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A Career at the Hinge: Paul Groth and Cultural Landscape Studies

Paul Groth
& Sarah Lopez

At the end of the Spring 2016 semester, Prof. Paul Groth retired from the Architecture and Geography Departments at Berkeley. To celebrate his career on campus, RM1000 asked Prof. Sarah Lopez of University of Texas, Austin to interview her former dissertation advisor and mentor.

Speaker 1 : Sarah Lopez
Speaker 2 : Paul Groth

SL 00:37 Well first, Paul, I wanted to start our conversation by obviously thanking you for a few things. As you know - I think you know this - my enrollment in your American Cultural Landscapes class in 1996 was the beginning, although unknown to me at the time, of my life career. I remember taking that class as a junior at Berkeley and being shocked and excited to learn that one could study the everyday built environment to better understand social and political history. And there's one other thing that I must thank you for, which I also believe that you're aware of. You taught me how to write. Now as a professor [chuckles], I marvel at the time you took with my various Masters thesis and PhD dissertation drafts. I remember taking your two page, single spaced letter about what, at the time was a bit of a disaster of a Masters thesis, to the bathroom weeping, and then immediately launching on what has become my writing career. It was for me the motivation that pushed me to be the writer that I am today. And because of that, I think that people who are invested in their work always share that investment with other people, and your investment in your work motivated me to be even more invested in my own work. So I just wanted to thank you.

PG 02:09 Oh, you're very welcome [laughter]. And your early writing was not so bad as I may have led you to believe [laughter], and it's always been an honor to have you as a student.

SL 02:25 Well thank you. So I wanted to start out by just asking you if you could please describe how you found cultural landscapes, both how you learned of this particular area of study, and also what it was and is about cultural landscapes that resonated with you so forcefully?

PG 02:44 Sure. Well, I graduated in 1972 with a standard five-year professional

architecture degree - a bachelor of architecture degree.. In those years, there was a movement around contextual design which I don't think is something we talk about much today, so that's sort of the background. A lot of designers were thinking about contextual design and trying to fit their designs into the surroundings of the design rather than creating a standalone building. So, I wanted to know how to do that, and no one really had an answer. For me, this was all happening in Fargo, North Dakota. I got my degree from North Dakota State University. Directly after graduation, a friend and I got a grant to teach school teachers about the built environment. There were 30 environmental fellows across the country offering similar courses with a large grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

PG 04:09 So my friend and I went out and circuit rode the state of North Dakota, at least eastern North Dakota, offering evening classes. We had wonderful students. They were all school teachers who wanted to learn about the built environment. What we found out was it wasn't that our students were not connected to high style architecture. They weren't connected to the built environment at all, and we couldn't find any teaching materials or any kind of guideline on how to teach the ordinary environment, what today we would call the vernacular environment. So these two prongs, the need to learn how to do contextual design, and then trying to teach people about the ordinary environment, sort of hit me about the same time. And at the end of our year of teaching these in-service courses, the person who had written and supervised the grant said, "You know? I see you need to know about small towns and farms, and there's one person in the United States who knows how to do that. His name is John Brinckerhoff Jackson, and he publishes a journal called Landscape. So I think you should be in



Linear shelter belts, planted during the New Deal, reduce wind erosion of fields near Fargo, North Dakota, and follow the rural grid survey system of the U.S., set up in 1785.

contact with J. B. Jackson.” And that’s where it all started.

PG 06:06 A couple of years later, I was writing a statement of purpose to go to graduate school. At that point I thought I was going to be in American studies, and I sent a draft of my statement of purpose to J. B. Jackson, and asked if I could meet him. I was going to take a bus across country from New York, where I was then working, to Los Angeles and Berkeley. And, so I stopped by Santa Fe on the way, and I talked with J. B. Jackson at his home near Santa Fe. He started off saying, “Well, in our field, what you want to study is not American studies, but Geography.” He had read my short statement of purpose, and he wanted to steer me away from American studies. The person who’d taken over his teaching at Harvard, John Stilgoe, had gotten a PhD in American Studies and J.B. Jackson intimated that he wasn’t happy with the way John Stilgoe was turning out. Jackson then listed the four geography departments I should consider and the people I should talk to in each place, because they had all written for him in his journal - Landscape. I had never taken a geography course in my life so this was news to me. I continued on my trip to California, came up to Berkeley, where I was going to talk to American studies and the 1970s version of that department had ceased to exist. I didn’t know that when I left New York. In those days, it didn’t occur to me to call ahead, and make an appointment.

