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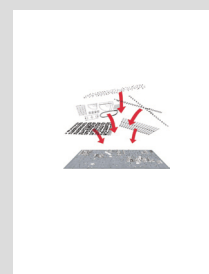
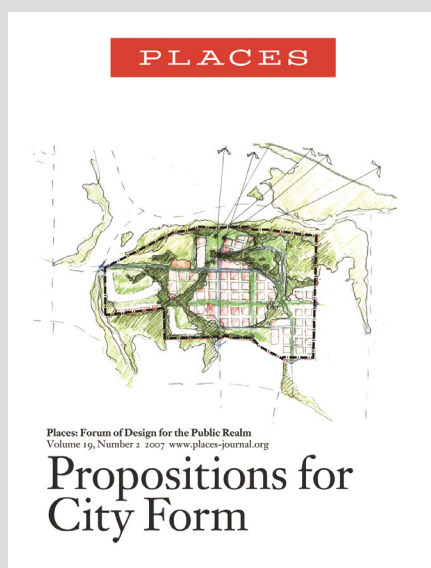
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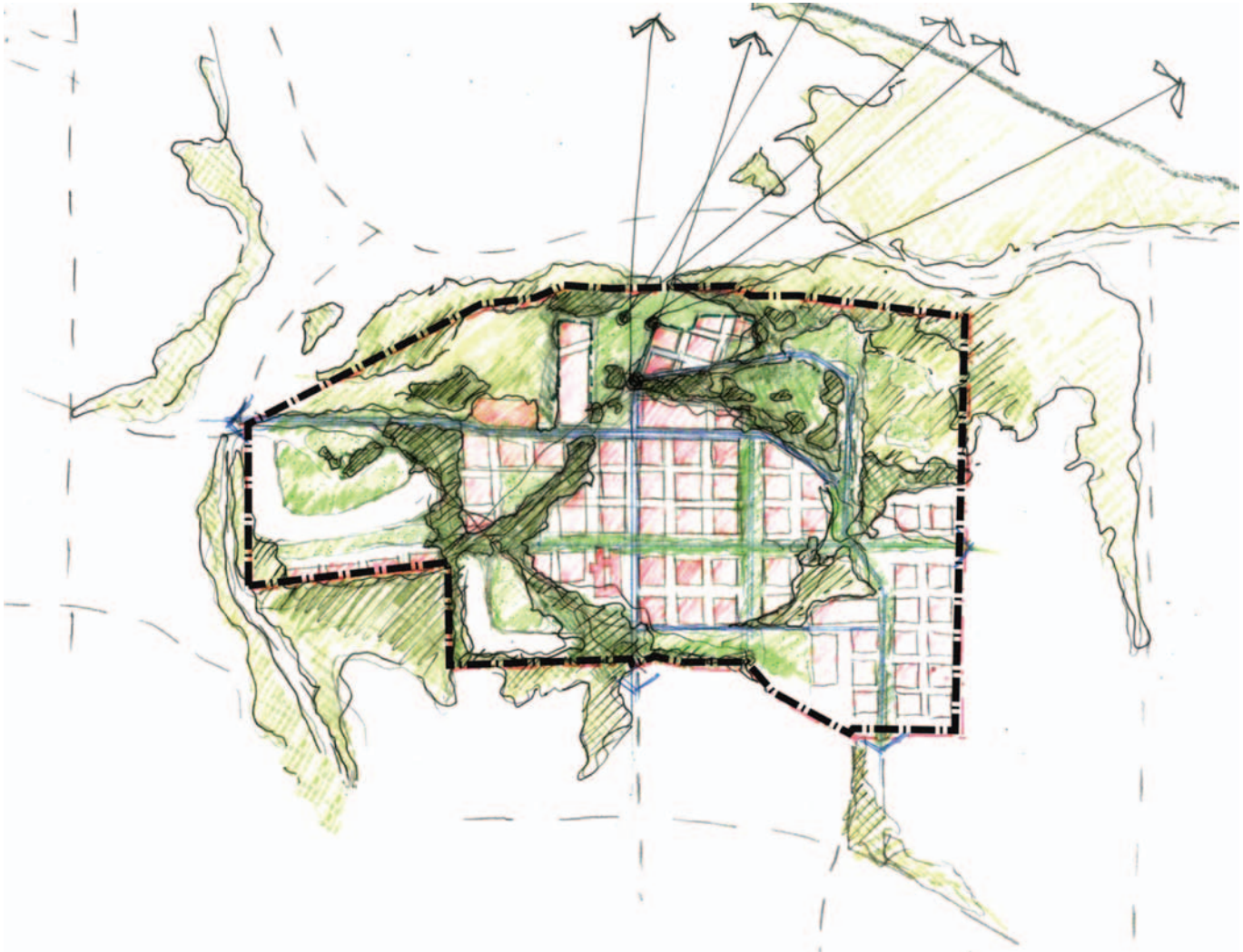
The covers of this issue highlight emerging trends that have recently reinvigorated the theory and practice of urban design in Europe and the Americas. The issue examines several of these under the title “Propositions for City Form.”

Front cover: The Rockcliffe redevelopment in Ottawa is the flagship for an emerging effort to design “green” infill communities in major Canadian cities, based on a rediscovery of underlying ecologies and a reappraisal of formerly mechanistic assumptions about the relation between human populations and urban space. However, as Ken Greenberg explains, a complex iterative process was required to successfully integrate specialized knowledge from a variety of disciplines. This design framework, “defining the plan as a living instrument capable of absorbing change and responding to evolving needs...provides a model for the type of integrated, flexible thinking required to shape contemporary cities.” Drawing courtesy of Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects.

Back cover: Before its Central Artery came down, the social geography of central Boston was divided into isolated territories. The North End was separated from the West End. Chinatown and the Leather District were separate from Downtown, City Hall Plaza, and so on. Today the Rose Kennedy Greenway and the Crossroads Initiative, part of a public works campaign with few parallels in history, offer the opportunity to break through this previous fragmentation and create a fundamentally altered image of the city in the minds of residents and visitors alike. Pencil sketch by Ken Greenberg.

Inside front cover: As part of an “Ideal Figures Project,” this drawing illustrates the possibility of a new way of thinking about urban redevelopment. Instead of basing plans entirely on an elaboration of flawed existing conditions, Alexander D’Hooghe and Tali Hatuka argue that designers should once again engage with dreams and visions of the ideal. As a tool, such thinking might help overcome “a paralyzing anti-utopianism [that] has isolated the design professions from ongoing social problems.” In this case the drawing indicates the type of concerns that might inform the redesign of poorer suburban areas by a resurgent welfare state. Drawing by Alexander D’Hooghe and Neeraj Bhatia.

PLACES



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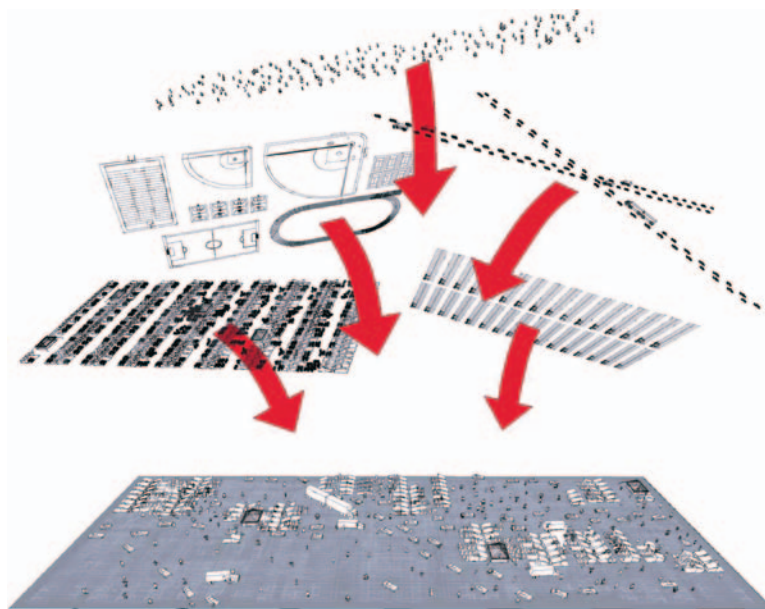
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Caring for Places: Ideas that Germinate

Ideas infiltrate the mind in curious ways—sometimes by sheer strength of assertion, sometimes by reasoned argument and deliberate study. Many ideas enter our thoughts surreptitiously, carried there by the casual interpretation of repetitive experience; they filter into our minds unbidden, settling there without challenge and forming the undercurrents of our thought. These ideas are often the ones that are most difficult to separate from reflexive actions, and to consider critically.

There is a temptation to assume that cities just happen, that they are the mindless products of inexorable economic forces. But the city, too, is infused with mind. It results from an infinitude of thoughts—ambitions, fears, presumptions of public good, intimations of private gain, prejudices and perspectives—all embedded in the actions we take day by day, and often wrapped in the rhetoric of persuasion. The city takes its form from the intersection of these ideas and images, from the differences in their persuasive power, and the ubiquity of their spread—as well as the patterns of ownership, regulation and power maintained by those who bear them in mind or act within their thrall.

Various propositions about forming environments are brought together in this issue, opening insights into how images and ideas germinate urban form. Multiple views must come into play as our cities evolve: ideas that reach to the landscape, ideas that care for the lives of people in place. We must understand how to husband resources and to weave the threads of enterprise into urban and rural fabrics that enable rather than ensnare those who live there. These ideas must be shared, challenged and elaborated in form. There must be ideas that shatter deceit, as well as ideas that rally support; ideas that show negotiable paths through the accretions of the past, as well as ideas that offer vision of what might become. We must be ready to change our presuppositions, as well as find ways to act with clarity—as designers, citizens and stewards of our cities and their place in the landscape.

In the forum of these pages we present not an encompassing theory, but essays that probe differing dimensions of how we attend to the forming of place. The articles emerge from a variety of vantage points positioned in theory, practice, use and observation. They represent the jostling of ideas that form and reform our cities. We must engage both overtly held and subtly infiltrated ideas and images and seek out their influence within our own works. Most important, we must put ideas to the test by imagining their impact on the lives of those who will live in the places to which we give form, and by projecting their consequences in the local, regional and global environments.

Throughout this process, each vision of possibility should be set within an understanding of its particular place, and measured in terms that enlarge our understanding of the freedoms and responsibilities involved. The process should engender ideas that help individuals and communities become responsible stewards of the future.

— *Donlyn Lyndon*

Architectural Positions on the Public Sphere: The 2007 Delft Lecture Series

Tom Avermaete and Hans Teerds

Looking back on architectural theory over the past two decades, a narrative of profound loss appears with regard to the public sphere. As theoreticians lament what they consider to be a decline in its content and character, some have even been moved to use such dire phrases as “The End of Public Space” and “The Phantom Public Sphere.”¹

During this period, however, architectural practice has offered a much richer picture, as illustrated, for example, by work on the collective domain by Manuel de Solà-Morales in Barcelona, the Neotraditionalist public projects of Rob Krier, and the minimal public interventions in European cities of Bernardo Secchi. In the end, one is left to ask: which view better captures the actual vicissitudes of the contemporary city?

The rift between architectural theory and practice was a key subject of the 2007 Delft Lecture Series, which brought together scholars and practitioners such as de Solà-Morales, Léon Krier, Bernard Tschumi, Kengo Kuma, and Hans Kollhoff between February and May to debate the state of the public realm in cities across Europe. Its format paired a theoretician with two practicing architects around the topics “Changing Definitions of Public and Private,” “Image Building and Public Space,” “The Temporalities of the Public Sphere,” “Monumentality and Public Representation,” “Alternating Programs and Practices,” and “The Perception of the Public.”²

What emerged was the view that architects and urban designers need to take a more nuanced approach to the public realm—one that considers change in contemporary public life not as lamentable, but as offering a series of new challenges. The lecture series also emphasized how many

recent public initiatives overlook the *longue durée* of public space—the traditional capacity of public buildings to play a role in the collective memory of citizens, and of streets and squares to offer an enduring structure to the city.

The Theoretical Debate

For years one of the main exponents of the narrative of lost public space has been the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. In his apocalyptic 1994 essay “The Generic City,” he claimed that cities were witnessing an “evacuation of the public realm.” He used this slogan to describe the pending transformation of the public sphere into a uniform space of traffic, implying that squares and streets, traditional urban expressions of public life, would be increasingly reduced to infrastructural figures. If places still existed in the new urban world where public life could unfold, they would certainly not be streets.

*The street is dead.... Roads are only for cars. People (pedestrians) are led on rides (as in an amusement park), on “promenades” that lift them off the ground, that subject them to a catalog of exaggerated conditions—wind, heat, steepness, cold, interior, exterior, smells, fumes—in a sequence that is a grotesque caricature of life in the historic city.*³

In Koolhaas’s view, the traditional street, with its opportunity for chance encounters with the “other,” would be replaced by decks, bridges, tunnels and motorways reserved for specific urban audiences. If the *flâneur* still had a place in this future city, it would be in the highly planned and privately owned interior spaces of hotel lobbies and shopping malls.

The underlying logic of these changes has been accurately described by Michael Sorkin, who has pointed to a strategy of “Disneyfication” that has increasingly been applied to cities.

*Whether in its master incarnation at the ersatz Main Street of Disneyland, in the phony historic festivity of a Rouse marketplace, or the gentrified architecture of the “Reborn” Lower East Side, this elaborate apparatus is at pains to assert its ties to the kind of city life it is in the process of obliterating.*⁴

Sorkin warned that even though the theme-park perspective was proving enormously effective in attracting tourists to historical cities, it might mean the end of diverse public life. After all, he wrote, “In the ‘public’ spaces of the theme park or the shopping mall, speech itself is restricted: there are no demonstrations in Disneyland. The effort to reclaim the city is the struggle for democracy itself.”⁵ Sorkin appealed for “a return to a more authentic urbanity, a city based on physical proximity and free movement and a sense that the city is our best expression of a desire for collectivity. As spatiality ebbs, so does intimacy.”⁶

In the late 1990s the Belgian philosopher Lieven De Cauter further characterized developments in the public sphere with the expression “capsularization of life.”⁷ He claimed that everyday life was increasingly unfolding in conditioned, private spaces of heterotopic character.

Our everyday life can be described as a movement, using transport capsules, from one enclave or capsule, home for instance, to another, campus, office, airport, all-in-one hotel, mall, and so on. One might say that hyperindividualism

+ the suburbanization of everyday life = capsularization.⁸

In an earlier lecture, De Cauter had linked this process to what he called the “Mediterraneanization” of historical centers in European cities. Part of this process was their exclusive and one-dimensional use for leisure, tourism and shopping. Though at first glance we perceive a variety of people using streets and squares, he argued, on second view we recognize a homogeneous group using a heterotopian place.

“Mediterraneanization is not so much a sign of the return to the Athenian agora, of a new public life, but rather of the injection of an archetype that stems from the dream world of advertisements into the real city; the ‘universal beach party,’” he wrote.⁹

Perspectives from Practice

The perspectives of Koolhaas, Sorkin and De Cauter sketched the outlines of a broader theoretical discourse lamenting the increasingly one-dimensional character of public spaces. But other insights emerged in the 1990s from European architectural practice.

One of the most interesting was that of the Spanish architect and urban planner Manuel de Solà-Morales. In a 1992 article “Public and Collective Space: The Urbanization of the Private Domain as a New Challenge,” originally published in the Spanish newspaper *La Vanguardia*, he questioned two aspects of the traditional definition of public space: that it should be publicly owned, and that it should be freely accessible by everyone.¹⁰ To de Solà-Morales, both these attributes were becoming obsolete, and he argued that even in the most traditional European cities, much public life was developing elsewhere.

As a response, de Solà-Morales suggested extending the notion of public space to encompass new spaces such as “parking lots, shopping malls, vacation centers and cinema complexes.” He called these “collective spaces” and argued that architects should seek broader responsibility for their design. They should not concede their design to commercial logic and developer standards, but rather seek to transform them into challenging new fields of architectural investigation. De Solà-Morales described this task as “the urbanization of the collective territory.”

At the same time, the Italian urban designer Bernardo Secchi was pointing to another important aspect of the public sphere: its ability to accommodate different forms of appropriation over different time periods. In the mid-1990s Secchi developed several designs for “a project of the soil.” For the Belgian city of Kortrijk, this involved a minimally defined series of public plains or “*galletes*” which were carefully inserted in the topography to become a substratum for future public life and building.

Crucial to Secchi’s approach was a belief that everyday appropriation would take place only if sufficient time were provided for new practices to unfold. The design of public space must thus accommodate

*...a slower pace, in which everyday habits can again legitimately play a role. Too often there is a refusal of the space of life which is a continuous construction site, continuously traversed by nomadic populations and activities, never reaching a recognizable stable condition. There is a necessity for a narrative which, as Wim Wenders says, “protects its own characters.”*¹¹

A third perspective on the appropriation and temporality of the public sphere came from Bernard Tschumi. In his design for the well-known Parisian Parc de La Villette he explored ways to serve different publics, and especially the short-term cycles of appropriation that characterize a space such as a park. He saw these “events” as crucial to understanding contemporary public space. They involve practices of shock and reinvention that architecture should accommodate, creating loci where differences might become visible. Tschumi noted that “the event is by definition the place of the combination of differences.”¹²

Parc de La Villette was thus designed to express a superposition of differences. On the largest scale this involved the introduction of a grid over the site, an open frame within which all activities might unfold. Defined elements were then added to the grid, such as playgrounds, purposefully designed gardens, and red *follic* pavilions employing a common formal language. The combination of uniform grid and specific elements offered a clever blend that might function as a background for both daily life and singular events.

Hypertrophy of Invented Public Spaces

The positions of De Solà-Morales, Secchi and Tschumi illustrate a disconnect between theoretical debate and actual developments in architectural practice. Indeed, practicing architects were discovering new complexity and richness in the public sphere. And their calls for more nuanced attention to it did not remain unanswered. Despite the dour forecasts of architectural theorists, during the 1990s architects and city governments in Europe started to regard public space (both open areas

such as squares and park and public buildings such as museums) as a matter of concern.

Projects in Barcelona (Spain), Lyon (France), and Groningen (The Netherlands) highlighted a growing awareness of the value of public space in a new competition to establish regional “poles of attraction.” Attractive public space was seen as key to catching the attention of both the local population (for entertainment and shopping) and the international public of congress participants and tourists.

During the 1990s leaders in major European cities (and also secondary ones) became convinced that the reimagination of public space should be part of a general strategy to put them on the map. The results were staggering. In city after city public spaces were developed or redeveloped: squares, streets and quays were beautified; iconic public buildings erected; and abandoned industrial areas redeveloped into public parks. The public squares of Barcelona, the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao, and the conversion of the Ruhr district of Germany into new park areas became the templates for a variety of strategies applied across Europe. The outcome can only be described as a hypertrophy of public space.

The new buildings and spaces were often very successful and had strong visual impacts. The contours of the Bilbao Guggenheim, the fountains of the public squares in Lyon, and the public parks of Barcelona cut a high profile in the commonly held imagery of these cities today.

In these major cities attention to public space was embedded in a larger plan to improve the public realm. Unfortunately, however, this was not always the case in secondary locales, where occasional investment in public space was seen as a way to

augment their appeal in international guidebooks, advertisements and websites. Too often new public spaces were regarded merely as stage settings for concerts, festivals, or made-up festivities with little relation to long-term qualities of the city.

Many such spaces had two common denominators: a fascination with image quality and a concern with short-term activities. Attention was aimed at the fleeting logics of consumption and mass and congress tourism, as new or renewed public spaces became integral to a society of spectacle. A recipe of beautified public spaces, spectacular public buildings, and throbbing public events became the accepted norm.

The Return of the Perennial and Difference

Have things changed since the 1990s? In architectural theory, perspectives have hardly altered. In 2007 phrases such as the “evacuation of the public realm” and “the capsularization of life” seem to reverberate more intensely than ever. And renown theoreticians are still claiming that traditional squares and public buildings are obsolete, eventually to be replaced by electronic highways, chat rooms, and virtual communities.

But what has become of the more optimistic view among practitioners? This question provided the incentive for the Delft spring 2007 lecture series. Titled “Architectural Positions,” it aimed to convene leading architects and ask them for their views on the changing public sphere.

Once again, the perspective from practice differed greatly from the tone of mourning that is the grist for contemporary architectural theory. Not a single practicing architect claimed that the public sphere was being “evacuated.” Rather, a perspec-

tive emerged of important challenges and responsibilities.

Two important concerns were raised in particular. One was described by de Solà-Morales as follows: “a shopping center or a peripheral supermarket, an amusement park or a stadium, a large parking lot or a shopping gallery... these are the significant places for everyday life, these are the contemporary collective spaces.” The embedding of private spaces into the collective structure of the city clearly remains a worry for many.

But participants in the seminar series sought to interpret this as a challenge for the future. Michiel Riedijk was specific:

Architects are by default condemned to think and work for the future. The past does not offer clear-cut answers for contemporary challenges. Architectural and urban design must regain the conviction that new solutions, technologies and instruments allow for the design of a more comfortable and durable world.

The other main concern was the need for a careful consideration of the different temporal qualities of public activity. A recurrent theme here was the need to renew concern for the *longue durée* of public projects. In rethinking the design of public spaces, a number of presenters argued that new emphasis should be placed on their ability to structure the long-term development of the city, not merely lend it a quick imaginability.

In the words of Felix Claus:

Public building is asked to stand out. It represents society.... We want to build strong buildings because their strong presence could change

the environment.... It is an issue of content and not of images. There are too many images. It has to be about the content regarding social responsibility. This has very much to do with urban design; durability.

Beyond addressing the present cycles of building, deterioration and rebuilding, architects and urban designers should refocus attention on the capacity of streets, squares and important public buildings to serve as organizing figures within a city. But several speakers offered a second reason for the *longue durée*. They identified public places and buildings as “sites par excellence,” where crucial collective issues such as sustainability can still be addressed.

Thus, in his lecture, Léon Krier argued that “the main concern of architects today should be the relation of building to available resources. The realm of public building is one of the most obvious terrains for an architect to consider these issues.” Several presenters also characterized the field of public space as one where architects can engage with broad social considerations beyond fleeting commercial logic.

Another important theme was multiplicity. While it is generally acknowledged that processes like “Disneyfication” and “Mediterraneanization” create homogeneity in the use of space, de Solà-Morales, Tschumi, and Juhani Pallasmaa claimed that architects should aspire to strategies that offer room for the expression of difference—for the unexpected, otherness, and the unknown.

Projects presented illustrated attempts to come to terms with these new principles. For example, Lieven de Boeck of Xaveer de Geyter Architects proposed a strategy for “After-Sprawl.” As he claimed,

...the project presents an overview of a possible new spatial condition that can be created in the sprawl and be drawn from the inherent characteristics. After-sprawl aims to demonstrate that there can be a contemporary urbanity that is not founded on the classical dichotomy of the city and countryside. It finds possible ways to connect that urbanity to a public space based on a shared notion of perception and accessibility....”

A New Future for the Public Sphere

In general terms, participants in the Architectural Positions seminars confirmed the pleas of de Solà-Morales, Secchi and Tschumi for a more nuanced approach to the design of public spaces. No doubt, definitions of public and private are today shifting to give increasing importance to the private sphere. And, no doubt, the high expectations concerning spectacle and image within the public realm will continue to create volatility within contemporary public programs.

Yet, despite—or exactly because of—the complex temporality of the present-day city, concern for the *longue durée* should be a key consideration for contemporary architects working in the public sphere. The design of public spaces can provide an expansive décor for this alternating life; it can offer a frame for public events and habits; and it can offer room for expression of difference. In short, it can create places for meeting and exchange—or in the words of Hannah Arendt, “action and speech.”¹³

Notes

1. Michael Sorkin, ed, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New

York: Hill and Wang, 1992); and Bruce Robbins, ed., *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

2. For an overview of the program of the Architectural Positions seminar series, see <http://positions.tudelft.nl>.

3. Rem Koolhaas, “The Generic City,” in Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1995), p. 1254.

4. Michael Sorkin, “Introduction,” in Michael Sorkin, ed, *Variations on a Theme Park*, p. xiv.

5. *Ibid.*, p. xv.

6. *Ibid.*, p. xv.

7. Lieven De Cauter, “The Capsule and the Network: Preliminary Notes for a General Theory,” in the architectural journal *OASE* 51, “Re: Generic City” (2001), Nijmegen, Uitgeverij Sun.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

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10. The article was translated in Dutch and published in the architectural journal *OASE* 32, “De transformatie van de metropool” (1992), Nijmegen, Uitgeverij Sun. An English translation of the article will be published in a forthcoming *Architectural Positions Anthology*, which will present thirty-six articles by architects on “Architecture, Modernity, and the Public Sphere.”

11. Bernardo Secchi, “For a Town-Planning of Open Spaces,” in *Casabella* 597-598, January/February 1993.

12. Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 258.

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After Postmodernism: Readdressing the Role of Utopia in Urban Design and Planning

Tali Hatuka and Alexander D'Hooghe

The last few decades have brought massive political, economic and social change to urban areas. Trends such as population growth, the rise of dual economies and oppressive political regimes, and continued transnational migration have accelerated urbanization and caused urban resources and territories to become increasingly contested. The question is, can urban design and planning respond effectively to these changes? And how do these changes affect places?

These questions need to be analyzed in the context of current theories and practices of urban design and planning. Beginning in the 1960s, many urban designers responded to the excesses of modernism by embracing such concepts as context, the quotidian, and multiplicity, and integrating them into design practice. Among planners, a similar assessment fueled development of a participatory model, sometimes called “planning from below,” that expanded the range of participants in urban interventions to include NGOs and social movements.

For many, therefore, urban design and planning discourse today is based on critical reassessment of actual places produced by the Modern Movement—which has, in turn, suggested alternative ideas about the relationship between socio-political space and design. But this opposition is seen as arising within a postcritical era, dominated by pragmatic approaches that emphasize materiality and technology and that view public spaces as arenas for spectacle.

This approach has been employed worldwide in urban design projects that regenerate city centers through the selling of place image within a tourist economy. Examples include the celebrated Schouwburgplein square in Rotterdam (West 8), the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Frank Gehry), Parc de la Villette in Paris (Bernard Tschumi), and Fremont Street in Las Vegas (Jon Jerde). Such projects celebrate the global economy and downplay local political agendas, developing technological strategies in lieu of real engagement with urbanization issues.¹ For better or worse, Mark Dorian has argued, the rhetoric of crisis that characterized the urban design discourse of the 1960s and 70s has almost disappeared.² Unfortunately, most current projects employ the language of multiplicities, differences and flexibility, but are unable to critically address important changes in cities and their urbanizing regions.

A similar decline in the critical assessment of space is apparent in planning discourse. Today, public-sector planning relies on nongovernment organizations that operate “from below” to produce alternative plans for market-based development. As recently argued by Bishwapriya Sanyal, this reliance has a side effect—namely, it diverts attention from public-sector mechanisms essential to social development and change.³

Planning from below has also shifted professional focus from the object itself (i.e., the city) to action-oriented participatory approaches such as advocacy and communicative planning.⁴ These strategies, which map the requirements of different groups, deal primarily with distribution of resources, and operate within an existing order. As a result, the planning process has become a matter of inclusive negotiation, and can no longer foster macro-visions of social justice.

In summary, then, by focusing entirely on the concrete and pragmatic, the urban design and planning professions have dissociated themselves from universal questions. Furthermore, this is happening at the exact moment when these questions are resurfacing. Such a situation obliges us to reflect on what has been achieved and what has been lost through the engagement with postmodern discourse. We argue here that a reformulation of urban ideals and a resurgence of visions of the utopian are crucial to the future of cities.

The Utopian Debate

How is it possible that the utopian vision has vanished in this most urbanized epoch? How can we justify distancing ourselves from this discourse at a time when urban resources and territories are becoming increasingly contested?

One departure point for a discussion of the utopian debate is the work of Thomas More, who in 1516 defined utopia as both the “good place” and “no place.”⁵ However, debates around the idea have existed since Aristotle argued that Plato’s ideal society was a false model on which to base the construction of political theory.⁶ Aristotle’s view was that only critical assessment of existing social and political realities could improve society.

More recently, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels coined the term “Socialist Utopia” to dismiss the idealized communities of Claude Henri Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen. They were concerned that these “escapist” movements, with their optimistic views of human nature and predictions for a better future, would strengthen resistance to Marxism—or Scientific Socialism.⁷

Conversely, however, other theorists have argued that the utopian promise is a prerequisite for social change. In *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch described how utopian thinking has contributed to the development of society.⁸ But he differentiated between abstract utopias unembedded in reality, and concrete utopias grounded in the possible. To Bloch, utopia was a horizon, a place beyond reach but within view. By aspiring to it, people could become active in the production of a better world.

In an effort to overcome utopia’s negative totalitar-

ian connotations, Karl Mannheim also sought to refine understanding of the term. He described utopia as a means through which groups understand the world, a process based on mental constructions (dreams, fantasies, symbols).⁹ Every period in history has produced ideas that transcend the existing order, he argued, but these do not function as utopias; they were, rather, ideologies that integrated the worldview of the period. Such ideologies become dangerous totalitarian movements only when certain groups attempt to embody these “wish-images” in actual conduct.

In urban design and planning the utopian debate is far from academic; it is embedded in actual projects that people and societies still inhabit, and with which we still struggle. On one side, opponents of utopian thinking such as Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Jane Jacobs, Kenneth Frampton, and Aldo Rossi argue that utopian ideals require totalitarian coercion and physical determinism. For them, “utopia” implies static strategies with social and economic definitions, organized in physical space. Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City and Le Corbusier’s Ville Radieuse were twentieth-century examples of such utopian visions.

Opponents of utopia often use Brasília as an example of the disempowering dialectic of utopian visions.¹⁰ The plan of Brasília (intended for only five hundred thousand inhabitants) envisioned that all classes would live together in harmony. But Brasília now has more than two million inhabitants, the vast majority of whom live in either satellite towns or squatter settlements outside the area of the official “Pilot Plan” (which now houses mostly the elite). For critics, the failure of a utopian scheme derives from its contradictory logic—i.e., utopia is intended to control and stabilize social processes, but in order to be fulfilled these processes must inevitably remain dynamic.¹¹

On the other side of the utopian debate in urban design and planning, however, advocates such as Susan Fainstein and John Friedmann argue that ideal visions remain an essential catalyst for any kind of social development. Thus, conceptions such as a “Just City” or a “Good City” must be central to both theory and practice.¹²

As Fainstein has said, “today planning is mostly characterized by modesty. Despite some exceptions, especially the advocates for the New Urbanism, most planners and academic commentators argue that visionaries should not impose their views upon the public.”

Such commentators believe that skepticism deeply imbues contemporary planning efforts, as typified by resistance to much-needed comprehensive new models for urban development.

The Contemporary Paradox

Late-twentieth-century assessments that modernist projects erected in the name of utopian ideals were massive failures have largely silenced contemporary utopian discourse. Postmodern opponents of such “visioning” have instead championed everyday life and celebrated a consumer society.¹³ Such an anti-utopian stance, however, raises important questions. Can a discourse on the everyday provide more than an aestheticization of urbanity? Does a corresponding architecture of the everyday merely legitimate the use of spatial resources without social vision?

Hyper-engagement with these issues has resulted in an acute disengagement between lived experience and imagined space. Within the design disciplines, Bernard Tschumi has written, this has created a paradox, as architects and other designers have been unable to reconcile their need to address everyday life with a wish to engage abstract concepts in pursuit of alternatives.¹⁴ This paradox is conspicuous in the polarization of contemporary American (and European) practice: one group is committed to social change, but ignores questions of form and material; another is committed to technology, computation and morphology, but ignores social issues.

