Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

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This *EAP* marks our 36th issue. Amazingly, 12 years have passed since, uncertain, we began the newsletter in early 1990. Many readers have asked us to expand in format and content. Our dilemma is time and resources: to make the kind of leap to more material, better layout, and greater circulation would require a full-time editor and a fiscal endowment that seem beyond reach at this point.

A small but steady interest in *EAP* holds constant, particularly among young people, many of whom are seeking ways of thinking and practice that will make the world more fair-minded and alive. As an example, note undergraduate Micah Issitt's letter in "membership news." Our assumption with *EAP* has always been that the forces of real change are never necessarily dramatic or well known. Our hope is that, in its own small way, *EAP* alerts interested parties to conceptual points of view and practical developments that, over time, may contribute to a significant revision of what the world and human experience is about.

Our first piece this issue is environmental psychologist Louise Chawla's review of environment-behavior researcher Herb Childress's *Landscapes of Betrayal, Landscapes of Joy*, a study of the importance of place for teenagers living in one small California town.

Next, we present an essay on phenomenological research method by landscape architect Madeleine Rothe, who recounts the process and procedures whereby she explored the experience of becoming at home for residents of a cohousing community near Denver, Colorado.

Finally, we are pleased to include an essay by architects David Wang and Julie Keen, who draw on philosopher Edmund Husserl's "transcendental" phenomenology for better understanding the process of architectural design.

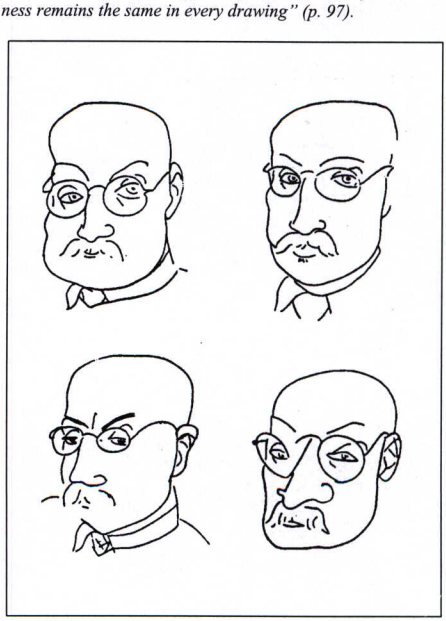
Note this issue of *EAP* includes a 2002 renewal form. Please respond as soon as possible so there will be fewer second reminders to stuff in the first 2002 issue!

CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

We have just received from Oxford University Press a pre-publication copy of *The Phenomenon of Life*, the first of four volumes in architect Christopher Alexander's long-awaited masterwork, *The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe*. This first book will be published in December, and we hope to do an extended review in the next issue of *EAP*.

In all his work, Alexander (see above) has been concerned with "wholeness," which he believes is the central characteristic of genuine environmental and architectural vitality.

In the first volume of The Nature of Order *Alexander draws on four self-portraits of artist Henri Matisse to illustrate how wholeness—in this case, Matisse's portrayal of his own personality—is much more than individual parts. "...[T]he features are different in each case: only the wholeness remains the same in every drawing" (p. 97).*



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Micah Issitt is an undergraduate at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, majoring in philosophy and biology and interested in phenomenological approaches to nature and environmental issues, particularly Goethean science [see *EAP*, winter 1998].

He writes: "I have never learned anything about Goethean phenomenology in any of my classes. I have always been a self-motivated learner and I read extensively in science and philosophy outside my class assignments. I was interested in the scientific studies of Dr. Lynn Margolis, whose work led me to James Lovelock's Gaia theory. Eventually, I learned of Heidegger, Husserl, and Merleau-Ponty and also Goethe.

"I have not received a very enthusiastic response from my teachers when I have tried to bring some phenomenological viewpoints to my classes. My teachers have never heard of this material and seem skeptical of some of the claims I have made about the accomplishments of holistic scientists. My academic environment seems to be hip deep in the reductionist philosophy of the West, and so I have yet to find others who share my interests.

"I have plans to complete an independent study project on holistic science for my senior project, and I have been trying to hone my skills as a science writer for the school paper. I hope I will be able to incorporate some of what I am learning in my articles and, hopefully, someday write for a magazine that caters to a more educated audience interested in more detailed articles on phenomenology and holistic science." Micah.issitt@mobot.org

Martha Perez recently completed her dissertation in geography at the University of Texas at Austin under the direction of geographer Robin W. Doughty. The title of the dissertation is "Reciprocity and a Sense of Place: A Phenomenological Map of Haitian Space." The abstract reads as follows:

This dissertation is a humanistic study of place and explores how local knowledge shapes production of space. The thesis propounds that culture is embodied in spatial practice....

Multiple disciplinary layers support this approach. First, it is based on a theoretical framework that engages the literature on the production of space, namely, Lefebvre, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Walter. Second, this study develops an appropriate investigative method based on a sense of place utilizing current post-structural, experiential, and ethnographic literature, namely James, Stoller, Stewart, Friedson, Desjarlais, Feld, and Jackson.

Third, it explores the literature on Haitian Vodoun and studies of spatial and socio-economic organizing principles of their lifeworld (reciprocity-based exchange, earth-based systems of knowledge), namely, Brown, Anglade, Wolf, Schaedel, Deren, and Desmangles.

Fourth, one important aspect of this work is linking organizing principles of pre-capitalist lifeways to current literature on sustainability and argues how development processes could integrate other ways of knowledge—reciprocity-based. It explores the literature on the cultural assumptions in development initiatives and ideas of our own ecological crisis vis-à-vis the wisdom in kin-oriented systems, namely Denevan, Marsh, Leopold, White, Berry, Abrams, Broomfield, Doughty, Mugerauer, Marx, and Redclift....

