



# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology Newsletter

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This *EAP* is the last for 1999 and marks the completion of our tenth year of publication. We enclose a renewal form and ask you to respond promptly so that we will not need to send a second reminder.

When we started the newsletter in 1990, we were uncertain about how much reader interest there would be. Over the years, membership has not grown dramatically but, instead, has stayed relatively steady at about 130-150 readers. Some subscribers come and go but, luckily, there is a loyal core of about 100 people who have been with us for all or many of our ten years. You faithful readers we thank most gratefully. Without your support, interest, and contributions, there would be no *EAP*. Keep the news, reviews, essays, and all the rest coming!

This issue begins with ethnographer Herb Childress's review of two books: geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's *Cosmos and Hearth* and essayist Wendell Berry's *Another Turn of the Crank*. Next, *EAP* Editor David Seamon examines the relationship between physical design and human community as argued in architect Christopher Alexander's *New Theory of Urban Design* and political activist Dennis Kemmis's *The Good City and the Good Life*.

In turn, sculptor and nature writer Tom Jay explores the archetypal meaning of mountains through his encounter with Washington State's Mt. Rainier. We conclude the issue with poems by geographer Miles Richardson and poet and writer Judyth Hill.

## CONFERENCES

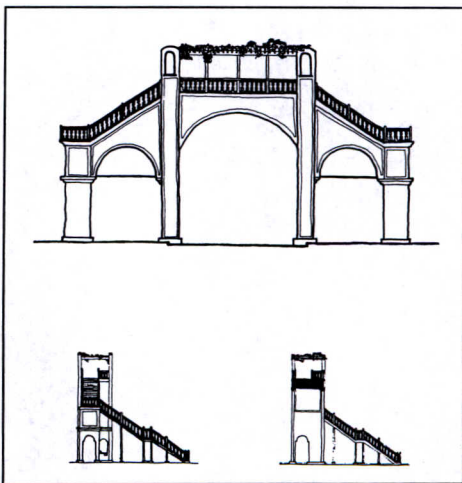
The 6<sup>th</sup> Qualitative Health Research Conference will be held 6-8 April, 2000, at the Banff Conference Centre in Banff, Alberta. The conference is sponsored by the International Institute for Qualitative Methodology, which provides "leadership to address the issues in qualitative inquiry and to facilitate the development of qualitative methods." 6-10 University Extension Centre, University of Alberta, 8303 112 St., Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2T4 (780-492-

9041; [www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/](http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/)).

The 16<sup>th</sup> conference of the International Association for People-Environment Studies will be held 4-7 July 2000, in Paris, France. The focus is "cities, social life, and sustainable development." Contact: Laboratoire de Psychologie Environnementale CNRS UPRES-A 8069, 28 rue Serpente, 75270 Paris Cedex 06, France ([iaps2000@psycho.univ-paris5.fr](mailto:iaps2000@psycho.univ-paris5.fr)).

A conference, *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, will be held 22-23 October, 1999, at the Winterthur Library in Wilmington, Delaware. Topics include: "Religion and Mass-Mediated Images," "Religion, Art, and Media in Public Life," "Sacred Spaces," and "Nature and Culture." Contact: Winterthur, Wilmington, DE 19735 (302-888-4600).

*Below: An entrance gate from Christopher Alexander's New Theory of Urban Design. See p. 7.*



## AUTHENTICITY & REGION

*Environment-behavior researcher and ethnographer Herb Childress organized a special session on authenticity and region for the annual meeting of the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) held at Disney World, Florida, in June. Philosopher and session participant Ingrid Leman Stefanovic sent the following report.*

Herb Childress began the session by distributing an information sheet that he had prepared [reprinted at end of this report]. He engaged the audience in a brief discussion of the significance of authenticity and regional concerns. He contrasted his interpretation of "regional" with both larger, global concepts as well as self-centered, individualistic concerns. He emphasized how impersonal the process of dwelling has become because we have become disengaged from local places in favor of a universalizing image of western, global development.

Because of another conference responsibility, Herb had to leave the session early, and Ingrid Stefanovic took over as discussion leader by raising some concerns emerging from her work on perceptions of the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail.

While this regional development traverses 325 kilometers (200 miles) from Hamilton to Trenton and passes through 160 natural areas, 126 parks and promenades, and 100s of historical places (not to mention different scales of built communities), Stefanovic found in her research that there is a sense in which the trail preserves an identity, despite its diverse manifestations. She raised the question of whether identity is equivalent to authenticity and proposed that authenticity implies a moral significance—e.g., what are the *good* parts of the trail? What are the *real* parts of the trail? And why?

The group spent some time deliberating on these issues as well as related topics such as how authenticity does not refer to a static ideal but to a historically-grounded series of narratives that may illumine the "ethos" of a place such as the Lake Ontario Waterfront Trail. There was also discussion about methodological clues for investigating questions of authenticity and region.

The number of session participants was small (only a half dozen or so) but the discussion was earnest, enthusiastic, and quite fruitful.

**Tentative definitions of "authenticity" and "regional"**  
[from sheet distributed by Herb Childress]:

*authenticity*: "having a true and lucid consciousness of the situation, in assuming the responsibilities and risks that it involves, in accepting it in pride or humiliation, sometimes in horror and hate" (Jean-Paul Sartre).

"Sometimes we must come to believe that each one of us bears a part of human destiny within his true self, and each of us must do our utmost to bring this true self into being. We must also come to realize that we will serve ourselves best by being loving and generous without expectation of return, for only in this way can we gain lasting contentment, happiness, and salvation" (David McElroy).

antonym: *bad faith*, i.e., abdicating decisions to authority, to custom, to convenience, to avoidance, to a "quest for certainty" (Eric Fromm).

*regional*: pertaining to a section of landscape unique from and identifiable from its surroundings (on the basis of climate, soil, land forms, plants and animals, human culture and history etc.).

