PLACE TALKS COMMON SOURCE

A READER

Assembled at YBCA March 16, 2017

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PLACE TALKS COMMON SOURCE

Welcome to COMMON SOURCE! A project by PLACE TALKS, this is a project considering the sharing of space alongside the sharing of information.

COMMON SOURCE includes a library of books to browse and learn about place. It includes a selection of printed material that you can assemble as a packet and take with you. It includes a soapbox from which we invite you to read aloud language that speaks to you, either from the library or elsewhere.

The printed and library materials are all about San Francisco and California, and about the sense of place that is one of the resources of this city. They are also about sharing — the sharing of space, of resources, and of information. These are things held in common. They are things that no one owns, exactly, and which are best managed together, by groups of people who come to an agreement on how that should be done.

But this *holding-in-common*, this is contested ground. The privatization of our commonly-held resources drives profit forward, and these acts of enclosure accompany and rely upon a wide variety of injustices and a dizzying web of oppressions. This process of enclosure and its resulting inequities are framed as necessary to progress and development.

This installation seeks to explore a cultural alternative to this particular narrative of progress.

One alternative is creative space for public sharing, like this one. The management of the commons must be practiced. What does it look like to engage the modest rituals of sharing over the grand ones of profit, construction, production?

It might look like a library, or a public square. It might look like historical narrative as a creative, additive, and fragmented concept — a messy set of papers laid out on a table to be arranged, rearranged, and questioned. It might look like the ritual of reading to each other, in a process that could build alternative histories and alternative futures of the place known (most recently) as San Francisco. Or it might look like something else entirely.

Will you read from the PLACE TALKS soapbox, and share your thoughts?

Thanks for coming to practice with us.

<3
Nicole Lavelle and Charlie Macquarie
PLACE TALKS

COMMON SOURCE
at YBCA, March 16, 2017

Part of the Live Practice program series

www.placetalks.online

THANK YOU!

Our PLACE TALKS readers: Lukaza Branfman-Verissimo, Justin Carder, Hallie Chen, Annie Danis, Susana Eslava, Sarah Hotchkiss, Rose Linke, Miles Mattison, Dorothy Santos, and YOU!

Our dear friends Tesar Freeman and Claire LaMont, for their support and assistance.

California Going, Going...

CALIFORNIA TOMORROW

Preface: *Time to face the facts*

"I love you, California . . ."

* * *

"Where bowers of flowers bloom in the spring.
Each morning, at dawning, birdies sing and everything . . ."

* * *

"And when I get my pocket full in that bright land of gold,
I'll have a rich and happy time: live merry till I'm old."

Over the years the tunes change, the rhythms vary, but the message remains: at the western shore of the American continent there lies a temperate land of unlimited beauty and unlimited bounty, which may be shared by all who choose to follow the sunset.

The message remains today; we still sing in praise of the golden state, notwithstanding the smog, the water pollution, the crowded roads, the dirty blighted cities, the disappearing open space.

Perhaps we sing out of nostalgia—for the old uncrowded ways of life. Most likely, and hopefully, we sing out of belief—California is a unique bright land, and somehow or other we must keep her so.

There is, however, a limit to our credulity: how polluted can a bright land become, and still be bright? The answer to that question is being written right now, across the surface of this chaotically growing state.

The evidence is mounting that Californians are beginning to recognize that the great asset of their state, the very goose that has laid and will lay the golden eggs of their pleasures and profits, is their golden land. This land, our bright land—the charm of its open spaces, the vitality of its soils—is the true economic base of our state, its attraction as a place to live.

Within the past decade, at all levels of government, there have been marked efforts to control the development and the uses of California land, in order to conserve it and protect it from unnecessary encroachments of new towns, new people, new roads, new sewage—to protect it, that is, from *us*. In other words, some plans have been laid, some laws and policies made.

In certain ways, California is America's most progressive state. Each county in California is now required under law to have a planning commission and to develop for itself a "master" plan for the use of its lands. Each city planning commission must do the same. Dozens of California cities and counties are carrying on active planning programs and adopting policies which say: this area is especially suitable for homes and gardens, this for industry, this for park land, this for schools, this for agriculture, and so on.

The various departments of state government are hard at work planning for land uses. The Division of Highways, for example, in fighting out where freeways must go, is trying to plan to meet the highway needs of millions of people decades from now. On its part, the federal government is giving generous financial aid to California communities willing to plan for the future of their lands.

At all levels, good people are at work and working hard. Their wish is everyone's wish—to keep the land bright, make it brighter.

Unfortunately, although the dough looks good, the cake is not rising, and the reason is simple: nobody wrote out a recipe. A number of good cooks (and some amateur ones) have measured out a cup of this or a tablespoon of that, but the ingredients do not blend, they do not work together, they are inadequate. In other words, there is in California a serious, progressively disastrous lack of coordinated land planning and development.

In spite of all efforts to the contrary, California's unique bright land is increasingly defiled by badly located freeways and housing subdivisions and industries which needlessly destroy beautiful scenery and entomb agricultural land; by reservoirs and water courses which unwittingly encourage the growth of mislocated communities; by waste products; by cars and jeeps and cycles which pre-empt our very living and breathing space. Already, the state's nose is bloody. How long before its whole magnificent body is beaten to deformity? How long before the bright lands are dead lands?

It is our purpose in this report:

—To take a state-wide, broad-ranging view of the dangers now facing the bright land of California—the total natural environment which is our outstanding common heritage.

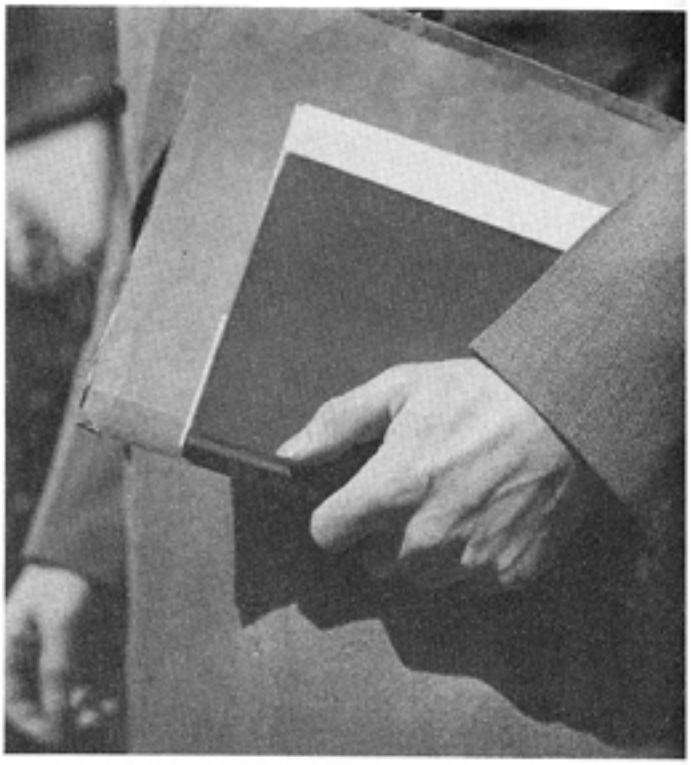
—To review the good but still severely inadequate efforts being made at all levels of government to meet these dangers.

—To lay bare the awesome problems of planning and coordination that confront us now and will confront us in the future.

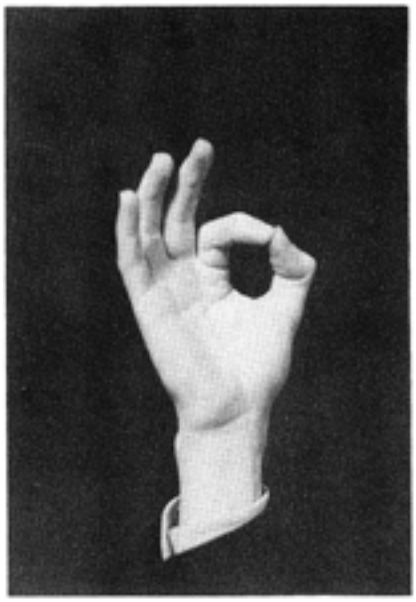
The story we tell is not new. But this is a great and progressive state, and we think its citizens are ready to face the compelling facts.

At the present time, despite all appearances and amid all destructive tendencies, a humanising process is evident; an uprising of the human spirit against the oppressions of those close brothers – mechanisation and bureaucracy. Among the coming generation, this uprising has sometimes taken the form of escapism. Distrust of the machinery of politics can be observed everywhere. This goes together with an awakening of new moral and religious feelings, not bound to any specific creed but linked to a deep respect for the dignity of human life. This rejection of the cynical worldliness that dominates the contemporary scene – in capitalist as well as in communist areas – is a kind of self-protection, a longing for '*Ganzheit*' – wholeness – a desire for universality and for the integration of the different facets of human experience.

Man today observes, listens, and suffers – but he has no longer the means to be *a participant.*



A firm grip on reading matter



Just right

Louder, please

RADICAL UTOPIA

Radical Utopia!

OUR CITIES AWAKE

What Is A City?

Blueprint for Action

INFORMATION CENTER
ACREAGE LOTS E-Z TERMS

ANTIQUE MALL

ACROSS
THE RIVER

THE LAND
IS OUR GOLD.

What Is A City?

Blueprint for Action


NO
DOGS
ALLOWED

THE CITY

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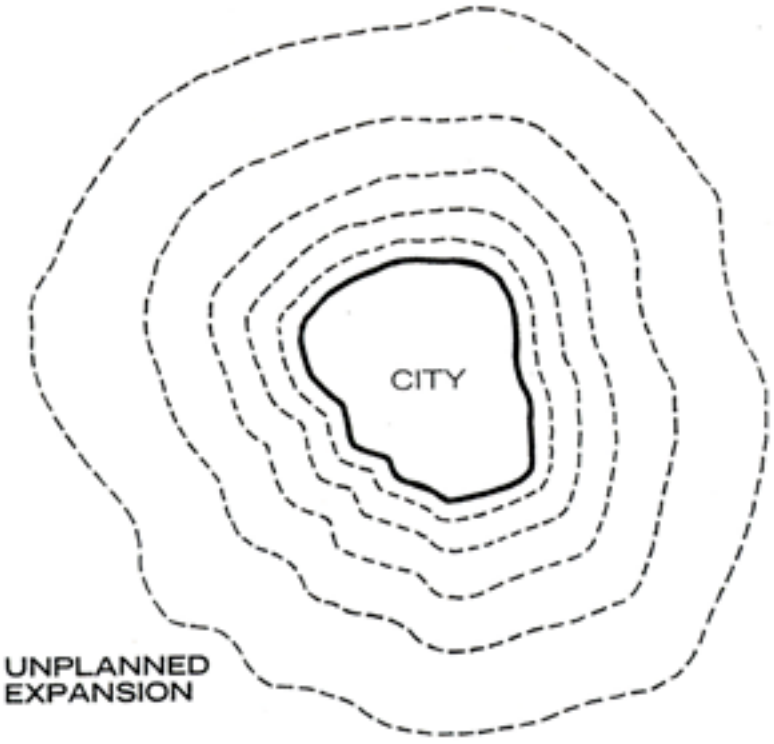
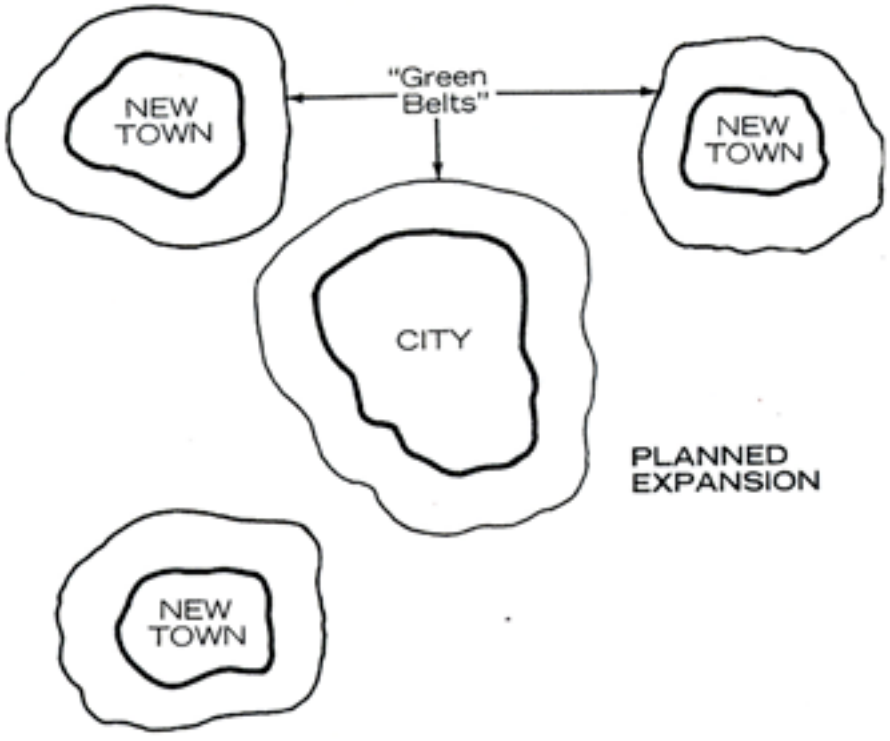
New Towns, New Cities





The world's tallest apartment building soars 70 stories into the air from the shore of Lake Michigan.

The City in the World of the Future by Hal Hellman — from the Prelinger Library, prelingerlibrary.org

A major highway interchange in Florida uses up an enormous amount of land.

Urban Space for Pedestrians: a report of the Regional Plan Association — from the Prelinger Library, prelingerlibrary.org

JAMMED FLOW. Space per pedestrian in this view is about 3.8 sq ft (0.35 m^2). This is representative of the lower half of the speed-flow curve, where only shuffling movement is possible and even the extremely uncomfortable maximum flow rate of 25 people per min per ft (82 per m) of walkway width cannot be attained due to lack of space. Photograph by Louis B. Schlivek.

Urban Space for Pedestrians: a report of the Regional Plan Association — from the Prelinger Library, prelingerlibrary.org

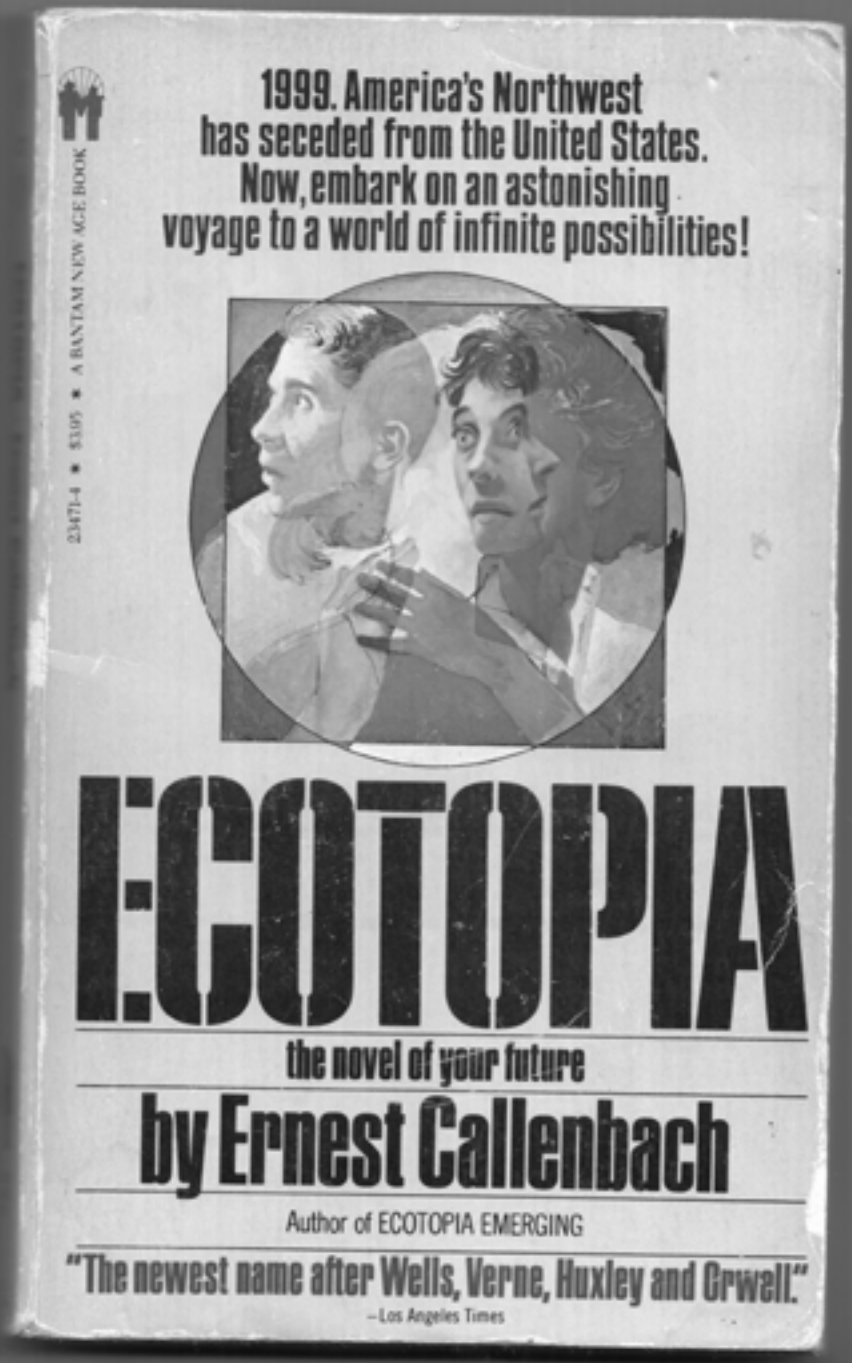
The five phases of crossing an intersection. First, led by a few venturesome souls, the waiting platoon of pedestrians is poised at the curb to accelerate. Second, the platoons from both sides of the street start moving toward each other. Third, the platoons meet and interpenetrate. For a short time, available space in the pedestrian stream is cut in half, causing delay. In this view, people compensate for the shortage of space in the crosswalk by walking a wider front. Fourth, the platoons begin to arrive at opposite sides of the street. Fifth, the major platoon flow is over, but stragglers—among them several older people—continue to walk; cars begin to make turning movements. The total time required for the operation depends on the number of pedestrians, their directional distribution, the width of the front in which they are waiting and walking, and on the width of the street to be crossed. Photographs by Paul Cardell.

