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VISUAL BLIGHT ON THE KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Americans have long enjoyed the world's highest standard of living, reflected especially in per capita income. But in recent years a re-evaluation of the qualities that make up an advanced society has placed increasing emphasis on life quality rather than on income and the acquisition of material wealth. This new orientation is reflected in a growing concern for the overall physical environment.

Disruption of the environment has captured the research interests of scholars here and abroad. Among the scientific disciplines, geography has traditionally been most concerned with the relationship of man to land. This tradition is today reflected in growing numbers of scientific studies relating the effects of noise, air pollution, water pollution, visual blight, and other hazards to the human system.¹ Work done by Gilbert White in conjunction with the Federal Environmental Impact Statement is one example of geography's involvement in conserving the quality of the environment.

This report will deal specifically with variations in perception of visual blight on the Kansas State University campus within a sample group of the student body, in the hope

¹See Sterling Brubaker, To Live on Earth (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, for Resources for the Future, Inc., 1972), Chapters 3 and 4.

that this empirical research might give some insight to the importance of the physical environment in the learning situation. Visual blight has been defined by Meinig as "a diagnosis, a condition discerned within something else. The very words connote a disharmony, an offensive addition."² It is concerned with that which makes the environment ugly, unattractive, and uninspiring to the human soul. Visual blight is usually a man-made despoilation of place because of unrestrained and thoughtless applications of technology.

This chapter will first consider man's perception of nature and the environment, and his ability to adapt to his surroundings. This general theme will be related to the specific focus of the paper, visual blight, and the special environmental responsibility of the university will then be examined. Relevant geographical literature will be cited as the findings and analysis are developed.

Man's Perception of Nature

The man-nature relationship is everchanging. From the time of the "original sin"³ man has been subjected to the wrath of nature. The wilderness was seen to be fraught with evil and temptation. Nature was perceived as harsh and cruel to a mankind who could do little more than respond passively to the onslaught of drought, flood, pestilence,

²D. Meinig, from a paper presented at the 68th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Kansas City, Missouri, April 24, 1972.

³When Adam and Eve ate fruit from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden; see Genesis 3:6.

and famine.

Gradually improved technology enabled man to become less subject to the whims of nature. Sedentary agriculture encouraged production of man-made implements and domestication of animals. Later, when men came together in cities, a division of labor emerged. Certain sectors of the population were freed from agricultural pursuits and entered entrepreneurial functions and small-scale, labor-intensive manufacturing. Mechanization facilitated utilization of inanimate resources for the generation of greater amounts of energy to be used in production. Improvements in communications hastened the exchange of goods and ideas and man became increasingly aware of his ability to exploit resources provided by nature. But man's hegemony over nature became questionable when the years of exploitation of nature's bounty began to mar the face of the earth and deplete certain natural resources. In his book, From Geography to Geotechnics, Benton Mackaye developed this progression through American history. He traced the increasing use of technology from frontier expansion to the stage of depletion and despoilation.⁴

Vast wildernesses which were once looked upon with disdain are now revered as they steadily disappear beneath urban sprawl, highways, industrial development, mining operations, agricultural lands and public recreational areas. "Wilderness" was earlier defined as undeveloped land inhabited

⁴Benton Mackaye, From Geography to Geotechnics, ed. Paul T. Bryant (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968).

by wild beasts, where man did not venture lest he lose his way or worse, fall victim to moral chaos. The term has been extended to include other inhospitable environments for man, such as large urban areas, and then further extended to include favorable conceptions, such as that of a sanctuary for respite and contemplation away from the pressures of civilization.⁵ Wildernesses are now perceived as nonrenewable resources to be protected for posterity, and are championed by conservation interests throughout the U.S.A., such as the California-based Sierra Club.

The pure, clean air and waters of the world are being increasingly contaminated by the very objects originally produced to extend man's capacity for exploiting resources. Man's use of electric power and the automobile, for example, have greatly fouled the environment.⁶ It would appear then that "the chief danger to human survival comes from man himself instead of the forces of nature."⁷

Whereas western society has attained the world's highest material standard of living, it has also contributed a greater share to global environmental disruption. In

⁵For a review of the concept of wilderness see R. Nash, Wilderness and the Human Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

⁶For a discussion of the role of technology in environmental degradation see Thomas R. Detwyler, Man's Impact on Environment (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), Chapters 8, 9, and 26.

⁷Jerome D. Frank, "Galloping Technology," Journal of Social Sciences, XXII, 4 (1966), 4.

addition to the use of technology, differing attitudes towards nature are offered as a contributing factor. Yi-Fu Tuan points out that, "the European sees nature as subordinate to him whereas the Chinese sees himself as a part of nature."⁸ In the film, "Multiply and Subdue the Earth," Ian McHarg portrays how western man ignores the basic tenets of living in harmony with nature, with resultant losses on both the part of man and the environment. He observed that "Western society at large believes that the world consists of a dialogue between men, or between man and an anthropomorphic God. The result of this view is that man, exclusively, is thought divine-given dominion over all life, enjoined among all creatures to subdue the earth. Nature is then an irrelevant backdrop to the human play called Progress or Profit. If nature is brought to the foreground, it is only to be conquered--man versus nature."⁹ This perception of nature has largely been responsible for the widespread environmental disruption in most technologically developed countries.

The Perceived Environment

The manner in which individuals interpret their surroundings varies according to their differences in perception. In his study of landscape appraisal, Craik states that "the influence of the physical environment upon behav-

⁸Yi-Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies between Environmental Attitudes and Behavior: Examples from Europe and China," Canadian Geographer, 12 (1968), 176.

