

THRESHOLDS 40

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SOCIO

EDITED BY JONATHAN CRISMAN

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CONTENTS

- 5 EDITORIAL:  
SOCIO-INDEMNITY AND  
OTHER MOTIVES  
— JONATHAN CRISMAN
- 11 CONJURING UTOPIA'S GHOST  
— REINHOLD MARTIN
- 21 LE CORBUSIER, THE BRISE-SOLEIL,  
AND THE SOCIO-CLIMATIC PROJECT  
OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE,  
1929-1963  
— DANIEL A. BARBER
- 33 MOVE ALONG!  
THERE IS NOTHING TO SEE  
— RANIA GHOSN
- 39 FLOW'S SOCIO-SPATIAL  
FORMATION  
— NANA LAST
- 47 COLLECTIVE EQUIPMENTS OF  
POWER: THE ROAD AND THE CITY  
— SIMONE BROTT
- 55 COLLECTIVE FORM:  
THE STATUS OF PUBLIC  
ARCHITECTURE  
— DANA CUFF
- 67 TUKTOYAKTUK: OFFSHORE OIL  
AND A NEW ARCTIC URBANISM  
— PAMELA RITCHOT
- 75 BOUNDARY LINE INFRASTRUCTURE  
— RONALD RAEI
- 83 DISSOLVING THE GREY PERIPHERY  
— NEERAJ BHATIA AND  
ALEXANDER D'HOOGHE
- 91 PARK AS PHILANTHROPY:  
BOW-WOW'S REDEVELOPMENT  
AT MIYASHITA KOEN  
— YOSHIHARU TSUKAMOTO
- 99 MUSSELS IN CONCRETE: A SOCIAL  
ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE  
— ESEN GÖKÇE ÖZDAMAR
- 105 PARTICIPATION AND/OR  
CRITICALITY? THOUGHTS ON AN  
ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE FOR  
URBAN CHANGE  
— KENNY CUPERS AND  
MARKUS MIESSEN
- 113 THE *SLUIPWEG* AND  
THE HISTORY OF DEATH  
— MARK JARZOMBK

CONTENTS

- 121 EXTRA ROOM:  
WHAT IF WE LIVED IN A  
SOCIETY WHERE OUR EVERY  
THOUGHT WAS PUBLIC?  
— GUNNAR GREEN  
AND BERNHARD  
HOPFENGÄRTNER
- 127 *SCULPTURE FIELD*: FROM THE  
SYMBOLIC TO THE TECTONIC  
— DAN HANDEL
- 135 ON *RADIATION BURN*  
— STEVE KURTZ
- 163 *CAIRO DI SOPRA IN GIÙ*:  
PERSPECTIVE, PHOTOGRAPHY,  
AND THE “EVERYDAY”  
— CHRISTIAN A. HEDRICK
- 175 HUSH  
— STEVEN BECKLY AND  
JONATHAN D. KATZ
- 189 NORCS IN NEW YORK  
— INTERBORO PARTNERS
- 209 UNCOMMON GROUND:  
AETHER, BODY, AND COMMONS  
— ZISSIS KOTIONIS
- 217 EDENS, ISLANDS, ROOMS  
— AMRITA MAHINDROO
- 225 THE PRINCE:  
BJARKE INGELS’S SOCIAL  
CONSPIRACY  
— JUSTIN FOWLER
- 233 BEYOND DOING GOOD:  
CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE AS DESIGN  
PEDAGOGY  
— HANNAH ROSE MENDOZA
- 237 AID, CAPITAL, AND THE  
HUMANITARIAN TRAP  
— JOSEPH M. WATSON
- 245 THE END OF CIVILIZATION  
— DANIEL DAOU
- 255 TOWARD A LAKE ONTARIO CITY  
— DEPARTMENT OF  
UNUSUAL CERTAINTIES
- 263 SOCIOPATHS  
— JIMENEZ LAI

COLLECTIVE  
FORM:  
THE STATUS  
OF PUBLIC  
ARCHITECTURE

DANA CUFF

“WHEN THE COURTHOUSE SQUARE  
DISAPPEARS, I DON’T SEE HOW THE  
RES PUBLICA CAN SURVIVE.”

— COLIN ROWE

In 1955, Colin Rowe and John Hejduk ventured out of Austin, Texas, traveling 30 miles south to the town of Lockhart. There, they found a form of public architecture that today seems touchingly nostalgic. In *Architectural Record* two years later, they described an unpretentious yet formally distinct courthouse, library, and prison aligned to create a civic realm that was markedly—if modestly—aspiring to be more urbane. Together, the public buildings, the courthouse square, main street, and small town grid offered a “diagrammatic coherence” to the town.<sup>1</sup>

Something about the scale of these turn-of-the-century buildings, miniaturized versions of their precedents, was worthy of remark by Rowe and Hejduk. Collections of similarly small artifacts created civic enclaves in courthouse-square towns across Texas. “Here it is the law which assumes a public significance; and it is around the secular image of the law, like architectural illustrations of a political principle, that these towns revolve. In each case, the courthouse is both visual focus and social guarantee; and in each square the reality of government made formally explicit provides the continuing assurance of order.”<sup>2</sup> It was as much the hubris as the everydayness of small-town America that struck Rowe, asserting a *res publica*, or public sphere, from the vast landscape of Texas by deploying a smattering of little buildings over the street grid.

