RESEARCH REPORTS

Reviews of new research at public agencies and private institutions

"Emerging Infections: Microbial Threats to Health in the United States."

Inst. of Medicine, National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418. 294 pp. $34.95.
Editors: *Joshua Lederberg, Robert E. Shope, and Stanley C. Oaks, Jr.*

During the 1950s, American physicians and public-health officials concluded that progress in medicine and public health was making the conquest of infectious illnesses such as tuberculosis (TB) inevitable. Today, however, such maladies again pose a serious health threat, notes a U.S. Institute of Medicine panel. Along with the AIDS epidemic, there has been an alarming resurgence of TB, and "new" illnesses such as Lyme disease have emerged.

The incidence of TB in the United States fell for three decades until 1985. Between 1986 and 1991, however, there were 28,000 more cases than specialists had expected. The rise of AIDS and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) has been "perhaps the most significant factor" behind the increase in TB. The incidence rate among the HIV-infected is nearly 500 times the rate for the general population.

Especially alarming, according to the committee, is the appearance of TB bacteria resistant to drugs. Outbreaks have occurred in hospitals in Miami and New York City, as well as in the New York State prison system. Not only patients and inmates but health-care workers, social workers, corrections officials, and others are "at risk of contracting a disease that is difficult or essentially impossible to treat. Multidrug-resistant TB now represents a major threat to health in the United States."

Lyme disease, first recognized in Old Lyme, Connecticut, in 1975, has been found in all 50 states, and the number of cases has grown from a handful in 1980 to 9,344 in 1991. The illness, which can become debilitating, is caused by a microbe transmitted to humans by ticks on mice and deer. As is often the case with disease outbreaks, the recent Lyme upsurge does not have its origins in mysterious biological processes but in human behavioral and environmental changes. Humans and disease-bearing animals have been brought into closer contact by suburbanization and the explosion of the deer population resulting from the decline of farming and the absence of natural predators.

Indeed, while it favors more medical research and monitoring, the committee notes: "[It] is often only by changing patterns of human activity—from travel, personal hygiene, and food handling to sexual behavior and drug abuse—that the spread of disease can be halted."

"Global Standards: Building Blocks for the Future."

Office of Technology Assessment, U.S. Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402-9325. 114 pp. $5.50 (GPO Order No. 052-003-01277-4).

When a huge fire broke out in Baltimore in 1904, outside fire companies could not help. Because there were no standards the threads on their hoses did not match those on Baltimore hydrants. Today, says Congress' Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), the issue is *international* technical standards for the design, manufacture, and functioning of products ranging from machine tools to high-resolution TV. If the United States fails to influence development of these standards, OTA warns, U.S. competitiveness will suffer. U.S. industries that must completely readjust to foreign specifications—often designed precisely to hinder competitors—lose precious ground to overseas rivals.

Most governments in industrialized nations play a very active role in setting standards and even help underdeveloped countries set theirs. The harmonization of technical standards within the European Community is now under way.

Washington, by contrast, leaves many of these matters to the private sector. The nonprofit American National Standards Institute represents U.S. interests in international organizations, but dissension at home over ASNI's role limits its effectiveness in international negotiations.

COMMENTARY

We welcome timely letters from readers, especially those who wish to amplify or correct information published in the Quarterly *and/or react to the views expressed in our essays. The writer's telephone number and address should be included. For reasons of space, letters are usually edited for publication. Some letters are received in response to the editors' requests for comment.*

Finding the New Morgan

J. Bradford De Long's article ["What Morgan Wrought," *WQ*, Autumn '92] points the way toward an optimal system for the governance of large corporations: an informed, independent, and credible monitor of management within the governance structure.

De Long wants "large-scale financial institutions to take an interest in corporate management by establishing and holding major long-term positions in individual companies." The owners De Long is seeking are already here. As much as $1 trillion already may be invested in just this way. Then why hasn't the informed involvement of these owners become the standard?