"We feel a sort of dread that so few people follow Wendell Berry from simple love of a particular countryside to thinking through how *all* systems connect, so we can try specific ways of amending our greed in order to preserve the patterns. For every person willing to do such thinking, there seem to be thousands simply feeling *virtuous* because they prefer woods to hotels" (Carol Bly).

antonym: *global*, operating without regard to unique local circumstances; and *individual*, operating without regard to community.



## ITEMS OF INTEREST

The Center for Advanced Research in Phenomenology disseminates information on phenomenology and phenomenological research. The Center also sponsors the two monograph series, *Contributions to Phenomenology* and *Series in Continental Thought*. Contact: Dr. Lester Embree, Philosophy Dept., Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431-0991(561-367-3827;<http://www.flinet.com/~carp>).

**KAIROS** is an educational charity promoting "the recovery of perennial values in the arts and sciences." KAIROS promotes the study of "Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy by offering worksheets for personal study and occasional seminars, talks, and workshops to promote direct experience." The group has an annual summer-school retreat in Crestone, Colorado, which this year featured architects and sacred geometers Keith Critchlow and Paul Marchant, among others. Contact: David Yarbrough, PO Box 117, Crestone, CO 81131; or Amanda Critchlow-Horning, 4 Abbey Cottages, Cornworthy, Devon TQ9 7ET UK.

**Realistic Living** is a biannual journal "on ethics and religion." The publication includes essays, reviews, and news features. Topics of interest include environmental ethics, small-group life, local and continental bioregionalism, grassroots efforts promoting the arts, and the relationship between spirituality and community. Contact: RL, Rt. 3, Box 104-A5, Bonham, TX 75418.

## CITATIONS RECEIVED

Francis, M. & Reimann, A., 1999. *The California Landscape Garden: Ecology, Culture, and Design*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

The authors use "California's natural beauty and habitat as a starting point for inspiring Californians to see their gardens as extensions of the surrounding landscape." Information is included on "native plants and wildlife, ecology and bioregionalism, landscape history and design concepts." There are also specific design examples.

Lunenfeld, P. (Ed.), 1999. *The Digital Dialectic*. Cambridge: MA: MIT Press.

A collections of articles about "visual and intellectual cultures as the computer redoes technologies, media, and art forms." Includes architect William J. Mitchell's "Replacing Place," which argues that cyberspace "reinvents the body, architecture, and the complex relationship between the two that we call inhabitation."

Pollio, H. R., Henley, T. B., & Thompson, C. J., 1996. *The Phenomenology of Everyday Life*. NY: Cambridge Univ. Press.

These psychologists examine phenomenological approaches "to the psychological study of everyday human activities and experiences." Themes examined include the body as lived, time, the human experience of older people, and feeling alone.

Saaarinen, T.F., 1999, *The Eurocentric Nature of Mental Maps of the World* (Tucson, AZ: Discussion Paper, Department of Geography, Univ. of Arizona).

This geographer overviews findings of the "Parochial Views of the World" project, a worldwide study of mental maps of the world: "We do have a shared image of the world today [but] unfortunately it is parochial and resembles the colonizer's model of the world. Europe and European extension overseas tends to be well-known. The former colonial world is not so well known."

Weston, A., 1999, ed. *An Invitation to Environmental Ethics*. NY: Oxford University Press.

A collection of five essays all dealing with environmental ethics. Contributors are David Abram ("A More-Than-Human World"), Anthony Weston ("Is It Too Late?"), Val Plumwood ("Paths Beyond Human-Centeredness"), Holmes Rolston, III ("Ethics on the Home Planet"), and Jim Cheney ("The Journey Home").

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Artist **Daan Hoekstra** has initiated the Environmental Mural Initiative, a program of painting murals with environmental themes. The procedure is as follows: (1) the nonprofit organization identifies site and recommends content; (2) the artist and organization refine design; (3) the artist and organization work to raise funds for project; (4) the artist paints the mural with community involvement. Contact Hoekstra Studio, 3130 Mayfield #E312, Cleveland, OH 44118 (800-345-4992).

Miles Richardson teaches in the Department of Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University. He provided the following background for his poem, "Buga," which appears on p. 14: "In 1992, I went back to Columbia, where I had done fieldwork for my dissertation in anthropology in

1962-63. I lucked out by finding a place to stay that overlooked a huge shrine in the city of Buga. Each morning, I put my chair on the balcony and watched the sun come up. Here is a poem about those mornings." 227 Howe, Russell Geoscience Complex, Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, LS 70803.

## BOOK REVIEW

Yi-Fu Tuan. 1996. *Cosmos and Hearth: a Cosmopolite's Viewpoint*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Wendell Berry. 1995. *Another Turn of the Crank*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint.

When I was an undergraduate at Berkeley, I met a man from North Carolina who was finishing his Master's degree in Architecture and preparing to go into professional practice. He often said that he felt compelled to return to North Carolina after graduation, to go back home and do his work in a community that needed his skills. But he graduated, and Berkeley offered him a teaching position, and he's still there, ten years later.

His story and the questions it raised for me came to mind while I read these two books, both of which consider the nature of home place and our positions in the world. What allegiance do we owe to the places from which we came? What is the nature of the local within the global economy? Do we have a duty to place? These two writers, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan and poet/essayist/farmer Wendell Berry, could not disagree more sharply.

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In *Cosmos and Hearth*, Tuan--perhaps best known for his 1977 *Space and Place* (Univ. of Minnesota Press)--has reached the logical endpoint of the attitudes of his earlier work. In *Space and Place*, Tuan tells us that places are specific and imbued with meaning, whereas space is abstract and interchangeable. In the preparation for exploring the things that give places their identities and meanings, however, he posited an unsettling dualism: "Place is security, space is freedom" (p. 4). In *Cosmos and Hearth*, he pursues that dualism to its end. His four central ideas

are that: (1) "Cosmos," which he aligns with a desire for movement, advancement and progress, is fundamentally opposed to "Hearth," which he aligns with a desire for stability and security; (2) this opposition is possibly the central division in our collective lived experience of the world; (3) we are moving away from place toward space; and (4) this movement is a good thing.

