CONTEXT: ECHO PARK

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Context is the spatial or pattern relation of the built environment and its use by (or support of) the social environment. The area of context examined in this thesis is urban and residential, and specifically site planning for multi-family dwellings.

This study examines the context of multi-family sites in Echo Park, Los Angeles, to extract structural principles as a basis for forming Guidelines and Patterns.

A site planning sketch problem is undertaken to test the Guidelines and Patterns as a design tool, and a scenario is constructed to evaluate the Design Test.

The intent of this study is to establish a process whereby design principles are extracted from context to aid architects in designing in continuity with an existing fabric.

Thesis Supervisor: Fernando Domeyko

Title: Associate Professor of Architecture
INTRODUCTION

The original impetus for undertaking this thesis topic may simply have been a homesickness for Los Angeles. Four years of architectural education in New England did not provide the opportunity for analysing or designing in the context most familiar to me. Other motivations had to do with an interest in the increasing demand for urban dwellings in the last ten years in American cities and the fate of older neighborhoods.

Historic preservationists have made recommendations for preserving the physical fabric of urban residential neighborhoods (primarily those with fashionable architectural styles) and sociologists have studied the social networks of urban life but there is still little literature outlining methodologies dealing with the relationship between the built and social context of neighborhoods such as Echo Park.

One additional motivation may have been the lingering misconception that Los Angeles is utterly chaotic. With a smile, I would remind my readers that the apprehension of order depends on the perspective of the observer, or as Foucault quotes Borges quoting a certain Chinese encyclopedia in which it is written that,

"...animals are divided into: a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) frenzied, i) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) et cetera, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies."

Michael Foucault, THE ORDER OF THINGS: AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE HUMAN SCIENCES, 1970
my Parents

in Los Angeles:
Marcy, Tina, Tony, Grant,
Cheryl, Bob and Mary Alette,
and all the patient, friendly
people of Echo Park

in Cambridge:
my advisor Fernando Domeyco,
my readers Gary Hack and John Zeissel;
Virginia, Cristina, John, Greg, Jo, Charles

and most of all, Bob.
CHAPTER 1
Context
In this thesis, context refers to the "fabric" of the environment of the neighborhood. This fabric is the spatial or pattern relation of the built environment and its use or support of the social environment. These two components may be separated for analysis, but in reality they are "co-present" in a manner similar to reading and typography, as explained by William Hubbard:

"Any page of printing can be read for its written content, or we can pull back and contemplate the ways in which the page 'plays with' the set-up rules of good printing. We can, for example, consider the way the block of text fits into the frame of the full sheet."

"All of these questions have very little to do with the activity of reading. They are questions that barely enter our minds when we are concentrating on getting the written meaning out of a page of text. They would, in fact, impede our reading if they occupied too much of our attention."

"The term I would like to use is 'copresent.' The object for contemplation is copresent with the object for reading."

"But to say that reading and typography are copresent does not mean that they are equal or equivalent. The page to be read is, in all normally encountered circumstances, necessarily prior to the page to be contemplated. That is, the page is brought into existence because of its capacity to be read."

Complicity and Conviction, pp. 68-69

This fabric has a structure that we sense, even when we do not analyse it. We take a great deal of pleasure in experiencing and learning to "read" new environmental structures. This is often the motivation for travel or reading about travel. There are many well loved books on travel such as Notes from Abroad by Mark Twain and Italo Calvino's novel, Invisible Cities. The latter is a series of fantastic tales told to the aging Kublai Khan by Marco Polo, inspired by the fabric of famous cities. We take delight in these structures, and an environment that is contradictory and completely unpredictable is profoundly disturbing. Christian Norberg-Schulz writes of the ability to abstract and generalize that we employ in reading the environment:
"It is essential to bear in mind some elementary facts concerning man and his position in the world, facts which are too easily forgotten or insufficiently understood. The first is man's indeterminate nature. Whereas animals are functionally and organically specialized, man is characterized by adaptability. In animals specialization has led to rigidity of structure and function, and an animal always remains at the level of its species. Man, instead, has remained flexible, and at the same time capable of further developing his functions. The human freedom, however, implies demands and responsibilities. Whereas learning plays a secondary role in animals, the newborn child comes into the world helpless, and is equipped with a few inborn reflexes and instincts only. With the aid of others and through personal action, the child slowly gains existential foothold. To a high degree, therefore, man is free to shape his own destiny.

By what means, then, does man gain the foothold and identity which are not offered him by nature? In general, he succeeds because of his ability to reach beyond the individual situation, that is, because of his ability to abstract and generalize. This means that man is capable of recognizing similarities and relationships between phenomena and discovering the laws which govern natural and human processes. What he abstracts from the continuous flow of phenomena constitutes his existential meanings. This implies that the meaning of any phenomenon is the context in which it appears, and that any man is the interrelationships or meanings which are accessible to him. The faculty of abstraction and generalization, or induction, is therefore the basic distinction of man, and the experience of meaning his basic need. To grow up signifies to become aware of meanings."

MEANING IN WESTERN ARCHITECTURE, p. 428

Growing up and becoming aware of meanings enables man to make comparisons and judgements. In his book, THE MORAL JUDGEMENT OF THE CHILD, Jean Piaget describes this process of perceiving structure and taking pleasure in understanding the rules.

"...from its tenderest years everything conspires to impress upon the baby the notion of regularity. Certain physical events (alternation of day and night, sameness of scenery during walks, etc.) are repeated with sufficient accuracy to produce an awareness of 'law,'..."

"The fact that the child enjoys complicating things at will proves that what he is after is rules for their own sake. We have described elsewhere the extraordinary
behavior of eight boys of 10 to 11 who, in order to throw snow-balls at each other, began by wasting a good quarter-of-an-hour in electing a president, fixing the rules of voting, then in dividing themselves into two camps, in deciding upon the distances of the shots, and finally in foreseeing what would be the sanctions to be applied in cases of infringement of these laws. Many other facts analogous to this could be culled from studies that have been made on children's societies.

THE MORAL JUDGEMENT OF THE CHILD, pp. 50-51

Piaget goes on to explain the next stage in development in which the rules come to be understood as the result of free decisions and mutual consent.

"After the age of 10 on the average, i.e., from the second half of the cooperative stage and during the whole of the stage when the rules are codified, consciousness of rules undergoes a complete transformation. Autonomy follows upon heteronomy: the rule of a game appears to the child no longer as an external law, sacred in so far as it has been laid down by adults; but as the outcome of a free decision and worthy of respect in the measure that it has enlisted mutual consent."

Ibid, p. 65

This is what Hubbard terms "convention," when he states:

"Let me draw a radical distinction. Let me say that there are two ways in which reality makes sense to us: there are those things we accept as being the way they are because we have no choice but to do so, and there are those things we accept as being the way they are because we want them to be that way. That is, with the first the arrangement could not have been otherwise and so we accede to that fact; with the second the arrangement could have been otherwise, but we prefer that it be this way instead.

For the time of this book, let us call the first category of things inevitable and the second, conventional. Inevitable things include such concrete arrangements as the shape of trees and mountains and of people themselves; and they also include such intangible things as laws of nature, forces operative in the world like gravity or natural selection.

Conventional things can likewise be concrete or intangible. Human ethics, the ways we act toward each other, are intangible conventional arrangements. We could choose to act toward each other in any number of ways, but from that number there are certain ways of acting that we prefer. Conventional arrangements can also be concrete, as in the clothes we wear (the way we prefer to look)..."
Just as the clothes we wear are a concrete conventional arrangement, so are the buildings, open spaces, and towns we build. But in the same way as the child makes judgements and modifications in the rules with the complicity of his peers, we modify and change the environment. Hubbard suggests a model for these changes in the development of the law:

"The judges made their opinions plausible by showing how they submitted to the wisdom of their predecessors, but they made their opinions convincing by showing how they exceeded their predecessors. Further, we can see that the method they used was to cite an older decision and then tell us what the salient point of that decision was. In several instances, the new salient point was manifestly not what the original judge had in mind. But by seizing upon that point as the basis for his argument, the new judge was able to construct a new principle with reasoning that addressed the new conditions but gave the appearance of being rooted in the previous reasoning."