⁹Ian L. McHarg, Design with Nature (Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1969), p. 43.

ior and the influence persons attempt to exert upon the physical environment are both mediated by the manner in which human organisms comprehend it."¹⁰ It can be said that decisions are made in the environment not as it is, but rather as it is perceived. Man's perceptual environment is that part of the operational environment of which he is aware.¹¹ In his classic survey of the perceived environment, H. C. Brookfield defines it as "the whole monistic 'surface' on which decision is based, including natural and non-natural, visible and non-visible, geographical, political, economic and sociological elements."¹²

For many years geographers generally have been loathe to further involve themselves in studies relating man's behavior to his environment. Discredit brought to the field by environmental determinism was probably the cause. But numerous case studies have shown a very positive correlation between the influence of man's physical environment and his behavior. There is a need for empirical studies in geography dealing with these relationships in a spatial sense. The natural hazard studies have already made a very positive

¹⁰Kenneth Craik, "Human Responsiveness to Landscape: An Environmental Psychological Perspective," Response to Environment, ed. G. J. Coates (Raleigh: North Carolina University Press, 1969), p. 171.

¹¹See Joseph Sonnenfeld, "Geography, Perception and the Behavioral Environment," Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 51, 3 (1961), 241-260.

¹²H. C. Brookfield, "On the Environment as Perceived," Progress in Geography, Vol. 1, eds. Christopher Board et al. (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p. 53.

contribution to this area.¹³

Beauty in the Environment

The possession of a soul¹⁴ differentiates man from beast. The human soul needs variety in experience and stimulation just as the body needs physical nourishment. Parr explores the importance of the physical environment and argues that "extreme sensory deprivation quickly deranges the mind and will soon destroy it if the condition is allowed to persist."¹⁵ The spirit especially needs beauty, ". . . the hard beauty that intrudes on life; the Beethovenian chords that stop the chit-chat and wake the baby, the pieta that disturbs and the desert that shocks the complacent needs of our bodies for softness and shade."¹⁶

There is little agreement about what constitutes beauty. It is a fleeting and subjective concept which changes in place and through time. Learning and life exper-

¹³Among the contributions are: I. Burton and R. W. Kates, "The Perception of Natural Hazards in Resource Management," Natural Resources Journal, 3, 3 (1964), 412-441; R. W. Kates, Hazard Choice Perception in Flood Plain Management (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 78, 1962); T. F. Saarinen, Perception of Drought Hazard on the Great Plains (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 106, 1966); and G. E. White (ed.), Papers on Flood Problems (Chicago: University of Chicago, Department of Geography Research Paper No. 70, 1961).

¹⁴The spiritual principle embodied in human beings.

¹⁵A. E. Parr, "Environmental Design and Psychology," Landscape, 14, 2 (1964), 15.

¹⁶Yi-Fu Tuan, "Architecture and Human Nature," Landscape, 13, 1 (1963), 19.

iences will usually modify an individual's perception of beauty. Analysis of the experience of beauty is called aesthetics.¹⁷ Aesthetics may be further defined as the "philosophic study of perceptual intuition . . . the study of the value that is to be found in the data of perceptual intuition."¹⁸ When the Zen Buddhists, for example, speak of beauty as perception by those who mentally complete the incomplete,¹⁹ the notion alludes to an aesthetic attitude of complete occupation with the perceptual data considered in their own nature.

McCamy stated that "beauty is a pleasure to the soul. Aesthetic pleasure raises the spirit of man and makes him better than he might be without it."²⁰ George Santayana saw beauty as a "manifestation of God to the senses, since, in the region of sense, the perception of beauty exemplifies that adequacy and perfection which in general we objectify in an idea of God."²¹ Man's ability to perceive the beautiful is a divine gift that enriches the spirit and elevates

¹⁷For a diagrammatic representation of the "Domain of Aesthetics" see George Dickie, Aesthetics (Indianapolis: Pegasus, 1971), p. 45.

¹⁸Harold Newton Lee, Perception and Aesthetic Value (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1938), p. 98.

¹⁹See J. O. Simonds, Landscape Architecture: The Shaping of Man's Natural Environment (New York: F. W. Dodge Corp., 1961), p. 118.

²⁰James L. McCamy, The Quality of the Environment (New York: Free Press, 1972), p. 12.

²¹Quoted in Irwin Edman (ed.), The Philosophy of Santayana (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 13.

the soul. To Boersch, the natural landscape as a creation of God is the exemplar of beauty.²² Aristotle said that "the essential characteristics composing beauty are order, symmetry and definiteness."²³

George Santayana wrote that "the beautiful does not depend on the useful; it is constituted by the imagination in ignorance and contempt of practical advantage."²⁴ Considerations of beauty do not normally take priority over considerations of utility and economic feasibility today. Kates further stated that "if beauty were indeed commonplace we should probably be unconscious of it. Its very scarcity provides value, its rarity gives unique pleasure."²⁵ This is poor consolation to humanists and others appreciative of the dwindling resources of natural beauty.

Man's Ability to Adapt

A large body of literature supports the notion that people adapt to visual disruption and other forms of environmental deterioration. Lowenthal sees this as a function of apathy and a conscious placing of filters. He notes that there are "few who care, or pretend to care, about the way things look where they live. Few people really look at the

²²A. Boersch, "Landscape: Exemplar of Beauty," British Journal of Aesthetics, 11, 1 (1971), 93.

²³Aristotle in Philosophies of Beauty, ed. F. Carritt (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 36.

²⁴George Santayana in ibid., p. 16.

²⁵R. W. Kates, "The Pursuit of Beauty in the Environment," Landscape, 16, 2 (1966), 23.

places they live in, work in, or travel through. Anaesthetized against their surroundings, they spare themselves pain."²⁶

In Charles Darwin's Origin of Species, his natural selection theory predicts that the fit will survive in great numbers. "All successful adaptations may be expected to improve an organism's position in a given environment."²⁷ It would follow that those who have made the successful adaptation have blocked out aestheticism and are alive and well, at least in a physical sense. In the words of Ian Burton, "conditions of environmental quality that might be considered intolerable have a habit of becoming quickly accepted and barely noticed."²⁸ This tolerance to environmental disruption is not enhancing man's spiritual development.

Microbiologist Rene Dubos related man's nonspecific responses to a variety of stressful situations in his General Adaption Syndrome.²⁹ His book, Man Adapting, expresses the real danger of twentieth century man's ease in adapting to his environment. He said that "the frightful threat

²⁶David Lowenthal, "Not Every Prospect Pleases," Landscape, 12, 2 (1962), 21.

