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HOME, REACH, AND THE SENSE OF PLACE
by Anne Buttimer

"Country Road take me home
to the place
I belong..."

Emotionally laden eulogy on the meaning of place rings
through much modern poetry and song. Nostalgia for some
real or imagined state of harmony and centeredness once
experienced in rural settings haunts the victim of mobile
and fragmented urban milieux. Like many a fortune seeker
amidst the lights of Broadway who longed for the simple
cottage near the rippling stream back home I suppose one
could say: "you never know what you've got 'til it's
gone". Patriotic songs about native soil and forest that
built the spirit of nationhood in many of our countries
were often written in the cities of North America and
Australia. And today, as the uniqueness of places becomes
more and more threatened by the homogenizing veneer of
commercialism and standardized-component architecture,
many long for their *hembygd* and *smultronställe*.

It is fascinating to notice when and where during recent
history this notion of place has emerged as a strong
motif in literature, politics, and popular song. The re-
cord synchronizes fairly well with periods of relatively
abrupt change either within the social or physical en-
vironment or in the world of ideas. Late 18c and early
19c Romantic literature on place, for instance, corre-
sponds roughly with the reaction against a Newtonian
world view. Scandalous, it seemed, to impose a "scienti-
fic" grid on Nature- to reduce all that beauty, melody,
and fragrance to the sterile metric of mathematics or
physics. When industrialism and transport systems began

to rupture the old harmonies of peasant landscapes again
protest was voiced in the language of place. Urbaniza-
tion brought its own wave of rebellion against abrupt
change: the old mosaic of artisan districts, open mar-
kets, and bourgeois villas became distorted and dismant-
led as within the city itself former cultural and econo-
mic equilibria gave way to the new. "Housekeeping" func-
tions of civic life - residential, ceremonial, governmen-
tal, and religious - yielded to the growing importance of
commercial, financial, industrial, and other "empire
building" ones. In the bustling enthusiasm of early in-
dustrialism it was far more important to expand horizons
of access to markets and clientele rather than seriously
try to make the city a home.

Transatlantic migrations in the late 19c and early 20c
mark another powerful source of lament and insight into
the meaning of place. I don't know if migrant Swedes
wrote songs about Dalarna or Småland but other European
migrants certainly did sing the praises of home places.
To those for whom the westbound oceanic voyage was a one
way trip the longing for home resulted in a virtual tor-
rent of feelings about places and their identity. Many
groups had indeed tried to incarnate their images of
"home" not only in social and political life but also
in their choices of work, living and recreation patterns.
The "Little Italy's", "Bohemias" and "Blarney Stone Irish"
neighborhoods of American cities still display façades
so "authentic" that the European visitor is reminded of
his grandparents era.

Whatever its sources or explanations this literature on
the sense of place reveals several consistently recurring
themes. It appears that people's sense of both personal
and cultural identity is intimately bound up with place
identity. Loss of home or losing one's place may often
trigger an "identity crisis". Bachelard, a 20c philo-
sopher, in "The Poetics of Space" claimed that the rela-
tionship between place and personality is so intimate,

that to understand oneself, a *topanalysis* might yield
more fruitful insight even than a *psychoanalysis* (Bache-
lard 1964). There are many dimensions to the *meanings*
ascribed to place: symbolic, emotional, cultural, politi-
cal, and even biological. People have not only intellec-
tual, imaginary, and symbolic conceptions of place but
also personal and social associations with place-based
networks of interaction and affiliation. As with other
members of Biosphere, too, humans display marked patterns
of territoriality. When the fundamental values associat-
ed with any of these levels of experience are threatened,
then protest about the meaning of place may erupt. Whe-
ther all these values are *consciously* articulated in
legal or behavior terms does not seem to be the crucial
point. In fact they are often not brought to conscious-
ness until they are threatened: they are part of the
fabric of everyday life and its taken-for-granted rou-
tines.

This does not suggest, however, that *ideas about place*
are not significant. In fact the fundamental *Zeitgeist*
or world view at any point in history which may be ex-
plicit in scientific and philosophical ideas about space,
time, and nature is present implicitly also in concep-
tions of place. It is especially on this level that 20c
brought unprecedented reaction and insight. The "post
Newtonian shock" was over: science and rationality was
beginning to triumph over all other competing alterna-
tives. The idea that countries and places should be plan-
ned within a wider sociospatial horizon was gaining
ground. World depression and war "justified" managerial
convictions that people and their home places should no
longer be trusted to carry on in the traditional way. An
old Stoic idea that rational order should be imposed on
nature and society became an apparently workable dream
because of developments in science and technology.