Urban Space for Pedestrians: a report of the Regional Plan Association — from the Prelinger Library, prelingerlibrary.org

Urban Space for Pedestrians: a report of the Regional Plan Association

It is curious that most of the concern with functionalism has been focused upon form rather than function . . . design professionals—city planners, landscape designers, architects . . . —would gain by adopting a functionalism based on user behavior.

Robert Sommer,
Personal Space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by Ernest Callenbach
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—Los Angeles Times

The first shock hit me at the moment I stepped onto the street. There was a strange hush over everything. I expected to encounter something at least a little like the exciting bustle of our cities—cars honking, taxis swooping, clots of people pushing about in the hurry of urban life. What I found, when I had gotten over my surprise at the quiet, was that Market Street, once a mighty boulevard striking through the city down to the waterfront, has become a mall planted with thousands of trees. The "street" itself, on which electric taxis, minibuses, and delivery carts purr along, has shrunk to a two-lane affair. The remaining space, which is huge, is occupied by bicycle lanes, fountains, sculptures, kiosks, and absurd little gardens surrounded by benches. Over it all hangs the almost sinister quiet, punctuated by the whirr of bicycles and cries of children.

Scattered here and there are large conical-roofed pavilions, with a kiosk in the center selling papers, comic books, magazines, fruit juices, and snacks. (Also cigarettes—the Ecotopians have *not* managed to stamp out smoking!) The pavilions turn out to be stops on the minibus system, and people wait there out of the rain. These buses are comical battery-driven contraptions, resembling the antique cable cars that San Franciscans were once so fond of. They are driverless, and are steered and stopped by an electronic gadget that follows wires buried in the street. (A safety bumper stops them in case someone fails to get out of the way.)

The bucolic atmosphere of the new San Francisco can perhaps best be seen in the fact that, down Market Street and some other streets, creeks now run. These had earlier, at great expense, been put into huge culverts underground, as is usual in cities. The Ecotopians spent even more to bring them up to ground level again. So now on this major boulevard you may see a charming series of little falls, with water gurgling and splashing, and channels lined with rocks, trees, bamboos, ferns.

Despite the quiet, the streets are full of people, though not in Manhattan densities. (Some foot traffic has been displaced to lacy bridges which connect one skyscraper to another, sometimes 15 or 20 stories up.) Since practically the whole street area is "sidewalk," nobody worries about obstructions—or about the potholes which, as they develop in the pavement, are planted with flowers.

the great downtown skyscrapers, once the headquarters of far-flung corporations, have been turned into apartments! Further inquiries will be needed to get a clear picture of this development, but the story I heard repeatedly on the streets today is that the former outlying residential areas have largely been abandoned. Many three-story buildings had in any case been heavily damaged by the earthquake of 1982. Thousands of cheaply built row houses in newer districts (scornfully labelled "ticky-tacky boxes" by my informants) have been sacked of their wiring, glass, and hardware, and bulldozed away. The residents now live downtown, in buildings that contain not only apartments but also nurseries, grocery stores, and restaurants, as well as the shops and offices on the ground floor.

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10
The need for aged buildings

CONDITION 3: *The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, including a good proportion of old ones.*

Cities need old buildings so badly it is probably impossible for vigorous streets and districts to grow without them. By old buildings I mean not museum-piece old buildings, not old buildings in an excellent and expensive state of rehabilitation—although these make fine ingredients—but also a good lot of plain, ordinary, low-value old buildings, including some rundown old buildings.

If a city area has only new buildings, the enterprises that can exist there are automatically limited to those that can support the high costs of new construction. These high costs of occupying new buildings may be levied in the form of rent, or they may be levied in the form of an owner's interest and amortization payments on the capital costs of the construction. However the

costs are paid off, they have to be paid off. And for this reason, enterprises that support the cost of new construction must be capable of paying a relatively high overhead—high in comparison to that necessarily required by old buildings. To support such high overheads, the enterprises must be either (a) high profit or (b) well subsidized.

If you look about, you will see that only operations that are well established, high-turnover, standardized or heavily subsidized can afford, commonly, to carry the costs of new construction. Chain stores, chain restaurants and banks go into new construction. But neighborhood bars, foreign restaurants and pawn shops go into older buildings. Supermarkets and shoe stores often go into new buildings; good bookstores and antique dealers seldom do. Well-subsidized opera and art museums often go into new buildings. But the unformalized feeders of the arts—studios, galleries, stores for musical instruments and art supplies, backrooms where the low earning power of a seat and a table can absorb uneconomic discussions—these go into old buildings. Perhaps more significant, hundreds of ordinary enterprises, necessary to the safety and public life of streets and neighborhoods, and appreciated for their convenience and personal quality, can make out successfully in old buildings, but are inexorably slain by the high overhead of new construction.

As for really new ideas of any kind—no matter how ultimately profitable or otherwise successful some of them might prove to be—there is no leeway for such chancy trial, error and experimentation in the high-overhead economy of new construction. Old ideas can sometimes use new buildings. New ideas must use old buildings.

Even the enterprises that can support new construction in cities need old construction in their immediate vicinity. Otherwise they are part of a total attraction and total environment that is economically too limited—and therefore functionally too limited to be lively, interesting and convenient. Flourishing diversity anywhere in a city means the mingling of high-yield, middling-yield, low-yield and no-yield enterprises.

The only harm of aged buildings to a city district or street is the harm that eventually comes of *nothing but* old age—the harm

that lies in everything being old and everything becoming worn out. But a city area in such a situation is not a failure because of being all old. It is the other way around. The area is all old because it is a failure. For some other reason or combination of reasons, all its enterprises or people are unable to support new construction. It has, perhaps, failed to hang on to its own people or enterprises that do become successful enough to support new building or rehabilitation; they leave when they become this successful. It has also failed to attract newcomers with choice; they see no opportunities or attractions here. And in some cases, such an area may be so infertile economically that enterprises which might grow into successes in other places, and build or rebuild their shelter, never make enough money in this place to do so.*

A successful city district becomes a kind of ever-normal granary so far as construction is concerned. Some of the old buildings, year by year, are replaced by new ones—or rehabilitated to a degree equivalent to replacement. Over the years there is, therefore, constantly a mixture of buildings of many ages and types. This is, of course, a dynamic process, with what was once new in the mixture eventually becoming what is old in the mixture.

We are dealing here again, as we were in the case of mixed primary uses, with the economic effects of time. But in this case we are dealing with the economics of time not hour by hour through the day, but with the economics of time by decades and generations.

Time makes the high building costs of one generation the bargains of a following generation. Time pays off original capital costs, and this depreciation can be reflected in the yields required from a building. Time makes certain structures obsolete for some enterprises, and they become available to others. Time can make

* These are all reasons having to do with inherent, built-in handicaps. There is another reason, however, why some city districts age unremittingly, and this other reason has nothing to do, necessarily, with inherent flaws. The district may have been blacklisted, in a concerted way, by mortgage lenders, the way Boston's North End has been. This means of dooming a neighborhood to inexorable wearing out is both common and destructive. But for the moment we are dealing with the conditions that affect a city area's inherent economic ability to generate diversity and staying power.

13

The self-destruction of diversity

My observations and conclusions thus far sum up to this: In our American cities, we need all kinds of diversity, intricately mingled in mutual support. We need this so city life can work decently and constructively, and so the people of cities can sustain (and further develop) their society and civilization. Public and quasi-public bodies are responsible for some of the enterprises that help make up city diversity—for instance, parks, museums, schools, most auditoriums, hospitals, some offices, some dwellings. However, most city diversity is the creation of incredible numbers of different people and different private organizations, with vastly differing ideas and purposes, planning and contriving outside the formal framework of public action. The main responsibility of city planning and design should be to develop—insofar as public policy and action can do so—cities that are congenial places for this great range of unofficial plans, ideas and opportunities to flourish, along with the flourishing of the public enterprises. City dis-

THE ROLE OF ARTISTS

tricts will be economically and socially congenial places for diversity to generate itself and reach its best potential if the districts possess good mixtures of primary uses, frequent streets, a close-grained mingling of different ages in their buildings, and a high concentration of people.

In this group of chapters on decline and regeneration, I intend to dwell on several powerful forces that can influence, for good or for ill, the growth of diversity and vitality in cities, once an area is not crippled by lack of one or more of the four conditions necessary for generating diversity.

These forces, in the form that they work for ill, are: the tendency for outstandingly successful diversity in cities to destroy itself; the tendency for massive single elements in cities (many of which are necessary and otherwise desirable) to cast a deadening influence; the tendency for population instability to counter the growth of diversity; and the tendency for both public and private money either to glut or to starve development and change.

These forces are interrelated, to be sure; all factors in city changes are interrelated with all other factors. Nevertheless, it is possible and useful to look at each of these forces in its own right. The purpose of recognizing and understanding them is to try to combat them or—better yet—convert them into constructive forces. Besides influencing the growth of diversity itself, these forces also sometimes affect the ease or difficulty with which the basic conditions for generating diversity can be introduced. Leaving them out of account, even the best planning for vitality would fall a step back for every two steps forward.

The first of these powerful forces is the tendency for outstanding success in cities to destroy itself—purely as a result of being successful. In this chapter I shall discuss the self-destruction of diversity, a force which, among its other effects, causes our downtowns continually to shift their centers and move. This is a force that creates has-been districts, and is responsible for much inner-city stagnation and decay.

The self-destruction of diversity can happen in streets, at small nodes of vitality, in groupings of streets, or in whole districts. The last case is the most serious.

Whichever form the self-destruction takes, this, in broad strokes, is what happens: A diversified mixture of uses at some place in the city becomes outstandingly popular and successful as a whole. Because of the location's success, which is invariably based on flourishing and magnetic diversity, ardent competition for space in this locality develops. It is taken up in what amounts to the economic equivalent of a fad.

The winners in the competition for space will represent only a narrow segment of the many uses that together created success. Whichever one or few uses have emerged as the most profitable in the locality will be repeated and repeated, crowding out and overwhelming less profitable forms of use. If tremendous numbers of people, attracted by convenience and interest, or charmed by vigor and excitement, choose to live or work in the area, again the winners of the competition will form a narrow segment of population of users. Since so many want to get in, those who get in or stay in will be self-sorted by the expense.

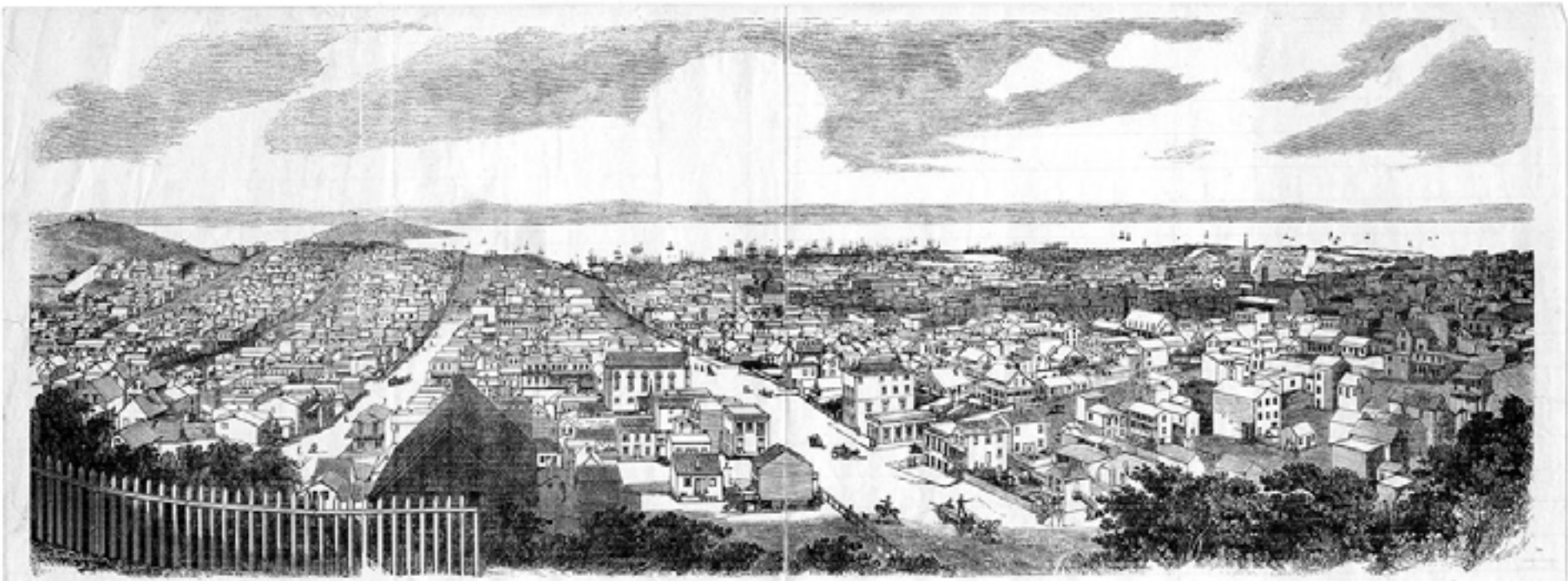
Competition based on retail profitability is most apt to affect streets. Competition based on working- or living-space attraction is most apt to affect whole groupings of streets, or even whole districts.

Thus, from this process, one or few dominating uses finally emerge triumphant. But the triumph is hollow. A most intricate and successful organism of economic mutual support and social mutual support has been destroyed by the process.

From this point on, the locality will gradually be deserted by people using it for purposes other than those that emerged triumphant from the competition—because the other purposes are no longer there. Both visually and functionally, the place becomes more monotonous. All the economic disadvantages of people being spread insufficiently through time of day are likely to follow. The locality's suitability even for its predominant use will gradually decline, as the suitability of downtown Manhattan for managerial offices has declined because of this reason. In time, a place that was once so successful and once the object of such ardent competition, wanes and becomes marginal.

Many streets which have already gone through this process and are at rest in their moribundity can be seen in our cities. Others,

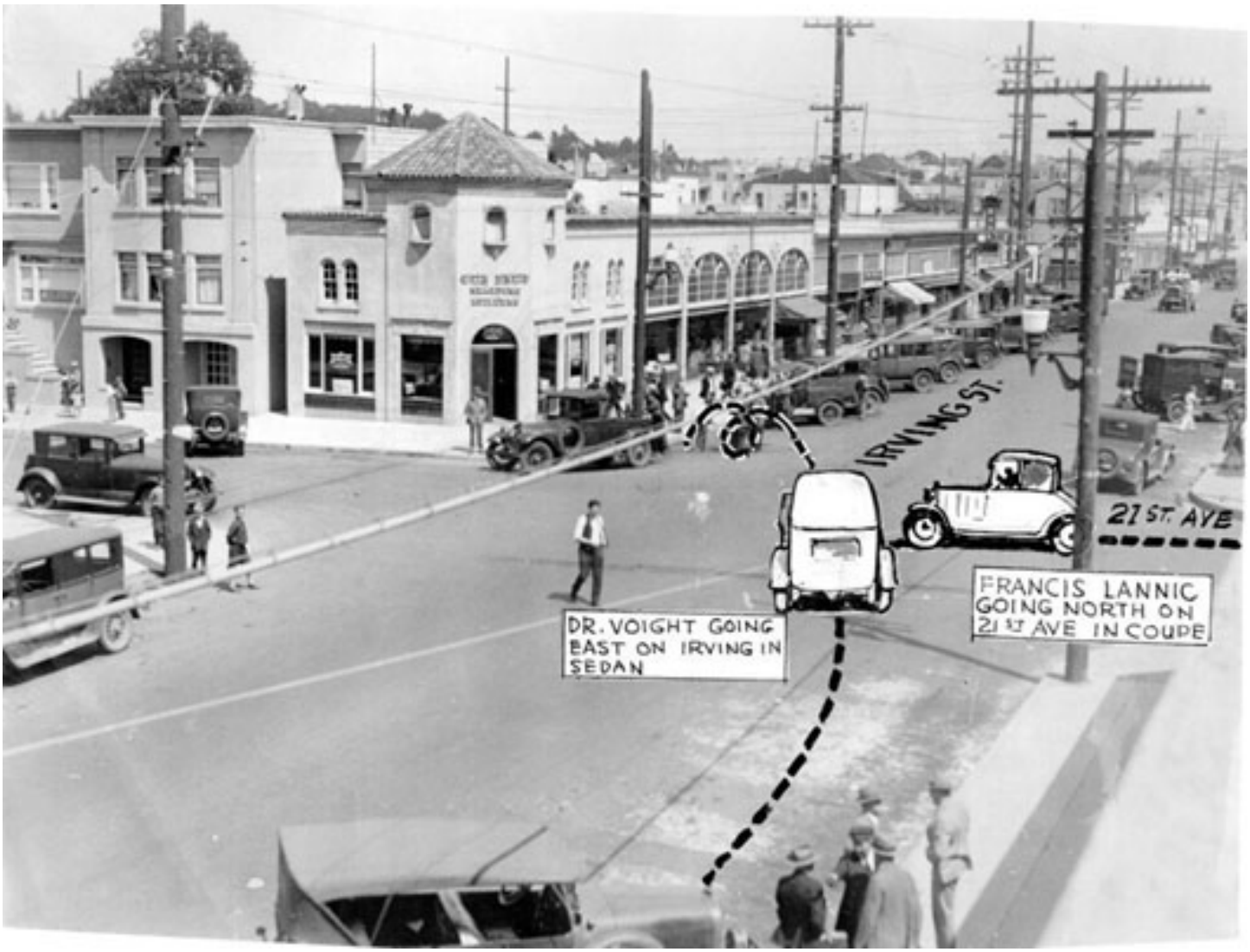

PRIVATE
PUBLIC



SAN FRANCISCO, 1858.