Such extreme polarization has caused a detachment between form and social meaning, resulting in distorted communication. Theoretically, the socially oriented professionals are able to operate beyond the boundaries of the discipline, while the second group only operates within the boundaries of spatial form, presenting a limited reading of the city and its inhabitants, and thus marginalizing architectural practice. But, at the end of the day, both groups fail to articulate a meaningful vision, and thus also fail to significantly influence practice.

As an alternative, we argue that creativity and utopian visions are indivisible, and that their integration is essential for the progress of humanity. As Frederic Jameson has said, postmodern life is characterized by the fragmentation of history, leading to the vanquishing of humanity’s hope for the future.¹⁵ In other words, it is difficult to keep alive, however feebly, the possibility of socio-political culture without an “alternate” or utopian vision of society.

We do not believe that a revival of utopian thinking necessarily means a return to static concepts. Rather, it may involve new ways of using such vision as a tool for social change. As David Harvey has written, without utopian vision, capitalism produces landscapes appropriate to its own dynamics, which are destroyed and rebuilt over and over again.¹⁶ Only by conceptualizing utopia, with all its limitations, can we hope to create an alternative discourse.

Utopia as Methodology

How do current engagements with utopia look? How can utopia address the needs of the contemporary metropolis? Can urban designers and planners mediate between the polar extremes of the mundane and the utopian, between daily action and wider vision? How can utopian models be useful in the design and development of places?

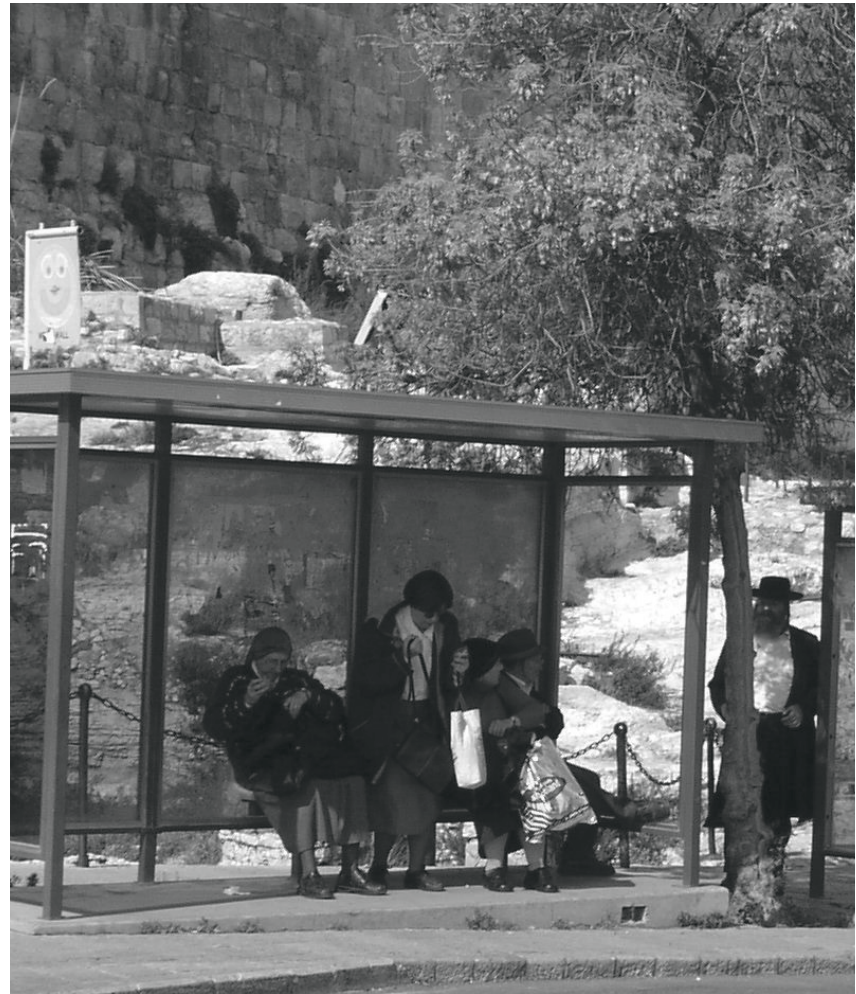
We suggest that a methodology based on thinking about and designing visionary places may free planners and designers from the pragmatic and allow critique and revision. As an approximation of what Ernest Bloch has called “concrete utopia,” such an approach might contribute to the invention of new forms and ideas that could influence our actual future.

Such a utopian methodology may be particularly useful to three specific areas of inquiry: finding new ways to deal with highly conflicted urban situations; inventing ideal forms to help structure cities by giving formal expression to socio-political ideals; and creating new forms of affordable housing that address both population growth and ecological crisis.

The Just Jerusalem Project. One example of a new planning methodology that employs utopian thinking is being implemented with sponsorship from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Just Jerusalem Project seeks to create a new intellectual space for urban problem-solving in systemically complex and contested urban environments.¹⁷ A key component of the project is a commitment to interdisciplinary learning and problem-solving, based on a belief that innovations frequently emanate from such a mode of inquiry and action.

The project emerged, in part, from the sense that a new approach was needed to the future of Jerusalem, one that could transcend the present constraints imposed by nation-states, especially those within which it is historically embedded. In ethnically or religiously diverse urban locales like Jerusalem the superimposition of nationalist projects and aspirations has frequently fanned the flames of aggression and violent conflict. Could concerted efforts to think about the social, political, economic or spatial practices that would “emancipate” this city from nationalist blueprints be a solution? Could they, at the very least, create a partial foundation for greater tolerance, and perhaps even peace?¹⁸

In this context, the project’s call to envision the outlines of social peace in Jerusalem in 2050 is not intended to replace efforts to develop a new formal order there. Rather, the two aims are intended to be inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing. However, the introduction of a utopian methodology requires new modes of thinking—which is precisely the aim of the project.



Such methodological action and visioning are especially relevant to the conflicted reality of contemporary cities. Today’s urban warfare often transcends occasional episodes of violence to produce ongoing, tragic campaigns of bombing and destruction.¹⁹ However, by perceiving of the underlying political conflicts only at a national level, disconnected from socio-spatial vision, we often only exacerbate them. There is a fundamental contradiction here: although this way of seeing exposes social complexity, it also blocks the implementation of social change.

According to Just Jerusalem Project coordinator Diane Davis, the goal of projecting vision into the future is to create space for discussion and for the kind of action that may be impossible while immersed in day-to-day struggles. In short, the project seeks to look to the future to create normative and discursive spaces for



change in the present. And it seeks to do this through a juried international competition and the establishment of a public platform for articulating a new vision. The key question is: Is it possible to address the fragmentation of modern society and also generate a vision that will include pluralities—across all boundaries—without erasing them?

Certainly, it will be difficult to bridge between a singular new utopian vision and the inherent plurality of society. But, as Davis argues, this is a process that intensifies voices, which is in itself a form of democracy. Perhaps this can also help define the role of the planner searching for the just city. Thus, the question here is not whether the project will be implemented, but how a process of envisioning can develop the discourse of place and challenge contemporary beliefs.

The Ideal Figures Project. Another promising methodology for articulating utopian impulses involves the use of ideal figures as an alternative to traditional urban master planning. Conceptualizing utopia in this way does not aim at the total transformation of a city—only at the reconfiguration of certain fragments, which can then be experienced as whole within themselves.

The power of ideal figures is that they are consciously bounded. Indeed, their failure to achieve hegemony across a larger territory is what guarantees their strength as symbols. In real terms, an ideal figure may be composed of

Above: Waiting, Jerusalem, 2006. Is it possible to generate a vision that will include all pluralities—across all boundaries—without erasing them, to construct a bridge between singular vision and society's plurality? Photos by Tali Hatuka.

segments of infrastructure, public space, and one or several buildings; it is a crystallized microcosm of an entire city on a controlled and nontotalizing scale.

Jose Louis Sert called such projects “civic complexes” because they concentrated the essential elements of urban life.²⁰ He envisaged only one such core in each city, but our view would embrace a plurality of them—each embodying as radically as possible its own conception of the city. As a finite figure, each such complex would leave plenty of room for others—in fact, it would evoke other differing and conflicting ideals. And as an assemblage of them, the overall structure of the city would express not compromise, but the coexistence of incompatible elements. The point, then, is to actively stage the last actual utopia of our time: that of difference itself—pluralism as a celebration of differing, yet coexisting value systems.

The illustrations in this and the following page show three different ideal figures superimposed onto the urban fabric of Brussels. Each contained the ideals of a certain time and agency; but each also proclaimed intention more than enacted reality. The Catholic Church embarked on the Basilica project at a time when Catholic hegemony in Belgium had not been achieved; the Administration City was conceived before the welfare state became a reality. But in both cases, an urban design project served to crystallize and articulate larger utopian intentions.

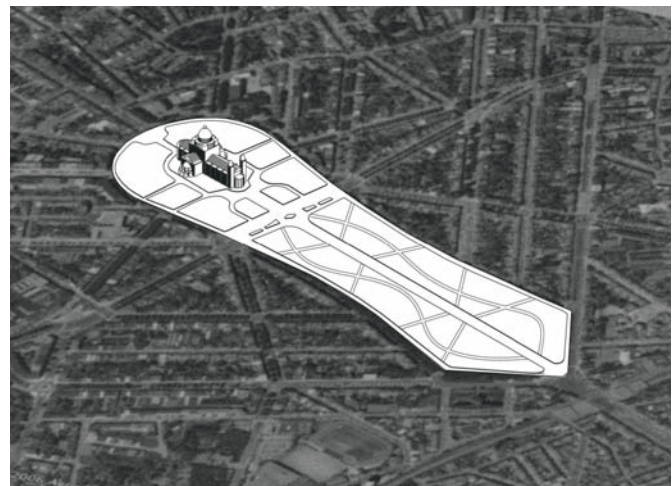
The illustrations on pages 26 and 27 were drawn when the author was preparing a project for several of low-income New York City suburbs in New Jersey. Rather than basing their form on extensive analysis of the existing situation, they are to be read as attempts to formulate an ideal: a resurgent welfare state in America’s poorer suburbs. Like Brussels’ realized figures, they are, at the moment of their inception, statements of intention, voiced through the form and the program. Thus they become vectors of a potentially alternative future.

Imagining such an alternative future is possibly only by distancing oneself from the constraints of the pragmatic and the consensual. Thus, a different socioeconomic regime had first to be conceptualized, one where the market has given some territory back to direct government intervention. While this is unthinkable currently in America, it is almost a matter of consensus in other capitalist economies in Western Europe and Southeast Asia.

From a methodological point of view such projects are related to the ideas of late-nineteenth-century German Romanticism. Friedrich Schelling, Robert Vischer, Wilhelm Worringer, and others defined the symbol as an ideal aesthetic category whose meaning is contained within

its own formal structure. Such a symbol could operate as a prelinguistic ideogram or “schema,” and capture, describe and summarize an entire narrative. Importantly, German symbolist theory was not one of linguistics, but rather a normative aesthetic theory of the sublime. Because the ideogram opened up content beyond words—without any existing outside referent, each figure could access the sublime in its own way.

When applying symbolist theory to urban design, the result is a form of public space that proclaims and describes its own order. Each fragment thus produced presents a desired destiny for the entire city; but each is also contradicted by adjacent figures and remains only a small fragment of the urbanized territory. Such radical pluralism may bring to mind Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter’s Collage



City. But Rowe envisaged the entire city as a collage of fragments. His concept was holistic, whereas the Ideal Figures Project rejects any wholesale formal strategy that might unleash the totalitarian drive within the utopian instinct. Furthermore, Collage City had a distinctly anti-modernist tone: against modernism’s totality, it produced its own. The Ideal Figures Project is essentially motivated by late-modernist principles, and its inception is already evident in some of the work of Sert, Louis Kahn, and others. Kahn’s well-known project for Philadelphia, for instance, constituted no less than an ideal figure meant to reconstitute the city’s downtown in the wake of the onslaught of the automobile.

The price we must pay here is to relinquish desire to make a form an explicit expression of people’s desires. For

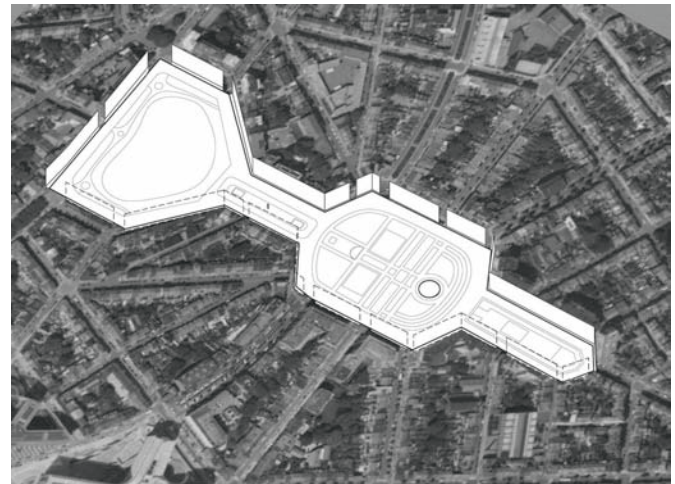
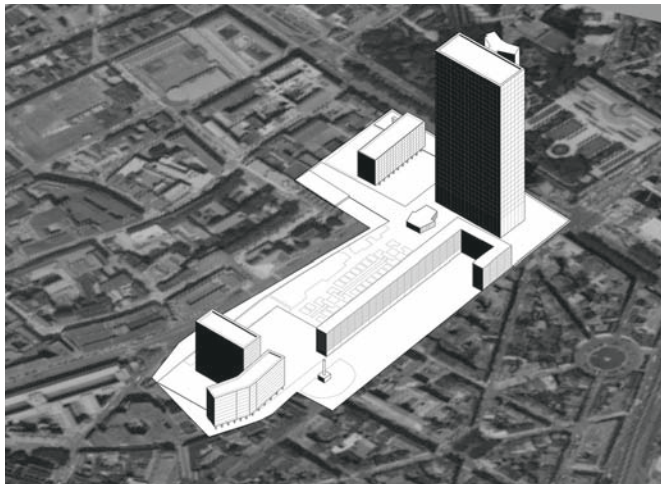
it is exactly that kind of naïve thinking about form, without any insight into the principles of aesthetic cognition, that has halted the utopian in its tracks for the last forty years. The form must liberate itself from any reification, imitation or narration of the social structures upon which it is built. Instead, it must be read as a prophecy, a statement of what could yet still come.

This method thus does not seek to “install” a new social order; thus it also avoids the pitfalls of the utopian tradition in planning. But it does place the utopian front and center—as a means to allow various conceptions of differing orders to begin to appear, parallel to the existing one.

Affordable Housing. A utopian methodology may also play a key role in creating new forms of affordable housing. Disregarded recently due to the focus on the

is whether the architecture and planning professions can address the socioeconomic aspect of the problem and suggest new design models, without falling into the deterministic trap of the 1960s. The controversial program HOPE VI, which has financed the demolition and redevelopment of numerous public projects in cities across the U.S., could be used as a departure point for thinking and designing “public neighborhoods” rather than as housing projects only.²²

A methodology involving concrete utopias could be used here to help advocacy groups and committed professionals runderstand the world through the development of mental constructions (dreams, fantasies, symbols) and new spatial configurations embedded in feasible economical contexts. The goal would be to readdress interrelationships among spatial form, public institutions, and poverty.



regeneration of cities by means of a leisure economy, the search for low-cost housing is, nonetheless, one of the traditional roles of urban planning. The paradox is that this neglect for new models and visionary housing environments has arisen in history’s most urbanized epoch, at a time of complex superimposition of capitalist forces (global and local) and transnational migration. Yet in the United States, the demolition of large 1960s-era housing projects has likewise not solved the social problems of cities like Detroit, Chicago or Newark.

As Lawrence Vale has shown, the history of housing the poor embodies ambivalence between self-interest and obligation, punishment and reward, social assistance and social control, and individualism and community.²¹ Poverty is often perceived as a public threat. The key question today

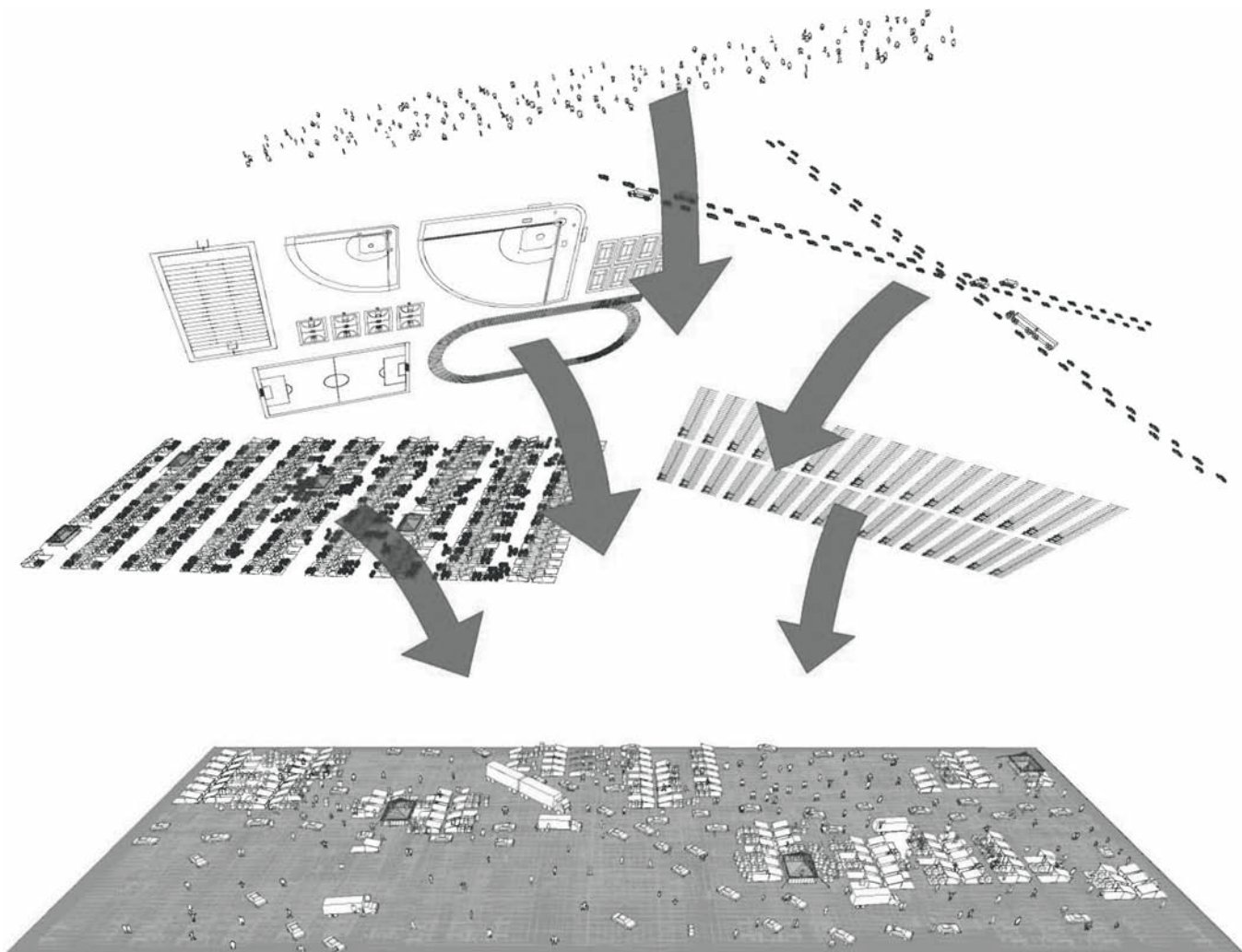
Isolation or neglect of any of these dimensions will lead to the marginalization of the design professions. But a new utopianism may help shift discussion from assessing modernist housing environments as failures to developing practical new forms of affordable housing.

Opposite: The Koekelberg Basilica in Brussels, 1890–1935. The ideal form of a triumphant, hegemonic Catholic Church, bringing stability when all that is solid melts into air.

Above left: Administrative City Headquarters in Brussels. The ideal form of the welfare state captured in a single complex, 1950s.

Above right: Sequence of plazas in Brussels, nineteenth century. The ideal form of the nineteenth-century bourgeois public sphere captured in a sequence of secular monumental spaces, with the public space defined by its private constituents.

Drawings by Alexander D’Hooghe and Neeraj Bhatia.



Places of Tomorrow

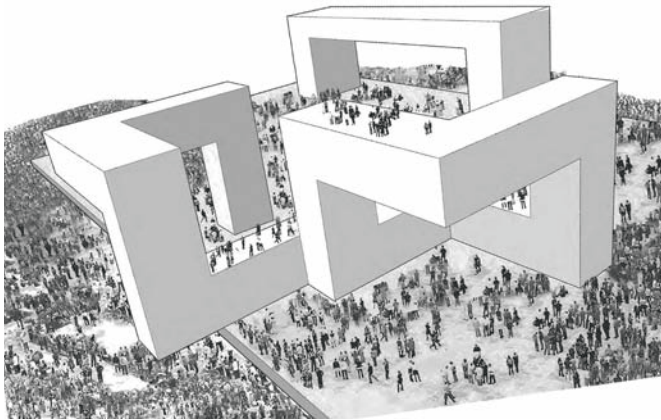
The design professions play significant roles in demarcating spatial order and negotiating and mediating among contesting forces. As a methodology for thinking about places, reengagement with utopian ideas may allow the professions to better address this social and political covenant.

Utopian thinking can be seen as a method of creating change, a different awareness; a critique of how we live, of our thinking; and as a methodology for negotiating all of these. In this regard, the utopian will cease to be pertinent when it no longer serves as a catalyst for change in our urban environments or an influence on other actions.

How should the authors of utopian visions arrive at their dialectic, and to what do they need to attend? The tools of the designer are her/his mental constructions and

those of others (dreams, fantasies, symbols), as well as revised spatial configurations, embedded in an economic context. Nothing is new. Innovation should derive from the problem addressed, and from awareness of the socio-political state of today's cities.

It is clear that this mode of thinking encompasses its own determinations, closures and authority. However, the design praxis (whether utopian or other) is about confronting the dialectic of "either/or." It might be, as Robert Venturi has suggested, that the place itself is compounded of "both/and," but the product of design is an accumulation of concrete decisions about inclusions and exclusions of groups, forms, symbols. This is always the case, and it is inevitable. Thus, when applying utopia to the concrete, the discrepancy between ideal and reality may well be enor-



mous. Nevertheless, the aim should be to move beyond assessment of the utopian as mere success or failure, to embrace it as a tool for mediating between contesting forces, interests and communities.

Unfortunately, a paralyzing anti-utopianism has isolated the design professions from ongoing social problems. What will happen if we continue in our refusal to address contemporary issues through visionary devices? In that case, the design professions will cease to actively participate in influencing the social order.

By embracing the idea of utopia as a method of thinking and acting, the professions can regain their authority. And by applying the utopian methodology to concrete problems, the urban designer, planner and architect can become engaged in contemporary social struggles. By releasing the practitioner, at least initially, from market interests and ideologies he/she may invent the new forms of our social environment.

Notes

1. Murray Frazer, "The Cultural Context of Critical Architecture," *Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2005), pp. 317–22, esp. p. 320.
2. An exception to this are works that address issues of ecology and population density. See Mark Dorian, "Criticism, Negation, Action," *Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2005), pp. 229–33, esp. pp. 229–30.
3. Bishwapriya Sanyal, "Planning as Anticipation of Resistance," *Planning Theory*, 4 (2005), pp. 225–45.
4. See, for example, Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *JAIIP*, Vol. 31, No. 4, (November, 1965), pp. 331–37. Also see Judith E. Innes, "Information in Communicative Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 64 (1998), pp. 52–63; John Forester, *Planning in the Face of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Patsy Healey, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping Places in Fragmented Societies* (London: Macmillan, 1997); and Margo Huxley and Oren

Yiftachel, "A New Paradigm of Old Mytopia? Unsettling the Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, Vol. 19, No. 4, (2000), pp. 333–42.

5. Thomas More, *Utopia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
6. Aristotle, *Politics, Books V and VI*, trans. with a commentary by David Keyt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
7. Friedrich Engels, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, trans. by Edward Aveling (London: Sonnenschein; New York: Scribner, 1892).
8. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).
9. Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. from the German by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985; orig. 1936).
10. Oren Yiftachel, "Planning and Social Control: Exploring the Dark Side," *Journal of Planning Literature*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1998), pp. 395–406.
11. David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 173.
12. Susan S. Fainstein, "Cities and Diversity: Should We Want It? Can We Plan for It?" *Urban Affairs Review*, 41 (2005), pp. 3–19; and John Friedmann, "The Good City: in Defense of Utopian Thinking," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2000), pp. 460–72.
13. See, for example, Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski, eds., *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).
14. Bernard Tschumi, "The Architectural Paradox" [1975], in Michael Hays, ed., *Oppositions* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), pp. 224–27.
15. Frederic Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia," *New Left Review*, 25 (2004), pp. 35–54.
16. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*.
17. For further information on the project, see <http://web.mit.edu/justjerusalem/>.
18. For further information about the project epistemology, see <http://web.mit.edu/CIS/jerusalem2050/>.
19. Eduardo Mendieta, "Imperial Geographies and Topographies of Nihilism," *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2004), pp. 5–27.
20. J.L. Sert, lecture on "Urban Design" at the AIA Regional Conference of the Middle Atlantic District, October 23, 1953. Sert Archives at the Harvard University Special Collections of the GSD Loeb Library, Cambridge, MA. File D91, 6 pp.
21. For comprehensive analysis of public housing history and analysis, see Lawrence J. Vale, *Reclaiming Public Housing: A Half-Century of Struggle in Three Public Neighborhoods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and *From the Puritans to the Projects: Public Housing and Public Neighbors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
22. Ibid.

Opposite: The space of the urban design project invites a plurality of totally different projections, a consequence of its necessarily independent form from the existing social structure.

Above: Assemblage of monuments into a putative ideal figure. Drawings by Alexander D'Hooghe and James Shen.

A Good Time for Cities

Ken Greenberg



Editors Note: This article is adapted from a keynote presentation to the 2006 Mayors Institute on City Design West, held in Berkeley, California.

The current state of play in terms of cities is, in many ways, auspicious. Great challenges remain—particularly fiscal imbalances—and certainly, these cannot be ignored. But it is important to recognize what an encouraging time this is, with considerable reinvestment occurring in city centers.

Several positive conditions underlie these circumstances. To begin, there is today a vast reservoir of strategically located obsolescent land in the hearts of our cities. This consists largely of disused former port, railway, waterfront and industrial properties. Significant strides in environmental cleanup are creating tremendous opportunities for growth and transformation using this land.

Demographic shifts are also underway. Urban households are diversifying, and immigration—from both surrounding areas and other countries—is bringing new life and energy to cities. The result is a partial reversal of the post-World War II urban exodus. It is also now widely

acknowledged that cities are generators of wealth, especially as the shift continues to a knowledge-based economy.

This renewed desire for city life has been coupled with something equally important—a better understanding of how cities actually work. In both professional and lay circles we have a better understanding of the role of different timeframes in the life of a city. And we have abandoned simplistic planning models based on the separation of uses, on mechanistic organization, and come to a more ecological understanding. That this view is now shared so broadly makes work on cities—city-building—inherently easier.

New resources and approaches to planning and urban design have emerged from these conditions. Design engagement is no longer seen as a cosmetic layer applied after the big decisions are made, but as fundamental problem-solving. At the intersection of economy, community and environment there is now a market for great integrating concepts about the city. This need goes beyond numbers and definitions to real appreciation for the city's physicality—for the qualities of space and place. This has in turn brought renewed public interest and confidence in the role of design.



One must add to this that planners and designers have gained a new appreciation for the strategic, action-oriented element of design decision-making. Plans can no longer be understood as static blueprints, as in previous decades; they must now be flexible, so that multiple parties can use them to make decisions over time.

Finally, it is widely acknowledged that quality of life is a key competitive asset. A new paradigm for urban economic development has replaced previous, exclusive concern for factor cost (land, labor, capital). The old emphasis produced a “beggar-thy-neighbor” spiral, which was a race to the bottom. Instead, many location decisions are today less about neighboring cities competing locally, as about cities competing worldwide. It has been demonstrated repeatedly that the most effective means of doing this is through the promise of a better quality of life.

In this new world, a key distinguishing factor among cities is the ability to put things together, to assemble elements in a timely, creative fashion. Value results from the ability of urban administrations to embrace, shape and manage change: to create viable places that address a range of objectives and needs.

Mayors can play a central role in this process. They can bring actors together, focus the issues, mobilize forces, decide the agenda, and articulate a vision. Given the timeframes involved, this must be a serial effort.

Success at city building inevitably requires a passing of the baton from one mayor to another, making great civic commitments in a sense nonpartisan. For this reason, the role of organizations outside electoral politics is also important. Such stewards of the public vision ensure that undertakings that really matter, typically measured in decades, can be sustained.

Numerous examples of outstanding partnerships illustrate these principles; however, the most effective occur when the public sector is able to clearly and forcefully

Opposite: Several decades ago people would have looked at this image of a street market uncomprehendingly. They would have seen this street space as somewhat shabby, needing to be “cleaned up.” They certainly would not have seen great value here. But through the work of such people as Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte, and other great observers of cities and urban economies, we now understand how the mix, the overlap, the shared space, the flexibility, the organic growth that occurs in places like this are what cities are all about. This is where import replacement occurs. This is where incubation occurs. This, in fact, is the crucible of the urban economy. Photo of Baldwin Street in Kensington Market in Toronto by author.

Above: Ben Thompson’s 1992 watercolor “The Great River Park” set the stage for ongoing revitalization efforts in Saint Paul, Minnesota. These have included work by Bill Morrish and Catherine Brown of the University of Minnesota showing the hydrology of the river, and how the river actually touches every area of the city with its drainage patterns. Image courtesy of the Saint Paul Design Center.

articulate its goals. Currently, Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago has achieved well-deserved recognition for his efforts to promote green strategies. But every city has assets and the ability to achieve excellence in its own way.

I have been involved with several cities and their mayors over the years, and I'd like to use two examples to probe these issues more deeply.

Saint Paul: Rediscovering a River

Saint Paul, Minnesota's capital, is located at the farthest navigable point on the Mississippi River. In the early 1990s it was hemorrhaging population and jobs and losing the sense of its own purpose in relation to its stronger twin, Minneapolis.

The effort to turn things around gathered momentum when Norm Coleman was elected mayor in 1993. Instead of seeing the city entirely in the present, he adopted a view of it as a dynamic, evolving organism. Looking to the past, this meant understanding how the city was founded on a dramatic setting defined by limestone bluffs above the Mississippi. It meant understanding the emergence of the barge fleets and industrial growth. But it also meant understanding how, in ecological terms, industrial St. Paul had climaxed in the 1950s.

As a result of this trajectory, virtually all traces of nature had been removed from the city, and its river edge had been thoroughly hardened. Closer to the present, other threats had also emerged, as the city's near neighborhoods fell victim to the highway network that surrounded it, and its office functions weakened and began to fail.

The turning point for Saint Paul came when Ben Thompson, a native son and well-known Boston architect, was called back to conduct an urban design study.

Above: Our study produced a series of diagrams to show how the center of the city could be reinhabited, with neighborhoods connected to each other, connected to an increasingly green river valley. The consolidation of these ideas and concepts became the broadly endorsed "St. Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework."