The study incorporates fieldwork (three site visits in 1996, 1998, and 1999) with a narrative of Haitian space. This narrative follows James' phenomenological approach to religion and integrates: (1) participant observation of Vodoun ceremonies, (2) journal records and interpretation of experiences, and (3) interviews and personal communications. 908 East 53rd Road, Austin, TX 78751

BOOK ON PHILOSOHY OF PLACE

We've just learned of Australian philosopher J.E. Malpas's *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Malpas emphasizes that "what we are as living, thinking, experiencing beings is inseparable from the places in which we live—our lives are saturated by the places, and by the things and other persons intertwined with those places, through which we move, in which our actions are located, and with respect to which we orient and locate ourselves."

Malpas calls this idea "Proust's Principle" and uses Proust's writings to demonstrate "the place-saturated character of human life."

BOOK REVIEW

Herb Childress, 2000. *Landscapes of Betrayal, Landscapes of Fear: Curtisville in the Lives of its Teenagers.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

In this book, Childress tells a tale of teenagers and two towns. Most of his ethnographic description centers around *Curtisville*, the fictional name of a rural town of about 15,000 residents in northern California; but he compares it at key points in his story to *Union*, the fictional name of an older, nearby urban center.

Childress notes that Union's dense urban center, a legacy of the 19th century, could largely fit into the property that Kmart and its parking lot occupy in Curtisville, which had been historically a home for the rural working class, a place of trailer parks and humble frame houses on unpaved roads. By the 1970s, however, the town was marketed by real estate boosters as a place with cheap land and loose regulations, and therefore a haven for developers and home buyers. The developers had carved up the town with subdivisions where single family homes that range from the modest to the extravagant sit back on wide cul-de-sacs.

When Childress arrived in 1994 to do a year-long ethnography of teenagers' everyday lives in Curtisville, the town's Main Street had recently been revitalized: five freshly paved lanes for traffic and a brand new Kmart, McDonald's, Burger King, Taco Bell, Denny's and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Childress followed local teenagers through this town that had grown, he notes, in the most characteristically American suburban style—a simultaneous "everywhere" and "nowhere" on the American scene.

Some of the young people in his story came from the trailers and shacks that still stand as reminders of the town's rural past, almost invisible on their still unpaved roads. Others came from the subdivisions that are almost equally invisible, set back among trees behind their walled entry streets. In the large local high sch

ool that draws students from a 500-square-mile area, these young peoples' lives intersected but often didn't overlap. In his descriptions of everyday life in these settings, Childress tells a tale of literally grounded theory.

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Childress arrived at Curtisville High School with plans for a carefully structured study. He distributed a questionnaire to all 800 students in the high school, conducted structured interviews with over 40 students, and had another 40 fill out a detailed time-and-location report on a given date. He did careful observation mapping of students in the school and interviewed the principal and some of the teachers. Near the end of the first semester, he realized that he knew a lot *about* the students he followed and watched and interviewed, but that he didn't *know* them:

> Through these exercises, I learned what one might expect. I learned about frequency and location, about pattern and direction, about likelihood and density. I learned almost nothing about meaning, almost nothing about what kids thought about all those places they used.

Given that Childress' goal was to understand the meaning of places to teenagers in this everywhere/nowhere town, he found himself at a moment of research reckoning. When he set out:

> I wanted to know how kids chose places; how they evaluated places; how they used places and how they modified places. I wanted to learn about conflicts between teenagers and adults over places, and how those conflicts were managed and resolved.

The research tool that he needed for this purpose, Childress discovered, was offered by the students themselves. As their conversations with this odd adult addition to their school grew longer, they began to include him in their activities. He became, in research parlance, a successful "participant observer," although Childress discusses the inaptness of this term, noting that he was alternately either participant or observer, but that it was impossible to fill both roles at the same time.

The more realistic term for the method that evolved, Childress found, was that the young people had reached out to him as a 'friend'. "Ignorant of the rules of research and thus wiser than I," Chil-

dress observed, they "taught me what I needed to learn by the simple human effort of trying to make friends with this strange person who roamed among them" (p. xviii).

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Childress entered the world of Curtisville teenagers, however, not only with the goal of understanding, but also with the goal of "learning enough to tell the world about their lives and places, being their public advocate; and although these goals disappeared constantly under the real responsibility of being a good friend"(p. xvii), he returned to these initial goals in the end.

After the year of fieldwork was over, the friendships served the final purpose of providing him with the material he needed to demonstrate adequate understanding in a dissertation in Environment-Behavior Studies at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and beyond that, for the public advocacy that this book represents.

This balancing act between friendship and professional goals, Childress notes, is more complicated than research guides acknowledge. The modern activity of ethnography has generated strange new forms of friendship that codes of ethics only loosely comprehend.

Childress implies much about these complexities—complexities that he could have, and should have, made more explicit. How does one balance giving advice and counsel, as a friend, with the desire to create an "unbiased space," in the phenomenological sense, in which people show themselves on their own terms? When does one just accept and record the circumstances in which people live, and when should one intervene? How long-term a commitment is a research friendship?

I have heard that after Childress' book was published, it was outselling the latest adventures of Harry Potter in the Curtisville bookstore. How much confidentiality can detailed published ethnographies really provide, even if all names are changed? How can the publication of personal disclosures be reconciled with friendship? These are basic questions that merited more attention.

