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"Edgy Cities, Technoblurbs, and Simulcrumbs: Depthless Utupias and Dystopias on the Sub-Urban Fringe"

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Edgy Cities, Technoblurbs, and Simulacrumbs: Depthless Utopias and Dystopias on the Sub-Urban Fringe[1]

(first draft)

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[1] This paper draws on my work for a book on the San Francisco Bay Area. See also Walker *et al.*, 1990.

In this paper I want to explore the process of urban expansion at the city's edge, which has received a good deal of attention recently thanks to the propaganda value of Joel Garreau's *Edge Cities*. This is an old topic for me, in that my work of the 1970s was largely concerned with suburbanization in the United States, but I return to it armed with some new insights about the geography of industry, urban landscapes, the politics of space and consumerism, as well as a greater awareness of the way localities like San Francisco and Los Angeles differ from each other, to add to a continuing faith in some of the older ideas about capitalism and urbanization.

"Edge city" is as good or better than the alternative names given to the urban fringes. The older "suburbia" still dominates, but misleads in fundamental ways. Every name has an agenda behind it, some implied cause behind or dominant element in the phenomenon in question, and suburbia -- conceived chiefly as a sudden explosion of mass housing tracts -- was the key word of urban critics circa 1960. Today other things are featured, such as the force of high-tech industrialization in Robert Fishman's ugly term "technoburbs" or Allen Scott's trendy "technopoles". Or the anti-urbanity and ambiguity of the outer city captured in Edward Soja's term "exopolis", which expresses something quite the contrary of Garreau's view of emergent urbanity in his edge cities. Or the social and environmental dystopia of Mike Davis in such terms as "junkyard of dreams", "cannibal city", or xxxxxx. What we name the urban fringe has much to do with what we think about it and how we conceive of the processes that gave rise to it. No easy agreement can be reached, therefore, without looking at the matter from several angles in and around the edges, and even then we shall find that our language is undeveloped because the thing itself is an uneasy world of people and places torn apart, of urbanity and politics denied, and of production and consumption cut loose from their moorings. The result is indeed sub-urban, a good deal less than it might be as contrasted with the available instances of what a vigorous civic life has on offer; suborned by the money-makers and fantasy peddlers, whose respect for the public good and popular will is observed mostly in the breach; and subjacent to utopian imaginings of urban form and the enlightened *polis* might look like if alternative pathways of development, *civitas* and democracy were pursued.

• Edge cities, urban growth and postmodern banalities: the conquest of space and the conquest of history

For many observers, contemporary edge cities are a thoroughly new phenomenon. Edward Soja, for example, sees a great divide between the modern city and the postmodern city (Soja, 1989). Looking at the dreamworld of exopolis in Orange County, he says, "Something new is being born here, something that slips free of our old categories and stereotypes, resists conventional modes of explanation....(Soja, 1991, p. 101). Joel Garreau (19xx, p. xx really!) declares that Edge Cities are "the biggest change in a hundred years in how we build cities". He has an implicit tripartite history: mercantile, industrial and edge cities. He also appears to think that residential suburbs began only after World War II. Robert Fishman (1986), whose exemplary study of residential suburbs dates these 'bourgeois utopias' back to the late 18th century, nonetheless imagines that where workplaces are concerned, suburbanization is a new phenomenon. All such views of the unprecedented nature of Edge Cities are based on a lack of historical memory that mirrors more than it criticizes the American ideology that the future is now, the present is ever-present, and history, urban or otherwise, is bunk.

Urban accretion and edge cities of the past

Cities have always grown at their edges, outgrowing their original confines, leaping old city walls, nearby watercourses, and adjacent mountain ranges -- as the peregrinations of Paris, Rio or Los Angeles show. If 92% of the populace of the New York metropolitan area does not live in Manhattan (Garreau, p. 6), it cannot have happened in the last decade, or even the last fifty years, but must be the result of a century or more of outward expansion beyond the island home of the city.

This growth is not incremental. It occurs in waves of expansion that correspond to cycles of capital investment, job creation and surging economic activity. With each wave, great swaths of new construction are laid down in the form of peripheral belts, jutting wedges, and even whole satellite towns. At these burgeoning edges are to be found a full panoply of workplaces, homes, infrastructure and commerce making up the city economy and city life.

Edge City accretions are at least as old as medieval *faubourgs*, and a layering of edge cities can be found in all the metropolises of the

modern era. New York, having leapt up Manhattan, soon spawned Brooklyn, which by 1890 had become the second biggest city in the United States. San Francisco, starting up suddenly at mid-century, soon spun off Oakland across the bay, and the latter became the principal node of growth in the urban region between 1900 and 1945. More recent Edge Cities of the Bay Area, San Jose and the 680 corridor are largely repeats of what happened in Oakland. In greater Los Angeles the waves that hit Orange county or the Inland Empire from 1960 onward had previously lapped up against the east side industrial belt, Long Beach, and the West Side.

None of these were simple residential suburbs of the central city (though parts of them were). Edge cities have ranged quite widely in size, character and relative autonomy from the parent city, depending on circumstances of economic base, class base, political history, and the like. Oakland has always had a separate, if bitterly contested, identity from San Francisco from the outset -- though it is not an entirely separate city, as James Vance (1964) would have it. The growth of Hollywood and West Side LA triggered a bitter series of mid-century power struggles with the Downtown establishment from within the envelope of Los Angeles, as Mike Davis' (1990) narrative describes. Brooklyn's claims to independence were forcibly suppressed by means of incorporation into the five-borough system in 1899.

Has anything changed, then? Clearly so. Metropolitan areas are absorbing larger proportions of the total national population and economy than before and these megacities are less centered on a single node than before, i.e., they have become more multinucleated. Neither of these is a sudden development. In California, in particular, urban areas have always dominated the pattern of settlement (now over 92% of the populace) and both Northern California and the Los Angeles basin both arose as highly multinucleated systems.

Today's Edge Cities are not free-standing new cities of the kind dotted everywhere across the country in the 19th century. The continental conquest of indigenous lands provided the spectacular opening for the wholesale implantation of a new civilization that strung a transcontinental necklace of cities across its well-thumped chest. That sort of city-formation probably found its last frontier in Las Vegas in the 1930s and 40s. Schaumsberg does not stand in relation to Chicago as Chicago once stood to New York or Buffalo. The cloning of urban centers in the US must, therefore, take a different form, as it has for around a century: the multiplication of poles within metropoles.

It is easy to mistake the older edge cities for part of the urban core by virtue of their very different and now completely foreign modes of spatial organization and building styles. Every generation of edge cities fixes the habits of their time into stone and steel and asphalt and astroturf. Oakland and the inner east bay appear as an antiquated assemblage of houses, street grids, storefronts and the like which blend, to the uncritical eye, into those of San Francisco, even though the two sides of the bay could not look more different, for the most part. The latter is one of the great 'streetcar suburbs' of early 20th century and once heralded as the 'Detroit of the West' -- an unlikely moniker for an industrial belt long gone to seed. Today's edge cities take an automobile form, as Chicago took a railroad form, but this only takes us part of the way toward understanding their differences. They also take the chain store form, the megamall form, the minimall form, the warehouse store form, the monster house form, the regional hospital form, the Theme Park form, etc.