*Ibid*, p. 121

This points out the importance of maintaining historical continuity while allowing for growth and change. (Of course the fabric of the city or neighborhood is layered with memories and associations.) The elements we choose to perpetuate and modify must be appropriate, as Hubbard again writes:

"If an architect is going to invoke past buildings to support what he does, he takes on the responsibility for what he invokes. It is up to him to see that the works likely to come to a person's mind are works that that person could read as having a comparable intent. It is up to the designer to see that the activity of rereading works for the viewer. The viewer should be able to hold aspects of the old and the new buildings in his mind and imagine analogies between them that are resonant, not absurd or discordant. We are not talking here only about the rarified experience of a building as an aesthetic entity. We are also talking about analogies on more basic levels — analogies between the feeling of this roof and the feeling of the roof of the house I was born in — analogies that give to parts of experience connections that make human sense. These are insights and experiences that only architecture, the art that is used, can provide. They are, in fact, precisely what constitute that stream of people that flow past a building in history."

*Ibid*, p. 150

This connection between our past and the spatial context of our experiences form what Norberg-
Schulz and others term our conception of the "image."

"The concept of existential space is based on the fact that any human action has a spatial aspect. Actions take place and need a more or less precisely defined spatial frame to take place. The concept has a double meaning: It denotes the objectively describable spatial aspects of an intersubjective form of life as well as the single person's image of the spatial relations which form part of his existence. We may therefore talk about 'public' and 'private' existential spaces. The private existential space is constituted during mental development through interaction between the individual and his environment. As a result an image is formed which consists of three-dimensional relations between meaningful objects. This image does not correspond to immediate perceptual space. Whereas the perceptual space varies continuously, existential space has a relatively stable structure which serves as a frame of reference for the transitory perceptions and turns them into experiences. For example, my image of the town where I live gives meaning to its elements, be it buildings, streets or squares."

MEANING IN WESTERN ARCHITECTURE, p. 430

It is this sense of image and meaning coming from ourselves that Christopher Alexander writes of in a more mystical tone, in the introduction to the TIMELESS WAY OF BUILDING:

"A building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed by the timeless way.

It is a process which brings order out of nothing but ourselves; it cannot be attained, but it will happen of its own accord, if we will only let it."

THE TIMELESS WAY OF BUILDING, p. ix
CHAPTER 2
Echo Park: A Description

Saludos desde Los Angeles
Echo Park is located in the north central section of Los Angeles. It is part of the original city of Los Angeles (Pueblo de Nuestra Senora Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula) founded under Spanish dominion in 1871. Echo Park is similar in some ways to other Los Angeles neighborhoods. What Christopher Isherwood writes of the city, is also typical of Echo Park:

"I would scarcely know how to 'show' Los Angeles to a visitor. Perhaps the best plan would be to drive quite aimlessly, this way and that, following the wide streets of little stucco houses, gorgeous with flowering trees and bushes - jacaranda, oleander, mimosa...."

Isherwood, EXHUMATIONS, p. 157

Situated in the foothills of the Verdugo Mountains, Echo Park is cradled by hills. Echo Park Avenue connects the southernmost end of the neighborhood containing Echo Park Lake, to the crest of the hills in the north overlooking Highland Park. Echo Park Avenue runs up the valley crossing Sunset Boulevard...
ameliorating some of the division caused by Sunset Boulevard which is a major urban street. The other major street passing through Echo Park is Glendale Boulevard which runs under Sunset Boulevard, and under the Hollywood Freeway. The overpass of the Hollywood Freeway creates a "gate" for motorists coming to Echo Park from downtown.

A noted historian once referred to Echo Park as the "Urbino" of Los Angeles. A network of public and private pedestrian stairways vertically connect to the roadways running laterally along the steep hills. (Laurel and Hardy were filmed in a famous piano moving scene on one of these stairways.) Residents, interviewed in a recent study by U.C.L.A., remarked on the view as being one of the most enjoyable characteristics of the neighborhood. From much of Echo Park one can see the tall buildings of downtown, and from the hilltop on a clear day see the Pacific Ocean 15 miles away.

Echo Park is bounded on the east by the 600 acre Elysian Park and on the west by the neighborhood of Silverlake, known architecturally for buildings by Schindler and Neutra. Echo Park Lake was once a natural lake providing water for nearby farms. In 1891 a public park, comprising 26 acres, was developed around the lake, modeled after a garden in Derbyshire, England. It included semi-tropical plants and a lotus pond. In the 1920s the famous evangelist Amy Simple McPherson built her temple next to the park.
The climate, like all of Southern California, is basically semi-arid, and the natural vegetation is Mediterranean coastal shrub. The weather often baffles "easterners;" as one Californian resident said in 1883:

"The wet season is the season in which it can rain but may not; and the dry season is the season in which it cannot rain, but occasionally does."

Helen Hunt Jackson quoted in L.A. ACCESS, p. 105

Despite rumours to the contrary, there are some dramatic weather changes in Southern California:

"There is something uneasy in the Los Angeles air this afternoon, some unnatural stillness, some tension. What it means is that tonight a Santa Ana will begin to blow, a hot wind from the northeast whining down through the Cajon and San Gorgonio Passes, blowing up sandstorms out along Route 66, drying the hills and the nerves to the flash point. For a few days now we will see smoke back in the canyons, and hear sirens in the night. I have neither heard nor read that a Santa Ana is due, but I know it, and almost everyone I have seen today knows it too. We know it because we feel it. The baby frets. The maid sulks. I rekindle a waning argument with the telephone company, then cut my losses and lie down, given over to whatever is in the air. To live with the Santa Ana is to accept, consciously or unconsciously, a deeply mechanistic view of human behavior...

'On nights like that,' Raymond Chandler once wrote about the Santa Ana, 'every booze party ends in a fight. Meek little wives feel the edge of the carving knife and study their husbands' necks. Anything can happen.'

Easterners commonly complain that there is no 'weather' at all in Southern California, that the days and the seasons slip by relentlessly, numbingly bland. That is quite misleading. In fact the climate is characterized by infrequent but violent extremes: two periods of torrential subtropical rains which continue for weeks and wash out the hills and send subdivisions sliding toward the sea; about
twenty scattered days a year of the Santa Ana, which, with its incendiary dryness, invariably means fire."

Didion, LOS ANGELES NOTEBOOK, p. 64

The hot, arid climate naturally should make Angelinos conscious of the value of their water supply, but Los Angeles has been "borrowing" its water from the Owens Valley and other sources for so long (about 60 years) that when there was a drought in the mid 70s no one had reflected on the nature of the original landscape. Water, then, became an important issue, and residents watered their houseplants with recycled dish water and put bricks in their toilet tanks. In 1977 Joan Didion (in THE WHITE ALBUM) wrote:

"Some of us who live in arid parts of the world think about water with a reverence others might find excessive. The water I will draw tomorrow from my tap in Malibu is today crossing the Mojave Desert from the Colorado River, and I like to think about exactly where that water is. The water I will drink tonight in a restaurant in Hollywood is by now well down the Los Angeles Aqueduct from the Owens River, and I also think about exactly where that water is: I particularly like to imagine it as it cascades down the 45-degree stone steps that aerate Owens water after its airless passage through the mountain pipes and siphons."

Didion, THE WHITE ALBUM, p. 59

The hills of Echo Park are a tangle of native plants that thrive in this climate, such as yucca, prickly pear, cactus, and sage. Other imported species such as palms, jacaranda, and eucalyptus have adapted and proliferated so well that they seem to be native.
Eucalyptus was originally brought to California in the hey-day of the railroads, for producing lumber for railroad ties, but the grain of the wood was found to be too twisted to be of use. Stands of eucalyptus scent the air in the hills of Echo Park, and rows of palms can be seen profiled across the pink-tinged smoggy sunsets.

palm leaves

at exactly 12:00 midnight
1973-74
Los Angeles
it began to rain on the palm leaves outside my window the horns and firecrackers went off and it thundered.

Charles Bukowski (fragment of a poem from "The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hill")

The first residents of the area were the Yang-Na Indians, hunters who lived in the Elysian Park Hills. The contemporary residents are primarily Latino with a sprinkling of Asians and Anglos. Several dialects of Spanish can be heard on the streets and many of the shops and restaurants have signage in Spanish (one reads "Pet Shop," "gallos y patos").

