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Vol. 26, No. 1, Winter 2015 (includes "items of interest," "citations received," and essays by Christopher Aanstoos & Jeff Ediger).

# Environmental & Architectural Phenomenology

This *EAP* begins 26 years of publication and marks the first digital-only edition, though we emphasize that readers who wish to continue receiving paper copies can order a postal subscription (see back page for details).

We thank the many readers who forwarded notes of congratulation for our special 25th-anniversary issue, which has now received over 1,500 "hits" on the academia.edu website. (Whether this attention leads to reading or studying the special issue, who knows?!)

In this issue, we return to our regular *EAP* features, including "items of interest" and "citations received." Longer entries include environmental psychologist **Claudia Mausner's** review of urban designer **Vikas Mehta's** *The Street* (2013), which incorporates an innovative observational study of sidewalk behaviors in three urban neighborhoods in the Boston metropolitan region. Particularly relevant to *EAP* is Mehta's creative field-research methods for observing and describing city streets and urban behaviors. One could say that his graphic presentations (see pp. 8, 9, and 10) point toward important possibilities for a "phenomenology of graphically portraying place."

The two essays in this issue are by phenomenological psychologist **Christopher Aanstoos** and contemplative craftsman **Jeff Ediger**. Aanstoos reflects on how a phenomenological perspective can help to envision designing one's home (see his earlier *EAP* essay on this topic in the winter 2006 issue). "Can we," writes Aanstoos, "imagine our experience of living in a home well enough to be guided in its design by a phenomenology of that imaginal experience?"

In his essay, Ediger presents three "imaginal vignettes" that explore the lived nature of sitting. Having created architecture, Ediger asks, "do we then forget how to dwell? For instance, we sit. We therefore build chairs. Having built the chair, do we then neglect the creative depth of our capacity to sit?"
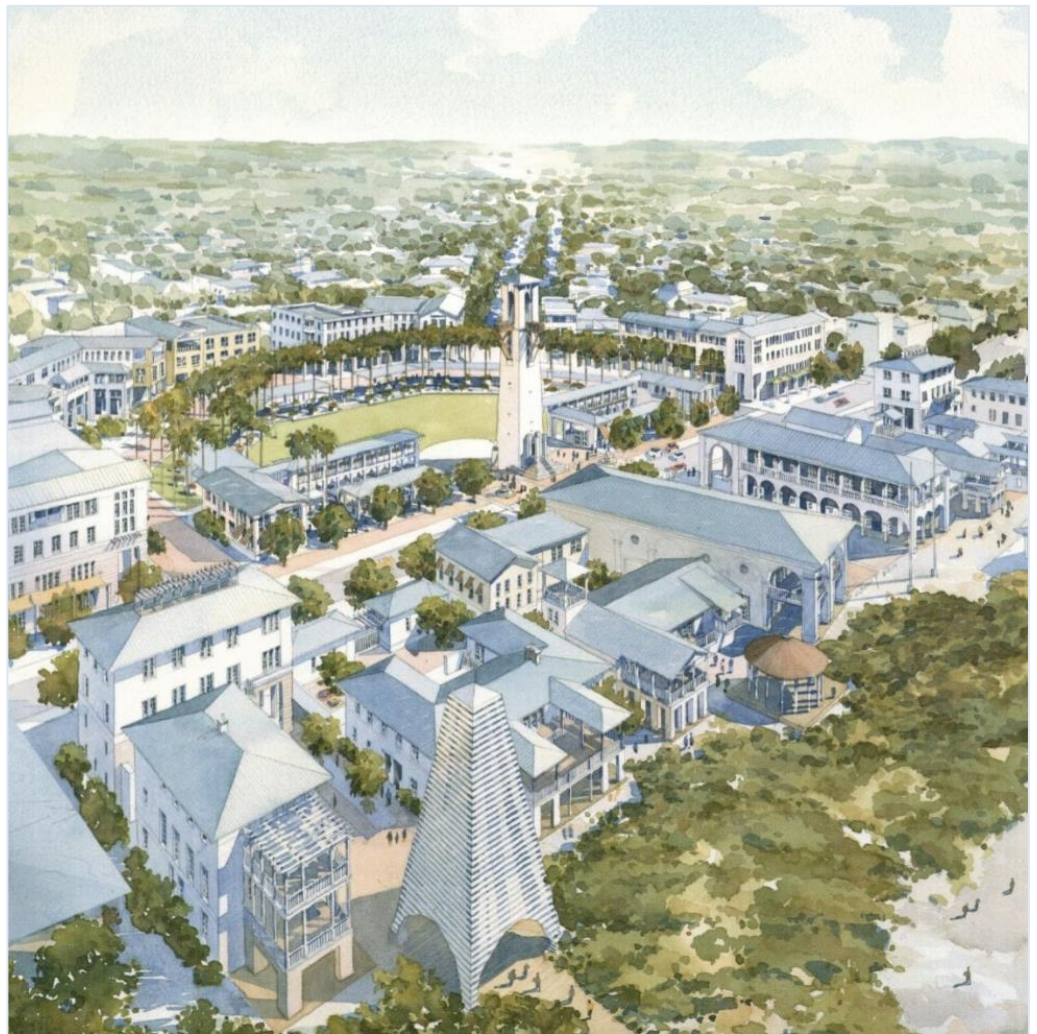
Above: Architect **Léon Krier's** *conceptual design for the completion of the civic center of the New-Urbanist community of Seaside, Florida, drawn from architect* **Dhiru A. Thadani's** *recently published* **Visions of Seaside** *(New York: Rizzoli, 2013; see pp. 5, 6, and 7). Krier's conception incorporates buildings designed by several other architects. His aim is "to regularize the space by planting a dense double row of Royal Palms… giving not only shade but a frame for the inchoate architectural appearance… [The design assumes] a classical layout with highly formal planting, classical architecture, and vernacular alleyways of a dense building fabric completing the oceanfront square" (p. 511). Watercolor drawing by* **David Csont**, *Urban Design Associates, Pittsburgh, PA.*

Donors, 2015

We thank the following readers who, since the fall 2014 issue, have forwarded contributions for *EAP's* continuing production: **Alvin Holm, Harvey Sherman, Peter Walker**, and **Tim White**.

Items of interest

The 7th-annual conference of the **Interdisciplinary Coalition of North American Phenomenologists** will be held May 22–24, 2015, at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. The conference theme is "Facticity and Transcendence." http://www.icnap.org/.

The **Forum of Architecture, Culture and Spirituality** announces its next annual Symposium, **ACS 7**, to take place June 18–21, 2015, at Ghost Ranch, an education and retreat center near Abiquiu, New Mexico, USA. The conference theme is "Nature and the Ordinary: Sacred Foundations of Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality." http://www.acsforum.org/.

The 2015 **International Human Science Research Conference** will be held at Sør-Trøndelag University College, Trondheim, Norway, August 11–14. The Conference theme is "culture and morality as the girders of human experience," but presentations on other topics are welcome. The keynote speakers are Professors **Polycarp Ikuenobe** (Nigeria/USA), **Svend Brinkmann** (Denmark) and **Jean Watson** (USA). www.seattleu.edu/artsci/map/ihsr/.

Prescott College environmental studies professor and naturalist **Mark Riegner** and Nature Institute director **Craig Holdrege** are leading a 12–day expedition, **"Form and Pattern in the Amazon: A River Adventure."** June 1–12, 2015. The expedition will incorporate methods of observation grounded in the phenomenological approach to nature developed by the influential poet and scientist **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**. The focus will be holistic approaches to science and the exploration of patterns in nature, including plant morphology and metamorphosis as well as on form and pattern in mammals and birds. For more information, contact Mark Riegner: mriegner@prescott.edu.

The **Newsletter of Phenomenology** is an on-line, weekly production highlighting research, events, and activities relating to phenomenology. A good source of news on conferences, workshops, and recent publications. http://phenomenology.ro/category/news/the-newsletter-of-phenomenology/.

Architecture and Culture is the international, peer-reviewed journal of the **Architectural Humanities Research Association** (**AHRA**). The journal focuses on the relationship between architecture and the culture that shapes and is shaped by it. A major aim is to "promote a conversation between all those who are curious about what architecture might be and what it can do." http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/journal/architecture-and-culture/.

Sound Studies is an international, peer reviewed, inter-disciplinary journal providing "a unique forum for the development of sound research within a range of disciplines such as ethnomusicology, history, sociology, media and cultural studies, film studies, anthropology, philosophy, urban studies, architecture, arts, and performance studies. The journal encourages the study and research of sound by publishing work that is interdisciplinary, theoretical, empirically rich and critical in nature." www.bloomsbury.com/uk/journal/sound-studies/.

Contemporary Aesthetics is an on-line, peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD): "In recent years, aesthetics has grown into a rich and varied discipline. Its scope has widened to embrace ethical, social, religious, environmental, and cultural concerns…. An on-line publication offers an ideal opportunity for advancing these purposes, and *Contemporary Aesthetics* hopes to provide that forum." www.contempaesthetics.org/index.html

Nature and Human Life is a Chinese e-journal of the environmental humanities, emphasizing environmental ethics and environmental aesthetics. The mission is to promote academic communication between China and the West in the field of environmental humanities and to promote the research of environmental humanities to the public. The editor is Prof. **Shan Gao**, Philosophy Department, Soochow University. sgao@suda.edu.cn.

Citations Received

Chris Abel, 2015. *The Extended Self: Architecture, Memes and Minds.* **Mahchester, UK: Manchester Univ. Press.**

This architect traces the roots of the current energy-wasting culture "to the coevolution of Homo sapiens and technology, from the first use of tools as artificial extensions to the human body, to the motorized cities spreading around the world, whose uncontrolled effects are changing the planet itself." Drawing on a concept he calls the 'technical meme', Abel "develops a theory of the 'extended self' encompassing material and spatial as well as psychological and social elements.

