Introduction

There's a place we all know Where we all love to go Where unity's heart is beating On Thursday nights We discuss our rights At Community Union Meeting.

Let's strengthen the arteries of Unity's heart And all pitch in and do our part. Your suggestions and ideas are worth repeating And the time and the place is Community Union Meeting.

> —Delores Maxwell, untitled poem on the cover of ERAP Newsletter, published by Economic Research and Action Project, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), October 5, 1965

elores Maxwell was not a famous person. The story of her life is not evident from the words she assembled into poetry in October of 1965, but her call to a particular time and place— Thursday nights at the Community Union-articulates the essential components of both history and action. Her poetics encircle her demand with metaphor, giving "unity" both a heartbeat and arteries in an attempt to make a poem out of it all, but this voice from the grass roots, calling on readers to "all pitch in and do our part," is less about poetry than it is about collective action. This is not to diminish the poet, who is equally unknown as an activist, but to celebrate the fact that an individual who was probably many things in the world perhaps a mother, a worker, a tenant, a daughter, or, to borrow a term from feminist scholar Karen Brodkin Sacks, a "center woman," whose social networks constituted a rich political life—took to heart the task of solving the problems in her city, and understood the importance of this particular time and place in doing so. She tells her readers not only to show up, but also to speak. She demands not only that they show up once, but also that they show up each week. On Thursday nights they discussed their rights at the community union meeting; that much we know.

It was nothing new in the summer of 1965 for people in a neighborhood to gather, share ideas, and plan campaigns for better streets, schools, and housing, but there was new faith and more widespread acceptance in the notion, at that particular time, that people like Maxwell and her neighbors had "suggestions and ideas worth repeating." The previous summer, Congress had signed into law the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, calling for the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor in the project of eradicating poverty. This phrase prompted little debate in Congress, tucked away as it was in one clause of one section of the legislation. But in the years to follow, as community groups seized on that notion in their struggle for a new kind of urban democracy, and civil rights, community control, and black power activists demanded real structural changes to have more say in the physical, social, and economic landscape of their cities, a heated debate emerged. It took the form of legislation, policy, and scholarship, but also the form of petitions, marches, mass meetings, protests, and community and tenant unions like the one that Delores Maxwell attended each Thursday night on Chicago's South Side.

By 1965, when Maxwell penned her poem, cities large and small—from Chicago to New Haven, Connecticut—were rocked at the grass roots by the convergence of three forces: the idea and the practice of citizen participation, the rising tide of social movements, and massive reconfigurations of urban space. As city officials and national policy makers came face-to-face with the repercussions of vague mandates for citizen involvement, and community leaders grasped at the opportunity for a new kind of urban democracy, civil rights activists stormed the South registering black voters, culminating in the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. That year, activists organized the first antiwar teach-in at the University of Michigan following the deployment of more than 3,500 combat troops to Vietnam. Shortly before Maxwell called on her neighbors to discuss their rights on Thursday nights, riots erupted in the Watts section of Los Angeles, ushering in the second round of an annual cycle of summer violence that had started in Harlem the previous year.

As the weather turned hot, newspaper maps accompanying images of broken glass and crowded streets delineated the sections of cities that were "volatile," "dangerous," "poor," and "black." But contrary to the chaotic images of these urban blocks, often outlined in dark lines and shaded and labeled on front-page, two-tone riot maps, these were also the places where community unions met, where citizens gathered to discuss their rights, and where some of the most promising grassroots models for urban renewal and the War on Poverty were constructed door-to-door, enacted on community playgrounds, and pushed by organized neighborhoods as an alternative to the city's model. Such alternative notions of what the "model city" should be

are visible only in portraits drawn from street level, and legible only in accounts written from the grass roots.

What emerges from such an account is the significance of particular spaces—like the community union office—in mounting resistance movements, and how changes in the urban landscape circumscribe the possibility for organized dissent. Through an analysis of the different proposals and visions for both urban forms and modes of citizen participation during a time of "urban crisis," "urban management," and movements for social change, this story of one model city asserts the importance of particular everyday places and the viability of alternative models for revitalizing the city. The story of these particular times and places in New Haven, Connecticut, from the mid-1950s through the early 1970s reveals the extent to which the physical transformation of the city affects social movements, and organized movements can affect the physical shape of the city.

All of the sites excavated here came to serve as catalysts for the local fronts of national social movements for civil rights, black power, women's liberation, welfare rights, and draft resistance, to name a few. A rich and fascinating body of scholarship on these movements-including Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward's Poor People's Movements (1977), Robert Fisher's Let the People Decide (1984), and, more recently, David S. Meyer's Politics and Protest (2006)—offers useful histories and analyses of movement strategies and their relationships to national politics. However, they tend to understand movements in relative isolation from one another, and in relation to the national rather than the local, their histories and consciousness rarely intersecting, and judgments of success or failure continent on national political consequences. What this look at the "movement culture" of one small city reveals is that, in these spaces of resistance, different movements for change all manifested themselves locally somewhat outside their organizational structures. Individuals and families came together to push for alternative visions of how the city (if not the country or the world) should be economically, socially, and spatially organized.

Today the important questions raised by this historical moment remain not only relevant, but essential, as institutions expand into poor neighborhoods and postindustrial spaces, as the Supreme Court expands the power of eminent domain, while big boxes remake the suburban landscape and Wal-Mart elbows its way into resistant communities. These questions take on added importance as the working poor—largely unprotected by union contracts and increasingly concentrated in low-wage service-sector jobs, just as they are concentrated in low-rent, under-resourced neighborhoods—struggle to build collective power while carving out a sustainable life in cities and towns that were not necessarily designed with their needs in mind. What role do people have in shaping the physical spaces in which they live? Who controls the plan and vision for a particular place? What happens when the people who work and live in that place challenge those plans and visions?

How do they overcome the obstacles to organizing their communities around their own alternative plans—obstacles such as a lack of neighborhood cohesiveness, lack of financial resources, the overworked and overwhelming nature of daily life for the poor and working class, not to mention the complexity of urban development, and the difficulty in seeing and explaining how the segmented pieces of a particular "master plan" fit together?

The remapping, reimagining, and redesigning of the urban landscape inevitably call attention to the meanings of different spaces. The sites examined here include an intersection in the heart of a black community slated for redevelopment, where, in 1961, hundreds sat down in the middle of the street to protest the city's plans. They include a neighborhood union office, a children's park, a movement-run coffee shop, and a half-mile stretch of a downtown street that was slated for demolition to build a 5,000-car parking garage. They also include a downtown residency motel where residents refused to move out, even as the city pushed ahead with its plans for a new modern city center.

