

The Bateson Building, Sacramento, California, 1977–81, and the Design of a New Age State

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E. F. Schumacher said this summer, “Learn to distinguish between unity and uniformity—between God and hell.” That abouts summs [*sic*] up the 20th Century problem. And my confidence in your administration.

—**Stewart Brand**, letter to Governor Edmund G. (Jerry) Brown, 1975¹

There is no such thing as a New Age politics. Ask yourself, would you like to work in the environment that government is in? Have you even gone into government buildings? Have you ever spent time in places like Washington or Sacramento?

—**Sim Van der Ryn**, California state architect, talk to the Lindisfarne Fellows, New York, 1978²

In Sacramento, the capital of California, a new midtown government administration building, designated “Site 1-A” during design and construction from 1977 to 1981, was named at its opening ceremony for anthropologist and cyberneticist Gregory Bateson (Figure 1).³ It was commissioned following the narrow 1975 electoral victory of the thirty-six-year-old Governor Jerry Brown, and the building is acknowledged as “the first large-scale building to embody what we now call sustainable architecture.”⁴ It was referred to as “climate modulating” at the time, and the very word *sustainable* acquired early currency among its designers during construction.⁵ It was intended as a showcase for ecological design, integrated into what we might now describe as policies of “resilience,” demonstrating national leadership in

an America newly attentive, since President Richard Nixon’s 1970 signing of the National Environmental Policy Act, to the nation-building potential of the environment.⁶ Yet the building’s place in history remains unclear. Why?

By examining the Bateson Building and the moment of which it was a part, this article explores some origins of sustainability, before it became normative as a technically verifiable, market-oriented response to environmental concerns integrated into building production. The Bateson Building belonged to a moment of big ecology, so to speak—a convergence of cybernetics, human ecology, “appropriate technology,” and reformist government, as the Golden State was reimaged once again as a state of exception, possibly as an “ecotopia” of the sort projected in Ernest Callenbach’s best-selling 1975 science fiction novel.⁷ That moment was hugely ambitious, so that one project (such as a building) was only part of a greater system (technology, the state, water, housing, mental health, planet Earth, outer space), tending toward greater or lesser capacity to “learn” or to maintain “sanity,” as Bateson’s cybernetic anthropology presented the objective of his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, the compendium of his life’s writings published in 1972.⁸ The scope of the approach taken by Brown’s administration evoked the New Age ideals of the 1970s—a holistic view of the world, carried over in part from hippie counterculture, in which the governor was “perceived as educable,” as Stephanie Pincetl concluded shortly after, “the politician for the New Age. It was a time of optimism, of possibilities for change.”⁹

Revisiting a historical episode such as that represented by the Bateson Building is itself historically implicated, of course. As this article is being written, Jerry Brown is again governor; concerns about water, central to Brown’s administration in the 1970s, have become critical to Californians; and Brown’s legacy of environmental concern furnishes something of an

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Figure 1 Office of the State Architect, Bateson Building, Sacramento, 1977–81 (author's photo).

example to other leaders, like Bill de Blasio, mayor of New York City.¹⁰ Moreover, these environmental concerns have again taken on some of the spiritual cast that they had in the 1970s, when Brown, a former Jesuit seminarian, was influenced by Zen Buddhism. In July 2015, Brown, de Blasio, and other political leaders met in Rome at an environmental summit called by Pope Francis. Much as the pope warns of the perils of untrammelled want, New Age-era Jerry Brown and his appointee Sim Van der Ryn, the state architect who had overall responsibility for the Bateson Building, called for an end to the politics of self-interest through design, reason, and consciousness.

The Bateson Building as an Ecology: Energy Efficiency, Social Interaction, and System

The Bateson Building was the first of a series of eight experimental state buildings created by the 1975–81 Brown administration. Three of these buildings were constructed on blocks adjacent to the Bateson Building, one was in a Sacramento suburb, and three were elsewhere in the state (Long Beach, Santa Rosa, and San Jose).¹¹ Offering general-purpose state offices and taking up a city block of midtown Sacramento, the Bateson Building featured an exposed reinforced concrete

frame that acted as a pergola and hanger for an infill of painted wood, windows, and canvas shading devices.¹² The highlight of the design was within: a four-story atrium, 150 feet by 144 feet, topped by north-facing monitor skylights (Figure 2). Majestic atria had been features of office buildings since Frank Lloyd Wright's 1904–6 Larkin Building in Buffalo, becoming a modernist signature in designs like Kevin Roche's Ford Foundation Building, New York, 1963–67; Norman Foster's Willis Faber and Dumas Headquarters, Ipswich, England, 1970–75; and Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers's Pompidou Center, Paris, 1971–77 (which also shared the open frame motif of the Bateson Building, allowing the flexible placement of internal walls).¹³ But none of these buildings, which came to exemplify the flamboyance of 1970s high tech, could be confused with the Bateson Building, which downplayed iconic, complex, expensive architectural engineering in favor of a strenuous and purposeful informality, inside and out.¹⁴ Eschewing the industrial iconography of steel and glass, the Bateson Building made do with concrete and wood, and not even with the formalist surface plays of Louis Kahn's architecture—from which the Bateson Building clearly evolved—but in order to maximize thermal performance and economy in the



Figure 2 Office of the State Architect, Bateson Building, Sacramento, 1977–81, atrium (author’s photo).

blazing Sacramento summer sun. The building’s understatement, which bordered on a functionalist antiaesthetic and surely contributed to its disappearance from the canon, was central to its broadly ecological mission. That mission seems to have had three main aspects: energy efficiency, interaction, and an attentiveness to systems. In pronouncing that mission, the Bateson Building represented the state’s pursuit of interdependence, adaptability, and self-reliance.

Energy Efficiency and Appropriate Technology

The Bateson Building aimed to deliver unprecedented energy efficiency, in part through the passive solar energy storage and deflection afforded by the massive frame and in part through the building’s most remarkable and controversial feature, a rock bed beneath the atrium floor that would use 660 tons of thermal mass to absorb and store heat energy during the day. This energy could be released on demand, with the air moistened by evaporative spray washers and pumped in or out by reversible fans (Figure 3).¹⁵ The atrium was not air-conditioned; rather, it acted as a sort of lung for the building, which was designed with the aim of achieving an unprecedented 80 percent reduction in energy use compared with the norm for other buildings of its type, in the hope that it

would pay for itself over twenty to thirty years. (It probably achieved about 50 percent of that target.)¹⁶ Vertical louvers automatically closed the south-facing clerestory surfaces in the summer; banner screens bounced sunlight into the space during the winter. Large vertical canvas tubes hanging in the atrium were equipped with fans to destratify and recirculate air. Cool night air was drawn down large air shafts, while hot air was purged through skylight vents. Sensing devices and a computerized central control unit adjusted fans and rolled the fabric shades on the east and west up and down throughout the day to exclude sun or allow views, and water was heated by 2,000 square feet of solar collectors.

This comparatively low-tech approach can be attributed in part to the impression made on the Brown administration by Ivan Illich, the Austrian philosopher and critic of Western education, industrialization, and cultural imperialism who in *Deschooling Society* (1971) and *Tools for Conviviality* (1973) argued for the capacity of self-directed learning, innovation, and community.¹⁷ Perhaps still more pronounced was the influence of E. F. Schumacher, whom Brown met at the outset of his period in office and at whose funeral Brown spoke in 1977.¹⁸ In his landmark 1973 book *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, Schumacher argued for “appropriate technology”—small-scale, decentralized,

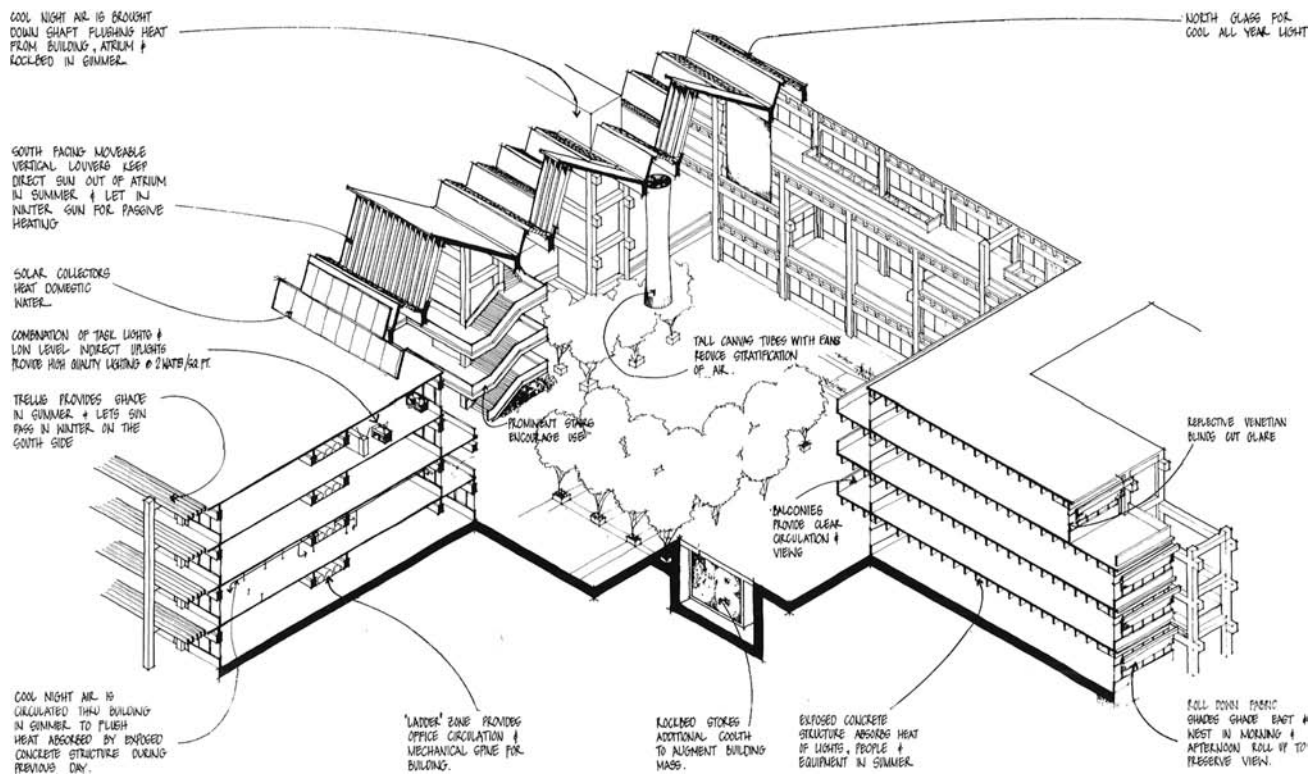


Figure 3 Office of the State Architect, Bateson Building, Sacramento, 1977–81, cutaway drawing (Office of Appropriate Technology Administrative Files, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento).

labor-intensive, energy-efficient, environmentally sound, and locally controlled.¹⁹ When Brown appointed Van der Ryn as state architect in 1975, he agreed to Van der Ryn’s condition that the Office of Architecture and Construction be renamed the Office of the State Architect “so people could identify with a person, rather than a faceless bureaucracy.”²⁰ Further, the leading-edge Office of Appropriate Technology was to be lodged within the Office of the State Architect.²¹ During Van der Ryn’s tenure, the office was constantly busy with myriad small local projects, advising on waste reduction and management, energy efficiency, sustainable food systems, biofuels, drought-tolerant gardens and clean soil, solar and wind energy, and a project for bicycle sharing in the flat streets of Sacramento; additionally, policy studies and competitions focused on urban growth and affordable housing.²²

Yet the OAT struggled to translate its futurist-ecotopian interests into governance.²³ For instance, Van der Ryn complained in 1978 about his experience installing a solar system for heating water in the governor’s apartment.²⁴ He noted, “As soon as I did this kind of experimentation in the hot lens of publicity, Murphy’s Law took over,” going on to explain the lesson he had learned:

I’m fed up with Government by symbol. . . . What’s *real* is direct action, and the only people who can take direct action are you.

