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# Architecture in Support of Citizenry

## Vernon DeMars and the Berkeley Student Union

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University students perennially use college campuses for social and political protest. For this reason it is important to understand how campus design conditions student activism as well as the ways architects have worked to build spaces to practice democracy and citizenship. This article turns to the administrative policies and campus planning activities leading up to the Free Speech Movement in 1964, which took place adjacent to the postwar student union building at the University of California, Berkeley. It argues that the student center and plaza, designed by the architects Vernon DeMars and Donald Hardison and landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, gave the postwar university citizenry a monumental space to practice democracy as it paved the way for civic-oriented student centers elsewhere.

### Introduction

Few can imagine the Free Speech Movement (FSM) of 1964 without Sproul Plaza (Figure 1). The space was and remains pedestrian oriented, tree-lined, graciously proportioned, and squarely in front of the University of California, Berkeley, campus administration building. It is near shops and cafés and is large enough to hold several thousand people. The space, however, was not a coincidental backdrop to the FSM, but instrumental in the movement's very formation. Its design is tied to Berkeley's storied past of student involvement in off-campus issues, the social education and citizenship training student union buildings promised, and the emerging career of Vernon DeMars and his colleagues, Donald Hardison and Lawrence Halprin.<sup>1</sup> In this way, the space and the events that took place in it during the 1960s result from several parallel histories, which defined the spatial politics of free speech as a conflict between student citizenship and university policies for student conduct (also known as "in loco parentis") and assumed architecture could facilitate citizenship and desirable public behavior.



**Figure 1.** A crowd filled upper Sproul Plaza on December 7, 1964. The student union buildings, designed by Vernon DeMars and Donald Hardison, appear in the background, with students hanging on the balcony of the California Memorial Union (later named after Martin Luther King Jr.) and the rooftops of the covered walkway and dining commons (later named after Cesar Chavez). (© Don Kechely, reproduced with permission from Free Speech Movement Photograph Collection, University Archives, Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley [UARC PIC 24B:1:23].)

In their 1957 competition entry, DeMars and Hardison used the typical midcentury program of student union buildings to shape the physical expression and social possibilities of the student union and plaza. Guided by their reverence for Piazza San Marco in Venice and semiplanned urban activities, they, and later Halprin, set out to build a civic space for the campus community. At the time, colleges across the United States were constructing new versions of student unions, by then a well-established building type, in an urgent response to postwar campus conditions: increasing student enrollment, inadequate old facilities, and available federal funding and loans for campus expansion. The proposed union at Berkeley thus matured alongside other campus centers while it addressed common postwar campus problems. The project by DeMars, Hardison, and Halprin, however, was especially visionary. It combined long-standing ideas about social education with the latest innovations concerning urbanism and civic participation. DeMars, a founding member of the regional planning and research organization Telesis, described his project as “a fragment of an urban situation with purposeful changes of pace, vista and materials at the scale and tempo necessary to evoke the experience of an urban situation,” which was to him “a synthesis of streetscape and plazascape, great building and small, shop and pub, terrace and mall.”<sup>2</sup> Complete with a large cafeteria, ballroom, lounge, bookstore, and bowling alley; rooms for billiards, art, band practice, and clubs; and two generous outdoor plazas, the complex served as a hub of student activities (Figure 2).

Programs typically found in union buildings supported normative social activities, which by the postwar period were likened to civic activities. The invocation of civics and citizenship supported the importance of democracy during the Cold War. At best, universities had



**Figure 2.** The plan of the student union complex designed by Vernon DeMars, Donald Hardison, and Lawrence Halprin with the lower plaza at its center and the upper (Sproul) plaza to the east (left). The latter extended the campus edge from Sather Gate (seen in the upper right corner) to the terminus of Telegraph Avenue (seen in the lower right corner). To the east is the front of the campus administration building, later named Sproul Hall. (Courtesy of the Vernon DeMars Collection, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Reproduced with permission.)

students practice democracy through student government, special-interest clubs, and school spirit. The thinking went that citizenship on campus happened when students participated in or led activities specific to college culture, not real-life politics. The distinction between cultural and political citizenship was important because the variety of “urban” spaces central to the architects’ design concept allowed for spontaneous and spirited student citizenship that included both normative (cultural) as well as undesirable (political) student activities. As a result, the project’s urban spaces advanced the issue of citizenry and citizenship on university campuses.

Scholars and university presidents, such as University of California President Clark Kerr, have compared universities to cities and the campus community to citizens, but the regulatory mechanisms that govern the citizenry and the built

environment of campus differ from those of North American cities.<sup>3</sup> Most important, universities, unlike cities, are governed by an administration, not elected officials; they embark on planning and development projects with little community input and establish policies that act in place of parental guidance. With these crucial differences in mind, the student union project and the designers gave students at Berkeley a monumental space that influenced the practice of democracy and citizenship on campus.

#### **Political Expression at the Campus Edge: Defining the Rules and Spaces for Citizenship**

The University of California, Berkeley, has a long history of student activism as well as rules established by the administration to govern student activities on campus. In an academic environment punctuated by protests during World War I, the Great Depression, and again during the 1950s, students regularly and fervently responded to conservative agendas, war, famine, labor injustices, and environmental concerns (to name only a few issues). Up until the FSM, the university administration restricted political expression on campus, closely regulated the activities of

compulsory and voluntary student organizations, and by and large viewed student self-government as a privilege.<sup>4</sup> These policies, an expression of *in loco parentis*, spatially defined free speech prior to 1964 and circumscribed how citizenship would be practiced on campus. When on campus, students needed permission to form organizations or to host lectures with off-campus speakers, for example. Without permission, or to voice unsanctioned opinions and ideas, students would gather off campus, often at its legal edge, just beyond the reach of the administration's rules.