Azucena Cruz-Pierre and Donald A. Landes, eds., 2013. *Exploring the Work of Edward S. Casey: Giving Voice to Place, Memory, and Imagination.* **London: Bloomsbury Academic.**

Philosopher **Edward Casey** has produced perhaps the most comprehensive phenomenology of place yet to be envisioned. This edited volume is composed of 15 chapters on Casey's "place" writings by colleagues and former students. Also included are three interviews with Casey relating to various aspects of his ideas about place. These chapters and interviews are arranged around three central themes: "Imagining, Memory, and Place"; "Painting and Scapes" [sic]; and "Edges, Glances, and Worlds." Contributors include **Kent Bloomer**, **Fred Evans**, **Eugene Gendlin**, **Eva Feder Kittay**, **Galen Johnson**, **Jeff Malpas**, and **David Morris**.

Martyn Dade-Robertson, 2011. *The Architecture of Information.* **London: Routledge.**

This architect and communications researcher asks, "What sort of space is information space?" He "examines "the motivations behind the perceived need to disguise the complexity of digitally encoded information with metaphors of physical spaces." Drawing partly on space-syntax

theory, he argues that "meaning is structured in architecture through topological relationships between places as experienced when we move through space." He concludes by advocating for "a better understanding of information architecture" and defining a new area of architectural design "as it relates to the complexity of digitally organized information." Includes a discussion of the historical significance "of physical places to the organization and expression of knowledge" and "the limitations of using the organization of objects as the basis for systems of categorization and taxonomy."

Dade-Robertson concludes: "if there is a single take-home message from this book, it is that our embodied manifestation has had significant implications for the way in which we interact with even the most dematerialized of information and how we shape our abstract experiences with references to our physical experiences…."

"Where graphic design supported the development of the GUI [graphic user interface] and product design supported the design of tangible user interface, surely the new century will prize architectural design along with relevant cognitive theories in the development of situated and pervasive computing interfaces… [W]hile models of design and cognition in human-computer interactions are centered around an allocentric frame of reference (the manipulation of physical objects), pervasive computing requires an understanding of ecocentric frames of reference (involving whole-body immersion).

"We might even call these new types of interface AUIs (architectural user interfaces). It remains to be seen what new artifacts and design agendas might follow their evolution."

Peter, Hall, 2014. *Cities of Tomorrow.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

This is the 4th edition of this planner's lucid intellectual history of urban planning and design since 1880. Hall arranges the volume's 13 chapters around contrasting urban images, for example, "cities of imagination" (ch. 1), "the city of dreadful night (ch. 2), "the city in the garden" (ch. 3), "the city of towers (ch. 7), "the city on the highway" (ch. 9), and "the city of enterprise" (ch. 11). The sidebar, below, from "the city

of theory" (ch. 10) reproduces a portion of Hall's unflattering critique of late-20th-century "postmodernist" thinking as it relates to planning theory.

"Progress is impossible"

Deriving from the Frankfurt school of sociology of the 1920s… [postmodernist theory] embraced all kinds of intellectual positions, which do not comfortably sit together and may even contradict each other…. Anthony Giddens has encapsulated its key tenets: nothing can be known with certainty; "history" has no teleology, so that "progress" is impossible; and that, with new ecological concerns and perhaps new social movements, there is a new social and political agenda—though exactly what this is, we are not quite certain. Partly this is because postmodernists seem to think that reality is no longer very real. It is obsessed with art forms that reflect a transitory, flimsy, unstable notion of reality….

So these new-style radical intelligentsia engaged in endless debates on the significance of postmodernism: in architecture, in the cinema, in television, in anything that would support a paper or a conference contribution. The contributions themselves were written as if by central *Diktat* in a strange hermetically sealed style, clearly directed at a small coterie of fellow cognoscenti, and characterized by odd private linguistic tricks like the placement of qualifying syllables in brackets, as in (un)inspiring or (un)original…. It did not produce much insight or enlightenment….

What was never quite clear about this flood of literature was what exactly it was all about, even as an intellectual activity, still less as a political project: intellectually, the much-quoted… model was the long-dead Berlin critic Walter Benjamin, celebrator of the *flâneur,* or fly-on-the-café-wall: politically, it amounted at most to polysyllabic mutterings about deconstructing the hegemonic projects of capitalism.

The problem… is that the postmodernists were all responding—in their highly oblique ways—to developments in contemporary capitalism, and in this sense they were simply following a long radical tradition. But their theory lacks explanation: there is a vague sense that we have entered a new era in which all previous theories have been rendered obsolete, but because the new theory denies meta-theory it proves incapable of explaining complex socio-economic-political relationships (Hall, pp. 408–09).

Marcie Cohen Ferris, 2014. *The Edible South.* Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press.

Subtitled "The Power of Food and the Making of an American Landscape," this book examines "the meaning and influence of food in southern history." Organizing her discussion around the three headings of "Early South—Plantation South," "New South," and "Modern South," this historian describes "an evolutionary South, a place continually pulled back by the past and at the same time wrenched forward into a changing present. Southern food provides access to this place of contradictions, where a cuisine of memory, the region's volatile racial past, and its transformative future lies waiting to be tasted."

Barbara E. Hendricks, 2011. *Designing for Play,* 2nd edition. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

This "specialist play area designer" draws on work from child development and child psychology "to find innovative design solutions, challenging the established notions of play provision." The focus is "designing from a 'child's eye' view of the world."

Hanne Jacobs, 2013. Phenomenology as a Way of Life? On Phenomenological Reflection and Self-Transformation. *Continental Philosophy Review,* vol. 46, pp. 349–369.

This philosopher considers Edmund Husserl's 1926 argument that "the consistent commitment to and performance of phenomenological reflection can change one's life to the point where a simple return to the life lived before this reflection is no longer possible." Jacobs' aim it to probe what such a life change might be and concludes that the key shift is toward "an attitude of epistemic modesty" that "can shield one from a dogmatism or skepticsm that would negate the open-ended character of our search for truth."

Jacobs provides an excellent discussion of what phenomenological reflection entails, but his picture of how this way of understanding might provoke changes in one's way of living is unconvincing. Oddly, he makes no mention of the many perceptive conceptual and practical reformulations that phenomenology has provided in the last several decades in regard

to lived body, environmental embodiment, place, and phenomenologies of alterity. See an extract from Jacobs' article in the sidebar, below and right.

A different perception

[O]ne should not take the all-encompassing character of the natural attitude too lightly. That is, one does not perform transcendental-phenomenological reflection when one, like Descartes, turns from the outside of the world toward the inside of the mind, since the inside of the mind still remains within the world. Likewise, one does not become a disinterested onlooker by "stepping outside" the world in which we all live our lives to somehow describe this life from an impossible place outside this world. Instead, in order to open up the dimension of phenomenology, a perceptiveness to a distinction that normally goes unseen must be acquired—namely, a perceptiveness to the difference between what appears and the way in which it appears to me.

In and through this change of interest, we gain access to the subjective dimension Husserl termed "transcendental." That is, in and through bracketing everything that we always already see, we do not exactly accomplish a turn toward the subject; rather, we become perceptive of the subjective in and through which the world (or, better, everything that appears within it) is continuously brought to appearance with a certain sense….

The concept of phenomenon is ambiguous, since it can refer to what appears or to its appearance…. For our purposes here… this difference in unity of what appears and its modes of appearing is instructive because it can elucidate why the subjective surface of the world can be so easily overlooked: it is not separate from the world that appears in the way that things in the world are separate. Rather, the incessant flow of appearances is the medium in and through which a world is there for us. Thus, the phenomenologist accomplishes what is impossible in the natural attitude: she observes herself seeing. The phenomenologist captures the act of perception, not because she finds

somewhere inside herself an act of perception that gives access to the outside world, but because she describes the way in which she sees the world by describing the subjective manners of its appearance (spatial-temporal, habitual, personal, and cultural). Thus, if phenomenological reflection is at a distance, it is in a way that our living in the world is never at a distance. We are always over there with the things, blind, so to speak, to their subjective mode of appearance (Jacobs, pp. 353–54).

Jaime Lerner, 2014. *Urban Acupuncture.* **Washington, DC: Island.**

Lerner is a Brazilian architect, urban planner, and former mayor of Curitiba, Brazil, where he established a bus/rapid-transit system called "Speedybus," often cited as an example of well-envisioned urban design. In his foreword, urbanist **Jan Gehl** explains that Lerner's "urban acupuncture" refers to "understanding places better, understanding that one city is not like the other, understanding what it is that is missing in a neighborhood before designing…. There is plenty of good design but an exorbitant lack of good programming with a deeper understating of problems, people, and places." The following sidebars reproduce three passages from Lerner's book.

True urban acupuncture

Everyone knows that planning is a process. Yet no matter how good it may be, a plan by itself cannot bring about immediate transformation. Almost always, it is a spark that sets off a current that begins to spread. This is what I call *good acupuncture*—true *urban acupuncture.*

Where can we see examples of good urban acupuncture? San Francisco's revitalized Cannery district is one; another is Güell Park, in Barcelona… We know that the planning process of a city takes time—and it has to—for it involves a multitude of actors and issues… However, sometimes, a simple, focused intervention can create new energy, demonstrating the possibilities of a space in a way that motivates others to engage with their community…. This

gets to the essence of true urban acupuncture—it needs to be precise and quick, that's the secret (pp. 3–4).

Continuity is life

Many major urban problems arise from a lack of continuity…. An important step is to add elements missing from a given area. If there is plenty of commerce or industry but no people, then housing development could be encouraged. If another district is all homes and apartment blocks, why not boost services? And if a building is crumbling or a shop closes its doors, something new must be built in its place, even if it's only temporary. Some years ago, after watching some of Curitiba's traditional coffee houses—true meeting points in the city—go out of business, we built a provisional café in a pedestrian mall that serves as new hub of activity.

The quicker an abandoned lot is occupied, the better, and preferably with something even more attractive or lively than before. I am in favor of creating temporary structures to rescue failing services or establishments—say a flower market or a concert hall—until new projects take hold. You could call this jerry-built acupuncture: putting up portable structures here and there to shore up threatened neighborhoods or city addresses that need revitalizing or a new burst of energy.

The key is to add the urban function that is missing. It could be building homes or else creating a provisional recreation center; the goal is to promote a healthy mix of urban activities. Whatever structures are constructed, any initiative must be undertaken quickly so as not to break the continuity of urban life. Continuity *is* life (pp. 37–38).

Buildings with dignity

The sense of belonging. That's the feeling that noble, older buildings give us when we see them on the street. They belong on the street. They open on to the street in grandeur. And they open to their residents with generosity. Magnificent foyers, doors, portals, lobbies. They leave no one unsheltered, they seem to wish to give us sanctuary.

