

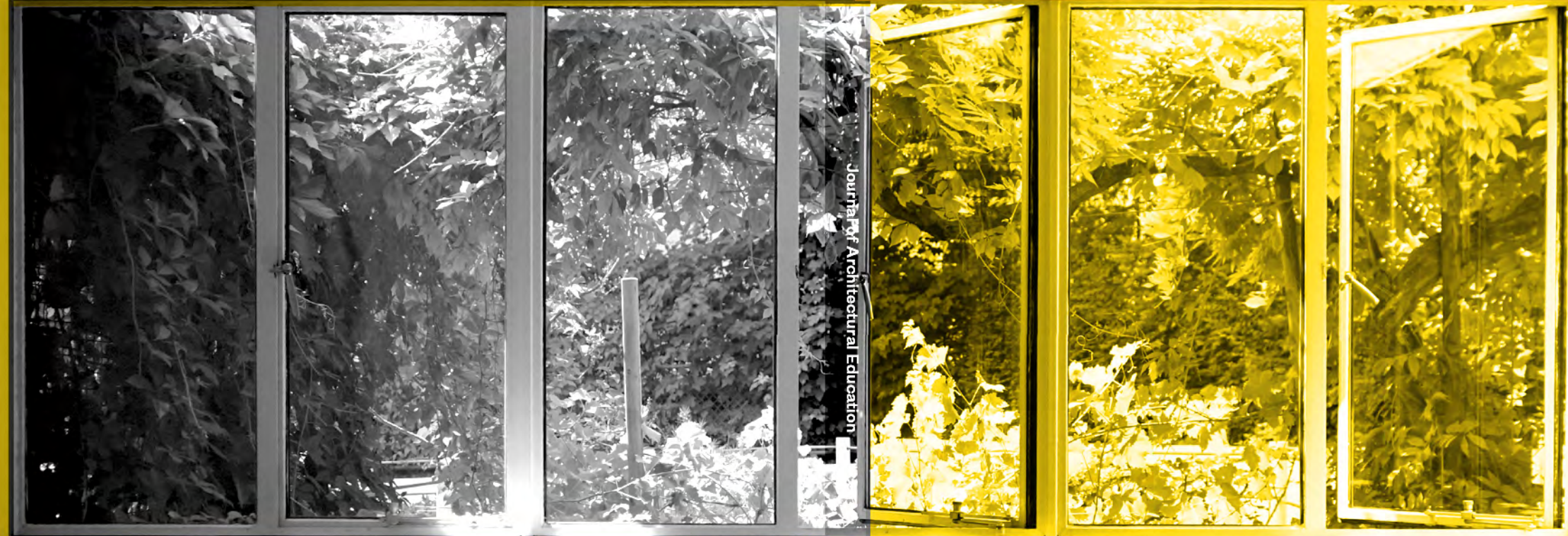
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# Restoring Los Angeles's Landscapes of Resistance

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The urban unrest following the Rodney King verdict was a turning point for the city of Los Angeles, which became the physical stage for violent expressions of protest. Specific “flashpoints” triggered increasing unrest with a particular urban geography. This paper examines how many of the most consequential sites exist today without a palpable trace of the events that momentarily brought visibility to long-standing inequities and that indelibly transformed the city. The study considers the potential of preserving the spatial inheritance of the uprisings as restored sites of resistance, while addressing the pressing needs of disinvested areas today.

The urban unrest following the Rodney King verdict was a turning point for the city of Los Angeles, which became the physical stage for violent expressions of protest.<sup>1</sup> Specific “flashpoints”—or catalytic sites of resistance, such as the intersection of Florence and Normandie Avenues in South Central Los Angeles (now referred to as “South Los Angeles”)—triggered increasing unrest with a particular urban geography (Figures 1, 2). While the networks of injustice that led to these events have been well documented by geographers and urban activists such as Edward Soja and Mike Davis, the following paper examines the vacuous spatial relics of the 1992 riots as haunting reminders of specific regimes of power.<sup>2</sup> Many of the most consequential sites exist today without a palpable trace of the

historic events that momentarily brought visibility to long-standing inequities and indelibly transformed the city. This study questions how to recognize and confront difficult or conflicted pasts in the built environment. Investigated largely through a graduate landscape architecture studio course at University of Southern California, the study explores how a socially and historically informed design practice might *restore* spaces of resistance while responding to immediate needs of South Los Angeles’s rapidly shifting populations.

By appropriating language that governs the treatment of historic properties, the restoration of landscapes of resistance challenges the field of historic preservation to test its intellectual bounds and methods.<sup>3</sup> This study considers the

potential of preserving the spatial inheritance of the uprisings as restored sites of resistance where collective liberties were and might still be significantly advanced. While the student design proposals featured below were generated too quickly to respond to the complexity of questions asked in this article, they do initiate critical reflection about how to restore space once claimed as public through performative negotiation; and how, through physical shaping, designers might interpret histories of the built environment as forms of discursive and performative urbanism. The intention of such forms of urbanism is the stimulation of multifocal debate and the further enactment of civil liberties, even as these areas experience a transforming demographic profile.

## Then: Control and Resistance

An article in New York’s *Village Voice* called the 1992 uprising “the first multicultural riots.”<sup>4</sup> While the initial disturbances may have been caused by immediate black rage over the “not guilty” verdict, Korean Americans and Latinos expressed violent discontent over inequities and tensions between the city’s marginalized populations. The making and implementation of two decades of conservative policy at the federal level, an oppressive and discriminatory police force and inequitable justice system, macroeconomic processes of deindustrialization (with particular

**Figure 1.** *Opposite page:* Geo-timeline of events, April 29–May 1, 1992. (Drawn by Molly Fanler, based on “Charting the Hours of Chaos,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 2002.)



# THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE 1992 L.A. UPRISINGS, BY THE HOUR

Based on the Los Angeles Times article "Charting the Hours of Chaos" (April 29, 2002)

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE FIRST TWO HOURS



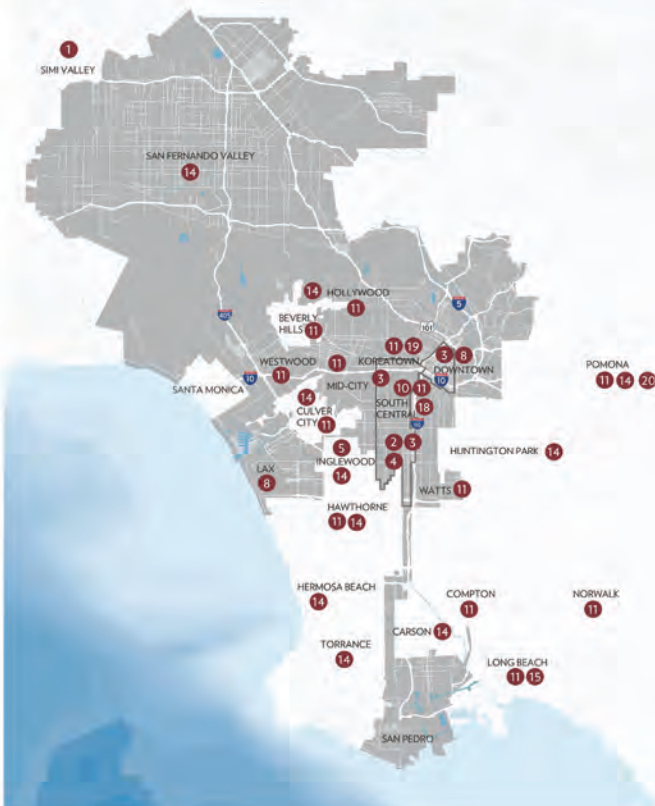
## WEDNESDAY APRIL 29, 1992

- 3:15 PM **SIMI VALLEY**
  - 3 LAPD officers are accosted and 1 is partially assaulted in the videotaped beating of Rodney G. King
  - The crowd of protesters outside the courthouse grows to over 300
- 5:00 PM **FLORENCE & NORMANDIE**
  - An angry crowd starts to form at the intersection
- 6:00 PM **DOWNTOWN**
  - Hundreds of demonstrators gather outside police headquarters
- 6:45 PM **FLORENCE & NORMANDIE**
  - Truck driver Reginald D. Denny is pulled from his truck and beaten
- 7:00 PM **INGLEWOOD**
  - Rioting erupts
- 7:45 PM **MAYOR TOM BRADLEY**
  - declares a local state of emergency
- 8:45 PM **LAX**
  - Flights are diverted from landing after a police helicopter was fired on
- 9:00 PM **DOWNTOWN**
  - Demonstration at police headquarters turns violent

## THURSDAY APRIL 30, 1992

- 12:00 AM **GOVERNOR WILSON**
  - announces state of emergency and plans to dispatch the National Guard
- 12:15 AM **SOUTH-CENTRAL**
  - Curfew enacted
- ALL DAY **SOUTH-CENTRAL, KOREATOWN, HOLLYWOOD, MID-WILSHIRE, WATTS, WESTWOOD, BEVERLY HILLS, COMPTON, CULVER CITY, HAWTHORNE, LONG BEACH, NORWALK, POMONA**
  - Looting, fires, and violence throughout the day
- ALL DAY **National Guard**
  - deployed. Hundreds of troops are positioned in hot spots around the city
- ALL DAY **WASHINGTON D.C.**
  - U.S. Atty. Gen. Barr announces that the Justice Department will resume its investigation into the King beating
- 3:30 PM **CARSON, CULVER CITY, HAWTHORNE, HERMOSA BEACH, HUNTINGTON PARK, INGLEWOOD, POMONA, SAN FERNANDO, TORRANCE, WEST HOLLYWOOD**
  - Curfews imposed
- 6:30 PM **LONG BEACH**
  - City declares state of emergency and imposes curfew
- 7:15 AM **LOS ANGELES**
  - Officials announce 1000-4000 federal troops and 1,000 riot-trained federal officers are sent to LA
- 7:30 AM **SOUTH-CENTRAL**
  - Handreds begin crowding post offices to get delayed mail
- 1:00 PM **WESTERN & WILSHIRE**
  - Thousands of Korean Americans gather for a peace rally
- 2:30 PM **WASHINGTON, D.C.**
  - Officials announce a federal grand jury has been convened that the Justice Department will likely seek criminal indictments of the officers involved in the beating
- 2:45 PM **LOS ANGELES**
  - Rodney G. King makes a statement asking, "People...can we all get along?"
- 3:00 PM **TUSTIN**
  - Thousands of federal troops, Marines, and soldiers begin arriving at Marine Corps Air Station
- 6:00 PM **WASHINGTON, D.C.**
  - President Bush addresses the nation

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF WEDNESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY









**Figure 2.** *Opposite page, top and bottom:* Florence and Normandie Avenues, April 29, 1992. Photographs by Kirk McKoy. (Image © Los Angeles Times. Used with permission.)

manifestations in the unique landscape of Los Angeles), the influx of Latino immigrants and Korean merchants competing for jobs and opportunities in South Central, and a media infusing public imagination with misconceptions of people and place all propelled these culminating acts of anger and revolt.<sup>5</sup>

By 1990, multiple gang killings per day (countywide) incentivized the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to institute neighborhood sweeps, strict curfews, and the fierce targeting of black and Chicano areas.<sup>6</sup> In his section on “LAPD as Space Police” in the controversial but compelling book *The City of Quartz* (1990), Mike Davis notes that:

The LAPD’s pathbreaking substitution of technological capital for patrol manpower ... was a necessary adaptation to the city’s dispersed form ... Technology helped insulate [a] paranoid *esprit de corps* ... [and] virtually established a new epistemology of policing, where technologized surveillance and response supplanted the traditional patrolman’s intimate “folk” knowledge of specific communities. ... But the most decisive element in the LAPD’s metamorphosis into a technopolice has been its long and successful liaison with the military aerospace industry. Under [former Chief of Police] Parker, ever alert to spinoffs from military technology, the LAPD introduced the first police helicopters for systematic aerial surveillance. After the Watts Rebellion of 1965 this airborne effort became the cornerstone of policing strategy for the entire inner city. As part of its “astro” program, LAPD helicopters maintain an average nineteen-hour-per-day vigil over “high-crime areas,” tactically coordinated to patrol car forces ... The fifty-pilot LAPD air force was recently updated with French

Aerospatiale helicopters equipped with futuristic surveillance technology. Their forward-looking infrared cameras are extraordinary night eyes that can easily form heat images from a single burning cigarette, while their thirty-million-candlepower spotlights, appropriately called “Nightsun,” can literally turn the night into day.<sup>7</sup>

The aerial surveillance, inversion of night and day, and transformation of this delimited urban landscape into an ordered and controlled Other becomes part of the inherited past that should not be whitewashed but rather actively interpreted in the present as part of an ongoing dialogue about race, power, equity, and justice.