As transport and communication systems shrank the dis-
tances between places, and the increasing mobility of

people, jobs, and armies continued to level our differences between places, it was in the urban context that the question of local identity became politically articulate. Prototypical examples of the place-based "culture shock" are, I suppose, the ethnic ghettoes of the early 20c in North America. Migrants from rural backgrounds in Europe poured into the industrial cities of New England, Chicago, and the West Coast all eager to maintain some sense of cultural and kin identity while joining the queue for the unskilled job market. These pockets of first generation immigrants settlement quickly assumed a distinctive "ethnic" character. Usually circumscribed by either physical landmarks, zoning laws, or prejudice, they displayed an internal cohesion reminiscent in many ways of those older working-class districts in European cities. Social scientists became fascinated by the social order of the slum: they noted the interweaving of social and spatial arrangements and ways in which external landscape forms mirrored the world views and behavior patterns of their residents. With confidence indeed did the Chicago Municipal Authorities accept the recommendations for administrative boundaries offered by these community sociologists: boundaries which still persist despite massive demographic and cultural change. The lack of "fit" between administrative regionalization plans and the social character of local areas remains one of the end problems regarding the identity of *place*.

Prior to World War II most of what was written about place was construed in terms of a Newtonian world: container space for people and activities, areally-circumscribed domains of political authority and/or administration. The notion of place was still a very respectable one: credible to those who lived in them as well as to those who sought to plan them. It had served as a model for the resettlement of minorities after World War I: the boundaries of language and nationalism being understood as basic and unquestionable (Dominian 1917). It was

also a plausible concept for two key planning movements
of the 1920's: the Garden City movement in Britain
(Howard 1897) and the famous "Regional Plan for New York
and its Environs" in the United States (Haig 1927).

It was only after World War II that the full impact of
an Einsteinian world view began to express itself in
applied science and its reverberations on character of
places. National and multi-national economic planning
became a moral imperative: political boundaries were dis-
mantled and recombined in various ways, comparative ad-
vantages in production and delivery were sought, optimal
spatial and structural programmes were designed to maxim-
ize efficiency and interaction. Sky was the limit, it
seemed, on the advantages of agglomeration and scale
economies. Most of these movements triggered significant
popular reactions. Most striking, I suppose, is the way
in which national stereotypes persist, for example, among
the member countries of EEC despite the enormous changes
in their actual patterns of interaction and exchange.
But it was in the urban realm especially that the old re-
frain of place identity assumed the most dramatic forms.

Urban renewal programmes particularly in the UK and USA
nearly always found their first targets in "slum" areas
near the old city center - victims of the CBD's success
as dominant pole within the empire-building city which
had forgotten its housekeeping responsibilities. Bull-
dozers respected few of those invisible boundaries or
sacred symbols of social space. (Few there were of cour-
se: in Glasgow today, several years after the first bull-
dozer arrived, pubs and churches stand like mesas atop
a landscape razed to flatness - isolated from their cli-
entèle whose houses once lay around and above them. In
Sweden, I understand, trees enjoy a similar magical
power over the bulldozer).

When social scientists got involved as consultants either
to redevelopment plans or to their evaluation, they

usually brought along the older models of place identity
which had been tried and tested in the 'twenties and
'thirties. Myths of "community" and "territoriality" had
enjoyed a long popularity and indeed it appeared ideolo-
gically desirable for many political authorities to
sponsor such people-oriented research. Most of this lite-
rature took the form of postmortem autopsy-grieving for
a lost home - too late or perhaps too "safe" to influen-
ce the onward march of urban and regional "development"
planning.

What emerged for many of the authors and audience of such
studies, however, was evidence about the fundamental con-
trast between an "insider's" ways of experiencing place
and an "outsider's" conventional ways of describing them.
Lived space and lived time were poorly and only partial-
ly represented via disciplinary models of (representa-
tional) space and time. For many serious researchers the
road ahead lay in exploring the lived worlds of people
in place.