But where is the *res publica* outside of Lockhart, in towns without courthouse or square? New Urbanists have tried to replicate such formal fashionings, but the results are less public and more pretentious. The argument forwarded here regards public architecture as an unstable and thus ambiguous construct. Over the last half century, coincident with postwar urban dispersal, the public has been reformulated as varied “communities.” Counter to romantic

ideals and common wisdom, “communities”—particularly those located in suburbs—undermine anything resembling a coherent, cosmopolitan expression of collective identity. In contrast to these fragmented, local associations, designers must now try to wring a form of public architecture from those lowly infrastructures that transcend the local—sewers, storm water channels, power grids, highways, and rail lines.

## EXPRESSING COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Typically, three criteria qualify a thing as public: use, access, and identity. The democratic dimension of public space, embodied by its use and accessibility, is intrinsic to its definition. These two criteria reflect important socio-political concerns that have been relatively well studied.<sup>3</sup> The question of identity is more complex, bearing directly on architecture and the thingness embedded in the *res publica*. As Bruno Latour notes, even the thinkers most occupied by questions about the public offer little help: “It’s not unfair to say that political philosophy has often been the victim of a strong object-avoidance tendency. From Hobbes to Rawls, from Rousseau to Habermas, ... their *res publica* does not seem to be loaded with too many things.”<sup>4</sup> Any notion of public architecture concerns things, or built forms, which symbolize entities that can be described—such as the national identity that capitol buildings exude—but also those that cannot. The public itself is a phantasm, an ideological and historical imaginary that

1 Epigraph, Colin Rowe as interviewed by Richard Ingersoll in 1989; republished in Colin Rowe and Alexander Caragone, *As I Was Saying* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 3:326.

2 Rowe, *As I Was Saying*, 1:57.

3 See, for example, Evan McKenzie, *Privatopia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Setha Low, *Behind the Gates* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris and Tridib Banerjee, *Urban Design Downtown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

4 Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public,” in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 16-17.

shifts imperceptibly, thus complicating an “aesthetics of the collective,” or how we present ourselves to ourselves. At stake for architects is their very history, since public and institutional structures are the building types that advance both the discipline and individual careers.

In terms of collective identity, Rowe and Hejduk promoted a well-established political notion of public space. With the courthouse and the prison as urban anchors, a social and spatial construction of justice is manifest. The godfather of this perspective is Jürgen Habermas, whose model of the public sphere depends upon political debate in the open, as if situated in some hybrid between a Roman forum and a Parisian café. In this view, the crux of our collective sphere is the sociology of difference and when located in public space, we confront others unlike ourselves. Only then do tolerance, collective identity, shared values, and social norms evolve. Marxists like Lefebvre describe a related “right to the city,” while Dutch urbanists Hajer and Reijndorp call for urban cultural friction.<sup>5</sup> But since when might we imagine that face-to-face political debate is our collective medium? This theoretical view has outlasted our spatial realities.

It also begs economic reality. As Sarah Whiting argues, “Lament-drenched, post-lapsarian narratives about a lost public sphere ... invariably feed futile ‘retrieve and recover’ missions that share success/failure rates with other contemporary missions based on myths. The public sphere in the US has, from its inception, been tied as much, if not more, to business than to its presumptive origin in government or some variant of public organisation.”<sup>6</sup> The privatized public sphere to which Whiting alludes was made up of the kind of places that Fredric Jameson and Mike Davis loved to hate in the ‘80s and ‘90s.<sup>7</sup> Postmodern spaces of consumption preoccupied debates about the decline of the public sphere. Non-place arguments by people like Marc Augé, the broadly adopted but uninspired “transit-oriented district,” the international McDonaldization of places, and the global competition among cities have grown more widely recognized as dead-end

forms of public architecture.<sup>8</sup> These models that sought to reformulate both an idea of the public and the space it would inhabit have already been reconstructed in virtual and post-human terms that abandon physical space given the prevalence of social media and the imminent internet of things. There, material space is displaced by accessibility, speed, convenience, customizable information sources, and new forms of intimacy. The material place of common ground in turn has relocated to the networks of efficiency and utility: public infrastructure.

Physical infrastructure is a victim of the present economic conditions from Europe to North America, characterized by an impoverished public sector at federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Construction in the US is a complex indicator of economic health but also of the nation’s physical condition. Thus, while recent increases in construction spending are primarily infrastructure-related, private construction spending for non-residential construction is down almost 40% below its peak in 2008, and residential construction is down 65% since its peak in 2006.<sup>9</sup> The most recent class of state governors claimed austerity as their watchword. All this suggests that the foreseeable future includes little public architecture in the traditional, if idealized, sense. Today “pure” public spaces like plazas and parks are likely to be historical

5 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); Maartin Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2001).