It’s practice, it’s attention to particulars, it’s attention to the land, it’s caring, it’s mindfulness, carefulness in terms of other people and living things, and government can’t do any of these things.²⁵

Much of the OAT’s efforts were expended in trying to explain its mission, notably in its 1977 *New Possibilities Show*, which toured the state with interactive demonstrations of appropriate technology, an undertaking that prompted allegations that the OAT was a political gimmick (Figure 4).²⁶ “An ideological touch of humor is evident,” reported a visitor to the OAT in 1978, “in an old, ill-fitting doorway whose jamb has been stuffed with newspapers to keep out the wind. A hand-lettered sign on it reads, ‘Home weatherization demonstration program, supported by funds from the Federal Department of Energy, Contract No. 209-137001.’”²⁷

The Bateson Building, to which the OAT relocated from its overcrowded digs in a former Mexican restaurant, was in effect the most important statement of the energy-consciousness of the OAT and the Office of the State Architect of which it was a part.²⁸ But the building, too, struggled to be understood, first because of its designers’ reluctance to build symbols—this at the peak of a semantic, postmodern turn in architecture—and second because of the difficulty of relating the larger, ecological ambition of which it was a part.²⁹ (As a draft for the OAT’s 1981

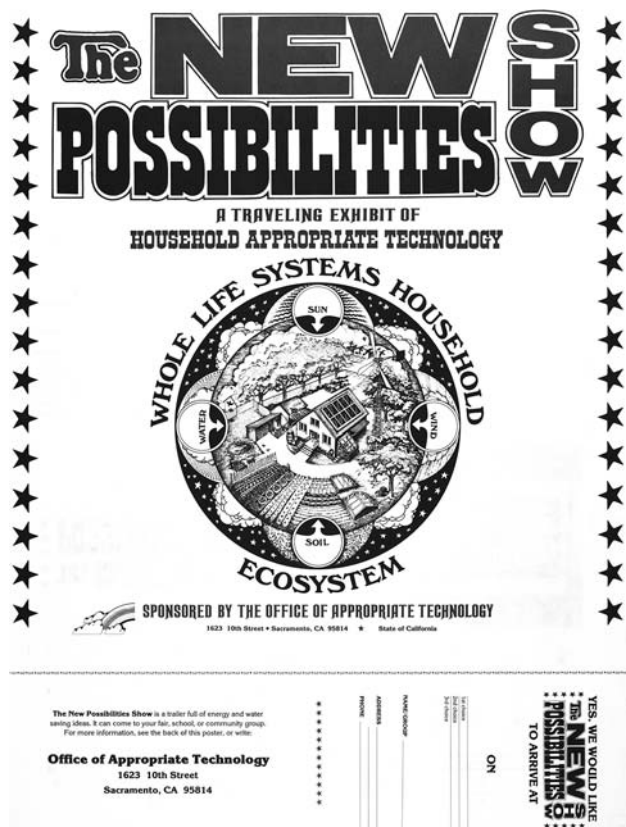


Figure 4 Office of Appropriate Technology, poster for the *New Possibilities Show*, 1977 (Office of Appropriate Technology Administrative Files, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento; photo: College of Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley).

affordable housing competition put it, “California is the rest of America ten years sooner.”³⁰

Interaction

The building’s atrium, designed to convey pleasant working conditions unexpected in government buildings, modeled an ideal of social interaction exemplified by Eero Saarinen at Bell Telephone Laboratories, the 1959–62 research and development facility in New Jersey that, complete with a conversation pit, exemplified the design of the “post-Fordist” workplace and its generation of a “hive mind” (Figure 5).³¹ If the Bateson Building’s low energy use was a contribution toward resource sustainability, its spatial excess was a gesture toward social sustainability: “hard,” engineered systems of energy conservation intermingled with “soft” social systems.³² The building’s design encouraged workers to walk the circulation walkways, people-watch from the office windows, and avoid the social awkwardness of elevators by enjoying the convivial alternative offered by the building’s prominent main stairs. The atrium, one early visitor noted, had a sidewalk-café

feel, designed to be planted with trees and drawing pedestrians through it from nearby office buildings on the way to parking, bus stops, or the capitol, while the building’s decks, panels, and yellow fabric shades lent the space “a noninstitutional informality.”³³ The perimeter offices were not especially anti-institutional in feel, although the atrium put all work spaces within 40 feet of a source of daylight, and the designers planned that workers would be organized into small groups of twelve to twenty-four people.³⁴ Indirect ambient lighting and direct task lighting, controlled at the individual desks, reduced the amount of lighting energy needed and also afforded workers some control over their immediate environments.

The building was an expressionless machine of sensory change, above all that generated by natural light. “We found,” Van der Ryn explained,

we could consider the wall of the building not as a static two-dimensional architectural element, but as a living skin that is sensitive to and adapts to differences in temperature and light. We are not adapted to live or work at temperatures or lighting that are uniform and constant. We are most alive when we experience subtle cycles of difference in our surroundings.³⁵

Thus the system of inhabitation was nudged away from entropy. By focusing on the differences inherent to variable daylight, the Bateson Building’s design was not simply energy efficient but was also trying to synchronize human relationships with the circadian cycle and the perception of time, while the plans of most U.S. office buildings were becoming ever deeper and more remote from the outside through their utilization of air-conditioning and fluorescent lighting systems. In a nod to Gregory Bateson’s view of a patterned and interconnected world, Van der Ryn held that

the building itself becomes “the pattern which connects” us to the change and flow of climate, season, sun and shadow, constantly tuning our awareness of the natural cycles which support all life. Maybe this is what esthetics and beauty are all about. Maybe what we find beautiful is that which connects us to an experience of difference—to an experience of the patterns of wholeness which distinguish the living world from the mere works of man.³⁶

Systems

The Bateson Building’s presentation of state, government, and nature interacting was evident too at the metascales mapped in two further concurrent projects: one on the ground—the survey for the 1979 *California Water Atlas*—and the other sky-high—the state’s proposed space program. As the journal *California Geographer* pronounced, *The California Water Atlas* was “an American atlas without peer in this

Figure 5 Eero Saarinen, Bell Telephone Laboratories, Holmdel, New Jersey, 1959–62 (photo: Connie Zhou / OTTO).



century” (Figures 6 and 7).³⁷ Conceived by Berkeley geographer Ted Oberlander and made by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research (under which the Office of the State Architect and the OAT also fell), the atlas revealed to ordinary citizens and the offices of state alike the massively complex distribution of the state’s lifeblood—water—through a system that had been the key endeavor (alongside the expansion of the state’s public university and highway systems) of Jerry Brown’s father, Pat Brown, California governor from 1959 to 1967.³⁸ Using the latest computer technology at the Cartography Laboratory of California State University, Northridge, the *Water Atlas* presented maps of staggering beauty and clarity (given the complexity of the information), spread across an oversized format, to represent California as a coherent, natural, technological, and cultural assembly.³⁹ The brilliance of the atlas was to depict a resource that, whether wild in nature or domesticated in channels, was clearly beyond the agency of any single citizen or branch of government, making it a matter of general political concern. Although water distribution was absolutely a responsibility of top-down government at both the federal and state levels, by revealing its natural and design history, the atlas made it a medium between all levels of government and all sorts of citizenry, between one industry and another, one region and another: the *Water Atlas* was a medium about water as a medium.

An ongoing drought lent urgency to the atlas and to the governor’s project for a new peripheral canal, which would have been the last major component of the state water project, the gigantic postwar supplement to the mighty federal water project of the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ The governor’s project was ultimately defeated in 1982 by

environmentalists, small farmers, Northern California regionalists, and taxpayers, all coordinated by large agribusiness—a coalition even more unlikely than the makers of the atlas could have imagined. Indeed, the atlas’s presentation of water as a system of shared interest was called out by a reviewer who suggested “that a more appropriate title might have been *Water in Conflict*,” given the complications of “property rights and the role of the market in allocating water.”⁴¹ Indifference to such politics and economics was a hallmark of the governor’s special adviser Stewart Brand, who chaired the board directing the production of *The California Water Atlas*. Brand had propelled himself to fame over the preceding decade as the founder of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, first published in 1968, with which personnel in the Brown administration (such as Huey Johnson, environmentalist and state secretary of resources) were connected.⁴² Why, Brand now asked in an extension of the *Whole Earth Catalog*’s global systems utopianism, should the localization and boundaries of the system be hemmed in by the boundaries of the state, or even of planet Earth?⁴³

“I’m operating on a paradoxical vision,” Brand wrote excitedly to Brown in 1975.⁴⁴ The first part of the paradox was “that we convert Earth-surface economics to something more like Herman Daly” (the ecological economist, and later an economist at the World Bank, who edited *Toward a Steady-State Economy*, 1973), “or in its romantic form to *Ecotopia* (enclosed—California secedes and becomes like Green Gulch—interesting book).” (Green Gulch was the Zen Buddhist retreat and organic farm owned and managed by the San Francisco Zen Center, where those in Brown and Brand’s circle discussed their coming ecological state.) The second part of Brand’s paradox was

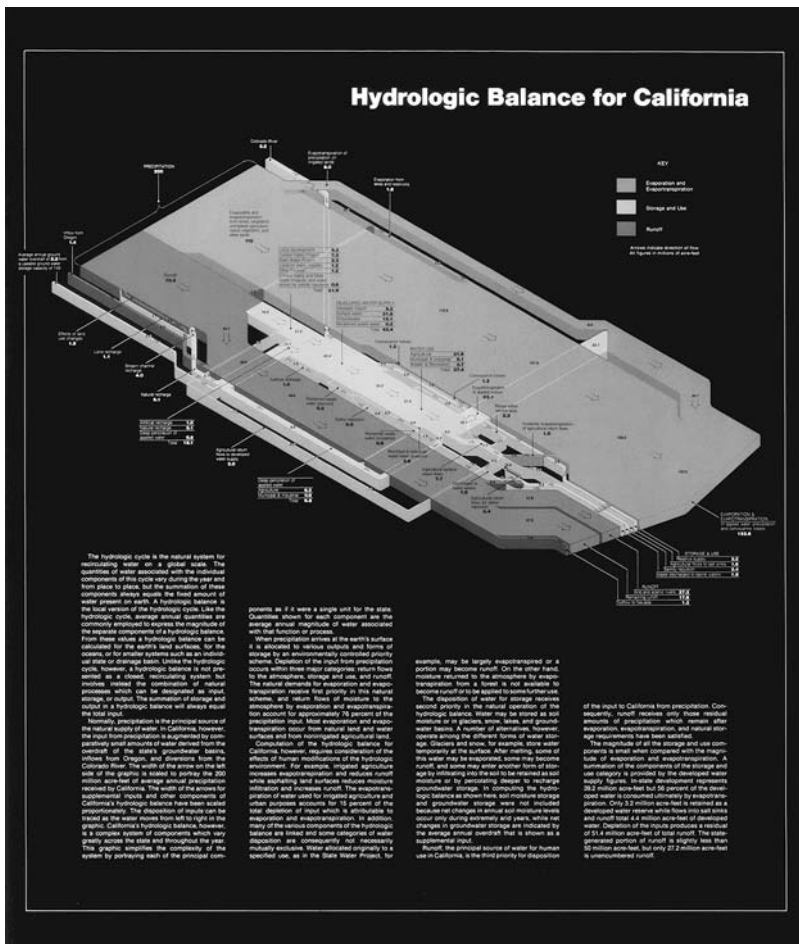


Figure 6 "Hydrological Balance," in State of California, *The California Water Atlas*, 1979 (courtesy of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State of California).