Critical philosophers have accused those who took such
an existentialist approach of having fallen prey to mani-
pulation by ideological and managerial interests (Adorno
(1964) 1973). Beneath the jargon of authenticity, it was
noted, lurked a tacit condoning of poverty, injustice,
and alienation. Romantic descriptions of neighborhood
life may indeed unwittingly have served to perpetuate
myths like the "culture of poverty" or to trivialize the
"insiders" perspective by refusing to articulate it in a
language which would reveal the extent of structural
inequity built into contemporary economic and political
life. Herein perhaps lies one basic clue to the impasse:
the *language* used to describe the resident's perspectiv-
es on place is still, by and large, the language of a
Newtonian world - people, activities, and things *con-*
tained within place - whereas the language used to plan
the economic and technological horizons of place has
been profoundly influenced by Einsteinian conceptions of

topological space, time, and process. To speak of "insiders" and "outsiders", places versus spatio-temporal organization, and other dualisms of this sort may serve reasonably well to describe the historical record. But to do justice to the fundamental life interests which could be evoked by the question of place identity today one needs to probe to a deeper level of meaning and there hopefully to find some common denominators for a dialogue between those who wish to live in places and those who wish to plan for them.

I suggest we think about places in the context of two reciprocal movements which can be observed among most living forms: like breathing in and out most life forms need a *home* and *horizons of reach* outward from that home. The lived reciprocity of rest and movement, of territory and range, of security and adventure, of housekeeping and husbandry, of community building and social organization — these experiences may be universal among the inhabitants of Planet Earth. Whether one thinks on the level of ideas themselves, or of social networks, or of "home grounds", there may be a manner in which one can measure and study the reciprocity of home and reach in all of them. For any individual the "home" and "reach" of one's thought and imagination may be quite distinct from the "home" and "reach" of one's social affiliations, which may again be distinct from the actual physical location of physical "home" and "reach". These distinctions are not just abstractions: if they are actually mapped within the lived space time horizons of any individual or group they could provide some clues into what constitutes place identity. If all three are synchronized or harmonized then one could speak of *centeredness* and hypothesize that one's sense of place is a function of how well it provides a center for one's life interests. Taken in a more general sense the question becomes how many of a local area's life interests may be centered within it and how many of them have their "home" elsewhere.

This process of centering is not at all identical with the notion of centralization - the rationally planned nodal concentration of power and social energy - rather it suggests an ongoing life process - the breathing in and bringing home which is a reciprocal of the breathing out and reaching toward horizon. The essential difference between "centralization" and "centering" may in fact symbolize the language barriers between outsider's and insider's views on place. For the words used to describe places *looked at from the outside* are nouns - artefacts like housing, land use, activity flows, political boundaries, and so from a national perspective one may speak of centralizing or decentralizing them. Centering is an essentially creative process authored by people themselves. The meanings of place to *those who live in them* have more to do with everyday living and doing rather than thinking so even to *discuss* place we have to freeze the dynamic process at an imaginary moment in order to take the still picture.

The observor speaks of housing whereas the resident lives the process of dwelling. The observor measures and maps activity systems and social networks and infers something of the native's *world within reach* whereas in the resident's experience *reaching* may be so fundamental a movement of everyday existence that it is not usually reflected upon (Schutz, 1962, 1973; Rose, 1977). One of the first steps to be taken in trying to straddle the divide between "insider" and "outsider" worlds, then, is to stretch our conventional "noun" or "picture" language so as to accommodate the "verbs" and "process" languages of lived experience.

To exaggerate a little, I see the "outsider's trap" in that we look at places, as it were, from an abstract sky: we try to read the texts of landscapes and overt behavior in the picture languages of maps and models and are therefore inevitably drawn toward finding in places what we *intend* to find in them. The "insider's trap", on the

other hand, is that we live in places and may be so immersed in the particulars of everyday life and action that we may see no point in questioning the taken-for-granted or in seeing our home place in its wider spatial or social context. For both "insiders" and "outsiders", perhaps the greatest challenge is a pedagogical one: a calling to conscious awareness those taken-for-granted ideas and practices within each of our worlds and then to reach beyond them toward a more reasonable and mutually-respectful dialogue.

The geographer, of all people, should find such a pedagogical challenge attractive. Whereas the bulk of our disciplinary models have fostered an observor's stance on places, we all sometime somewhere are "insiders" in some place. Would it not be a worthwhile goal then to examine our own experiences in various places and use this as a testing ground for our generalizations and also our efforts to achieve better communication across this divide? Before one leaps into issues of planning policy it would be vital, it seems to me, to understand the fundamental life processes which are at stake and are vulnerable to changes in the physical and political identity of place. (The question of decentralization in Sweden, for instance, might then be redefined as a problem that calls for an effort to revitalize the energies of local areas from the grass roots at the same time as one studies the feasibility of blueprints for redistribution from the top down.)