The media additionally played a major role in perpetuating and exacerbating social tensions and conflicts by enforcing and exaggerating stereotypes as well as expansively lumping all neighborhoods extending south of downtown into the singular “poor and dangerous South Central,” despite the variety of neighborhoods situated within these over fifty square miles of metropolitan flatlands. Juxtaposed against the downtown skyline, these sprawling plains were seen as “the Third World region of a dubiously First-World city.”<sup>8</sup> The city has since rebranded South Central by changing the

name of this vast territory to simply South Los Angeles in efforts to undo some of the damage inflicted by media-constructed stereotypes that continue to plague this divested urban geography.<sup>9</sup>

Just as the LAPD patrolled and controlled the urban landscape from the removed distance of aerial surveillance, “helicopter journalism” brought the riots into the living rooms of the American public who saw only the fires, violence, and looting, completely severed from what was happening on the ground and the complex sociospatial dynamics that led to the unrest (Figure 3).<sup>10</sup> Hearing only the sounds of the chopper and the sensationalized commentary of the news agency, rather than the voices of community spokespeople or citizens in the streets, the public remained totally disconnected from the intricacies of need, hope, fear, and anger of communities historically silenced.

In a more recent interpretation of 1992’s events and its range of cultural responses, which interrupted the rhetoric of what has been called “civil racism,” scholar Lynn Mie Itagaki asserts, “How threatening the violence was to the status quo is signaled by the powerful institutions

**Figure 3.** Stills from various television coverages. “Helicopter journalism” provided a distanced and edited version of events unfolding on the ground. (Collage by author.)





**Figure 4.** Top: Response to the verdict in South Los Angeles. Photograph by Kirk McKoy. (Photograph © Los Angeles Times. Used with permission.)

**Figure 5.** Bottom: The Northwest Corner of Florence and Normandie Avenues, Los Angeles, California, October 1993. Photograph by Joel Sternfeld with the accompanying text: "On April 29, 1992, four white police officers on trial for the beating of motorist Rodney King were acquitted. A videotape of King's beating had been extensively televised. The not guilty verdicts became a catalyst for widespread civil unrest. Riots began with several mob assaults at this intersection. Reginald Denny, a white truck driver, was pulled from his truck and severely beaten as a camera crew broadcast the event live from a news helicopter. The Los Angeles Riots caused more than fifty deaths and an estimated one billion dollars' worth of damage." (From *On This Site: Landscape in Memoriam* [San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997]). (Photograph courtesy of Joel Sternfeld. Used with permission.)



and narratives arrayed to invalidate the political and economic claims made by the participants, journalists, politicians, observers, and victims. Because nonwhite bodies were conspicuously involved and were not perceived as civil, any actions performed by such bodies cannot but be uncivil, any claims made cannot but be illegitimate.<sup>11</sup> The delegitimizing of any such political or economic agenda—especially through the media's construction of the events and the use of the term *riot*—has perpetuated within the popular narrative. It is such a narrative the current research calls into question.

The rebellion came as little surprise to those who tracked the mechanisms of the state, market, and media that controlled, exploited, and suppressed multiethnic minority populations of the city. Resisting threats to urban disenfranchisement caused essentially by neoliberal forces of globalization, the uprisings became a true claiming of “the right to the city” in Lefebvrian terms. Despite efforts to delegitimize any collective agenda, for *inhabitants* of the city—“who contribute to the body of urban lived experience and lived space”—the uprisings became the means through which to overthrow the institutional forces that denied them rights to that city.<sup>12</sup>

The uprisings therefore revealed the potential power of the underclass



to occupy, appropriate, and claim spaces of the city. While the brutal beating of the white truck driver, Reginald Denny, at Florence and Normandie was an act of seeming senseless brutality, the intersection and the act came to represent much more. The complete police absence on the scene and their overall inability to confine the unrest to its episodic flareups became symbolic of a shift in the city's power structures. The so-called flashpoints came to represent a demand for justice and a population asserting its voice (Figure 4).

### Since: Memory-Making

This investigation began with the discovery of two spreads from photographer Joel Sternfeld's book *On This Site: Landscape in Memoriam* (1997), which pictures places of tragic or traumatic events that exist without palpable trace of these pasts.<sup>13</sup> The sites shown—including Florence and Normandie and the location of the Rodney King beating—appear as everyday ordinary spaces yet have extraordinary histories (Figure 5). Sternfeld's images are juxtaposed with a neutral written account of those histories.



The vacuity and anonymity of these once-potent sites of symbolic claims to sociospatial justice in the city prompted this consideration of how to bring legibility to these powerful places and trigger discourse about the complexities that catalyzed the riots, some of which persist both in Los Angeles and cities across the nation.

Similarly, a recent and growing practice of georecording previously undocumented violence against racial minorities and police killings of unarmed black men, women, and children has emerged—in part a reaction to the visibility of the Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Keith Lamont Scott, (etcetera, etcetera) cases and to the failure of grand juries to indict officers involved. Data artist Josh Begley, for instance, “reveals the lack of innocence in the landscape” through his media work *Officer Involved*, which collates locations of police brutality in images taken from the “neutral” gaze of Google Earth and Street View (Figure 6).<sup>14</sup> The Equal Justice Initiative recently released mappings of the “Terror Lynchings” that took place in the United States between 1880 and 1940 to advocate for marking these “unrecognized” sites in the American landscape.<sup>15</sup> This South Los Angeles research questions whether and how to physically and fairly recognize histories of resistance to violence and inequality where they occurred. The fact that many of the sites most impacted by the unrest were the result of looting or arson rather than obvious activism complicates questions. Yet, as Itagaki argues, we might alternatively consider these acts as part of broader political claims on the state.<sup>16</sup>

To preserve or mark these places as historic sites “associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history,” using regulatory processes as outlined in the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, would not effectively preserve spaces in the city as domains of public life, or in this specific case, would not restore the



ethos that made these once-everyday spaces significant.<sup>17</sup> Instead, reinstatement of event and rupture might more effectively restore, and thus preserve, this landscape of resistance. Landmarks of nationally recognized heritage include places of both tragic and shameful pasts, such as sites of Japanese internment during World War II and landscapes of opposition such as the Selma-to-Montgomery March. Yet the geography of the 1992 uprisings, while clearly a response to broader forces of oppression and inequity, is a manifestation of Los Angeles’s particular urban circumstances. Therefore, the flashpoints are reframed as landmarks not by their official or national sanction but by their reinstatement in the city as domains for public expression, appropriation, and a local sense of ownership. The delineation of these sites acts to preserve memory embedded in these particular places. They thus become living memorials or memorial infrastructures that allow for hybrid interpretations and appropriations.<sup>18</sup>

Pulling from Michel Foucault’s notions of an oppositional “counter-memory”—a resistance against

**Figure 6.** Josh Begley, screenshot of *Officer Involved*. Using databases on police brutality compiled by *The Guardian*, Begley inserts Google Earth images at the locations of deaths by police shooting. Like Sternfeld, these seemingly insignificant places devoid of human presence are the locations of “someone’s last moments.” Each image is linked to that someone’s name, city, and state of shooting. (Photograph courtesy of Josh Begley. Used with permission.)

official versions of historical continuity—memorial scholar Erika Doss introduces the counter-memorial, which “ideally encourages public agency and articulates the complexities of modern history.”<sup>19</sup> Rather than the traditional “symbolic memorial,” which typically promotes healing through abstracted forms and metaphorical references, a hybrid program that activates particular sites significant to the unrest and provides equity of access and inclusion might address pressing environmental needs and improvements while offering platforms for continued debate and negotiation.<sup>20</sup> These ideas attempt to align with scholar Lisa Lowe’s argument in *Immigrant Acts*: “Where the political terrain can neither resolve nor suppress inequality, it erupts in culture. Because culture is the





**Figure 7.** Jonathan Froines, proposal for Florence and Normandie. *Top left:* Its aerial legibility is a reference to the helicopter coverage of the 1992 events and aerial police surveillance common to this area. *Top right and bottom:* The idea of sinking traffic below the intersection intends to reclaim the site as the domain of the people. Sustaining its otherwise “everydayness”—a typological example of the ubiquitous LA intersection, particularly in marginalized neighborhoods—brings awareness to this pervasive urban condition to which people have otherwise become habituated. (Images courtesy of Jonathan Froines.)

contemporary repository of memory, of history, it is through culture, rather than government, that alternative forms of subjectivity, collectivity, and public life are imagined.”<sup>21</sup>

In her essay “Uncertain Parks: Disturbed Sites, Citizens, and Risk Society,” landscape theorist Elizabeth Meyer takes on the issue of contaminated landscapes resulting from industrial processes and landscape architects’ too-prompt instinct to mitigate without a critical interpretation of the processes of production and consumption that contributed to the site’s “disturbed” condition. Echoing Mira Engler, Meyer calls this uncritical approach “landscape camouflage,” which, she claims, “masks the histories and processes of disturbed industrial sites and obliterates a connection that might render these parks more meaningful to the public.”<sup>22</sup> While she focuses largely on the interpretive potential of design to catalyze an environmentally responsible form

of citizenship, Meyer’s opposition to disguising the “uncertainty and risk” associated with disturbed sites as “places of anxiety and discomfort” is essential to the transformation of socially contested urban sites. She states, “Witnesses who encounter landscapes of disturbance, doubt, uncertainty, and beauty in their everyday experiences . . . might be bewildered, moved to wonder and recentered. . . . What might happen if that experience of beauty within risk caused a collectivity of individuals to act differently in their everyday lives? We might truly know what the cultural agency of landscape could be.”<sup>23</sup> While we might argue these South Los Angeles sites lack *beauty*, this same form of “recentering” or destabilizing the limits of our comfortable expectations—through the preservation of these sites as perpetuated or restored spaces of resistance—may provoke us to think more critically about the social, cultural, political, and economic histories and processes that impact the built world around us. This acknowledgment of an uneasy past may, in turn, stimulate public discourse and heighten human compassion—ingredients ultimately necessary to effect positive social change.

