Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

Vol. 16 ▪ No. 2 ISBN 1083-9194 www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/EAP.html Spring ▪ 2005

This issue begins with student Susan Enns' account of her recent summer visit to the central African country of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where her father grew up and her grandparents worked as missionaries. Next, geographer J. Douglas Porteous identifies four "environmental tangibles" that relate human beings to the environment. He asks *EAP* readers to respond with constructive comments, which we would be pleased to publish if they are sent our way.

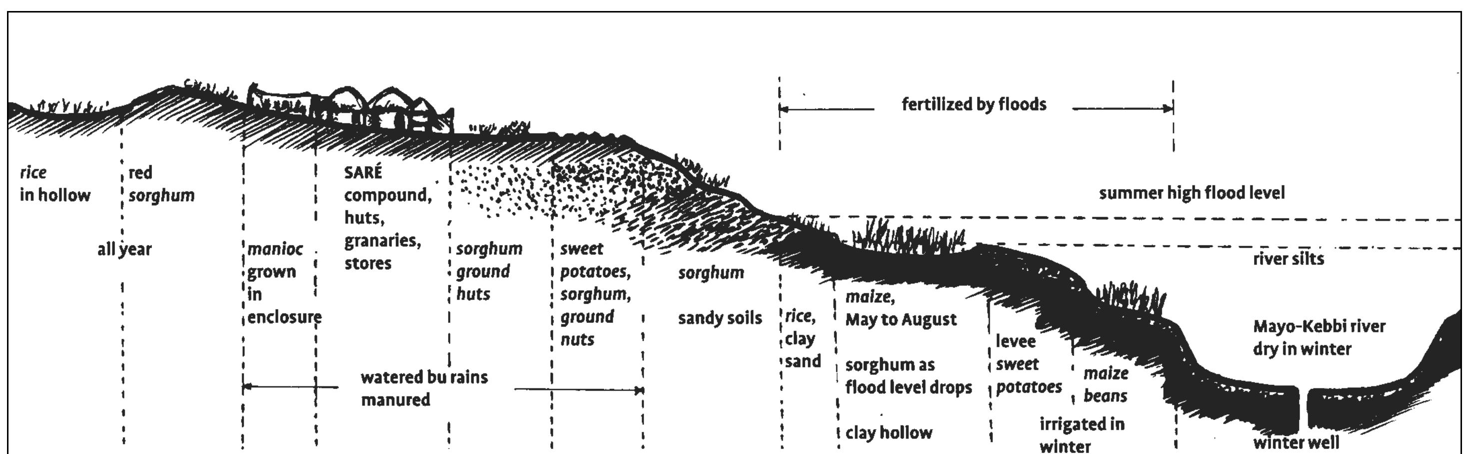
In her essay, doctoral student Marion Dumont summarizes work from her master's thesis on the significance of the place concept for understanding an industry that has sprung up in the Puget Sound region around the *geoduck*—a large clam with protruding siphons. Her work is a useful example of how the place theme can offer a way to bridge economic, regional, and sustainability concerns.

Last, *EAP* editor David Seamon offers commentaries on three papers presented at the conference, "Renew the Face of the Earth: Phenomenology and Ecology." Besides Seamon, keynote speakers were philosopher David Abram, psychotherapist Andy Fisher, and philosopher Don Ihde.

The conference was held in March at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University and sponsored by Duquesne's Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center, one of the foremost repositories of phenomenological writings and research in the world. Some 80 people attended the two-day event, which was greatly encouraging because it focused on a theme—the crucial interconnections between ecological and existential concerns—that has only slowly begun to be seen as a pivotal means whereby phenomenological research can offer a major contribution toward a central real-world need: fostering environmental sustainability and creating better natural and human places.

Yet again we are running short of material for future issues. We are interested in citations, items of interest, reader news, reviews, commentaries, and full-length essays—normally, not more than 12 double-spaced pages. Please consider contributing. We can't publish *EAP* without your help!

One of the many drawings in architect Paul Oliver's Dwellings: The Vernacular House World Wide*—see "citations," p. 3. The drawing illustrates a* saré*—a communal compound for the semi-sedentary Fulani people of Bé in Northern Cameroon, Africa. This section shows "crop culture related to the river levels, soils, rainfall, and the distance of crops from the saré" (p. 39). We hope to review this book in a future issue.*



Donors, 2005

Since our last issue, the following readers have contributed more than the base subscription for 2005. Thank you all so much.

David Adams	John Cameron
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Items of Interest

The 16th annual **Environmental Writing Institute** will be held 25-28 May 2005 on the campus of the University of Montana, Missoula. Events include workshops, field trips, readings, and individual writing consultations. For more information, visit: www.umt.edu/ewi.

The 7th annual meeting of the **International Association for Environmental Philosophy** (IAEP) will be held in Salt Lake City, 22-24 October, immediately following the 44th annual meetings of the **Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy** (SPEP) and the **Society for Phenomenology and the Human Sciences** (SPHS), 20-22 October. Contact: Scott Cameron, Philosophy Dept., Loyola Marymount Univ., One LMU Dr., Suite 3600, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659; scameron@lmu.edu. SPEP and SPHS information: www.spep.org.

The **Nature Institute** will again sponsor courses on Goethean science during summer 2005. For further information: www.natureinstitute.org.

The 2005 **Jean Gebser Conference** will be held 27-29 October at Rice University in Houston, Texas. The conference theme is "Chaos and Order." Gebser was a Swiss philosopher and poet whose foundational work on the evolution of human consciousness and culture is said to be "among the 20th-century's finest contributions to our modern self-understanding." Contact: Prof. Philip Dalton, Dept. of Communication Studies, Stetson University, Deland FL 32720; www.gebser.org.