The problem is that many, indeed most, institutions have crippling conflicts of interest. How can insurance companies, banks, and money managers monitor the same people who purchase insurance, make deposits, and hire pension managers? In addition, the "free rider problem" interferes. Action by any one entity inevitably costs more than its share of any gains. This obstacle is particularly large for institutional investors, which are subject to strict fiduciary standards. How can a trustee justify to his beneficiaries (to say nothing of regulatory agencies and courts) the expense of the initiatives required for monitoring when the initiatives could fail, or chiefly benefit others—the "free riders"—if it succeeds?

The public and private pension funds, as the owners of 30 percent of the total outstanding equity capital in the country, provide us with the critical ingredient. Pension funds have little need for liquidity and are long-term holders. Now that the nation's savings have been moved by 30 years of federal tax policy from banks to pension funds, it seems appropriate to create a new financial infrastructure of institutions limited solely to the management of pension funds. This would eliminate conflicts of interest. It would also assure that the new "merchant bankers" envisioned by Lester Thurow cannot take advantage of pension beneficiaries. But these institutions can become the New Morgans only if required to act exclusively for the beneficiaries, and that will require monitoring.

Robert A. G. Monks
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The Latin Dilemma

Tina Rosenberg ["Latin America's Magical Liberalism," *WQ*, Autumn '92] has it just about right: Latin America *is* based historically on authoritarian, organicist, elitist, Rousseauian, and mercantilist principles and institutions that have been only partially attenuated by the recent openings to democracy and free markets.

Her main mistake is to think that *at any time*, even in the early throes of independence, Latin America thought in U.S.-style Lockean, Madisonian, and liberal terms. In fact, the vested power of the Church, the army, the landed elites, and the executive in the early laws and constitutions indicate that liberalism was always at best a future aspiration.

The chief omission in Ms. Rosenberg's otherwise excellent article is the failure to draw out the policy implications of her themes. If Latin America is really based on organicist, centralist, and Rousseauian traditions, then that has important implications for human-rights policy (group rights often take precedence over individual rights), for efforts to reform the military (not a "mere" interest group but part of the backbone of the regime), the economy (these are still essentially mercantilist economies despite some moves toward free markets), and the polity (these essentially remain top-down political systems with limited pluralism or separation of powers).

Many Latin American scholars have been trying for years to help U.S. policymakers understand these differences. But the United States has always assumed that it knows best for Latin America, that it will teach it lessons and bring it the benefits of our more successful institutions, and that it is "too complicated" to educate the Congress and the rest of Washington, to say nothing of the public, about Latin America's uniqueness. With such pervasive ethnocentrism, it is small wonder that U.S. policy in Latin America has often produced, to put it charitably, so many unintended consequences. Tina Rosenberg's article, which should be read by all policymakers dealing with Latin America, helps us break through the veil of miscomprehension.

Howard J. Wiarda
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National Defense University

Tina Rosenberg's article is a welcome antidote to the widespread notion that Latin America has found the right path and can relax. The region's democratic elections and corrective economic steps are necessary but insufficient. To underline the urgency of her message I offer these observations based on my own reporting experience.

1. The United States has a greater stake than ever in the region, which is destined to be a major trade and investment partner in coming years as the global economy divides into regional trade blocs. Even businessmen otherwise unconcerned with political culture are directly affected when they try to do business in countries where the rule of law is lacking. Furthermore, desperately poor workers cannot buy U.S. (or any other) products.

2. Instability will return to Latin America if governments there continue to ignore the need for public-sector investments in health, education, and infrastructure. The region's citizenry includes a vast, far poorer poor than the United States. These citizens have paid a higher price for "austerity" programs than Ross Perot ever dreamed of demanding from Americans, and yet their living standards still have not improved.

3. Jorge Gonzalez Schmall, who recently gave up a leadership position and quit Mexico's small-business-oriented National Action Party because it blindly supported the government, is just one of many Latin Americans warning that the massive privatizations of state firms are simply making government monopolies into private-sector monopolies. Unlike the Chilean model II Rosenberg cites, many current sell-offs are increasing the wealth and power of the old guard instead of creating a larger and more dynamic entrepreneurial class.