They are unlike modern buildings, which hide their entrances or push them to the side, as if they consider these relationships secondary….

And the crown of the building is important. It has links to the street and to immortality. It's as if the crown of a building were a form of reverence for future generations.

Modern buildings are not like that. They simply stop, with strange structures added on, like water repositories, TV antennas and elevator shafts, exhibiting their entrails. At best, a well-groomed penthouse, or a new floor, a pool for the benefit of the privileged. They have no sense of community—of belonging—that the grand old building had. For this reason, I feel that the older buildings of various eras offer a form of reverence for the city. A Chrysler Building, a Crowne Building, a British train station—all have this type of commitment.

What is the commitment of a modern building? To deny us an entrance, to hide its public face, to open itself only to a select few. Surrounded by its entrails or its egoism. Its transience makes it a candidate for human demolition, because it is unperturbed by its reduction to rubble (pp. 97 & 99).

Liane LeFaivre & Alexander Tzonis, 2012. *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World.* NY: Routledge.

These architectural historians introduce "the theory and history of regionalist architecture in the context of globalization." They argue that "through time, globalization and regionalism have been antagonistic. Globalization has tended to 'flatten' obstacles to the interaction between places, transforming a world of barriers and insular regions into a 'flat world', enabling creativity and bringing about unprecedented wealth but also producing inequality, wastefulness, and ecological destruction. Regionalism, by contrast, has supported the singularity, autonomy, and distinct identity of regions, enhancing differences between them, nurturing diversity, and contributing to a world of 'peaks and valleys', but it has also tended to confine, tearing apart societies and promoting destructive consumerist tourism."

Andrew J. Mitchell, 2010. *Heidegger among the Sculptors: Body, Space, and the Art of Dwelling.* Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.

A dense, philosophical interpretation of Heidegger's 1950s and 1960s turn to sculpture, a medium through which he reconsidered the relationship between bodies and space and the role of art in human life. Unfortunately, the discussion is difficult to follow and largely inaccessible to non-Heideggerians. One wonders if Mitchell's interpretation might have been more simple and direct. Intriguing set of accompanying photographs.

Branko Mitrović, 2011. *Philosophy for Architects.* NY: Princeton Architectural Press.

Includes a chapter on "phenomenology and hermeneutics," but, other than a discussion of Norberg-Schulz, the focus is on philosophers, including Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer. No reference to more recent work on environmental hermeneutics or the phenomenology of place and architectural experience. Overall, a disappointing book.

Jerry D. Moore, 2012. *The Prehistory of Home.* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

This archeologist examines a wide range of prehistory houses and homes. Chapter themes include: starter homes; mobile homes; apartment living; gated communites; noble homes; sacred homes; home fires; and going home. In his concluding chapter, Moore explains: "I have written about home because so many dimensions of the human experience intersect there. Our houses allow us to physically adapt to the environment and to conceptually order the cosmos. Human dwellings enclose social groups of diverse forms—from nuclear families to entire clans, from hundreds of people to solitary hermits. Our houses solve problems of social life—for example, serving as architectural templates for appropriate behaviors—and our dwellings create social problems when we create environments of 'social irritation'. Our houses stand as symbols of equality or proclaim the social divides between people. We seek safety in our homes, not only from the elements, but increasingly from inchoate fear, or we may invite the supernatural into our homes for dangerous encounters. Much of what we humans do occurs at home."

Robert Mugerauer, 2014. Heideggerian Reflections on Literature, Architecture, and Film. NY: Fordham Univ. Press.

This philosopher and *EAP* co-founder examines works in three different artistic forms that respond to violence and loss: novelist Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing;* filmmaker Wim Wenders's *Wings of Desire;* and architect Daniel Libeskind's Berlin Jewish Museum. "Explicating these difficult but rich works with reference to the thought of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Luc Marion, Hannah Arendt, and Emmanuel Levinas, the author helps us to experience the multiple and diverse ways in which all of us are opened to the saturated phenomena of loss, violence, witnessing, and responsibility."

Dhiru A. Thadani, ed., 2013. Visions of Seaside: Foundations/Evolution/ Imagination: Built and Unbuilt Architecture. NY: Rizzoli.

This lavishly illustrated, 607-page volume is a reverent but critical overview and history of Seaside, a planned community founded in 1981 and located in the Florida panhandle, 50 miles west of Panama City.

Originally conceived by developer **Robert Davis**, his wife and entrepreneur **Daryl Davis**, and architects **Andres Dua**ny and **Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk**, this town remains the premier model for New Urbanism—a community or neighborhood "whose constituent parts [include] a mix of uses that commonly support daily life—housing, office, retail, and civic institutions such as schools, churches, post office, and community meeting hall—arranged in a memorable block structure with walkable streets where pedestrians [are] given priority over cars."

Editor Thadani writes that successful New Urbanism involves six key qualities: public buildings and spaces; compact size (80–160 acres); mixed uses; connected street network for easy walking about;

transportation options; and a discernible center and edge. The volume includes essays by Davis and Duany, who discuss the founding, aims, successes, and failures of Seaside, as well as essays by architects, planners, and others who have designed for or lived in Seaside. Also included are sections on Seaside's "Built Architecture" (28 entries, including buildings by **Steven Holl**, **Léon Krier**, **Aldo Rossi**, and **Robert A. M. Stern**) and "Unbuilt Architecture" (36 entries, including designs by **Anthony Ames**, **Braulio Casas**, and **Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company**).

In the following sidebars, we reproduce architecture student **Isaac Stein's** account of "growing up in Seaside"; and cofounder **Daryl Davis's** "Blueprint for community building." See p. 7 for images of Seaside buildings.

"I thought it was normal…"

Living in Seaside, I didn't know any other way besides the "new town, the old ways." I thought it was normal to have a town center, to retain the native landscape. I thought it was normal to bike to school. I thought it was normal to have a community to spend time in after school, instead of at some scheduled activity. I thought it was normal for kids to be free after school to explore....

I was able to mature at a young age, function on my own. I thought it was normal to see care given by carpenters, masons, architects, and homeowners to the places they crafted as homes. And for all these people to work together, indeed grow together....

My 20 years of growing up in Seaside encompassed a time of change from [the 1998 film] *The Truman Show*; to becoming a resort town, to the millennial boom, to the oil spill in the Gulf, to the present busyness of spring and summer seasons.... People have come and gone in these times, and come back again. It's fun to see people call it home at different times, for it seems everyone who comes or goes considers this place home....

Now, three years through university, It's easier to notice the influences and to understand why I attend architecture school. The submersion into the culture of living in a developing town allowed me to become acquainted with building culture and technics. The experience of an architecture class at Seaside Neighborhood School with Tom Christ on a project in WaterColor, Florida [a new-urbanist community adjacent to Seaside], when it first began construction, was one of the strongest scholastic experiences I had growing up.

Academic experience and life experience growing up in Seaside inspired me to work in community development and to create enjoyable built environments.... (Isaac Stein, pp. 107–09).

Blueprint for community building

1. Be young, naive, ambitious, and headstrong.

2. Be genuinely interested in people, their lives, and their dreams.

3. Be the maker of your own rules. Follow your intuition and believe in what you are doing.

4. Work in the realm of the theater of the absurd. You are creating a theater of life for your customers.

5. Enjoy the ride and don't worry about making money. If you're truly passionate then some sort of success will follow.

6. Young entrepreneurs will need hand-holding. You will need to walk them through the process of developing a business one step at a time. You will be their banker, therapist, trusted friend. Remember you are building community together.

7. Be prepared to be their mentor or to find one for them. They will need to be instructed in cash-flow management, visual merchandising, inventory control, and the art of professional salesmanship….

8. It is possible to retain 90 percent of the merchants you have invested in by being authentic and having integrity. It is impossible not to respect a compassionate and wise leader.

9. Community organizing is not for everyone. You may discover that this is not what you want to do. Be honest with yourself and find someone who wants to be a community organizer.

10. He or she needs to be a quick study of the sensibility you are creating in your community. They need to be enthusiastic, a people person, a good listener, and a go-getter. With some direction, you can mentor anyone with the above qualities to be your assistant. Of course, fearlessness and determination will help.

11. Combine all the steps above. Be prepared to participate by being visible at all events. The community members are you and co-creators. Together, with a sense of pride, you can accomplish anything.

12. When your community has taken off with a life of its own, moving in its own chosen direction, remember that it is not too dissimilar to parenting. You have to know when to let go and get out of the way.

13. Be prepared to work yourself out of a job (Daryl Davis, p. 56).

Douglas Vakoch & Frenando Castrillón, eds., 2014. *Ecopsychology, Phenomenology, and the Environment: The Experience of Nature.* **NY: Springer.**

The 17 chapters of this edited collection examine such topics as "the intimacy of nature, environmentally-related morals and ethics, and the realities engendered by climate change." Contributors are mostly psychologists and philosophers. Chapters include: "Intimate Responsivity as Essence-Calling-Path-Fruition: Eco(psycho)-logical Ethics Via Zen Buddhist Phenomenology" (**Will W. Adams**) "Phenomenology and the Moral Self" (**Charles S. Brown**); "Phenomenologies of the Earth: Deepening Our Experience of Nature and its Alterity" (**Kaisa Puhakka**); "The Invisibility of Nature" (**Eva-Maria Simms**); "Apocalyptic Imagination and the Silence of the Elements" (**Ted Toadvine**); and "The Naturalist's Presence: Notes Toward a Relational Phenomenology of Attention and Meaning" (**Trileigh Tucker**).

Some Seaside dwellings

Images from Dhiru A. Thadani's *Visions of Seaside* (see pp. 5 and 6):

Top left, 210 Ruskin Place, **Trelles Cabarrocas Architects**, 1991; a live-work building originally designed to house residential quarters above a café, which is now a retail shop selling home furnishings. The house draws inspiration from New Orlean's French Quarter townhouses.

Middle left: "Honeymoon Cottages," **Scott Merrill**, 1988–89; low-impact rental cottages built on the construction-control line on the high dunes above the Gulf of Mexico.