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In terms of his goals of sharing his understanding and serving as a public advocate, Childress effectively achieves these goals by weaving the stories of 11 teenagers together with his keen observations of the places that betrayed them or afforded them joy. His narrative and descriptions are rich in youth culture, but there is a large literature of cultural studies already in print, whereas *Landscapes of Betrayal, Landscapes of Joy* adds to a much rarer literature that notices the interdependence between the stories of lives and their settings. Childress mentions that as he wrote up his material, the motto of a colleague, "It's the *place*, stupid!" was never far from his desk.

Thus he combines his account of Curtisville teenagers' everyday lives with maps and cross-sections of Curtisville's Main Street, downtown Union, and a popular mall, with plans of the high school and typical homes, and with the layout of typical streets, showing graphically how certain physical settings make certain experiences, such as casual neighboring or serendipitous discovery, next to impossible.

He shows how the most successful teenagers, in his eyes, create alternative worlds for sociability and creativity in the limited spaces under their control. He shows how teenagers are systematically designed out of most public spaces, be it in suburban sprawl like Curtisville or a dense downtown like Union. As diverse as Curtisville teenagers are, he notes:

> ...they share one central fact, a fact they share with teenagers in Maine and Wisconsin and Missouri. Teenagers are defined through our civic, legal and educational institutions as a class "minors" and that class status intrudes on everything they try to do. School, jobs, home, sex, curfew, parks, driving, recreation, and almost all other facets of teenage life are impacted through the legal status of "minor." To class someone as a minor is to charge them with incompetence, with volatility, with the inability to manage their own affairs. Whenever kids try to find some joy within this bleak landscape, they almost always find that there is a rule against what they try to do.

This rule about rules, Childress found, was as true of a designated youth center as everywhere else. Under these conditions, it was no wonder that for a number of the young people who let Childress into their lives, their most important place was their car.

In some of the book's most memorable passages, Childress describes how capably these 16 through 18 year olds *can* manage when they are given a chance, whether it be producing a play, organizing a night-long music "happening," surfing, cooking for a restaurant, or coping with a family suicide.

In other memorable passages, he shows the risks when these young people are not given channels to grow into maturity, and their lives become bound in an empty search for agency and excitement through sex, drugs and aimless movement from one unsatisfying place to another.

Ultimately, Childress argues, Curtisville High School and other Curtisville spaces were created to manufacture and serve a labor force that will be passive, unattached to the local, ready to relocate as needed, intensely private, satisfied with private consumption, and ready to accept failure as a personal fault. There are high risks to such an economy, culture and landscape, he shows, including not least of all the loss of joy.

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I read Childress' book just as I sent off to the copy editor *Growing Up in an Urbanizing World*, a book that I edited based on an eight-nation revival of the "Growing Up in Cities" project that was originally conceived by urban planner Kevin Lynch. "Growing Up in Cities" involves preteens and young teens in evaluating their urban environments and in defining their own ideas for improving community quality. Based on this eight-nation experience, the stories that Childress tells ring true. True, at least, of our "Anglo" locations: Oakland, California; Melbourne, Australia; and Northampton, England.

The conditions Childress describes, however, were much less true of a poor district in Buenos Aires, a Bangalore, slum, or old Trondheim districts in Norway where we also worked, where young people had much greater freedom of movement, evidence that they were valued by the adults in their society, and a much greater variety of public and semi-public places available to them.

We in the United States tend to assume that we are a model for the rest of the world in terms of the most advanced standard of living. Childress' book and experience from the "Growing Up in Cities" project indicate that, at least when it comes to the lives of our young people, we need to re-examine our assumptions.

One of the ingredients in Childress' success in sharing his understanding of the meaning of Curtisville places to its teenagers and acting as a public advocate for their needs is his combination of research methods. Although most of his narrative is phenomenological, he is able to place the lives of the 11 teenagers he follows in the context of the questionnaires, structured interviews and time-and-location reports that he also collected, demonstrating that their desires and dilemmas were widely shared. Although we must turn to phenomenology to understand the meanings of places, public advocates also need this more quantitative authority if they expect to be heard.

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I have a few criticisms of Childress' analysis. In his final chapter, his attempt to cast his conclusions as a series of "modernist" versus "existential" ideas oversimplifies and stereotypes these terms in a way that does justice neither to philosophy nor to his material. His use of Csikszentmihalyi's concept of "flow" is a useful elaboration of his idea of "joy," but sometimes it is too broadly applied. The terms are not simply synonymous.

These are small objections, however, to a book that amply deserves to be heard. If the book makes little impression on the ongoing development of our communities in the United States, at least Childress will have shown how powerful are the forces arrayed against that development.

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Phenomenology as a Research Method: The Example of Becoming at Home in a Cohousing Community

Madeleine Rothe

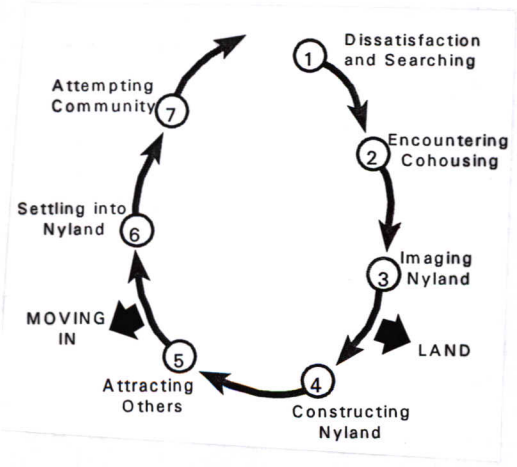
Rothe is a landscape architect. This essay is a revised version of chapter 4 of her master's thesis, which examines phenomenologically the process of becoming at home for 12 residents of the Nyland cohousing community outside of Denver, Colorado. As illustrated in the figure below, Rothe portrays this process as a series of seven stages and suggests that purchasing the land for development (after stage 3) and moving into the community (after stage 5) provide important external "spurs" for motivating the process onward. A thorough discussion of this becoming-at-home process is provided in Rothe, 2000. *Mcrothe@aol.com*

This essay reviews the phenomenological method that I used in my master's thesis (Rothe, 2000) to comprehend the process of becoming at home in a cohousing community outside of Denver, Colorado.