4. Corruption has exploded as an issue in Latin America. The court systems are still not functioning. But the budding public crusade for accountability suggests that Latin America's political culture is evolving beyond its Spanish colonial roots toward a Tocquevillean concept of citizenship. The Latin American press has begun publicizing the misdeeds of the elite. And the public is responding with justified outrage. The result in Brazil, at least so far, has been to hold politicians' feet to the fire, to apply the norms set down in their own laws. Justice just might become the touchstone of a new era in Latin America.

Linda Robinson
Latin American correspondent,
U.S. News & World Report

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

As a practicing architect and part-time teacher, I find it difficult to contradict Witold Rybczynski's description of the present state of architecture ["The Art of Building Or the Building of Art?" *WQ*, Autumn '92]. Most contemporary architecture falls far short of Vitruvius's ancient standard of "commodity, firmness, and delight." But good architecture comes from the combination of good architects and good clients, and common canons require communication between the two. Such communication seems worse than ever. Why?

According to Robert Gutman's book *Architectural Practice, A Critical View*, by 1985 there were some 90,000 practicing architects in the United States, jumping from 56,000 in 1970. Architecture was the fastest growing of all major professions. But as only a small percentage of buildings are actually designed by architects, one must wonder what they are all doing. Gutman points out that many are taking nontraditional jobs as governmental officials, corporate-facilities managers, etc. But many are teaching and, all too often, not building. I would propose that there is an ever-increasing, self-sustaining portion of architects who are concerned with Vitruvius's *delight* only, untested as they are by the reality of building. Indeed, at a recent round table discussion between faculty and students at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, it was the students who wondered aloud why there was such a gulf between teaching and practice.

But why aren't more buildings designed by architects? The answer could be that while there are more architects available, there are also fewer good clients. And it is here that I would disagree with Mr. Rybczynski. For in spite of TV and electronic communication, we are not visually sophisticated. True, images dominate our culture, but they are not true art that is taught as a basic form of thinking and communication. Our images are instantaneous; the images of art are enduring and sometimes slow to be understood. And without a real understanding of art, in its fullest sense, by client and architect, good architecture of *utilitas*, *firmitas*, and *venustas* is not possible. To Witold's cry for better architects, better buildings and better cities, I would also add a cry for better clients.

Jeremiah Eck
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I agree with Witold Rybczynski that agreement on what constitutes good architecture is difficult to reach these days, but suggest that the same questions were asked 30 or 90 years ago, albeit not as widely as in our time. The debate in the British press over the question of whether the Crystal Palace of the 1851 World Exhibition should be consid-

ered as architecture or merely an extension of the "mechanical arts" comes to mind, as does the outraged letter of the foremost poets, painters, and sculptors of France protesting the building of the Eiffel Tower in a full page newspaper advertisement. In fact, the debate was probably opened by Leonardo da Vinci, who represents in one person the very essence of the dichotomy between mechanics and artisanship.

Be that as it may, the destruction of a permanent and genuine sense of time and place, begun with the building of railroads and canals in the 19th century, has accelerated in recent times. Marshall McLuhan was the first to analyze the effect of the homogenization of the new "global village." The electronic media have not only destroyed our sense of time in the traditional historical sense, but blurred all distinctions of place and neutralized all distinctions of value judgment on beauty.

Whether it is possible to return to "ancient blessings" is a moot question. But as a native of one of the most beautiful cities in Europe—Prague—I am pessimistic. I watch with horror the transformation of this sad, mysterious, serene, and stunningly beautiful place into a potential "profit center" for international corporate investment—or, just as bad, a Disney-like stage set for mass tourism.

Eric Dluhosch
Boston, Mass.

Witold Rybczynski is too gentle and forbearing. That would explain the discreet and sad footnote, the heart of his article in many ways, in which he tells us that the staff and students of McGill's architecture department, where he teaches, found that "our new home [built in 1896] is vastly superior to our old one [built in 1958]..." Their response was an instinctive preference for a structure built according to "an accepted canon of architectural principles."