What I would like to present here are some insights and questions which have come to me from some exploratory efforts to understand the meaning of place in my own experience as well as in that of other groups. This is not intended as a model to be tested or a solution to problems but rather the story of a journey across the divide which most of us confront (or ignore) when we speak of people and places. In a way it is only the kind of "homework" which any scholar who believes in objectivity should

be willing to face: to unearth the "subjective" element
and recognize its influence. I'm sure that many of the
attitudes I bring to my geography, for instance, and cer-
tainly my cynicism about top-down bureaucratic planning,
derive from my childhood experiences of life in Ireland.

Even to an audience that consists mostly of geographers
I doubt if I could find words to describe what the exper-
ience of living in this place still means to me. As I
look at these pictures (figs. 1 and 2) it is a total
experience of milieu which is evoked: I recall the feel
of the grass on bare feet, the smells and sounds of vari-
ous seasons, the places and times I meet friends on walks,
the daily ebb and flow of milking time, meals, reading
and thinking, sleeping and waking. Most of this experi-
ence is not consciously processed through my head - that
is why words are so hard to find - for this place allows
head and heart, body and spirit, imagination and will
to become harmonized and creative. So far rationaliza-
tion of agriculture has not disrupted the fabric of our
local landscape or the predictability of sonic and other
intrusions throughout the day; somehow to live there
allows one a sense of being in tune with the rhythmicity
of Nature's light and dark, warmth and cold, sowing and
harvesting.

Now as a geographer I could probably tell you what soil
types there are, what the crop rotation system used to
be, the time-cost-distance to markets and so on, but
even when I had done the round of "geographical" inter-
pretations I still would feel it was only an opaque pic-
ture - insufficient to tell you whether the administra-
tive/economic/political boundaries of place should be
revised or what realms of human life interests should be
left to our discretion or abrogated by regional or natio-
nal authorities. Perhaps here I'm encased in the "insid-
er's trap"? Experiences in several other environments,
however, have convinced me that the solutions to many
regional problems which have been discovered through

Figs. 1 and 2. The Glenville area, Cork, Ireland.

trial-and error over generations may still be more ratio-
nal than those conceived by the urban or foreign civil
servant. Experience also suggests that any solution which
we do not consider to be "our idea" will be resented,
avoided or rendered ludicrous over time.

Attuned as I was to a relatively stable rural world with
its taken-for-granted "place" for everything, the urban
landscapes of North America seemed indeed to lack identi-
ty (fig. 3). Suburbia especially seemed such a "place-
less" sprawl of concrete and plastic nowhereland grid-
iron(fig. 4). Even in University districts, one searched
in vain for that kind of sidewalk café where one could
linger for hours: rather one found the short order eating
places which prided themselves on quick turnover and
throughput (fig. 5). It did not take long to discover how
false it could be to judge the book by the cover: many
of these nondescript hamburger stations were meaningful
nodes in teenager and truckdriver social space.

To many people, for whom *reaching* is more important than
home making, I suppose places are really points on a topo-
logical surface of access. Eventually the architectural
monotony or discordance within any one physical place
could be the result of coincidence rather than design:
each component is part of a spatial linkage and the *cen-*
ter of each lies at a national or multinational head-
quarters. How things will eventually combine within any
particular geographical milieu, therefore, is quite inci-
dental both to those who design them and those who will
use them (fig. 6).

The skyscrapers, airports, freeways and other stereotypi-
cal components of modern landscapes - are they not the
sacred symbols of a civilization which has deified *reach*
and derided *home* (fig. 7)? The gaping wounds of mining
and industrial landscapes (fig. 8) simply the refuse
heaps of a civilization intoxicated with promethean hub-
ris?