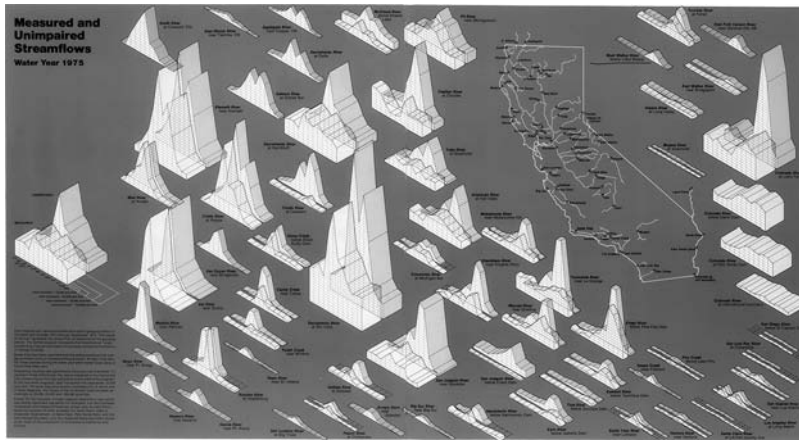


Figure 7 "Measured and Unimpaired Streamflows," in State of California, *The California Water Atlas*, 1979 (courtesy of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State of California).

to invest the 100 billion and get the space colonies going—in nearby free space there is more energy, material and open possibilities than a geometrically increasing humanity could encompass in centuries. . . . Industry and growth and outward adventure in space. Culture and balance and inward adventure on Earth. The two visions serve each other.⁴⁵

Brand urged Brown to initiate a California program for outer space. Brown's interest in space would earn him the notorious

nickname Governor Moonbeam, and it is not difficult to see why skeptics scoffed at Space Day, the governor's August 1977 conference at the California Museum of Science and Industry in Los Angeles.⁴⁶ Space Day combined the expertise of the scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory near Pasadena, California, and NASA with the New Age mood brought to the event by former Beat poet Michael McLure's "philosophical poems," written on the day, one of which opened with lines from French underwater explorer Jacques

Cousteau, who was in attendance (Figure 8).⁴⁷ And there was perhaps a sophistry in Brown's arguments justifying space exploration as a means of addressing the challenges of poverty, democracy, and the environment.⁴⁸ But it was not quite as bizarre as it seems in retrospect if, as Brand claimed, more than half of NASA's procurements already came from California and Brown was simply attempting to restore the New Frontier vision of John F. Kennedy.⁴⁹ As Space Day was taking place, the space shuttle *Enterprise*, which could easily be imagined as transport to a space colony, was scheduled to soon touch down at California's Edwards Air Force Base, the movie *Star Wars* was drawing summer cinemagoers, and the space station Skylab, launched in 1973, was orbiting the Earth.⁵⁰

My concern here is to acknowledge the way in which Brown imagined his state as a compartment of "Spaceship Earth," coordinating all design, from appropriate technology to the space program, as elements in a unitary systemic whole in which the visionary was presented as pragmatic political calculus.⁵¹ Brown summarized this calculus as "Awareness of limits leads to awareness of possibilities"—here talking about space, although he could have been talking about water, solar energy, economics, or politics.⁵² Space potentially altered the systemic limits in which ecology (and the economy) were operating.⁵³ Space Day provided an opportunity for Bruce Murray, head of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and "avid reader of Schumacher and Illich," to explain the relationship between appropriate technology and space exploration, as panelists from the Brown administration responded under the moderation of astronaut Russell Schweickart.⁵⁴

The Bateson Building as an Envoy of the New Age State

The OAT showed Californians how to remake an energy-efficient state systematically from the bottom up, while from the top down, the *Water Atlas* and Space Day guided Californians in systematically future-proofing the natural limits of the ecosystem. In the middle, the Bateson Building systematically realigned government work somewhere between a rock bed and the sun. The building was then a component of a larger state system, and it was to some extent a model or projection of the Brown administration's ideal governance of that state in microcosm: a self-effacing medium interrelating energy, matter, people, civilization, and nature into a new "whole" or "mind," synthesizing a decade or more of thinking in Northern California about systems and ecology. The building represented a New Age state, which revived the spirit of earlier human-environment holisms, like those of the Chicago School, Patrick Geddes, Catherine Bauer, and Lewis Mumford.⁵⁵



Figure 8 Bruce Murray, head of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, speaking at Space Day, California Museum of Science and Industry, Los Angeles, August 1977. Behind him is Russell Schweickart (astronaut and panel chair), and seated at the table are panelists from the Brown administration, from left, Richard Silberman (Business and Transportation Agency), Don Vial (Department of Industrial Relations), Huey Johnson (Resources Agency), and Stewart Brand (consultant to the governor) (photo: Maurice Manson / courtesy of Stewart Brand).

Brown was already highly conversant with the ecological literature of the New Age before he was introduced to Gregory Bateson.⁵⁶ To detail the beguiling philosophy of this New Age state, I return to Bateson's thought, which had such a profound influence on Brand that he began to sideline the *Whole Earth Catalog's* first guiding light, Richard Buckminster Fuller. Brown appointed Bateson his adviser and a regent of the University of California (Figure 9).⁵⁷ As remote as Bateson's ethereal ideas seem from application through government and design, in October 1970 Bateson had himself convened a conference on urban ecology at the office of New York City mayor John Lindsay, providing the basis for the final papers Bateson published, which were on policy.⁵⁸ At the 1979 dedication ceremony for the Bateson Building, Van der Ryn explained the retroactive decision to name a state building after the British émigré anthropologist and intellectual outlier.⁵⁹ "In the last month of his life I asked him what single thing was needed for people to grasp a new way of looking at their world and he told me, 'people are mad for quantity, yet what is significant is difference.'"⁶⁰

This quality of "difference" had been central to the lecture Bateson delivered to the Institute of General Semantics eleven years earlier, which Bateson regarded as a capstone of his intellectual career.⁶¹ Bateson's career had been revolutionized by the discipline of cybernetics, which was assembled at the Macy Conferences from 1941 on, expanding into a concern with ecology at large.⁶² Bateson's cybernetics and ecology were unlike the engineering bias that characterized early, "first-order" cybernetics, dominated as they were by the analogy drawn between the ways animals and machines alike use feedback to self-regulate as closed systems. Bateson's "second-order" cybernetics instead emphasized the



Figure 9 Gregory Bateson in conference with Governor Jerry Brown, governor's office, Sacramento, 1975 (photo: Jacques Barzagli / courtesy of Stewart Brand).

interconnection of many systems, of which the observer her- or himself and the observer's language and mental processes were also subsystems: there was no ultimate outside, center, control, or truth. The whole—in effect, a Mind of minds, organic and inorganic, technological and natural—was instead bound by pattern, connection, and difference, tending toward sanity or madness, that is, toward the maintenance or otherwise of multifarious life.

Van der Ryn thus invited visitors to imagine the Bateson Building as a Batesonian instrument for the sensing of that difference, the building's perforated wall a boundary mediating the movement of the Sacramento sun (one system) and the mental and bodily well-being of the government worker (another system). Difference constituted information moving from one subsystem to another, the better to cohere as Mind. For Van der Ryn, such an integration of the greater socio-psycho-ecological whole was the central purpose of design. "The process of institution building and institutional innovation becomes more than a technical problem," he wrote in 1968 with his then assistant, the political economist Robert Reich, who later served as secretary of labor under President Bill Clinton. "It becomes part of an overall design. It becomes utopian."⁶³

Van der Ryn brought to Sacramento a concern with architecture as a social ecology that characterized the College of Environmental Design at Berkeley during the tumultuous Berkeley 1960s, from the Free Speech Movement of 1964 to the direct activism of 1969's People's Park.⁶⁴ The Batesonian trope of pattern was echoed in the search for a pattern language led at Berkeley by Christopher Alexander and Murray Silverstein (the latter also a collaborator of Van der Ryn).⁶⁵ The massive communal space of the Bateson Building recalled the putatively bottom-up, self-organized requisitioning and forming of social space in the Bay Area's new



Figure 10 Farallones Institute, Integral Urban House, Berkeley, 1974, backyard with hutches, beehives, and farm plots (photo: College of Environmental Design Visual Resources Center, University of California, Berkeley; courtesy of Jim Campe).

communalism and People's Park, which historically closed a chapter in Berkeley's radical history, prompting a change in strategy for the elite segment of Bay Area counterculture to which Van der Ryn belonged. In 1974, in the period between the violent showdown with the state at the People's Park and his appointment as state architect, Van der Ryn cofounded the Farallones Institute, dedicated to research in appropriate technology, most prominently at the Integral Urban House in Berkeley, which for a decade offered a problematic and malodorous demonstration of a closed-system urban habitat (Figure 10).⁶⁶ This hint of a swords-to-plowshares strategy—from the extemporaneous illegal appropriation of space to its deliberative legal and technical reform—augured Van der Ryn's reluctant ascent into the offices of an erstwhile reactionary state, which he had fought at the People's Park.⁶⁷ The OAT's initial insignia, which depicted a mule eating oats, was practically pacifist in its symbolism (Figure 11).⁶⁸ After World War II, the Office of Architecture and Construction in Sacramento was likely the largest architectural office in the world.⁶⁹ It was "created to plan and execute the tremendous volume of new facilities in health, education and general government growth," as Van der Ryn wrote, hoping to recover his office's sense of mission. "This cycle began to slacken in the 60s, and the importance of the office was further reduced through the assignment of major State projects and State college construction to private firms."⁷⁰ A small-government policy of renting space for government workplaces from the private sector had prevailed under Governor Ronald Reagan (1967–75), but it proved (somewhat ironically) uneconomical, handing Brown and Van der Ryn an opportunity to create a building program through which "the State architect should take a more active role in helping to set standards and policy."⁷¹ Van der Ryn was a high-risk appointment, Brand later recalled: the Brown administration "had other New Age

types in government (such as myself) but they were advisors, consultants, and commission members. State Architect was a line position—highly visible, highly responsible.”⁷²

Brand, too, had now to reconcile with his old adversary of government per se. His *Whole Earth Catalog*, a sister enterprise to Van der Ryn’s Farallones Institute under the umbrella of the nonprofit Portola Institute, had declared in its 1968 preface, “So far, remotely done power and glory—as via government, big business, formal education, church—has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains.”⁷³ But as consultant to the governor from 1975 to 1983, Brand found himself close to a governance that the *Catalog* had intended to circumvent. Interest in overturning or seceding from “the system,” for instance, through the communalist and back-to-the-land movements that the *Catalog* was founded to support, and that its associated publication the *CoEvolution Quarterly* (1974) deliberated, mellowed to acceptance of the possibility of a larger systemic change.⁷⁴ If the state had “lost its mind” in 1969 when it used tear gas against encircled demonstrators at Berkeley’s Sproul Plaza, then “ecological mind” would close the feedback loop, Brand hoped, by making the state sane at all its interacting levels.

The anomalous result represented in the Bateson Building was of a New Age state moving away from the revolutionary, drug-altered, and communalist tendencies of counterculture toward rational, consensus-building reformism in tandem with a Zen-like reduction in the expenditure of all energy, including that of protest politics on the one hand and the political machine on the other. Van der Ryn despaired at the violent end of the People’s Park, which he perceived as the lost Eden for a natural, self-organizing community: “When I left Berkeley,” he has since recalled of his panic at the collapse of the People’s Park, when on 15 May 1969 Governor Ronald Reagan used Oakland police and the National Guard to confront its guardians, “I had flashbacks of leaving Holland as a young child just before the Nazi invasion.”⁷⁵ Nonagonistic change would be the way forward: Brand already prohibited overtly political discussion in the *Whole Earth Catalog*, tacking toward libertarianism during the 1970s. Brown came from a Democratic Party political dynasty, but he was so alienated by the party machine of his father’s era that he was drawn back to Catholicism, like Schumacher and Illich, initially choosing the Jesuit seminary.⁷⁶ In a 1975 article (a clipping of which Brand kept), the *Village Voice* claimed about Brown:

There’s the story of his command to one government official requesting expenses for a trip to Washington. Cancel the trip, Brown told him. “You can’t learn anything in Washington, they’re all fucked up there. Stay here and meditate.”⁷⁷

Green Gulch Zen Center was a center for this intersection of progressive politics and ecology under the oversight of its abbot (*rōshi*), Richard Baker.⁷⁸ Van der Ryn and Huey Johnson



Figure 11 Insignia of the Office of Appropriate Technology, 1975 (California State Archives).

were recruited to the Brown administration there; the center was where Brown consulted with Paul Ehrlich and Ivan Illich on the future of the Earth, with Rusty Schweickart and Gerard O’Neill on the future of space, and with the poet Gary Snyder and writer/farmer Wendell Berry on the question of humankind’s relationship to nature.⁷⁹ John Nathan, a translator of Japanese and a filmmaker, archly recalls his two-week stay in Baker’s salon at Green Gulch in 1978:

We spent our evenings in the living room of his private residence, off-limits to ordinary students and all but the most enlightened monks. The abbot presided over a salon of new-age futurists: the entrepreneur Paul Hawken; Michael Murphy, the proprietor of Esalen and author of *The Inner Game of Golf*; Stewart Brand, founder of *The Whole Earth Catalog*; and the architect Sim Van der Ryn, among others. Brand and Van der Ryn had been appointed special advisors to the progressive governor of California in those days, Jerry Brown, who was also a frequent visitor at Green Gulch. Brown was dating the singer Linda Ronstadt. . . . They would sit together on the couch, cuddling beneath a blanket, while Baker-*rōshi* discussed sustainability or gnosis or the nutrient value in a placenta.⁸⁰