²⁷Kenneth Hewitt and F. Kenneth Hare, Man and Environment (Washington: Association of American Geographers, Commission on College Geography, Research Paper No. 20, 1973), p. 22.

²⁸Ian Burton, "The Quality of Environment: A Review," Geographical Review, 58, 3 (1968), 480.

²⁹General Adaption Syndrome refers to the complex sequence of pathological processes that result from nonspecific responses made by the body of animals and man to a large variety of unrelated stressful situations.

posed by adaptability when the concept is applied to human beings in a purely biological context is that it implies so often a passive acceptance of conditions which really are not desirable for mankind. The ideal environment tends to become one in which man is physically comfortable, but progressively forgets the values that constitute the unique qualities of human life."³⁰ People readily anaesthetize themselves to unattractive surroundings in order to adapt to an increasingly ugly environment.

The real challenge for man today is to stop this passive acceptance of widespread aberrations of taste, to seek out what constitutes environmental heresy and to replace it with objects that satisfy the soul. If quality of life is to be the real criterion of an advanced society, a grand-scale reappraisal of the importance of aesthetics is needed. Hazard and resource management studies conducted by geographers have made a great contribution in the assessment of man's adaption to environmental disruption, but the realm of aesthetics has not been adequately explored.

Geography and Visual Blight

In April of 1972, at the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers, a special symposium on visual blight was conducted. Contributors to this session were Yi-Fu Tuan, David Lowenthal, Pierce Lewis and Donald Meinig. Themes presented included the importance of an aes-

³⁰Rene Dubos, Man Adapting (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 279.

thetically pleasing environment, the establishment of visual pollution as a major environmental problem, and the special role of the geographer in helping to alleviate this problem.

Pierce Lewis raised the question of the validity of spending geographer's research resources on the study of visual blight in a world beset with problems such as starvation, prejudice and population explosion, but he stressed the need for a recognition and love of beauty as an essential ingredient of humanity. Lewis argued that geographers could be among the more effective advocates in challenging visual blight because of geography's traditional concern for place, the regularities in the distribution of visual blight, the relationship between man and his environment, and the ability of geographers to think about landscape in its totality. He stressed the need for further activity by geographers in helping to describe and explain visual blight, and for those so inclined, to engage in a bit of politicking.³¹

The Environmental Responsibility of the University

Rene Dubos found that "man uses only a very, very small percentage of his potentiality; those components of the genetic endowment that become expressed are those that in some way are stimulated by environmental factors."³²

³¹Pierce F. Lewis, "The Geographer as Landscape Critic" (paper presented at the 67th Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, April 25, 1972, Kansas City, Missouri).

³²Rene Dubos, "Individual Man in Technological Society," Environment, the University, and the Welfare of Man, ed. B. R. Wilson (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1969), p. 43.

In finding an optimum environment for learning, the university should therefore seek to provide an environment of perceptual stimulation for its population. It has been estimated that "about 75 per cent of all learning may be accounted for by meaningfulness, motivation and memory, leaving only 25 per cent for the effects of the physical environment alone and in interaction with these variables."³³ As the physical environment is a tangible factor over which man can exercise some degree of control, its importance to the overall learning situation warrants further research and should not be underemphasized.

The college campus draws to mind a well-planned and expensive investment by private interests and Federal and State authorities to educate students and to promote intellectual endeavor. The importance of an aesthetically attractive setting conducive to stimulation and learning is paramount in the landscape of a university. The U.S. Office of Education defines the university's role as providing instruction, research and service to the community, but the responsibility goes further than this. The university has a specific challenge: "the development of an environmental ethic should be a matter of deep concern to all its members. Without such principles, the social environment will become increasingly fouled, along with the physical environment;

³³Daniel H. Carson, "The Interactions of Man and His Environment," School of Environmental Research, No. 2 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, Department of Architecture, 1963), p. 18.

the two are inseparable."³⁴

Of all social institutions, the university is perhaps the most cognizant of environmental problems. The environment and its preservation is the central theme to growing numbers of courses of study being offered through a wide range of curriculums. With extensive research resources, most universities are thoroughly versed on the causes and effects of environmental deterioration. It would therefore be a serious neglect of social responsibility if pollution of any form or manner were to be propagated on any campus.

Statement of the Problem

Kansas State University is a land-grant college, established in 1863, with an enrollment of 15,158 in the fall of 1972. It is located in the town of Manhattan which possesses an environment relatively pollution-free when compared with many inner-city universities or institutions located near industrial complexes or major transport nodes. It is an impelling challenge to preserve this environment, and to recognize and eradicate any potential menace to it.

In the view of the writer, visual blight is gradually encroaching upon the natural beauty of the Kansas State University campus. It takes the form of openly exposed physical plant and storage depots, poor landscaping, signs and advertisements, and bicycles and litter that clutter the grounds. The university will suffer aesthetically for a long time to come because of grossly discordant building styles and acres

³⁴Wilson, op. cit., p. 11.

of asphalt parking lots and cement sidewalks. Of shorter duration but equally objectionable to the senses, are the ever-present maintenance and repair activities which greatly detract from the natural beauty of the campus, through creating ditches and mounds of earth, scaffolding, and temporary storage of supplies on lawns.

The intent of this report is to identify variations in student perception of visual blight on campus. It is postulated that students are becoming immune to visual blight and that they are largely uncritical of visual pollution problems on campus. The following chapter will deal with the research procedures used in conducting this study.

Chapter 2

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The first step in undertaking this study was to survey the campus on foot and to photograph those areas which I perceived as contributing to visual blight. The photographs were impressions of views along heavily travelled routes around campus. They were images that could be readily experienced by most students in their normal daily routine. The field survey was conducted in the latter part of the fall of 1972 when the natural beauty of the campus was enhanced by the colorful foliage. I recall being disturbed at the way in which this natural beauty was reduced by the numerous instances of visual blight that were encountered. I was offended, and the question arose in my mind if others shared my feelings.