Many Mexican-American residents own homes purchased after World War II, and form a belt
of stable working people in the mid-section of the neighborhood. Closer to Sunset Boulevard and in the scattered absentee-landlord housing stock, reside recent immigrants from Central America, Mexico, Korea, Cambodia, and several other countries. Many of these residents work in local sweat-shops, in the garment district downtown, or do piecework at home. There is a scattered community of artists, writers, and actors who have always found the ambience and cheaper rent attractive.
On the northern crest of the hills are a few large old homes in an area referred to by those residents as "Elysian Heights." Echo Park is also dotted with "Carpenter's Houses" built by craftsmen, often for their own families in the 20s, and in some cases still occupied by their children.

A 1960 census described 29% of the residents as owners and 71% as tenants. The same census reported 1960 incomes in the neighborhood well below $5,000. There is a trend towards gentrification as evidenced by the recent appearance of new realtors on Echo Park Avenue. However, there remain strong stability and political participation among the residents, as demonstrated in the early 70s when complaints from a citizens group cut back the size of a subsidized housing project on Morton Avenue from 94 to 66 units and later prevented an enormous development over the crest of the hills northward that would have over-burdened services.

There are other signs of neighborhood solidarity, as indicated in the mid 70s when local school children petitioned and got a stoplight installed at a corner where a 7 year old schoolmate had been injured. There are some problems with gang activities in the neighborhood, but one of the largest organizations working with gangs in Los Angeles, "El Centro del Pueblo," is based on Echo Park Avenue.

The residents of Echo Park, whom I interviewed in the course of my research within the neighborhood, had fairly similar mental maps of the boundaries of Echo Park. However, differences occurred in their perspectives. Diagrams of these maps are included for the following interviewees:

1. teenage boy
2. an art teacher
3. a geologist
4. an artist
The teenage boys had a very accurate picture of the boundaries of Echo Park, including the strip between Temple Street and the Hollywood Freeway neglected by the other interviewees, perhaps because old gang boundaries date back to the 50s before the construction of the Hollywood Freeway. The one area where the boy's map differed with the actual boundaries was a piece just west of Alvarado Boulevard. However, this area was omitted by almost everyone, including a restaurant owner and resident of that area who insisted it was "just part of L.A." and not Echo Park. This was evidently due to the fact that Alvarado Boulevard, with its heavy traffic, is a strong edge.
the northern end of the hills past Cerro Gordo saw her section of Echo Park as Elysian Heights, but her boundaries were unclear and based more upon income than physical features. The artist, whose family had lived in the area for three generations in a "carpenter's house" built by his father in the north central area, saw the southern boundary of Echo Park as Sunset Boulevard (another heavily trafficked street); however, when questioned about Park he extended his boundary to include it. The artist had a very rich and detailed description of places in Echo Park, for example "kite hill," and old place names, some originating from the titles of the 1910 tracts.

The subdivision of Echo Park in 1910 was followed by rapid residential development and by 1939 88% of the existing housing had been built. The boundaries of Echo Park encompass an older neighborhood, Angelino Heights, built in the 1880s on a hill south of Sunset Boulevard and east of Echo Park Avenue. The 1300 block of Carroll Avenue in this district has received much attention from preservationists for its fine examples of Victorian architecture.
Unfortunately the attention given to this area in the media overshadows other architectural and social issues in Echo Park.

The major fabric of Echo Park was built by small developers, several plots at a time, and reflects the tastes and attitudes of Californian architecture of the period. David Gebhard writes:

"While it can well be demonstrated that the shingle and the redwood board and were the first architectural forms which in any way could be thought of as indigenous to California, it was the stucco-sheathed structure — with its broad areas of uninterrupted surfaces — which in fact and in myth have come to typify the buildings of Southern California. Unquestionably one of the unique qualities of this regional architecture is that it had little, if any, real roots in the historic past of the area.

The Spanish Colonial Revival, from its Mission phase on, was almost totally a myth created by newcomers to the area. Few artificially created architectural myths have succeeded in retaining a firm hold for so long and at the same time have been able to maintain a consistently high quality design.

By the end of the 1920s the Spanish Colonial Revival had become the architecture of Southern California. Block upon block of Los Angeles and other smaller cities of the Southland abandoned with builder's version of America's Hispanic heritage. In communities such as Santa Barbara, Ojai, Palos Verdes, San Clemente, and Rancho Santa Fe, legal and other indirect pressures were leading to the erection of complete 'Spanish' towns and cities. The intellectual justification for this revival was admittedly a bit thin, but it would be difficult to deny that the visual results were often impressive."

David Gebhard, Spanish Colonial Revivalism in Southern California, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians

The other style afoot at this time was the Craftsman movement, exemplified by the brothers, Greene and Greene. The common concerns uniting two of the most sophisticated representatives of either group, Irving Gill and the Greene brothers, were a respect for materials and a concern for construction and maintenance.

Gill and the Greenses were widely influential. In San Diego hundreds of contractors' houses were based on Gill's forms, fenestration, and use of materials. The rash of "Bungalow" publications (patterns for do-it-yourselfers) copied after the Greenses and other noted
architects like Alfred Heineman promoted Henry Greene to say, "Plagerism and poor copies of our work led us to discontinue publication of any of our work in periodicals."

Despite Henry Greene's objections to "poor copies," the influence of Spanish Colonial Revivalism and the Craftsman movement greatly enriched neighborhoods like Echo Park, contributing to their charm and habitability.
Bungalow, Arthur S. Heineman (Alfred Heineman, assoc.), ca. 1911. This bungalow appears in color on the cover of Sweet's Bungalows and also as Plan No. 101 on p. 20. Sweet gives the Heinemans no credit whatever.
(Photograph from Heineman archive, Greene and Greene Library, Gamble House, Pasadena)
A few years later Rudolf Schindler elevated studs and stucco to respectability with such work as his Manola Apartments in nearby Silverlake. The architectural vocabulary of Schindler, and such contemporaries as Richard Neutra, was recycled through generations of less competent architects eventually resulting in what Francis Ventre dubbed as "the basic Los Angeles Dingbat." There are several of these in Echo Park.
One essential difference in the esthetic of Spanish Colonial Revivalism and the Stick and Shingle bungalow is the nature of the materials and their relationship to the light. "Bungalow" is a corruption of the Hindustani adjective "bangla," meaning "belonging to Bengal," used by British colonialists to describe a low house surrounded by a veranda. The white washed concrete and stucco of buildings like Gill’s are a continuation of the Latin-American-
Spanish-Islamic vocabulary, born of the bright, axial Mediterranean light, (very similar to that of Southern California) punctuated by the crisp shadows of plants and reflected light from the wide expanses of wall typical of the simple massing. A white wall in this kind of light can be so reflective that it shatters the sunlight giving back subtle shades of pinks and blues. It is not the cold flat white of northern climates. Gill experimented with the mixing of primary colors into his white paint to heighten this effect, and planted red geraniums outside some windows creating a red glow in the rooms.
The attitude of architects like Greene and Greene, and Schindler towards light and materials reflects that of the Japanese. As Tanizaki states,

"And so it has come to be that the beauty of a Japanese room depends on a variation of shadows, heavy shadows against light shadows..."

Jun'ichiro Tanizaki, IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS, p. 18

Schindler also reflected a very Japanese attitude toward materials when he condemned protective coating on his exposed wood. As Tanizaki also writes,

"Yet for better or worse we do love things that bear the marks of grime, soot, and weather, and we love the colors and the sheen that call to mind the past that made them."

Ibid, p. 11
There was a great deal of cross-fertilization of ideas; the Greenes planned the Bandini Bungalow around a patio in the Spanish manner; and small stuccoed Spanish Colonial Revival dwellings and Stick and Shingle bungalows were often grouped to form courts. Two of the most interesting and thoughtful plans of this type are Gill's Horatio Court in Santa Monica and Schindler's Pueblo Rivera Court. Both of these, and Schindler's Manola Apartments, were used as additional references for the chapter on Patterns. There are also some slightly more
PUEBLO RIBERA
esoteric influences encompassed in Spanish Colonial Revivalism such as Mayan, Mediterranean, and Pueblo. There are many examples of Mediterranean, and one extraordinary example of Pueblo Revival in Echo Park.
CHAPTER 3

Research Method
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Research Method

The research method that developed during the course of this thesis was similar to that described by John Zeisel:

"What is research? It is more than just searching (which can be haphazard) or just solving problems (which can remain merely pragmatic). What researchers want to do is systematically use their experience to learn something to identify and help solve new problems. Presented with a problem, researchers draw on theory, training, accumulated knowledge, and experience to generate tentative ideas about how to solve it. Exploratory hypotheses serve as the basis first for observing and gathering data about the topic and then for describing and understanding it. Making visible implications of the data leads to improved hypotheses, further data gathering, and so on until the problem is sufficiently redefined and a tenable solution is found."