Although the university had the tradition of student regulations, the rules tightened in the early twentieth century, when the University of California Regents formally limited the types of student gatherings.<sup>5</sup> Intending to manage the Association of Students of the University of California (ASUC), the Regents required students to obtain prior permission to meet, parade, or demonstrate on the grounds and in campus buildings and forbade them from promoting, organizing, or participating in unsanctioned activities, especially those that were political or religious in character. The Regents also prohibited any student or organization from circulating or posting flyers, handbills, and newspapers without prior consent.<sup>6</sup> The mandates maintained administrative oversight of student leaders and targeted nonconforming students who tended to voice and enact ideas outside of the sanctioned norm. Thus, the campus administration, using public tax dollars to run the school, willfully and carefully controlled student activities as it managed its public image. The enforcement of these rules placed unsanctioned gatherings and the ephemera associated with them off campus, but not necessarily out of sight. Any person or group seeking visibility set up their soapbox south of Sather Gate, which was, until the completion of the student union and Sproul Plaza, the

southern edge of campus (Figure 2, upper right corner).<sup>7</sup>

The formal approval, design, and construction of the postwar student union in the late 1950s made the closure of the northernmost block of Telegraph Avenue permanent, and subsequently students moved unsanctioned activities southward toward the new edge of campus, where the conflict over political expression and campus property erupted in 1964 (Figure 2, lower right corner). The migration from Sather Gate to Telegraph and Bancroft Avenues was not merely procedural: it reflected students' tenacity to persevere despite administrative and government power and, less obviously, the administration's efforts to teach students (at least on campus) normative modes of citizenship measured by club membership and athletic participation. Hidden from view were policy changes and capital campaigns overseen largely by Clark Kerr, who served as Berkeley's first chancellor and later the University of California's system-wide President. Kerr was not only an instrumental proponent of the new union building but also a key player framing the spatial politics of Sproul Plaza.

Attentive to the liberalization of university rules, Kerr entertained the idea of a "free speech island" or "speaker's corner," akin to the famous corner in London's Hyde Park.<sup>8</sup> Hyde Park's Speaker's Corner, born out of class struggles in nineteenth-century England, gave Londoners a sanctioned place to hold public meetings. The content of these meetings was tacitly regulated by the government through forms of free and sanctioned speech, giving the spatial model credence for college campus administrators.<sup>9</sup> Kerr imagined a similar space designed as part of the student union project. Thus, similar to England's Parks Regulations Act of 1872, the campus administration (acting as the government) sanctioned a small swath of campus

land for a special purpose. More important, however, was Kerr's vision for its placement. It would be within view of the administration building, making surveillance and casual regulation possible.<sup>10</sup>

In parallel, Kerr revised the rules of student conduct, commonly referred to as the "Kerr Directives."<sup>11</sup> The rules of conduct were meant to liberalize the permissible boundaries of student politics by allowing students and voluntary student organizations to take positions on off-campus issues as long as their actions did not violate any law or act in the name of the university.<sup>12</sup> Following this logic, the student government could not speak for the university or for the student body as a whole on issues unrelated to campus affairs because the university had established it for the purpose of conducting student affairs.<sup>13</sup> This scheme censored compulsory organizations with diverse political and religious membership, such as ASUC, but allowed voluntary organizations to be the locus of off-campus issues and debate.<sup>14</sup>

The "directives" and "speaker's corner" would have worked hand in hand. The "speaker's corner" or the "free speech island" involved transferring property along Bancroft Avenue from the city to the university, which redefined the physical space for political expression and dissent on campus and gave the university administration the ability to oversee speech. These actions by the administration, especially by Kerr, were a genuine attempt to govern student behavior and model civil society on campus. In the fall of 1960, however, the administration decided the written rules were liberal enough: it kept the city land and abandoned the island.<sup>15</sup> More pressing were the unsanctioned political activities of students and the blight of Telegraph Avenue, which the mechanisms of campus planning and the new student union building promised to change.

### Postwar Campus Planning and the Student Union Project

At Berkeley, postwar campus planners and visionaries borrowed from the ethos of urban renewal, declared areas around campus blighted, and plotted to expand the campus beyond its original borders. Key players in this effort were Kerr, Dean of the College of Environmental Design William Wurster, and Halprin, who built upon ideas published by the Alumni Association in a 1948 report called *Students at Berkeley, a Study of Their Extracurricular Activities with Suggestions for Improvements on and off Campus to Broaden Their Preparation for Citizenship*, of which the student union was an instrumental piece.<sup>16</sup> Benevolent and bureaucratically based, the planners used data collected from surveys and crafted maps of the inevitable campus expansion to the south. The rationale, of course, was soaring student enrollment, the dreadful appearance of campus, inadequate facilities for instruction and student leisure, and the promise of continued enrollment and continued access to federal dollars. Although the Alumni Association had already spelled out the plight of students and the campus context in 1948, it was not until Kerr became chancellor in 1952 that plans for any major capital improvements took shape. The irony of Kerr's efforts, while inspired by Halprin and indebted to Wurster, was that the planning ignored the possibility of unsanctioned political expression and explicitly assumed that a clean and safe campus environment would appease parents, subdue students, and instill normative social behavior and citizenship in the postwar period.