This vignette is partly satirical, of course, though if the new makers of California regarded self-awareness and the mystical enlightenment of gnosis as relevant to statecraft in 1979, it was in reaction to the violent political reordering and social breakdown, real or threatened, in which they had grown up.⁸¹ They came of age during the Cold War, as the relative clarity of a clash between freedom and oppression in the world war of their childhoods gave way to mutually assured destruction and the confusion of the intervention in Southeast Asia, with its associated culture war inside the United States. The apparently imminent ecological collapse

of industrial civilization was meanwhile warned of in a series of popular books by credible ecologists, from Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*, 1962) to the Club of Rome (*The Limits to Growth*, 1972).⁸² Politico-ecological despair registered with mainstream popular culture, too, with the tracks of Marvin Gaye's 1971 album *What's Going On* expounding on a sequence of keynote calamities, Joni Mitchell foretelling the paving of paradise in her song "Big Yellow Taxi" (released 1970 and 1974), and filmmaker Roman Polanski dramatizing the corruption of Southern California water in *Chinatown* (1974).⁸³

Following the post-World War II expansion of consumerism and the military-industrial complex, and following countercultural dissent in reaction to that expansion, would come the *whole* state.⁸⁴ *E pluribus unum*—Out of many, one—this was the Latin motto on the Seal of the United States until 1956, when Congress resolved to put its trust instead in God. Brown's administration hoped that California, labeled by historian Carey McWilliams in 1949 as "the great exception" for its pluralism, would become again that American "one from many," simultaneously a space of difference and a space of unity.⁸⁵ Bateson complained to Brand about "all these definitions of self as over *against* other people or the environment":

The truth which is important is . . . a truth of complexity . . . of a total eco-interactive ongoing web in which we dance. . . . The whole of good and evil gets wrapped up in the dance of Shiva. And in ancient Hebrew good-and-evil is a single word meaning "everything."⁸⁶

The New Age state addressed a skepticism about government that ran even deeper than the culture wars. Its cybernetics and ecology countered pessimism about whether a selfless politics was even possible, a gloominess traceable back to Charles Darwin and Sigmund Freud. Biological drive did not eviscerate the possibility of the cooperation necessary for a state, the argument now ran, but encouraged it: "CoEvolution," Brand explained in 1977, was

a term of recent coinage co-conceived by biologists Paul Ehrlich and Peter Raven to explain something terribly obvious but not before formally recognized about living organisms. They spend most of their adaptive effort getting along with other life which is likewise busily competing, cooperating, and avoiding at them [*sic*]. Life co-evolves with life.

That includes us. So as you study your work, your yard, your watershed, your bio-community and human community, your weather, your access to tools, your night sky, and your prospects in Space, be aware that they are studying you.⁸⁷

Much more than a Hobbesian state offering security, and advancing beyond the redistributive state of the New Deal characteristic of Pat Brown's administration, Jerry Brown's

mindful California aimed to offset entropy and imbalance (the problems studied by cybernetic systems theory).⁸⁸ It would accomplish this by mitigating energy loss, inertia, imbalance, and depletion (the business of first-order cybernetics theory), and then by relating different layers, entities, and subsystems of the nation, the world, and eventually space, so that there would be no outside to the system (the business of second-order cybernetics).⁸⁹

Lightly steering the system, attentive to feedback, was the governor's office, and appropriately so, given the etymological root of the word *cybernetics* in the Greek for *governor*.⁹⁰ Resonances with the expertise, unity, and happiness of Plato's *Republic* were striking: this imminent and immanent systemic harmony had found its guardian philosophers and their *techné* in Brown, Brand, Van der Ryn, and the counsel of Bay Area counterculture, who placed themselves above the conventional political fray by their unbounded regard for natural law.⁹¹ Proceeding beyond the self-adjusting, homeostatic closed-loop cybernetics of the 1940s—which lately had characterized Stafford Beer's Project Cybersyn for socialist president Salvador Allende's Chile—second-order cybernetics helped the guardians of New Age California to imagine competition and disagreements as drivers rather than as destroyers of a whole system.⁹²

At the center of Allende's cybernetic system was a control room with a now-iconic circle of Gui Bonsiepe white control panel chairs (Figure 12). At the center of Brown's system, the governor admitted, he simply "set themes and created tension," with nary a computer or interface in sight.⁹³ "Enjoying your dialectical approach to truth—and gladly learning from it—may I add something perhaps?" Brand asked Brown in 1975:

The process has structure—"logic"—as you know. Cybernetics—conceptual cybernetics—has the best formal handle on that structure that I've seen. It yields not only the most direct learning mode—felt paradox—but also excellent diagnosis (& principles of cure) of social pathologies: the business of governors.⁹⁴

Such iterative models were core to the various design methods being developed by Van der Ryn's colleagues in the College of Environmental Design at Berkeley, such as Christopher Alexander, Horst Rittel, and Melvin Webber. But where these colleagues quickly ran up against constraints—limits famously described in Rittel and Webber's 1973 paper on the "wicked" unpredictability of interdependences—Van der Ryn and his colleagues saw a holistic interdependence and a tendency toward self-management.⁹⁵

Brown and Brand's studies of water and outer space recapitulated an American "technological sublime."⁹⁶ Brown and Brand believed, like the transcendentalists and progressives before them, in a national capacity to take control of human



Figure 12 Gui Bonsiepe and the Industrial Design Group INTEC, Control Room, Project Cybersyn, Chile, 1972–73 (photo courtesy of Gui Bonsiepe).

destiny through schemes that would secure the American continent’s astonishing natural resources.⁹⁷ Much as conservationists had been shocked in 1895 by Patrick Geddes’s approval of hydroelectricity as the conjunction of nature and culture into the machinery of life, some environmentalists were dismayed by Brown’s commitment to the continued hydraulic engineering of his state.⁹⁸ In Brown’s first term as governor, his administration had little need for radical inquiry into the commons, and some in the appropriate technology movement were frustrated with the OAT, seeing in it a fig leaf for politics as usual.⁹⁹ Brown’s embrace of appropriate technology seemed driven as much by the need for California to survive the energy crisis as by an effort to initiate the even economic development and capital redistribution called for by appropriate technology’s key theorist, economist E. F. Schumacher. California’s tentative space program in particular was much more a pursuit of American frontier exceptionalism than of Schumacher’s Buddhism, Gandhism, and Maoism.

The Technical, Aesthetic, and Ideological “Disappearance” of the Bateson Building

The significance of the Bateson Building, in itself or within this grand holistic vision, is very unlikely to be apparent to the casual observer today and was probably lost on Californians at the time: it “disappeared” technically, aesthetically, and ideologically.

Technical “Disappearance”

The Santa Barbara oil spill of 1969 and the Earth Week of 1970 had endowed the baby-boom generation, whose members were starting to reach positions of influence, with a

wariness of the risk of eco-disasters.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the 1973 energy crisis, environmentalist and energy analyst Amory Lovins—introduced to Van der Ryn by friends during the period when Lovins was drafting his famous 1976 essay “Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?”—authored Friends of the Earth’s *Soft Energy Paths: Toward a Durable Peace*, published in 1977, to argue that a centralized energy system based on fossil and nuclear fuels could be steadily replaced by energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.¹⁰¹ The Bateson Building’s energy-saving features accorded with the environmentalist mood in California and the nation, then, but they were not well communicated, creating a missed opportunity.¹⁰²

The Bateson Building’s innovations met with immediate skepticism from the state budget analyst and the state employees union, for instance.¹⁰³ The building’s systems were subject to only cursory testing before occupancy, and, incongruously for an ecological design culture dedicated to integration and long-termism, management and maintenance were not embedded in the building’s plan.¹⁰⁴ A possible miscommunication or lack of communication among the building disciplines working on the design meant that no one fully explored the interplay of all the systems together. Many buildings exhibit technical shortfalls postoccupancy, but the Bateson Building’s innovations set it up for more such shortfalls than the average office building. The louvers stopped working automatically, so the building required more lighting, heating, cooling, and ventilating energy than expected, especially under the duress of improved environmental health standards after the 1970s.¹⁰⁵ The state deactivated the rock-bed system following a class-action lawsuit filed in 1981 on behalf of state employees worried about mold infestation.¹⁰⁶ The solar water-heating system was removed mainly because of roof load, and the air destratification socks in the atrium



Figure 13 Michael Graves, Portland Building, Portland, Oregon, 1979–82 (photo: Steve Morgan Creative Commons Attribution–ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License).

were disconnected because there was too little stratification to merit their use.¹⁰⁷ The building now runs off the same grid of steam and chilled-water services as other government buildings in the area. The cumulative effect of the building’s technical shortfalls was likely to knock it off the pedestal to which it had been raised.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately the Bateson Building was to be technically overshadowed by other energy-efficient office buildings, including those built in downtown Sacramento, where the Bateson Building had been the leader. Yet the state’s Department of General Services has declared that “the building . . . remains among the state’s most energy efficient, comparable to those built in the last 5 to 10 years.”¹⁰⁹ Further, a recent audit on the building commissioned by the state even recommended the reinstallation of the rock-bed system, with some modifications.¹¹⁰

And so the building’s “disappearance” was perhaps as *discursive* as it was due to any absolute technical failure. During Brown’s second term in office, the momentum of his administration was diverted into the governor’s ill-starred presidential campaign, and the 1980 election of Brown’s gubernatorial predecessor, Ronald Reagan, as U.S. president marked a conservative sea change in U.S. politics, including the curtailing of energy-saving initiatives introduced by President Carter. When California’s conservative 1978 constitutional amendment Proposition 13 choked state funding by freezing

property taxes, the OAT decided, characteristically, that it would become more “self-reliant.”¹¹¹ The agency was closed anyway in 1982 by Brown’s successor, Republican governor George Deukmejian.

Aesthetic “Disappearance”

In effect, most of the Bateson Building’s innovative but moribund technologies became symbolic for those few visitors able to read devices as arcane as air de-stratification socks, “legible signs of the designer’s concerns vis-à-vis systems and ‘energy flows,’ ” as the *Architectural Review* put it.¹¹² The building’s rectangular, concrete austerity played to the parsimonious image of government that the American public had come to expect with the waning of the New Deal, but that was about to be challenged by the carefree flourishes of Michael Graves’s Portland Building (Figure 13).¹¹³ On its 1982 opening, the Portland Building offered a decorative and strikingly different image of government a year after the completion of the Bateson Building, the largely functionalist aesthetic of which offered perilously little to the erupting postmodern architectural scene.

To make another comparison, in 1978 New Orleans unveiled a divergent notion of “publicness,” the sensational Piazza d’Italia by Charles Moore, a former colleague of Van der Ryn at Berkeley in the early 1960s. Moore and Van der Ryn had collaborated, with Donlyn Lyndon and Patrick J. Quinn, on an essay that was formative for its authors, “Toward Making Places,” which argued for the cultural and ontological immediacy of place making as the basis of an architecture succeeding the technocratic universalism of modernism.¹¹⁴ Van der Ryn focused on process and activism, in which Moore had expressed an interest in the 1960s, but it was Moore’s spatial and iconographic devices that attracted the most attention.¹¹⁵ True to its functionalist program, meanwhile, the envelope of the Bateson Building eschewed the formal invention and allusion of the Kahnian wall that had been such a revelation to postmodernists of all stripes, and the building’s late Brutalism presented a directness and economy that leading tastemakers of the era had declared moribund.¹¹⁶ Introducing the landmark *Five Architects* show at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1972, curator Arthur Drexler derided the hubris of social and environmental reform through architecture, singling out Brutalism as “architecture in blue jeans and other effete mannerisms of proletarian snobbery.” He called instead for a return to architecture as an “art,” pursued by “men of talent.”¹¹⁷

We might then blame the Bateson Building’s “disappearance” on the changing fashions of architecture, but perhaps we could better tackle this issue by using the tacit aesthetic ambitions established by the building itself, and those of its

designers, and of the ecological melee of which they were a part. Also looking a little bleakly institutional and underpopulated by this time, for instance, was Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti, under construction in Arizona since 1970, which was comparable in its ambition to create concrete megastructures adequate to the "noosphere" (Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's term, following Vladimir Vernadsky, for the final stage of our planet's evolution through the collective human mind).¹¹⁸ Van der Ryn's Capital Area Plan for Sacramento, meanwhile, tried to create an "urban village" of quarter blocks "to encourage variety and mixed use," and the Bateson Building's perforated, gridded shell was "eroded" so that pedestrians would not be confronted on all sides by four-story walls, which were slotted with a series of small outdoor spaces to acknowledge the midtown Sacramento tree canopy and grid.¹¹⁹ But it would be hard to argue that the façades of the Bateson Building were a gift to the street in the same way as were the district's threatened Victorian homes then being rehabbed by Governor Brown's young staffers.¹²⁰ The Californian public constituency imagined by Brown's state could then have had little sense of the experiment in statecraft being undertaken in the Bateson Building. Nor did the building's "circadian" design publish well in architecture magazines. Its socioecological program was difficult to read from the outside and was likely misunderstood even by environmentalists, for whom Gregory Bateson remained an obscure figure.¹²¹

The building ultimately failed to express adequately Bateson's relational epistemology, it would be fair to say. True to that epistemology, Van der Ryn's team had approached the building as a set of environmental patterns, not simply as an object, and its open grid sought extension into other environmental systems. But consider the Bateson Building as a shell—to follow Bateson's own pedagogy, in which he would present students with crab, lobster, and conch shells and ask them to "produce arguments that will convince me that these objects are the remains of living things."¹²² What traces of life were made apparent by the Bateson Building's carapace? Much beyond its capacity to modulate differences in daylighting effects, or its staircases' staging of impromptu meetings, the Bateson Building was not a particularly strong engine for producing relationships and connecting patterns in the manner that Bateson himself described. The building's shell suggested no great potential to bring external processes and relations into the structure, or to reciprocate by networking across space and in time.