PG 08:12 But one of the geographers I was supposed to meet—Donald Meinig from Syracuse, New York--was here at Berkeley, applying for a teaching job. So, I got to meet him, I got to hear him give two lectures, and I heard the conversations between the Berkeley faculty and Meinig. And I realized, Donald Meinig and these people at Berkeley, were doing exactly what I needed to know. They knew about the built environment--all the built environment, not just the high style dots on the map. , So that was one of those

moments in my life when the clouds went away, a shaft of sun came through, and I heard a voice from heaven. This time, it said, "Geography could be your academic home." Then it was just a matter for me, over the next year, to meet the other people, go to visit the other schools, see Donald Meinig in Syracuse where he taught. He didn't get the job at Berkeley, by the way, which is probably good for Syracuse [laughter]. Then I proceeded to apply to those four places.

PG 09:25 So anyway, that's how I came to be a geographer. Out of the four schools I applied to, Berkeley seemed to be the most exciting. It certainly had the best weather and I had had enough of snow. So I came to Berkeley in 1976.

SL 10:29 Well, we're very glad you did. I also understand that you came to Berkeley as a student, but you stayed and ended up taking over J.B. Jackson's cultural landscape course.

PG 10:43 Yes.

SL 10:49 Well the course was a 10 week course and you expanded it, I believe, into a 30 week course. Could you talk a little bit about the elements that you added that you're particularly invested in or how you expanded it?

PG 11:05 The things that I added were more information about the culture regions of the United States. Jackson had taught a bit about Colonial New England and a bit of the lowland South. But he didn't talk about the mid-Atlantic, or the Midwest, or the upland South or the West per se, so I added a good deal about the cultural regions of the United States. I added a good deal about urban landscapes. Jackson was particularly interested in small towns and farms and houses - various houses - wherever they were but he didn't really have very many lectures about the American city, past or present. So, I added a good deal of material about urban



Water power canal and part of the Boott textile mill complex built in 1835 in Lowell, Massachusetts.



This business sign in the Mission District of San Francisco presents clear evidence of the immigration of Spanish-speaking people into the city, and their integration into the national economy.

landscapes, eventually adding in more about factories and industrial sites. That's what I first came to study-- when I came to Berkeley, my statement of purpose was to learn about industrial sites. Instead of doing that, I ended up writing about residential hotels. But at any rate, I added more about housing, more about industrial stuff, more about both the center city and the suburbs.

PG 13:11 Other things that I added were general processes of cultural landscape change-- general guidelines about how to see the landscape. In the last ten years, especially, I've worked particularly on the processes of cultural landscape change. And I've published a few articles about those processes, and probably I will still be doing more work on those even though I've retired. And by processes, we mean things like the processes of connection, the inertia of nature, the mass movements of people including migration and immigration and invasion, first settlement, settlement inertia, basic economics, gradual changes including maintenance and remodeling, reinforcing individual and social identities, and sparking innovation. Now Jackson alluded to some of these, but he really didn't go into any detail about them.. Jackson certainly didn't talk about economics. He was not very interested in the economic backgrounds of the environments he was looking at. Now I'd come, by that point, out of geography where economics and class struggle were very important to the curriculum, so I had to sort of sneak those topics into Jackson's class without being too obvious about it. Thus, I would say one of the things I really did add was a much more economic view of the world, along with the ideas that people had in religion and other causative factors that were of more interest to J.B. Jackson when he taught the course.

SL 15:34 I remember those lectures very well. I use those lectures in my current cultural landscapes class in the University

of Texas. Adding the urban aspect and adding all the culture regions west of the Appalachians is pretty much the course, Paul [chuckles]. So it sounds like obviously the course is built on what J.B. Jackson started, but that you really invented a new course.

