



THE GEOGRAPHY
OF NOWHERE

JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER THE GEOGRAPHY OF NOWHERE

1994 • FREE PRESS • 304 PAGES • REVIEW BY CHRISTINE STEELE

Exhaustively researched, wittily told, *The Geography of Nowhere* reads like a who's who of American destruction.

Kunstler tells us the history of nearly everything in American development. For example: Why are suburban streets so hostile and pedestrian unfriendly? Because they were designed for drivers of cars, who are not all "highly skilled," he says, and "often they are even drunk." So, removing hazards such as trees insured that Ward would get his Buick home in one piece.

Kunstler's searingly fresh descriptions marry dry historical facts with razor sharp observations that will perk even the most disinterested development historian's ears.

Why had I never heard of Robert Moses before - the man, who was single-handedly responsible for turning Long Island into a parking lot? And while Moses, Kunstler wryly notes, was busy threading highways all over New York City (he built the Van Wyck Expressway, the Cross Bronx Expressway and the Long Island Expressway) and at the same time,

rabidly keeping mass transportation out, the man never in his life learned to drive a car.

Kunstler's vivid imagery has us imagining Thoreau "gnashing his teeth" at the Boston-to-Lowell train as it passed within a few hundred yards of his cabin at Walden, and wishing painter Thomas Cole - who fretted that the vices and material lusts would overcome the American people - had lived to see Las Vegas

This book serves as a document to a destructive history with Kunstler as our lens, our Jacob Riis, the journalist/photographer/social reformer, who documented abject poverty in late 19th Century New York.

This book does for cities and towns and the history of American development what Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting By in America* did for the minimum wage worker.

You won't look at your home town - or any town - the same way again.