Each of these sites was a space of organized resistance in its own way, each with a particular geographical, political, and cultural significance. None holds great historical weight and most have since disappeared, but each was-for a time-a collective space given meaning through particular actions and ideas, and a point of resistance to plans to redesign the city around highways, shopping centers, and parking garages. As spatial, streetlevel anchors for organized resistance, each facilitated the convergence of time and place—of a "community union" in one form or another—and each was both predicated on and a catalyst for collective action. Recounting this story of how "movement people" in New Haven, Connecticut, staked a claim on physical, political, and cultural spaces forces a reimagining of the role of space—both physical and cultural—in our understanding of social movements in the postwar period, during which an increasingly suburbanized geography and a repeatedly "scattered" and "displaced" poor population posed a significant challenge to the potential for all kinds of collective action. The size, scope, complexity, and ambition of New Haven's urban renewal scheme focused the city's civil rights movement on the fight for affordable housing and galvanized antiwar activists around a fight against a particularly militarized domestic colonialism. Early studies of the city's predominantly black Hill neighborhood by city agencies were referred to in internal communications as "Hill Reconnaissance." Weapons of a war in Southeast Asia were tested along Columbus Avenue in that neighborhood as police and National Guardsmen in riot gear barricaded the streets.

At the level of the street—with its police barricades, neighborhood parks, and endangered storefronts—history and geography are intricately linked. Street names can articulate a timeline, as do Goffe Street and Whalley and Dixwell avenues, which converge at the edge of Yale University's campus, now a sort of unofficial gateway to the Dixwell neighborhood, but tied to a

moment in the distant past, when each of those streets was named after one of the three judges who fled England in 1661 after signing the death warrant of King Charles II. Cemeteries in the center of town mark what once were its edges, the arrangement and ethnicity of names etched in stone calling out past inhabitants. Other historical geographies have a more persistent legacy, such as the red lines drawn by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation on insurance maps of hundreds of American cities in 1935. The practice, which came to be known as "redlining," designated predominantly black neighborhoods as high risk for mortgage lenders, exacerbating existing racial segregation and concretizing the links connecting race, place, and poverty. But other histories have a more precarious connection to the landscape, anchored as they are to the lives and spaces of people who lack wealth and power. Whereas a passionate preservationist lobby is able to save some "historic places" and green and wooded sanctuaries from the wrecking ball or the bulldozer, the everyday places, homes, and histories of poor and working people are less likely to make headlines when they are under threat. Indeed, these blocks, acres, or square feet are worth more money as something else than they are as everyday places, homes, and histories, but so is the land that is now New York City's Central Park. Clearly, the predominant corporate logic of urban development is not completely impervious to the human spirit.

Writing about New York City in the 1980s, Neil Smith asserted that gentrification "scrub[s] the city clean of its working class history and geography." His theory of the "revanchist" city shows how a middle-class, corporate, and private interest attack on the poor and working class replaces the social and geographic history of the city with a "mythical past." Urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 1960s—much studied and roundly condemned—had a similar aim, but rather than replace the social and geographic history with a "mythical past," they sought to replace it with a mythical future. Highways, parking garages, convention centers, and luxury hotels would eradicate slums, eliminate poverty, and save the city from the rise of the suburb.

This mythical future formed the basis of "master plans" for urban centers, the perceived needs and possibilities for which were reinforced by postwar corporate and suburban ideals, Watts-era anxieties about urban unrest, and Vietnam-era technologies for militarized control of the urban poor. In New Haven, residents suddenly found themselves living in what the city's Redevelopment Agency (RA) called the "New New Haven." This was a construction of the agency's publicity arm, and figment of that mythical future, in which an increasingly divided, impoverished, and decaying urban center would rise up out of "urban crisis" on the shoulders of a generation of experts, dressed in new high-speed roadways and thousands of parking spaces. As New Haven basked in the title of "model city," many residents organized and mobilized not so much to tear down the claim of that title as to revise the meaning of that model. The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan

Development Act of 1966 (better known as the Model Cities program), a centralization and redesign of Johnson's antipoverty programs, intended to show—through concentrations of funding in "demonstration areas"—what effect a coordinated attack on urban problems could have on struggling cities. The legislation inadvertently called the question of what a city should demonstrate, and how, and to what extent the demonstrations of its inhabitants could shape its form and its content.

The Interstate and the Demonstration City: Master Planning and Maximum Feasible Participation

A master plan [is] . . . a flexible set of guidelines for a city's growth, in which patterns and trends of work, housing, transportation and population, and location of services and facilities for the city's functions and requirements are figured in broad but carefully calculated predictions of future needs.

—Ada Louise Huxtable, New York Times architectural critic, New York Times, July 13, 1964, p. 24

This story unfolds between 1954, when a thirty-seven-year-old New Haven newspaperman, Richard C. Lee, narrowly won the city's forty-fourth mayoral race on his third attempt, and 1970, when he ended his eight-term reign. This story isn't about Mayor Lee (although many have written extensively on that topic).3 Nonetheless, his rise to national prominence in what became known as the nation's first model city, and his slow descent following the defeat of his master plan for a complex urban highway network, parking garage hub, and shopping mecca, offer artificial bookends to a story that continues, in many respects, into the present day. When Lee took office, a new interstate highway, I-95, had just opened, and was the only major artery connecting New Haven to its most prominent neighbors, Boston and New York, where the Central Artery and the Cross Bronx Expressway were, respectively, drawing a mix of excitement and criticism in advance of the traffic.4 The inner-city conditions that would precipitate national debate about an "urban crisis" were just beginning to come into view: across the country, the urban poor crowded into aging structures while the more affluent began moving out to an ever-expanding ring of suburbs.

Mayor Lee took office months before the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, and just as the Army-McCarthy hearings played out on national television, finally beginning the demise of Wisconsin senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist witch hunts. Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower was president and a close ally of big business. His cabinet was famously described in the press as "composed

of eight millionaires and a plumber."⁵ General Motors president Charles Wilson reportedly told a crowd of U.S. senators during the process of his nomination for secretary of defense, "What was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice-versa."⁶

For the purposes of this historical sketch, Wilson's adage more or less summed up the priorities of the Eisenhower presidency. The country was embarking on an era in many ways defined by and catering to the automobile industry. In 1956, Eisenhower sailed into his second term with the signing of the Federal Highway Act, which called for a \$25 billion highway-building project, enabling the construction of 40,000 miles of interstate highways over the next ten years. That was going to be "good for General Motors." It was also going to be good for Mayor Richard C. Lee, who envisioned the impending highway network not only as New Haven's ticket to modernity and efficiency, and its point of access to new pockets of suburban affluence, but also as the solution to urban decline—the remedy for the "slum cancer" that ate away at the city's center. Slums could be replaced by highways and highway access ramps. Federal highway funds could foot the bill. Urban life could be revitalized by suburban shoppers and culture seekers who could come in their cars on new, convenient high-speed roadways.

Faced with both decaying inner cities and a burgeoning national highway system, postwar policy makers and city governments resorted to the bulldozer, clearing slums to build highways, highway ramps, and the parking lots and shopping centers that this new network both demanded and facilitated. These included the Oak Street Connector, which replaced New Haven's densest "slum neighborhood," Boston's Central Artery, which eliminated densely populated communities in the middle of the city, and the Cross Bronx Expressway, which necessitated extensive demolition in the South Bronx. As massive displacements of the urban poor bared the human cost of the city's problems, Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty" attempted to address complex social needs (jobs, training, education, public health) through a more participatory process. Organized groups of the urban poor took to heart vague provisions for "citizen participation" and demanded more decision-making power in antipoverty programs, as they did in New Haven's Hill neighborhood in the late 1960s.