Lower left: Truman house, **Cooper Johnson Smith**, 1991; this house was featured in director Peter Weir's popular 1998 film, *The Truman Show,* filmed in Seaside. The film's main character, Truman Burbank (played by Jim Carrey), "is unaware that his entire life is a hugely popular 24-hour-a-day reality TV series…. Every moment of Truman's existence is captured by concealed cameras and telecast to a giant global audience."

Top right: Seaside Avenue residence, **Cooper Johnson Smith**, 1994; the design draws on the Neo-Classical traditions of the South with special consideration for the semitropical environment of the Gulf Coast.

Middle right: "Stairway to Heaven" townhouse, **Alexander Gorlin**, 1994; stairs lead to a roof terrace and crow's nest with panoramic views of Seaside and the Gulf of Mexico.

Lower right: Hudson residence, **Cooper Johnson Smith**, 1998; this Tampa, Florida, architectural and town planning firm "has designed 24 houses and four guest houses in Seaside."

7

Book Review

Vikas Mehta, 2013. *The Street: A Quintessential Social Public Space.* New York: Routledge.

Reviewed by **Claudia Mausner**

Architect and urban designer Vikas Mehta authored this ambitious, empirically robust work that combines socio-emotional concepts of place with principles of planning and design for urban commercial streets. With passion for the street as "quintessential social public space," Mehta is motivated by his dissatisfaction with "the predominant paradigm in architecture and urban design [that] lacks an engagement with the social sciences and scientific rigor" (p. 206).

Based on the author's University of Maryland doctoral dissertation, the book covers broad ground: the history of the commercial street as well as a brief cross-cultural comparison; detailed description of multi-method research techniques used to examine social life in three Boston-area research sites [see figure below and on p. 11], illustrating Mehta's observational methods]; and extensive raw data replete with quantitative and qualitative analyses. It is easy for the reader to be overwhelmed and at times distracted by the sheer volume of information presented in such condensed format.

Mehta begins with a brief social history of the street, moving in broad strokes from the "promenade" to our current-day "consumption" street and, most significantly, describing the "efficient" commercial street that prioritizes safe, efficient traffic flow over pedestrian-level community life. The author envisions a "Resurgence of the People Street" reflective of earlier cities, whereby central commercial pathways would again become an integral link in the network of parks, squares, and plazas so vital to urban social life and livability.

Based on his extensive observations of pedestrian users in his study areas, Mehta develops a metric—what he calls the "sociability index"—to represent the number of people present on a given street; those engaged in social behaviors at that location; and the time spent engaging in the identified social behaviors.

Applying advanced statistical analysis, the author provides ample empirical evidence of a strong and thus predictable relationship between social behaviors and street design vis-à-vis standard physical features and attributes. The conceptual framework for this copious work proves disappointing, however, as there remains a deep schism between planning, design, and the social sciences, along with a steadfast dichotomy of person versus place.

In contrast to the sociability index, the "zones of activity" that Mehta outlines in chapter 4 may have more potential for integrating people-with-place. This spatial typology begins with "zone 1" at the building's edge where people often linger to window shop; "zone 2" identifies the sidewalk area typically associated with pedestrian activity; and outermost "zone 3" incorporates the sidewalk extending from the edge of zone 2 to the curb [see figure, next page].

While not surprising, analysis of social activity in zone 1 emphasizes the role of nooks and crannies along the building façade in supporting social behaviors. The outermost zone invites phenomenological investigation with descriptive labels such as "room" (p. 179), "balcony", "terrace" and "patio" (p. 175). Perhaps these zones of activity could be extended to include the actual curb as well as alleyways and street crossings—spaces often used informally and spontaneously but not currently designed to support sociability.

Mehta also develops a typology of social behaviors, inspired by his understanding of the work in environment-behavior studies. A cursory review of these

Below: A behavioral map of people engaged in some stationary activity on weekdays and weekends on five blocks on Massachusetts Avenue at Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts,, one of Mehta's three urban study areas. Data from 30 author walkbys spread through day and evening; each dot represents one person (Mehta, p. 85).
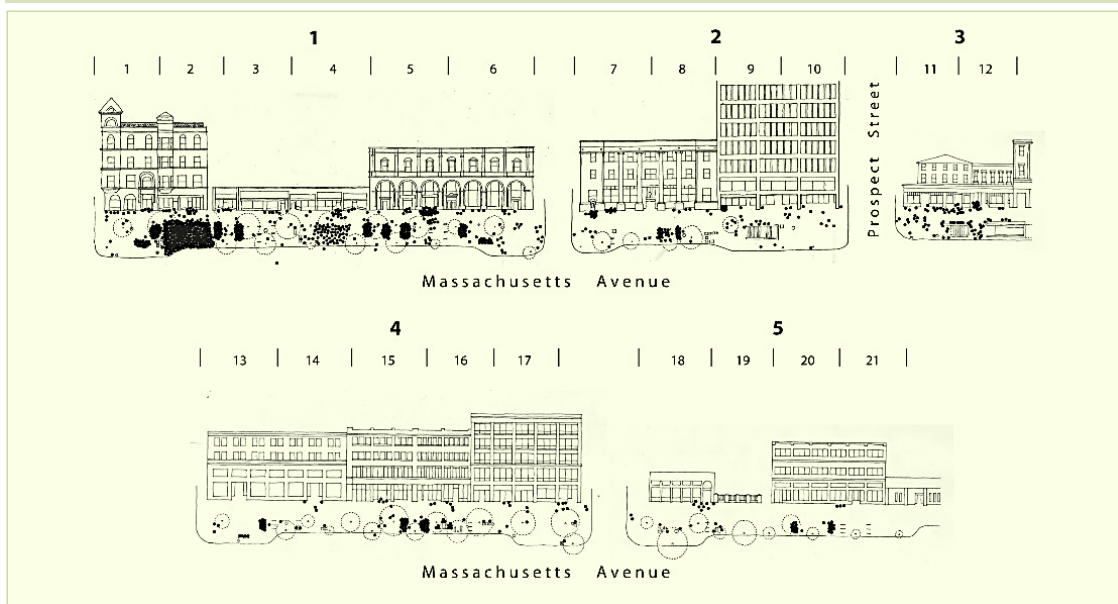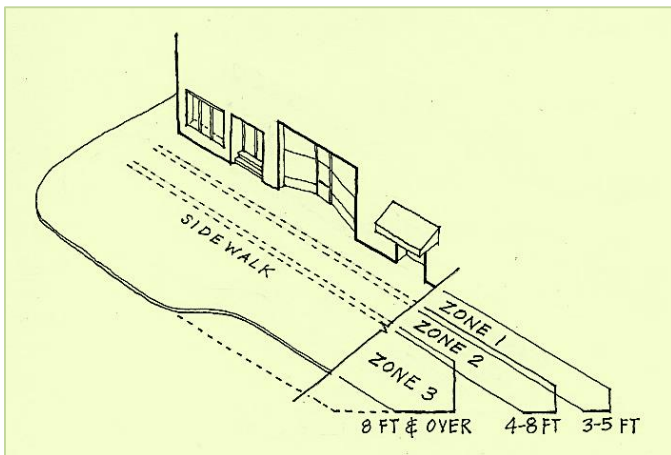
place-based theories and concepts is included in chapter 3; they are referenced repeatedly throughout the book.

In sharp contrast with the traditional focus on "transitory" pedestrian activity held by planners and designers (p. 104), Mehta's typology begins with *passive sociability*, defined as "stationary" (p. 110) or "lingering" behaviors (p. 101) not requiring direct verbal contact, such as people-watching, relaxing, eating and drinking.

Based on sociologist Lyn Lofland's (1998) work, the next category in this typology is *fleeting sociability* with "short-term, low-intensity contact" (p. 106) as simple as a wave or nod of the head. E*nduring sociability* rests at the apex of Mehta's typology, with extended conversation occurring between participants who often know one another and interact regularly.

Incorporating sociologist Ray Oldenburg's (1991) concept of "third places," Mehta suggests that *enduring sociability* may develop into "community gathering places" that are of value to the broader urban neighborhood. Mehta assumes that, with each level of this typology, there is increased demand on the features and qualities of the physical setting as required to promote and to support the associated social behaviors.

The piecemeal rendering of social-science theories and concepts in *The Street*—reflective of the environment-behavior field itself—is arguably the "Achilles' heel" of Mehta's research project. From my perspective, commitment to a single framework such as phenomenology or behavior-setting theory would enable a more effective integration of social sciences with planning and design. Either one

of these theoretical approaches would offer welcome relief from the implicit environmental-determinist assumptions that permeate this research. Moreover, either perspective would provide a springboard for circumventing the persistent dualism of person-and-place.

A phenomenological perspective could expand Mehta's tripartite identification of *passive, fleeting,* and *enduring* social behaviors, for example, by examining the dialectic of "rest" and "movement" (Seamon, 1979, p. 132). The study of "time-space routines" or "place ballets" could reveal sociable behaviors as a sequence of events that increasingly contribute to "environmental vitality" (op. cit., p. 159). In contrast to the static conceptualization of time found in Mehta's sociability index, "lived time" would allow for deeper understanding of the relationship between sociable behaviors, especially when they evolve one from the other as "a continuum over time" (p. 110).

Behavior-setting theory, with its emphasis on "place-specific behavior," could also provide a powerful tool for analyzing the sociable street as a spatial-temporal unit. A behavior-setting perspective would offer tools for measuring tempo and intensity of the "standing pattern of behaviors" (Barker, 1968) as well as "temporal boundaries" (Fuhrer, 1990, p. 529) of the street-as-social setting—i.e., the ebb and flow of a sociable street within a brief temporal period. Used to describe a longer stretch of time, this framework might inform researchers about the "life cycle" of sociable streets (Wicker, 1987) as they pass "through predictable transformations" (Fuhrer, 1990, p. 530).

With extensive data collection and robust data analysis, the research outlined in Mehta's book confirms the validity of current best practices in urban design but generates little in the way of innovative guidelines or applications. For example, the author concludes that outdoor seating is essential to support the sociable street, a conclusion reached by urbanist William

Whyte decades ago. Given that small, independently-owned coffee shops were most effective at supporting and fostering sociability in the research study areas, the author recommends that similar retailers be privileged over larger, corporate-owned establishments.