Indeed, the OAT's emphasis on data, prompted by its attention to energy savings, detracted somewhat from Bateson's call for an ecological urbanism of qualitative overcapacity and redundancy, open to change and adaptive relationships beyond efficiency or quantitative systemic management. This was the central pursuit of Bateson's ecological aesthetics—an empathy for interacting systems, human and nonhuman, the

better to understand and expand upon them.¹²³ Something of this empathy might have emerged at the People's Park, albeit chaotically and without much regard for differentials in power, ownership, and control among the actors (without much regard for politics, in other words—marginalized in hippie statecraft and in Bateson's own work alike). But conserving physical energy and system stability, as the Bateson Building's designers mandated—somewhat homeostatically, to use the central figure of early cybernetics—mitigated the exchange of information.¹²⁴

The Bateson Building was actually in something of a "double bind," as Bateson and his colleagues termed their famous explanation for schizophrenia, wherein a subject is faced with irreconcilable demands.¹²⁵ The building had to both hunker down and open up, at once closed off from the political lassitude of modern America and the roller-coaster summer climate of Sacramento and still accessible to the greater cultural, urban, and natural system of the state. Although saving energy, emphasizing social space, and sustaining the urban grain, the building was nonetheless only a staging point for an infinitely grander Batesonian aesthetic. The building honored that aesthetic, retroactively, but was not born directly from it.

Ideological "Disappearance"

Screen walls became a subject of interest to psychoanalytically influenced postmodern criticism, and an application of such critical methods to the Bateson Building—appropriate for a supposed architecture of Mind, forged by a culture fascinated with the self and its relationship to the environment—might skeptically read its functional façade less as the "living skin" claimed by Van der Ryn than as a mask or portrait.¹²⁶ The portrait was not an especially appealing depiction of the coterie of initiates within, government workers managed by hippie graduates of the Bay Area's universities, communes, and Zen centers who had transplanted themselves to the capital, bearing their "smiling revolution," as Tomás Maldonado described the counterculture in 1970.¹²⁷ These managers wore the "happy face" attacked by punk band the Dead Kennedys in their 1979 single "California Über Alles," the cover of which featured Jerry Brown as a führer: "Zen fascists will control you / 100% natural / You will jog for the master race / And always wear the happy face" (Figure 14).¹²⁸

In fairness, Brown endeavored to include more women and minorities in government, precisely to deepen his vision of government as mediator between constituencies drawing on a common environment, mobilized by new technologies, and exercising their right to representation.¹²⁹ Brown even replaced the heraldic trappings of government in his private office with Chicano art.¹³⁰ But an ascendant postmodernism would degrade all totalizing epistemologies, showing little

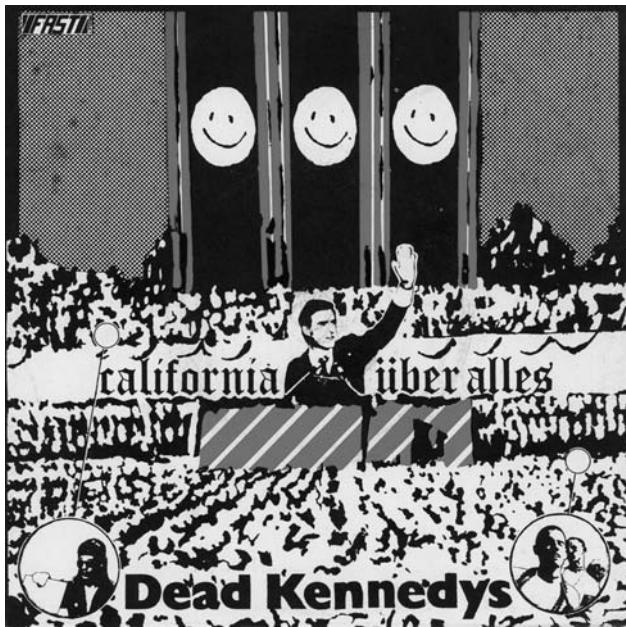


Figure 14 Dead Kennedys, “California Über Alles,” single cover, 1979 (courtesy of Jello Biafra).

interest in common biospheric limit conditions and the morality that might ensue from them, holding in a far higher regard organization through culture and language.¹³¹ The Bateson Building was a system of difference, but of “circadian” difference, not of the irreconcilable, categorical difference that might form at the conjunctions of different modes of life and circumstance diminished by an eco-state and its biopolitics, to use Michel Foucault’s term for governmental techniques of population control.¹³²

It is striking, however, that by the late 1970s and early 1980s appropriate technology, the New Age, the New Left, punk, and Reaganism alike were pursuing the reduction of government. What differed among them were the means, rationales, and objectives for so doing. The meaning of limited government was one of the topics of Brown’s very first conversations with Bateson, and by the end of the decade, as the Brown administration slid into the crisis of Proposition 13 (a herald of the neoliberal era at large) the politics of limited government were deep and blurred.¹³³ In 1981, a book issued by the OAT—*Working Together: Community Self-Reliance in California*—made its case through quotes from Ronald Reagan as well as from E. F. Schumacher and Ivan Illich.¹³⁴ The book’s ecumenical appeal was probably intended to distract from the preponderance of case studies the OAT had drawn from minority groups, co-ops, and organized labor, but nevertheless the effect was to convert any appeal to justice to an expectation of self-help. Such was Brown’s core fiscal conservatism that the *Wall Street Journal* asserted “that he had out-Reaganned Reagan,” even if Brown had reached this reputation from a position diametrically opposed to that of

Reagan, having concluded from reading Schumacher that he was governing in the “era of limits”—resource, fiscal, and governmental.¹³⁵

In fact, the New Age eco-state was a brief encounter even for its leading protagonists. “Any career advocate might do well by cycling through occasional policy and assistant positions, both in government and business,” Brand breezily reflected on Van der Ryn’s term as state architect, while surely contemplating his own future, in which he would find a more comfortable fit in management consultancy and technological advocacy, ultimately becoming a mentor for Silicon Valley.¹³⁶ In 1975 Van der Ryn claimed that “Government that regulates least encourages responsibility and clearly defines personal freedom.”¹³⁷ Three years later, irascibly reflecting on his time in office, Van der Ryn complained, “The process of Government is mostly about building and maintaining your turf, and that’s why the best thing people can do is cut off the water and dry up the turf, like Proposition 13.”¹³⁸ In the following decades the basic principles of sustainability and of the urban village, explored in Sacramento in the 1970s, became familiar through the traditionalist, market-oriented solutions of the New Urbanism, inspired in part by the Bateson Building’s midtown environment of glorious Victorian houses and tree canopies, which was promoted by Peter Calthorpe, a Bateson Building co-architect.¹³⁹ Distancing himself in his second term in office from the huge moral burden of New Age state management, Brown gravitated toward the more pragmatic political persona that eventually saw him reelected as governor in 2011.¹⁴⁰

Bateson himself, while happy to join in the conversations in Sacramento before his death, did so as a stranger to government—as an anthropologist, he explained.¹⁴¹ In some ways his ideas were mismatched with the functionalism of the building that bore his name. For Bateson (and Brown) the role of system, by seeing all things interrelated, was precisely not to seek rigorous order in the things over which one had oversight; it was to accept the “muddle” of which the observer (or governor) was a part. Bateson’s ideas in relation to design, for all their promise as “pattern,” were challenging to translate into built form when compared with the pattern languages of, for example, Christopher Alexander, György Kepes, and Buckminster Fuller.¹⁴² Indeed, Bateson’s epistemology would contribute to the very poststructuralism that rejected an understanding of ecology as an intelligible whole.¹⁴³

Conclusion

Whether it is sought out as a pioneer, an outlier, or a cautionary tale, the Bateson Building, with its empty atrium, its disconnected systems, and its lost chance to make ecology a

public project, is an intriguing and melancholic thing to visit. It is a memorial to a vision of a holistic California about to be overtaken by another organizational mode that adherents would again claim to be “natural” (that of markets); a hubristic, postcountercultural undertaking in social engineering sponsored by a state since in retreat as a benefactor (if not a force); and a grand application of appropriate technology destined to seem instead like a primitive exercise in sustainability.

Rather than reinstating the building as a misunderstood exemplar, we might accept its elusiveness as characteristic of the design and culture of the 1970s, a period of burgeoning interest for scholars curious about the way in which modernist and social democratic consensus gave way to the putatively postindustrial, information-driven present. The Bateson Building was at once a coda to a decades-long modernist search for interdisciplinary, progressive, and positivist environmental design (of which Van der Ryn’s home school at Berkeley was traditionally a national center) and an advent to postmodern architecture as a communicative medium, its very matter and energy a conduit (according to the Batesonian reading that Van der Ryn invited) for information.¹⁴⁴ In a sense the building was set up to fail as architecture traditionally defined: it had to “disappear,” to become environment, an ecological medium integrating subjects and systems.¹⁴⁵

This makes it a potentially instructive historiographical challenge. It can provide a case study in biopolitics, or it can drive home the message left to us by Arthur Drexler and others at the time: that architecture should stick to architecture. Alternatively, the building can remind us that architecture inevitably deals with matters other than itself, so completely imbricated with its economic and physical environment that its pursuit is de facto statecraft.¹⁴⁶ The Bateson Building not only “disappeared”—an avowedly Batesonian architecture has yet to appear, assuming such a thing is possible.

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Notes

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Stewart Brand to Edmund G. Brown, Governor, n.d., Folio 6, correspondence 1975–76, Stewart Brand Editorial Files, Series 1, Box 1, *Whole*

Earth Access/CoEvolution Quarterly Records, M1045, Stanford University Special Collections.

2. Sim Van der Ryn, “Abstracted in Sacramento: The Late Great State Architect Tells What He Learned about Power,” *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Summer 1975, 16–21, 19.

3. The Bateson Building can be credited to the Office of the State Architect (Sim Van der Ryn, Barry Wasserman, Peter Calthorpe, Bruce Corson, Scott Matthews).

4. “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento,” *Architectural Review*, 31 Jan. 2013, <https://www.architectural-review.com/archive/viewpoints/hanging-gardens-of-sacramento/8641934.article> (accessed 27 Sept. 2016). For other recent references to the Bateson Building, see Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 142–46; Simon Sadler, “A Culture of Connection,” *Boom: A Journal of California* 2, no. 1 (2012), 8–9; Simon Sadler, “An Architecture of the Whole,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 61, no. 4 (2008), 114–15.

5. The description “climate modulating” comes from Stewart Brand, quoted in Van der Ryn “Abstracted in Sacramento,” 16. In 1979, Van der Ryn stated, “The key principle behind the Solar Village is sustainability.” Sim Van der Ryn, “The Solar Village,” *Cry California* 14 (Fall 1979), 14, quoted in Carroll Pursell, “Sim Van der Ryn and the Architecture of the Appropriate Technology Movement,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 28, no. 2 (Dec. 2009), 26–27. Google Books’ Ngram view shows negligible use of the word *sustainability* until the late 1970s; use of the word increased exponentially in the mid-1980s, cemented by the United Nations’ Brundtland Report of 1987, which tried to revive the spirit of the 1976 UN Conference on Human Settlements, to which Brand and his mentor Richard Buckminster Fuller had been delegates. On the 1976 UN conference, see Felicity D. Scott, “Carry on Talking,” *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 92 (Dec. 2013), 108–31.