Staying true to the phenomenological mode of inquiry, I attempt here to capture the essence of my research method as I experienced and lived it. As I outline the steps that I followed in my method of study, I attempt to weave in some of the details of my study as well as the impact that I have personally felt as the study progressed.

Finally, it will become obvious that this journey has not progressed in a straightforward path but instead has followed a meander that continues to be full of meaning.

Figure 1: The stages of "becoming at home" in the Nyland Cohousing Community (Rothe, 2000, p. 106).



Phenomenology as Journeying

Journey is defined as "travel or passage from one place to another" (Webster, 1988, p.652). There are different kinds of journeys that we undertake throughout our lives, for example, we can talk about traveling to some place such as Albuquerque or we can speak about journey as something more symbolic such as searching for meaning about a particular event such as divorce, illness or death.

My point is that *often things make more sense when we reflect back upon them.* This phenomenon is important to keep in mind as I discuss my method of study because, while I was going through it, I didn't always grasp why I was doing something but I listened to my intuition anyway (which requires a certain amount of confidence and trust).

In other words, my methodology was not clear from the beginning but rather slowly evolved and developed. I learned and adjusted many things along the way. Million (1992, p.66) explains her experience this way:

> In brief, there is no prescribed procedural manual. The most precise and formal description of method is a ...circle constituted by a series of "back and forth," apparently circular, encounters that invariably moved the researcher more deeply, and with emerging clarity, into the phenomena under study.

Hence, the analogy of "journeying along a path" seems an appropriate metaphor for describing how this study progressed. The phenomenological mode of inquiry compels us to study a phenomenon such as the process of becoming at home as a "lived experience." In other words, we are challenged to "see" anew, to discover and to search for thematic understanding while we live the experience—all of which cannot be forced or approached too aggressively or rapidly.

In order to proceed with a discussion of method in a clear and organized manner, it is helpful to con-

sider Van Manen's work (1990, pp.30-31), in which he outlined six activities for researching lived-experience:

1. turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the act of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

1. Searching for the Right Path

Although there is no right or wrong path, anyone who has tried to write a thesis can recount that one of the first steps is to choose a topic of interest. Van Manen suggests that we not only choose a topic of interest but that we select a theme that "commits us to the world." I stumbled upon cohousing as a topic for several reasons that I will explain and in retrospect appear serendipitous.

Being a single parent during my graduate studies meant that I was challenged to juggle many responsibilities, both at home and at school. Meanwhile, this was also a time when I met other single parents who were also dealing with the same demands of juggling responsibilities. Having this common bond, it seems natural that we learned to support one another.

At the same time, because I was studying architecture, I began to notice the discrepancy between our needs as single parents and the inadequacy in the design of traditional family housing to meet our unique needs. For example, although I knew that it was feasible to move into a house with another single-parent household, I was also aware that doing so would be a rather difficult task that could possibly "ruin a good friendship."

The problem, as I perceived it, was in the design of the single-family house in that it would be difficult to be autonomous as single parent families in spaces that were designed for traditional two-parent families who commonly share much of the interior spaces.

In this way, because of a need that I experienced in my life, I was made aware of a phenomenon that not only intrigued me but that also challenged me to search for more compatible design responses. I don't recall exactly when or how I came to hear about the concept of cohousing, but I do recall that when it was explained to me, I had a sense that I had found what I had been searching for—so, in this way, cohousing became the subject that "committed me to the world."

I followed a similar path in my search for an appropriate methodology for my thesis. Initially, I wrote my proposal using the more familiar empirical approach that included a predetermined conceptual framework and hypotheses. At the same time, I began to learn more about cohousing by reading various publications—e.g., *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (McCamant & Durrett, 1994). Over time, I gathered a wealth of information about cohousing and became familiar with the people who were involved in promoting cohousing around the country.

At this point, I again have to interject some background history that is relevant to why I was eventually drawn to the phenomenological approach. Being a special-education teacher, much of my training prior to graduate school had involved dealing with student behaviors through the use of behavior management and behavior-modification techniques not only as a teaching tool but as a way of explaining human behavior.

During my ten years of teaching, I found these techniques effective for training students to learn simple concrete and mechanical tasks necessary to master vocational skills such as learning to clean a hotel room or working in a restaurant dish room. When it came to more complex issues, such as those dealing with social behaviors, however, I found that behavior-management techniques were not nearly as effective.

Then, in the fall of 1995 (after I had already submitted my original thesis proposal), I enrolled in one of Prof. David Seamon's classes and was exposed to phenomenology as a method of study. Although it took some time to grasp what this method was about, I was initially fascinated because it seemed to address some of the unresolved questions I already had experienced in my career as a teacher. I was sincerely drawn to the fact that phenomenol-

ogical work contributed to a deep understanding of human experience.

In this sense, learning about phenomenology—a coincidental discovery—provided a method for answering questions to which I was already searching for answers. The result was that, like my substantive topic of cohousing, this method of study also "committed me to the world."

2. Commencing the Journey

Once one has found both a topic of study and a method that he or she feels committed to, Van Manen suggests that one must next investigate lived-experience as opposed to simply learning about it through discussions, journals, books, and other secondhand, cerebral accounts. At this point in my research, I reorganized both my approach to my thesis as well as my thesis committee.