The agrarian and extractive eras forgotten

Edge Cities have no history, in another way, according to both advocate Garreau and critic Soja . They have literally erased the landscapes that preceded them. "The everpresent Now-ness of tomorrow makes the Then hard to find", says Soja, quoting a tourist brochure for Orange County. But the theorists of the postmodern have a penchant for overlooking historical precedents within the age of modernity. Urban expansion involves a reconquest of territory already long settled and developed under the regime of capitalism and European, modern America.

Orange County, for example, has a long history as a prosperous realm of agribusiness of a most modern sort, home to the citrus industry that first pulled Southern California out of the economic backwaters of San Francisco between roughly 1880 and 1920. Civilization's footprint was heavy on the land well before freeways and Disneylands were laid on top -- so heavy that the land sank several feet in much of the coastal zone of the county.

The countryside of California agribusiness (or New Jersey iron bogs) was integrally tied to the cities of the past: financed and harvested for profits, settled from the cities outward, processed and planted by urban industry, and so forth. Petaluma, now a quaint old center

surrounded by suburban tracts north of San Francisco, was once the chicken and egg center of the United States, literally fed by industrial fishing of sardines off the Monterey coast and orchestrated by the City's commercial and financial network. San Jose and Santa Clara were once the largest canning center in the country, supplied by the surround agricultural valley's abundant orchards and fields, again tied heavily to San Francisco. Traces of the past are there to be found on all sides, despite the collective effort to forget, which is America's most cherished commercial value.

Imperial cities like San Francisco, Chicago and LA have reaped a fine crop from their hinterlands, only to conveniently forget and abandon the vast swathes of cutover lands, dredge-spoils and desert wastes left behind (Cronon, 1990; Brechin, various; Davis, 1993). This is one of the chief lessons of the new environmental history, and it sits uneasily with the virtual celebration of history's erasure by the postmodern urban theorists. But another lesson of environmentalism ought to be that the real history of devastation has a way of coming back to haunt us. This is Mike Davis' concluding image of the suburbanization of Fontana, the "junkyard of dreams", at the end of *City of Quartz*. It is coming home to the people now buying tract homes by the tens of thousands sitting over groundwater deeply contaminated with DBCP, EDB and other toxins in the Central Valley, former agricultural hinterland and now the new Inland Empire of San Francisco and the Bay Area.

A sucker born in every epoch

Orange county's edge city is the postmodern nightmare of Jean Baudrilliard, Umberto Eco, Ed Soja and other sojurners in Southern California. Soja (1992) paints a chilling picture of postmodernity in Orange County that is a stiff antidote to the kind of snake oil that Garreau is selling about the new urbanism of the metropolitan fringe. This endless exurbia is portrayed as a monumental space of simulacra, "ceaselessly creating more absolutely real fakes in order to simulate the appearance of urbanity." (p. 105) In a quick tour of Orange County, from Disneyland to the Nixon Library to the UC Irvine campus, Soja pounds away at the way "image and reality become spectacularly confused inside exopolis, [so] that truth not only disappears but becomes totally and preternaturally irrelevant." (p. 119)

Orange County has become nothing more than a "768 square mile theme park", as the Orange County boosters put it. But the postmodern exurbs have achieved an unprecedented level of illusion, by comparison to which "the simulations of Disneyland seem almost folkloric, crusty incunabula of a passing era"; instead, "a second wave [of postmodernism] has carried hyperreality out of the localized enclosures and tightly bounded rationality of the old theme parks and into the geographies and biographies of everyday life, into the very fabric and fabrication of exopolis" (p. 101). (cf. Sorkin, 1992).

But is this sort of illusionary landscape new? It is not. Soja's dystopia is anticipated by the modernists in the form of Surrealism and particularly by Walter Benjamin in his *Arcades Project* (Buck-Morss, 1990), whose focus was Paris -- hardly the antithesis of urbanism and urbanity, but rather the "capital of the 19th century", as Benjamin put it (a notion echoed by Soja and Scott's essay on "Los Angeles: Capital of the 20th century"). This perhaps explains Soja's readiness to call forth images from Paris (or Vienna) of the last century: the Newport Freeway as the Champs-Élysées or UC Irvine as the Ringstrasse. One could continue: the South Coast Mall as the arcades, Disneyland as the Paris Exhibitions, the Palace of Living Arts at Buena Park as the dioramas, the Orange county performing arts center as the Opéra. Something is going on here that we have seen before, if we can just get a handle on it.

Nor is postmodern fakery unanticipated in the United States, land of P.T. Barnum, land speculators (Sikorski, 1933), and patent medicines (Schudson, 1986). One needs only read Patty Limerick's (1988) ruminations on boosterism and fraud in the course of western settlement and town building. Welcome to America: the continental theme park of capitalism and European conquest. This sort of preternatural fakery has long been taken to the level of a fine art in California. Soja notes the enormous false-front of the OCPAC building, but what is this but a replication of a thousand Victorian buildings, the Roman arch pasted on the front of San Francisco's Emporium (1908), or the triumphal arch at the front of the Stanford Quadrangle (mercifully levelled by the 1906 earthquake)? What is the replica of Irvine in the Irvine Exhibit but a miniature of the replicas of fantasy cities at the Mid-Winter Fair of 1894 and Panama-Pacific Exhibitions in San Francisco and San Diego in 1915 (themselves replicas of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, itself a replica of Hausmann's Beaux-Arts Paris and the Parisian Exhibition of 1890)?

Why is UC Irvine's architectural theme-park worse than UC Berkeley's Beaux-Arts plan, financed by the Hearst mining fortune, or subsequent hodgepodge of disparate styles by William Wurster, John Galen Howard, Julia Morgan and other architectural notables of an earlier era? And when Charles Moore creates a stage-setting for Zorro at UCI he is merely repeating the century-old fantasy of the Californios invented by the Charles Fletcher Lummis and the Arroyo set of Pasadena (and the group of architects around W. Page Brown in the north). This is not postmodernism but a continuation of an old theme of bourgeois insecurity and the invention of tradition, a history of cities as theme-parks to which the nouveaux arrivés of California are heirs-apparent and the latest in a long line of masters of appearances.

Disneyland's themes are the same kind of potted history the bourgeoisie has always favored, cleaned up and sealed in a sanitary package for the masses, so they might be insulated from the germs of history, with its bloody conquests, grim injustices and popular upheavals. Uncle Walt and the burghers of Orange County seem no more insecure that the bourgeoisie who filled Vienna's Ringstrasse with the hypergothic, the hyperroman and the fulsomely eclectic (Schorske, 19xx) or Hausmann's clique with their baroque radial plan for Paris (harkening back to the Papal rebuilding of Rome in the counter-reformation). We should not grant these builders too much, however. As Jon Wiener puts it, with regard to Disney's plan for an American history theme park near Washington, D.C., the imagineers are caught on the horns of the past because history is not, in the end, all that much fun. Nor is Orange County *qua* giant theme park. Nor were Haussman's Parisian boulevards during the Commune (Harvey, 1986) or the Ringstrasse filled with Hitler's goose-stepping armies.

