

The Baraccia Fountain, designed by Bernini and located at the foot of the Spanish Steps, is fed by the Vergine system. Its design — a sinking boat less than two meters high, including the central water jet — is a clear response to the limitations of its site. Yet the fountain has an almost monumental presence in the piazza. Because the available pressure was very low (less than a one-meter drop in elevation from the source) it was necessary to excavate the site, even to attain this modest display.

The entire Vergine system, not just the Barcaccia, is under low pressure. This, more than any other condition, determines that Vergine fountains, such as the Trevi, Pantheon, Piazza del Popolo, Piazza Navona (including the Quattro Fontane of Bernini) and Barcaccia, all exploit and celebrate falling water.

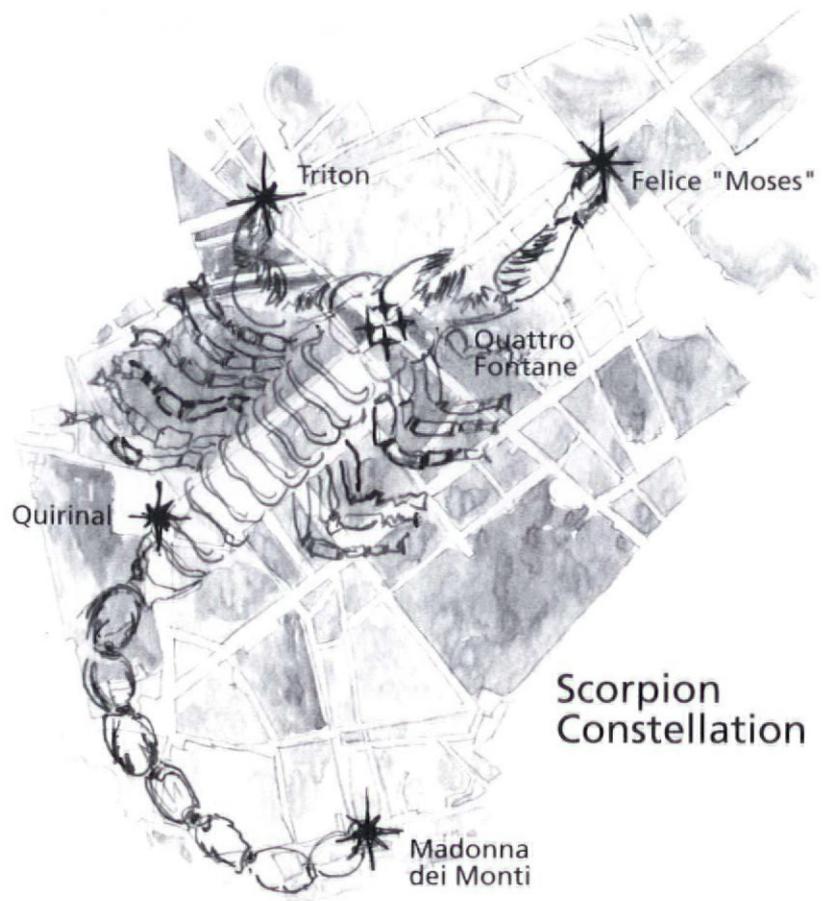
In spite of each fountain's topographic specificity, several have been peripatetic, having been relocated to other parts of the city due to urban renewal projects and street widening. A striking example is the Terrine Fountain, now in front of the Chiesa Nuova but formerly in the Campo dei Fiore. Like the Barcaccia, this member of the Vergine family was placed partially below ground level because of the low pressure available in the *campo*, where it serviced the public market. Since the new site, also within the Vergine watershed, is at approximately the same elevation (16.5 masl), the fountain displays approximately the same quantity of water as before and the intentions of the original water display, as part of the overall fountain design, has not been compromised.



Fountains move about town at their own risk, however, and others have not been so fortunate. Consider the original Piazza del Popolo (15 masl) fountain designed by Giacomo della Porta in 1572. It is about four meters tall, including its base, and originally displayed a jet of water about one-meter high. The entire composition rose to approximately 20 masl, or only one-half meter lower than the maximum elevation of the water near the Piazza di Spagna.

The new site is also within the Vergine watershed, but at 17 masl it is a full two meters higher than the Piazza del Popolo. Because della Porta had already stretched the limits at the earlier, lower site, it is simply impossible to display Vergine water at the new location. Today it is fed by the 1870 Acqua Marcia, a system that mechanically pumps water throughout the city.

