



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

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This *EAP* begins 35 years of publication and includes “items of interest,” “citations received,” and one “book note” highlighting the new edition of pedagogue **Max van Manen’s** *Phenomenology of Practice*. There follow reviews of four books: psychotherapist **Iain McGilchrist’s** *The Matter with Things* (reviewed by cognitive scientist **Andrea Hiott**); architect **Lisa Heschong’s** *Visual Delight in Architecture* (architect **Susan Ingham**); architect **Howard Davis’s** edited collection of *Early and Unpublished Writings of Christopher Alexander* (anthropologist **Jenny Quillien**); and **Christopher Alexander’s** *Production of Houses* (*EAP* Editor **David Seamon**).

This last review complements architect **Howard Davis’s** report in this *EAP* issue on a recent event celebrating the self-help housing experiment that he, Christopher Alexander, and others conducted in Mexicali, Mexico, in the mid-1970s. Sponsored by a local arts organization, this gathering featured presentations on Alexander’s work and offered tours of some of the houses and experimental buildings designed and built at the Mexicali site.

This *EAP* includes three essays. First, architect **Gary Coates** has graciously allowed us to include the new preface to his *Resettling America*, an edited collection originally published in 1981 and now reprinted in Routledge’s “Revival” series. This book was one of the first to detail the earth’s devolving environment and to illustrate examples of

sustainable, real-world communities.

Second, philosopher **Jeff Malpas** provides an extended version of his remarks for a memorial event at the University of Washington, Seattle, devoted to the work of the late philosopher **Robert Mugerauer**, who died in 2022. Referring to a theme central in Mugerauer’s work, Malpas emphasizes the importance of a careful, critical rethinking of belonging, home, and being-in-place.

Third, **Jenny Quillien** provides a penetrating phenomenological reformulation of the ideas of early-twentieth-century geographer **Ellen Churchill Semple** (1863–1922), too often portrayed unfairly as an environmental determinist claiming that human actions and history could be reduced to the active, regulative power of the physical environment. Quillien demonstrates that, in fact, Semple’s understanding of the people-environment relationship was subtle and illustrated aspects of human

life even today existentially grounded in geographical aspects of the world. Quillien’s essay intimates that a phenomenological reconsideration of Semple’s remarkable work is long overdue and particularly relevant as climate change becomes ever more prominent.

IHSR Conference

We’ve just learned that the 41st-annual **International Human Science Research Conference** (IHSRC) will be held at western Long Island’s **Malloy University** in Rockville Center, New York, June 9–13, 2024. The conference theme is “Advancing International Human Science Research: Creating Gracious Space.” This group sponsors one of the few conferences actually interested in doing real-world phenomenology rather than generating dense philosophical discussion. A wide range of professions and disciplines are represented, and the *EAP* Editor strongly recom-

mends the event. These conferences are always a pleasure because one is with a group of like-minded colleagues who revere real-world phenomenological method. Contact: Judith James-Borga: jjamesborga@malloy.edu.



Left: A portion of the residential courtyard of one of the experimental buildings envisioned by architect Christopher Alexander and described in *The Production of Houses* (1985); see architect Howard Davis’s report of a recent event in Mexicali celebrating Alexander’s experiment—p. 23. Photograph by Howard Davis and used with permission.

Items of interest

Because of the fluid conference situation, we are not providing specific information on 2024 events. Readers should check organization webpages for dates, procedures, and virtual, real, or hybrid formats. In the past, we have regularly covered the following conferences:

Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Forum (ACSF);

***Back to the Things Themselves!* (BT!!!);**

Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA);

Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists (ICNAP);

International Association of Environmental Philosophy (IAEP);

International Human Science Research conference (IHSR) [see front page];

International Making Cities Livable conference;

Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (SPEP);

Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences (SPHS).

The **Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Forum (ACSF)** has recently launched a new website that features a news feed, recent research, and publications archive. The site is configured to maximize search-engine optimization (SEO), thus providing more accessible and speedy web searches. <https://acsforum.org>.



Atmospheric Spaces is a research group and website that studies atmosphere from a phenomenological and aesthetical point of view. The platform gathers news, events, and publications related to the topic and related themes with the aim of establishing an informational network and research community. Atmosphere is described as “a sensorial and affective quality widespread in space. It is the particular shade or tone that determines the way one feels his/her surroundings. Air, ambiance, aura, climate, environment, genius loci, milieu, mood, numinous, *Stimmung*, *Umwelt*—a vague sense or power, without perceivable and discrete boundaries” <https://atmosphericspaces.wordpress.com/>.

This short film, “**Revitalizing creeks and streams,**” illustrates how one can use simple rock-detention dams to revitalize creeks and streams. The focus is the Turkey Pen Watershed, of the Chiricahua Mountains in southeastern Arizona. The film reviews a 30-year case study that examines the remarkable success of low-tech, low-cost natural rock dam constructions in dryland watersheds. An interesting example of careful understanding and action illustrating a mode of implicit phenomenology that allow the natural world better to be what it is and can be. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c2tY17jUdU0>

Biologist **Christoph Hueck** is organizing a program of international cooperation among researchers involved with **Goethean science**, which can be described as one early proto-phenomenology of the natural world. The website for this effort is: www.goetheanism.online. The aim is greater cooperation among researchers and a proposed international conference to be held in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2025. To gauge interest in this possibility, Hueck organized a Zoom conference on October 21, 2024, in which some 30 interested researchers participated. To be able to watch this event, contact Hueck for a permission link: hueck@akanthos-akademie.de.

Call for Papers Eco-Phenomenology

Editor **Mădălina Diaconu** has sent out a request for article contributions to a special 2025 issue of *Studia Phaenomenologica*, a peer-reviewed international review of phenomenological research sponsored by the Romanian Society of Phenomenology. The deadline for submissions is March 30, 2024. Article manuscripts should be sent to submissions@phenomenology.ro (subject title: *Studia Phaenomenologica* 2025). <https://zetabooks.com/library/journals/studia-phaenomenologica/>.

Because the “call for papers” is so thorough and accurately portrays the wide range of ways in which phenomenological work relates to environmental and ecological concerns, we reproduce, in the sidebar, right and next page, the full description.

Eco-phenomenology

Eco-phenomenology is a recently emerged discipline that aims to constructively re-articulate the relationship of phenomenology with natural sciences based on the assumption of a situated and embodied subject. The field is not only confined to attempts to engage in a dialogue with natural sciences (e.g., Böhme & Schiemann). Classical concepts of phenomenology, such as physis, earth and sky, fourfold (Heidegger, Held), *fūdo* (Watsuji), and even “face” (Levinas), are reinterpreted in the light of present environmental issues.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty is particularly influential for phenomenologists committed to environmental issues (Toadvine, Abram, Berleant), but other phenomenological approaches might be equally inspiring, for example, Gaston Bachelard’s theory of elements, Mikel Dufrenne’s ontology of a poetic nature, Eugen Fink’s cosmological philosophy, Heidegger’s phenomenology of care and concern, and so forth. Relevant in this context are also the phenomenology of place (Relph, Casey, Seamon) and the New Phenomenology of atmosphere (Schmitz, Böhme, Hasse, Griffero).

The present “call for papers” conceives eco-phenomenology in the broad sense of the plethora of experiences that are related to dwelling on Earth (*oikos*) but specifically welcomes subjects related to the present environmental crisis and possible contributions of phenomenology to mitigate it. Beyond enriching the sphere of phenomenological approaches, we are interested in raising the question of how the phenomenological emphasis on experience can contribute to a critical environmental philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics. Possible topics include:

- Analyses of sensuous dimensions crucial for the experience of the environment but hitherto having received little attention (e.g., the sense of temperature, the experience of electricity, magnetism, echo-location, the place-making and place-disrupting capacity of odors).

- Eco-sensitivity and the new everydayness in the Anthropocene. This includes negative experiences related to pollution and toxic atmospheres, as well as dysfunctions of sensitivity: abnormal place experience (Fletcher's "dystoposthesia") and the general discomfort caused by exposure to chemical substances.
- The disenchantment of landscape. Experiences of landscape beyond contemplative constitution (Smuda), Romantic fusion (Schmitz), and topophilia (Tuan). What happens when the "lived landscape" (Waldenfels) becomes uninhabitable? Experiences of deserted, haunted, devastated, nuclear, and in general uncanny (Trigg) "landscapes."
- The subject's immersion in the atmosphere or being sky-bound. Experiences of weather phenomena and meteo-sensitivity have been occasionally described by human geographers (e.g., Craig) but have only seldom drawn the phenomenologists' attention (Ogawa, Diaconu).
- Environmental experiences in non-Euro-American contexts. How do environmental factors such as climate and vegetation, but also cultural traditions and beliefs, modulate the category of landscape? Does the understanding of landscape change in tropical forests or during the arctic winter? Are the "sentient landscapes" (Cruikshank) in the indigenous cultures compatible with the legacy of phenomenology? Can the sources of phenomenographies be extended to traditional ecological knowledge?
- Phenomenology of crisis, threat, loss, and precariousness. Has the ecological crisis contributed to the recent shift of emphasis away from the subject's intentionality? The "pathic" subject (Hasse) is responsive and vulnerable, subject to contingent encounters, being affected by the resonance with an environment that appears itself as

fragile (Waldenfels, Wiesing, Böhme, Rosa). Analyses of moods that come to the fore in the present environmental context: anguish, nostalgia and mourning, shame, guilt.

- Poly-temporal structures and new experiences of temporality: The value of ephemerality and the "celebration of finitude" (Wood); rhythmicity and periodicity; the "natural" resonance between body rhythms and natural rhythms, but also their increasing dissonance at present due to technology and climate change (light pollution, disturbances of seasonality).
- Analyses of ecological art and environmental art, place-making practices in architecture, landscape/city planning and everyday life.
- Deep time and intergenerational experience. Traditionally, phenomenology focused on immediate individual experiences; however, climate change is a diffuse "hyper-object" (Morton). Slow decay, remote pollution, or invisible contamination transcend the experiential evidence and the horizon of *hic et nunc* perception, engaging the memory of losses and the fear of future destruction. How can phenomenology account for middle- and long-term developments that require comparisons between generations? Can it integrate collective memory and even the deep time that is crucial in geology and climatology? Can the experience of temporal sublime (Toadvine, Brady) motivate eco-friendly patterns of thinking and behavior?
- Orientation towards the future. Phenomenology has often been infused with hermeneutic analyses, while the environmental crisis requires visionary thinking and constructive alternatives. Can traditional phenomenological concepts (e.g., Heidegger's "projection") or phenomenological interpretations of imagination support a future-

oriented environmental philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics?

- Phenomenology of sustainability and care. How are material things experienced along the axis desire-use-discard? Can the category of "thinghood" be extended to raw materials (resources) and leftovers of consumption? How can waste challenge the phenomenological horizon of signification and value? Can the regeneration and restoration of environments become a subject of phenomenological analyses, and can phenomenology's concern with everydayness integrate practices of care (maintenance, repair, recycling) (Saito)?
- Stepping beyond anthropocentrism. Can phenomenology accommodate the nowadays widespread requirement to overcome an (if not epistemic, at least moral) anthropocentric perspective? How can its first-person account cope with the present tendency to extend agency beyond human subjects?
- Eco-phenomenology, critical phenomenology, environmental activism. What is "critical eco-phenomenology" (Toadvine)? Can phenomenology, understood as a praxis of critical reflection, be converted into a resource for action, resistance, and empowerment? Does its awareness-raising function have a transformative potential beyond academic circles? Can its emphasis on the subject's unavoidable bodily emplacement enhance the general sense of interconnectedness?

Citations received

Nisha Botchwey, Andrew L. Dannenberg, and Howard Frumkin, 2022. *Making Healthy Places: Designing and Building for Well-Being, Equity, and Sustainability*, 2nd edn. Washington, DC: Island Press.

Edited by health-science researchers, this volume includes 27 chapters, mostly by social planners and health professionals, covering such topics as water, food, safety, air quality, physical activity, mental health, transportation, schools, social capital, presence of nature, workplace and residential planning, and so forth. Most of the entries emphasize health and safety; environmental design is given considerably less attention. This health-science perspective is important but is usefully complemented by overviews emphasizing applied design and placemaking, e.g., Matthew Carmona's *Public Places, Urban Spaces* (2022).

Victor Counted, Haywantee Ramkissoon, Laura E. Captari, and Richard G. Cowden, eds., 2023. *Place, Spirituality, and Well-Being: A Global and Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Springer.

The 16 chapters of this edited volume offer “a wide overview of the complex links between place, spirituality, and health.” Contributors consider “the spiritual dimensions involved in the person/place relationship and its influence on health practices, behaviors, and community level outcomes.”

Edmund De Waal, 2011. *The Hare with the Amber Eyes*, illustrated edition. NY: Farrar, Status and Giroux.

Written by an eminent British ceramicist, this memoir is organized around one group of craft objects that benchmarks his family's history—a collection of over 200 Japanese *netsuke*, practical, fine-grained wood

or ivory carvings that worked as toggles to fasten the cords of medicine or tobacco pouches. One of the *netsuke* is an ivory hare with amber eyes (image, below), thus the book's title. De Waal tells the story of how these *netsuke*, originally made by adept craftsmen or skilled amateurs, became collector items and eventually part of a family collection that moved from Paris to Vienna to Tokyo to London. De Waal describes the original collector, a cousin of his great-grandfather, who aimed to understand the first wave of *Japonisme* as it became popular in Paris in the 1870s. This experience allowed this man to collect, “to turn looking into having and having into knowing” (p. 39).

A prescient account of the importance of things in human life and in understanding family and world history.



A brindled wolf and tumbling acrobats

There are 264 *netsuke* in this collection. It is a very big collection of very small objects.

I pick one up and turn it round in my fingers, weigh it in the palm of my hand. If it is wood, chestnut or elm, it is even lighter than ivory. You see the patina more easily on these wooden ones: there is a faint shine on the spine of the brindled wolf and on the tumbling acrobats locked in their embrace. The ivory ones come in shades of cream, every colour, in fact but white. A few have inlaid eyes of amber or horn. Some of the older ones are slightly worn away: the haunch of the faun resting on leaves has lost its markings. There is a slight split, an almost imperceptible fault line on the cicada. Who dropped it? Where and when?

Most of them are signed—that movement of ownership when it was finished and let go. There is a wooden *netsuke* of a seated man holding a gourd between his feet. He's bending over it, both hands on a knife that is half into the gourd. He is hard at work,

his arms and shoulder and neck show the effort: every muscle concentrates on the blade. There is another of a cooper working on a half-finished barrel with an adze. He sits leaning into it, framed by it, brows puckered with concentration. It is an ivory carving about what it is like to carve into wood. Both are about finishing something on the subject of the half-finished. Look, they say, I got there first, and he's hardly started (pp. 13–14).

Thomas Fuchs, 2021. *In Defense of the Human Being: Foundational Questions of an Embodied Anthropology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This philosopher and psychiatrist calls into question the advancing technologizing of lifeworlds. Instead, he offers an embodied, interactive account of human being whereby “we are neither pure minds nor brains but primarily embodied, living beings in relation to others.” In defending humans as they are and not what science and technology would make them be, Fuchs discusses several potentially threatening developments to which he devotes a chapter each. These developments include neuroscience; transhumanism; digitization; artificial intelligence; robotics; and constructivism (the perspective that meaning is no more than an illusory, deceptive construction of subjective reality).

Fuchs writes: “[T]he image of the human being that we consider to be true ultimately determines how we deal with ourselves and with others ... Humanism in the ethical sense therefore means resistance to the rule and constraints of technocratic systems as well as to the self-reification and mechanization of humans. If we conceive of ourselves as objects, be it as algorithms or as neuronally determined apparatuses, then we surrender ourselves to the rule of those who seek to manipulate such apparatuses and to control them socio-technologically ... The defense of man is, in this respect, not only a theoretical task but also an ethical duty” (p. 8).

William Fulton, 2022. *Place and Prosperity: How Cities Help Us to Connect and Innovate*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

This urban planner and former mayor of Ventura, California, envisions vibrant urban places that “create better chances in life for everyone.” Largely drawing on his own personal and professional experiences, Fulton aims to illustrate how the two interconnected themes of place and prosperity “lie at the heart of what a city is and, by extension, what our society is all about.” All 19 chapters in the book were originally published elsewhere in venues dating from 1998 to the recent present.

Susan Ingham and Or Ettinger, 2023. *Teaching Wholeness in Architectural Education: Advancing Christopher Alexander’s Teaching Legacy through the Building Beauty Program*. *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism*, Vol. 47, Issue 2, pp. 125–34.

These architects describe the “Building Beauty” post-graduate program in architecture, grounded in the work of architect Christopher Alexander. A central program aim is understanding “what makes the physical environment beautiful, and how beautiful environments can be created today.” See the poster on the “Building Beauty” program on p. 47. Also, see: <https://www.buildingbeauty.org/building-beauty-online>.

Hesam Kamalipour, Patricia Aelbrecht, and Nastaran Peimani, eds., 2023. *The Routledge Handbook of Urban Design Research Methods*. London: Routledge.

Edited by three urban designers, this handbook includes 52 chapters arranged around five themes: *agency*, *affordance*, *place*, *informality*, and *performance*. Contributors

include **Matthew Carmona** (“Researching Urban Design Governance”); **Emily Talen** (“Transect-Based Coding: A Methodology”); **Vikas Mehta** (“Exploring Streets as Places for Social Change”); **Kim Dovey** (“From Place to Assemblage: Meanings and Morphologies in Urban Design Research”); **David Seamon** (“Phenomenological Research Methods and Urban Design”); and **Maria Lewicka** (“Researching Place Attachment”).

Annika Lems, 2018. *Being-Here: Placemaking in a World of Movement*. Oxford, UK: Berghahn.

This anthropologist describes the life-worlds of three middle-aged Somalis living in Melbourne, Australia. Her focus is “the interrelated meanings of emplacement and displacement in people’s everyday lives.” She considers “the refuge as a metaphor for societal alienation and estrangement.”

Maxine E. Miller, 2023. *Place and Being: A Psychological and Phenomenological Inquiry*. Summerland, CA: Pacifica Graduate Institute, doctoral dissertation, Clinical Psychology.

This clinical psychologist examines place and people’s relationship to place from a multi-disciplinary perspective, including the psychological and phenomenological literatures. The author highlights several clinical implications, including “diagnostic considerations of place attachment and relationship to place; the necessity of a greater inclusion of ecological or environmental considerations in therapeutic treatment; an enhanced understanding of the variance of people’s experience of place.”

Dermot Moran, 2017. *Embodiment, Enaction, and Culture: Investigating the Constitution of the Shared World*. In Christopher Durt, Thomas Fuchs, and Christian Tewes, eds.,

***Embodiment, Enaction, and Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 25–46.**

Philosopher Dermot Moran is one of the finest interpreters of phenomenology, and here he provides an excellent discussion of intersubjectivity and intercorporeality as identified by Husserl and extended by Merleau-Ponty. Moran writes: “for Husserl, the constitution of the social world is deeply connected with the constitution of the body and the constitution of others in empathy. How precisely the sense of the common world (both the social world of persons and the objective world of scientific ‘mere things’) is constituted is an enormous and extremely complex challenge for Husserl” (p. 43)

Dermot Moran, 2018. *What is the Phenomenological Approach? Revisiting Intentional Explication*. *Phenomenology and Mind*, Vol. 15, pp. 72–90.

Moran considers “the main features of the phenomenological approach, focusing on the central themes of intentionality, embodiment, empathy, intersubjectivity, sociality and the lifeworld.” He argues that phenomenology is “a holistic approach that rightfully defends the role of subjectivity in the constitution of objectivity and recognizes the inherent limitations of all forms of naturalism, objectivism and scientism.”

Sjörén, H. 2023. *Powering homemaking: Everyday domestic life in times of rising energy prices*, Uppsatsers Kulturgeografiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet. Masteruppsats i geografi/kulturgeografi.

“Recent research in both geography and in neighbouring disciplines argues that we need to pay more attention to the cultural and symbolic significance of home in order to understand domestic energy consumption. In this thesis I consider how ideals of

home are renegotiated in times of increased energy prices. By focusing on the experiences of the body-subject, I describe how ideals of home and the flow of energy interact in people's everyday homemaking practices.

"I build my analysis from a combination of semi-structured interviews, walkalongs and photo-elicited interviews with people living in detached houses in Sweden. Although often producing feelings of stress, rising energy prices also allowed the participants to ascribe their home new meaning and to feel a sense of connection to others. Often the participants express feelings

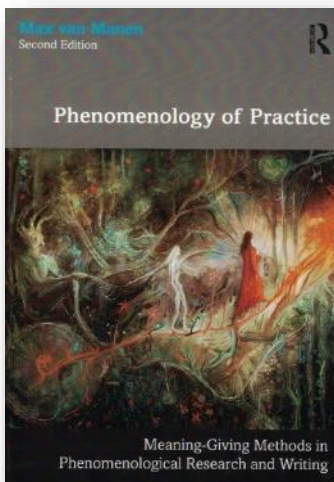
of being part of a shared societal effort. By finding a new, less energy-intensive routine the participants interact with their home in new ways and ascribe their home new meanings. These new routines become a way to creatively engage with and reflect on long entrenched embodied ideals of home."

Özge Yaka, 2023. *Fighting for the River: Gender, Body, and Agency in Environmental Struggles*. Oakland, CA: Univ. of California Press.

This geographer considers women's intimate, embodied relationships with river waters and explores how those relationships embolden local communities' resistance to private run-of-the-river hydroelectric power plants in Turkey. The conceptual focus is "a body-centered, phenomenological approach to women's environmental activism ..."

Book Note

Max van Manen, 2023. *Phenomenology of Practice*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.



Published ten years ago in 2014, the first edition of this book aimed to provide "access to phenomenological thinking and research in a manner that shows, in a reflexive mode, what the phenomenological attitude is like" (2014, p. 19).

For this new, substantively revised edition, this pedagogue's aim remains in place, though he has largely rewritten and revised much of the text, particularly by

incorporating "examples of phenomenological essays and excursions on ordinary and extraordinary topics" (2023, p. i).

One result is a considerably longer book: 498 pp. vs. 411 pages of the earlier edition. The original book included no divisions, but the new edition is divided into three parts: "ways of understanding phenomenology"; "protagonists and practices"; and "methods, research, writing." Both editions have 14 chapters, though titles and content are mostly different in the new edition.

If we contrast some title headings, we have chapter 1, 1st edition: "phenomenology of practice" (11 pages); chapter 1, 2nd edition, "doing phenomenology" (40 pages); chapter 2, 1st edition, "meanings and methods" (26 pages); chapter 2, 2nd edition, "samples of phenomenological texts" (69 pages); chapter 3, 1st edition, "openings" (16 pp.); chapter 3, 2nd edition, "on the meaning of meaning" (16 pp.). These varying titles and chapter lengths indicate considerable topical and structural shifts in the new edition. One could argue that there is much about this revised publication that makes it a new book.