PG 16:12 More or less, although I like to think of J.B. Jackson's material still being the beating heart of the class. I didn't need to take any of his material out, I just added things onto it. It may seem a lot like my own material, but there's still a lot of J.B. Jackson's. What Jackson contributed and that I kind of learnt most from his is how to look widely at the whole built environment, that everything is information. That every kind of building, every kind of setting - rural or urban or small town or suburban - is information about American culture and society, and that we have things to learn from it. That's Jackson's main theme. And it's the theme I tried to keep in the class.

SL 16:57 And it's definitely a theme that resonates with me and one that I try to teach.

One of the interesting things about that theme is that it forces you to look at everything, which makes it very hard to know where to draw boundaries, and limits, to one's study. So, that's something I still struggle with.

I also understand that you're an avid road-tripper, and that you, when you were creating the course and building the course, took a road trip every 3 to 5 years, somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 miles. So, at this point, I very much consider you an expert road-tripper. I was wondering if you could just give us a few tips or insights into how you craft an itinerary, how you best prepare for some kind of cross-country trip? You know, rules of thumb.

PG 17:49 Well first of all, I learned how to do road trips from experts who knew more about it than I did. I took every field trip that was offered in geography. I took a two week

field trip with Pierce Lewis out of Penn State. When I would go to geography conferences, or later the conferences of the Vernacular Architecture Forum - the VAF - they had great field trips. Hence, I learned how to do my own trips by taking other people's field trips. It isn't something that just kind of sprang out of my head, like Athena out of the head of Zeus.

The prompting for a trip is that I usually have someplace I have to go. You know, there's a conference, there's a family event that's going to take me somewhere far away. And then I start to look at a map, and I see the freeway route getting to where I need to go. Then I try to find a parallel route, maybe 40 or 50 miles away from the freeway, and I look for state highways that will get me where I need to go. On these routes, sometimes called "blue highways" it's easier to stop. You see more of the local environment, especially the small towns and the county seats along the way. And when it gets dark or it's starting to get dark, then I get off the two lane roads and go up to the freeway. Also, if I've gotten behind - if I'm not getting to the motel I've reserved for that evening - then I go to the freeway and travel there.

PG 19:41 These days, I plan my trips more carefully and I know where I'm going to be each night - but in the old days when I was out exploring, at about 3:00 in the afternoon I would try to project where I was going to be at supertime, then I would call ahead and get a motel.

I also took two certain kinds of guidebooks with me when I was taking these long trips. In particular, I took the Federal Writers Guides written during the 1930s in the New Deal. There's a volume for every state in the Union, and our library here at Berkeley has all the volumes. No one ever checks them out, so in the trunk I would have a box of books that would be these 1930s or early 1940s guides.. Because they were New Deal projects, they talked about every little town along the route, as well as the route itself, and background on the state. I still find them



Figure 4. The western edge of the Great Plains, along U.S. Highway 34 in northeastern Colorado—a classic blue highways route.



Figure 5. Billboard on the Main Street of Valentine, Nebraska, celebrating the Sandhill region's history of cattle raising.

to be great, great reading. I also take the salient AAA guidebooks along. In fact, the AAA guidebooks start as a summary of the New Deal guidebooks. I used the AAA guide books to help find motels and to see when museums were open and things of that sort. And I tend to stop at things that AAA gives a star rating to.

PG 21:19 For example, I was crossing Nebraska, in the sand hills of Nebraska, which is pretty sparsely-settled terrain. The AAA guidebook said there was this great museum of the Indian trade in Chadron, Nebraska. And this is a town of about 2,000 people, and the museum was out of town. I pull up in front of it; it was a long one-story building. It looked like a snake pit kind of stop. It didn't look promising at all. But inside was, in fact, a terrific collection from the colonial era of America to about 1930 of all the trade goods between Native Americans and Anglo Americans. It was an amazing museum and I would never have stopped there if it hadn't been a star rated stop in the AAA guide book. And it had been built after the New Deal so it wouldn't have been my New Deal guidebook either. So I use guidebooks, I get advice from friends and then I just go out and see what's there. And to stay awake on these trips, because I'm often driving alone, I make sure to get out of the car at least once an hour to take a picture of something, if nothing else just the road I'm traveling on. So again I'll remember where I've been, and again to stay awake.