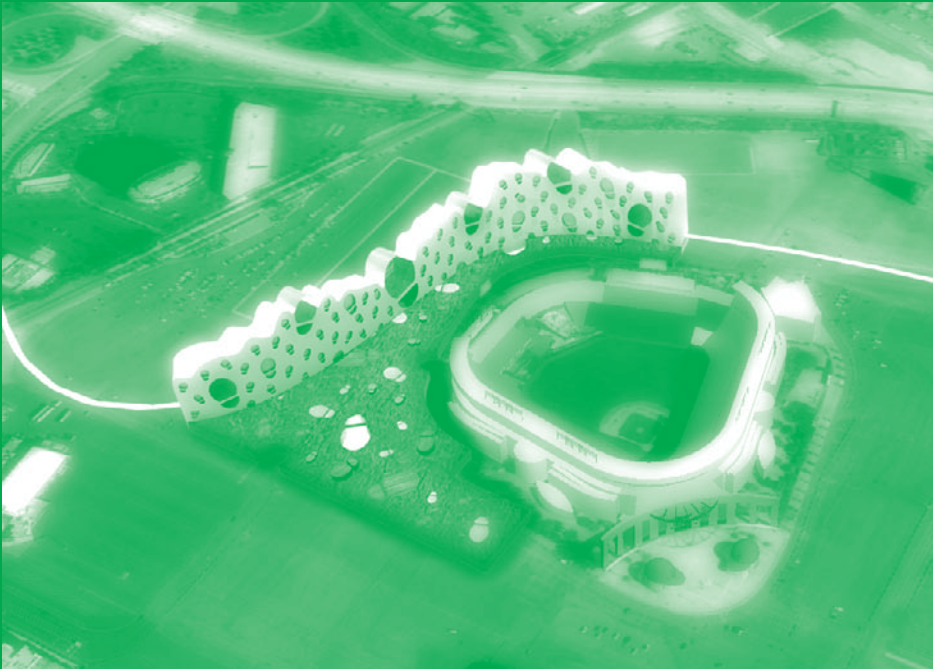
6 Rafi Segal and Els Verbakel with Stan Allen, Marcel Smets, Sarah Whiting, and Margaret Crawford, “Architecture and Dispersal,” in “Cities of Dispersal,” ed. Rafi Segal and Els Verbakel, *Architectural Design* 78, no. 1 (January/February 2008): 102-107.

7 See, for example, the 1980s *New Left Review* debate about postmodernism between Jameson and Davis using the Bonaventure Hotel atrium as their case in point: Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review*, no. 146 (July-August 1984): 53-92; Mike Davis, “Urban Renaissance and the Spirit of Postmodernism,” *New Left Review*, no. 151 (May-June 1985): 106-113.

8 Marc Augé, *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995).

9 See <http://www.census.gov/construction/c30/c30index.html>.





Scenario 1: *Disneyrail*, a networked system of five park-development interventions along the High Speed Rail, including one at the Angel Stadium. Courtesy of cityLAB-UCLA.

artifacts from an earlier century. Similarly, the dignity of public buildings that were built with significant investment contrasts with the anonymous, leased space that government offices now occupy. The retronym “public park” is necessary since new open space is likely to be provided as an amenity within private enclaves, whether at an open air shopping mall or new housing development.

## MID-CENTURY MUTATIONS

In 1955 when Rowe and Hejduk worried about the disappearance of the courthouse square, it was actually already gone, an artifact of an earlier era. In small towns across the US, however, broadly scattered rural and vaguely urban populations still contain common ground. The space of collectivity is visible wherever we find what Albert Pope calls the “city of form,” the gridiron urbanism of the nineteenth century that carved out blocks for squares, courthouses, and civic centers.<sup>10</sup> Where the Texas Rangers’ concern would have been warranted was in the cotemporaneous postwar explosion of the suburbs. Outside Austin and other cities across the country, the new city of dispersal had taken root.

Indeed, in the expanding postwar suburbanity, the courthouse square had already disappeared. In the early suburbs of the late ‘30s and ‘40s, collections of land, houses, and residents were built on greenfields, with few architectural illustrations of collective aspiration. Instead, the individual house was made formally explicit. In these early, postwar residential developments, Habermasian public space devolved into a more local, less formal community center, strip development, or neighborhood primary school. Consider two of the very first modern

suburbs, one from each coast: At both Levittown on Long Island and Westchester in Los Angeles, forms of community foreshadowed the fragmentation of the public, however idealized. While the focus was fixed on the single-family house, a new idea about the collective was shaping up in peripheral view.

The early history of Levittown captures how the public was changing in the suburban context. First, in Levittown’s initial phases between 1947 and 1951, the only private space was inside the house. Residents were not allowed to fence their yards to permit the Levitts oversight of deviant practices that they feared former slum and apartment dwellers might bring. Among those fearful behaviors, nothing was more emblematic than drying laundry. In fact, although laundry blew intimately in the breeze during the week, as soon as the men came home from work Friday evening, women had to bring it inside. Played up as the space of private life, the Ur-form of single-family dwellings actually involved a notion of “neighborly” surveillance. Collective lives depended upon each neighbor acting as a block warden to guard against misbehavior.<sup>11</sup>

At Levittown, “the public” underwent a subtle shift from its cosmopolitan predecessor to “the neighbor,” an intimate social and geographic construct. Rather than a hierarchical public institution situated as a spatial hub, Levittown was organized around multiple “community” centers. In Levittowns and their equivalents across the US, there would never again be a Lockhart courthouse square or a San Francisco Union Square. Instead, there would be a rec-center, a church or two, and an elementary school. These formed the new collectivity, with local audiences that were far more homogeneous than the term “public” implied with its liberating anonymity coupled to civic responsibility. At Levittown, the town breaks down into communities; the architecture of the collective is rooted in local services; the shared landscape is surveilled, pushing everyday life to the interior. And just in case the interior becomes too remote, the picture window allows the gaze from and to the street. In this landscape, the terms “public” and “private” are no longer legitimate.

