

FREEWAY CITY: FROM THEATRE OF CONFLICT TO PUBLIC DOMAIN

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View from the Road

“Pedal to the metal,” throttling down the superhighway at 120 kilometers per hour, we can still feel the City’s motions beyond its inner loops, but once in the domain of the subdivision, stillness rules. What happened to the geography of the City in Suburbia? Did the ancient striations of street, block and plaza just disappear? Were they abandoned for another alphabet? City versus Suburb: a simple dichotomy. Yet mobility forcibly unites this duality—a generalized mobility that seems to have replaced labor as the fundamental anthropological unit of the metropolis. It is time to rethink.

In the realm of freeway speed, the visual agency of the flaneur walking down the avenue is rapidly rendered defunct and replaced by the distracted peripheral view of the motorized subject. The suburban city seen in this way emerges in more or less coherent chunks, jerrybuilt in the mind of the speeding subject. Left behind are the familiar boulevards, piazzas and perimeter blocks of the City. The new geography is an alphabet city that occasionally makes sentences, stories and even epics. Its construction is motivated by the moving subject’s use of pattern recognition to build fictions or virtualities by clusters of physical and atmospheric bearings.

Megashapes

Scanning the rapidly approaching world through the windscreen of a moving car, a driver senses the possibility of a new visibility a field of emergent, unexpected Megashapes that are newly apprehensible but only at vastly different scales of motion. We can expect these Megashapes, despite their fleeting emergence, to be quite complex. Constructed over time, a Megashape is not a traditional architectural object, solidly set in space, place and time, but a type of fiction fashioned by the apprehending subject. On the one hand, we have in Houston the Zoohemic Canopy, constituted of myriad trees of varying species, size and maturity, and on the other, we have Downtown, formed by a tight cluster of skyscrapers. Both shapes rely on repetition, the former a repetition of many small elements (trees) and the latter a repetition of a fairly small number of similar large elements (high-rise buildings). Though these two Megashapes seem different, both are apprehended and appreciated through shifts and distortions of scale and speed during repeated encounters.

When approached by car, Downtown perceived as one coherent shape relies less on speed than on distance, after which this perception is underpinned from inside by actual repeated visits from the viewpoint of both driver and pedestrian. The result is a complex object, with its own shape, grammar, ecology and atmosphere.

The Zoohemic Canopy demands a special kind of attentiveness since it operates on the periphery in the everyday encounter. Once focused on, however, trees “get counted,” and individuals form with time and repetition a zoohemic appreciation—even pedestrians get a sense of the urban forest. The Canopy, moreover, is understood from within—from inside the “field room” constructed between the ground and the underside of the canopy—rather than from a realization of the whole. Here the

Megashape is truly imagined, built in the mind of the observer and confirmed only once he or she flies in over the vast city. There seem, then, to be at least two readings of any Megashape: one from the inside, leading to an appreciation of the algorithm of the shape (of its *taxis*, to borrow from the Classical vocabulary), and one from the outside, leading to an understanding of the whole—its *figure*. In the end, all Megashapes are forever in the making, leaving the old City in its manifest presence behind in favor of a semi-private conception that is as much software as hardware.

Stillness & Speed: The Freeway City

Crudely and simplistically put, the freeway city is produced by combining two root components, the freeway and the subdivision (an assembly of single-family houses set in rows along winding streets), then adding a series of other root components: shopping centers, schools, churches, etc. The freeway with its complex history, ranging from Fordism to the Highway Acts, interspersed with the histories of asphalt, rubber, and gasoline, is as fascinating as it is crucial for a thorough understanding of the power and determination underlying the creation of a city like Houston. The freeway's umbilical connection to the bucolic subdivision with its peculiar stillness is additionally and equally important in an understanding of the freeway city. Time and space here do not allow me to cover this vast ground. I will instead use examples to make shortcuts, allowing me to reach my conclusions while hinting at the panoramic context of both speed and stillness in the vast suburban city.

Speedzone

A jump cut away from the stillness in the adjacent subdivision, action and speed pick up. The passage from stillness to speed is smoothed by a zone lying somewhere obscurely between the two. Still made up of housing, but denser and with an occasional commercial building, this buffer zone anticipates the speedzone: The traffic is heavier, the speed is increased, and the real estate market is softer, more fluid. The pace of change, imperceptible in the subdivision, is here visible, if not yet striking. The canopy of trees thins out, streets stop their meandering, street humps attempt to slow the increased traffic and speed, and building density increases along with activity. We are at the edge of the speedzone.