It is important to differentiate this division of Cosmos and Hearth from the more common phenomenological distinction of "home" and "away," which implies a stable center from which we move to encounter the busy, uncertain world and to which we return for rest and love. The division of Cosmos and Hearth is, according to Tuan, a temporal rather than geographic opposition. The hearth is the realm of the peasant and the domestic, closed-minded and illiterate. Through the dual projects of education and modernization--both dependent on "the belief, fairly widespread among the educated, that time has direction" (p. 136)--we move inexorably toward the Cosmos, which Tuan paints as progressive, tolerant and materially enriched.

Tuan argues that it is inherently human, that it is inevitable, to leave the weary village behind and move into the "sun and air," the "cultural and intellectual riches of the larger world" (p. 13). In order to make this argument, he explores the cultural histories of Confucian China and Enlightenment America. In both societies, he claims, a collective drive toward reason, abstraction, linearity, organization and standardization have led to power over the



forces of the natural world, the victory of space over place. This power frees us from toil and poverty, and allows the material plenty that affords leisure, contemplation and artistic expression, the identifying marks of high civilization.

What of real places within this universalizing cosmos? Tuan writes that they are reduced to local color; a pleasantry, an accent or style or fashion carefully constrained within the master narrative: "It hardly needs saying that the differences are minor and never transgress the tacitly agreed upon rules and customs of propriety" (p. 36). The power so desired by the cosmopolitan mind can only come through the illusion that complex places can be reduced to such trivial differences. We often think that the global entrepreneurs' primary goal is the saturation of local markets; a more fundamental, and chilling, goal may be the elimination of the concept of local.

Tuan celebrates the placelessness of the modern cosmopolitan view by praising the loss of barbaric local customs:

A common criticism leveled against places that try to reinvent their individualized selves is that the results are rather bland and tend not to be sharply differentiated from one another. This criticism reminds me of *Anna Karenina's* famous opening sentence, "All happy families are like one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." A lax paraphrase might be to say that ways of showing common decency are limited, whereas ways of showing perversity are not only many but highly colorful, the stuff of popular ethnographies: infanticide, child bride, scarification, bloody rites of animal and human sacrifice, foot binding, self-immolation of widows, demon possession, witch burning, and so on. No doubt the world's cultural diversity suffers as a result of the demise of these practices, but this particular loss can be borne by anyone touched by the spirit of enlightenment (p. 186).

This shocking conceptual reduction of the local to a litany of pathologies is partly drawn from what Tuan admits is his Confucian and Enlightenment view of the world, dividing "civilized" from "barbarian" (p. 16) and "primitive" from "cultured" (p. 119). It also, however, is drawn from a somewhat lazy series of premises, a flaw repeated throughout the book. His brief, flitting histories of China and the United States are especially insufficient to support the essential arguments he draws from them.

For instance, he writes that the United States' sense

of self is threatened in two major changes during the second half of the twentieth century:

One is global modernization—the establishment of a global culture such that no part of it stands out: New York's skyline, at one time the nation's unique signature, is now replicated in many other metropolises. The second change, which no one had predicted before its sudden arrival, is cultural particularism or ethnicity...that can weaken America's sense of a larger self with a common past, shared values, and goal (pp. 73-74).

Well, yes, these two things have changed, but so have a number of other conceptual structures that may have equal or greater impact on our sense of who we are. Information has changed from local and personal to global and mediated; nature has changed from a strong, everyday relationship to an occasional getaway vacation; progress has changed from the welcome reduction of labor to the looming end of employment; the frontier has changed from a place, singular and distant, to a time, shifting and immanent. Any of these cultural shifts likely will have more ill effects on our American consciousness than the knowledge that other people now have skyscrapers and fax machines. Unfortunately, this is only one example of the somewhat vague and artificial underpinnings that Tuan uses to support his larger intellectual structures.

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Wendell Berry also uses cultural history to make his points, but his cultural history is deeply rooted in the soil and families and economics of one particular place. As such, it is less abstract, more passionate, and not surprisingly leads to different conclusions. *Another Turn of the Crank* is a series of brief essays on the nature of community, especially agrarian community.

His basic thesis is that "I am a member, by choice, of a local community. I believe that healthy communities are indispensable, and I know that our communities are disintegrating under the influence of economic assumptions that are accepted without question by both our parties—despite their lip service to various economic 'values'" (p. x).

Berry's aim through these essays is to show us the dangers of what he calls the "large, exploitive,

absentee economy" (p. 9) The dangers include the loss of family farming and the communities that support it, and that is his biggest concern. However, he speaks compellingly of other values at risk:

But as we now begin to see, you cannot have a postagricultural world that is not also postdemocratic, postreligious, postnatural--in other words, it will be posthuman, contrary to the best that we have meant by 'humanity'.... These people see nothing odd or difficult about unlimited economic growth or unlimited consumption in a limited world. They believe that knowledge is power, and that it ought to be. They believe that education is job training. They think that the summit of human achievement is a high-paying job that involves no work. Their public boast is that they are making a society in which everybody will be a 'winner'--but their private aim is to reduce radically the number of people who, by the measure of our historical ideals, might be thought successful: the independent, the self-employed, the owners of small businesses or small usable properties, those who work at home (p. 13-14).

The placelessness that Tuan sees as the ideal of the cosmopolitan life is noted by Berry as well but in much less kind terms: "The ideal of the modern corporation is to be (in terms of its own advantage) anywhere and (in terms of local accountability) nowhere. The message to country people, in other words, is this: Don't expect favors from your enemies" (p. 12).

Berry is thoroughly quotable, an acclaimed poet and fine essayist at the top of his form. This slim book--a mere 109 pages--could be opened and cited at random, and its wisdom immediately felt. But his best rebuttal of Tuan's pursuit of abstraction comes near the end, in his description of his brother's heart attack and subsequent recovery, in which he speaks of the power and centrality of real, substantial relationships:

...each of us is made by--or, one might better say, made as--a set of unique associations with unique persons, places and things. The world of love does not admit the principle of the interchangeability of parts (p. 105).