Today the Roman water system includes both pressure-pumped and mechanically pumped systems. In some



## Scorpion Constellation

instances the waters from several aqueducts are mixed together and even sent outside their original watershed areas. Consequently we have to work harder to understand the original gravity-based design intentions.

However, with a renewed awareness of topography and the principles of gravity and pressure, the fountains can reveal hidden dimensions of the city, and it is possible to locate them, and oneself, within the larger water landscape of the city.

As such, the fountains provide landmarks for anchoring urban experience to the continuum of history and memory through topography. As we mentally connect the fountains by their underground conduits, we construct a diagram of the city made up of constellations of fountains. Like those in the night sky that they mimic, they help to construct order out of chaos and to orient us in the physical world, facilitating and enriching urban navigation.

### Note

1. Today the water in all three systems is carefully controlled for water conservation. The fountains of St. Peter's, for example, now shoot about a one and one half meter jet of water. Bernini's Triton shoots only a one-meter jet, rather than the original five meters. Other fountains, such as the Trevi and the Fontanone, now use a pumping system to recirculate water.

*left:* The Terrine fountain in its new setting in front of the Chiesa Nuova.

*above:* A "constellation" of Acqua Felice fountains, connected by underground conduits.

## Paris Album

American Institute of Architects  
Committee on Design

John Morris Dixon, FAIA

Viaduc des Arts  
Syl Damianos, FAIA



The American Institute of Architects Committee on Design explored innovative design in Paris and Lyon for five and a half days last summer. Our year's theme of "Cross Sections in Time and Space" helped us to understand the ways in which individual architects and their buildings can contribute to the ongoing processes of building the best city in the world.

We began and ended our time in Paris's historic core, studying careful efforts to serve twentieth-century needs (automobiles, parking, services) while enhancing the character and quality of some of the world's best-loved public spaces. We spent two days examining how former industrial sites are being redeveloped as residential neighborhoods whose parks and public spaces incorporate artifacts from the past. A one-day visit to Lyon demonstrated how these same approaches can work in a smaller city.

For information on future AIA forums, contact AIA at 800-242-3837.

—Raymond Gindroz, AIA, Chair,  
Committee on Design

The most enduring lesson of a visit to Paris is how deeply satisfying the everyday urban environment can be. Perhaps, we think, Paris should be frozen exactly as it is—or even returned to its 1930s condition, before high-rises and expressways. But Paris is after all a living, evolving capital, facing changes in technology and lifestyles. And in recent years, the French have responded to these challenges with remarkable creativity. While the attention of the world's architects has been drawn to high-profile cultural facilities, such as the expanded Louvre and the huge new national library, Paris has also been carrying out large-scale projects meant to pump new life into deteriorating districts outside the glamorous core.

Some of the most ambitious efforts are centered around new parks on tracts formerly occupied by factories and wholesale markets. Each of these is surrounded by new residential, commercial and cultural development in what is obviously meant to be a complementary relationship. The parks we visited are provocative examples of open space design, but unfortunately most of the parcels around them are occupied by hulking structures, physically aloof from both the parks and the city fabric.

Parc de la Villette, the earliest of these public spaces, continues to confound our notion of park. Bernard Tschumi's competition-winning design of 1982 rejected conventional landscaping approaches as inappropriate for the site of the former Paris meat markets. Often criticized as abstract and unwelcoming, the park is laid out on an insistent grid, with red "folly" structures—used as a day-care center, a café, etc.—sprouting at every crossing. Compensating for this regimentation are pocket gardens reserved for design by others, including a terraced mini-vineyard and a sunken bamboo garden.

Long bordered by a vast, ugly science center and a banal entertainment arena, Parc de la Villette is now properly framed at its main entry by the two parts of Christian de Portzamparc's recently completed Cité de la Musique, teaching facilities on one side and public halls on the other. These buildings acknowledge Tschumi's grid in unexpected ways, while providing both a much-needed street wall toward the existing city and a sympathetic gateway into park.

Two subsequent peripheral parks we visited are more conservatively designed, as if in reaction to La Villette, by



local design teams rather than international competition winners. The Parc de Bercy, replacing the wine markets, includes a few old buildings and ruins in its picturesque gardens, which are loosely dispersed across the site. It is best known as the setting for Frank Gehry's ill-fated American Center, empty since its nonprofit sponsors ran out of money (and recently bought by the French government for a new Maison du Cinema).