INQUIRY BY DESIGN, p. 18

The research involved such areas as environmental behavior, architectural history and criticism, environmental design, which, together with my familiarity and empathy with Los Angeles, led to the establishment of exploratory hypotheses. The hypotheses included, for example, "people in Echo Park use communal and private outdoor, and partially protected spaces, as an important extension of their dwellings;" and, "There are some consistent built elements in Echo Park that make it a recognisable and distinct urban fabric." With these exploratory hypotheses in mind I began on-site observations of Echo Park, while attempting to be as explicit about my preconceptions as possible.

One preconception, for example, which was inaccurate, was the amount of activity taking place in shared outdoor spaces, such as bungalow courts. Use of these spaces was not as frequent or prolonged as I had thought with the exception of courts entirely owned and occupied by extended families, as shown in the example below. This court has been partially roofed over by the occupants and the inhabitants, an Asian family, pass back and forth between their dwellings using the court as common area, much like the zaguan in Latin America and Spain.
As my investigation proceeded I began to place more emphasis on private outdoor spaces and transitional spaces between indoors and outdoors, for example, courtyards, terraces, porches, and balconies. My concepts in this early stage of research were still very general and I was walking and photographing, chatting with people, eating "tacos de carnitas" in the Park, and "indwelling" as Zeisel describes.

"If research aims at developing concepts, how do researchers do this? One way to go about this murky task is to become as intimate as possible with data and also as distant as possible from them.

Intimacy for one researcher may mean stewing over a particular photograph or staring at a map a respondent has drawn to find what sense can be made of it. Another investigator may look over one computer printout a dozen times or read through a large number of completed questionnaires from beginning to end, getting a feel for what to ask the data. These methods enable an investigator to focus her attention on particulars of diverse phenomena until she begins to see them as a coherent whole, just as a musician practices a piece until it comes together for him. The term 'indwelling' is used to refer to these methods, to make clear that they are attempts to become as close as possible to the data—to dwell in them (Polanyi, 1967:16).

When researchers achieve such internal awareness, they cannot necessarily articulate it—either verbally or diagrammatically. Another step is required to articulate the tacit knowing that indwelling can bring."

Ibid, p. 21

After amassing a large number of photographs and notes, and "stewing," I began to organize them in a more specific way. One aid in this organization was Christopher Alexander's PATTERN LANGUAGE. In checking my categories with Alexander's, although many categories were similar I found differences which made the special nature of Echo Park more apparent.
Many of these differences were related to climate and culture. There were also some things I had neglected to observe or photograph which I then listed and set out to check. My hypotheses were thus constantly being modified.

In observing and photographing the neighborhood, I used many of Zeisel's strategems described in the chapter, "Observing Physical Traces," and to quote Zeisel again:

"Observing physical traces means systematically looking at physical surroundings to find reflections of previous activity not produced in order to be measured by researchers. Traces may have been unconsciously left behind (for example, paths across a field), or they may be conscious changes people have made in their surroundings (for example, a curtain hung over an open doorway or a new wall built). From such traces environment-behavior researchers begin to infer how an environment got to be the way it is, what decisions its designers and builders made about the place, how people actually use it, how they feel toward their surroundings, and generally how that particular environment meets the needs of its users. Researchers also begin to form an idea of what people are like who use that place—their culture, their affiliations, the way they present themselves..."

"Sherlock Holmes, Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, and Lord Peter Wimsey are masters at detecting and correctly interpreting side effects of behavior—worn-away stair treads, a smudge on a door, or a glass wiped suspiciously clean of fingerprints. These examples represent three types of by-products: erosions, leftovers, and missing traces."

Ibid, p. 89, 101

Other physical traces observed were: "props" (things added by the users creating new opportunities for action), such as the basketball hoop in the Morton Avenue Housing installed in the parking lot; "separation," such as the "no trespassing" sign at the top of a stairway off Echo Park Avenue (resembling
a nearby public stairs); and "connections" such as the doorway cut through the garage of the house on the left, in the photograph below, to join it to the back porch of the house on the right (a shared laundry facility).

"Displays of Self" were also observed including "personalization," for example a collection of cacti on a window ledge; "identification," such as the "Ladies" sign on a front door (an inside joke); and unofficial "public messages," such as that in the photograph below:

![Photograph](image-url)

My vantage point as an observer varied a great deal according to my relationship to the people I observed. Having lived in the neighborhood many years ago, I still had some friends there; however, they did not represent a wide enough range of users for purposes of this thesis. I therefore established contact with as many other people as I could. However, the scope of the thesis limited this type of investigation.

In the on-site research I used photographs for recording "traces," and kept notes on observations made. There were simple questions I sometimes asked to spark conversation such as directions to streets or landmarks. In situations that were of particular architectural interest, such as building additions or alterations, I often just knocked on the inhabitant's door and made specific inquiries. The questions I asked were in part formulated before the interview, but also partly inspired by replies, using what Zeisel terms "Focused Interviews":

"In the focused-interview guide, the map is a set of topics, elements, patterns, and
relationships that the interviewer tentatively intends to cover. Adjustments to the guide during the interview are carried out by skillful use of the major focused-interview tool, the 'probe': the interviewer's prompting for further elaboration of an answer. An interviewer probes to find out how a respondent's definition of the situation differs from the hypothesized one; this information allows the interviewer to adjust and refine the guide. The researcher's goal is to determine which of the many hypothesized elements are important to the respondent and then to understand as thoroughly as possible what these elements mean in the respondent's definition of the situation.

To avoid misunderstandings, one should know that for surveys in which questions are posed with prescribed rigidity, a 'good interviewer' is one who adheres to the text and never develops initiative of his own. In a focused interview, the opposite is true."

Ibid, p. 138

There were some advantages I had which made the interviewing process easier. Telling interviewees that I had once lived in the neighborhood made me an "insider;" being female and dressing in styles similar to the local residents made me less suspicious; and one unanticipated advantage was the use of a bicycle in getting around the neighborhood (not having a car in Los Angeles is usually a severe handicap). Being so visible on a bicycle, many people came to know me by sight, and would greet me and stop to chat.

The process of refining the hypotheses continued and following the on-site research, analysis at a block level was undertaken. Four specific areas of Echo Park were selected for analysis, which were fairly well represented in the photographs, notes, and interviews. It was necessary to redraw and combine several maps, and the redrawing was also an experience in "indwelling." Following the establishment of the "guidelines" and "patterns" a design test was applied to determine their implications.

The next step, the scenario, would ideally generate concepts for redesign, resulting in a more developed site plan. In the case of an actual project the users would preferably be involved and the final stage in the dialogue between research and design would be a post-occupancy study, informing the architect for future research and design. As the closing
of Zeisel's book suggests:

"Research is a purposeful, systematic way to improve knowledge. Design can also contribute to a body of knowledge when designers commit themselves to share what they know, when they approach design problems as opportunities to learn what they do not know, and when they make design decisions that contribute to inquiry."

Ibid, p. 231
CHAPTER 4
Block Analyses/Guidelines
Analyses were done at the block level to discover the structure of the fabric of the neighborhood and develop guidelines ensuring continuity. These guidelines are the root of the structure of the fabric, and the patterns following are common themes that occur in varied combinations and relationships.

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Echo Park: a Description) the different building typologies: bungalow court "box" apartments, duplex, and single family houses are distributed across the neighborhood. The more dense forms (bungalow courts and "boxes") occur most frequently near the commercial areas of Sunset Boulevard and Echo Park Avenue and then become more disperse higher in the hills. The street front is thus a mix of many types of edges. Current trends in Los Angeles are pushing this area towards more dense typologies.

Four study areas were chosen with an attempt to include some of the diversity and some of the special features of the neighborhood, for example public pedestrian stairs. In studying maps and photographs of the areas, distinct continuities in the urban fabric began to emerge relating to: the percentage of land covered on each site by buildings; the direction of building masses; set backs; heights; semi-public accesses; views; and the visibility of greenery. Each of the four areas is described by photographs and four maps: building typologies; semi-public access and direction of entries; landscaping; and a map as key to the photographs. Information unable to be verified was omitted from the maps.