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The basic positions of these two writers are reflected in their life paths. Yi-Fu Tuan was born in China, moved to Australia at ten, to England at fifteen, and then to America in his early twenties, during which time he has studied at Berkeley, taught at the Universities of Indiana, Chicago, New Mexico, Toronto, Minnesota and Wisconsin, and taken sabbatical or fellowship years in Hawaii, Australia and California. Wendell Berry was born in Henry County, Kentucky, studied in Kentucky, taught two years at Stanford and two more in New York City, and then, in 1964, returned to Henry County to stay.

It can be no surprise that either writer takes the stance he does. The mobile, linear thinker, Tuan urges us to slip gently into that good future in which everything is understood and under control, in which inexorable progress toward freedom from place allows the cosmos to replace the hearth. The more grounded, cyclical Berry, however, insists upon honoring "local knowledge, memory, and tradition," and will not let his hearth go without a hell of a fight.

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# MAKING COMMUNITY AND PLACE: COMMONALITIES AND CONTRASTS IN THE WORK OF DANIEL KEMMIS AND CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER

David Seamon

As illustrated by the ideas of political activist Daniel Kemmis (1990, 1995) and architect Christopher Alexander (1985, 1987; et al., 1977), there is a practical movement afoot in public policy and environmental design that attempts to understand useful societal change from the viewpoint of wholes healing themselves.

Alexander, particularly in his *A New Theory of Urban Design* (Alexander, 1987), has been the most visible proponent of this perspective. He understands successful urban place making as a collaborative process of healing whereby the city becomes more alive and healthy through an incremental growth of parts that, over time and synergistically, enriches the whole.

Key aspects of this healthy city include small blocks, mixed uses, lively streets, physical and human diversity, distinctive neighborhoods, and human sociability--especially informal interactions in public spaces.<sup>1</sup> Crucially important is a design and decision-making process whereby new parts of the city arise in such a way that they strengthen the existing urban fabric and make it more identifiable and coherent.

In *The Good City and the Good Life*, Daniel Kemmis (1995) explores the idea of urban wholeness and healing as it might have meaning for politics and citizenship. "The refocusing of human energy around the organic wholeness of cities," he writes, "promises a profound rehumanizing of the shape and condition of our lives" (p. 151).

Kemmis describes a way of urban life that involves individual citizens' feeling a part of the city because it provides a place for them to belong. Individuals, he argues, "cannot be fully healthy, physically and mentally, in isolation, but only as meaningful players in a meaningful community....the healing (making more whole) of cities is serving to heal--to reknit--the often frayed and sometimes severed strands of our humanity" (p. 152).<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, Kemmis says much about the lived-process of making community happen, especially through striking examples and vignettes drawn from his own political experiences as former mayor of Missoula, Montana, and former Speaker of the Montana legislature. Perhaps the most valuable dimension of the book is its speaking to how, in terms of communal and political process, Alexander's theory for healing the city--a theory that Kemmis draws on directly and regularly--needs to happen.

In other words, the book answers the question of how the what, where, and why of urban change is to be decided by the various parties involved. For Kemmis, this decision-making process is innately *political*, whereby he means the realization of the city's possibilities through a civility among different citizens' views.

In this critique of Alexander and Kemmis's ideas, I argue that Kemmis, in his vision of the good city, sees urban healing fostered largely through civil discourse among citizens and politicians, whereas Alexander argues that, before any such discourse can begin, there must first be a basic understanding as to what environmental wholeness is and how it can be strengthened or stymied by qualities of physical design. I argue that, ultimately, *both* aspects of the healing process--material and communal--must be considered and carried out, though I concur with Alexander that a knowledge of how the *physical* city grounds the healing process must found the civil discourse that follows.

## WHOLENESS BEGETTING WHOLENESS

In the first chapter of *The Good City*, Kemmis discusses "The Good Life," which "makes it possible for humans to be fully present--to themselves, to one another and to their surroundings. Such presence is precisely opposite of the distractedness--the being beside--that is so prevalent in our political culture" (p. 22).

Crucially, the urbanite does not necessarily need to initiate an active interest in the city; rather, the city in its liveliness and attraction can invigorate the dweller, who in turn contributes to the city. In this sense, urban wholeness begets human wholeness and vice versa. This mutual interplay of part and whole, person, and world, urbanite and city is, for Kemmis, the foundation of civilization: "This fundamental connection between human wholeness and livability and the wholeness and life of the city are all contained in...the word 'civilized' (p. 12).

What Kemmis discusses here, implicitly, is the basic phenomenological principle that *people-are-immersed-in-world-as-world-is-immersed-in-people*. This relationship is elusive and difficult to give grounded significance. One of the delights of Kemmis's book is his ability to found this principle in his political experience. For example, in his first chapter, he discusses Missoula's lively farmer's market, which provides a place for the city to work on its citizens by gathering them together and providing economic and social exchange. This "gathering role...enables people to come away from the market more whole than when they arrived" (p. 11).

In chapters 2-4, Kemmis suggests how this mutuality of wholeness between urbanites and their city might shed new light on urban problems conventionally tackled through piecemeal solutions. In chapter 2, for example, he examines teenagers in the city, who regularly complain, wherever they live, that their city provides no places for them to gather or to be themselves in a positive way. Kemmis reviews several recent initiatives--e.g., the use of mentors, neighborhood programs teaching building trades--that forge "into its children's very character those elements...crucial to the maintenance of the city, those elements that we generally think need to be expressed in laws and regulations" (p. 33).

## THE CITY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

In chapters 5 and 6, Kemmis examines the city's relationship to its surroundings and to other cities. These chapters have much to say about a revitalized understanding of economy, recognizing at the start that economics is necessarily grounded in place and region and should be understood on the basis of that lived-geography.

Drawing on the arguments of Jane Jacobs (1984), Kemmis argues that the modernist nation-state is dead. The postmodernist replacement is the *city-state*,

perhaps best symbolized by Hong Kong and the powerful way its capitalist economy has influenced its surrounding Chinese region. As economies grow more global, nation-states lose their economic relevance, while cities and their regions become the new economic unit, since "real economies turn out to be nothing other than the organic relationship of cities and towns to their surroundings" (p. 106).