Place Study is a major part of the newly reorganized MS.Arch degree at the School of Architecture and Interior Design at the University of Cincinnati. The program emphasizes four key themes: Understanding places in their complexity; philosophical and phenomenological foundations in understanding environments; urban places; and theory and research approaches in Interior Design, Architecture and Urban Design. For further information, contact Dr. David Saile, MS.Arch Program Coordinator at: david.saile@uc.edu; www.said.uc.edu.

Citations Received

Alick Bartholomew, 2004. *Hidden Nature: The Startling Insights of Viktor Schauberger*. Edinburgh: Floris.

A useful overview and commentary on the unusual work of Austrian naturalist and hydrologist Viktor Schauberger (1885-1958), who developed a radical new vision of nature, energy, and technology. "His controversial credo was that humanity must begin, with humility, to study Nature and learn from it, rather than try to correct it. We have put the future of humanity at risk by the way we produce and consume energy. His aim was to liberate people from dependence on inefficient and polluting centralized energy resources and generation of power."

Stephanie E. Bothwell, Andrés M.Duany, Peter J. Hetzel, Steven W. Hurtt, & Dhiru A. Thadani, 2004. *Windsor Forum on Design Education: Toward an Ideal Curriculum to Reform Architectural Education*. Miami, FL: New Urban Press.

Edited transcriptions of a conference in which architectural educators reviewed "the underlying philosophies and structures of some well-known past and present models of architectural education and speculated on new ones." A major emphasis on New Urbanism and Classical architecture.

Dolores Hayden, 2004. *A Field Guide to Sprawl.* NY: W. W. Norton.

This landscape architect constructs a dictionary of "precise terms to define the physical elements of sprawl." The result is

“colloquial terms for fifty-one built conditions, from alligator to zoomburg.” Each term is illustrated with aerial photographs from across the United States by photographer Jim Wark. Some categories: “big box” (“gigantic, windowless structures, usually of cheap, concrete block construction”), “boomburg” (“a rapidly growing, urban-sized place in the suburbs”), clustered world” (a community of “similar houses sold at similar prices to families who purchase similar kinds of household goods”), “porkchop lot” (“an interior lot requiring a long driveway to reach the main part of the property"), “snout house” (“dwelling with protruding garages taking up most of the street frontage”), and “TOAD” (“temporary, obsolete, abandoned, or derelict site”).

David Hutchison, 2004. *A Natural History of Place in Education*. NY: Teachers College Press.

This educator “explores the intersection of place and education.” Chapters examine “the philosophy of place in education and everyday life, competing pedagogies of place, the history of and current trends in school design, the school infrastructure crisis, the relationship between the philosophy of education and classroom design, the move from ‘real’ to ‘virtual’ places in computer-mediated schooling, and the changing public versus market-driven landscape of education in the United States.” Hutchison is author of another book in which *EAP* readers may be interested: *Growing up Green: Education for Ecological Renewal* (NY: Teachers College Press, 1998).

John A. Jakle & Keith A. Sculle, 2004. *Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

A study of “parking and its impact on America, especially its impact on the American built environment.”

David Lorimer, 2003. *Radical Prince: The Practical Vision of the Prince of Wales*. Edinburgh: Floris.

This philosopher attempts to present the “full range and context of Prince Charles’ ideas and work.” Includes chapters on architecture, organic architecture, and integrated medicine. A key question is why the Prince’s view has “evoked such strong and contradictory reactions?” Puzzlingly, there is no mention of the Prince’s strong support of architect Christopher Alexander’s work.

Malcolm McCullough, 2004. *Digital Ground: Architecture, Pervasive Computing, and Environmental Knowing*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

This book argues that an integral part of the pervasiveness of computers in our world today is “embedding information technology into the ambient social complexities of the physical world….” The focus is on “how people deal with technology—and how people deal with each other, through technology.” Drawing in part on a phenomenology of embodiment, this architect argues that “unlike cyberspace, which was conceived as a tabula rasa, pervasive computing has to be inscribed into the social and environmental complexity of the existing physical environment. Situation technology may help us manage the protocols, flows, ecologies, and systems that form the basis of valued places; or it may add a layer of distrust, information glut, and experiential uniformity to them.” A major aim is what the author calls “place-centered design.”

David Morris, 2004. *The Sense of Space*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

This philosopher “brings together space and body to show that space is a plastic environment, charged with meaning, that reflects the distinctive character of human embodiment in the full range of its moving, perceptual, emotional, expressive, developmental, and social capacities. Drawing on the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Bergson, as well as contemporary psychology to develop a renewed account of the moving, perceiving body, the book suggest that our sense of space ultimately reflects our ethical relations to other people and to the places we inhabit.

Paul Oliver, 2003. *Dwellings: The Vernacular House World Wide*. London: Phaidon Press.

A beautifully-illustrated study of vernacular housing, organized by such topics as “shelter of nomads,” “settling down,” “built from the ground,” “coping with climate,” “spatial relations,” and “house and cosmos.” Note on the cover of this *EAP* the drawing of a communal compound in northern Cameroon of the Fulani, a semi-nomadic people originally from Senegal and the western Sudan.

Robert A. Scott, 2003. *The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to Understanding the Medieval Cathedral*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This sociologist’s aim is “to understand the very idea of cathedral—any cathedral. What did it stand for? What conception did it embody? What sort of cultural artifact is it?”

Conevery Bolton Valencius, 2003. *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and their Land*. NY: Basic Books.

This historian considers “the excitement, romanticism, and confusion of the frontier experience as well as… how terrifying the untamed wilderness of the West was to its homesteaders.” A book said to be “animated by the voices of the settlers themselves.”