Following the analyses are the guidelines developed from the continuities observed. These continuities are part of a larger set of continuities concerning the totality of the built neighborhood of Echo Park.
Block Analyses
KEY

BUILDING TYPES
- single family house
- duplex
- multifamily dwellings

ENTRIES

LANDSCAPE: trees

PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS
Guidelines

1. A maximum of 40% of the lot may be built upon excluding semi-enclosed porches, terraces, balconies, and courtyards.

2. The major direction of the building masses must run perpendicular to the direction of the lot.

   Exceptions: - square buildings
   - corner lots with access on two sides
   - duplexes
   - last building in a bungalow court.

3. When two or more consecutive lots are acquired, buildings must not run across lot lines.

   Exceptions: - porches, terraces, and walled courtyards
   - buildings on the back half of the lot joined at no more than 1/4 the length of the lot or no more than two consecutive lots.

4. A two story building height is recommended. A maximum of three stories including parking at grade, and no more than half of the structures with three floors.
5. If more than one building is located on a lot, the order of height (if they are different heights) is from lowest at the front of the lot to highest at the back. For lots sloping downways from the street the order of height is reversed from that of above.

6. On sloping lots views must be conserved for each dwelling in at least one direction.

7. The minimum horizontal distance between buildings on a lot shall be determined by projecting a line with an angle of 45° from the grade line of the higher of the buildings, if one is higher (otherwise either building) to its intersect point on the lower building, as shown in the following examples, but in no case shall the distance be less than 9 feet. The maximum required separation for buildings of two or more storys shall be 18 feet.
8. The minimum vertical or horizontal transitional zone between the front property line and the floor of the dwelling must be 8 feet, as illustrated in the following examples:

- If vertical, a minimum dimension of 8 feet from grade to the first floor;
- A minimum dimension of 8 feet and if horizontal this zone must be landscaped or have a four foot wall;
- Or, some combination of both horizontal and vertical dimension totalling 8 feet.
9. When buildings are located within a horizontal distance of 8 feet of the front property line then an area at grade along the front property line, with minimum horizontal dimensions of 10 feet along the front property line and 8 feet perpendicular, must be provided free of buildings. This area is for landscaping and semi-public space. A building on a lot must not have a continuous edge along the front property line in excess of 40 feet, and with those buildings having a continuous edge of between 30 and 40 feet, tree plantings along the sidewalk where feasible shall be a requirement. The trees should be spaced approximately 10 to 20 feet apart and be of a minimum 3 inch calibre.

10. A minimum sideyard setback of 4'6", between the exterior walls of the building and the side property line must be provided for one story buildings. Buildings of two or more stories must have a minimum setback of 7' and 12' respectively, between the exterior walls of the buildings and the side property line. An exception to this requirement is that buildings may be built up to the side property line for up to a maximum of 20% of the length of the lot.

11. Minimum rear lot line setbacks, between the exterior walls of the buildings and the rear property line, are required as follows: one story building, 4'6"; two story buildings, 7'; and three story buildings, 12'.

Exceptions: - where public alleys are provided, garages, with or without dwellings above, may be built to the rear lot line; - where the rear lot line abuts on unused right-of-way or a park, buildings may be built to rear lot line.
12. A semi-public path must have landscaped and irrigated buffer zones separating the walkway from residential buildings. The minimum width of this buffer is three feet horizontally.

Exceptions: - if floor level of dwelling is a minimum of four feet above the level of the path.

13. Adjacent patios of neighboring dwelling units must have walls separating them of a minimum of six feet in height.

14. Patios and courtyards must have a minimum dimension of eight feet in each direction.

15. Private courtyards, terraces and sleeping porches must not be in the direct sight line of windows of other dwelling units unless they are more than 60 feet apart.
CHAPTER 5
Site Analyses
Site Analyses

PATTERNS

Using the methods described in Chapter 3, Research Methods, a compendium of Patterns was developed. "Patterns" in this usage describes characteristics of places and built elements of multi-unit sites observed in Echo Park. However also included are the multi-unit buildings of Gill and Schindler discussed in Chapter 2. These are excellent examples of site planning compatible with the context of Echo Park (one of these is in the neighborhood community of Silverlake on a steeply sloping lot) and their inclusion is intended to enrich the existing patterns of Echo Park while maintaining contextual continuity.

This chapter describes the patterns in terms of "needs" and "supports." Needs are the physiological, psychological, and social requirements for the well-being of the users related to site planning. Supports are the physical and spatial elements that can be designed to facilitate those needs.

The patterns are intended to be qualitative and suggestive. There are many possible ways of combining or modifying the elements of supports in addition to those described.

Following the "Patterns" is a description of the "Material Vocabulary" of Echo Park, composed of observations of some of the architectural forms, materials, and details in the neighborhood. This section also includes a description of landscaping materials and ambiance. These aspects of the neighborhood could in fact form the basis for two additional sets of "Guidelines" and "Patterns," for use in regulating development in Echo Park.
NEEDS

- a feeling of entering the communal domain
- separating oneself from the public
- a symbolic barrier to the "outsider"
- a sign or landmark to guests

SUPPORTS

- a change in light, level, or direction
- elements to walk through such as lintels, arches or posts
- symbolic elements connoting entry such as arches and arbors
ARCHED GATEWAY, ECHO PARK
ENTRY WITH ARBOR OF TWISTED TREES, ECHO PARK
NEEDS

- a place to pick up mail
- a place to put down packages
- a shelter from the sun or rain while waiting for a ride, talking to neighbors, or looking at mail
- a place to sit while waiting or conversing
- lighting at night so street address can be seen
- lighting so residents can find their way or see if anyone is waiting
ENTRY TO APARTMENT/CONDOMINIUMS, ECHO PARK

SUPPORTS

- mailboxes

- ledge or shelf by the mailbox

- building recesses, overhangs, trellises, trees, and arbors

- bench, low walls or steps wide enough to sit on

- light fixtures over address

- light fixture to illuminate waiting area
PATHS AND POCKETS

MANOLA APARTMENTS, R.M. SCHINDLER,
trees and balcony shade patio
walled garden opens to the street but wall is high enough to create privacy
child's toys

COURTYARD APARTMENTS, ECHO PARK

NEEDS

- privacy of windows adjacent to semi-public paths

SUPPORTS

- landscaped areas between paths and dwellings
- floors of adjacent dwellings higher than path level
- garden walls
NEEDS

- a variety of things to see, smell and touch along the semi-public path which give the site human scale, "inhabit" it and make the walk more interesting
SUPPORTS

- changes in: built and landscaped edges; paving patterns; shadow and light; closure and openness

- places looking out to the street

- selected views between walls of distant scenery and landmarks, for instance Echo Park Lake, or Downtown Los Angeles
NEEDS

- familiarity with other tenants to encourage communal cooperation and "defensible" space

- finding one's way at night

- sitting in the sun on a cool day

- sitting in the shade and breeze on a hot day

- sitting in a comfortable, protected spot, watching nearby activity without having to participate

SUPPORTS

- intersection of frequently used semi-public paths

- shared facilities such as mailboxes and laundry rooms

- low level lights along the path, directed at the pavement

CONFLUENCE OF PATHS, ECHO PARK
WOMEN'S CLUB, IRVING GILL, LA JOLLA

SUPPORTS

- benches, low walls, and steps with southern exposure

- benches, low walls, and steps under overhangs, trellises and trees; oriented toward summer breezes; pools and fountains

- space for chairs or benches off the semi-public path; something to back up to like a building or garden wall; belvederes next to paths on a hillside
NEEDS

- extending one's territory out into the shared domain, "claiming" and maintaining outdoor space

SUPPORTS

- space adjacent to private entries, defined on at least two sides by building edges, change in level, surface, low walls and screens, or overhangs
cul-de-sac allows this tenant space for an umbrella and table.
TERRACED GARDEN UNDER RESTORATION BY
OWNER/OCCUPANT, ECHO PARK

owner intends to connect to garden here from upper floor with a balcony and stairs

NEEDS

- growing things, feeling connected to the earth and seasons

SUPPORTS

- places of open ground, with partial or full sun, terraced slopes, raised plant beds
- room for potted plants on terraces
- water outlets and/or sprinklers
NEEDS

- space for small children to play near the house

- watching small children play

- informal areas, back spaces

- playing with messy things, potting plants, painting furniture, working on a bike

MORTON AVENUE HOUSING, ECHO PARK

SUPPORTS

- space near private entries with visibility from windows

- paved surface for wheeled toys

- places for sitting in the sun and shade

- water outlet with fountain attachment
NEEDS

- washing clothes in a place that is comfortable to work or wait

- drying clothes

- putting out the garbage

SUPPORTS

- sheltered place to sit and watch children, nearby but not in play area (see Lady Allen of Hurtwood's book, PLANNING FOR PLAY)

- some paved areas and some dirt visible from units, but not on path to front doors

- hose outlets
LAUNDRY, KENT STREET APARTMENT/ CONDOMINIUMS, ECHO PARK

- lighting for night time use

- lockable temporary storage. (These areas are particularly necessary if units do not have private garage spaces.)