Passive, fleeting, & enduring sociability

A host of behaviors and activities on the street create opportunities for social encounters…. Similar to our other social relationships, the inclination for social behavior on the street ranges from being left alone to being in the close company of others. Jan Gehl [in *Life between Buildings*] calls it a scale of "intensity of contact" ranging from passive contacts, chance contacts, acquaintances and friends, to close friends.

A well-designed and managed street provides for the widest range of this intensity of social contacts. Accordingly, a typology of social behaviors on the street must capture this range. All the behaviors and activities on the street that I discuss… fall into one of the tripartite taxonomy—*passive sociability*, *fleeting sociability* and *enduring sociability*. Some of the behaviors and activities supported by the design and management of the street provide opportunities exclusively for passive, fleeting or enduring sociability while others may support or trigger two or even three (Mehta, pp. 98–99).

Although it may be useful to provide city managers with empirical evidence supporting the value-added role of locally-owned establishments, one wishes for guidance in designing (and regulating) those corporate-owned franchises like McDonalds or Starbucks, which already serve an integral role on the sociable street (Torres, 2014) and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future.

Future research would also benefit from examination of "unsociable" behaviors that were not the focus of this study and were thus excluded from data analysis. It would be useful to know, for instance, at what point the occurrence of unsociable behaviors begins to discourage others from

engaging in sociable behaviors along the same city street.

By studying the full range of behaviors it might also be possible to determine under what circumstances streets zoned to permit businesses with "idiosyncratic" clientele (p. 195), such as tattoo parlors, can remain viable as sociable streets for the larger community (see Village of Tarrytown, 2013).

Importantly, Mehta's research identifies dead or "boring" zones (p. 152) associated with bank buildings. As the largest business category on two out of three streets in the study area, it is essential to acknowledge that these establishments contribute nothing to the street's sociability. Here again, innovative guidelines would be welcome, as the prevalence of banks in Mehta's study areas undoubtedly mirrors other urban streets. Perhaps application of "creative placemaking" principles (*ArtPlace*, 2013) would remove the dampening impact these establishments have on street sociability.

Mehta introduces the book with his visionary assertion that streets can and should be "redesigned as green corridors... providing physical amenities for people of all economic classes" (p. 10). His conclusion reaches even further by pronouncing that "making streets… sociable is primarily about providing a framework to support a civil and equitable society" (p. 205) with the promise of "comfort, safety, health, affordability, access, satisfaction, and enjoyment" for all (p. 204).

Despite its limitations, Mehta's research clearly demonstrates the relevance of social sciences to planning and design. One hopes *The Street* will inspire future efforts to forge a cohesive framework of environment-behavior theory that lends itself more readily to seamless integration with planning and design tenets and, as a result, generates the guidelines necessary for bringing Mehta's vision to fruition.

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Mehta's observations of passive sociability

It is an ordinary summer's day and many have chosen to fill up the neighborhood commercial street this afternoon. Observing the location of people, it is easy to tell that shade is really sought after. Fortunately, on this part of the street, there is plenty of it.

On this block, the street is like a stage set. I walk by slowly and find a range of actors on this set along with a variety of acts of passive sociability. A young couple is sitting on the bench facing the buildings. They seem to be engrossed in conversation, but the man turns part of his attention toward the people passing by.

Farther up, a man talks on his mobile phone as he leans on the side of a bench. On the other end of the bench, a poor, middle-aged man is sitting. Staring at the bench opposite, he appears to be in deep thought.

Not too far away on another bench facing along the street, a young woman has occupied the whole bench. Leaning on the side arm with her feet up on it, she too is talking on her mobile phone. Her beverage cup is parked on the brick sidewalk within easy reach. I notice how comfortable she has made herself.

I see a few people seated under the shade of trees eating a late lunch at the Mexican restaurant. Another man in his 30s is using the Mexican restaurant's outdoor furniture and relaxing as he talks on the phone.

Three of the four other benches on the north part of the blocks are also occupied. On one sits a homeless woman with her hard-to-miss-colored crocheted hat and backpack. Her feet up on the bench, she looks at the people and vehicles going past.

Close by are two young men standing and taking a cigarette break. They occupy the alcove outside the hardware store they work in. Leaning on the building façade, they face the street and catch all the action. Some people passing by seem to know them and nodes or waves and even a handshake are sometimes exchanged. Many other gestures of fleeting and some of enduring sociability are apparent on the street but I focus only on passive sociability in my observations.

The couple seated on the bench opposite the homeless woman have squeezed themselves into half of the bench so there is no metal armrest between them. They seem very intimate and happy to be by themselves but occasionally keep making eye contact with the homeless woman and others passing by.

I count 11 to 14 people—singles, dyads, and triads—seated outside the coffeehouse. It is a mix of mothers with toddlers, 20-somethings, middle-aged, and some older people.
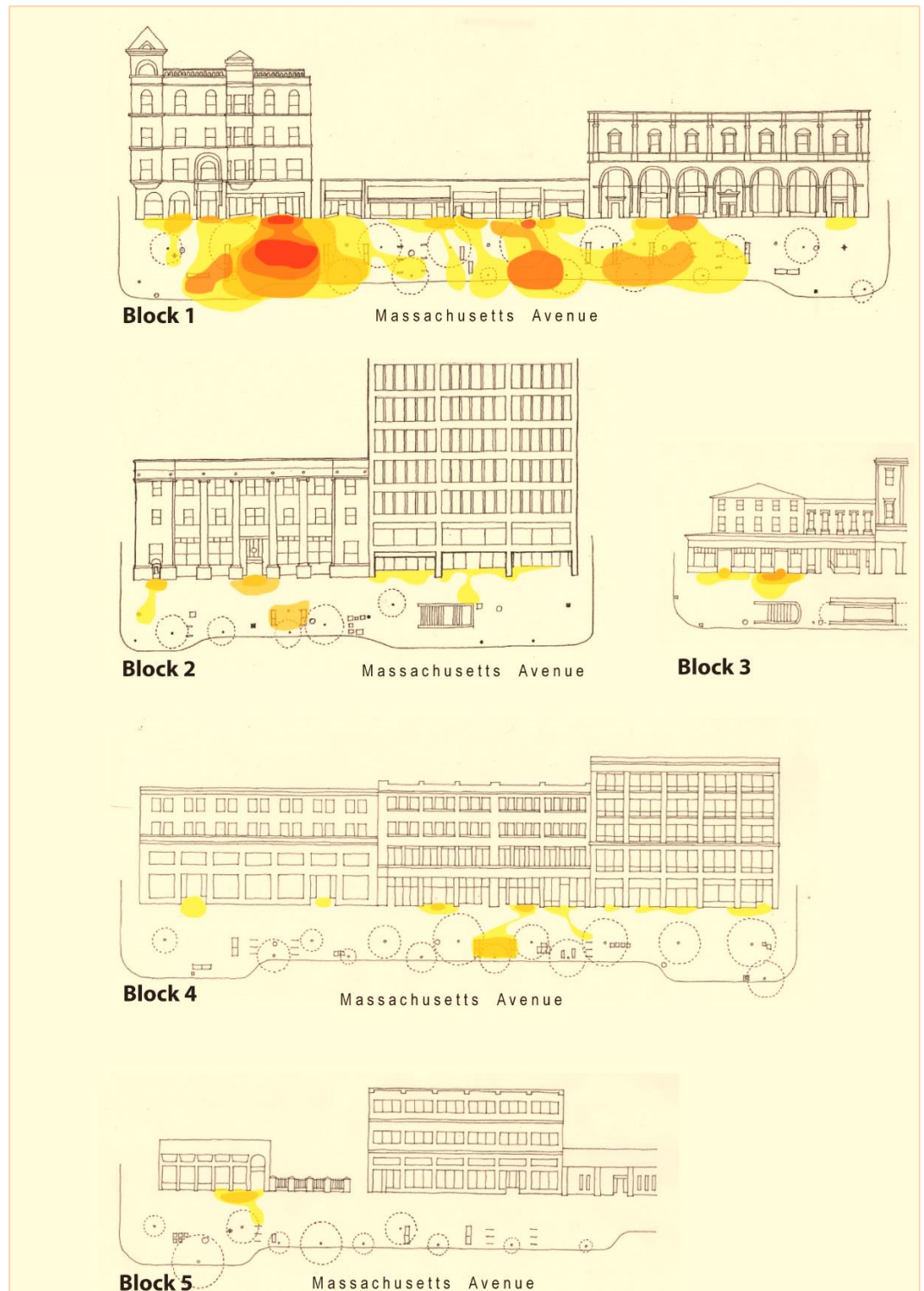
The wide sidewalk here, cluttered and occupied by so many, seems much like a terrace with all the furniture, patio umbrellas, planters and magazine-dispensing boxes. There are people reading, some chatting, some on the phones, and a few just enjoying the day with a beverage. Finally, on the northern corner of the block, two young women sit on the steps of the building entrance facing the street and chat.

In this brief observation, I notice a near-equal distribution of men and women, people of four races, three economic classes, and four age groups. Their behaviors and activities, albeit varied, may be classified mostly as lingering.

People came to this street to get something to eat, to drink, to relax, to be on their own, and to people-watch. For some others, the street was the best option to be on. But all came to the street to be in the presence of others, even as they spent time alone. And as they did, they came in contact with many like themselves, people whom they know but also strangers and others who were different from them (Mehta, p. 105).

Figure, right, from Vikas Mehta's *The Street,* p. 161: A "territorial map" illustrating range of territorial intensity. The study area is the five blocks of Massachusetts Avenue at Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts (compare with this study area's behavioral map on p. 8). The redder the color, the more intense the territorial claim. The map is based on a "territoriality score" compiled via: (1) the degree of personalization; (2) the commercial seating count; and (3) the degree of dynamic personalization—i.e., "changes in personalization made by each business." To identify each of these place features, Mehta visually surveyed the street front of each business in the morning, afternoon, and after dark on weekdays and weekends. He recorded changes using field notes, photographs, and short videos.

Mehta explains that his observations "suggest that the degree of territorial behavior and control on the street was not only dependent upon the types of business but also on the management of the businesses and the formal and spatial quality of the buildings and street space. The articulation of the building façade at the street level and at the entrance played an important role in creating transitional space between the street and the interior that could be personalized and territorialized by store owners. The presence of this space to mediate between the street and the store's interior space helped in supporting physical expressions of a claim to territory on the street. The availability of adequate sidewalk space… was an important factor in enabling store owners and users to exercise territorial control over the street space" (p. 165).