Cities are the core of this regional vitality but they also must take responsibility for suburbs, rural communities, and the natural environments of their hinterland. The aim is "learning how to make the region operate as the natural economy it is capable of being" (p. 119).

Drawing on his own frustrating experiences with federal commissions, Kemmis describes how current economic policies, especially at the federal level, ignore the idea of urban region and, instead, divide it into "city," "suburb," and "countryside," each of which must then compete separately for the same assistance dollars. These policies of division:

have exploded the natural integrity of city-regions, deluding city centers, suburbs, and rural surroundings into ignoring their mutual dependency. The result has been a gigantic and acutely nearsighted disinvestment in both central cities and rural areas, to the short-term but unsustainable advantage of that other, ultimate nonplace "suburban America" (p. 120).

In chapter 6, Kemmis examines the phenomenon of sister cities, which he sees as a practical means for global awareness and citizenship. His point is that it is impossible for one individual to relate to the whole earth directly but, by having contact with residents of his or her city's sister city, he or she can mark the start of a global understanding. The key is that the cities must interact with each other in several different ways--through formal political channels, yes, but also through high school exchanges, sports competitions, artistic performances and exhibits, newspapers, and so forth. The result is a ripple effect that Kemmis describes in terms of a Missoula child who has a pen pal in Missoula's sister city of Neckargemund, Germany:

The child is likely to ask his or her parents for help in describing the city; the parents in turn may recount the conversation to neighbors or colleagues, who, with so many other links already existing between the two cities, are that much more likely to have had first- and second-hand contacts of their own, which are then recounted back down the chain. As the threads of these stories circulate, they bring the sister city more clearly into



focus as a human enterprise, rather than the abstraction it must have been to most people at the beginning of the relationship. Conversely, when the relationships are too thin or one-dimensional, they never achieve their synergy, and the two cities never come alive to each other (p. 141).

Kemmis makes the intriguing observation that, in generating such a lived-synergy, sister cities become a postmodern equivalent to the golden mean, providing a manageable connection between the smallness of the individual and the vastness of the earth. But this possibility of global healing and wholeness can only happen if, first, each city heals itself. Kemmis writes:

The city's ancient work of creating presence, in which humans may gladly dwell, is what now enlivens the sister cities movement, by making the living planet present to so many of its citizens. The good city--the living city--thus in its wholeness provides the context within which global citizenship becomes a genuine possibility. But that possibility can only be realized if we become steadily more aware of the living wholeness of our own cities. Before they can 'save the earth' cities must understand and live into their organic relationships with their own neighborhoods, their own families, and their own immediate surroundings, relationships that form the true mediating 'structures of wholeness' between the individual and the living earth (p. 147).

### GOOD POLITICIANS AND GOOD CITIZENS

In the last two chapters of his book, Kemmis examines the relation between politics and citizenship. All politics, Kemmis emphasizes, are about power, but the kind of politician who can make the good city happen must always remember that his or her power "is only a form of stewardship on behalf of those whose power it really is" (p. 153). Conventionally, power has been regulated in our political system by a system of checks and balances, but this system too often interferes with politicians' and citizens' exercising the personal responsibility of working out solutions together, "which alone can make democracy work" (p. 154).<sup>3</sup>

Good politicians remember they are stewards of power, which they barter to make a better city, through listening to what its citizens say but also listening to the city itself. The need is to meet with many different people, get them to talk to each other, and--when the moment seems right--making the best decision possible on behalf of the city. In the end,

says Kemmis, the mark of the good politician is "knowing when to let the world work, and when to work on the world" (p. 177).

If this phrase sounds like phenomenological philosopher Martin Heidegger, it is. Several times in the book, Kemmis refers to Heidegger's essay, "Building Dwelling Thinking" (Heidegger, 1971), which argues that human beings can only design and make policy if they dwell in place and belong. For Kemmis, the good politician is open both to the needs of people and place so that, as the right moment arises, he or she can use power to make the next step toward healing the city whole:

if the city is constantly responding to what it has already created and to what fortune brings forward, then the next act of creation must always be some paradoxical blend of will and acceptance.... This blend is precisely the defining characteristic of the good politician.... (pp. 178-179).

...it is the city, in its slow movement of unfolding, which prepares both the places and the time for its next (risky and uncertain) step in the direction of its own possibility...it is this possibility...which is the true meaning of politics as "the art of the possible" (p. 179).

On the other hand, this kind of practical openness to what the city might become cannot happen if ordinary citizens do not partake in the political process. Unfortunately today, community involvement too often becomes special-interest groups fighting for power. The need, says Kemmis, is to draw into the process people who can be civil and take responsibility for mediating extremes and finding a middle point of possibility. To be a citizen involves "the ability to teach or encourage one another to speak so that you can actually be heard by others who do not already share your view" (p. 192).

### ALEXANDER'S HEALING OF THE CITY

As I mentioned earlier, Kemmis's understanding of the city is very much affected by Christopher Alexander's vision of urban healing and wholeness, most thoroughly developed in his *New Theory* (Alexander, 1987), to which Kemmis refers regularly. He also argues, however, that Alexander, as an architect, gives most attention to *physical* healing but that, "as important as the physical body of the city is, it alone cannot make the city healthy" (p. 14).