Meanwhile, mayors across the country began to voice their concerns, complaints, and outright protests about federal money flowing directly into the hands of community organizations. Federal aid that at one time was funneled through city hall no longer necessarily took that route. By the summer of 1964, waves of looting and violence were called "race riots" in the press and on the streets, a classification that in some cases concealed the realities on the ground, and on a national level challenged strategies both for policing and for the administration of existing poverty programs. The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 responded to these fears and challenges, scaling back expectations for citizen

involvement and placing more control back in the hands of city administrators, while attempting to develop a more comprehensive approach to "urban management." By this time, urban programs faced two obstacles: a war in Southeast Asia siphoned off sorely needed funding, and the Nixon administration's policies and priorities were friendly to neither the poor nor the cities in which they lived.

Although the city of the 1960s is often characterized by the riots, poverty, and crime that constituted an urban crisis, it was also a time of urban redefinition during which both the landscape and the nature of city spaces were up for grabs. Urban renewal's bulldozers leveled many streets into a blank canvas, citizen participation requirements raised questions about the decision-making structures, and the Model Cities program offered the opportunity (taken to differing degrees by different groups) to question the nature of "models," their replication and design, and the notion of "urban management" in a time of war, at home and abroad. Whereas national policy makers saw this moment as an opportunity to devise more comprehensive methods of designing, controlling, and solving the problems of the city, at the grassroots level the moment raised questions about the power of working people to control the social and physical landscape of their own cities. For many, the words of a Los Angeles radio disc jockey—"Burn, baby, burn"—captured the inner city of the mid- to late-1960s, but another phrase emerging from the New Left around the same time—"Let the people decide"—captured the time's more important, if less photogenic, imperative.

Demands from the New Left and from organized communities of the poor to let the people decide were somewhat incongruous with the dominant cultural and political norms. Thick bureaucracies staffed with teams of collegeeducated "experts" tinkered with policies and plans under the influence of an expanding and evolving corporate ethos. The political and legislative impulse in response to a burgeoning urban crisis was to apply the practices of corporate management to the "management" of cities. Nowhere in the cultural realm was this proposal—this particular urban model—more brilliantly and disturbingly illustrated than in the planning, design, and execution of the 1964 New York World's Fair. The fairgrounds were designed and managed by the country's most famous and infamous urban planner, Robert Moses. According to historian Morris Dickstein, Moses "seemed to take an almost perverse pleasure in plowing through people's homes, even in decimating whole neighborhoods-for their own benefit, of course." As Dickstein notes, by the late 1960s, Moses' methods and ideas were "increasingly under siege. The Fair," he wrote, "would be their last monument, and their Waterloo." The vision that Moses directed for the 1964 fair—his love of highways and garages and his celebration of corporate culture—was written with a heavy hand into the highway ramps, parking lots, and broad demolition strokes of cities like New Haven.

The World's Fair, like a city's master plan, offers a unique window into dominant mass culture and design since it is a self-conscious attempt to articulate and celebrate both, and its architects and boosters usually provided unabashed artistic and verbal gushings about their intentions, allegiances, and imaginations. As a deliberate mantle of its own kind of master plan—one invested in defining cultural norms and celebrating commercial enterprise—the fair was a significant and highly visible site of protest for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and other groups eager to call attention to both the labor exploitation and discriminatory practices of the Fair Corporation and its exhibitors, and the vision of corporate dominance, segregation, and suburbanization it celebrated.

This was a dramatic shift in emphasis from the fair's traditional (albeit problematic) spotlight on world cultures and places. Taking a corporate form and content, Moses and his team insisted that the celebrated space be arranged not only on the structure of the corporation, but literally around the corporations themselves, which laid mammoth architectural "products" on a blank canvas in Queens, New York, just as urban renewal projects unfolded in a disturbingly similar manner in city centers across the country. Absent the intrusion of civil rights protests, the fair would have been a particularly strange projection of mid-1960s America. It celebrated affluence and "free enterprise" in a time and place of severe poverty. It celebrated "peace" and "understanding" in a time of war and fear, and it celebrated a neat, round world crafted of steel-which it called the "Unisphere," suggesting unity and balance—in a society segregated and soon to be shaken by "race riots" in Harlem, Watts, Detroit, Newark, Chicago, and New Haven, to name just a few. But it spoke to one particular take on this moment in time and suggested-commandingly if not deliberately-a certain kind of "model city."

The influence of this model's form (if not its content) was evident in a 1965 memo to President Lyndon Johnson from United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther, who proposed the creation of a task force to consider what he called "The 'World's Fair' of American civic, social production, and design." Taking up the challenge of redefining the urban model, this lifelong adversary of management devised a plan to create "research laboratories for the war against poverty" by establishing "prototype" communities—"full and complete organic neighborhoods" of 50,000 people in six major American cities. Reuther himself was not from the city. He was born in West Virginia in 1907 and moved to Detroit at the age of twenty to work on Henry Ford's assembly line. He rose to prominence in 1937 following a sit-down strike against General Motors in Flint, Michigan, and a violent clash at Ford's Rouge River Plant.8 By the 1960s, he was a powerful voice in the Democratic Party, an outspoken advocate of both civil rights and expanded social programs, and a close advisor to President Johnson. Evaluating the challenges and goals of federal antipoverty initiatives, Reuther asserted that by showing, in detail, "the interrelationship of the home, the school, the social services to the young and old, the cultural, the religious, and the recreational facilities" necessary to redesign the city, the nation could understand more comprehensively what it would take to create what he called "architecturally beautiful and socially meaningful communities."

Reuther's proposal formed the basis for Johnson's 1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, which called for the concentration of resources and programs on compact "demonstration areas" to show the most effective means of solving urban problems. The program originally intended to provide competitive grants for a small number of municipalities to fund coordinated programs for urban renewal, employment, housing, and public health. The act envisioned a sort of "citizen participation filtered through local government" and rejected the direct democracy model of the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act.¹⁰ As demonstrations across the country turned violent, the name "Demonstration Cities" began to strike a sour chord. The less-controversial title "Model Cities program" quickly became more prevalent, perhaps aiding in the bill's passage, "by a cat's whisker," in November of 1966. Charles M. Haar, a member of the president's original task force and author of a book-length study of the program, called the Model Cities program "a realistic response to the shortage of money for new domestic programs" during the Vietnam War. "Experiments, prototypes, and models are fine ways for an administration . . . to economize," explained Haar. 11 But as applications to the program poured into the new office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and as the politicized process of "awarding" Model Cities grants unfolded, it became clear that the program would be anything but economical.

Of 193 original applications received in May of 1966, 112 "demonstration area" grants were awarded in a competition that Haar described as a "variation on the Miss America contest." Every American city with a population of more than 1 million people received a grant, with the exception of Los Angeles, a city still scarred physically and politically by the 1965 riots, whose mayor, Sam Yorty, failed to impress the committee in Washington. New Haven, Connecticut, fell in the category of "mid-range city," and its population placed it among the smallest in that group. Unlike Yorty, Lee's name would be an asset in the political beauty pageant that governed the distribution of "demonstration area" funds, and New Haven would become a "demonstration city" in more than one sense.