- laundry rooms with natural ventilation

- place near entry in shade to sit and talk or read

- direct access to clothes drying area

- sunny spot with breeze, sheltered from roadway dust by location, trees, or walls (also visual screening from main entry)
APARTMENTS, ECHO PARK

- view to outside and small children's play areas

- clotheslines above paved surfaces and adjacent to storage area

- area for can collection or dumpsters

- screen of walls, board fences, or plantings
arch separates garage and service area from main dwellings

VIEW FROM SERVICE AREA, HORATIO WEST COURTS, IRVING GILL, SANTA MONICA
PRIVATE LANDINGS

NEEDS

- the feeling of entering a private territory, the "introduction" to someone's home

- visual privacy for the dwelling interior when the front door is opened

ENTRY, HORATIO WEST COURTS, IRVING GILL, SANTA MONICA
ENTRY, KENT STREET APARTMENTS/CONDOMINIUMS, ECHO PARK

SUPPORTS

- architectural elements connoting entry such as porches and awnings
- partial walls or screens
- level changes, change of direction
NEEDS

- shelter from the sun or rain while, for example, looking for keys, or waiting for someone to open the door

SUPPORTS

- roof over entry

- partial screening from strong sun exposure, for example, trellises and trees

- a shelf or ledge to put parcels on
NEEDS

- personalizing one's landing by, for example, displaying objects that say who one is, or how one wants the world to see them, differentiating one's place from others

SUPPORTS

- easily modifiable structures

- walls one can easily anchor constructions into

- wide ledges for anchoring constructions

- wide steps and ledges for displaying personal effects

2 1/2' wide entry balcony at end of path filled with plants and highly personalized (painted in polychrome also)

Wooden railings made it easy to attach lattice and window boxes
landing shared by owner-occupant and tenant, "ladies" sign and plants belong to tenant

SKYLIT LANDING, DELTA TERRACE, ECHO PARK
The only case of “personalization” at the entry in the 49 units of this development, resident remarked, “All the entries are so alike it’s like that story about going back to the wrong house at night and waking up with someone else’s wife.”

ENTRY, KENT STREET APARTMENT/CONDOMINIUMS,
ECHO PARK
NEEDS

- sitting by the door in a territory that is private with a view of the outside world

SUPPORTS

- bench or space for a chair in direction of best view next to the door, with a sense of a "back"

- partial protection using screens, low walls or railings
no room for bench here because of path to second door

BENCH WITH A VIEW OF THE PARK, ECHO PARK
NEEDS

- growing things to see, smell and feel, for a sense of connection to the natural world

SUPPORTS

- low walls wide enough for pots
- ample terrace space
NEEDS

- storage space for such items as bicycles, baby carts, grocery carts, and outside toys

SUPPORTS

- sufficient space adjacent to door not interfering with circulation or seating area (minimum total suggested storage space of about 15 square feet, with 5 feet minimum in one direction for bicycles)
THE EXTRA
ROOM

NEEDS

- to extend the living space outdoors without losing privacy in a dense urban setting
- the feeling of being outdoors, sensing (seeing, hearing, smelling) the outdoors
- a convenient and enjoyable place to relax
- a feeling of connection to the earth, for example, growing plants, watching them grow and change
- to expand the dwelling to accommodate a growing family, working space, or a change in lifestyle
SCOTT AVENUE, ECHO PARK

SUPPORTS

- patios, balconies, and courtyards, with direct access from the dwelling

- partial enclosure of outdoor spaces

- easily adaptable construction
TERRACE, KENT STREET APARTMENTS, ECHO PARK

NEEDS

- to watch outdoor activity from the dwelling unit

SUPPORTS

- balconies with space for a minimum of two chairs and a protected "back" to sit against (a balcony should have a minimum area of 16 square feet with a minimum dimension of 3 feet on one side)

- constructions for partial shade
temporary shading device

BALCONIES, ECHO PARK AVENUE
NEEDS

- space for growing plants to personalize one's environment, see the passing of time, feel and smell natural things

SUPPORTS

- walls and railings on balconies and other outdoor spaces wide enough for potted plants
- extra paved areas for planters or built-in plant beds in terraces and courtyards
- water outlets for watering plants
screened greenhouse on entry balcony

GREENHOUSE/BALCONY
NEEDS
-
- a place to dine or barbecue in the open

SUPPORTS
-
- balcony, terrace or court with room for table and four chairs and cooking (minimum area of 48 square feet with no less than 6 feet in any direction)

BALCONY, DELTA TERRACE, ECHO PARK
barbecuing in the only available open-air space for this unit
Trellis creates partial shade and allows for air movement

Translucent screen at eye level for light and privacy

Unpaved area for plants

PATIO, MANOLA APARTMENTS, R.M. SCHINDLER, SILVERLAKE

NEEDS

- a private place for sunning and sleeping

SUPPORTS

- spaces with sun and partial shade

- privacy from neighbors created by screening
  or placement of spaces

- walls with openings for cross ventilation
sleping porch, windows on four sides

BUNGALOW COURT, ECHO PARK
This roof might have been a terrace with a view of the park for the upper level unit.

ROOF, ECHO PARK AVENUE
"Sleeping basket" with trellis roof, above living room

COURTYARD, PUEBLO RIVERA COURTS, R.M.
SCHINDLER, LA JOLLA
NEEDS

- varying degrees of personal connection to the outside

SUPPORTS

- courtyard with arcades

- balconies with partial shade such as overhangs, awnings and trellises

- see also section on Windows
NEEDS

- a space for contemplation and retreat from the noise and bustle of the urban environment

SUPPORTS

- small courtyard off of only one quiet room

- a sedative environment with such landscaping as trees, shrubs, fountains or pools
sculptured stucco detailing
balconies and overhangs shade large windows

WINDOWS

NEEDS

- a sense of harmony of form and rhythm in the architecture of Echo Park

- human scale and "projected habitability" (see Bloomer and Moore's book, Body, Memory, Architecture)

SUPPORTS

- in Echo Park small windows run vertically

- larger areas of glazing are comprised of combinations of vertical sections, often three (see following diagrams)

- large windows have mullions dividing each sash
NEEDS

- choice of views

- varying needs in spaces from contained, intimate and private to open and airy

SUPPORTS

- windows which frame vistas (see "Zen View" in Alexander's PATTERN LANGUAGE)

- a variety of sizes and shapes of windows to create changes of light and openness in rooms, which also can prevent monotony
NEEDS

- ventilating the room

SUPPORTS

- operable windows on at least two sides of every room, except bathrooms, designed for a variety of positions (see following diagram)
1. cafe curtains for privacy, hot air out top

2. opens completely; curtains are difficult to install; shutters or blinds could help

3. can cause heat-gain on sunny side of dwellings

4. limited vertical movement; hot air can flow out top; the Middle Eastern device of vents above the window could aid air flow and create better circulation than windows alone

5. lots of choices of operation; common in kitchen where heat and odor are a problem

6. slides horizontally; no way to open top and bottom for air circulation

7. even curtains cannot make sliding glass doors private unless completely closed; no place for furniture; out of scale with windows in the context; large area of glass causes heat gain; usable only when connecting to completely private outdoor space with overhang
heat gain problem: window covered with tin-foil

WINDOW, SCOTT AVENUE, ECHO PARK

NEEDS

- looking out without glare

- feeling cool next to windows on the sunny side of the building

SUPPORTS

- overhangs, balconies, trellies, deep windows, "mosrabi," brise-soliels
WINDOW, KENT STREET APARTMENTS, ECHO PARK
WINDOW ON SEMI-PUBLIC PATH, ECHO PARK