It was also around this time that I became familiar with Louise Million's phenomenological study in which she identified eight stages of involuntary displacement as a forced journey (Million, 1992). Additionally, since I was already familiar with some of the existing cohousing sites as well as the names of people involved in cohousing, I was equipped for this next step of exploring the life-world of cohousing.

I chose to study the Nyland Cohousing Community near Denver, Colorado, primarily because it was the closest existing community to Manhattan, Kansas, where I was living at the time. As it turned out, this community, as one of the earliest cohousing communities in the U.S., was one of the more established—a fact that is crucial, since, in studying a phenomenon such as the process of becoming at home, time is of the essence. Obviously, it takes time for people to become at home in a place. This truism also points to a weakness in my study, since, at the time I conducted my interviews, the longest any members had actually resided at Nyland was four-and-a-half years.

Taking the first step is always the most challenging in beginning a new journey and, in this case, that step was making a first contact with someone who actually lived at Nyland. As my initial contact, I approached an individual who not only lived at Nyland but who was involved in promoting cohousing around the country. I explained my interest in cohousing during our initial conversations and offered to volunteer my time during my initial visit to Nyland. My goal during this first visit was not only to meet residents but also to begin to experience firsthand the everyday lifeways and ambience of a cohousing community.

Additionally, a couple of weeks preceding my first visit to the community, I spoke by telephone to Louise Million about my work. She provided me with useful insights in organizing the information that I would be gathering, advised me on the questions that comprised my proposed interview schedule, informed me about potential issues to consider for my study, and walked me through her experiences with the research method.

She also related the amount of time she had spent not only in conducting her interviews but also in the writing of her dissertation. Finally, when I asked her what she would do differently if she had to do her research all over again, she gave me this wonderful piece of advice—*to trust and have confidence in the method and the process.*

The success of my initial visit to Nyland as well as the encouragement and enthusiasm that I received from Million indicated that I was prepared to move forward with my study. Descriptive evidence for examining the process of becoming at home was gathered from twelve residents of Nyland over a period of six months. The specific method utilized for obtaining this experiential information was in-depth interviews, which were tape recorded with the consent of the participants and subsequently transcribed.

3. Considering the Structures Along the Way

Van Manen suggests that another activity for researching lived experience is "reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon" (1990, p.30). In this sense, reflection implies attempting to capture the essential meaning of the experience as lived—in other words, its *essence* or that which grounds the things of our experience (ibid. p.31). In this way, phenomenological research involves "reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude about everyday life" (ibid.).

It is important to reiterate that it is primarily *through direct contact with the experience as lived that the essence or structure of meaning of a par-*

ticular phenomenon is revealed. In light of this statement, phenomenological reflection is both an easy and difficult task. For instance, everyone has an understanding of the meaning of becoming at home in a place from the perspective of *his or her* own lived experience. However, it is a much more challenging task to articulate a reflective determination and explication of what becoming at home means. This task demonstrates the difference between our pre-reflective lived understanding of the meaning of becoming at home and our reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the lived meaning of becoming at home.

Thus, it is impossible to grasp the meaning of an experience such as becoming at home by a single definition due to the complexities associated with the multi-dimensional aspects of the phenomenon. Rather, it is the themes as structures of the experience that embody the evolving image and meaning of the experience. The interpretive work of clarifying the nature of a lived experience such as becoming at home is described as a process of insightful invention, discovery, or disclosure whereby formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but an approach for "seeing" (Van Manen, 1990, p.79; Million, 1992, p.64).

Attempts at understanding the phenomenon of becoming at home at Nyland occurred at several levels over an extended period of time. Procedures used for "seeing" the nature of the lived experience of becoming at home included (but were not limited to) the following:

- reviewing the phenomenological literature on place and home;
- visiting Nyland and experiencing firsthand the lifeworld of a cohousing community;
- keeping notes about my experiences as I visited and volunteered at the Nyland community;
- interviewing participants and later transcribing the interviews with members of the cohousing community;
- analyzing and interpreting the responses of the twelve participants who were interviewed;
- photographing, sketching, and writing as an attempt to communicate and understand the experience at hand.

In other words, the fundamental purpose of "seeing" and reflecting on the lifeworld experience of becoming at home was to disclose the existential meaning of the experience of becoming at home by bringing to the foreground the structures of the phenomenon so that it would eventually lead to an uncovering of essential themes. As Van Manen explains, "in determining the universal or essential quality of a theme, [the] concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is" (1990, p.107).

Thus, essential themes of the process of becoming at home were identified by asking such questions as: Does the nature of the lived experience of becoming at home change if we alter or delete this theme? Does the phenomenon of becoming at home lose fundamental meaning without this theme?

Initially, I approached the transcripts from my interviews individually and became thoroughly familiar with each one so that I could analyze them in terms of broad issues. During this phase, I also recorded descriptive key words on 3" x 5" note cards to characterize the content of each interview. As another approach, I cross-analyzed the interviews by "cutting them up" and arranged the pieces on 3" x 7" cards by similar topics. In this way, I began to identify thematic descriptions whereby I could decide on the shared aspect of the experience of becoming at home and identify potential, more general themes. In comparing these descriptions, I searched to identify those "moments" that seemed to be at the center of the event for Nyland participants as they described their experiences of becoming at home.

In the end, my overall experience in searching for these essential themes can best be described as filled with tension. On one hand, feeling apprehensive about not being able to uncover the essential themes in a nice neat package by a certain time and having a sense of wanting to read more or perform one other "action" in order to force the themes to appear versus having faith in the research process itself and listening to my intuition while it suggested that I had gained some valuable insights along the way and more fully understood the process of becoming at home than I did in the past.