Parc Andre Citroën, on the site of an automobile factory, is similar to Bercy in scale, but with a stronger plan of broad terraces and individual gardens around a central lawn. An intriguing system of walks, ramps and bridges links a series of gardens and crisply rectangular greenhouses. Facing this park for a few hundred feet is a mid-rise apartment complex thoughtfully related to it, but across the park is yet another corporate citadel clad in reflective glass.

The Viaduc des Arts ingeniously reuses a mile of abandoned railroad track elevated on handsome masonry arches, with artisans' workshop-showrooms at street level and a linear garden above. Some exuberant turn-of-the-

century apartment buildings border the viaduct, and new housing has been effectively arrayed around a ground-level green at one end. Here is an excellent effort at integrating new amenities into the city fabric, without any neotraditional allusions in the new storefronts or housing.

In the city's core, the prevailing strategy is to support intensive activity through adaptive reuse and the insertion of parking beneath buildings, squares and parks. The

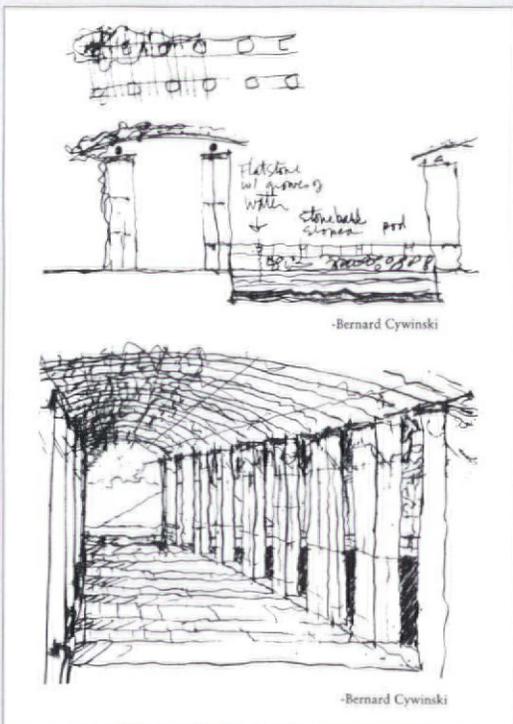
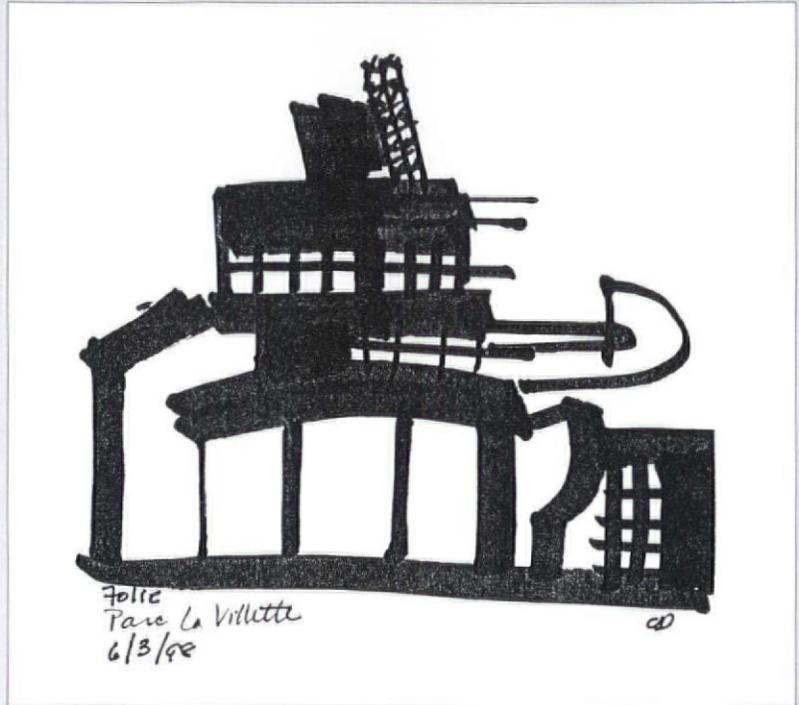
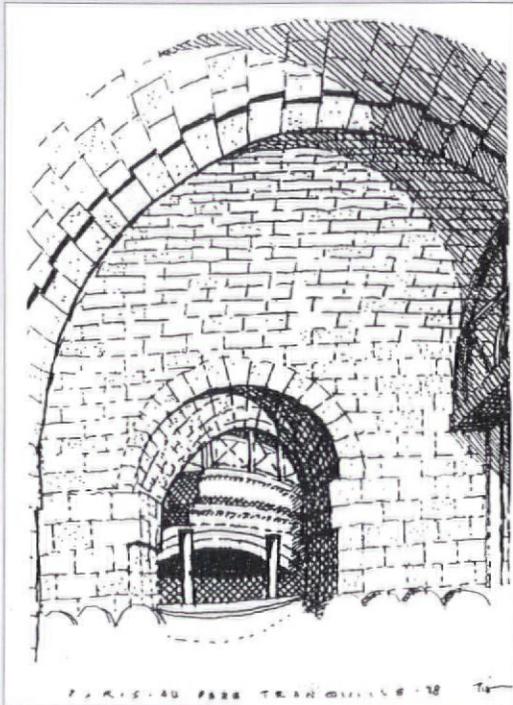
Louvre now has acres of shopping mall and parking extending from Pei's underground lobby, but its best moments are the galleries and skylighted courts the Pei firm has reclaimed inside the palace's wings.