Fig. 3. Downtown Toronto.
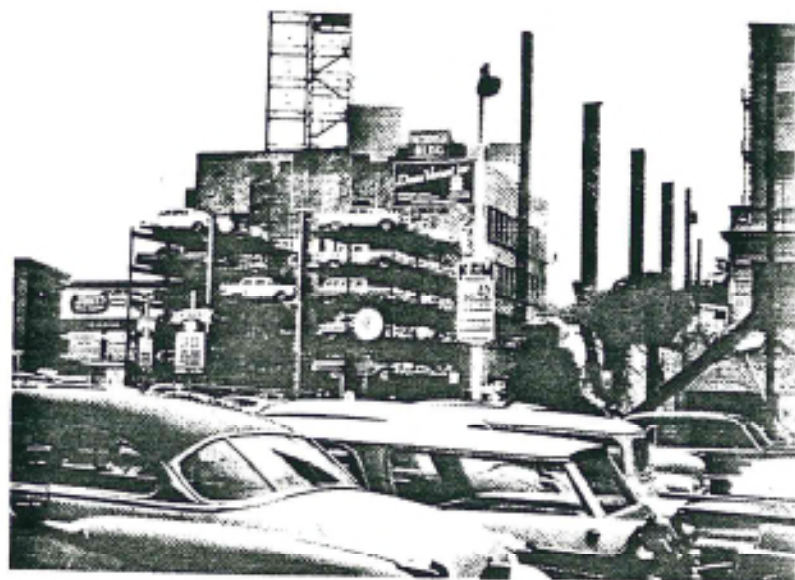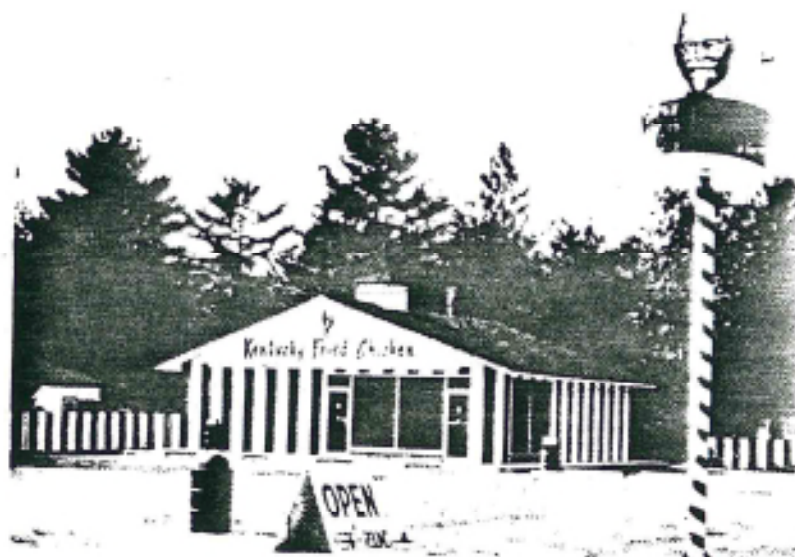Fig. 4. Suburbia, Chicago.

Fig. 5. The ubiquitous Kentucky Fried Chicken.
Fig. 6. "Coincidental development" in Portland, Oregon.

Fig. 7. Freeway access to downtown Minneapolis.
Fig. 8. Open pit mine, Minnesota.

It is difficult for a native of rural Ireland to take
such a culturally relativist attitude toward the place-
less landscapes of reach (Relph 1975). This is not be-
cause of aesthetics alone or sensory overload, rather it
derives from a nausea about values which make machines,
commodities, movement and salesmanship more important
than human encounter or letting nature have some breath-
ing space. It is even hard to be wholeheartedly in favor
of restoration movements in parts of cities if the aim
is simply to reconstitute a museum for the benefit of the
tourist industry or to salve the consciences of societies
which have trampled on history: it is the style of life
associated with place which is still far more important
for me than its external forms (fig. 9). Grady Clay's
"How to Read the American City Close up" has indeed been
an eye-opener (Clay 1974).

The "placing" of objects and activities within interior
space was also a surprise to someone socialized within
an Irish rural home. In this era of consumerism, it has
become not only stylish but also profitable to design
interior space in ways that will appeal to prospective
buyers. Proxemics and territoriality - inside and outside
the home - tend to become academically interesting re-
search topics at periods of collective claustrophobia or
political commitment to the expansion of *Lebensraum* -
like the late 1960s at both sides of the Atlantic. It
took the Germans to invent a field called *Bürolandschaft*
and to order furniture and acoustics in ways to facili-
tate optimal work efficiency. In most of our "developed"
urban societies what appeals after a certain threshold
of media massage has been reached is quite frequently
what pays - either in terms of commercial profit or ideo-
logical consensus.