#### Now: Vacuity and Anonymity

While traces of the uprisings have been physically erased, most affected sites

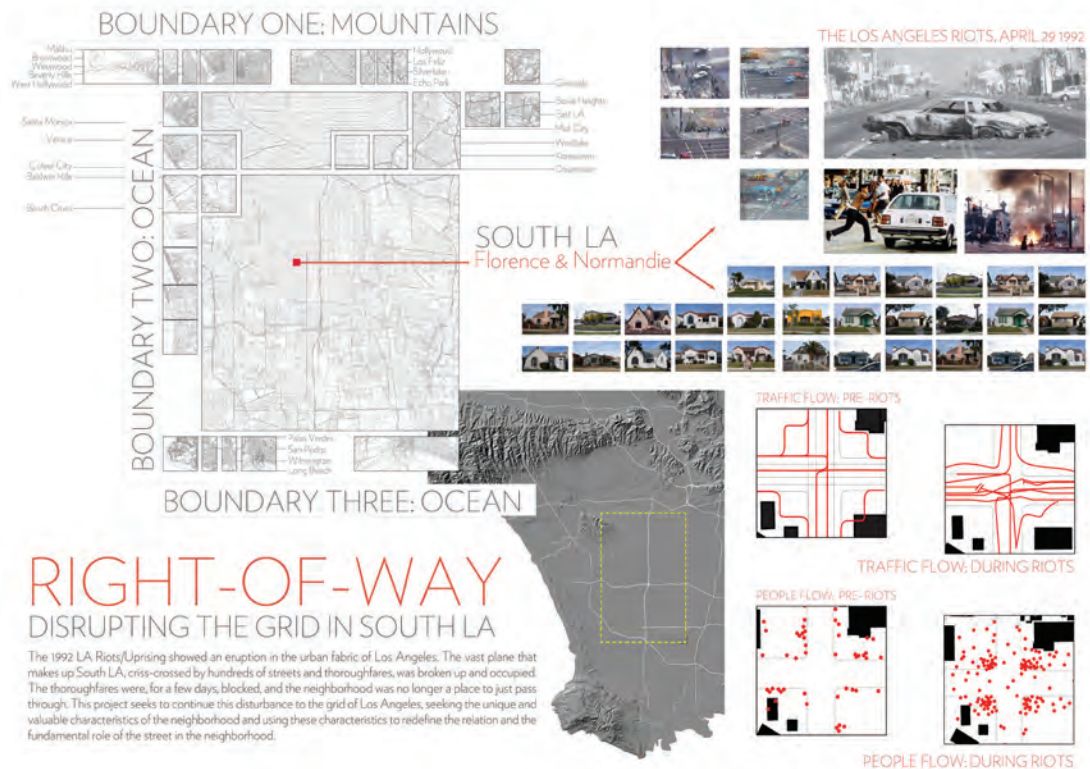
exist in areas that continue to suffer from environmental burdens and lack of quality public space.<sup>24</sup> We might thus question how to provide hybrid infrastructures that address such expectations while interpreting culture and provoking dialogue. As cultural landscapes, how do we follow the utilitarian mandate of addressing dire needs while asking the public to think critically about their past and future, rather than perpetuating cultural amnesia or appealing to the common insistence on forgetful “healing”?

One primary challenge of such an infrastructural intervention is how to respond to the vast magnitude of people and property impacted by the uprisings and its effects in the context of South Los Angeles’s dramatic demographic shifts. During the unrest, “more than fifty people were killed, thousands were injured, sixteen thousand were arrested, forty-five hundred businesses were damaged

**Figure 8.** *Opposite page, top:* Froines’s proposal aims to disrupt the relentless gridded flatlands of South Central Los Angeles as a reference to the 1992 events when the thoroughfares were overtaken by citizens in revolt. (Images courtesy of Jonathan Froines.)

**Figure 9.** *Opposite page, bottom:* Froines thickens the frontages of the storefront churches—creating “churchyards”—by introducing an undulation to the street that breaks the grid, slows traffic, and narrows Florence Avenue. (Images courtesy of Jonathan Froines.)



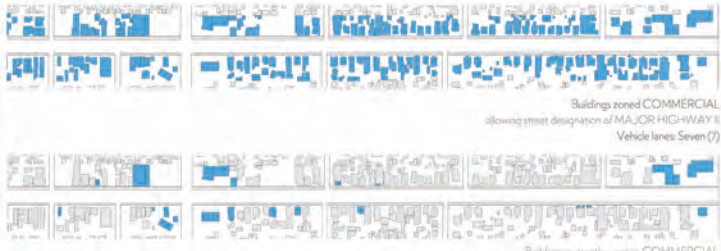


## LOCATING PUBLIC LIFE AT FLORENCE & NORMANDIE

### INTERVENTION



### CHARACTER OF STREET



### CHARACTER OF PUBLIC LIFE



### STOREFRONT CHURCHES

#### PREVALENCE OF CHURCHES



### INTERVENTION







**Figure 10.** Tom's Liquor at Florence and Normandie with cell tower disguised as "tree." (Photograph by author.)

or destroyed, and \$1 billion in property was lost ... More than a thousand were deported, most to Mexico; tens of thousands were made homeless and jobless by destruction."<sup>25</sup> While Los Angeles initially embarked on ambitious plans to address the physical damage caused by the unrest, as well as the injustices particularly impacting the black communities of South Central Los Angeles, most institutional efforts fell short of projected aims. Examples include Rebuild LA, an initiative instigated by Mayor Tom Bradley and Governor Pete Wilson but intended to harness the private sector to entice principally retail investment. The federal Empowerment Zone and the LA Revitalization Zone likewise underachieved in their efforts to stimulate employment and investment.<sup>26</sup> Areas of moderate success included liquor store abatement—as many of the 200 liquor stores damaged in the unrest were not reinstated (although South Los Angeles continues to have a much higher proportion of liquor stores).<sup>27</sup> Continuing police reform has somewhat improved relations between communities of color and law enforcement, and though a national problem, Los Angeles

continues to be at the forefront with initiatives like the Days of Dialogue, a program focused on the future of policing in Los Angeles.<sup>28</sup> While it is easy to dwell on the city's failures in physical rebuilding, planning, and policy (largely related to its inability to incentivize investors for areas, as Josh Sides notes, "perceived to be rife with crime and prone to riots"), authors such as Robert Gottlieb focus on the unrest as a stimulus for social movements that target housing and transportation inequities and gang intervention, "[becoming] the basis for a reconstituted Progressive LA."<sup>29</sup> Intended to provide an alternate vision of a city long characterized by dystopic narratives, this sense of positive social transformation is indeed palpable in some of the city's once-marginalized districts, yet with repercussions like gentrification and displacement.<sup>30</sup>

The transforming population of South Los Angeles has contributed to a shift in perception about the area. The vast territory that is South Los Angeles is now predominantly Latino (in 2010 it was 66.3 percent Latino and 31.8 percent black). As Sides claims, "As much as African Americans lamented the loss of a traditionally black community, the Latin Americanization of South Los Angeles was an economically advantageous development ... The

infusion of Mexican and Latin American families, who appear to have a high rate of labor force participation, produced an increase in the purchasing power in those communities." He concludes,

If the demographic trends of the past two decades continue, we can reasonably expect South Los Angeles to be about 20 to 25 percent African American by the next census, in 2020; at which point there may no longer remain any visible legacies of the riots of 1992. One might find instead an extraordinarily diverse and highly integrated community of Californians for whom the anger, despair, and violence of 1992 seem as antiquated as the days of Jim Crow.<sup>31</sup>

One might thus question the relevance of interpreting an event that did not have direct or immediate impact on the shifting populations that now characterize the area (also keeping in mind that 51 percent of those arrested during the unrest were Latino; 38 percent were black). These changes beg the question of whether a lack of visible legacies is a positive signal of a city moving away from a shameful past, or whether some tangible reflection of that past might provide a productive reminder to consistently evaluate conditions for spatial justice.

Along the Vermont Avenue corridor, where much of this research centers, neighborhoods like Vermont Knolls, Manchester Square, Harvard Park, and Vermont Square are still largely African American and low income with low rates of high school education.<sup>32</sup> These areas continue to be affected by high foreclosure rates and an abundance of liquor stores.<sup>33</sup> The quality of environment and access to park or recreational space as well as basic retail and nutritional needs are extremely limited, so any effort to mitigate such conditions is valuable.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, despite demographic shifts in the broader



area, marking the site in some way to recognize a past event that might stimulate current conversation about the city's progress in addressing social and environmental inequities would lead to a more constructive public realm.

### **Projecting Forward: Planning, Design (and Preservation?)**

In the weeks after the uprisings, the then major Los Angeles gangs—the Crips and the Bloods—formed a historic truce and generated a proposal for the positive reconstruction of the city. Called “Give Us The Hammer and Nails, We Will Rebuild the City,” the proposal recommended specific job-generating opportunities; small-business financing options; educational, healthcare, and social service funding and policy; police reforms; and physical infrastructure addressing the readaptation of burned buildings and lots, enhanced streetscapes, improved parks with recreation centers and parks programming (particularly at night), upgraded sanitation, and lighting.<sup>35</sup> As a whole, the comprehensive plan sent to Mayor Bradley aimed to mitigate poverty, racism, and gang violence. Despite its reasonable price tag, the proposal was generally ignored due to the dismissed credibility of the authors by those in city hall. In their essay “Anatomy of a Rebellion: A Political-Economic Analysis,” Melvin Oliver, James Johnson Jr., and Walter Farrell Jr. suggest a similarly comprehensive plan styled after Works Progress Administration initiatives with an emphasis on job creation and infrastructure; “only when South Central Los Angeles is perceived as a *public space* that is economically vibrant and socially attractive will the promise of this multicultural community be fulfilled. Thus far, private-sector actions and federal-government programs and proposals have done nothing to bring us nearer to reaching this goal.”<sup>36</sup>

Arguably public space in Los Angeles is still considered suspect, as much of its privileged populations

continue to live within the interior worlds of their home, cars, and gated communities. The studio focus on public space thus posed the especially challenging task of how to restore the flashpoints of the riots—specifically the intersection of Florence and Normandie, and Vermont and Manchester Avenues—into persistent spaces of disruption and resistance. In other words, the studio explored means of recognizing and reinstating “spaces of insurgent citizenship,” a term used by anthropologist James Holston to describe spaces that subvert the institutional order and regulation of the modern city, which holds that the state is “the only legitimate source of citizenship rights, meanings, and practices.”<sup>37</sup>

Because the complex transnational character of South Central continues to evolve and change, the hope is to restore these urban places as discursive arenas for public debate, the negotiation of identities, and new forms of collectivity outside the institutional powers of the state and the market. This aligns design objectives with sociologist Richard Sennett's long insistence on living together not simply in tolerant indifference, but in active and meaningful intercultural engagement.<sup>38</sup> By focusing on two intersections, students had to contend with both the memory of rebellion against institutional powers and the everyday practices and appropriations of space on these sites today, which amount to a smaller-scale form of insurgency. Both objectives are particularly relevant now with the increasing rise of organized civil society and civic mobilizations where inhabitants of the city assert new forms of citizenship that destabilize the old.

Teaching students to recognize and confront difficult pasts in the built environment requires a balance of critical readings and in situ experience. USC students, in their second year of a three-year master's of landscape architecture program, read about and discussed (1) the events of 1992 (their underlying causes, contemporaneous media coverage, consequences,

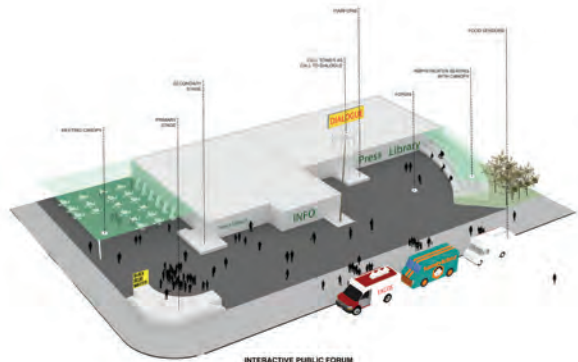
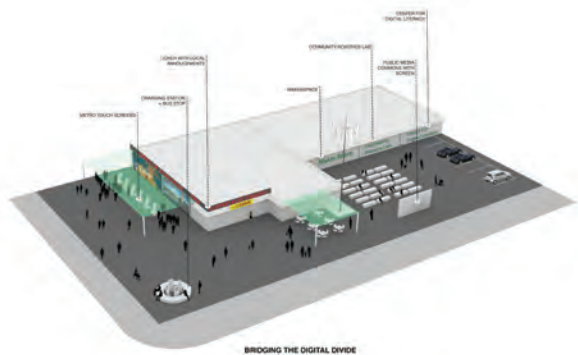
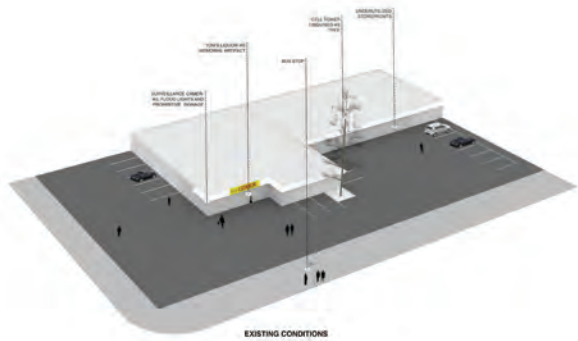
and revisionist considerations);<sup>39</sup> (2) questions of preservation, place, and memory (authors included Dolores Hayden, Erika Doss, Andreas Huyssen, and Norman Klein);<sup>40</sup> and (3) public space and the right to the city (authors included Edward Soja, Richard Sennett, Leonie Sandercock, and Margaret Crawford).<sup>41</sup> Students were tasked with extensive field work, graphically notating the rituals and rhythms of the Vermont Avenue corridor as a transect through South Los Angeles and area most impacted by the 1992 events. Study of the corridor was critical to formulating a comprehensive understanding of the area's past and future before focusing on the intersections. The following material specifically introduces some of the student output for the two intersections while the conclusion assesses the proposals' potentials and oversights, particularly questioning how and by whom their success should be evaluated.