In one development with an above-ground presence, six levels of parking are inserted below an elegantly glazed six-story office building by Ricardo Bofill, on the site of an old above-ground garage. Underground parking is

*Below left: Viaduc des arts  
Stanley Tigerman, FAIA*

*Below right: Folie, Parc  
de la Villette  
Carole Dixon*

*Bottom: Parc de Bercy  
Bernard Cywinski, FAIA*



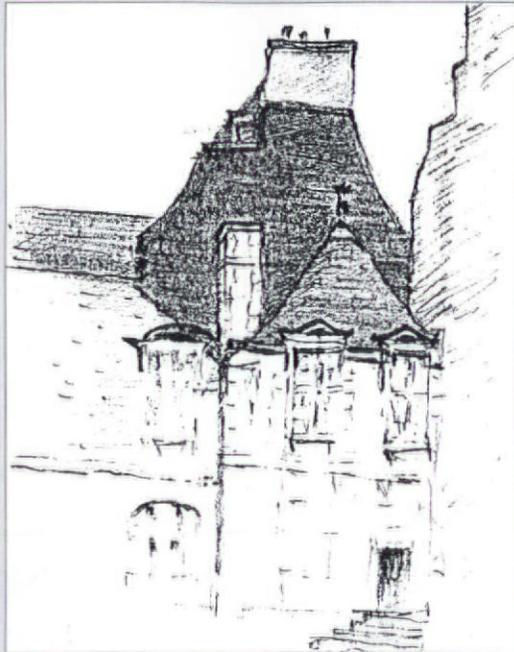
apparently seen as the key to prosperity in Lyon, as well, where we visited four imaginatively remodeled public squares, each over with subterranean parking.

Instructive as these efforts are for visiting architects, what do they portend for Paris? The adventurous parks should provide popular leisure time destinations, but they'll remain largely cut off from everyday life. In parts of the city, street life remains marvelously intense, but these areas may already have become sectors of a Paris theme park, whose visitors increasingly arrive by car. As urban populations withdraw to the privacy of cars and electronic media, the public realm, even in Paris, is in danger of becoming a sometime thing.

*John Morris Dixon, FAIA, a writer and consultant, was editor of Progressive Architecture from 1972 to 1996.*

Robert Campbell, FAIA

## Laminations in the Cityscape



**Hotel de Sully**  
*Robert Campbell, FAIA*

"Paris is elephants and parrots." That was a saying of my one-time boss, architect Josep Lluís Sert. The long rows of six- to ten-story, whitish-gray buildings, humped at the top with their mansards, were the elephants. The bright dashes of color at the street—parasols, awnings, posters—were the parrots. He loved the effect and tried to emulate it in his own work, splashing spots of color against gray concrete.

I thought of this again during the visit of the AIA Committee on Design in June. What brought it to mind was the perception, by Barton Phelps, FAIA, of the laminar quality of the Paris streetscape. Once you've seen it, you can't miss it.

On our trip up the St. Martin Canal, we could make out as many as six slices of space between the water and the building facades, each delineated by a rail or fence. Phelps calls them "precisely controlled layers of space and movement and propriety that, in their overall unity, might be thought of as being laminated." Parrots and elephants are laminar too, like a row of ducks in a shooting gallery moving against a neutral background.