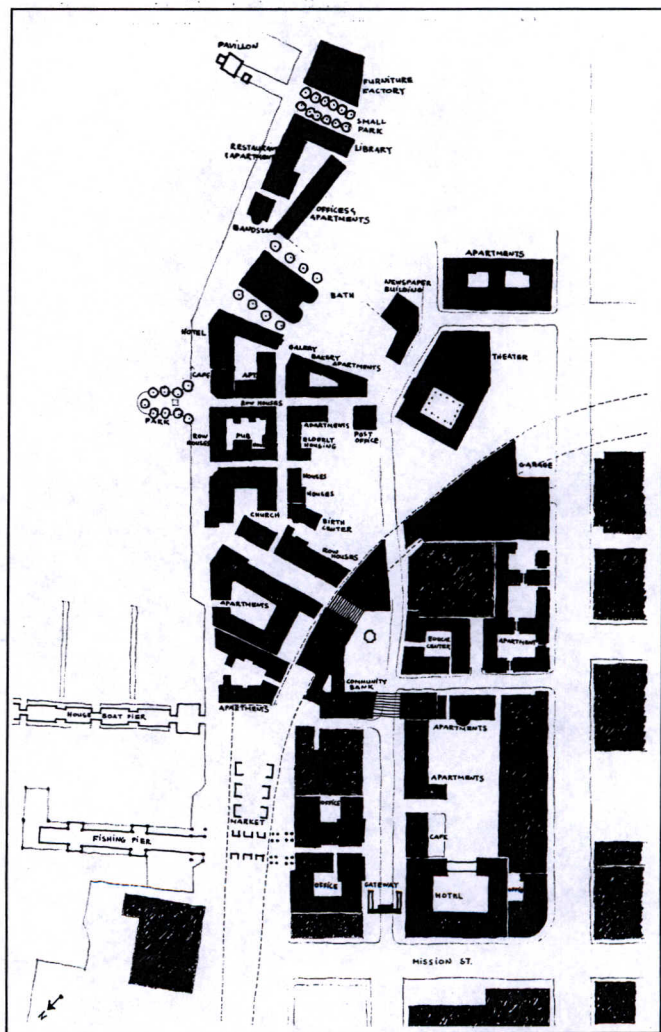
Kemmis's effort to move beyond the physical healing of the city is both *The Good City's* strength and weakness. On one hand, Kemmis gives an invaluable picture of the process of human give-and-take that must underlie and motivate actual building and policy decisions; on the other hand, he seems to suppose that civilized mediation among participants will somehow lead to the right decisions as to how the city will constructively change without necessarily the need for any precise understanding or specific expertise as to what the physical city is and how it works.

In *New Theory*, Alexander seeks to heal the modern American city, which he sees as chaotic, dehumanizing and placeless. He offers seven *rules*, as he calls them, which he believes could provide a healing action and lead to a renewed sense of urban place. He then illustrates the use of these rules through a simulation experiment conducted with architectural graduate students at the University of California at Berkeley in a design studio taught by him and colleagues Ingrid King and Howard Davis.

The nineteen students in this studio focused on thirty acres of the San Francisco waterfront just north of the Bay Bridge and destined for development in the near future. The major task the students faced was to transform these thirty acres, for the most part empty, into a district of buildings, streets, plazas and parks that would all contribute to a sense of life, atmosphere, and wholeness. Eventually, the students converted the waterfront site into an a set of places that included such elements as a pedestrian mall, a main square, a waterfront park, and a market and fishing pier.

The seven rules that Alexander and his colleagues developed all attempt to guide the urban-design process by fostering a good fit between new construction and the existing environment.<sup>4</sup> For example, rule 1—"piecemeal growth"—says that the best construction increments are small, thus there should be an even mix of small, medium, and large construction pro-

*The San Francisco site after 50 increments.*





jects.<sup>4</sup> Building on rule 1, rule 2—"the growth of larger wholes"—directs how specific design projects can be seen to belong together and therefore requires that "every building increment must help to form at least one larger whole in the city, which is both larger and more significant than itself" (pp. 38-39).<sup>6</sup>

In presenting such specific directives for urban design, Alexander seems to be saying that there must be some sort of reasoned procedure, or *instrument* as I will call it here, for the actualization of wholeness, which for Alexander is his seven rules through which decision-makers should gain understanding and the city should gain realization.

In contrast, Kemmis appears to have little interest in such a line of practical understanding and clearcut procedure; rather, he seems to believe that, if citizens and politicians begin to put the welfare of their city first, an understanding of what the city is and needs to become will automatically arise through civil discussion, mediation, and compromise: "As citizens become more practiced at working together with the city's best interests at heart, it is precisely such structures of wholeness that recommend themselves to their attention" (Kemmis, 1995, p. 194).

Alexander might not disagree with this perspective, provided the participants had some degree of conscious awareness of what the wholeness of place is and some set of guidelines to hold this wholeness in mind. On the other hand, Alexander says little about how these directives, through citizen involvement, can actually go forth into building. How, in other words, can his instrument—the seven rules—be given *direction* through various human participants?

In the studio experiment summarized above, the rules were given direction by the students and teachers of the design studio, who role-played a developer/committee relationship founded in dialogue and continual group awareness as to who was planning what where and when. Procedurally, the students were asked to represent developers and community groups, while the studio faculty—Alexander and his colleagues—took the role of an "evaluation committee." This committee was responsible for guiding the growth process, and no student "vision" could be constructed until the committee had evaluated the idea and suggested strengths and weaknesses. All faculty and students were involved in all discussions about every project, so there was much mutual understanding as to the project's progress and ultimate aims.<sup>7</sup>

Obviously, this method of direction is entirely artificial and arbitrary. Ultimately, students had to agree with the judgements of Alexander and the other instructors and to work in relation to the rules whether they personally agreed with them or not. At the same time, the resulting designs were completed only as paper plans and wooden models that never had to face the real-world evaluation of the residents, developers, city officials, politicians, and others who would ultimately provide approval and funding.

In regard to applied direction, this is where Kemmis's ideas are a crucial complement to Alexander's approach: Kemmis provides an extended picture of what is necessary, in terms of getting different parties to discuss and compromise, if urban wholeness and healing is to happen. On the other hand, Kemmis is less aware of how a city works physically and spatially. Again, we come to the basic phenomenological principle that people are immersed in their worlds, which first of all are physical and spatial. The many ways that this materiality supports or stymies human worlds and contributes to or weakens Kemmis's notion of the "good life and the good city" needs the attention provided by Alexander.<sup>8</sup>

In Kemmis's inspiring work, we have the start of a phenomenology of the process by which individuals and groups become the engine for a city of distinctive places, liveliness, and wholeness. At the same time, we must better understand how existing "good cities" work, especially the contribution of material qualities like path layout, arrangement of land uses and activities, qualities of architectural form, and so forth. As a politician, Kemmis emphasizes interpersonal and inter-group process; such a focus is crucial, since it is always human decisions and interventions that in the end build the city.