6. On the role of environmental discourse and its construction of subjectivity and nationhood in architecture, see Reinhold Martin, “Environment, c. 1973,” *Grey Room*, no. 14 (Winter 2004), 78–101.

7. See Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (New York: Banyan, 1975).

8. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1972)

9. Stephanie Pincetl, “The Environmental Policies and Politics of the Brown Administration, 1975–1983” (PhD diss., urban planning, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985), 272. Pincetl, now director and professor at the California Center for Sustainable Communities at UCLA, was an information systems manager at the state of California’s Office of Appropriate Technology (OAT) from 1976 to 1978, serving as one of its first three employees. Her 1985 doctoral dissertation in urban planning, the committee for which included Van der Ryn, took stock of “a period of great expectations and ferment.” *Ibid.*, 21.

10. For instance, “New York Mayor Bill de Blasio . . . thanked the California governor for being ‘the leading voice in the nation’ on climate change.” Tom Kington, “Gov. Jerry Brown, at Vatican, Tells Mayors to ‘Light a Fire’ on Climate Change,” *Los Angeles Times*, 21 July 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/europe/la-fg-brown-vatican-mayors-climate-20150721-story.html> (accessed 13 Aug. 2015).

11. The key survey is found in Sam Davis, *Designing for Energy Efficiency: A Study of Eight California State Office Buildings* (Berkeley: Department of Architecture, University of California, 1981).

12. On the frame’s functions, see “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento.”

13. See Davis, *Designing for Energy Efficiency*, 24.

14. “At one stage of the design,” *Progressive Architecture* relayed an admission from team architect Peter Calthorpe in 1981, “the wood panels were supposed to have been a more natural shade . . . that might have been better, since they are not redwood, but they are not offensive.” Jim Murphy, “State Intentions: State Office Building, Sacramento, California,” *Progressive Architecture* 62, no. 8 (Aug. 1981), 76.

15. For technical information on the building, see especially Davis, *Designing for Energy Efficiency*; Murphy, "State Intentions."
16. See "Hanging Gardens of Sacramento."
17. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971); Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Brown first met Illich at Green Gulch in 1976. See Jerry Brown, "Remembering Ivan Illich," *Whole Earth*, Spring 2003, <http://www.wtp.org> (accessed 15 Aug. 2015). See also "The Politics of Friendship: Ivan Illich and Carl Mitcham," a transcript from Brown's radio program *We the People*, Pacifica Network, 22 Mar. 1996, in Jerry Brown, *Dialogues* (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books, 1998), 51–62.
18. A letter to Brown from Stewart Brand refers to a forthcoming meeting between the governor and Schumacher in October 1975. Stewart Brand to Edmund G. Brown, Governor, 9 Oct. 1975, Folio 5, correspondence 1975–76, Stewart Brand Editorial Files, Series 1, Box 1, *Whole Earth Access/CoEvolution Quarterly* Records, M1045, Stanford University Special Collections. Brown's role at Schumacher's funeral is noted in Adam Nagourney, "Brown's Arid California, Thanks Partly to His Father," *New York Times*, 17 May 2015, A1, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/17/us/jerry-browns-arid-california-thanks-partly-to-his-father.html?_r=0 (accessed 1 June 2015).
19. The edition of *Small Is Beautiful* in the governor's archive is the 1978 French translation: E. F. Schumacher, *Une société à la mesure de l'homme*, trans. Danielle Day, William Day, and Marie-Claude Florentin (Paris: Contre-temps/Le Seuil, 1978), in Books, Personal Office and Residence, Brown (Edmund G., Jr.) Papers, c. 1975–83, University of Southern California Libraries, Los Angeles, catalogued at http://archives.usc.edu/repositories/3/archival_objects/55612. See also Carroll Pursell, "The Rise and Fall of the Appropriate Technology Movement in the United States, 1965–1985," *Technology and Culture* 34, no. 3 (1993), 629–37.
20. Brown promised Van der Ryn that "Sacramento is just a sandbox for us to play in." Sim Van der Ryn, *Design for Life* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2005), 57.
21. See Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 306. For further details on the OAT's creation, see Pursell, "Sim Van der Ryn," 23; Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The "Whole Earth Catalog" and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 176, 177–81; Van der Ryn, *Design for Life*, 60–69.
22. See Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology, 1975–82, California State Archives, Sacramento (hereafter Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology). See also California Office of Appropriate Technology, *OAT's Sixth Year: Office of Appropriate Technology, Summary of Accomplishments: A Report to the California Legislature* (Sacramento: Office of Appropriate Technology, 1982). In one of its most ambitious projects, the OAT proposed the development of a low-energy-use town called Manzanita. See "Innovative Technology" folder, Box 1, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology. Van der Ryn also vigorously pursued a proposal for a "solar city" immediately after stepping down as state architect. Meredith Gaglio is developing an important overview of the OAT. See Meredith Gaglio, "Counterculture in the California Office of Appropriate Technology" (paper presented at the annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Pasadena, Calif., Apr. 2016).
23. Political expediency dictated that Brown's administration focus on hazardous waste, for instance, rather than on safe alternatives to chemicals, or even on access to information around worker and community health. See Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 261–63.
24. See "Governor's Apartment Solar System 79-071" folder, Box 2, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology. See also Pursell, "Sim Van der Ryn," 23. Interestingly, this system reprised a comparable one proposed in 1974 under Governor Reagan for the old Governor's Mansion. A solar system was completed in September 1977 for the 1400 N Street Building in Sacramento, a 1920s apartment block, which seems to have been the location of the governor's residence at the time.
25. Van der Ryn, "Abstracted in Sacramento," 19.
26. See "New Possibilities" folder, Box 4, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology; "Exhibit Comments" folder, Box 6, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology. The exhibition was designed by Gordon Ashby, a designer for the *Whole Earth Catalog* who was central to the Bay Area's alternative design scene. See Greg Castillo, "Hippie Modernism," *Places Journal*, Oct. 2015, <https://placesjournal.org/article/hippie-modernism> (accessed 18 Oct. 2015). See also Don B. Cullimore, "California's Office of Appropriate Technology: Showcase or Charade?," *Environmental Action* 9, no. 19 (1978), 3–6.
27. Cullimore, "California's Office of Appropriate Technology," 4.
28. On the OAT's previous location, see Pursell, "Rise and Fall of the Appropriate Technology Movement," 633.
29. "Most agencies traditionally see their mandates to manage the present. We, however, advocate that they prepare for the future by designing and promoting programs with a reliance on cost-effective, renewable resource technologies," the OAT explained in 1979. See "OAT Philosophy" folder, Box 4, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology.
30. "Publicity, Poster, Fact Sheet," "Affordable Housing Competition" folder, Box 1, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology.
31. On the larger parameters of social engineering in 1970s ecology, see, for instance, Martin Beck, ed., *The Aspen Complex* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012). For a comprehensive survey of the counterculture's attempted reorganization of life through the arts and architecture, see Andrew Blauvelt, ed., *Hippie Modernism: The Struggle for Utopia* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2015).
32. "According to Peter Calthorpe," *Progressive Architecture* noted, citing one of the building's designers, "that's the way it should be. Energy considerations, he feels, should be only one very natural part of any building program. Equally important in these state projects is the initial programming and its sociological implications." Murphy, "State Intentions," 80.
33. Sally Woodbridge, "Governing Energy: California State Office Buildings," *Progressive Architecture* 65, no. 4 (Apr. 1984), 86–91.
34. See Davis, *Designing for Energy Efficiency*, 7.
35. Sim Van der Ryn, "Gregory Bateson Building," <http://www.vanderryn.com> (accessed 11 Apr. 2013), reprinted as "Bateson Building Dedication, Sacramento, CA, 1979," in Sim Van der Ryn, *Culture, Architecture and Nature: An Ecological Design Retrospective*, ed. Richard Olsen (New York: Routledge, 2014).
36. *Ibid.*
37. "Geographic Publications: Two New Atlases," *California Geographer*, 1 Jan. 1979, 108.
38. On Oberlander's role, see *ibid.*
39. See Governor's Office of Planning and Research, State of California, *The California Water Atlas* (Sacramento: Office of the Governor, State of California, 1979). For an appreciation of the atlas and information on a project to revive it, see "What We Are Making," New California Water Atlas, <http://ca.statewater.org/about> (accessed 28 June 2016). See also Chacha Sikes, "A New Water Atlas," *Boom: A Journal of California* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2013), <http://www.boomcalifornia.com/2013/10/a-new-water-atlas> (accessed 13 Aug. 2015).
40. See Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 139–66.
41. J. Herbert Snyder, "Troubled Waters," *The Sciences*, 1 Feb. 1980, 27–28.
42. *Whole Earth Catalog* design editor Jay Baldwin also reportedly had connections with the OAT. See, for instance, Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 177–78.
43. See Stewart Brand, ed., *Space Colonies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977). For more on Brand's space colonies proposal, see Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 170–81; and Felicity D. Scott, "Securing Adjustable Climate," in *Climates: Architecture and the Planetary Imaginary*, ed. James Graham (New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City/Zurich: Lars Müller, 2016), 90–105.