In Paris, layers slide past each other as you move through the city, like stage flats, very strongly so in a place like the

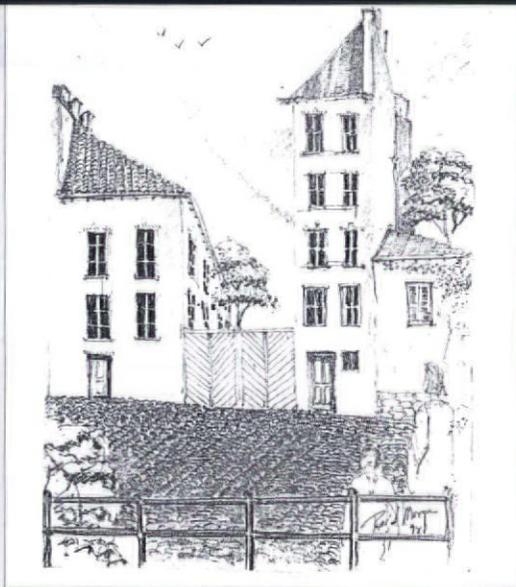
Palais Royale, where the environment establishes a way of seeing people as theater. In a newer example, the Fondation Cartier, the lamination principle was adopted as a mannered and literal expression by a contemporary architect, who erected a glass screen in front of his building.

I've often had occasion to compare Paris with my own city of Boston. The two cities—the cities proper, excluding suburbs—comprise about the same area, depending on how much water you count. Yet Paris is home to almost four times as many people, although Boston is much denser than most American cities. Paris achieves its greater density without any great sense of crowding and without, for the most part, intimidating its inhabitants with tall buildings. The price you pay is smaller rooms at home; the prize you gain is a corresponding increase in the size and richness of the public realm, which becomes, as it seldom is in the U.S., truly part of where you live.

The population density of Paris brings many benefits. It supports continuous shopping on almost every major street. It supports some 280 Metro stops (compared to Boston's 50). And many people live near their work, reducing the pressure of commuting. Best of all, of course, it makes the public realm of the city feel alive and fully inhabited.

There's an obvious relation between this density and the laminar quality of the cityscape. In Paris, people live closely packed. Definition of turf becomes important. Because the path from the private world to the public world is a short one, the thresholds along the way matter more. With each crossing, you move a step closer to the public realm—your door, your stairwell, your courtyard, your concierge, your own street, then the big street that roars by at the corner. A Parisian's trip is much shorter than an American's is likely to be, and therefore each step, each threshold is more insistently defined. Hence the lamination of space.

Lamination takes other forms. Parisians typically live in a *pousse-cafe* world of horizontally layered apartments; when such apartments first appeared in American cities, they were called French flats. The British or Dutch, by contrast, traditionally live in a bookshelf world of vertical layers called terrace houses. In keeping with this national trait, British architects tend to solve their problems by elaborating the section, French the plan. The bookshelf



proclaims the self-contained independence of each family unit, as well as its hierarchies (upstairs, downstairs). The horizontal flat, often sandwiched with other flats used for commercial or institutional purposes, suggests a more anonymous, and perhaps more extended, family identity.

There are also laminations in time, what Kevin Lynch called temporal collage: the new on the new, as at Parc de la Villette, which resembles a computer-generated overlaying of one system onto another; the new on the old, as at the Louvre, the Viaduc des Arts or, most remarkably, at the Maison de Verre, with its scrim-like glass-block facade inlaid into stucco Paris; the old on the new, as at the Centre Culturel Suisse, where old architectural skins of no special merit were maintained as a memory, then filled with new life; and everywhere, of course, the old on the older.

Sometimes the collage worked, but not always. At Parc de Bercy (another symphony of thresholds) old railroad tracks were left in the paving of the new park. The remains of the old were deliberate quotation, not gritty survival, and you felt you couldn't make your own discoveries, that every experience had been pre-envisioned by the designers. At la Villette, the empty red pavilions felt lonely and toy-like, a stalled model train set existing in a conceptual grid that defined neither time nor place. At Cité Berryer, as Donlyn Lyndon, FAIA, put it, we saw a "medieval order sanitized, as the latest evolution" in imagining Paris—the expression, but not the realization, of a longing for physical community.