World War II, however, had irreversibly changed the social and educational priorities of colleges and the subsequent planning and construction of campus buildings. Wartime officer training programs and postwar college enrollments, in particular, pressed campus administrators at Berkeley to devise



**Figure 3.** Rendering of proposed student union building in 1948 showing a courtyard building beside a great plaza with Sather Gate in the distance. (Courtesy of the California Alumni Association. Originally published in California Alumni Association, *Students at Berkeley, a Study of Their Extracurricular Activities with Suggestions for Improvements on and off Campus to Broaden Their Preparation for Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California, 1948). Reproduced with permission.)

temporary solutions for dire needs and to plan for more permanent facilities. New curriculums and research endeavors played an important role in campus development, but the physical appearance of the campus and the social needs of students worried administrators at Berkeley most. With more students, Berkeley's lawns turned to dirt as students trespassed across them, trash cans filled up faster than maintenance crews could empty them, and commuter cars clogged every lot, path, and alley.<sup>17</sup> When it rained, students trudged across muddy paths to find refuge in the few interior spaces of the old union. The students also desired social spaces and amenities, such as ample and inexpensive lunchrooms, informal lounge spaces, and lockers, tailored to their needs.<sup>18</sup>

The publication *Students at Berkeley* made several notable assertions about the postwar campus

that stressed leisure activities, rather than scholastic ones, as the basis of a great university and the practice of citizenship by its graduates. A great university "will be concerned with the living problems of its students" and provide "many types of outdoor activities that absorb the free time of students."<sup>19</sup> Equating appropriate leisure with citizenship, *Students at Berkeley* went further to declare that a new student union could be the hearthstone of the university, and the center of social and cultural education.<sup>20</sup> Affirming what student union directors and campus administrators already believed, *Students at Berkeley* effectively made a new student union building the solution to postwar campus problems and the guarantor of campus citizenship.

The authors of *Students at Berkeley* illustrated the student union as an agglomeration of amenities that would fill the entire city block on Telegraph Avenue across from the administration building (Figure 3). The architectural program proposed by the Alumni Association, typical of its time, would include public telephones, writing rooms, lockers, a post office, candy and cigarette counters, a snack bar, a cafeteria, a ballroom, a student store, and a parking garage, as well as offices

**Figure 4.** Long Range Development Plan for the Berkeley Campus. (Courtesy of the Committee on Campus Planning [Donald McLaughlin, Clark Kerr, and William Wurster]. Originally published in Committee on Campus Planning, *Long Range Development Plan for the Berkeley Campus*, University of California, August 1956. Reproduced with permission.)

for student government, bowling alleys, a hobby shop, an auditorium, a chapel, an art gallery, and a radio station.<sup>21</sup> The new union would have nearly everything a student would want or need, including a courtyard, connecting loggia, and large pedestrian plaza south of Sather Gate. The site, to be acquired over several years, played into the university's vision for campus expansion and signaled the role that student union buildings played in facilitating the practice and physical presence of in loco parentis.

Although *Students at Berkeley* made the proposed union appear fairly resolved, the student union building and adjacent plaza would take years of dedicated administrative support and a long building campaign to complete. Kerr, one of many strong supporters, saw the student union as an essential and necessary improvement on campus.<sup>22</sup> Before Kerr had become chancellor of University of California Berkeley, the Office of Architects and Engineers had devised a Long Range Development Plan that formally proposed to expand the university southward. Couched in the belief that the university needed to sanitize and control blighted areas around the campus in order to tame the overall university environment, the plan touched on every institutional need, including classrooms, housing, office space, recreation, and parking. As one scholar put it in 1969, if the university were to be a knowledge factory, then the south campus area would be its company town.<sup>23</sup> Kerr's vision of campus kept the rational, technical, and efficient characteristics but cast aside the traditional Beaux-Arts buildings and planning strategies previous campus plans celebrated. Instead, Kerr embraced the idea of a comprehensive campus



environment with seamless spatial experiences described and designed by Halprin.<sup>24</sup>

To create a postwar vision for campus, Kerr borrowed from Halprin and enlisted Regent Donald McLaughlin and Dean Wurster. Rolled out as the *Long Range Development Plan for the Berkeley Campus* in 1956, the proposal clustered academic departments according to college or research unit (Figure 4). Thus, new engineering buildings joined older ones on the north side of campus, athletic facilities were proposed to the south, and humanities buildings remained in the center. The plan limited building footprints, and therefore

it set out to preserve open spaces for greenery, pathways, and plazas. New axial relationships, however, were absent from the plan. In their place were varied landscapes and groups of academic buildings.<sup>25</sup> The significance of Kerr's campus plan, influenced heavily by Wurster, was that a single building no longer served as the unit of planning. Instead, the plan linked several concerns involving the academic plan and student life. This shift away from older planning paradigms allowed Kerr to advance Wurster's concept of "environmental design," where academic and social needs trumped historic style or architectural unity.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, it positioned



**Figure 5.** Student proposal for the California Memorial Union. (Originally published in *Daily Californian*, January 4, 1955, 1. Reproduced with permission.)

contemporary modern architecture as a rationalized backdrop for the social life of campus. The logic of the Kerr-McLaughlin-Wurster plan meant that campus expansion would fulfill necessary functional relationships among academic units while introducing new exterior spaces for social recreation and demonstrations of citizenship.