44. See Kirk, *Counterculture Green*. Brand was officially Brown's adviser from 1977 to 1979, although his influence in the administration clearly predates this period.
45. Stewart Brand to Edmund G. Brown, Governor, 25 Aug. 1975, Folio 5, correspondence 1975–76, Stewart Brand Editorial Files, Series 1, Box 1, *Whole Earth Access/CoEvolution Quarterly* Records, M1045, Stanford University Special Collections.
46. On the sobriquet, see Jesse McKinley, "How Jerry Brown Became 'Governor Moonbeam,'" *New York Times*, 6 Mar. 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/07/weekinreview/07mckinley.html?_r=0 (accessed 8 Aug. 2015). The California Museum of Science and Industry was remodeled in 1998 and renamed the California Science Center.
47. See Michael McLure, "Philosophical Poem #3," in Brand, *Space Colonies*, 148.
48. "Going into Space is an investment . . . and through the creation of new wealth we make possible the redistribution of more wealth to those who don't have it. . . . As long as there is a safety valve of unexplored frontiers, then the creative, the aggressive, the exploitive urges of human beings can be channeled into long term possibilities and benefits. But if those frontiers close down and people begin to turn in upon themselves, that jeopardizes the democratic fabric." Jerry Brown, "From Limits on Earth to Possibilities in Space," in Brand, *Space Colonies*, 146.
49. Brand, preface to *ibid.*, 146.
50. See Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 178.
51. "Ecology and technology find a unity in Space." Brown, "From Limits on Earth," 146. On the larger histories of the view of Earth as a spaceship or closed system, see Diedrich Diederichsen and Anselm Franke, eds., *The Whole Earth: California and the Disappearance of the Outside* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013); Peder Anker, *From Bauhaus to Ecobouse: A History of Ecological Design* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010).
52. Brown, "From Limits on Earth," 146.
53. Although in subsequent decades space receded as a reopened frontier (especially with the 1986 and 2003 *Challenger* and *Columbia* disasters), the arguments being formulated for space exploration in the 1970s read in retrospect like early drafts of the zealotry for another new "frontier," that of the Internet. The technical and commercial development of the Internet would soon be championed by Brand and would be globally centered on the southern portions of the San Francisco Bay Area known as Silicon Valley, its web-founded technologies (initially developed, of course, by government) becoming the next commons system. In 1985, Brand and Larry Brilliant founded the first civilian Internet chat room, the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link). See Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).
54. Brand, *Space Colonies*, 147.
55. See Volker Welter, *Biopolis: Patrick Geddes and the City of Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002).
56. See the books listed by Stewart Brand as being on the governor's coffee table during his first conversation with Bateson in 1975. Stewart Brand, "Caring and Clarity: Conversation with Gregory Bateson and Edmund G. Brown, Jr., Governor of California," *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Fall 1975, 32–47.
57. Buckminster Fuller attended a demonstration of a nitinol engine by Ridgway Banks at Brown's office in 1977. See Jay Baldwin and Stewart Brand, eds., *Soft-tech* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), 39.
58. See Gregory Bateson, "Crisis in the Ecology of Mind," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. This section of Bateson's book includes his revision of a paper from 1970 on New York, "Restructuring the Ecology of a Great City," first published in *Radical Software* in spring 1971. For further discussion of this work, see Jon Goodbun, "Flexibility and Ecological Planning: Gregory Bateson on Urbanism," *Architectural Design* 82, no. 4 (July/Aug. 2012), 52–55.
59. Bateson was eventually admitted—alongside Charles and Ray Eames, among others—to the California Hall of Fame in 2013 by Jerry Brown, two years after Brown regained the office of governor.
60. Van der Ryn, "Gregory Bateson Building."
61. See Gregory Bateson, "Form, Substance, and Difference," Annual Korzybski Memorial Lecture of the Institute of General Semantics, 9 Jan. 1970, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 455–71. For a summary of Bateson's intellectual career, see Robert I. Levy and Roy Rappaport, "Gregory Bateson, 1904–1980," *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 84, no. 2 (June 1982), 379–94.
62. See Stewart Brand, "For God's Sake, Margaret: Conversation with Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead," *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Summer 1976, 32–44, <http://wholeearth.com/issue/2010/article/361/for.god.s.sake.margaret> (accessed 13 Aug. 2015); Steven J. Heims, *The Cybernetics Group* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991).
63. Sim Van der Ryn and Robert Reich, "Notes on Institution Building" (unpublished draft report for Behavioral and Systems Approaches to Design Grant #1 ROI MH16285-01, Sept. 1968), 4.
64. On the relationships among architectural planning, social organization, ecology, and the People's Park, see Peter Allen, "The End of Modernism? People's Park, Urban Renewal, and Community Design," *JSAH* 70, no. 3 (Sept. 2011), 354–74; Daniel Barber, "People's Park; or, the Crisis of Humanist Architectural Environmentalism" (MEd thesis, Yale University, 2005); Anthony Raynsford, "Ecological Politics and the Designer-as-Ethnologist: People's Park Revisited" (talk presented at the College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley, 13 Nov. 2014). See also Sim Van der Ryn, *Building a People's Park* (Berkeley: Sim Van der Ryn, 1969).
65. One of Van der Ryn's early projects was his then-innovative 1967 postoccupancy survey of Berkeley student housing, written with Silverstein. See Sim Van der Ryn and Murray Silverstein, *Dorms at Berkeley: An Environmental Analysis* (Berkeley: Center for Planning and Development Research, University of California, 1967). Van der Ryn has noted Alexander, Ishikawa, and Silverstein's *A Pattern Language* as one of his three key books of the 1970s. Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa, and Murray Silverstein, with Max Jacobson, Ingrid Fiksdahl-King, and Shlomo Angel, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). See Sim Van der Ryn, *Culture, Architecture and Nature: An Ecological Design Retrospective*, ed. Richard Olsen (New York: Routledge, 2014).
66. See Sim Van der Ryn and the Farallones Institute, *The Integral Urban House* (New York: Random House, 1982). For a recent assessment, see Sabrina Richard, "Integral Urban House," *Critical Sustainabilities*, 1 June 2015, <https://critical-sustainabilities.ucsc.edu/integral-urban-house> (accessed 18 Aug. 2015); Lisa Uddin, "Radical Shit: Countercultural Autonomy and the Composting Toilet" (paper presented at the annual conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, Pasadena, Calif., Apr. 2016).
67. See Van der Ryn, "Abstracted in Sacramento."
68. See too Barber's argument that Van der Ryn moved from the "scientific humanism" of Serge Chermayeff, which had been keynote to the College of Environmental Design's architectural environmentalism, to "a new theory of causality in architecture, one which ultimately rejects the transcendent cause of humanism for the immanent production of change within social relations." Barber, "People's Park," 3. See too Daniel Barber, "Making Design Environmental: The Correctional Facilities Studios at the UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design, 1965–67," *Pidgin Magazine* (Princeton University School of Architecture), May 2011, 54–67.
69. Reported in Woodbridge, "Governing Energy."
70. Sim Van der Ryn, *Appropriate Technology and State Government* (Sacramento: Office of Appropriate Technology/Office of Planning and Research, State of California, Aug. 1975), 9.
71. *Ibid.*, 10.
72. Stewart Brand, preface to Van der Ryn, "Abstracted in Sacramento," 16.

73. Here quoted from *Whole Earth Catalog* (Menlo Park, Calif.: Portola Institute, Fall 1969), inside cover.
74. The *Whole Earth Catalog* coordinated three main holistic tendencies: first, beliefs in harmonious natural processes and intuition, from ancient Eastern religion (particularly variants of Buddhism) to Native American creed to modern American transcendentalism; second, adaptive theories of evolution, from Darwin, Huxley, and Lamarck to Wentworth Thompson; and third, systems theories, from Fuller's design science to rationalist design methods and from Wiener's first-order cybernetics to Bateson's second-order cybernetics. For further discussion, see Bruce Clarke, "Steps to an Ecology of Systems: *Whole Earth* and Systemic Holism," in *Addressing Modernity: Social Systems Theory and U.S. Cultures*, ed. Hannes Bergthaller and Carsten Schinko (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 259–88.
75. Sim Van der Ryn, "Sim Van der Ryn Interviewed by Jeffrey Inaba," 22 Mar. 2011, blog supplement to *Volume*, no. 24 (2010), <http://volumeproject.org/sim-van-der-ryn-interviewed-by-jeffrey-inaba> (accessed 17 June 2014).
76. See Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 40–41. Brown entered the Jesuit Sacred Heart Novitiate in Los Gatos, California, in 1956. He went on to study classics at UC Berkeley and law at Yale. "Understanding how to live and what one should do with this life, that's a continuous question. The Jesuit order was one path, now I'm on another but I don't think they're all that different. . . . All of this is an attempt at understanding the human mystery and equation." Jerry Brown, quoted in Robert Pack, *Jerry Brown: The Philosopher Prince* (New York: Stein & Day, 1978), 25. See also Gary Hamilton and Nicole Biggart, *Governor Reagan, Governor Brown: A Sociology of Executive Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
77. Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, "The Neo-Nixonites: Jerry Brown and Other Liberal Mutants," *Village Voice*, 30 June 1975, 6. The clipping is in Folio 5, correspondence 1975–76, Stewart Brand Editorial Files, Series 1, Box 1, *Whole Earth Access/CoEvolution Quarterly* Records, M1045, Stanford University Special Collections. Repeating a common observation of the sometime Jesuit and Zen novice, the *Harvard Crimson* referred to Brown as "ascetic unto death." Joseph Dalton, "Futurism and All That," *Harvard Crimson*, 17 May 1976, <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1976/5/17/futurism-and-all-that-pbpublic-laboratories> (accessed 14 Aug. 2015).
78. See Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 59.
79. *Ibid.*, 284, 301, 304.
80. John Nathan, *Living Carelessly in Tokyo and Elsewhere: A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 193–94. Hawken was also associated with the Farallones Institute. See Paul Hawken, "Living with Appropriate Technology," in *The Farallones Institute: Creating Tools for a Convivial Society*, annual report, 1979, reprinted in Van der Ryn, *Design for Life*, 57. Esalen was a spiritual retreat, founded in 1962, that was pivotal to California's holistic scene.
81. Brown and Brand were born in 1938, Van der Ryn in 1935.
82. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962); Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).
83. My thanks to building energy specialist Tom Phillips, formerly of the California Air Resources Board, for recalling some of these examples of the environmentalist influences on his generation.
84. "He [Brown] has made a policy out of having no policy, and in this respect the man he most calls to mind is Richard Nixon," lamented the inflammatory comparison made in the *Village Voice* in the very first year of the Brown administration. "He is reported to have said 'we must go left and right at the same time.'" Cockburn and Ridgeway, "The Neo-Nixonites." Today, Brown's style would likely be viewed as a signal of the "postpolitical." See, for instance, Jacques Rancière, "Introducing Disagreement," trans. Steven Corcoran, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 9, no. 3 (2004), 6–7.
85. Carey McWilliams, *California: The Great Exception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949).
86. Stewart Brand, *II Cybernetic Frontiers* (New York: Random House, 1974), 32–33.
87. Brand, *Space Colonies*, 4.
88. The structural and political problems of the world would instead be sublimated by the state's new guardians into the "personalism" presented by Theodore Roszak in *Person/Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1978), a copy of which was in the governor's library. See Books, Personal Office and Residence, Brown (Edmund G., Jr.) Papers, c. 1975–83, University of Southern California Libraries, Los Angeles, catalogued at http://archives.usc.edu/repositories/3/archival_objects/55609. In 1969, Roszak had published the landmark *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969).
89. For more on cybernetics in environmental design, see the summary provided by M. Christine Boyer, "The Two Orders of Cybernetics in Urban Form and Design," in *Companion to Urban Design*, ed. Tridib Banerjee and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris (New York: Routledge, 2011), 70–83.
90. "We have decided to call the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal, by the name *Cybernetics*, which we form from the Greek κυβερνήτης or *steersman*. In choosing this term, we wish to recognize that the first significant paper on feedback mechanisms is an article on governors, which was published by Clerk Maxwell in 1868, and that *governor* is derived from a Latin corruption of κυβερνήτης." Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1948), 11–12.
91. George Mowry describes progressives as "something akin to Plato's guardians." George E. Mowry, *The California Progressives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 101, quoted in Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 33.
92. On Project Cybersyn, see Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011).
93. See Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 51.
94. Stewart Brand to Edmund G. Brown, Governor, 24 Apr. 1975, Folio 6, correspondence 1975–76, Stewart Brand Editorial Files, Series 1, Box 1, *Whole Earth Access/CoEvolution Quarterly* Records, M1045, Stanford University Special Collections.
95. Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences*, no. 4 (1973), 155–69.
96. See David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994). This optimism was being sustained even after Brand's mentor Lewis Mumford had withdrawn from espousal of Geddes's "neotechnic" age into pessimism.
97. Pincetl argues that Brown's first administration transpired as an episode in a longer history of progressive reformism. Extolling the role of expertise and objective government, progressive politics had been epitomized nationally in the early twentieth century by President Theodore Roosevelt's federal management of natural resources and trust-busting, and in California the progressives had offered a strong counter to railroad interests under Governor Hiram Johnson (1906–16). Pincetl, "Environmental Policies and Politics," 32–33.
98. "There are a lot of people who think engineering water from Point A to Point B is somehow unnatural," Brown, back in the governor's office, recently told the media. "Well, we long ago passed the unnatural in California. We're almost bordering on the supernatural in the way we move things around and in the way we intervene." Recorded and quoted in Katie Orr, "Brown: California's Water System 'Engineered,'" Capital Public Radio, 13 Nov. 2014, <http://www.caprado.org/articles/2014/11/13/brown-californias-water-system-engineered> (accessed 14 Aug. 2015). Water development in California,

starting with the levees of the Sacramento River Delta in the 1860s, transformed landscape and ecology, redistributing animal and plant species and ultimately leading to the development of housing tracts across the state. But, Pincetl notes, “the fundamental issue underlying the Peripheral Canal struggle was never really raised: how was nature to be reconstructed in California?” Pincetl, “Environmental Policies and Politics,” 202. Regarding conservationists’ shock at Geddes’s actions, see Welter, *Biopolis*, 17.

99. Some in the appropriate technology movement worried “either that OAT can never work because it’s a government agency, and its mission or image likely will be preempted or misused for personal gain by the politicians and entrenched bureaucrats, or that its programs are too ‘demonstration oriented’ and of no direct benefit to the average citizen.” Cullimore, “California’s Office of Appropriate Technology,” 5.

100. My thanks to Tom Phillips for pointing out these prompts. Action on air and water quality predated the baby boomers and extended to conservatives, including the California Air Resources Board, established under Governor Reagan in 1967, and the Environmental Protection Agency, created under President Richard Nixon in 1973. As much as these were politically expedient acts of bipartisanship keyed to the tensions of the nation in the early 1970s (see Martin, “Environment, c. 1973”), the state’s long history of appreciation for natural beauty can be traced back at least as far as the founding of the Sierra Club in San Francisco in 1892. (Brown’s resources secretary Claire Dedrick was a former Sierra Club official. See Van der Ryn, *Design for Life*, 58.) California exported the ethos; in Berkeley, for instance, a former director of the Sierra Club, David Brower, founded Friends of the Earth in 1969.