I should add that large buildings and roadways are not necessary for the spinning of myths about past and present by the capitalist hordes. For example, the agrarian Irrigation Age and its particular transformation of the land in California (especially Southern California) was as replete with illusion as contemporary Orange County, spawning a propaganda barrage from National Irrigation Congress (based in LA), public policies that changed the Western landscape dramatically (e.g. the 1902 Reclamation Act), and a litter of fiction (ironically dubbed "American realism") that was every bit as much of an ideological trope of capitalist redemption as anything Disney ever dreamed up (Henderson, 1992).

One must also observe that the roots of Disneyland (the axiomatic theme park of our time) lie deep in Hollywood, an earlier edge city of LA. The film industry was busily rescripting western history in celluloid long before Frontierland set it in plastic. And if you want an example of hyperreality that beats all for fakery and grim reality both, why not cite Las Vegas? Here can be found the fullest dystopia of a ".... postmodern world absorbing us unobtrusively into politically-numbed societies of hypersimulation where even everyday life is thematically spin-doctored and consciousness itself comes in prepackage forms", while "its ecstatic inhabitants deeply believe in make-believing" (p. 121). Las Vegas, Reno and the whole of Nevada are satellites of Los Angeles, San Francisco and California's fevered culture of gambling and hyberbolic promotion (Findlay, 1987). West Coast gambling begins with the Gold Rush, with the first large casino the El Dorado in San Francisco, the first gargantuan tourist hotel the Palace, and the Mining Exchange the biggest gambling house of all. Nevada was the chief outlyer of San Francisco's mining empire, and the nation's greatest rotten borough, during the Comstock period. The action jumped south with the oil rush at the turn of the century, and the gambling fever caught everyone in its net, including half the US Cabinet during the Teapot Dome scandal. Real estate speculation, always a collective gamble, a defining element of American economic culture, and its greatest fount of false fronts and false claims, hit full bore in LA during the citrus and oil eras, teaching Hollywood's johnny-come-latelies a thing or two about imagineering. It was only when California's bourgeoisie decided to crack down on gambling and prostitution in the 1940s that they drove their sin-suburbs out of Emeryville, Jackson and Bell Gardens into the Nevada desert.

Postmodern theory proves in the end to be a poor aid in getting a handle on what's wrong with American cities and suburbs. In the hands of a fashion-statement maker like Jean Baudrilliard, it is just another case of the French discovering America and thinking it is the new world (ask the native peoples of Turtle Island about that). Then Americans like Soja discover Paris and its intellectuals and bring home the news. Or Scott discovers regulation theory, an imposition of French categories on a truculent history of American economic development. These are new instances of Corbusier studying drawings of grain elevators or Raynor Banham discovering modern architecture in LA.

Paradoxically, Garreau does us a favor by putting a geographical moniker on the phenomenon of edge cities rather than a temporal one like Baudrilliard and Soja's postmodernism. How curious of Soja and

the POMOs, the exorcists of the temporal, to fall prey to the same disease of choosing time over space as the definitive moment. What we are seeing is, of course, a junction of time and space in the American form of capitalism and the California variant of that and the Los Angeles twist to that theme.

But here we hit a snag: why isn't San Francisco are horrific as Las Vegas, Orange County or LA? Why is it so lacking in postmodernity, and even in modernity? It seems to limp along, lost in the past glories of Nob Hill, North Beach, the Waterfront and the Haight. Time and space seem to have climbed on a cable car here and left the past behind. After all, when we think of Charles Keating of Newport and Michael Milken of Rodeo Drive as the kings of real estate and financial speculation in the 1980s, the parallels with Billy Ralston of silver-era San Francisco are uncanny, as Gray Brechin has pointed out. Contrary to myth, San Francisco of the 19th century was not a delightful place, and was commonly excoriated for its shallowness, money-worship, gambling culture, and thrown-together look. It took a century of civilization to make it the pleasant spot it is today, the place the LA Times loves to put down as a soporific place of naval-gazing or the carnal house of wierdness, so that the pursuit of mammon in LA might go forward unhindered by nagging doubts of the citizenry that possibly life might be fairer and more peaceful in the metropolis of the north. What happened to knock San Francisco and northern California off the high road to postmodernity?

• What created edge cities? The economic basis of growth at the suburban fringe

The long pedigree of industrial expansion at the urban fringe

Observers of the contemporary urban fringe have been surprised to find a massive dispersal of jobs in factories and offices to the outlying realms of the metropolis. This suburbanization of employment along with the suburbanization of residences is, they believe, a wholly unprecedented development deserving of a new name, such as "technoburbs" or "edge cities" (e.g., Fishman, 1986; Garreau, 1991; Soja, 1992). Quite the opposite is true, however: industry and employment have been present at the growing edges of American cities from the outset, and have been a central part of the dynamic of urban expansion. The late 20th century urban fringes may be different from

their predecessors in certain regards, but here the continuity with the past is strong.

Industry began dispersing from the big cities as soon as there was modern industry in America, at the turn of the 18th century. Beginning with Waltham in 1812, Boston's capitalists spun off a set of fast-growing industrial satellite towns from Manchester in the north to Fall River in the south. Some remained in distant orbit, but others such as Cambridge, Waltham and Lynn were absorbed into the expanding metropolis as it spread outward in the 19th century. New York's shipyards, tanneries and sawmills occupied the fringes of the city as early as the 1830s (Pred, 1966). Philadelphia was constituted throughout the 19th century as an immense puzzle of industrial districts, some within the city limits, some as their own towns: Germantown, Kensington, etc. etc. (Scranton, 1983). When Chicago added the great Union Stockyards and its assembled slaughterhouses in the 1860s, they were on the city's southern edge, while after the great fire of 1870, McCormick Reaper works and other big manufacturers pushed westward along the Chicago river, outside the preexisting city limits; in the 1880s Pullman built his company town well to the south again, and in 1900 it was US Steel's turn to build an edge city just over the state border: Gary, Indiana. The best-documented case of this outward movement of industry is for Montreal, from the 1850s onward, by Robert Lewis (1993).

In California, San Francisco came into being as the head of a chain of satellite cities reaching up the great Sacramento river system through the Central Valley and into the goldfields; this system soon jumped over the Sierras to Virginia City and the comstock lode, rushed up the coast into the northern California mines and forests, and eventually spread over the whole of the west from the Rockies to the Pacific slope. Confining ourselves only to the immediate bay area, outlying industrial nodes appeared almost immediately around sawmills and planing mills, paper plants, barrel making works, soap factories and the like from Santa Cruz to Redwood City to Berkeley, and by the 1870s there were the Southern Pacific yards in Oakland and the first outlying canneries. Within San Francisco's (then) expansive city limits, industry jumped quickly south of Market Street and then spread rapidly south along the waterfront after the Civil War, the giant Union Machine Works and shipyards rising across Mission Bay and butchertown farther south, at India Basin. Out in the Mission District Claus Spreckels built a huge sugar mill in the 1870s. To the west, where Golden Gate park now stands, were powder works and a lead smelter; along the north

beach were a marble cutting yard, canneries, and a rock crushing mill. This industrial decentralization became a flood by the turn of the century that swept down to South San Francisco ("The Industrial City") and across to the East Bay, where Oakland, Berkeley, and Emeryville grew explosively, along with a chain of small company towns along the length of the Sacramento from Richmond to Antioch. Canneries, refineries, powder works, machine shops, smelters, wagon shops, and all the rest stretched along the east bay from the hub of Oakland.