Opposite left: This bird's-eye image, produced in the 1990s, was evocative but deliberately vague in its details. As the transformation it anticipated is to a very large extent happening, it is being turned into something much more specific and real.

Opposite right: First Bank owned a drive-in branch on a critical triangular site in the heart of the city. They agreed to participate in developing it into a park (part of a green link to the river), and a competition was held for its design. The competition was won by the Olin Partnership, and today the site, known as Landmark Plaza, includes a street market in summer and a skating surface in winter.

Images courtesy of Saint Paul Design Center.



However, instead of producing a standard product, he made a single watercolor image, "The Great River Park." This took enormous liberties in imagining a verdant river valley running through the heart of the city.

Mayor Coleman took Thompson's foretelling of a radically different future as his inspiration. It was at this point that I became involved, working under the aegis of the Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation, a well-respected private nonprofit governed by a board of directors representing all sectors of city's diverse community, including business and government leaders.¹ One of our first steps was to begin a broad community outreach effort to define a set of core principles for renewal, which would underpin a vision of a city once again connected to its river.² These principles, with their specific local meanings, led to the "Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework," the product of a three-year process involving thousands of people. The principles were as follows:

1. *Evoke a sense of place.*
2. *Restore and establish Saint Paul's urban ecology.*
3. *Invest in the public realm.*
4. *Broaden the mix of uses.*
5. *Improve connectivity.*
6. *Ensure that buildings support broader city building goals.*
7. *Build on existing strengths.*
8. *Preserve and enhance heritage resources.*
9. *Provide a balanced network for movement.*
10. *Foster public safety.*



Creating cities always involves building on what has come before—adding something, and then handing off to the next set of people to carry on. It is never a complete single operation; nor should it be. However, in our work in Saint Paul certain moments stand out.

One of the most significant initiatives related to the Framework emerged directly from Ben Thompson's drawing. It involved a community effort to plant 35,000 new trees in the Mississippi River Valley. School kids participated, and companies gave employees time off, provided saplings, and helped people get into the valley to plant them. The sense of ownership produced by this initiative was extremely important.

Another important step was the establishment of the Saint Paul Design Center. With the full support of the mayor, this nonprofit agency created by the Riverfront Corporation became a place where city staff—landscape architects and architects in the Parks Department, Building Department officials, traffic engineers—could become directly involved in shaping the city. When not engaged in their full-time jobs, they could wear another hat as part-time employees of the Design Center, with staff support from outside city government. This was a place where design issues could be discussed outside formal channels, and where a lot of very crucial lateral thinking took place.³

If it is done well, urban design is a kind of flycatcher. As Jane Jacobs often said, "Great plans are plans that liberate other people's plans." They create an open-ended framework and an inspiration—not a complete end-state

vision. In St. Paul this overall vision has been based on establishing a new connection to the river. But over the years many other initiatives have also emerged: new downtown housing is being built; parks are being created; new public spaces are being designed—all by different people. There are also an increasing number of special seasonal events and opportunities to celebrate the city's reuniting with its river.

I have now worked in Saint Paul with three successive mayors—Norm Coleman, Randy Kelly, and Chris Coleman—but this program has continued nonstop. As it has succeeded, new ambitions have emerged, but always pushing toward a city that is more urban and more green.

As the city has progressed financially, it has also been possible to raise the bar on design quality and promote new standards of sustainability. As a result, the city is now dedicating itself to an ambitious new effort: to go back to the original 1992 vision and literally remake the whole seventeen miles of its Mississippi riverfront, right to the border with Minneapolis, as a 3,500-acre Great River Park. This will combine city, federal, state and private land to create a centerpiece for the city. Mayor Chris Coleman, elected in November 2005, has taken up this challenge.

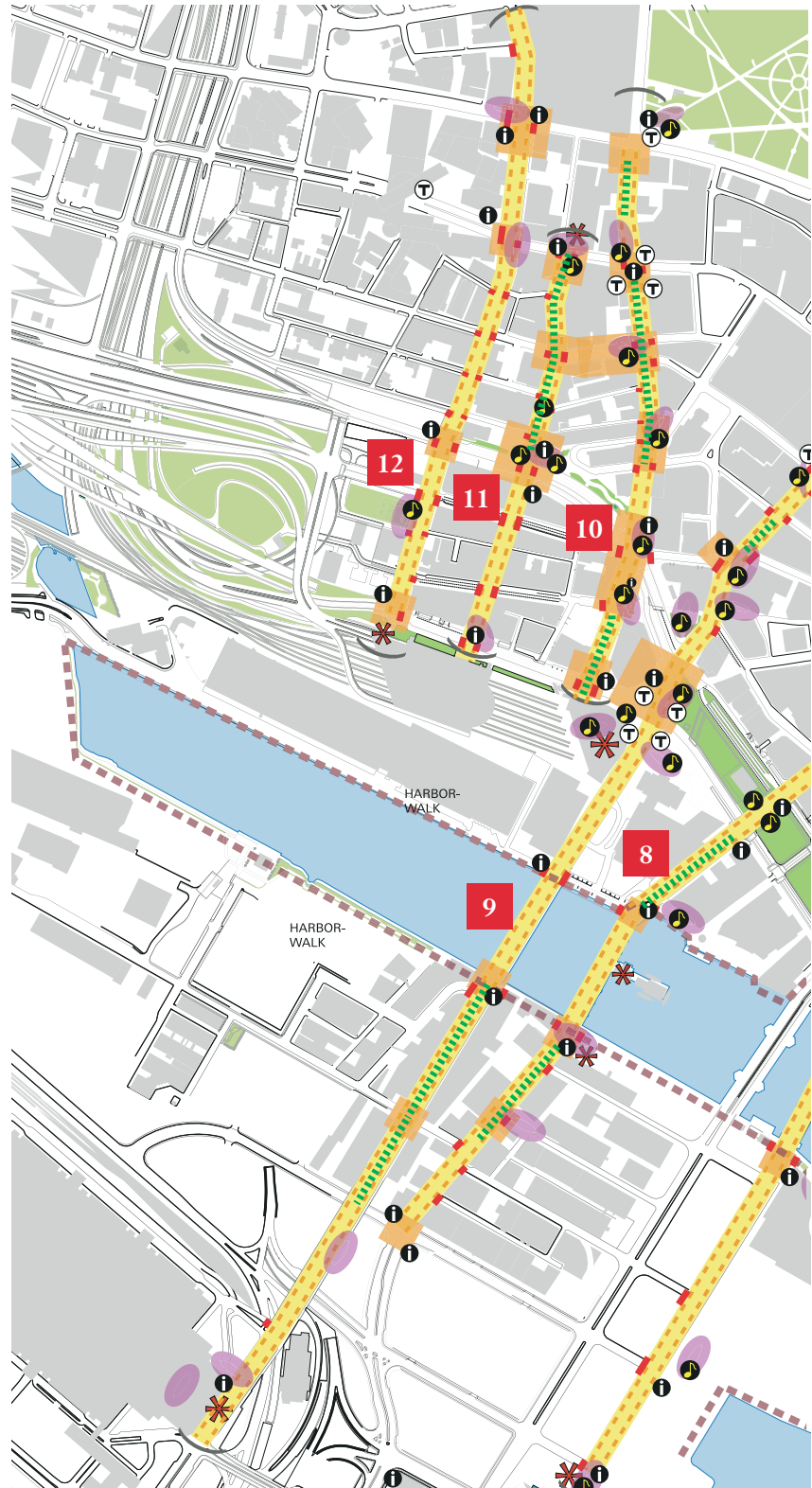
Boston: Expanding Common Ground

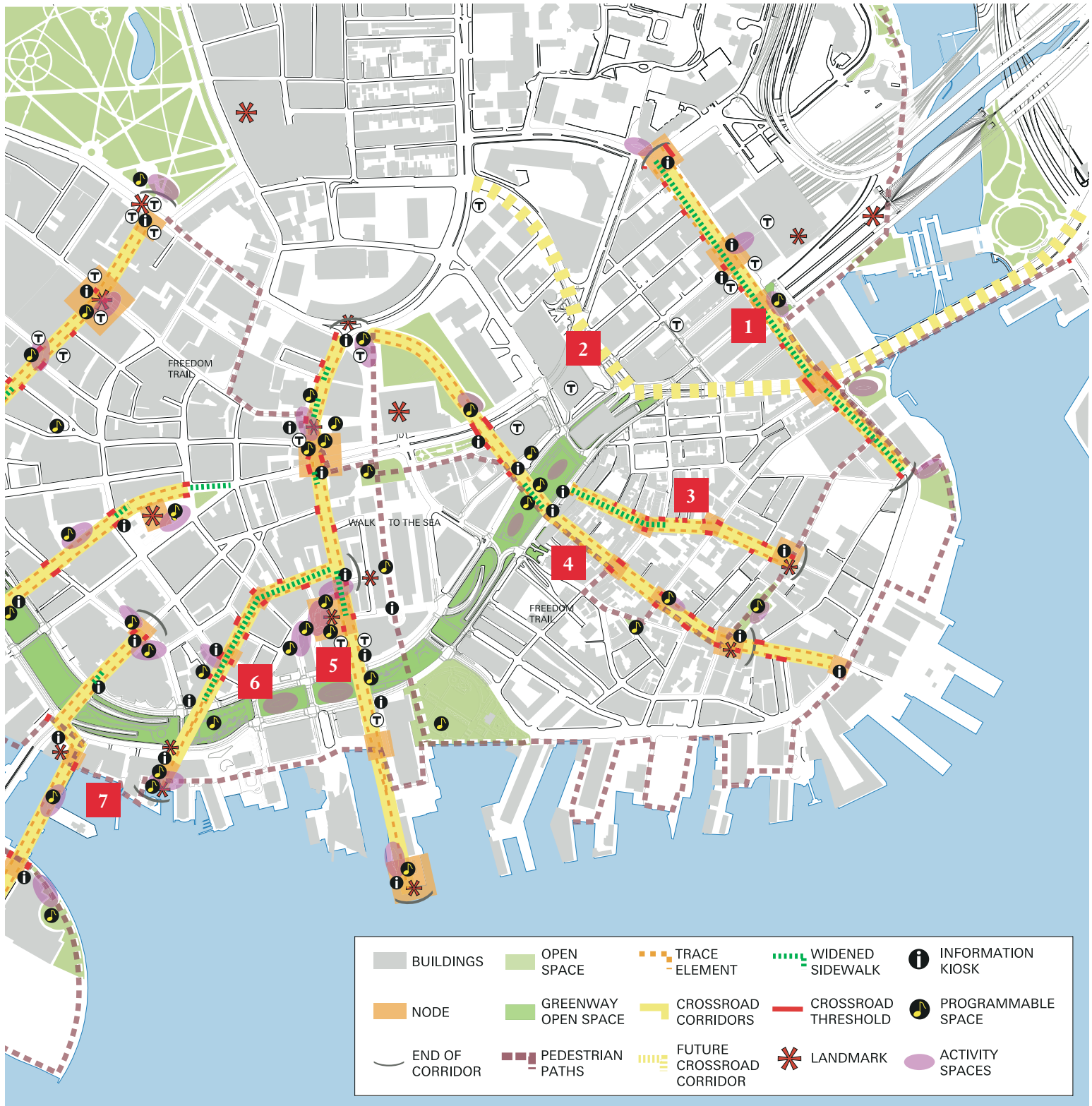
My second example involves work I have been involved in for several years with Boston's mayor, Tom Menino. In an all-too-familiar scenario, an elevated highway, the Central Artery, was cut through the heart of Boston in 1950, devas-

The New Boston Crossroads

1. Causeway Street transforms into a great pedestrian-oriented boulevard. It lives up to its Bulfinch Triangle heritage to become the anchor for a business and entertainment district linking two of Boston's great neighborhoods—the West End and the North End.
2. As new development emerges on former Central Artery lands, New Chardon and North Washington Streets form a vibrant connector between Charlestown, the Bulfinch Triangle, Government Center, and Beacon Hill. Activity and buildings which once shunned the Artery turn back toward the street: new housing and a grocery store re-create an edge along Washington Street, while buildings along New Chardon Street adapt ground-floor uses to attract passers-by.
- 3 and 4. As wayfinding and traffic improvements make it easier to access North End shops and restaurants, two principal streets there offer strong links across the Greenway between Government Center and the waterfront. Enhanced signage and improved conditions for pedestrians and vehicles along the narrower, winding Salem Street (3), a powerful reminder of Boston's beginnings and evolution, allow it to become a classic neighborhood street. Hanover Street (4) draws people from the "front porch" of the Greenway's North End Park to a newly activated and landscaped City Hall Plaza, where it continues as a major civic gathering place and pleasant walking route to a new Government Center MBTA station.
5. State Street is Boston's most frequently traveled downtown street, a place where the paths of workers, residents and tourists cross day and night, year round. As a Crossroads, it celebrates Boston's connection to the harbor and central position in the city over the centuries.
6. Broad Street becomes an active contemporary place at the center of the historic financial district, strengthening connections between State Street and harborside destinations.
7. The Oliver/Northern Avenue Crossroads serves as a corridor for significant new development. The historic Northern Avenue Bridge facilitates new connections across the Fort Point Channel between the Moakley Courthouse and the developing South Boston Waterfront, past the New Center for Arts and Culture, into the heart of the Financial District.
8. Congress Street becomes an inviting, pedestrian-friendly path linking South Boston to the Financial District, improving connections between important city destinations.
9. The Summer Street Crossroads makes the trip from Boston Common and Downtown Crossing to the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center (BCEC) a friendly and inviting experience for people traveling on foot, by transit, or by bicycle.
- 10, 11 and 12. The Crossroads Initiative improves the main streets of three neighborhoods: Chinatown, a revitalized Leather District, and the future South Bay mixed-use development. Renovations to Essex Street (10), Beach Street (11), and Kneeland Street (12) create a lively network of connections and activity, forming an exciting cultural gateway to downtown Boston.

Adapted from <http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/crossroads/theStreetsFlash.htm>.







tating its inner neighborhoods. The complex and controversial undertaking to replace it, known as the Big Dig, has taken an enormous amount of time and effort, but it is hard to exaggerate how it has already changed the city.

Today the Rose Kennedy Greenway, the reclaimed artery footprint, is restoring east-west links that were disturbed by the elevated highway. But it is also creating north-south links that were never there before—from the Bullfinch Triangle down through Chinatown, and from the Leather District up through the North End. As a phenomenon, the result of tearing down the Artery has been similar to the removal of medieval city walls, which allowed new social and economic connections to form within the cities of Renaissance Europe.

When I started working with the staff at the BRA (Boston Redevelopment Authority), Mayor Menino asked a fundamental question: “As wonderful as it is, are we spending too much attention on the 1.3 miles of the Greenway itself? How can we make this enormous investment do more for the city?”

This was the genesis for what became known as the Crossroads Initiative. In essence, it was about building on the concentrated effort to restore twenty-seven acres of artery footprint to create a larger, interconnected web of perpendicular links: to the water, to adjoining neighborhoods, to other destinations. In a remarkably short time the mayor was asking me to accompany him on visits with civic and business groups to explain this notion. The idea was to forge a new common ground, to make new links between key places in the heart of the city.

Seeing how the needs and values of the city were changing, the mayor wanted to make a powerful statement about how the Big Dig could benefit surrounding neighborhoods. And to capture this commitment, we began to use the term “twenty-first-century streets” to describe the Crossroads.

The real estate industry immediately saw the potential of the various sites opened up by the removal of the Central Artery. Through the mayor’s office we realized we could help provide the glue to hold the pieces together.



Our notion emphasized pedestrian comfort and an invitation to take part in the city. This meant designing streets that would be flexible and lend themselves to different kinds of uses: streets that could turn into markets; that could convey information in both low-tech and high-tech ways; where buildings might open up seamlessly onto wide sidewalks; and where sustainability would be integral to all aspects of design.

Surprisingly, since its initial proposal, Crossroads has also become about portraying a contemporary image for Boston. A previous generation of urban designs had emphasized the city's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century past. Here was an opportunity to use street design and landscape architecture to add a fresh dimension to that image and create a public place for performing and visual art.

The potential to make a real difference through creative infrastructure design has also been immense—rebalancing the priority given to pedestrians, and enhancing the quality of the environment with innovative approaches to paving,

planting, lighting, improved crossings, cycle lanes, street furniture, and wayfinding.

The Crossroads program is now entering its implementation stage. Design work on an initial set of street segments has been initiated, and contracts are being let for the first phases of construction, scheduled to start in 2008. It is estimated that this effort will require seven to ten years to complete, and that roughly \$60 million will be needed to complete the redesign of the initial set of streets. But the program is also intended to be the springboard for another generation of streets to follow.⁴

The effort has so far engaged a number of key city departments and agencies, who are being encouraged to work together as part of an implementation team led by a project manager. The complexities of such an initiative are challenging. But the key so far has been a broad involvement by private- and public-sector partners. Mayor Menino's leadership has also proved invaluable.

Today it is clear there are many comparable opportunities in other cities. The challenge is to find catalytic projects that shift the focus to the whole and that produce unifying elements and integrated city-building.

Notes

1. For more on these and other activities by the foundation, see <http://www.riverfrontcorporation.com>.
2. The initial work in Saint Paul was done when I was a partner in Urban Strategies, Inc.
3. I served as the first interim director of this center. Other interim directors included the head of the city public works department and an official in the parks department. Under Riverfront Corporation CEO Patrick Seeb and its current director Tim Griffin, the Design Center continues to play a critical role in the city's evolution.
4. For more on the Crossroads Initiative, see <http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/crossroads/indexFlash.htm>.

Opposite: A colossal feat of engineering, the Big Dig involves not only the well-publicized tunnel to replace the Central Artery, but also cleanup of the Charles River and Boston Harbor, a new subway line, and many connecting components. To find something of comparable scope and ambition one would have to look to the Space Shuttle program, the Tennessee Valley Authority, or Haussmann's nineteenth-century alterations of Paris. Photo courtesy of Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Above: We made a collage of all the development plans, public and private, by different groups, and discovered there wasn't one square inch of the territory we began to call the Greenway District that somebody hadn't laid claim to with a plan. Drawing courtesy of Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Toward an Integrated Paradigm: Further Thoughts on the Three Urbanisms

Douglas Kelbaugh



It is an article of faith that we design the built environment in an ever-changing social, cultural, economic, technological and ecological milieu. Contemporary urban development has responded to these changing factors in ways that might loosely be called “market urbanism.” This term is used here to refer to current conventions and modes of land acquisition, professional planning and design services, government regulation, financing, and construction for the thousands of real estate development projects that spring up in places and at times determined by macro and micro market forces and by the decisions of private developers.

Most of these projects are small or unremarkable, or both. However, their accumulation inevitably changes the

face of America in ways that are not planned, organized or self-conscious. Thus, the recent conversion of downtown office buildings into hotels and condominiums, or factories and warehouses into residential lofts, has transformed many urban centers. Post-World War II suburbia has likewise been transformed by a tsunami of subdivisions, gated communities, arterial strips, and retail malls.¹

There are, however, three contemporary paradigms of urbanism that *are* self-conscious: New Urbanism, Everyday Urbanism, and, to a lesser extent, what I call Post-Urbanism. These three approaches or attitudes (other than New Urbanism, it is hard to call them movements) represent the cutting edge of theoretical and professional activity in Western architecture and urbanism.²

I contend that all three paradigms are basic and somewhat inevitable. Each has its merits and demerits, but not in equal proportion—at least for most American cities at this point in their evolution. This essay examines their overlaps and oppositions, methodologies and modalities, strengths and weaknesses, in the hope of sketching the outline of a more integrated position.

Above: Mixed-use buildings at Stapleton are designed in a background, but contemporary architectural style, and are built to the sidewalk to define a continuous street wall, with residential and office uses above retail shops—a traditional but still compelling, if elusive, urban configuration. Photo courtesy of Calthorpe Associates.



The Formal/Classical Paradigm

New Urbanism is by far the best known of these three paradigms. It is the most organized, having established the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) to promote and defend its tenets.³ It is also the one with which I am most aligned, albeit with reservations and criticisms.

The Charter of the New Urbanism, ratified in 1996, aspires to truly utopian goals. They are an explicit combination of noble ends and practical means: to equitably mix people of varied income, ethnicity, race and age; to build public architecture and public space that makes citizens feel they are part of, and proud of, a common culture; to weave a tighter urban fabric that mixes uses and architectural types; to sponsor and integrate transit, revenue sharing, planning and governance at the metropolitan scale; and to be economically sound and ecologically responsible at the scale of the building, neighborhood and region. Rarely, it must be said, are its ideals fully achieved, especially in a single project or community.

As these ambitious, lofty principles indicate, New Urbanism seeks to counter the physical fragmentation,

social dislocation and polarization, and functional compartmentalization of the modern city. It envisions a structural relationship between social behavior and physical form, and it maintains that good design can have a measurably positive effect on city dwellers' sense of place and community. Its basic model is a compact, mixed-use, diverse, transit-friendly, walkable city with a hierarchy of buildings and places that promote face-to-face social interaction.

In more specific terms, New Urbanism's Charter advocates mixed-use centers where low- and midrise buildings form a continuous street wall, and where offices and affordable housing can be located above retail shops. The city envisioned by New Urbanism is not dense by European or Asian standards, but it is denser than conventional American sprawl. Its idealized urban hierarchy runs the gamut from background housing and private yards to foreground

Above: Denver's former Stapleton Airport is being converted into a 4,700-acre New Urbanist community with 12,000 homes, master-planned by Calthorpe Associates. Photo courtesy of Calthorpe Associates.



civic and institutional buildings, with public squares and parks. The built environment is organized along the urban “transect,” which, like the ecological transect, subdivides and codifies a prototypical cross-section of development, from natural countryside to urban core. The continuum has six zones of gradually increasing building density and height, with a seventh zone for special districts.⁴

Above: Parking lots, sidewalks, and vacant lots are temporarily but productively taken over by informal markets in Everyday Urbanism. Photo courtesy of Margaret Crawford.

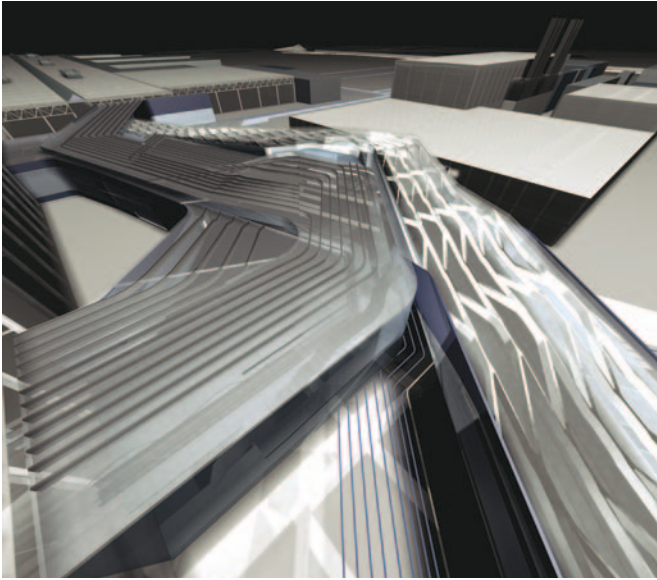
Opposite left: The BMW plant by Zaha Hadid not only embodies but expresses the laminar flows of industrial assembly. Its Post-Urbanist architecture is visually dynamic, with forms streaming around existing buildings like solidified lava. Photo of BMW Central Building © Zaha Hadid Architects.

Opposite right: Los Angeles, a city not known for a vibrant, walkable downtown, is attempting to establish a 24/7 mixed-use district, including almost 2,500 residential units, on Grand Avenue. Frank Gehry, who designed the popular Disney Concert Hall, across this major street, has proposed an informal mix of low- and highrise buildings (already jumbled and fractured, as if by an earthquake), a project that is pedestrian oriented if not street oriented. Rendering courtesy of Gehry Partners, LLP.

To engage with these ideas, the CNU has popularized a set of alternative principles and practices throughout North America, Australia, and parts of Europe. Among these are models for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to reduce auto-dependency, and Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) to encourage mixed-use.

In terms of historical antecedents, New Urbanism is reminiscent of the City Beautiful movement, and it embraces open spaces and housing typologies that recall the Garden City tradition. Typically, its architecture is also historically derivative—in a style that is, in a word of its own coinage, Neotraditional.

The New Urbanist vision also seeks to influence society beyond physical planning and design. For instance, its adherents have sought to reform contemporary financial and banking practices that encourage developers to build and “flip” projects for quick profits. They seek the patient capital of investors who would stay in a project for the long haul. And they lament the way Wall Street, through real estate investment trusts, has restricted the architectural palette to a limited number of standard “product” types.⁵



The Informal/Vernacular Paradigm

By comparison, Everyday Urbanism is not as tidy, doctrinaire or utopian as New Urbanism. Nor is it even an established movement. Nevertheless, it has a body of literature and a clearly stated goal: to celebrate and build on ordinary life, with little pretense of creating an ideal environment. Its proponents argue for “elements that remain elusive: ephemerality, cacophony, multiplicity and simultaneity.”⁶

Everyday Urbanism is informal and bottom-up, as opposed to formal and top-down; and unlike New Urbanism, it downplays, and even denies, the relationship between physical form and social behavior. Its advocates frequently celebrate the ability of indigenous and migrant groups to respond in resourceful and imaginative ways to ad hoc conditions and marginal spaces. Its aim is to help people adapt and improvise, often *in spite of* physical design and planning.

In practical terms, proponents of Everyday Urbanism support such activities as the appropriation of space on sidewalks and in parking lots (as well as on vacant lots and in private driveways) for informal commerce and festivities. It champions the vernacular architecture, street life, and art of vibrant, ethnic neighborhoods such as those of Los Angeles. An international example might be Curitiba, Brazil, with its populist ethic and low-tech bus transit system.

Despite its grassroots quality, however, Everyday Urbanism should not be confused with conventional real estate development. It is more personal, political and democratic than the standard “product” built and financed



by mainstream developers and banks. Its very abilities to fly below the organized financial radar and work in the gaps and on the margins have allowed it to empower disadvantaged people and disenfranchised communities.

The Avant-Garde/Inventive Paradigm

It must be said that no one formally labels himself a Post-Urbanist; Post-Urbanism is not even a widely used term. Nevertheless, I use it here to refer to the avant-garde paradigm that has grown out of what has been called the poststructuralist or critical architectural project of the last several decades. In its embrace of dynamic global information and capital flows, this urbanism is critical of most traditional norms and conventions, although sometimes in a playful, satiric way. Relativistic, predictably unpredictable, and without formal orthodoxies or principles, it favors bold form—either broken and fractal, or continuous and flowing.

At its purest, Post-Urbanism argues that shared values or metanarratives are no longer possible in a world increasingly fragmented and composed of heterotopian ghettos of the “other” (e.g., the homeless, the poor, minorities) and mainstream zones of fantasy commerce, information exchange, and free-range tourism. Indeed, liminal zones of taboo and fantasy and twenty-four/seven zones of unfettered consumerism are viewed as liberating because they allow “for new forms of knowledge, new hybrid possibilities, new unpredictable forms of freedom.”⁷

Espousing ever wilder and more provocative designs, Post-Urbanism also aspires to engage an increasingly

sophisticated, celebrity-conscious consumer of the built environment. Urban works born of these ideas include the mega-forms of Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid, and some less strident proposals of Steven Holl. Frank Gehry's proposals for Atlantic Terminal in Brooklyn and Grand Avenue in Los Angeles, as well as Daniel Libeskind's Denver Art Museum complex, are other examples.

In formal terms, the abstract architectural language and topological explorations of Post-Urbanism are often ones of surface and skin. There is little direct reference to the physical context, even when it is contemporary. A variety of avant-gardist shock tactics may also be deployed, no matter how modest the building program or unimportant the site. However, it is sometimes difficult to know if a project is neo-avant-garde or truly avant-garde—that is, whether surprise and spectacle is employed for its own sake, or whether the principal motive is to inspire genuine belief in the possibility of change.

Nevertheless, Post-Urbanists have described their discordant and exceptional insertions into the city as examples of open, democratic urbanism. And they criticize New Urbanist communities as stultifying and irrelevant in light of modern lifestyles and technology, especially digital media and what I call the Electronic Now. For them, New Urbanism's desire for orderliness embodies nostalgia for a romanticized past that never existed. Meanwhile, they see the ad hoc liveliness of Everyday Urbanism, while less scenographic and predictable, as lacking aesthetic ambition and cohesiveness.

Despite their theoretical and aesthetic sophistication, however, it is questionable whether Post-Urbanist works give back as much as they take from the city around them. Its projects are typically self-contained, if not self-centered, with little faith in the work of others to complete a fragmented urban fabric. Meanwhile, sprawling auto-centric cities like Atlanta, Houston and Las Vegas are sometimes held up as models of a liberating mobility.

Methodologies and Modalities

Underlying these paradigms are three very different methodologies. New Urbanism is clearly the most precedent based. It aims to extrapolate from enduring architectural principles and typologies, as well as historical examples and traditions as they intersect contemporary environmental, technological, social and economic practices. It is also the most normative, with its goals and principles carefully inscribed in the CNU Charter, and adapted to local conditions through the relatively standardized tool of the community design charrette.

Politically active, the CNU has also built coalitions with movements such as Smart Growth, and other organizations such as the Urban Land Institute, US Green Building Council, and the AIA. These links have given it traction and clout as a national organization, as evident from the post-Katrina replanning of the Gulf Coast.

New Urbanists believe that a coherent hierarchy of architectural forms, street types, and public spaces can best sort out and make legible the complex mixture of land uses and buildings that cities have always possessed and still require. New Urbanists have thus lambasted the post-World War II zoning that separated and compartmentalized land uses, as if, in Ken Greenberg's words, it could juggle only one ball at a time.⁸

To be sure, mixed-use urbanism, with its walkability and chance encounters, is now the only approach that everyone, from Leon Krier to Rem Koolhaas, seems to embrace. This is a major, pervasive, positive sea change. However, as single-use zoning is phased out, a new way to create urban order is needed. A new appreciation for architectural typology, New Urbanists believe, can provide this foundation. Thus, in place of zoning codes that focus on function and bulk, they advocate form- and typology-based codes that promote normative architectural and urban forms.⁹

New Urbanist emphasis on typology partly derives from a desire to dignify the many background buildings needed to make a coherent city. Builders and designers are thus freed to refine details and forms rather than overhaul or reinvent them. A typology also provides familiar architectural vessels into which new functions can be poured, helping to preserve the memory of the city. And it makes future architectural and urban form more predictable. Indeed, without agreed-upon formal types, the effective practice of urban design and planning is almost impossible.¹⁰

Everyday Urbanism is far less normative and doctrinaire. Where New Urbanism grew out of concern for precedent and typology, it emerged from the community design movement that has stubbornly survived since the 1970s in a few cities, and that has recently been revived in others. It views the design professional as a student of the popular and the quotidian rather than the ideal and elite, and more a participant in than a leader of public dialogue.