### **“Preserving” Florence and Normandie**

Students began with an exercise to consider the initial flashpoint of the riots, which today bears no reflection of its potent past.<sup>42</sup> A typological example of a ubiquitous Los Angeles intersection (especially in marginalized neighborhoods), Florence and Normandie is distinguished by liquor stores, auto repair shops, and gas stations as well as the still-standing Tom's Liquor, which has become the symbolic reminder of the events that occurred in 1992. The exercise asked students to design a memory infrastructure, meaning a physical proposal that integrates a hybrid program—one that synthesizes the needs of the everyday, enforcing and enhancing the existing social character of the neighborhood, *and* preserves or interprets the memory of the insurgent events that made this intersection recognizable in the public imagination.

One proposal, by Jonathan Froines, employs aerial legibility in response to decades of overhead surveillance and the detached gaze of news helicopters capturing a version of the events taking place at





**Figure 11.** Yao Yao and Christopher Sison, proposals for Florence and Normandie. Taking cues from the cell tower on the site, Yao and Sison proposed four scenarios for reimagining the location as a site of communications and activism. (Images courtesy of Yao Yao and Christopher Sison.)

the intersection in 1992. Froines's design reappropriates the street as a public arena, as it operated during the riots. By sinking vehicular circulation, pedestrian primacy is restored and the intersection is once again a domain for people. The proposed section interrupts the relentless gridded streets that define the area's homogenous flatlands and co-opts elevation, a vantage typically afforded in Los Angeles's landscapes of privilege among the hills and by the ocean (Figures 7, 8). Recognizing the street's lack of human occupation today, except for the weekend churchgoers attending the sixteen storefront churches that exist along this half-mile stretch of Florence Avenue, Froines additionally exaggerates their frontages. These "churchyards" introduce an undulation to the street that slows traffic and narrows Florence Avenue from seven to four lanes. The churchyards provide social and ecological amenities as public spaces for parishioners and the general public, thickening the pedestrian domain of the now-uninviting intersection and street (Figure 9).

As a symbol of communicative expression, another student proposal by Yao Yao and Christopher Sison takes cues from the "ecology" of the disguised cellular tower on the site and transforms the area around Tom's Liquor into a center for communication and activism, including community rallies and gatherings (Figure 10). Tom's, preserved as material artifact, is incentivized by the city to diversify its inventory to become a fresh food market (currently nonexistent in this area). The proposal started with four potential scenarios for the intersection, each cued by the perpetuating existence of Tom's Liquor and the cell tower as communications infrastructure and one of the only "trees" along either Florence or Normandie Avenues (Figure 11). The





scenarios introduced a “memorial ecology”; programming to overcome inferior access (or “the digital divide”) in lower-income neighborhoods to information and communications technologies; a staging infrastructure for public debate; and improved access

to fresh and healthful food and transit. The composite scheme, pictured both as an everyday space and a space of event or rupture, aims to unite these multiple goals and restore the place as a public space for performative appropriation (Figure 12).

**Figure 12.** Yao and Sison’s composite scheme, pictured both as an everyday space and a space of event brings together many of the aims of the individual scenarios. (Images courtesy of Yao Yao and Christopher Sison.)



**Figure 13.** Top: Stitched photographs taken in 1950 of the currently vacant blocks on Vermont Avenue just north of Manchester Avenue (8400 and 8500 blocks of Vermont Avenue). (Photograph courtesy of the Jewish Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.)



**Figure 14.** Middle: Burned blocks at Vermont and Manchester Avenues, 1992 and 2016. (Left: Photograph courtesy of AP Photo/Paul Sakuma. Right: Photograph courtesy of Google Earth.)



**Figure 15.** Bottom: Informal vending along fence of 8500 block of Vermont Avenue. (Photograph by author.)



### “Preserving” Vermont and Manchester

The buildings around the intersection of Vermont and Manchester Avenues were decimated by fire during the three days of unrest in 1992. Ironically, some who lived in the area considered this clearance an opportunity to replace what had devolved into a landscape of swap meets, auto shops, and vacant lots from its history in the 1940s and 1950s as “a community of striving and prosperous black families ... a community of black-owned businesses and world-class entertainment” (Figure 13).<sup>43</sup> Yet, despite numerous plans to redevelop the area, two massive lots scorched in the insurrection remain vacant today (Figure 14), increasing perceptions of blight, abandonment, and neglect. Modest acts of insurgent citizenship, particularly forms of informal entrepreneurship that line the chain link fence and scaffolding, have reappropriated these symbolic spaces (Figure 15). On April 29, 2015 (twenty-three years from the day the verdict was handed down), ground was “broken” to transform these vacancies into the \$200 million Vermont Entertainment Village, a flashy outdoor mall seemingly unresponsive to the immediate community. Renderings of the project depict a white clientele visiting stores such as Gucci, Chanel, Armani, Abercrombie and Fitch, and the Hard Rock Cafe.<sup>44</sup> As of June 2017, no construction had started.<sup>45</sup> In response and as an alternative, rather than simply appease community groups eager for increased consumer

opportunities, the students were asked to consider both the past large-scale resistance and the present small-scale insurgencies to develop a meaningful form of public space that encourages sustained forms of encounter and exchange for the area’s shifting and mixed populations.

Many students attempted to enhance the fencing to increase the small-scale economic opportunities it provides as an informal and elaborated “swap meet.” Others sought larger-scale economic opportunities and more

comprehensive access to basic amenities. Working at the scale of the former but in more nuanced form, one student, Nan Cheng—through research and visual fieldwork—discovered significant “ethnic edges” or places of transcultural conflict along the Vermont Avenue corridor (from Koreatown to South Los Angeles, a transect that cuts through many of the areas most affected by the 1992 events; Figure 16). She thus intervened at these margins at three intersections including Vermont and Manchester (Figure 17). Her proposal

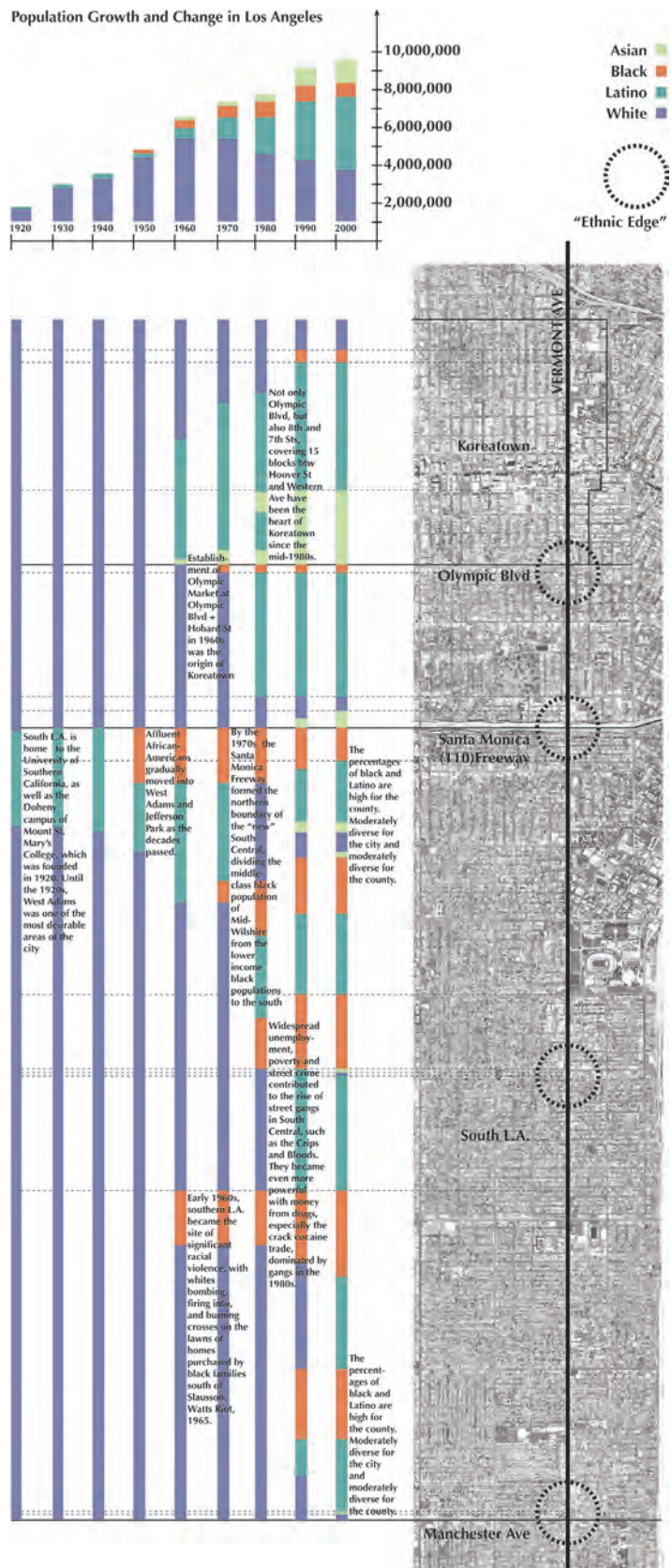


**Figure 16.** Nan Cheng, diagram of shifts in the ethnic/racial profile along Vermont Avenue from 1920 to today with compressed edges between such multiple “profiles” pulled out as sites of intervention. (Data from U.S. Census. Courtesy of Nan Cheng.)

(Figure 18) centers on activating these “marginal” or contested spaces in the city. This focus on the Vermont–Manchester site is one of multiple programs situated in thickened edges to create hybrid spaces for renewed forms of social interaction. While these spaces enforce some accepted landscape architecture norms, the overarching concepts tackle questions of collective memory concerning what once existed (albeit the “collective” has since changed), spaces of conflict and resistance, and the needs of the current population—in this case, quality recreational and community gathering space that subtly enhances economic opportunity and provides a platform for new forms of occupation.