The purpose of this study is to establish and assess variations in student perception of visual blight on campus. In order to accomplish this, a questionnaire was designed to elicit both specific and non-specific responses from students concerning their perception of the campus environment. A sample group was selected from which I could obtain responses within a relatively short period of time to ensure spontaneous answers about the perceived environment, with time as a constant variable. These responses were analyzed to dis-

cuss areas of agreement among clearly identifiable groups, and to determine the extent to which the problem of visual blight was perceived among the sample.

Questionnaire Construction

After the pre-test,¹ a one-page questionnaire, the survey instrument was revised to remove observed weaknesses. (See Appendix I) Information on visual blight sought by this questionnaire has not been treated in other surveys, but the Natural Hazards Research Papers were a sound guide for the general outline. The questionnaire basically sought to analyze perception of visual blight with specific variables, such as the age, sex, and major field of study of the respondents. It was designed to assess variations in perception within the sample group, as well as similarities in responses.

The first five questions sought to identify each respondent according to age, sex, major field of study, the number of semesters spent at Kansas State University, and hometown. It was anticipated that variation in the above factors would influence the degree of awareness of blight on campus. Question six dealt with car and bicycle use around campus. Problems of parking lots and bicycles cluttering the grounds prompted the inclusion of this question.

¹A one-page questionnaire was administered to 35 Freshman Physical Geography students. Fourteen lived off campus, and 21 lived in student residence halls. In analysis, 62 per cent of the dormitory residents perceived visual blight to be a problem while among the students who lived off campus the result was 50 per cent.

Question seven was the first open-ended question, requiring students to comment on the main environmental problems on campus. It was posed early in the questionnaire to find out if students would refer to visual pollution. The following question required the respondents to consider the importance of an attractive campus, and to give reasons for or against this. They were then asked to compare the Kansas State University campus with others they had visited, and to comment on the major differences in appearance between them. This question draws on the student's life experiences as reflected in his perception of different environments.

Items eleven and twelve asked students to list two or three of the most attractive and least attractive places on campus. Students were then asked the direct question of whether visual pollution exists on campus. This required a fairly definite opinion on the part of the respondents. The last question on the first page asked students to list the factors which they considered might contribute to visual blight.

On the second page of the questionnaire, students were asked to rank sixteen variables that were suggested might contribute to blight, according to whether they constituted a serious problem, a moderate problem, or no problem at all. The list of variables were instances of visual pollution that I have experienced along normal routes to class, such as unkempt lawns, maintenance and construction work, old buildings in poor condition, discordant architecture,

and so on. This list was by no means a comprehensive reckoning of every real item of blight on the campus, but merely a selected sample of items that I had perceived. It was hoped that a correlation of strength of the problem with each variable might give rise to generalizations about which instances of blight were perceived as most serious by the sample. The final question aimed at student's creative ideas in asking for their recommendations on how funds for beautification of the school grounds could be used in the future.

Sample Selection

The sample group was chosen from among student residents of Moore Hall. Moore Residence Hall lies on the northeast corner of campus so that its occupants usually cover an extensive area of the grounds daily on their way to and from classes. Moore Hall offers a wide cross-section of students because it is a co-educational dormitory, with both graduate and undergraduate students from all major curriculums, and from many states.

Of the 4,110 students who lived in residence halls at Kansas State University in the fall of 1972, 638 lived in Moore Hall. There was a total of 499 male residents and 139 female residents. Incoming freshmen made up the greatest proportion of residents, totalling 36 per cent, or 191 males and 41 females. There were 55 male and 13 female graduate students, constituting approximately 1.1 per cent of Moore Hall residents.

The sample size was set at 150 as this represents a

one per cent sample of the entire student body. Of the sample, 86 were male and 64 were female. Their ages ranged from 17 to 40 with the greatest frequency being 18 years old. Median age was 19, and the mean was 20.5 years old. All major curriculums were represented, with concentrations in Arts and Sciences and Veterinary Medicine. Fifty-six per cent of the sample were experiencing their first semester at Kansas State University, a factor which possibly biased the sample. Length of residence ranged up to twelve semesters. The hometowns of 75 per cent of the sample were in urban areas of 2,500 or more population.

The two-page questionnaire was administered in Moore Hall to allow for distribution and collection within a short time span and to ensure spontaneous responses. It was distributed non-randomly, with a conscious effort to weight female responses as Moore Hall was made up of approximately 72 per cent male residents. The questionnaire was distributed and collected until 150 useable responses were available. It was not administered orally, but left with respondents early in the evening with a brief explanation of its intent, and collected later that night or on the following evening. It was hoped that this method would reduce the risk of influencing respondents due to the personal bias of the interviewer. The findings and analysis of data collected from the sample will follow in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the findings of the questionnaire will be correlated and analyzed to assess variation in the sample population's perception of visual blight on the Kansas State University campus. Responses to each question are tabulated and examined in the light of the research objectives. The chi-square test is used to measure the strength of association of several of the variables with recognition or non-recognition of blight.

Local Transportation and Vehicle Ownership

The town of Manhattan is not compact, and most people require a means of transportation for business and social activities. The situation is aggravated by the lack of an efficient public transportation system, so that ownership of some means of transport is almost a necessity for freedom of movement in and around the city. The resultant widespread ownership of cars and bicycles has generated the problems of providing and maintaining adequate parking facilities for students on campus, and of congestion within the grounds.

For the academic year 1972-1973, a total of 8,214 parking permits had been sold to students, faculty and staff at K.S.U. There are a total of approximately 3,370 parking spaces on campus, exclusive of those provided for students

in residence halls. The situation is gradually coming to the point where the campus "originally pedestrian in nature now resembles urban parking lots with other buildings."¹ Parking lots are taking over many areas of natural beauty as functionalism clearly over-rides considerations of aestheticism. In addition, parking lots have been found to be among the most susceptible places to litter on campus.