Published by Heydenfeldt & Rosenfield, 116 Montgomery Street, January, 1858.

Title(s) Protesters for Pershing Square garage [graphic]
Order Number 00034799
Filing Information HE box 226-Pershing Square. Herald-Examiner Collection
Date 1949.
Description 1 photograph : b&w
Notes Used in the "Extra! More local news" exhibition
Summary Supporters for a Pershing Square underground garage "dig in." Sign above group reads: San Francisco has underground parking; so should we.
Subject(s) Parking California Los Angeles. Underground parking facilities California Los Angeles. Downtown Los Angeles (Los Angeles, Calif.). Pershing Square (Los Angeles, Calif.).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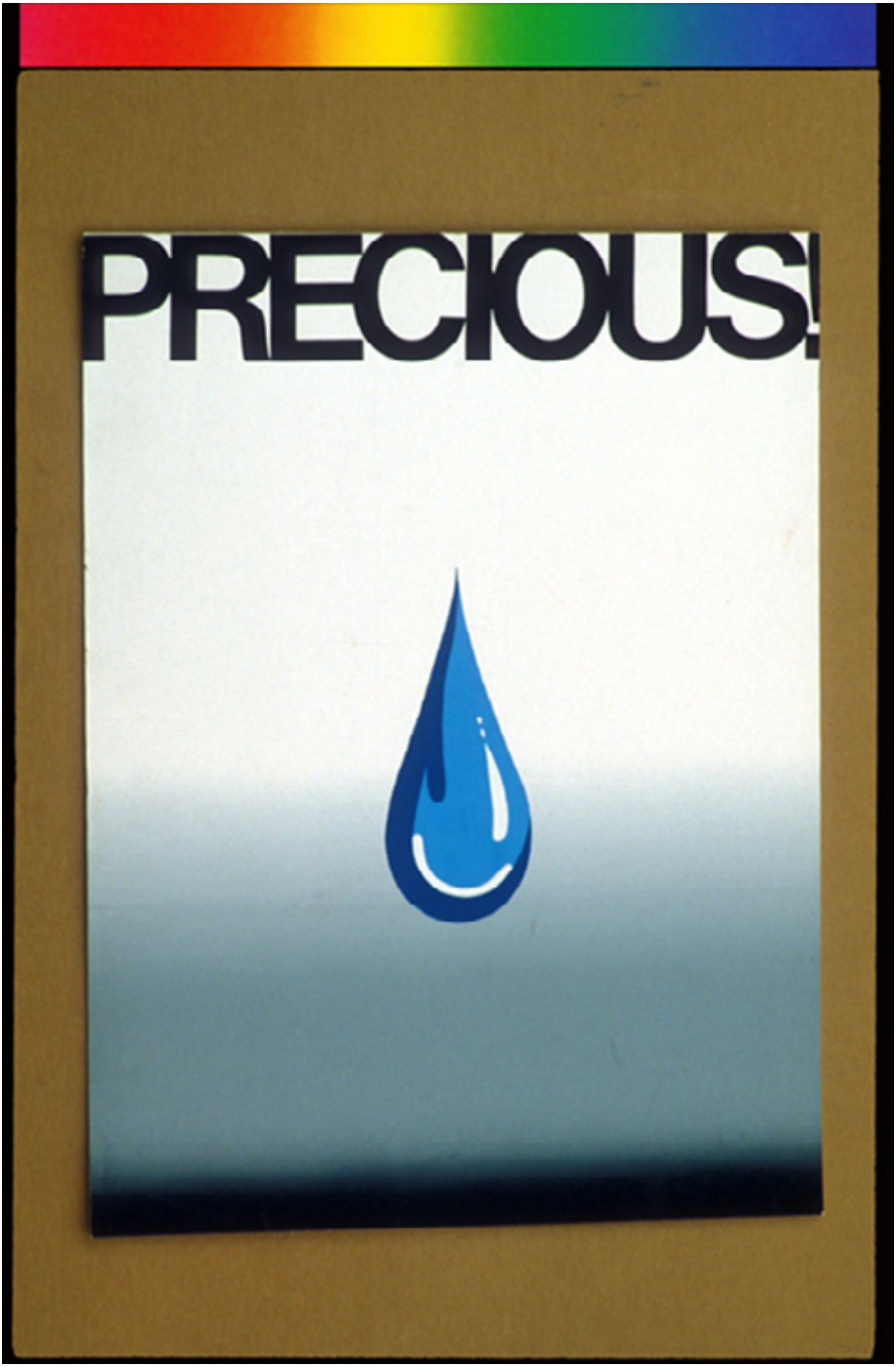
Courtesy of UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb9w1009js/?order=2
Title: Hunters Point Housing Protest Meeting -- City Hall Date:1962-07-22 (July 22, 1962) Contributing Institution: UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library 9

-- Police Oust Tenants

Biography Of A Tenant

The well-dressed gentleman on the cover, sledgehammering his way into tenants' rooms without warning, is none other than San Francisco's liberal sheriff, Richard Hongisto.


PRECIOUS!

Precious!

Creator
Artist Unknown, Artist

Contributor
Artist Unknown, Artist

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Contributing Institution
UC Santa Barbara, Library, Department of Special Research Collections

Collection
Lucero (Linda) collection on La Raza Silkscreen Center/La Raza Graphics

Description
On the top of the poster it says “Precious” in black. The poster goes from white to black at the bottom with a blue water drop in the middle.

Type
image

Identifier
http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb9199p54r
CEMA 3

Language
English

Subject
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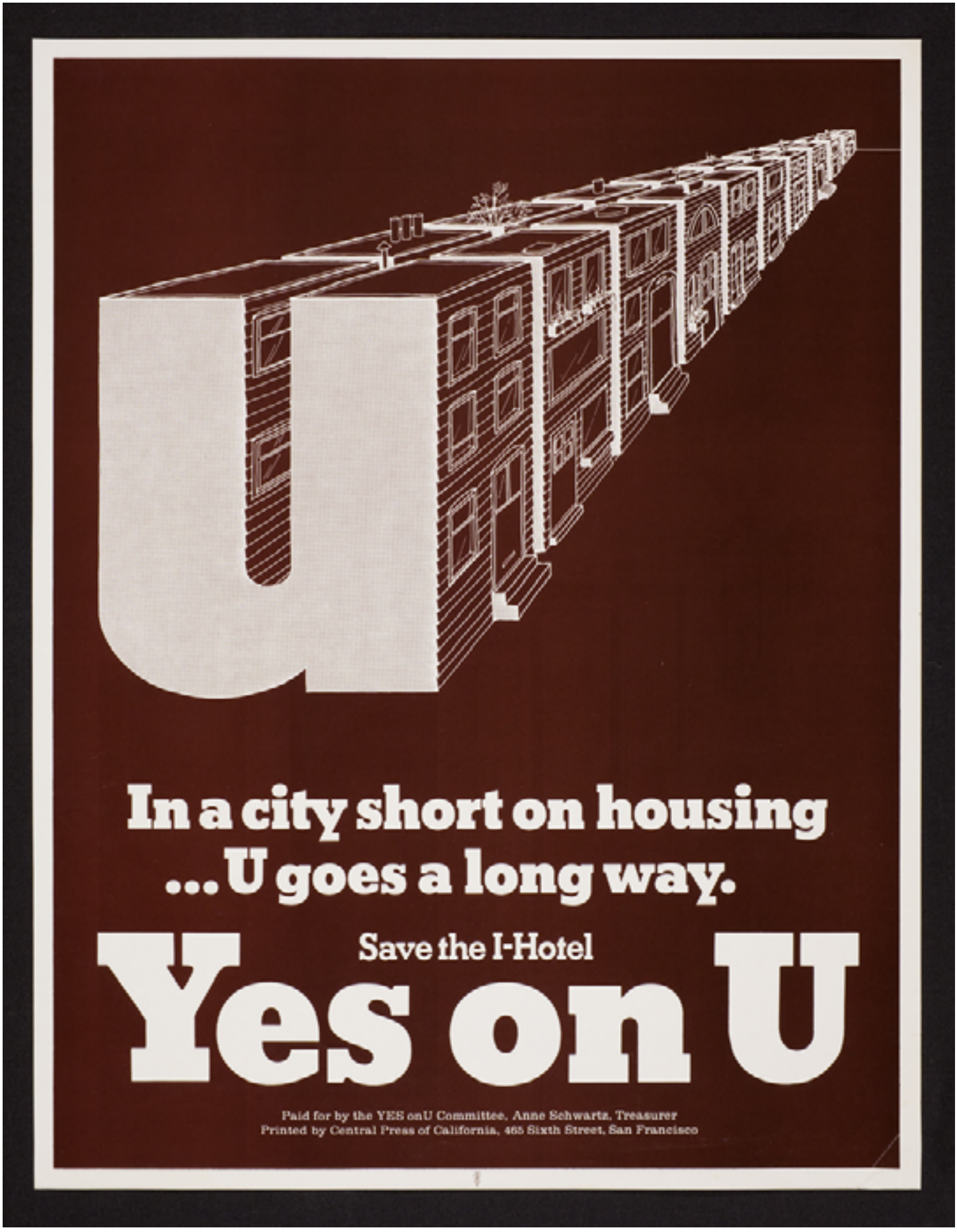
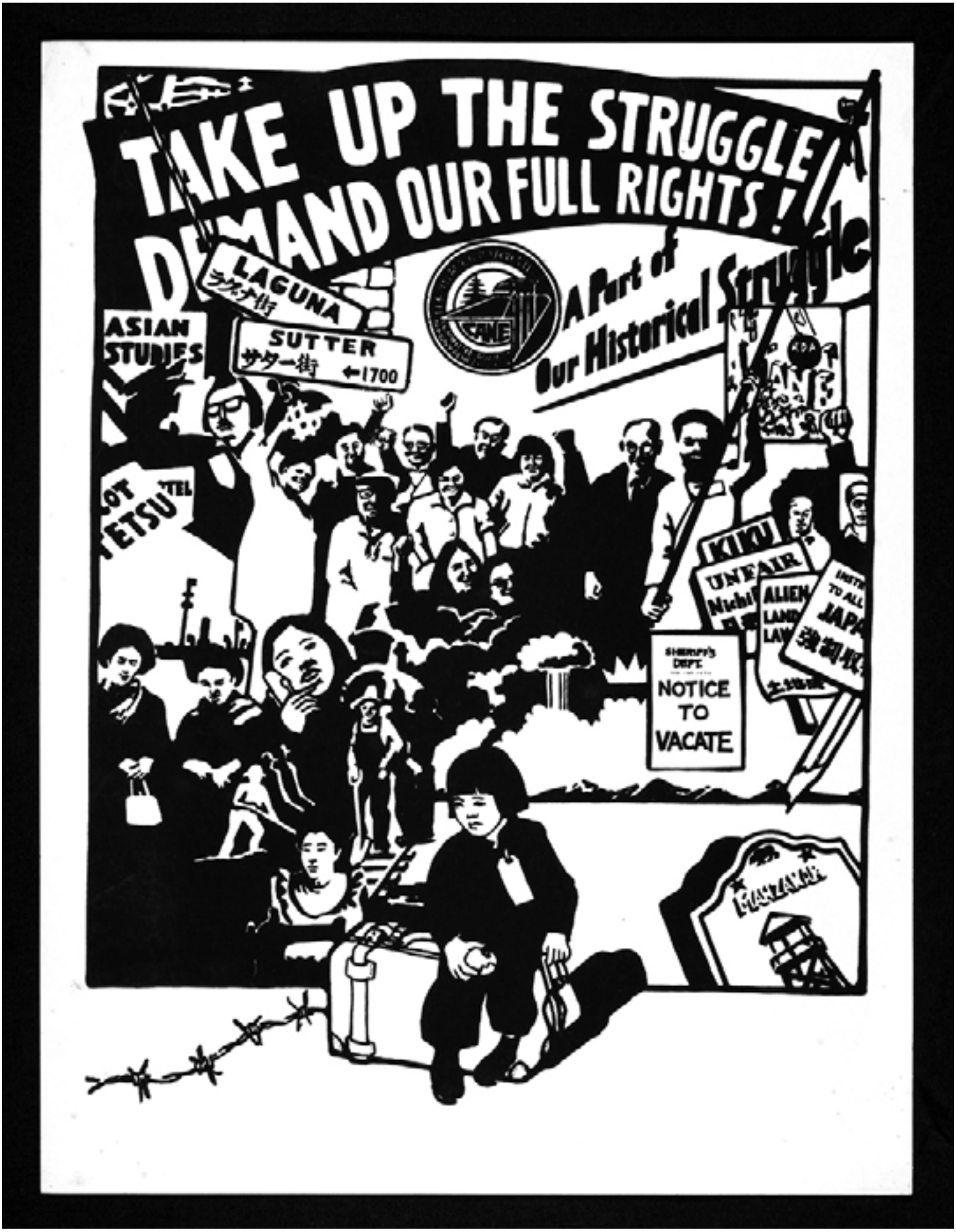
Chicanos
Mexican American art
Mexican Americans
Posters
Prints
Graphic arts
Conservation
Water in art

Place
San Francisco (Calif.)





Take up the struggle demand our full rights

Creator/Contributor:
Artist unknown, creator

Date:
undated

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UC Santa Barbara, Special Collections

Earthquake Relief Poster, 1906

Date:
1906

Contributing Institution:
History San Jose Research Library

Title:
On a brick wall beside air raid shelter poster, exclusion orders were posted at First and Front Streets directing removal of persons of Japanese ancestry from the first San Francisco section to be affected by evacuation. The order was issued April 1, 1942, by Lieutenant General J. L. DeWitt, and directed evacuation from this section by noon on April 7, 1942. Evacuees will be housed in War Relocation Authority Centers for the duration. -- Photographer: Lange, Dorothea -- San Francisco, California. 4/11/42

Contributing Institution:
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Title: Union Square construction (4 views) [graphic]. Author: Locations: Show Locations
Imprint: San Francisco : Allen's Photo Supply Co., [between 1940 and 1946] Description: 4 photographic prints ; 7 5/8 x 9 1/2 in.

Title: Union Square construction (4 views) [graphic].
Imprint: San Francisco : Allen's Photo Supply Co., [between 1940 and 1946] Description: 4 photographic prints ; 7 5/8 x 9 1/2 in.

Title: [Fairmont tower construction] (6 views) [graphic] Imprint: [1962]

Title: Union Square construction (4 views) [graphic].
Imprint: San Francisco : Allen's Photo Supply Co., [between 1940 and 1946] Description: 4 photographic prints ; 7 5/8 x 9 1/2 in.

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From the Dorothea Lange archive, collection of the Oakland Museum of California

From the Dorothea Lange archive, collection of the Oakland Museum of California

Two terms, or really, two groups of terms, seem to gather competing ideas as to how we might conceive anything like a collective, collectivity, or collective space today. The city figures prominently in both. On the one hand we have the set of concepts assembled around the term "public," as in public realm, public sphere, public space, public sector, and "the public" itself. On the other we have the set of concepts associated with the term "common": the common(s), common sense, and common wealth. The latter set resonates with communism, communal, and the like. But neither should its usage by environmentalists to debate an oft-misunderstood "tragedy of the commons" be overlooked; similarly, as the recent controversy over a potential "public option" in American health care reform showed, conventional Anglophone usage associates "public" with the welfare state and with liberal/progressive political reform more generally.