10 Albert Pope, “From Form to Space,” in *Fast Forward Urbanism*, ed. Dana Cuff and Roger Sherman (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011), 143-175.

11 Dana Cuff, “Enduring Proximity: The Figure of the Neighbor in Suburban America,” *Journal of Postmodern Culture* 15, no. 2 (2005).

This new postwar order, a collective identity rather than Habermasian citizenship, evolved even further on the other side of the nation. Slightly earlier than Levittown, a more commercial form of suburb was taking shape in Westchester at the hands of Southern California's homebuilders. No land was set aside because it was all real estate and thus all for sale. The dominance of the automobile brought not only sprawl, as is widely understood, but also the further individuation of the landscape itself: even movement through it, particularly in comparison to mass transit, was the purview of the individual. The formal patterns at Levittown and Westchester differ enough to see this mutation. At Westchester, boulevards defined groups of houses that turned their backs to the wider world, facing a labyrinth of local streets. Public and private are replaced by regional and local, and the infrastructure of streets becomes the physical material worthy of government funding and representative of the collective.<sup>12</sup>

Westchester is an early exemplar of another significant development in the collective landscape: Lockhart's courthouse-prison-square and Levittown's community centers are supplanted by a retail strip. Physically organized like everything else in Westchester—that is, by principles of traffic management—the shopping district sits between the superblocks. Within this diagram, towns that had citizens and publics are transformed into communities of neighbors and consumers. The fundamental segregation of the suburban landscape is etched into an economic maxim: those who can shop together, live together. Because of the strong ties between race and socioeconomic status, spatial segregation was mapped neatly by racial differences.<sup>13</sup>

By the mid-fifties, in both Levittown and Westchester, the suburban landscape was characterized not by public and private, but by localities sharing grocery stores and schools. There was, however, a larger sphere of things the collective shared: a utilitarian backdrop of streets, sewers, power lines, phone lines, and storm water systems. Yet when the common ground is rendered as infrastructure,

communities are left with an identity crisis: infrastructure is variously buried, invisible, at the margins, or ill-attended. The street may be the clearest exception. Where the house is the symbol of self, the street is the figure of the neighborhood. Occasionally, as with a cul-de-sac, the street can provide symbolic identity, but more often the road, street, and highway function as mere service connectors. In the '60s and '70s, this tacit and troubling collective locus triggered studies like Bernard Rudofsky's *Streets for People*, Donald Appleyard's *Livable Streets*, and Jane Jacobs's manifesto to reclaim the prewar city's streets and sidewalks for the neighborhood. But none of these authors took on the tougher and more prevalent condition; none cruised the streets of sprawl where cars dominated.

Stepping back from Levittown and Westchester, three interrelated postwar trends have been alluded to that influence a contemporary notion of the public with regard to architecture and urbanism. The first is a change in subjectivity, captured by the citizen's transformation into the consumer; the second is a change in scale, by the contraction of the civic into the local or the city into the neighborhood; and the third is a change in form, with the shift from a city of form into a city of space.<sup>14</sup> Each of these and their corollaries have profound effects on public architecture.