Our "Cross Sections in Time and Place" were taken through many such laminations. What are the lessons for Americans? One, I would think, is that city planning isn't always a bad idea. Only powerful, well-financed and sometimes ruthless central planning could pull off the successes of Paris, especially the astonishing parks and the marvelous public transit. You have to admire, too, the willingness to plunge in and reinvent, and the understanding that a city must embody a promise for the future



*Above left: Canal St. Martin  
Reid Morgan, ALA*

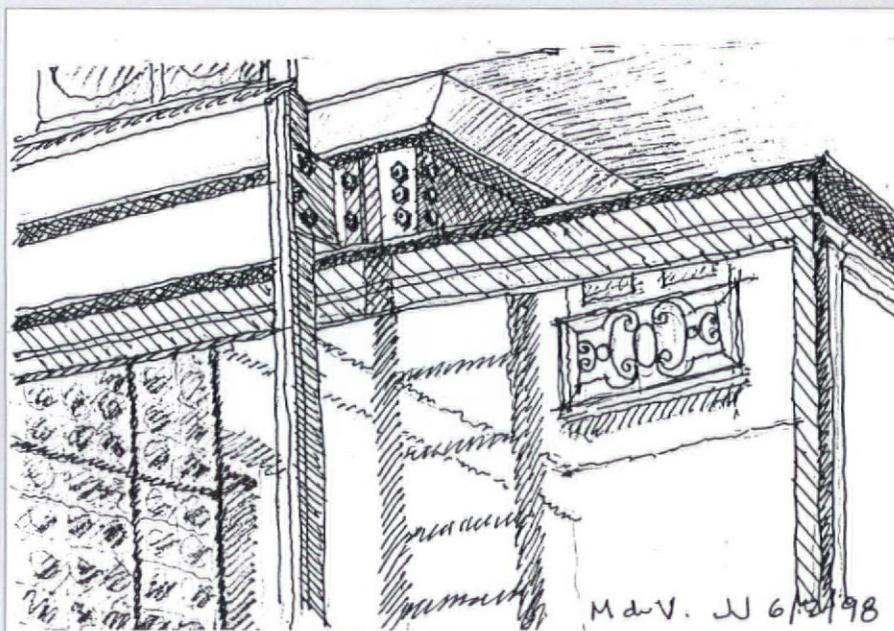
*Above: Centre Culturel  
Suisse  
Raymond L. Gindroz, ALA*

as well as a memory of the past. But, at the same time, you wonder if a dose of the chaos of American citizen participation might not have helped here and there, as at the new Bibliotheque Nationale, a building driven more by ideas than by experience: a witty Wildean reversal of Le Corbusier's towers in a park, it is a sad park in towers.

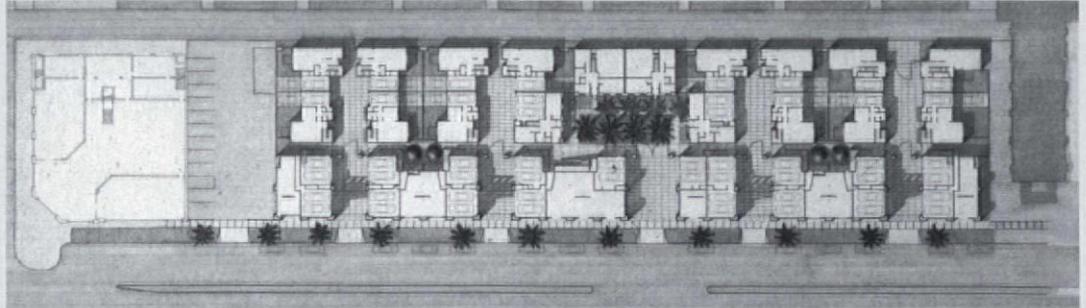
If there's another lesson, one we need, it's simply that cities do come back. The Marais quarter, where we spent much of our time, was a notorious slum as late as the middle of this century. Perhaps all great older neighborhoods today were once, by the standards of our time, slums. Paris shows us that you don't need to knock them down. But you needn't be afraid to mess with them, either.

*Robert Campbell, FAIA, is architecture critic for the Boston Globe.*

*Maison de Verre  
Jon Jackson, ALA*



## The Block: Enabler of Urban Architecture



**Vermont Village Plaza, a multifamily urban block in South Central Los Angeles.**

*Top: Block plan*

*Drawing: Solomon Architecture and Urban Design*

*Above right: View from side street that passes through the project.*

*Photo: Grant Mudford*

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The Charter for the New Urbanism contains a section entitled, "The Street, the Block, the Building." I am particularly interested in the block for several reasons. First, our office has several commissions to design urban blocks. Second, and more importantly, the reason we have commissions of this type is that the block has become a fundamental morphological unit of the city. Most large-scale contemporary master plans, such as San Francisco's Mission Bay, are built out block by block.