Circulating between these two sets of terms is the category of the "social," as in socialism, but also as used by the philosopher Hannah Arendt, in The Human Condition (1958), to differentiate the modern managerial sphere, including both state- and market-based social or behavioral management, from the classical res publica. According to Arendt, modernity is characterized by the preponderance of managerial practices — "housekeeping," as she puts it — that have emerged from the classical domestic sphere, the oikos, to organize and dominate the life of the polis, or city. These practices take as their field of activity a newly constituted object — society — thereby blotting out the distinction between public and private life, or the distinction between household management and political life, on which city-states were founded in classical times. Many commentators have pointed out that in accepting uncritically this division of labor, Arendt idealizes the Greek polis, in which only male citizens participated in "public" (i.e. political) life, with women and slaves confined to the household (the "private" realm, or oikos) and its internal, domestic economy.

According to Arendt, modernity is characterized by the use of managerial practices — housekeeping — to organize the city. For Arendt, the polis constitutes a "space of appearance," in which being-in-public, or "publicity," is effectively synonymous with politics. More than simply a public square or forum, the space of appearance is potentially ubiquitous. As she puts it, "appearance — something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves — constitutes reality"; meaning that publics are formed only in the presence of others. In the sort of democratic city-state that Arendt has in mind, these others are equals, to whom fall the responsibilities of governance. Such governance is decidedly agonistic, in that "the reality of the public realm relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself." This "presence of innumerable perspectives" renders Arendt's "public appearance" a kind of struggle among equals for the heart and soul of the polis, which is what differentiates it from the false "objectivity" of the money economy and of administrative rationality more generally.

It is worth noting that Jürgen Habermas, in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1962), associates in passing Arendt's "rise of the social" with the emergence of what he calls the bourgeois public sphere (Öffentlichkeit). This sphere is, again, ideally a social space in which transparent communication among equals occurs in such a manner that these individuals ("private persons," or Privatmannen) come together to form a public capable of laying claim on state politics. It is also, as Habermas says, the space where "public opinion" (opinion publique, or its analogue, öffentliche Meinung) is formed; remembering the 18th-century pamphleteer Thomas Paine, we can add that it is also the space in which "common sense" is formed. The principal matrix of the public sphere comprises the assembled instruments of civil society such as the press (or media), which accompany the "traffic in commodities and news" characteristic of European capitalism from its mercantilist phase onwards. Hence Habermas's public is a bourgeois "reading public" which, in the late 18th century, frequented libraries, gathered in cafés to discuss matters of state, and published their opinions in daily broadsheets and in monthly political journals.

Like Arendt's, Habermas's idealizations have been vigorously challenged, not least by feminist theorists who note the hidden exclusions, often determined by gender, by which the bourgeois public sphere is constituted. In one important response that is still in considerable sympathy with Habermas, Nancy Fraser has offered the category of "subaltern counterpublics" in an effort to throw off balance Habermas's implicitly male, white, moneyed, or otherwise hegemonic public sphere; by this Fraser means those groups or categories of citizens and noncitizens that are structurally excluded, usually by some combination of gender, race, and class, from the political commerce of bourgeois capitalism. Fraser's "subaltern counterpublics" describes a whole host of potentially incommensurable public spheres, or "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs." Most critically, these spheres do not simply coexist in a homogeneous gel, a metapublic sphere or space in which their differences can be democratically adjudicated. Rather, they occupy a differentiated field of "stronger" and "weaker" powers, in which the very constitution of counterpublics subordinates them by definition to the pervasive, hegemonic force of bourgeois (i.e., masculinist) norms, thus marking what Fraser calls the "limits of actually existing democracy."

In this regard it is interesting to note further that Arendt uses the section heading "The Public Realm: The Common," to distinguish this category from its private counterpart, which is subtitled "Property." In this second sense — running alongside the sense of public as publicity — for Arendt what is public is outside the realm of property relations. It is, simply, "the world itself, insofar as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it." Whereupon the gradual, historical erasure of the sharp line dividing public interests from private ones also abolishes the sense of a common world, to be replaced with "mass society" comprising merely unrelated, juxtaposed fragments rather than actual or virtual publics, and capable of relating only at the level of economic exchange or its arithmetic equivalents.

It may seem odd, then, that Arendt begins The Human Condition with the image of the Soviet Sputnik satellite, humankind's first instance of mechanized escape from earthly conditions, which was launched in 1957. For Arendt, Sputnik captures the whole modern travesty of enlightened public knowledge ("science," as she calls it) instrumentalized to enact long-held philosophical and religious fantasies of otherworldly life. Likewise this orbiting machine bears witness to what she understatedly calls the "uncomfortable" political circumstances of the Cold War. But precisely as such Sputnik and its American counterpart, Explorer, were also the very product of the medium of publicness that was the sine qua non for both (or all) sides of the Cold War impasse: the modern state.

I pointedly describe the state as a "medium" to steer away from disputes over statist versus nonstatist political models that fetishize abstractions in positive or negative terms, and to move toward an infrastructural, almost technological, conception of the state and its institutions. By this I do not mean technocratic, but pragmatic; the state, or the "public sector," not as an idealized or abstract entity, but as a historical constellation of institutions, practices, protocols, and material complexes. Sputnik and its descendants are products of such infrastructures, a term which connotes in its own right, in its commonest usage, a certain publicness. To put it another way: Sputnik is unthinkable without the material infrastructures of the state, as well as the cultural imaginaries that circulate through those infrastructures, and the reflexive "apparatuses," or instruments of societal regulation, in which these two levels join (as described by thinkers like Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault). Arendt is able to discern in Sputnik's orbit a compelling metaphor for humanity's efforts to delink from that "space of appearance" — Earth — to which public life is ultimately tethered. She is less concerned, however, with the strange fact that the very invention — the modern state — that makes it all possible is presumed at both ideological poles to represent whatever is left of her ideal public, as in a distorting mirror.

Something like this is also at work in the Habermasian public sphere, as well as in Fraser's counterpublics. In both the state sits firmly in the background, as the locus of bourgeois political address percolating through civil society, or as the ultimate site of contestation over rights, voice, transparency, and equity first elaborated in counterpublic arenas. In that sense it is as though the term "public" shares a fate with the modern state itself.

In their collaborative trilogy of Empire (2000), Multitude (2004), and Commonwealth (2009), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri take this proposition to its logical conclusion. They argue that during the course of the 20th century, the world order based on the sovereignty of nation-states has been gradually and unevenly replaced by what they call "imperial sovereignty," or Empire, a transnational, biopolitical capitalism coursing fluidly through both affective and instrumental channels. For Hardt and Negri, then, the categories of "public" and "private," linked historically with state socialism or social democracy on the one hand, and liberal republicanism on the other, simply connote two different means to the same end: the reproduction of capital. Writing four decades after Sputnik, they follow many critics of Soviet-style socialism in suggesting that this system merely substituted a centralized state for a market oligarchy in order to manage industrial/capitalist production, and thus served as a prelude to the new, decentered sovereignty of neoliberal capital. To confront the latter, they propose a political philosophy that substitutes older categories like, "the people" and "the state," or "private" and "public," with new ones like "multitude" and "common wealth," or "singularity" and "common."

Key to this reconceptualization is the claim that the common is not merely a postindustrial upgrade of the modern state, which is historically linked with the rise of industrial capitalism. Hardt and Negri define this common most succinctly as: 1) the natural environment, its resources and the products they yield; and 2) the products of social interaction, such as codes, languages, affects, information and other forms of knowledge. Especially in this second form, their sense of the common is wholly immanent to biopolitical practice: that is, a common wealth is constantly being produced and circulated in those everyday processes by which life itself is sustained, enhanced, articulated or otherwise organized, in areas as diverse as manufacturing, health care, and housing, on the one hand, and education, scientific research, and the arts, on the other.

Hardt and Negri therefore encourage us to look "beyond public and private" for philosophical concepts and political practices capable of challenging and transforming the "republic of property" that underlies both categories. Most frequently they find models in the insurgent, bottom-up politics of the counter- or alter-globalization movements that proliferated in the 1990s, or in the autonomous democracy practiced by groups such as the Mexican Zapatistas. They see the heterogeneous, sometimes fractious "multitude" that comes together in these and countless other, less visible movements as the contrary to the homogenized modern masses or an abstract, universal "public." But this multitude does not merely replace or multiply these earlier versions. Instead, for Hardt and Negri, the multitude constitutes a novel historical subject that draws its energies from the constant production of common goods and, especially, common knowledge and services, provoked by resistance to capitalism but not wholly determined by it.

What are these goods and services? Hardt and Negri place a great deal of emphasis on the productivity of "immaterial labor," the type of labor characteristic of what is sometimes called the service sector. They have therefore been criticized for deemphasizing or ignoring manual labor and the working class. In response to this they argue that under these new conditions it is not a matter of one class or sector replacing another, but of one logic — applying to all classes and sectors — replacing, or at least displacing, another. Immaterial labor is based above all on communication, and it is this they seek to release in radically transformative, revolutionary directions. Think of Sputnik, then, as a triumph of immaterial labor held captive by the state.

Here too we can discern an etymological resonance — common(s), communication — that is sharpened when Hardt and Negri claim that "the common does not refer to traditional notions of either the community or the public; it is based on the communication among singularities and emerges through collaborative social processes of production." (In their idiom, a singularity is more like a unique, internally divided and incalculable point, rather than an individual unit.) Elsewhere, they add one more term to the etymological chain by arguing "what the private is to capitalism and what the public is to socialism, the common is to communism."

Hardt and Negri are quick to distinguish this communism from the state-based authoritarian socialisms to which that term became affixed during the course of the 20th century. And if anything, many of their practical proposals for "a reformist program for capital" are distinctly neo-Keynesian: provide the physical, social and educational infrastructure for biopolitical production; open the intellectual and cultural commons to all; establish "open citizenship" across borders; enhance economic freedom with a guaranteed income; build participatory democracy into all levels of government. For Hardt and Negri, "saving" capitalism from its self-destructiveness

in these ways is not an end in itself, but the first stage of a transition that "requires the growing autonomy of the multitude from both private and public control; the metamorphosis of social subjects through education and training in cooperation, communication, and organizing social encounters; and thus a progressive accumulation of the common."

What is less clear, however, is the medium by which communication becomes common. Unlike many theorists of the communicative public sphere, Hardt and Negri have relatively little to say about the specific forms of mediation by which collective subjectivities are formed. By this I mean not only technological mediation — as in the properties of those communications systems by which a multitude comes into its heterogeneous being-in-common — but also other mediating instruments, like social structures (the family, the nation) or institutions (schools, hospitals, housing, workplaces, prisons, communications networks). If the segmented realm of public and private is to be replaced by the networked realm of the common, what will replace these mediators?

In this sense Hardt and Negri's common is subject to criticisms analogous to those that have been leveled at Habermas's version of the public sphere. Not that it homogenizes otherwise heterogeneous subjectivities or submits them to the rule of an arbitrary norm; but rather that in subsuming the dyad singularity/multiplicity into a common, non-homogeneous substrate, it potentially underestimates the differentials, interferences, and asymmetries comprising that substrate's communicative infrastructures. From its beginnings communications theory has emphasized the necessary loss of information in any communicational transaction. Hardt and Negri seem to assume that this loss is ultimately negligible, and that the interference and distortions that accompany all communication are superseded by the common wealth generated by cooperative labor among singular subjects. I do not wish to argue the contrary: that the inevitable mediations of intersubjective life render any common impossible from the start. Rather, I want to ask whether the exhausted category of the public, and with it the ruined infrastructures of the state — including Sputnik's descendants — might be reappropriated as media, or as fragments of a media system, in which life-in-common can take place.

At a practical and political as well as a philosophical level, this reappropriation entails modulating the directness of direct or participatory democracy with a media theory of communications. Hardt and Negri suggest as much when they cite recent scholarship on radically democratic media practices. And by no means do they argue that the common emerges out of some primal, unmediated field of social and economic activity. But nowhere do they work through the structural, rather than circumstantial, particulars of the very mediating infrastructures by which they propose to "save" capitalism from itself while simultaneously preparing the ground for its multitudinous alternative.

Here is one example. Among the many sites in which they discern "specters of the common" is the contemporary metropolis, or really, the global city. One measure of the city as a site of biopolitical production appears in the vexing problem (for traditional Marxists) of ground rent. In urban economics, a labor theory of value has some difficulty in accounting for the intangibles of location, services, and other "quality of life" factors, which economists sometimes term "externalities." Hardt and Negri point out that these seeming externalities actually register "the general social circuits of biopolitical production and reproduction of the city," which are subject to reappropriation. Another way of saying this is that the city mediates value production through its material infrastructures; among other things, these infrastructures typically support transportation, communication, education, security, health, housing and commerce, and are variously associated with the state, the private sector, or both.

Elsewhere, referring to the metropolis as the "inorganic body of the multitude," Hardt and Negri suggestively argue that "the metropolis is to the multitude what the factory was to the industrial city," in three ways. First, the contemporary city is "the space of the common," a privileged site in which an "artificial common" of "languages, images, knowledges, affects, codes, habits, and practices" is produced. Second, the city is (and long has been) a site of aleatory and "joyful" encounter among singularities along the lines of Baudelaire's flâneur, as well as a site of insurgent political organization. And finally, the contemporary city is, like the factory, a site of exploitation, antagonism, conflict, and hence, of potential rebellion. Leaving aside the urban-rural interdependencies and antagonisms that their account underplays, Hardt and Negri thereby recast the global or globalizing city as a "biopolitical city," a collective space of productive, life-or-death struggle against biopower, or the coercive management of everyday life.

To illustrate, they single out rent as paradigmatic of the neoliberal financialization of urban (or exurban) life: "Rent operates through a desocialization of the common, privatizing in the hands of the rich the common wealth produced and consolidated in the metropolis." Thus Hardt and Negri contrast land privatization not with public ownership, but with a common that exists beyond or outside of property relations and hence beyond such concepts as "private" or "public." Superficially, their argument shares some characteristics with Garrett Hardin's much-invoked "tragedy of the commons" — but only in the inverse. Hardin, a biologist, argued in 1968 that the environmental commons, like the common agricultural lands that had been progressively enclosed as private (or public) property in Britain since the 16th century, is finite. The "tragedy" to which he refers is the proposition that the free pursuit of self-interest — for instance, the effort to increase one's share in the land's output — inevitably leads to degradation of the finite common resource and thus mutual loss. For Hardin, who assumes the all-powerful lawfulness of self-interest, the commons is therefore a "horror" to be abandoned in favor of privatization or administrative enclosure — what Arendt calls housekeeping — which he construes as lesser evils to that of resource depletion, figured mainly in the specter of overpopulation. That Hardin's most concrete proposal entails eugenic restrictions on the "freedom to breed" directed at the world's poorest populations, rather than an assault on poverty itself, is enough to remind us that here, too, biopower is at work.

In contrast, Hardt and Negri construe the common as a sort of force field that overspills those processes that seek to expropriate it. They regard earlier collectivist projects such as socialism, with its state-centric language of "public" and "private," as philosophically if not practically distinct from what they call a "governance" of the common, accomplished through horizontal networks of democratic decision-making by an autonomous, self-organizing multitude of singularities.

In a lively exchange in Artforum, David Harvey has challenged their near-exclusive emphasis on these relational protocols over representative systems or other regimes of mediation. If the multitude is capable of commandeering biopolitical production toward revolutionary ends, "[h]ow," Harvey asks, "will this new value be represented and objectified in daily practice?" Harvey reminds us, for example, that what Marx terms "fictitious capital" is value objectified as representation, or money, which recirculates in the form of securities and other higher-order financial abstractions. He is therefore asking, with some impatience: What will take the place of money, rent, and finance more generally — as representations of value — in the new forms of governance that Hardt and Negri envision? Rightly dismissing any romantic notion that conventional regimes might easily be abandoned ("don't tell me global bartering is feasible"), Harvey implies that the common, like the socialist state or the communist international before it, requires institutions of its own, beginning with a medium of economic exchange.

Hardt and Negri certainly acknowledge as much. But they do not preempt this critique simply by suggesting that the abstractions of money and finance could, in principle, be turned against themselves to "provide the instruments for making the multitude from the diverse forms of flexible, mobile, and precarious labor." To Harvey they reply directly that, whereas in the earlier era of industrial capitalism it may have been possible to regard economic production (labor and its products) as "real" and finance as "fictitious," in our own era "the form of finance is symmetrical to the new processes of biopolitical production of value," such as codes, languages, and images. The project hence becomes one of "reappropriating socially what finance now possesses."

What applies here to banks and financial institutions could presumably be said for other mediating institutions of the biopolitical commons, such as schools and universities, museums, libraries, laboratories, satellites, and so on. But how, exactly? Hardt and Negri insist repeatedly on the interdependence of revolutionary insurrection and patient institutional transformation, or of a Gramscian "war of movement" and "war of position." On the side of institutions, they essentially ask: If socialist identification with the public and its analogues (the people, the proletariat, the general interest, the state) has become ineffective or obsolete, then what, if any, forms of networked mediation might enact globally a "democracy of the common" that is not one of surreptitious enclosure? Might the networks governing the neoliberal metropolis be turned into revolutionary instruments?