Though considerably reworked and extended, van Manen's text remains one of the most useful introductions for encountering phenomenology phenomenologically and for learning about practical

methods for doing real-world phenomenology. One of the best portions of the book (also included in the first edition) is van Manen's discussion of five *existentials*—i.e., integral lived dimensions of lifeworlds, regardless of a person or group's specific personal, social, cultural, or historical situation:

1. *Relationality*, or *lived others*: the lived connections we maintain with other human beings, including bodily co-presence and interpersonal encounter;
2. *Corporeality*, or *lived bodies*: how such bodily qualities as upright posture, corporeal habituality, degree of ableness, and so forth, contribute to human experience;
3. *Spatiality*, or *lived space*: the ways that people experience and know the spaces and environments in which they find themselves;
4. *Temporality*, or *lived time*: how we experience time, including chronological and historical sensibilities;
5. *Materiality*, or *lived things*: the importance in human experience of things, which work in a wide range of ways to sustain, improve, or undermine situations and events.

Interestingly, in this new edition, van Manen adds a sixth existential that he identifies as *technology*, or *lived technics*: the taken-for-granted attitude "that most of us take toward technology in our lives

as tools and techniques.” Van Manen asks, however, if we are “taking our cyborgian existence for granted” and, if so, “How?” (p. 414).

Overall, this volume is a valuable introduction to the nature of phenomenology and phenomenological method as one can better identify, understand, and describe human life and real-world human experience. We include four excerpts from the book below.

Phenomenology starts with experience

[T]he practice of “doing phenomenology” is thinking and seeing our world phenomenologically. And to think phenomenologically is to be swept up in a spell of wonder about the originary meaningfulness of this or that phenomenon or event as they appear, show, present, or give themselves to us in experience or consciousness. In the experiential encounter with things and events of the world, phenomenology assists us by directing our gaze toward the regions where understandings, emotions, meanings, and feelings originate, well up, and percolate, through the porous membranes of past existential sedimentations—then infuse, permeate, infect, touch, stir us, and exercise a formative and affective effect on our being and becoming. In this sense, phenomenology tells us how we are.

Doing phenomenological research is making intelligible the originary meaningfulness of experiential phenomena and events that we explore in a methodological phenomenological manner though written texts. This need for intelligibility is a characteristic of phenomenology as a mode of inquiry and as an intellectual discipline. Phenomenology starts with experience. But some current phenomenological discourses are so rooted in academese and technical philosophical vocabulary and argument that they are virtually unintelligible jargon, even to well-educated readers. This has led some philosophers to urge

their philosopher colleagues to practice phenomenology in a manner that is understandable to non-philosophers. But ironically even some of these philosophers, wittingly or unwittingly, do not seem to know how to follow their own advice and not raise the unnecessary threshold of comprehensibility by remaining as much as possible jargon-free for genuinely interested readers (pp. 4–5).

Practicing direct description

To do phenomenology *on* the things, we must turn *to* the things that matter and attend to our experience of them. Maurice Merleau-Ponty says that this means that we must begin by awakening the basic experience of the world and by practicing a “direct description” of this world in which we live and that lives in us:

The efforts [of phenomenology] are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world ... it also offers an account of space, time, and the world as we “live” them. It tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking into account its psychological origin and the causal explanations that the scientist, the historian, or the sociologist may be able to provide (Phenomenology of Perception, 1962, p. vii).

Giving a “direct description” of experience is not a narratively reporting, copying, or providing information about something. Rather, to describe, to compose, a description, is to *write* (unravel or uncover) what remained hidden or concealed. Doing phenomenology on the phenomena means taking up the attitude of immediate and direct seeing and practicing an attentive awareness to the things of the world as we live them rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or theorize them. Direct description is making existential sense of the originary

meanings of lived or inceptual experience (the primal phenomena and events as given in or as consciousness) (pp. 25–26).

“As a manner or style”

Everyday experiences that are common tend to be experienced in a taken-for-granted manner. But what is the everydayness of daily life? When we speak of matters of everyday life, we tend to think that such matters are simple and less worthy of our academic attention. We are more interested in things that are exotic and less common. And yet, phenomenology shows that the quotidian everydayness of daily life experiences is much less simple than we tend to think.

In everyday life, we are able to engage in our daily practices because they are to a certain degree habituated, repeatable, common, reproducible.... Husserl reserved the notion of “natural attitude” not just to point at the taken-for-grantedness of everyday thinking and acting. For him, the natural attitude is manifested in our natural inclination to believe that the world exists out there, independent of our personal human existence. The challenge for phenomenology is not to deny the external existence of the world, but to substitute the phenomenological attitude for the natural attitude in order to be able to return to the beginnings, to the things themselves as they give themselves in lived-through experience—not as externally real or eternally existent, but as an openness that invites us to see them as if for the first time.

Heidegger warns us against a reliance on method, yet he and others describe phenomenology in terms of method: “Phenomenology is only accessible through a phenomenological method,” says Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 2012, p. xxi). How do we reconcile these claims? It appears that these scholars

are warning against reducing phenomenology to a set of standard strategies and techniques. Merleau-Ponty refers to method as something like a way of thinking and feelingly understanding: “phenomenology allows itself to be practiced and recognized as a manner or as a style” (2012, p. xxi). So, it may be best to think of the basic method of phenomenology as the taking up of a certain attitude and practicing a certain attentive awareness to the things of the world as we live them rather than as we conceptualize or theorize them, and as we take them for granted. “Do phenomenology” as a reflective method is the practice of the bracketing, brushing away, or reducing what prevents us from making primitive or originary contact with the primate concreteness of lived reality. (pp. 27–28).

The pathic

The notion of the pathic is useful in understanding how phenomenological text produces a certain kind of non-cognitive understanding: pathic knowledge that corresponds to a pathic acting. The etymon of the term pathic is the Latin *pathicus*. And the etymology (dating back to 1600s) of the noun pathicism and the classical pathicus includes patience and passivity The *Oxford English Dictionary* currently defines pathic as: “Involving feeling, perception, or intuition, rather than cognition or deliberation.”

In this book, the notion of pathic is used to the extent that the act of practice depends on the sense and sensuality of the body: personal presence, relational perceptiveness, tact for knowing what to say and do in contingent situations, thoughtful routines and practices, and other aspects of knowledge that are in part pre-reflective, and yet thoughtful—full of thought.

If we wish to further study and enhance such pathic dimensions of practice, we need a convocative language

that can express and communicate these understandings. Pathic texts need to remain oriented to the experiential or lived sensibilities of the life-world. For example, experiential stories provide opportunities for evoking and reflecting on practice

The term “pathic” implicates forms of expressive understanding that we call empathic and sympathetic. Empathy and sympathy are usually discussed as certain types of relational understandings that involve imaginatively placing oneself in someone else’s shoes, feeling what the other person feels, understanding the other from a distance (telepathy) or, more generally, to be understandingly engaged in other people’s lives.

But these relational linguistic notions also open up ways of thinking about expressivity and forms of understanding that are more mantic than semantic. No doubt, there are various forms and modalities of pathic understanding. But the first important point is that the terms empathy and sympathy suggest that this understanding is not primarily gnostic, cognitive, intellectual, technical—but rather that it is, indeed, pathic: involving the emotions, the body, the poetic, the pathetic, and the pathically inspired

The term pathic derives from pathos, meaning “suffering and also passion.” Pathic expressiveness is not to be confused with pathic expressiveness. And yet, phatic comes from *phanein*, to show oneself, to appear. So there is a phenomenological sensibility to phatic expression that presents a person’s presence to others. The phenomenological notion of pathic and phatic words and expressions raises the question of the limits and possibilities of the communicability of language

In a larger life context, the pathic refers to the general mood, sensibility, sensuality, and felt sense of being in the world The pathically tuned body recognizes itself in its responsiveness to the things of our world and to the others who share our world or break into our world. The pathic

sense perceived the world in a feeling or emotive modality of knowing and being We have an implicit, felt understanding of ourselves in situations, even though it is difficult sometimes to put that understanding into words.

A phenomenological text should never be read merely for its explicit meaning. The pathic sense of the text is directly related to the meaning that phenomenology attempts to evoke. The pathognomy of a text refers to its signifying power to express deeper emotive meaning. But the pathognomic aspects of text cannot be explicated in straightforward conceptual terms. Pathic meaning is something that is part of the experience of language in everyday life. We experience the pathic sense of a text when it suddenly “speaks” to us in a manner that validates our experience, when it conveys an evidential understanding or truth that stirs our sensibilities.

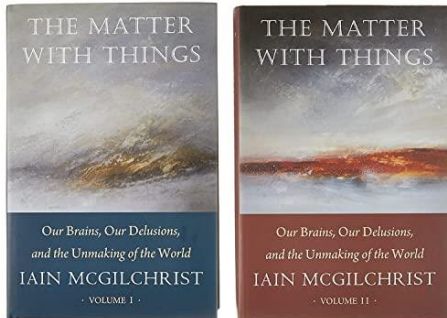
It is much easier for us to teach concepts and informational knowledge than it is to bring about pathic understandings. But herein lies the strength of a phenomenology of practice. It is through pathic significations and images, accessible through phenomenological texts that speak to us and make a demand on us, that the more noncognitive dimensions of our professional practice may also be communicated, internalized, and reflected upon. For this we need to develop a phenomenology that is sensitive to the thoughtfulness required in contingent, ethical, and relational situations (pp. 185–87).

Book Review

Asymmetrical Reconciliation

Andrea Hiott

Iain McGilchrist, 2009. *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World*. London: Perspectiva Press.



The universe is asymmetric and I am persuaded that life, as it is known to us, is a direct result of the asymmetry of the universe or of its indirect consequences.

—Louis Pasteur

It was a cold London evening, some time at the end of November 2021. I sat beside Caradoc King, the agent and good friend of the author Phillip Pullman, who sat in front of us on stage, as did psychotherapist and author Iain McGilchrist. We were there for the release of *The Matter with Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions, and the Unmaking of the World*, a two-volume encyclopedic work from the author of *The Master and His Emissary*, a book I reviewed in the winter-spring 2023 EAP. McGilchrist had been working on the new book for over a decade, and this event was its premiere.

I begin with this moment for two reasons. First, this event occurred almost exactly two years ago, so it has been a long time since I read the first part of this 1,500-page book, having started it on my way back home to Berlin after the event. Luckily, the first part of the book focuses on neuropsychology and parallels arguments in his previous book, discussed in my earlier review. As a result, my focus

here is mainly the second and third parts of the book.

The second reason I begin with this event relates to something Caradoc King (who I did not know before this evening) said to me that night—namely, that Iain McGilchrist’s work helped Phillip Pullman “reconcile” himself. As Pullman has expressed elsewhere, reading McGilchrist gave him a new angle on attention, demonstrating the extraordinary difference in perception possible for one body—what is characterized by McGilchrist’s differentiation of the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

As Caradoc described it, Pullman was at the London event because reading McGilchrist had helped him to perceive the world differently. McGilchrist had been able to open a space for Pullman to “stay with the contradiction,” something prescribed by the American philosopher Jacob Needleman, quoted by McGilchrist in his book:

Stay with the contradiction. If you stay, you will see that there is always something more than two opposing truths. The whole truth always includes a third part, which is the reconciliation (p. 1343).

This effort of reconciliation is what I take as the book’s overall message, expressed in multiple ways throughout the two volumes, and one I describe here as “asymmetrical reconciliation”—not “reconciling opposites” but reconciling by way of them. Noticing opposites with a particular sort of attention is reconciliation of the sort Pullman experienced. It does not mean changing what is perceived of as opposites into similarities; rather, it means *changing one’s level of perception*. This is what Alan Watts

called “the coincidence of opposites” and what McGilchrist discusses under that same phrase in the book’s third part. Asymmetrical reconciliation relates to a dynamic realizing that is not about “one” or “two” but is an illumination of process.

Part one of McGilchrist’s book is largely like the earlier *Master and His Emissary*. He begins with neuro-psychology and gives evidence to demonstrate that the left hemisphere is reductive and mechanizes the body’s encounter with the world. In dramatic contrast, the right hemisphere allows for *attention with* that encounter so that one can experience it as a process, or what is often referred to as holistic awareness.

In the book’s next two sections, McGilchrist shifts to epistemology and concludes by discussing a kind of revitalized sacredness. This last section has much in common with writers, like Watts, who consider spiritual practice. Though he is careful not to side with any religious or spiritual tradition, McGilchrist speaks, in this last section, of Geist, spirit, and consciousness. Throughout his argument, he suggests that we should let ourselves be guided by the right rather than the left hemisphere. In the book’s final section, we gain a sense of what this guidance might mean in practice.

By the end of the book’s second section on epistemology, we have been given a knowledge basis for why the neurophysiological distinction between right and left hemispheres has philosophical and practical merit. In this second section, he deepens our understanding of *representation*, a theme that continues in the rest of the book.

What he explains here more thoroughly than in *Master* is that the left-hemisphere stance is dangerous for what it overstates

in the world relative to representation, which for McGilchrist does not refer to the neuroscientific concept of mental images in brains but, rather the world pictures and images that human beings create to articulate, communicate, and share their discoveries and stories—for example, alphabets and languages as well as books, artworks, films, mathematics, and so forth.

As I understand McGilchrist, he is speaking about any created symbolic representations of the human world, whether paintings, music, websites, equations, models of atoms, and the like. He is concerned about what these representations become in the left-brain understanding that dominates our way of seeing the world today.

We too often function like left-hemisphere beings that reduce everything we encounter to secondhand representations only. We are similar to those creatures chained in Plato's cave who no longer know there is a real world outside. They only see the shadows on the walls, and these shadows are assumed to be reality. We forget that the images we make—even our fMRI brain images—are not the things themselves but only partial, frozen snapshots of an ongoing process of lived experience that can never be fully represented.

This process is dynamic so that, as soon as any part of it is represented, that part is already changed. Still, to take these snapshots (for example, to write music out in notation) is a helpful left-brain effort and not to be disregarded. What we must do is to refine and distinguish between the real world and secondhand representations. To make this point, McGilchrist provides several quotations from the German philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs, for example:

In music, as in the living world, change is permanent, stasis is transitory. "What is perceived," writes Thomas Fuchs, "is not a sequence of discrete tones but a dynamic, self-organizing process which integrates the tones heard to create a melody ... It is an automatic synthesis, not

one actively performed by the subject" (p. 1587).

The point is that there is no original synthesis because the melody was whole from the start. Any synthesis only appears *after* we have broken music into notational representation to then hold it statically in place as melody. To say that music is its notes is to reduce music to the representation we created to bring our attention to it in a partial way. *But the music itself does not depend on this piecemeal formulation.*

Another helpful example is film, which is a matter of many momentary images that, when run together at high speed, look continuous. Picturing the situation via the left hemisphere, people too readily think of life as a film in which they can locate and pinpoint relevant parts. To think that life is atomistic and that we must find and isolate its parts is a left-hemisphere mistake because we are applying a representation model to what is not representational: Film is a representation. Life is not.

Experience cannot be stopped and started or broken into parts. Yes, it can be represented so that we better understand it. We must move beyond the representation, however, to return to actual experience. The great mistake is to confuse representation with what we're trying to understand.

We have substituted the map for the territory such that we are in danger of no longer attending to the territory, to life itself—to the real world. This is the primary plea of the book, as I read it, a hope that we will *let the right brain in* and notice, in the words of McGilchrist, "the difference between representations of experience and experience itself" (p. 1439).

This lived difference between representation and experience relates to "the conciliation of opposites." Needleman explains that, by sitting with the contradiction, "sometimes the veil is lifted for a moment, and you get a tiny glimpse through those protective illusions ... if you have courage, you can stay with that and look at it closely—and that can

bring a glimpse of our higher, inner possibilities" (<https://www.pulse-berlin.com/jacob-needleman/>). The contradiction is necessary resistance; as McGilchrist explains, there is never a valley without a mountain, or a wave without a trough (p. 1339). He quotes Heraclitus:

Grasping: wholes and not wholes, convergent, divergent, consonant, dissonant, from all things one and from one thing all (p. 1335).

Via quotations like this, McGilchrist aims to portray a nested, fractal manner of understanding closer to the natural world and closer to the right brain's awareness—a grasping that means to touch but also to understand via reconciling what is asymmetrical. McGilchrist expresses this experience as a whirlpool of matter and consciousness (p. 1567).

Holding opposites means understanding that what you hold are not really opposites, just like music is not its notation or film a series of images. It is this dissonance that allows the nested, fractal positions that appear asymmetrical but are in fact inseparable and not to be judged as two. The situation is much like trying to divide the human body's front and back. Or trying to impose the left hand on the right. These situations can never be reconciled precisely because their portions coincide.

At first, paradox may seem a problem to solve. In Chapter 16, for example, McGilchrist provides several examples of how each hemisphere would solve a particular paradox. Take Dichotomy: the hare beats the turtle no matter how much one might reduce the space between them (p. 1066). Still, it is clear that we cannot get back to where we started and know it for the first time without the left hemisphere of resistance.

By the last part of his book, McGilchrist has demonstrated that paradox is only a way to awaken one's attention within a process that is difficult to spot without such resistance for the very reason that this process is already what one is moving within. The realization beyond opposites does not

dissolve them because they were never there. In other words, the reconciliation is asymmetry.

The most important thing we gain from McGilchrist's text is to look at ourselves more honestly, to reconcile ourselves, which is to say, to approach ourselves with a new sort of attention. As expressed by Pullman and others, there is value in how this explication allows us to realize

we have a choice about which hemisphere we hope to prioritize and in so doing, about what kind of world we want to nurture. This approach means staying with the contradiction until we get a glimpse of something else.

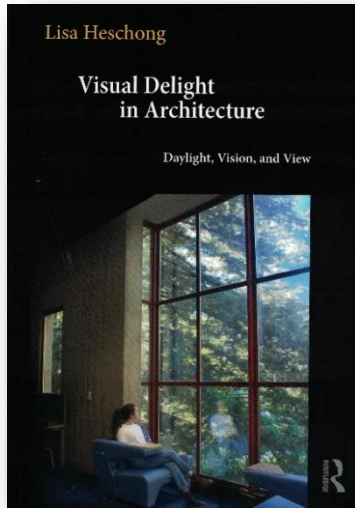
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Book review

Susan Ingham

Lisa Heschong, 2021. *Visual Delight in Architecture: Daylight, Vision, and View*. London: Routledge.



As a practicing architect living and working in Seattle, Washington, I place high importance on the size and placement of windows in my design projects. In the Pacific Northwest, windows are often quite large due to Seattle's mild climate, northern latitude, and many overcast days (Seattle is the cloudiest large city in the lower 48 states, sometimes experiencing over 300 overcast days per year). Stunning views are plentiful in this hilly city surrounded by mountain ranges and bodies of water. Maximizing both light and views is standard practice in my design work.

When I began reading architect Lisa Heschong's *Visual Delight in Architecture: Daylight, Vision, and View*, I thought I understood well the value and importance of "Daylight, Vision, and View" but was mistaken; My knowledge and experience is just one piece of a much deeper knowledge of how daylight and views are integrally connected to human health and well-being.

In her book, Heschong outlines a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary portrait of

the effects of daylight and views on human life. She weaves together several diverse areas of research with her own decades-long studies and observations to make a compelling case for the necessity of daylight and views to increase and maintain our physical and mental health and to provide visual comfort and delight.

Heschong's central premise is that good daylighting and window views are not just optional amenities nice to have if the budget allows. She contends that daily access to daylight and views are essential to our physiological and cognitive health. She emphasizes that more attention should be given to window sizes and placements in buildings.

In addition to physiological and cognitive benefits, Heschong demonstrates that the presence of well-designed windows and views can help shape and reflect distinct cultural perspectives. Good daylight design has the potential to create more universal transcendent experiences, well illustrated by the view of Earth from the window of an orbiting space station.

Covering a broad range of fields including physiology, cognitive psychology, neuroscience, aesthetics, architecture, urban design, environmental science, and cultural anthropology, Heschong divides the book into four main sections. The first section, *Prediction*, "outlines the physiological mechanisms of our circadian, visual, and cognitive systems and their relationships to daylight and view" (p. 6). Heschong explains the importance of several biological rhythms closely connected to daylight and views and impacting human health directly.

The first is circadian rhythm, our internal genetic clock that helps predict the timing of day versus night. Our bodies are biologically programmed to be awake and feel more vital during daylight hours and to rest at night in sync with Earth's rotation.

Recent studies suggest that disruptions in circadian rhythms are a significant cause of some sleep disorders and other health challenges. Robust circadian rhythms not only result in better sleep but also support better metabolic health, better memory formation, and better emotional resilience. Getting a daily dose of daylight boosts our vitality and helps maintain a healthy circadian rhythm, though today most Westerners spend ninety percent of their time indoors, and access to daylight is much more restricted.

Heschong describes recent scientific discoveries demonstrating that many other hormonal, cognitive, and bodily rhythms are in sync with circadian rhythms, including mind wandering, or "Default Mode Network" (DMN). Studies have shown that we spend forty-seven percent of our waking hours "mind wandering" or in DMN, often in very short bursts of time of which we are not consciously aware.

Rather than being a negative attribute, researchers have discovered that "Mind wandering is associated with rich internal activity that often entails contemplating future goals and/or thinking about the self" (p. 70) This mental activity is focused on a person's internal state and is closely connected with insight and creativity:

A steady rhythm of mind wandering implies that it is a basic function of the brain, very much like sleep, where internal processes are attended to, in preparation for the next round of outward sensing and activity (p. 73).

Other positive associations attributed to mind wandering include increased self-awareness, working memory, and incubation of problem solutions and creative thought.

Is it possible to harness this largely subconscious rhythm of mind wandering to increase our creativity and power of insight?

Heschong suggests that looking out windows to a view can easily trigger our minds to go into DMN:

I know that, personally, when I am looking out my office window, there is a ninety-nine percent chance that my mind is wandering: I stare, let my mind blur, and answers to all kinds of unasked questions just bubble up unbidden” (p. 72).

When I designed my own office 15 years ago, I designed large corner windows next to which I placed my desk so I could easily look outside. I was not aware of the benefits of mind wandering at the time but instinctually knew I wanted to be able to look out to be able to do my best creative work.

In the book’s second part, *Perception*, Heschong explores the human sensory experience: How we learn to see, how visual perception shifts with age, and daylight aspects linked to vision, including color, shadow, sparkle, and glare. She includes valuable information on how to design for daylight in buildings to maximize visual comfort and delight, as well as what content and qualities of window views are most meaningful for building occupants.

The challenge for architects and designers is to size and place windows so that both the interior daylighted environment and exterior views are both optimal for creating places to work and live that nourish the occupants’ physical and mental health. This section of the book is densely packed with astute observations, research study results, and readily applicable tips.