Everyday Urbanism's concern for citizen control makes it the most open-ended and populist of the three approaches. And because it is about celebrating the ordinary rather than starting over with a new and presumably more sophisticated model, it is also the most modest, incremental and compassionate of the paradigms, demon-

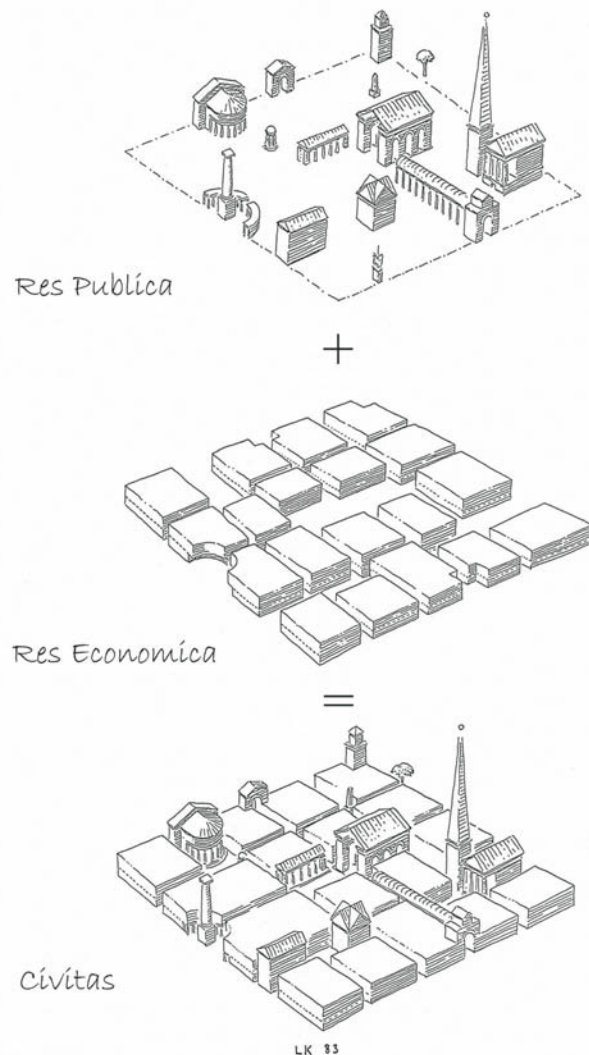
strating the strongest commitment to social and economic justice. However, if the New Urbanist romanticizes the past, the Everyday Urbanist overestimates the power of the commonplace.

These are flaws that Post-Urbanism seeks to take on directly by accepting, and seeking to express, the powerful techno-flow of a global world, both real and virtual. Instead of seeking accommodation, its projects are bold and experimental rather than normative, and its practitioners often relish the chance to violate design guidelines, zoning codes, and existing typologies. Post-Urbanists also tend not to engage the public as directly in open dialogue—perhaps because they feel the traditional “polis” is increasingly obsolete, and its civic institutions too calcified to promote new possibilities. Celebrated in the media as solo artists or lone geniuses, they cultivate Howard Roarkish personas, despite the large multidisciplinary teams needed to realize their designs.

Perhaps the quintessential Post-Urbanist is Rem Koolhaas, the vanguard Dutch designer and brilliant provocateur. He has proclaimed—perhaps as a trope, but irresponsibly in any case—that urbanism is dead, that there is no longer any hope of achieving urban coherence or unity. Like the talented and less nihilistic Steven Holl, he has dropped typology in favor of topology.¹¹

Rigorously consistent within their own architectural vocabularies and sites, Post-Urbanist projects often seem to have been designed within an invisible envelope, with almost zero attention to off-site relationships.¹² For this reason, they tend to be perceived as confrontational, even brazen. Like mid-twentieth-century Modernist works, they want to make a radically new start and are comfortable with, and even depend on, being at odds with their surroundings. But unlike those Modernist projects, their forms are now increasingly untethered from a sense of common, shared value—free to be arbitrary, even bizarre. Yet, in spite of their hubris, many a Post-Urbanist building is a spatial and formal *tour de force*. They can be sophisticated foreground architecture of great formal skill and elegance—however convoluted, enigmatic or haunting their shapes.

However, if New Urbanists are overly optimistic about urban centers and neighborhoods as aesthetically consistent wholes—beautiful in the traditional Viennese or Parisian sense—Post-Urbanists may be too willing to settle for cities of internally unified but disparate fragments. Where New Urbanists want to be *normative* at too many scales, Post-Urbanists want to be *free* at too many scales—from the baluster to the building to the bioregion.¹³ And, if New



Urbanism tends to hold too high the best practices of the past and Everyday Urbanism overrates a prosaic present, the Post-Urbanist is overinvested in endlessly exciting topology and an audacious future.

Above: Leon Krier's well-known diagram illustrates the clarity of a typological urbanism, albeit in a Neo-Classical idiom, with elaborate foreground and simple background buildings. The former are reserved for civic and institutional uses, the latter for residential and commercial uses, which typically make up 80 percent of an American city. With the network of small blocks of lowrise, street-oriented structures, New Urbanism strives to be more human scaled and pedestrian friendly.

It must be said that the differing clienteles for the three paradigms may explain some of these proclivities. Everyday Urbanists often work for nonprofit community groups with limited resources and political power. Thus, their commissions are more modest, sometimes built with volunteer labor. New Urbanists often work for land developers, especially on the suburban greenfield projects for which they are best known. However, their lesser-known but numerous urban redevelopment projects, including Hope VI, may be sponsored by government agencies or public/private partnerships. Post-Urbanist projects typically result from prestigious competitions or are commissioned by wealthy and powerful institutions, corporations and patrons seeking high-profile, iconic buildings.

These client groups have different missions and audiences, ranging from subaltern minorities to middle-class consumers to urbane cognoscenti and glitterati. It should therefore be no surprise that the three paradigms lead to different physical outcomes. However, this is not to imply tautologically that they are solely the result of these divergent clienteles. The paradigms do seem to represent and resonate as deeper, more intrinsic modes of thought, design and production.

Outcomes

New Urbanism, with its Latinate clarity and order, achieves the most aesthetic unity and the most coherent sense of community, in my opinion. It orchestrates a range of uses at a human scale in familiar architectural types. However, its formal harmony is usually achieved by employing historical styles that lack authenticity and tectonic integrity.

Such skin-deep pastiche is more understandable for speculative housing, which will either sell in the marketplace or bankrupt the developer/builder. It is less excusable for nonresidential buildings, especially public structures that are allowed to break the design code but all too rarely rise to first-rate design.

Many New Urbanists claim that the issue of architectural language or style is irrelevant or overblown. But clearly style *does* matter to design professionals and academics, judging from the ferocity of their debates. And if style *is* of little consequence to developers (and their public), why isn't there more contemporary architecture in their projects? Clearly, architectural style *is* important because it expresses values, meanings and attitudes that are deeper than visible form.

By contrast, Everyday Urbanism has trouble achieving any aesthetic coherence, day or night, micro or macro.

But it is egalitarian and lively. And while Post-Urbanist site plans look exciting, with their laser-like vectors, fractal geometries, jumbled fragments, and sweeping circulatory systems, when realized, they are often overscaled and empty of pedestrians. Tourists in rental cars experiencing a city through their windshields may be better served than actual residents, for whom there is less human-scale nuance and architectural detail to be revealed over the years, especially to pedestrians. Ironically, Post-Urbanism suggests that local citizens are tourists in their own cities, just as tourists have become citizens of the world.

Everyday Urbanism is, in a sense, already ubiquitous in the informal squatter settlements of global cities, where the working- and under-classes seek a stake in the urban economy. But it doesn't make much sense in the cities of Europe, where a wealthier citizenry has the luxury of punctuating a mature, dense urban fabric with Modernist commercial and institutional buildings in counterpoint to the traditional architecture. And the heavy masonry fabric of European cities sets off the new, highly glazed, gravity-defying buildings of Post-Urbanism better than North American cities, which are more spatially open and sporadic, and where glass curtain-wall designs already dominate. Because our cities lack the horizontal viscosity of European cities and are often underprogrammed and made empty by parking lots, New Urbanist infill usually adds the greatest value.

Nagging Questions

What can be said then about the possibility of a more integrated approach to urbanism in America, one that might merge the best of these three approaches while avoiding their weaknesses? Is there any hope for combining elements of these three paradigms into a richer, more sustainable, more enduring urbanism?

Everyday Urbanism is too often a practice of default rather than design. It is a bottom-up approach, that is "too much bottom, not enough up" in Michael Speaks's words.¹⁴ Can it raise its design expectations and standards as its clientele becomes more mainstream?

New Urbanism is too often formulaic, realized in banal and cloyingly historicist architecture. It often fails to deal with either regional or economic issues, such as the balance of jobs and housing. Can it move beyond "the post-modern notion of the city as solely a place to live, not to work," and embrace a more raw and potent mix of uses, including industry?¹⁵

Post-Urbanism is too often an urbanism of trophy

buildings, of which a city needs and can absorb only so many. Can it produce good but quiet background buildings that are more urbanistically sensitive and architecturally contextual?

Certainly, Americans should be able to count on a more physically ordered and architecturally ambitious commons than Everyday Urbanism offers and a more humane one than Post-Urbanism promises. Although Europe may delight in Post Urbanist avant-gardism, and the developing world may embrace the informality of Everyday Urbanism, wouldn't the typical American metropolis benefit most from New Urbanism at this point in its history? Arguably, the unevenness of American urbanism would also benefit from "some rules that prove the exceptions," just as European cities are enriched by Modernist "exceptions that prove the rule."

For most North American cities, New Urbanism represents the responsible middle path, less glamorous than Post-Urbanism and more ambitious than Everyday Urbanism. But can it learn from the other two paradigms? Despite being the most comprehensive and successful design and planning movement of its generation, New Urbanism must evolve if it is to remain responsible and responsive. Like all movements, it will ultimately ossify and lose its meaning and value as it runs the inevitable and ever faster historical course from archetype to type to stereotype.

There are a number of serious questions the New Urbanism needs to address if it is to evolve into a more integrated paradigm. Can its exemplary urban principles be realized in contemporary architecture, especially for public and institutional buildings, and can its practitioners display the kind of talent and skill evidenced by Post-Urbanist architects? Can it live up to the same egalitarian ideas of social diversity and affordability espoused by Everyday Urbanists? And can it fully address ecological challenges?

Last, is New Urbanism flexible enough to align with and harness the emerging forces of the global economy? Or will it rely too heavily on top-down formal templates, form-based codes and regulations, outdated technologies, and moral mandates? As the late Jane Jacobs pointed out in *Dark Age Ahead*, sprawl will densify and diversify, and inner cities will rebound and redevelop, only if underlying economic and social forces make it an inevitable, natural, sustainable and voluntary process.¹⁶ Otherwise, New Urbanism will become another failed utopian movement, a misfortune in a field littered with broken dreams and promises.

Notes

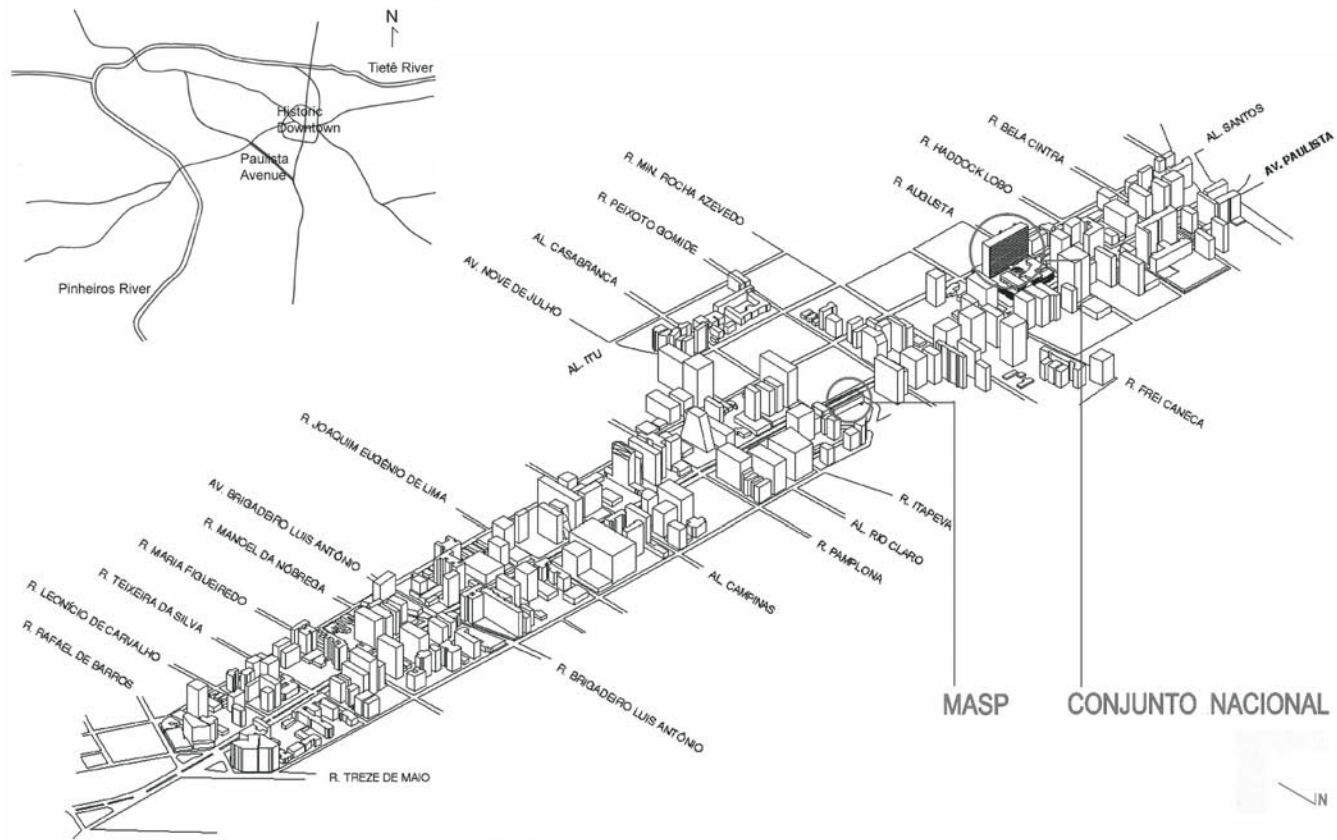
The notion of "three urbanisms" was originally introduced in my book *Repairing the American Metropolis* (Seattle: UW Press, 2002). It was further developed at a series of debates in 2004 hosted by the Taubman College of Architecture at the University of Michigan. Edited transcripts of these sessions eventually provided a basis for a three-volume series of publications, "The Michigan Debates on Urbanism" series (Ann Arbor: Regents of the University of Michigan, 2005). Readers are encouraged to consult those volumes for a more complete explanation of the ideas underlying this essay.

1. Urban sports stadia and cultural venues, often the result of private/public partnerships, are other manifestations of what Robert Fishman has described as "ReUrbanism." See Robert Fishman, ed., *New Urbanism: Peter Calthorpe vs. Lars Lerup*, Vol. 2 of the "Michigan Debates on Urbanism" series.
2. There is also Landscape Urbanism, a self-named group that is more driven by dynamic environmental concerns and, for the purposes of this essay, represents more of a hybrid than a pure paradigm.
3. Indeed, the fervor of its members and its organizational prowess largely precipitated the thesis of this essay.
4. See *Places*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 2006) for a fuller discussion of the New Urbanist rural-to-urban transect. I believe the right (urban) side of this transect needs to be expanded to include more of the messy and open land uses of industry, sports and entertainment, as well as transportation infrastructure such as depots, airports and seaports.
5. As Chris Leinberger has pointed out, REITs currently allow investment in only nineteen building types, a much more limited palette of options than when local bank lending was less standardized and more responsive to individual needs. This diminished architectural variety, coupled with an investment mentality typically blind to returns beyond the first five to seven years, has made additions to the built environment more generic. See Christopher Leinberger, "Retrofitting Real Estate Finance: Alternatives to the Nineteen Standard Product Types," *Places*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer 2005).
6. J. Chase, M. Crawford, and J. Kaliski, *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999).
7. Ellen Dunham-Jones, personal correspondence.
8. Kenneth Greenberg, *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall 2005/Winter 2006.
9. For example, to ensure that a street wall is created and maintained, prescriptive, form-based codes typically prefer the "build-to line" to the "setback line" of conventional, proscriptive, use-based zoning codes.
10. Jonathan Barnett, personal correspondence.
11. Francesco Garofalo, ed., *Steven Holl* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).
12. There are exceptions, of course. Frank Gehry's Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, an exfoliating figure that epitomizes the freestanding sculptural object, offers a rich and shining (literally) counterpoint to its urban context. Steven Holl's Kiasma Museum in Helsinki is a contemporary interpretation of an urban gateway that responds well to its honorific site.
13. Douglas Kelbaugh, "Urbanism and/or Architecture: Toward a Theory of Norm and Scale," *Places*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Fall 2006), pp. 42-48.
14. Rahul Mehrotra, ed., *Everyday Urbanism: Margaret Crawford vs. Michael Speaks*, Vol. 1 of the "Michigan Debates on Urbanism" series.
15. Trevor Boddy, "Siamese Cities...", *Arcade*, Summer 2007.
16. Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead* (New York: Random House, 2004).

Architecture and Public Space: Lessons From São Paulo

Zeuler R.M.A. Lima





As I lifted my camera to photograph Conjunto Nacional, São Paulo's largest mixed-use complex, a security guard stopped me. "You can't take pictures of that building; it's private property," he announced.

From where I was, everything I could see—the expanse of Avenida Paulista and the slit of sky above its canyon of buildings—seemed to contradict his statement.

"I'm standing on a public walkway," I argued, "paid for with tax money." He didn't budge.

Frustrated, I moved away a few steps. As we distanced ourselves from each other, I made sure he couldn't see me. Then I took the picture anyway.

This brief, puzzling encounter illustrates the ambiguity of public and private domains in contemporary cities. As architects and urbanists, we struggle to articulate collective structures for urban life. Yet the concepts we espouse often materialize in unintended ways and change over time depending on how individuals and social groups appropriate, disrupt and transform spaces we design.

The histories of two mid-twentieth-century landmarks in São Paulo, the Conjunto Nacional (National Complex), designed by David Libeskind, and the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP), designed by Lina Bo Bardi,

provide lessons on this unstable relationship between design intent and the ongoing negotiation of public and private spheres.

Sited on the prominent Avenida Paulista, the buildings were contemporaneous with creation of the national capital of Brasília. Both structures also attempted to translate post-World War II modernist debate about enhancing public life—particularly views emerging from the 1951 meeting of CIAM (Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne), which focused on "the Heart of the City."¹

While projects illustrating the historic and geographic unfolding of these ideas in Europe and North America are relatively well known, similar projects in Latin America are not.² Neither is the contemporary condition of these projects.

Opposite: Avenida Paulista seen from the roof terrace of Conjunto Nacional.

Above: Avenida Paulista. Axonometric highlighting the location of Conjunto Nacional and the Museu de Arte de São Paulo. Drawing by author, Sabri Farouki, and Sujaul Kahn.



The Avenida Paulista

Both Conjunto Nacional and MASP were important milestones in the transformation of São Paulo in the 1950s and 60s. In 1950, the city's population was two-and-a-half million, but this number would nearly double in the following decade as the city became a modern capitalist metropolis. The Avenida Paulista would be at the core of this transformation and subsequent disputes over collective spaces and symbolic representation.

Laid out in 1891, Avenida Paulista was originally the main street of a sumptuous residential development created with money from the international coffee trade. But the stock market crash of 1929 devastated the coffee economy, and the resultant shift in economic and political power in Brazil brought an increase in industrialization and commerce to the city. In the years that followed, new emerging elites changed the city's physiognomy. In particular, the character of Avenida Paulista was fundamentally altered by a 1936 law lifting its previous single-family zoning.

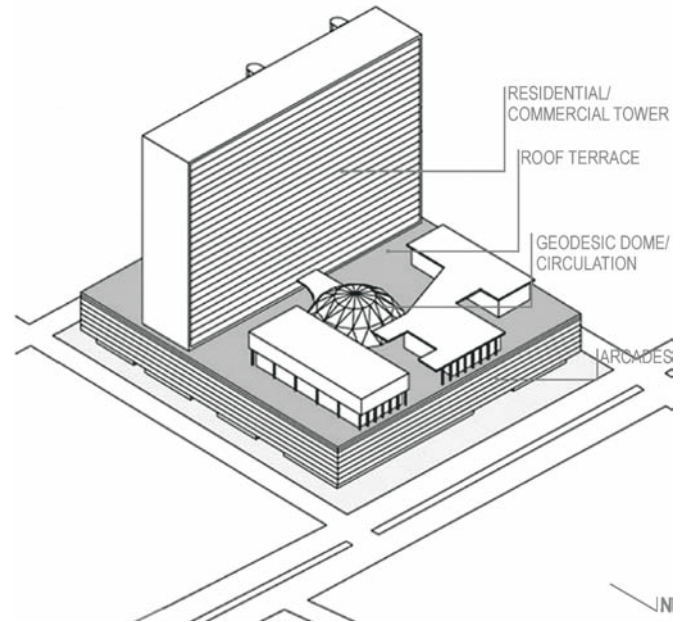
Important changes to the area also resulted from a master plan for São Paulo designed by the engineer Prestes Maia (Plano de Avenidas, 1930), and based on Daniel Burnham's model for Chicago.³ Among other things, Maia's plan designated Avenida Paulista as one of the city's main arteries. The plan was partly implemented when Maia served as mayor, from 1940 to 1945. But it was never entirely completed, and the few isolated segments that were realized benefited real estate and highrise development in the city's southwest, leaving other areas, notably its poorer east side, underserved.

As a result of these social, political and economic changes, Avenida Paulista went from being a boulevard lined with eclectically styled villas to a highrise business district. Indeed, as São Paulo expanded horizontally and vertically in the second part of the twentieth century, the avenue largely replaced the historic downtown as the commercial and cultural center of the city.⁴ Construction of Conjunto Nacional and MASP helped anchor this process and changed the relationship between public and private space.

A City within the City

Conjunto Nacional (1955–62) is the most significant ensemble of mixed-use buildings and semipublic spaces on Avenida Paulista. The developer, José Tjurs, originally envisioned it as a "city inside the city," combining underground parking, shops, restaurants, movie theaters, a hotel, offices and apartments. His desire to transform Avenida Paulista into the "Brazilian version of Fifth Avenue" was a cosmopolitan image that the new Paulistano elites quickly embraced.⁵ To realize his vision, Tjurs chose the architect David Libeskind's proposal for an entire city block southeast of the intersection of Avenida Paulista and Augusta Street, then São Paulo's most affluent commercial thoroughfare.

Libeskind (born in 1928, no relation to Daniel Libeskind) based his design on a functional separation of forms. Formally, it resembled such contemporaneous buildings as the United Nations Headquarters (1947–53), in New York, by a team led by Le Corbusier, Oscar Niemeyer, and Wallace N. Harrison; Lever House, in New York (1950–52), by Gordon Bunshaft/SOM; and two Brazilian



towers by Oscar Niemeyer—Rio de Janeiro’s Ministério de Educação e Cultura (Ministry of Education and Health, 1936–42) and the sinuous Edifício Copan (Copan Residential and Commercial Complex, 1951–66), in the historic center of São Paulo.

The similarity in imagery and configuration of Latin American buildings to others being designed for midtown Manhattan at the time was no coincidence; in fact, it resulted from a prolific exchange between modernist architects around the world. However, the Conjunto Nacional was novel because of its mixed-use program. It was even more notable because it inaugurated a series of modernist arcades that spread throughout the central parts of city in the 1960s. These fulfilled an essential commercial purpose until they were largely replaced by enclosed shopping malls later in the century.

The original design of Conjunto Nacional consisted of a large horizontal podium raised on pilotis over the block, creating space for an expansive ground-floor shopping arcade. A wide, twenty-five-story tower was then set back from Avenida Paulista, with the smallest (western) portion, Edifício Guayupirá, containing apartments, and the other two portions, Horsa I and Horsa II, containing large and small offices respectively.

The ground level connected to all four surrounding streets with eleven-meter-wide passages, forming a continuous interior plaza.⁶ And the semipublic area of the project also included a large roof terrace connected to the ground level by ramps and elevators located under a large geodesic dome.

The half-century history of Conjunto Nacional is full of ups and downs. Initially, the complex enjoyed great public

success; in the late 1950s and 1960s the city was growing quickly, rich and poor areas were more clearly divided, and the military regime (installed in 1964) maintained an appearance of urban safety.

The arcades opened in 1958, and even before the completion of the towers in 1962, the complex had become fashionable. It was served by Fasano, a well-known restaurant, which also occupied two ballrooms built by Tjurs on the roof terrace, against the architect’s recommendation. And it did not take long for shops and movie theaters to relocate there from the historic downtown, taking advantage of the increased affluence represented by Avenida Paulista.

However, this success did not last long. The arcades started to lose their importance in the 1970s as other residential and commercial highrises appeared nearby. Their further demise was signaled by the opening of the city’s first upscale shopping mall in 1966, slightly more than two kilometers to the south.

Corrupt administrators hastened the complex’s physical deterioration. Among other missteps, they allowed a progression of irregular commercial activities to take place and building additions to be constructed that transformed its arcade into an unsafe labyrinth. The building’s deterioration climaxed with a fire in September 1978 that

Opposite and above, left to right: Southwestern view of Conjunto Nacional, highlighting the elevated podium and tower structure. Interior view of the commercial arcades on the ground level. Roof terrace. Axonometric view, showing the functionalist concept of raised podium, roof terrace, and tower. Drawing by author, Milan Kontari, and Sujaul Kahn.



destroyed part of its podium. Between 1978 and 1983 little remained of its initial appeal, and it was even considered for demolition.

In 1984, with Brazil in the midst of an economic crisis, the development group Savoy bought the Conjunto Nacional at auction and initiated a long process of restoration. According to attorney Vilma Peramezza, the building's administrator for more than two decades, its focus has been to combine "good architecture and the continuous life of the complex as a multiuse space."⁷

The work began with physical and infrastructural renovation.⁸ These improvements were followed by an attempt to change the profile of commercial activities there, especially on the arcade level. Music shops and bookstores have since replaced pawnshops; restaurants have replaced bars; fashionable clothing stores and drugstores have replaced banks; and an art cinema has replaced an adult movie theater.

Above: General view of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP).

In 1998 the renovation concluded with the creation of new gardens and the opening of a large health center on the roof terrace. More recently, in 2005, the Brazilian historic, architectural, and cultural preservation council (Condephaat) registered Conjunto Nacional as an urban landmark. However, this regentrification of the complex has not been without its problematic aspects, as indicated by my encounter with the security guard. Popularity and visibility have returned at the cost of increased private security, a presence that has expanded into surrounding public spaces.

A Museum Open to the City

Three blocks east of Conjunto Nacional, the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (1957–68) has a different story to tell.

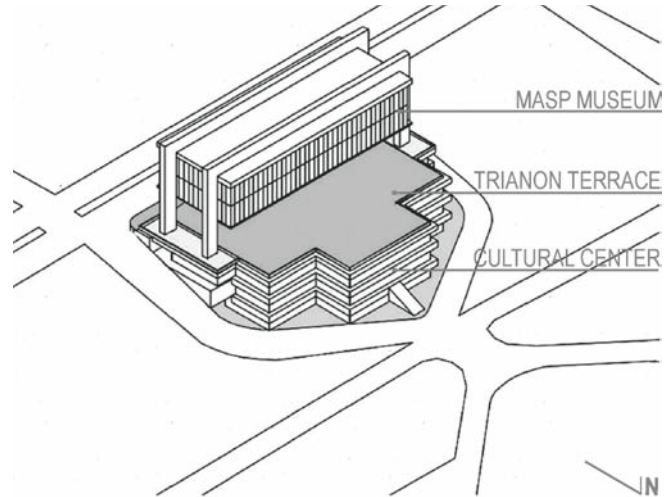
Founded in 1947 according to the cultural model of New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), it houses the largest collection of art in Latin America. The building occupies a prominent site at the center of Avenida Paulista, directly across from Siqueira Campos Park and



over Nove de Julho Tunnel—a key link in Maia’s Plan of Avenues, connecting the historic downtown with southern areas of the city.

The design for the museum, by the Italian-Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992,) consisted of three complementary elements: a semi-buried podium, a plaza, and a transparent, elevated exhibition hall. Before construction of the museum, the site had been occupied by a small, sloping belvedere-park called Trianon Terrace, which included a Neoclassical composition of pergolas sitting on a large semi-buried ballroom built in 1916 and demolished in 1951. A constraint to building on this site was a city ordinance mandating continued public access to it and its street-level views.

In her design, Bardi was influenced by Mies van der Rohe’s proposal for Crown Hall and by modernist concern for open structures. In collaboration with the engineer Figueiredo Ferraz, she raised the exhibition halls off the ground with unembellished concrete piers and large pre-



stressed concrete beams. This long-span solution accommodated both the museum’s large program and the need to maintain public access.

Hovering over a street-level terrace, the transparent exhibition space spanned seventy-six meters. Its original layout further emphasized openness to the city by replacing traditional partitions and hierarchies among art works with vertical glass easels sitting on small concrete blocks. Meanwhile, beneath the plaza, the podium housed the museum’s educational and administrative areas.

From the beginning, Bardi conceived of the large open terrace below the museum galleries as a place of “collective and civil dignity.”⁹ And her definition resonated with a postwar urban and architectural desire to promote public, civic spaces in place of an earlier emphasis on functionalism. Indeed, the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck described Bardi’s response to the constraints of the site as an “amazing achievement, because the building is indeed both there and not there, giving back to the city as much space as it took from it.”¹⁰

In the late 1960s and 70s, together with her husband, Pietro Maria Bardi (1900–1999), the museum’s director until 1990, Bardi promoted a variety of activities on the terrace, including open-air exhibitions and even a circus. However, in the 1980s and 90s, the terrace was increas-

Above left: Temporary and everyday uses along pedestrian spaces of Avenida Paulista.

Above right: Axonometric model of MASP, showing the semi-buried podium, suspended museum volume, and terrace connected to Avenida Paulista. Drawing by author, Milan Kontari, and Sujaul Kahn.



ingly appropriated for political demonstrations surrounding the end of the military regime. During this period, MASP—and its terrace—gained great notoriety as a stage for the cultural and political life of São Paulo.¹¹

In the last decade, however, great changes have taken place in the relationship between the museum and the city. Cutbacks in public funds have generated budget problems. Concern has grown for property and personal safety in an environment of increasing violence. Art and culture have become more and more commodified. And the growth of tourist activities has profoundly affected MASP's mission.

Furthermore, in 1994 the museum's board named the developer Júlio Neves as director. He soon proposed drastic changes to the museum's cultural programs and the building's spatial organization. He replaced Bardi's transparent easels with tall, opaque walls in 2001, and placed limits on public use of the terrace. At the same time, several proposals to address the museum's escalating financial crisis created public controversy. One such proposal, made in 1995, was to place a rental electronic billboard on top of the building; another, in 2005, was to use adjacent land to build a tower that would have dwarfed the museum complex.

Despite these economic setbacks, layout changes, and restrictions on public use, the museum and its terrace remain a strong collective reference in the social imaginary of São Paulo and the space of Avenida Paulista. And

Above: Southeast view of Trianon Terrace connected to Avenida Paulista and used for weekend antiques fair.

Opposite: Trianon Terrace under the suspended volume of the museum framing the vista toward the city's historic downtown.

to spare the museum from even greater negative changes, Condephaat named it a heritage building.

Still, while Conjunto Nacional has recovered its role in everyday life, MASP's administrative crisis goes on, curtailing its presence in the public life of the city.

Public and Private Spaces in a Global Metropolis

Fifty years ago, Conjunto Nacional and MASP embodied a desire to promote collective sociability in the center of a modernizing city. But now, these buildings are more representative of a struggle between public and private interests in an increasingly fragmented, socially segregated, and violent urban realm.