By the summer of 1967, New Haven's Model Cities Task Force was finalizing its "Demonstration Cities" proposal, calling for the creation of a computerized Urban Management Information System (UMIS) in partnership with IBM. UMIS would revolutionize the city's policing, planning, and management by streamlining the process of gathering, storing, and accessing information about all of the people in the Hill neighborhood, the city's largest and poorest concentration of African Americans and Puerto Ricans. The

"Model Neighborhood" on which New Haven focused its proposal for computerized surveillance would be the same neighborhood that would capture national headlines with its own civil unrest later that summer, and the same community that would organize at the grass roots to take control of Model Cities funding, calling into question both the form and the content of this particular urban model. By the spring of 1968, when Martin Luther King, Jr., fell to an assassin's bullet in Memphis, prompting an early start to summer unrest in cities across the country, New Haven activists finally won control over Model Cities funds. It was a dramatic local victory eclipsed by national defeat as poor people nationwide scrambled for dwindling resources in a nation increasingly divided by race and class.

That same spring, on fifteen acres of West Potomac Park, between the Reflecting Pool and the foot of the Lincoln Memorial, a different kind of demonstration city took shape. Between May 14 and June 24, 1968, an estimated 3,000 people lived in A-frame tents in what became known as "Resurrection City," the first stage of Dr. King's final civil rights proposal, the Poor People's Movement. The temporary residents of Resurrection City, organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) into several "caravans," traveled from nearby slums, from the hills of Appalachia, from the Deep South, and from cities across the Northeast, Midwest, and Mid-Atlantic to set up a multiracial shantytown of the nation's poor. The campaign would culminate in a mass march, mass arrests, and then a national boycott of the country's most powerful corporations, in response to the failure of antipoverty programs and the exploitations of corporate America.

Ultimately, the Poor People's Movement failed to bring about either racial harmony or massive economic restructuring, but its explicit choice of model—a city built from scratch, populated only by the poor, and formulated around a social movement—offers another take on both the master plan and the urban form. Designed by a professor of architecture and built by its inhabitants, the camp included a city hall, a dining tent, a Poor People's University, a psychiatrist, and a cultural center. Entire families lived, worked, learned, and interacted on those fifteen acres for forty-two days, twenty-eight of which brought pouring rain, turning the "urban landscape" into a muddy swamp. Within Resurrection City, groups segregated themselves racially and geographically, contrary to King's vision of a cross-racial alliance of the poor, but on Solidarity Day, June 19, 1968, the crowed gathered and swelled to 50,000 people for a march on Washington. Speaking before the Solidarity Day crowd, Walter Reuther called on the government to close tax loopholes for rich corporations to fund programs for the urban poor. He called for new national fiscal policies to help the unemployed, raise wages, and lift families out of poverty.¹³

These demands, issued from the muddy town square of a "demonstration area," suggested the shortcomings of the federal Model Cities program that had grown out of Reuther's original proposal. Back in New Haven, the

community fought to shape that model through collective action. It was a fight played out in many forms in cities across the country as poor neighborhoods organized around alternative plans to fight poverty and revitalize their cities. When President Richard Nixon took office in January of 1969, these grassroots struggles were just beginning to gain ground. That ground crumbled in the months that followed, as federal urban programs were reshaped by the Nixon administration's preference for centralized control, its political allegiances to the "silent majority," and its commitment to "law and order" in the management of cities. These federal responses to the urban crisis of the 1960s precluded the more democratic, participatory forms of urban planning and governance that emerged out of community movements. In many cases—as in New Haven—these community-grown alternative plans were ultimately supported by local elected officials compelled by the full force of an organized neighborhood in a politically and socially turbulent time and place.

Contested Spaces in a Model City

New Haven was once a playground for social scientists. For the policy wonks, sociologists, and political scientists of the 1960s and 1970s, this little city was fodder for plentiful scholarship. ¹⁴ Despite its small size and relative obscurity in comparison to its nearest well-known neighbors, New York and Boston, New Haven is home to a prestigious and wealthy university and has been the birthplace of many celebrated innovations that, before too long—like the forty-third president of the United States, who tries hard to hide the fact that he was born in New Haven—became terrible liabilities. These include an urban shopping mall (since gutted and turned into vacant high-rise condominiums), mammoth downtown parking garages that now interrupt the frayed urban fabric, and more recently, urban biotech industrial parks—supposed saviors of a struggling postindustrial economy—that remain vacant and obtrusive in the middle of residential spaces.

In New Haven, the fabulously rich live alongside the terribly poor, and all of the physical symbols of white American affluence and imperialism are within spitting distance of its street-level subjects. It seems that New Haven was to the political scientists of the 1960s and 1970s what Chicago was to the sociologists of the first half of the twentieth century. A large, powerful, prolific research institution in the heart of an impoverished city made for fruitful scholarship. In the case of New Haven, many scholars commented on the extent to which the city was first a guinea pig, and soon after, a "demonstration" for poverty programs and community "involvement." So while Chicago's sociologists of the 1940s saw urban communities as their living laboratory and sought to understand the lives of working people, New Haven's social scientists, prompted by Robert Dahl's *Who Governs* (1961), examined a power struggle, asking over and over again in many different ways, "Who's running this place?"

The range of possible responses to that question, by 1960, seemed limited to politicians, political parties, business leaders, and possibly—in a way that was unique to this small city with an increasingly powerful university—the Yale Corporation, the aptly named governing board of the wealthy nonprofit institution. In the years that followed, organized citizens would throw that question wide open and insist on a new range of grassroots possibilities through a seemingly continuous set of battles over urban spaces and models that unfolded against a backdrop of national political change, large-scale racial reconfigurations, and local and national strategies for urban management and Watts-era policing. For his 1970 book-length study of New Haven, Model City: A Test of American Liberalism; One Town's Efforts to Rebuild Itself, journalist Fred Powledge interviewed customers and eavesdropped on conversations at Lindy's, a local (and now extinct) downtown lunch counter. "What made New Haven exciting was none of these usual [urban] excitements," wrote Powledge, "but the knowledge . . . that New Haven had the talent, the money, the leadership, and the energy—and therefore the potential—to become the Model City." It was this sense that a new and energetic generation of urban "experts" was setting out to "make a new town out of a very old, decayed, dying, or—as some said—already dead one" that captured the national (and at key moments, international) imagination of what a city could be.¹⁶

In June of 1957, the cover of *Time* magazine celebrated "Roadbuilders—on the New Highway Network." At the center of this story, in which old industrial urban centers were being eclipsed by more orderly, engineered, and exclusive spaces off highway exits, was this small city, where a powerful and ambitious young newspaper reporter–turned–mayor was foisting a would-be narrative of urban decline into the national and international spotlight, skillfully recasting it as one of innovation and rebirth. "In five years," Lee told *Time*, "families will be moving into the city instead of out to the suburbs." His predictions proved to be quite inaccurate. Five years later, with a number of ambitious urban renewal projects in varied stages of completion, New Haven's population was in decline.

Once a major manufacturing center for firearms, carriages, corsets, and clocks, New Haven benefited from its position along a densely rail-connected coastline and a string of active ports. Today its distance from either New York or Boston is most commonly measured in car travel time along I-95—about ninety minutes and two hours, respectively. But the small city of just over 120,000 was once an industrial and commercial center in its own right. In the mid- to late nineteenth century, its own Little Italy, Wooster Square, flourished. Immigrants from Ireland and eastern Europe flooded into the Oak Street neighborhood, New Haven's most dense and vibrant immigrant community, where they walked to work in nearby factories, in offices, or at Yale University, just blocks away.