In response to such questions, Hardt and Negri argue that the pliable networks governing the neoliberal metropolis might be turned into both revolutionary instruments and genuinely democratic institutions. But if this turnaround is possible, it is also possible that the ruined infrastructures of the socialist or social democratic city might be more closely interrogated for their transformative potential. From the point of view of the stagist model of history that Hardt and Negri rather too quickly adopt, these infrastructures — public education, public healthcare, public housing — may indeed be vanishing into obsolescence, partly due to their earlier role in shoring up the capitalist state. But these and other remnants of the state remain very much part of the urban fabric and very much part of collective consciousness worldwide. Emptied of their ideological force, these disused ruins also await reappropriation as instruments to redirect — to remediate, that is — the vectors of finance capital and its abstractions.

In 1785, the French architect Étienne-Louis Boullée was commissioned to design an expansion of the Bibliothèque du Roi (King's Library), located in the Hôtel de Nevers portion of the former Mazarin Palace in Paris. Boullée famously proposed converting the Hôtel's courtyard into a vast basilica-like reading room under a skylit vault, lined at its base with four tiers of books running the entire length of the perimeter. Prior to this, a series of other architects had developed plans to relocate the library to the Palace of the Louvre. Ironically, Boullée argued his approach to be more practical. In the aftermath of the Revolution, however, the project to relocate or expand the library was abandoned; the existing royal library was nationalized, and the palace became a museum.

In 1854, Henri Labrouste began his long-term renovation and replacement of the Hôtel de Nevers buildings to better accommodate what was then the Imperial Library and later, the National Library. As a precursor to Labrouste's vaulted room for bourgeois readers, Boullée's monumental proposal aligned despotic power with classical learning. Retroactively, it has been celebrated as "revolutionary" for giving form to an Enlightenment republic of letters, the sort of communicational public sphere thought to be necessary for informed democratic citizenship, on a grand scale. Like the actually existing royal/national library (now expanded into a massive complex with corporate overtones), Boullée's project, had it been realized, could possibly have functioned as such. It also could have functioned as an apparatus of state control, or as an archetypal medium of immaterial production. As is, it would be most accurate to regard the project as a ruined monument to monarchy that later circulated as an enigmatic sign. That is, as a nonfictitious unit of rereadable information that, in this case, combines medium and message. This complicated little piece of the common wealth is now stored and circulated in books and silicon chips, which are in turn hooked up to media complexes into which the project's dream of universal knowledge — and communication — has been tendentiously deformed.

Such media complexes are cobbled together from the leftover infrastructures of incomplete or obsolete sovereignties, be they royal palaces, aristocratic hôtels, or bourgeois national libraries. As Marx once famously said of revolutions: "The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." In Boullée's day a city, on the brink of revolution, begets an imaginary royal library, which in turn yields, eventually, to a national and then supranational space of knowledge production. Today governments and corporations, and other bits and pieces of modernity, combine to produce sovereign networks, all the nodes of which — including museums and libraries in the great metropolis, and satellites orbiting the earth — belong to the neoliberal republic of property. If another, common world is to be assembled outside of these networks, it would necessarily include the richly textured ruins of the public, as a medium and as a message.

Full text with citations is online.

Nowhere is the salinity problem more serious than in the San Joaquin Valley of California, the most productive farming region in the entire world. There you have a shallow and impermeable clay layer, the residual bottom of an ancient sea, underlying a million or so acres of fabulously profitable land. During the irrigation season, temperatures in the valley fluctuate between 90 and 110 degrees; the good water evaporates as if the sky were a sponge, the junk water goes down, and the problem gets worse and worse. Very little of the water seeps through the Corcoran Clay, so it rises back up into the

root zones—in places, the clay is only a few feet down—waterlogs the land, and kills the crops. A few thousand acres have already gone out of production—you can see the salt on the ground like a dusting of snow. In the next few decades, as irrigation continues, that figure is expected to increase almost exponentially. To build a drainage system for the valley—a giant network of underground pipes and surface canals that would intercept the junk water and carry it off—could cost as much as a small country's GNP. In 1985, the Secretary of the Interior put forth a figure of $5 billion for the Westlands region, and Westlands is only half the problem. Where would the drainwater go? The Westlands' drainwater, temporarily stored in a huge sump which was christened a wildlife preserve, has been killing thousands of migrating waterfowl; the water contains not just salts but selenium, pesticides, and God knows what else. There is one logical terminus: San Francisco Bay. As far as northern Californians are concerned, the farmers stole all this water from them; now they want to ship it back full of crud.

As is the case with most western states, California's very existence is premised on epic liberties taken with water—mostly water that fell as rain on the north and was diverted to the south, thus precipitating the state's longest-running political wars. With the exception of a few of the rivers draining the remote North Coast, virtually every drop of water in the state is put to some economic use before being allowed to return to the sea. Very little of this water is used by people, however. Most of it is used for irrigation—85 percent of it, to be exact. That is a low percentage, by western standards. In Arizona, 90 percent of the water consumed goes to irrigation; in Colorado and New Mexico, the figure is almost as high. In Kansas, Nevada, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, Montana; even in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho—in all of those states, irrigation accounts for nearly all of the water that is consumptively used.

By the late 1970s, there were 1,251 major reservoirs in California, and every significant river—save one—had been dammed at least once. The Stanislaus River is dammed fourteen times on its short run to the sea. California has some of the biggest reservoirs in the country; its rivers, seasonally swollen by the huge Sierra snowpack, carry ten times the runoff of Colorado's. And yet all of those rivers and reservoirs satisfy only 60 percent of the demand. The rest of the water comes from under the ground. The rivers are infinitely renewable, at least until the reservoirs silt up or the climate changes. But a lot of

the water being pumped out of the ground is as nonrenewable as oil.

Early in the century, before the federal government got into the business of building dams, most of the water used for irrigation in California was groundwater. The farmers in the Central Valley (which comprises both the Sacramento and the San Joaquin) pumped it out so relentlessly that by the 1930s the state's biggest industry was threatened with collapse. The growers, by then, had such a stranglehold on the legislature that they convinced it, in the depths of the Depression, to authorize a huge water project—by far the largest in the world—to rescue them from their own greed. When the bonds to finance the project could not be sold, Franklin Delano Roosevelt picked up the unfinished task. Today, the Central Valley Project is still the most mind-boggling public works project on five continents, and in the 1960s the state built its own project, nearly as large. Together, the California Water Project and the Central Valley Project have captured enough water to supply eight cities the size of New York. But the projects brought into production far more land than they had water to supply, so the growers had to supplement their surface water with tens of thousands of wells. As a result, the groundwater overdraft, instead of being alleviated, has gotten worse.

In the San Joaquin Valley, pumping now exceeds natural replenishment by more than half a trillion gallons a year. By the end of the century it could rise to a trillion gallons—a mining operation that, in sheer volume, beggars the exhaustion of oil. How long it can go on, no one knows. It depends on a lot of things, such as the price of food and the cost of energy and the question whether, as carbon dioxide changes the world's climate, California will become drier. (It is expected to become much drier.) But it is one reason you hear talk about redirecting the Eel and the Klamath and the Columbia and, someday, the Yukon River.

The problem in California is that there is absolutely no regulation over groundwater pumping, and, from the looks of things, there won't be any for many years to come. The farmers loathe the idea, and in California "the farmers" are the likes of Exxon, Tenneco, and Getty Oil. Out on the high plains, the problem is of a different nature. There, the pumping of groundwater is regulated. But the states have all decided to regulate their groundwater out of existence.

The vanishing groundwater in Texas, Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Nebraska is all part of the Ogallala aquifer, which holds two distinctions: one of being the largest discrete aquifer in the world, the other of being the fastest-disappearing aquifer in

Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART)

Repeat after me: "The only thing consistent about BART is its inconsistency." Keep this in mind.

BART is an electric commuter train that runs (knock-on wood) in San Francisco, Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, plus Daly City in San Mateo County. Hours of operation are from 6 a.m. to midnight Monday through Saturday and 9 a.m. to midnight on Sunday.

Bicyclists are second class passengers on BART. Bicyclists are not allowed during rush-hours, Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m...except from Lake Merritt Station (Oakland) to Fremont; Rockridge Station (Oakland) to Concord and Ashby Station (Berkeley) to Richmond during the a.m. rush-hours, vice-versa during the p.m. rush-hours.

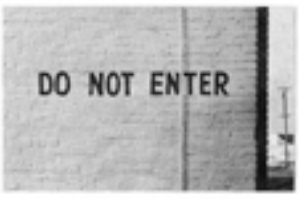
BART tickets are sold out of machines (bring lots of change) and in some banks. They are processed in machine operated gates of entry and exit. A bicycle must be rolled through a service gate, usually located near a Station Agent's Booth and unlocked manually by an agent. Tickets cost from 50 cents up, depending on where you're going. Maps posted near ticket machines give one-way fares; double for round trip. Fares to rise approx. 15% by 1983.

Do not use escalators; use only stairs or elevators. Bicyclists must *hold* the bike while riding in the rear of the last car on the train (known affectionately to some locals as the "Jim Crow" section). The bike must be clean of dripping oil, mud, etc., and if it has a kickstand, this must be kept in the "up" position. Lastly, and most important, you need a permit to take a bike in the paid area of BART. If you don't have a BART bike permit, here's the procedure(s) to obtain one: Call the Office of Passenger Service at the Lake Merritt (Oakland) Station, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday thru Friday at (415) 465-4100 ext. 510 and ask for Starla Bahen. You will have to go there in person to obtain it or wait 10 working days for one via mail. You must have authentic identifica-

WE

Crossdress as a way of life

THE



We mean business

PEOPLE

Over there

This would be a good place for a community bulletin board.

Radical Utopia!

Are you surprised by the number of things you would like to have done outdoors last year but didn't do? Why didn't you do them? Perhaps you just didn't have time. Perhaps a few activities were too expensive. But how many things didn't you do simply because there wasn't the opportunity near enough or convenient enough for you?

Have you ever considered how important being outside really is? Somehow throwing a ball around, having a picnic, or walking alone along a wooded path provide a necessary and satisfying change from the things we usually do and the places where we spend most of our time. Walking through a meadow or sitting under a tree at the edge of a lake does something for us that walking to school or work or sitting in our own backyard just can't do.

We all desire these nonroutine experiences because recreation satisfies basic human needs that are as important as eating or sleeping. We need the exhaustion and exuberance of exercise; the company of friends, acquaintances, and just other people; the regenerative effects of solitude; and the change in our environment and the opportunity for learning that recreation, particularly outdoor recreation, provides. Recreation allows us to step out of our customary lives and, by engaging ourselves in what we most want to do, to rediscover and re-create ourselves.

"We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them. We want the greatest possible contrast with the streets and the shops and the rooms of the town which will be consistent with convenience and the preservation of good order and neatness. We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy. Practically, what we most want is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward, with sufficient play of surface and a sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade. This we want as a central feature. We want depth of wood enough about it not only for comfort in hot weather, but to completely shut out the city from our landscapes."

"The beauty of the park . . . should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquility and rest to the mind. . . . A great object of all that is done in a park, of all *the art of a park, is to influence the mind of men through their imagination."*
Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns.

"First, the chief end of a large park is an effect on the human organism by an action of what it presents to view, which action, like that of music, is of a kind that goes back of thought, and cannot be fully given the form of words. . . ."
Notes on the Plan of Franklin Park and Related Matters, 1886.

"Let any man ask himself whether the value of such views as the grandest the mountain offers, is greater when they are made distinct spectacles or when they are enjoyed as successive incidents of a sustained landscape poem, to each of which the mind is gradually and sweetly led away, so that they become a part of a consistent experience,—let him ask this with reference to the soothing and refreshment of a town-strained human organism, and he will not need argument to lead him to a sound conclusion."
Mount Royal, 1881.

Most of us find the break from routine that recreation provides makes us better able to enjoy our work when we resume it. In the same way, our enjoyment of other people is increased by the time we spend alone. Have you ever thought about how tedious life would be if you could never be alone? Jean-Paul Sartre defined hell as "other people" without relief. When we are alone, we are free to be ourselves, to let our imaginations roam, to remember, to dream, or to make plans.

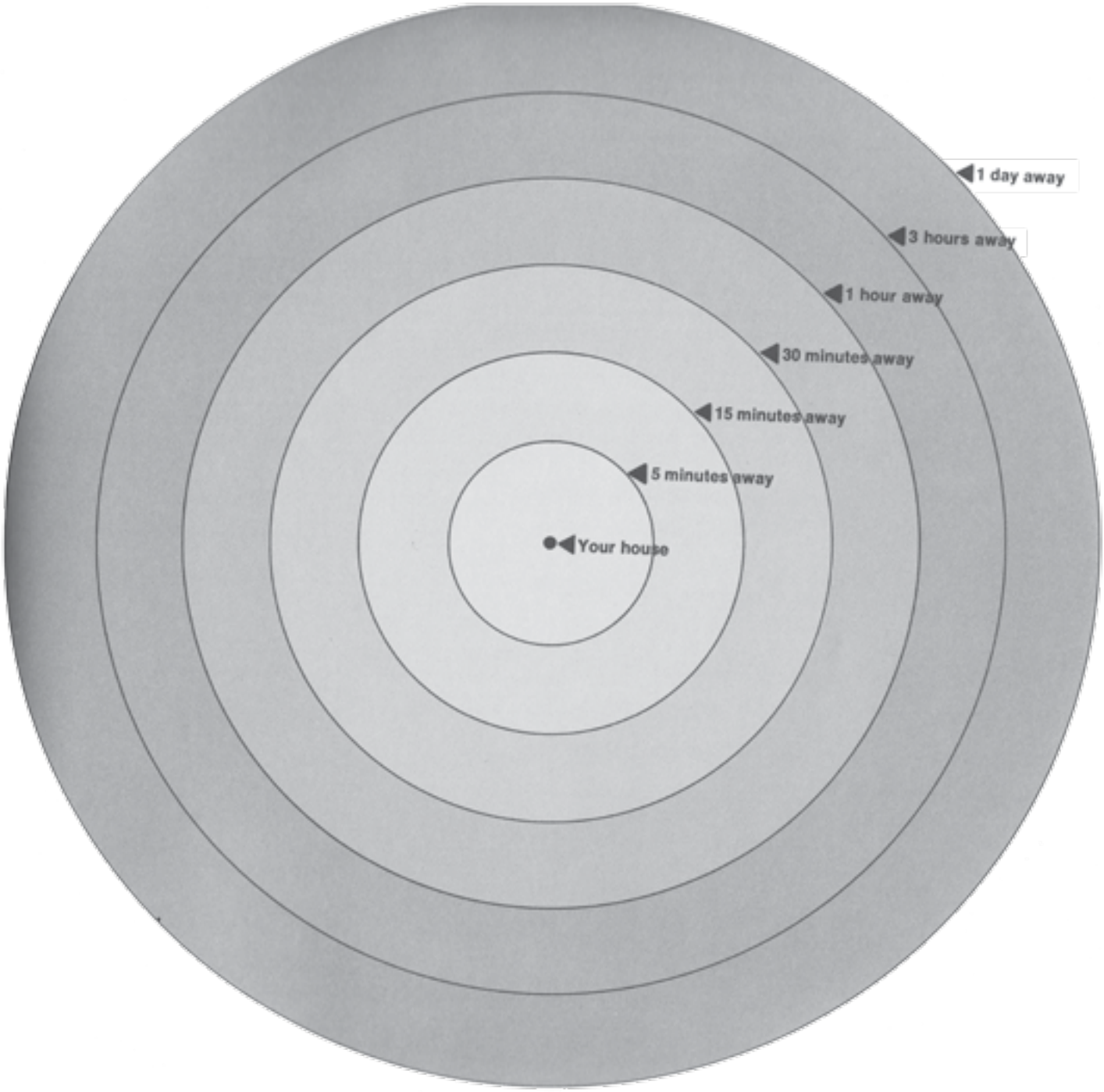
Three-fourths of the people in this country live in cities, which every day become dirtier, more crowded, and more dangerous. It seems natural, then, that we enjoy being alone from time to time, away from our responsibilities and the watchful eyes of other people. And it is understandable that our solitude can be enhanced by the vastness and restfulness of nature, the coolness of water, the shade of a tree, and the softness of grass trembling in a breeze.

Did you ever throw yourself down on a patch of grass and observe the infinite variety of life right before you? Did you notice the intense activities of insects, the sunlight and shadow on one blade of grass, the intricate veining on a leaf dropped from a nearby tree?