SL 23:43 What a fabulous way to collect material for your course. The guidebooks you used from the 1930s capture one moment in time, the AAA guidebook captures another moment in time, and then your eyes and your experience on the road captured a third moment in time, so it's making a lot of sense to me as to how you were able to come up with patterns and arguments and conclusions about what you were seeing.

PG 24:15 It's very often that those conclusions come when you get home [laughter], when you're looking through slides and what notes you may take on site. Remember now, I had taken J.B. Jackson's classes, and I had also taken a lot of geography classes, so I had been trained how to see and what to look for and what ideas to look for out on the road. I didn't come up with those myself a lot of the times. The things I was looking for were things I had learned in class. J.B. Jackson had always said he didn't have his major 'A-ha's' out when he went to explore, he had them when he got back to his desk and started to write.

PG 24:54 That's when the ideas start to come to you and you start to be able to string things together, and I think that's the case.

SL 25:00 Well, this is sort of a big question but how would you say the cultural landscape has changed since you started taking these road trips? Is there anything going on either in cities or in the countryside now that you find to be critically important, the same way some of the things you teach about are? What are you paying most attention to right now in the built environment?

PG 25:27 Now, I guess, I'm looking at the effect of corporate investments and how larger corporations are buying up more of the environment. International investment is much greater now than when I started out. I remember - this being made vivid to me - I was driving up the Mississippi River Valley about a hundred miles north of New Orleans. There was this giant grain elevator which didn't surprise me because it was farm country. But, it was all owned in Japan. And in Japanese characters, the name of the corporation was painted on the grain elevator. That's the kind of thing that seems new in the environment now.

PG 26:43 I think there were certainly lots of ethnic migrants or immigrants in the United States that left their traces on the landscape, and I think I'm better at seeing the imprint of migrations, both past and present, now than I was 20 or 30 years ago. And of course ethnicity, immigration, and migration have been very important themes in the last 10 to 15 years.

SL 27:25 Well, those sound like definitely important topics that I, as well, would hope the next generation of cultural landscapers would assume those topics and research them. I wanted to also talk to you about your research methods. You've made the point before, and you said this just a few minutes ago, but that the clouds parted when you went out into the field, and when you realized that major societal questions could be researched in the material world. I recall this as a point of entry into the question of research methods, and I would like you to speak about what methods you used and what were important to you at the start of your career. For example, when you were researching Living Downtown.

PG 28:09 My dissertation, which went on to be the book, Living Downtown, was about the history of people living in hotels--from hobo flop houses all the way up to palace hotels. To do that work, I started with a case study of San Francisco between 1880 and 1930. And I hammered out a method to figure out what was ordinary in urban buildings because there are thousands of possible examples. What is ordinary out of those thousands of examples of a building type - in this case, residential hotels? To do this urban vernacular architecture study, I relied on in what in those days was called, cliometrics. That term ties the name of the goddess of history to quantitative methods. So I tried to figure out a quantitative way, a very scientific way, to figure out what was ordinary. I've never written this down by the way, it's not part of the book. But I used city directories and looked into the headings

of hotel, boarding house, lodging house, all the kinds of headings that hotels might have been under, especially the cheap ones. Then I would clean out the duplications from the lists.

PG 29:49 So for 1880, 1910, and 1930 I had a list of about maybe 2,400 buildings by address. Then, using a random number table - this is the quantitative part - I chose a sample, a quantitative social scientific sample, of one eighth of those hotels. So instead of having to research thousands of buildings and figure out what was ordinary, I only had to research about 300 buildings total, [chuckles] about a hundred buildings from each list. I still didn't know what was ordinary, but I knew I had this random sample of buildings to help my search. Then I looked at each building historically on Sanborn Maps, which are fire insurance maps that show the outline of every building. Other city records survived in San Francisco for the latter two years, 1910, 1930. All the 1880 records in San Francisco had been burned in the Great Fire of 1906, but the city water company records had survived. Their vault survived the fire. So I used the records from the city water company for all 300 buildings.