The same kinds of expansive industrial and settlement patterns can be found in Los Angeles, though it grew at a later date. The network of commercial-railroad towns came first, in the citrus era, followed by an dispersed nodes of the "black oil suburbs" (cite). Heavy industry, as it grew, followed the rail lines southeast down the chain link suburbs from Vernon to Compton, where it bumped into settlement coming north from the implantation of the port at San Pedro-Long Beach. Hollywood in the 1920s took root to the west of the established center of the city of LA and the great crescent of aircraft factories and landing fields were planted in the 1930s in an arc along the west side from Long Beach through LAX to Santa Monica and up to Burbank.

Residences very often followed these industrial tesselations, particularly those of the working class. (Garreau is dead wrong when he says that "industrial and warehouse space does not create anything urbane. No dense centers ever evolve." (p. 31).) In the Bay Area, residential growth accompanied industry out to the Mission, up Potrero Hill, in west Berkeley (Oceanview), to east Oakland (Fruitvale), Point Richmond and the rest. The size of the settlement was dictated by the number of firms and jobs, and the character of the work. Powder works, which hired mostly Chinese men because of their expendibility, did not lay the seed for much in the way of urbanization. Rail yards and studios spawned great concentrations of workers and their families nearby. The great arc of aircraft factories created the 15-mile circle of residential tracts in the 1940s documented so carefully by Hise (1992). Of course, the spatial relation was mediated by a number of things, prominently the kind of transport, land availability, and wage rates. In the East Bay, where all three were expansive, the sprawl of little homes for working people covered the flatlands behind for miles behind the main spine of the industrial belt.

All this fits very well with Allen Scott's (1988a) insistence on the necessary relation between industrialization and urbanization -- although Scott sells his insight short by insisting so often on the

linkage between new industrial (and urban) spaces and the transition from Fordism to flexibility in industry (1988b). In fact, a wide variety of industrial types has provided the basis for the labor markets and ancillary housing that grounds new edge cities, both past and present. (Aerospace in West LA and Hollywood in its big studio form are classic examples of "systems houses" for batch production of complex goods). Soja makes matters worse by taking over Scott's language of post-*Fordism* to underpins his own model of post-*modern* urbanization. It just doesn't wash, and in treating Orange County, Soja quickly drops the industrial base to concentrate on other matters closer to his heart.

The wonder is that Scott had to rediscover the industry-urban dialectic at all, when the historical evidence for it is so abundant. The main reason is surely that as the muster and march of factories began, the bourgeoisie almost always headed off in the opposite direction (or up the hills) to get away from noxious fumes, smoke and immigrants, and thereby lost close contact with the process (Walker, 1978). The Chicago sociologists engraved the separation in conceptual stone with their concentric ring model of the city, even though Homer Hoyt (1939) soon corrected their error in his wedge model of urban growth. (The New York Regional Plan Association study of the 1920s also played a part, given the distinctive concentration of the garment industry and office in southern Manhattan). During World War II no one was writing about cities, even though factories were being thrown up like mad on the urban fringes, as at Fontana.

The key time for the present-day obsession with residential suburbanization came after the War, when a pent-up tsunami of housing demand spilled over the suburban landscapes of the United States. For the next generation, suburbanization was equated to residential sprawl (Whyte, 1959). Take the case of Silicon Valley, one of the most prominent instances in Garreau's pantheon of Edge Cities. In my youth, before it ever acquired the silicon sobriquet, it was notorious for the extraordinary pace and pattern of residential development, and maps of San Jose's ridiculous pipe-stem annexations made it into every text on the evils of poor urban planning (SELS, 1969; Fellmeth et al., 1971; Downie, 1973). Indeed, almost no one who lived there or wrote about it before 1975 had the slightest idea that they were watching the growth of one of the world's most important industrial districts, the leading center of global electronics of the age. All those park-like "campuses" following the script of Stanford Industrial Park were marvelous false fronts for the hard work and often toxic work going on behind the bucolic facades. This sort of fake residential utopia did not have to

wait for Walt Disney (though Hewlett and Packard's first commercial product, made up in the legendary garage in Palo Alto, was an audio tube custom-built for Disney's film, Fantasia).

The shifting division of labor and the dispersal of offices

In many of the edge cities of the late 20th century, factories are not the main locii of employment. This shift in the division of labor from factories to offices and retailing venues needs to be addressed in coming to grips with the urban expansion of today, and the economic forces behind these constellations of office employment and retailing need to be teased out. Without question, a long-standing transformation in the division of labor has put more employment into glass highrises and fewer into glass manufactories, more workers into shopping centers and fewer on the shop floor. So we should expect these kinds of workplaces and activities to be featured in the newer segments of metropolitan systems, the new Edge Cities. But a few cautions are required, as well.

Joel Garreau chimes in with the usual snappy slogan: "In Edge City, the offices are the factories of the Information Age". (p 29) As much is obscured as is clarified by this kind of statement, and with most of the easy generalizations now popular with regard to office-based work and the contemporary division of labor in the United States. To begin with, many of the most famous edge cities, including Silicon Valley and Orange County, are factory-based in the traditional sense, as just indicated. Although they, too, have large office and shopping complexes added to the mix, these industrial-urban districts are principally dedicated to the production of goods such as computers and aircraft-guidance systems. At the same time, the division of labor in these industries includes large numbers of engineers, software hackers and the like who work in jobs at a far reach from the final material outputs of PCs, instruments, or even off-the-shelf software packages that are becoming a bigger part of the mix of products in electronics.

There are, of course, many offices that are factories in the sense of large clerical workforces engaged in repetitive labor of only moderate skill, as in the insurance offices in Connecticut or financial back-offices of route 680 in the Bay Area. These anchor many edge cities today, and are intimately tied to the availability of female clericals, who abound in certain suburban residential sectors such as the outer

East Bay (Nelson, 1984). In this case, the residential suburbs created a pool of workers effectively trapped in urban space by domestic responsibilities and looking for jobs to keep up family incomes, and large companies splitting off their back-offices to save money in the burgeoning city centers such as New York and San Francisco saw the opportunity to suburbanize in the 1970s and 80s (and experiment that worked so well, it was applied to even more peripheral places, such as Phoenix, South Dakota and the Caribbean). Here labor attracted employers rather than the other way around, but the ultimate unity of the two sides of the urban equation still holds.

Shopping districts have gone hand in hand with residential suburbanization since the time of the corner grocery. Small shopping "centers" were part of turn of the century planning for high-class suburban developments such as the Claremont District of Berkeley. More important were the linear shopping streets leading outward to the suburban zones (which Engels observed as early as 1840 in Manchester). Zoning helped concentrated commerce along streetcar arterials, later the great highway strips, which appeared at the moment of urban inception along every major wedge of the city (Liebs, 1984). One thinks, in the Bay Area, of Oakland's East 14th Street or El Camino Real down the Peninsula. What changed dramatically was the rise and fall of the great central department store districts which identified central cities with shopping in the popular (and academic) consciousness for the fifty years 1880-1930. Suburban shopping centers became drivers of the expansion process in the 1950s, while the megamalls of today, like South Coast Mall in Costa Mesa, may jump out even farther into open reaches, pulling housing after them (though there's a delicate balance between cheap land to be had farther out and customer base from existing housing, as Richmond's Hilltop Mall discovered; there Chevron Land and Development Corporation has had to build contiguous housing and office parks to try to raise the effective demand at the mall's stores).