In the end, it was this struggle to understand the essence of the phenomenon with emerging clarity

that led to the uncovering of the themes in a sensitive and compelling manner.

4. Writing as Research

Another of Van Manen's six actions for conducting phenomenological research involves communcating the lived experience through the art of writing and rewriting. In phenomenological research, this act of writing brings forth the structures of the lived experience. In other words, striving to express thoughts in as clear and precise a manner as possible is another *method* for understanding the structure of the phenomenon. In this way, the process of writing is at the heart of the research enterprise.

As a method for understanding a phenomenon, writing is a reflective act in which there is an attempt to cognitively bring to the surface the appropriate language to describe self-consciously the unself-conscious experiences of the taken-for-granted lifeworld. Exactly because experiences of the lifeworld are typically *unself-conscious, pre-reflective, and self-evident*, there is invariably a struggle to uncover the layers of meaning that describe these experiences.

Consequently, one may come to realize the limits of language in that words somehow fall short of being able to fully express lifeworld experiences.

However, much like speech that rises out of silence and returns to silence, the deep truth of the lived experience seems to lie just beyond words, on the other side of language (Van Manen, 1990, p.112). Silence is to the phenomenologist the stillness out of which and against which text is constructed in much the same way as the architect must continuously be aware of the nature of space out of which and against which building occurs (ibid.). By implying more than what is explicitly fixed on paper, this silence around words aspires to disclose the deeper meaning of the lifeworld. In short, a certain silence is experienced when in the presence of truth (ibid., p.114).

Likewise, to "see" the deeper significance of the lived experience, the themes that have been identified must be presumed (by the reader) as appropriate. That is to say, the description of the themes should reawaken our basic experience of the phenomenon it describes in such as way that we experience the foundational nature of the phenomenon itself. It is in this way that phenomenology is an effective method because it permits us "to see the deeper significance, or meaning structures of the lived experience it describes" (ibid., p.122).

Conclusively, the act of writing fixes our thoughts on paper in that it seeks to externalize what is somehow internal. In attempting to grasp the meaning of a lived experience as it presents itself to the consciousness, writing distances us from the immediate experience yet also draws us more closely to the lifeworld. Barritt states that "to write is to learn about the adequacy or inadequacy of your thoughts" (1984, p.16). In this way, because the aim of writing is to create text that does justice to the fullness of the human experience, "to write is to measure the depth of things as well as to come to a sense of one's own depth" (ibid., p.127).

My own personal experience of writing as a component of my phenomenological journey can be described as rewarding and enriching. I was surprised that the process of writing about becoming at home could give me such a deep sense of satisfaction and fulfillment in spite of the fact that I often felt frustrated or unproductive.

I attribute this satisfaction to two factors: first, because I was writing about an experience of great personal interest to me; and secondly, because it required a great deal of effort, time and patience on my part to strive to say what it was I really wanted to convey through the creation of text that spoke sincerely about the human experience of becoming at home. In the end, I not only learned about the topic at hand, but also about myself.

5. Meandering in a Directed Way

Maintaining a strong and oriented relationship to the lived experience is another of Van Manen's proposals for conducting phenomenological research. I call this "meandering in a directed way" because the phrase describes my experience as I searched for answers to the fundamental research question of how one becomes at home in a cohousing community like Nyland.

My research process entailed not so much asking "where am I going to end up?" but rather reflecting on the meaning of the journey along the way. In other words, the focus was on the experience as I sought to interpret, to explain and to deeply understand the phenomenon of what it means to become at home.

Similarly, van Manen states that "to do research, to theorize is to be involved in the consideration of

the text, the meaning...that render a human science text a certain power and convincing validity (van Manen" (1990, p.151). To achieve this end, the research and writing need to be "oriented, strong, rich, and deep" (ibid.).

According to van Manen, being oriented means that we do not separate theory from life, but rather that "we are researchers oriented to the world" (ibid.). Being oriented in the case of this thesis meant that, oftentimes, I felt little separation between myself as the researcher and myself as being on my own personal quest (in which I was searching for answers to the question of what it means to become-at-home in a place). The research qualities of strength and richness were pursued while attempting to capture the essence of the lived experience in such a way that it both broke through the abstractions and yet was engaging.

Finally, as the quality that gives the lived experience its meaning, depth implies that some questions may have to remain unanswered or ambiguous. As van Manen explains,

> ...as we struggle for meaning, as we struggle to overcome this resistance, a certain openness is required. And the measure of the openness needed to understand something is also a measure of its depthful nature. Rich descriptions, which explore the meaning structures beyond what is immediately experienced, gain a dimension of depth. Research and theorizing that simplifies life, without reminding us of its fundamental ambiguity and mystery, thereby distorts and shallows out life, failing to reveal depthful character and contours (1990, pp.152-153).

6. Balancing Parts and Whole

Van Manen suggested that a final dimension of conducting research on lived experience is "balancing the research context by considering parts and whole" (1990, p.31). In phenomenological work, one can easily "get so buried in writing that one no longer knows where to go, what to do next, and how to get out of a hole that one has dug" (ibid., p.33; Carpeneto, 1996, p.111-112). For instance, in posing the question "What is the process of becoming at home?" I had to be continually mindful of balancing the overall design of the research against the significance that the parts contributed to the total work.

The question then becomes "how do I balance a strong, committed, personal involvement in the lived experience of becoming at home while objectively giving a thoughtful interpretation in the written text?" In other words, reaching an equilibrium between the parts and the whole "means living in the tensions that phenomenological research presents" (ibid., p.113). For instance, I experienced a similar tension in writing this discussion of research method in that it has been necessary to present the methodology in some form of order (i.e. in a linear progression) even though my research process could better be described as a back-and-forth movement between each of Van Manen's six research activities.