PG 31:21 At any rate when I finally got those 300 addresses, I made a 4 by 6 card for each building. (This is more detailed than you or your readers may want [chuckles].) Then I started to sort them into piles based on the square footage of each room, which I had computed, and where they were located because that would suggest who the buildings were intended for. I'd also gone to look at each building from the outside and had written notes about them. Eventually, the piles of cards began to be in four clumps. And the key definer, what clump they were in, wasn't so much what they looked like from the outside. It wasn't necessarily the number of rooms and not even necessarily their location because there was a lot of social mixture in San Francisco, especially before 1910. But it was the plumbing in each building that seemed to matter. Palace Hotels had one bathroom for every room. The next level down, let's see, Palace Hotels--



Figure 6. The Hotel Grant, on Bush Street in San Francisco, was built as a mid-priced hotel with rooms for permanent residents as well as rooms for tourists.

SL 32:46

Mid-priced?

PG 32:47 Yeah, in the mid-priced hotels, about half the rooms had one bathroom for each room. Half the rooms had a bathroom down the hall, so their average was about one to three bathrooms per room or something like that. . In the rooming houses, which were the third rank of hotels, almost always the bathroom was down the hall; at a ratio of about one bath for every six rooms. And for the cheap lodging houses, which were the hotels for hobos and migrant workers or formerly migrant workers, the ratio was often 1 to 12, the minimum in the city code, or even less than that. The plumbing wasn't necessarily visible, but there were records of it in the water company files, that's because they used to charge by the fixture before they invented the water meter. The plumbing turned out to be a really key source, at least for hotels, in deciding who the hotel was initially built for. That's my secret method of knowing how to discern what's an ordinary building type. I eventually ended up with a pretty strong feeling about what those four building types were and what examples of them were.

SL 34:17 That's amazing, that's amazing. With the water records, it sounds like you really hit on a goldmine that you couldn't have perceived on the outset. You were just using it because it was an available resource, but it turned out to be one of your most important criteria..

PG 34:36 I had hit a wall because of the Great Fire of San Francisco, and then someone told me that the water company records survived. Again, it was not part of my prospectus. I didn't know anyone else who used water company records to sort buildings out. But it was part of the process of doing the work. I was also very lucky because the two

weeks I went in to use the records of the water company, the staff let me behind the desk to use most of their Sanborn Maps, which had also survived the fire, and what were called tap records in their vault. After I'd been there two weeks the manager came back and found me working behind the desk and said, "Who let you work behind the desk [chuckles]?" So I was also very lucky because the manager was gone the two weeks I was doing the research. It would've taken me a very long time going up, one at a time, and asking for the tap record of every building out of 300, which is the way I would've had to do it.

SL 35:50

Wow.

PG 35:52 Another great source turned out to be something that the Dean of the College of Environmental Design at that time, Roger Montgomery, told me about: the Real Property Survey, a New Deal project, aimed at documenting downtown buildings. And the Real Property Survey data cards - there was a card for every building - were at the Bancroft Library. The cards were stored in these big boxes with a pack of cards for every block, tied up in string. Once again, the manager of the collection was gone when I went into the Bancroft Library, and the other staff were bringing me whole boxes of data. I was untying the strings, looking at the information I needed, and tying the strings up again, and very carefully putting the material back in the boxes. Then the curator for the collection came back, again after about two or three weeks,, and again said, "Who is letting you use whole boxes of information? You should be working with one block of information at a time." The staff were supposed to be untying the strings. Again, that saved me probably, at least two or three months in the archives, because the archivist was gone the week I went in. So a lot of times, research is just dumb luck. More than I should admit.

SL 37:20 And also, archival research is really important. There's a lot you can see by going out into the built environment, out into the field and looking at buildings, but there's a lot you can't see, so archival sources are very valuable.

Can you reflect on how cultural landscape methods have changed over the years from some of the sources that you used to research your book, or perhaps where you would like to see cultural landscape methods go in the future?

PG 37:48 Sure. Well there's certainly more urban cultural landscape work being done now than was being done in the early 1980s when I joined the VAF. The members of the VAF at first were mostly looking at rural buildings, small-town buildings like cultural geographers were doing back in the '60s and '70s. So that's a change. There's beginning to be more international work done by people who work in cultural landscapes. It used to be strictly the US and Canada. Some of the questions are changing, I think, especially when you get into urban vernacular buildings. The questions of social class and ethnicity can be more important than they are in rural areas. Those are the main things that come to mind.