Losing a Sense of Century: Africa as the New Eden

Susan Enns

Enns is a student at Kansas State University and a graduate of Wichita State University in Wichita Kansas. *skenns2003@yahoo.com*. © 2005 Susan Enns.

I speak of Africa and golden joys.

—*Henry IV*, Act V, Sc. 3

Africa and the Congo have unfortunately never been on the American radar screen. Even though Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* took place in the Congo, it (as *Apocalypse Now*) has never been filmed there. More recent treatments like *King Leopold's Ghost* and *Out of Africa* have flitted by without much notice, to be replaced with effect by the delightful Botswana Lady Detective Series.

My own personal experience of the Congo—today the Democratic Republic of Congo and formerly Zaire—was of growing up at my grandfather's knee. My grandparents spent their lives there and my father grew up there, but I never overheard them talking about their sojourn nor did they ever sit me down and explain to me what they had done there.

I remember vividly the excitement of phone calls from Congo to their home, of people rushing to the old black wall phone in the hallway to hear of news that someone over there had died. I also remember my pride at my grandfather's recommissioning service, after my grandmother's death, for his final return to Africa. But the continent for me was always terra incognita, a great mystery, filled with the mystique and lure of the unknown.

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This past summer, I was able to fulfill a lifelong dream of visiting the land of my father's birth, the land to which his parents gave their lives. After much planning and having to make decisions about an unknown world, I took flight for Brussels via Washington's Dulles airport.

At the airport in Kansas City, the *Kansas City Star* announced an uprising in Congo's largest city, Kinshasa, but I decided to press on anyway. We had an overnight flight across the English Channel but I was so excited I couldn't sleep, expecting that very same day I would be in Congo. Upon my arrival in Brussels, however, we were told that our plane to Congo had been cancelled due to an uprising in Bukavu, a large city in the eastern part of the country.

Thus, I was forced to spend five days in a hotel room in Brussels. I could not leave the hotel because I had all that cash (the only form of currency used in Congo), so my room became a sort of Narnian Wood between the Worlds, a holding pattern for me, although not unpleasantly so.

Since Brussels is so far north, the sun, instead of being the timekeeper that I as a Midwestern American know, tracing its path across the sky, was rather like a large light hovering in the sky. I found it very disconcerting and disorienting to look out the window at the sun, and then some time later to look again, and see that it hadn't moved at all. I had no sense that the day had made any progression at all.

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Finally, on the fifth day, I returned to the airport, relieved to be released at last from limbo. Waiting for the plane to Congo, I saw only a few other white faces, which was true of my whole stay in Africa. We got to Kinshasa after dark (night falls at 6 pm at

the equator), so my first exposure to that capital was nocturnal, thus adding to the sense of mystery.

My first night in Congo there was an attempted coup, so the next day the streets were abandoned. Having been advised that I should register at the American Embassy due to the political situation, I made my way over. When I spoke with the consul, she said the situation was unstable and that I shouldn't have come to Congo at all.

My next memory of note was in Tshikapa, which makes the Congo rich with diamonds. I had waited in Brussels, waited in Kinshasa, waited there in the mining zone, and finally I was told I would be leaving for Nyanga, my father's birth place. I remember walking and walking (we walked everywhere) for almost an hour, in a gradual descent to the river. I felt a growing sense of excitement.

We walked and walked and at last we reached the river. I turned a corner and was shocked. All I could see were the ancient brick warehouses, the long pirogues, and the river, always the river. There was nothing there to tell me that I was in the twenty-first century.

I tried to take it all in, but my brain could not comprehend what my eyes were seeing. I became light-headed and I nearly swooned. At other times, I have lost my sense of who I am and where I am, but I have never before that moment lost my sense of what century I am in. I was totally disoriented, as if I had gone to Williamsburg, and found the people weren't acting but were actually real.

Then in Kavudi, Nyanga's tiny port town, I had the same sense of loss of century. We reached Kavudi at night and docked at a dirt bank, lit only by wood fires and filled with Africans. Again, I felt like a time traveler to the nineteenth century. Again, I felt the same loss of reality. There was nothing there to connect me to the twenty-first century, nothing there to remind me of the time and place I had come from.

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I spent four weeks in Nyanga, and felt all the time that I was in Brigadoon, or Gerstacker's *Germelshausen*. I was there two weeks before I realized what I was seeing—a pilot's house with no pilot, an airstrip with no plane, a garage with no cars, and my grandfather's well with no water. There were no missionaries there to explain to me what had happened, so I was left to figure things out on my own, again adding to the sense of unreality.

One day, we went walking in the country and saw a church that felt like LeCorbusier's Ronchamp on the inside. The concrete blocks with V-cuts, placed in all four directions, made it feel that the light came from within, as if the church itself were creating the light. As we walked along, I saw flowers and trees I could never have imagined. It felt like the very first day of creation, as though the world had begun that very moment. Then when we went swimming in the lake, rimmed by gigantic caladia, I felt as though I were in Eden and that the earth had just begun.

The day we left for Tshikapa, we drove out into the country and I had this wonderful sense of expansiveness, as if the world would go on forever and never stop. Rather than Sajer's *Forgotten Soldier*, lost in the endless Russian steppes, I felt like Reepicheep in Narnia approaching the Eastern Isles. I felt that if I went on I would reach paradise. It was as if Aslan himself was saying to me, "further up and further in." I wanted to go on forever and never stop.

If America in the nineteenth century was a kind of New Eden, then surely Africa is for the twenty-first. Congo is the heart of Africa and Africa is the heart of the world. I went to the Heart of Darkness and found a heart of light, and traveled to the Dark Continent and saw that it was filled with light.