Correspondingly, finding an equilibrium between the parts and the whole continued to be a challenge as I wrote my interpretive chapters on the process of becoming at home in the Nyland cohousing community. That interpretation, however, is another topic, which the interested reader can find in my full report (Rothe, 2000).

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Intentionality and the Production of Architectural Design(s): An Application of Section 37 of Husserl's *Ideas*

David Wang & Julie Keen

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Edmund Husserl's phenomenology holds that the human consciousness is not independent from the things that it is conscious *of*. Rather, consciousness and the object of which it is conscious form a unity.

This doctrine of "the intentionality of consciousness" is well known. However, in the realm of architectural phenomenology, particularly in relation to the phenomenology of the *production* of architectural designs, Husserl's theory has not been much referenced. And by "architectural design" we mean the generation of figural graphic schemes that represent built forms. This short paper summarizes one attempt to use Husserl's theory to explain an instance of architectural design production.

We did the exercise for two reasons. First is simply to demonstrate how Husserl's theory explains the production of an architectural design. Second, by this example we suggest a broader claim, which is that Husserl's theory does not describe a rare or esoteric reality, but rather describes everyday productions of architectural design.

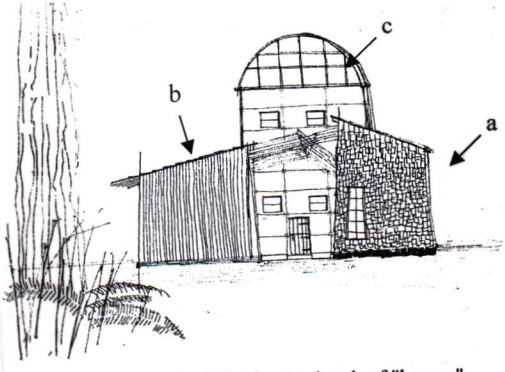

Figure 1: Julie Keen's sketch of "house."

Method

Our method was first to go through the process of designing a concept: "house." How does one go about it? How does Husserl's theory explain the process? Julie Keen, a 5th year B.Arch. student, agreed to do the exercise (Figure 1). After the exercise (and it was not known to her that she would be asked this), she was asked to recall in detail each step in her decision process during the exercise. Julie jotted down her recollections, and here is an excerpt. (Note, all of Julie's descriptions of her experience will be in italics):

"I began to sketch the face of the house. I sketched the outline of the simple shape on the right side of the page (a). Then I drew the outline of the figure on the left (b). Then I began to draw lines that crossed between the two figures. They sort of intersect. Hmmm, I need windows, so I drew a large window on the first figure (a). I then started to draw 'L' shapes on the face of this figure. I repeated this for a while until I had filled the whole face. Hmmm, then I drew some rocks at the base of it. Afterward, I studied the empty figure on the left and thought I would draw lines on it, something other than the 'L'. After I had filled that face I realized I needed a door. So between the two figures I drew a door, then a wall then a rounded roof form (c). I detailed some cladding for this form; it was something different from the previous patterns. I then drew some lines to indicate the ground on which the house sat. Then I drew a tree, and some ferns at the base..."

We then looked to Section 37 of Husserl's *Ideas* for a theoretical explanation of her process. This section of the *Ideas* is a landmark point in Husserl's text in that it summarizes previous material on "intentional experience." It is also a seminal section relative to design generation. The section concludes with an explanation of why we have a built world:

"cities, streets with street-lighting ... dwellings, furniture, works of art ... and so forth." (p. 123).

When she did the exercise, Julie had not fully engaged with *Ideas* in general, nor with Section 37 in particular. (The exercise was part of an independent study on Husserl's phenomenology; the exercise took place early in the semester).

We sorted Julie's testimonial into a sequential framework with theoretical material from Section 37. The theoretical sequence is outlined as follows.

The Unity of Consciousness and Conception

By the "intentionality of consciousness," Husserl holds that, at any instant, the consciousness and the thing that it is conscious *of* forms an integral unity. This departs from the Cartesian model, in which the consciousness is seen as a "thinking I/eye" (a subject) disconnected from the world of empirical objects. Husserl unifies subject with object in an experiential unity that can become the basis for understanding all of experience as having a phenomenological immediacy. This may be diagrammed as follows:

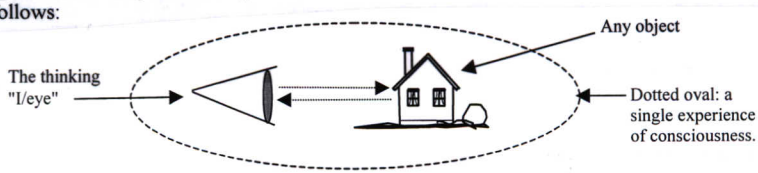

Figure 2. The unity of the intentionality of consciousness.

The dotted oval denotes a unity of the conscious "I/eye" with what the I/eye perceives. But Husserl's theory goes beyond the unity of consciousness with physical objects in the empirical world. It also includes unities of consciousness with objects that a subject *thinks*, which in turn connects to all of her past memories. As Husserl points out in an earlier section of *Ideas*: "Every perception of the thing has such a zone of background intuitions ... and this also is a 'conscious experience'" (Section 35, p. 117).

On this view, then, in Julie's process of drawing the concept "house," unities of consciousness were in play before any empirical lines were drawn on paper. That is to say, given a task to draw the concept "house,"for Julie, meant engaging in unities of consciousness with thoughts/memories of "house" unique to her past experience. It is out of these ephemeral unities of consciousness that the first lines were drawn. Thus: *"I began to sketch the face of the house. I sketched the outline of the simple shape on the right side of the page (a)..."* and so on.