New Haven was originally mapped out in nine squares with a marketplace at the center. In the surrounding squares, the city's most prominent planters set up shop, and the remainder of the city's original 120 families settled in outlying areas. This early settlement was given the Native American name Quinnipiac when the first families arrived in the spring of 1638. Most inhabitants came from other parts of Connecticut until the first wave of immigrants arrived from Ireland in the 1830s. With the Industrial Revolution came the familiar list of immigrant settlers. Between 1839 and 1860, they came from Germany, Italy, and eastern Europe, quadrupling the population to 40,000. It was a walking city until a horse-drawn trolley connected the Italian enclaves of Wooster Square to the Irish and German areas in the Hill, and to Oak Street's Jewish sections shortly after the Civil War. By the 1870s, New Haven became part of a regional network, connected by train to Hartford and New York City. By 1900, the city was home to more than 100,000 people in a handful of increasingly dense and diverse neighborhoods connected by electric and horse-drawn trolleys.¹⁸

This urban fabric flourished to differing degrees—weathering depression, racial and ethnic discord, and the transformation of the city's industrial landscape—until the 1960s, when the growth of the suburbs combined with the flight of industry challenged the city's tax base just as the most recent influx of African Americans from the South showed up in search of the manufacturing jobs that had just disappeared. By then, the city had been effectively dismantled, gutted, and rearranged by a generation of experts, using unprecedented levels of federal and state funding. As New Haven architect and activist Harris Stone explained, "Within a few years, 140 acres of land were totally cleared, thousands of units of housing for low-income families were demolished. Hundreds of small businesses and dozens of dense, varied streets disappeared." 19

Much of this dramatic transformation was accomplished through the completion of Lee's touchstone urban renewal project, the Oak Street Connector, a mile-long stretch of Connecticut's Route 34 in the heart of downtown, charted in Figure Intro.1. The project was an ingenious marriage of highway construction and slum clearance in that it demolished the city's "worst slum" (and most dense and diverse center of population) to make way for four lanes of highway traffic. The connector was intended to eventually extend ten miles to the west but never made it any farther than the dead end that stumped highway watchers at the time of its completion in 1959. Nonetheless, its construction was celebrated then as much as it is reviled now. Images of the downtown in ruins graced the front pages, not as stories of disaster, but as tales of progress and rebirth.

By contrast, plans for a project uncovered nearly a decade later, which called for a six-lane high-speed "inner circumferential loop highway" encircling the downtown area and Yale University, were greeted with outright rage by many community groups. The plan for this "Ring Road," as it came to be known, involved widening some outer downtown local streets, eliminating thousands of low-income residential units and small businesses, and



Figure Intro.1

The Redevelopment Agency charts the elimination of the Oak Street neighborhood with the dotted-line highways drawn on this aerial photograph of downtown New Haven. (New Haven Redevelopment Agency, c. 1955.)

significantly disrupting the daily lives and lived geography of New Haven's poor and low-income families in the Dixwell, Dwight, Hill, and State Street areas. This plan initially also promised significant disruption for the outer edges of Yale University's campus. After a series of very private meetings between Mayor Lee and the university's president, Kingman Brewster, the Ring Road plan was altered such that a small stretch of the road—the part that would have impacted campus—would tunnel underground. Brewster subsequently agreed to endorse the city's plan.

The significance of this loop of highway, for the construction of which the city sought federal funds, was not only the homes and small businesses that would be destroyed by the widening of these local urban streets to sixlane highways, but also the extent to which its construction would literally amputate Dixwell, Dwight, and the Hill from downtown, while insulating Yale from the rest of the city. By 1967, the year that violence erupted in the very neighborhoods that the Ring Road promised to isolate, the people of the Hill, Dixwell, and Dwight, along with residents and small-business owners on State Street, were beginning to see where they figured in the diagrams and scale models displayed at public meetings, and in the local press.

The difference between the Oak Street Connector's completion and the Ring Road's suppression was—on the most superficial level—the difference between the 1950s and the 1960s. The intervening years brought the civil rights, black power, antiwar, and women's liberation movements to a head in the Elm City, and saw the emergence—on a national scale—of racial unrest, coupled with War on Poverty "mandates" for citizen participation that challenged people and their governments to redefine, reshape, or reify the city's existing decision-making processes. But beyond this somewhat clunky and often ill-fitting decade splice, it is important to understand that many of the people moved from Oak Street were also the same people threatened by the constellation of urban renewal plans that would enable the construction of a Ring Road. By the time an activist organization's inside man at the RA leaked the confidential plans to organizers, and subsequently to the press, many of the individuals who showed up to protests, testified at public hearings, and signed petitions had already been moved two, three, or four times to accommodate the city's master plan.

Neighborhoods and Movement Spaces on the Ring Road Map

To ascribe boundaries to particular neighborhoods within a city—or even across municipal lines—is to make a particular argument about social constructions of space, political identities, and local culture. Add to this the passage of time, and the extent to which particular events can alter these boundaries, and the whole project of identifying, naming, and outlining "neighborhoods" starts to seem more like an act of historiography than one of cartography. But scholars do it all the time because people require intelligible units of space to understand a story or an argument. The unit of "neighborhood" is one with which we all tend to be familiar (although increasingly less so), despite the fact that this "unit" might mean entirely different things to any two readers. The boundaries of these units must take into account the social, political, cultural, and in some cases even topographical. The neighborhoods described here have been constructed with a view to 1960. Their boundaries take into account the city's designated "project areas," the spaces of resistance claimed by citizens and organizations opposing renewal, and personal accounts of spatial boundaries. None of these designations is any more authentic or reliable than another. But to simply take the city's official neighborhood boundaries or to rely on presentday boundaries, wards, or census tracts would obscure important elements of the stories and erase crucial connections and relationships.²⁰

The Ring Road is important to this story because, as one of the centerpieces of the city's 1953 master plan, and as a useful and salient symbol of that plan's intention to remake the city in service of the automobile while isolating the poorest people from the city's center, it is also a road that was never built. As such, it constitutes one of history's often overlooked grassroots victories, and suggests disquieting possibilities for what this still-segregated, heavily gentrified, and painstakingly remapped city would have looked like today if the road had been built. Economist Rick Wolff, an activist in the American Independent Movement (AIM), which fought many battles with the Lee administration, Yale University, and New Haven's other corporate powers, imagined that, had the project been completed, the city would be divided in three "stark" areas: a walled hospital and university complex accessed through a "safe, white" corridor down scenic Prospect Street, an isolated "black and Hispanic ghetto" comprised of the Hill, Dixwell, Newhallville, and Westville areas, and—across the Mill River—the "Hispanic ghetto" of Fair Haven. Taking the police as a fourth group, there would be "four distinct armed camps," suggested Wolff, adding, "And I mean armed." And I mean armed."