The commercial swelling of an avenue like Kirby in Houston, a prominent strip/thoroughfare going north-south perpendicular to a major freeway (Hwy 59), is typical of the tributaries comprising the feeder systems around the freeway network. Like a meal that causes a python to bulge, the internal pressure of the speedzone gently impinges on the adjacent subdivisions and, in the case of Kirby, pushes deeper into the suburban fabric. Since there is no zoning in Houston, buffers seem to emerge naturally. Precisely how this occurs is buried in real estate history, yet the transition zone appears natural (compared to planned areas that give the impression of being hard-lined one against the other). But there are hidden constraints: In the transition zone, the speedzone's development freedom slowly morphs into a development constraint imposed by deed restrictions in the adjacent subdivision. The view changes accordingly—from the cinematic to the photographic, from movement to stasis. This movement from flux to fixity reflects the pragmatics of this highly volatile corridor of activity. Fused yet separated, both firmness (the deed-restricted subdivisions) and flexibility (along the speedzone) live comfortably together. There is a great lesson to be learned from the elasticity of this operation.

Ebb & Flow

It may be that only after a catastrophic event do a city's internal connections become apparent; behind an obscure cacophony of actions lie vital mechanisms that, when interfered with, can halt the entire enterprise. However, while chugging along in its everyday ways, the City shows virtually no evidence of these underlying mechanisms. In fact, when we look closer at our Megashape, only tiny events appear—thousands of simultaneous but independent actions in the ebb and flow of bodies (humans and vehicles) and artifacts (from soap to hamburgers). All seem to be totally disconnected from each other, each action on its own errand, each event oblivious to any other. Much like the characters in a Samuel Beckett novel (such as *Watt* of 1953), our Megashape's actors (and their paraphernalia) seem haplessly thrown to chance and irrationality. Yet because of common physical limitations and jurisdictional grounds, manifest in the particulars of the street and plot system and in social habits and mores, our actors are all functionally similar. Complex nested networks of actors, connected by friendships, work habits and chance, build a rich mix of activity. As we look closer, the complexity increases: Next to the laundry, a small Thai restaurant produces astonishingly different behaviors, attitudes, smells, gestures and sounds. In unison hundreds of tiny uses and associated events combine virtually in the observer's mind to form a symphony of sights, sounds and smells that no plan could duplicate. Simultaneously it is also clear that all these micro activities are purposeful, determined and supported by myriad regimes, from financial institutions to know-how, deliveries, service mechanisms, habits and desires. The peculiar characteristics of a particular Megashape emerge from the multitude of highly diversified human events that take place within it. A dense *stim of stims*¹ happens in a simultaneous and largely frictionless process, aside from tiny hesitations in entryways and at intersections. This lack of serious friction can itself be seen as an expression of internal dispersion—of just enough space or leeway (and parking) to go about your business. (This type of natural proxemics or spacing was expressed by E.T. Hall in the image of a flock of birds resting equidistantly on a telephone line.) It is the density of the collective *stims* that is of particular import. Only in highly concentrated Megashapes such as Downtown, The Galleria and the Texas Medical Center is the density roughly equal. However, here is also where the similarity ends. In all three settings, behaviors and actions are unified into specific families of activity: business, shopping and health, respectively. Along Kirby it is the divergence of events and behaviors, thoughts and speech acts that is the norm.

Enterprise Zone

Like a toppled Tower of Babel, thousands of tongues are wagged in the speedzone (not only in different languages but also with totally different intentions). Superficially these observable scenes may appear quaint and charming, much like those in a small European city, but behind them hover the forces of democracy and equal opportunity. Here in the nooks and crannies of this visually discombobulated microcosm, careers are made, enterprises started, bodies trimmed, stomachs satisfied, risks taken, affairs consummated, business transactions conducted, liens delivered, tax returns prepared, apartments cleaned, high-fives exchanged, coffees bought and imbibed, children taught to read, hair cut, nails polished, cars washed, shoes mended, art sold, books signed, clothes fitted, TVs tuned, loud music played, beer drunk, wine tasted, barbecue slow-cooked and smoked, cars valet-parked, wallets misplaced, petty crimes attempted, parking tickets given, umbrellas opened, winks exchanged, kisses thrown, cell phone messages delivered, cell phone calls taken and barbells hoisted. The speedzone is its own distinct ecology.

¹ In my book *After The City*, I defined *stim* (as in stimulation) as an event and *dross* as the momentary or permanent absence of activity, both in contradistinction to the 24/7 activity of the traditional City.