I especially appreciated Heschong’s practical explanations about how color, shadow, sparkle, and glare can be used to design comfortable daylighted spaces. For example, the presence of shadows allows us to better perceive three-dimensional space, while sparkles or highlights balance the shadows and make objects appear more vivid and three-dimensional (though too much sparkle in a space can quickly become uncomfortable glare). For retail displays, Heschong recommends a combination of diffuse and clear skylights at a proportion of 10:1 for an optimal balance of diffuse light and sparkle, without glare.

Strategically introducing sparkle is one way to add visual delight to a daylit space.

Heschong’s example is the Phoenix Central Library where architect Will Bruder designed special skylights for the main reading room:

A diffusing skylight sits above each column that supports the space frame structure spanning the vast space. However, set into each skylight dome there is one small circle of clear glazing that lets a small beam of sunlight into the space. The location of this clear circle is such that at exactly noon on the summer solstice, the sunbeam strikes the top of the column, making it seem to burn with the intensity of the sun. At that moment, the reading room lights up with more than the usual delight and transforms into an observatory for our place on Earth and in the larger solar system (p. 113).

Having worked with Christopher Alexander and his colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley, I was pleased that Heschong mentioned pattern No. 159, “Light on Two Sides of Every Room,” from Alexander’s seminal *A Pattern Language*, as an excellent way to mitigate spatial glare. I use this pattern in most of my projects, as I find that windows on two sides make a dramatic difference in the visual comfort of most medium- and large-sized rooms. If a project’s budget is tight and I can only modify one element to improve a room, I will most likely add or enlarge windows, preferably following “Light on Two Sides of Every Room.”

Although Heschong makes no mention, Pattern No. 223, “Deep Reveals,” also addresses the glare problem. This pattern proposes thicker window frames that can be splayed at an angle toward the room interior so that there is a more gradual transition of natural light along the splayed edge, more smoothly connecting the bright outside with the darker inside walls and thus mitigating glare.

Heschong does not refer to other *Pattern Language* patterns relating to light quality, though most align with Heschong’s argument. For example, No. 135, “Tapestry of Light and Dark,” and No. 252, “Pools of Light,” directly relate to the importance of shadows and the differentiation of light in a space. For both patterns, Alexander em-

phasizes the need for variation and a coherent balance of light and dark rather than uniform lighting throughout.

One well known example is Frank Lloyd Wright’s incorporating low, dark entrance halls in his house designs so that, when one passes from the low, dark entrances into the main dwelling spaces, they seem much lighter, brighter, and larger than they actually are. I use this perceptual device in my own work in entrance rooms and in dark, narrow hallways that lead to bedrooms that feel brighter and larger than they would otherwise.

Heschong next discusses contrasting qualities of light for different cities and regions, mostly arising because of latitude, weather patterns, and the surrounding landmass, context, and regional landscape elements, including physical shapes and materials. For example, the many overcast days in Seattle, coupled with its northern latitude, facilitate a soft quality sometimes called “oyster light.” The dark green of evergreen trees, the dark inky blue of water bodies, and the light icy mountain blue all contribute to the singular “cool tone” color feeling of the place. To harmonize with this regional place palette, I often recommend to my clients that they paint their houses a darker red, terra cotta, or burnt orange to complement the natural landscape’s greens and blues.

Heschong concludes the book’s second part with a focus on views outside windows. There are certain types of landscapes and views that people gravitate toward, including sky, trees, birds, pathways, water, mountains, and distinctive landmarks. The sky changes frequently and, in observing it, we gain knowledge about the weather and satisfy our appetite for circadian stimulus. Birds and trees connect us with nature, and paths and people connect us with others in the city. Landmarks provide important emotional anchors reminding us where we are in the world, and “water may be the most universally treasured component of views” for its reflectivity, its constant state of change and motion, and its connection to nature and wildlife.

I once rented office space in downtown Seattle where I could look out to Puget

Sound and the Olympic Mountains. I watched ferry boats and the sun setting over the snow-capped mountains. I especially appreciated the cargo ships anchored in the bay, plying the Seattle-Asia trade. Seeing them waiting to unload made me feel more connected to the wider world. My mind would wander and expand, linking me to the planet and distant shores.

In relation to window views, Heschong highlights layering light as a design device to create visual comfort and delight. Window views can be manipulated in various ways to regulate desired degrees of privacy, sun/glare/heat control, and undesirable views. Movable elements such as shades, blinds, curtains, and shutters allow individuals to better control their visual comfort.

Also useful are perforated screens, lattices, exterior fins, and frosted or obscure glass. Alexander's pattern No. 238, "Filtered Light," describes the delight in looking out a window through the leaves of a tree, or through tracery or leaded glass. In my work, I have designed stained glass windows, rice paper screens, and other window coverings to create filtered light for particular rooms, especially bathrooms.

Heschong correctly asks, however, "At what point does the veil create a sense of imprisonment instead of protection or privilege?" (p. 175). She studied children in a classroom with windows that included security features like perforated metal screens and scratched, yellowed plastic security glazing, both of which appeared to have a negative impact on the children's learning experience.

I recently stayed in a modern, upscale London hotel room where the floor-to-ceiling window was frosted glass except for the top few inches by the ceiling. This glass was used to block out an unpleasant view of an industrial landscape, but not being able to see out made me feel trapped. I kept looking up to the clear top glass to try to look out, despite the gritty surroundings. I felt a general sense of unease when I was in the room, despite the upscale amenities.

In the book's third part, *Motivation*, Heschong concentrates on case-study metrics demonstrating real-world benefits of views and good daylighting. She

focuses on three environments—schools, retail stores, and offices—and describes studies that demonstrate improved academic performance, increased retail sales, and enhanced worker productivity. Broadly, these improvements are substantial, mostly in the seven to thirty percent range.

There are also health benefits relating to views and daylight as demonstrated by one study indicating that office workers sitting by windows complained less about their physical environment and were less critical about other aspects of their office situation. Relevant here is the research of Roger Ulrich, who examined differences in recovery rates for hospital patients based on window views. One group of patients looked out to a brick wall, while another group looked out to trees; this second group had a faster recovery rate.

Heschong explains that daylight and views of nature are also associated with pain reduction, partly because daylight exposure can help increase levels of serotonin:

Findings indicated that patients in rooms with more sunlight reported less pain and stress, and took 22% less analgesic medications, resulting in a 21% of medication costs (p. 275).

If these findings are correct, then shouldn't all hospitals be required by code to provide patient rooms with a view of a garden, trees, or other natural elements? Unfortunately, building codes move in the opposite direction. To increase safety from the threat of fire, building codes (including the International Building Code [IBC] which is the predominate code used in the US) almost always require buildings to be fully sprinklered. The IBC has recently allowed new exceptions for escape window requirements if a building is fully sprinklered with the result that some building types—for example, dormitories and apartment buildings—are no longer required to have a bedroom window to be code compliant.

Recently at the University of California, Santa Barbara, developer Charles Munger planned to build a twelve-story-high student dormitory with 4,500 individual student dorm rooms for which ninety-four

percent did not include windows. The reasoning was that, to minimize residential costs, students would pay less rent for a small windowless room. Fortunately, there was enough protest from students, staff, and local officials that the project was scrapped, though the idea continues, and windowless dormitory rooms have been built at the University of Texas, Austin (Daniel Roche, "University of California abandons plans to build 'windowless dorm' Munger Hall", *The Architect's Newsletter*, August 9, 2023).

UT student Joan Miro reports on the UT Austin windowless dorm rooms in *The Architect's Newspaper*, October 14, 2022:

*The benefits of natural light on people's general well-being—not to mention its preventive effects on such mental health conditions as depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, and stress—are well documented. Students may not be fully aware of the health ramifications when they sign leases for apartments with windowless rooms, but many have shared their "dreadful experiences" after the fact. Most speak about trying to avoid spending time in their room, but there is no escape. [One student reported that] "From the moment you wake up, it is a very confusing and anxious experience." [Another student commented that] "Waking up every morning in total darkness never fails to create anxiety, which is a terrible start to each day" (Joan Miro, "Windowless dorm rooms are proliferating, exacerbating a growing student mental health crisis. They should be banned" (excerpt from a letter to the editor, *The Architect's Newspaper*, October 14, 2022)).*

Another student's experience corroborates research linking depression with the absence of natural light: "While being in my windowless room, I have experienced symptoms of depression and fatigue quite often. It is very hard to get motivated, almost to the point where you feel trapped" (ibid.). This comment parallels research findings relating to the negative impact of circadian-rhythm disruptions. One hopes that the extensive press coverage of the Munger Hall saga acts as a catalyst for re-

vising the IBC to once again *not* allow windowless dorm rooms, this time to preserve the physical and mental health of the students rather than solely for fire safety.

Another major theme of Heschong's book is the impact of urban design on a building's daylight and views. Building size and orientation are dependent on property lines, setbacks, building heights, block structures, street layouts, and urban open spaces. She discusses the importance of voids in the urban fabric—for example, parks, public squares, bodies of water, or even courtyards within houses or apartment building—that can help to increase opportunities for daylight and views.

Desirable views are often those that look out across a void, such as New York City's iconic line of apartment buildings that face Central Park along Fifth Avenue. In the mid-twentieth century, Copenhagen expanded from its historic central core as a series of long "fingers" that reached westward, alternating between built areas and green space creating more access to daylight and more views of nature. As a result, Copenhagen is considered one of the greenest and most livable cities in the world.

One of the most fascinating sections in the book for me is Heschong's discussion of views evoking a feeling of ownership and belonging, both personally and collectively. When author and illustrator Matteo Pericoli moved from his New York City apartment, he realized he would never see the rather ordinary view from his home office again. He had looked out that window thousands of times as he had worked there for seven years:

I remember looking once again at the view and was struck by a bewildering feeling of loss. "I can't leave this behind!" I told myself ... Without my knowing it, that view had become my most familiar image of the city. It had become mine. And I would never see it again (p. 244).

Pericoli photographed the view before he moved, but the images didn't capture the feeling of the view he remembered. He then created a detailed black and white ink

drawing of the view, incorporating the window frame and all details outside, an effort that provided him a better feeling sense of what it was like looking out "his" window. This experience was inspiration for his *The City Out My Window* and *Windows on the World*, two books based on interviews with writers and artists about the view they see when they look out their office or studio windows. Pericoli then paired their thoughts with black and white drawings of the respondents' windows and views, creating a uniquely personal "view portrait."

In the book's last section, Heschong examines *Meaning*, which relates to how daylight, view, and visual environment can support and enhance more universally transcendent experiences. She discusses the power of iconic visual experiences that can reinforce cultural meanings of a place. Her examples include the directional shaft of light in the Pantheon; the reflected, red-tinged light inside the tunnel of torii gates at the Fushimi Inari Taisha shrine in Kyoto; and the vertical stained-glass windows in the Saint Chapelle chapel.

I immediately thought of the placement of structures in relation to the angle of the sun on important dates like the equinox—for example, Stonehenge, the Egyptian pyramids, Machu Picchu, and Chichen Itza. Heschong draws on Chinese and Japanese gardens as sophisticated examples of creating and manipulating views to fabricate environments of beauty and delight grounded in specific cultural meanings.

Heschong also illustrates how iconic views can become treasured components of landscape, triggering emotional bonds for neighborhoods, cities, and countries—for example, the sight of the Eiffel Tower, Golden Gate bridge, Mt. Fuji, Sydney Opera House, or Taj Mahal. She also mentions less well-known markers of collective ownership and belonging as illustrated, for example, by Seattle's imposing 14,000 foot high glacier-covered Mt. Rainier. Since Seattle is often cloudy and overcast, Mt. Rainier is not always visible but a stunning sight when it does appear, always looking different because of the light, time of day, cloud cover, and season.

Seattleites can be heard asking, "Is the mountain out?" If it is, they make a point of catching its view.

In addition, this iconic view of Mt. Rainier conveys a transcendent quality: "Views often provide a connection to the history of a place, and the promise of continuity with the future, resulting in an expansive sense of time." (p. 349). Looking at "the mountain" reminds me it has been there for thousands of years and, in some form, will be there for thousands more. Millions of people, past, present, and future admire Mt. Rainier just as I do; I feel a sense of connection with the landscape and with the sweep of historical and geologic time.

Throughout the book, Heschong makes persuasive arguments supported by research to demonstrate the fundamental importance of daylight and views as an essential aspect of healthy human habitats. She strongly advocates for the inclusion of daylight and view as an essential ingredient of daily life, as it affects our physiology, health, creativity, productivity, and sense of community and place.

She concludes by contending that improving daylighting and views in buildings is a multi-disciplinary endeavor that relies on coordination between many professions including research scientists, design professionals, building code officials, lawmakers, academics, employees, and residents. She lists practical ways to increase knowledge and implement better daylight and view solutions for buildings and environments. These possibilities include:

- Conducting coordinated research studies across disciplines for increased understanding;
- Mandating access to daylight and views in building codes;
- Rehabilitating older buildings, especially those built before air-conditioning, so they respond better to daylighting and views;
- Implementing a LEED-type awards program for excellence in daylighting and views;
- Teaching the importance of daylighting and views in design curricula;

- Coordinating with urban planners and zoning code officials to maximize urban voids and green spaces, ensuring that lot and building orientations are advantageous for good daylight and views;
- Ensuring that users can control light and glare in their work and living environments.

These strategies are multi-faceted and involve multiple disciplines, which may be one reason that daylighting and views have

not received the attention and publicity they deserve. *Visual Delight in Architecture* is a brilliant first step in teaching others how to shape worlds where every person can work, live, and heal in a healthier, more humane built environment.

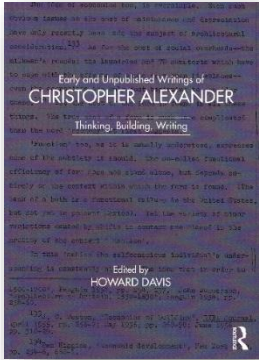
Susan Ingham, AIA, is a practicing architect in Seattle, Washington. Her firm, KASA Architecture, was founded in 2004 and specializes in residential design. While an architecture student at Berkeley, she

studied in the Building Process Area of Emphasis, directed by architects Christopher Alexander and Hajo Neis. Ingham is a founder of “Building Beauty” in Sorrento, Italy, a post-graduate architecture program based on the design principles of Alexander. See the poster for the program on p. 47. © 2024 Susan Ingham.

Book review

Jenny Quillien

Howard Davis, 2023. *Early and Unpublished Writings of Christopher Alexander: Thinking, Building, Writing*. London: Routledge.



Howard Davis has done the Alexander readership a huge favor in assembling this collection of short and mostly unknown writings. I have some misgivings about the title because, although it is totally accurate, it might convey a feeling of discarded, old, or unfinished pieces of secondary importance that we can skip. We already have more reading than we can keep up with, don't we?

Davis's labelling is equally accurate: "unpublished chapter," "submission to a local newsletter," "transcripts of a conversation," "notes from a seminar held in 1967," and so forth. *Sounds important*, we think to ourselves. *Let's dive right in*.

Davis has sensibly organized the writings in three parts:

- The large and small details of everyday life;
- From the center to the universe;
- Theory into building.

For this review, I take an opposite tack. Since Davis is academically appropriate and softspoken in his editorial commentary, I will be opinionated and extreme. I offer an alternative grouping, different labels, and another sort of commentary.

Radical

About one third of the entries might be labeled radical ideas that went nowhere. They were so anathema to established vested interests and the way things normally get done that these ideas died a swift death. Though perished they may be, they are also full of irrefutable common sense, good thinking, and signposts to sanity. A few examples of the kinds of questions considered:

- If you want to revolutionize the currently bungled way we put roofs over our heads (and leave a lot of people out in the rain) all you need are the arithmetic skills of a 12 year old and a bit of homespun self-interest. Did you really want that financial straight jacket of a 30-year mortgage (and pay for your house three times over) when you don't have to?
- Who do you think is better placed to endow your new house with some real Tender Loving Care, the guy in overalls who builds it or the white shirted CAD guy who visits the site once?
- If you were the urban planner for low-cost housing in a hot steamy climate, would you (a) possibly consider the breezes in how you lay out the buildings; and (b) possibly consider giving people a little outside space to raise a few chickens and fix their old trucks?
- Have you ever seen anything more lethally boring than standard office furniture? It is a straightforward task to have exquisitely bespoke office arrangements that suit you and your available square footage.
- If you wanted to tell the entire software industry to pull up its damn socks, how would you go about it?

Delicious leftovers

About one third of the pieces could be described, metaphorically, as "leftovers." As

readers, we go into a bookstore and leave with a book: a tidy, typically rectangular object, nice and clean, with well-defined edges. The computer download process is a bit different, but we are still delivered a tidy, crisp, finished product.

It is all a bit like the birthday cake parachuted down onto the table as a *Voilà*. The cake arrives divorced from the kitchen bowl with the leftover icing and all those messy cooking pans. As an example, consider Alexander's *A Pattern Language (APL)*, often referred to as "the Bible." We can't change it, add, subtract, or correct. We take it as it was delivered: that's the way books are. But, back in the kitchen, are the leftovers. The finished *APL* left behind alternative thoughts about how to go about pattern work, more fluid, more adaptable, where we could add, subtract, and correct.

Davis has salvaged those thoughts and included a number of other bowls of tasty leftover icing. For example, I boldly suggest that the leftover (i.e., left out) chapter from Alexander's 2012 *Battle for the Life and Beauty of the Earth* has more practical hope than the rest of the delivered book.

Oh! Now I get it!

Again, about a third of the entries. These writings have a particular quality: The topic is single and focused. Simple declarative sentences are presented without flourish. The voice is quiet: there is no persuading going on.

Personally, I read these entries as moments where Alexander had to stop and pick his way through some kind of obstacle in his reasoning. Pen and paper were his thinking tools. He chose practice exercises that are banal and minimal—just enough to clarify the situation to his own satisfaction. When he is done, he is done.

The relevance to the reader is that Alexander never retraces all these *thinking-it-through-steps* when, later on, he writes a

longer and ultimately better-known piece. Access to these smaller background writings can greatly enhance our understanding—for example, a short entry Alexander wrote in 1966 entitled, *From a set of forces to a form*. I select this item because, just before I read it in Howard's book, I had botched two conversations. Perhaps if I had this short essay under my belt, I might have done a better job.

In one, I failed to convincingly explain to a new colleague the significance of *forces* in pattern work. My colleague had listened politely and then given me one of those *OK Whatever* shrugs. In the other botch, a person new to patterns had intuited that patterns were potentially powerful but asked, “*What exactly is the difference between a pattern and a set of instructions?*” His question was well-founded, because often (particularly in the programming community and PLoP conferences) people can't distinguish a pattern from a set of instructions. Let me provide an overview of the 1966 paper and then return to my botched conversations. The argument goes like this:

Question: Given a set of needs, how can we generate a form that meets those needs?

Answer: There are three ways.

Numerical methods: most common but too simple for environmental design.

Analog methods: common but also too simple.

Relational methods: unexplored but promising.

Underlying problem: The concept of need is faulty: unobjective, too narrow, ignores other factors, does not give any indication of a form that will satisfy it.

Possible solution: Try *force* as an invented motive power that summarizes some recurrent, inexorable tendency to seek another state. Applicable to humans, i.e., if we want to read, we turn on the light. Applicable to physical and mechanical realms, i.e., heat flows across a temperature gradient.

Requirements: We look to the exact circumstance under which the force arises. What are the exact conditions that the force seeks?

Forces generate form

In natural systems, this is literal. Example. When wind blows over sand, it forms wave like ripples because of five forces: (1) the windward slope catches more grains and grows; (2) the wind carries grains an approximately constant distance; (3) the wind gathers more grains on the windward slope and, carrying them the same distance, irregularities are repeated one “path length” downwind; (4) as grains land, they push others, causing creep. Small grains are carried beyond the crest, leaving larger grains to accumulate on the crests; (5) on the crests, wind velocity is higher, blowing off small grains and leaving heavy ones.

In complex man-made systems, this process is not literal but metaphoric. For example, people want to escape noisy neighbors. If the house doesn't allow it, they close the bedroom window and make the room stuffy. They turn up their own radio. They become angry. Forces may be impotent and render the system unstable.

New formulation of question: Given a system, how can we assess the forces that act upon it and arise within it? Given a set of forces, how can we generate a form that is stable with respect to them?

Review of numerical methods

Each force can be represented by a one-dimensional numerical variable. One seeks minimization (or maximization); the others are held constant and called constraints. Equations of inequalities relate the values of the different variables to the configuration of the system and to one another. There is an algorithm that defines the configuration in which the chosen force reaches its minimum (or maximum) value under the constraints provided by the others. For example, the Mitchell theorem can be used to minimize the weight of a structure but does not take into account transportation choices or maintenance needs. Numeric methods to minimize movement in a hospital layout ignore conditions that speed up a cure.

Most human forces cannot be optimized with a single one-dimensional variable.

Review of analog methods

Forces of a second-system model the forces of the first system. Example.

Weights and strings locate an elevator on an office floor. Again, too limited. For example, lighting is ignored.

Common to all methods: All methods must obtain form from the interaction of forces. They must establish a common ground where the forces can interact. In numerical methods, all forces are expressed as numerical variables and the number system provides the common ground. In analog methods all tendencies are expressed as active forces, and the physical analog is the arena of interaction.

New formulation of question

Given a set of forces *with no restriction on their variety*, how can we generate a stable form with respect to all of those forces?

Relational method

Determine as abstractly as possible, the physical relations that each tendency is seeking. Then combine by fusion these individual abstract relational implications to generate a form.

For example, Alexander works through the case of placing a highway in Massachusetts. He reviews 26 forces, such as, for instance, the reduction of earthwork costs that will provide a flat terrain. Alexander then proceeds with a fusion through superimposing maps from each force and its sought form.

Turning to a second example, Alexander considers forces within a family.

- Force 1. Each person has hobbies and wants a place where things can be left out to be readily accessible.
- Force 2. Mom wants the communal areas to be kept tidy for visitors.
- Force 3. Family members want to be together.

Fusion suggests a form of “sitting room with alcoves.”

Returning now to my two ineffectual conversations. Had I been armed with this 1966 essay; I could have better explained *forces* in the first conversation. I could have explained why Alexander had found the prevailing vocabulary (constraints, needs, numeric and analog reasoning) to be inadequate tooling, and therefore why he takes the concept of a *force* and forges it to his needs of versatility and relatability. I could have gone on to explain how these

burgeoning thoughts about forces and relationships would grow into investigations of pattern languages, complexity, generated structures, unfolding, and beauty.

With the second conversation, a useful moment could have been spent thinking about instructions versus a set of forces, each of which is whispering to us the form that will satisfy it. A sand dune doesn't come about because of instructions. It comes about as a resolution of forces playing out their destiny.