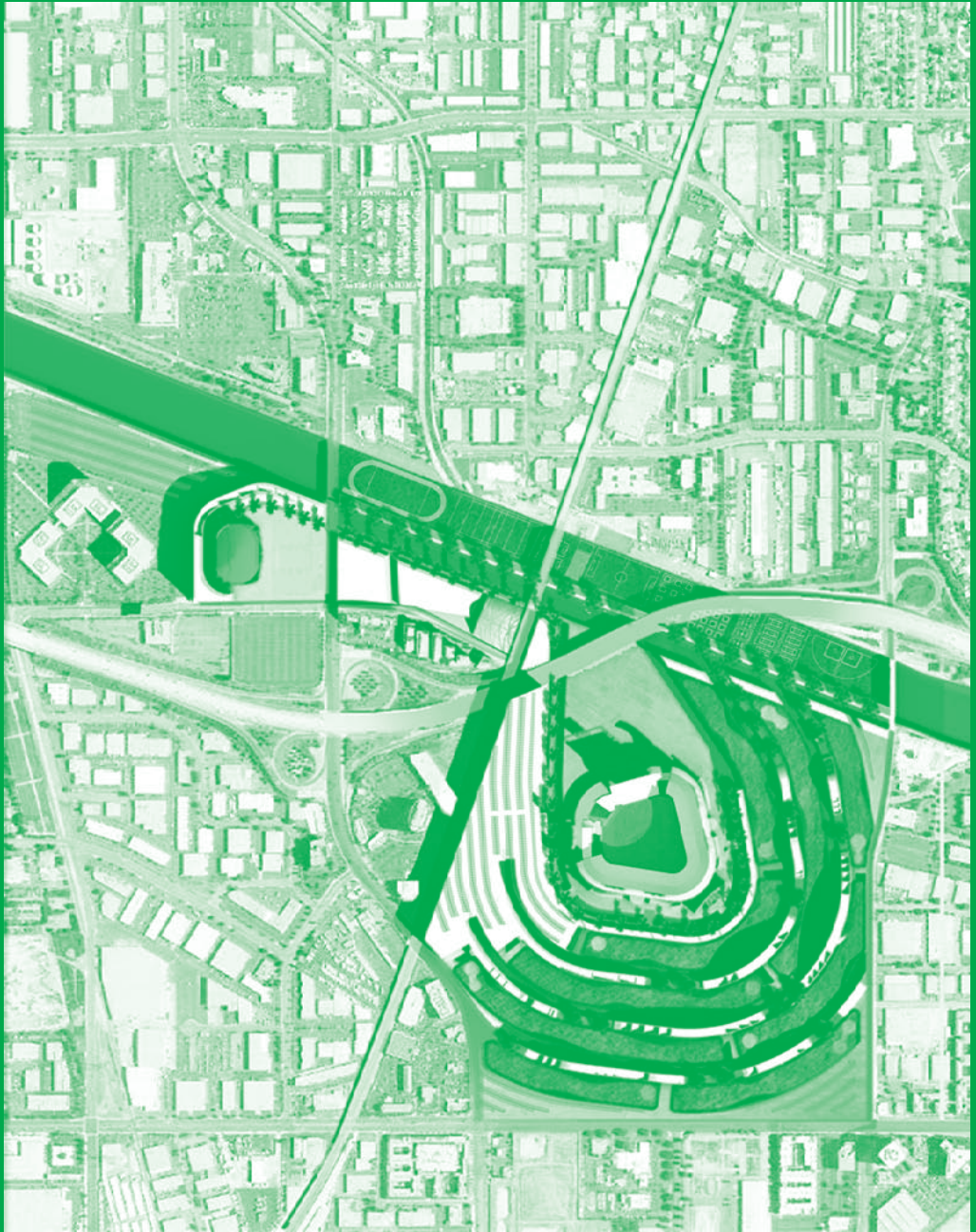
## CITIZENS QUA CONSUMERS

Economists, sociologists, and cultural critics locate the onset of "consumer society" at the end of WWII. When market demand is viewed as voting-by-pocketbook, commercial success is a new measure of democracy. This

12 The Westchester research is documented in Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

13 Early legislation against segregation was enacted in 1948 when the Supreme Court ruled against racially restrictive housing covenants, and more followed, but according to Massey and Denton, it was no more effective. See Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 186.

14 Pope, "From Form to Space," 143-175.



Scenario 2: *Train to Training*, linking the largest network of US Olympic training facilities with the High Speed Rail.  
Courtesy of cityLAB-UCLA.

“public” is no longer a collective citizenry but, instead, independent consumers aggregated into market sectors by their consumption choices. While it is often assumed that these trends mark the rise of the individual, they may also be viewed more fatally, as the death of the subject.<sup>15</sup>

For architecture, the expanding consumer culture produced well-known changes in the material environment, some of which by now are cliché: shopping malls are the new collective arena; architecture is complicit in the production of desire; and disinvestment killed the traditional public sphere. In addition, when architecture’s clients, occupants, and owners self-identify as consumers, they seek speculative, short-term economic value over other objectives such as programmatic fit, symbolic expression, or durability. When economic logics of expediency and efficiency prevail, individual projects and even clients are less important than effective management.<sup>16</sup>

Under these circumstances, what becomes of the public building that defined the urban collective and drove the discipline of architecture? Of course, there are still city halls, parks, courthouses, libraries, and schools, and these continue to materially render what we share. Today, these buildings are portraits of efficiency and utility, dressed in an aesthetic that could be called “thrif-washing,” a thin coat of architecture that expresses a priority on economizing, whether or not the building is actually cost-effective.<sup>17</sup>

## SCALING BACK: CIVIC TO LOCAL

At the same time that citizens mutated into consumers, the conceptual scope of “the public” scaled down from a civic ideal to something much more geographically local. As Levittown and Westchester demonstrate, when the city fragments into clusters of neighborhoods, the public becomes a community. The latter is used for collectivities of every stripe—from interest groups (the animal rights community) and demographics (the elderly community) to spatially coherent clusters (the Ocean Park

community). Since Toqueville’s nineteenth-century characterization of American communitarianism, the force of the local has been strong. But when social policy scholars like Robert Putnam argue that “community bonds” or “generalized reciprocity” have weakened in recent decades, the difference between civic and communitarian is elided.<sup>18</sup> The history of this distinction is apparent in the history of public building.

The role of public architecture has been debated since the origins of the architecture profession in America. A formal notion of public space reached its apex in the US during the City Beautiful movement, retreating to our present ideas about the death of the public sphere. In the same year as the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, the young American Institute of Architects successfully argued for federal regulations concerning “public architecture,” particularly that commissions for the design of federal buildings be decided by competition. Since neither landscape architecture nor urban planning existed as professions at the time, architecture willfully shaped its own conception of public space and public design. From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, men with no formal training in architecture designed the public realm: Fredrick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux made urban open

15 Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 111-125.