Top level offices, including headquarters, financial services and R&D labs, form another element in the suburban growth complex. Here, too, one needs to exercise a bit of historical and analytical caution. In Silicon Valley, industrial headquarters, the huge venture capital complex, and specialized law offices grew up together as part of the electronics district; they are not transplants for older city centers. Probably the same goes for the immense banking and office district of northern Orange County. The banks are overwhelming branches of outside corporations coming in to collect deposits and make loans to

firms and customers in the county (deposits in both edge cities exceed those in San Francisco, yet the headquarters of Bank of American and Wells Fargo keep "The City" far ahead of the rest of California as a banking control center).

Even as corporate headquarters have spun off to the suburban zones in a way they have not done since the great corporate merger and headquarters concentration era of the early 20th century, many of these are branch offices or new units of older companies, as in the case of AT&T, PG&E or Pacific Bell in the 680 corridor; Pac Bell, in particular, has suburbanized its new, fast-growing units, such as Cellular One (car phones) and xxxxxx, while keeping the conglomerate headquarters in San Francisco. Thus we see in the Bay Area's edge cities an overlap of headquarters removal from the central city (e.g., xxxxx), hierarchical spatial division of labor (e.g., Chevron), completely new companies in new industrial spaces (e.g., Hewlett-Packard) and new branch companies in new office spaces (e.g., Pacific Telesis). (Garreau properly insists that edge and center both grew in the 1980s, only the center became more specialized in finance and tourism -- which rings true).

Eliding all such differences is part of the simple-minded formulations of the popular journalist, as one might expect in Garreau's case. But more is involved in this elision of factories, offices and businesses of various kinds, and that is the hyperbolic promotion of the Information Age and the triumphalism of Reagan-era economic ideology (Great American job machine, Symbolic Analysts, Information Age, Service exports and the like). I can't dispense with all this here, but have written a book about it (Sayer & Walker, 1992). The extent of Garreau's Bush-like delusion is shown by his assurances to the American pubic to "Ignore the doom-and-gloom sayers" and to celebrate America's nonpareil manufacturing capacity in steel and other basic industries (p. 30). Edge Cities are confidence builders, if nothing else.

Indeed, the office-centeredness of edge cities is exaggerated in the US by the loss of so many manufacturing jobs in still-viable sectors through international competition, profit decline and offshoring of plants (Cohen and Zysman, 1988; Kenney and Florida, 1991). And by overstocking clericals and fast-food workers because they come so cheap these days (Reich, 1991; Schorr, 1993).

Property development and the illogic of accumulation

The other force exaggerating the development of suburban office and shopping complexes and prematuring signaling the arrival of new edge cities is the overheated property markets of the 1980s. The real estate boom lies behind the explosive way that offices and other large buildings suddenly shot up everywhere, attracting the attention and surprise of Joel Garreau and other journalists.

The 1980s were a time of rampant office and commercial construction, fueled by easy money from a deregulated and overheated financial sector. (show chart?) This property boom is unparalleled since the 1920s -- with equally dire results in terms of overbuilding, vacancies, financial losses, and bankruptcies. So the trend to Edge Cities was exaggerated in the same way as suburbanization was exaggerated in the 20s (remember the Florida land bubble or the LA land boom). It will take a while to recover from the collapse and solidify the shift in fixed capital toward the Edges -- though it will most likely happen, as it has done in the 680 corridor, where vacancies are down after 5 lean years to a level below that of San Francisco.

Recall, too, the journalistic uproar over the wonders of Houston or Denver circa 1980 and the decade of quiescence that followed, while the empty buildings slowly filled back up. The same cycle undergirds the bubble of promotion and discovery by academics of the post-modern, post-industrial or post-fordist city in Los Angeles: a huge boom made the city seem larger than life, larger than capitalism itself, during the last decade. Now our visions of the capital of the 20th century have necessarily shrunk or been overlaid by the bleak landscapes of despair painted by Mike Davis, and by images of fires, earthquakes and riots. This is, indeed, an edgy city, from the center out, in all directions.

On a more subtle note, the emergence of edge city offices and commercial property development is tied to the rolling tide of profitability and overaccumulation within long waves of property investment. There is a clear shift in the eras 1900-1930 and 1945-1973 in the proportions of different buildings in the construction mix, beginning with heavy emphasis on single-family homes, then moving toward apartments, and finally going whole-hog into commercial structures. Each time the bubble burst most spectacularly in the commercial realm (Hoyt, 1933; Harvey, 1986). After 1975 came another wave (Kuznets' cycle) of property investment that peaked early

in industrial buildings in Silicon Valley (circa 1985) and later in office buildings in San Francisco or highway 680 (circa 1990). The collapse of prices and high vacancy rates in all three urban zones attests to the general nature of the phenomenon. A speculative frenzy led to rising land and housing prices in the 1980s, urban hot spots exploding in value as excess and fictitious capital poured into the cauldron. A melt down.

The meltdown was felt particularly hard in the leading zones of late 20th century capitalism, from the global cities of finance to the high-tech industrial clusters of California. Globalization of financial capital reached new highs, allowing investible funds and loans (fictitious capital) to rush into the new frontiers of property speculation in unprecedented quantities, like water sloshing around a tub, threatening to spill over as the oscillations increase. Silicon Valley attracted loose money from all over the world, both for industrial and property investment. California in general was a favored outpost of accumulation, and property values soared, leading to a feeding frenzy of foreign investors. Thus, Japanese overaccumulation drove huge real estate investors to drop unheard of sums for dubious properties here, from Pebble Beach to downtown LA. And, when Olympia and York went bankrupt from the Big Bust in London, reverberations were felt in San Francisco, Oakland and Orange County.

In the aftermath these places have become less triumphant, more edgy about the future. Silicon Valley fever gave way to fears of eclipse by the Japanese (false, as it turned out, but enough to push the valley's capitalists behind Clinton in 1992). LA turned to immigrant bashing. San Francisco to running the homeless out of town on their shopping carts....etc. (continue in vein of Walker, 1994, on the decline of California).

• Who created the Edge Cities? Class, race and political power in the metropolis

Edge cities are as much the consequence of the social and political order of the US as they are a product of economic forces, though you would not know it from Joel Garreau's popular book, which begins with the usual ideology foreplay of liberal journalism about the virtues of individualism and choice. Edge Cities, he claims, "are the culmination of a generation of individual American value decisions about the best ways to live, work, and play -- about how to create 'home'." (p 7) No wonder he has a best-seller on his hands. Unfortunately, all those

individual choices are heavily structured by class and racial schisms that run deep in the American veins.

Class and race exclusion

For Garreau it is impossible to conceive of the exercise of control over space by whole classes and races of people. Edge Cities are a classic social reconstruction of space on new turf, away from the contested and problematic territories of the older built-up areas and their habitation by undesirables, a process that has been at the heart of US suburbanization since its inception (Walker, 1978).