With human affairs, things may be more metaphorical but essentially are the same. We gravitate to ROOMS WITH LIGHT ON TWO SIDES because it is in our nature to want to see clearly and not fatigue our eyes with the glare of one directional light. We hang out in and create for ourselves FARMHOUSE KITCHENS because Mom wants to prepare dinner, the kids have homework and do better with a table for schoolbooks, cookies and milk, and a pinch of supervision. Phideau, the dog, wants to be where everybody else is, and Aunt Nelly doesn't mind peeling the potatoes if gossip can be shared.

The forces beckon us toward a kitchen form that embodies the desired affordances, i.e., those conditions that the forces are seeking. Patterns, unlike instructions, are about understanding forces that generate form to increase the density of happy relationships.

I'd like to thank Howard Davis for his generosity of time and spirit in assembling this compilation. It is a great resource for the community.

An anthropologist by training, Jenny Quillien worked for six years with Christopher Alexander on the manuscript of his The Nature of Order. See her essay, p.37, on the anthropo-geography of geographer Ellen Churchill Semple. jennyquillien94@gmail.com. © 2024 Jenny Quillien.

Barbershop Politics




It is easier to strike up a political talk in a place like a laundromat or a barbershop, than it is, coming as a stranger, to a person's home.

When a community center takes on the task of organizing around some issue, there is the problem of reaching everyone in the neighborhood. It is impossible to reach many people with a door-to-door residential campaign. Often people don't want to be bothered in their home: either they are busy doing something else, or they are just relaxing, and don't really want to talk politics.

Where can organizers engage people, outside of the home, where they will be relatively open and receptive?

We suggest that the places where

discussion can most naturally arise are the following:

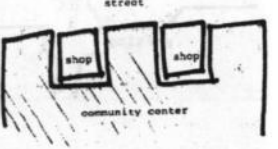
1. Barbershops.
2. Laundromats and lunch counters.
3. Small, street-oriented businesses, like news racks, cigar stores, record shops, small grocery stores.
4. Hangouts around pool halls and bars.
5. Places where people wait to get unemployment checks, food stamps, and so on.

(See for example, M. Kaplan, *Leisure in America*, J. Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1960, p. 107.)

Certainly community organizers will need to spend a lot of time in places like these. But also it will help if the center, itself, is near these places. The closer the connection between talking and the potential for action, the better. Talking politics in a barbershop suddenly becomes real when next door there is a facility for turning your two cents into some action. (Imagine open mimeo machines, a community wall, hot lines to the mayor and governor, all around a grocery store and a bar.)

(continued over)

Therefore: Weave at least one, preferably several, of the kinds of activities named into the public face of the community center.

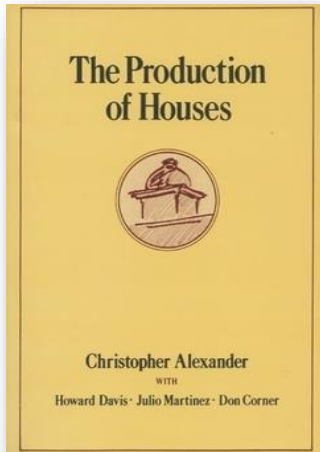


In his edited collection of Alexander's unpublished and early writings, Davis includes several early patterns not found in the published *Pattern Language*. Besides "Barbershop politics" (a portion above), other patterns that Davis reproduces are "Paths interrupt roads," "All services off arena," "Corridors that live," and "Buildings surround open spaces."

Book Review

David Seamon

Christopher Alexander, with Howard Davis, Julio Martinez, and Donald Corner, 1985. *The Production of Houses*. NY: Oxford University Press.



local university to be architect/builders who helped families plan and build their dwellings.

Over time, there are bureaucratic and governmental problems. Ultimately, only five of the 30 houses are finished. These houses look like a connected set of thin, vaulted breadboxes wrapped around a central outdoor courtyard turned away from the street [drawing below].

Though the complete project was not finished, the building process described in *Production* provides a significant model for practically achieving self-help housing. The project points to one potential way whereby, through hands-on design and construction, people develop skills and self-confidence:

It is axiomatic for us that the people who build the houses must be active, mentally and spiritually, while they are building,

so that of course they must have the power to make design decisions while they are building and must have an active relation to the conception of the building, not a passive one (p. 74).

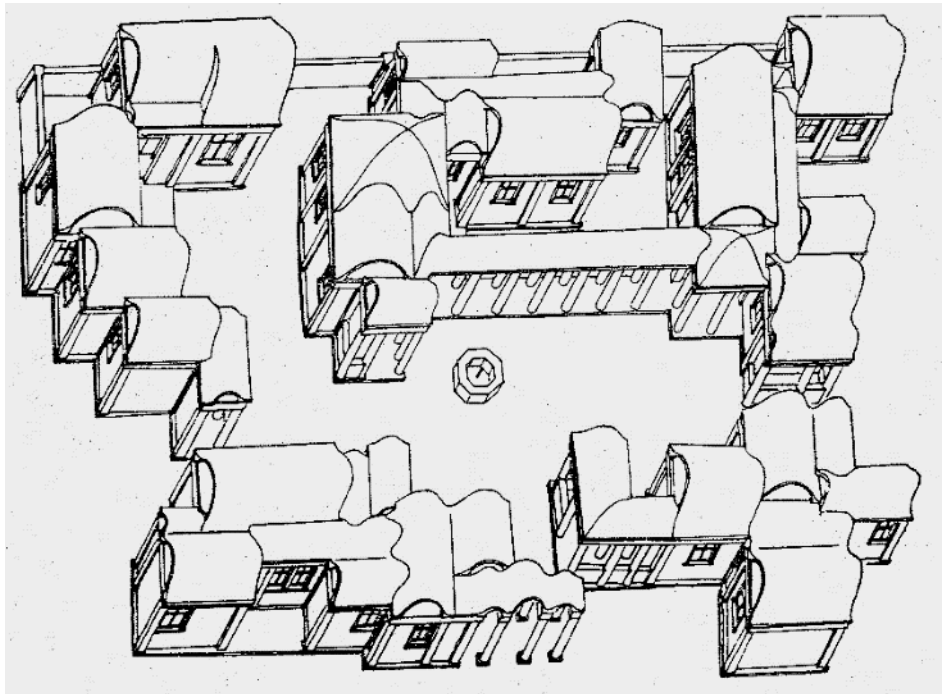
Alexander contends that the building process must be made more alive and humane so that people will become more active and reach higher parts of themselves through envisioning, designing, and building. The result might be not only a more pleasant architectural environment but people who are more confident and self-actualized:

We therefore propose to replace the mechanical building operation of present systems of production with a more human operation in which the joy of building becomes paramount, in which the builders have a direct human relation to

In all his work, architect Christopher Alexander (1936–2022) argued that modern architectural design has been severed from everyday life and genuine human creativity. The needs are, first, a conceptual means for thinking about environmental and place concerns in a holistic way; second, a practical method by which thinking and designing can be integrated with building.

Production of Houses is one of the best examples of Alexander's remarkable efforts to create a more humane built environment. His focus is low-income housing in Mexicali, Mexico. The aim is to build inexpensive but comfortable homes that families design and construct themselves.

With support from regional and local authorities, Alexander contracted to build homes for 30 families. He and his design team hired architectural students from the



the work itself, to the house, to the place of the houses, and to the people that the houses are for, and in which the families themselves may enter in, as much or as little as they want to, in the process, so that the building process as a whole becomes a record of achievement, a human struggle to be remembered, a memory, a moment of life, which will remain in the houses, once occupied, a process which will continue, in the years that follow, in the slow improvement, growth, and maintenance of the same houses—and in which, above all, the houses take their place in the community as part of a living process, a source of life, which spreads life into the life of the society (p. 298).

The largest portion of *Production* describes the process of building the five Mexicali houses; this process is marked by seven aspects, each described in its own chapter:

- The architect-builder;
- The builder yard;
- The collective design of common land;
- The layout of individual houses;
- Step-by-step construction;
- Cost control;
- The human rhythm of the process.

All these aspects of the building process are masterfully detailed in the book. The first aspect of the process is the *architect-builder*, who oversees the building operation. Alexander points out that, in modern housing-production systems, no one person is responsible; rather there are a series of officials, architects, engineers, contractors, and so forth who have no thorough sense of the needs of people and site.

In contrast, Alexander calls for a new kind of “master builder” who has complete charge of no more than a few dozen houses at a time and therefore can deal directly with families’ design wishes and construction problems. In the Mexicali project, these master-builders were Alexander, associates, and the student-architects, who worked side by side with the

families to help them solve any design or construction problems. The result, claims Alexander, is that the house is no longer a manufactured object but

a thing of love, which is nurtured, made, grown, and personal The building is shaped in a human way where its shaping is a human act, related directly to the familiarity and to the men and women who actually build it All this requires that houses be treated as unique, separate things, each one built according to its own special nature; and this requires in turn that the architect have an amount of time available which is inconceivable in today’s mass housing projects (p. 67, p. 70).

The physical heart of this engaged building process is a system of decentralized *building yards*, one or more every few blocks and each responsible for buildings in the local neighborhood. Unlike today, where construction is normally carried out by large, remote corporate firms, such building yards would return construction control to the locality and give people a more active interest in their community.

For Mexicali, the builder’s yard was the first structure constructed by Alexander and his team of architects. It became the seedbed of manufacturing building blocks and for storage, a place to instruct the families in construction, and to experiment with untried building technologies.

Without this yard, Alexander claims, the project would have quickly collapsed because it would have been without a center: “The yard was the physical and spiritual starting point for the whole process, and it remains so throughout the process of production” (p. 112).

Once the building yard was complete, Alexander’s next step was to establish contact with interested families (achieved through a local credit union) and lay out *the collective design of common land*, typically done by some impersonal governmental process. Instead, Alexander sought to have families lay out their own neighborhood via talking together, reaching agreements, and thereby working out

a real-world arrangement best for all involved.

In Mexicali, the families met at the site early one morning and used wooden stakes to determine lot arrangements and shared common space. Although there were difficulties—e.g., some families wanted the same plot location—an agreement was eventually made with the five houses arranged as a “cluster”—i.e., a group of homes sharing common land under their control. Alexander points out that the effort that goes into making a house cluster is *human* effort: “It lies in the *human* process by which a group of people come to know each other, work together, trust each other, and together make their world” (p. 127).

Next, each family participates in *the layout of individual homes*, the aim of which is to help each family design their house in such a way that it “becomes a genuine life base, a place for the heart, a place in which the family, as a unique being in society, may be anchored and nourished” (p. 165).

To envision the houses, Alexander’s team worked closely with each family, using a housing pattern language that the team had written before design and building began. The families were asked to study this pattern language, which incorporated 21 patterns such as “northeastern outdoor space,” “positive garden space,” “long, thin house,” “main entrance,” “half-hidden garden,” “front porch,” “bed alcoves,” “natural doors and windows,” and so forth (see list, next page).

This pattern language allowed the families to produce the specific house they hoped for, each one essentially a variant of the basic house type described by the 21 patterns. The families worked with these patterns in the order of larger to smaller, and *Production* devotes considerable discussion to the relative success the five families had with each of them.

For example, all the families were successfully able to locate effective “main entrances,” but none took advantage of “couple’s realm”—a pattern that called for a private part of the house creating a separate domain for husband and wife.

Pattern Language for Houses

Northeast outdoor space
Positive outdoor space
Long thin house
Main entrance
Half-hidden garden
Front porch
Intimacy gradient
Common areas at the heart
Farmhouse kitchen
Couple's realm
Children's realm
Back porch
Sequence of sitting spaces
Bed alcoves
Bathing room
The shape of indoor space
Light on two sides of every room
Closets between rooms
Structure follows social spaces
Columns at the corners
Natural doors and windows

Turning to *step-by-step construction*, one notes Alexander's development of a system of building operations to be performed one after another. For the Mexicali houses, there are 23 procedures, which include: (1) lay out stakes; (2) excavate and neutralize soil; (3) place corner stones; (4) place wall foundations; (5) prepare building slab; and so forth. These operations are applied to match the family's design for their house. When carried out correctly, these 23 operations produce a structurally sound building without the need for construction drawings.

Again, Alexander claims that this self-help method of building is much more rewarding personally and communally than conventional construction methods that rely more on standardized building components assembled in the same mechanical way time after time. Alexander argues that this method of construction is creative, since it "produces things which were not known before they were done The building grows slowly, step by step, the way a living organism does—with no contortions having to be made along the way" (p. 226, p. 229).

The sixth aspect of the Mexicali experiment is *cost control*, which involves the matter of how houses quite different in design can be constructed at reasonable cost. Alexander's method of cost control

is based on his procedure of step-by-step construction whereby costs can be geared to each of these operations.

The last aspect of the building process is *human rhythm*, and here, again, Alexander points out how building can become a creative act in which people grow and discover new parts of themselves. This rhythm is described in terms of five aspects probably important to any group effort of creation: first, that people work together a definite hour every day; second, that each family contribute at least some physical labor; third, that something definite be completed each day; fourth, that people help each other with the more arduous operations; fifth, that there is a celebration at the end of every operation.

The effectiveness of this way of working is captured poignantly in Alexander's description of the celebration following completing of the houses' foundations:

Last night, at the fiesta which the five families had to celebrate the completion of the foundation, Jose Tapia came up to me and told me in words of almost inexplicable warmth and fervor that this was the most wonderful process he had ever experienced; that he had only the desire to work more; that he wanted to help the other families complete their houses; that when the group of five houses was finished, he wanted to help other families have the same experience; that it was an honor and a wonderful thing for him to be part of this process; and that he wanted to thank me from the bottom of his heart, over and over again—and that words could not adequately express his feelings (p. 310).

Ultimately, Alexander's aim to build 30 houses fails, though the five house are completed and occupied by the end of 1976. In a 1984 article in *Places*, Alexander and colleagues describe a visit back to the five families seven years later. Their report concludes that, overall, the families were happy with their houses and looked back on the building experience as an important time in their lives.

On the other hand, the sense of community that Alexander hoped would be facilitated by sharing the common space joining the five houses spatially did not happen. The families had built fences around their lots and withdrew from neighborly interaction. As one of the families explained,

It didn't work well because the families were not well chosen. There was a problem when company came over because of the other families. One particular family took over the communal space and there was no privacy. So we didn't usually use the porch All the families ended up closing themselves off (p. 90).

Alexander's Mexicali experiment was only partially successful. The failure to create a sense of neighborhood and community through shared labor and common space was particularly disappointing. Yet *Production* can be seen as a remarkable achievement, particularly in its success for implementing a simple, stepwise process whereby laypeople could envision and design their own dwellings.

Production offers a practical, reproducible pathway for home building that deepens people's sense of themselves and makes them feel more alive as persons. The Mexicali project is a bright beacon for others attempting self-help housing.

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Davis, Howard, 1999/2006. *The Culture of Building*. NY: Oxford Univ. Press.

David Seamon is EAP editor. An earlier version of this review was published in Impressions, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1986), pp. 20–23. There follows co-author of Production Howard Davis's report on a recent event celebrating the Mexicali experiment—see next page. His account indicates that Production continues to be studied today as an important model for self-help residential design and construction.

Notes on a Visit to “El Sitio” in Mexicali, Mexico

May 18–20, 2023

Howard Davis

Davis is a Professor of Architecture at the University of Oregon. He is author of The Culture of Building (1999); Living Over the Store: Architecture and Local Urban Life (2012); and Working Cities: Architecture, Place and Production (2020). In this EAP, we review his just-published Early and Unpublished Writings of Christopher Alexander (2023)—see p. 17. Davis worked with Alexander for several years and co-authored with Alexander, Julio Martinez, and Donald Corner, The Production of Houses (1985), which tells the story of the five owner-built houses that are the focus of the event described below. For a review of the book, see p. 20. hdavis@uoregon.edu. Text and photographs © 2024 Howard Davis. Captions for photographs are on p. 28.

I was invited by architect Andrea Torreblanco to participate in a three-day event in Mexicali organized by INSITE, a local arts organization (<https://insiteart.org/>).

The event was on the site of the project that I worked on as part of a group led by Chris Alexander. The event focused on that project. Many of the INSITE members are from the region that straddles the Mexico-California border, including the cities of Mexicali, Ensenada, Tijuana, and San Diego. INSITE is composed of artists, architects, curators, writers, and others interested in connecting art with the landscape and places of this region now bisected by the border wall. (That odious wall is abundantly present as one gets near the physical border between Mexicali and Calexico.)

After receiving the invitation, I accepted immediately, seeing the event as an opportunity to revisit the place and project that had such a big impact on my early career. I flew to San Diego on Wednesday, May 17, and was met at the airport by Michael Krichman, the U.S. Executive Director of INSITE. We drove across the desert, on the American side of the border, to Calexico where we crossed into Mexicali.

“El Sitio,” as the site of the project is generally known, has an important, almost mythic, status among the leadership of INSITE and the architecture school at the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California (UABC). According to the chair of the UABC architecture school (which now has 1300 students not only from Mexicali, but



also from Tijuana, Guadalajara, Monterrey, and other places in Mexico including Mexico City), students know about the project, visit it in their first year, and remain interested in it. (Not all of them, but many, according to the chair of the school, Alejandro Peimbert.)

Pastizal Zamudio, an artist, spent the first ten years of his life living in the experimental buildings, beginning in 1991. His father, an architect, was invited to teach at the UABC architecture school, and was offered the experimental building complex as a house for his family, in return for taking care of the buildings.

In 2002, his family moved out on request of the school of architecture, which entered into a new arrangement that turned the complex into a local health center. Now in his early 30s, Pastizal did not return to *El Sitio* until about a year ago, when he began work on repaving the courtyard (the complex’s inner courtyard that has the bedrooms around it). He pulled up the concrete or concrete tiles that had been put

there (not the brick in the arcade that is still there, but the center of the courtyard itself), and made stone-like tiles that are individually shaped and colored. Pastizal is a very gentle, sweet person, spiritually connected to the natural world. He explained how the stone tiles come out of that spirituality. After he left home, he spent time in California, (and still spends time there every year). He read about Chris and studied his work. Somehow, Pastizal’s personal history helped spark this three-day event.

The other central person in my visit, beyond the wonderful leadership of Andrea



Torreblanca, INSITE's Director of Curatorial Projects, was Felipe Orensanz. He is a Mexico City architect assembling a book on the *El Sitio* project that Don Corner and I both contributed to, along with Peter Bosselmann and Dorit Fromm. I'm not sure whether Felipe was affiliated with INSITE before this event was planned, but he attended and was instrumental in connecting INSITE with the *El Sitio* project.

Other invited participants included a well-respected architect from Mexico City, Alejandro D'Acosta; an architect from Tijuana, Rodolfo Argote; A.J. Kim, a planner; Georgina Cebey, an art historian; Teddy Cruz, from Tijuana and San Ysidro, who I was very glad to meet again after he visited our architecture department at the University of Oregon some 15 years ago.

Event attendees participated in a series of well-organized presentations and public conversations, each of which attracted between one and two hundred people. The program began at 5 pm, following a day of tours of Mexicali in the morning, lunch together (once tacos at the house of art collectors; once at a Japanese restaurant that had an art gallery upstairs, with some wonderful contemporary art relating to the region around Mexicali; and once at a restaurant with Mexican food in a historic movie theatre), and a siesta in the afternoon. We traveled around Mexicali by bus; our main guide was the architecture chair Alejandro Peimbert, who knows the history of the city.

The other person at the event with a direct connection with Chris was Michael Mehaffy, who participated in a public conversation on the second evening, and showed two videos about Chris, including a series of interviews and Ruth Landry's 1991 film, "Places for the Soul." Michael discussed larger philosophical issues related to Chris's work. Mehaffy's "highlights" film of the Mexicali event is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KiBtF-4TWE>.

The Experimental Buildings

The project's experimental buildings still stand, intact and in relatively good shape after almost a half century. The original windows and doors have been replaced, at

least once, and some kind of foam insulation has been sprayed on the roofs. There have been only a few changes to floor plans. The loggia now has walls on both sides and has been divided into

two rooms—a larger room used as a community center for elderly people, and a smaller room used as an office.

Across the courtyard, the rooms are still there, with one tiny change—the room at the end of the common room, closest to the bedrooms, is now accessed only from the outside rather than also from the common room itself. But everything else in project plan is exactly as it was when built. It seems as if the underside of the vaults has been changed in some cases, with the wood lath removed and replaced by different wood of the same dimensions but in a square rather than diagonal/diamond pattern.

Currently, the buildings are being used by a local health center, sponsored by the Faculty of Nursing at UABC. Julio Martinez's room is now a patient examination space with scales, examining table, storage cabinets, and so forth. Chris's room seems to be a place for children, with colorful painting on the wall. I'm not sure about the others.

When Pastizal lived there with his family, his parents' bedroom was Julio Martinez's room; Pastizal lived in Chris's room; and his two sisters shared Don's room. The family used the bigger common rooms for kitchen and living rooms, with pets living in the courtyard. Pastizal has very happy memories of living in the house as does his mother, who I also met. She told me that she thought the house was like paradise. Everyone liked the roof vaults.



After so many years, I was surprised and pleased that the buildings were so familiar to me. (It did not hurt that I lecture about the project and show slides of it almost every year.) There were some tiny things that I did not remember—the exact position of some of the doors and windows, for example; or the fact that we had put a guest room between Chris's room and the office; or the exact layout of the common rooms. But these were small lapses of memory, particularly after 41 years (I think I last visited in 1982). When I first walked in on Thursday afternoon, the overall feeling was as if I had been there yesterday.

One of the best things about the event was that the place was alive—with people, energy, creativity. The INSITE people set up a terrific venue for the nightly events of the three-day program. At the center of the gathering space was a long wooden table, surrounded by wooden bleacher seating, and yellow fabric overhead, held up with thin ropes and pulleys on a metal frame, to help shade the proceedings. This gathering space was to the east of the experimental buildings; it seems as if the land retained by the university after our team left the



project included about 30 or 40 feet of space to the east of the buildings.

The main courtyard of the project, with the loggia on one side and the staircase/common rooms on the other, was also covered with a fabric shade. The whole place, ordinarily a neighborhood health center that usually must be rather quiet, took on a kinetic energy that extended the life of the courtyard to the boundary between the site and the houses to the east.

Indeed, this energy went beyond that boundary, as I experienced it. I was introduced to a man who lived in a house just to the east of the site, right across the metal fence. He is an artist, who works with found, used materials, and he invited me to come to see his work at his house. We were ready to leave, so I declined his invitation. He disappeared, but then turned up again about ten minutes later, and asked me to come over to the fence. He had placed one of his objects there so that I could see it. It consisted of a wooden chair without its back, with the body of a guitar in place of the seat, the neck of the guitar instead of the chair back, and a light bulb-and-lampshade at the top of the guitar neck. He said that this three-dimensional collage



would sell for two hundred dollars. He told me that in a neighboring *colonia* there are houses with roof vaults like the ones we did at *El Sitio*. I asked him if he could photograph them with his cell phone and send them to me. He said he would, but I have not yet seen the pictures.