Block 1   Massachusetts Avenue

Block 2   Massachusetts Avenue   **Block 3**

Block 4   Massachusetts Avenue

Block 5   Massachusetts Avenue

Building Home Together

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Phenomenology is useful not only for *studying* experiences. It can also help us *live* them more fully and effectively. For any experience, one may find enormous benefit in employing phenomenology's method of reflecting on the prereflective as a means to thematize essential meanings usually remaining taken-for-granted. Whenever we need to make important choices that relate to our implicitly lived meanings, phenomenology can be a powerful tool.

The opportunity to design one's own home provides an exceptional occasion to reflect upon the meanings that can be lived there. Architectural design is a work of imagination and vision, but it is an envisioning that aims at perceptual reality—at the instantiation of the world of the imaginal into the perceived world. The meanings lived in such experience are highly significant and imagistic but also latent. Clearly discerning such latencies can be an important advantage in building one's home.

Twenty years ago, when I had the chance to design my own "dream home," I employed a deliberate phenomenological approach summarized in an earlier *EAP* article (Aanstoos, 2006). Later, I remarried, and my wife Amy and I had the opportunity to design collaboratively the reconstruction of that home to accommodate a marriage in midlife, again with the use of a phenomenologically guided reflection on lived experiences and meanings. The present article, a sequel of sorts to the earlier report, describes those results.

As Gaston Bachelard (1964, p. 47) wrote, "A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space." While this claim is certainly true, the interesting question I posed earlier (Aanstoos, 2006) is this: Can we anticipate those lived meanings, can we predelineate them, so that we take them into account in advance as we design our home? In the intensively double-sided relations of imagination and perception—in which each overflows the other so that one's imagination is always *both* more *and* less than one's subsequent perception—can we imagine our experience of living in a home well enough to be guided in its design by a phenomenology of that imaginal experience?

To that question, I found the answer to be yes. By imaginally placing myself as phenomenologically as I could into the experience of living in the house I was building, I found the home that was to be *my* home. By being conscious of how the design opened a lived experience, I was guided by that virtual understanding so that the imagined house emerged as a personal experiential reality—a dream home of one's own. Then, a decade later, I remarried, and the question became: Can we design our dream home *together*? Can two people imagine a home for *both* of their to-be-lived experiences—and for their relationship—to unfold, fulfill, and realize itself?

Amy is a poet and fiction writer. As Virginia Woolf (1929/1989) noted almost a century ago, "a woman must have … a room of her own if she is to write." What form, however, would this proverbial "room of one's own" take?

First, we had to decide if we even wanted to live in the same house. A marriage after midlife presents the partners with the stark realization that each *already* has their *own* home place. Amy had made her home a unique and experientially-sensitive place, but that home was fifty miles away.

After imagining the possibility that we could continue to reside in our own homes, we both felt that would be "too far" apart. If not both homes, however, which one? Between the two, mine was the larger. As we envisioned Amy's moving in, however, we both felt that we would be "too close." We considered Amy's having her own house in the nearby town a few miles away, but that felt "too far." We imagined extending the house and adding rooms, but that felt "too close." We imagined building a cabin for Amy on the other side of the lake the house faced across, but that felt "too far."

Finally, feeling our way with as much experiential touch as we could, we realized what would work: We would build a separate, two-story structure next to my original house and link it, on both floors, with a connective, interior space. Amy dubbed this solution a mode of "detached attachment"—analogous to the Buddhist vision of nonattachment. Or, in a psychological sense, this arrangement would instantiate the vision of "separate" and "together," not as opposites that defy each other but as polar complements that co-exist—the very realization that psychologist Daniel Levinson (1978) had identified as a key exemplar marking the completion of individuation in midlife.

While immersed in this meditation, we happened to visit an antique store and spotted a stained-glass window that we purchased impulsively, with no idea what to do with it. As the vision of a connective linking took hold of our imaginations, however, this window became the first concrete manifestation of what the first-floor interior space would be: It would be built around this window. Its stained-glass design is a classic Tibetan mandala, centered by a many-sided prism, encircled by ever-widening concentric edges, with four outer "gates" connected by bursts of leafy green. The window pattern expressed a polarity of conjointly lived meaning—separate yet together. What, however, would connect with what? And how?

We decided that the ground floor's connecting space would be a "gallery"—a passageway twelve feet long and seven feet wide. On one side, the stained glass with a built-in window seat beneath would face a set of double French doors opening onto a

central courtyard between the old and new structures. The gallery would be the inside connection between our two spaces, and the center courtyard would link them outside. This gallery would extend from my study and be the architectural means to connect our home's older and newer parts.

On both floors, Amy's addition could have accommodated several rooms or one large room. On the ground floor, she wanted the entire space to be her studio and designed it around a vision of the optimal place to write poetry and fiction. What quickly became evident was the contrast between her artist's "studio" and my scholar's "study," which includes a large fireplace and an old, massive oak desk. There are wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling bookcases of dark stained wood, matching the dark hardwood floor. The remaining wall spaces are painted a deep forest green.

This study is an interior-oriented space and, in contrast to Amy's studio, is decidedly masculine. In the way it connects to the world outside, Amy's studio reminds me of Luce Irigaray's (1985) thesis of woman's

tendency toward multiplicity in her relatedness, in contrast to which my study is much more "cave-like." Given, however, the gallery as an in-between transition space, the contrast between studio and study is not jarring. Rather, we each have our own distinctive worlds.

For Amy, the studio's woodwork would be white. The walls would be light tan, almost white. The entry to a courtyard to the east would be a "Dutch door," its top half a window. The bookcases would be no higher than the window sills, and her "desk" would be a continuation of the bookcases, across a nook toward a large, south-facing window. On the north side, a suspended, un-bannistered staircase of stained blond maple would lead to the second floor. Beneath, a platform would provide space for a large eight-foot-long cushion, underneath which would be file drawers and a large window. Whereas I had designed a place for retreat, Amy wanted "a room with a view"—a vista out to the world beyond the studio, the well-spring of inspiration.

Twenty-four by fifteen feet, this space was large enough to be divided into at least two rooms, which I had

imagined to be her studio proper and a parlor/sitting room. For Amy, however, it was essential that these rooms be visually open to each other and not separated in any way. Once built, the significance of this spatial openness readily became apparent. The space includes an architectural feature only rarely possible in most rooms—windows on all four sides. The effect of natural light and the surrounding forest coming inside from every direction is quietly enlivening.

As I had done with the older part of the house, we wanted to integrate inside and outside by including an "in-between" space where inside and outside overlapped. In contrast to a covered porch providing this overlap in the original house, Amy designed two courtyards. Opening from the connecting gallery, an "inner" courtyard occupies space between the old and new parts. There is also an "outer" courtyard, accessible by the door on the far side of the studio. Bordered by tiered, rock walls, this outer courtyard affords Amy, a seasoned gardener, a place for plants and flowers. This courtyard expresses another intersection between natural and built worlds.

The second floor of the older part of the house had included bedrooms for my two children, who had recently left home for their own adult lives. By adding a large-screen television and sofa, my son Lucas's room became our media-viewing space and a place to relax at the end of the day.

Amy's adolescent daughter Ada would still live with us. She participated in the new home's design and occupied my daughter's two-room suite (bedroom and study), reversing which was which, and repainting the pink-with-white trim to blue and white. Her style of furnishing, artwork, and accessories refashioned the space to be her own.

Significantly, Ada occupied space in the original house, herself linking the old and the new together. Where her study space had previously ended with a window, there was now a door to a new bathroom above the gallery space below. This bathroom had a second door on the far side that connected this space to the second floor of Amy's addition, linking mother and daughter via a private, unmitigated passageway even as Ada traversed that fraught, adolescent-separating process.

On the second floor of Amy's space was another large room, occupying the entire space, topped by a cathedral ceiling beneath a hipped-shaped roof. Given the girth of the room, two beams were required to brace the walls, and these lend the space an ancient, elfin aura. Similar to Amy's studio and parlor below, this space incorporates two distinct parts. The space accessed by the stair is a "salon" that includes a favorite old couch, coffee table, and other furniture Amy had before our marriage. She envisioned this space as a place where things and memories of her old home nestled in this new home, marking continuity within change.

This salon space is differentiated from the room's far side by two large floor-to-ceiling cabinets that house a television, microwave, refrigerator, and additional kitchen equipment. The passage between these cabinets opens onto an inner space in which Amy's bed before our marriage provides an ultimate private retreat. Flanked by curtains that conceal closets, the bed's enclosing fabric creates an exceedingly soft texture for this dreamscape. In addition, the windows on all four sides bring outside visions into the room from diverse angles. The west and east windows look down onto their respective courtyards. The south window, peculiarly short and floating just above the bed,

provides an oddly mystical view of trees, while the large north-wall window above the stairwell emplaces the viewer into the deep, all-encompassing forest.

Inside/outside, new/old, masculine/feminine, separate/together—a reconciliation of polarities. Home.

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If Dwell is a Verb, "Chair" is "to Sit"

Jeff Ediger

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Architecture, said both Goethe and Schelling, "is frozen music." Not all buildings, however, rise to this level of refinement. At its most primordial level, architecture is the materialized expression of a more basic human possibility—the capacity to dwell. Architecture is frozen dwelling. As philosopher Emmanuel Levinas declared: "We dwell; therefore, we build architecture." Or as philosopher Martin Heidegger contended: "Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build." [1]

This expression of dwelling as building is as problematic as it is expedient. The question is this: Having built architecture, do we then forget how to dwell? For instance, we sit. We therefore build chairs. Having built the chair, do we then neglect the creative depth of our capacity to sit? To name a few forms that have plumbed these depths, consider Buddhist Zazen ("Zen sitting"), Judaic "sitting Shiva," or the Chinese tradition of "sitting the month." What range of possibilities might open if human beings were roused from their "easy chairs" to explore other depths for sitting?

To recover the human capacity for dwelling, I direct phenomenological imagination toward symbolic representations of architectural structures and elements, attempting to recover the essential, fluid capacity that makes them possible. Drawing especially from my work as a craftsman in architectural restoration, I offer here three narratives describing instances of the essential human capacity for sitting.