The city's proposal for an "inner circumferential loop" included the widening and recasting of four distinct urban streets as stretches of or spokes on a high-speed, multilane loop: Dixwell Avenue, a popular strip in the heart of New Haven's oldest African American community adjacent to Yale University; an extension of a state highway, Route 34, through local roads in the Hill and Dwight communities; a downtown stretch of small businesses and residences along State Street; and a section of Trumbull Street that would tunnel under Yale University's campus, as shown in Figure Intro.2.

Each of these pieces was centered on an extensive urban renewal plan and involved the construction of not only widened higher-speed roadways and highway extensions, but also parking garages and city spaces redesigned to meet the needs of the increased automobile traffic that a highway network would bring.

Mapping the Story

The following chapters are organized both chronologically and geographically. They loosely trace both the path of the proposed Ring Road and the footsteps of the city's redevelopment plans, while charting the historical trajectory of national policy in addressing an evolving set of "urban problems" alongside the alternative models and proposals put forward by organized communities.

Oak Street

Chapter 1, "'The Ghosts of Oak Street's Paved Ravines': The Oak Street Project, the Construction of Public Consensus, and the Birth of a Slumless City," chronicles the clearance of the Oak Street neighborhood for the construction of the Oak Street Connector, during which the city developed an extensive

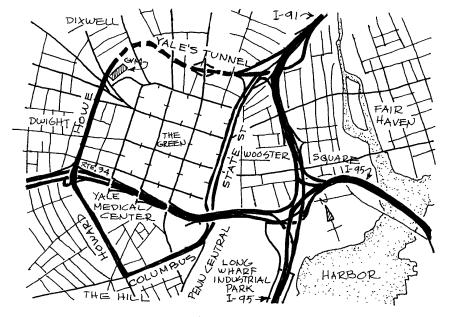


Figure Intro.2

Map of the proposed Ring Road as drawn and published by the Urban Renewal Committee of the American Independent Movement in 1967. (*Published in Harris Stone*, Workbook of an Unsuccessful Architect [*New York: Monthly Review Press*, 1974].)

public relations apparatus to push through urban renewal projects on an unprecedented scale. It examines the city's public hearing strategies and a variety of other public relations mechanisms devised to preclude traces of dissent from both the process and the record of slum clearance and redevelopment.

The Oak Street Connector was a short stretch of highway that would reconfigure the city and the highway system such that two important roadways, I-91 and I-95, would meet in the heart of the city rather than passing through its perimeter, directing highway traffic to a downtown shopping (and parking) oasis. It served another purpose as well in that it would eradicate an existing slum neighborhood. Until the late 1950s, Oak Street was the city's most densely populated area, crowded with open-air markets, momand-pop shops of every variety, restaurants, tenements, and ethnic and cultural organizations. The neighborhood once called Oak Street is now a collection of extinct street names. In its place are a broad and somewhat useless highway connector and a few very large, architecturally prominent, and visually underwhelming parking garages. A group of families who once lived in the area still meet annually to remember it, as if it was a deceased relative in danger of being forgotten. This is a ritual the members of the city's RA could never have imagined as they drew thick lines on their aerial photos of

the Oak Street area to delineate the "project area" and help both their proponents and their detractors visualize where this new modern highway connector would be.

Between the "before" and "after" photos of Oak Street, nearly 900 households and 250 businesses were forced out of the area. Many white households, comprising 56 percent of those displaced, ended up in nearby suburbs and in other New Haven neighborhoods (many of which would also soon face renewal). African Americans, about 40 percent of those displaced from Oak Street, were more likely to be sent by the city to "relocation areas" in other slums, largely in the increasingly overcrowded Hill neighborhood. Others found themselves—at rates far higher than whites—in public housing, such as the large and increasingly "troublesome" Elm Haven project in the Dixwell neighborhood. Land the such as the large and increasingly "troublesome" Elm Haven project in the Dixwell neighborhood.

Dixwell

Chapter 2, "On Dixwell Avenue: Civil Rights and the Street," takes place on Dixwell Avenue, where a controversial sit-out in 1961 brought the local civil rights movement into the fight to resist urban renewal. Lower Dixwell Avenue was the heart of black New Haven, directly bordering not only the Elm Haven housing project, but also the edge of Yale University's campus. This chapter explores the competing visions for this stretch of road, the ways in which the city hoped to facilitate its transformation, and the role of the civil rights movement in resisting a suburban plan for Dixwell.

Dixwell's redevelopment was more disruptive than the much-publicized and celebrated Oak Street project. More than 1,100 households and close to 200 businesses were forcibly relocated, and nearly 30 percent of the housing units in the area were completely demolished.²⁴ The avenue defined the neighborhood, with the housing and small businesses along Dixwell serving as the heart of what was once called "New Haven's Harlem." The neighborhood's official boundaries stretched northward to Munson Street, marking the southern boundary of Newhallville, west to Winchester Street, where Winchester Repeating Arms employed hundreds of Dixwell residents, south to the campus of Yale University and Whalley Avenue, and east to Sherman Avenue, which roughly marked the start of the Beaver Hills neighborhood, one of the areas oldest planned suburban subdivisions.

In 1960, as the city unveiled its intention to make Dixwell its fifth renewal project area, the neighborhood was home to more than 10,000 people, 70 percent of whom were African American. Dixwell had its "old settlers" and its newcomers—the former a long-standing, established, black lower middle class, connected to large prominent churches and organizations such as the NAACP, and the latter largely displacees from Oak Street or new migrants from the South who had arrived just in time to witness the disappearance of the manufacturing jobs they had come to fill. Before the destruction

of the Oak Street neighborhood in the late 1950s, Dixwell was known as home to New Haven's established black community, a mix of poor, workingclass, and lower-middle-class families, and a rich collection of black- and white-owned small businesses. The neighborhood carried many of the social and economic markings of poverty, despite its long-standing network of black churches and institutions. With a median annual family income of less than \$4,000, and total unemployment levels exceeding 10 percent, the neighborhood showed no signs of benefiting from the economic retail boom downtown. The bulk of Dixwell workers were employed in unskilled, lowwage manufacturing jobs, clustered primarily around the metal industries, such as those available at Winchester Repeating Arms, where war production had boosted the demand for labor and attracted new migrants. The neighborhood's pedestrian scale was written into the everyday lives of its working people, and daily routines were entwined with its sidewalks and street corners. Most worked close to home, driving a short distance. More than half walked or took the bus.²⁵ It was a neighborhood challenged by economic inequalities and poor housing conditions, but it was a highly organized community with deep institutional and residential roots, and a vibrant businesses community. This was not the case in the Hill, home to the city's other large concentration of African Americans.

The Hill

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 move to the Hill neighborhood to chart the involvement of first the New Left, and later an increasingly militant grassroots neighborhood movement, in the struggle to win community control of urban planning and antipoverty funds. The Hill, quite counterintuitively, is a peninsula reaching out into Long Island Sound. The "Hill Project Area" as designated by the RA included a five-block section stretching from Congress Avenue to Columbus Avenue, and from Hallock Street to West Street, an area that was home to a mix of ethnic whites, blacks, and Puerto Ricans. The Hill was inhabited primarily by Italian and eastern European immigrants and their children, until the demolition of Oak Street relocated hundreds of African American and Puerto Rican families to the Hill neighborhood in what quickly became a disorganized, overcrowded, and underemployed ghetto.