16 One consequence is the creation of gigantic multi-service operations like AECOM and Stantec. These mega-firms gain “experience” by purchasing specialty firms in different locales, aggregating a resume that can fit target commissions.

17 “Thrif-washing” is a play on white-washing and “green-washing” in which environmental concerns are symbolic and expressive rather than substantive. This is not a new phenomenon: when the first public housing act in 1937 authorized construction of subsidized apartments, it steered far from any sign of luxury. Closets went without doors, interior plumbing was left exposed, and finishes were minimal. Such details symbolized that public housing was not meant to be permanent or even well-liked; it would satisfy as a form of *existenzminimum* until the occupants could pay their own rent elsewhere.

18 Generalized reciprocity refers to the practice of helping others with no expectation of gain. See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2001), 505.

space; Haussmann in Paris or Ebenezer Howard in England laid out streets and urban plans. In 1897, AIA President George B. Post recommended broadening the profession's agenda to focus on "public architecture and urban planning."<sup>19</sup> The design of the broader city—its public space, streets, and buildings—was to belong to the architect. With the Chicago's World Fair, architects like Daniel Burnham sought to turn the city into an aesthetic project. What distinguishes this initiative is its focus on the whole rather than the fragment or component.

The courthouse, whether it is in Lockhart or Chicago, is a symbol of society at large whereas the school is a symbol of the neighborhood.<sup>20</sup> The postwar surge in school construction coincides with what I suggest is the postwar scaling back of collective identity, when the modifier "neighborhood" displaces "public," as in "neighborhood park." Thus, as cities with citizens are fragmented into communities, public buildings shift from those that are typically found downtown to those—like schools—found in the suburbs.

## FROM ORDER TO EXPANSE

Lastly, changes in city form parallel the dynamic notion of publicness. The order of the nineteenth-century city, the gridiron, set a formal pattern for urban activity and development. While the grid itself is without hierarchy, the built and open spaces that filled the grid established a continuity of centers, districts, relational distances, and facade

orientations. By contrast, postwar suburban growth evidenced no such order but was, instead, a horizontal expanse for speculation. Infrastructural linkages between tracts comprised utilities, roadways, and commercial strips, representing the minimal connections between them. While architectural notions of urban dispersal were formalized, as in Wright's Broadacre or Saarinen's "organic decentralization," neither architects nor planners had enough power to redirect the interests of the real estate industry. In the purest cases—Phoenix, Houston, or Los Angeles—the postwar housing boom produced an urban agglomeration that had neither center nor edge. Leap-frogging across farmland and pushed up against the limits of topography, the population fled the city and abandoned the *res publica*. The dispersed residential landscape left no room for the visible public.

Unsurprisingly, the increased dispersal of cities into their hinterlands parallels the rise of neighborhood associations. As cities grow to scales beyond geographic manageability, and areas within cities come to see themselves in competition with other areas, the public in the public good shrinks to fit. Not-in-my-backyard is a euphemism for a contemporary version of civic interest, highly local and reactionary.

While a lingering ideal of the public can be discerned in architectural and urban studies writing, the changes above are part of a continuous evolution that was particularly marked in the mid-twentieth century. "The public" is a historically specific construct that can be monitored in the material culture of our environment—our public architecture.

## RES PUBLICA REBOOT

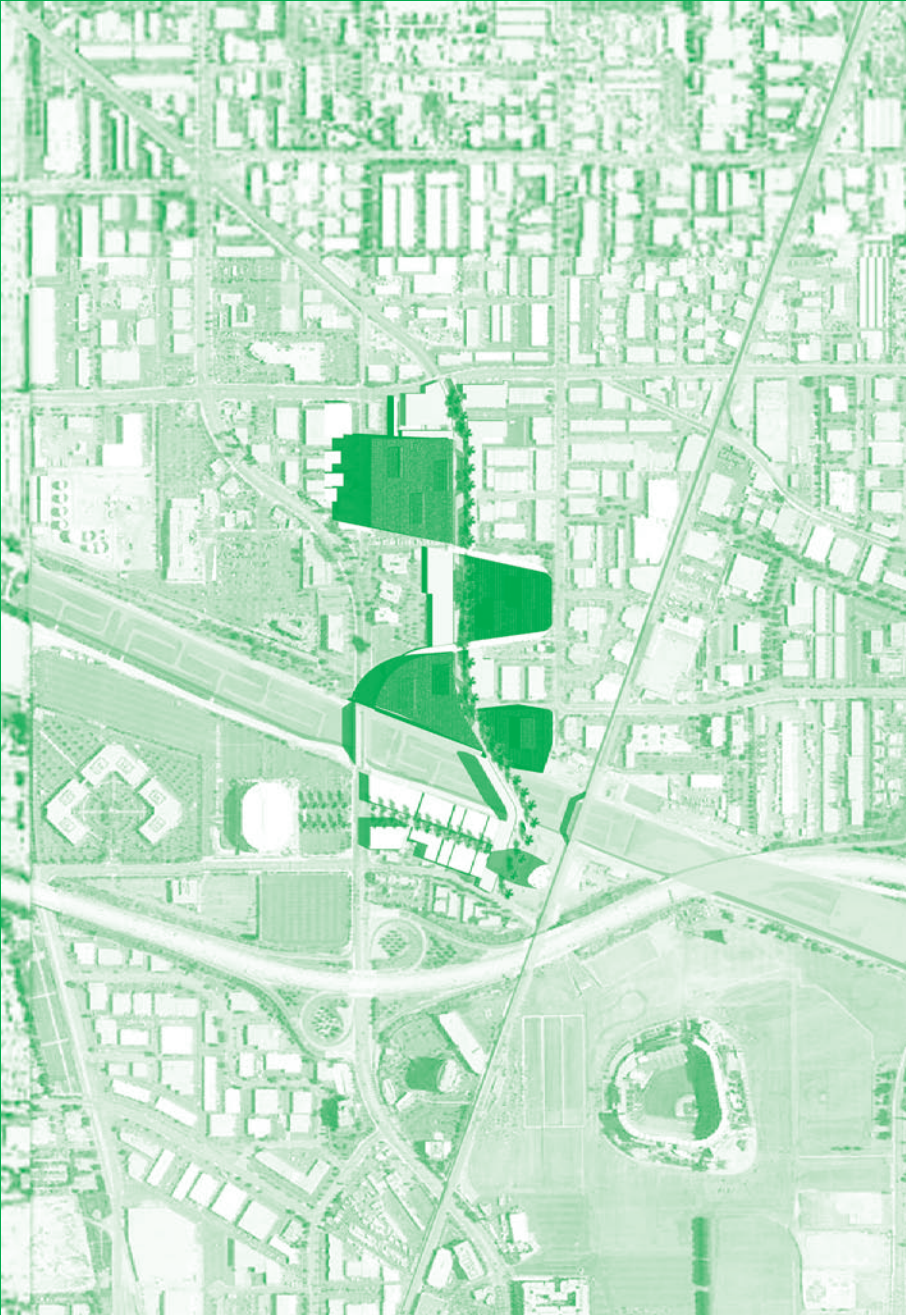
"THE TROPHY BUILDING IS SO OVER. WELCOME TO THE ERA OF DESIGN ON A DIET."<sup>21</sup>