Rybczynski would have us return to Vitruvius, Alberti, Palladio, and Sir Henry Wotton. I would suggest Geoffrey Scott's *Architecture of Humanism* (1914) as our first guide. Wotton noted that "the academic influence rescued the architecture of England and France. It provided a canon of forms by which even the uninspired architect could secure at least a measure of distinction; and genius... would be trusted to use this scholastic learning as a means and not an end." Note that his canon was to be found in *forms* not principles.

Better still, I would have Rybczynski look to Thomas Ustick Walter, architect of the extensions and the dome of the United States Capitol. Wotton's three conditions he stated as "utility, durability and beauty." The first two "being entirely of a practical or mechanical nature," he tells us, "we shall pass them over and limit ourselves to the consideration of architectural composition, with reference alone to the production of beauty." This was to be found in the basic elements, namely surface, moldings, light and shade, symmetry, variety, and intricacy when "seen in a combination of harmonious form as to present a unity of design."

So, going beyond principles, let us turn to Scott's forms as explored by Walter before he started work on the Capitol, and we will arrive at the *visual* canons to fill the vacuum left by the nihilists.

Henry Hope Reed
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The Loss of Self

The big problem with Daniel Bell's view in "The Cultural Wars: American Intellectual Life, 1965–1992," [*WQ*, Summer '92] is that it doesn't build on his own *Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. The basic rift in our culture is not between Left and Right, though that's the rift that is most seized upon by the press and pundits. The basic rift is between self and community. The old assumption that there was a fit between our personal and social aspirations (an assumption basic to the liberal Protestant tradition, the tradition that gave us the "center" of our intellectual life into the mid-20th century) no longer seems plausible. As Christopher Lasch has pointed out, when community erodes, so does self. Narcissism is not just the self-concern that takes the form of consumption or self-aggrandizement, but the desperate feeling that self is being lost. Reality itself seems to decompose. Hence poststructuralism is an apt sign of the times not because it claims there is no reality but because it builds on and tries to make sense of the evanescence of reality.

We are blocked culturally and politically not because the Left (or the Right) has a stranglehold on our culture, but because our oldest and fondest assumptions about self and community no longer persuade. The fall of Eastern European and Soviet communism is a good double-edged sign of our dilemma. We get to celebrate the new freedom of life in the eastern part of the West, but we know we've lost our former conviction that society was marching forward in historically progressive fashion. The demise of Marxist progress calls liberal progress into question too. Hence we get Lasch's *True and Only Heaven*, in which he renounces the progressive historical vision he earlier embraced. We get historians turning away from their earlier collective assumption that enlightened progress was in principle possible, however benighted our

culture might be at any given time. Historians turn to evoking the past to illuminate our future upward movement. The tragic sense of life becomes once again, as in the 1950s, a dominant sensibility.

Reinhold Niebuhr can serve as a good antidote here: No one was more committed to the tragic sense of life, but he was also open to change and "progress" of an indeterminate sort. That's the kind of intellectual openness we need today—even if old models of leaping into a higher stage of historical freedom cannot persuade, we can still cultivate a democratic sensibility in which all voices deserve to be heard. "Cultural diversity" is the concrete path forward for those who venerate freedom.

Richard Fox
Wilson Center Fellow

De-Russifying Turkestan

Your "Land of the Great Silk Road" [*WQ*, Summer '92] was enticing. If there was an easy way to reach Samarkand, I would hop on the next plane.

I hope your readers will not conclude, however, that the easiest way to communicate with Central Asians is in Turkish, as Mr. Henze seems to suggest. While it's true that Central Asian languages are Turkic (except for the Farsi spoken by Tajiks), Turkish travelers generally agree that they need to live in the region for several months before they begin to converse with the natives on any but the most primitive level. Some Turkish intellectuals contend that the Turkic of Central Asia is so "polluted" by Russian as to be unintelligible, and that one needs to master *four* distinct languages, one for each Turkic-speaking republic. This, of course, refers to the *spoken* languages, for everybody still writes in the Cyrillic alphabet.