"barrier": window covered with plywood

NEEDS

- feeling of inside privacy when windows are located near the street or a public path

SUPPORTS

- small windows, high sills, translucent glazing, brise soiles

- floor levels higher than path levels

- landscaped setbacks

- bedrooms and baths with natural ventilation, but should not have windows all the way to the floor unless opening into a completely private outdoor space (a common problem with sliding glass doors, compounded often by their being the sole source of ventilation)
COURT, RAMPART DISTRICT, LOS ANGELES

living room window screened by tree and level change
no protection from heat-gain or glare

drawn drapes: lack of privacy

FACADE, LAVETA TERRACE HOUSING, ECHO PARK
TWO TENANT RESPONSES TO HEAT AND GLARE

NEEDS

- growing plants (connection to nature)

SUPPORTS

- southern exposure with filtered light
- good ventilation
- in the case of window greenhouses the glazing of the interior opening to prevent heat gain in summer
- wide sills for pots or boxes
NEEDS

- hanging things on the wall

- placing furniture against the wall

SUPPORTS

- vertical windows rather than horizontal (see preceding diagrams, and Material Vocabulary); only doors need open all the way to the floor

- sills should be at least 14" from the floor

- some window sills in each room with a depth of at least 6" for displaying personal effects
The residential fabric of Echo Park comprises buildings of generally one and two stories height, and occasionally three, with a great deal of architectural variety and articulation. The building massing is complex with multi-unit buildings and although they may be basically "boxes," the buildings are embellished with balconies, exterior stairs, porches, stair towers and occasionally "miradors." "Court" plans may be simple, but are often complicated by adaptation to a slope.
The two common styles of architecture that have influenced the area are: California Craftsman and Spanish Colonial Revivalism (see Echo Park: A Description). The predominant materials of the Craftsman style are "stick and shingle." Spanish Colonial Revivalism, the more common style for duplexes and apartments, has a vocabulary which includes stucco or concrete, wood balconies and windows, wrought iron decorative railings and fixtures, and red tile roofs. Surfaces, for the latter style, are usually white (or sometimes vivid pastels) which reflect the light and heat. The quality in Los Angeles is much like the Mediterranean,
intense and axial. Even white walls take on a spectrum of colors, and shadows of plants and architectural details are crisp and emphatic.

Almost all of the properties in Echo Park are
greatly enriched by a profusion of shrubs and trees. Even small areas of open ground are a tangle of growth. This dialogue between the building forms and greenery is essential to the character of the neighborhood. Buildings not softened by landscaping are conspicuous in their bareness. Plants are a buffer from the heat and smog, integrate the building with the ground and neighboring structures, and even allow us to project "inhabitation" (see Bloomer and Moore, Body, Memory and Architecture).

On the right is a photograph of a dwelling in Echo Park that presents a hard edge to the street. Accompanying this photo is a sketch showing the addition of landscaping and a trellis covered roof terrace with a stairway linking the terrace to the landing on the second floor.
HARD STREET EDGE, ECHO PARK

IMPROVEMENTS
Gardens are also an important expression of personalization. The style and choice of materials often display the ethnicity of the occupants or reflect their image or feelings about their home and who they are.
ENTRY TO BASEMENT UNIT, ECHO PARK
Although Southern California is semi-arid, and in the last few years has had serious water shortages, the open hills in Echo Park abound with vegetation that receives little if any cultivation.

New gardens should make use of these hardy plant types, such as eucalyptus, cacti, yucca, and palms. Terraced and planted slopes also prevent erosion, a serious issue in Los Angeles communities where rain is infrequent but torrential.
TERRACED GARDEN BEING RESTORED BY OWNER/ OCCUPANT, ECHO PARK
Although the common pattern of garages on the street can create a "hard" pedestrian edge, the edges are softened by greenery. Many sites on steep hills present a tangle of landscaping along their paths up the hill, and balconies and terraces over garages are sometimes edged with plants giving a controlled but intense view of greenery as shown in the diagrams to the right.
DETAIL OF PRECEDING PHOTOGRAPH FROM UNDER THE TREE

GREEN EDGES SECTION

GREEN EDGES PLAN
The site used for the sketch problem was the fourth site in the Block Level Analyses, on the corner of Echo Park Avenue and Donaldson Street. The sketch problem was completed in two days. An additional day was taken to render the plan.
1. entry porch
2. balcony
3. courtyard
4. sleeping porch
The Scenario: A Test of the Design Sketch

In order to test the design sketch as a living environment in Echo Park a scenario was constructed. The use of scenarios as design tools is well documented and will not be elaborated upon here, other than to say that scenarios can be written in such a way that they easily enable the readers to empathize with the characters. Scenarios can provide readers with insights into the actions and thoughts of the characters that cannot be reflected in statistical analysis. The image of the human context is representable as is the built, and if future users cannot be on hand to participate in the design process the architect can inform him/herself through interviews, observation, and informal discussion with others in the neighborhood. These sources can also be invited to critique the design and scenario.

There are many possible frameworks for scenarios. The framework for the following scenario, in terms of timing, characters, and action was chosen specifically for the settings designed in the sketch problem. It seemed most appropriate to follow several groups of residents with different lifestyles through a short period of time, rather than for example, to chronicle one resident through the entire day.

The time of day, day of the week, and season, were chosen as being times of maximum occupation of outdoor and transitional indoor-outdoor spaces.

It was helpful in evaluating the sketch problem to imagine that the site and development represented in the sketch problem had been inhabited for thirty years. The advantage of this approach is that it both helps the
architect, using this type of design evaluation, understand the transformable nature of the particular environment under evaluation and aids him/her in making more realistic evaluations of the design sketch. The element of time and its concomitant effects is important in such design evaluations. The advantage of using thirty years is that substantial modifications would likely have occurred in that time. A projection of thirty years into the future would not be appropriate as one cannot reasonably predict lifestyles and technology that far ahead. An obvious disadvantage, however, of using thirty years of habitation of the site and development in the sketch problem, is that construction materials and techniques would relate to that of thirty years ago. However, for the wood framing and stucco construction proposed this would not represent major changes.

The hypothetical residents in the following scenario are a "collage" of people I have known over the years in Echo Park and surrounding neighborhoods, or interviewed during a summer of research in 1981. Since the public school data (1980) describe the ethnic composition of Echo Park as 70% Latino, with the remainder being Asian or Anglo, I have tried to reflect this distribution of ethnicity in the narrative. The living groups represented also reflect three typical situations in the neighborhood: single immigrant workers living together; a small family; and an extended family owning property jointly.

While it would be useful to go into further scenario development in an actual project, the scope of the thesis was limited. However, the scenario was sufficient to "inhabit" the areas concentrated on in the sketch problem. The scenario is preceded by a list and description of the hypothetical residents of the design sketch. Following the scenario is an evaluation of the sketch problem relating the scenario to the site. The numbers in parentheses in the scenario are keyed to the evaluation.
Scenario: The Residents

Unit A

Louis: Age 25, left El Salvador two years ago and came through Mexico to California and eventually Los Angeles. His sister here found him a place to live with a friend of hers from work, Juan. Louis works at an auto-body shop sanding cars, and like many immigrants from El Salvador does not have a working permit. He is consequently overworked and underpaid.

Carlos: Carlos is Louis' younger brother (22 years old). He left El Salvador 2 years ago and is presently working in the same place as Louis, spray painting.

Juan: Juan has been in Los Angeles for six years. He is 28 years old, and is married with a wife and children in Nicaragua. He sends most of what he earns home, and is hoping to become a citizen and send for them. He has a green card (acquired recently with the help of a lawyer) and works as bar-boy at the Hyatt Regency. He is planning on becoming a bartender soon, now that he has a working visa.

Jesus: Jesus is 19 years old. He has been in Los Angeles only a couple of months, and comes from Mexico City. He is looking for work, and does odd jobs as they come along. The apartment is really too small for a fourth person, even though the others are accustomed to much denser living situations than Anglo-Americans. Jesus is sleeping in the courtyard, and as it is summer the nights are warm and this is no problem. By fall he will probably have found another place.
Cindy: Cindy is 32 years old and expecting a baby. She is an actress and singer, and she and her husband Tom work in small theater productions and support themselves sporadically with television commercials.