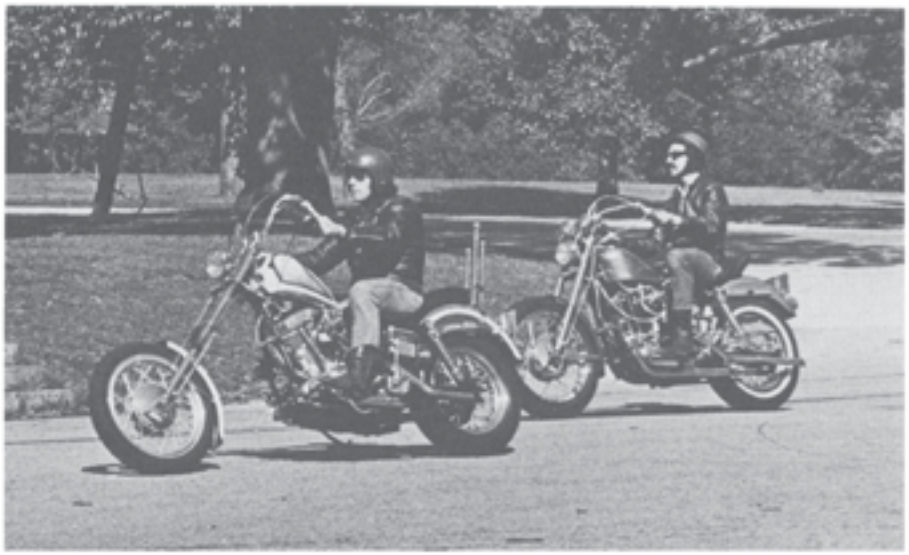
The most direct way to learn is by experience. We learn about cars, traffic lights, and road construction by seeing them in our urban environment and we learn about trees, birds, and flowers by exploring them in their natural environment. No matter how much we read about the seasons, we learn to understand spring by watching the delicate green buds grow a little bigger and darker each day, and to associate autumn with the deeply colored leaves we walk through on the way to school or work.

What we learn by observation and in response to our curiosity is remembered with particular intensity because we discovered it ourselves. The places where this kind of education can best take place—our parks, zoos, wildlife preserves, and national forests—are the best kind of classrooms we can build for our natural world. They are classrooms that we will never get tired of—even the path we explored last week will have become a little different by today.

Where is the nearest:	5 minutes away	15 minutes away	30 minutes away	1 hour away	3 hours away	1 day away	Don't know
playground	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
basketball court	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
tennis court	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
ballfield	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
drinking fountain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
picnic place	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
pleasant bench	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
street for playing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
public flower garden	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
climbing tree	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
secluded spot	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
wooded path	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
stream	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
grove of trees	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
duck pond	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
grassy meadow	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
hill	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
waterfall	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
campground	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
fishing lake	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
swimming pool	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
skating rink	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
outdoor theater	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
ski slope	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
zoo	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
_____	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
_____	○	○	○	○	○	○	○


1 day away
3 hours away
1 hour away
30 minutes away
15 minutes away
5 minutes away
Your house


Build a sand castle
Camp out
Sit in a treehouse
Have a picnic
Swing
Slide
See-saw
Climb on a jungle gym
Climb a tree
Play ping-pong
Play baseball
Play football
Play golf
Play basketball
Play volleyball
Play tennis
Play soccer
Swim
Skin dive
Wade in the water
Catch a fish
Feed a duck
Skip rocks
Lawn bowl
Fly a kite
Surf
Waterski
Pick up seashells
Play cards in the grass
Play chess
Play a guitar under a tree
Paint a picture
Write poetry
Sit by a lake
Sunbathe at the beach
Wrestle
Do push-ups
Nap in the grass
Daydream
Have a chat on a bench
Play blindman's bluff
Shoot marbles
Have a tug-of-war
Play house
Play cowboys and Indians
Play croquet
Play bocce
Play handball
Catch a frisbee
Play badminton
Throw horseshoes
Play shuffleboard
Ski
Sled
Ride a horse
Skate on a skateboard
Iceskate
Climb a hill
Roll down a hill
Backpack
Watch boats on a river
Look for wildflowers
Find wild animal tracks
Rollerskate
Ride a bike
Jog
Walk in the park
Walk a dog
Sail a boat



CHAPTER ONE

Commitment

We all know that buildings destroy land, and yet in the name of architecture we continue to pave this beautiful country with buildings and parking lots. Every one of us in the building industry or paving industry does his part. Where there were forests there is now concrete. Where there were prairies we find asphalt. Where there were meadows, houses have appeared. Architects, along with engineers, builders, pavers, realtors, developers, mortgagors, planners, and building officials, have created so much momentum in so many wrong directions we can't seem to stop, even though many of us now know we're in trouble. Listen to what the members of a New York AIA jury, architects themselves, had to say: "Architects have not yet struck out on any firm new directions away from the modern movement."[1] And in California, it was a *citizens'* group that had to petition the California Board of Architectural Examiners before it would even consider requiring architects to take courses in such subjects as insulation, solar heating and cooling, and appliance efficiency.[2] As a profession, we're still arguing about building styles at a time when the very foundations of modern architecture are in question.

We're really out of touch.

Most of us respond directly, intuitively, to natural beauty or to the beauty of the best indigenous architecture. We sense its appropriateness. It feels right. Most modern architecture, on the other hand, now feels wrong. (It *literally* feels wrong when the fuels run out.) Look-alike buildings in look-alike cities were the architecture of abundance. Now the abundant age is past, and the validity of all the things we took to be architectural certainties is called into question.

The best-known architects of the day create stunning forms and impressive details, but there is little substance behind them. It's not that the architects don't know better. They do. We all do, by now. Modern architecture is empty because we still lack the courage to face its consequences.

[1] *The New York Times*, Mar. 13, 1977.
[2] *Not Man Apart*, Mid-March, 1977.

I pushed a button, a few minutes ago, to light eight rows of fluorescent fixtures in a huge office space, simply to see if I'd left an old tweed jacket there. I didn't even think about what would happen in addition to all that lighting when I touched the switch; my judgment was so well deactivated by a half century of power company advertising. I didn't think about the all-too-familiar consequences of wasted electricity. It's too bad I didn't have to go through a ten-minute countdown in order to energize that circuit. Then I might have thought before I acted.

When I pushed that lighting button (instead of simply waiting for a moment, letting my eyes adjust to the darkness, and then looking for the jacket at the desk and chair I'd been using), I caused another bit of this American land to be stripped in the search for coal, or another bit of lethal radiation to swell the containment vessel of a nuclear power plant, or another cupful of oil to be precariously conveyed in some tanker. I knew better but I didn't want to think about all the consequences. Obviously, I had not yet made a solid commitment to saving electricity.

There are, of course, those who would say that my button pushing was actually patriotic, generating, as it did, not only the need for more electricity but wealth and jobs as well; but the hollowness of such arguments is increasingly apparent. We know where such reasoning has led us in the past.

Life without the courage to face consequences is cowardice, and life teems with it today. Look at the headlines. The incredible cowardice shown by a terrorist in the taking of children as hostages is monstrously embarrassing, yet the cowardice of his act gets overlooked in most accounts of the event. He arrives home to a hero's welcome.

Who would have imagined a time would come when cowards were called heroes!

Cowardice in the practice of architecture and the cowardice of the terrorist are worlds apart, but their effects can be equally long-lasting; a building can destroy land and waste resources for a hundred years or more.

Values

How far down this list should the paving over of *100 acres of prime farmland* be pegged?

1. Terrorism
2. Hostage-taking
3. Skyjacking
4. Kidnapping
5. Assault with a deadly weapon
6. Rape
7. Vandalism
8. Graffiti
9. Litter
10. Obscene phone calls

Should such farm destruction follow number 3? Number 4? Number 5? Or should the mere paving of land not even appear on a list like this? It's hard to attempt value judgments when human lives and property are weighed against land values, isn't it? And yet the question has got to be faced. We must put values on all things if we are to act responsibly.

How much am *I* worth? Is my life equal to one square foot of mature forest land? Two feet? An acre? A square mile? How about a hundred acres or a whole state—how many human lives are *they* worth? Before rejecting such speculation as irrelevant nonsense, remember the kinds of things we go to war for.

In the Great Library of Heaven there are said to be ancient books in which the values of all things are written, but we can't get inside the gates, let alone see the books. We must work such things out for ourselves. There seems to be some urgency about the matter, too, if a lot of very impressive people are to be believed. It's awfully late in the day for us architects to be still dragging our feet on the question of life values. Obviously, you wouldn't want to weigh, *for someone else's conscience*, the exact value of an arm or a leg, a tree or a pond. But responsible living must be based on some rational system of values.

Maybe, of course, just getting the matter aired is enough; maybe if we do nothing more than acknowledge the existence of values other than those shown on the bodily-injury and property-damage tables of insurance companies we'll have made a start. I don't know. I *do* know that we're wrecking this country with our failure to face the consequences of our acts.

Don't misunderstand. We ask surgeons to do things we'd be too squeamish to do, but, all squeamishness aside, few of us have any *moral* objections to surgery. Squeamishness is not cowardice. It's a different story, however, when it comes to, say, plywood. We'd not only be squeamish about watching the slaughter of a mighty forest, many of us, face to face with its moment of extinction, might balk and go for doing nothing instead, on some sort of *moral* ground. In the forest, the consequences of a plywood panel might tend to outweigh our need for it. And yet, out of sight, out of mind; we reestablish our special kind of irresponsibility with the next forest products specification.

CHAPTER TWO

Reverence for Life

I'm sure I heard about chlorophyll and photosynthesis when I was in school, but I don't believe they ever struck me as having any more importance than, say, the Declaration of Independence—or geometry. I doubt if they were even intended to. They were simply part of the stuff I had to learn in order to graduate. No one ever impressed upon me—or upon anyone else, apparently, judging from the state of things—the astonishing priority held by the green plants of the third planet: *priority number one.*

Take away all governments and armies, take away all businesses and industries, take away all communications; take away cars, houses, cities, hospitals, schools and libraries; take away electricty, clothes, medicine, and police; take away everything, in fact, but the green plants, and most of us would survive. But take away the plants and we would all die. That's how important they are.

Now, wouldn't you think that something that important—that vital—would have been communicated to the architects and engineers of America at some time during their education? Wouldn't you think that the value of land and the health of plants, each more precious than gold, would have been made the two top considerations by anyone about to tamper with the surface of the earth? You'd think so, all right, but in all the talk about planning and environment those central facts are almost never heard.

Green plants turn sunlight into food and fuel. They take inedible earth minerals and water and carbon dioxide, and, holding them up to the sun, give us food and fuel and oxygen in return. Green plants are all that keep the soil from washing away.

Now take a look at what *we* do. Everything we build fails. It doesn't collapse or explode or melt, but it kills all the land it touches, from the mine to the site.

Few construction practices today are based on reverence for life, but the *next* architecture of America will have to be. Its central rule will be this: improve the land when you build, or don't build there. Then we'll be forced to revive the most devastated of sites first. Slums. Worn-out farmland. Strip mines. Old parking lots. They're the kinds of places on and in which to build, and the results can be glorious—a whole new architecture in which you won't be quite sure where the land ends and the buildings begin.

Freedom of expression under really tight restrictions will give our cities character again. They'll not only be healthy, and healthful, they'll be beautiful, too. A wind-twisted tree growing out of a crack in the rock is a far more moving expression of life than is the same kind of tree rising monotonously from the well-watered rows of a nursery. An ancient city speaks to the poet and the artist in us because it has that same life-expression as the gnarled tree. It grew under natural restraints we thought we could escape forever. That's why our cities and suburbs look no more interesting than the tree-rows in the nursery. That's why our cities and suburbs have failed. We've created so much convenience and ease we've turned ourselves into an artificial people, with artificial values, who live precariously far from the roots of life. If you don't believe it, just listen to what most people are talking about. Look at what most of us are buying at the supermarket.

The Empty City

I used to wonder what would happen to the world if all the people were to disappear. In my imagination, I arranged this by slipping something into the water supply, and painlessly killing us. Nowadays, having mellowed a bit, I simply send us all off into a pleasant sort of limbo from which we can watch the miracle of regeneration take place. The empty city is a theme already overworked by film writers, but they always choose to see it as disaster; the late-night movies all seem to have been made before Earth Day.

Take the Empire State Building, for instance. From what cause might the first of its windows be shattered? A hurricane? A migrating bird? Charlton Heston? It doesn't matter; the point is that once the first pane was broken, life would begin to reawaken the silent corridors, as birds and then insects and seedlings—along with all the colonies of parasites to which they are hosts—began to set up housekeeping in what from then onward, forever, would be wilderness again, and the famous old building would accelerate its currently imperceptible march toward the bottom of the sea. The timetables, of course, are unknown to us, but surely, long before the Great Collapse of the Empire State Building, trees and flowers would have begun to grow from hundreds of its windows, there above the new forests of Thirty-Fourth Street.

Or take Broadway: when would the first tree seedling sprout from all its lifeless asphalt? Probably sooner than you'd think; I saw a blade of grass

Preface

You don't have to be very wise or very perceptive to see what a mess we've made of our beautiful earth. We're even paving large portions of our *national parks!*

To our grandparents, "the good old days" were those of a society just beginning to emerge from its pastoral phase, society delighted with every new invention. To us, "the good old days" sounds prenuclear, uncomplicated, low key, and generally rather wholesome. Whether we and our grandparents deceive ourselves about all that is, of course, open to question, but it is a fact that in those times that are gone forever, hazardous substances were less virulent, terrorism was unknown, and human society was thought to have continuing prospects for improvement.

Now think about what "the good old days" will mean to our children: just what they see around them today. It will be against this norm that they will measure the even greater horrors to come—unless we can start to turn in some new direction right now, unless the embryonic, and still largely misguided, environmental movement starts to produce the sweeping changes that must be made if we are to have any hope of survival.

I leave for other minds the solutions to such problems as the nuclear ones, geotoxification, desertification, and overpopulation. But I do have the temerity to offer some thoughts on the ways in which the *built* world has got to be changed. It is, after all, more visible, more manageable, than radiation; its effects are more easily measured than those of desert growth. We can tell from our man-made environment, sometimes at a single glance, whether we're getting deeper into or climbing out of trouble. For this we don't have to wait two or three generations, as we must to see if we've caused genetic damage or if we've melted the polar ice. Architecture of every kind, as slowly as it sometimes seems to evolve, is faster than all that. And we can get started on the new kind right away.

Malcolm Wells
Gentle Architecture

Ecotopia

The first shock hit me at the moment I stepped onto the street. There was a strange hush over everything. I expected to encounter something at least a little like the exciting bustle of our cities—cars honking, taxis swooping, clots of people pushing about in the hurry of urban life. What I found, when I had gotten over my surprise at the quiet, was that Market Street, once a mighty boulevard striking through the city down to the waterfront, has become a mall planted with thousands of trees. The "street" itself, on which electric taxis, minibuses, and delivery carts purr along, has shrunk to a two-lane affair. The remaining space, which is huge, is occupied by bicycle lanes, fountains, sculptures, kiosks, and absurd little gardens surrounded by benches. Over it all hangs the almost sinister quiet, punctuated by the whirr of bicycles and cries of children.

Despite the quiet, the streets are full of people, though not in Manhattan densities. (Some foot traffic has been displaced to lacy bridges which connect one skyscraper to another, sometimes 15 or 20 stories up.) Since practically the whole street area is "sidewalk," nobody worries about obstructions—or about the potholes which, as they develop in the pavement, are planted with flowers.

Scattered here and there are large conical-roofed pavilions, with a kiosk in the center selling papers, comic books, magazines, fruit juices, and snacks. (Also cigarettes—the Ecotopians have *not* managed to stamp out smoking!) The pavilions turn out to be stops on the minibus system, and people wait there out of the rain. These buses are comical battery-driven contraptions, resembling the antique cable cars that San Franciscans were once so fond of. They are driverless, and are steered and stopped by an electronic gadget that follows wires buried in the street. (A safety bumper stops them in case someone fails to get out of the way.)

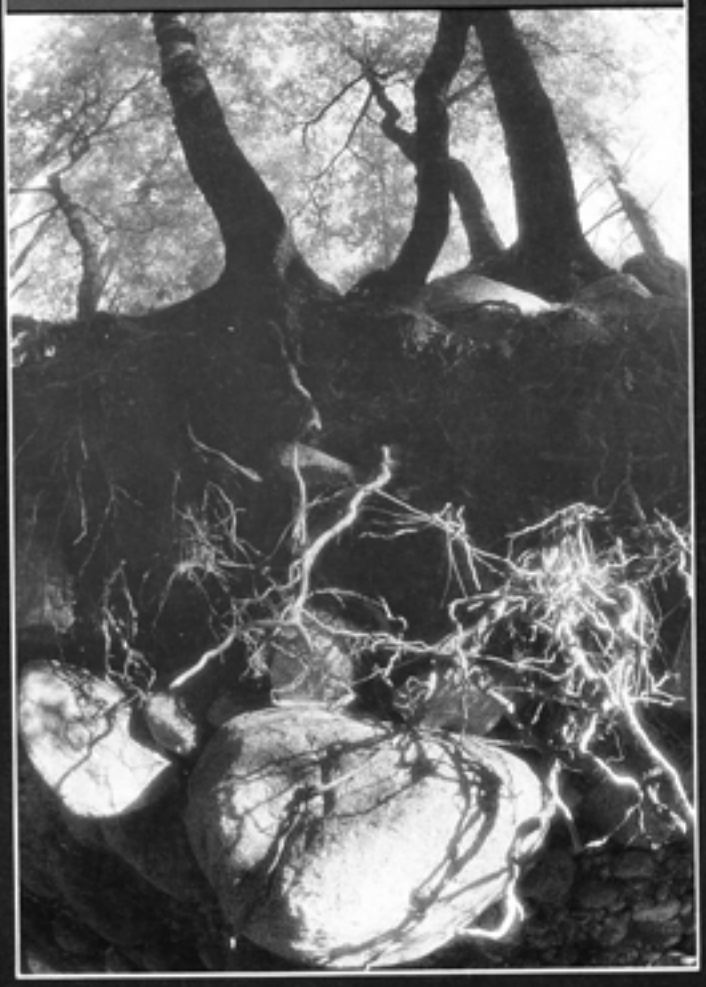
the great downtown skyscrapers, once the headquarters of far-flung corporations, have been turned into apartments! Further inquiries will be needed to get a clear picture of this development, but the story I heard repeatedly on the streets today is that the former outlying residential areas have largely been abandoned. Many three-story buildings had in any case been heavily damaged by the earthquake of 1982. Thousands of cheaply built row houses in newer districts (scornfully labelled "ticky-tacky boxes" by my informants) have been sacked of their wiring, glass, and hardware, and bulldozed away. The residents now live downtown, in buildings that contain not only apartments but also nurseries, grocery stores, and restaurants, as well as the shops and offices on the ground floor.

