



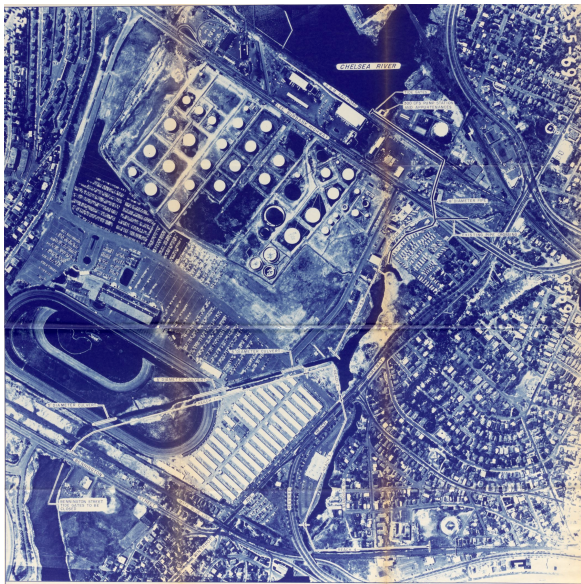
Norman B. Leventhal
Map & Education Center
at the Boston Public Library

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MORE OR LESS IN COMMON: ENVIRONMENT AND JUSTICE IN THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE

A new, free exhibition at Leventhal Map & Education Center combines historic and future-facing maps and visuals that shine light on how the environment is part of social struggles.

In-person show opens March 18 in the Leventhal Center gallery at Boston Public Library with accompanying digital exhibition available everywhere.



BOSTON — March 3, 2022 — An ambitious new exhibition that spotlights how environmental design and social inequality are intertwined in the past and present opens this month at the Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library (BPL). *More or Less in Common: Environment and Justice in the Human Landscape* includes rare materials from the BPL’s historic collection alongside newly created visual investigations of environmental challenges from Boston and beyond. Visitors will find objects that range from nineteenth-century plans for Boston’s park system by Frederick Law Olmsted’s firm, to 1970s protest posters and future-facing contemporary designs for climate justice. *More or Less in Common* runs March 18 through December 28, 2022 and, like all exhibitions at the Leventhal Center, it is free to the public

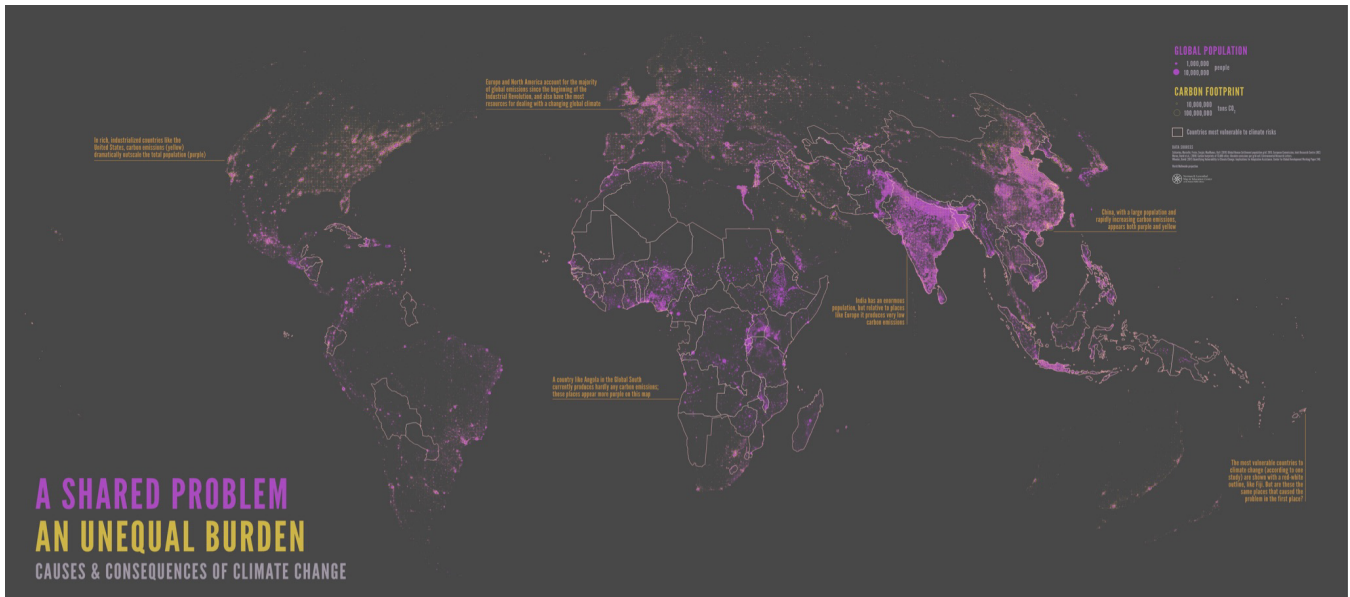
at the BPL Central Library in Copley Square.

“*More or Less in Common* highlights the intersection of two of society’s most urgent issues through a historical lens,” says **Garrett Dash Nelson**, President and Head Curator at the Leventhal Center. “While the environment and social justice tend to be discussed in separate conversations, and covered by separate sections of the media, the truth is they are intertwined...and have been for centuries. Increasingly urgent issues like addressing climate change simply can’t be managed without treating them as fundamental social challenges.”

Nelson says *More or Less in Common* shows how the differences between degraded environments and healthy ones can often be tied to which communities have political and economic power. The exhibition

Photo this page: A 1976 environmental management blueprint of Sales Creek in Revere, with oil facilities, housing, heavy infrastructure, and a highly engineered coastline, shows how the environment bears the mark of social decisions

also underscores the role of cartography in documenting and visualizing relationships between people and places. “Instances of environmental and social exclusion quite often map onto one another,” Nelson says.