In 1960, the city declared the neighborhood a "middle ground" area, which meant it was tagged for rehabilitation and conservation. Just a few years later, it was marked for "large-scale demolition." ²⁶ Urban renewal "will increasingly become the crucial issue," wrote Yale sociologist, activist, and soon-to-be congressional candidate Robert Cook in a document assessing the problems facing the Hill in the early 1960s. The housing stock was old, social and institutional networks nearly nonexistent, and the schools crowded and dilapidated. Through community organizing and mass mobi-

lizations for improved housing, schools, and community control, a neighborhood that initially lacked institutional networks of support would become a mobilized "model" in ways the city hadn't expected.

Chapter 3, "The Hill Neighborhood Union and Freedom Summer North: Citizen Participation and Movement Spaces in a 'Project Area,' " starts with a series of rent strikes on Ann Street, through which a door-to-door, New Left-initiated community-organizing campaign was concretized in the formation of the Hill Neighborhood Union (HNU). Across the street from the HNU office, Hallock Street Park was the site of a small neighborhood playground, the result of a hard-fought battle by the youngest members of the HNU. The fight for the park, in which children from the Hill's Freedom School engaged city officials and local War on Poverty officials, claimed an important neighborhood space while teaching collective action and neighborhood identity.

The park and the HNU office provided safe, familiar places to meet, organize, and develop a collective voice and political confidence. This chapter follows the significance of these neighborhood spaces—where organizers met to plan rent strikes, pickets, and welfare office sit-ins—from the summer of 1965, when the language of civil rights dominated the organizing, to the summer of 1967, when the more militant Hill Parents' Association (HPA) emerged as the dominant community organization in the Hill, meeting the needs of the neighborhood that the city's antipoverty programs failed to address. The HPA's summer camp and breakfast programs predated similar (more widely known) initiatives by the Black Panther Party (BPP). Before the establishment of a BPP chapter in New Haven, the HPA asserted considerable political power as a militant community organization, demanding a seat at the table in the allocation of Model Cities money.

Chapter 4, "Maximum Feasible Urban Management: The 'Automatic' City and the Hill Parents' Association," deals with grassroots attempts to define citizen participation and challenge official antipoverty programs in the era of urban management, and Chapter 5, "Renewal, Riot, and Resistance: Reclaiming 'Model Cities,'" begins with New Haven's civil disorder in the summer of 1967 and its aftermath, concluding with the subsequent takeover of the city's Model Cities grant. These events marked both a more aggressive era in community organizing and a more oppressive response to a newly organized black community.

To a large extent, the neighborhood's identity was formed around opposition to "downtown"—meaning both the physical space that was New Haven's central business district and center of government, and the officials and institutions (such as the mayor, the RA, and particularly the police) with which that area was associated. The Hill was physically and socially separated from downtown by the construction of two wide frontage roads, and the city's renewal plans would exacerbate that situation by fully amputating the Hill from centers of business and government with the construction of

the Ring Road. The redevelopment of the Hill would ultimately force the relocation of more than 1,000 families and about eighty businesses. Many of those displaced were experiencing urban renewal the hard way for the second, third, or even fourth time.

But in between what the Hill used to be and what it is now—a hotly contested space scarred with empty lots, parking garages, medical buildings, and poverty, but enlivened by a wave of neighborhood organizing and activism rooted in a labor-community coalition similar to the one that fought to save community spaces forty years ago—was a community-grown alternative plan for those five project blocks. It was not a plan devised by the RA, but rather one imagined by neighbors in conversation with one another. It included a cooperative housing project that started with an architect interviewing the future inhabitants, it included jobs, day-care, and food-assistance programs run by the community, and it provided a playground designed by the children who would use it, built up out of a vacant lot with discarded tires, lumber, and iron, the waste materials of urban renewal. A host of persistent "urban problems" make it easy to define this neighborhood by the 1967 "riots" or the media frenzy surrounding the murder trial of members of the BPP in 1971. However, the emergence of a new and promising community movement for responsible development around Yale-New Haven Hospital is further evidence that the Hill is an organized community fighting for an alternative urban model.

State Street

Two competing visions for the form and future of downtown came to blows on a half-mile stretch of State Street, which the RA hoped to widen from two lanes to six lanes and replace all of its occupants with an eight-block, six-story parking garage. This half-mile section of State Street is the subject of Chapter 6, "The City and the Six-Lane Highway: Bread and Roses and Parking Garages." It was home to more than 100 small businesses and light manufacturing firms, including Trio Plastics, Brown Clothing Manufacturers, and the General Sewing Machine Company, and more than a dozen restaurants, including John's, the Ship Shape Sandwich Shop, a number of bars and taverns, and Chef's Corner Restaurant, a popular hangout for local activists.²⁷ Despite the city's occasional assertion that the area was not heavily residential, these few blocks on State Street were home to some of the city's ever-decreasing stock of low-rent apartments, including three or four buildings with between twelve and sixteen units each, as well as J. W. Faugno's Furnished Rooms, one of the city's few remaining singleoccupancy buildings.

State Street was once the city's Main Street, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when its position along the Farmington Canal attracted—in the words of architectural historian Elizabeth Mills Brown—

"wharves, shops, and well-to-do merchants' houses." In the 1840s, the railroad was built on the site of the canal, driving away many of the shops and homes, and attracting wholesalers. When Brown surveyed the area for her study of New Haven neighborhoods, she called twentieth-century State Street "a place of sooty buildings, secondhand furniture stores, and a paradise of Italian markets." But by 1976, she noted, it was "mostly demolished," with plans for the massive parking garage still looming (see Figure Intro.3).²⁸

Before State Street was "renewed," foot traffic was common, and the existing small businesses survived on a combination of local reputation, longevity, and low rent. With the completion of I-91 in 1966, State Street businesses—located right near a highway ramp—may have had the potential to reach some suburban customers, but the city's plans for that stretch of road reflected different intentions. The proposed parking garage would obliterate the pedestrian scale and dominate the landscape. In 1969, as the controversy surrounding the State Street Redevelopment and Renewal Plan captured local headlines, a new business opened on one of the low-rent downtown blocks in the proposed shadow of that half-mile, six-story garage. Bread and Roses, a movement-run coffee shop at 536 State Street, was the project of an antiwar, anticorporate, left organization called the American Independent Movement (AIM), which emerged in 1965 when a group of New Left activists and a Yale-affiliated socialist club merged in response to the bombs dropping in Southeast Asia. They quickly tripled in number, tackling not only the Vietnam War, but also a wide array of local issues, including urban renewal.

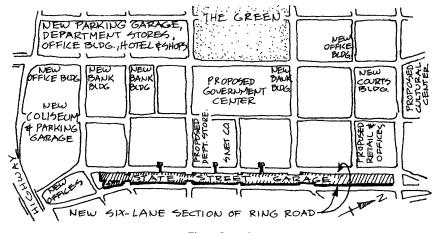


Figure Intro.3

Map of proposed State Street parking garage. (Drawn by Harris Stone for his Workbook of an Unsuccessful Architect [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974].)