A new scenario has developed today in São Paulo according to which those who can afford it circulate within and between high-security private spaces such as malls, gated communities, and semi-self-sufficient residential and office highrises. Meanwhile, those who can't afford these freedoms are left to perambulate among sparse, under-maintained and unsafe public spaces.

With the end of the military regime and the adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1990s, business and government leaders in the city have tried to position it within the global economy. However, the resultant concentration of public resources in support of private urban development has only aggravated the difficulties of maintaining and safeguarding open urban areas. As new strategic business districts are created and historic ones renovated, old problems such as uneven access to communal spaces, poor infrastructure, and a lack of social investment remain unresolved.

In light of these changes, Avenida Paulista has again come to define a process of urban restructuring. In 1995, bankers and property owners created Associação Paulista Viva (Live Paulista Association) to recover the appeal the area enjoyed until the 1980s, and this group has mobilized the city to finance renovation of deteriorated physical aspects of the avenue. They have also increased the presence of private security in and around buildings and lobbied city officials to step up inspections of street vendors and restrict public use of the avenue, itself.

The private model of the "city within a city" underlying the Conjunto Nacional—heir of the arcades and Phalanstery of the nineteenth century—clearly fits better into this contemporary context than the public model of the open city and free space promoted by the Museum of Art. It is in this new, restrictive climate that the museum's administration is attempting to limit access to its public spaces, despite the fact that MASP continues to be a major focus for the enactment of the cultural and social life in the city.



Bardi once insisted that she designed the museum not as “an architectural extravagance; it was conceived to be the space of freedom.”¹² Until we can keep our eyes open and take pictures without being asked to move away from the museum space because it has become private property, we have reason to believe that she was right.

Notes

The research for this article was funded by the Graham Foundation and is part of a collaborative effort with Eric Mumford to document architecture and public spaces in Brazil and the United States.

1. Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 201.
2. These relationships were further explored in “Modern Architecture and Public Space: Post-War Case Studies in São Paulo and New York” (2000–2004), developed by the author and Eric Mumford with a grant from the Graham Foundation.
3. Benedito Lima de Toledo, *Prestes Maia e as origens do urbanismo moderno em São Paulo* (São Paulo: Empresa das Artes, 1996).
4. Urban historians have since described this pattern of urban investment as the southwestern development vector.
5. Angelo Iacocca, *A Conquista da Paulista* (São Paulo: Origem, 1998), p. 53. Despite

Tjurs’s reference to Fifth Avenue, Avenida Paulista more closely resembles the urban and architectural typologies along New York’s Avenue of the Americas (Sixth Avenue) or Park Avenue. Paulistano is the Portuguese term regarding the city of São Paulo.

6. In his original design, these passageways were more regular, but according to Libeskind, Tjurs changed the project several times in order to guarantee maximum profit. Iacocca, *A Conquista da Paulista*, p. 66.

7. Ibid., p. 94.

8. This renovation has included an innovative recycling plan to process the tons of garbage produced within it, which is today a model program and job generator for other large buildings in the city.

9. Lina Bo Bardi, *Museu de Arte de São Paulo* (São Paulo: IPMLBB, 1997), n/p.

10. Aldo van Eyck, “Um dom superlativo,” in Bardi, *Museu de Arte de São Paulo*, n/p.

11. For more information on the collective uses of Trianon Terrace, see Zeuler Lima and Vera Pallamin, “An Uncommon Common Space,” in Lars Meier and Lars Frers (eds.), *Encountering Urban Places: Visual and Material Performances in the City* (Hampshire, U.K.: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 81–96.

12. Lina Bo Bardi, *MASP* (Lisboa: Blau, 1994), n/p.

All photos by author.

Rockcliffe Redevelopment, Ottawa: Plan Iterations

Ken Greenberg

Canada Lands Company Ltd. is an arms-length, self-financing Canadian Crown corporation charged with disposing of surplus government property to bring optimal value to Canadian taxpayers. One such property is the 320-acre former Rockcliffe Airforce Base, five kilometers east of Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada's capital city.

Located alongside the Ottawa River, and surrounded by existing neighborhoods and institutions, the former base (whose operational facilities were vacated in 1985) is the largest remaining redevelopment site inside the Ottawa Greenbelt.¹ Several years ago Canada Lands committed itself to making Rockcliffe a flagship community for a series of similar infill projects in major Canadian cities. The goal was to set a new benchmark for sustainable and financially successful development, combining creativity, innovation and design excellence, and emphasizing such important concerns as orientation away from the automobile, responsible stormwater control, reduced energy consumption, improved waste management, and regeneration of natural features.

Work on the Rockcliffe community design plan demanded the formation of a complex multidisciplinary consultant team (first assembled in April 2006). At the same time, it required an ability to be highly efficient and focused. To deal quickly with an enormous number of interrelated variables, we developed an open-ended framework capable of continuously learning and responding to new information. In practical terms, this meant working through a series of structured "iterations" that could gain progressively in completeness based on an increased need to know, and that could be tested from multiple standpoints.

This sequence of plan diagrams illustrates this process, which provides a model for the type of integrated, flexible thinking required to shape contemporary cities and neighborhoods. The drawings reflect the contribution of different team members to an intensive, evolving exploration of the site and expressed design values over a period of several months—a layering of objectives, needs and perceptions.

In our process, all the balls were in the air from the start, but there was also a relatively complete concept at each stage, representing an ever-increasing level of sophistication. Periodically, all contributing parties would come together to explore interrelationships and opportunities for lateral thinking. But the goal of each iteration was to address a sequence of issues at a higher level of precision, allowing specific technical analysis to push initial concepts toward greater refinement.

Throughout the process, the Canada Lands client group was a key participant. The City of Ottawa, through its Technical Advisory Committee (a public advisory commit-

tee with broad neighborhood and stakeholder representation), and the National Capital Commission (NCC) also provided critical input.²

Natural Presence

The team's first step was to arrive at "break-through" linking ideas which could simultaneously address multiple objectives. The first of these was simply to take full advantage of conditions on the site and of larger planning concepts for the region, such as the National Capital Commission Greenbelt, established in 1950 by Jacques Gréber, the capital's master planner.

An important feature of the Ottawa Greenbelt is its one hundred kilometers of trails for hiking, jogging and cross-country skiing, which combine with the city's extensive network of bike paths to reinforce Ottawa's goal to be as an active, healthy place to live. The Rockcliffe site abutted this greenbelt trail network along the Ottawa River. The site also already possessed a mature landscape, including a densely wooded escarpment overlooking the river, areas of rolling, open land with scattered trees, and two protected forests—the National Research Council's Woods North and the Montfort Hospital Woods.

From the outset, the team decided to emphasize continuity with this existing green infrastructure. Such a strategy would promote vital connections within the city and region, as well as generate a memorable context for development. In laying out residential streets and arteries, then, a primary goal was to link the community to the bike paths and hiking trails that wind through the surrounding green space, connect to the bike network along the Rockcliffe Parkway, and afford spectacular views of the river and Gatineau and Parliament Hills.

Rather than adhering to minimal planning norms for green space, therefore, the fundamental structuring idea of the master plan became a bold effort to preserve and expand access to the site's natural features. This meant integrating built spaces with a network of internal greenways to facilitate landscape regeneration, stormwater management, and wildlife and pedestrian connections between the Montfort Woods (a natural woodlot of maple trees to the southeast), the National Research Council (NRC) campus (an immediate neighbor to the east), and National Capital Commission (NCC) parkland along the Ottawa River and beyond.³

This strategy also meant planning to build more densely in a reduced development area, a requirement we proposed addressing through a series of compact mixed-use urban villages, each with a distinct character, mix, and range of building types and uses.



Community Forms

The site's history of settlement dates back to the early 1800s. The plan set out to preserve and celebrate this rich native and military heritage by drawing these features into integrated relationships with new development. This effort will eventually include a strategy for relocating, rehabilitating or recycling materials from 469 remaining military family dwellings.

One of the most significant aspects of sustainability planning for the Rockcliffe development will be the development of a true mix of uses—allowing people to live, work, play, shop, and enjoy a full range of community amenities in one place. Opportunities for synergistic relationships are currently being explored with the

adjoining NRC campus and other nearby institutions, including Montfort Hospital, several federal agencies, and the Canada Aviation Museum.⁴ Minimum targets for employment on the site have been set, with the expectation that these may be exceeded.

The plan also provides for a strong retail presence on a pedestrian-oriented High Street and around a market square that will occupy the base's former parade ground. This retail space is expected to serve not only the site's residents and employees but also surrounding communities. Housing on the site will accommodate a great range of forms, tenure, income levels, and lifestyles. The overall goal is to mirror the range of uses and forms within the diverse Greens Creek Sector in which Rockcliffe is located.

A transportation strategy was also developed to connect Rockcliffe's new population to the surrounding city. This deemphasizes the automobile in favor of a range of alternatives. First and foremost, it will encourage people to walk within and among the new villages. An extensive network of bike lanes and off-street multiuse trails will further weave through its greenways, connecting to communities to the south and west and improving access to the river and the regional trail system leading to downtown Ottawa. A new transit spine has also been identified that will run through the community and link to the regional bus transitway. Its stops will be key neighborhood focal points. Other transportation strategies in the plan include traffic demand management, controls over parking supply, and emphasis on shared parking areas.

A Public Infrastructure

For any undertaking of this scale, a master plan can only serve as a "framework," a living instrument capable of absorbing change and interpretation. Over time, some elements will remain fixed, while others will evolve. Through this process, the Rockcliffe plan will need to remain accountable to original commitments, while also being flexible enough to accommodate unexpected market-driven opportunities. Such flexibility has been the great lesson of large-scale planning in recent decades.

To reconcile this dilemma, the plan proposes a design for the public realm that is both more explicit and more detailed than that for a conventional development. In essence, Rockcliffe's public realm will embody its "big idea"—to establish its greenway network as its essential connecting web.

In addition, the public realm specified in the plan does not just comprise a utilitarian network of streets and park reserves. It includes actual preliminary park designs; locations for trails, gardens, constructed wetlands, and regeneration areas; a range of hardscapes and softscapes; a rich hierarchy of street types; specific ways of integrating transit; and a range of public facilities and programs.

These features are ultimately the guarantors of what will make Rockcliffe distinctive, and they are intimately tied to the successful implementation of sustainability strategies. They are what Canada Lands Company, as the master developer, will commission and build, establishing Rockcliffe's fundamental DNA and character.

In summary, then, the Rockcliffe plan focuses on weaving together found assets (both built and green), new networks for movement, a synergistic mix of uses, and appropriately scaled built form. But the ultimate test of

the iterative process that produced it will be its ability to encourage the formation of attractive, active "places"—the High Street, the market square, sidewalks, trails, parks, and neighborhood gathering spaces. When inhabited, it is these that will create the basis for real community.

Notes

1. The greenbelt, established in 1956 by Jacques Gréber, is a 14,950-hectare (36,950-acre) crescent of land within the present-day boundaries of Ottawa, in which real estate development is strictly controlled.
2. The National Capital Commission (NCC) is a Crown corporation created by Parliament in 1959 as steward of federal lands and buildings in the National Capital Region.
3. The National Research Council (NRC) is Canada's premier science and technology research organization.
4. The Aviation Museum contains Canada's premier aeronautical collection and is housed in a facility due north of the project area.

Project team

Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects in association with Greenberg Consultants, Inc.

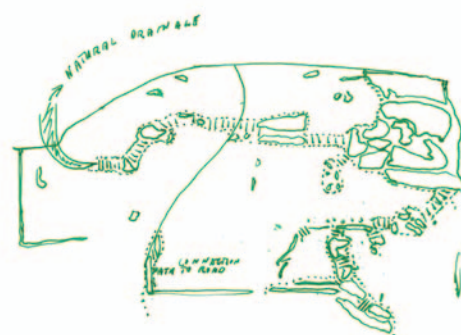
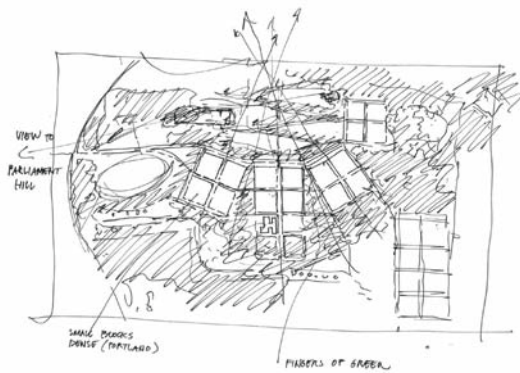
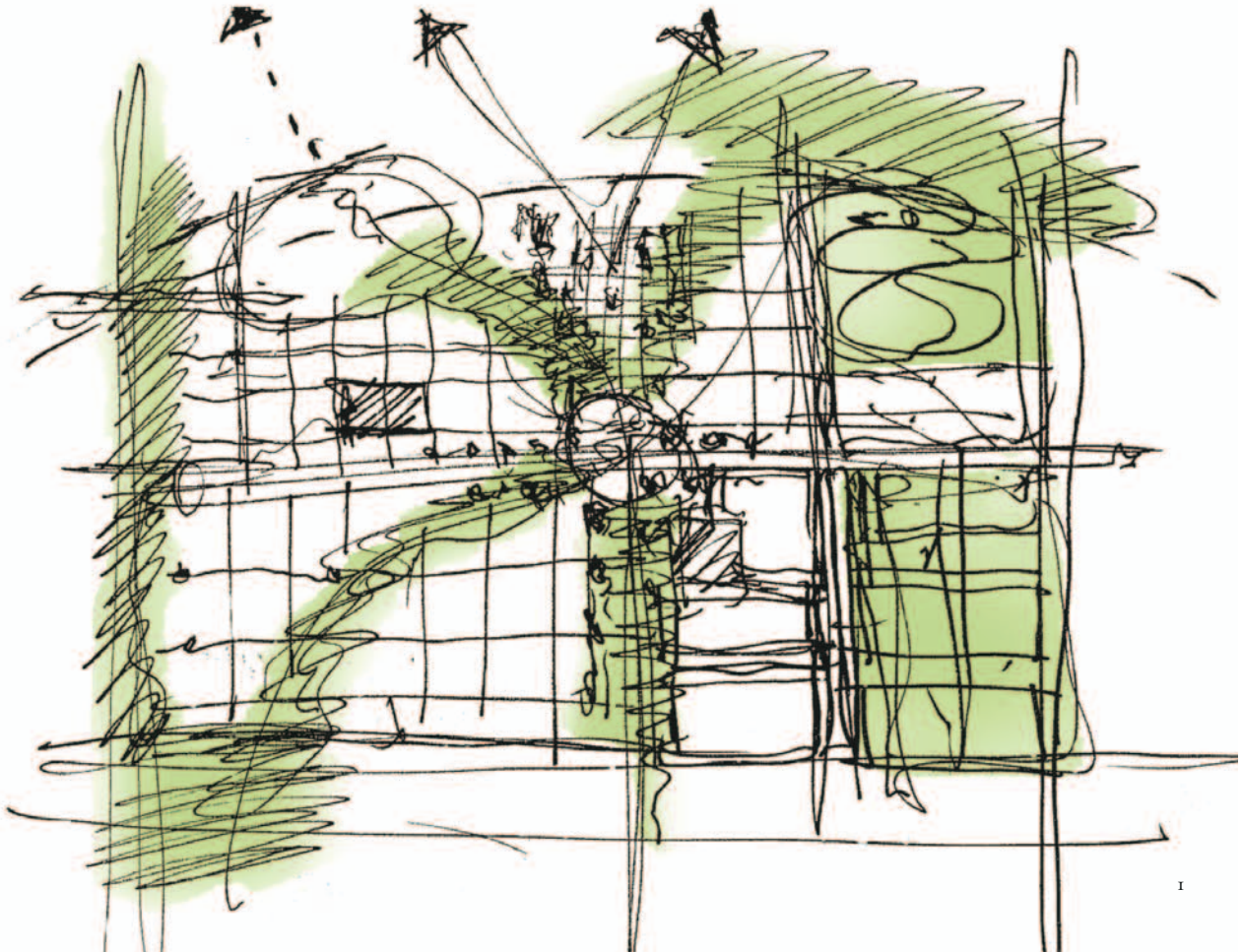
and

Barry Padolsky Associates, Inc., Architects
 Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg Landscape Architects
 Delcan Corporation
 IBI Group
 Halsall Associates Ltd.
 Niblett Environmental Associates
 DST Engineering
 Applied Ecological Services
 L'OEUF Architects

All images courtesy of Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects.

Previous page: Aerial view of Ottawa showing a portion of the greenbelt surrounding the city and the Rockcliffe site.

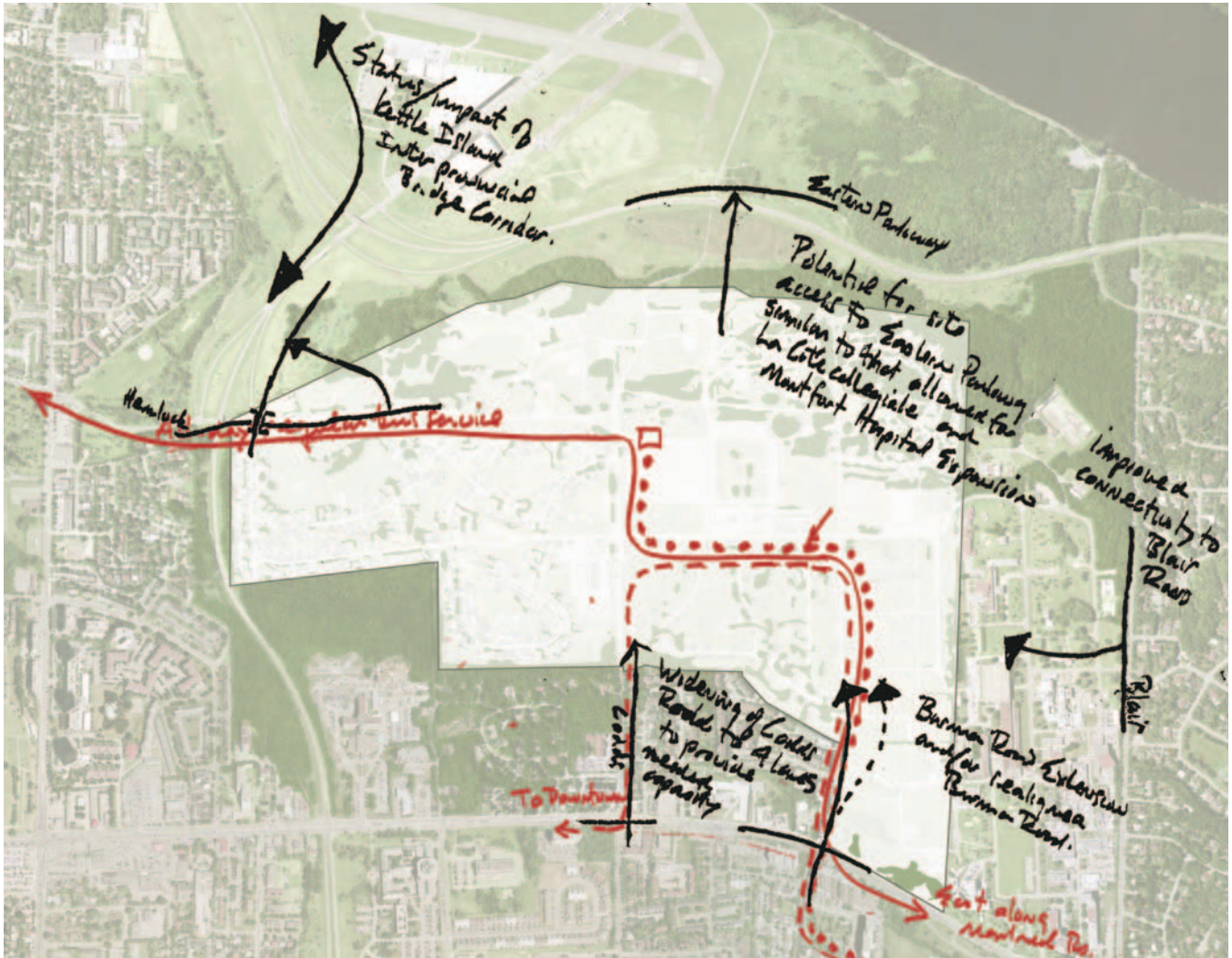
1. Interwoven diagonal greenways suggest a functional green network that then builds community around it. Landscape is viewed as the driver of urban form.
2. Dense, urban entities defined by small, compact blocks are formed between the green fingers, creating portals on the river.
3. Biological regeneration, green infill, and natural drainage patterns locate the green frame.





4

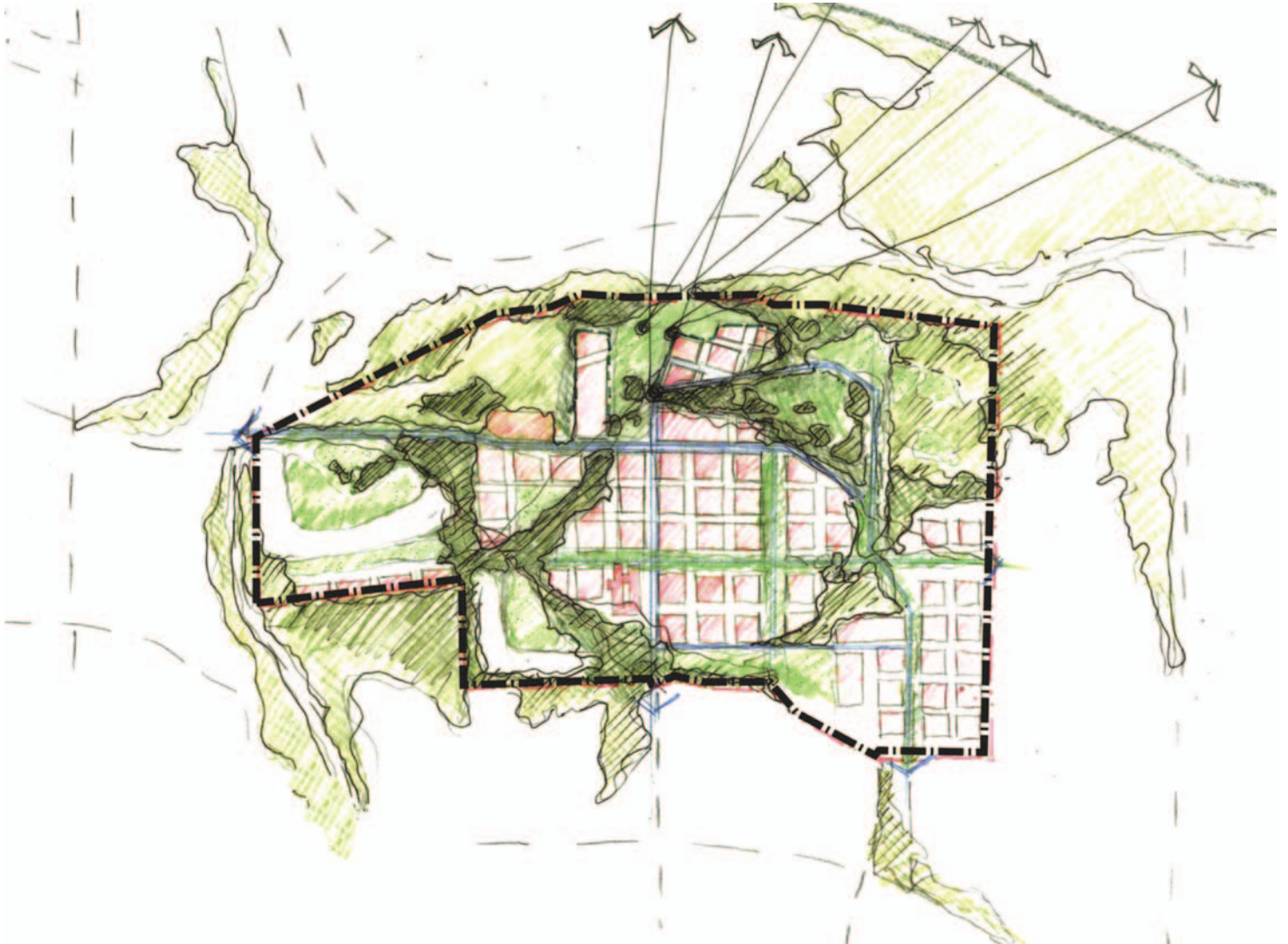
4. Mapping of habitat and wildlife corridors reinforces the positioning of the green network.
5. An access and transit strategy is developed to ensure connectivity and walkability both within the community and the neighborhoods beyond.
6. The tight, walkable urban grid defers to the greenways, defining a porous, transitional edge between park and city.



5

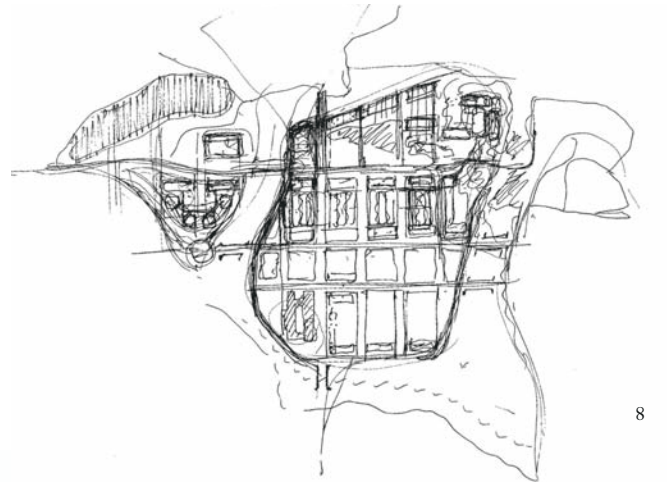


6



7

7. The “a-ha moments” are identified and serve to locate an urban park and look-off pier, committing the best place on the site to the public realm.



8

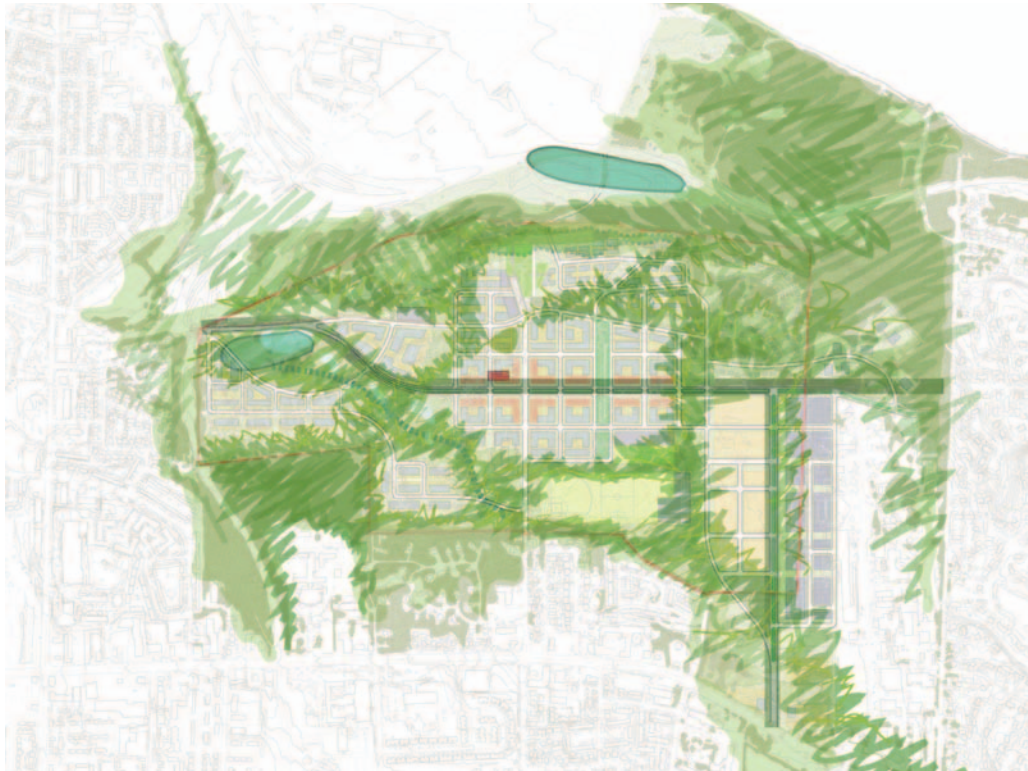


9



10

8. The notion of a hilltown emerges at the north of the site as the rectilinear grid begins to defer to the folds and flats of the topography.
9. A variety of streets emerge. An east-west High Street comes into focus as a retail spine, centered on a new market square.
10. Fluid lines shape the greenways, creating public promenades that lasso the emerging neighborhoods.



11



12

11. Functional open spaces drive the community structure, and pedestrian-oriented “green streets” connect the neighborhoods.

12. Institutional buildings are located along the greenways, capitalizing on views, trail networks, and a program of shared green spaces.



13



14

13. Eight distinct neighborhoods are defined, encouraging a diversity of built form that reflects social diversity.

14. A vibrant mixed-use community, concentrated along the High Street and public transit corridor provides retail, work, transit, and amenity within a five-minute walk of every residence.



15. A guiding, flexible “sustainable frame” emerges, defining the plan as a living instrument capable of absorbing change and responding to evolving needs.



Timing and Triggering: Clues from Antiquity

Barton Phelps

The-sis, n. Gk., lowering of the voice; downbeat, the more important part of a poetic foot; the act of laying down.

Landscapes are dynamic, and place is about time and activity. Function usually follows form—not the other way around; and time (in its historic, annual, and daily guises) performs a continual, not always harmonically constructive duet with presence.

Designers rarely encounter stable, unchanging landscapes in this country. Indeed, it appears such an idea is historically un-American: experimentation and commodification are more powerfully culture-driven ambitions than conservation and permanence.

Partly because its development came late and quickly, California is home to a distinct sequence of efforts to respond to this dynamism—to speed up or slow down the rate of change.

(Deciding where to come down in the professionally suspect, often moralistic terrain of time is a fundamental problem of architectural and planning activity. And what we are thinking as we go about this and what we report to clients are not necessarily the same thing.)

Let's call it timing.

An experiment in timing is underway at Thacher School in the hot, dry foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains near Ojai.

Founded on a former cattle ranch by a Yale-educated newcomer in 1889, Thacher provided an early societal link between California and elite institutions of East Coast higher education. Nowadays, it's a diverse,

coed boarding school. Yet even if its curriculum is no longer based on the Classics, it still undertakes an update of Sherman Thacher's broadly inclusive educational initiative, combining academic achievement with objectives in self-reliance, teamwork, and environmental awareness.

The 240 high school-age students at Thacher live a rugged, outdoor life, shaped by the Ojai Valley and the daily ranch labor they perform. Their 400-acre campus (also home to 60 faculty and 140 horses) drops 200 feet in 1,200 feet from east to west, making for steep climbs and long, elevated views on the way to anywhere. Part grid, part contour-tracing ramble, its layout, and daily life itself, take focus at a shady central terrace called "The Pergola."

In 2001, the decision by the school's trustees to construct a new performing arts building and a student commons (the largest project in school history) on this central space raised a range of questions about space and time—as well as the designers' ability to get it right.

Bordering hallowed space unchanged for a half century, the Commons building would be the school's first to fully recognize coeducation in its design, and the Arts Building would give new importance to creative activity. The siting that we ultimately settled upon, however, intervened forcefully in a spatial composition evolved over five or six generations.

Our design aimed to show that architectural "progress" is not a *Zeitgeist* constant, and that the conscious choice of where to come down in architectural time is critically important to supporting social progress in every community.