My present, positive feelings about the experimental buildings have to do with the fact that they indeed have energy, having found different uses over several decades. The place was, first of all, our experiment; then, for me, a home for a couple of months; then a field station for the architecture school; then, about ten years after we left, the home of Pastizal and his family; then a health center, which it remains presently; then and now an experimental site for Pastizal; now also a venue for INSITE to experiment with various physical changes and improvements.

Through these different uses, there have been small changes to the buildings, but these modifications happened as the buildings remained more or less the same, “true” to their initial design and intention.

The Houses

The five houses were also all there, though there had been many more changes to them than to the experimental buildings. Makaria Reyes’s original house was not recognizable from the outside, but I was told by one of her neighbors that her original vaulted house was still present behind and below all the additions that had been made to the house. This was the only house that had a second story added. In the other four

houses, the original walls and roof vaults were visible from the outside, along with various additions that had been made.

Members of three of the five original families are still there: in Emma Cosio’s house, two of her sons; in Julio Rodriguez’s house, his daughter and widow; and in Makaria Reyes’s house, members of her family (I don’t know which ones). The families of Lilia Duran and José Tapia are no longer there, but their houses are. With the help of Pastizal, I visited the Cosio house (twice) and the Rodriguez house.

Pastizal and I saw the Cosio house on two successive days. On the first day, we met one of Emma’s sons, who said he was four years old when the house was built. During that visit, we did not go into the house, but talked in the space just outside the front door at the edge of what was originally the common space shared by the five families. Large portions of what had been the private courtyard and the shared common space (but now seemingly belonging to the Cosio house) were covered, and much of that whole area was in shade.

Emma’s son gave us some information about the neighbors, and I asked him if the neighbors got along. He said yes, very much so, and that they played cards every week. On the second day, we met a different son, who invited us into the house. There seemed to have been some interior changes, but nothing major; the original plan and structure were still there.

The most heartening experience was in the Rodriguez house, which we visited last, on the Saturday, in the early evening just before Teddy Cruz’s talk. Julio’s daughter answered Pastizal’s knocking and cheerfully invited us into the house. She introduced us to her mother, Julio’s widow, who seemed quite frail and somewhat bewildered. She said little during the visit that lasted about a half hour.

The daughter was very open; one of the first things that she was proud to show us was a wall covered with family photographs, including one of Julio as a young man. I told them how much Julio was liked, about his cheerfulness during the



project, and how he seemed to be the glue that held the group of families together.

The house was in beautiful shape. The family had turned the courtyard facing the street into a living room with a concrete-slab roof, leaving the house with no outdoor space except for two narrow strips on the inside of the site used for service, storage, and drying clothes. There was a modern bathroom and tiled floors all over (I did not see any evidence of the original red-oxide-dyed concrete floors anywhere on either side of the street) and a relatively new kitchen. Everything was spic and span, and clearly the house was well taken care of and a source of family pride. It seemed as if Julio's positive and cheerful spirit was still present.

After our design team completed the project, we felt that the satisfaction people had with their houses was the most successful outcome, so talking to the families in the houses today, along with Pastizal and his mother, was gratifying. The common land had problems; we built five houses rather than the 30 originally planned; and the builder's yard never developed into a continuing institution to help build the city.

But our book, *The Production of Houses*, has inspired many people. And it is arguably the case that the satisfaction of families



in their houses is the most important positive result of any project in housing production.

The Place of Mexicali

During the time we worked on the *El Sitio* project, our everyday connections with the world in Mexicali outside the Colonia Orizaba had to do with those places linked to the project itself and our daily lives: materials-supply houses, the bank (I was in charge of finances and material flows in the project), the architecture school at UABC, places to eat and buy food, the gate at the border between the U.S. and Mexico. We were certainly aware of the landscape around us; of the difference in water supply between the two sides of the border and how that difference affected agriculture; the fact that Mexicali was founded just before the beginning of the twentieth century; the immigration of Chinese people to the city; continuous attention to the state of the weather. Somewhere, I have a picture of a grain elevator in the Imperial Valley with a painted marker on it about 30 feet up the side, saying "SEA LEVEL."

What my recent visit did, thanks to INSITE, was to expand my awareness of Mexicali and the meaning of that place. This awareness was amplified by the impinging presence of the border wall and the destructive impact it has on a regional ecology that includes people and other living things.

For me, the city of Mexicali is no longer only a large, hot, dry city

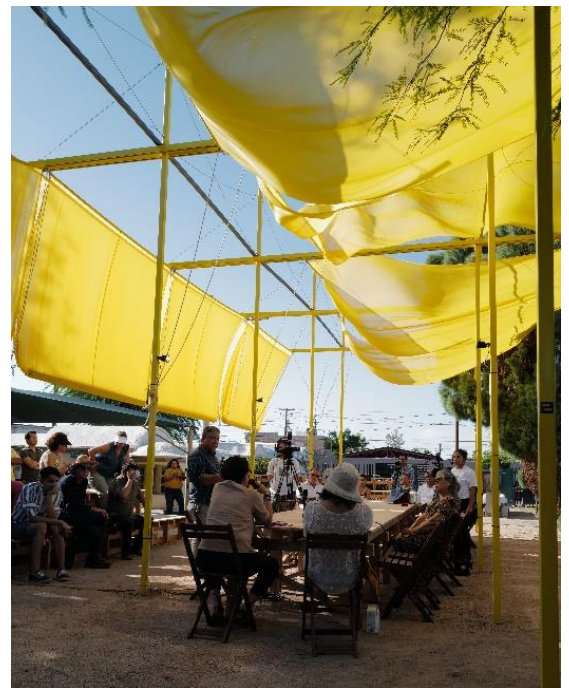
that exists only as a particular, economically-driven entity in the world. Mexicali is a place that is the center of many people's lives, of living things that are in various states of life and stress, of interpretations made by artists and writers, of a place with enormous potential as it continues to grow—potential that is beginning to be discovered and acted on.

Final Thoughts

And finally, after all this time, what are the results of the project and what did we learn from it? I note three lasting results: first, the experimental buildings and houses themselves and how they changed the people in and around them; second, *The Production of Houses* and the work it has inspired; third, how this project changed me, who worked on it for over a year.

1. The houses and the families

As mentioned above, the families were generally pleased with their houses and remain so today, at least those who still live there. During the year that the houses were being built, I never talked to the families about where they were then living, or what the house meant to them. I did not conduct



interviews when the families had moved into the houses. But various reports and the fact that the families stayed in the houses and changed them suggest that they did, individually, have an increased sense of power and agency because of the houses and the fact that they had built them.

The houses are complex as products as well as processes and need to be looked at with generosity toward the idea of the need for serious investigation in housing production—about which this project turned out to be important to many people. The idea of developing a building system that was inexpensive, but at the same time workable by people without construction experience, led to the particular building system and its details.

By many standards, the system used in Mexicali is rough, with details that do not stand up as they should over time. But the ceiling vaults give a sense of increased space to small rooms, the families were able to be precise with the layouts and gained a sense of agency because of their construction experience. We were insistent about not using drawings during design and in not moving corner stakes to make room for oncoming construction. (This last rule led to an overly complicated foundation detail.)

Significantly, Chris's later projects used a combination of direct, full-scale, on-the-site decision making with drawings and models—with arguably better results. For the Mexicali project, we spent many weeks modifying the blockmaking machine so that we could retain at least some clay-soil content in the blocks. This led to rooms that are a little cooler in the extreme heat of Mexicali than rooms made of standard concrete block. But this effort also led to delays in the start of house construction, contributing to the project stopping at five houses instead of achieving the 30 originally planned.

The idea of common land did not work, though I believe the reason was that Emma Cosío's house was “land-locked,” without



an entrance directly from the street. That factor, along with the fact of ten children living in that one house, meant that the outdoor space originally intended for the five families communally was taken over by the one large family alone. I don't see the project as a fair test of the idea of common land and shared outdoor space.

In other words, the question of whether the project was a “success” or “failure” is too simplistic a question and too much focused on interpreting the project as a set of five architectural objects rather than as a dynamic architectural experiment working to facilitate at-homeness.

2. The Production of Houses

Most people who have read *The Production of Houses* have never visited the project. They should not be faulted for that nor faulted for wanting to learn from a project that has both flaws and strengths. Many people have been positively influenced by *Production*, precisely because it is not limited to the project itself but lays out a series of principles and ideas intended to counter what was largely, in the twentieth century, a mind-numbing, top-down, money-driven approach to housing production.

The main ideas described in the book are more important than the details of the project. Those main ideas by themselves, which to us represented the heart of the

matter of housing production, remain subject to debate and reinterpretation.

3. The project's effect on my career

In architecture school at Berkeley, I was already interested in the idea of the building culture; my final paper in Spiro Kostof's seminar on the history of the architectural profession was a proposal for further study of the history of the relationships between architects, contractors, and builders. The Mexicali project began to make these relationships real for me, and I went on to do research on the subject, ultimately writing *The Culture of Building*, which was published 23 years after I left Mexicali. My experience in the Mexicali project was also an important step toward my interests in vernacular architecture and informality in the Global South, leading eventually to a project in India and many travels in which I visited vernacular and traditional environments as well as informal urban settlements. I teach about these subjects at University of Oregon.

There are two more project-specific ideas that I came away with and developed in the years after the Mexicali project. One is the need for respecting the existing building culture in a place—in this case, the existing building culture of Mexicali, even if at the same time one is skeptical of certain aspects of it and the buildings it tends to produce. I believe that if we had

made a point of understanding and respecting the reality of that culture and introduced innovations gradually, the project might have continued and would still be functioning today as a real, alternative process of housing production within this area of Mexicali.

The second project-specific idea is most significant for me personally and involves respecting the reality of people's lives. The family members who qualified for loans to build their house were all government workers, some highly skilled and others less so. But they knew how they wanted to live and what they wanted for their children. And according to Emma Cosio's son, they now get along as neighbors.

The idea that housing production at a large scale needs to respect these human realities is one of many big challenges of our time. That need is always in my mind when I teach and write about housing—and it got there in the first place because of my participation in the Mexicali project.

My sincere thanks to Andrea Torreblanca, Michael Krichman, Carmen Cuenca, Monserrat Sanchez, Felipe Orensanz, Alejandro Peimbert and, not least, Pastizal Zamudio.

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Captions for photographs

- p. 23: Main courtyard of experimental buildings; arched entry on far wall and shade fabric above.
- p. 23: View of houses; Lilia Duran's, right, and Makaria Reyes', left.
- p. 24: Jose Tapia's house in foreground; Makaria Reyes house, now two-story, right.
- p. 24: Entrance to main courtyard of experimental buildings; room built as taco stand at left.
- p. 25: Outdoor area, Emma Cosio's house.
- p. 25: Covered passage from main courtyard to residential courtyard of experimental buildings.
- p. 26: Main room in experimental buildings.

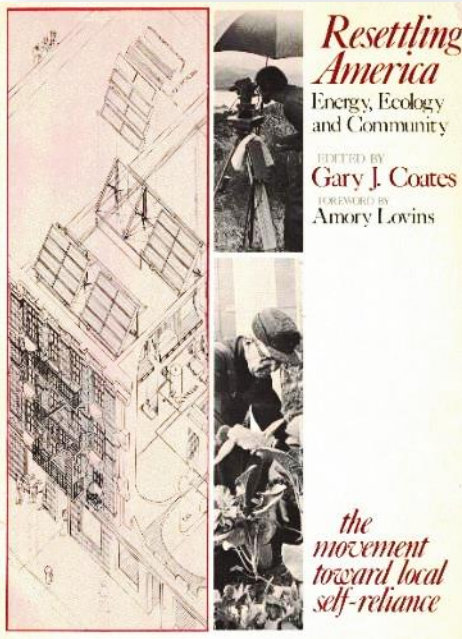
- p. 26: Stair leading to roof of experimental buildings.
- p. 26: Structure built for May 2023 event; note fabric shades.
- p. 27: Attendees watching video of Chris Alexander.

Resettling America: Energy, Ecology, and Community

Preface to the Reprint Edition (2023)

Gary J. Coates

Coates is Professor of Architecture Emeritus in the Department of Architecture at Kansas State University. He is recognized as a leading voice in the movement to create socially, technologically and ecologically sustainable buildings, towns, cities and bioregions. His Resettling America: Energy, Ecology, and Community was first published in 1981 by Brick House Publishing and has just been reprinted in Routledge's "Revival" series. Here, we reprint the new preface Coates wrote for this reprint edition.
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In this transdisciplinary collection first published in 1981, I argued that our fossil fuel-based urban-industrial civilization is fundamentally and structurally flawed. Our entire way of life is based on reductive, materialistic values; an inaccurate understanding of the nature of reality; and institutionalized forms of exploitation of the earth and many of its peoples. This civilizational form is based on the necessity for infinite economic growth on a finite planet (a premise that economist Kenneth Boulding once said

was a belief that could only be held by a “madman or an economist”).

I detailed the “ecology of scarcities” being generated by the routine operation of the existing political economy, including the availability of fresh water; the accelerating depletion of finite sources of energy and minerals; the progressive, irreversible degradation of the earth’s major biological systems, (including a stable and livable climate); and escalating patterns of violence within and among nations. I concluded that we needed to begin the transition to a society in which human needs are met without diminishing the prospects for future generations.

Since this cascade of crises eventually comes home to roost in the places where we live and work, I argued that the great task before us is to create ecologically sustainable and life-enhancing buildings, towns, cities, and biologically and socially diverse bioregions, powered by the same renewable energy flows that sustain all other life on the planet. I therefore called for the resettling of America based on this vision and the principles of equity, social justice, cooperative community, and the recognition of the inherent sacredness of all creation.

Following economist Kenneth Boulding’s dictum that “what exists is possible,” nothing was proposed in the book that was not illustrated by practical examples. Case studies were chosen that: (1) embodied the new paradigm outlined in my own essays and introductions; (2) would remain instructive and inspiring over the many decades that would be necessary to resettle

America as part of a transformation of the entire planetary human ecology. Through their ideas and works, leading authors and activists described how we could:

- de-structure our sprawling cities and suburbs into an interconnected pattern of self-reliant urban districts and livable neighborhoods;
- reconfigure our centralized fossil fuel-based energy grid into a network of decentralized grids powered by varied sources of renewable energy;
- create rural new towns situated within agro-ecological landscapes;
- establish new ways to own land in common and manage living ecosystems within circular, bioregional economies;
- establish new contemplative communities that would allow for the integration of spiritual beliefs and practices and the mindful care of the earth.

Taken as a whole, both in theory and practice, the book demonstrated that it is necessary as well as possible to integrate our architecture, agriculture, and the pattern of human settlements gracefully and sustainably within the energy flows, material cycles, and biological rhythms of the natural world, while creating life-enhancing, place-based human communities.

At the time *Resettling America* was published, I assumed that we were on the brink of making such radical transformations and that this book could help to catalyze a broader movement in that direction. I believed that the envisioned changes offered a way to avoid or mitigate the social, economic, and ecological catastrophes toward which we were headed; and that these

changes offered an historically unique opportunity to create a more humanly-scaled, sustainable society. Since the business-as-usual path seemed so unthinkable, the choice seemed clear.

With hindsight, it is obvious that I completely underestimated our compulsive commitment to the addictive, self-destructive rituals of the consumer society and the enormous power of existing institutions to resist change. As it turned out, we did resettle America but, rather than in the ways called for in this book, we created the most sprawling, inherently unsustainable form of human settlements ever conceived or constructed.

It has become clear that we have, along with other fossil-fuel dependent nations, destabilized the planetary climate system to such an extent that large parts of America and the world will become uninhabitable in this century. In the decades and centuries ahead, rising sea levels, megadroughts and deserts, and extreme weather events will produce millions of climate refugees around the world.

Already we are living through the sixth great era of species extinction, and the

earth's biodiversity continues to plummet. It is difficult not to see that the entire planetary web of life is already unraveling in complex, unforeseen ways. We are living during an unprecedented era of ecological collapse, societal instability, and spiritual malaise, which threatens the continuation of human civilization as well as all the living world as we have known it.

It is within this increasingly urgent and existentially threatening context that *Resettling America* is being rediscovered by a new generation of academics, architects, landscape architects, planners, environmental activists, and concerned citizens, many of whom have urged me to find a way to get the book back in print.

Rather than being a program for averting the crises we face, the book is now understood as a prophetic text, decades ahead of its time and more relevant than ever before. By providing a strategic vision, as well as offering practical means for creating a sustainable society worth sustaining, it is my hope that *Resettling America* will continue to inspire and instruct those brave enough to honestly face the ecology of crises that now surround us, and bold enough to work

cooperatively to create a society that serves the purposes of life and honors the sacred mystery out of which all things arise and disappear.

Belonging, Home, and Place

Critique and the Task of Retrieval

Jeff Malpas

*Malpas is an Australian philosopher and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Tasmania. His books include *Place and Experience* (2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2018); *Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger, Place, Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021); and *In the Brightness of Place: Topological Thinking with and After Heidegger* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2023). This essay is a longer version of a talk presented at the 2023 Annual Symposium for the University of Washington's Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Urban Design and Planning and Ph.D. Program in the Built Environment, on May 19th, 2023. The symposium theme was "Space, Place, and Belonging"; the event was dedicated to the memory of philosopher **Robert Mugerauer**, who died in 2022. Jeff.Malpas@utas.edu.au. © 2024 Jeff Malpas.*

Of Bob Mugerauer's many important contributions, the one that has engaged me most closely over recent years is his weighty 2008 volume, *Heidegger and Homecoming*, one of several works in which Bob explored aspects of Heidegger's thinking [1]. This volume takes up ideas of belonging and home that are central to the later Heidegger and that are, in my terms, essentially *topological* in character. As such, they are tied to notions of place and being-in-place that are significant well beyond Heidegger alone. *Heidegger and Homecoming* is thus a major contribution both to Heidegger scholarship and to the larger project of what I call *philosophical topology*.

The ideas of belonging, home, and place or being-in-place that are at the center of Bob's volume run through the entirety of his work just as they run through mine. Those ideas have, in one form or another, been the focus for much critical attention over the last 50 years or more from many other thinkers.

That attention has frequently been so critical, however, that it now seems to be assumed, in some quarters, that these ideas are irretrievably problematic such that they cannot have any real role in contemporary discourse. The sort of criticism at issue here is sometimes more directed at one of these notions than another—at belonging or home, for instance, rather than place as such—but since all these ideas are so closely interconnected, and since both belonging and home are indeed tied to the

idea of place and being-in-place, any criticism of one invariably tends to involve all three, even if only implicitly.

Thus, when geographer John Wylie, for example, insists that "a landscape cannot be a homeland," he is not only refusing a certain way of understanding landscape, but his critique also encompasses the understanding of place [2].

Here, my aim is to work through some of the arguments and claims that arise and to set out reasons why it seems to me that, far from abandoning these ideas, the task of their rethinking and retrieval remains an absolute necessity—a necessity even for the possibility of any critical engagement with them. Indeed, my claim is that these notions have never really been abandoned at all and that the commonplace language of abandonment has led to their uncritical acceptance in other forms.

My discussion has three parts: first, a brief survey of the main lines of argument typically directed at the notions at issue here; second, an exploration of the reasons why ideas of belonging, home, and place remain necessary; third, a discussion of the task of the retrieval of the ideas at issue.

Much of the critique of belonging and home comes to devolve, whether implicitly or explicitly, onto the critique of place—belonging and home typically being understood as notions that presuppose a certain relation to place as the basis for identity. Put simply, when *who* we are is taken to be determined by *where* we are, to where we belong, then such place *attachment* or place *relatedness* is taken to give rise to various problematic consequences.

There are three main lines of critique evident in the literature concerning attachment or relatedness at issue here. The first and foremost in many accounts is the idea that place is tied to *exclusion*: If identity is tied to place, then the affirmation and preservation of identity requires exclusion of others from that place. The second is the idea that place is tied to a problematic form of *determinism*: If identity is tied to place, then this makes identity dependent on that which is bounded, and so already determined, on that which cannot be changed, and to the determination by which one can only submit. For some writers, Emmanuel Levinas being one, this is especially problematic since it makes the human subservient to place. The third is that the connection of identity to place involves an essential *nostalgia*: If identity is tied to place, then this ties identity to a certain mode of temporal orientation, specifically, to an orientation that privileges the past and refuses to engage with the future.

What is centrally at issue throughout the general form of critique evident here, across many different writers, is the character of place as tied to boundary and boundedness whether the boundedness of oneself by place, the boundedness of the other, or the boundedness of the past as against the supposed openness of the future. Such boundedness is understood as essentially exclusionary and restrictive and giving rise to politically regressive and xenophobic forms of thought and action.

The critical engagement with place is thus identical with the critical engagement with boundary.

“Boundary” or “bound” as it appears here is more or less the same as horizon or limit. This meaning is etymologically as well as semantically distinct from the other senses of “bound” associated with ideas of being tied to or being tied by, springing forth, or heading toward.

The idea of boundary is not an additional notion over and above the idea of place but is intimately tied to it, at least so long as we do indeed treat place as a *sui generis* notion with an irreducible content of its own. The ideas of *topos* and *chora* that are Greek precursors to the contemporary idea of place combine two notions—dimensionality and boundedness, so that the former arises on the basis of the latter. *The boundary is that which gives room to that which appears within it.*

This idea of place is not only evident in Plato and Aristotle but is also evident in more recent thinkers such as Georg Simmel [3] and, most famously, Martin Heidegger (whose thinking on this matter is partly indebted to Simmel) and whose own thinking of place, especially as it emphasizes the idea of boundedness, is so often the target for many recent critics of place [4].

If we treat place as more or less interchangeable with space, then place need not be understood as tied to boundedness simply because space is not so tied (or, at least, not intrinsically). And it is commonplace for place to be understood in this way in contemporary discourse. Place is thus most often understood in terms of space, which almost always means taking place to be a modification of physical extension. When place is understood, as it often is, as identical with some spatial location or area, the demarcation of which is essentially contingent, then the boundedness of place also becomes contingent, just as place also becomes contingent.

The possibility then arises of an emptied-out notion of place that is no longer seen as problematic, simply because it is no longer a notion that carries any special content of its own and certainly need not

be seen to be tied to boundedness, exclusivity, determinacy, or the past, or, indeed, to belonging or home in any strong sense. Thus, a writer such as Doreen Massey can argue for a “progressive” sense of place although it turns out that the notion of place at issue for her is a sense of place that is little more than the idea of a contingently delimited domain within a spatially extended field [5].

The lines of argument at issue here regarding place as exclusionary, as nostalgic, and as determinate and determining are evident in the work of many different writers and thinkers: perhaps most notably in the work of Levinas, but also Theodore Adorno (both of whom formulate their arguments in direct opposition to Heidegger); in the work of Doreen Massey as well as David Harvey, two of the most prominent figures within geography; in architectural theory, in the work of such thinkers as Hilde Heynen, David Leach, and Mark Wigley; and also being elaborated across other disciplinary domains in ways that draw on a variety of theoretical frames from critical theory to psychoanalysis, feminism to post-modernism, Marxism to liberalism. Such critiques are now so commonplace that in some fields they have become almost taken-for-granted.