SL 38:54 So, it sounds like while some of the methods that you used, for example, to research your book could be applied to these new directions, it sounds like in general the field is evolving and taking on new content, new topics.

PG 39:10 Yeah, it is. And a part of that is that now with the VAF journal called Buildings and Landscapes, there's a really good journal attracting better scholarship. And just as J. B. Jackson's journal called Landscape was important in gathering people together and getting them to see what each other were doing, a journal like Buildings and Landscapes, put out by the VAF, is bringing people together and helping people share their methods.

SL 39:43 Great. I have a question for you that relates to the theme of this issue - being architectural expertise. I'm wondering where you think architectural expertise is located? That question is loaded with possible interpretations, but what I'm thinking about is the idea of if we replace the word architecture with built environment, and we think of built environment expertise, and I'm thinking specifically about how your research and teaching have tracked the specialization of space over time. Can you speak a bit about this idea of the specialization of space?

PG 40:26 Well, let's sort those two out.

SL 40:27 Okay.

PG 40:27 First, let's talk about architectural expertise. I'm not going to talk about professional exams and studio education which I certainly come from. I think studio education for becoming an architect or a landscape architect or urban designer, that studio education is a wonderful training on how to see. Again, one of the ways I could go out into the environment and pull the environment apart and see parts of it was because I'd had a studio education. So I think that's a wonderful plus. But I like to think of cultural landscape as anatomy for designers. In design studios, we're basically trained to be like heart surgeons, we're trained to work on special parts of the body, and we don't learn about the rib cage or the muscles or things surrounding the heart or the lungs where we're going to do an operation. A cultural landscape study, I think, knowing the whole built environment or being curious about the whole built environment, again, I think is essentially anatomy for designers. If you're not thinking of doing contextual design, which is now out of fashion, you still need to know the context that you're designing within. And I think that's an important part of architectural expertise, and it's a part that I think cultural landscape study still has a role to play. So that's that question.



Figure 7. An outdoor crane bay in the shipyard of the Camden South Jersey Port of New Jersey. On the moving cross bar between the two rails, a block and tackle system can quickly place items anywhere in this storage yard.



Figure 8. A classic example of an “upstairs meeting hall,” the Napa Valley Masonic Lodge occupies the second floor of the Ritchie Block, completed in 1892 in St. Helena, California.

PG 42:04 Then specialization of space is something that in my teaching I began to see as a theme basically of the 20th century. In the mid-1800s lots of spaces saw multiple uses, the forms of spaces weren't fit to any one thing, they were fit to be able to be used for a number of things. However, over time, at least in the last 100 years or so, Americans have specialized space for one thing and one thing only. The best example I could think of in our present day environment is the interstate highway. The Interstates are very specialized spaces. They're there for through roads only, you're not supposed to stop. They are for long distance travel, travel at relatively high speed, and they have their own police force, the highway patrol. They have a fence on either side to keep animals and pedestrians off. Vehicles have to be able to go a minimum speed of usually 45 miles an hour, in order to use the interstates. So in a way, our interstate highway system is a great example of very specialized space, and these roads are very unlike the old two lane highways where farmers can roll their machinery onto and putt along at ten miles an hour to get from one field to another-which can slow you down a good deal if you're trying to make time. So old highways were much more multi-purposed than the interstate highway system is.

PG 43:50 Some other examples I use in my class are modern barns that have a big hayloft, where there's a rail system and a clamp. The clamp goes down to a wagon, picks up a big bundle of hay and it's hauled up to the top of the barn. Then someone attaches the clamp to a railing that runs across the top of the barn - the peak of the roof - and that worker brings that bunch of hay all the way to the back and drops the hay. Well, that's a very specialized space. That hay mow is specialized by that hay rail at the top of the roof for just one thing, for storing hay. In a similar way, the crane bay in factories, starting about 1880 or so, was a way of moving things within the factory much more quickly. And a crane bay is a specialized

space within a machine shop or a factory for assembling things, and that moving crane,, which is up in a clerestory part of the roof, again is a specialized piece of equipment, just for moving things and moving them very quickly out of the way of people who are working on the ground floor. So the crane bay of a factory, the freeway, and the hay mow of a barn are all examples of very specialized space.