Perhaps the applied ideological or commercial fringe of
territoriality study has overshadowed the deeper issues.
Norberg-Schulz in his very lucid textbook on architec-
ture outlines what is involved in making architectural

Fig. 9. Old Montreal.

space a reflection of existential space (Norberg-Scnulz
1971). I am, of course, doubtful that all significant
aspects of existence in place can be readily translate-
able into architectural terms but this does not really
seem to be the important point. The crucial philosophi-
cal and pragmatic problem lies in what potential role is
allowed for residents to have any creative say in design-
ing them.

Looking back I suspect that my decision to accept an in-
vitation to join a team of experts on a critique of plan-
ning standards in the United Kingdom probably stemmed
from an emotional resentment against the ways in which
benign technocrats and planners seemed to be actually
killing places through their very efforts to "renew"
them (figs. 10 and 11). It was this resentment, plus the
hope that somehow there could be some place for *reason*
in the highly *rational* world of liberal planning, much

Figs. 10 and 11
(opposite page).
Before and after
urban renewal,
central Glasgow.

more than intellectual curiosity about applied geography
that motivated me to investigate the lived experience
worlds of working class families in Glasgow. Equipped
with the analytical and theoretical languages of social
science on the one hand, and deeply aware of how trauma-
tic a change of home can be, I felt that I could perhaps
play a mediator role between "insiders" and "outsiders"
in this context (Buttimer 1972).

The details of this study are perhaps less interesting
than the insight which later reflection yielded regarding
its strengths and limitations. There were several ways
in which the actual models used prevented me from letting
the residents articulate their own versions of the situa-
tion or from communicating directly to planning authori-
ties themselves. From an analytical viewpoint also there
were several dimensions missing: analyses of perceptions,
behavior, territoriality, and attitudes in cross-sectional
fashion at one point in time did not allow me to take
sufficient account of the temporal dimension. It was
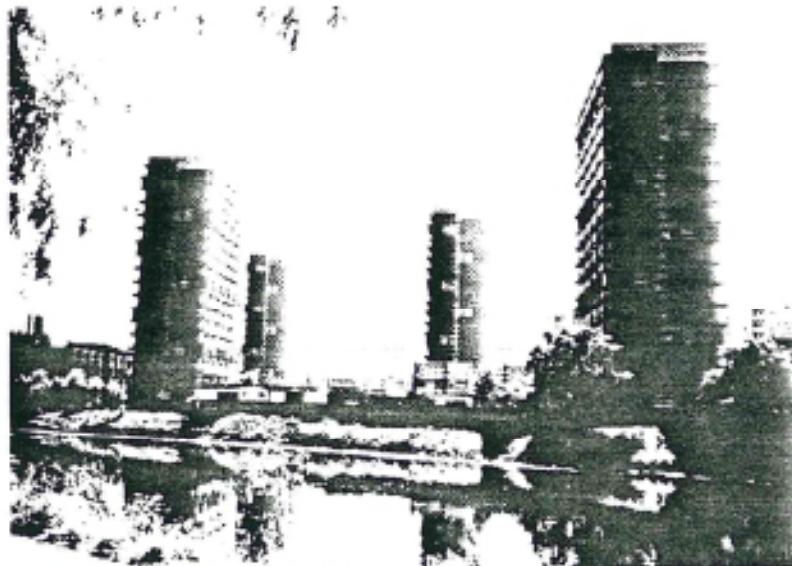
clear that those habits and preferences which had the
deepest roots in people's memories were also those which
were likely to survive and many of those were not really
plannable. It was also a very anthropocentric study: even
environment was defined in "human" terms (architectural
form, access horizons, functional boundaries, etc.) and
insufficient attention was given to the actual physical
environment. But most significantly, in retrospect, it
was not an objective interpretation. Even though residents
spoke about "home ground" and "sense of place" I heard
those words through the filters of my own experience.
"Home" for me should ideally have those qualities of my
own home - quietness, fragrance, spaciousness, and rhyth-
mic flow of light and dark, winter and spring. These
Glasgow housewives would probably have gone insane in
such a milieu! For them the noise and bustle of street
life, the regular whistle of factory and train, the occa-
sional gangfight and football match - these would probab-
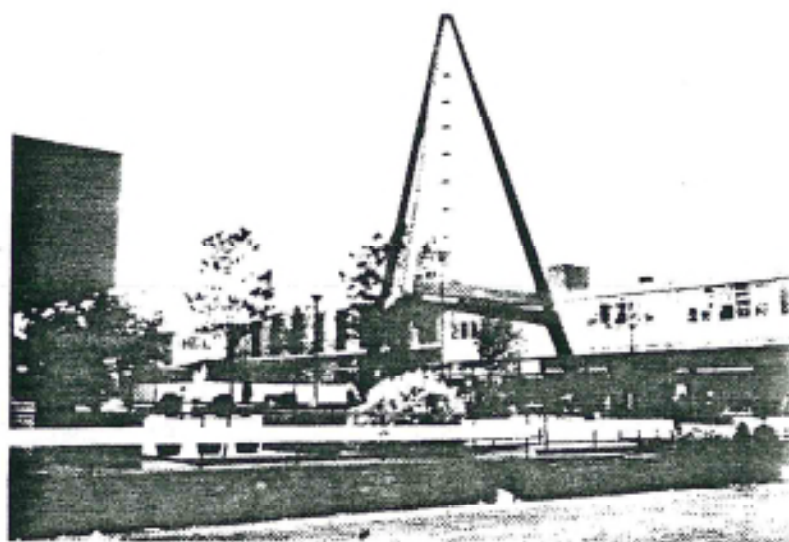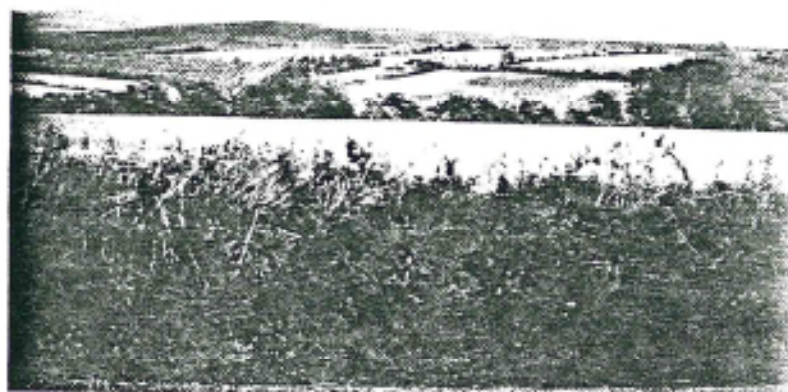ly have been more important for them than the presence of