Later in the process, after more conceptual grasp of Section 37, Julie's explanation of the start of the process includes this:

Wanting to sketch a house, I am directing myself toward a house (intentional object) with my "mental eye," and thus engaged I proceed to sketch.

However, how does the sketch-design proceed, on Husserl's theory? What informs Julie's mind-hand as the driving force behind the emergence of the sketch? Section 37 answers this question by defining the intentionality of consciousness as not a static (as perhaps implied by the graphic of Figure 2), but rather a very dynamic, process.

The "*Double Intentio*"

Husserl holds that any engagement with an object (mental or physical) in intentionality includes connections to *value*. His wording goes like this: "...Not merely representing of the matter in question, but also the appreciating which includes this representing, has the modus of actuality...." (p. 122).

In other words, any intentional unity involves an intention in a double sense, what Husserl calls a *double intentio* (p. 122). It is not only the matter of the object in its brute form, as it were, that is in the unity, but also the affective connotations that come with it. Earlier in 37, Husserl describes the intentional act as a "glancing-towards" that can render these acts affective realities: "fanciful in fancy, approving in approval... and so forth" (p. 121). Thus,

Section 37 is entitled not only "the Noticing," but also "the Noticing that *Apprehends*."

Applied to Julie's case, her ability to proceed with the sketch involves a symphonic engagement with many affective unities of consciousness that, in turn or in sync, drove her hand to produce the sketch. For instance, when she says, *Hmmm, I need windows, so I drew a large window ...(or) Hmmm, then I drew some rocks at the base of (the house)....*

These "Hmmms" actually reflect extremely rich juxtapositions of value-laden unities of consciousness. Julie is referencing her past experience, and somehow windows at this or that place, rocks at this or that location, emerge on the physical drawing as representations of deeply meaningful associations Julie has with the notion of "house."

(We might also add that this explanation can explain why a designer would reject an idea after it is drawn, namely, that it somehow does not jibe with her sense of an accurate graphic expression of those meaningful associations. Design can then be understood as a struggle to reify ephemeral connections to value that have high connotative values for the designer).

In our analysis of this process, we tried to capture this symphonic meshing of intentionalities with diagrams such as the following:

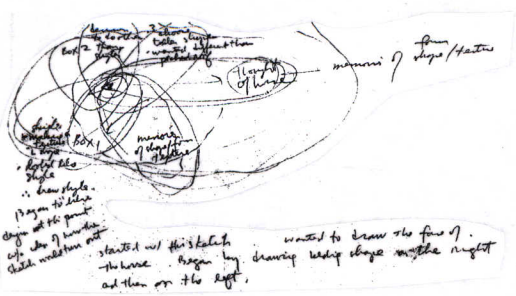

Figure 3

It can be seen that the simple unity of Figure 2 has been greatly expanded to multiple "ovals" that designate different unities involving memory, associations, preferences, in short, acts of appreciation. Together, these all form a meta-unity of consciousness that approximates the intentional map of a simple sketch of "house."

The Represented Object

Husserl relies upon this complex dynamism of the intentionality of consciousness to further introduce two terms that are key relative to design production. One is "modification." The other is "representation." Together, the words suggest that the double *intentio* suffices to motivate the generation of new schemas to the consciousness that did not exist before. Here is Husserl:

> ... the possibility of a modification remains an essential property of these grounded acts, a modification whereby their full intentional objects become noticed, and in this sense 'represented objects,' which now ... become capable of serving as bases for explanations, relations, conceptual renderings, and predications... (p. 123).

In this light, consider Julie's account once again. This passage relates to how she developed the shingles on the house wall, along with her decisions on the placement of architectural elements:

Afterward, I studied the empty figure on the left and thought I would draw lines on it, something other than the 'L'. After I had filled that face I realized I needed a door. So between the two figures I drew a door, then a wall then a rounded roof form (c).

Julie's account is a simple illustration of Husserl's dense words, which, simply put, reveals that the intentionality of consciousness inherently drives the production of figurative schemes in dynamic ways. For Julie, it was the simple placement of cladding on the house, and where the door and roof should be located. But these "modifications and representations" are not simplistic, because they involve acts of value and appreciation connected to Julie's store of past experience, experiences that become engaged into intentional unities in the process of design.

The result is built forms of many kinds, in fact, the totality of our built environment. And so Husserl concludes Section 37 with this:

> Thanks to this objectification we find facing us in natural setting, and therefore as members of the natural world, not natural things merely, but values and practical objects of every kind, cities,

streets and street-lighting arrangements, dwellings, furniture, works of art, books, tools and so forth (p. 123).

Conclusion

In this short paper, we have shown how Husserl's theory of the intentionality of consciousness enables an explanation of an unpretentious design procedure, the sketching of a simple house. And because it was an unpretentious design procedure, it is clear that it can represent design processes that occur every day, and every where.

In other words, the production of graphic design schemes can be explained by an understanding of the dynamic nature of the intentionality of consciousness in its ability to involve the whole person in the design process. Furthermore, Husserl's notions of "modification" and "representation" in Section 37 help to understand how that dynamism can be the basis for the generation of figurative designs.

This in turn gives insight into why, from Vitruvius to Gropius, theories of architectural education have always sought to include a wide sampling of fields of knowledge as necessary for the architect's basic instruction (Vitruvius: not only drawing, but geometry, history, music, medicine, philosophy… *Ten Books*, 1/3). It is an inherent recognition that the production of good design requires the creation of a wide store of value-associations, so that the actual figural production can be informed by a rich variety of intentionalities of consciousness.