The proposed postwar student union project fit into the scheme well. Nested within the master plan south of Sather Gate, the union promised functional and efficient spatial arrangements for students arriving to and departing from campus, as well as flexibility between indoor and outdoor student activities. In this way, the interior spaces of the building were to be as important as the adjacent exterior spaces. Thus, if student unions served as instruments for social education, as union proponents believed, then at Berkeley this education could take place outside on the plaza.

#### **Vernon DeMars's Position on Civic Space: Designing the Postwar Student Union**

DeMars framed the debate about the architecture of the proposed student union in lasting ways. As a newly minted professor in the Department of Architecture, he actively sought the project through the Office of Engineers and the chancellor. At one point, he would have given his "remaining eye and tooth to land the project" and "sweat blood to see it through."<sup>27</sup> He later professed his interest, qualifications, connections,



**Figure 6.** Vernon DeMars, Donald Hardison, and Lawrence Halprin's vision for the student center bears resemblance to earlier published proposals. It contains several discrete buildings, covered walkways, and pedestrian plazas. (Originally published in *California Monthly*, January 1958, cover. Reproduced with permission.)

and availability during the summer months for travel and research and described to Kerr how he could form several professional associations with architects Ernest Kump, Joseph Esherick, and Wurster.<sup>28</sup> By assuring DeMars that he would be considered alongside other qualified professionals, Kerr kept him at bay.<sup>29</sup> Undeterred, DeMars nurtured his interest by offering studios that focused on the design of a student center.<sup>30</sup>

The studios led by DeMars produced several student-generated proposals, one of which was developed and built as a model over a winter break and displayed in the lobby of a prominent academic building on campus.<sup>31</sup> The school paper later featured a project by students Richard Hanna and James Hastings and celebrated its promise

as a viable proposal (Figure 5).<sup>32</sup> The published proposal broke the major programmatic elements into a low-rise building with a courtyard, an office tower, and a theater. Covered walkways linked the exterior spaces to the interior and tied the composition of buildings together. Hanna and Hastings's proposal of 1955 shared formal ideas present in DeMars and Hardison's 1957 competition entry, specifically the discrete buildings for student offices, the theater, ballroom, and dining commons, as well as exterior covered passages that connected buildings (Figure 6).

Up until this point, DeMars's credentials as a designer had been based on a mixture of teaching and professional practice. While teaching as a visiting professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, DeMars similarly offered an architecture studio that addressed a real architectural problem he later designed and built himself. He had also tackled the design of a theater that involved a large-scale

auditorium.<sup>33</sup> By the time DeMars joined the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley in 1951, he had a wide range of professional experiences that cemented his propensity to think locally and expansively about community and the grandeur of civic centers.

Between 1936 and 1942, DeMars served as District Architect for the Farm Security Administration regional office in San Francisco. In this capacity, DeMars designed and constructed schools, clinics, community centers, and affordable housing for migrant farmworkers in rural areas and established research in low-cost housing and communities with colleagues Burton Cairns, Garret Eckbo, and planners such as Francis Violic. In 1943, he served as the Chief of Housing Standards for the National Housing Agency in Washington, DC. During this time, DeMars helped establish Telesis, a city and regional planning organization dedicated to the promotion and popularization of regional planning, research, and individual anonymity amid team efforts.<sup>34</sup> In 1951 DeMars proposed plans for the development of Diamond Heights in San Francisco, an unprecedented middle-income mixed-use development, and in 1957 collaborated with Hardison on the design of row housing in Richmond, California.<sup>35</sup> DeMars's design approach grew out of these experiences. Sensitive to climate and human inhabitation, he sought work that bridged housing, neighborhood design, and civic spaces.

Urban renewal and large-scale planning projects were afoot at this time as well. DeMars would have been aware of older massive development projects, such as Rockefeller Center, and projects that were contemporaneous to his practice, such as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City. Both had the financial backing of John D. Rockefeller, but the latter used government initiatives to claim and clear a swath of New York's Westside slums for what visionaries hoped would be the world's most

concentrated and extensive performing arts district.<sup>36</sup> To accomplish this, the design needed to bind several performing arts institutions together and did so through classically inspired modern buildings, a central plaza, underground parking, and covered passageways. These urban maneuvers, spanning three city blocks, allowed the architectural firm of Harrison and Abramovitz to create a completely new form of civic space. The key was that civic spaces like these were imagined as better than those of the previous era. Moreover, Lincoln Center's plaza had light and air, and the spaces were cultural rather than governmental. The student union at Berkeley would borrow not only the site-planning logic of Lincoln Center but also the social and convivial spaces implied by its cultural program. In this way, Berkeley's student government would not dominate the design, which would instead emphasize school pride and a social spirit.

DeMars's own practice dealt with large-scale urban projects. In partnership with Donald Ray, DeMars studied and proposed numerous civic centers, in downtown Richmond and San Jose, California, for example, that combined housing, office space, retail, and urban environments. Much like University of California Berkeley's student center, these projects envisioned people strolling through public plazas, enjoying food and drink outside but adjacent to work environments inside. Plazas, colonnades, and pedestrian bridges gave coherence to the building ensembles.<sup>37</sup> In this way, DeMars's concurrent projects renewed urban areas and imbued them with a reverence for bustling city centers, where citizenship was seen and practiced collectively. Berkeley's student union and plaza reflected this civic optimism.

