

UC Berkeley

Places

Title

The Organic Approach [Dispatches]

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0jq986r5>

Journal

Places, 13(1)

ISSN

0731-0455

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Publication Date

2000-07-01

Peer reviewed

already highly engineered landscape of major aqueducts, but it would require significant investment in new highways. The jury supported the compact development diagrammed for each town, but had difficulty understanding what created their need and location.

In contrast, the entry by (Zvonimir Prlic, Karmen Prlic) proposes significant urban growth on prairie farm land in the foothills east of the valley's major cities. The growth would be tied to stops on the proposed high-speed rail line from San Diego to Sacramento. This strategy seemed to tie new town and old town together, implying that new development and redevelopment can be managed for mutual benefit.

The competition revealed glaring weaknesses in our understanding of the problem of accommodating "the next ten million." The jury could not determine with confidence how much growth existing communities could actually absorb through infill, redevelopment and modest density increases. How much underutilized land is there? How much intensification and increase in density is appropriate? How many new towns are needed? How much expansion of existing urban boundaries is necessary?

There is very little understanding about where the pressure for residential or employment growth will actually occur, or what kinds of jobs will be created. Almost all the entrants focused on major communities, leaving hundreds of unincorporated towns, small villages and rural communities out of the equation.

In the end, the Great Valley Center's director, Carol Whiteside, got her wish. The competition raised the discourse about alternative solutions to current patterns of sprawl and big-box commercial and about creating a more robust civic fabric—one that kints communities together through a more livable public realm and increases density.

Throughout the jury process there was concern about how local politics would make it difficult to implement the winning design ideas. It is likely that effective processes for community participation, collaboration among communities and regional planning will be more difficult to come by than promising design ideas. But the fact that remarkably diverse jurors could reach such a strong consensus about desirable design qualities and planning concepts suggests that when alternatives are carefully laid out, consensus can be forged.

The Organic Approach

Deborah Gans

"Organic" is a word that one uses with hesitation. It conjures biomorphic forms confused with nature, undisciplined explorations confused with freedom and rhetorical analogy that overreaches in its admittedly humanistic goals.

Today, organic forms are seemingly present in the gorgeous folding surfaces that flow from our computers. They are accompanied by a discourse that offers their super-continuity of form as a compensation for cultural rifts they do not directly address. "The Organic Approach" was a search for critical tools that could overcome mere zeitgeist representation and confront the discontinuities in our cultural fabric among classes, places and infrastructures and their symptomatic conditions of megalopolis, ecological crises and warfare.

The name of the conference—with "organic" as the modifier of "approach"—was very much the point; we were searching for modes of exploration rather than a model of form. As Zehra Kuz traced in the nineteenth-century Germanic roots of this distinction, organic meant the finding of form (*kuntsvinde*) not the giving of it (*kuntswollen*).

The invited participants offered conflicting ideas about this concept, but they returned to a common set of concerns: the problem of democracy, the problem of technology and the problem of the city, most broadly framed as the relation of nature to culture.

The Organic and Democracy

How can organic architecture facilitate, as well as represent, aspects of democracy? Gunther Behnisch described his forty-year attempt "to reduce constraints and enhance freedom" through a practice he considers collaborative in its process and non-deterministic in its objects. Describing buildings made from contingencies, layers and fragments, he simultaneously maintained the Modernist position that glass can achieve the desired transparency of democratic culture: through open interior space and permeable boundaries, this glass architecture attempts to merge building with landscape or the freedom of the street. His parliament in Bonn (under construction for 15 years and aban-

done when the German government moved to Berlin shortly after its completion) sets fragments of program in relation to a pre-existing city fabric, but has as its centerpiece the glass volume of the assembly.

Behnisch's contradictory dualism of transparent volume and non-systemic event echoes the debate between Mies van der Rohe's idea of universal space and Hans Scharoun's advocacy of idiosyncratic program. The conference traced a heritage in Scharoun, Hugo Häring and Alvar Aalto, whose desire to escape the dialectic of form and function might today be considered organic. Eeva Pelkonen stressed Aalto's interest in the psychological and vernacular aspects of function; Kuz discussed Häring and Scharoun's insistence on the vagaries of perception and the precision of daily habits in the making of architecture.

The Organic and Technology

The conceit of a democratic architecture resulting from the social forces that act upon it was challenged by discussions of change and continuity within the organic object. Speakers stressed the potential of computer technology to behave organically and the digital world to serve as an organic environment.

Hareesh Lalvani showed geometric forms of increasing complexity that he generated from a digital "genetic code," provoking the question of how such virtual systems could become physical; what would the limits and determinants be in material, scale and time? John Johansen discussed nanotechnology William Katavolos described a chemical architecture where encoding of patterns occur on a molecular level; both suggested that habitable structures and landscapes might literally be farmed from a single cell or crystallized from a start-up molecule. The imagined merging of the natural and artificial also appeared as the digital modeling of materials and physical forces.

Mahadev Raman of Ove Arup rhetorically described how the fluid mechanics of the curved Kansai Airport (Renzo Piano) and the adamantly gridded U.S. Courthouse in Houston (Richard Meier) are equally sophisticated, either through their skins or shapes, in creating their own internal weather systems. Both are "performance buildings", as Johansen put it, characterized

by "self-organization, sensors and responsiveness to environment and the user."

The value of both the performance building and the democratic building depends on interaction with its physical or cultural environment. Like organisms which survive through the exchange of substances with environment, the organic object cannot exist in isolation.

Nature and Culture

In the context of the conference, the blurring of built form and landscape in large-scale environmental earthworks seems to be part of a larger desire to overcome our dialectical framing of nature and culture. While Kenneth Frampton soberly questioned the ability of organic architecture to embrace the collective assembly and physical monumentality fundamental to urbanism, a certain utopianism pervaded the conference. There were calls for freedom (nature) and for place (culture) at the scale of building, city and time and space.

The freedom of "no place" was expressed most purely in John Johansen's Event City, constructed through an ephemeral tissue of individual and collective actions, and Todd Dalland's nomadic tent city, which has infrastructure hook-ups like tree stumps in a continuous landscape. The desire to ground freedom in place appeared in Volker Geincke's arboretum, in recurrent references to the vernacular and in Frampton's homage to Aalto's fusion of landscape and urban density.

Ahmet Omurtag, a mechanical engineer and philosopher of science, most precisely described the physical necessities that control the relation of nature and culture. He explained: *Organisms are entities who struggle to persist (live) in the condition of scarcity of substances and time. They struggle against each other and the fatal threat of indifference. The world is a fatal environment, not because it is malicious but because inanimate nature is indifferent and does not "care about" the complex arrangements that organisms need in order to live. One could say that organisms live in a disenchanted environment.*

While playing with the dream of an enchanted landscape, the conference searched for the insight needed to avoid the proliferation of indifference.

"The Organic Approach," a three-day symposium sponsored by Pratt Institute's School of Architecture, was held in New York City in March. It included lectures and panel discussions among architects, engineers, computer graphic designers, scientists and historians from the U.S. and abroad. The symposium was based on a seminar taught at Pratt by Zehra Kuz, and organized by Kuz and Deborah Gans.