Among the exhibition highlights:

- “A Shared Problem. An Unequal Burden.” [Above; larger image available] Two large maps created by the Leventhal Center highlight contemporary environmental justice struggles. One shows the global imbalance between the nations responsible for carbon emissions and the nations most likely to be harmed by consequences of climate change. A second shows the City of Boston’s assessments of social vulnerability to climate risks.
- Two maps highlight the innovation and the unrealized scope of Boston’s Emerald Necklace chain of parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. The first shows early interventions in the Fenway before Olmsted became involved; the second shows a never-completed boulevard that was meant to connect Franklin Park with Dorchester Bay. Contemporary environmental justice campaigns have highlighted how wealthy communities are more likely to have ample green space than communities with fewer resources. [[Image 1](#); [Image 2](#)]
- A BPL-held 1920s map of Venezuela and Colombia that was annotated in real time with land claims by U.S. and European oil companies that were chasing an oil rush in that region. It highlights how environmental exploitation has taken place on an international scale. [[Image](#)]
- A 1930s “redlining” map of residential loan areas in Boston that perpetuated racial injustice and segregation in the city is superimposed onto a park planning map from around the same time, showing a correlation between economic disinvestment and open spaces.

More or Less in Common comes at a time of increased national attention to environmental justice, with both the Biden administration and local political leaders emphasizing the importance of factoring social justice concerns into issues like climate adaptation and pollution control. Geographic information is crucial to these

efforts: digital assets such as the Environmental Protection Agency's screening and mapping tool *EJScreen* have been used by regulators and activists alike to highlight environmental inequities. U.S. Senator Edward Markey of Massachusetts has specifically highlighted the importance of maps and data for this work in the *Environmental Justice Mapping and Data Collection Act of 2021* bill.

By emphasizing the use and power of digital data to understand environmental challenges, *More or Less in Common* reiterates the Center's growing focus on enabling broader public access to digital tools and techniques. Assistant Curator for Digital and Participatory Geographies **Ian Spangler** is leading efforts to train and equip the general public with tools that empower civic engagement with maps. "Geographic information belongs in the hands of everyone, not just technical experts," Spangler says. "By offering resources to engage with digital data, we can help people document and challenge environmental injustices in their own communities."

A DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL EXHIBITION

For those who can't visit the exhibition at the Boston Public Library, the Leventhal Map and Education Center has created a digital exhibition that offers a chance to experience *More or Less in Common* from anywhere. The online exhibition features a self-guided tour of the themes, issues and objects in the live show, links to related essays and resources, zoomable views of ultra-high-resolution historic objects, and lesson plans and classroom items for teachers. The online exhibition can be found [here](#).

EDUCATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS

More or Less in Common has numerous opportunities to engage students, educators and families; its interpretative materials include examples of local and international contemporary environmental justice battles to provide context around the historical documents and objects.

"This exhibition highlights a variety of ways that educators and young people can engage with maps and case studies focused on activism and environmental justice," says Director of Education Michelle LeBlanc. "Young viewers from kindergarten through high school can connect with local environmental issues and consider how the needs of different communities can be balanced."

As the Center continues to welcome more in-person guests, it will once again offer access to more than a quarter million of the BPL's historic and contemporary geographic objects by request, including many documents related to environmental justice in Boston and the region.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Public events and outreach programs during the run of *More or Less in Common* will include talks, hands-on workshops, and field visits to sites in the Boston area where environmental justice struggles are ongoing.

Later this year, throughout the month of December, *More or Less in Common* will feature a pop-up installation and educational outreach event featuring the "Soft Cities" textile maps of Boston's Black

neighborhoods created by artists Amanda Ugorji and Sophie Weston Chien. More details on this and all exhibition-related activities will be announced later this spring.

OLMSTED NOW / OLMSTED 200

More or Less in Common is a featured program of the *Olmsted Now* coalition of Greater Boston, a group of regional environmental design organizations commemorating the bicentennial of influential landscape architect and frequent Massachusetts resident Frederick Law Olmsted, who worked in Boston during the last part of his career and designed dozens of influential parks and gardens in the area. *Olmsted Now* is part of the national *Olmsted 200* network, which advocates “parks for all people” and the role of public spaces in democracy.

HOURS AND EXHIBITION DETAILS

More or Less in Common: Environment and Justice in the Human Landscape is open Mon., Tue., Thu., and Sat. from 11 am-5 pm and Wed. from 1-7 pm. Admission is free.

- More information on the exhibition, including directions, access and visitor requirements can be found at leventhalmap.org/exhibitions.
- An updated calendar of events and programs associated with *More or Less in Common* can be found at leventhalmap.org/event.

FUNDING/SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (grant MA-249587-OMS-21).

CALENDAR LISTING

- WHAT:** “*More or Less in Common: Environment and Justice in the Human Landscape*” explores – through maps, historical documents and new interactive displays – the historic and current-day connections between environmental design and social injustice.
- WHEN:** Opens in-person and online March 18, 2022 through December 28, 2022.
- WHERE:** Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library, Central Library in Copley Square; 700 Boylston Street, Boston
Online at leventhalmap.org/exhibitions/
- VISIT/HOURS:** The Leventhal Center is open Mon., Tue., Thu., and Sat. from 11 am–5 pm; Wed. from 1–7 pm. Admission is free.

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MEDIA INFORMATION

To arrange interviews about *More or Less in Common*, curator-guided visits to the Leventhal Map and Education Center, or for digital images of exhibition objects, contact Jennifer Astin, ja@jmkpr.com / 424-333-1718 or John Michael Kennedy, jmk@jmkpr.com / 781-620-1761.