There is, on the one hand, the attraction of the suburban fringe for the upper classes seeking homes tucked away in the woods or overlooking rolling hills and glades, replete with wildlife and fresh air. Garreau acknowledges this elements bourgeois escapism when he refers to the search for "Nice" among corporate executives looking to remove their headquarters to the exurbs and extolls the sylvan landscapes to be found their, where deer and antelope play on corporate driveways. Of course, it is a odd sort of Nature that entices the burgher to the greenwood, where racehorses are the top of the food chain. "There is precious little that drives up the prices of land like horses", notes Garreau in a moment of clarity (p. 93), unconsciously echoing Veblen's acerbic observations of a century before in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899, Chap. 6). Furthermore, equs and ugulate are less preferred than the right upright simians, and "Nice" places turn out to be the executive rangelands where managers and their wives graze on the plenitude of the countryside (Whyte, 1990).

On the other hand, the burghers are escaping from someone else: the teeming masses of the working class and underclass made up of former Africans, Asians, Latins, Caribbeans and the like. I need hardly remind you of South Central Los Angeles, and Mike Davis' eloquence on the war against the young men and women of the ghetto is well known. Allen Scott (1988a) gives telling evidence that Orange County's economic growth did little to paliate the unemployment of the African-American people of the region because they were systematically not hired and drawn to the suburbs by the expanding industries underwriting that Edge City's explosive growth. (No wonder Soja cannot find anyone with a historical memory in Orange county: potential critics have been excluded). My own favorite example is Detroit, where the white people have not merely suburbanized or create new edge cities, as Garreau

claims, but have quite literally shifted the whole metropolitan area population and economy to the north, abandoning the old city almost entirely, as shown by Robin Bloch (1993). Even in Atlanta, where the Black Bourgeoisie is supposedly ascendant, Garreau admits that the Edge City growth is all to the north, away from the traditional black areas of town. In the Bay Area, where racial division is a good deal less than any of these other cities, the Edge City of the highway 680 corridor was erected as the East Bay antithesis to dusky Oakland in the twilight of its industrial greatness -- even as cheap office space was going begging in Oakland's downtown. During the last thirty years of rapid growth in the region, Oakland has remained the 'black hole' in the bright metropolitan galaxy.

To the long-standing habits of the white bourgeoisie must be added the particular depredation of the Reagan era, with its assault on civil rights and the working class in general. Reagan's gang systematically choked off the cities, their black and minority constituents, and their Democratic Party power base while favoring the "new suburban majority" with tax breaks and investment subsidies. Clinton's neo-liberalism caters to the same class of people, studiously avoiding any mention of inner cities, poverty and racism except to chastise African-Americans for a breakdown of social values (Davis, 1993).

Along with the generalized racism and classism of the white elite we must recognize that the spatialization of privilege and hatred does not occur only at the suburban fringe; urban space itself is tainted. Cities have repeatedly drawn together great assemblages of workers, immigrants from the Irish to the Salvadorans, and people of all kind who have found in the interstices of urban life the freedom to be different, to be deviant, to be everything the upright classes cannot stand: homosexual, intellectual, libertine, riotous, idle, and so forth (Wilson, 1992; Groth, 1994). Hence the long war over urbanism and urban space, in which the bourgeoisie and its allies have repeatedly attempted to choke off and run away from the urban monster they have created. The American ruling classes do not like cities and their inhabitants and ways of life, and they have been particularly vehement about this in recent times. The Bay Area has experienced several waves of urban rectification, from the imposition of the Victorian grid on the city of the 49ers to the clearances of the 1950s and 60s (Walker, 1994). But amazingly it has been a place where some semblance of urban life has been preserved and deviant movements have blossomed several times in the midst of the American empire and the long Cold War epoch: Beats, student activists, Hippies and Gays have

found their principal refuge and redoubt in San Francisco and Berkeley, and more besides.

Indeed, the Bay Area has been so notorious for its liberation movements that its has suffered repeated invasions from Southern California and the American heartland, from the John Birchers of Orange county to the Moral Majority. The decisive counterrevolution was led by Ronald Reagan and his cronies (including several key rightists of the Bay Area), who successfully captured the California governorship and then the Presidency. It is hard to disentangle the anti-labor, anti-gay, anti-feminist and anti-immigrant strains of the New Right where the spaces of opposition and liberation are so deeply interwoven. Even under Clinton, the Bay Area is being punished for its transgressions in opposing US militarism and imperialism by taking the hardest hits of any region in the recent wave of military base closures. After two decades of hammering, is it any wonder that the resiliency of the Bay Area left and counterculture seems to be weakening? Nonetheless, it may be here, in the realm of urban politics and resistance, that a clue to the difference between Orange County and, say, the old Edge city of Oakland and Berkeley, can be found.

Garreau refuses to face the ugly side of suburban flight. He even has the gall to assign Edge City's emergence to women's liberation (by which he means the entry of women into the workforce). (p. 112) What happened, in fact, was the suburbanization of certain back offices to be near a captive female workforce trapped in space by *lack* of mobility (not increasing automotive freedom, as Garreau thinks) and *lack* of options as second income earners. These are the women clericals, who provide a principal reason for office expansion in the suburbs, as carefully documented in the case of the Bay Area by Kristin Nelson (1985). [Might refer to Janet Flammang as this juncture?????]

Equally galling are Garreau's apologetics about the middle class building "in the Spanish style", that is, bringing public space behind high walls (p 49).

The left has recently been hotly challenging the decline of public space in the malls and theme parks of the US, as in the fine collection of essays edited by Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park* (1992). The authors of that collection ruminate on the private appropriation, barricading and surveillance of public space in the new cities, and they connect this dystopian space to the political drift of the 1980s. Here a strictly spatial equation of Edges with control of space is unjustified,

however, as Mike Davis has shown: the same sorts of depredations on civil rights are to be seen throughout contemporary cities.

Poles, Metropoles and the Polis

Behind the middle class curtain stands the wizard of property capital, the land developer. In fact, as Garreau demonstrates, in spite of himself, Edge Cities are the product of strictly commercial, profit-seeking decisions by developers, many of them huge, like the Irvine company (cite). Developers have been busily promoting the hyperextension of the American city for almost two hundred years (Walker, 1978, 1981; cf. Limerick, 1987). The highly open and speculative nature of the US land market (and financial system) has meant that land changes hands easily and swiftly, and that gains from property revaluation are quickly realized by the speculator who buys and builds ahead of the expanding urban fringe. This kind of hyper-urbanization holds no post-modern secrets.

Developers push activities together as well as tearing the city apart. They jostle to attract clusters of stores and shoppers together to internalize externalities and maximize rents: my kingdom, the mall. This also explains the congregations of office and retail activity observed by Garreau and others in the edge cities, mountains of office space at critical points in the urban grid. These peaks in the rent gradient are less like the rolling hills of Appalachia than the olympian cones of volcanism, scaled to ever-augmenting size of capital funds melting into investible magna below the hard surface of the city, their eruptions on the high plateaus of urbanization fed by red-hot finance of the 80s.

Everything ever said about the schism between developers and the human interest can be repeated here. Even Garreau provides ample evidence of developer power over the creation and use of space in edge cities. In a telling example, the inhabitants of Bridgewater Township in New Jersey "went from dream about Boston Commons to building Bridgewater Commons" (p 43): that is, they abandoned the idea of a public space in the face of what was commercially possible: a big shopping complex.