A proposal by Donielle Kaufman and Wen Wu examines the larger network of needs in this area. It began with a series of urban studies to identify contextual anchors—particularly the multiple churches and schools in the immediate area and the Los Angeles County Administration Building (Department of Public Social Services)—as potential stewards (Figure 19).<sup>46</sup> The LA County Administration Building was part of the Community Redevelopment Agency’s Recovery Redevelopment Project. While the administration building was promoted to the community as a “catalyst for retail development,” it provides minimal amenities and offers no sustained employment opportunities for local residents.<sup>47</sup>

Kaufman and Wu’s proposal is an exercise in community preservation, to enable the site’s restoration through the local public staking a claim. In contrast to Vermont Entertainment Village, Kaufman and Wu propose community anchors to catalyze the design of and placemaking within public and private spaces meant to respond to the retail,

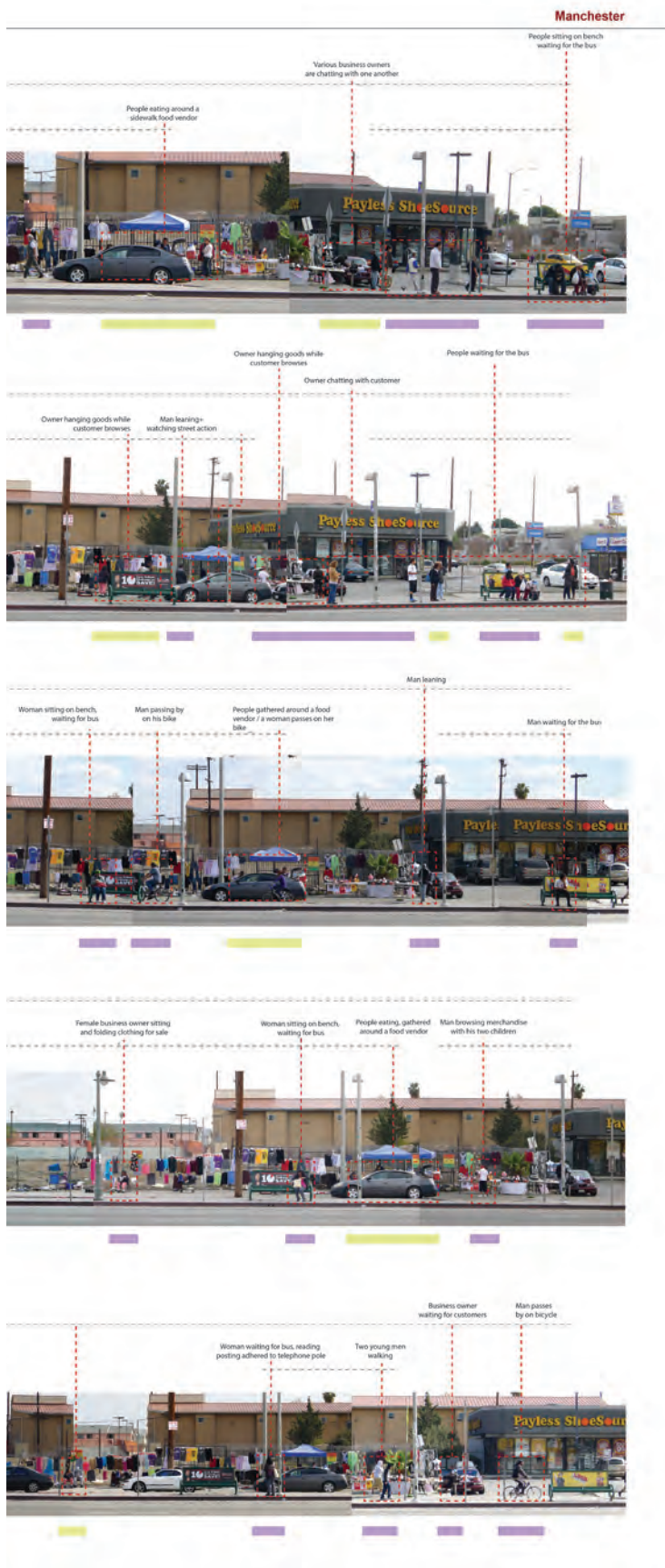




# 84th Street







**Figure 17.** Cheng's notated fieldwork of daily interactions along the Vermont and Manchester vacancies. Clearly she only used visually obvious cues to determine race/ethnicity but the method of recording is the point of emphasis here. (Images courtesy of Nan Cheng.)

service, recreation, and entertainment needs of local residents. Divergent and regional precedents underpin their initial study and include activist architect Teddy Cruz's *Living Rooms at the Border*—iterative modular programs that respond to the largely Mexican population living in San Ysidro, a San Diego suburb immediately north of the Mexico border (Figure 20). Working with the community development agency Casa Familiar, Cruz proposes means of acquisition, rezoning (to allow for unconventionally mixed uses), financing, and development of two prototypical parcels (Living Rooms at the Border and Senior Housing with Childcare). They are presented as “small infrastructures that mobilize social entrepreneurship into new spaces for housing, cultural production, and political participation.”<sup>48</sup> Eli Sasson of the Sassony Group, which is responsible for Vermont Entertainment Village, is the owner of the Vermont and Manchester site, hence complicit in the area's deterioration and the site's prolonged vacancy. This “top-down” model of urban development contrasts with Cruz's proposal, which presents “neighborhood-driven equitable urban development” where Casa Familiar acts as the mediating agency between the municipality (and now owner, having acquired the parcels), a microfinancing institution, and locals investing in the site (as “microdevelopers”). Kaufman and Wu's proposal likewise aims to inject collective programming to support formal and informal economies and social organization. The project reinstates the site by resisting external institutional forces and returning control to citizens who reside and work in the area.

The multiplicity of uses and occupants include parks and spaces for gathering, wide-ranging commercial and social services,





**Figure 18.** Cheng's final proposal, *Activating the Margins*, for the Vermont and Manchester site. (Images courtesy of Nan Cheng.)

diverse retail venues, arts-based programs, restaurants, spaces of entrepreneurship such as culinary incubators, entertainment and recreation facilities, community center and community policing stations, workshop space, library space, daycare, senior care, and programs aimed at bridging the “digital divide,” all with a large supermarket and housing for mixed family types.<sup>49</sup> These are pieced together to create juxtapositions resistant to traditional zoning practices and to facilitate social encounters and organizations. The design team likewise developed a plan for financing that aspires to “create long-term community control” (Figure 21).<sup>50</sup>

Like Yao and Sison's proposal for Florence and Normandie, part of the intention of Kaufman and Wu's proposal is the institution of new public rituals—or programmed events—that recognize the tragedies and triumphs of the uprisings and provide opportunities for rallies, demonstrations, and other forms of community organizing to effect change.<sup>51</sup> A new calendar of public

events might activate and thus preserve the fierce performance of protest that occurred in 1992. The idea of planning for long-term community control also ensures the site's future as a reflection of its resistant past.

The final student project discussed here most directly tackles the question of preservation and memory, taking an archaeological approach to the site's renewal. Jade Orr and Rachel Ison propose to excavate the blocks' multiple layers by integrating Micro-Narratives on the site. Their primary starting points were the aerial images of these scorched blocks just after the unrest—with still-standing walls defining vacuous spaces open to the sky (see Figure 14). Recognizing the power of this widespread media footage, they sought to restore the spatial diversity of these footprints while integrating what archaeological evidence or relics still existed from the 1930s structures that burned in 1992 (Figure 22). Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps offered more evidence of how the blocks evolved from “the premier shopping district of southwest Los Angeles,” with Charlston's Department Store, J. J. Newberry Co., M&V Market, and F. W. Woolworth

Co., to the “proud product of dozens of ethnic hands” in 1992, consisting of forty-two businesses including two large swap meets.<sup>52</sup> The students wanted to preserve the spatial voids created by the fires and the large void the blocks remained as since the unrest. The design proposes a reminder of both the 1992 events and the injustices of disinvestment yet transforms these voids from blight to public amenity, specifically recognizing the unequal distribution of public green space across Los Angeles, while simultaneously restoring the site's commercial vibrancy (Figure 23).<sup>53</sup>

### Conclusion: Looking Forward

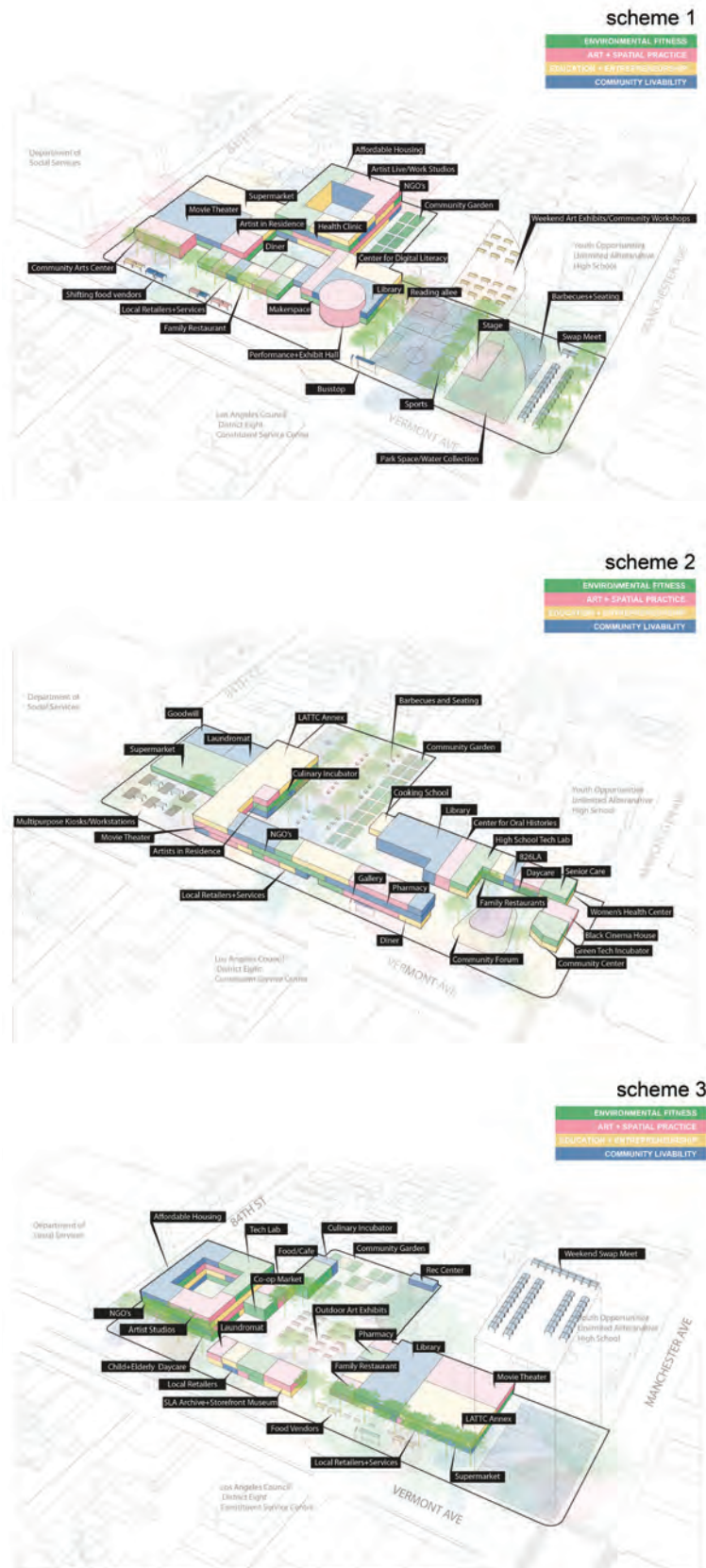
This studio taught students to transgress conventional strategies for ordering the city to imagine restored spaces of resistance. As perpetual sites of social recentering, speculative designs aspired to create discursive places “where engagement with strangers in a common activity disrupts easy labeling of the stranger as enemy and initiates new attachments. They are moments of cultural destabilization, offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions, and through this, to learn to become