We started by trying to be useful, helping other people to collect and organize their thoughts for a project whose name was soon shortened to AB/C.

Building with Gerunds

Engaging: Two programs totaling 24,000 sq.ft. in an integrated composition anchored to the Pergola establish movement patterns that clarify campus orientation, provide new, precisely oriented view lines, and heighten awareness of the setting.

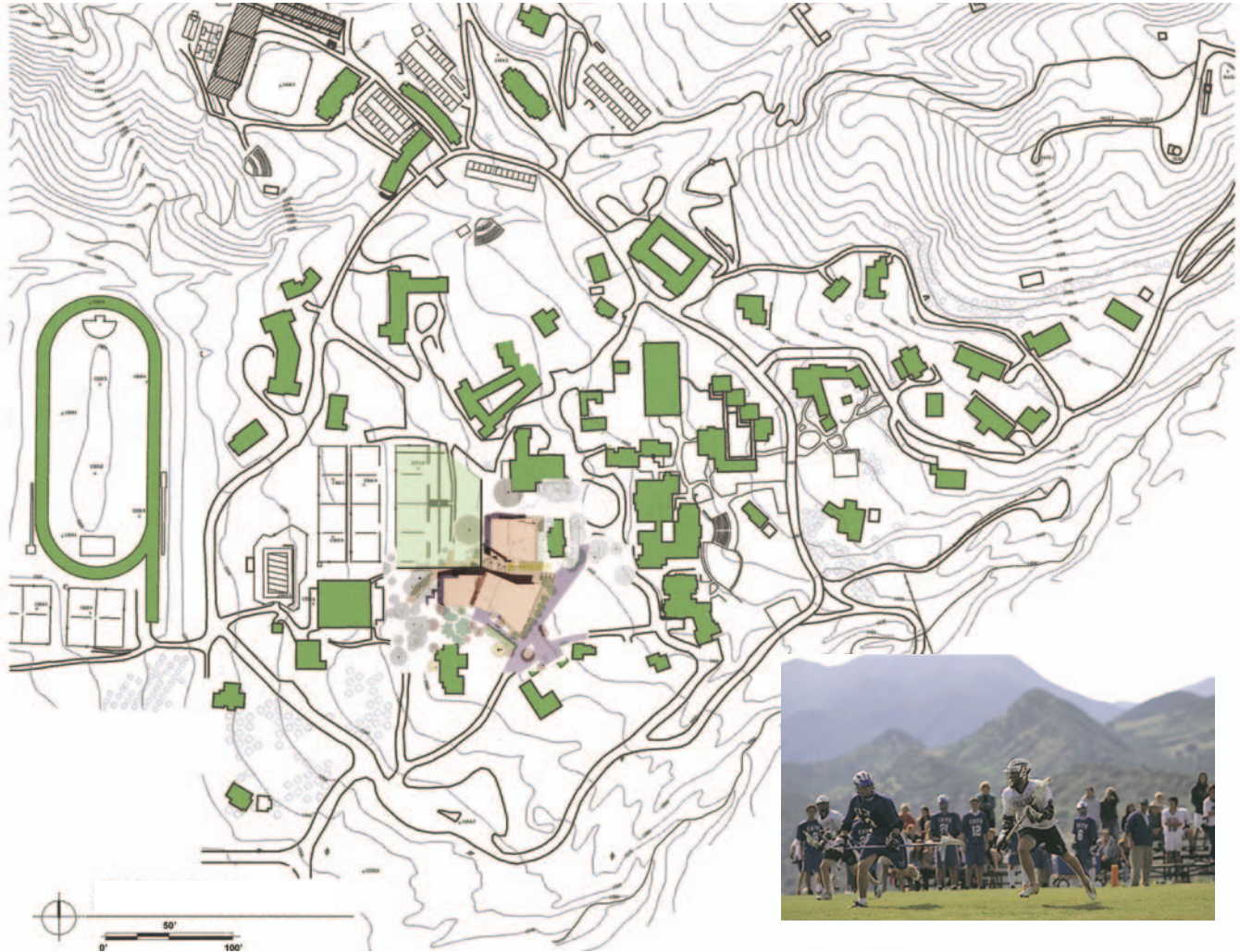
Double-functioning: Operations overlap to avoid redundancy and link activities. In addition to casual spaces for student, faculty, alumni and conference use, the Commons provides lobby/reception/rest room facilities for events in either building. Lower-level music practice rooms are close to the stage/rehearsal rooms across the court.

Linking/Encountering: Circulation is concentrated in a skylit central corridor linking Pergola and Arts Building, interpreted as a Parisian shopping arcade with a café and a school store display window. A *socio-petal* space, it banks on function, location, and daily visits to the mail room at its center to encourage social interaction. The space doubles as a gallery for the display of student work and traveling exhibitions. The tackboard "Toad" (school mascot) offers additional space for pin-up, Internet access, and vending machines.

Testing Regionalism/Elevating Performance: Orientation, daylight penetration, roof overhangs/sun shades, foundation/structural design, natural ventilation/limited HVAC systems, and material selection all reflect a balance between construction cost and life-cycle performance. In terms of texture, fieldstone, boulders (from the excavation), concrete, and metal siding predominate. Metal roofing replaces heavy tile, diminishing the seismic load its use created in earlier buildings.

Opposite: Campus plan of Thacher School showing site of Arts Building and Commons (AB/C). The school's setting is dominated by vistas to surrounding mountains (inset).

Images courtesy of Thacher School.



A Prime Transformation

As at other venerable schools, the campus landscape at Thacher is valued equally for functional and symbolic successes. And, as is true of other examples of this best recognized and most revered form of American building culture, great effort has gone into maintaining its encoded spatial system.

But up here, absent gates, quads or towers, campus spaces and narrative myth developed anomalously. And partly because of the vertical topography and the land's former use for grazing, and partly because of an ethos

of modesty that prefers conventional building to more emphatic representational modes, the campus ideal seems ironically delicate in this craggy mountain context.

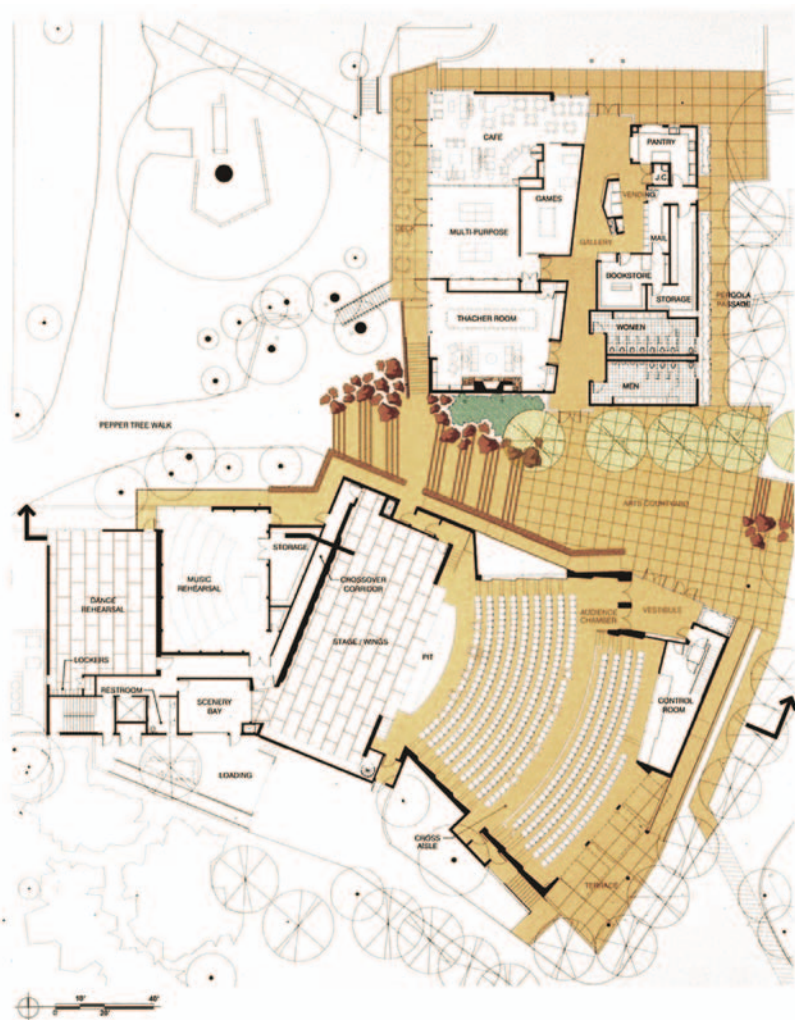
As architect/alumnus Ross Anderson, FAIA, has written, the Thacher landscape is “easy to screw up.” School supporters are painfully aware of this, and architects working at Thacher find the meaning of “daring” to be more closely related to Zen archery than the “shock and awe” of the international architecture scene.

Our approach wraps vernacular

building forms and materials around a technically complex program. The exterior of the Arts Building looks to the angular unity and sculptural potential of California barns to mask the high stage loft and provide a sense of contextual fit.

The 450-seat auditorium has mid-range acoustics for music, speech, drama, dance and cinema. And its cross-aisle and lighting lend intimacy to the lower 300 seats for daily assemblies. But the interiors are plain.

Overhead, exposed structural elements and industrial features do play



off the memory of an older campus building, the long-gone “Rough House,” which offered a cunning combination of ordinary gymnasium and scary high-wire equipment devised to induce terrified exhaustion in adolescent males. In our design, some fairly daunting ladders, catwalks, and lighting positions were as close as school lawyers would let us come

Above: Plan of Commons and Arts Building at ground level. Courtesy of Barton Phelps & Associates.

Opposite: Arts courtyard looking west. © Benny Chan/Fotoworks.

to this precedent. However, garage doors at the rear do open for ventilation and allow for additional performance seating on horseback. The leather-colored concrete likens the floor to a collective saddle.

Controlled institutional landscapes sometimes allow designers to look beyond assigned functional programs to create unasked-for interactions with surrounding outdoor spaces, and so enhance the campus experience. At Thacher the opportunity was intensely contextual. For example, it could be argued that few buildings constructed there since the

1950s recognized the powerful presence of their mountain setting.

Similarities between this semi-arid terrain and that of ancient Greece immediately reminded us of the care with which designers of sacred sites once drew palpable linkages between topographic features and architecture. From this viewpoint, the Thacher lacrosse field hovers above the valley in an ennobling way that echoes the soaring stadium at Delphi.

The old Greek model triggers awareness of our place in the natural world.¹ This school values the idea. It still works.

Phe-nom-e-non, n. Gk., to appear, to show, to know things by means of the senses rather than by means of rational thought.

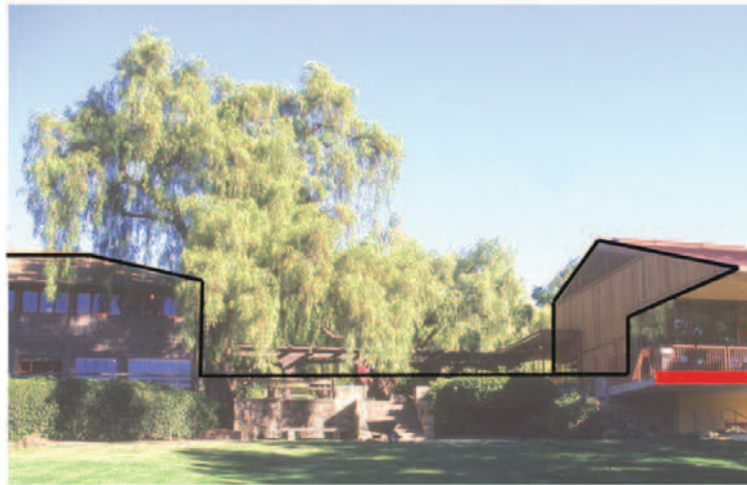
It's thrilling to work just above the base of a western mountain range — low enough that the wild terrain has already been tamed by loggers and ranchers (so you're off that hook), but high enough to still be knocked silly by topographic abstractions expanding above and below you.

Part way up, the earth's broken shell dispenses hard facts more clearly and rapidly than a designer can possibly take in. Phenomenal interests sabotage rational problem-solving, and distant crustal events lay claim to your clients' carefully chosen site in a way that does not suffer value engineering or "gift opportunities."

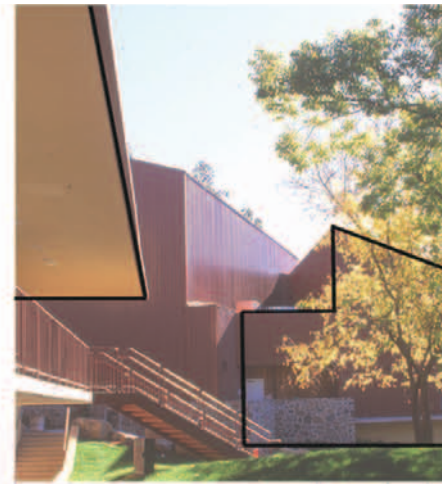
The architect finds salvation in a forgotten soft science: sites like these are testing ranges for built interactions with the natural world. And if design alone cannot originate a shared idea of place, it somehow can alert people to certain dimensions of space that make it meaningful and, most importantly, memorable.

Let's call it triggering.





5. FRAMING THE PERGOLA



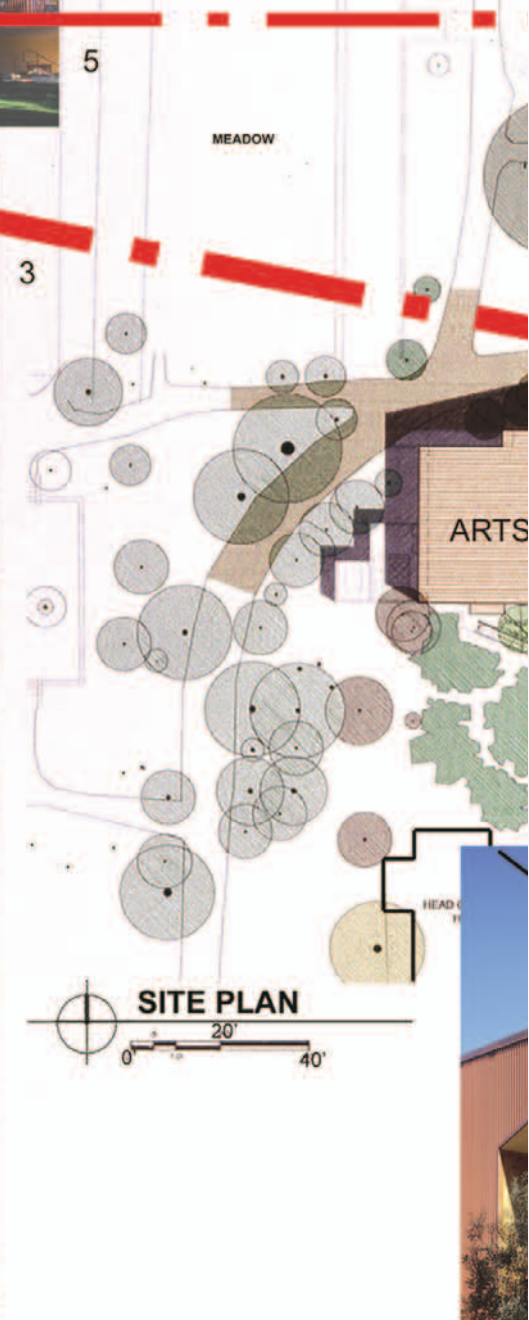
4. NEW CORNER AT MEADOW



3. VIEW OF OLD UPPER SCHOOL

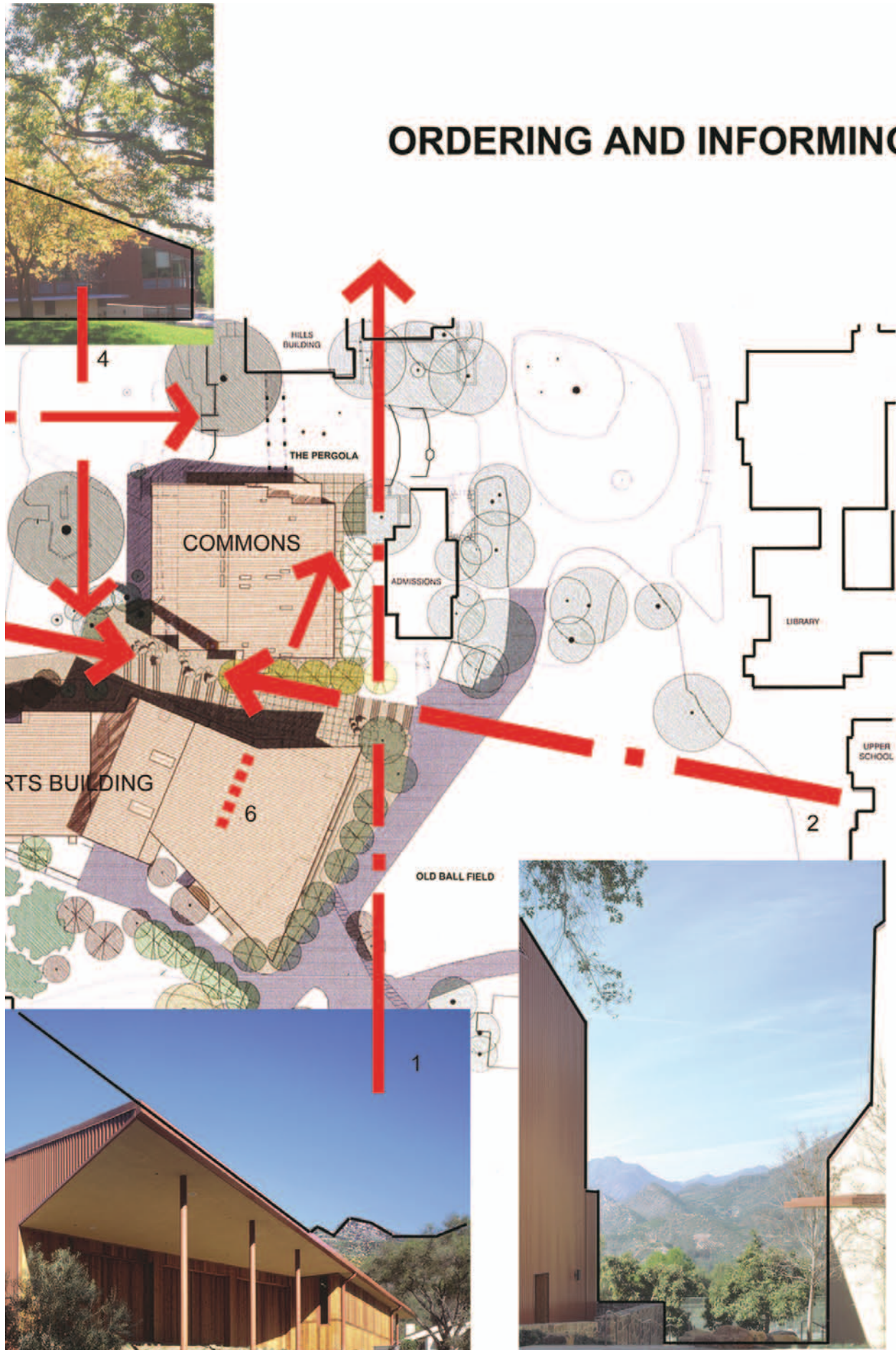


6. TWIN PEAKS FROM AUDITORIUM



Credits: Photos 1, 2, 3, and 6, © Benny Chan/
Fotoworks. Photos 4 and 5, courtesy of Barton
Phelps & Associates.

ORDERING AND INFORMING



1. TWIN PEAKS SIGHTLINE ON ENTRY WALK

2. ARTS COURT: LONG VALLEY VIEW



The site plan manipulates the AB/C buildings as an integrated composition anchored directly to the Pergola and axially to the old Upper School. The design establishes movement patterns that aid orientation and heighten awareness of the

Above: Commons entry from the Pergola. © Benny Chan/Fotoworks.

Opposite: Arts Building Entry, north elevation. © Benny Chan/Fotoworks; Wooden Barn, Cambria, California (below). Courtesy of Barton Phelps & Associates. Section through the Arts Building (unfolded). Courtesy of Barton Phelps & Associates. The historic Rough House. Image courtesy of Thatcher School.

larger context, and it enlivens landscape through playful application of regional vernacular form.

The Commons squares off with the north/south grid at the center of the campus. Its main (north) entry receives the old wooden pergola that connects to the dining hall. Meanwhile, the plan of the adjacent Arts Building swings off the grid to border a fabled triangular ball field, and then cranks back to shape a strong corner for the meadow to the west.

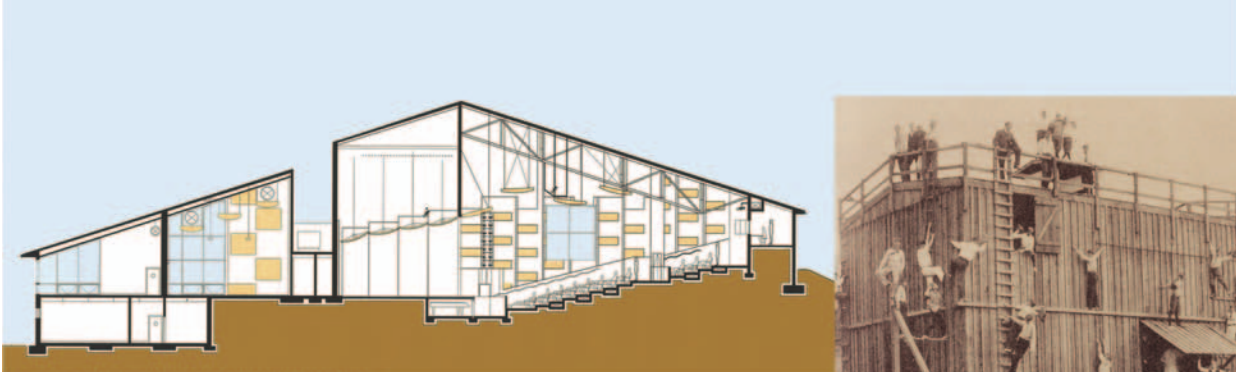
Most importantly, the composition frames a major space that was not mentioned in the school's program: a stepped courtyard

between the two buildings that serves as a lobby for assembly/event crowds, an informal student gathering place, a theater for outdoor events, and a passage for daily movement. Its axis opens a powerful new view corridor that links distant peaks with the oldest building on campus.

Building alignments and window placements also connect major spaces with distant peaks and ranges. The cantilevered deck and window wall of the Commons provide a sweeping overlook of the Ojai Valley. The roofline of the Arts Building leads the eye of arriving theater-goers up to Twin Peaks. And music and



WOODEN BARN, CAMBRIA



SECTION THROUGH THE ARTS BUILDING (UNFOLDED)



dance rehearsal rooms engage mountains to the north, while the big auditorium window frames Twin Peaks during each daily assembly.

The California Problem

One intention of the AB/C was to demonstrate how much positive, perceivable landscape change two relatively small buildings could produce if they were designed not only inside-out and outside-in, but also (in the Greek sense) outside-out.

Thacher School presented the perfect laboratory for this effort. And, judging from users' responses, our design has succeeded at least partway in triggering thoughts about the relationship between human activity and remaining natural (or naturalistic) places.

We like to see this heartily conceived and supported project as a small contribution to a larger effort, begun before Thacher was founded, to imagine ways of forming landscapes worthy of California's Edenic promise.

Note

1. See Vincent Scully, *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).



Above: Gallery looking toward Arts Court. © Benny Chan/Fotoworks.

Opposite: Auditorium. © Benny Chan/Fotoworks.



The Poetics of the Ordinary: The American Places of Charles W. Moore

Michelangelo Sabatino

In order to try to throw out our standard notions about shape and the making of it and about space and its importance, I have employed the perhaps vaguer notion of place, the ordering of the whole environment that members of a civilization stand in the middle of, the making of sense, the projection of the image of the civilization onto the environment.¹

architectural debate away from overly tectonic, formalistic notions of space.

By appropriating the materiality of the “ordinary,” Moore and his collaborators set the standard for an architecture and urbanism that interacted with the expanded field of the public and private realm. They pursued an open-ended design process that promoted the ideals of

Modern, Postmodern, Premodern

Lucien Febvre’s dictum—“it is never a waste of time to study the history of a word”—is particularly apt for those seeking to differentiate the concepts of *place* and *space* in modernist architecture and theory during the 1950s and 1960s.² The cult of abstract space that was so powerful at the time had grown out of books like Sigfried



These comments by Charles W. Moore appeared in his youthful essay, “Creating of Place,” published in 1966. At a time when the exclusionist dogma of high modernism and the brittle curtain-wall aesthetic of post-World War II American corporate architecture were dominant, Moore and his partners attempted to redirect

community and “open society.” And by seeking to instill anthropologically charged notions of place, they presciently anticipated the repudiation of postwar planning and mass housing that would surface in the 1980s and 90s.

Yet, despite Moore’s influence upon a generation of students and professionals in the 1970s, his legacy as an architect and a writer has suffered from indifference and at times hostility. Some critics have championed his early “modern” production and dismissed his later “postmodern” work on the basis of its eclecticism; others have ignored him altogether. Nevertheless, his core concern for context and site specificity continue to challenge the profession today, even as the limits of globalization become all too evident.

Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (1941). Bruno Zevi’s *Architecture as Space: How to Look at Architecture* (1957) was also current at the time Moore and his collaborators began to challenge the architecture of contextually disengaged “heroic” objects in the early 1960s.

It has been said that Moore’s critique of architectural culture at the time involved “popularizing” a variety of architectural sources in reaction to the elitism of the International Style.³ These sources ranged from classical Italian villas and fountains to California barns to roadside Texas burger stands he personally visited and photographed. But it is equally true that Moore’s counter-current “postmodern” design production, pedagogy and writing cannot be grasped without a

Above, left to right: Villa Poiana, Poiana Maggiore, Italy, by Andrea Palladio (photo by Charles Moore, August 1977). Barns in northern California (photo by Charles Moore, no date). Roadside restaurants along I-40 in Amarillo, Texas (photo by Charles Moore, January 1968). Photos courtesy of the Alexander Architectural Archives of the University of Texas at Austin.

Opposite: Whitman Housing (Huntington, NY) (June 1974). Photo courtesy of the Charles Moore Foundation.



full appreciation for the impact of the European modernist avant-garde in postwar America.

Moore's interest in improving society through architecture was distinctly modern in its advocacy of social responsibility. However, his approach was not charged with the same fundamentalist certainty implicit in radical European interwar modernity. Indeed, it would be inaccurate to describe Moore as anti-modernist. Robert A. M. Stern has rather pointed to a productive ambivalence. "Traditional post-modernists" like Moore and Robert Venturi, he has argued, embraced both "modernist and pre-modernist values."⁴

It is easier to perceive continuity in Moore's strategies over the decades if one traces his design approach back to a fascination with ordinary ways of

building and a belief in real experience over abstraction. A bricoleur of sorts, these proclivities allowed him to appropriate and popularize seemingly disparate sources of architecture at a time when the hand-driven folk arts of preindustrial rural society (from homesteaders to pioneers) were being replaced by new middle-class American icons such as the Campbell's Soup can and neon signs along Route 66.⁵

It is equally essential for those assessing Moore's work to understand his design process. He had an insatiable curiosity about buildings and objects from all periods of history. But he was also able to bring these sources together with an eye toward accessibility and affordability, a process that often involved bridging "high" and "low" design and "warming up" the material proper-

ties of an original. Thus, stone was often replaced with wood, color was favored over monochrome, and ornament over plain surfaces.

Wherever possible, Moore and his collaborators also tempered architectural gravitas with wit and levity. Recall, for example, his Piazza d'Italia (1973–78) in New Orleans, where the "seriousness" of a classical fountain was irreverently undercut with neon lights and exaggerated effects to encourage public interaction.

Foremost, however, Moore's work and that of his many collaborators, including his partners Donlyn Lyndon, William Turnbull, and Richard Whitaker in the firm MLTW (founded in 1962), sought to activate the poetic qualities of prose (i.e., of the ordinary, familiar or vernacular).



Senses of the Ordinary

Over his career Moore refined his understanding of the ordinary, the familiar, and the vernacular in relation to a particularly North American context.

I have taken great pleasure, all my life, in ordinary American places and garden variety tourist attractions....I am especially interested in vernacular architecture. It is familiar to me, I enjoy it, and I believe it is proper for it to be the prime source of my own work. I think it is important to note that ours is not a peasant society; to see vernacular architecture as hooked to the land, free of exotic influences or of pretension, at some odds with an aristocratic "high" architecture is, in the United States, altogether to miss the point.⁶

Driven by wanderlust, Moore traveled extensively throughout his life to seek out and write about the architecture, built environments, and material cultures of the distant and not-so-distant past. His vast slide collection, now housed at the University of Texas

and the Moore Center in Austin, attests to this voracious appetite for discovering (and documenting) examples of both high and low architecture. Thanks to his extensive travel, Moore was also able to pinpoint and vindicate the differences between the vernacular of North America and that of other continents:

What is most familiar, of course, is what lies around us, loosely labeled the vernacular. The term, I'm afraid, confuses: it immediately conjures up in the minds of art historians and many others, images of the elegant cubist assemblages of the Greek islands or Mexico, beautiful compositions made by villages in strict response to familiar conditions of site and society, with a stringently limited palette of materials and (for us) thrilling level of agreement about color and shape and scale. The contemporary North American vernacular, on the other hand, the one that concerns me here, is very different from that, on just about every count.⁷

To be sure, during the 1950s and early 1960s several European architects and émigrés had laid the foundation for a renewed interest in the "primitive" preindustrial vernacular. Among them was Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, with her pioneering *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture* (1957). Bernard Rudofsky's polemical exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and its related book, *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigree Architecture* (1964), also initiated intense debate over the possible role of preindustrial vernacular as a tonic for modern architecture in the United States. However, both works fell into the camp of "Greek islands or Mexico" that Moore distinguished from a specifically American twentieth-century vernacular.⁸ Moore was able to make these distinctions thanks to his travels and his willingness to understand "foreign" cultures before formulating his opinions, thus avoiding snap, unsubstantiated judgments.

Like such English and American Pop artists as Richard Hamilton, Roy Lichtenstein, and Andy Warhol, Moore saw the working class of the 1960s as the protagonist of a "people's" art that was taking shape in a heterogeneous, mass-media-based, entrepreneurial culture. In this regard, Moore related to the position of John A. Kouwenhoven, whose important study *Made in America: The Arts in Modern Civilization* (1949) attempted to vindicate the specificity of an American vernacular as the "unself-conscious effort of common people to create satisfying patterns out of their environment."⁹ Moore understood that the slow fine-tuning typical of the European rural vernacular assured a situation of little transformation over the centuries, while the North American commercial vernacular was



subject to the rapid change typical of capitalist economic dynamics.

Likewise, although Moore was interested in Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's popularizing of "complexity and contradiction" (as Dean of the Yale School of Architecture, he even encouraged them to give a studio on Las Vegas), his approach was far less conceptual. Even their common interest in the overlap of the classical and the vernacular led to quite different results, especially at the beginning of their careers.¹⁰ One might, for example, compare Venturi's design of his mother's house in Philadelphia (1962) with Moore's design of his own house in Orinda, California, completed the same year.

In the Venturi design, classical and vernacular allusions were combined to achieve ironic, almost surreal effects; Moore's was a more distilled design, whose deceptively simple exterior masked a complex interior featuring salvaged columns from a historic building.