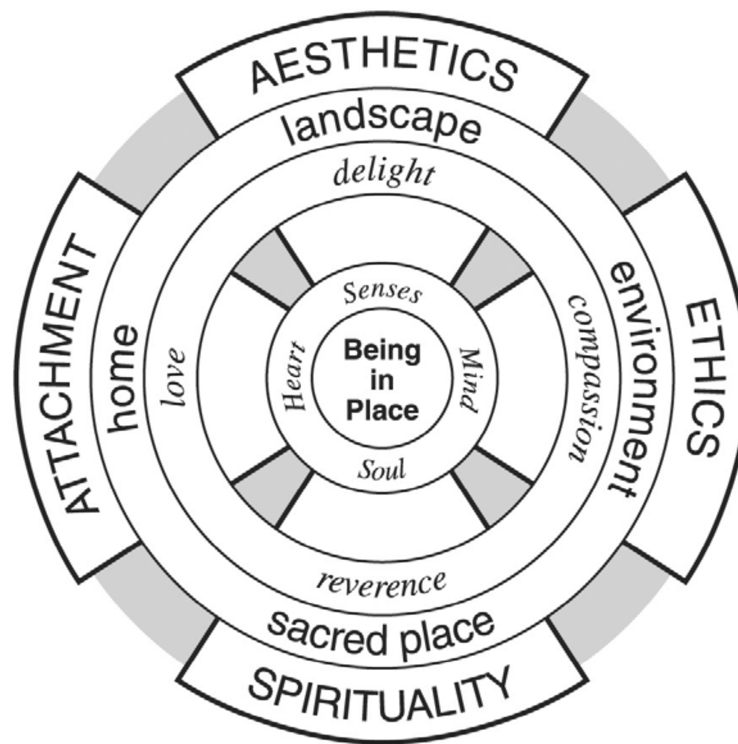
Environmental Intangibles

J. Douglas Porteous

Author of 12 books, Porteous teaches at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. His essay, "Direct Action and Fields of Care," appeared in the fall 2003 issue of EAP. *Geography Department, University of Victoria, PO Box 3050, Victoria, BC V8W 3P5.* *©2005 J. Douglas Porteous.*

God is in the details, and phenomenologists are well aware of the particularities of things. Yet, whether in complementary or contradictory ways, many of us also search for apparent order among apparent chaos. I've tried to do this, with a high degree of trepidation, concerning the identification of the chief intangible relationships between people and the nonhuman environment, whether natural or built.

After prolonged "intuitive cogitation," I have identified four major environmental intangibles that relate people and environment (see Porteous 1993). These qualities are: *attachment*, *aesthetics*, *ethics*, and *spirituality*. Their dynamic relationship is illustrated in the diagram (from Porteous 1996).



Several generations of students have attempted to modify this schema. Hindus and Buddhists note its similarity to the cosmic wheel and suggest motion from attachment (*artha*) through *karma* and *dharma* to *moksha* (spiritual release). Western students suggest direct causal relationships among the four elements: for example, might attachment (e.g. perhaps via domicide—see Porteous & Smith 2001) lead directly to an ethic of dwelling? Or, can aesthetics lead directly to spirituality, or vice versa? Can some elements conflate, as in Santayana's (1896) notion of the coming together of ethics and aesthetics in kalokagathia?

As yet, however, no one has questioned the basic tetradic structure (in favour of dyad, triad, multivalency, or even the impossibility of diagramming intangible relationships). I recognize that the schema has value, if any, chiefly as a heuristic device. Nevertheless, I'm not satisfied with it (although I don't know exactly how or why) and would welcome constructive comments.

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Place as Both Local and Boundary-less: The Puget Sound Commercial Geoduck Industry as an Example

Marion Dumont

Dumont lives on Carr Inlet near Gig Harbor, Washington. The beach near her home hosts a viable population of geoduck (pronounced GWEE-duk)—*a large clam* whose *siphons can be seen protruding from the sand during seasonal low tides. She is currently enrolled at San Francisco's California Institute of Integral Studies in their Humanities Ph.D program in Philosophy and Religion with a concentration in Women's Spirituality. This essay is based on Dumont's master's thesis, "The history and development of the Puget Sound commercial geoduck industry: how does place shape the way in which we look at the history and development of the commercial geoduck industry?" University of Washington, 2004. mgdumont68@hotmail.com.* *© 2005 Marion Dumont.*

Panopea abrupta is a very large clam commonly known in the Pacific Northwest as the *geoduck* (Gordon 1996). If you live in the Puget Sound region, there is nothing quite so fascinating as this great clam, which I became acquainted with the summer before starting my second year of graduate school. A study of the geoduck industry led me into the culture, politics, economics, history and ecology of the region. It was the notion of place that provided the perspective from which to weave my discoveries.

In this essay, I consider the emergence of non-local or boundary-less place and the interface that occurs between the local and non-local through an analysis of the history and development of the geoduck industry.

A Set of Living Relationships

A particularly useful way of looking at place is as a matrix of life-giving relationships. As René Dubos (1972) explains, "Each particular place is the continuously evolving expression of a highly complex set of forces—inanimate and living—which become integrated into an organic whole."

From this perspective, one can argue that the geoduck, the Puget Sound region, and the commercial geoduck industry can be understood as a set of living relationships that constitute place. Place, Dubos goes on to say, "symbolizes the living ecological relationship between a particular location and the persons who have derived from it and added to it the various aspects of their humanness." The Puget Sound marine ecosystem as a matrix of life-giving relationships is one real-world example of such a place.

In this sense, place is an evolution of a set of relationships between the living and the non-living that results in an organic whole. If we accept this description, what is place if not a system? Dempster's depiction of a system is useful here: "Although a focus on components and boundaries is typical when identifying or understanding systems, the *relations* among these components are critical for establishing a system, its behaviour, and its degree of complexity" (Dempster 1998).