There is another line of argument that also appears in the discussion of these notions, especially the idea of place or being-in-place, namely, that such ideas are at odds with the character of the globalized, dynamic, interconnected contemporary world. In other words, the assumption is that these notions are not only fixated on the past in problematic fashion, but that they belong to the past. This is something to which I shall return, since what is at issue here is directly tied up with the convergence between certain key elements in the critique of place and the increasingly spatialized modes of ordering characteristic of the contemporary world and, as I noted earlier, directly connected with contemporary globalized, technological capital.

There is no doubt that the language of home, belonging, and place has frequently been deployed in ways tied up with prob-

lematically exclusionary and even oppressive and violent forms of thought and action. One only needs to look to the rhetoric of many contemporary right-wing politicians, but also to the more generalized rhetoric around Brexit in the UK, to see how ideas of home can enter into reactionary politics. The startling way the language of “homeland” became part of the political vocabulary of governments across much of the English-speaking world after 9/11 also reinforces the sense in which “home” can readily become associated with xenophobic insecurities and repressive forms of governmental control.

Yet the mere fact that the language of home, belonging, and place can indeed function in this way, although it may tell us a great deal about the prevailing political and cultural climate that currently obtains and that has a direct impact on the ways in which language is used, actually tells us very little about the terms or notions that are themselves in play here. And that there may be a disjunction between the way terms and ideas are deployed and what is really at issue in those terms and ideas, is itself part of the very ground for the possibility of critique.

Moreover, a too narrow focus on particular uses of ideas of home, belonging, and place, especially as they occur in a contemporary context, can readily obscure the ubiquitous nature of such ideas. Notions of home and belonging are no more the exclusive preserve of conservatives than notions of freedom or justice are the exclusive preserve of progressives. Such ideas have been drawn upon, and continue to be drawn upon, by groups and individuals from across the political spectrum.

Even in pre-Second World War Germany, often taken to be exemplary of a political milieu in which home, belonging, and place have a central and problematic role, one can find those notions being drawn upon by both conservative and progressive figures over time and even at one and the same time (this is particularly notable, for instance, in the case of Wilhelmine Germany as well as the Germany of the inter-War years). The contemporary situation is little different. Moreover, across this breadth of uses, one can find ex-

amples of these notions being used in relation to both forms of exclusion and inclusion.

The ubiquity of the language of belonging, place, and home is itself something that is worthy of attention, since it reflects how entangled these terms are with everyday language. That they are so is a direct reflection of their centrality. In this respect, belonging, place and home are no different from other key notions, such as justice, truth, and the good, that figure prominently in social and political discourse as well as elsewhere, in ways that spread across the entire political spectrum. It is because notions of home, belonging, and place are so central that they are also so frequently appealed to in a range of political contexts. And that they are central in this way is a direct consequence of the necessarily placed character of life and existence.

This brings me directly to the second part of this discussion—the centrality or even necessity of place and so too of notions of belonging and home. Rather than being notions that we can simply pick up or put down—as if they were simply tools lying around—the notions at issue here arise out of our existing being-in-the-world and are reflective of the character of that being. In other words, they constitute already extant phenomena rather than merely being elements in or artefacts of certain ways of talking or thinking.

Part of what comes into view here is a point about the very nature of philosophical reflection and the way retrieval might be part of such reflection, and this is a point to which I shall return. But for the moment, what I want to do is briefly to explore the way that ideas of place, belonging, and home connect with other key concepts, of which perhaps the most salient is that of the self.

If we treat this term in a purely formal sense and without yet offering any substantive account of what it might be, then the self is that which is referred to, in the first instance, by the first-person pronoun, “I.” As such, it is also, therefore, a certain locus of agency and perception, and ultimately, of deliberation and judgment, that also figures, to varying degrees, in such action, perception, deliberation, and judgment.

No matter how much we claim to be able to “deconstruct” the self, the fact remains that it is necessarily implicated, at the most basic level, in the structure of action and perception. Without a capacity to distinguish self from environmental context, including from other agents, there can be no possibility of directed action or even of any integrated perceptual engagement with things nor of deliberation and judgment. In phenomenological terms, the self is part of the necessary structure of intentionality. Similarly, in terms of empirical cognitive science, the self is a necessary part of the structure that makes cognition possible.

The ideas of home and belonging are both directly connected to the idea of the self. They are terms that relate to the way in which the self is articulated in the world. This is especially the case if one understands the self, not in terms of some underlying “substance,” but rather as a nexus of action and reflection both internally and externally articulated—a complex, dynamic unity of attitudes and dispositions as well as comportments and behaviors. The self is, by its very nature, even when understood purely formally, a mode of differentiated existence. As such, the self is constituted through both its connectedness to the world and to others and by its differentiation from the world and from others.

Home and belonging both refer to this structure of identity, connection, and differentiation. There are as many different forms of home and belonging as there are different modes of articulation of the self. These modes vary according to environmental context, historical background, and social and cultural situatedness. The latter give rise to the contingencies of the self, but that there is a self and that it has a certain structure that is realized in and through those contingencies is not contingent *but necessary*.

As soon as one grasps the idea of the self as extended into the world—to use the language of contemporary 4-E cognition as embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended—then one must recognize the self as necessarily emplaced also (4-E cognition is actually un-derpinned, I would argue, by this fifth E of

emplacement, though it is one that is fundamental to all the others).

This is not a point that applies only to the self but to the mind, consciousness, mental content, even to agency and sentience in general. Moreover, this idea of the emplaced character of the self and of existence that is articulated in contemporary cognitive science as well (and, I might add, in various forms of “externalism” as developed within analytic epistemology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of mind) can be argued to already have been adumbrated in earlier work in ethology, psychology and, especially, phenomenology.

Thus, Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, from 1927, already sets out a form of externalism or “topologism” (if we use this as a term to capture the focus on place and being-in-place) in its idea of Dasein as “being-in-the-world”—which, even in 1927, Heidegger was connecting to the idea that has come into English as “dwelling” (*Wohnen, sich aufhalten*). This idea also has connotations of “home” and of “belonging” (especially through notions of familiarity and habituation), although it is worth noting that, also in 1927, Heidegger’s account of being-in-place does not exclude its potential “uncanniness” and its potential “unhomeliness.”

It is this idea of self and existence as necessarily emplaced that is developed in more detail in Heidegger’s later work and in the work of a series of phenomenologically oriented thinkers over the last century. And the centrality of place here—and of associated notions such as home and belonging, as well as embodiment—can be seen to reflect the inescapable character of existence as always an existence *in the world* but also worked out in terms of specific places and spaces, through specific forms of home and belonging, and at the same time is differentiated from the world.

Existence is this emplacing and belonging, which is also a differentiating.

As it is fundamentally active (a theme that runs through all of these thinkers and approaches including both the phenomenological and the cognitive scientific and analytic), so the character of the being-in-place at issue here is always dynamic and

negotiatory and cannot therefore be understood in terms of any simple deterministic structure.

Moreover, this being-in-place is almost always understood as indeed tied to boundedness, or more generally, to finitude. Indeed, one of the great insights of many of the most important currents of philosophical thinking in the twentieth century, though it has its roots in the eighteenth and nineteenth (including, I would argue, in Kant) is the idea, especially evident in hermeneutic thinking, that it is precisely boundedness, which is also to say, being-in-place, that makes possible cognition, knowledge, existence, rather than being merely restrictive of them. Such finitude is tied to facticity—to the “always already” character of existence—and it is this that underlies the stereotypical criticism of place-oriented thinking as nostalgic or backward-looking.

But the recognition of facticity is just the recognition of the historicity of existence and so of the necessary historicity even of the future, as well as of the character of existence as always something given to one rather than being that which one simply creates or over which one can exercise mastery.

This recognition of facticity also involves an awareness of the inevitable character of existence as permeated by the experience of fragility and loss, and it is this that is the ground for the very real nostalgia, the *melancholia*, that belongs with the experience of being-in-place, of being in the world, of belonging to the world, even of being “at home.”

To be emplaced is to be given over to a world to which one belongs but which does not belong to one, a world to which one is subject but which is not subject to one, a world that always exceeds any experience or articulation of it—ideas that are powerfully evident in indigenous traditions around the world, and also present in modern thought and culture in many different forms, but which seem almost entirely absent from the formations of contemporary political and economic life.

Already, near the beginning of Western thinking, Aristotle reiterates what he takes to be a common claim to the effect that *to be is to be emplaced* and this idea captures

the positive and productive sense of place and being-in-place that emerges so strongly in much of the thinking over the last century.

It is this positive and productive sense that also underpins what is at issue in the fundamental role of notions of home and belonging. That role is one that can be clearly discerned in the analysis of cognition, of action and perception, of mental content, of memory (an especially important topic regarding place that deserves a more extensive discussion of its own), of knowledge, and of the self in general.

In these comments I have not provided a fully worked-out argument for the necessity of place, although I have done so elsewhere [6]. And neither have I even tried to show how the sort of fundamental account of being-in-place, belonging, and home that is at issue here would play out in terms of the more concrete analysis that might be undertaken from the perspective of specific disciplinary inquiries.

Instead, my aim has been limited to showing why it might be that ideas of belonging, home, and place cannot be abandoned, even though those notions may often be misused. I have also pointed to how those ideas can be seen to be grounded in both phenomenology and analytic thought, as well as in the empirical investigations of cognitive science and we might also add, in the topological-oriented thinking evident in many other disciplines including, for instance psychology, sociology, and history.

Similarly, the knowledge of indigenous societies and their experiences in the face of colonialism also draws attention to the intimacy of the relation between identity, life, and existence, and the places in and through which life, existence, and identity are formed and shaped—something articulated in Australian indigenous thinking through the idea of the “Dreaming” as it is often referred to, somewhat misleadingly, in English. Thus, Wylie’s claim that “a landscape cannot be a homeland” is rather more difficult to make in-country to an indigenous audience in Australia (say in the Ananda country of *Uluru* or the Bininj/Mungguy country of *Kakadu*), than

in a university lecture hall in a place like Brussels or London.

Belonging, home, and place name contemporary problems not because these notions retain an illegitimate currency, but rather because of the problematic relation to place that has emerged as a key feature of the contemporary world. The homelessness and displacement that is now such a common feature of societies around the world, and which is evident in refugee camps and border zones, is present on the streets of almost every major city, and is a continuation of colonialism and racism, a result of war and political disruption as well as being one of the products of globalized capital. These phenomena are a problem precisely because they concern a lack of *home* and a disruption in *place*. And this is not merely about a lack of physical *shelter* but more centrally relates to the absence of the conditions that enable the flourishing of life and existence and that enable the sense of identity and of belonging that contributes to a sense of community—even of a pluralistic community.

Rather than the ideas of belonging, home, and place being antagonistic to plurality and difference, they provide their necessary preconditions. Indeed, the idea of a pluralistic community cannot be the idea of a community that effaces home or belonging, but rather one that gives home to a plurality of different homes and forms of belonging. Plurality presupposes difference, but difference is precisely what is articulated through the different modes of being-in-the-world that are worked out only in and through different places, different homes, different identities and belongings.

The problem is not the existence of difference or of the boundedness that is a necessary part of difference and the working out of difference, but rather the refusal of boundedness and the denial of the mutuality that itself belongs to differentiation. Far from being merely exclusionary, place, and so the boundary with it, opens up the possibility of inclusivity, of plurality, of difference, which is always an inclusivity, a plurality, a difference, that appears in and with respect to concrete places, in and with respect to our own place and so our own relatedness to the world.

If the boundary, like place, is productive in the sense I suggested earlier, then that productiveness applies both to what is within and what is without the boundary. The boundary is that which establishes the possibility both of differentiation but also of communication across difference (which is why the border, the bounding path or *limes*, hence the liminal, is such an important place). It is thus that every boundary connects at the same time as it disconnects—a point that is also made by Simmel.

This idea is reflected in the character of places as always entangled with other places, both within the place and without. To be emplaced is not to be merely stuck within a single enclosed space—to use an example Walter Benjamin employs, as if one were enclosed within a hard shell—but rather to be embedded within a complex of places.

Every place opens to other places—just as the boundary of the horizon beckons one toward other places that lie beyond—and every place opens up to other places within it—even the most familiar place is thus capable of revealing new discoveries within it (something made very evident in Bachelard). Far from being determinate and determining, the place and so also the boundary is what opens up to the indeterminate at the very same time as it allows a certain limited determinacy that occurs in the very *placing* of things, here, in *this* place.

It is because of the necessity of place that the retrieval of place—that is, its rethinking and recollection in the face of its forgetting and refusal, is such an important task. Even the attempt to assert the need for the abandonment of place takes place from within its own place and on the basis of an existing orientation to the world and to thinking. All thinking and critique begin somewhere. The question is whether they attend to where they begin and whether they attend to the boundaries that make such critique possible (leaving aside its viability).

One of the problems with much of the recent, contemporary critique of place is its refusal to attend to its own place, which means to attend to its own boundaries and

presuppositions, its own “ground.” Such critique often operates through the repetition of standard toposes and assumptions, like those regarding the character of place as invariably given over to exclusion, to determination, and to the problematically nostalgic, and with little or no regard for the sort of considerations sketched earlier.

One reason for this is tied up with the discursive insularity and internalization of much contemporary critical discourse, with the result that discussion frequently remains within the circles of engagement established by familiar texts and theoretical positions. Critique thus becomes a purely textual practice rather than a genuinely reflective engagement with the issues at stake (which is not to say that the engagement with texts is unimportant, but only that one cannot remain entirely “inside” the text alone). But associated with this is a tendency for that insularity and internalization also to be reflected in the prior assumption of a *ideological* or *polemical* positions, and so the critical engagement with an issue or idea becomes simply expressive of a certain politics rather than showing how, for instance, a certain political response might emerge as a consequence of what is at stake and as appropriate to it.

Directly connected with this is a further tendency to refuse consideration of what might be termed the *ontological* in favor of a focus on the *affective* and *discursive* (including the textual). Suspicion of ontology has a long history in the social sciences, especially, where the ontological, usually identified with the metaphysical, is contrasted with the empirical, the variable, and the contingent.

Sometimes the eschewing of ontology is defended by a sort of Rawlsian argument concerning the plurality of conceptions of the good but, in fact, most contemporary critique, especially inasmuch as it aligns itself with a broadly “progressivist” agenda, is not at all agnostic in this way but holds to very clear conceptions of the good, even if not always made explicit, as these might be played out in the domain of the political (one might argue that this is true, to some extent, even of the Rawlsian position).

Moreover, when it comes to the critique of notions like belonging, place, and home,

there seems little reticence in asserting the problematic ethical and political content that is supposedly intrinsic to these notions—a claim that is itself implicitly ontological in character, a claim about the very character of those notions as such, about their fundamental character, rather than merely concerning particular instances of their deployment. If critical engagement is to be more than mere polemic—if it is to be part of a genuine attempt at thinking—then it must involve reflection both on the phenomena at issue and the framework of the thinking from within which those phenomena are approached.

This is a familiar hermeneutic point: To paraphrase Gadamer, all critique is a form of self-critique, and all critique must take the form of a dialogue in which something is at stake and in which what is at stake must be given space to appear in its own terms. There is an ethical imperative to critique that emerges here that follows from the way critique is embedded in its place (and, in fact, I would argue that ethics itself is only understood properly when it is understood as tied to place).

To attend to what is at stake is also to attend to the character of that phenomenon and so to enter into what is ultimately a form of ontological inquiry ultimately founded in the being of things. And that, of course, is a large part of what I was talking about earlier in relation to place, identity, and self—my focus was on the character of place and the self, on what they *are*, rather than merely what is *said* about them.

The task of retrieval, understood as having this *ontological* character, is not some esoteric practice predicated on a special kind of access to an otherwise hidden “essence,” but is rather a matter of re-thinking what we already think we know in a way that attends to what is actually at issue and to the phenomena that draw our attention in the first place. And such retrieval is especially important when the phenomena in question are indeed as central to life and existence as are belonging, place, and home.

The topological ideas at the crux of my discussion here are central to critical inquiry because they are themselves part of the very structure of

thought as they belong to the structure of being-in-the-world. This is an ontological claim that is eminently defensible and that cannot be dismissed simply by any blanket dismissal of the ontological in general.

But these ideas also have a key role in terms of the attempt to engage critically with our contemporary situation—our contemporary place. This was suggested earlier by my brief comment on the character of homelessness, in its various forms, as a worldwide problem that goes beyond, even while it includes, the problem of physical shelter. But it isn't just the loss of home that makes these notions so significant.

The history of modernity as a worldwide phenomenon is a history that is itself closely tied up with topological and spatial structures and developments. One might even say that modernity has its origins in the separating out of place from space. This process has taken various forms. It appears in the history of ideas, a history well-elaborated in Ed Casey's work, in terms of the development of a notion of physical space that is not dependent on any notion of boundedness but is instead tied to the idea of homogenous, isotropic extensionality or dimensionality and of place as entirely secondary, being merely the idea of a location or area within such an extended domain.

This spatialized way of understanding is tied to the quantitative and the numerical. It is evident in the character of contemporary science as predicated on quantitative and numerical analysis (those disciplines that resist such quantification running the risk of appearing irrelevant or "unscientific"); in the character of modern organizations as subject to purely "managerialist" modes of operation that are themselves centered around quantitative, numerical, and increasingly automated systems; in the transformation of social relations through systems of personalized, electronic communication and exchange, based around the computer and mobile phone, and including media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook; and through the structure of globalized corporate or oligopoly capitalism that is itself intimately entangled with the quantitative and the numerical, with the

managerialist, and the technological, at the same time as it also reinforces and draws together all of these.

If we refer to this spatialized mode of world-formation, in which everything is drawn within the same all-encompassing and ultimately reductive system, as "technology," then we may perhaps recognize it as essentially the same phenomenon that is often at work in the progressivism that we have inherited from the Enlightenment, which seeks to free human being from any sense of being limited by its situation, whether historical, geographical, or ontological.

This escape from place is precisely the escape into the unboundedness of space. But this escape is an escape into the purely quantitative, the numerical, the manageable, the monetizable. The philosophical embodiment of this idea of escape is essentially that given in Cartesianism and its many offshoots, since what characterizes Cartesian thinking is precisely the privileging of space over place. But among many of the contemporary critics of place, one finds a similar privileging of space that also replicates the structures at the heart of contemporary managerialist, technological, globalized capitalism—structures of unbounded connectivity, of what Heidegger refers to as an unbounded en-framing or positioning.

This is true, ironically, even of those writers, like David Harvey and, to some extent, Doreen Massey, for whom the critique of capitalism has been so central. It is the rejection of any *sui generis* idea of place that facilitates the critique of place that is evident in the work of such thinkers. But that rejection is also fundamental to the possibility of modernity as it is manifest in both intellectual terms and in terms of the socio-economic and political.

The underlying problem with the spatialized mode of world formation evident here is that, despite its seeming effacement of place, it remains ontologically founded, no matter its claims to the contrary, in the same topology that I described earlier. The Aristotelian dictum that to be is to be emplaced remains no less true in 2024 CE than it was in 350 BC. Consequently, the

spatialized mode of engagement that characterizes contemporary thought and practice is in direct conflict with the topological structure on which it depends—a topological structure that it both obscures and forgets.

It is the retrieval of that structure and the task of re-membling and re-collecting what it entails that is the real challenge for contemporary critique. It is a task that, as Bob Mugerauer describes it, does indeed involve a form of homecoming. Fundamentally, it is a matter of coming back to a place that we never really left.

Notes

1. R. Mugerauer, *Heidegger and Homecoming*, Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2008. Also see his *Heidegger's Language and Thought*, NY: Humanities Press, 1988; *Interpretations on Behalf of Place*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994; and *Responding to Loss: Heideggerian Reflections on Literature, Architecture, and Film*, NY: Fordham Univ. Press, 2015.
2. See J. Wylie, "A Landscape Cannot be a Homeland," *Landscape Research* 41 (2016):1–9.
3. See G. Simmel, "Bridge and Door," in *Simmel on Culture*, D. Frisby and M. Featherstone, eds., London: Sage, 1997, pp. 170–74.
4. See J. Malpas, *Rethinking Dwelling: Heidegger, Place, Architecture*, London: Bloomsbury, 2021, pp. 171–77, for more on Simmel and Heidegger on place and boundary.
5. For example, see D. Massey, "Power-geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," in *Mapping the Futures*, J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and G. L. Tickner, eds., London: Routledge, 1993, pp 59–69.
6. Most notably in J. Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*, London: Routledge, 2nd edn., 2018.

Ellen Churchill Semple's Anthro-Geography

A Rediscovered Voice in the Study of Place

Jenny Quillien

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The earth has set man his tasks and at the same time whispered hints for their solution.

—Ellen Churchill Semple

A pearl of a read has emerged from the deadly dungeons of out-of-print: *Influences of Geographic Environment* by geographer Ellen Churchill Semple (1863–1932), first published in 1911 and dormant all these many decades, has been resurrected and reprinted. The twofold aim of this essay is, first, to promote knowledge of the book's existence through a rather personal review; second, to apply Semple's ideas in a case study of a specific geographic region that is dear to my heart.

Part 1. A personal book review

Nothing less than a page turner was this rather weighty slab of a book—no pictures and 600 pages. A few lines taken from the preface give a taste of the author's topic, style, and ambition.

... Man has been so noisy about the way he has conquered nature and nature has been so silent in her persistent influence over man, that the geographic factor in the equation of human development has been overlooked The importance of the geographical element in the history of human development is that it is a stable force. It never sleeps. The natural environment for all intents and purposes is immutable in comparison with other factors.

... Man is a product of the earth's surface. This means not merely that he is a child of the earth, dust of her dust, but that the earth has mothered him, fed him, set

him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties that have strengthened his body and sharpened his wits, given him his problems of navigation or irrigation, and at the same time whispered hints for their solution. She has entered into his bone and tissue, into his mind and soul.

On the mountains she has given him leg muscles of iron to climb the slope, along the coast she has left them weak and flabby but given him instead vigorous development of chest and arm to handle his paddle or oar. In the river valleys she attaches him to the fertile soil, circumscribes his ideas and ambitions by a dull round of calm, exacting duties, narrows his outlook to the cramped horizon of his farm.

Up on the windswept plateaus, and the boundless stretch of the grasslands and the waterless tracks of the desert, where he roams with his flocks from pasture to pasture, and oasis to oasis, where life knows much hardship but escapes the grind of drudgery, where the watching of grazing herd gives him leisure for contemplation, and the wide-ranging life of a big horizon, his ideas take on a certain gigantic simplicity, religion becomes monotheism, God becomes one, unrivaled like the sand of the desert or the grass of the step, stretching on and on without break or change.