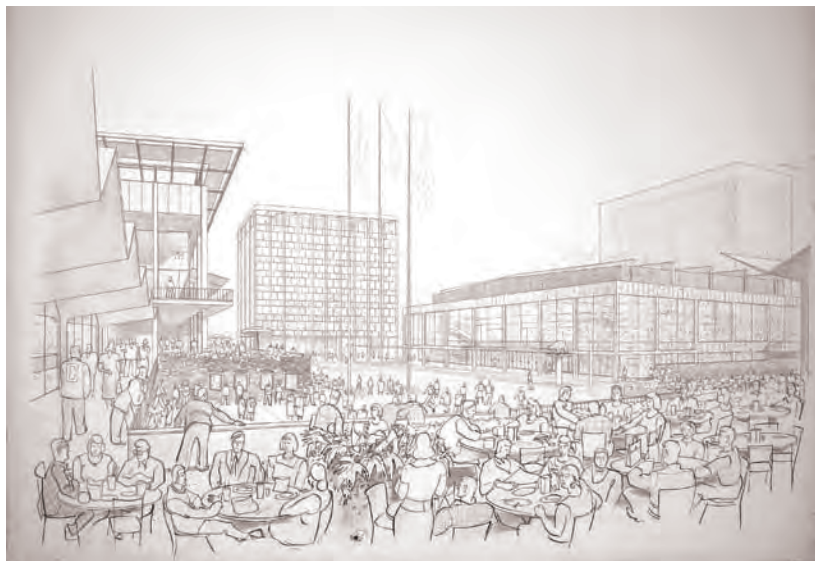
Using the mechanisms of urban renewal, the postwar student union project at Berkeley took over an entire city block, which the university had bought and cleared of local bars, cafés, and stores.<sup>38</sup> By 1961, with the bulk of

the complex complete, the student union's interior passages and exterior covered walkways tied the buildings together, framed a large pedestrian plaza, and defined the edge of another plaza in front of the administration building. Modern interpretations of classical motifs established aesthetic unity, and similar to other large-scale urban renewal projects, the complex had underground parking that knit the buildings and spaces into a continuous and varied set of experiences.

The architectural gem was the Memorial Union building. Built of a concrete frame with a form reminiscent of a Greek temple, it housed the student bookstore, pub, lounge, exhibition space, ballroom, meeting rooms, memorial chapel, roof garden, and spaces for billiards, bowling, table tennis, and crafts. Although this building symbolized the union as a whole, other buildings completed the program. One two-story building with an undulating concrete roof contained the cafeteria, kitchen, and private dining rooms. A tower housed student and athletic offices, while the last structure contained a performing arts center that seated audiences of 500 and 2,000.<sup>39</sup> Early drawings show that DeMars and Hardison used floor materials to designate major pedestrian thoroughfares, similar to paving patterns used on city sidewalks or shopping malls. Describing the paving patterns as "carpet," DeMars envisioned students walking from the bookstore past the billiards and game room to the project room on their way to the cafeteria, all inside the building.<sup>40</sup> In form and diagram, the student union project, while diverse programatically, was made legible through circulation, building materials, and lines of sight between spaces.

The most celebrated part of the project, however, was the lower, central plaza. It was here that DeMars and Hardison envisioned the pulse of student life (Figure 7). With the lounge, dining terrace, and pub activities spilling out and over the





**Figure 7.** Vernon DeMars and Donald Hardison depicted students as leisurely citizens on the dining terrace overlooking the lower plaza, the bear sculpture, and myriad leisure activities. The California Memorial Union (later renamed the Martin Luther King Jr. Union) is on the left, while the student office tower, Eshleman Hall, and Zellerbach Auditorium are center and right. A covered canopy and bridge (far right) thread the buildings together, circa 1958. (Courtesy of the Vernon DeMars Collection, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley. Reproduced with permission.)

space, it served as an outdoor theater for casual spectators. Concerts, dance performances, academic festivals, and impromptu rallies at the foot of a sculpture of Berkeley's bear mascot could take place here and be seen and heard by nearly anyone using the complex. As the architects hoped, such activities would solidify school spirit and their vision of campus citizenship.

By comparing the student union to Piazza San Marco, DeMars and Hardison suggested that citizenship would be modeled on Renaissance ideals, civic space, and architecture. DeMars understood that the residents of Venice visibly practiced citizenship in the great main piazza, where deliberation and discussion took place. Thus, he imagined that the large lower plaza at Berkeley would be an outdoor gathering place for all of its citizen-students. He and Hardison gathered the main "civic" buildings of campus around the plaza and included

a bear sculpture, which, like Saint Mark atop the basilica in the Venetian piazza, blessed the campus.<sup>41</sup> With these parallels between the two plazas, DeMars and Hardison sought to cast the union as an environment for modern citizenry where students would deliberate and discuss while they ate, drank, and participated in the daily activities of college life.