In June 2010, *Newsweek* proclaimed that the exuberance of the previous era's architecture had met the recession and was chastened. Compared to the private

19 Mary Woods, *From Craft to Profession* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 43.

20 Putnam documents that the percentage of parents joining the PTA doubled between 1945 and 1960, followed by an equally steep decline thereafter. This is consistent with a decline in active involvement in all sorts of local organizations in the last decades of the 20th century. See Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 56-62. Similarly, over half of all schools are now more than fifty years old, suggesting that the majority of these schools were built in the '40s-'60s. See Thomas D. Snyder and Charlene M. Hoffman, *The Digest of Education Statistics* (Washington DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

21 Cathleen McGuigan, "Starchitecture: A Modest Proposal," *Newsweek*, June 10, 2010.



Scenario 3: *Park, Shop N' Ride*, solving parking requirements through the opportunistic use of neighboring vacant land and development opportunities in Orange. Courtesy of cityLAB-UCLA.

sector's "trophy building," public buildings had been quieted far sooner. In 2010, the federal government was funding courthouse and border station construction, but little else. Public funding of design is increasingly miserly, demonstrated by a scaling back of the GSA design excellence program. While it is unquestionably important to continue to advocate for the strong design of our public buildings, there is a revanchist ring to that cause. With few private and governmental architectural opportunities available, what possibilities remain for a contemporary public architecture in the material world and where are the most interesting design opportunities located?

The most provocative site to construct a contemporary public and its architecture is all around us if we remember that the *res publica*, beyond the dome and the square, contains the street. Infrastructural space is the terrain vague where design may opportunistically reengage the collective. There are signs of design attention to infrastructure, including the broad, enthusiastic response to cityLAB-UCLA's ideas competition, WPA 2.0: Working Public Architecture (2009), and to the Van Alen Institute's initiative, Life at the Speed of Rail (2011). Both competitions asked architects to bring focus on that which had rested in their peripheral vision: the networks of utility and mobility.<sup>22</sup>

With transit and infrastructure spending that exceeds other publicly funded efforts, architects and urbanists are clamoring to be involved. The funds authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included some \$150 billion for infrastructure-related construction. The ARRA appropriation resembled Works Progress Administration spending at the end of the Great Depression, with one primary caveat: while both funding programs expressly prioritized jobs, WPA projects were expected to contribute to the federal government's built legacy. Designers and communities will need to insist that ARRA spending bring an aesthetic other than thrift if projects from the Bay Bridge in California to the Denali National Park facilities in Alaska are to express shared values other than economy.

The potential to create new identities for localities is visible in New York, where bike lanes as well as impromptu and more permanent seating areas have been wrung from the city streets. Named New York City's Transportation Commissioner in 2007, Janette Sadik-Khan stated "We are looking at our streets differently, and treating them as the valuable public spaces that they are. With 6,000 miles of streets, that's a lot of real estate to work with."<sup>23</sup> Projects like these that re-imagine service networks as amenities are not without controversy. To be implemented, they require tactics that vary from those common to architecture: infrastructure sites have indefinite boundaries; the time frame is mercurial; master plans or end-states are inadequate; hybrid programs can be invented. Perhaps most importantly, the infrastructural intervention is conceived as a catalyst for further economic and urban development. The designer needs to think through the possible scenarios, with contingencies in mind.