The bucolic atmosphere of the new San Francisco can perhaps best be seen in the fact that, down Market Street and some other streets, creeks now run. These had earlier, at great expense, been put into huge culverts underground, as is usual in cities. The Ecotopians spent even more to bring them up to ground level again. So now on this major boulevard you may see a charming series of little falls, with water gurgling and splashing, and channels lined with rocks, trees, bamboos, ferns.

Ecotopia

Essays by Gary Snyder

The Practice of the Wild



sometimes that the world is hostile to human life—he says it chills us and kills us. But how could we *be* were it not for this planet that provided our very shape? Two conditions—gravity and a livable temperature range between freezing and boiling—have given us fluids and flesh. The trees we climb and the ground we walk on have given us five fingers and toes. The "place" (from the root *plat*, broad, spreading, flat) gave us far-seeing eyes, the streams and breezes gave us versatile tongues and whorly ears. The land gave us a stride, and the lake a dive. The amazement gave us our kind of mind. We should be thankful for that, and take nature's stricter lessons with some grace.

Understanding the Commons

I stood with my climbing partner on the summit of Glacier Peak looking all ways round, ridge after ridge and peak after peak, as far as we could see. To the west across Puget Sound were the farther peaks of the Olympic Mountains. He said: "You mean there's a senator for all this?" As in the Great Basin, crossing desert after desert, range after range, it is easy to think there are vast spaces on earth yet unadministered, perhaps forgotten, or unknown (the endless sweep of spruce forest in Alaska and Canada)—but it is all mapped and placed in some domain. In North America there is a lot that is in public domain, which has its problems, but at least they are problems we are all enfranchised to work on. David Foreman, founder of the Earth First! movement, recently stated his radical provenance. Not out of Social Justice, Left Politics, or Feminism did I come—says David—but from the Public Lands Conservation movement—the solid stodgy movement that goes back to the thirties and before. Yet these land and wildlife issues were what politicized John Muir, John Wesley Powell, and Aldo Leopold—the abuses of public land.

American public lands are the twentieth-century incarnation of a much older institution known across Eurasia—in English called the

"commons"—which was the ancient mode of both protecting and managing the wilds of the self-governing regions. It worked well enough until the age of market economies, colonialism, and imperialism. Let me give you a kind of model of how the commons worked.

Between the extremes of deep wilderness and the private plots of the farmstead lies a territory which is not suitable for crops. In earlier times it was used jointly by the members of a given tribe or village. This area, embracing both the wild and the semi-wild, is of critical importance. It is necessary for the health of the wilderness because it adds big habitat, overflow territory, and room for wildlife to fly and run. It is essential even to an agricultural village economy because its natural diversity provides the many necessities and amenities that the privately held plots cannot. It enriches the agrarian diet with game and fish. The shared land supplies firewood, poles and stone for building, clay for the kiln, herbs, dye plants, and much else, just as in a foraging economy. It is especially important as seasonal or full-time open range for cattle, horses, goats, pigs, and sheep.

In the abstract the sharing of a natural area might be thought of as a matter of access to "common pool resources" with no limits or controls on individual exploitation. The fact is that such sharing developed over millennia and always within territorial and social contexts. In the peasant societies of both Asia and Europe there were customary forms that gave direction to the joint use of land. They did not grant free access to outsiders, and there were controls over entry and use by member households. The commons has been defined as "the undivided land belonging to the members of a local community as a whole." This definition fails to make the point that the commons is both specific land *and* the traditional community institution that determines the carrying capacity for its various subunits and defines the rights and obligations of those who use it, with penalties for lapses. Because it is traditional and *local*, it is not identical with today's "public domain," which is land held and managed by a

central government. Under a national state such management may be destructive (as it is becoming in Canada and the United States) or benign (I have no good examples)—but in no case is it locally managed. One of the ideas in the current debate on how to reform our public lands is that of returning them to regional control.

An example of traditional management: what would keep one household from bringing in more and more stock and tempting everyone toward overgrazing? In earlier England and in some contemporary Swiss villages (Netting, 1976), the commoner could only turn out to common range as many head of cattle as he could feed over the winter in his own corrals. This meant that no one was allowed to increase his herd from outside with a cattle drive just for summer grazing. (This was known in Norman legal language as the rule of *levancy and couchancy*: you could only run the stock that you actually had "standing and sleeping" within winter quarters.)

The commons is the contract a people make with their local natural system. The word has an instructive history: it is formed of *ko*, "together," with (Greek) *moin*, "held in common." But the Indo-European root *mei* means basically to "move, to go, to change." This had an archaic special meaning of "exchange of goods and services within a society as regulated by custom or law." I think it might well refer back to the principle of gift economies: "the gift must always move." The root comes into Latin as *munus*, "service performed for the community" and hence "municipality."

There is a well-documented history of the commons in relation to the village economies of Europe and England. In England from the time of the Norman Conquest the enfeoffed knights and overlords began to gain control over the many local commons. Legislation (the Statute of Merton, 1235) came to their support. From the fifteenth century on the landlord class, working with urban mercantile guilds and government offices, increasingly fenced off village-held land and turned it over to private interests. The enclosure movement was backed by the big wool corporations who found profit from sheep to

be much greater than that from farming. The wool business, with its exports to the Continent, was an early agribusiness that had a destructive effect on the soils and dislodged peasants. The arguments for enclosure in England—efficiency, higher production—ignored social and ecological effects and served to cripple the sustainable agriculture of some districts. The enclosure movement was stepped up again in the eighteenth century: between 1709 and 1869 almost five million acres were transferred to private ownership, one acre in every seven. After 1869 there was a sudden reversal of sentiment called the "open space movement" which ultimately halted enclosures and managed to preserve, via a spectacular lawsuit against the lords of fourteen manors, the Epping Forest.

Karl Polanyi (1975) says that the enclosures of the eighteenth century created a population of rural homeless who were forced in their desperation to become the world's first industrial working class. The enclosures were tragic both for the human community and for natural ecosystems. The fact that England now has the least forest and wildlife of all the nations of Europe has much to do with the enclosures. The takeover of commons land on the European plain also began about five hundred years ago, but one-third of Europe is still not privatized. A survival of commons practices in Swedish law allows anyone to enter private farmland to pick berries or mushrooms, to cross on foot, and to camp out of sight of the house. Most of the former commons land is now under the administration of government land agencies.

A commons model can still be seen in Japan, where there are farm villages tucked in shoestring valleys, rice growing in the *tanbo* on the bottoms, and the vegetable plots and horticulture located on the slightly higher ground. The forested hills rising high above the valleys are the commons—in Japanese called *iriai*, "joint entry." The boundary between one village and the next is often the very crests of the ridges. On the slopes of Mt. Hiei in Kyoto prefecture, north of the remote Tendai Buddhist training temples of Yokkawa, I came on

men and women of Ohara village bundling up slender brush-cuttings for firewood. They were within the village land. In the innermost mountains of Japan there are forests that are beyond the reach of the use of any village. In early feudal times they were still occupied by remnant hunting peoples, perhaps Japanese-Ainu mixed-blood survivors. Later some of these wildlands were appropriated by the government and declared "Imperial Forests." Bears became extinct in England by the thirteenth century, but they are still found throughout the more remote Japanese mountains, even occasionally just north of Kyoto.

In China the management of mountain lands was left largely to the village councils—all the central government wanted was taxes. Taxes were collected in kind, and local specialties were highly prized. The demands of the capital drew down Kingfisher feathers, Musk Deer glands, Rhinoceros hides, and other exotic products of the mountains and streams, as well as rice, timber, and silk. The village councils may have resisted overexploitation of their resources, but when the edge of spreading deforestation reached their zone (the fourteenth century seems to be a turning point for the forests of heartland China), village land management crumbled. Historically, the seizure of the commons—east or west—by either the central government or entrepreneurs from the central economy has resulted in degradation of wild lands and agricultural soils. There is sometimes good reason to kill the Golden Goose: the quick profits can be reinvested elsewhere at a higher return.

In the United States, as fast as the Euro-American invaders forcefully displaced the native inhabitants from their own sorts of traditional commons, the land was opened to the new settlers. In the arid West, however, much land was never even homesteaded, let alone patented. The native people who had known and loved the white deserts and blue mountains were now scattered or enclosed on reservations, and the new inhabitants (miners and a few ranchers) had

neither the values nor the knowledge to take care of the land. An enormous area was de facto public domain, and the Forest Service, the Park Service, and the Bureau of Land Management were formed to manage it. (The same sorts of land in Canada and Australia are called "Crown Lands," a reflection of the history of English rulers trying to wrest the commons from the people.)

In the contemporary American West the people who talk about a "sagebrush rebellion" might sound as though they were working for a return of commons land to local control. The truth is the sagebrush rebels have a lot yet to learn about the place—they are still relative newcomers, and their motives are not stewardship but development. Some westerners are beginning to think in long-range terms, and these don't argue for privatization but for better range management and more wilderness preservation.

The environmental history of Europe and Asia seems to indicate that the best management of commons land was that which was locally based. The ancient severe and often irreversible deforestation of the Mediterranean Basin was an extreme case of the misuse of the commons by the forces that had taken its management away from regional villages (Thirgood, 1981). The situation in America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the reverse. The truly local people, the Native Americans, were decimated and demoralized, and the new population was composed of adventurers and entrepreneurs. Without some federal presence the poachers, cattle grazers, and timber barons would have had a field day. Since about 1960 the situation has turned again: the agencies that were once charged with conservation are increasingly perceived as accomplices of the extractive industries, and local people—who are beginning to be actually local—seek help from environmental organizations and join in defense of the public lands.

Destruction extends worldwide and "encloses" local commons, local peoples. The village and tribal people who live in the tropical forests are literally bulldozed out of their homes by international

logging interests in league with national governments. A well-worn fiction used in dispossessing inhabitory people is the declaration that the commonly owned tribal forests are either (1) private property or (2) public domain. When the commons are closed and the villagers must buy energy, lumber, and medicine at the company store, they are pauperized. This is one effect of what Ivan Illich calls "the 500-year war against subsistence."

So what about the so-called tragedy of the commons? This theory, as now popularly understood, seems to state that when there are open access rights to a resource, say pasturage, everyone will seek to maximize his take, and overgrazing will inevitably ensue. What Garrett Hardin and his associates are talking about should be called "the dilemma of common-pool resources." This is the problem of overexploitation of "unowned" resources by individuals or corporations that are caught in the bind of "If I don't do it the other guy will" (Hardin and Baden, 1977). Oceanic fisheries, global water cycles, the air, soil fertility—all fall into this class. When Hardin et al. try to apply their model to the historic commons it doesn't work, because they fail to note that the commons was a social institution which, historically, was never without rules and did not allow unlimited access (Cox, 1985).

In Asia and parts of Europe, villages that in some cases date back to neolithic times still oversee the commons with some sort of council. Each commons is an entity with limits, and the effects of overuse will be clear to those who depend on it. There are three possible contemporary fates for common pool resources. One is privatization, one is administration by government authority, and the third is that—when possible—they become part of a true commons, of reasonable size, managed by local inhabitory people. The third choice may no longer be possible as stated here. Locally based community or tribal (as in Alaska) landholding corporations or cooperatives seem to be surviving here and there. But operating as it seems they

must in the world marketplace, they are wrestling with how to balance tradition and sustainability against financial success. The Sealaska Corporation of the Tlingit people of southeast Alaska has been severely criticized (even from within) for some of the old-growth logging it let happen.

We need to make a world-scale "Natural Contract" with the oceans, the air, the birds in the sky. The challenge is to bring the whole victimized world of "common pool resources" into the Mind of the Commons. As it stands now, any resource on earth that is not nailed down will be seen as fair game to the timber buyers or petroleum geologists from Osaka, Rotterdam, or Boston. The pressures of growing populations and the powers of entrenched (but fragile, confused, and essentially leaderless) economic systems warp the likelihood of any of us seeing clearly. Our perception of how entrenched they are may also be something of a delusion.

Sometimes it seems unlikely that a society as a whole can make wise choices. Yet there is no choice but to call for the "recovery of the commons"—and this in a modern world which doesn't quite realize what it has lost. Take back, like the night, that which is shared by all of us, that which is our larger being. There will be no "tragedy of the commons" greater than this: if we do not recover the commons—regain personal, local, community, and peoples' direct involvement in sharing (in *being*) the web of the wild world—that world will keep slipping away. Eventually our complicated industrial capitalist/socialist mixes will bring down much of the living system that supports us. And, it is clear, the loss of a local commons heralds the end of self-sufficiency and signals the doom of the vernacular culture of the region. This is still happening in the far corners of the world.

The commons is a curious and elegant social institution within which human beings once lived free political lives while weaving through natural systems. The commons is a level of organization of human society that includes the nonhuman. The level above the local commons is the bioregion. Understanding the commons and its role within the larger regional culture is one more step toward integrating ecology with economy.

Bioregional Perspectives

> The Region is the elsewhere of civilization. MAX CAFARD

The little nations of the past lived within territories that conformed to some set of natural criteria. The culture areas of the major native groups of North America overlapped, as one would expect, almost exactly with broadly defined major bioregions (Kroeber, 1947). That older human experience of a fluid, indistinct, but genuine home region was gradually replaced—across Eurasia—by the arbitrary and often violently imposed boundaries of emerging national states. These imposed borders sometimes cut across biotic areas and ethnic zones alike. Inhabitants lost ecological knowledge and community solidarity. In the old ways, the flora and fauna and landforms are *part of the culture*. The world of culture and nature, which is actual, is almost a shadow world now, and the insubstantial world of political jurisdictions and rarefied economies is what passes for reality. We live in a backwards time. We can regain some small sense of that old membership by discovering the original lineaments of our land and steering—at least in the home territory and in the mind—by those rather than the borders of arbitrary nations, states, and counties.

Regions are "interpenetrating bodies in semi-simultaneous spaces" (Cafard, 1989). Biota, watersheds, landforms, and elevations are just a few of the facets that define a region. Culture areas, in the same way, have subsets such as dialects, religions, sorts of arrow-release, types of tools, myth motifs, musical scales, art styles. One sort of regional outline would be floristic. The coastal Douglas Fir, as the definitive tree of the Pacific Northwest, is an example. (I knew

Outside Lies Magic

Regaining History
and Awareness in
Everyday Places

John R. Stilgoe

WALKER AND COMPANY
NEW YORK

One

Beginnings

Get out now. Not just outside, but beyond the trap of the programmed electronic age so gently closing around so many people at the end of our century. Go outside, move deliberately, then relax, slow down, look around. Do not jog. Do not run. Forget about blood pressure and arthritis, cardiovascular rejuvenation and weight reduction. Instead pay attention to everything that abuts the rural road, the city street, the suburban boulevard. Walk. Stroll. Saunter. Ride a bike, and coast along a lot. Explore.

Abandon, even momentarily, the sleek modern technology that consumes so much time and money now, and seek out the resting place of a technology almost forgotten. Go outside and walk a bit, long enough to forget programming, long enough to take in and record new surroundings.

Flex the mind, a little at first, then a lot. Savor something special. Enjoy the best-kept secret around—the ordinary, everyday landscape that rewards any explorer, that touches any explorer with magic.

The whole concatenation of wild and artificial things, the natural ecosystem as modified by people over the centuries, the built environment layered over layers, the eerie mix of sounds and smells and glimpses neither natural nor crafted—all of it is free for the taking, for the taking in. Take it, take it in, take in more every weekend, every day, and quickly it becomes the theater that intrigues, relaxes, fascinates, seduces, and above all expands any mind focused on it. Outside lies utterly ordinary space open to any casual explorer willing to find the extraordinary. Outside lies unprogrammed awareness that at times becomes directed serendipity. Outside lies magic.