Nonetheless, the decline of public space flows not only from the specific privatizations of large developers, but from the whole constellation of institutions over which the proprietary classes

exercise power (and, indeed, create specifically to that end in many cases). Certainly it is not the public in the form of local government that is going to bail out free and libertines spaces, given that suburban governments have for a century been predicated on the exclusion of undesirable publics from the narrow commonweal of the well-to-do. Such local governments usually enact as draconian measures as the landlords of the malls in order to keep 'vagrants' and 'agitators' at bay. We're currently seeing a resurgence of such laws up and down the west coast in response to mass homelessness and beggary, teenage rowdiness, curbside hiring of immigrant day-laborers and the like. Even the supposed bastions of urbane tolerance, such as San Francisco, Santa Monica, Seattle and Berkeley are vying with each other to be the first to steal shopping carts from the homeless.

So we need to pause a moment to consider the fragmented nature of class power in this country and its cities. US cities (most notably California's metropolitan areas) have been a hodge-podge of jurisdictions throughout the 20th century. Americans prefer their sovereignty parcelled, a peculiarity of the country, and one not explained by recourse to democracy or preferences (in the manner of Charles Tiebout). After all, suburban jurisdictions have ever been the favored instrument of the rich and of business, with the working class taking the leftovers (Hoch, 19xx).

This fragmentation has meant endless confusion for students of urbanism, as well as the general public. The common sense definition of city is something with a single name, like "San Francisco". Yet San Francisco has never represented the whole of urbanism in the Bay Area, and has not been overwhelmingly dominant through most of this century. A lack of significant names or coherent boundaries hides the reality of the new outlying metropolitan nodes, or edge cities, as Garreau has forcefully argued. Rare was the city that accomplished the kind of unification of center and satellites New York achieved at the turn of the century.

Now this raises a question about the need for political power to take a geographically bounded form. Throughout the course of westward settlement, the rule was: stake out a townsite, incorporate and you're in business. Early suburban additions to the big cities generally could not do this because they did not have the tax base to provide infrastructure for growth, so they clove to the parent city. Besides, the older cities were imperial enterprises topped off by a business elite that wanted control over its immediate territory and the

provisioning of land development, so incorporation made sense: Los Angeles' addition of the San Fernando valley as a water-based speculation is a well-known California example. Nonetheless, the process of absorption was imperfect at the best of times and gasped its last around 1900 (the New York model was ignored in most other places), leaving the fragmented metropolises of today.

So it should be no surprise that Edge Cities are jurisdictionally independent of the old central cities; this is hardly news and makes them characteristically American. But are they cities in all other senses? Overall, yes, they are urban, parts of larger metropolitan systems, new poles within the metropoles. Does this make them sub*urbs* to a central city or Edge Cities in their own right? (this peters out......)

- **Are Edge Cities urbane? The imagined city**

Urbanity requires, everyone seems to agree, a certain level of concentration and human interaction. Propagandist Garreau takes the upbeat view that the new commercial nodes in the outer realms of the metropolis are, indeed, citified. Obviously, these Edge Cities are automobuilt places, and as Garreau says, "a place blown out to automobile scale is not what [one] thinks of as a 'city'." (p. 9) But the density of the commercial nodes is rather high by suburban standards (indeed, by town and small city standards in the US), so they are in fact about as high as urban concentration gets outside of a few precious spots in the US. (Probably as high as Berkeley, which is quite urbane, right?)

Nonetheless, as Garreau admits at one juncture, a lot of people living in Edge cities find them repugnant: sterile, plastic, uncivilized (p. 8). Here we need to turn back to Ed Soja, who draw a sobering portrait of the new exopolis as the antithesis of the urbane, a place deluding itself and its inhabitants that it is a real city. Or Mike Davis' disturbing vision of the city as *film noir* , where danger lurks and the fearful burghers throw up hasty battlements in defense of privilege.

We would do well, in reflecting on the late 20th century city, to remember the concerns of Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Raymond Williams and past critics of capitalist urbanism. This means, *contra* Soja, avoiding a false starting point by taking the city of the past as a place of transparent reality (just as Williams chided the Romantics for

fantasizing a rural past of more valid human relations or Benjamin probed Baudelaire's thoroughly-modern despondency). The grip of illusion in the city is not to be gainsayed. Walter Benjamin was, after all, profoundedly in awe of the phantasmagoria of capitalism and its hold over consciousness. (expand on this?) Where Benjamin parted ways with the Surrealists -- and I with the post-modernists -- is in the view that the dreamworld of everyday urban life should not merely be celebrated or damned, but explored for the possibility of rupture and utopian vision contained within the "collective unconscious" of the people. Or is this an impossible ideal itself?

And hasn't something been lost along the way from Paris to Edge City, which makes the revolutionary hopes of Benjamin's era look sadly tarnished? One can feel the loss by traveling from Paris to Los Angeles (or even from the center of Paris to its far-flung suburbs, including EuroDisney). But how to put one's finger on it? It lies more in the fabric of city-building and social life, I would argue, and less in the fantasy world and iconography of landscape favored by the postmodern critics.

Density and compactness are part of it, to be sure; walkable places are important for human interaction, human scale important for sense of knowing and mastering a place (cf. Alexander, 19xx). Achievement of a certain density of activities allows foot traffic to reappear and support pedestrian businesses within the fabric of these enormous clusters of buildings, thereby negating the automobile scale of the whole. But density is not enough. The kind of pleasant effects Garreau espies in his Edge Cities are due to other things.

One has to do with the outlook of the middle class denizens the offices and the residential suburbs around the Edge Cities, who have enjoyed rising incomes and imbibed a bit of urbanity in their habits as a result of the Yuppie Era. This sort of rediscovery of the urban as a place of gentrification and consumption has been particularly marked in the Bay Area core and in West LA, where the counterculture of the 1960s was repackaged in commercial guises from California cuisine to the Nature Company, from Esprit to Whole Earth Access stores (Walker, et al., 1990). Hence Garreau's jocular line: "New Jersey is a kind of California of the East Coast".(p 24)

In other words, consumer culture is implicated in the kind of urbanism we find today in the United States, and that has taken a few steps back toward the boulevards of Paris. Recall that Benjamin looked to the

consumers haunting the arcades for his insights into the collective dreams of liberation. The spaces and traces of consumption are everywhere in the edge cities, from the megamalls to the housing tracts. What is it that bothers us about this consumer frenzy? Partly it is vulgar, so ticky tacky, as Fontana's new suburbanites complain to Mike Davis. The masses do not always get good values for their money and the objects and activities of their lifes can, in many ways, be bereft of aesthetics and learning. We can say this without falling into the trap of elitism, though many culture critics from Adorno to Bourdieu have taken the plunge. The alternative is a vernacular populism that says learn from Las Vegas, but learns nothing from urban history and the frauds perpetrated on arts and economy alike by the money-makers and the power mad. Venturi et al (1971) take their cue from JB Jackson .... for gawd's sake.

Consumer culture is marked by more than shallow delights or shoddy goods, however. It refracts the nightmare world of human dreams and desires, of a society unhinged, its citizens binging on eroticism and addiction, reduced to a rampant infantilism and object fetishism, force-fed on mythologies of liberation through the pocketbook, caught up in the cyclonic winds of money as the means to all things. (Develop further.....in light of work with TJ Clark)......