Yet Moore's interest in appropriating commercial and noncommercial vernacular did not extend to the conventions of the builder vernacular celebrated by Sigfried Giedion in *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to Anonymous History* (1948). Indeed, Moore worked against the grain of such builder developments, especially those of the ilk of the Levitt brothers that sur-

faced in the postwar period that he considered devoid of the urban planning ideals crucial to the construction of place. If anything, he was more sympathetic to Gustav Stickley's Arts and Crafts bungalows, which flourished on the West Coast (and elsewhere) under the influence of Charles Keeler's moralizing text *The Simple Home* (1904).

Opposite: The Moore House in Orinda, California, under construction, December 1961. Photo by Richard Whitaker.

Above: The completed Moore House, showing the complex relation between interior and exterior. Photo courtesy of the Charles Moore Foundation.

Mobility and Impermanence

If any one thinker of the times espoused a view of the ordinary similar to Moore's it was the J.B. Jackson. Jackson believed that the twentieth-century American vernacular landscape embraced the varied expressions of human ingenuity resulting from people's interaction with the specificities of place.¹¹ The spirited, unself-conscious ingenuity of the commonplace intrigued Moore. And whether this ingenuity was the result of mobility (associated with



Route 66) or the urbanity of classically inspired sites, it often was perceptible in spatial arrangements characterized by a pragmatic intelligence that transformed prose into poetry.¹² Mobility was central to Moore and Jackson's concept of ordinary landscapes. In one of his many essays, Jackson traced the genesis of American wood building in relation to mobility.¹³ He assigned great importance to wood as a construction material in conferring a transitional or impermanent quality to a building type—the single multifunctional room that was originally meant for the working class or rural population, but which eventually developed into the mobile trailer.

Upon Moore's arrival at the University of Texas in 1984 to occupy the O'Neil Ford Chair of Architecture, he and Sally Woodbridge published a

small catalogue to accompany an exhibition that had originally been held in Los Angeles and entitled "Home Sweet Home: American Domestic Vernacular Architecture."¹⁴ In the Texas version of the exhibition, "The Cabin/The Temple/The Trailer," Moore looked to the overlapping features of the indigenous log cabin, the clapboard house as miniature temple, and the Airstream trailer.¹⁵ The modest scale of these units, their intimate relationship to the human body, and their cost-efficiency were all part of their allure for him.¹⁶

The idea of impermanence, epitomized by the mobile home, as well as by such objects as the disposable Bic pen, invented in the 1960s, emerged at a time when increased opportunities for travel were igniting imaginations. And compared with the stability and rootedness of rural societies of Europe, the mobility and prosperity of postwar America encouraged Moore's restless freedom.

The influence of the automobile was particularly important in American architecture and urbanism. During the 1960s, it far outpaced the other modernist icons of progress celebrated by Le Corbusier in *Towards a New Architecture* (1923) and *Aircraft* (1935). But where Le Corbusier adopted the aircraft, ocean liner, and automobile as types that could inspire design, Moore was primarily interested in the car as a means to explore and discover new realities.

At the time an endless array of new motor hotels (motels), shopping malls, and fast-food drive-ins already attested to the power of car culture to generate new types, and even "monuments" like the artist collective Ant Farm's *Cadillac Ranch* (1974) in Amarillo, Texas.¹⁷ Until the late 1950s and mid-60s, the roadside still also provided a fertile cross-section of

American working-class culture and its creative talent—as well as a penchant for excess that excited Moore's imagination.

In the mid-1960s, Moore brought automobile and design together in his essay "You Have to Pay for the Public Life."¹⁸ In it, he acknowledged America's romance with the freedom offered by the car and the car culture's inevitable influence on the built environment. Yet, unlike Buckminster Fuller, for example, he expressed little interest in the streamlined aesthetics of the car (or the machine) as a source for architectural design.

Homes as Places

Instead, it was the experience of dwelling in the domestic realm that occupied an increasingly important role in the buildings and writings of Moore and his collaborators. Homes functioned as catalysts for collective design and for contemplating the notion of place.

Writing in *The Place of Houses* (1974), Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, and Gerald Allen drew attention to the qualities of the small town of Edgartown, Massachusetts. In particular, they observed that it "preserves the decorum of a black-tie dinner, where everyone manages to look his best while dressing very much like everyone else."¹⁹ But this was just one of many instances in which Moore and his collaborators identified the vernacular as a conduit for individual and collective identities to coexist.²⁰

By the time *The Place of Houses* was published, MLTW had already completed the Sea Ranch Condominium north of San Francisco (1963–65) and Kresge College at the University of California, Santa Cruz (1964–74). These projects reflected a desire to integrate architecture with context (a windswept coastal meadow and

a redwood forest, respectively) and facilitate mixed private and public use. Within the currents of modernism at the time they also indicated how Moore's "realism" might provide a brake on the grand urban gestures and utopian megastructures of those years.

At Kresge College, MLTW focused on the street as a space for interpersonal interaction and a conduit for placemaking.²¹ But the firm also revealed keen interest in high-density low-lying Mediterranean "townscapes."²² Both it and the contemporaneous Church Street South housing in New Haven (1966–69) were organized around open-air "piazzas." These provided areas for social interaction that recalled Mediterranean prototypes, despite their distinctive Pop Art-inspired "supergraphics" and the "cheapness" of the cinderblock construction.

In his early work, Moore had alternately cited the vernacular cabin and "primitive" hut as design precedents. Indeed, his house in Orinda (1962) was a melding of the lowly hut with the "high" form of the Renaissance aedicule, which he and his colleagues had "discovered," thanks to John Summerson. The combination was then adapted to the scant practical needs of a bachelor.²³ But with the advent of his collaboration in MLTW his designs abandoned such overt simplicity and became more complex and articulated.

Nevertheless, Moore's concept of the ordinary was always closely linked to notions of place. Writing on the sources of inspiration for the Orinda house, he stated that "the overall design for the house took the archetypal form of a square hut, not unlike those to be found in primitive villages or those symbolized in the motifs carved in the stone of Mayan or Hindu temples."²⁴



Other residences he designed at the time, such as the Bonham House in Boulder Creek, California (1961), and the original Sea Ranch Condominium, combined the understated, introverted qualities of sheds and barns with open, highly articulated interiors.²⁵ The dichotomy between toned-down, ordinary exterior and *wunderkammer*-like complex, colorful interior (perhaps most evident in his last house in Austin, designed with Arthur W. Andersson) allowed his domestic designs to affirm civic modesty externally without forgoing interior richness.

Moore's love for folk objects has never been adequately discussed, and it was in the design of residential interiors (for his own homes, especially) that his affinity for ordinary material culture was most visible. During his

life he acquired a vast collection of objects as diverse as toy soldiers and folk masks. His passion for such forms is especially revealing in the current installation of items from his collection in the Moore house in Austin. Moore looked to these objects as a source of design inspiration. One might recall his "transformation" of a familiar Adirondack chair by refashioning its profile and adding color and ornament (c. 1990).

Opposite: Exhibition cover page for the "The Cabin/ The Temple/ The Trailer," Charles W. Moore and Sally B. Woodbridge, 1984.

Above: Interior of Bonham Cabin, Santa Cruz Mountains, California, 1961. Photo courtesy of the Charles Moore Foundation.



Construction Technique

Whether making reference to barns found in situ (Sea Ranch) or rethinking shingle cladding for the Whitman Village public housing complex in Huntington, New York (1971–75), Moore and his collaborators also demonstrated a commitment to building in wood. Although this practice was typical of many regions of the United States, it clashed with the use of industrially produced materials like glass and steel that were being championed at the time in the modern architecture of European émigrés.

Low-tech construction in wood, using familiar, and therefore less costly, materials and techniques, also allowed Moore to design projects that were affordable (to both low-income public-housing residents and individual clients of limited means).²⁶ This low-tech approach often involved simple platform wood construction, a distinctly American method for domestic building. Despite Moore's affinity with the spirit of Pop Art (American and English), his designs never embraced the high-tech attitude of contemporary British design spearheaded by the likes of Peter Cook.²⁷

During the postwar period, European-born modernists like Sigfried Giedion, Walter Gropius, and Konrad Wachsmann identified traditional American wood construction as a model for new factory-produced housing that was affordable.²⁸ While Moore was captivated by the modesty of indigenous wood construction, he was less enthusiastic about the modernists' interest in mundane anonymity or serial repetition. On the contrary, Moore's projects were carefully articulated to show off the artistry of the designer and the identity of the patron (public or private). It is no coincidence, therefore, that Vincent Scully celebrated Moore's

work as a creative continuation of the Shingle Style, inaugurated by talented American architects of the late nineteenth century.²⁹

Despite his commitment to authorship, Moore firmly believed that a sophisticated yet empirical approach could also be applied to modest ends. For example, the New Zion Community Center in Kentucky, the first completed project of the design/build program he initiated at the Yale School of Architecture (1967), demonstrated William Morris's principle that architectural design should not be divorced from the process of building.³⁰

Yet, in contrast to the English Arts and Crafts movement, which was heavily influenced by the built environment of rural peasantry, Moore's understanding of ordinary America also led him to consider such simula-
cra of "real" places as Disneyland.³¹

An Important Legacy

Were it not for the unifying element of Moore's concern for ordinary American places and their importance for contemporary design, his contribution to architectural culture might be lost. He was a keen observer in the tradition of Henry James, whose writing he admired. And despite his erudition, extensive travels, and personal library, he was never snobbish or condescending. Manfredo Tafuri admired Moore's sophistication, and aptly described him as a "refined populist."³²

During his life, Moore published several books (mostly in collaboration with others) and numerous seminal essays, yet none of these texts have found their way into scholarly anthologies published in recent years.³³ Nevertheless, *The Place of Houses* (1974) was reprinted in 2000 and has sold some 35,000 copies. Despite Moore's prolific production as an architect and

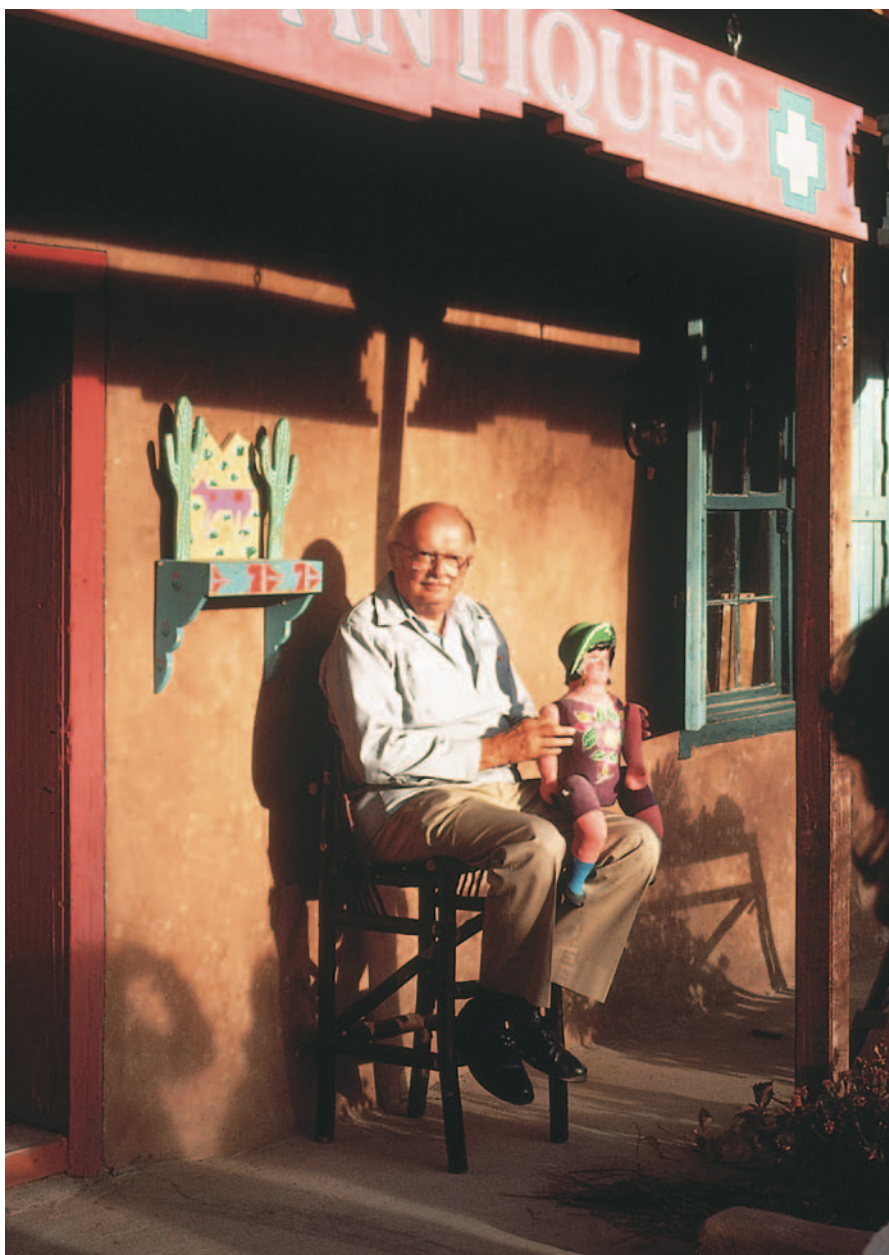


writer, he has also been marginalized in recent assessments of twentieth-century architecture and urbanism.³⁴ Dell Upton's *Architecture in the United States* virtually ignored him.³⁵ And under the rubric of "populism" in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Kenneth Frampton denounced his "flaccid eclecticism," and scolded him for abandoning the "constructional purity" of Sea Ranch.³⁶

Rather than seek out aspects of continuity throughout his career (i.e., his unfailing interest in the ordinary),

Opposite: Kresge College, Santa Cruz, California (1964-74). Initial site plan drawing courtesy of UC Berkeley Design Archive.

Above: Adirondack chair by Charles Moore (1990). Photo by Kevin Keim.



critics like Frampton have divided his output into periods of good and bad work. Nevertheless, more sympathetic critics did assess his contribution over the years. These have included Charles Jencks in England, Paolo Portoghesi and Manfredo Tafuri in Italy, Heinrich Klotz in Germany, and in

the United States, Vincent Scully.

By activating the poetics of the ordinary, Moore and his collaborators sought to counteract postwar formalism with a more humanist strategy of placemaking. Their accessible and open-ended design process provided a challenge to the architects and urban

planners of the “affluent society.”³⁷

Today, in light of the alarming withdrawal from civic life demonstrated by the increase of gated communities and concern for security since 9/11, Moore’s optimistic and generous vision of an “ordinary” architecture for the public realm is an important legacy that deserves rediscovery by students and professionals alike.

Notes

My interest in Charles W. Moore was sparked while I was a lecturer at Yale University School of Architecture. Special thanks go to Dean Robert A. M. Stern for his continuing support. Kent Bloomer and Stephen Harby were especially generous in sharing their knowledge and insight. Special thanks go to Donlyn Lyndon and David Moffat for their patient guidance and to Kevin Keim for his hospitality in Austin. All original images used to illustrate this essay are housed at the Charles Moore Foundation and the Alexander Architectural Archives of the University of Texas Libraries in Austin (Charles Willard Moore Architectural Drawings and Manuscript Material).

1. Charles Moore, “Creating of Place,” *Image 4* (1966), pp. 20–25.
2. Lucien Febvre, “Civilisation: Evolution of a Word and a Group of Ideas,” in Peter Burke, ed., *A New Kind of History and Other Essays*, trans. K. Folca (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 220.
3. See William H. Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976).
4. Robert A. M. Stern, “The Doubles of Post-Modern,” *Harvard Architecture Review* 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 75–87.
5. Arnold Hauser, “The Art of the People, the Masses, and the Educated,” in *The Philosophy of Art History* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985), pp. 279–365.
6. Charles W. Moore, “Personal Statement,” in *Charles Moore* (Tokyo: Global Architecture, 1978), pp. 7–16.
7. Charles Moore, “Human Energy,” in Byron Mikellides, ed., *Architecture for People: Explorations in a New Humane Environment* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), pp. 115–21.
8. While Rudofsky’s book focused primarily on Mediterranean examples, Moholy-Nagy’s also looked to the preindustrial vernacular of the Americas (she

- included Mexico, for example). Charles W. Moore and Wayne Attoe, eds., *Ab Mediterraean! Twentieth Century Classicism in America* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986).
9. John A. Kouwenhoven, *Made in America: The Arts in Modern Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1949).
10. Jean La Marche, *The Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
11. John Brinkerhoff Jackson, "The Word Itself," in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 1–9. Also see D. W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi, *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
12. Charles Moore, Peter Becher, and Regula Campell, *The City Observed: Los Angeles, a Guide to its Architecture and Landscapes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984).
13. John Brinkerhoff Jackson, "The Movable Dwelling and How it Came to America," in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, pp. 88–101.
14. Charles W. Moore, Kathryn Smith, and Peter Becker, eds., *Home Sweet Home: American Domestic Vernacular Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli International in collaboration with the Craft and Folk Art Museum, 1983).
15. Charles Moore and Sally B. Woodbridge, *The Cabin, The Temple, The Trailer*, a self-published catalogue printed ca. 1985.
16. On the relationship between body and architecture, see Kent C. Bloomer and Charles Moore, *Body, Memory and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
17. See, for example, Richard W. Longstreth, *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920–1950* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997).
18. Charles Moore, "You Have to Pay for the Public Life," *Perspecta* 9/10 (1965), pp. 57–97; reprinted in Charles Moore and Gerald Allen, *Dimensions: Space, Shape and Scale in Architecture* (New York: Architectural Record Books, 1969), pp. 105–30.
19. Charles Moore, Gerald Allen, and Donlyn Lyndon, *The Place of Houses* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974).
20. In the last twenty years, the New Urbanism has sought to identify a similar socially driven urban strategy, but it has never advocated the same freedom to re-create experiences of place that so intrigued Moore and his collaborators.
21. At the time, Bernard Rudofsky's *Streets for People: A Primer for Americans* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1969) was in the process of being published.
22. Gordon Cullen, *Townscape* (London: The Architectural Press, 1961); and Ivor de Wolfe, *The Italian Townscape* (London: The Architectural Press, 1963).
23. Robert Stern has pointed out the fundamental differences between Moore's house (1962) and Philip Johnson's earlier glass house (1949), despite their common programs. See Robert A. M. Stern, *New Directions in American Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969), p. 71.
24. Moore, Allen, and Lyndon, *The Place of Houses*, p. 60.
25. For an extensive discussion of the Sea Ranch, with many excellent images of the Condominium, see Donlyn Lyndon and Jim Alinder, *The Sea Ranch* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).
26. Philip Johnson's "low-tech" glass house (whose structural eclecticism disturbed Mies van der Rohe) is thus closer in spirit to Moore's approach than Mies's own Farnsworth house.
27. See Patricia Phillips, "Why is Pop so Unpopular?" in Edward Leffingwell and Karen Marta, eds., *Modern Dreams: The Rise and Fall and Rise of Pop* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 118–31.
28. See Sigfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948); and Gilbert Herbert, *The Dream of the Factory-Made House: Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).
29. Vincent Scully, *The Shingle Style Today or the Historian's Revenge* (New York: George Braziller, 1974).
30. Richard W. Hayes, *The Yale Building Project: The First Fifty Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
31. Charles Moore, "You Have to Pay for the Public Life," republished in Kevin Keim, ed., *You Have to Pay for the Public Life: Selected Essays of Charles W. Moore* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 111–41.
32. Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto* (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), p. 364; (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 298.
33. For a complete bibliography, see Eugene J. Johnson, ed., *Charles Moore: Buildings and Projects 1949–1986* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986; repr. 1991). Some of Moore's writings have been republished in:
- Robert A. M. Stern, Alan Plattus, Peggy Deamer, eds., *Re-reading Perspecta: The First 50 Years of the Yale Architectural Journal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), which reprinted three: "You Have to Pay for a Public Life" (pp. 173–83), "Hadrian's Villa" (pp. 93–99); and "Plug It In, Rameses, and See if It Lights Up" (pp. 242–45).
34. A few exceptions do exist. The most recent contribution is the exhibition organized in 2001 by Eve Blau at the Yale School of Architecture and her *Architecture or Revolution: Charles Moore and Yale in the Late 1960s* (New Haven: Yale School of Architecture, 2001). See also Kevin P. Keim, *An Architectural Life: Memoirs and Memories of Charles Moore* (Boston and New York: Bulfinch Press; Toronto and London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996). The most comprehensive book to date is Eugene J. Johnson, ed., *Charles Moore: Buildings and Projects 1949–1986* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986; reprint 1991).
35. The omission is surprising in light of Upton's sustained interest in the American vernacular.
36. Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, 3rd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), pp. 291–94.
37. The frequently quoted phrase comes from Galbraith's landmark study *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 253.

The Lost Public Art of Gordon Matta-Clark

Garth Rockcastle



An exhibit on the work of Gordon Matta-Clark at the Whitney Museum of Art this spring (March-June 2007) was a reminder of the prophetic insight he had in the 1970s, infiltrating the art and architectural worlds, revealing profound complacencies in each.

I first paid attention to the work of Matta-Clark in the early 1990s, well after his premature death in 1978 at age thirty-five. Despite having lived in the wake of his influence in Ithaca and New York City in the 1970s, I did not find my way to his work until I developed a professional and academic interest in the reuse of existing buildings.

Now, this exhibition and its attendant resources has further deepened my regard for his work. It also provides important insights into how

places *bold*, *conceal*, and through insightful intervention and reappropriation, can *reveal* complex cultural, psychological and physically embodied meanings. The exhibition, scheduled to travel to other parts of the country, deserves to be visited and scrutinized by those interested in the remaking of place. The exhibit will next be at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles through October 29.

A Broad Scope of Interest

Matta-Clark was best known for his building cuts and fragment displacements. But he had a much broader range of artistic interests, as this exhibit clearly shows, and he was among the few artists in the 1960s and 70s who explored the social/performance dimensions of art.

Matta-Clark's work emerged from an early exposure to architecture. He was an architecture student at Cornell University in the 1970s, and his estranged father, Roberto Matta Echaurren, was a surrealist artist who apprenticed for Le Corbusier and collaborated with Moholy-Nagy and Gropius.¹ But instead of pursuing his university training, Matta-Clark chose to help develop a new form of art that would better allow him to pursue his critical and creative interests. Disdainful of formalist and utopian Modern architecture, and frustrated with the relative lack of freedom in architectural culture, he chose a renegade path, exposing the constrictions and awakening the possibilities of a liberated understanding of visual and material culture.

As an activist, Matta-Clark convened a gathering of artists which called itself “Anarchitecture” (fusing anarchy and architecture), whose goal was to address transformational possibilities, neglected places, and taboo ideas outside architecture proper.² Their critique of architectural design focused on the limits of “cosmetic” or surface considerations, emphasizing the insights about specific places possible through removal, displacement, and intervention. It was the revelatory, phenomenal and metaphorical possibilities of place they pursued, more than the advancement of any alternative, formal image or notion of space. And the work Matta-Clark pursued that rose from this group freely crossed disciplinary boundaries and exposed the deep but often invisible or subconscious power of place.

Affirmation by Displacement

This exhibition attends exceptionally well to the diverse fascinations and modes of creative/critical enterprise Matta-Clark had—with film, street theater, waste, landscape and food, to name only a few. But it is his poetic and daring interventions into derelict places that I still find most appealing. In short, his cutting, relocating, representing, and reinterpreting of vulnerable buildings and places is particularly instructive to an understanding of place creation, alteration and stewardship.

As we have come to realize over the past several decades, thanks especially to the preservation and sustainability movements, the embodied energy and meaning places gain over time and through use (how they come to support, protect and represented us) is profound. Matta-Clark’s interventional work demonstrated like nothing before or since that these realities can be critical and creative sources of meaning, just waiting to be

engaged. This tangible “action” work has even amplified and linked for me the diverse writings about place by such twentieth-century titans as Yi-Fu Tuan, Jane Jacobs, Howard Mansfield, and Colin Rowe.

Perhaps because this intervention work is largely unavailable today but for a few teasing remnants, its alluring power continues to attract. Not unlike his own use of absence in the presence of the previously complacent settings in which he intervened, we (as designers and planners) are reminded of the potency of memory or association, whether based on real or imagined experience. It just might be, then, less the particular latent facts or qualities of this work we should be paying atten-

tion to, and more the creative, revelatory and existential affirmations of how place matters that so readily precipitate from such displacement work.

Notes

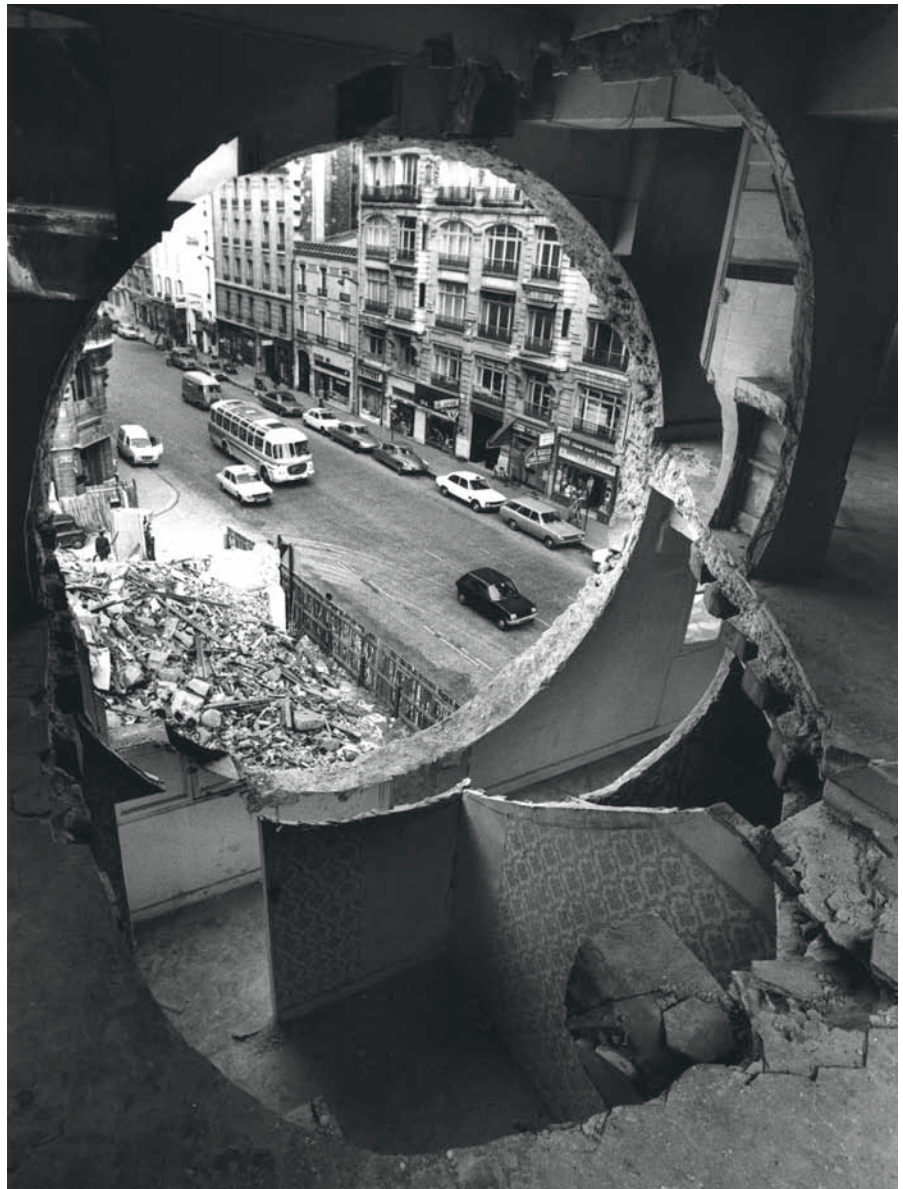
1. Pamela M. Lee, *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), p. 6.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Opposite: Gordon Matta-Clark, “Bingo,” 1974.

Building fragments, three sections. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Nina and Gordon Bunshaft Bequest Fund, Nelson A. Rockefeller Bequest Fund, and the Enid A. Haupt Fund. 309.2004.a-d.

Above: Gordon Matta-Clark, “Conical Intersect,” 1974. Courtesy the Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark and David Zwirner, New York.



The Coming Ecologic Epoch: Sim Van der Ryn at EDRA

David Moffat

Throughout his long career as an architect, teacher, writer and public figure, Sim Van der Ryn has challenged accepted approaches to design and argued for fundamental change in ways of thinking. In the 1960s and 70s, as a young architect and professor, he helped pioneer the application of physical and social ecology to building and environmental design. When ecological design was subsequently dismissed by many as naïve during the 1980s and 90s, he remained a staunch advocate. Now that the Green Building movement has brought concern for sustainability back to the mainstream, his passions seem to have been vindicated.

But in a keynote talk May 31 at the annual conference of the Environmental Design Research Association, held in Sacramento, California, Van der Ryn sought to dispel notions that current concern for better technologies will solve such deeply rooted problems as global warming.

"Climate change is the ultimate design challenge," he said. "You can give everybody a Prius, and you can put solar collectors on everybody's roofs, but that ain't going to get us anywhere."

The reason is that there is no such "thing" as sustainability. What is needed is a change of worldview: in the words of the theologian and ecologist Tom Berry, "We are ready for a new story."

Even the title of Van der Ryn's presentation sought to gently displace sustainability as an attribute of unquestionable virtue. Instead, we should be interested in "surpassability," he argued.

"In the next generation or two we will have to redesign most of what we have taken for granted...all the things that we thought we were getting for free." Yet, even today, most green buildings are designed

and produced according to an upside-down logic that puts numbers ahead of human experience.

"The challenge is not so much thinking outside the box, as throwing the box away," he said. Or, quoting Albert Einstein: "the same thinking that produced the problem can never solve it."

Bridging Generations

When the decision was made to hold the thirty-eighth annual EDRA conference on the theme "Building Sustainable Communities," the conference chair, Janice Bissell, realized Van der Ryn would be the perfect keynote speaker. Bissell, of Stafford King Wiese Architects of Sacramento, even made a special trip to Van der Ryn's home in Inverness, north of San Francisco, to recruit him.

At seventy-one, Van der Ryn is perhaps best known for championing energy-efficient design as California State Architect in the mid-1970s. But through his teaching and collaborative work he has also inspired several generations of younger architects to pursue ecological design. And he has been a long-time member of EDRA—ever since his desire to study building performance more scientifically helped pioneer the field of postoccupancy evaluation in the 1960s.

Today he is president of Van der Ryn Architects in Sausalito and its nonprofit partner, the Ecological Design Institute. Both seek to create environments, from the community to the building-specific scale, that are sensitive to place and climate, responsive to human needs, and supportive of ecological systems and quality of life.

Many of Van der Ryn's comments at the EDRA meeting were drawn from the concluding chapter of his 2005 book *Design for Life*.¹ The book provides a first-person account of his life and work, beginning with his

boyhood in Queens, New York, where his Dutch-Jewish parents immigrated to escape Nazism. Early chapters describe his architectural education at the University of Michigan, his first attempts to find a place in a field dominated at the time by cold modern formalism, and his move to San Francisco in 1958 in search of adventure and a more inspiring natural setting.

At the age of twenty-six, a job with the firm of Bob Marquis and Claude Stoller helped open the door to a teaching career at the University of California, Berkeley. There, taking a cue from his hero, Buckminster Fuller, his classes in Descriptive Geometry soon departed from exercises in Euclidean construction to embrace hands-on explorations of organic form. Meanwhile, his research challenged the notion that aesthetic acclaim for a building necessarily corresponded with a positive experience among those who lived or worked in it.