With independence thrust upon them more than a year ago (Kazakhstan didn't even bother to declare its exit from the Soviet Union), Central Asian states have begun to search for new identities. Taking a stab at affirmative action, they have declared "state" languages mandatory in key radio and TV programs, in school instruction, and in certain government jobs. They soon discovered that relegation of Russian to a secondary role was easier to legislate than to implement, especially in such areas as northern Kazakhstan where the Kazakhs constitute a very small minority.

The task of de-Russification is staggering. Given an acute shortage of teachers in indigenous languages, simply reducing the number of Russian schools achieves little. Turkey and Iran have extended scholarships to perhaps 1,500 students, but this is a drop in the bucket. To go back to the Latin, or even to the Arabic, is a declared goal of nationalists, but to reach it after three generations have been brought up reading the Cyrillic is not easy. And who will underwrite the cost of transliterating and republishing books, of producing new textbooks, of teaching teachers how to read them? Because of the very high literacy rate in Central Asia, it would be politically dangerous to reduce the availability of education. If one is to consider the need to augment the vocabularies with the concepts and terminology of the 20th century, it would be obvious that the process of de-Russification will take at least a generation and require sympathy and generosity of Islamic nations far beyond what they have shown so far.

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An Innocent Abroad

Dervla Murphy, in "Footnotes: Reflections on Travel Writing" [*WQ*, Summer '92], espouses the common view of travel writers, that one cannot truly travel without devoting much time to transportation, and that mere tourists are despoiling the world's dwindling cultural and natural resources. In my opinion, this attitude is similar to the wine writers' view that one has not lived until one has drunk a vertical section of Petrus, Mouton Rothschild, and Haut-Brion of the pre-*phylloxera* era. Simply put, while many travelers would love to spend six months cruising the South Pacific with Paul Theroux, they are not able to.

To blame these travelers for the "Westernization" of values and the decline of tribal, communal, or rural values throughout the developing world is silly. Travelers have been bringing (and imposing) their values to (on) foreign lands since man first traveled from one camp to another. In all cases basic Ricardian economics prevailed: Items of value were exchanged, and grounds for competitive advantage were established.

In nearly every case, however, reinforcement of the trade relationship resulted from "reverse tourism," travel from the poorer nation to the richer one. When travel was by ship and information moved slowly, the pace of "Westernization" was slow, but not imperceptible. Even as Ms. Murphy pedaled through India, values were shifting. Today, with television and radio reaching the jungles of South America and Africa, Western values are showcased and Western goods are coveted.

These changes have not been wrought by the traveler or tourist. I am writing this from Ndola, Zambia, a copper mining area on the Zaire border.

I've been able to watch two hours of American TV a day, plus snippets of CNN interjected around local advertisements for scouring powder and detergent. I listen to Western music on the only radio station in the country. I'm drinking Carling Black Label Beer (imported from South Africa), which gives me the "same lusty, lively taste that's enjoyed by men around the world."

Tourists do not visit Ndola. They do not bring their values here. Western values are reinforced by governments who wish to emulate those of the most powerful nations on this earth. Those governments promise their citizens Western goods, values, and culture. We can not be cultural Luddites, we can not stop this "march of progress."

Instead, we should fight to preserve the environment and the cultural heritage while bringing technological, medical, and social advancement. Whitewater rafting in the Zambezi Gorge does not destroy the heritage that is Zimbabwe. Building a second hydroelectric project in that same gorge may destroy both the heritage and one of the seven natural wonders of the world. Already, Victoria Falls is dry on the Zambian side owing to diversion for hydroelectric power. Who knows how much habitat has been destroyed?

Most of us have a feel for our place in this world. Whether we travel among the Hmong in a four-wheel-drive vehicle or in Ethiopia by mule, we are brethren, linked by a wanderlust that transcends economic and cultural barriers. Yes Ms. Murphy, we can change the world . . . for the better.

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Hotel Mukuba
Ndola, Zambia

Correction

On page 140 of the Autumn '92 *WQ*, an editing error changed the intended meaning of a letter concerning Daniel J. Boorstin's "Afterlives of the Great Period." The affected section should have read ". . . in fact, if another important number, such as e=2.71828+, the base of natural logarithms, did appear, then I might wonder." We regret the error.

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(signed) Kathy Read, *Publisher*

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