The designer of the lower and the upper plazas was Halprin, who had worked on Berkeley's master plan in the early 1950s and consequently shaped Kerr's *Long Range Development Plan for the Berkeley Campus* and many features of the student union complex. He had, for example, formally established the need for a pedestrian plaza and the importance of landscape design before DeMars and Hardison competed in the student union design competition.<sup>42</sup> He had also articulated his notion of a "total environment," a concept he would further in the 1960s through his work and writings, by stressing the importance of using existing landforms along circulation paths, plantings, outdoor meeting places, and architecture for the campus design and the student union project.<sup>43</sup>

For the student union, Halprin designed the pedestrian mall to have an alley of sycamore trees that connected the old edge of campus

at Sather Gate to the new edge of campus at Telegraph Avenue. He included a modest fountain to the side of the alley but on axis with the administration building and steps to the lower plaza. The lower plaza, which was constructed on top of the union's underground parking garage, had raised concrete planters with olive trees and wooden benches. It was similar to the upper plaza, in that Halprin used exposed aggregate concrete pavers with brick expansion joints to establish an orthogonal grid. Both spaces had informational kiosks, lighting standards, and perimeter seating and a common material palette of concrete, brick, and wood.

Recontextualized in is his 1963 book, *Cities*, the plazas of the student union served as the foundation for Halprin's early ideas about cities and city design. It gave credence to the use of kiosks, benches, lighting, and water features, as well as paving patterns in dedicated pedestrian plazas.<sup>44</sup> In this way, it was his historical survey of cities portrayed in his book, including his work at Berkeley, that informed his approach to later projects such as Ghirardelli Square, Nicollet Mall, and Portland's downtown open-space sequence, which were part of the postwar pedestrianization of cities.<sup>45</sup> When the architectural critic Allen Temko criticized the Berkeley project as "planned chaos" and "dogmatic antidogmatism," DeMars and Hardison relied on their understanding of medieval cities by explaining that the "continuum of shelters and terraces filling the end of the square like stalls and booths in a great market" was deliberate.<sup>46</sup> Halprin, however, turned Temko's criticism of the project into a well-deserved compliment. In a letter to DeMars, Halprin wrote that "planned chaos" accurately described "the modern approach to compositions." In his view, the project was "deliberately city-like" and an "accidental or semi-planned situation" in that it contained elements of cities and of modern city planning.<sup>47</sup> It supported Halprin's emerging theory of

landscape and urban design, which turned toward historic precedents as it abstracted natural forms, integrated contemporary social needs and materials, and harnessed modern planning processes.<sup>48</sup> In this way, the student union plazas allowed Halprin to test his ideas alongside those of DeMars and Hardison. Considered as a total environment, the designers created civic spaces that served as the principal and monumental entrance to the university, which FSM activists soon coveted.

### Design, Citizenry, and “In Loco Parentis”

The conflict over campus and free speech that led to the FSM, as well as the political dimensions of the movement itself, has been chronicled by scholars, firsthand observers, and filmmakers.<sup>49</sup> Less understood are the spatial territories claimed by student activists on Sproul Plaza and the student union building.<sup>50</sup> Without a sanctioned “speaker’s corner” or “free speech island” students used the plazas and parts of the union to express unsanctioned political ideas. After students faced pressure from the administration to stop political activities in the fall of 1964, students openly (and defiantly) disseminated information from tables set on the plaza near the base of the union building and soon sustained a sit-in around a police car for several days. Students also carried out hunger strikes at the base of the union and used union balconies and interiors to organize, observe, and document campus activism. For much of the movement in 1964 and 1965, the administration building and its interiors figured prominently in the story, but the student union, which stood within a few hundred feet of it, and the postwar plaza between the two were the visible epicenter of student activity, democracy, and citizenship (Figure 8).

DeMars, Hardison, Halprin, and the faculty at Berkeley who drafted the Student Center Competition brief could not have predicted the FSM, but the student center and its plazas



**Figure 8.** View of crowd in Sproul Plaza, with tables and the student union in background, November 1964. (Courtesy of the Free Speech Movement Photograph Collection, University Archives, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley [UARC PIC 24B:110]. Reproduced with permission.)

proved foundational for both cultural and political citizenship on campus at a crucial point in history.<sup>51</sup> It seems that DeMars, who taught architecture at Berkeley, understood the campus citizenry better than the administration, and that Halprin, who designed civic spaces elsewhere, joined DeMars and Hardison in creating a civic environment for Berkeley’s campus. The project developed over the course of a decade and at key moments in time included student input: in 1948 under the direction of the Alumni Association and throughout the 1950s under the direction of DeMars in his architecture studios. The proximity of DeMars and Halprin to the student body as design educators should not be overlooked. The collaborations between faculty and students, of which the student union is an example, and the pedagogical positions of faculty in the College of Environmental Design at Berkeley point toward the participatory design movement of the 1960s. It was during this time that the faculty and students became acutely aware of social and environmental problems and saw environmental design and

participation as a way forward, and as a form of citizenship.<sup>52</sup>

Even though the student union project bears resemblance to notable civic spaces of the time and came to fruition as many other university campuses were building new student unions, Berkeley’s student center gave union proponents and student union architects an architectural model to follow.<sup>53</sup> The project is tied to the vision of its architects, who had designed vibrant urban centers, and to an institution of higher education that believed, by virtue of its institutional actions, that architecture and the built environment influenced student behavior. Kerr and his colleagues abandoned their “free speech island” only because architecture contained the potential to teach citizenship. And it did. Students took cues from the student union buildings and Sproul Plaza—the size, historical references, placement, and didactic content—and exercised their civic duty and right to free speech. DeMars, Hardison, and Halprin may not have foreseen the importance of the student union and plaza for the FSM, but they understood civic space and which ingredients were necessary to bring it to life.