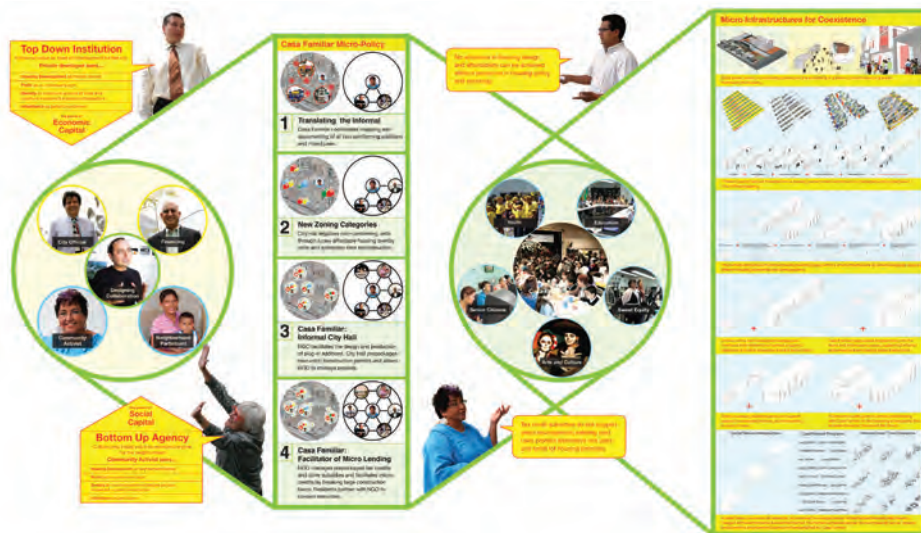
**Figure 19.** Donielle Kaufman and Wen Wu, massing and programmatic studies for Vermont and Manchester Avenues. (Images courtesy of Danielle Kaufman and Wen Wu.)

different through new patterns of social interaction,” in the words of geographer Ash Amin.<sup>54</sup> The pedagogy argues that designing for disruption is necessary to produce positive change. Yet while elements of the student projects might challenge conventional expectations of urban landscape design and planning, they are relatively tentative in their efforts to destabilize and recenter the public into “new patterns of social interaction.” In fact, teaching strategies to foster openness to designing for discomfort or beyond conventional or predictable expectation—as a means of provoking dialogue and imagining new social patterns—remain elusive. Most student proposals largely sustained the frameworks of state and market institutions that ultimately provoked the unrest, while some included new policies and programs for transferring (and restoring) power to local citizens. Students remained healthfully unresolved on whether preserving or provoking cultural memory and instigating debate is justifiable in these areas that face more dire concerns. Yet this course was intended to provide an alternative to the more traditional “community design” studio, in which student engagement with local citizens has the potential to compound the fear of risk-taking and limit speculative capacities. More investigation is necessary to develop methods that assist community participants in thinking outside conventional expectations and beyond a sense of utility and immediate need—perhaps through a process of visionary co-creation.<sup>55</sup>

In preservation practice, efforts to address issues of equity and justice have worked to counter the market-driven, back-to-the-city investment incentives of traditional preservation that have led to mass displacement in urban neighborhoods throughout the United States, through rent regulation and support for local economic development.<sup>56</sup> Major strides to preserve places with







**Figure 20.** Top: Teddy Cruz, development of a zoning policy for San Ysidro. (Images courtesy of Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman.)

**Figure 21.** Acquisition, financing, development and stewardship diagram. (Courtesy of Kaufman.)

**(a) Right: CONNECT NEIGHBORHOODS - FOSTER INVESTMENT**

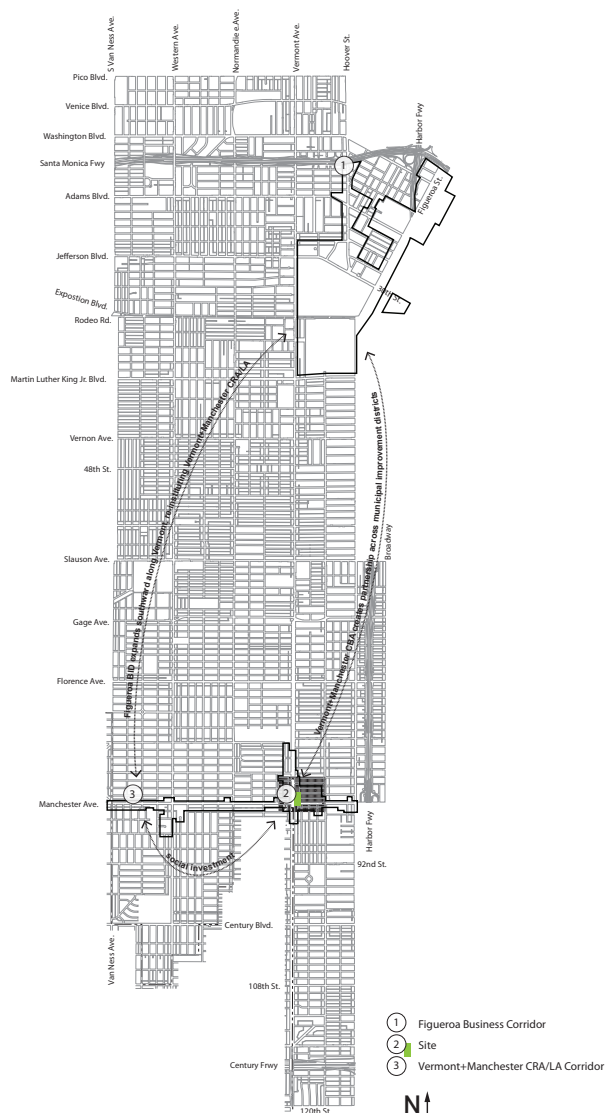
Sassony Group is incentivized to create a Community Benefits Agreement with local nonprofits: Esperanza Housing Corporation, SCOPE, Community Build and a newly formed SLA Spiritual Collective. Unlike typical CBAs, the Vermont + Manchester CBA moves beyond project enthusiasm and aims to catalyze social investment by connecting existing and expired neighborhood improvement districts.

**(b) Opposite page, left: ENGAGE LOCAL ORGANIZATION THROUGH MICRODEVELOPMENT**

The CBA ordains an alternate economic structure for redevelopment, mediated through Esperanza, SCOPE, Community Build and SLA Spiritual Collective. This group additionally oversees permitting of the alternative mixed-use development, while packaging tax credits and other subsidies, and works in partnership with community-based microfinancing agencies to offer microcredits to small businesses and organizations to initiate projects onsite.

**(c) Opposite page, right: CREATE LONG-TERM COMMUNITY CONTROL**

The CBA generates a dynamic spatial condition by building local economies, providing essential services, promoting arts and culture. Here, residents and business owners sustain long-term community control and investment throughout and across neighborhoods. The site becomes the key joint between two redevelopment projects.



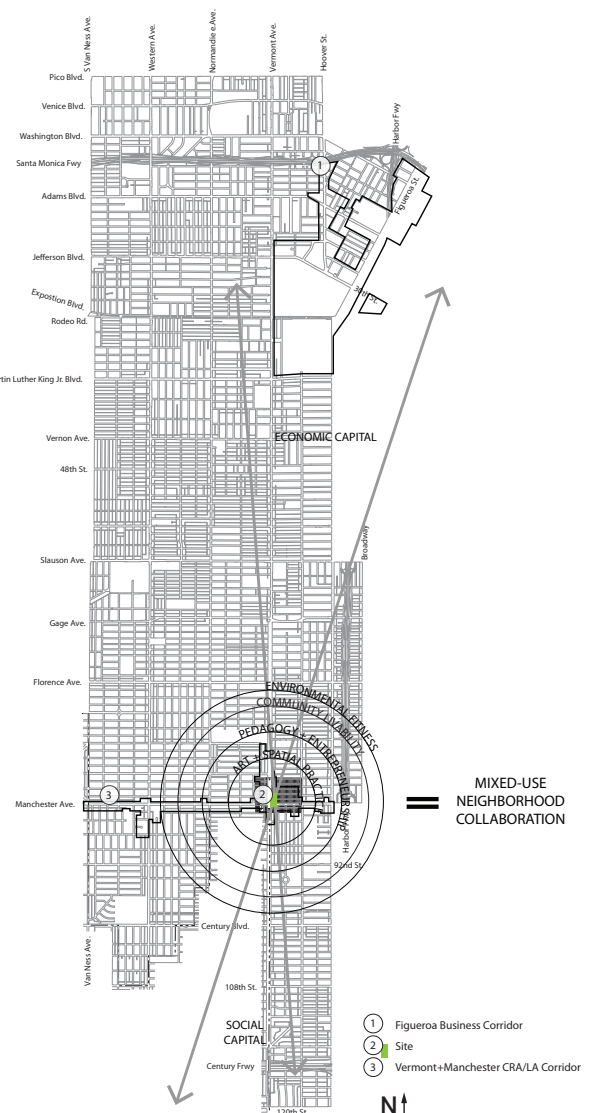
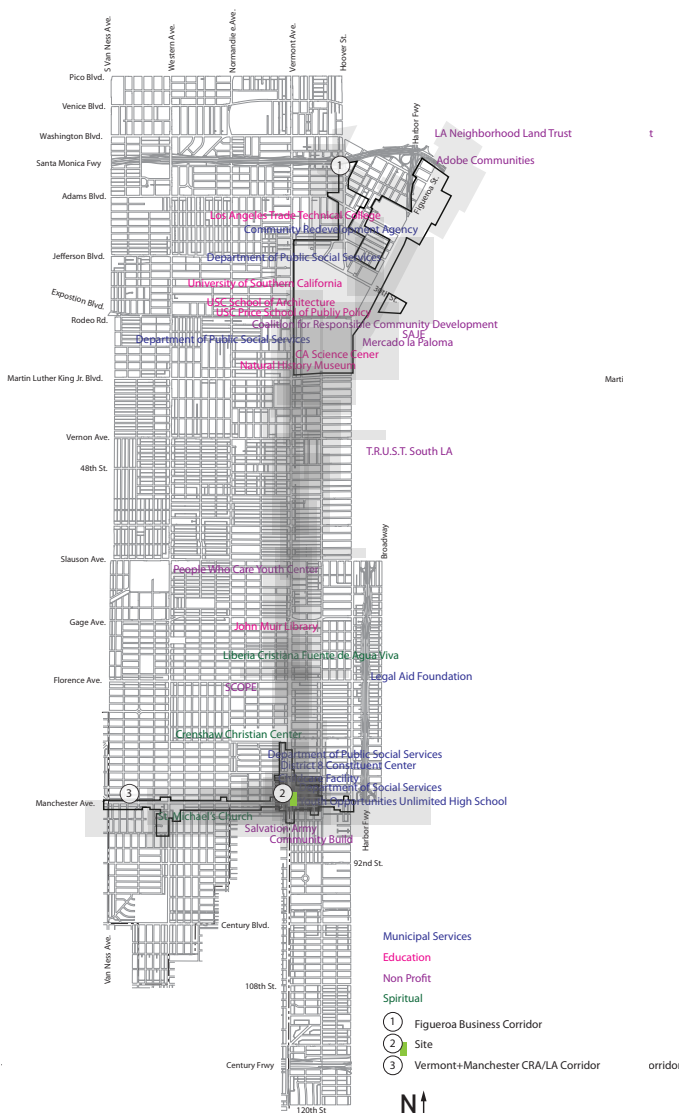


marginalized, painful, or shameful pasts as “sites of conscience” have been made throughout the United States and abroad. Recognizing and restoring Los Angeles’s landscapes of resistance—as sites of conscience and empowerment, and as places intended to improve equity and inclusion by responding to everyday needs and new expressions of identity—both fits into evolving discourse about “why preservation matters” and sits outside it, since more of the effort in this study is aimed at restoring a public ethos than the physical fabric as material testimony.<sup>57</sup>

The inequities made momentarily visible in 1992 are still rampant

in US cities, as has been revealed through the Movement for Black Lives. This movement has ensured that the anonymity and vacuous absence of recognition of the lives lost and injustices asserted are no longer deemed acceptable by a substantial public who has revived a resistive stance. Again, this can be translated to the treatment of urban space and how it might be reappropriated to provide a platform for political and social discourse. Where design, planning, and preservation—as institutional entities—might be situated to facilitate such appropriation is, of course, an ongoing question.

While this research began before the latest US presidential election, Trump’s campaign and presidency have propelled a global resistance to the abuse of power used to instill heightened fear of and hatred toward what’s deemed Other (non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, non-Christian, non-American). Cities across the world are being transformed into spaces of resistance, and the hope is that designers and planners will support, enable, and enforce the preservation and renewal of public space and work to counter spatial injustices created by broader institutional forces.