SL 45:21 I remember when you talked about specialized space, or the specialization of space in your lectures, that you also talked about how it was towards facilitating capital. That all of these things that you're mentioning helped move capital, accumulate capital, so it's an important moment in history in that way.

PG 45:41 Yes: the faster you're doing work and getting things done, the faster capital circulates, so there's a real push for doing things more quickly and to interpret work in terms of time. That comes from the demands of investment and investors who are waiting for a profit from what you're doing. .

SL 46:05 You've said that we're moving away from contextual design or have been moving away for decades, but I think that there are certain people out there, who are in design schools, who are still interested in this field and in this way of researching and thinking about the built environment. The anatomy as you described it. In conclusion I was wondering if you could just reflect a little bit on, why a young student of today should continue this tradition of studying the built environment. And where you think we can take this field in the subsequent decades.

PG 47:17 Well, there are always new building types that haven't been studied and that need to be studied. That's learning about the past. For designers of the future, that's a good question that I haven't been asked or challenged with before. You may

be better at knowing what they should be doing than I. But I think, to think contextually, you need to see contextually. And I think it informs even high style design that's very much a monument and very different from its surroundings, which is up again, how a lot of design is these days, is still in a context. And so I think we need to have contextual designers. In the realm of housing especially, contextual design is as important now as it ever was. Is that what you're getting at?

SL 48:21 Yeah. Just as a little teaser for us, are there any building types that you've always, throughout your 30 years teaching, thought, "I wish someone would do a dissertation on this or I wish someone would write about this," and that we haven't yet?

PG 48:37 Well, the one that comes to mind is upstairs meeting halls. In urban neighborhoods, there's always a number of buildings that were very important for Sons of Norway meetings, or for Irish-Americans, or Swedish-Americans, or German-Americans, and these ethnic halls - and some of them were simply commercial halls that were dance halls for rent - were always on the second floor. They had a big, at least one large room that was for hire and lots of social life happened in these upstairs meeting halls. No one has ever really done any work on them, as a building type. Many of them are still there. They're now used for dance classes, or for storage, so the work is still there. That's a building type that I've always wished someone would grab ahold of, because so much important social life up through the 1930s happened in these halls. I think with radio and especially with television - people stopped going to these meetings.

PG 49:54 Well-known examples are Masonic Lodges. And going to the Masonic Lodges, you know, the Masons still exist, as do their women's auxiliary, the Eastern Star, and they still have Masonic Temples, which are upstairs meeting halls for these groups, but they're not nearly as important as they

used to be. So that's just one example. We certainly don't know enough about prisons, modern prisons haven't been studied, incarceration, as a dark theme of American cultural landscapes.

SL 50:43 Did you know that I'm teaching that right now?

PG 50:46 No [laughter]. All right, so maybe you or some of your students will teach us about prisons. .

SL 50:52 I'm teaching a class on immigrant detention centers, which include immigration prisons, so hopefully we'll fill that gap a little bit.

PG 51:02 I hope you'll get some publishable material out of that.

SL 51:06 Yeah.

PG 51:07 That's a great idea. A friend and I were driving the San Joaquin Valley here in California, and I think in two days we came across seven large prisons. And neither of us knew that there were so many prisons in California, and that they're out in these agricultural regions far away from where people go. And because we were on two lane highways, we were bumping into these prisons. It was one of our travel themes which we hadn't intended.

SL 51:43 If you look at Google Earth, and recently I actually was looking at the Central Valley to see the scale of agricultural fields, and all I was seeing was prisons everywhere. It's quite amazing.
Well, this is great, Paul, because it gives me ideas of things that I can inspire my students with, because we very much intend—we, meaning my current generation of young professors who are carrying the torch of cultural landscape studies, and my students who one day

will have this role to carry forward this tradition and this legacy and this intellectual genealogy. I want to thank you so much for your gift of everything that you've given to us about how you think, how you research, how you teach, what you've taught and I hope my students enjoy my cultural landscape class as much as I enjoyed yours [chuckles].