Feeder Zone

Downriver from the elastic tributary, things are changing. Turning from Kirby onto the feeder road parallel to the freeway, we enter the franchise corridor. Here another calcification is taking place: the relentless repetition of the national and global players of commerce. Like Muzak, the same tune repeats over and over in an endless loop. The speed picks up as the search grows easier because the signs are larger, brighter and more conspicuous. The feeder is a transmogrification of the strip, now slung like an elongated saddlebag between the freeway on-ramps and off-ramps. Here is where the big fish school. Here changes on the big board of the New York Stock Exchange are manifested on the ground as mere repercussions. This is the true DNA of the linear city that now, as a seemingly endless speedzone, delivers services along its entire length. The old strip that replaced the old city center has become the new city whose success is entirely dependent on access—location, location, location—a complex algorithm of customer catchment areas, numbers of customers and demographic specifics.

Speeding

Once back on the freeway behind the wheel of a ton of steel, careening along—pedal to the metal—at five miles over the speed limit, we complete our cycle of speed. In fact, the advancement of car technology allows the driver to retain fifty cubic feet of buffered stillness inside his cockpit—imported, as it were, from the subdivision—while outside top speeds prevail.

The lore of speed in American literature, film and video is immense, far more prevalent than photographs of stillness. The freeway car chase (the first instance of reality television was filmed on a Los Angeles freeway) is ingrained in our minds and repeated, hysterically, over and over again in our children's video games (rudely interrupting the stillness of the suburban house). The frustrations of the endless commuter traffic jam going into town, visibly juxtaposed with the heady line of flight in the opposite direction going out of town, comprise the metabolism of freeway life—a type of artificial life, best understood as a computer simulation that even the most sophisticated chaos theory cannot figure out.

Inside the cocoon of freeway life, the dynamics are predictable, yet hard to fathom. “Rarely,” I wrote in the conclusion of *After the City*, “do cars align across the four lanes, and when three cars do, they stay together for a second only: A certain distance is at work, independence and cooperation.² Six to seven cars slide back and forth inside my focus, held apart by mutual and mild aversion, while held together by proxemics: the equation of car size, lane width, freeway geometry, speed, habit, rules and surveillance. A dance, a swarming, motorized prowess....”³ “Sparta,” I went on, “may have had its revenge on the city right here on the superhighway, but the drifters’ apparent directional resolve, leading to a common destiny beyond my vision, is deceiving. They will all disperse.”⁴ Sparta, I have argued, prefigured Suburbia, while Athens was the epitome of the City. Freeway life is of course emblematic of the modern Spartan metropolis. Like the Spartans, the freeway drifters are athletes, some more than others, wielding SUVs instead of swords in their battles to be first. But the freeway

² “Transportation is in a very cool spot between a social system and a physical system,” explains Christopher L. Barrett at Los Alamos National Laboratory. His colleague Steen Rasmussen adds: “The elements [or vehicles widely distributed over space] that interact with one another are like biological systems. They are dynamical hierarchies with controls at many different levels, like organelles, cells, tissues, humans.” See Kenneth R. Howard, “Unjamming Traffic with Computers,” *Scientific American* (October 1997): p. 87.

³ *After the City*, p. 175.

⁴ *After the City*, p. 175.

is also the most blatant expression so far of the unforeseen consequences attendant on the enormous agglomeration of subdivisions and their service components. An ameliorative system, the freeway attempts to cope with, and by the ease and smoothness of the drive to cover up, the ordeal of the daily commute that collectively accumulates to thirty-four years. Simultaneously the freeway is productive as it spearheads further development at the edge of the network. The speedzone is a highly complex suburban artifact replete with its own technologies, its own life, its own hopes and its own desires. Financed and run by the federal government, state government, and private contractors, it is an enterprise on its own independent errand—fueled by an astonishing hubris, amassed over the years by all the various actors of our car culture and in Houston alone evenly spread over thousands of miles of concrete and steel.