I am much less certain than Kemmis, however, that citizens putting their place first will always envision the next right move that the city must take to become more whole. An integral part to this healing is precise understanding and expertise grounded in the lived-city, especially its physical, spatial, and environmental base. In this sense, Alexander's design vision is an essential complement to Kemmis's hopeful politics of community and place.

#### Notes

1. Though he does not say so explicitly, one supposes that Alexander's model of the city is grounded very much in the ideas of urban critic Jane Jacobs (1961), who argued that streets

are the heart of the city and should be alive with pedestrian activity that accepts both residents and visitors. Jacobs claimed that the grounding for a vital street life is *diversity*—a lively mix of land uses and building types that supports and relies on a dense, varied population of users and activities. She also believed that crucial to diversity and lively streets are qualities of the *physical city*—e.g., small blocks, direct surveillance from buildings to street, high proportion of built-up areas, and so forth. Note that Jacobs' ideas are also an essential guide for Kemmis' ideas about the city.

2. Kemmis examines the political basis for this argument in his earlier *Community and the Politics of Place*, which argues for "a politics which rests upon a mutual recognition by diverse interests that they are bound to each other by their common attachment to a place" (Kemmis, 1990, p. 123).

3. Kemmis more thoroughly discusses the differences between republican and federalist approaches to government in his first book; see Kemmis, 1990, chap. 1.

4. These seven rules are: (1) piecemeal growth; (2) the growth of larger wholes; (3) visions; (4) positive outdoor space; (5) building layout; (6) construction rules; and (7) formation of centers. In studying the rules carefully, one realizes that these rules have two related functions: first, rules 1, 2 and 7 help the designer to recognize and understand environmental wholes; second, rules 3, 4, 5 and 6 help to create new parts in the whole that will lead to healing and a stronger environmental order.

5. In the waterfront simulation, Alexander and his group defined physical size in terms of floor space (less than 1,000 square feet, 1,000-10,000 square feet, 10,000-100,000 square feet), while types of uses were defined in terms of "reasonable distribution of functions" (p. 34). The functions of housing, parking, and community were allotted the most space (26, 19, and 15 percent respectively) while manufacturing, shops and restaurants, and hotels allotted the least (12, 7, and 5 percent).

Small projects for the waterfront included fountains, kiosks, gateways and individual houses, while medium projects included a cafe, bakery, row houses, and waterfront park. Yet again, large projects included apartment houses, a theater, a community bank, a main square, an electronics factory, and a pier for ship repairs.

6. For example, the very first project was a high, narrow arching gate to mark the entrance to the site [see drawing on p. 1]. In terms of rule 2, this gate was important because it generated a sense of passage that started beneath the arch and continued south. In this way, the gate hinted at a larger whole—a street and pedestrian mall going south into the heart of the site. This pedestrian street was then defined more exactly by the next two projects: a hotel and a cafe, which fixed its west side and width (an existing building on the east fixed the street's east side). Soon after, another project—a community bank—established the far end of the street, which was then completed by a series of increments that included an apartment house, an office building, and various construction details such as a gravel walk and low wall.

In terms of rule 2, the key point is that each project defining

the pedestrian street did several things at once: first, it helped to complete one major center already defined; second, it helped to pin down some other, less clearly defined center; third, it hinted at some entirely new center that would emerge later. One example is the hotel, which wrapped around a garden courtyard. First, in conjunction with the gate, this building helped complete the southern edge of the simulation site; second, it helped to pin down the pedestrian street by fixing its western edge; third, in shaping itself around an outdoor courtyard, it hinted at a new center that in later increments would become a large public garden running south from the hotel and shaped by a series of apartment buildings.

7. Interestingly, Alexander points out that this unspoken agreement became stronger as the students had more experience with the rules: "in the last stages of development, the students were able to function almost entirely without guidance from the committee, since the rules had been completely absorbed and understood" (p. 110).

8. Though here, too, Alexander's picture is incomplete and needs complementary discussion grounded in the efforts of other designers and planners. For example, architects and environment-behavior researchers are only beginning to understand the ways that the spatial patterning of pathways in the city contribute to whether specific streets and districts have or do not have lively, dense pedestrian movement (e.g., Hillier, 1996).

The key point is that the physical design of the city and its districts plays an integral role as to whether urban life will be successful (Seamon, 1994). The dilemma is that, once pathways, buildings, and other physical elements are in place, they are not easily or inexpensively changed. To start with a clear understanding of the physical dimensions of place and to support design and policy that make use of this understanding is therefore crucial from the start of any civil discourse.

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## ON MOUNTAIN TOPS WE ARE STARKLY SOULFUL

Tom Jay

I first saw Mount Rainier in the early sixties. I was hitch-hiking back to college in southern California after a spring visit to a friend at the University of Washington. The weather was overcast and a restless mist masked the Cascades. I was facing north on Highway 99 thumbing the remnant morning commute when the sky cleared, and I didn't see "the mountain" until I turned south to walk out of the mid-morning traffic backwater. And Rainier was *there*, looming shockingly huge, an inscrutable giant, hoary preadamite elder, above the dim cacophony of the strip.

Suddenly and incontrovertibly imminent, the foreboding eminence of the earth awoke in imagination, a mysterious faintly ominous majesty, a monument honoring a force beyond my ken, a presence both familiar and strange. In that brief startled blink, Rainier seemed like the fire-darkened crown of eternity.

In the origin myths of traditional culture, a mountain embodies the archetypal beginning. The mountain is the center of the world, the navel of the cosmos. Mythologically, the mountain rises from the primal chaos of waters, marking and clarifying the murky horizon of ocean and sky. It separates the first mother and father and arrives as the first child of eternity, centering the sea, lifting up the heavens.