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### Notes

- 1 For Berkeley's storied history, see Carroll Brentano, "The Two Berkeleys: City and University through 125 Years," *Minerva* 33 (1995): 361–71; and Don Mitchell, "Iconography and Locational Conflict from the Underside: Free Speech, People's Park, and the Politics of Homelessness in Berkeley, California," *Political Geography* 11, no. 2 (March 1992): 152–69. For the social training unions promised, see Clare Robinson, "Student Union: The Architecture and Social Design of Postwar Campus Community Centers in California" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2012).
- 2 Paul Heyer, *Architects on Architecture: New Directions in America* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), 101.
- 3 For metaphors and discussions of campuses as cities, see Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Paul Venable Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984); and, more recently, Sharon Haar, *The City as Campus: Urbanism and Higher Education in Chicago* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

- Press, 2011).
- 4 For a concise summary, see Peter Van Houten and Edward L. Barrett, eds., *Berkeley and Its Students: Days of Conflict, Years of Change, 1945–1970* (Berkeley: Berkeley Public Policy Press, 2003).
  - 5 Rules governing political expression changed in 1938 when the Regents severely limited the types of student activities permitted on campus. See *ibid.*, 53; and the Clark Kerr Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley carton (c) 4, folder (f) 28 (hereafter cited as "Kerr Papers").
  - 6 Kerr Papers [carton 5f12].
  - 7 See discussion in Van Houten and Barrett, *Berkeley and Its Students* (note 4), 51–111.
  - 8 Cabinet meeting minutes from Spring and Fall 1960 (Kerr Papers [f18c66]).
  - 9 For history and analysis of free speech at Hyde Park, see published work by John Michael Roberts, especially "Expressive Free Speech, the State and the Public Sphere: A Bakhtin-Deleuzian Analysis of 'Public Address' at Hyde Park," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural, and Political Protest* 7, no. 2 (2008): 101–19.
  - 10 Kerr was not the only university president to imagine a sanctioned "free speech" space within view and earshot of campus administrators, nor was this the first time in history "free speech" would reach the ears of those in charge.
  - 11 See "The Kerr Directives," reprinted in Van Houten and Barrett, *Berkeley and Its Students* (note 4), 74–77; Kerr Papers [carton 5f12]; Ray Colvig, *Turning Points and Ironies: Issues and Events—Berkeley 1959–1967* (Berkeley: Berkeley Public Policy Press, 2004), 17–18; and Clark Kerr, *The Gold and the Blue*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
  - 12 "Statement of Student Rights by President Clark Kerr," May 15, 1960 (Kerr Papers [carton 4f21]), later published in Van Houten and Barrett, *Berkeley and Its Students* (note 4), 153–55.
  - 13 *Ibid.*
  - 14 Note that membership to the Association of Students at the University of California (ASUC) was at times voluntary, but by the mid-twentieth century, the organization levied mandatory fees for student activities, including athletics and the student union building campaign, and therefore membership became compulsory.
  - 15 Cabinet meeting minutes from Spring and Fall 1960 (Kerr Papers [f18c66]).
  - 16 California Alumni Association, *Students at Berkeley, a Study of Their Extracurricular Activities with Suggestions for Improvements on and off Campus to Broaden Their Preparation for Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California, 1948).
  - 17 *Ibid.*, 145–64.
  - 18 *Ibid.*
  - 19 *Ibid.*, 9.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, 83–84.
  - 21 *Ibid.*, 96.
  - 22 See Kerr, *The Gold and the Blue* (note 11), 90–110.
  - 23 R. Scheer, "The Battle of Berkeley: Dialectics of Confrontation," *Ramparts* 8, no. 2 (August 1969): 42–53.
  - 24 Landscape architect Lawrence Halprin informed Kerr of this concept. Under the direction of the UC Regents, Halprin drafted a comprehensive campus plan in 1954. Rejected by the Office of Architects and Engineers, it was picked up by Kerr, who then understood the "total environment" as an imperative for the campus community. The crux of this type of environment lay in the interstitial spaces between buildings—paths, walkways, parking lots, and plazas—and in student life. For these reasons, courtyards, plazas, and benches became what Kerr, faculty, and administrators discussed when they sought to foster socialization on campus. See Landscape Subcommittee, "Program of Action," revised March 15, 1954; "Preliminary Report on the Landscape Plan," September 1954; and Lawrence Halprin's preliminary landscape plan (Kerr Papers [carton 3F12]).
  - 25 Clark Kerr, "The Berkeley Campus Plan," *California Monthly*, October 1956, 24–25.
  - 26 Clark Kerr, "William Wurster: Master Architect of the Holistic View of Environmental Design," in *Design on the Edge: A Century of Teaching Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley*, eds. Waverly Lowell, Elizabeth Byrne, and Betsy Frederick-Rothwell (Berkeley: College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley, 2009), 71–72.
  - 27 Letter to Bob [Robert] Evans, December 12, 1952, Vernon DeMars Collection, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter cited as "DeMars Collection").
  - 28 Letter from DeMars to Clark Kerr, June 2, 1953, DeMars Collection.
  - 29 Letter from Clark Kerr, June 12, 1953, in response to DeMars's letter, June 2, 1953, DeMars Collection.
  - 30 *The Daily Californian* (May 1953) reported student design proposals from DeMars's studio, but he began teaching the problem as early as 1950 (Facility list for the University of California Union Building [studio assignment], DeMars Collection).
  - 31 Vernon DeMars, *A Life in Architecture: Indian Dancing, Migrant Housing, Telesis, Design for Urban Living, Theater, Teaching, an Oral History* (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, 1992), 338–9; and Shirley Murphy, "New Student Union Model to be Unveiled in Wheeler," *Daily Californian*, January 4, 1955, 1.
  - 32 *Daily Californian*, January 7, 1955, 1–S.
  - 33 DeMars, *A Life in Architecture* (note 31), 337.
  - 34 "Telesis," *Architectural Record* 88, no. 4 (1940): 69–70; "A Group of Young California Architects, Regional Planners, Landscape Architects, Industrial Designers Ask the Question, 'Is This the Best We Can Do?'" *California Arts and Architecture* 57 (1940): 20–21; and Harry Sanders, "Space for Living: A Challenge by Telesis," *Architect and Engineer* 142 (August 1940): 6–7, 58d.
  - 35 Richard Brandt, "San Francisco's Diamond Heights: Urban Renewal and the Modernist City," *Journal of Planning History* 12, no. 2 (2012): 133–53; and Matthew Gordon Lasner, "Architect as Developer and the Postwar U.S. Apartment, 1945–1960," *Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum* 21, no. 1 (2014): 27–55.
  - 36 Richard Miller, "Lincoln Center: A New Kind of Institution," *Architectural Forum*, August 1958, 74–77. See also Peter Allen, "A Space for