Chewing over and over the cud of his simple belief as the one food of his unfed mind, his faith becomes fanaticism, his big spatial ideas, born of that ceaseless regular wandering, outgrow the land that bred them and bear them legitimate fruit in wide imperial conquests.

As I turned the pages, I found myself experiencing the pleasures of a range of *aha!*

moments. At what points other readers will feel that delightful clink of the nickel drop will depend on their experiences and travels. I can only convey a few of mine as illustration.

Sometimes I found myself exclaiming, *Oh, why, Yes. Of course!* as a geographic truth, which I had very dimly perceived but never articulated, came galloping rapidly into focus. For example, we all recognize that mountains block and plains invite movement. That's all well and good, but Semple demands that we think it through.

As I thought through my abundant time spent in the south of France, I realized that I had known that the Italians were our cultural cousins. I had known that the local patois simply ranged by degree from pure French to pure Italian as one made one's way around that coastline. I had known that trade with Italy was easy and our shared kinship oiled communication.

Of course, I also had known that the mountains, particularly the Alps, which separate France and Italy, were quite high but really not formidable. Thanks to multiple, navigable passes—natural highways as it were—one can traverse the Alps without too much ado.

I had also known that this was not the case with Spain. The Pyrenees are certainly less high than the Alps, but they form an unbroken, unbreachable wall from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. Historically, entry and infiltration of the Iberic peninsula has been from south, and that, as the saying goes, *Africa begins at the Pyrenees* [1]. Because one does not go through the mountain wall of the Pyrenees, what trade does take place between Spain and France

is by sea with ports that have grown up on either side of the barricade.

Sometimes the sweet clink of the nickel drop was not *Oh, why, Yes. Of course!* It was more a moment of feeling startled and then the sudden view of a new perspective. For example, as a child in school, I had learned of the American war of Independence, the 13 colonies, and the vying for power between the British and the French. I had not realized until Ellen Semple brought it to my attention that, with more densely populated and concentrated colonies with many navigable rivers, the Brits had a decisive advantage over the French, who were far too widely dispersed to get their military act together.

Or, to return to Spain for a moment, it had eluded me that the high dry central plateau with Madrid in its middle had, again and again, experienced the greatest difficulty in maintaining political control over the numerous and varied populated areas around its coastal periphery. So, of course, why be surprised that the history of Spain shows us that a heavy-handed and muscled arm of authority will be a standard recourse for keeping disorder and disintegration at bay.

Sometimes the *aha!* was farther afield, simply taken on good faith without much personal experience to go on. I know just a little something of Hinduism, had read sections of the Mahabharata, followed Arjuna, Krishna, and the great family feuds of India's national literature. I had even been a few times to the Indian sub-continent. Semple points out that India has little in the way of seaports and that the Himalayas close it off from the north. Geographically, India seems to hang down like some kind of purse with strings. Anybody and anything that falls into the purse would likely stay there and stew in its own juice. This struck me as congruent with the somewhat introverted stories starring Ganesh, Sita, Rama, or Hanuman.

Or, for another example, I took on good faith that Africa, aka the "dark continent," could have its "darkness" to some extent explained by the fact that its coastal areas are narrow, the rivers unnavigable, and it rises as a sharp continental plateau. One simply does not enter Africa that easily. I did know from my own travels how these

phenomena protected Ethiopians from colonization.

Sometimes the *aha!* came as a surprise. Really? and I would read a passage twice to make sure I understood. Here is Semple on oceans:

If we compare the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in respect to the rivers, we find that the narrow Atlantic has a drainage basin of over 19,000,000 mi.² as opposed to the 8,660,000 mi.² of drainage area commanded by the vastly larger Pacific. The Pacific is, for the most part, ringed by mountains, discharging into the ocean only mad torrents or rapid broken streams. The Atlantic, bordered by gently sloping plains of wide extent, receives rivers that for the most part pursue a long and leisurely course to the sea. Therefore, the commercial and cultural influences of the Atlantic extend from the Rockies and Andes almost to the heart of Russia, and by the Nile Highway to even invade the seclusion of Africa.

Through the long reach of its rivers, therefore, the Atlantic commands a land area twice as great as that of the Pacific, and by reason of this fundamental geographic advantage, it will retain the historical preeminence that it so early secured. The development of the World Ocean will mean the exploitation of the Pacific trade from the basis of the Atlantic, the domination of the larger ocean by the historic peoples of the smaller, because these people have wider and more accessible lands as a base of their maritime operations [2].

Laws, patterns, and organized complexity

Semple offers us numerous laws, or perhaps we should say, more simply, rules of thumb. The reader is always offered Semple's own examples and then can turn to his or her own experience. Consider this example:

Rivers unite the peoples of their basin, and it follows as a corollary that rivers do not make good boundaries [3].

The Rhine has long been the line of demarcation between the French and German and has done so rather badly if we consider

the lurching from war to war and the reciprocal claiming of lands on the other side. And if a mighty nation controls a river, then it wants very much to control its mouth, the ports, the sea, and beyond. Only as a second-best will it entertain the possibility of a weak nation at the mouth of the river as a way to stall off a rival nation from taking over.

As I now live in Amsterdam, at the mouth of the Rhine, I know full well that the Dutch are there only on the sufferance of the Germans and the French and that when push comes to shove, as it did in World War II, they don't stand a chance. WWII Liberation Day for the Dutch is a solemn affair with no cocky victory songs. They had been creamed in short order and others had to come to their rescue.

In the vein of rules of thumb, cognoscence of place literature will not fail to notice the kinship between Semple's approach with that of patterns as developed by Christopher Alexander and organized complexity as developed by Jane Jacobs. And note, once again, that the publication date is 1911, long before either Alexander or Jacobs were a twinkle in their parents' eye.

I would like to quote Semple at some length on these matters so that the reader can fully appreciate the similarities and, perhaps, as I do, see that the re-discovery of Semple's work allows us to significantly enlarge the scope of current pattern work, particularly in integrating the built environment with its geographic underpinnings. Consider this passage:

Investigators in this field [anthropo-geography], moreover, are prone to get a squint in their eye that makes them see one geographic factor to the exclusion of the rest; whereas it belongs to the very nature of physical environments to combine a whole group of influences, working all at the same time under the law of the resolution of forces.

In this plexus of influences, some operate in one direction and some in another, now one loses its beneficent effect like a medicine long used or a garment outgrown; another waxes in power, reinforced by a new geographic factor which has been released from dormancy by the

expansion of the known world, or the progress of invention and of human development.

... The law of the resolution of forces applies in geography as in the movement of planets The analysis of these interacting forces and of their various combinations requires careful investigation. Let us consider the interplay of the forces of land and sea apparent in every country with a maritime location. In some cases, a small, infertile, niggardly country conspires with a beckoning sea to drive its sons out upon the deep, as another with a wide territory and a generous soil keeps its well-fed children at home and silences the call of the sea [4].

The reader could pick any one of possible examples for the first pattern (let's call it SONS TO SEA) of an ungenerous land that drives sons away along with a sea that draws them: how about Ireland, Greece, or Norway? I'll pick France for the second pattern (STAY HOME) where the soil is rich and well-watered, the wine fine, and the cheese excellent.

In other passages, Semple reads a bit more like a precursor to Jane Jacobs. The reader may recall that Jacobs took urban planners to task for misjudging the nature of their job. A place, such as a city or even a small city park, cannot be considered a simple design problem with just a few variables. Nor is it a design problem amenable to methods of statistics. Rather, like the biological sciences of growth, ageing, and death, it is a problem of organized complexity where a dozen or a few dozen variables are at play. Miss a variable and you fail, and these variables can change. Here, again, is Semple:

Skepticism as to the effect of geographic conditions upon human development is apparently justifiable, owing to the multiplicity of the underlying causes and the difficulty of distinguishing between stronger and weaker forces on the one hand, as between permanent and temporary effects on the other. We see the result but find it difficult to state the equation producing the result.

But the important thing is to avoid seizing upon one or two conspicuous geo-

graphic elements in the problem and ignoring the rest. The physical environment of a people consists of all the natural conditions to which they have been subjected, not merely a part. Geography admits no single blanket theory. The slow historical development of the Russian folk has been due to many geographic causes—to excess of cold and deficiency of rain, an outskirt location on the Asiatic border of Europe exposed to the attacks of nomadic hordes, a meager and, for the most part, ice-bound coast which was slowly acquired, an undiversified surface, a lack of segregated regions where an infant civilization might be cradled, and a vast area of unfenced plains wherein the national energies spread out thin and dissipated themselves. The better Baltic and Black Sea coasts, the fertility of its Ukraine soil, and location next to wide-awake Germany along the western frontier have helped to accelerate progress, but the slow-moving body carried too heavy a drag.

... Owing to the evolution of geographic relations, the physical environment favorable to one stage of development may be averse to another, and vice versa. For instance, a small, isolated, and protected habitat, like that of Egypt, Phoenicia, Crete, and Greece, encourages the birth and precocious growth of civilization; but later it may cramp progress and lend the stamp of arrested development to a people who were once the model for all their little world. Open and wind-swept Russia, lacking these small, warm nurseries where Nature could cuddle her children, has bred upon its boundless plains a massive, untutored, homogeneous folk, fed upon the crumbs of culture that have fallen from the richer tables of Europe.

But that item of area is a variable quantity in the equation. It changes its character at a higher stage of cultural development. Consequently, when the Muscovite people, instructed by the example of western Europe, shall have grown up intellectually, economically, and politically to their big territory, its area will become a great national asset. Russia will come into its own, heir to a long-withheld inheritance. Many of its previous geographic disadvantages will vanish, like the diseases of childhood, while its massive size will

dwarf many previous advantages of its European neighbors [5].

My book review is that of a strong recommendation. Of formidable scope and depth, Semple's work is an eye-opening journey taking the reader around the globe. It lends a wealth of insights and wisdom and a sharper, more critical eye to current events as they unfold. Throughout the book is a way of thinking—an attentiveness to the forces at play and how they will find resolution—that can strengthen any audience interested in place, patterns, the phenomenology of place, place politics, or place design.

The more passive reader can simply sit back and enjoy the ideas and the examples given. A somewhat more engaged reader can do that and then, in addition, conjure up their own experiences and memories for consideration. But can we apply Semple's anthropo-geography to an unexamined terrain? What if we put Semple in conversation with other voices in the study of place? To this experiment I now turn.

Part 2. Case study of the shaped world

History is geography set in motion.
—Johann Gottfried Herder

The unexamined terrain chosen for investigation is that of the lost-in-time Anasazi homeland and their abandoned dwellings. A few preliminary questions and answers will help orient the reader.

What does Anasazi mean?

The term refers to peoples and a way of life in the American Southwest that existed roughly from 200 AD to a rather abrupt end around 1300 AD. Political correctness now demands that we forego the term Anasazi and use the clumsy textbook-ish mouthful *Ancestral Puebloans* instead.

Frankly, Anasazi is better. It's more precise in its designation of place, people, and relationship, since it was taken from the Navaho who wandered into the southern Rockies during the fourteenth and fifteenth century after the abandonment. The term means something like *ancestors of our enemies*.

The Navaho kept a wary and respectful distance from the ghost-ridden ruins left by old pueblo peoples—and there was never any love lost between Navaho and Pueblo of any century.

How does the Anasazi homeland fit into Semple's framework?

In the frame provided by Semple, we are examining a geography of *refuge*: a harsh land distant from generous lands and natural highways where goods and ideas travel with ease and fruitfully mingle. Geographies of refuge have historically been sought by remnants of peoples who might enter the safety of difficult terrain from different directions, each remnant bringing their own language and gene pool.

The Anasazi homeland fits the bill. A tortuous high-altitude terrain of isolation and confinement sheltered different groups of different origins and languages, some Aztecan, some Keresan, some Tanoan. Paucity of arable lands and scarcity of water forced limited community life. Geography heavily imposed its problems to be solved and limited their solutions: From that arose a similarity in habitat and coping mechanisms.

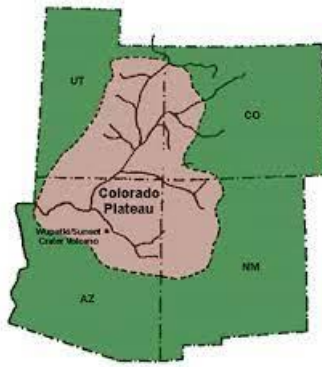
Where, exactly, is this place?

Well, therein lies an interesting discussion. Maps, like foreign words, can invite us to perceive in new ways. The interested reader will, most often, be directed to the most inane of (ir)relevant maps, that of the Four Corners area where four state boundaries meet, a map that was indubitably drawn up in a distant and unconcerned Washington by uninformed bureaucrats.



The Four Corners.

The boundaries correspond to nothing sensible. And these bureaucrats had a better option on the table. John Wesley Pow-



The main geological feature: the Colorado Plateau.
Source: Wikipedia.

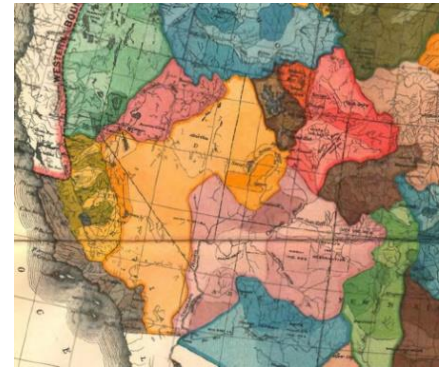


Early societies studied by archeologists.
Source: <https://thefurtraper.com/home/anasazi/source>.

ell, one of the great early American explorers of the Southwest, had submitted a proposal for state boundaries based on the area's scarcest resource: water. That would make for taking into account at least one significant variable.

For Powell, each state, conceived as matching a natural watershed, would be, by boundaries alone, encouraged to engage in good stewardship. What a different southwest we would have today if Powell had been taken seriously. I can just imagine the poignant conversation that could have taken place between these two geographers, Powell and Semple.

The interested reader might also be directed to a map of the Colorado Plateau, the dominant geological feature of the Anasazi homeland. Archeologists might offer another map, given their interests in pre-literate cultures of North America. What a map includes, promotes, and ignores will forever determine our thoughts and decisions. For this reason, and for others to be further explained, my own preference goes to a hand drawn sketch [next



John Powell's proposal for future state boundaries. Source: <https://canyonology.com/powell-grand-canyon-water-in-the-west/>.

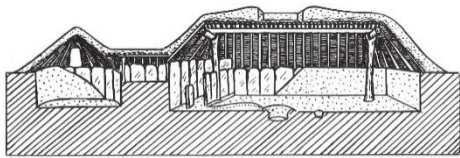
page] provided by architect Vincent Scully of what he called "The Shaped World."

What is the geography of this place?

In strict geographic and geological terms, the Anasazi homeland is the Colorado Plateau proper and some surrounding areas of highly broken or folded strata of mesas, buttes, hogbacks, cuestas, and rift valleys. Throw in a few volcanoes and lava flows here and there. To the northeast, the Rocky Mountains formed as crust folded, fractured, and warped. To the southwest, lie the "kicked rug" landscapes of the basin and range.

The Colorado Plateau itself is highly unusual: multiple layers of flat-lying sedimentary rock lifted to 7000 feet and then cut deep into canyons by rivers and further eroded by wind and flash floods. The layers shift from the red of dried blood, to brick, to watermelon rose, to salmon, to cream, to ochre, to ash, to black. Some layers (particularly the one the color of dried blood known as the Morrison formation) are rich in the remains of life—fossils, dinosaurs, oil, and gas.

The rock is dry. The sun hot. The rare color is green. It seems strictly ornamental. Tiny patches, occasional skinny lengths of creek bottom land. Mountain summits of pine. Canyon water from hidden seeps where drops accumulate in a fringe of green humidity. The textures meander from razor sharp lava flows to baby buttock smooth slick rock to endlessly combed strands of pastel hair through wavy slot canyons. The shapes in this Shaped World are compact and endlessly



Mesa Verde, pit house, section. A typical dwelling echoes the contours of the surrounding land and blends in with it. Source: Pueblo: mountain, village, dance 1989.

thropo-geography is less in how it develops and illustrates the general guidelines provided, but in the lessons offered when mankind ignores the guidelines.

We're talking here of what we can surmise of goings-on from the third to the thirteenth century in the Anasazi homeland. A lot of it is conjecture. A lot of it involves disagreements among specialists, but it seems safe to say that from the ninth to the twelfth century, the Chaco canyon area saw the rise of a have-more and have-less society—as indicated by dwelling size, burial artifacts, and indications of nutrition in bone remains.

A fairly elaborate road system and trade items of turquoise, macaw, and shell indicate an extensive sphere of influence. Buildings, now of finer masonry, were clearly oriented to cardinal directions as well as to key features within the landscapes. Astronomical markers indicate a thoughtful cosmology. Water control systems were in place. Population increased beyond what the land could carry.

Then, there was hell to pay. Telltale traces of the thirteenth century indicate a sad, vicious saga of collapse: resource exhaustion, malnutrition, stress [8], fracturing and scattering of groups, aggravation by long drought, mutual raiding, and mayhem.

People left the area en masse. They seem frequently to have just walked away, moving mostly south and southeast to new spots or to join existing groups. Some places, such as Chaco itself or Mesa Verde show few traces of violence but much malnutrition. Other sites, along McElmo creek in southern Colorado, for example, tell of mass murder and, some will argue, cannibalism. Not a good time. Definitely not a good time.

Of these last difficult decades, a notable, arresting, and dare I say, haunting feature

of the built environment is the reappearance of cliff dwellings. Looking way back, there was some very early and primitive use of adaptable overhangs in the first centuries, then the idea seems completely forgotten for a thousand years, and then re-surfaces in the twelfth century.

Why? The first thought is safety, for why else would you do it? I have myself gingerly made my way up slick rock and a hand and toe “ladder” to reach a small well-hidden overhang with a built-in protective wall and a nearby equally well-hidden granary that still contained corn, a bit worse for the wear and the rodents, but still there. With bone-marrow certitude, I declare that no woman would make that climb with a jug of water or a toddler unless she were absolutely and totally scared out of her wits. If fear has a smell (and I think it does), it still lingered in the air.

But the defense thesis, certainly for the larger cliff dwellings, is problematic [9]. First of all, they are not easy to defend and vulnerable to attack by ambush. Indeed, these dwellings are traps and with their timber roofs were fire traps: definitely not where you would want to be if, in these old days as in historic times, setting fire to an enemy village was standard procedure. Additionally, the cliff dwelling is worse than useless if the task is to ward off raids on the mesa top, the fields, or on the granaries (assuming that raids on food supplies seem more plausible than organized warfare).

A radically different look at the cliff dwellings is proposed by architect Vincent Scully, who became enthralled with the region, the pueblos, and their culture. Eschewing the obvious and practical question of defense in a time of turmoil and strife, Scully speculates that psychic malaise could be the reason for moving to the middle of the earth. He writes:

Perhaps it was mankind's first holy conscious attempt to reach back out, or down, to mother Earth, his first major philosophical leap, or regression, not to separate himself from nature but to attempt a firmer grip on more of it [10].

For Scully, man had broken, as it were, the rules of anthropo-geography, royally shot himself in the foot, and had attempted

redemption. Here is Scully on the cliff dwellings:

... Men cannot stand up to the sky and the earth in the Southwest, at least not without a technology that tends to destroy nature, which did not become a problem in the area until modern times In Chaco ... the house was enclosed in the constructed shell of wall, upstanding and abstract in form—thus very much a man-made shape and one that was compulsively elaborate, even precious, in its structure.

In the cliffs of Mesa Verde, the walls are entirely gone, and the great house as a whole has no man-made shell whatsoever. The earth provides it now. The towers of the house probe up and the kivas probe down. This is the true magic of the houses, a complex highly evolved, and abstracted urbanism all slipped back into the earth as in some mad modern scientific dream.

The shapes and sounds of rituals had to have been profoundly intensified in the setting. There is surely a true delirium of man-made geometry in the cylinders, cubes, and towers, but the ultimate order is the caverns, and to its pre-existing shape the human geometry must eventually conform. The masonry at Mesa Verde that was solid and dignified, becomes more rough and slapdash as time goes on and resembles the rubble and mud of modern pueblos [11].

The Anasazi peoples, having failed at redemption (or, at the very least, at finding dinner) moved out of their homeland and moved on. No doubt broken-hearted. Perhaps wiser.

Part 3. Personal postscript

Semple was intrigued with the relationship between landscape and mindscape. Lands of refuge, however, did not command much of her attention: her only comment about this mindscape was that of anxiety. As provided in her above description of “mountain peoples,” she suggests that lands of asylum are “regions of much labor and little leisure, of poverty today and anxiety for the morrow...” Precarious living naturally leads to worry. Will the rains come? Will the hunt yield meat? Will the corn last the winter?



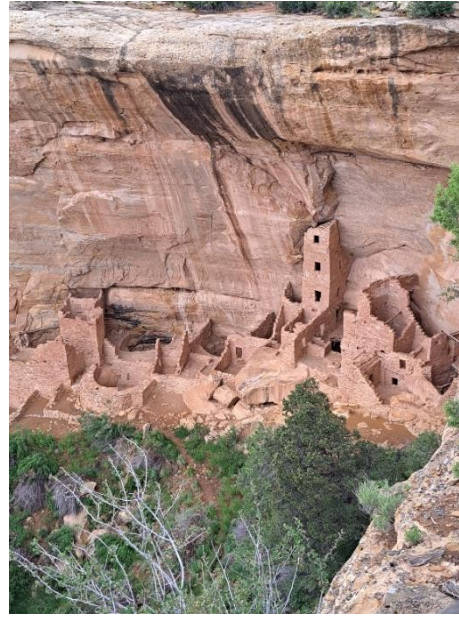
Cliff Dwelling. Canyon de Chelly. 11th Century. Photo by author.

Personally, I sense much anxiety in the modern pueblo and would easily assume anxiety in the former Anasazi world: an absolute need for rituals to be performed and performed precisely, lest a false move provoke bad luck. For example, when a choice had to be made during COVID, elders at the Zuni pueblo opted to maintain ritual, including cramped togetherness in the kiva, rather than postpone their need to enact their part and beseech the world to do its part.

To develop this line of thought, consider the observations of Scully, who is eloquent in his take on the modern pueblo building and the pueblo art of communal ritual dance:

The pueblos are American and purists, hopeful, reasonable, and hard. Something true and clear, massively unsentimental, runs through all their works, and this is, at bottom, the relationship between man and nature that they embody and reveal. In this they occupy a clear position in relation to the fundamental problem of human life: how to get along—which means in the end how to live and die—with the natural world and its laws.

It is the fundamental architectural question as well because the environment inhabited by human beings is created partly



Cliff Dwelling. Canyon de Chelly. 13th Century. Photo by author.

by nature and partly by themselves. All human construction involves the relationship between the natural and the man-made

In historical terms, the character of that relationship is a major indication of the character of a culture as a whole. It tells us how the human beings who made it thought of themselves in relation to the rest of creation. Are they, in their view, unique in the scheme of things, or have no such conception? Do the buildings contrast with the forms of the earth or echo them? [12].