Beyond the cinematic speedzone, an archipelago of subdivisions form an enclosing chain of photographic stillness. The contrast is radical. ***The Subdivision*** Splendidly isolated, the single-family house, the most basic root component of Suburbia, sits on its half-acre lot at the end of a cul-de-sac. Gravitationally centered, each pavilion sits closer to the street than to the adjacent backyard. The side yards are always equal and asymptotically diminish as the lots get smaller. Houses must never meet! However slight, the separation is sacred. In fact, it is here in the distance between houses that the American making of distance has truly come to its most reductive conclusion. Dense with history, bias and conviction, this distance is extolled as “light & air,” “sanitary assurance,” “freedom,” “individuality,” “in the midst of nature,” “away from the city in total privacy.” Manifest in the undisturbed surround of the house, this domestic distance is arguably the most important aspect of Suburbia—although there are other contenders. When agglomerated with thirty almost-identical houses, the street must meander and eventually end at a dead stop in order to form another sacred dimension—the domestic *temenos* (a respite from a hostile world) of the typical subdivision. In turn, when hundreds of these subdivisions are agglomerated, then combined with all the other typical root components, we have orchestrated Suburbia.

Although Houston may well be the ultimate freeway city, its true motor is the subdivision. Here, within the confines of the stretched, curved and edge-clipped grid, the battle between the progressive and the pragmatic has been played out. And it is clear who won. Though the progressive era, centered in the early 1950s, saw modernist architects valiantly, if briefly, involved in the struggle for Suburbia, by the late 1950s it was clear that the rapidly expanding middle class had been convinced that a calm, secluded and intensively private life was not best performed behind wide plate glass windows but under the eaves and behind the narrow windows of a Georgian or Tudor. Yet the emphasis on the house—a clear preoccupation of the modernist architects—missed the significance of the subdivision as the bastion and bulwark of middle-class values. Here the house was clearly secondary as long as it kept its distance from the neighbors. This struggle for distance—distance from the City (in the case of Houston, a truly imaginary City), distance from others and finally distance from one’s neighbors—appears in retrospect to have been a true collective obsession. Architects had their own blinding aesthetic obsessions, but the pragmatic land developers saw the desire for distance in their clients’ eyes. The FHA National Housing Act of 1934, which for a brief but crucial moment in Houston’s development history financed a series of instrumental subdivisions, enshrined a particular vision in its requirements.⁵ But by the late fifties, private development with little concern for actual qualities beyond the now well-established stereotypical subdivision had taken

⁵ As part of the New Deal, the FHA (Federal Housing Administration) began a program that would “encourage credit for home financing” and revive the badly underdeveloped building industry. Thus, the FHA insured mortgages up to 90 percent for low-cost houses and 80 percent for houses costing at first up to \$16,000 and later up to \$10,000.

the lead, albeit still backed by federal mortgage instruments such as the GI Bill and two highway financing instruments: the Federal-Aid Housing Act of 1938 and the Federal Highway Act of 1956. The same developers that had originally used architects now subcontracted everything from design to plumbing to the small builders, leaving architects in the dust.

However, the orchestration of all these new Cyclopic subdivisions required local public involvement, particularly in terms of infrastructure: schools, sewage, flood control and road systems. One of the more important forces in setting the standard and pace for public involvement was Ralph Ellifrit, the director of Houston's Department of Planning from the late 1940s to the early 1960s.

His blueprint for "Quiet Neighborhoods," published in 1949, was brilliant in its simplicity and an almost perfect prefiguration of Houston's future. Derived from developments such as Radburn, designed by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright and built in New Jersey in 1929, and the work of the father of the Anglo-Saxon version of Suburbia, the English planner Ebenezer Howard, Ellifrit's concentric diagram delineated "neighborhoods" (read subdivisions) and a combination "school/park," all surrounded by a loose master grid—the super block—that later would feed directly into the freeway net. Although local "stores" in the diagram were less significant than a set of prominent "community centers," it is just a matter of switching the two to reflect the future of Houston's Suburbia.

Ellifrit made the scale change from single house to "suburban urbanism" largely based on the issue of traffic flow and congestion. By the late 1940s, traffic accidents had become "staggering and something had to be done."⁶ Ellifrit discovered shrewdly, as did his favorite developers, that when it comes to urbanism, the coalition between public and private interests is fundamental. Thus, the profitable union between infrastructure and subdivision was literally cemented, a relationship that with the assistance of federal highway dollars secured the financial success of Suburbia.

What Ellifrit understandably missed was both the enormous ensuing population growth and the subsequent proliferation of services in what he called the "central business" area in his diagram—what my colleague Albert Pope has elaborated on at length under the rubric of the Polynuclear City in his book *Ladders* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1996). Ellifrit would have benefited from some of the diagrams developed by the German regional scientist Walter Christaller explaining the growth and development of towns in southern Germany. Christaller took the original town's basic diagram as a subcomponent of a series of interlocked concentric diagrams, all pulling at each other until they no longer formed the static diagrams of the past but an ever-changing and dynamic field whose outlines we can barely discern, much less control or guide.