Tom: Tom is 33 years old, and like a lot of other young actors came here from New York hoping to make enough money in television to have an easier lifestyle. He has recently auditioned for a couple of parts in the "soaps" and hopes that one of them may come through.
Carmen: A widow, 65 years old and mother of five children. She own the property, bought by her husband on a G.I. loan and paid for with his salary as a postman. She now lives on his pension and supplements that with some piece-work at home, sewing underarm protectors for ladies garments.

Jorge: Jorge (age 45) is Carmen's youngest brother, a bachelor, from Guadalajara. He is a visitor, looking for work, a musician, and may stay as long as a year or more.
Unit D

Alfred: Age 28, Carmen’s youngest son, who also works in the post office, and has been a mail carrier for about a year. He helps pay the mortgage on the property, and since his father died is the "head" of the family.

Terry: Age 25, the wife of Alfred. She was studying at the State College, but dropped out to marry Alfred, and now has two small children and works part time in a dress shop.

Freddy: Their son, age 4, just turning 5.

Peggy: Their daughter, age 3.
The Scenario

It is eleven o'clock on a hot Saturday morning, late June, in Echo Park. There is a haze of smog over the Civic Center and a faint, acrid odor of eucalyptus and sage from the hills. Young families pushing baby carriages have gone down to the Park to stroll around the lake and feel the coolness settling there beneath the trees. Listless teenagers paddle rented boats on the lake and ducks forage in among the lotus leaves.

Pioneer Market is bustling with Saturday shoppers. Louis and Carlos are pulling out of the crowded parking lot in Louis' lowered '69 Torino. Already sticky and hot, and with the bag of groceries between them on the seat, they sit far down in the front seat with all the windows open, cruising up Echo Park Avenue. They pass small storefronts and sweatshops along the street, and apartment buildings laced with trees and shrubs rising up the steep hills. The light is bright in spite of the smog, and the mid-day shadows are clear and crisp. The noise of the city is lost as they drive further from Sunset Boulevard.

Pulling up in front of the garage they discuss the dent in the right rear fender Carlos found coming out of the pool hall on Sixth last night. They decide to pound it out and Carlos goes to put the groceries away while Louis gets his tools.

Carlos walks around to the gate, stopping to see if anyone got letters from home. There is Carmen peering into her mailbox in her housedress, slippers on her swollen feet, and apron. She chides him for being late with the rent and he promises to bring it by in the afternoon. She invites him to her grandson's birthday party at two o'clock, keeping him there an agonizing ten minutes while she goes on about her grandchildren, the smog, and her arthritis. He meanwhile thinks he is lucky they are standing in the shade or the orange juice would defrost. Finally she ambles off and he dashes up the steps to his apartment. Juan is sitting on the porch reading a letter from his wife in Nicaragua before he catches the bus to go to work at the Hyatt. Carlos tosses him a can of Coors and runs to put the food away. Jesus is just coming into the kitchen from the courtyard as Carlos slams the refrigerator door. Jesus growls at him for making so much noise and Carlos laughs tossing him a beer saying "Here's a hair from the dog that bit you last night." They both laugh and then stop, listening quietly as the sound of singing floats over the wall.

Next door in her courtyard Cindy is watering the plants and singing a Kurt Weill song, a bit heavy and uncomfortable as the baby is due in two months. She and Tom have Carmen's permission to remodel the sleeping porch into a nursery and Tom is hammering and sawing in accompanyment to her song. She sprays the ferns and rosemary at the base of the wall and wets down the pavement. Turning off the hose
she coils it on the patio and steps out of her soaked skirt (9). She lays on the chaise in the sun with her feet up, her hand shading her eyes, and dozes off.

Coward comes bouncing out of the house, taking a noisy drink from his bowl in the patio (10) and puts his wet nose on Cindy's leg. She wakes with a start and gets up to pull the chaise back a bit so her face is in the shade and her legs are in the sun (11). She drifts off to sleep again with the faint moist odor of the water evaporating from the pavement (12).

Other scents are also in the air today. The rich spicy odor of meat and chilies is peppering the atmosphere at Carmen's. She and Terry are making tamales for the birthday party, spreading the masa on the corn husks, filling it with the warm meat and chilies and wrapping them in neat bundles to steam in an enormous pot on the stove.

Uncle Jorge is in the courtyard with Freddy and Peggy stringing crepe paper across the walls and hanging a pinata from the beam of the portico (13). Terry comes out into the courtyard to take a load of wash from Carmen's machine (14) and puts it in a basket. She carries it back through the house, out the front door, up the stairs, and up to the roof to hang in the breeze (15). She runs back down the stairs because she sees her sister driving up with her baby and knows that Carmen is up to her elbows in masa.

Terry's sister Francis parks on the street and comes up the back stairs (6) with her baby. Terry runs out the door and down the steps to help Francis with the things she is carrying, telling her that Alfred is not home yet as he has a new route, and she is just in time to help with the tamales. They go into Carmen's house to the kitchen and Freddy and Peggy run in, bumping into each other yelling "Tia Francis! Tia Francis!"

Evaluation of the Sketch Problem

(1) The communal mailbox gives neighbors a chance to meet.

(2) The mailbox and gateway are both of symbolic and practical importance (for gateways see Patterns). The mailbox is a link to the outside world, often in this area to family out of the country. A place to wait in the shade facilitates chance conversations or reading a letter one is impatient to open.

(3) Carmen's feet are bothering her because of arthritis. This raises the problems of elderly people living in such a hilly neighborhood. Ramps on these slopes would not be feasible. However, elderly persons might prefer to locate in lower units. There are a variety of needs for elderly persons in the neighborhood reflecting conditions such as living
alone or in a family group. Housing stock should be oriented towards this variety of needs.

(4) In this case the front porch turns out to be a good place to wait both for mail and buses (a bus stop is located in front of the site). This does raise some questions about the use of the balcony. There was a conflict in the design process here. It seemed most appropriate to have the front door porch with a completely covered roof, for the reasons outlined in Patterns. It is also a common pattern to have arches at the entry and a transition from light to dark. Lighter construction, semi-shade, and direct connection to the interior seemed more appropriate for the balcony. However, the porch is in a more protected location from the street and could have been more open. The balcony could be more easily converted into living space, if necessary, but only if it had more enclosure and privacy. Perhaps the lower half of the balcony could be a continuation of the stucco wall.

(5) The courtyard may serve as a "guestroom" in the summer.

(6) The two courtyards, being adjacent have no sound privacy.

(7) It would be useful to leave some of the courtyard unpaved for plants, perhaps with a raised bed. Hose outlets facilitate watering plants and cleaning the pavement.

(8) Location, accessibility, and construction make it practical to convert the sleeping porch to a nursery.

(9) All of the courtyards were designed with sight lines in mind (see Guidelines). A six foot tall person standing at a balcony or window at a vantage point above any of the courtyards can see, at most, only a small piece of the upper back wall.

(10) A courtyard can be a useful place to leave a pet unattended for the day, or a small child for a brief time.

(11) Choices of sun or shade allow the user to find locations most comfortable to him/her.

(12) Water evaporation is one way to cool the atmosphere, a small fountain would be a pleasant way to create a feeling of coolness in the courtyard.

(13) A courtyard can also be a pleasant informal setting for a party.
(14) A courtyard is useful as a service area.

(15) There is a circuitous path here, partly because the two household units, sharing facilities, were designed for privacy and separation. One way to shorten the route would be a door in the courtyard wall under the stairs.

(16) The back stairs are a necessary shortcut to the upper units. This emphasizes the importance of one mail box location, as residents of the upper units arriving by car will often use the back stairs.
EPILOGUE

In retrospect there are portions of the thesis that could have been expanded or refocused. The Block Level Analyses would have been more useful if undertaken while I was still in Los Angeles. For example, the mapping could have been more complete, and certain conditions could have been photographed specifically to illustrate the guidelines.

An attempt was made to organize the Design Test as a team effort with friends role-playing an architect, a developer, and users, but coordinating the participation of these assistants was not possible in the limited time available. The evaluation of the Design Test, in addition to the Scenario, may also have been undertaken by a "discretionary review board" role played by friends and advisors.

There were many stories omitted as not directly relevant: local anecdotes; incidents of corrupt real estate dealing; an interview with a city planner; and all the fascinating "life stories" I heard from people in Echo Park during the course of my research.


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