In answer to the question of "Do you use a bicycle or car at school?," 33.3 per cent of the sample gave a negative response. The bias of the residence hall being on campus probably helps to account for the low level of ownership. Both a car and a bicycle were used by 11.3 per cent, 15.3 per cent used bicycles alone, and 40.0 per cent of the sample used only cars. Responses from this question related directly to questions 7, 12, 14 and 15 following in the questionnaire, where cars and parking lots were frequently cited as instances of environmental disruption by the sample.

The Main Environmental Problems Perceived on Campus

Item seven was open-ended to allow students to comment at length on the question "What are the main environmental problems on campus?". There was a great diversity of response. Most often mentioned, by 22 per cent, was litter. From the author's experience litter on the K.S.U. campus was a modest problem, in comparison to inner-city colleges.

¹Bricks and Mortarboards, A Report on College Planning and Building, Educational Facilities Laboratories Inc., 1964, p. 143.

Perhaps the influence of the mass media, where in many instances conservation is equated with proper trash disposal, stimulated this response. The second most frequently given answer, by 18.6 per cent, was that there were no environmental problems on campus at all. A number of respondents left this blank, inferring a negative response. Perhaps the fact that 56 per cent of the sample were first semester freshmen, reluctant to criticize their new surroundings and having limited experience on campus was the reason for this response.

Eighteen per cent of the sample saw environmental problems associated with sidewalks. Reference was usually made to students who walk across lawns leaving dirt paths in their wake, or misplaced sidewalks where excessive amounts of cement had greatly disturbed the natural appearance of the area. Other environmental problems listed by the sample in descending order of frequency were: lack of vegetation, cow barn odor, cars, poor drainage, the physical plant, maintenance and construction work, parking lot landscaping, Campus Creek, smoke, older buildings in need of repair, noise, soil erosion, pigeons, and sculptures. Judging from the responses, the sample had shown an awareness of a wide variety of environmental problems on campus.

Only four per cent of those interviewed gave a negative response to the question "Do you feel it is important to have an attractive campus?". They would prefer that the emphasis lie with quality of education. This response indicated a certain amount of apathy toward the environment,

although it would be difficult to argue against quality of education as the most important aspect of the university.

Among the 96 per cent which indicated that it was important to have an attractive campus, the most common response (given by over 45 per cent of the sample) was that an attractive campus was aesthetically inspiring and made for a better attitude for going to class. The environment was seen to be important in promoting a "university outlook." A good looking campus was also considered important for attracting incoming students, and for visitors. Pride was mentioned as a further reason for having an attractive campus. From these responses, it was clear that the majority of students were mindful of their surroundings, and had some sound ideas on university public relations and the value of an aesthetically pleasing environment to the overall learning situation.

Comparison of the K.S.U. Campus with Other Campuses

Life experience is an important factor in determining what is perceived, and how it is perceived. Carson states that "individual perception of a given environment depends on what other environments have been experienced."² Attitudes about the natural environment are usually formed by the time a person reaches twelve years of age³ so that by the time a student enters college, most of his basic ideals

²Carson, op. cit., p. 17.

³See Paul Shepard, Man in the Landscape (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 34.

about the environment have been established.

In order to find out a little more of the life experience of respondents, question nine asked if they had visited any other campuses. Only 4.6 per cent had never been on a campus other than K.S.U. Of the 95.4 per cent who had visited other schools, 32.6 per cent had visited other schools in Kansas, whereas the remaining 62.8 per cent had also experienced universities in other states. The majority of respondents were therefore aware of what other campuses looked like, and should have been able to make some kind of mental comparison with K.S.U.

Although most students had been to other campuses, they experienced difficulty in making sound comparisons with Kansas State University. There was a low level of written responses to this question. Many answers directly conflicted with those given by others in the sample population. The answer with the greatest frequency, given by only 16.6 per cent, was that there was no difference between K.S.U. and other campuses. Fourteen per cent of the sample said that K.S.U. had more trees. Almost equal numbers of students said that the campus was both older and newer, compact and more spread out, less attractive and prettier. Other comments about the K.S.U. campus were that it was bigger, and that it had benefits of being in a rural area with clean air, less noise, and so on. It was also seen to be more crowded, and had less consistent architecture. Although students could be expected to know their way about campus, their answers showed that very few of them are really critical of their

surroundings. It follows that the slow destruction of the campus environment would go largely unchallenged by the majority of students.

Perception of the Most and Least Attractive Places on Campus

Questions eleven and twelve asked students to list 2 or 3 places that they perceived as being the most and least attractive on campus. The responses have been compiled in Tables 1 and 2. Photographs of several of these places appear on the following pages. From the responses, there appears to be a greater consensus of what is ugly rather than what is beautiful. Other studies have reached the same conclusion.⁴

Sixty-five per cent of the sample group gave a positive response to the question "Do you think we have visual pollution on campus?". In order to gain a better understanding of the variable within the sample which might give the reasons for this response, the chi-square test was used to correlate responses for questions 2-5 identifying each respondent, with question 13 given above. Chi-square assesses significance between empirically obtained and theoretically expected results. It is an especially good test to use in correlating qualitative variables, but has limitations when

⁴See Kates, "The Pursuit of Beauty," op. cit., p. 23; R. E. Coughlin and K. A. Goldstein, The Extent of Agreement Among Observers on Environmental Attractiveness (Regional Science Research Institute, Discussion Paper Series No. 37, 1970), p. 10; and D. Lowenthal, An Analysis of Environmental Perception, Second Interim Report to Resources for the Future Inc. (New York: American Geographical Society, 1967), p. 7.