The mountain was the first earthly home, a place for the gods to play and the fellowship of creation to thrive. The first temples imitated mountains. The ziggurats and pyramids were sacred because they were mountainlike. At the top of the temple, at the top of the mountain, we were at the center of the earth, the place where time begins.

The montane inspiration of early temples is true. The few times I have been on mountain tops, the exhilaration I felt was not from being "elevated" or closer to heaven but from something less grand yet more fundamental. On summits, knolls, tumuli, promontories and peaks, we are most pointedly aware of our peculiar human situation, face in the cloud-scoured heavens, feet firm on rock rooted deep in the hot-hearted gravity of the planet. On mountain tops

we are starkly soulful, grounded in the ancient earth, quickened in the oblivion of the sky, simple wind-shivered lightning rods of wonder.

Mountains are the bones of the Northwest Bios, the essential architecture of its salmon-haunted dream. Imagine the Puget Sound climate without the Cascades to thicken, funnel, dam and direct the wet marine weather of our latitude. Imagine our lively, unpredictable rivers without the gravitational "force" the Cascade cordillera supplies. Imagine our salmon-rich streams without the rattling braid of water-rounded gravel that issues from the steady wreckage of the mountain slopes.

Mountains inform all life here, are the bone of its animate body, the firmness of its character. Rainier, "the mountain" in Puget Sound vernacular, symbolizes the mountain's elemental role in the Northwest drama. "The mountain" is the regent, the lava-hearted monarch of this wet green eddy of creation.

But Rainier is not merely royalty. My spring-sudden epiphany of Rainier's eminence ineffable above the toylike intensity and commercial anonymity of the American highway has ripened in long reverie into something darker and more fertile that I have allowed so far.

Our word *mountain* is rooted in the Indo-European etymon *men*--to jut out, project. This root gives us the Latin word *mons, montis*, hence our word *mountain*. The same root *men* supplies the Latin verb *minari*--to project, overhand, to threaten, and arrives in our speech as *menace*.

This etymological synchrony echoes an intuition that beneath its stately repose, its unfathomably dense and weighty "jut," Rainier is dangerous. "The mountain" is swole with mercurial fire; storms pivot on its prominence and many have died in its crevasses, blizzards, and avalanches. Rainier is dramatic and beautiful because in our hearts it is edged in a shadowy sublimation of peril. "The mountain" is a slow motion Tsunami of fire, rock and ice; one day it will break and blow us away. We secretly fear it the way we fear God. The mountain inspires awe and dread. We are a mountain-fearing people.

But the mountain sublimates more than our fear. The ancient Irish imagined prominent hills or mountains as "sidhes." A sidhe was the fairy abode, the place where the perennial spirits of the land abide. For me, Rainier has become a sidhe--the dwelling place of the forgotten spirits, the fateful energies of life in the Northwest; Raven, the changer; cannibal woman, salmon woman, snot boy, Thunderbird, the

throng of personae who spoke through and for the life here and who hide now in the mountain's dome awaiting reinvasion into our commercially-desiccate culture. In my imagination, Rainier shelters their natural sovereignty.

The mountain that still startles us is a fundament, a temple, the first place, a terrible power, a sidhe, the secret hive of our children's dreams.

## BUGA

A city in the middle of Columbia's Cauca Valley,  
comfortable in colonial architecture,  
graceful in developing modernity,  
devout in religious tradition,  
begins each morning with a shower of colors  
--even during the *verano*, the dry season.

From my tiny balcony, just above the abode  
of the *Milagroso*, I wait in darkness  
for the recurrent miracle that starts the day.  
Apart from the radio with its soft melodies  
of Colombian romantic pop and my typewriter  
with its keys at the ready, I am alone.

I strain for the first sign, but even  
as I stare, it arrives: A v in the mountains,  
square towers of the basilica,  
slender palms naked until the very top,  
steel antennas with their stark triangles,  
small birds in an intricate dance  
of darts and counter darts.

A streak of orange, not there just a blink ago, now  
arches the mountains; now a yellow, a blue, another orange,  
silver, purple, red. I've lost count, colors are everywhere,  
the miracle is upon me, glorious miracle of sight, of birth, of being.

--Miles Richardson



## WALKING THE FIELD OF VISION

These vegas aflush with color,  
and us, awash in a sea of naming,  
a field of many grasses.  
Lush, succulent at the roots,  
Buffalo, fox tail, longspine sandbur,  
an OED of meadow.

Clumps of pinky clover,  
bees will plot on their map of sweetness.  
What is the cartography of our sweetness?  
My compass always whirling towards true North,  
while I long to orient South,  
to the place of pure grove.

Pressing on,  
my steps disturb the soft turpentine musk of sage.  
A scent that scours us towards wisdom.  
Bending lower, I get personal with Pentstemon,  
their sullen, bitten lips,  
their twinned rapprochement on a single side of  
slender stalk.

Brain sees leaves, says lanceolate.  
Sees light stopping at the vibratory rate called purple.  
Brain will not let me off the cognitive hook.

I admit I'm a slut for facts--  
wantonly lusting for data.  
Storing it away for a future of forgetting, asking,  
forgetting.  
At least I'm not begging for the phylum, kingdom,  
species, speech.  
I obviously have a genius for erasure.

My savannah's a blur of greens blowing,  
Bowing to the place they lock into vertical.  
Today, I am purposely vertical.  
On Wilson mesa, walking towards a distant stand of  
aspen,  
And watching.

Suddenly, the spaces inside landmark lengthen,  
I see the between, where the deer run,  
what elk see.  
Now I've come to the Wow:

Shifting light sweeps the smooth flank of hill  
sheen then shade  
Wow! The stretch and release of landscape -  
Everything, I mean everything, moving!  
All these flowers doing their Hootchie Kootchie  
C'm here baby, oooh la la thing.

Set to cicada,  
the tuned being I'm becoming sings all the way to  
sneeze.

A westerly wind whips through,  
clearing language, swallowing voice.  
The mind, in the on/off blare of lit aspen,  
finally quiet, bows down.

--Judyth Hill