PG 52:36 Great. I'm sure they do. Thanks a lot. And if you have any follow up questions or the editor of this is going to whittle this down to size have any questions, they can just be in contact by email or phone.

SL 52:58 Okay. And is there anything that I didn't ask you that you wanted to talk about?

PG 53:03 No. I'm looking through our notes to see if there is anything. Let's see. I'm looking here from my swan song notes. I did look at that again. Well, we didn't define cultural landscape.

SL 53:20 Right.

PG 53:21 We maybe should do that because again, it's not a household word. And both words, cultural and landscape, are dangerous words. Even anthropologists, for whom culture has been a very important word, often don't use the word culture because it's so structural, and we're not supposed to be believing in structuralism these days. I still like the word culture and the idea of shared knowledge, of ideas that people do share. Post-modernists have told us that people don't share any knowledge; that a thousand people marching over a bridge are a thousand people marching over a thousand different bridges. But, for me at least, the way I see the world is that there is bridge-ness, there is some knowledge that people share in their built environment, and that culture can still be a useful word--Even if it's an old and a maligned word..

PG 54:22 And cultural landscape in geography is associated with Carl Sauer and the old Berkeley School of cultural geography, which by the 1960s was being critiqued because it wasn't economic, it wasn't asking serious questions, it wasn't urban. So I sort of feel I got here just as the old cultural landscape study at Berkeley was being taught and I watched while the new cultural geography was being hammered together here at Berkeley, by scholars like Richard Walker and Clarence Glacken, and Allan Pred. These new cultural and economic geographers at Berkeley - and other schools - were forging a new cultural landscape studies. So I kind of feel like a hinge. I was trained by some of the scholars of the old cultural landscape tradition but I have the advantage of being a student of the people making the new cultural geography as well. And one of my hopes for the future is that geographers will still use the concepts of cultural landscape study. It makes as much sense in geography as it does in design.

PG 55:53 Also, one of the reasons I like going out and looking at things is that visual evidence makes abstract ideas more vivid and more real. When I was studying economic geography with Professor Richard Walker here in geography - for a long time, because he was a Marxist, there were lots of Ks and Ls that chased each other around the blackboard: Kapital and Labor. The circuits of capital were in investment, were the diagrams he was putting on the board. Well not until I went out and looked at the environment did I see examples that made sense to me about the circulation of capital, like speeding up factory work. So for me, going out and doing field exploration is a way of making abstract things more concrete, sometimes literally concrete, in terms of kinds of buildings.

PG 57:05 One person I haven't mentioned enough as an inspiration and as an important teacher of mine was Roger Montgomery, who for a long time was Dean of the College of Environmental Design. Before that, he was a professor in city planning and

in the architecture department – he was both a planner and an architect. It's Roger Montgomery – who, when he was Dean - created my job. But he also understood what cultural landscape studies meant for design. He was involved in bringing Jackson into the department. And when Jackson retired, Roger realized we should be still teaching cultural landscapes, and he created my job in order that cultural landscapes would still be taught at Berkeley. So I've always been fond of him for that reason. And cultural landscape approaches were taught here for another 30 years. Roger Montgomery was someone from the generation prior to me who realized why cultural landscape study was important for design.

SL 58:22 You know, I'll tell you that I've always been curious what you do with your little white pocket notebooks.

SL 58:30 Where do you put them?

PG 58:34 I drop them into a file folder and on New Years Day every year I three hole punch them, and I put them into a binder.

So I have a rack in my home office and I can get about four years to every binder, so I have my pocket notes back to when I started taking them, which was when I drove a two ton yellow Ryder truck from my home town of Mayville, North Dakota, out to Berkeley to go to graduate school.

SL 59:15 Wow.

PG 59:16 I started taking notes on that trip, so it starts with my coming to Berkeley. I still take notes the same way, and I still bind them together that same way.

SL 60:10 Rituals are an essential
part of daily life, aren't they?

PG 60:13 Guess so.

SL 60:14 Guess so [laughter].