Everything about the geoduck is structured in relation to its environment—the Puget Sound marine ecosystem. Embedded in the Sound's sea floor, the geoduck varies by size, color, and flesh according to the type of sediment into which it burrows.

In other words, the geoduck's size, strength, composition and mobility are very much dependent on environmental surroundings, and its stupendous siphon, outsized fleshy body, and mammoth bivalves make no sense apart from the watery environment of Puget Sound. The relationships between

the shell, the siphon, the foot, the soft body, and other components constitute the pattern of organization that is the geoduck.

Non-Local Place

Especially in modern times, however, human beings have coevolved in a relational system that includes but transcends local phenomena. Place becomes a system of life-supporting relationships that includes local and non-local factors.

Murray Bookchin (2001) explains that "…nature and society are interlinked by evolution into one nature that consists of two differentiations: first or biotic nature, and second or human nature." His *biotic* nature refers to local place—i.e., that space defined by an intimate, harmonious relationship between the natural world and early human beings. On the other hand, his *human* nature refers to non-local place—i.e., that space defined by boundary-less relationships between human beings and the world.

The notion of non-local place provides one way to understand the situation today in which many people have lost their place in the world. Our way of making a living is no longer shaped by local phenomena, which have retained only residual meaning. Instead, the local factors of nature, culture, and history have combined with non-local factors as determinants of place.

We no longer inhabit the local in the way in which indigenous people did. The clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the foods we eat all come from non-local places. When we eat clams or mussels, the shells are waste rather than a valuable exchange for goods or decorations for clothing.

Geoduck Industry as Non-Local

In studying the geoduck industry, it becomes evident that place is both a bounded local, regional space as well as a boundary-less set of relationships that transcend space and time. The geoduck has evolved with place, reproducing under a set of local and fairly controlled set of factors relatively easy to understand.

The geoduck industry, on the other hand, has emerged from the same place, but the character of its emergence is driven by non-local and unpredictable factors much more complicated and more difficult to decipher.

Today's phenomenal market demand for geoduck is something no one could have predicted a century ago. The continued viability of this industry is dependent on its ability to transcend local boundaries and to create a complex system of global interdependency.

For example, thousands of miles from Puget Sound, boats full of geoduck wait to unload at Asian fish markets. The industry is structured around the individual and social preferences of a people that live on the other side of the world who adhere to a set of beliefs that serve these preferences. In short, the geoduck industry is very much shaped by the social preferences of cultures whose historical development has no local connections with the geoduck.

The geoduck industry as a way of making a living has evolved over a long history of non-native natural-resource use and has emerged as a system dependent on a market economy driven by the need for profit.

At the same time, however, the organization of the industry and the decisions made internally are not often in response to local phenomena. The geoduck industry is a viable market economy because of its structural relationship with non-local markets and has little to do with the set of relations that constitute local place.

Losing Life-Giving Relationships

The intersection of the bounded and the unbounded, represented here by the geoduck and the geoduck industry, is a new and troubling phenomenon. There is good reason to be concerned that local place has lost much of its value and that local characteristics such as the ecological diversity of the Pacific Northwest have only residual meaning and significance. It matters to the Puget Sound and it matters to the geoduck. It ought to matter to local people because they too belong to this place.

What have we lost as a result of our overwhelming accomplishments in overcoming the constraints of local place? Many would argue that we have lost the connections with local, life-giving relationships. We live as if these connections didn't

matter. But if the essence of place is relationships, what about humanity's relationship with the creatures it exploits? What about the local inhabitants' relationship with the local place in which they live?

Non-local places are dependent on a market paradigm driven by individual, social and market preferences and not by a creature or ecosystem's well-being. The life economy of the marine ecosystem has its account-balancing activities that function to maintain its own viability. The very different economic and account-balancing activities of the geoduck industry function to maintain the viability of a market system. The local is everything for the former, but it has become residual to the latter. The contemporary interface between these two very different systems is not compatible with the life-giving relationships of the local place.

For both systems to survive there needs to be some sort of life-giving relationship that connects them. We are faced with the challenge of finding a way to restore balance and harmony to the structural relationships that define humanity's place in the world. We must learn to respond in ways that are suitable to the environment that we inhabit.

Is it possible to structure our lives, not in response to a market economy, but in response to a market economy dependent on the natural world? Can we redefine profit margins to include environmental losses? Can we incorporate into our relationships with culture, politics, and economics a life-sustaining relationship with the natural world? Ultimately, the local is fundamental. Without the geoduck there would be no geoduck industry.

The problems that arise out of the intersection of place require more than finding fixes. Solving these problems will take a re-visioning of the way in which we inhabit our new kind of place. We need to manifest a way of living where two places can exist along side one another and the overlapping of shared factors can foster life-giving relationships. We need a new way of being in the world that enables us to be attentive to both the local and non-local aspects of our lives. We need to develop a view of the world not yet imagined.