101. Amory B. Lovins, *Soft Energy Paths: Toward a Durable Peace* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth International, 1977). Van der Ryn’s encounter with Lovins is described in Sim Van der Ryn, “Ecotopia Now: Utopia Brought Down to Earth,” *New Age*, 1979, reprinted in *Culture, Architecture and Nature*, 108–23. Lovins was drafting “Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?,” *Foreign Affairs*, 1 Oct. 1976. Lovins’s physics impressed Van der Ryn, although Van der Ryn found it too abstract. Van der Ryn, “Ecotopia Now,” 109.

102. Under Brown, the California Energy Commission encouraged renewable energy and energy efficiency, with California’s building standards for energy efficiency leading the nation. Objectives were shared nationally under President Jimmy Carter, whose energy conservation programs, handled in part by the Community Action Agencies, also prompted the federal funding of the National Center for Appropriate Technology in 1976. See Pursell, “Rise and Fall of the Appropriate Technology Movement,” 633. Building scientist and physicist Arthur Rosenfeld and his group (as Tom Phillips recalls) helped position the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory as key to building energy efficiency and indoor air quality. On the wider ecological turn in architecture, see Giovanna Borasi, Mirko Zardini, and Harriet Russell, *Sorry, Out of Gas: Architecture’s Response to the 1973 Oil Crisis* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2007).

103. “A state budget analyst complained that the four-story atrium wasted space, maintenance workers objected to having windows that opened (thus allowing in more dust), and the head of the state employees union objected to the predicted swing in temperature between seventy-eight on the hottest summer days and sixty-five degrees in the winter.” Pursell, “Sim Van der Ryn,” 23. “Van der Ryn measured other state office buildings and discovered that they actually averaged sixty-five degrees in the summer and seventy-eight in the winter.” *Ibid.*

104. See H. Levin and T. J. Phillips, “Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation Measurements in Energy-Efficient California State Office Buildings,” in *Design and Protocol for Monitoring Indoor Air Quality*, ed. N. L. Nagda and J. P. Harper (Philadelphia: American Society for Testing and Materials, 1989), 99–110.

105. The fresh-air ventilation stipulation rose from 5 cubic feet per minute per occupant to 15 cubic feet per minute under new code. As reported in

Architectural Review: “Reports of occupant discomfort were largely attributable to faulty variable air-volume control boxes that reduced the air supply to occupants. Furthermore, a rushed completion schedule and late installation of fabrics and carpeting containing the irritant formaldehyde caused additional discomfort.” “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento.”

106. Employees were apprehensive that the system posed a risk for Legionnaires’ disease, a form of pneumonia first recognized in 1976 after people became ill from a bacterium found in the air-conditioning system of a Philadelphia venue hosting an American Legion convention. *Ibid.* In fact, no infections could be attributed to the Bateson Building’s rock-bed design, although Van der Ryn later conceded that the system “was a bad idea. We weren’t aware of mold issues back then.” Sim Van der Ryn, quoted in Patricia Leigh Brown, “It Happened Here First,” *New York Times*, 17 Nov. 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/17/garden/it-happened-here-first.html> (accessed 27 Sept. 2016).

107. See “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento,” drawing on a 2008 infrastructure study by the State of California.

108. Critics were thus able “to rather unfairly dismiss the building’s energy reduction ideas outright, even though they had not been given an adequate chance to prove their viability.” “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento.”

109. Brown, “It Happened Here First.”

110. The state concluded “that the Bateson Building can be repaired, retrofitted and brought into compliance with current codes together with LEED Silver or Gold certification for existing buildings at 20 percent of replacement cost.” “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento.”

111. See “Prop. 13 & Self-Reliance” folder, Box 7, Records for the Office of Appropriate Technology.

112. “Hanging Gardens of Sacramento.”

113. I owe this observation about Americans’ image of government post-New Deal to Tom Phillips.

114. Donlyn Lyndon, Charles W. Moore, Patrick J. Quinn, and Sim Van der Ryn, “Toward Making Places,” *Landscape* 12, no. 1 (1962), 31–41.

115. Moore helped to instigate design-and-build exercises at Yale. For an account of the postwar ascent of environmental design and phenomenology, and the relation of both to counterdesign, see Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture’s Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

116. “Most people think buildings are sculptural objects or works of art,” Van der Ryn recently noted in defending his work, “but my view has always been that buildings are organisms and ecosystems, and humans make up an important part of those systems.” Van der Ryn, “Sim van der Ryn Interviewed by Jeffrey Inaba.”

117. Arthur Drexler, preface to *Five Architects*, by Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1.

118. See, for instance, Paolo Soleri, *Arcology: The City in the Image of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969); Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man* (London: Collins, 1959).

119. Davis, *Designing for Energy Efficiency*, 7–8, 24.

120. See Steven M. Avella, *Sacramento: Indomitable City* (Mount Pleasant, S.C.: Arcadia, 2003), 125ff.

121. A point made to me by Tom Phillips.

122. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* (New York: Dutton, 1979), 7, quoted in Jon Goodbun, “An Ecology of Mind,” *Architectural Review*, 27 Mar. 2012, <http://www.architectural-review.com/rethink/an-ecology-of-mind/8628251.fullarticle> (accessed 2 May 2016).

123. For an exceptionally helpful effort to define Batesonian aesthetics and its limitations, particularly in relation to architecture, see Goodbun, “Flexibility and Ecological Planning”; and Jon Goodbun, “Gregory Bateson’s Ecological Aesthetics: An Addendum to Urban Political Ecology,” *Field: A*

Free Journal for Architecture 4, no. 1 (2010), 35–46. Implicit in Bateson, Goodbun finds, is “a systemic room-for-manoeuvre.” Goodbun, “Flexibility and Ecological Planning,” 54.

124. As Bateson put it, an ecological theory of mind is “neither supernatural nor mechanical.” Quoted in Goodbun, “Flexibility and Ecological Planning,” 42.

125. See Gregory Bateson, “Double Bind” (1969), in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 271–78.

126. See Beatriz Colomina on early modern Viennese façades as nothing but relation and difference: “In the middle is the screen itself, the mechanism of difference.” Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 27.

127. Tomás Maldonado, *Design, Nature, and Revolution: Toward a Critical Ecology* (1970; repr., New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 19.

128. Jello Biafra (Eric Reed Boucher) and John Greenway, “California Über Alles,” 1979, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/deadkennedys/californiauberalles.html> (accessed 15 Mar. 2007).

129. See Pincetl, “Environmental Policies and Politics,” 26, 31.

130. See Brand, “Caring and Clarity.”

131. That the Bateson Building and the eco-state it represented were caught out by a general cultural turn to pluralism was insightfully underscored in one of the very few architectural histories to take account of the building, Dell Upton’s *Architecture in the United States*. Upton astutely explained the Bateson Building’s “moral dimension,” in which saving energy was “not merely to save tax dollars but also because humans have an ethical responsibility to minimize their impact on the natural world,” which was “ultimately a theological parable. The Judaeo-Christian ambivalence about nature and culture imported by the first European colonists re-emerges in green metaphors of environmental sin and retribution.” Upton was part of the turn toward American cultural studies in architectural history, and he now explained of the round of 1970s and 1980s ecological architectures attempting—as he saw it—to realize ecotopias or Edward Abbey’s Hayduke sagas, “None of these fictions addresses real issues of social diversity, environmental justice (the fair distribution of inevitable environmental hazards), or differences of political values.” Upton, *Architecture in the United States*, 144, 145–46, 147. Upton’s critique drew in part from Martin W. Lewis, *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).

132. See Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*”: *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976* (New York: Picador, 2003).

133. On Brown’s conversation with Bateson concerning the meaning of limited government, see Brand, “Caring and Clarity.”

134. Community Assistance Group, Office of Appropriate Technology, *Working Together: Community Self-Reliance in California* (Sacramento: State of California, 1981).

135. See Pincetl, “Environmental Policies and Politics,” 273. The summary of the *Wall Street Journal* op-ed is from Cockburn and Ridgeway, “The Neo-Nixonites.”

136. Brand, commentary on Van der Ryn, “Abstracted in Sacramento,” 21. In 1986, Brand became a visiting scientist at the Media Laboratory at MIT, and by the late 1980s he was a private conference organizer for corporations including AT&T, Royal Dutch Shell, and Volvo. He had admired the anarcho-capitalism of Ayn Rand since 1971. See, for instance, Stewart Brand, “Capitalism,” in *The Last Whole Earth Catalog*, ed. Stewart Brand (Menlo Park, Calif.: Portola Institute, 1971), 344. The objectives of ecology, self-help, anarchism, liberalism, neoliberalism, libertarianism, and technocracy became blurred in the *CoEvolution Quarterly*. See, for instance, Jim Eggert, “A

Liberal’s Guide to Milton Friedman,” *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Summer 1975, 12–15. Eggert concludes with an analogy between Friedman and Illich; Eggert was also a self-builder. On environmentalism’s relationship to conservative enterprise, see Kirk, *Counterculture Green*; Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*. From the 1980s on, Brand’s circle was associated with the techno-libertarianism of networked computing and free market economics.

137. Van der Ryn, *Appropriate Technology and State Government*, 8.

138. Van der Ryn, “Abstracted in Sacramento,” 19. “Working for Jerry,” Van der Ryn recently confessed offhandedly, “I was able to get a lot done [but] I never took it that seriously.” Van der Ryn, “Sim van der Ryn Interviewed by Jeffrey Inaba.”

139. Calthorpe, who had also worked with the Farallones Institute, went into practice with Van der Ryn after both left government service.

140. See, for instance, Jerry Brown, “Still Ambitious after All These Years: Jerry Brown Interviewed by Jeffrey Inaba,” *Volume*, no. 13 (2007), <http://c-lab.columbia.edu/0075.html> (accessed 29 Aug. 2014).

141. See Gregory Bateson and Jerry Brown, “Prayer Breakfast,” *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Spring 1976, <http://www.wholeearth.com/issue/2009/article/360/prayer.breakfast#> (accessed 18 June 2013).

142. As essayist and novelist Tim Parks has commented, “Bateson’s ‘epistemological’ approach . . . prevented him from proposing remedies to the problems he identified.” Tim Parks, “Everything Is Connected,” *Guardian*, 12 Sept. 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/sep/13/politics.art> (accessed 21 Apr. 2014).

143. Félix Guattari modified Bateson’s ecology in “The Three Ecologies,” trans. Chris Turner, *New Formations*, no. 8 (Summer 1989), 141. Further, a recent volume on ecological urbanism opens with the ideas of Bateson and Guattari: see Mohsen Mostafavi and Gareth Doherty, eds., *Ecological Urbanism* (Zurich: Lars Muller, 2010). For more on the strange conjunction of cybernetics and poststructuralism, see Lydia H. Liu, “The Cybernetic Unconscious: Rethinking Lacan, Poe, and French Theory,” *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 2 (Winter 2010), 288–320; Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, “From Information Theory to French Theory: Jakobson, Lévi-Strauss, and the Cybernetic Apparatus,” *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 1 (Autumn 2011), 96–126.

144. As Jon Goodbun puts it, “Bateson is not simply referring to information systems that might sit ‘on top’ of more fundamental matter and energy flows, but is rather emphasising that ‘information’ is immanent with the relations of all of these flows.” Goodbun, “Gregory Bateson’s Ecological Aesthetics,” 41.

145. See Martin, “Environment, c. 1973.”

146. The question of whether more could be expected of government as a “designer” has recently recurred. See, for instance, Reinhold Martin, Raphael Sperry, Amit C. Price Patel, Liz Ogbu, and Tom Angotti, “The Housing Question,” *Places Journal*, June 2012, <https://placesjournal.org/article/the-housing-question> (accessed 22 Aug. 2015); Nancy Levinson, “After the Storm: Climate Change and Public Works,” *Places Journal*, Jan. 2013, <https://placesjournal.org/article/after-the-storm-climate-change-and-public-works> (accessed 22 Aug. 2015); Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative, *Governing by Design: Architecture, Economy, and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012); Jeff Madrick, “Innovation: The Government Was Crucial after All,” *New York Review of Books*, 24 Apr. 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/apr/24/innovation-government-was-crucial-after-all> (accessed 3 Oct. 2014). In 2003–7, Thom Mayne and Morphosis would return with a powerful image of government as a locus of innovation and sustainability with their San Francisco Federal Building, part of the short-lived General Services Administration’s “excellence in design” initiative.