The most striking feature of Ellifrit's diagram was its simplicity. As a blueprint for action, its message was clear: All a subdivision needed was an embedded "school" doubling as a park, a connection to the intra-subdivision grid with its supportive facilities of "shops" and "community centers," and subsequent connections via an extended concentric and radial system of roads to the "central business" area. But once this diagram was taken literally, which it was especially after the late 1950s, the astounding barrenness and crude reduction of the design became apparent. Whatever the City had to offer had been conveniently forgotten, all for the sake of distance, privacy and isolation. Suburbia, much like a cartoon, had become the City Redux.

⁶ Quoted in Ben Koush, "Houston Lives the Life: Modern Houses in the Suburbs, 1952-1962", unpublished master thesis, Rice School of Architecture, 2003. pp. 29-31

The stage for the future of the vast suburban city was set. Land planners and builders of infrastructure who concentrated their efforts around the subdivision had displaced architects and their myopic obsession with the house and its style. As we shall see, even when architects finally rediscovered the neighborhood, they still missed out because they underestimated the importance of American distance.

Military Missions: The Suburb-City Dichotomy

Umbilically connected, Suburbia is the City's offspring, though less its progeny than its bad conscience. An extrusion and a radical reduction, Suburbia finds its genealogy obscured by the fact that the City was unable to deal with the most powerful component of its citizenry: the middle-class family. This inability to cope left both City and Suburb lacking. Once "desubjugated" and reconnected, however, the genealogical bonds with the City become apparent and the suburban power-lines come to light.

Rereading, rethinking and acting upon the old dichotomy as a single sprawling body will require a new vocabulary, new tools (some of which have been explored in the text above) and new ways of governing—a large order as well as a great and necessary project.

Suburbia as a crude extrusion of the City not only lost its progenitor's physical characteristics, but also gained a new relationship with nature, one peculiarly contradicted in the commodification of land that is seemingly essential to all enterprise in the emerging suburban city. Nevertheless, the loss of the pedestrian world was presumably greatly compensated for by the new access to nature. But before we return to some of the philosophical issues surrounding the suburban project, let me examine the way it was constructed.

Military Missions and Collateral Damage

It may be that a combination of Fordism/Taylorism and the exploits of General Dwight Eisenhower (the highway president) set the pace and rationale for the construction of the suburban city. The similarity between the internal precision and logic of a military mission (or of the mass production of cars and gadgets) with its ignored or unforeseen collateral damage and that of suburban production is striking. A close study of any highway project, subdivision or shopping center construction reveals the same internal logic and total disregard for the environmental impact, ranging from traffic congestion to pollution. The huge agglomeration of autonomous pieces that results is rapidly "constructing" a *virulent ecology* that has infiltrated the "life styles" of the suburban field much like a miasma. Yet there is no agency truly devoted to the amelioration of all these unforeseen side effects. Instead each subcomponent of the virulent ecology is dealt with erratically, generally with poor results. Yet it is also clear that public opinion, as revealed in yearly surveys, is becoming increasingly concerned with pollution and (in the case of Houston) flooding—while the military-like missions continue unabated and Houston remains the world's largest Monopoly Game, played for real every day.

Entirely at the mercy of the roving market system, the entire suburban expanse appears in a military light as a *theatre of conflicts*—albeit minor conflicts—in a war by other means. The modern market system led by profit-seeking cannot be expected to care for any form of collateral damage; that is simply not in the sights of the entrepreneur. Encouraged by an extremely weak public sector that often serves as the facilitator of the entrepreneurial project, the accumulated side effects of myriad independent missions are pointing us towards catastrophe. Leapfrogging, or the customary practice of seeking land opportunities some distance from the most recent development (where prices are

lower), has greatly expanded the suburban city, leaving huge gaps that have increased commuting distances and created an archipelago of *dross* space. A further result of this stretched and broken fabric of development is the destruction of ecological coherence, striating abandoned farmland into an accidental domain that is still owned by private interests and therefore only temporarily out of commission, simply waiting for the next development wave. The public sector, unused to thinking and operating in the interest of the public good, remains idle, missing the opportunity to develop the accidental domain into park systems or as a land bank. There is a peculiar symmetry between the entrepreneurial domain and the public sector that would make Joseph Schumpeter proud: both domains are driven by maximization—of profits and votes, respectively.

