

# UC Berkeley

## Places

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To Rally Discussion

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I found *Places 6:2* interesting and constructive. I like the observations you make and especially the article by De Carlo, which was thoughtful and respected the reality of cars. The pictures of quarries were marvelous.

What has prompted me to comment was the drawing on page 50, “Downtown Boston 2088”: elaborate, well done, but utter nonsense. I thought, are we going to have that much more of the same old thing? (I say “we,” all of us now must say “they” when we refer to the citizens of the year 2088.) To be sure there are more 1920-like town masses, a few Pei pyramids, axial gardens and courts; these are only momentary fixations and will fall aside.

But for anyone to think they could imagine 2088 just appalls me. Does anyone think the architects, city designers, such as they were, in 1888 could imagine, let alone comprehend, the cities of 1988? Could they imagine motor cars several thousandfold, electricity, radio, TV, unlimited (it seems) heights of buildings, high speeds, pollution, manufactured materials we know, computer computations? Air traffic, top-heavy financial structure, sometimes impotent government and political organizations, printing excesses, photography and reproduction—advertising!!!

One could ask me, “What would you put down if you were to make a projection?” Answer: I wouldn’t. It’s absurd and a complete waste of time and energy and, what’s more, a missed opportunity to put time and energy toward things that could be analyzed and done (including much that the rest of this issue of *Places* recommends).

People (architects especially?) seem to forget that the logical approach to a problem is to write the right program, which means looking at what is really needed and almost always seeing what is wrong with what we have or what we don’t have.

It seems to me that students should be led into looking around them to see even the small problems that haven’t been solved, and bigger ones too. For instance: Has anyone really solved the problem of how the motor car is introduced into a building? Must one always step from the comfort of a car to pass through dark underground garages, not always clean, into transitional lobbies to small elevators or stairs? Does anyone know how to make elevators in tall building safe from being such bottlenecks that a single terrorist with Mr. Bush’s automatic weapons could make hostages of 40 floors of people?

Does anyone know how to control the amount or number of vehicles that should be allowed into a city? (I know some places are working on this mostly by reducing the number of parking places by thousands.) Does anyone have acceptable separations of pedestrians and cars in the city, except overhead, as in Min-

neapolis? (Are those skyways acceptable?) Has anyone solved the luggage problems, not only safety, but also convenience, in air traffic and trains? De Carlo looks at some of these problems, along roads.

To me, the interesting thing about the “revolutions” in Eastern Europe and Russia is that they are first looking at what is not working before trying to imagine grand schemes to be sold to the public. So it is with the pollution and waste. We are at last admitting there is a problem, and that must precede solving it.

—Maynard Lyndon

*Antonio DiMambro responds:*

It is not “absurd and a complete waste of time and energy” to make projections about the future of a city. While I recognize that it is indeed difficult for architects and city designers to capture in their visions of a future city the long term and unforeseen transformations of our society in terms of technology, economy and culture, I also believe that generating visions is an important and useful design task.

Visions allow us more successfully to discuss options for the future. They permit citizens and policy makers to visualize the implications of competing choices. Visions are also useful as a means to anticipate and hopefully to avoid the enormous problems that have been generated by the piecemeal planning and building process of the past few decades.

While Mr. Lyndon is entitled to dismiss Boston 2088 as “utter nonsense” he should be aware that the ideas embodied in that vision have captured the imagination of many communities, interest groups and public agencies in Boston. The competition has raised the consciousness of the critical issues that the city must tackle in the near future, particularly in the areas of airport facilities, water transportation and rapid transit expansion.

As stated in my article, visionary designs have always influenced Boston’s development and have shaped the form of the city in undeniable ways.

**Editor’s Note:**

Photographs in “Surrealist Paris” in *Places 6:2* were by Janet Irwin. In “The Waste of Place,” the photograph of children on a railroad track was by Michael Southworth. The photograph of a crane demolishing a building was by Kevin Lynch.

*Places encourages comments and critiques from readers. Please send letters to: Donlyu Lyndon, Editor, Places, c/o Center for Environmental Design Research, 390 Warster Hall, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720. Please limit letters to 500 words.*