As a UC professor, Van der Ryn also became involved in the eventually violent struggle over the collaborative design and construction of People's Park, on a piece of land cleared for redevelopment by the university. And as his voice grew as an advocate for alternative forms of architectural production, he became instrumental in founding the Farallones Institute, a research center that supported experiments in "integrated ecological living" in both urban and rural settings.

In the mid-1970s, Van der Ryn came to the attention of California's new governor, Jerry Brown. Brown was looking for outsiders to reshape state agencies, and he named Van der Ryn State Architect in 1975.

In Sacramento, Van der Ryn's goals included integrating ecological principles into the design of state office buildings and creating an Office of Appropriate Technology. But

he resigned the position in 1978 to return to teaching. And with the election of Ronald Reagan as President in 1980 and the return of Republican governors to Sacramento in the 1980s he saw many of his initiatives fall abruptly out of favor.

"Despondent," he told the EDRA audience, and taking the change in social direction personally, he became increasingly interested in philosophy, particularly the works of writers in the Perennial School. Among them, the German historian Jean Gebser has described a progression of non-biological mutations within human evolution, which has produced huge shifts in thinking, allowing societies to move from an archaic, to a magic, to a mythic, to a present mental epoch.²

At the beginning of history, there was no separation between humans and nature, Van der Ryn explained. But we now live in an age when we have completed "the mechanical disassembly of the organic."

Unfortunately, our very success has created a world that is both unsustainable and unsustaining. It is unsustainable because if every living person were to require the same ecological footprint as the typical American, three-and-one-half planet Earths would be needed to support them. It is unsustaining because our mechanistic worldview cannot accommodate true human aspirations, which are based on integration with, rather than separation from, the natural realm.

What is needed—and what may result from a new "great leap forward"—is a shift in consciousness allowing a U-turn in population growth and levels of personal consumption. According to Van der Ryn, the arrival of such an "ecologic" epoch will allow a reassembly of ties with nature and the development of systems of design that mimic natural

processes instead of seeking only to dominate them.

As he wrote in *Design for Life*, "this involves a deeper process where geometry at all scales of the built environment integrates with the scale and processes of the living world."

The impetus for such a revolution in consciousness will need to come from the grass roots, however. None of our present institutions is ready to meet its challenges.

The Future We Can Create Now

As an organization, EDRA's aim is to disseminate research that improves understanding of the relationship between people and their surroundings and that helps create environments responsive to human needs. A concern for sustainability has long been part of this agenda. However, the program materials for the Sacramento conference acknowledged that the concept has long been difficult to pin down. They explained that early definitions emphasized simple physical metrics such as improving air and water quality, reducing energy consumption, restoring and conserving natural resources, and reducing landfill

mass. Increasingly, however, "sustainability is being viewed as a concept that is multi-faceted, encompassing social, political, economic, cultural and spiritual as well as ecological dimensions."

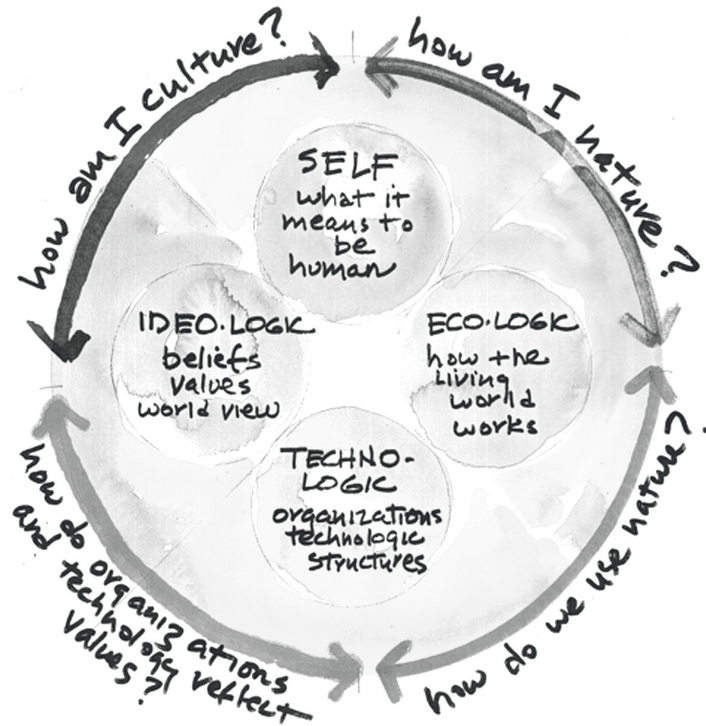
Van der Ryn's comments went to the heart of this distinction. In the end, he argued, the potential of the movement for sustainability is less interdisciplinary than metadisciplinary; what is needed lies less in method or number than "in the power to challenge views about how we think we are."

"We will not perish from a lack of information," he said, "but a lack of ability to wonder."

Notes

1. Sim Van der Ryn, *Design for Life: The Architecture of Sim Van der Ryn* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2005).
2. Jean Gebser, *The Ever-Present Origin*, trans. by Noel Barstad and Algis Mickunas (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1984). Other influential works mentioned by Van der Ryn in *Design for Life* are Arthur Oncken Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*; Arthur M. Young, *The Geometry of Meaning*; and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*.

Above: Global environmental crises may offer the chance for new ways of thinking about self, technology and culture. Drawing by Sim Van der Ryn.



Contributors

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Making Housing Home

Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani and Susan Saegert

Photos by Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani



*How comfortable can you get?
I've been in this country all my
life—I came here when I was
twelve—and I walk in here,
and I'm home. — Tony*

Markets and policies produce units of housing that are only made into “homes” as lives are lived in them. For those with adequate resources, housing becomes home through a process of exercising choice in the market, buying goods and services to augment one’s own labor, and making personal and emotional investments. For poor families, the struggle for both housing and home is a difficult one. Yet, in all kinds of housing, residents work to keep their families healthy, educate their children, and live what they and society deem good and productive lives.¹

Through narratives and photographs, this article considers how housing provided to low-income families in two different eras in the United States were more than simple economic commodities, as they strove to support lives and carry forward a broad social commitment.² It explores how people have created “home” in two unusual, humane and progressive affordable-housing developments: Marcus Garvey Village in Brownsville, Brooklyn (opened in 1975); and Urban Horizons in the South Bronx (opened in 1997).

In our efforts to understand how designed space can aid in the making of personal place, we asked residents for tours of their apartments, listened to their narratives, and photographed the spaces in which they felt most at

home. In the process, we were able to see how the grand structures of architecture, politics, and social commitment filter down to the detailed level of everyday experience.

Housing that Supports

The strengths and weaknesses of Marcus Garvey Village and Urban Horizons are interwoven with the decrease in public commitment to social housing over the past three decades in the U.S. Yet, social housers have also learned positive lessons about the need to supply more than housing if poor families are to flourish and improve their economic standing from one generation to the next. These changes are nowhere more evident than in the scale of effort reflected by these two projects. Today,



at Urban Horizons, the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDCO), a private nonprofit agency, has been able to maintain high standards in an individual building. Yet, thirty years ago, with projects like Marcus Garvey Village, the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC) once sought to change the landscape of housing in an entire state.

At Marcus Garvey Village (MGV), Ethel, a grandmother in her late sixties, shared with us the "living fabric" of the home she has lived in since MGV first opened in 1975. To her, the development is a "great place," which has gone downhill due to poor management. When it was new, MGV reflected a major social commitment to improving housing

for people of low income. Responding to the urban upheavals of the 1960s, the UDC set out to define criteria for "good" housing and built 33,000 units of it in New York State. Between 1968 and 1975, this state entity worked at a scale and pace not equaled since, and its radical effort to improve public housing design so residents might thrive was considered a national model.

MGV was one of the UDC's last projects. Designed by architect Kenneth Frampton and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, it followed a "low-rise, high-density" prototype for family infill housing, incorporating in-block mews and private front doors for each apartment.³

In the thirty years she's lived at MGV, Ethel has raised seven children and eighteen grandchildren in her

three-bedroom apartment. During that time, the development, neighborhood, and political climate have all changed. In particular, just after MGV opened, the UDC itself was disbanded due to political and financial crises. As a more conservative political climate set in and responsibility for housing devolved to the private sector, the quality of management and main-

Opposite: Marcus Garvey Village, Brownsville, Brooklyn, New York. Developer: New York State Urban Development Corporation. Designed by the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. Opened in 1975.

Above: Urban Horizons, South Bronx, New York. Developer: Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation. Designed by Becker & Becker. Opened in 1997.



tenance suffered. The surrounding Brownsville neighborhood, densely residential and primarily African American, also declined as a result of continued patterns of economic and social disinvestment.

In praise of the design of MGW, one resident said she thought the architects had built the duplex apartments for “rich people.” Yet she also implied the challenges of life in Brownsville have been quite different from the life the designers imagined. “They thought there would be no crimes—they never thought people would do that. They thought there’d be no illegal transactions.” For example, the mews, planned as communal spaces of play and engagement, were difficult to police during the drug epidemic of the late 1970s and 80s. During that time, they often became spaces of gunplay, drug deals, and gang activity.⁴

Changes in financing, ownership and management have also had a deleterious effect on the quality of life in the buildings. There have been

patches, but never a sustained effort to maintain and repair the physical and social infrastructure. As Ethel sums it up:

Oh, it could be nice. It was so nice. For example, the lighting was different when I first moved here—but then they put another kind of lights, talking about how they were saving saving, saving.... And they only made it worse! But, management don’t live here, so they don’t give a kitty.

By the 1980s and 90s, the social commitment that had given rise to MGW was replaced by a rhetoric of smaller government and a new emphasis on the private sector to voluntarily provide for “the deserving poor.” Gone was any broad consensus for the use of public money to improve the life chances of those with few resources.

Reliance on the private market eventually led to an increase in U.S. housing standards. But it brought high persistent rates of homelessness, and led to income stagnation for the



lower one-third to one-half of the population. The housing crisis faced by low-income (especially minority) Americans persisted in a new guise.⁵

As responsibility shifted away from the state, a new model for building low-income housing emerged. It involved the activities of private non-profit agencies like WHEDCO. As is clear from the stories told by Tony, Isaura and Norma, residents of Urban Horizons, in the best of cases these activities have continued the former UDC commitment to housing that supports its residents’ lives.

The eleven-story Neo-Renaissance building occupied by Urban Horizons typifies these efforts. Located in a primarily Latino South Bronx neighborhood, it originally served as the Morrisania Hospital. In 1976, in the midst of the fiscal crisis partially responsible for the UDC’s demise, New York City closed the hospital. The building then sat derelict for twenty years, a towering symbol of the larger abandonment of the South Bronx.

The gutting, rehabilitation and res-



toration of the old hospital for Urban Horizons followed a design by the architecture firm of Becker + Becker. It involved tax-credit financing, durable materials, and a belief that beauty must play a role in all housing. Its 132 units have 50 unique floor plans and original high ceilings, and its ground floor houses social services for the entire community.

The Struggle for Better Lives

Residents of both developments appreciate the life improvements these buildings have enabled. At the well-maintained Urban Horizons, Isaura, a spare, sweetly careful middle-aged woman, sits at the table in her light-filled, immaculate studio apartment, explaining how little good her efforts were in her previous apartment, and her relief at the feeling of safety she now enjoys.

I lived in a terrible place. Was just like hell. I couldn't sleep—roaches were all over the ceiling, falling down on my bed. I woke up in the middle of the night, and my bed was full of roaches.

But this house is a blessing. By the Lord God to me. I think it's a glory. Compare it to the place I lived before! I open the window, the sun comes through the house, and I see the blessing.

Ethel's home at MGVS is also welcoming, comfortable and enveloping. Entering through her own front door, Ethel's house truly seems her own.

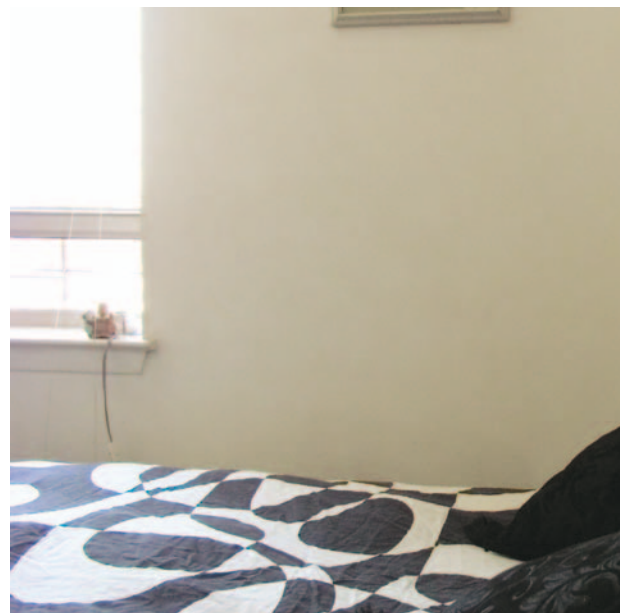
I'm going to tell you—I really like it here. You couldn't really ask for no more than it kind of being like being in your own home, because you come in, you don't have to go in no hallways or anything like that. I come in my own door, I don't have to bother with no one, I get in my car, I go, I come, the yard is there for the kids—so I love that part about it.

Yet, Ethel can't ignore the crime in Brownsville and her problems with management. Specifically, she cites the installation of a security camera on one side of the building, so that crime

simply migrated to the other. Health is also deeply compromised at Ethel's neighbor's house. One bedroom is closed off, due to water damage management has never fixed. The room is full of ruined furniture, while potentially dangerous mold grows down the walls, breeding a deep sense of insecurity among residents.

Though now of different ages, Ethel at MGVS and Norma, a single mother of two at Urban Horizons, came to their buildings at times in their lives when both were actively involved in raising their children. Their work to make stable homes for their families is central to their engagement with society. Each has made enormous efforts to obtain education (for themselves and their children), and each has created space for learning within their homes.

Opposite and above, left to right: Isaura's table; Ethel's living room; Ethel's dining table; Norma's living room table.



Ethel describes her home as a sanctum, a place where she can keep her children close to her.

When I moved here, I only had four kids that were still young. They fared very well, because I don't let my kids just run out in the street, OK? You come from school, you do your homework. I raised six of my grandchildren, and out of those, two finished college so far. The oldest one in the house now is away at school, so I just have the one fourteen and one thirteen now living with me every-day—but lots of the other grans stay here now and again.

Norma moved to Urban Horizons from a homeless shelter. She explains how deeply the physical space of the apartment is intertwined with her goals for her children.

Opposite and above, Left to right: Norma's living room table; Norma's bedroom; Norma's very organized kitchen.

My daughter's drawings are incredible. And my son wants to be an architect. His school is very good, so now he gets free classes of art on Saturdays. I had my daughter when I was so young—although I never missed teacher's conferences with her, and always motivated and praised her to do whatever she wanted, with my son, I'm doing things a little differently, because I knew my daughter had talent, but I wasn't educated about what to do—and I was so young—but I'm learning. So with Marcos, I go to Barnes and Noble, I buy him an architecture book. It was expensive, but he wants to look at different ideas, so I'm trying to help him. To help them, it's a process, and to motivate them, it's important, and that's why I always keep my home like this, because I think it helps the child want to do other things, bigger things and better things, and feel comfortable and feel free.

This space isn't only for her children. She explains how it has also allowed her to invest in herself. "I feel calm here, I feel at ease, I could think better, analyze...." Indeed, when the photographs accompanying this article were first exhibited, Norma sent a letter apologizing for not being able to attend the opening: her new stability had enabled her to return to college part-time, and the date conflicted with her first class.

Well-designed buildings can also support educational aspirations directly. At a panel discussion led by the chief architect for the UDC, one member of the audience stood up to say he had become an architect because he grew up at Marcus Garvey. Perhaps one day Norma's son Marcos, growing up at Urban Horizons, will follow a similar path.

While the association between poor-quality housing and poor mental health has been well-documented, the reverse also holds.⁶ When poor families move to better housing, the mental and physical health of mothers



improves, and parenting becomes less restrictive and more supportive of exploration.⁷ And when parents escape from poverty, even temporarily, they invest more time and money in their home environments.⁸

Such investments pay off by supporting their children's intellectual and emotional development. Norma eloquently explains the positive role her apartment plays in her life with her children, and how this entwines with her own sense of fulfillment.

This is just me. I love this, I love cleanliness. I didn't have this! Little by little, I've gotten this. I made all this happen for me. This is my space, this is my home. This is where I'm nourishing my children. So it's important to me, my environment here. This is my kitchen. It's small, but I put in so much love toward what I do when I cook. The house reflects the person I am. I always keep everything clean, always, always, always.

Yet, for Ethel, in her “house-shaped” home at Marcus Garvey, crowding is still a reality. Dinners prepared there are served to many more than sleep in her three bedrooms. And her dining and living rooms feel cramped for this “extended family.” Nevertheless, the family is extremely close, and Ethel revels in its size and her role as matriarch.

It's a lot of family, and we spend our time together. We are the Kennedys, OK? Not quite as bad as the things they did, but...I value family! Everyone comes over here. But my dining room, when we're eating together, on Thanksgiving or any other day—it's just got no space. A lot of people have smaller tables—but I'm used to my big table, because I got a big family, you know? It means something to me to have a little space.

The determined efforts made by these two parents, and others like

them, in terms of education and family stability have the potential to break the intergenerational reproduction of poverty. When parents can make home in a good way, they are better able to make the next generation in a good way.

The World beyond the Home

Both Marcus Garvey Village and Urban Horizons were thoughtfully designed to try to expand their residents' sense of home and support beyond their doorsteps. Yet, the social conditions of the communities in which they are located have often worked to limit such an expansion of spaces of safety. As one resident who grew up at MGV explained, “We used to play outside on the streets and in the mews with no one watching us except from the windows. Now no one considers doing that.”

Rather, Ethel's MGV backyard is the primary place for her family's play. She continually reworks this malleable space to create a place for herself and her family.



The weather is just changing and we haven't done anything back here yet, but I've changed the yard around many times; I bought a swimming pool for the backyard—at least I had space for something! I didn't care for the public pools. I got eighteen grandchildren, and I always had them play out here in my yard.

As she described that swimming pool, Ethel's voice relaxed, explaining that while it originally served to keep the kids happy and close to home, she too can sometimes be found out there on the hottest days of the New York City summer, blissfully floating in the dark until 2 or 3 AM.

At Urban Horizons, play can take place in outdoor common areas. This is how Tony, an older disabled man with a young son, explains his experience of "eyes on the street."

See, here I have everything. I have a nice view, see? You could take a look....My kid goes out, I watch him through here. If he wants something, he just calls, Papa! You know? It's nice. I mean, don't you like to be in your room?"

But such a sense of safety may owe as much to the wide-ranging efforts of WHEDCO to improve the surrounding community and help neighbors, as to the design of Urban Horizons.

A Place in Society

The efforts residents make to build home are part of their work as citizens and participants in a collective society. But thoughtful housing designs can signal the respect of those with greater resources, giving the people who live there a sense that they have a "seat at the table" of the American dream. At Urban Horizons, Tony exclaims:

To be honest, when I saw this apartment, I flipped! I mean, the design! You ever seen a ceiling like that? The windows! Incredible. The people that fixed this building, they really did a hell of a good job.

In forming a connection with this building, residents also build a community they all want to protect. Uncategorically, they title it "our

building." These relationships of trust and mutual responsibility are at the core of a functioning civil society, supporting the development of the social capital that allows residents to both "get along and get ahead."⁹

A place in society also enables people to make valued contributions to inhabited space. For example, the residents of Urban Horizons are technically not allowed to make alterations to their apartments. However, when building managers arrived to clean one vacated studio apartment, they found that the departing tenant had divided it in half with a wall to make separate spaces for himself and his young son. The wall could have blocked the light from the apartment's main window. Yet, he had placed a large square of glass bricks in its center so that the entire apartment was still filled with sunlight—a strategy also employed in some of the building's common spaces. The job had been done with such care that the management let the modification remain.

While a physical environment can support or impede the struggle for positive sense of self, family and citizenship, it cannot bring these qualities by itself. For Ethel, political agency must also be involved. However, empowerment in decisions concerning living environments has been elusive at MGCV. For years, a management company has run its tenants' association, stifling dissent and undermining this important organizing tool.

Ethel has worked to reclaim the tenants' association, trying to encourage commitment among other residents. As she explains, "there are a lot of people here as long as me, and they're good people, very nice people."

An Intergenerational Effort

Concerns for crime, low educational achievement, and the cost of health care illustrate how a failure to provide for the needs of those with few resources undermines everyone's collective future. Projects such as MGTV and Urban Horizons show the importance of a social vision that includes good housing for all. Providing such space and treating people with dignity allows them to join society as valued members according to a social contract that holds for the long term.

Such a policy will ultimately require sustained state engagement, however, so that good programs can evolve and grow. Locally based, stable nonprofits are also important as repositories of knowledge about a community's strengths and needs. Lastly, caring individuals are part of an intergenerational solution. By creating supportive homes, Ethel, Isaura, Norma and Tony are giving their children the chance to contribute to successful new communities over the next fifty years.

WHEDCO's director believes the apartments at Urban Horizons should be the kind of place she would want to live and raise a family. Public opinion and policy have increasingly lost sight of this basic insight. However, looking at the experience of those who live in these two developments should encourage a reopening of discussion on the costs and benefits of housing that can become home, and the vision of society that motivates our choices.

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Opposite: Ethel's backyard.

Above: View from Tony's window.

New York City and the Legend of Robert Moses

June Williamson

Three astonishing exhibitions documenting the work of the mid-twentieth-century über-public planner/builder Robert Moses stirred the imagination of New Yorkers this year. The shows, revisiting the career of a figure who has been largely demonized since his death in 1981, were curated by the Columbia University architectural historian Hilary Ballon. “Remaking the Metropolis,” at the Museum of the City of New York, examined Moses’s big-picture schemes for restructuring the metropolitan region. “The Road to Recreation,” at the Queens Museum of Art, focused on the prodigious building of beaches, pools, playgrounds and parkways under his direction. And “Slum Clearance and the Superblock Solution,” at Columbia University’s Wallach Art Gallery, examined his impact on federal Title I urban redevelopment spending in the city.¹

With a built legacy of immense scope and reach as the result of thirty-four years in city government, from 1934, when he was appointed New York City Parks Commissioner, until 1968, when he was forced out of the chairmanship of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority, an entity he created, Moses was (and remains) a riveting, controversial figure for New Yorkers.² The shows captured this legacy through archival photographs, documents, and majestic contemporary photographs by Andrew Moore. But the comprehensiveness of the exhibitions also caused the red flag of revisionism to be raised, especially with regard to the accepted view of Moses as insensitive, tyrannical, and corrupted by power, best expressed in Robert Caro’s exhaustive 1974 biography *The Power Broker*.³

A plethora of prominent critics have already weighed in on this question. Arguing that the exhibitions

breathed fresh air into a tired subject, the *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff called the shows “required viewing.” Michael Sorkin presented a “brief for the dark side” in *Architectural Record*, emphasizing the cautionary lessons of Moses’s history—a view seconded in the *Wall Street Journal* by Ada Louise Huxtable, who asserted that Moses “is not the man to emulate.” Meanwhile, *Governing* thanked the revisionists for returning “the concept of public authority to the center of the urban policy debate.” In the *New York Times*, Phillip Lopate stressed Moses’s “vision of sustaining New York as a middle-class city,” to which he in part attributes New York’s astonishing revival in recent decades. And *The New Yorker*’s Paul Goldberger took a middle road, concluding (apropos of the stark contrast between the legacies of Moses and Jane Jacobs) that “there is a price to pay for thinking small, just as there is for thinking big.”⁴

Lost in the hoopla over whether the shows repudiate some of Caro’s damning claims of Moses’s racism and contempt for public process, however, are astonishing insights.

- A new appreciation for the scope and grandeur of the public works projects of the 1930s. Among these were ten massive new public pools, built mostly on existing park property, accommodating thousands, which opened to great fanfare—one per week—in the sweltering summer of 1936.
- Diagrammatic maps and a compelling description of Moses’s commitment to mixed-income housing (if not mixed-race) in the implementation of Title I-funded slum clearance in the 1950s.

- A rich narration of the battle over Washington Square Park from 1952 to 1958, which radicalized a “bunch of mothers” and resulted not only in blocking construction of a road through the park but also the birth of a countervailing movement that largely discredited the powerful forces of centralized, large-scale urban redevelopment.
- A reminder of citizens’ horror over the extent of planned demolition in the old industrial districts of Greenwich Village, SoHo, and TriBeCa (complemented by irony, in light of the insanely high property values in these areas today).
- Envy for a time when Moses was able to pull strings to ensure that New York City got far more than its fair share of federal money. In 1935 and 1936 he secured one-seventh of all Works Progress Administration funding dispersed nationwide. And in the 1950s New York received twice the Title I funding allocated to Chicago, its closest competitor.

Clearly, these exhibitions struck a nerve with the general public. Attendance at all three was phenomenal, far exceeding the organizers’ expectations. New Yorkers seemed genuinely moved by the opportunity to evaluate Moses’s controversial legacy on their own terms. In the models and photographs depicting his visions for a modern city, we could discern the origins of much of our individual, contemporary experience of New York: our patterns of daily existence, the routes we use to move from place to place, the recreational facilities our children enjoy. We could reflect on the old neighborhoods and places that



have been preserved, as well as those that were destroyed, and the sweeping Moses-directed projects that took their place—expanded university and cultural institutions, new housing, highways, and parks.

I found myself trying to imagine New York without the pleasant outdoor areas of Morningside Gardens, the Title I-funded cooperative housing near Columbia University, where my son frolics while at preschool. But I cringed at the renderings of Washington Square Park, and

its genteel bocce court, split in two by the four-lane arterial Moses tried to ram through it.

What Can We Learn?

Two issues raised by the exhibitions seem particularly relevant to readers of *Places*. First is the question of what constitutes proper use and control of public space. According to Kenneth Jackson, Moses had “a consistent and powerful commitment to the public realm.... While Moses was in power, the word ‘public’ had not

yet become pejorative.”⁵ Second is the opportunity to revisit the “towers in the park” debate, by examining the relative success of urban redevelopment projects in New York.

With regard to the first question, Marta Gutman’s scholarship in the exhibition’s companion volume on the pools program in the 1930s is particularly fascinating. She writes

Above: Morningside Gardens, view north, 2005.
Photo by Andrew Moore.



that the placement of WPA-funded public facilities in existing parks “enforced the reform landscape put in place in New York starting in the late nineteenth century and emphasized the value of a specific kind of recreation: civic, not commercial; uplifting, not honky-tonk; public, not private.”⁶ This civic-minded approach resulted in an expansive network of free public spaces, unsullied by commercial amusements.

One can hardly help contrasting this program with current emphasis

on public-private partnerships, commercialization of activities within public parks, and expansion of eminent domain to assist essentially private commercial and entertainment development projects. It is generally recognized today that some privatization is necessary for the maintenance and improvement of public assets like city parks. But this system has not been able to deliver the same level of equity in the distribution of public investment as that enjoyed under Moses. Simply stated, the New York

City parks with the best facilities and programs today—i.e., those funded through private, not-for-profit organizations, such as the Central Park Conservancy and the Battery Park Conservancy—are located in the wealthiest districts.

Regarding the “towers in the park” controversy, the exhibitions provided good examples of New York projects that contradict accepted wisdom about this now-disgraced modernist formula. As Hilary Ballon points out in her essay, Moses’s genius in

working with Title I was to counter its failings elsewhere.

In some cases he did this by making agreements with private developers before proceeding with land clearance. He thus avoided situations in which land, once cleared by a public agency, remained empty for years for lack of private redevelopment initiative.

In other cases he paired Title I sites with New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing to promote establishment of mixed-income neighborhoods. Under his direction, twelve of seventeen Title I projects in the city (comprising new, privately built middle-income housing and other noncommercial uses) were paired—with great coordination difficulty—with adjacent public-housing projects.

One lesson from the exhibitions might be that success in mass housing has as much to do with the location, size, and programming of a site as it does with formal organization.

Thinking Big

The exhibitions also raised the subject of scale by highlighting conflicts presented by regional versus neighborhood-level planning. Although it was at the neighborhood level that the public facilities Moses championed were often valued most, his own favored view was a regional one. Sometimes it can seem to make sense, from a bird's-eye perspective, to sacrifice a neighborhood for the good of the region. But the "worms" on the ground will be none too pleased. After all, it does not make sense at the neighborhood level to decide on self-annihilation.⁷ But without leadership and authority at the regional scale, useful and necessary projects requiring coordination among neighborhoods will rarely be built.

This retrospective of Moses's

built projects inspires big thinking about the future. The real question is whether it is possible to renew emphasis on the region without losing sight of the local.

The idea of the abstract "public" has already been reintroduced to planning discourse through sustainability agendas that promote awareness of local decisions as not just regional, but global in their ramifications. Are there other big opportunities to improve the prospects of our metropolitan regions?

I see three. First is to think regionally in retrofitting existing inner-ring suburbs that have suffered from disinvestment in recent decades. This rejuvenation can be accomplished by adding the missing public realm, by densifying, improving public services for diverse populations, rebuilding infrastructure, and introducing increased housing choice. Second is to devise, promote, and implement comprehensive urban sustainability agendas. Multiple sources of funding are already on the horizon; we must be prepared with plans to use them, as Moses always was. Third is to invent new ways to finance and build a substantial quantity of much-needed affordable housing, both low- and middle-income, in locations served by mass transit.

While not as self-consciously modern as the view of Robert Moses, such initiatives offer a vision of a city at least as bold as the one he embraced.

Notes

1. I will refrain from attempting to describe the breadth and depth of the exhibitions. For this, readers should consult the amazing book of scholarly essays and project descriptions published concurrently: Hilary Ballon and Kenneth T. Jackson, eds., *Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

It contains contributions from Marta Gutman, Owen Gutfreund, Martha Biondi, Robert Fishman, and Joel Schwartz, portions of which are quoted here.

2. Along the way Moses served mayors from Fiorello LaGuardia to John Lindsey on the City Planning Commission, as the City's Construction Coordinator, as chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Slum Clearance, as Coordinator of Arterial Projects, and as president of the 1964 New York World's Fair Corporation. He also served in numerous capacities in New York State government.

3. Robert Caro, *The Power Broker* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1974).

4. Nicolai Ouroussoff, "Complex, Contradictory Robert Moses," *New York Times*, February 2, 2007, p. E1. Michael Sorkin, "Can Robert Moses be Rehabilitated for a New Era of Building?" *Architectural Record*, Vol. 195, No. 3 (March 2007), p. 55.

5. Ada Louise Huxtable, "Shows Try to Renovate Moses' Reputation," *Wall Street Journal*, March 14, 2007, p. D10. Alan Ehrenhalt, "The Power Broker Reconsidered," *Governing* (April 2007), p. 9. Phillip Lopate, "A Town Revived, a Villain Redeemed," *New York Times*, February 11, 2007, p. 14. Paul Goldberger, "Eminent Dominion; Rethinking the Legacy of Robert Moses," *The New Yorker*, February 5, 2007, p. 83.

5. *Robert Moses and the Modern City*, p. 70.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

7. However, such neighborhood-scale decision-making is not totally unprecedented—if the price is right. Entire residential subdivisions have been known to sell themselves out to a developer seeking to assemble a large parcel for retrofitting. On the other hand, movements are afoot for suburbs to coalesce into regional governance networks in order to recognize and support their interdependence and shared needs.

Above: Sunset Pool, entry pavilion on the pool side, 2005. Photo by Andrew Moore.