The idea for a coffeehouse emerged just as AIM's Urban Renewal Committee stepped up its fight against the State Street Garage, the Ring Road, and other highway plans throughout the city. Both AIM and its organizational ally, the Draft Action Group (DAG), sought a comfortable and relaxed space to bring people into the movement, hold meetings and cultural activities, distribute literature, and generally give people a place to meet and talk. Bread and Roses operated at cost, off of donated labor and supplies, and made the space into a living and thriving physical site of resistance to the RA's plans for State Street. By 1972, the State Street plan was all but abandoned, but the coffeehouse was gone, along with nearly 100 other businesses, homes, restaurants, and services occupying six blocks of downtown State Street. Another eighty were left vacant, in many cases awaiting demolition, in others, simply victims of the insecurities wrought by renewal.²⁹ But the massive garage was never built, and the plans for the Ring Road seemed to recede out of possibility as plans for its different six-lane legs were stalled or otherwise undone by a combination of collective actions and shifting priorities, locally and nationally.

Downtown

Somewhere between the downtown of the distant past—with its walking scale, mixed use, open-air markets, and mom-and-pop shops—and today's downtown—where luxury apartments are carved into the abandoned fossils of a one-time urban shopping mall—was the downtown of the 1960s: a scattering of the very old and the very new, scarred with construction sites, laced with scaffolding, in a seemingly constant state of "renewal" that looked to some like progress and to others like Armageddon. The final chapter—and the final site—is the Strand, a five-story downtown residential hotel that, by the late 1960s, housed about fifty residents. Chapter 7, "Downtown Lives and Palaces: From 'A Space of Freedom' to 'A Space of Exclusion,' " narrates the transformation of downtown, taking the Strand Hotel as its point of departure. Contrary to conventional misunderstandings about hotel living, most of the residents of the Strand were permanent—some had lived there more than twenty years—and nearly all chose initially to stay and fight their eviction, which they saw as part of a larger fight to keep New Haven accessible and livable for working people.

By the spring of 1969, when the city issued eviction orders to all of the tenants, it was one of only two residential hotels remaining in a city that once had nearly twenty of them. The city's central business district before urban renewal, the constellation of spaces in which Strand residents had made their lives, was a patchwork of businesses, residences, theaters, restaurants, bars, social services, and small hotels and motels, surrounding a classic New England town green. In an effort to separate uses, expedite and

prioritize parking, and reimagine the city as a regional center for shopping, the Lee administration devised a massive government center, with police station, city hall, and federal building, to be dropped down upon the footprint of a number of smaller properties, including many small shops, restaurants, and the Strand Hotel. Separate from this area, they planned an arts and cultural center. In another area still would be a massive high-rise luxury hotel, the Park Plaza, with easy access, via a raised and enclosed walkway, to both shopping and parking lots, sparing visitors and shoppers the trouble of using city streets.

For those who fit into the city's 1960 vision of what belonged in a modern downtown, the RA's "New New Haven" would certainly be preferable to the old. It would be cleaner, more compartmentalized, more car friendly, more white, more affluent, and more likely to host a convention or attract a new corporate headquarters. Assertions that such a transformation would make the city more "safe" were soon challenged by critics of urban renewal such as Jane Jacobs, who argued that it was the presence of people on and around the street that made for a safe urban environment. Plans for a Ring Road, which the RA claimed to the bitter end—despite plentiful evidence to the contrary—was never part of their overall scheme, would remove people from the street, and insulate downtown and Yale University from the city's poorer areas by cutting off the Hill, Dixwell, and parts of the nearby Dwight neighborhood with a six-lane high-speed road. It would provide quick and easy access to new highways for suburban drivers, and eliminate a deteriorating strip of small businesses (and a haven for activists) along State Street while justifying thousands of new parking spaces. It would complete Maurice Rotival's early designs of the model city and bring order to the perceived chaos of the city's side streets.

The Ring Road was never completed, although many people in New Haven lived in fear of its impending arrival from the day it was revealed in 1967 through the early 1970s, when it became abundantly clear that the city would be unable to secure state and federal money to complete the project. For some who have lived in the Elm City since the urban renewal period, publicly contested plans for new development at the ever-expanding Yale–New Haven Hospital are a reminder of the persistence of competing visions for city spaces, and the impact that such struggles have on the jobs, social networks, and homes of city people.

The importance of the fight for community control over the city's master plan is not just in its material outcomes. Central to this story is the importance of space and geography in the construction of what historian Lawrence Goodwyn calls "movement culture." Goodwyn was, ironically, writing about the populist movement at the turn of the century, and arguing that rural life was more conducive than the urban environment to the development of movements for social change. But his ideas about movement cul-

ture are helpful in articulating the importance of particular spaces to building movements in the city. Goodwyn asserts that America is "culturally progressive," imbued with a general sense that "the system works." Consequently, he argues, acts of resistance or demands for change require a unique environment—a "movement culture"—that he asserts is possible only through collective political experiences, or a "collective self-confidence" that enables individuals to see their personal struggles and obstacles as collective problems with collective solutions.³⁰

Sarah Evans and Harry Boyte have similarly argued that communal settings and structures of community participation allow working people to both identify with one another and collectively distinguish themselves from "the elite," enabling mobilizations for change. Many organizations and individuals in New Haven in the 1960s imagined, designed, and fought for residential, political, and cultural spaces of working-class urban life that not only provided for all of the material and social needs of low-income people, but also allowed for the "collective self-confidence" that Goodwyn asserts is necessary for the establishment of a strong movement. These sites enabled regular people to intervene in the city's efforts to define the model city, and their physical and social forms helped define a collective alternative model.

All of these sites were meeting places, collective spaces, and points of contention in the struggle over what the model city would be. Each was an assertion of occupancy, a claim on space in and access to downtown, and an attempt to register dissent during a redevelopment campaign bent on broadcasting consensus. Each enabled an extended web of organizing and mobilizing beyond its own walls or fence posts. The Strand, the coffeehouse, the HNU office, and Hallock Street Park all served as meeting and gathering places for actions throughout the city and beyond. Buses coordinated at the HNU and AIM offices left for city hall, Washington, D.C., New York, and Hartford to protest the war, demand fair treatment for welfare recipients, walk picket lines, or attend public hearings. It was from these primary meeting places that groups of mobilized citizens gathered and drove to the state house, not just to testify before the State Highway Commission about the Ring Road plans, but to ask to see these plans and figure out how the state decided which highway should go where. In this way, many of these spaces of resistance are prerequisites for other such spaces.

No space for collective action exists in a vacuum. Lower Dixwell was powerful as a site of protest only to the extent that Goin Park, a block or so to the west, provided a space for the sit-out protesters to gather, hear speeches from local civil rights leaders, and resolidify their conviction to sit out in front of oncoming traffic. The catch (and the crux) is that it took a movement to preserve those spaces, and without those spaces, there cannot be movements. In order to "move," the movement must have a place to live, meet, grow, and claim. These are not utopian spaces—they are merely street

corners, coffee shops, apartment buildings, and playgrounds. But these everyday spaces are what enable culture and collectivity—provided, of course, that they are actually in neighborhoods where people can afford to live. So this is why a story that seeks, in the end, to clarify the meaning of bodies sitting in the middle of the street must start with a highway in the middle of somebody's kitchen.