The text that follows is a compilation of poetic scenes—I call them *imaginal vignettes*—that inspire an awakening of consciousness to the vast range of possibilities for sitting as one mode of the human capacity to dwell. These vignettes are excerpted from the larger context of a performance entitled "Dwell is a Verb," which considers many other aspects of dwelling as well. [2] I perform this material as a solo show in which I take on the semi-fictional (though also autobiographical) persona of a craftsman who offers up a dramatic reading of these vignettes out of collected memories from his life and work experience. [3]

The purpose of these imaginal vignettes is not to negate architecture but, rather, to facilitate an expansion of consciousness in which renewed vitality can be breathed into architectural forms to encourage deeper dwelling.

On one hand, I attempt to contribute to the ongoing struggle to create "living architecture." On the other hand, I suggest that the recognition of a gap between dwelling and design might offer means to study architecture as a way to explore the mystery of human dwelling. In that regard, I present three imaginal vignettes that focus on the human capacity to sit. [4]

1. On Sitting Down to Business

I let myself in the front door, and a blast of emptiness hits me like the smell of last night's curry. Is this the loneliness of an empty house I'm feeling or is it nausea coming from the pit of my stomach? I do feel a bit queasy.

But I'm not sick! I just don't want to be here! My assistant is off on another job. The client whose house I'm working on is off to his own job. And the nanny has taken the kids to the park. I'm alone. I've got plenty of work to do but, like I said, the house is empty!

No one can see me!

Being self-employed, they say, is great! You get to be your own boss... set your own hours... huh!!! That isn't the way it works! You've still got to get the job done... that is, if you wanna' get paid! Only now you've got to be your own boss—ride your own butt. The way I see it?

I'm self-employed...YEA! But my boss is *still* a pain in the ass! Of course, that doesn't mean you can't slack off when the boss isn't lookin'. And when you're your own boss, it's pretty easy not to look.

So… here I am. Monday morning. I've clocked in. But I'm still just standin' around, not getting anything done.

You know that ridiculous dance a dog does when he can't decide where to take a poop? You're standing there like some kind of idiot with a grocery bag wrapped around your hand like a glove and there he is, squatting here, squatting there... then squatting again. "For God's sake... it's not so hard... just poop!"

Well, that's how I am when I don't want to get down to business. First, I wander around, pretending like I'm getting organized. Then I remember a phone call I've got to make. "Hey Art, it's Jeff. Got a problem with an oak door..." After we're done consulting, of course, we've got to chew the fat for a while, complain about the jobs we have and about the jobs we

don't have. And about how nobody appreciates good craftsmanship these days, especially when you have to pay for it.

After I hang up the phone, I think of something I need from my van. When I get back inside, I think maybe turning on the radio will motivate me to get to work. Finally, I pick up a screwdriver.

I've got ten double-hung windows that need to be prepped for painting. That means, first of all, pulling all the hardware—four screws for every sash pull and four screws for every sash lock. That's ten windows, each with two sash pulls and one sash lock. Three times four times ten... That's 120 screws in all... and you know a bunch of them are gonna' be stripped out!

"Wait a minute. This isn't the screw driver I wanted to use!"

Then I remember I was supposed to stop at Home Depot to pick up some sandpaper. Better go get that before I get started... because when I get going... I'm gonna' fly! And, of course, after picking up the sandpaper I've got to stop at Starbucks for a job-avoiding cup of coffee.

But I finally make my way back to the jobsite. The dog looks at me with this smug, who's-squatting-now kinda' look, but I ignore him. Now I'm all out of excuses, though. There's nothing left to do but pick up the screwdriver and get to work.

And that's when it happens.

It doesn't happen right away. Maybe it takes 20 minutes. Maybe it doesn't happen until I figure out a system, find a white plastic bucket to throw all the hardware into, and get a feel for the rhythm of the screws. But sooner or later, as long as I keep my feet rooted to the ground in front of the windows, it does happen.

What happens is this: I sit down!

No! ...no! ...no! I'm no longer talking about avoiding work. I'm not even talking about bending the knee, plopping-your-butt-down-onto-a-chair kind of sitting down. What I'm talking about is a kind of sitting down *on the inside*.

What this looks like on the outside is that I settle myself down into the job at hand. I stop avoiding my work and, instead, turn my full attention toward it. I commit my body-and-soul to doing the work... and I relax.

The only way I know how to describe what this feels like is that I sit down into my job! It's kind of like what we really mean when we say we're going to "get down to business." And when I do sit down to business like this, something amazing happens. You might even call it a miracle!

It's as if there had been a storm brewing, and I couldn't make headway toward the windows because a fierce wind was holding me back. But when I surrender myself to what I had been avoiding, the wind dies down. Everything becomes calm. The waves become still. My stomach settles down. I stop fighting it. And then I sit down.

In terms of the work itself, I suppose you could say I get into the zone. I find my flow. I become one with the windows… one with the screws.

But another way one might say it is that I come home to myself!

Let me explain it this way.

Before I accepted the task at hand, I was like a wanderer, lost in the wilderness. I was a homeless man, bereft of identity. I was *beside* myself with anxiety. I could not find myself! I looked for myself in my van. I looked for myself in Home Depot. (No one can find himself in Home Depot!) I looked for myself in Starbucks. But I was nowhere to be found!

Of course, the truth is that I wasn't so much lost as I was hiding from myself. At least that's how Martin Buber says it. He's talking about the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden—pretty far removed from my windows, I know, but humor me. Anyway, this is after they've eaten the fruit they were told not to eat. God comes looking for them because he liked to talk with them at the end of the day. What do they do? They hide!!!

Here's how Buber describes it: "Adam hides himself to avoid rendering accounts, to escape responsibility for his way of living. Every man hides for this purpose, for every man is Adam and finds himself in Adam's situation. To escape responsibility for his life, he turns existence into a system of hideouts." [5]

Yup, that's pretty much what I've been doing here, escaping my responsibility for these screws in this hardware in these windows. Instead, I've spent my precious energy ingeniously inventing one form of hiding after another.

You gotta' give me credit, though. And give yourself credit too. We all seem to be pretty inventive when it comes to hiding from ourselves. And these hideouts can get pretty comfortable! Only problem is that they're so costly.

The cost? What's the cost? A few hours of procrastination. What's that?

No! The cost is myself. In hiding from my responsibility, I'm hiding from the one place where I could actually find myself.

Think about it this way: When I lose something—let's say it's my car keys—I comfort myself by saying, "There's only one place they could be... There's only one place they could be." Now I don't know why this is so comforting… I guess it's because, when I lose my keys, I start to doubt they ever existed in the first place. Or else I think they have just disappeared, and I'm not going to find them anywhere. By saying to myself, "There's only one place they could be," I am reminding myself that they are somewhere. They do exist! And if I just find that place, I'll find my keys.

The same thing happens when I lose myself. I begin to doubt that I ever existed! But I do exist. *I am!* And if I just find that place where I am, I'll find myself again!

Of course, even though I think it happens, my keys don't consciously hide from me. But that's not the way it is with me, myself. I make it harder to find myself than it already is because I keep hiding from myself! There's only one place I can be. But as long as I hide from that place, I can never find myself. I can never come home.

But when I stop avoiding my responsibility, an amazing thing happens. What previously felt like something foreign and exceedingly unpleasant becomes, instead, a place of respite, a place of calmness—I dare say, a place I belong!

And that's what I mean about becoming one with the windows. In accepting the task at hand, I find myself *in* the task itself. And what does this feel like? It feels like sitting down!

But I'm not the first person to recognize this connection between sitting and dwelling. Our ancestors, the one's we tried to wipe out? The American Indians? They knew all about this sort of thing.

You're all familiar with the name "Sitting Bull"? But do you know where that name came from? The bull, of course, is the buffalo. In a biography about Custer's battle at Little Bighorn, historian Evan Connell describes how the "white men" thought of the buffalo as an exceptionally stupid animal.

The American Indian, on the other hand, regarded the buffalo as the wisest, most powerful of creatures, nearest (of all creatures) to the omnipresent Spirit. If one says in English that someone is sitting, it means he is seated, balanced on the haunches. But the Sioux expression has an additional sense, not equivalent to but approximating the English words "situate," "locate," and "reside."

From an Indian perspective, "Sitting Bull" signified a wise, powerful being who had taken up residence among them. [6]

And that's what *I* become when I finally come home to myself in accepting my responsibility for these screws and this hardware and these windows... a wiser, more powerful being.

Oh, and those white guys? Well, isn't it interesting that we've come to refer to Custer's battle at Little Bighorn as his "last stand"? Maybe he should have sat down instead.

Anyway... I've wasted enough time. I've got some "serious sitting" to do. If you'll excuse me, I'll be getting back to work.

Now where's that screwdriver?

There's only one place it could be... There's only one place it could be....

2. Seriously Sitting

A bunch of my friends are artists. We all meet up in Chicago, but some of them have moved out of town. Even those who live in town have trouble staying in touch. Nevertheless, Chicago is still *the* place to be seen for these artists. When someone has a gallery opening, we all meet up for what becomes a kind of reunion.

My friend Mark was in a group show that opened last night, and we showed up for the event. Even if it's a good show, people come and go from these openings pretty quickly. But, except for Mark's work, this wasn't even a good show. In fact, if he hadn't needed the line on his vitae—Mark was coming up for tenure review—he probably wouldn't have accepted the invitation to participate.

So, without actually saying anything, a few of us decided to hang around the whole evening as moral support. But gallery owners don't seem inclined to encourage people to linger anymore. I don't know why they call it an "opening' if they don't want you to come inside and stay awhile.

So galleries tend to be short on seating space—and this gallery was particularly inhospitable without a single place to sit, either in the gallery or lobby outside.

But, man, I was tired of mingling. And I really needed a break from that show! So I suggested to a friend we each grab a glass of wine and head outside on what had turned out to be a surprisingly pleasant, September evening.

But you know what? There wasn't any place to sit there either!

So, as scandalous as it seemed, we just sat our butts down on the sidewalk and leaned our backs against the building.

Call it camping. Call it squatting. Call it what you will. We were sitting down.

Now why *do* we sit down together? When you think about it, it's a pretty strange thing to do, given that we've got these legs attached to our bodies that, for the most part, work pretty well to keep us standing upright.