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Duquesne Conference on Phenomenology and Ecology

David Seamon

"Renew the Face of the Earth: Phenomenology and Ecology" was a conference held Friday and Saturday, 11-12 March 2005, at the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. Keynote speakers were ***David Abram****, philosopher, Alliance for Wild Ethics, New Mexico, and author of* The Spell of the Sensuous *(Pantheon, 1996);* ***Andy Fisher****, psychotherapist, private practice, Ontario, and author of* Radical Ecology *(SUNY Press, 2002);* ***Don Ihde****, philosopher, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, and author of* Bodies in Technology (University of Minnesota Press, 2002)*; and* ***David Seamon****,* EAP *editor, Kansas State University, and editor of* Dwelling, Seeing, and Designing *(SUNY Press, 1993).*

On Friday, Abram and Fisher presented papers and replies to each other's paper; Ihde and Seamon presented shorter responses to the two papers. The same format was used on Saturday with Ihde and Seamon presenting papers and replies, and Abram and Fisher presenting shorter responses. Paper titles were as follows:

- *David Abram, "Between the Body and the Breathing Earth: On the Phenomenology of Depth Perception;"*
- *Andy Fisher, "To Praise Again: Phenomenology and the Project of Ecopsychology;"*
- *Don Ihde, "Postphenomenology and the Lifeworld;"*
- *David Seamon, "Interconnections, Relationships, and Environmental Wholes: A Phenomenological Ecology of Natural and Built Worlds."*

What follows are David Seamon's responses to Abram, Fisher, and Ihde's presentations. Unless indicated otherwise, all quotations that Seamon cites are from the presentations. For readers interested in the full papers, they will be published in 2006 by the Simon Silverman Phenomenology Center; Director Daniel Martino is editing the volume. Contact: www.library.duq.edu/silverman/index.htm*.*

1. Commentary on David Abram's presentation

How are we to be with the earth and world? This to me seems the major question that David Abram asks in his presentation. Hiking lost in the mountains becomes a locus for meditation on the nature of Abram's lived relationship with the forest in which he finds himself. He realizes that depth-as-experienced is "the weird stretch between the near and far of things"…. a "shifting blend, this *synaesthesia*, between different sensory modalities…"

Abram's meditation then shifts to the lived contrast marked by the flat, two-dimensional world of digitized images portrayed on the screens of televisions and computer monitors. Nature is now "something you look *at*, not something you are *in* and *of.*"

Is postmodern life moving us in such a way that eventually all visual experience will be reduced to the objectivist representation of digital screen images? Will "the palpable world" become "a kind of representation"?

Many thinkers and commentators are writing about the ways that digital technologies appear to be reducing the range and quality of human experience. In a recent Sunday *New York Times* article (February 20, 2005), for example, columnist and blogger Andrew Sullivan notes that New York City's lively streets have lost some of their animation, partly because of the "iPod people," who "walk down the street in their own MP3 cocoon, bumping into others, deaf to small social cues, shutting out anyone not in their bubble."

The result, Sullivan says, is that we Americans are "narrowcasting our own lives…. Technology

has given us finally a universe entirely for ourselves—where the serendipity of meeting a new stranger, or hearing a piece of music we would never choose for ourselves…are all effectively banished…. Society without the social. Others who are chosen—not met at random."

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In the past, lifeworlds integrating people and place arose unself-consciously. Left to our own human devices, we had no other choice but to meet and make life firsthand through the polyphonic mesh of human being directly in a world soldered to time and space. Today we face a situation where, to know the dense, rich potential of human being-in-place, we may need to make that potential a focus of self-conscious study through the perspective and methods of phenomenology.

In this regard, there are wonderful studies going on, some of them directly phenomenological, some of them not: composer and acoustic historian Murray Schafer's marvelous interpretive studies of the soundscape and ways to sensitize people, particularly children, to the world of sound (Schafer 1977); architectural theorist Thomas Thiis-Evensen's perceptive efforts to delineate a phenomenology of architectural experience (Thiis-Evensen 1989); philosopher Kay Toombs' moving firsthand accounts of her experience of progressive multiple sclerosis as a portal toward a phenomenology of the experience of differently-abledness (Toombs 1995) ; architect Christopher Alexander's singular attempts to recreate self-consciously built environments with a sense of wholeness, community, and place (Alexander 2002-05).

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In short, to make a better world—perhaps even to save our world—I'm suggesting that what, in an earlier time, was taken for granted and always of the lifeworld and natural attitude may need today to become an object of self-conscious attention honed through phenomenological explication. To save their lived richness, we may need to lay out explicitly the tacit aspects of human experience and life, using phenomenology as our means. Then we may need to find ways to remake this lived richness self-consciously through policy, design, and engaged ways of being.

Can this be done? To make self-consciously what in the past largely happened unself-consciously? This perhaps is one of our time's pivotal questions, which the notions and methods of phenomenology can play a major role in answering.

2. Commentary on Andy Fisher's presentation

In his *Nature's Economy*, a history of ecological ideas, intellectual historian Donald Worster (1994) highlights two contrasting world views toward the natural world: on one hand, the *arcadian* tradition, which reveres nature and seeks to find ways to enmesh human beings in harmony with the natural world; on the other hand, the *imperial* tradition, which attempts, especially through reason, to dominate the natural world and use it largely for practical human ends.

In his presentation, Andy Fisher laments the dominance of the imperial tradition in our world today and seeks a contemporary means for facilitating the arcadian tradition through a self-reflexive psychology and phenomenology—what he summarizes by the term "ecopsychology."

In the kind of phenomenological psychology he speaks of here, Fisher emphasizes the need to facilitate a "sense of kinship or intimate reciprocity with nonhuman beings" because "[e]verything, from a wounded bumble bee to a booming thunderclap, has its own voice, aliveness, and hold on the world."

I much admire Fisher's efforts of finding ways to "let the larger natural world come alive and speak again." This possibility is a central way in which phenomenology and ecology can sustain each other in the aim to encounter the "deep organismic wisdom at the centre of our experience."

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I must disagree with Fisher, however, in his conclusion that little real-world work has been done in ecopsychology, or "phenomenological ecology," as I would prefer to call it. Other than psychiatrist Harold Searles' remarkable *The Nonhuman Environment*, which argued that people's relatedness to

the physical environment is "one of the transcendentally important facts of human living" (Searles 1960, p. 6), it is largely true that psychologists have contributed little to finding ways to cultivate and intensify peoples' respect and care for the natural world.