More than twenty years ago, I began teaching the art of exploration at Harvard University, and I have been at it ever since. My courses and the books I have written focus on particular subjects—the creation of a national landscape as the treasure common to all citizens, the seacoast built environment, the suburban landscape after 1820, the ways modernization reshapes traditional spaces, among others—but the real focus of all my teaching is the necessity to get out and look around, to see acutely, to notice, to make connections.

Late in the 1980s I stopped distributing schedules of lectures. On the first day of class I introduce each course, show slides that outline the subject matter, hand out a reading list and examination schedule, and speak a bit about the sequence of topics. But I refuse to provide a schedule of topics. Undergraduate and graduate students alike love schedules, love knowing the order of subjects and the satisfaction of ticking off one line after another, class after class, week after week. Confronted by a professor who explains that schedules produce a desire, sometimes an obsession, to "get through the material," they grow uneasy. They like to get through the material. They like knowing the halfway point, the near end. I assure them that examinations will occur on given dates, that the term paper is due on the day I announce on the course information sheet, but then I explain that the lack of a topic schedule encourages all of us to explore a bit, to answer questions that arise in class or office hours, to follow leads we discover while studying something else. Each of the courses, I ex-

plain patiently, really concerns exploration, and exploration happens best by accident, by letting way lead on to way, not by following a schedule down a track.

My students resist the lack of topic structure because they are the children of structured learning and structured entertainment. Over and over I explain that if they are afraid of a course on exploring, they may never have the confidence to go exploring on their own. I encourage them to take a chance, and many do. My courses range in size from ten students around a seminar table to fifty in a traditional classroom, and I get to know my students. Now, more than twenty years after teaching my first course, I find myself knowing a great number of alumni. They tell me that I teach something of enduring value, not a mass of facts and figures, but a technique that produces surprise and delight, that enlivens otherwise dull days, that frees them from the ordinariness of so much learning. Day after day their postcards and letters, and now faxes and E-mail messages, arrive and sometimes I find their discoveries—and the ways they made their discoveries—so intriguing and insightful that I begin my classes by reading a line or two, then asking my students to comment.

My students often stare at me in amazement. They ask what kind of former students I have. Are

they reliable or slightly odd? One has just noticed escape hatches in the floors of inter-city buses and inquired about their relation to escape hatches in the roofs of new school buses. Another has reported a clutch of Virginia-Kentucky barns in an Idaho valley and wonders if the structures suggest a migration pattern. A third has found New York City limestone facades eroding and is trying to see if limestone erodes faster on the shady sides of streets. A fourth has noticed that playground equipment has changed rapidly in the past decade and wonders if children miss galvanized-steel jungle gyms. Another has been trying to learn why some restaurants attract men and women in certain professions and repel others, and another (from the same class years ago) has found a pattern in coffee shop location. Yet another reports that he can separate eastbound and westbound passengers at O'Hare Airport by the colors of their raincoats. I look at my students and encourage their comments, suggesting that they consider the alumni remarks in terms of safety legislation or wagon-train routing or regional differences in clothing styles. By the middle of the term, my students respond, having gotten over their fear of subjects about which little is written.

Learning to look around sparks curiosity, encourages serendipity. Amazing connections get made that way; questions are raised—and sometimes an-

swered—that would never be otherwise. Any explorer sees things that reward not just a bit of scrutiny but a bit of thought, sometimes a lot of thought over years. Put the things in spatial context or arrange them in time, and they acquire value immediately. Moreover, even the most ordinary of things help make sense of others, even of great historical movements. Noticing dates on cast-iron storm-drain grates and fire hydrants introduces something of the shift of iron-founding from Worcester and Pittsburgh south to Chattanooga and Birmingham. The storm-drain grate and the fire hydrant are touchable, direct links with larger concepts, portals into the past of industrialization.

Exploring as I teach it depends heavily on understanding the pasts that swirl around any explorer of ordinary landscape. Unlike so many historians entranced by great political, economic, and social movements, I emphasize that the built environment is a sort of palimpsest, a document in which one layer of writing has been scraped off, and another one applied. An acute, mindful explorer who holds up the palimpsest to the light sees something of the earlier message, and a careful, confident explorer of the built environment soon sees all sorts of traces of past generations. Students with no particular interest in schoolroom history involving presidential elections,

treaties, and wars often awaken to the richness of spatial or visual history, simply because objects and even landscapes from the past have shaped their lives and shape them still.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, experts advised men to have their kitchens painted apple-green. The experts believed that apple-green quieted nervous people, and especially wives beginning to think of suffrage, of careers beyond the home. Today the explorer of color schemes finds in old houses and apartments the apple-green paint still gracing the inside of the cabinet under the kitchen sink, and the hallways of old police stations and insane asylums. But did apple-green once cover the walls of urban schoolrooms? The explorer who starts to wonder at paint schemes in apartments, houses, and schoolrooms may wonder at the pastels that cover the walls of police stations today and the bold, primary colors everywhere in public elementary schools but absent from private ones. A college student only slightly intrigued by period color schemes but awakened to the art of exploration has a subject and skill that reward countless hours spent outdoors, in cabs approaching airline terminals, and in art museums. History is on the wall, but only those willing to look up from newspaper or laptop computer glimpse it and ponder.

A lot more is on the wall, too, however, and exploring ordinary landscape sharpens the appreciation and understanding of subjects from art to physics. No longer am I surprised when my students tell me that what they learned in my courses paid immediate dividends in others. Exploring a painting independently, not as a mere follower of some art critic, reveals details and patterns critics have missed, as one of my seacoast-environment-seminar students told me when she began studying the trees in the coastal-zone paintings of Rembrandt. And exploring the context in which a physics experiment occurs, really seeing it in detail and realizing that something is happening to the measuring device as well as to the material being charged with electrons, leads to discovery that impresses the physics professor, as a student in my suburbs seminar related to me before lapsing into scientific jargon I scarcely followed. When I hear such reports, I wonder if more students would do better in elementary and high school if teachers taught more about individual exploration of subjects and less about sliding smoothly along observational ruts.

Exploration is a liberal art, because it is an art that liberates, that frees, that opens away from narrowness. And it is fun.

Ordinary exploration begins in casual indirection,

in the juiciest sort of indecision, in deliberate, then routine fits of absence of mind. Follow the sidewalk, follow the street, turn right or left as the wind and sunlight or driving rain suggest. Walk three quarters of the way around the block, then strike out on a vector, a more or less straight line toward nothing in particular, follow the downgrade or the newer pavement, head for the shadow of trees ahead, strike off toward the sound of the belfry clock, follow the scent of the bakery back door, drift downhill toward the river. Bicycle to the store, then ride down the alley toward the railroad tracks, bump across the uneven bricks by the loading dock grown up in thistle and chicory, pedal harder uphill toward the Victorian houses converted into funeral homes, make a quick circuit of the school yard, coast downhill following the sinuous curves of asphalt covering the newly laid sewer line, tail the city bus a mile or two, swoop through a multilevel parking garage, glide past the firehouse back door, slow down and catch your reflection in plate-glass windows.

Why not explore by car? Automobile exploring insulates the motorist from every sort of nuance. The car moves too fast for its driver to notice much, and when it slows, it obstructs then jams traffic. Rarely can it safely pull over to the side of the road, onto the shoulder legally intended to receive it but nowadays

harboring weed-masked ditches, broken glass, nails, tangled barbed wire, smashed shopping carts. Always its engine drowns out whispers; always its windows, its air-conditioning shut out odors. Always it bulks too large to turn easily into eight-foot-wide roads left from wagon days. Even when it is equipped with four-wheel-drive, trees and gates and mud and great rocks herd it back onto pavement, onto rutted roads meandering between obstacles. But worst of all for the explorer, the car attracts notice. Exploring requires the cloak of invisibility bicyclists and walkers quickly take for granted.

Bicycling and walking offer unique entry into exploration itself. Landscape, the built environment, ordinary space that surrounds the adult explorer, is something not meant to be interpreted, to be read, to be understood. It is neither a museum gallery nor a television show. Unlike almost everything else to which adults turn their attention, the concatenation of natural and built form surrounding the explorer is fundamentally mysterious and often maddeningly complex. Exploring it first awakens the dormant resiliency of youth, the easy willingness to admit to making a wrong turn and going back a block, the comfortable understanding that some explorations take more than an afternoon, the certain knowledge that lots of things in the wide world just down the

street make no immediate sense. But exploring not only awakens attitudes and skills made dormant by programmed education, jobs, and the hectic dash from dry cleaner to grocery store to dentist. It sharpens the skills and makes explorers realize that all the skills acquired in the probing and poking at ordinary space, everything from noticing nuances in house paint to seeing great geographical patterns from a hilltop almost no one bothers to climb, are cross-training for dealing with the vicissitudes of life. Exploring ordinary landscape sharpens all the skills of exploration.

Explorers quickly learn that exploring means sharpening all the senses, especially sight. Seeing intently means scrutinizing, staring, narrowing the eyes, even putting one's hand across the forehead to shade the eyes in one of the oldest of human gestures. The hand over the eyes shields them from some sideways, incident light, and cupping the hands around the eyes works even better. Spruce, pine, hemlock, and other coniferous trees become suddenly greener since the eyes see their colors as saturated, free of the blanching caused by dispersed light. And since the human eye evolved to see saturated color, cupping the hands around the eye makes possible more precise scrutinizing of even distant things, for the shielded eyes pierce the light haze that afflicts

most places nowadays and reveal distant slopes not so much as brownish or gray, but darker blue, and the trees blue-green. Any explorer learning to look soon discovers the astounding interplay of light, shadow, and color, a gorgeous interplay that never ceases to amaze.

Until the turn of the century, noticing the interplay of light and dark and the myriad effects of interacting color across the landscape meant engaging in the study of *chromatics*, sometimes called *gentleman's chromatics* or *ladies' chromatics* by professional artists, but often called *meteorology* by well-educated people who knew that weather included far more than rain or wind. A stunning collection of "atmospheric effects," everything from mirages to double rainbows to over-the-horizon glimpses called *looming*, figured in the education of well-to-do children lucky enough to get beyond the one-room schoolhouse and prepare themselves for analyzing art, especially painting. Meteorology, art history, and geography combined to explain the wealth of meaning implicit in phrases like "the light of Tuscany" or the heritage implicit in colors like raw umber or chartreuse. So long vanished that even historians of the visual retrieve its fragments with difficulty, education in visual acuity explains both the origins of careful tourism and the care with which many people not only designed and built

houses and gardens but supported efforts to beautify cities, suburbs, and even villages. Educated people looked acutely and valued landscapes and paintings and even furniture that rewarded scrutiny.

Visual education suffered first from the burgeoning of newspapers and magazines and dime-novels, all of which deflected interest toward typeset knowledge, and from lithography and other inexpensive methods of reproducing images, especially advertisements. Around the turn of the century, the proliferation of inexpensive black-and-white photography, then the spread of cinema houses, further deflected interest from exploring ordinary outdoor surroundings. The 1930s introduction of color photography for amateurs and cinematographers alike skewed attention further, but by then physics professors intrigued with Einstein's theories had catapulted college students, and high school students preparing for college, across Newtonian physics, especially Newtonian optics, to a science consisting largely of equations and interminable problem sets. By 1940, the old relation of visual acuity, physics, and analysis of art lay shattered, its only schoolroom artifact being a few minutes of instruction with a glass prism, a prism making a rainbow of colors in which few students ever see indigo, let alone wonder why Newton saw the color made by a New World dye explorers found by accident. Only

now and then does someone rummaging among heirlooms notice that amateurs seem to have made much better photographs a century ago, that the faded images show an eerie attention to composition and chiaroscuro, certainly an attention lacking in most contemporary snapshots and homemade videotapes. Going for a walk became progressively less interesting even to educated people in the 1930s and 1940s, simply because even educated people knew less and less about the mysteries of light, shadow, and color that cloak and accentuate ordinary landscape.

Nowadays almost no one who walks under deciduous trees notices that all the spots of sunlight on the walkway, whatever their different sizes, are the same shape. The elliptical shape indicates something to anyone who notices and then thinks for a few minutes, who explores where others walk or trudge or scurry. The elliptical shape means simply that the sun is not a point source of light, that it fills a very large part of the sky indeed.

As education in visual acuity diminished, then essentially ended except perhaps for lessons in the appreciation of art and a handful of elementary lessons in oil painting, seeing became less and less rewarding, and interpreting poetry and travel narratives written in earlier eras became progressively more difficult. Smoke, for example, entranced generations of educated men and women, simply because it exercised their eyes and their minds. Ordinary wood smoke pouring from a chimney appears blue against a dark background, such as black shingles, but brownish yellow against a light one, such as a blue or overcast sky. Smoke particles disperse blue rays more than they do red and yellow ones, and when the smoke is against a light background, the viewer sees the smoke as brownish yellow because the blue rays have been scattered in all directions into the incident white light, leaving mostly blended red and yellow rays to reach the explorer.

Nowadays the explorer walking or bicycling in ordinary landscape may more easily watch the changing colors of smoke from truck and bus exhausts than from chimneys channeling wood smoke, but the explorer willing to risk a bit of rain can still study the amazing changes wrought by a few droplets of water. Tobacco smoke immediately exhaled from the mouth appears blue or brown, but smoke held in the mouth, then blown out in smoke rings perhaps, is always white. And just as the moisture in the mouth coats the sooty black particles of tobacco smoke, so mist, fog, and rain coat diesel exhaust, making it appear white.

Visibility mattered to earlier generations of educated adults, and to children learning to see acutely, so changes in weather mattered too. Prolonged periods of still air make for poor visibility simply because

vast amounts of dust sink down from upper altitudes and remain near the ground until rain or snow sinks them to the surface. Sunny, windy weather sweeps dust particles high into the atmosphere and lets explorers see miles farther than they would otherwise. Rain meant not only washed air, however, but puddles everywhere, especially in shady areas beneath trees, where explorers may venture as soon as the sun appears. Peering into one sort of puddle after another, the explorer can analyze the visual phenomena related to those made by cupping hands around eyes, learning that to look at the reflection of trees in dark puddles means seeing details in excruciating clarity. To look up at the trees means having one's fringe vision dazzled by the incident sunlight, but to look down into the puddle surrounded by dark earth means to see the reflection free of annoyance. Out for a walk after the rain means not only peering into one type of puddle after another, however, but seeing how clean air opens on all sorts of reflections.

Today explorers must teach themselves the lessons of visual acuity long absent from grammar schools and universities, and they can learn only by looking hard. Out for a walk, out for a bicycle ride, the explorer looks at a new-mowed lawn and realizes that the strips look different when viewed end-on. Where the lawn mower moved away from the explorer, the swaths look lighter in color, but where the machine moved toward the explorer, the swaths look darker. The explorer eventually realizes, having stopped and scrutinized and thought, that the swaths that appear lighter do so because they reflect more light, and they reflect more light because the grass is laid down away from the explorer. Trespassing on the new-mowed lawn offers even more to ponder. At right angles, the swaths disappear completely, but from the middle of the lawn, as the explorer turns around, the light-dark relation reverses. And having noticed the light-dark relation, the explorer meandering through an ordinary suburban landscape begins to see the patterns in American lawn mowing, the lawns mowed in concentric squares, the lawns mowed diagonally to houses, the lawns that at first seem to contradict all the lessons of gentlemen's or ladies' chromatics, those lawns where the fertilizer spreader missed whole swaths. The explorer notices and ponders and notices, and even when the explorer cannot at first account for the interplay of light and shadow and color, say the bold, rich blue of the explorer's shadow when crossing the green lawn, at least the explorer has something to think about.

This is a straightforward guidebook to exploring, but not a comprehensive study of any of the things mentioned in it. It suggests that a little acute observation of ordinary things like power lines, railroad rights-of-way, post office equipment, back roads and shopping districts, alleys and the interstate highway system, fences and revitalized main streets, even motels and highway interchanges opens up larger issues that invigorate the mind, that entice understanding, that flex mental muscle, that fit the explorer for further exploring. It is a book about awareness in ordinary surroundings. It is a book about awareness that builds into mindfulness, into the enduring pleasures of noticing and thinking about what one notices.

I hope this book encourages each reader to widen his or her angle of vision, to step sideways and look at something seemingly familiar, to walk a few paces and see something utterly new.

I also hope this book makes each reader aware that his or her personal observations and encounters in the most ordinary of landscapes can and will raise questions and issues routinely avoided by programmed educational and entertainment authorities.

And I hope this book makes each reader aware that education and entertainment media teach nothing about being original, about being innovative, about being creative or inventive. How does one learn to be creative? How does one develop the ability to produce lots of new ideas, to respond to problems easily and energetically? I think the answers lie outdoors.

Exploration encourages creativity, serendipity, invention.

So read this book, then go.

Go without purpose.

Go for the going.

How to begin? As an introduction, as a straightforward guide into the art of walking or bicycling with eyes open, mind aware, body relaxed, following and noticing the skeleton framework of electric and other lines will do. After all, not long ago wise observers worried that the telegraph, telephone, and electric wires were the snare of modernism, a great net strung over the heads of the unwary, a web that snatched ideas and dreams and independence.