So is civic culture generally.

Is there any way out of the maelstrom? The revolutionary break of which Benjamin still dreamed is not on the horizon, but is certainly never without possibility. Nevertheless, while revolutions are part of the historical record, the revolutionary dream of a break with history cannot be. We are doomed to sort it out for ourselves even as the second millenium comes and goes. Perhaps Benjamin had it wrong to take consumption seriously, and the answer lies in a return to the verities of production and a democratization of the workplace and a workers' socialism. I have been accused in other debates of being an orthodox productionist, a sort of Stalinist relic, for my insistence on the continued relevance of production to the study of urbanization and regional development in America (Cronon, 1994). Yet I hardly think the proper attention to production (versus exchange, in market-driven theories of capitalist development) belies a concern with consumption and the utilization of the products of labor and of nature. The blinding panoply of goodies that capitalist industry spews forth is full of delights and satisfactions, many of which reasonable people would be unlikely to do without in some form in a post-capitalist world.

Besides, shopping can be fun. More than that, I quite agree with Daniel Miller (1987) that the self-realization of humanity through material practice, and hence the historical process of human liberation in the modern world, is deeply tied up in the way people today use consumer goods to satisfy their wants, learn about the world, unlock their own potentials, and create new human prospects. But I don't envision an apotheosis of humankind simply through the acquisition and manipulation of industrial goods. The power of money still cannot substitute for the human soul or the human heart.

The difficult project for the future is to grow up from our consumerist childhood and sober up from our consumer binge so that the plenitude of things which labor has wrought (and capital brought to our doorstep) might be used more intelligently, more judiciously, more satisfactory. And the only way to do this is through politics, meaning participation in civic life, participation in collective governance, and winning a greater measure of control over the basic economic conditions of life. That is a very general admonition, but it pertains to some very tangible aspects of city life and the kind of urbanism we get.

Returning to the city and civic spaces, what we like about Paris is very much the result of the popular reconquest of the city after every aristocratic or bourgeois attempt to exclude and destroy and redecorate. The students, the workers, the immigrants, the tourists and transients will not go away and leave the burghers in peace (nor do the burghers leave to seek peace in the suburbs, abandoning the city to the warring subproletariat, as in Detroit or LA). The streets and barricades, the cafes and bohemians, are the most obvious sites and signs of the contest over urbanity and *civitas*. But the larger issue is who controls the city: who designs it, who profits from it, who puts boundaries on it, who allocates resources, who excludes whom, and so forth. Paris is an enormously, profoundly contested site, and the contest lends it vigor, while the victories of the people give it substance and the plans of the capitalists give it shape.

In the United States, the politics of space are less vital. To some extent, they tend to concentrate on the federalist segmentation of space and acquisition of resources, on escape from rather than recovery of civic life. At the same time, political life in general has been draining away from the body politick in America, leaving little better than our home sites, car purchases, and gasoline bills to concentrate on. Yet even here the public does, on occasion, attempt to reconquer civic space. The tale of New Jersey is telling: how dare people imagine

a village green without commercialism? Developers must be ever vigilant against such dreams of the collective unconscious!

But there is more to the political history of urbanism in the United States than this isolated incident. I want to suggest that some of the differences that are so visible in the urban environment and urban life of the Bay Area and Southern California are the result of political struggles, including culture, class and the physical environment in the brew. This will be the subject of the next section.

- **The urban environment: politics of the civic landscape**

It is widely acknowledged among Americans and visitors that San Francisco is probably the country's most livable and pleasant city. It is also one of the most politically off-center places in a deeply conservative nation. Many things have gone to making this such a unique American city, the least of which are the overrated climate and setting. The class structure has bulged oddly in the middle from the Gold Rush onward. The labor movement flourished and even seized electoral power for many years. Racism has been moderated, mostly by the absence of non-white masses and by the selective incorporation of more acceptably middle-class migrants. Prosperity has nurtured the egalitarian tendencies of class and race relations. Cosmopolitanism has been the rule in the global mingling of fortune-seekers coming to the area. Libertine indulgence has been little checked, and the public manifestation of libido and deviance greatly tolerated. Bohemianism has generally flourished, reaching a peak in the great postwar era of the Beats and the Hippies. And more.

But here I can only highlight a few ways in which political struggles directly impinged on the fabric of the urban environment in the Bay Area, and the contrast with Los Angeles. I do this fully aware of the neglect of all the countertendencies on both sides, including the most despicable forces operating close to home:

One example is the environmental movement.[2] This saved the Bay, took on nuclear power, took on water industry, fought suburban sprawl, saved huge swaths of open space.

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[2] Garreau carries on the grand tradition of bourgeois landscape ideology in which a few trees and grazing deer constitute a satisfactory ecosystem, allowing them to live in harmony with nature (p. 57). Here again, Veblen should be recalled in reference to the pastoral haunts of the well-to-do: "...deer, antelopes, or some such exotic beast ....[are] preferred because of their superior expensiveness or futility, and their consequent repute. They are not vulgarly lucrative either in fact or in suggestion." (Veblen, 1933, p. 101).

Another example is the anti-highrise movement that protected San Francisco's aging fabric from ruination at the hands of the developers, engineers, planners and big capitalists, and which mobilized middle class, left, neighborhoods against the corporations.

A third example is the counterculture, penetrating even to middle class life, to silicon valley, and to commercial culture. Boutiques and environmental goods.

A fourth example is the gay liberation movement, which led gentrification, helped open up electoral politics and revived some of the city's neighborhoods.

A fifth example is Berkeley in the 60s.

How does LA fare by contrast, despite the commonalities across the length of California?

• The endless pavements and lack of open space or parks, and a no-growth movement with little environmental content (as Davis complains).

• Consumer culture over counterculture. Lack of Beats (contrasting obscenity trials), lack of hippies. Intense commercialism of everything.

• The lack of political challenges to the big city machine and an LAPD over the city.

• Orange county as a center of reaction, versus relatively easy-going republicanism of Silicon Valley.

• The counterrevolution against Berkeley and San Francisco that marched Reagan into the White House. The Reagan library is in Simi Valley, not Stanford, for a reason.

• **Conclusion: Edging away from urbanism, republicanism, and industrialism**

It could be claimed that the Edge finally overtook the Center in the balance of the dialectic: the auto city finally took over in shaping the suburban rings into nodal cities. This is probably true. Of course, Oakland and LA did the same via streetcars, so it is not unprecedented, as said before. What has happened is comparable to the shift in urban-regional form from the riverboats to the railroads in the Midwest, giving shape to Chicago. This is the apotheosis of the auto suburb as city, rather than the emergence of a new form (one can argue over the additional qualitative shift this produces in urbanism...)

And the result of years of battering the cities into submission....it takes effort and determination to destroy the cities as far as we have.....of writing off the old fixed capital and old places with their problems and contestations, as capital always does....and without new investment, old capital goes bad fast.

And of years of anti-democratic machinations, failure of the American republic, which the people try to realize in their little castle homes, their exclusionary suburbs and their consumerist expenditures.....

And of years of decline in which the working class has been increasingly downgraded from its suburban middle class aspirations, and demonized as its face has changed.....and industry has given way to circuses as the empire declines......