Table 1
Places Perceived as Most Attractive on Campus

Place name	Mentioned by (% of the study group)
(1) Rose Garden by Justin	30.6
(2) Farrell Library and fountain	24.6
(3) K-State Union	18.6
(4) President's home	18.0
(5) Older buildings (Leasure, Gowans Stadium)	15.3
(6) Newer buildings (Auditorium, Chapel, Cardwell, King, Ackert)	14.6
(7) Anderson Hall and front lawn	14.0
(8) Gardens by Moore Hall	12.6
(9) Campus Creek	12.0
(10) Nichol's Gymnasium	8.6

Table 2
Places Perceived as Least Attractive on Campus

Place name	Mentioned by (% of the study group)
(1) Older buildings (Ahearn Field- house, Waters, Holtz, Dickens, Thompson, Fairchild, Willard, and Seaton)	51.3
(2) Physical Plant	29.3
(3) Parking lots	26.0
(4) Newer buildings (Derby Complex, Ackert, Cardwell, King, Pittman)	23.3
(5) Maintenance and construction	10.6
(6) Nichol's Gymnasium	10.0
(7) Sidewalks and dirt paths	7.3
(8) Cow barns	6.6
(9) Greenhouses	6.6
(10) Sculptures (Farrell fountain, Waters Hall painting, white fork)	4.6



Farrell Library and Fountain



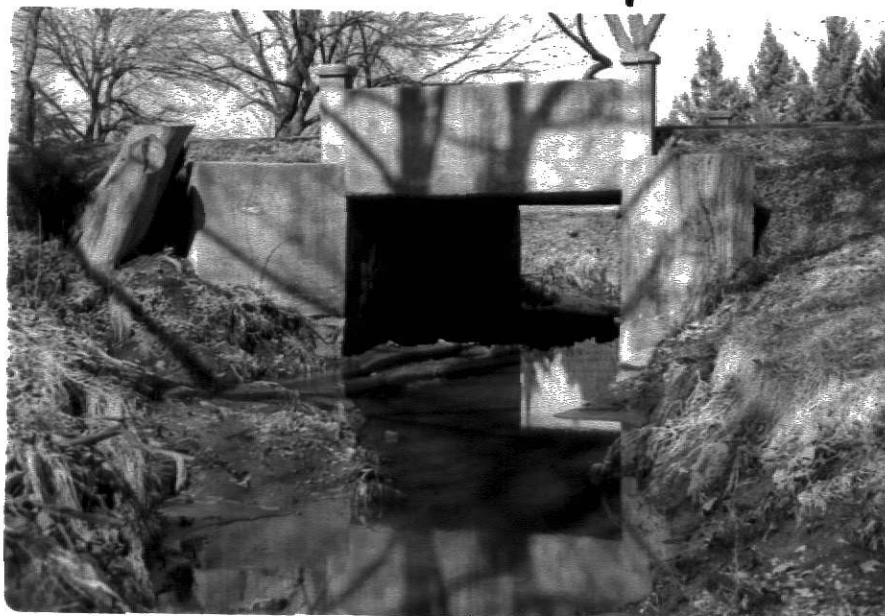
K-State Union



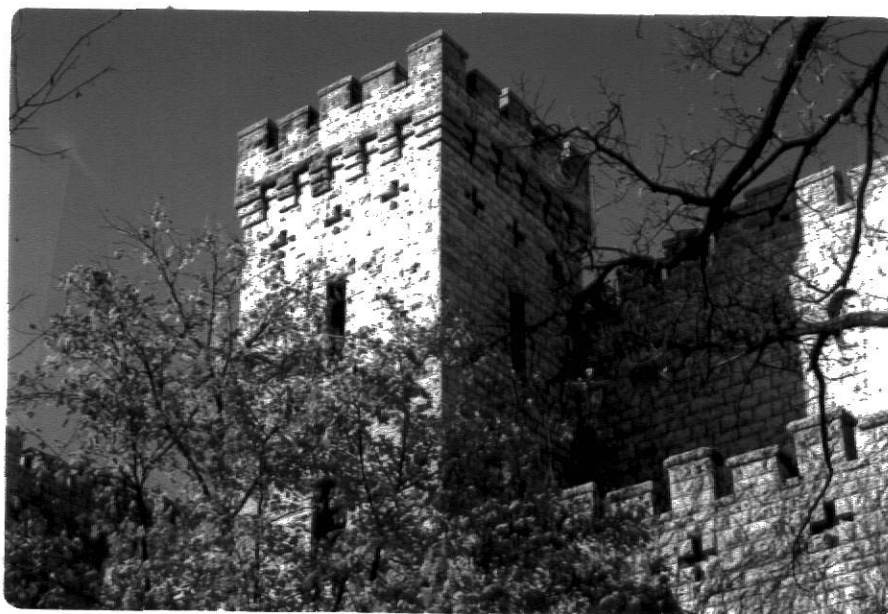
President's Home



Anderson Hall and Front Lawn



Campus Creek



Nichol's Gymnasium



Maintenance and Construction
(October 1972)



Maintenance and Construction
(March 1973)



Dirt Path



Greenhouses

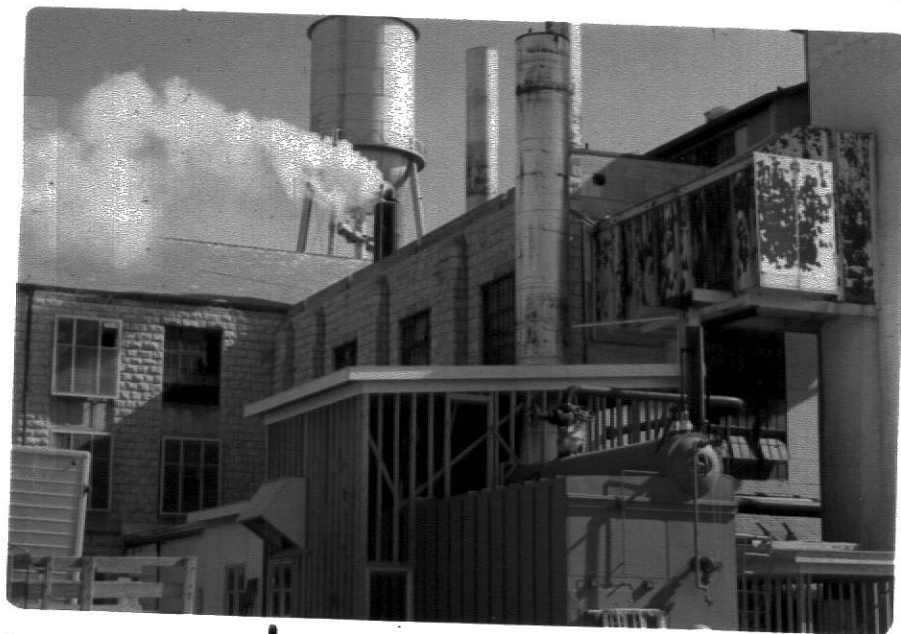


"For everything is good
and beautiful for what-
ever purposes it serves
well, but bad and ugly
for what it does not."