One of the best test sites for this way of working will be the proposed national high speed rail network, the largest public infrastructure investment since the Interstate Highway system. Although station design is the standard architectural component of this new infrastructure, our research at cityLAB-UCLA suggests that neither station design nor station-area design will produce urban consequences. The "build it and they will come" model has not worked along other rail lines.<sup>24</sup> Based on the experience in

22 The concept of "terrain vague" is discussed in Ignasi de Solà-Morales, "Terrain Vague," in *Anyplace*, ed. Cynthia C. Davidson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 118-123. The WPA 2.0 competition is discussed in Dana Cuff, "WPA 2.0: Working Public Architecture," *Harvard Design Magazine*, no. 33 (Fall/Winter 2010): 36-44. See <http://www.vanalen.org/lasr/> for more information on the Van Alen Institute initiative.

23 Sarah Goodyear, "Taming the Mean Streets," *Grist*, December 21, 2010, <http://www.grist.org/article/2010-12-21-Taming-the-mean-streets-of-new-york-a-talk-with-nyc-dot>.

24 For example, twenty years after the construction of BART in northern California, the expected development around stations has not occurred. See Robert Cervero, "Rail Transit and Joint Development: Land Market Impacts in Washington, D.C. and Atlanta," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 60, no. 1 (1993): 83-90.



other countries with high speed rail, we are exploring scenario planning that identifies local potential capable of tipping the scales of urban design toward particular solutions. In the examples shown here FIGS. 1, 2, and 3, the Anaheim station area is imagined according to three unique catalysts: the need for parking, the expansion of the city's sports facilities, and a new transit connection between the rail station and Disneyland. The design of staged interventions foreshadows subsequent components, taking into consideration economic, programmatic, and policy drivers. Each scenario leverages a *res publica* from two sources: the initial public investment in infrastructure, and the subsequent growth it sparks.

The potential of a systemic intervention like high speed rail will only be realized if architects and urban designers work in more opportunistic and strategic ways. This holds whenever infrastructure is the starting point of public architecture. The zones of storm water, power, and circulation have resisted design attention, but as experiments take place in cities across the country, it grows easier to understand how this form of *res publica* can take shape. After all, there was a Main Street between the courthouse and the prison in Lockhart. Now that the infrastructural interstices have captured our concentrated focus, we need to demonstrate that we can make something of them.

\* \* \*

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# THRESHOLDS 40

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- 5 SOCIO-INDEMNITY  
AND OTHER MOTIVES  
— JONATHAN CRISMAN
- 11 CONJURING UTOPIA'S GHOST  
— REINHOLD MARTIN
- 21 LE CORBUSIER, THE BRISE-SOLEIL,  
AND THE SOCIO-CLIMATIC PROJECT  
— DANIEL A. BARBER
- 33 MOVE ALONG!  
THERE IS NOTHING TO SEE  
— RANIA GHOSN
- 39 FLOW'S SOCIO-SPATIAL FORMATION  
— NANA LAST
- 47 COLLECTIVE EQUIPMENTS OF POWER  
— SIMONE BROTT
- 55 COLLECTIVE FORM  
— DANA CUFF
- 67 TUKTOYAKTUK  
— PAMELA RITCHOT
- 75 BOUNDARY LINE INFRASTRUCTURE  
— RONALD RAEI
- 83 DISSOLVING THE GREY PERIPHERY  
— NEERAJ BHATIA AND  
ALEXANDER D'HOOGHE
- 91 PARK AS PHILANTHROPY  
— YOSHIHARU TSUKAMOTO
- 99 MUSSELS IN CONCRETE  
— ESEN GÖKÇE ÖZDAMAR
- 105 PARTICIPATION AND/OR CRITICALITY?  
— KENNY CUPERS AND  
MARKUS MIESSEN
- 113 THE *SLUIPWEG* AND THE  
HISTORY OF DEATH  
— MARK JARZOMBEK
- 121 EXTRA ROOM  
— GUNNAR GREEN AND  
BERNHARD HOPFENGÄRTNER
- 127 *SCULPTURE FIELD*  
— DAN HANDEL
- 135 ON *RADIATION BURN*  
— STEVE KURTZ
- 163 *CAIRO DI SOPRA IN GIÙ*  
— CHRISTIAN A. HEDRICK
- 175 HUSH  
— STEVEN BECKLY AND  
JONATHAN D. KATZ
- 189 NORCS IN NEW YORK  
— INTERBORO PARTNERS
- 209 UNCOMMON GROUND  
— ZISSIS KOTIONIS
- 217 EDENS, ISLANDS, ROOMS  
— AMRITA MAHINDROO
- 225 THE PRINCE  
— JUSTIN FOWLER
- 233 BEYOND DOING GOOD  
— HANNAH ROSE MENDOZA
- 237 AID, CAPITAL, AND THE  
HUMANITARIAN TRAP  
— JOSEPH M. WATSON
- 245 THE END OF CIVILIZATION  
— DANIEL DAOU
- 255 TOWARD A LAKE ONTARIO CITY  
— DEPARTMENT OF  
UNUSUAL CERTAINTIES
- 263 SOCIOPATHS  
— JIMENEZ LAI

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9 780983 508212