Suburban Evolution: Gladstone vs. Schumpeter

Despite all the concerns raised above, the immense suburban project is clearly a success from many points of view, ranging from economics to community. However, it is also clear that the current model of development, i.e., a process entirely in the hands of the market system, will soon reach a saturation point when the side effects will begin to threaten the initial achievements. Seen as an evolutionary function, the suburban project now has to develop new tools; indeed it has to reorient its obsession with growth towards the wider and loftier goal of the public good.

David Marquand, the English political scientist, exquisitely dissects the decaying corpse of the public good in the United Kingdom in his book *Decline of the Public* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2004), setting the stage for the struggle to find a better future for the American suburb. For simplicity's sake, while relying on Marquand's work, I see two potential paths: one to follow Schumpeter's propositions and establish *incentives* for developers to deal with the side effects of development, and the other to follow the cumbersome and elaborate construction of a public domain exemplified by William E. Gladstone's work in Britain, a domain that serves as a neutral ground guided by professionals in close contact with the citizenry. I am inclined towards the latter path for reasons that will be made clear.

Marquand outlines three “interconnected propositions” for a well-functioning public domain. He writes, and I paraphrase:

- The public domain has its own distinctive culture and decision-making rules.
- The public domain is both priceless and precarious—a gift of history that is always at risk.
- An aggressive interventionist state, such as the modern British one, can systematically enfeeble the institutions and practices that nurture the public domain.

The public domain thus constructed over time serves as a buffer between the market and the public sector. But it is an ephemeral domain: rather than a distinct sector with clear boundaries, it is a dimension of social life. Marquand elaborates:

[The public domain cuts across] *sectorial boundaries: as a set of activities, which can be (and historically have been) carried out by private individuals, private charities and even private firms as well as public agencies. It is symbiotically linked to the notion of public interests; central to it are the values of citizenship, equity and service. In it goods are distributed on the basis of need and not of personal ties or access to economic resources. It is a space, protected from the adjacent market and private domains, where strangers encounter each other as equal partners in the common life of*

*society—a space for forms of human flourishing which cannot be bought in the market-place or found in the tight-knit community of the clan or the family of intimates.*⁷

As a space, the public domain defined here shares characteristics with the Megashape in that its physical dimensions, such as a new public park, a cleaned-up river or a new bike path, are instigated and held in place by the virtual doings of an interested citizenry who, in ongoing interactions and through many agencies, defend the public interest. Thus the proposition for a public ecology is set against the virulent one now emergent in the American suburb. Although American philanthropy is a well-established public good, the concern for the negative side effects of development and modern agriculture is relatively recent, and unlike in Britain, it never had a heyday. This in turn poses the question: How does one start the construction of a public domain?

When the pollution becomes visible both in the air and in the health statistics, when the water is fouled by industrial waste, and when traffic congestion and commuting time become a recurring and nagging problem, today's suburban agencies, from the market to the public sector, seem unable (and unwilling) to cope. Here is where community loyalty is needed, but as Marquand eloquently shows, it "can be forged only in a social realm protected from market power," a power now dominating both surrounding sectors. The project to construct a community loyalty in which citizens work together as equals entails not only a lengthy process but a complicated one because such loyalty remains highly spontaneous and dispersed among many agencies, where it waits to be formed. Marquand writes:

*As in nineteenth-century Britain, success will depend on a mixture of state intervention, initiatives by charities, NGO's, trade unions, mutuels and other voluntary associations, and action by local authorities, probably with voluntary bodies and local authorities in the lead. Private firms committed to the public interest may contribute as well. Most of all, it will depend on a cultural shift comparable to the shift that Gladstone described in his Nineteenth Century article.*⁸

It is clear that this "cultural shift" lies far outside my expertise. However, I am convinced that without such a shift the vast suburban city, now dominating the way we live in most western-oriented urbanizations, will soon come to a very rude awakening. And solutions to remedy such awakenings will again be some form of military mission operating far beyond the public interest.

One aspect upon which I, as an architect, can reflect comfortably is the issue of professionalism, something that in the suburban world is entirely subsumed under the neo-liberal blanket of market forces. This, argues Marquand, has undermined the trust historically associated with the professional—trust being a fundamental component of the working of the public domain.

The task is to recover the professional trust, not of the client who pays the architect's fee nor of the actual users of a new project, but of those dwellers who live in the *environmental shadow* of the new footprint—the recipients of the hard-to-define public interest. The new architects have to regain aspects of their ancient duty: "the autonomy to exercise their judgment as they see fit" outside the auspices of both profit and power.⁹

⁷ David Marquand, *Decline of the Public* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2004), p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 136..