Socrates



Campus Campaigns



Physical Plant

the sample size is small.⁵ Results of the application of chi-square follow in Table 3.

Table 3
Summary of Chi-square Tests of Significance of Four
Independent Selected Variables with
Responses to Question 13

Independent variable	Degrees of freedom	Test statistic	Decision
Sex	1	0.6624	not significant at .001 level
Major field of study	9	7.4600	not significant at .001 level
Number of semesters at K.S.U.	5	22.5000	significant at .001 level
Urban/rural hometown	1	0.3886	not significant at .001 level

From the above results, it was found that there was no significant relationship between perception of blight on campus with sex, major field of study, or urban/rural hometown. A significant relationship, however, did appear in relating the number of semesters at K.S.U. where the majority of students who had been on campus at least 3 semesters perceived visual blight to be a problem.

Perception of What Constitutes Visual Blight on Campus

In response to question 14, litter and trash were

⁵For further discussion of the use of chi-square see Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Social Statistics (2d; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), pp. 275-287.

given as the greatest contributors to visual blight on campus, mentioned by 34.6 per cent of the sample. This perceived problem is directly attributable to students. The findings support de Laet and Singh in their observation that "it appears that little can be accomplished until the individual recognizes his role in the creation of the problem and modifies his behavior."⁶ Buildings were mentioned by 18.6 per cent of the sample. Sidewalks were seen as contributing to visual blight on campus by 15.3 per cent, parking lots, cars and bicycles by 11.9 per cent, maintenance and construction by 11.3 per cent, and landscaping by 10.6 per cent of those interviewed. Other contributing factors listed were the physical plant, signs, cow barns, sculptures, and student apathy.

Question fifteen asked the sample to rank 16 given variables which they perceived as contributing to visual pollution on campus. The results are in Table 4. Information collected in Table 4 contradicts some of the information gathered in earlier questions, as more of the sample group showed a negative perception of blight than, for example, in question 13. While they disapproved of visual pollution, they did not perceive that it had materialized on their campus. When asked what contributed to blight on campus, few alternate responses were given other than those suggested in Table 4. The results showed reluctance to

⁶Christian de Laet and Susan Singh, "The Individual and the Environment," Natural Resources Journal, 12, 2 (1972), 211.

Table 4
 Ranking of Contributors to Visual Blight
 on the K.S.U. Campus

Contributors to visual blight on campus	No problem	Moderate	Serious	TOTAL
Litter	11	57	82	150
Unkempt lawns	40	56	54	150
Temporary stairs at Farrell Library	29	71	50	150
Maintenance and construction	28	76	46	150
Poor landscaping	48	59	43	150
Nichol's Gymnasium	64	44	42	150
Signs	40	72	38	150
Condition of buildings	41	75	34	150
Lack of flowers	55	62	33	150
Cow barns	67	50	33	150
Clashing architecture	67	58	25	150
Sidewalks and parking lots	58	70	22	150
Older buildings	87	44	19	150
Air conditioners	82	50	18	150
Greenhouses	94	45	11	150
Creek	<u>120</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>150</u>
TOTAL	931	910	559	2400

criticize the physical attributes of the campus. As the sample was taken from a residence hall, located on campus, this tendency may have been exaggerated. In a perception study of drought in Australia, R. L. Heathcoate spoke of a "misplaced patriotism" on the part of many Australians who were unwilling to recognize the significance of drought in their environment. It is easy to draw an analogy to "purple pride" generated at K.S.U., and a similar unwillingness to "imagine natural disasters in a familiar environment."⁷

Litter was again mentioned with the greatest frequency as being the most serious problem on campus, followed by unkempt lawns. The temporary wooden stairs outside Farrell Library were mentioned as a serious problem by a third of the sample. Apparently little effective disenchantment with that structure had been registered, as at the time of writing it had embellished the west entrance to the library for more than seven months. Maintenance and construction abuses to the environment were regarded as a serious problem by less than a third of those interviewed. When instances of visual blight such as the long ditches by Leasure Hall (see photographs on page 32) uncovered for six months are experienced, one wonders the extent to which things must deteriorate before protest is lodged.

Eighty per cent of the sample saw Campus Creek as not being a problem of visual blight. Perhaps if the creek was inspected closely, noting run-off from the cow barn,

⁷Burton and Kates, op. cit., p. 282.

decaying vegetative material and trash deposits in it, a different response might have been given. Functional considerations apparently condone the odor from the cow barns, and the unsightliness of several of the greenhouses. Air conditioners in windows are also listed as being no problem by well over half the sample. Placing the units out of sight on roofs or installing central air conditioning systems is usually considered too expensive, yet as they stand, air conditioners detract from both the inside and outside appearance of buildings, and serve as roosts for pigeons causing not only visual and noise pollution, but creating a health hazard as well. Older buildings, many of which are clearly in need of renovation, were also listed by the majority as not contributing to visual blight.

Approximately 80 per cent of the responses given perceived the listed instances of blight as not being a serious problem. This is an indication that the sample group was largely satisfied with the state of their environment, and had rationalized the disruption around them.

The final question asked students to suggest how funds for campus beautification should be used in the future. Better landscaping, with more planting of trees, flowers and grass were mentioned by 67 per cent. Thirty per cent mentioned remodelling of older buildings. Sidewalk improvement, better parking facilities, better sculptures, more new buildings, anti-litter programs, and comprehensive planning were also suggested for future funding.