As an aside, however (since this conference is being hosted by Duquesne University), I think it important to point out that, almost thirty-five years ago, Duquesne psychologist Rolf von Eckartsberg, in the first volume of the *Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology,* called for what he termed an "experiential ecological psychology" (von Eckartsberg 1971a, p. 73) or "existential ecology" (von Eckartsberg 1971b, p. 377). He wrote:

> This is what we need now: ecological awareness on all levels. It has to be a particular kind of ecology, however—what we might properly call *human ecology* or *existential ecology*, meaning thereby that it has to be an ecology that includes [human beings] as part of the system. I am always part of the ecology in which I move, and my being there and of it—whether as an individual or as [human]kind—has the greatest consequences because [human beings are] the most pervasive, persistent and powerful agent of change. Therefore, we have to learn to be more careful. We have to let grow a spirit of human ecology to increasingly absorb the adolescent thrust of the spirit of technique. But this also mean that every individual and all [human]kind will have to change radically (p. 377).

Though the contributions of psychology to this "existential ecology" may be so far minimal, other disciplines and professions have made major strides toward facilitating phenomenological awareness toward the environment, and I want to highlight just a few of these efforts here.

Early on, beginning in the 1970s, appeared the influential phenomenological work of humanistic geographers like Yi-Fu Tuan, Edward Relph, and Anne Buttimer, who, in books like *Topophilia* (1974)*, Place and Placelessness,* (1976) and *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (1980) developed a useful phenomenological language for better understanding human environmental experience and peoples' lived relationship with nature.

In architecture, there are worthy efforts by thinkers like Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980), Thomas Thiis-Evensen (1987), and Christopher Alexander (2003-05) to find ways to understand and design the physical environment in ways that respect and are more attuned to the deeper aspects of the natural world.

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One of the most powerful efforts to deepen the way we see the natural world is naturalist and educator Paul Krafel's *Seeing Nature* (1998), a book that points implicitly toward a phenomenology of the laws of thermodynamics, the first of which says that energy is neither created nor destroyed; the second of which says that all activities, left to their own devices, tend toward greater disorder and few possibilities.

As Krafel comes to understand the second law of thermodynamics more deeply, he comes to wonder whether human beings can do nothing but consume and destroy the earth: "I despair at not being able to do more than live at the expense of the world" (p. 107). His book depicts his personal efforts to find ways whereby he is more attuned to the second law so that he less often consumes possibilities faster than they are created, especially in regard to the natural environment.

One of Krafel's aims is to see the natural world in new ways by *shifting* perspectives and human actions whereby people increase, rather than decrease, the possibilities of the world through intentional, caring actions grounded in firsthand awareness and understanding. Much of his book describes ways to facilitate this understanding, which begins, he claims, with efforts to see in new ways.

One of the most powerful examples that Krafel offers of his efforts to transform understanding into action is his struggle to heal an overgrazed field badly eroded by six-foot gullies near a school where he taught in suburban Los Angeles. Working in rain storms and using only a shovel, Krafel builds a series of low sod dams to split and thus weaken the erosive power of the torrents of rain-fed water plunging through the gullies.

How he slowly learns to work with the rushing water and, eventually, to transform the field into stretches of green teeming with plant and animal life is an inspirational lesson in learning to truly see how the natural world works and to use that understanding for environmental healing.

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Having edited for the last sixteen years a newsletter entitled *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology*, I could go on at length about hopeful scholarship and practice devoted to integrating human beings in a caring relationship with nature. My larger point is that an "ecopsychology" must be interdisciplinary and multi-professional: that psychologists alone cannot rejoin people and nature because this relationship is too wide-ranging and must be made to happen not only conceptually but also practically, through counseling, healing, designing, policy-making, and other real-world actions.

Personally, I would be happiest if universities banished all disciplinary departments and programs tomorrow. The wide-ranging wholeness of life and nature cannot be and should not be constrained by disciplinary and professional boundaries that reduce the world to an incomplete counterfeit.

To me, a major conclusion that Fisher's paper intimates is that we must find new institutional ways to look, to see, to study, to understand, to help, and to make. One such institutional structure might be a discipline and profession of place and place making. However such new institutional structures might arise, I believe, like Fisher, that the vision and methods of phenomenology will be central.

3. Commentary on Don Ihde's presentation

Don Ihde's presentation raises a number of issues relating phenomenology to technology and ecology, and here I focus on two.

First, I'd like to comment on how we might use the perspective and practices of phenomenology in the pragmatic way involving what Ihde calls "societal, political, and technological reform."

Second, I want to argue that there are a number of ways in which phenomenological philosopher Martin Heidegger's thinking, expressed through the work of phenomenological scholars like Ingrid Stefanovic, Edward Relph, Gordon Brittan, Jr., and Albert Borgmann, continues to have important value not only intellectually and conceptually but also experientially and practically, especially in regard to ecological concerns.

For me, a reform-reminded phenomenology and a Heideggerian vision are intimately related, since I accept Heidegger's claim that we do and make only what we understand; therefore, if we find new ways to understand, we might do and make differently (Heidegger 1971, Mugerauer 1994).

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I agree with Ihde that, in regard to contemporary ecological and technological concerns, there is much in Heidegger that can be described as romantic, nostalgic, and dystopian, but I also believe that the much greater hope that Heidegger offers is the possibility of what phenomenological philosopher Ingrid Stefanovic (2000) has called *originative thinking*—i.e., a style of empathetic looking and seeing by which the thing to be understood is given room to be both what it is in itself and what it is in relation to the larger whole of which it is a part.

I would argue that, since the 1970s, a growing number of scholars and practitioners have, through originative thinking, generated work that might change the ways in which we understand, live with, and care for our natural and humanmade worlds.