... The environmental function of Hopi architecture is not to provide complex interior spaces or a variety of individually expressive buildings but instead to use buildings to frame a plaza in which ritual dances can be performed and from which they can be watched. In Hopi buildings, the human scale is precise so that the buildings become an exact frame for ritual. The environment frames the act

... these dances ... directly form human behavior and distill, in the architecture of their natural and man-made spaces, a sculptural and pictorial essence of human action and of the structure of human thought. They, like all works of art, flesh out at least two realities and live in two kinds of time—first in that of their people,

and secondly, outside and beyond it, capable of any number of unexpected effects upon others, able to endow themselves with a thousand meanings and inhabiting the time of the watcher, or perhaps eternity alone.

... The dance is like an order of form not rigid but taking shape from its own inner dynamics and therefore full of accident and variety within the ritual frame that calls it forth. Infinitely particular it can be, and even casual, but it is inexhaustibly fertile, both in disciplined force and resourceful device, because it is passion that moves it and the cooperative rhythm of a whole people that gives it form [13].

... The dances themselves I believe to be the most profound works of art yet produced on the American continent. They call up a pity and terror which only Greek tragedy rivals, no less than a comic joy, at once animal and ironic, that suggests the precursors of Aristophanes [14].

That is quite a statement for Scully to make. *The most profound works of art yet produced on the American continent.* I have attended a few of the dances when the public was allowed. Not always, but once in a while there would be a dancer with the talent of a Vaslav Nijinsky, undergoing metamorphosis and becoming the deer or the butterfly. I was lucky enough to be invited to Zuni Shalako. Shalako goes on and on all night and all the next day, with anxiety, testing every fiber of those who take part; exhausted or not, one mistake, one missed step, brings all into question. As art, these pueblo dances plumb a depth of humanity that Santa Fe's traditional Friday night art gallery openings never dreamt of. In that, I would have to agree with Scully.

Up to date

The case study proper ends with the abandoning of homeland at the end of the thirteenth century by the Ancestral Puebloans when the survivors limped out of the hills in their respective language groups, headed south and southeast, and are now, so many generations hence, in Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, Taos, and so on. It seems only fair to complete the story and bring things forward to modern times.

Shortly after the abandonment of the homeland, the Navaho came, by dribbles and drabs, into the Shaped World. With their dispersed habitat and pastoralism, they took to pockets of more open land and took to a lifestyle of raiding the pueblos for stashes of corn and beans. *Raiding is the natural thing to do* would be the comment of Semple: *the desert makes them do it*. We know about the Navaho's attachment to the land through historical records and modern-day commentary. Consider Medicine Man John Begay, speaking to author Douglas Preston:

"You have the Bible, we have the land. The land is our book. The four sacred mountains ... are what maintain b'ózb'ó or balance in the world. Everything we have as a people came from those mountains. They give us our physical and mental health. They give us long life and happiness. Every day, when I pray, I think of those mountains just pouring blessings and health into the Navajo people. You find your origin in words, and we see our origin in those mountains. They exist so we exist. If someday they die, we die too [15]."

Who, among Whites, took the Navaho relationship to the Shaped World most seriously? The military. Take as an illustration the comments of a certain Commander Carlton of Civil War days who was assigned (by his boss Kit Carson) the duty of ending the pesky Navajo marauders who galloped off with military horses and supplies. He wrote that it was the land that provided all to the Navajo: *"They will never be crushed until they are ferreted out of the haunts, and hills, and hiding places of their country and transferred to a distant reservation under the eye of the Army"* [16].

On the heels of the Navajo, Hispanic settlers worked their way north from Mexico. They took to the small patches of river bottom for subsistence farming. But consider how it is the Shaped World that shapes them and not the other way round. Semple reminds us more than once that geography works less by sudden force than by long, slow erosion. *"It is the persistent effect of remoteness which counts,"* she writes. *"It is the long reach which weakens the arm of*

authority, no matter what the race or country or epoch" [17].

This land was too remote and too insignificant for Mexico City or the Catholic Church to bother with these settlers. Left to their own devices, the Hispanic communities made up their own laws for home rule, put their own (rather dark) spin on Catholicism, and many a Hispanic man fathered his children with a Pueblo wife. The crypto-Jews among the settlers professed Christianity but continued to quietly do some of their own things, such as make unleavened bread at certain times of the year. But after a while, deprived of their resources and authorities, they couldn't remember why. The remote and disconnected Shaped World shaped them as well.

Whites came, not because anyone thought the location a choice morsel but, propelled by Manifest Destiny, it lay between any place important and what they did want, which was California. There were miners and Mormons and railroad men and then oil and gas: an economic showcase of Joseph Schumpeter's creative destruction, one economic technology rolling over the previous one.

Unlike the Navaho who stringently avoided Anasazi ruins, and the Hispanics who seemed to find them of little interest, the Whites did mess with the ruins. Some, like the colorful Weatherill brothers, were enthusiastic, curious amateur archeologists working with the ideas and tools of their time. Excavating sites with the Weatherills was the Swedish scientist Gustaf Norden-skiöld, who had come to New Mexico's high country to cure himself of tuberculosis but caught the archeology bug instead. He shipped back to Scandinavia two railroad cars full to the brim with found treasure and provoked the first American legislation curbing theft and removal.

The Mormons of Blanding, Utah, get dubious recognition for having runs-in with the new laws and holding on to the idea that a shovel for recreational grave digging was a normal part of a family picnic. There still are the run-of-the-mill scoundrels looking for a pot or a mummified body that might sell.

On the whole, however, nowadays is the heyday of the entrance ticket, the museum displays, the state employed archeologist,

and the uniformed park ranger. These professionals claim that they have an oxymoron of a job: They must protect the sites and educate the public. If you want to protect the sites, so their argument goes, the best thing to do is exclude the public. The latest coined word among those in-the-know is *touron*: a combination of tourist and moron.

Aesthetics and wholeness

Although my mind boggles at Semple's accomplishments, I am perplexed by what she left out. There is, in all her 600 pages, nary a line about aesthetics. Should aesthetics be a natural part of anthropo-geography or should it be, as Semple provides, strictly a reflection on geographic affordances?

I chose this place as my case study because I love it so much. I revel in its sensorium of shapes, textures, silences, smells, its mesmerizing beauty—a surround of abstract art with insane colors, minimalist lines, and subtle complexities. But are my feelings relevant? *"When we look at a landscape"*, says Robert McFarland, *"we do not see what is there, but largely what we think is there. We attribute qualities to a landscape which it does not intrinsically possess—savage-ness, for example, or bleakness, and reevaluate accordingly"* [18]. In a similar vein, Simon Schama declared, *"landscape is a work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock"* [19].

*Dry wash, truck tracks
in the riverbed
Coiled sand pinyon
Sea bottom
Riverbank
Sand dunes
The floor of a sea once
again.*

—Gary Snyder, *The Back Country*

What I see in the Shaped World (whether there or not) is aloofness. Unlike Holland—where I spend much of my time and where the Dutch quite literally made their surrounds themselves and in their own image—this land is not me and does not care about me. Unrequited love. I love it and it couldn't give a tinker's damn about my love. I sense quite deeply its distance and disinterest and its corollary (whether there or not) of appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

I feel appropriateness in this landscape to be about time. This is a land of eons and eternity carved into its cliffs and caverns. Its shapes are the traces of its time. There comes with that a natural hierarchy to be respected. The long-lived pine tree suffers the idiocy of the short-lived squawking jay. The mountain suffers the pine tree. Mankind rates only slightly above the jay. It's best for him to construct his nests with a nod to eternity and go with the flow.

The Ancestral Puebloans built with adobe mud bricks that melted back. Their stone walls tumbled. Their wattle and wood had their own limited time horizon. All that is well and good, as is Hispanic village mud brick and Navaho hogan. Even the modern trailer has some wisdom about its relevance. What jars is plastic grass and metal siding with pretenses of longevity and supremacy or the almost comic 15-floor towers of hotel chains in Page, Arizona or Moab, Utah.

Moab, by the way, is now a verb. *To moab or not to moab, that is the question.* There is a bumper sticker made by the not-so-distant town of Bluff which reads: *Do not moab Bluff.* Moab was an abandoned Mormon settlement and then an abandoned uranium mining operation. It now offers neon lights and delights to tourists: sushi bars, karaoke, latte take aways, sporting goods new and used, and ATV rides through the sandstone cathedrals. Might as well roller skate with a boom box through Chartres. What are they thinking? Or are they not thinking at all? It just isn't appropriate. If Moab provokes sardonic laughter, to contemplate the HUD housing on reservations is to weep: such levels of insult, tawdry ugliness, ignorance, and deep inappropriateness.

And, finally, there is the delicate and subtle question of wholeness. Although I would strongly contend, as I did in the first section, that Semple allows us to ground more firmly our thinking about habitat and inhabitant, and that she both precedes and strengthens place authors such as Christopher Alexander on patterns and Jane Jacobs on organized complexity, I don't sense in Semple much of a sensitivity about wholeness. She does offer a plethora of reflections on boundaries but not on the whole, which is bound.

My choice of case study does not readily elucidate the question either. Vincent Scully, again, offers some insight. The map that he proposes isn't of a place clearly framed. On the ground it is the same: the Shaped World has no official or informal boundary markers. It is a whole, but a subtle one revealing itself slowly and only to those with patience and attentiveness. One learns to feel the edges.

Driving north out of Albuquerque one must climb La Bajada hill and that always feels to me like a steep entranceway. Going on the east-west highway 140, if you dare take your attention off the speeding trucks, you might sense that you are skirting some large breathing body just to the north. Many segments of the Shaped World have been kept intact because they are reservation land, national forest, or parks. Other segments have been injured through industrial drilling and oil fracking. There is the curious history of Los Alamos and the Bomb made in the Shaped World, but only because Oppenheimer came camping here as a boy and remembered its remoteness and beauty.

The pueblos, modern and ancient, are one with the land, indeed, part and parcel of it. Here is Scully on the topic, and the operative word is *oneness*:

European architecture has come to explore multiple themes, many of them having to do with the victorious exercise of human energy and with dominating the world. A glorious architecture, yes, and counting many victories, but now clearly required by mortal necessity to exhibit a renewed reverence for nature's realities and to explore ways for decent interaction with the earth and its forces in the crowded

years to come. Not least with the force in the sun.

North American Indian architecture, on the other hand, whether because builders are less "developed," less powerful, considerably wiser, or merely more practical than their conquerors, has for many centuries been concerned with nothing less than the cosmic theme: celebrating a vast human and natural concordance, oneness, and peace—the same for relentless Apache raiders as for the farmers of the pueblos. Perhaps, especially in the case of the Pueblos, this is so in part because they have seen it all before: the failure of resources, the desolation of the earth; the death of the proud towns—and then their patient, humble, indomitable resurrections [20].

I've walked and contemplated much of the Shaped World. I've walked many of the places left by the Old Ones. I have sat quietly in spots untrampled, dusty, undisturbed, and also in sites prepared for public consumption. I have sometimes commented to friends and colleagues who love this land as I do: *You know, the unexcavated unmarked ruins are one kind of place, but when you visit the parkified archaeological sites with the swept paths, the explanatory panels, the shelved artifacts, each object catalogued and numbered, the place seems dead. It went sterile. The ghosts have gone. You know what I mean?*

My friends nod vigorously, Yes, Yes, they say, *We know exactly what you mean.* Well, it is—in some ways—comforting that they know what I mean but, the problem is that I don't know what I mean. After all, what is a ghost? I don't know what a ghost is. I sometimes feel in these untouched places that there is a presence, a sentience. I am aware of it and it is aware of me.

I also find I have increasing problems with my own kind of people—the pedigreed scholars. Sure, it's easy enough to dismiss the scumbag pot hunter and the tourists out moabing, but I'm finding that professional excavation and analysis equals autopsy. There are reasons to do it; information to be gleaned. But it is, at the same time, a dismantling of a whole, a



Balcony House Mesa Verde. Still untouched and complete with ghosts.
Photo from 1891 taken by Gustaf Nordenskiöld. Source: Mesa Verde National Park.

breaking apart of connections, an estrangement and reification of parts.

Henri Bortoft, the British philosopher of science who had a lot to say about wholeness, makes a distinction between inauthentic and authentic wholes [21]. Inauthentic wholes are the inaccurate reconstruction of parts that were never separate to begin with. Maybe that is what we are doing: running around making inauthentic wholes.

To walk the Anasazi homeland is to walk a land of refuge. It also is to walk a land where the laws of anthropo-geography were ignored and where climate change, in the form of drought, brought a final blow. It is a place to acknowledge a major and tragic reset in human history. It is a place to pay respects to ghosts. There is another Navaho word, *Nahodishgish*, which, if I understand it correctly, means something like: *some places are better left alone*.

Notes

1. *Africa begins at the Pyrenees*. The phrase is most often attributed to Dominique Frédéric Dufour de Pradt. His account of France's dreadful experiences during the then-recent Peninsular War, *Mémoires historiques sur la révolution d'Espagne* (1816), contains a sturdy exposition of the substance behind the slogan: *It is an error of geography to have assigned Spain to Europe; it belongs to Africa: blood, manners, language, the way of life and making war, in Spain everything is African. The two nations have been mixed up for too long—the Carthaginians who came from Africa to Spain, the Vandals who left Spain for Africa, the Moors who stayed in Spain for 700 years—for such a long cohabitation not to have confused the race and customs of the two countries. If the Spaniard were Mohammedan, he would be completely African; it is religion that has kept it in Europe*.
2. Semple, 1911, p. 318.
3. Semple, 1911, p. 334.
4. Semple, 1911, p.18.
5. Semple, 1911, pp. 20–21.
6. Semple, 1911, p. 550.
7. Roberts, 1996.
8. David Stuart (2014) worked out an ingenious system for a more careful study of the demise of the

Anasazi culture. Calories could be accurately assessed and serve as a stand-in for energy consumption. For example, how many extra calories did it take for a woman to bring a pregnancy to successful birth. How many calories did a man expend walking ten miles cross country versus ten miles on a road. Masonry work on a second story requires more calorie expenditure than on a ground level. As the hunting and gathering brought in fewer and fewer calories, they depended increasingly on corn which required more and more hard labor to produce. The Anasazi had, in a word, eaten themselves out of house and home. The title of his book, *Anasazi America*, lets the reader know that he is making a parallel between the demise of the Anasazi and the pending demise of America.

9. Cordell, 1976.
10. Scully, 1989, p. 24
11. Scully, 1989, pp. 26–27
12. Scully, 1989, p. 4
13. Scully, 1989, p. 212.
14. Scully, 1989, p. xiii.
15. Preston, 1995, p. 129.
16. Preston, 1995, p. 195.
17. Semple, 1911, p. 13.
18. Gulliford, 2022, p. 14.
19. Gulliford, 2022, p. 355.
20. Scully p. 306.
21. Bortoft, 1996.

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Restoring the ability to create beautiful places

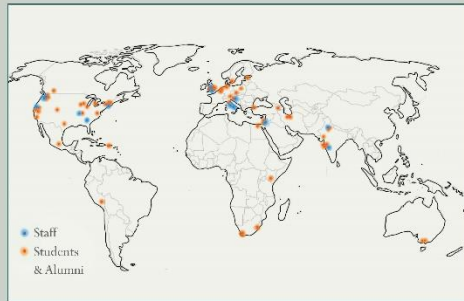
To this collaborative effort, our contribution is in **education**: training a new generation of architects, builders, and community builders capable of **building beauty**.

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Our focus is not on past traditions or high-level craft, but mainly on **attitude** and **process**: developing the frame of mind for seeing a place as a **whole**, learning the fundamental process that would bring **healing** to it, and growing into a **leader** of projects that would make it happen.



Our School



- ❖ **Knowledge base:** The theory, practice and teaching of Christopher Alexander
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- ❖ **Academic credits:** In partnership with the University of Hartford, CT
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Key Principles



Wholeness

Perceiving context and continuity in the physical world, and learning how to extend and enrich it



Beauty AND Function

Approaching beauty and function as two sides of the same coin which emerge together from the creation of wholeness (rather than beauty as an add-on)



Feeling and Intuition

Identifying the universal aspects of feeling, honing them into reliable design tools, and producing places that evoke such feeling



Hands-on Making

Engaging in the act of building as an inseparable part of the design process (rather than only as the construction of pre-planned designs)



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Questions relating to environmental and architectural phenomenology (from *EAP*, 2014 [vol. 25, no. 3, p. 4])

Questions relating to phenomenology and related interpretive approaches and methods:

What is phenomenology and what does it offer to whom?
What is the state of phenomenological research today? What are your hopes and concerns regarding phenomenology?
Does phenomenology continue to have relevance in examining human experience in relation to world?
Are there various conceptual and methodological modes of phenomenology and, if so, how can they be categorized and described?
Has phenomenological research been superseded by other conceptual approaches—e.g., post-structuralism, social-constructionism, critical theory, relationalist and non-representational perspectives, the various conceptual “turns,” and so forth?
Can phenomenology contribute to making a better world? If so, what are the most crucial phenomena and topics to be explored phenomenologically?
Can phenomenological research offer practical results in terms of design, planning, policy, and advocacy?
How might phenomenological insights be broadcast in non-typical academic ways—e.g., through artistic expression, theatrical presentation, digital evocation, virtual realities, and so forth?
What are the most important aims for future phenomenological research?
Do the various post-structural and social-constructionist criticisms of phenomenology—that it is essentialist, masculinist, authoritative, voluntarist, ignorant of power structures, and so forth—point toward its demise?

Questions relating to the natural world and environmental and ecological concerns:

Can there be a phenomenology of nature and the natural world?
What can phenomenology offer the intensifying environmental and ecological crises we face today?
Can phenomenology contribute to more sustainable actions and worlds?
Can one speak of a sustainable lifeworld?
What is a phenomenology of a *lived* environmental ethic and who are the key contributors?
Do the “sacred” and the “holy” have a role in caring for the natural world? For places? For lifeworlds broadly?
Can phenomenology contribute to environmental education? If so, in what ways?

Can there be a phenomenology of the two laws of thermodynamics, especially the second law claiming that all activities, left to their own devices, tend toward greater disorder and fewer possibilities? Are there ways whereby phenomenological understanding of lifeworld might help to reduce the accelerating disordering of natural and human worlds?

Questions relating to place, place experience, and place meaning:

Why has the theme of place become an important phenomenological topic?
Can a phenomenological understanding of place contribute to better place making?
Can phenomenology contribute to a generative understanding of place and place making?
What roles do bodily regularity and habitual inertia play in the constitution of place and place experience?
What are the lived relationships between place, sustainability, and a responsive environmental ethic?
How are phenomenological accounts to respond to post-structural interpretations of space and place as rhizomic and a “meshwork of paths” (Ingold)?
Can phenomenological accounts incorporate a “progressive sense of place” argued for by critical theorists like Doreen Massey?
Can phenomenological explications of space and place account for human differences—gender, sexuality, less-abledness, social class, cultural background, and so forth?
Can phenomenology contribute to the politics and ideology of place?
Can a phenomenological understanding of lived embodiment and habitual inertia be drawn upon to facilitate robust places and to generate mutual support and awareness among places, especially places that are considerably different (e.g., different ethnic neighborhoods or regions)?
Can phenomenology contribute to mobility, the nature of “flows,” rhizomic spaces, the places of mobility, non-spaces and their relationship to mobility and movement?

Questions relating to architecture and environmental design and policy:

Can there be a phenomenology of architecture and architectural experience and meaning?
Can phenomenology contribute to better architectural design?
How do qualities of the designable world—spatiality, materiality, lived aesthetics, environmental embodiment etc.—contribute to lifeworlds?

What are the most pertinent environmental and architectural features contributing to a lifeworld’s being one way rather than another?
What role will cyberspace and digital technologies have in 21st-century lifeworlds? How will they play a role in shaping designed environments, particularly architecture?
What impact will digital advances and virtual realities have on physical embodiment, architectural design, and real-world places? Will virtual reality eventually be able to simulate “real reality” entirely? If so, how does such a development transform the nature of lifeworld, natural attitude, place, and architecture?
Can virtual worlds become so “real” that they are lived as “real” worlds?

Other potential questions:

What is the lived relationship between people and the worlds in which they find themselves?
Can lifeworlds be made to happen self-consciously? If so, how? Through what individual efforts? Through what group efforts?
Can a phenomenological education in lifeworld, place, and environmental embodiment assist citizens and professionals in better understanding the workings and needs of real-world places and thereby contribute to their envisioning and making?
Is it possible to speak of human-rights-in-place or place justice? If so, would such a possibility move attention and supportive efforts toward improving the places in which people and other living beings find themselves, rather than focusing only on the rights and needs of individuals and groups without consideration of their place context?

Questions relating to Covid-19:

Will demands of Covid-19 have a lasting impact on physical places and bodily sociality?
Can social media and virtual realities effectively replace face-to-face presence and physical places?
Will human beings return to physical place and firsthand intercorporeality once the pandemic ends?
Can human life really survive if people lose their direct lived relationships with other human beings and an entrenched physical involvement in real-world places?
Does the crisis of Covid-19 demonstrate the central phenomenological principle that human beings-are-inured-in place? If that inurement collapses, is human life in risk?



Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Published digitally twice a year, *EAP* is a forum and clearing house for research and design that incorporate a qualitative approach to environmental and architectural experience, actions, and meanings.

One key concern of *EAP* is design, education, policy, and advocacy supporting and strengthening natural and built places that sustain human and environmental wellbeing. Realizing that a clear conceptual stance is integral to informed research and design, the editor emphasizes phenomenological approaches but also gives attention to related styles of qualitative research. *EAP* welcomes essays, letters, reviews, conference information, and so forth. Forward submissions to the editor.

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Exemplary Themes

- The nature of environmental and architectural experience;
- Sense of place, including place identity and place attachment;
- Changing conceptions of space, place, and nature;
- Home, dwelling, journey, and mobility;
- Environmental encounter and its relation to environmental responsibility and action;
- Environmental and architectural atmospheres and ambiances;
- Environmental design as place making;
- Sacred space, landscape, and architecture;
- The role of everyday things—furnishings, tools, clothing, interior design, landscape features, and so forth—in supporting people's sense of environmental wellbeing;
- The progressive impact of virtual reality on human life and how it might transform the lived nature of "real" places, buildings, and lifeworlds;
- The practice of a *lived* environmental ethic.

For additional themes and topics, see the preceding page, which outlines a series of relevant questions originally published in the 25th-anniversary issue of *EAP* in 2014 (vol. 25, no. 3, p. 4). Beginning in 2016, *EAP* is digitally open-source only. Current and back digital issues of *EAP* are available at the following digital addresses:

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