- Living: Region and Nature in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1939–1969.” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2009).
- 37 See plans and illustrations of San Jose, Richmond, and San Francisco’s Embarcadero Center in the DeMars Collection.
- 38 The visions and processes of urban renewal guided the administration’s efforts to purchase land and expand the campus southward. Initial renderings of this expansion appear in Berkeley’s publication, *Students at Berkeley* (note 16). University of California Berkeley’s comprehensive plan of 1956 is another milestone. See Kerr, “The Berkeley Campus Plan” (note 25); and William Würster, “Campus Planning,” *Architectural Record*, September 1959. The Bancroft Library contains volumes of archival material, but Peter Allen offers the most succinct summary of Berkeley’s campus expansion in “The End of Modernism? People’s Park, Urban Renewal, and Community Design,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no. 3 (September 2011): 354–74.
- 39 Vernon DeMars and Donald Hardison, Associated Architects, *The Winning Design in a Competition for a Student Center on the Berkeley Campus for the University of California* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1957).
- 40 “Paraboloids for a Pedestrian City,” *Western Architect and Engineer*, September 1959, 4–5.
- 41 DeMars Collection.
- 42 “A Preliminary Report on the Landscape Plan, University of California, Berkeley Campus,” September 1954, 1–2 (Kerr Papers).
- 43 Landscape Subcommittee, “Program of Action,” revised March 15, 1954, and “Preliminary Report on the Landscape Plan,” September 1954 (Kerr Papers [carton 3 F12]).
- 44 See Lawrence Halprin, *Cities* (New York: Reinhold, 1963), esp. 53, 73, and 108.
- 45 For discussions of Halprin’s early work and professional significance, see Randy Gragg, ed., *Where the Revolution Began: Lawrence and Anna Halprin and the Reinvention of Public Space* (Washington, DC: Spacemaker Press, 2009); and Alison Hirsch, *City Choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in Urban Renewal America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). For the pedestrianization of cities, see, for example, David Smiley, *Pedestrian Modern: Shopping and American Architecture, 1925–1956* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); and Victor Gruen’s classic book, *The Heart of Our Cities: The Urban Crisis: Diagnosis and Cure* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964).
- 46 Alan Temko, “Planned Chaos and the Piazza,” and Vernon DeMars and Donald Hardison’s official response, *Architectural Forum*, October 1961, 112–17.
- 47 Letter from Lawrence Halprin to Vernon DeMars regarding Alan Temko’s criticism, October 19, 1961 (DeMars Collection).
- 48 Halprin, *Cities* (note 44).
- 49 See Robert Cohen, *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Neil Smelser, *Reflections on the University of California: From the Free Speech Movement to the Global University* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); and the documentary film *Berkeley in the Sixties*, directed by Mark Kitchell (P.O.V. Theatrical Films, 1990).
- 50 Donald Mitchel, in his book *Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford, 2003), examines the spatial implications of the FSM.
- 51 For the competition brief, see *Program of Competition, Student Center, University of California, Berkeley Campus* (Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley, 1957).
- 52 Alison Hirsch, “Scoring the Participatory City: Lawrence (&Anna) Halprin’s Take Part Process,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 64, no. 2 (2011): 127–40; Mario Comario, “Community Design: Idealism and Entrepreneurship,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 1, no. 4 (December 1984): 227–43; and essays published in *Design on the Edge* (note 26), such as “Discussion Draft of the College Plan” (83–86) and “People’s Park: An Experiment in Collaborative Design” (151–53).
- 53 Texas A&M and the University of Florida introduced new outdoor civic spaces in unions during the postwar period.