Well, for one thing, because anyone who has ever attended a stand-up social affair knows, it is nearly impossible to be still, to stay rooted in the moment, while standing in a noisy room.

To stand is to be in a perpetual state of readiness to be on the go. And to stand still is to either be idling or stuck. And neither of these is a pleasant state of being. Maybe that's why so much alcohol is consumed at stand-up social affairs—there's just too much nervous energy bouncing around.

We sit *down together* so we can be still, turn our attention toward one another, and forget about being on the go. Sitting down together on that sidewalk with our backs resting against the building, my friend and I could, in the words of phenomenological sociologist Alfred Schutz, "grow old together."

Lots of people noticed us sitting there, growing old together. In fact, it seemed like everyone who walked down the street and into the gallery glanced over at us. Some people seemed uncomfortable with seeing us sitting there. Others smiled conspiratorially.

One couple, in particular, stand out in my memory. They weren't even coming to the opening. They just happened to be walking down the street. But as they passed, the man looked down at us and, in a good-natured voice said, "Hey, there's no loitering here."

Like I said, he wasn't being mean-spirited. In fact, it felt more like an affirmation than an indictment. But it also seemed to me

there was nervousness in his voice. It was as if he were uncomfortable passing by while we were sitting there.

What? Was this too intimate a thing to do? To sit down in a public space that wasn't designated for sitting?

Architect Louis Kahn describes the streetscape in which we found ourselves as a "common room" of the community. Hey... we're both tax-paying citizens. We even have valid driver's licenses. Have you ever noticed that the most common form of identification in our society is a card that gives you permission to be on the go?

So, anyway, didn't we have as much right to sit down in this common room as others had the right to pass through?

I don't know what possessed me, but I felt a need to challenge his indictment, even though it had been uttered in jest.

Nevertheless, what I said surprised *me*: I looked up at him and said, "We're not loitering. We're seriously sitting."

Hmmm... Only later did I realize what I meant. I meant to assert a distinction be-

tween loitering, an aimless form of lingering, and what we were doing—intentionally stopping, asserting squatter's rights, claiming a place in this common room of the community, and dwelling for a spell.

Everyone else around us was on the go. And since everyone these days seems perpetually on the go, everyone noticed that we were not. Sure, we'd previously been on the go like everyone else, but then we rebelled—we stopped! We resisted every force in our environment that suggested we should remain on the go. And that, I think, is why people noticed us.

We were rebels engaging in a scandalous, seditious affair. We were *sitting down!* And everyone knows only troublemakers and protesters dare to stop in a public place and engage in this act of rebellion, which has been reduced to the word "sit-in."

Maybe you'll think I'm grandiose? But I wonder what might have happened differently last night.

What if, instead of an oddity and, hence, a source of suspicion, our defiant act of sitting down had become an inspiration for others? What if that couple had decided, instead of continuing down the block, to

stop and sit down somewhere nearby? Maybe beneath a tree on the other side of the street. What if others had done the same? What if the whole street had become filled with little groups of people sitting down together... growing old together!

Eventually the police would come. "Move along, move along... there's no loitering here. You're disrupting traffic. You people have got to be on the go, on the go..."

Maybe we would even get arrested. After all, sitting down together in a public place is a pretty dangerous thing to do in a culture where everyone is always on the go. On the other hand, it is perfectly acceptable in our culture to speak of leaving home, going on vacation, and having a "good trip."

"Did you have a good trip?" we ask when they return.

Why isn't it just as acceptable to stop somewhere for a while, in a public place that isn't your private residence, and to sit down for a spell and have a "good dwell"?

Did you have a good dwell?

3. Sunday Sitting (in memory of Abe Ediger, 1920–2012)

Church had long been the center of my father's life. He served as a pastor for fifty years in unglamorous settings in small towns on the Midwestern prairie, at one time even functioning as a circuit preacher, maintaining two separate church communities at once.

I remember many a weary Sunday night ride across South Dakota dirt roads, rocks pinging against the undercarriage of our station wagon as I drifted off into weary, dust-filled sleep in the belly of that beast beneath a cavernous prairie sky.

When he retired, my father took on short-term pastorates, spending six months here, six months there. All the churches he and my mother served throughout their years— he, the forceful, yet caring pastor; she, the faithful pastor's wife who played the piano

and taught Sunday School—were troubled churches.

So it was a fitting tribute to their years of ministry that, when he and my mother finally settled into full retirement, they landed in an appreciative community recognizing and honoring their many years of service. He had finally achieved rock-star status and she, too, enjoyed her own position of honor.

My mother passed away seven years ago. My father adjusted well. Only in the last several years had he, at age ninety, begun to decline. Not uncommon at his age, the decline was sudden with a rapid series of nomadic transitions from acute rehab to the hospital and back, then, after a fall, back to the hospital for hip surgery, then back to rehab and, finally, to this assisted living facility.

The family tried to adjust to each move, but we always found ourselves one step behind his current state of need. Yet we persisted, hoping now that this assisted living facility could be a place where his condition would stabilize and he could call home for a handful more of golden years.

His balance had long been failing him because of an inner-ear disorder contracted in his mature years. He now spent most of his time in a wheelchair. Nevertheless, as much as possible, we continued to take him to church. It was the highlight of his week.

But his strength waned. When I visited him on weekends, I most often was unaccompanied. He had increasing difficulty providing assistance in his transfer from wheelchair to my van's high-sitting seat. I worried how much longer I would be able to take him to church.

Then the fateful day came. My van, sitting high off the ground, is difficult even for an agile person to enter. It was an ordeal for my father, even with my full assistance. On this Sunday, though, he was full of anticipation, eager to see his friends—you could even have called some of them "groupies"—after enduring a week of largely solitary confinement. We were determined to get to church.

But it wasn't to be. His strength had diminished too much. The space between door and wheelchair was too confined. The step was too great. My strength was not enough. After multiple attempts, my fear of his quickening breath intensifying, we surrendered to the inevitable weight of gravity.

I left him sitting there, at the facility entrance and returned my van to the parking lot. It was a warm September day and the soft, innocent sunlight was shining through the trees, adding poignancy to our plight.

I returned from the parking lot and said nothing. I wheeled my father's chair next to a bench by the entry and sat down beside him. We remained there for a full forty-five minutes without speaking.

Deep was our thought. Deep was our fear. Each of us slipped into one cavern of despair after another. We were both facing the end of something, flailing, trying to grasp hold of something secure, but neither of us finding anything stable, except the necessity to face the inevitable.

This was not yet the end of his life. And there would be many pleasant moments shared between us and with the whole family before he passed. But this was the end of one kind of life. And it was a foreshadowing of that final end that would come soon enough. This silent host sat there with us— the invisible third—facing us, insisting on being reckoned with.

And so we sat. And we reckoned. One car came along to breezily whisk another, younger resident off to church. We exchanged pleasant greetings as they passed and then were gone. The sound of shut doors faded, and we returned to our dumbfounded silence.

Growing up in the church as a pastor's kid, I remember squirming impatiently in my seat through many a long service while my father stood tall up front, appearing as though he could preach forever. But this worship service, now sitting beside my father in his wheelchair, with nothing to say, was the most difficult I ever sat through.

But we did get through it. The unspoken sermon, oddly enough, was worth hearing.

Notes

1. While Levinas and Heidegger use similar phrasings, philosopher David Gauthier argues convincingly, in *Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and the Politics of Dwelling* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2011), that these two thinkers draw on contrasting reference points: Heidegger grounds dwelling in geographical place, whereas Levinas grounds dwelling in relationship.

2. For instance, several vignettes focus on "the human door." Even before I read philosopher Gaston Bachelard's description of human being as "half-open," I've been fascinated with the human door. I dedicated an entire chapter of my dissertation on listening to a study of the analogous relationship between receptivity through the door and through the ear. My first publication for *EAP,* "Listening through the Door" (vol. 5, no. 1 [1994], pp. 10–11) was based on that chapter (J. Ediger, 1993. *A Phenomenology of the Listening Body*, doctoral dissertation, Institute of Communications Research, Univ. of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign).

3. I conceive of this dramatic reading as a "performative lecture"—a blending of entertainment, celebration, and learning. This choice has its theoretical foundation in my study of communication systems as they have become a mode of "second orality" in the electronic-digital age (a term coined by philosopher Walter Ong). My project of developing "performative lectures" is an attempt to explore how education might fruitfully be altered to respond to the cultural shift from literacy to this new "second orality." I believe this shift requires the recovery of the human capacity for celebration—a capacity that today is often reduced to its virtual simulation as entertainment. Second orality involves a shift from the fixation of the written to the embodied, event-based "performative word" traditionally more at home in the theater than in the classroom.

4. While composing these vignettes about sitting, I recollected phenomenologist Ervin Straus's fine phenomenological study of human standing: E. Straus, "The Upright Posture." *Phenomenological Psychology* (NY: Basic Books, 1970.) Although I don't claim Strauss's depth of phenomenological insight, I attempt, in these medications, to emulate his postural perceptiveness.

5. Martin Buber, *The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism* (Waterford, PA: Pendle Hill, 1960), p. 10.

6. Evan S. Connell, *Son of the Morning Star: Custer and the Little Bighorn* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1997).

Environmental & Architectural
Phenomenology

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Published three times a year, *EAP* is a forum and clearing house for research and design that incorporate a qualitative approach to environmental and architectural experience.

One key concern of *EAP* is design, education, and policy supporting and enhancing natural and built environments that are beautiful, alive, and humane. Realizing that a clear conceptual stance is integral to informed research and design, the editors emphasize phenomenological approaches but also cover related styles of qualitative research. *EAP* welcomes essays, letters, reviews, conference information, and so forth.

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- Sense of place, including place identity and place attachment;
- Architectural and landscape meaning;
- The environmental, architectural, spatial, and material dimensions of lifeworlds;
- Changing conceptions of space, place, and nature;
- Home, dwelling, journey, and mobility;
- Environmental encounter and its relation to environmental responsibility and action;
- Environmental design as place making;
- The role of everyday things—furnishings, tools, clothing, interior design, landscape features, and so forth—in supporting people's sense of environmental wellbeing;
- Sacred space, landscape, and architecture;
- The practice of a *lived* environmental ethic.

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