Summary

Although 65 per cent of the sample group responded positively that visual blight existed on the Kansas State University campus, consistent recognition of the problem rarely went beyond its perceived materialization as litter. An overwhelming majority of the sample recognized the importance of an aesthetically attractive campus for the development of a "university outlook" and as an important factor in the overall learning situation. But most responses were vague and contradictory, perhaps reflecting a growing consciousness of environmental disruption, and an awareness that things are not exactly as they should be, yet a feeling of detachment, because bad things like pollution just do not happen in semi-rural utopias like Manhattan.

Implications

In general, visual blight was not perceived as a serious problem on campus by the sample group. The original postulation, that students are becoming immune to and are largely uncritical of visual pollution problems on campus, was supported by the findings. This sample group had made a successful adaptation to instances of blight that appear in ever-increasing numbers on the university grounds. Whether it be apathy, or a misplaced loyalty, or perhaps anaesthetization of the senses, the majority of those interviewed found little fault with the campus environment when asked to comment on specific instances which were suggested exist on campus.

In recent years, most universities have had to operate on restrictive budgets. There is little doubt that preservation of an aesthetically attractive campus constitutes a real cost, and the trend has been for aesthetic considerations to be completely overridden by considerations of functionalism. Blight is increasingly overlooked, being accepted as a cost of progress. Yet surely progress should be measured by the absence of blight.

It would appear that decisions about the environment are being made without reference to the human needs of those on campus, but rather in response to economic considerations and to short-term needs. A systematic analysis of student attitudes should clearly be undertaken before further decisions on campus design are made. As matters stand, decisions are rarely initiated by students. Their major role is in reaction, requiring little conviction, and evoking no sense of responsibility or committal. Resultant apathy condones maintenance of the status quo, and a passive acceptance of visual blight in the immediate surroundings.

Chapter 4

CONCLUSION

Every person should be able to experience beauty in his immediate environment. Perception of that which is attractive and inspiring is an essential ingredient to man's spiritual development. Increasingly, aesthetic considerations give way to functional considerations so that instances of visual blight appear in ever-increasing numbers and are discounted as a cost of progress.

The grounds of Kansas State University are experiencing many forms of visual pollution. With growing emphasis on environmental protection among the university community, it is disconcerting that such a condition is allowed to persist. The university's social responsibilities, both to the students in providing stimulating surroundings, and to the community as an example of how to live in harmony with the environment, are in need of reappraisal.

Results from the questionnaire showed that sixty-five per cent of the sample gave a positive response to the question "Do you think we have visual pollution on campus?". This indicated a fairly high degree of dissatisfaction with the present state of the campus environment. When asked to list items that were considered as contributing to visual blight few alternate contributors to blight were given,

other than those suggested to exist in question 15. With increasing emphasis on environmental education, most students had been exposed to the desirability of a pollution-free environment and were able to recognize that in several instances the university had fallen short of this goal. Yet results shown in Table 4 indicated that students did not perceive the problems as being serious.

Applications of the chi-square test showed that the majority of students who had been on campus for at least three semesters perceived visual blight to be a problem. Images of the campus held by incoming freshmen were still very positive, perhaps because of feelings of loyalty to their newly chosen school and limited experience on campus. These factors, combined with the low status of student involvement in decision making in university design, ensure continued apathy among students towards their campus environment, and excessive tolerance of visual pollution.

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APPENDIX I

Questionnaire

- (1) Age _____ (2) Sex _____ (3) Major _____
- (4) Number of semesters at K.S.U. _____
- (5) Hometown and state _____
- (6) Do you use a bicycle at school? _____ A car? _____
- (7) What are the main environmental problems on campus?

- (8) Do you feel it is important to have an attractive campus? _____ Why, or why not? _____

- (9) Have you visited any other campuses? _____ Where?

- (10) What were the main differences in appearance between it and K.S.U.? _____

- (11) What 2 or 3 places do you find the most attractive on campus? _____
- (12) What 2 or 3 places do you find least attractive on campus? _____
- (13) Do you think we have visual pollution on campus? _____
- (14) What do you think might contribute to visual pollution on campus? _____

(15) Which of the following do you feel might contribute to the visual pollution of campus? (Please rank)

No problem Moderate Serious

- (a) Cement sidewalks, parking lots
- (b) Nichol's Gymnasium
- (c) Temporary stairs at Farrell Library
- (d) Campus Creek
- (e) Signs and advertisements
- (f) Greenhouses
- (g) Cow barns
- (h) Air conditioners
- (i) Maintenance and construction work
- (j) Older buildings
- (k) Condition of buildings
- (l) Litter
- (m) Unkempt lawns
- (n) Lack of flowers
- (o) Clashing architecture
- (p) Poor landscaping

(16) If funds were available for beautification of the school grounds, how would you recommend they be used?

VISUAL BLIGHT ON THE KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

by

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B.A., University of Sydney, 1970

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Visual blight is gaining recognition as a contributing factor in the deterioration of man's physical environment. Whereas its existence may not appear as urgent as problems of air pollution, water pollution, and noise, its effects on the human system have not been fully researched. The university has a special responsibility to prevent visual blight and to provide an aesthetically inspiring environment conducive to stimulation and learning.

Man's ability to adapt to environmental deterioration has caused concern among those who believe that not only are these adaptations undesirable for mankind, but that the qualities constituting the uniqueness of human life are gradually being foregone. In seeking to avoid visual disruption and other forms of environmental deterioration, people tend to anaesthetize their senses and withdraw into apathy to avoid the unpleasantness of their surroundings.

This study examined student perception of visual blight on the Kansas State University campus. Attitudes were gathered from a questionnaire distributed to a sample group of students from Moore Residence Hall. It was found that those who had attended classes at K.S.U. for more than two semesters were most aware of visual pollution on the university grounds. No significant association was found between perception of blight and major field of study, sex, or urban/rural place of residence. There was a low level of awareness of visual blight among the sample group, and responses indicated widespread apathy concerning the physical attributes of the campus.

This report concluded that students were becoming immune to instances of visual blight on campus, and unless they were given more of an initiatory role in campus planning, the apathy would continue along with gradual deterioration of the natural beauty of the campus. It was proposed that a systematic analysis of student attitudes be undertaken before further decisions on campus design were made.