My first example is the remarkable work of phenomenological geographer Edward Relph (1976, 1981), who perhaps more than anyone else writing about environmental and ecological concerns, has taken Heidegger's difficult, opaque notions and given them powerful sense in terms of real-world situations, landscapes, and environments. Relph's best known work is *Place and Placelessness*, a 1976 phenomenology of place grounded in Heideggerian conception and method.

Though there have been a number of thoughtful phenomenological explications of place since Relph's book—I think, for example, of the work of philosophers Edward Casey (1993), Jeffrey Malpas (1999), and Robert Mugerauer (1994)—I believe *Place and Placelessness* still to be the single-best phenomenology of place because its conceptual clarity, readerly access, and practical usefulness.

Relph argues that places are a fundamental aspect of peoples' existence in the world and can be defined as "fusions of human and natural order and… the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world" (1976, p. 141). His most original contribution to the understanding of place

is his emphasis on *insideness*—in other words, if a person feels *inside* a place, he or she is here rather than there, safe rather than threatened, enclosed rather than exposed, at ease rather than stressed.

Relph suggests that the more profoundly inside a place the person feels, the stronger will be his or her identity with that place. On the other hand, a person can be separate or alienated from place, and this mode of environmental experience is what Relph calls *outsideness*.

Further, Relph argues that outsideness and insideness constitute a fundamental dialectic in human life and that, through varying combinations and intensities of outsideness and insideness, different places take on different identities for different people, and human experience takes on different qualities of meaning and feeling.

Relph then explicates several modes of insideness and outsideness grounded in various levels of lived intentionality and involvement. For example, the strongest sense of place experience is what Relph calls *existential insideness*—a situation of deep, unself-conscious immersion in place, and the experience most people know when they are at home in their own community and region.

The opposite of existential insideness is what he calls *existential outsideness*—a sense of strangeness and alienation, such as that often felt by newcomers to a place or by people who, having been away from their home place, return to feel like strangers because the place is no longer what it was before.

The value of these modes, particularly in terms of self-awareness, is that they apply to specific place experiences yet provide a conceptual structure in which to understand those experiences in broader terms. In other words, Relph provides a language that allows one to articulate the particular experience of a particular person or group in relation to the particular place in which they find themselves.

We also have a terminology for describing how and why the same place can be experienced by different individuals (e.g., the long-time resident vs. the newcomer) or how, over time, the same person can experience the same place differently (e.g., the 'home' that suddenly seems so different after one's significant other has died).

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If Relph's work offers an eye-opening and flexible language for clarifying our lived relationships with places, the innovative thinking of philosopher-inventor Gordon Brittan, Jr. (2001, 2002) strikingly demonstrates how a Heideggerian vision can offer guidance toward more ecologically- and place-based technologies.

Over the last twenty years, Brittan and his associate, philosopher Henry Kyburg, have been developing a place-based wind turbine that is much smaller and less visually jarring than the conventional 700-foot-high, three-bladed wind turbines favored by the corporate energy industry.

The sailboat-like design of Brittan's sixty-foot-high machines much more gracefully fits in with its natural surroundings and is readily owned, operated, and repaired by individuals or small cooperatives.

In developing this "windjammer," as it has come to be called, Brittan draws on the work of philosopher Albert Borgmann (1984), especially his Heideggerian distinction between "devices" and "things." Illustrated by jet planes, computers, cell phones, pocket calculators, and other electronically-sophisticated technologies common to our time, devices are distant and disengaging in the sense that an ordinary person does not usually understand how they work or how they might be fixed if broken.

Typically, devices resist appropriation through care, repair, and exercise of skill; when a device no longer works and must be disposed of, we feel little sense of attachment or loss.

In contrast, a "thing" is any object with which we can readily involve ourselves and feel a part of, thus we may hone our skills, fondness, and sense of responsibility for the thing—for example, the woodworker's pride in his or her tools; the potter's sensitivity to clay, turning wheel, and kiln; or the biker's care for his motorcycle.

Brittan's aim is to make a wind turbine that is a thing rather than a device. His windjammer turns by sails, furled when the wind blows, unfurled when it does not. The turbine's machinery is at ground level and exposed, easily assembled, and readily repaired with the same tools used to fix farm machinery. The windjammer can be owned by a person of modest means, and Brittan and his team have developed

different styles of windjammer to relate ecologically and aesthetically to varying natural landscapes and regions.

In short, through creative thinking and design at least partly obliged to Heidegger, Brittan is developing a viable alternative to the device-like wind turbines that, because of their huge size and frequent visual incompatibility with natural surroundings, have generated considerable opposition in many parts of the United States and Canada.

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In both Relph and Brittan's work, there is evoked the Heideggerian possibility of experiencing an intuitive intimacy with things, creatures, landscapes, and places such that the boundaries of self and Other are replaced by a deepened understanding and, in Brittan's work, a deepened making.

Relph (1981) calls this empathetic openness an *environmental humility*—i.e., a way of seeing and understanding that is responsive to the best qualities of the Other and that might foster a compassion and gentle caretaking for places, people, and the things of nature. His appeal, he says, is "for guardianship, for taking care of things merely because they exist, for tending and protecting them. In this there is neither mastery nor subservience, but there is responsibility and commitment" (p. 187).

I believe that phenomenology is the most powerful conceptual vehicle we academics have to foster empathetic openness and, in turn, to understand and learn to care for the natural and humanmade worlds in this way that Relph calls environmental humility.

Kindly seeing points to wiser actions that, in turn, set the stage for more kindly seeing. The result is a virtuous circle propelled by phenomenology and beginning and ending with the obligation to look after things, creatures, people, and places the best we can simply because they have the right to be and to become.

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