A block is a large enough unit of construction to amortize the administrative time of bureaucracies, banks and developers. Yet it is small enough for garden-variety developers and small enough not to cause a normal loan committee to freak out. It is small enough to be within the range of a modestly scaled architectural practice like my own. But it is large to be generative of urban pattern larger than itself.

This list of small enoughs and large enoughs has a significant consequence. The block is the vehicle through which an ordinary architect, an ordinary developer, an ordinary lender and an ordinary bureaucrat can think about and materially affect the city as a whole. It requires architects to think about their work in large collective terms, and to shun the usual heady jaunts into the intoxicating realm of the self.

Thinking about the city in large terms acknowledges that cities change, that change is the essence of their life. The changes for which we must find architecture are large changes, from public transportation to private cars and, perhaps, back again (but maybe not); from tiny entrepreneurs and individuals filling out a public infrastructure to huge aggregations of investment building the whole thing; from centralized federal bureaucracies building



social housing to the same bureaucracies demolishing all they built.

Each of my office's block-scale projects is a product of these huge patterns of upheaval and change. Yet all of them share common traits. Each creates a pedestrian realm in places where everyone is dependent on automobiles and likely to remain so. Each establishes a pattern to be replicated on a larger scale. Each is embedded in some fragment of older architecture, none of it very distinguished, and each treats those old fragments with deference and respect without copying them either typologically or stylistically.

This aspiration to think about the city in large terms is the single distinguishing characteristic of New Urbanist architecture. It is also what makes our collective work different, and I would argue better, from most of what has gone on in schools of architecture and in the professions they serve for a long time.



*Left: Gateway into parking courtyard in the midblock.*

*Below: Vermont Avenue streetscape.*

*Photos: Grant Mudford*

This aspiration to think about the city in large terms is different from what one might call naive contextualism or what the British architectural press used to call “keeping in keeping.” The contextualism in our work is not revivalism, of either what is next door or someone’s memory of what was next door.

Ideology about style has crippled the ability of architects to respond stylistically to all the situations in which we are asked to work, when that is in fact exactly what people want from us. In the nineteenth century and first third of the twentieth century that was not the case. One sees this phenomenon clearly in Northern California. From the late 1890s until the end of the 1920s the public institutions of Northern California were built, for the most part, by a small group of gifted and superbly well-trained architects educated at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. This little group (including Bernard Maybeck, Willis Polk, Arthur Brown and Julia Morgan) built a world that was in New Urbanism terms a very satisfactory place. These architects built a city fabric, public monuments, rural retreats, grand campus plans and retail streets of great vitality—and they did it all without any theory to speak of (they were too busy for theories), but with virtuoso skill, unabashed eclecticism, interest in the new and a complete absence of hang-ups and ideological proscriptions.

Then came the Modern movement, forty years of stylistic rectitude and an eradication of architectural culture as systematic and complete as the eradications of the Cultural Revolution. In the aftermath of revolution people learn that it is no longer wise to hate knowledge.



At the end of the century the best architects of the beginning of the century take on new relevance—the proto-Moderns like Otto Wagner, with their skill, love of good building and simultaneous fascination with new technologies and absence of stylistic dogmatism.

The end of the century is like the end of a Mardi Gras. All of the great orthodoxies and -isms, political and artistic, lie amidst the litter like discarded masks. We shuffle through them and look forward to going back to work, to behaving with civility and to putting things in order.

*Daniel Solomon, a founder and board member of the Congress for the New Urbanism, is a San Francisco architect and professor at the University of California, Berkeley.*

*Project: Vermont Village Plaza*

*Architect: Solomon Architecture and Urban Design  
Landscape architect: GLS Architecture/Landscape Architecture*

*Sponsor: Rodney Shepard/Vermont Village Plaza LLC.*

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**Errata** The designers of two projects published in *Places* 12.1 were not properly identified. The master plan for the Tanglewood Performing Arts Center was done by Carr Lynch Hack Sandell, William L. Porter, FAIA, was Consulting Principal in charge and Catharine A. Verhulst was Project Manager/Chief Designer. The landscape architect for the Beth Israel Memorial Chapel was GLS Architecture/Landscape Architecture. We regret the errors.

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