**Figure 22.** Site Archaeology of the Vermont/Manchester Vacancies. Jade Orr and Rachel Ison, relics that inspired student intervention at Vermont and Manchester Avenues. (Photographs courtesy of Jade Orr and Rachel Ison.)

**(a) Top:** Connections to the past: These photos from 1928, 1935, and the 1950s respectively, show the development of the site from a sparse corridor scattered with small shops and residences to a burgeoning commercial area that was a premier shopping district before racially discriminant housing covenants drastically changed the development of South Los Angeles. A reimagining of the site seeks to recapture some of the original uses and amenities.

**(b) Middle:** Storefronts: After the uprisings that took place at the site, little remained but these storefronts dating back to the 40's and 50's at the street edge. They are reminiscent of the golden age of the site, when it was a thriving commercial district. The proposed design aims to incorporate these relics as a way of acknowledging the long standing story of the place.

**(c) Bottom:** Infrastructure: The prolific fires that spread during the uprisings ravaged the site, leaving sparse remnants of infrastructure behind. These elements framed the site and facilitated the archaeological approach taken in the proposed design. Each element was thoughtfully repurposed to tie the new design into the site's history while still looking forward to its potential future.

**Figure 23.** Vermont/Manchester Site analysis and student proposals.

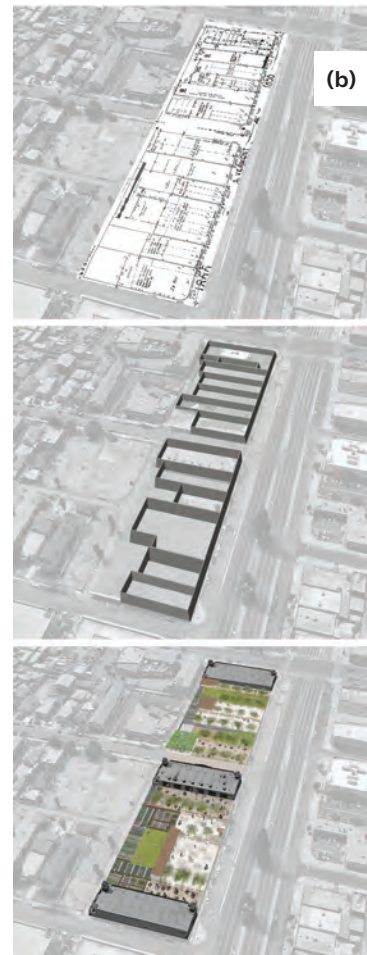
**(a) Opposite page, top left:** Sanborn Fire Insurance Map overlay with proposed new uses. (Photographs courtesy of Jade Orr and Rachel Ison.)

**(b) Opposite page, top right:** Concept generation at Vermont and Manchester Avenues, from a thriving commercial site to the spatial voids post-1992 to an envisioned multiuse public space reminiscent of the past that provides investment and amenities for the future. (Photographs courtesy of Jade Orr and Rachel Ison.)

**(c) Opposite page, bottom:** Final proposal for Vermont and Manchester intended to reveal the site's multiple layers and offer a space of resistance to conventional urban development. Orr and Ison did not want to overdevelop the site; they chose to leave it open as outdoor spaces with differentiated functions made spatially distinct by ground material, vegetation, and remains of building foundations. Additionally, wanting to restore the site's

commercial vibrancy, they flanked the site with structures that house community retail, services, and restaurants (not fast food). They adapted the extant building in the middle of the site, making it an arcaded public market. Areas with once-small storefronts become an outdoor vendor space both reminiscent of the swap meets that burned and the informal occupation of the fencing currently onsite (see Figure 15). A small interactive museum of South Los Angeles history and culture presents art works, archival material, and media installations interpreting the past and projecting the future. Other details pictured here include reused reliquary raised concrete slabs as platforms/stages for public gathering and demonstrations; one with forty-two emergent fruit trees, called the Memorial Orchard, recognizes the forty-two businesses lost in the fires of 1992. The still-visible basement of one burned building has been transformed into the Basement Amphitheater, a space for performance, gathering, or respite. (Photographs courtesy of Jade Orr and Rachel Ison.)







## Author Biography

Alison B. Hirsch, M.A., H.S. (Historic Preservation), Ph.D., is a landscape historian, designer, and assistant professor in the University of Southern California's School of Architecture. Her book on landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, *City Choreographer* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014) emerged out of her graduate work on his disappearing physical legacy. Hirsch co-edited *The Landscape Imagination* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2014) and has published widely in international journals. Co-founder of the transdisciplinary practice called foreground design agency ([www.foreground-da.com](http://www.foreground-da.com)), Hirsch's design interests focus on public histories and politics of urban settlement, which is the topic of her forthcoming book, *The Performative Landscape: Frameworks for Action*. Hirsch is a 2017–2018 Prince Charitable Trusts/Rolland Rome Prize Fellow at the American Academy in Rome.

## Notes

- 1 The political contentions over terminology used to describe the events of April 1992—riot, uprising, rebellion, unrest, insurrection, crisis, etc.—are often used as an expression of differing ideological viewpoints and political allegiances. Riots, while most recognizable, is a term perpetuated by the right. For some review of terminology, see Lynn Mie Itagaki, *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and the Crisis of Racial Burnout* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2016), 4–5. The Rodney King verdict refers to the acquittal of the white police officers caught on video tape beating Rodney King, who was African American.
- 2 Mike Davis and Edward Soja are often cited as key figures in what is called the LA School of Urbanism or “postmodern urbanism.” For a synopsis of these topics, see Michael Dear and Steven Flusty, “Postmodern Urbanism,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88, no. 1 (1998): 50–72; and Michael Dear, “The Los Angeles School of Urbanism: An Intellectual History,” *Urban Geography* 24, no. 6 (2003): 493–509. For a counterargument to the “reductionism” of these theorists, see Robert Sullivan, *Street Level: Los Angeles in the Twenty-First Century* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014). Of particular use to this research was Edward Soja, “Los Angeles, 1965–1992: From Crisis-Generated Restructuring to Restructuring Generated Crisis,” in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the 20th Century*, ed. Allen Scott and Edward Soja (Berkeley: University of California, 1996).

- Recent documentary coverage recognizing the 25th anniversary of the riots focus primarily on police brutality, drawing connections to recent high-profile cases where police have killed black citizens. See *LA Burning: The Riots 25 Years Later*, directed by One9 and Eric Parker (A&E, 2017); *Let It Fall: Los Angeles 1982–1992*, directed by John Ridley (ABC, 2017); *Burn, Motherf\*cker, Burn!*, directed by Sacha Jenkins (Showtime, 2017); *Lost Tapes: LA Riots*, directed by Tom Jennings (Smithsonian, 2017); and *LA 92*, directed by Daniel Lindsay and T. J. Martin (National Geographic, 2017).
- 3 I use the term *restore* as one of the “four approaches to the treatment of historic properties” (preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction) canonized by the US Secretary of the Interior Standards that evolved out of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. According to these standards, “Restoration depicts a property at a particular period of time in its history, while removing evidence of other periods.” Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, “Four Approaches to the Treatment of Historic Properties,” accessed December 20, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm>. In this case, the “other periods” are years of continued neglect and disinvestment. Here the study asks for both the restoration of public space and the preservation of memory.
- 4 Peter Kwong, “The First Multicultural Riots,” *Village Voice*, June 9, 1992.
- 5 Sources that corroborate on the general facts related to the lead-up to the uprisings include Don Hazen, ed., *Inside the LA Riots: What Really Happened—And Why It Will Happen Again* (New York: Institute for Alternative Journalism, 1992); Edward T. Chang and Jeannette Diaz-Veizades, *Ethnic Peace and in the American City* (New York: NYU Press, 1999); Robert Gooding-Williams, ed., *Reading Rodney King, Reading Urban Uprising* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Edward T. Chang and Russell C. Leong, *Los Angeles: Struggles Toward Multiethnic Community* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993). See also the University of Southern California’s Christopher and Webster Commission Records Collections held by the USC Library Special Collections. Recent documentaries listed in n. 2 provide additional sources, as does much coverage in the *Los Angeles Times*.
- 6 Crime statistics using data from LA County Sheriff’s Department and California Department of Justice found in *Los Angeles Almanac*, “Gang Related Crime, Los Angeles County,” accessed January 18, 2018, <http://www.laalmanac.com/crime/cro3x.php>.
- 7 Mike Davis, *The City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso Books, 1990), 251–52. This passage includes the statement: “. . . exceeding synchronization, thousands of residential rooftops have been painted with identifying street numbers, transforming the aerial view of the city into a huge police grid.” This has since been discredited (see Geoff Manaugh, “How Aerial

- Surveillance Has Changed Policing—and Crime—in Los Angeles,” accessed December 2, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/magazine/panopticopts.html?> and a number of critics have challenged the accuracy of some of Davis’s other claims. Rob Sullivan critiques Davis and allies for presenting a “lop-sided and myopic view of the City of Angels” (Sullivan, Street Level, 60). See also Christopher Hawthorne, “Reading LA: Mike Davis, ‘City of Quartz’ and Southern California’s ‘Spatial Apartheid,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 2011, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/06/where-to-start-when-it-comes-to-city-of-quartz-mike-daviss-1990-polemic-against-the-rampant-privatization-and-gated-communi.html>.
- 8 Elston Carr, “Riot Homecoming,” in *Inside the LA Riots*, 52.
- 9 See Calvin Sims, “In Los Angeles, It’s South-Central No More,” *New York Times*, April 10, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/10/us/in-los-angeles-it-s-south-central-no-more.html>. In 2015, the 8th district councilmember Bernard Parks supported the rebranding of this area once again into “SOLA.” See Angel Jennings, “Can South LA Re-Brand Again? How Does ‘SOLA’ Sound?” *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 2015, [http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-south-la-could-be-renamed-sola-by-city-in-image-makeover-20150421-story.html?utm\\_source=dlvr.itutm\\_medium=twitterdlvr=649324](http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-south-la-could-be-renamed-sola-by-city-in-image-makeover-20150421-story.html?utm_source=dlvr.itutm_medium=twitterdlvr=649324).
- 10 Carol Tice, “Helicopter Journalism,” in *Inside the LA Riots*, 121. See also Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 38–42.
- 11 Itagaki, *Civil Racism*, 26–27 (see n. 1).
- 12 Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 158.
- 13 Joel Sternfeld, *On This Site: Landscape in Memoriam* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1997).
- 14 See Josh Begley’s *Officer Involved*, accessed August 17, 2016, <https://theintercept.co/officer-involved/> and <https://joshbegley.com>. See also “Collective Punishment: Mob Violence, Riots, and Pogroms against African American Communities (1824–1974), Interactive Map,” accessed August 17, 2016, <https://collectivepunishment.wordpress.com>.
- 15 See Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), “Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror,” accessed August 17, 2016, <http://eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america>; and EJI, “Map of 73 Years of Lynchings,” accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/02/10/us/map-of-73-years-of-lynching.html>. EJI has since opened the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice (Montgomery, AL), the latter dedicated to the memory of victims of lynching.
- 16 Itagaki, *Civil Racism*, 19.
- 17 US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Criteria for Evaluation,” accessed December 20, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/>



- bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\_2.htm.
- 18 While the broader institutional forces of state–market–media that led to the uprisings were national in scale, the specific urban conditions of Los Angeles made it particularly fertile ground for violent expressions of protest. This tension between official sanction by typically federal preservation policy and the particularities of the local that contribute to a site's significance relates to James Holston's and Arjun Appadurai's arguments on the shifting nature of citizenship where "cities are challenging, diverging from, and even replacing nations as the important space of citizenship as the lived space not only of its uncertainties but also of its emergent forms." "Introduction: Cities and Citizenship," in *Cities and Citizenship*, ed. James Holston (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 3.
- 19 Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 256; citing Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977).
- 20 For "symbolic memorial," in particular the discussion of the Oklahoma City National Memorial, see Erika Doss, "Death, Art, and Memory in the Public Sphere: The Visual and Material Culture of Grief in Contemporary America," *Mortality* 7, no. 1 (2002): 63–82.
- 21 Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University, 1996), 22.
- 22 Elizabeth Meyer, "Uncertain Parks: Disturbed Sites, Citizens, and Risk Society," in *Large Parks*, ed. Julia Czerniak and George Hargreaves (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 62. See Mira Engler, *Designing America's Waste Landscapes* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 2004).
- 23 Meyer, "Uncertain Parks," 82.
- 24 Jennifer Wolch, John P. Wilson, and Jed Fehrenbach, "Parks and Park Funding in Los Angeles: An Equity-Mapping Analysis," *Urban Geography* 26, no. 1 (2005): 4–35. On South Los Angeles vacancies since the unrest, see Emily Alpert Reyes and Angel Jennings, "'It Looks Bad. It's Dangerous.' Vacant Lots Dotting South LA a Painful Reminder of LA Riots," *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 2017.
- 25 From Itagaki, *Civil Rascism*, 2. For these numbers, she cites Nancy Abelman and John Lie, *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1995); Chang and Diaz-Veizades, *Ethnic Peace* (see n. 5); E. H. Kim, "Home Is Where the Han Is: A Korean American Perspective on the Los Angeles Uproar," in *Reading Rodney King* (see n. 5); and Helen Zia, *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000).
- 26 Josh Sides, "20 Years Later: Legacies of the Los Angeles Riots," *Places Journal* (April 2012), <https://doi.org/10.2269/120419>.
- 27 The riots destroyed approximately 200 of the 728 liquor stores (mostly Korean-owned). Many were not reinstated because of community efforts, but as of 2012, South Los Angeles still had 8,<sup>51</sup> liquor stores per square mile as compared to 1.<sup>97</sup> in West Los Angeles and 1.<sup>56</sup> in LA County. According to Josh Sides, "Renewal through Retail? The Impact of Corporate Reinvestment in South Los Angeles," in *Post-Ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*, ed. Josh Sides (Berkeley: University of California, 2012), 98. See also David Sloan, "Alcohol Nuisances and Food Deserts: Combating Social Hazards in the South Los Angeles Environment," in *Post-Ghetto*, 93–108; and Kyeyoung Park, "Confronting the Liquor Industry in Los Angeles," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 24, no. 7–8 (2004): 103–36.
- 28 For description of police reforms, see Jill Leovy, "Homicide, the New LAPD, and South Los Angeles," in *Post-Ghetto*, 191–208; and Institute for Nonviolence in Los Angeles, "Days of Dialogue on the Future of Policing," accessed June 15, 2016, <http://futureofpolicing.org>.
- 29 Sides, "20 Years Later." Robert Gottlieb, Regina Freer, Mark Vallianatos, and Peter Dreier, *The Next Los Angeles: The Struggle for a Livable City* (Los Angeles/Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 68.
- 30 See Sides, "20 Years Later." The new investments in South Los Angeles and the debates relating to gentrification have been well documented in regional media sources. See, for instance, Mike Sonksen, "The History of South Central Los Angeles and Its Struggle with Gentrification," *KCET*, September 14, 2017, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/city-rising/the-history-of-south-central-los-angeles-and-its-struggle-with-gentrification>.
- 31 Sides, "20 Years Later."
- 32 These neighborhood designations are coming from "Mapping LA Neighborhoods," *Los Angeles Times*, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/>.
- 33 As of 2014, see Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department, "Interactive: Foreclosed Properties Still Dragging Down Neighborhoods," *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/business/realstate/la-fi-g-foreclosure-registry-map-20140609.htmlstory.html>.
- 34 See Annie Park, Nancy Watson, and Lark Galloway-Gilliam, *South Los Angeles Health Equity Scorecard* (Los Angeles: Community Health Councils, Inc, 2008).
- 35 See "Crips' and Bloods' Plan for the Reconstruction of Los Angeles," accessed January 7, 2015, <http://gangresearch.net/GangResearch/Policy/cripsbloodsplan.html>.
- 36 Melvin Oliver, James Johnson Jr., and Walter Farrell Jr., "Anatomy of a Rebellion: A Political-Economic Analysis," in *Reading Rodney King*, 135 (see n. 5). Italics by author.
- 37 James Holston, "Spaces of Insurgent Citizenship," in *Cities and Citizenship*, ed. James Holston (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 155–73.
- 38 See Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994); and Richard Sennett, *Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (New York: Knopf, 1970).
- 39 See n. 5 for a list of primary assigned texts.
- 40 Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995); and Dolores Hayden, "Urban Landscape History: The Sense of Place and the Politics of Space," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Paul Groth and Todd Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 111–33; Doss, "Death, Art, and Memory" (see n. 20); and Doss, *Memorial Mania* (see n. 19); Craig Barton, ed., *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001); Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003); and Norman Klein, *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* (New York/London: Verso, 1997).
- 41 Soja, "Los Angeles, 1965–1992" (see n. 2); Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (New York: Wiley, 1996); Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis* (New York: Wiley, 2000); Leonie Sandercock, *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities* (Wiley, 1997); Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities of the 21st Century* (London/New York: Continuum, 2003); Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (see n. 12); John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski, eds., *Everyday Urbanism* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2008); Sennett, *Uses of Disorder*; Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1990); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1984); and Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990): 19–36.
- 42 Events that led up to the violence at Florence and Normandie really began one block north at 71st Street and Normandie Avenue.
- 43 Josh Sides, "Conclusion: How to Get to Post-Ghetto Los Angeles," in *Post-Ghetto*, 209–10 (see n. 27). See Nicole Santa Cruz and Ken Schwencke, "South Vermont Avenue: LA County's 'Death Alley,'" *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2014, <http://homicide.latimes.com/post/westmont-homicides/>.
- 44 See Sassony Group, "Vermont Entertainment Village," accessed June 1, 2018, <http://sassony-group.com/vermont/>.
- 45 The complex fight over this land has a long history. The blocks have been property of real estate developer Eli Sasson (Sassony Commercial Real Estate) since before 1992 and have been deemed a blight on the neighborhood. For a profile of this history, see Jason McGahan, "A Beverly Hills Developer Has Held 3 Acres of South LA 'Hostage' for 25 Years, Critics Say," *LA Weekly*, April 18, 2017, <http://www.laweekly.com/news/beverly-hills-developer-eli-sasson-is-holding-three-acres-of-south-los-angeles-hostage-critics-say-8129446>. See also Tim Cavanaugh,



"Can the Vermont/Manchester Project Be Saved?" *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/apr/17/opinion/oe-cavanaugh17>; and Tim Cavanaugh, "Vermont and Manchester in Pictures," *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2008, <http://opinion.latimes.com/opinionla/2008/04/vermont-manchest.html>. Most recently, the county moved to seize the land by eminent domain; see Emily Alpert-Reyes, "LA County moves to Seize Long-Empty South LA Parcel," *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-vermont-manchester-20171205-story.html>.

- 46 The Department of Public Social Services building was completed in 2007 immediately north of the current vacancies and it houses the departments of Social Services, Child Support Services, Children and Family Services, and Mental Health Services. It has limited ground-floor eateries (Subway and Wingstop).
- 47 The Community Redevelopment Agency was given its mandate in 1996 to redevelop this area. See CRA/LA, "Vermont/Manchester Recovery Redevelopment Project," accessed January 22, 2017, [http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/Vermont\\_Manchester/about.cfm](http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/Vermont_Manchester/about.cfm). See also Cavanaugh, "Can the Vermont/Manchester Project Be Saved?"
- 48 See Estudio Teddy Cruz, "Designing and Economic Process," accessed June 10, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/16778067>.
- 49 For a recently discovered project tackling the issue of community policing from an architectural standpoint, see Studio Gang, "Polis Station: Toward a Community-Centered Police Station," accessed December 20, 2017, <http://studiogang.com/now/watch-now-polis-station-film-by-spirit-of-space>.
- 50 In addition to Cruz's example, the students looked more locally at the mission and structure of Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, a community development agency and nonprofit developer that is responsible for Mercado La Paloma, a market and community space about five miles north of the site (still in "South Los Angeles") intended to reverse the effects of long-term disinvestment in this area (specifically the Figueroa Corridor; see linkages in diagram, **Figure 21**). Mercado La Paloma, accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.mercadolapaloma.com>; and Esperanza Community Housing Corporation, accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.esperanzacommunityhousing.org>. In addition, while not a project emphasizing community development, another point of reference for the retail aspects of the proposal was the Plaza Mexico, situated in the city of Lynwood not far from our site and just north of Compton. With a local majority population from Mexico, the Korean developer designed this "cultural wonderland of shopping, dining, and entertainment" to emulate the ancient city of Monte Alban near Mexico City and the town squares of pueblos throughout Mexico. See Plaza Mexico, "About the Plaza," accessed August 17, 2016, <http://www.plazamexico.com/menu/abouttheplaza.html>. Despite its kitsch

simulation of "traditional" Mexican towns and their central plaza (with its theme park pastiche of Mexican cultural symbols from different eras), the site has been embraced as an actual cultural center for festivals and performances as well as political rallies; it is seen as a public space in an area where maintained public spaces are scant. See Clara Irázabal and Macarena Gómez-Barris, "Bounded Tourism: Immigrant Politics, Consumption, and Traditions at Plaza Mexico," *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 5, no. 3 (2008): 186–213. Its mixed programs and facilitation of new forms of appropriation and occupation provided a local point of reference.

- 51 The proposal uses as a point of reference both Plaza Mexico and Future Fest. The latter was organized as a rally, march, and arts festival recognizing the 25th anniversary of the uprisings; see South LA is the Future, "Future Fest," accessed April 15, 2017, <http://southlaisthefuture.com/events/>.
- 52 For a brief history and inventory of businesses that were destroyed by arson in 1992, see "After the Riots: A Dream up in Smoke," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1992, [http://articles.latimes.com/1992-05-22/news/mn-315\\_1\\_financial-status](http://articles.latimes.com/1992-05-22/news/mn-315_1_financial-status). See also Mark Platte, "Merchants in South LA Ponder Future," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1992, OCA3.
- 53 See Wolch et al., "Parks and Park Funding in Los Angeles," (see n. 24). As of 2007, in South Los Angeles there are 1.2 acres of public green space per 1000 residents versus West Los Angeles, where there are 70.1 acres of public green space per 1000 residents. See Park et al., *South Los Angeles Health Equity Scorecard*, 58 (see n. 34).
- 54 Ash Amin, "Ethnicity and the Multicultural City," *Report for the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions and the ESRC Cities Initiative* (January 2002).
- 55 Elizabeth Timme makes similar claims in her description of the Frogtown (Los Angeles) community process where participants in meetings insisted on maintaining the status quo even though that ultimately hurt them in the long run. She states: "the community members in the neighborhoods where we work struggle to speak a shared language with designers, planners, and developers because they have not had the benefit of learning the ramifications of contextual issues and sustainable practices. Without an education in the potential of alternatives, a layperson will most often default into proposing the contextual and propagating the known." "Community," in *Tabula Plena: Forms of Urban Preservation*, ed. Bryony Roberts (Oslo: Lars Muller, 2016), 49. My own writings on Lawrence Halprin's Take Part Process argue that though the community workshops might exhibit what some would call the manipulation or engineering of participant responses, their main strength was the process of progressively shaping environmental values across diverse constituents. See Alison B. Hirsch, *City Choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in Urban Renewal America* (Minneapolis,

MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); and Alison B. Hirsch, "Facilitation and/or Manipulation? Lawrence Halprin and 'Taking Part,'" *Landscape Journal* 31, n. 1–2 (Winter 2012): 119–36.

- 56 See Max Page, *Why Preservation Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).
- 57 Ibid.