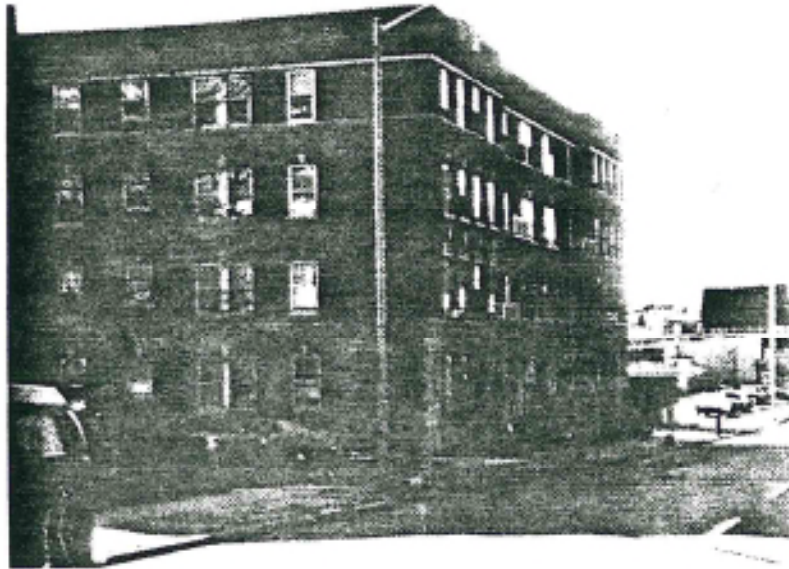Figs. 12 and 13. "Home" - in urban Glasgow and rural Cork.

Fig. 14. 1039 Main Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.

cows or birds (figs. 12 and 13).

Conscious of the ways in which disciplinary models and
one's own socialization can influence one's approach to
the study of *place* I have tried over the past few years
to develop a method of investigating my own experience
of *home* and *reach* in the two contrasting milieux where
most of my time has been spent: the Glenville home in
Ireland and an apartment complex on Main Street, Worces-
ter, USA (fig. 14). The aim was to really to stand (as
objectively as possible) inside my own experience and
through sharing an enquiry with those who lived in the
same apartment complex to arrive at some understanding
of the "insiders" world.

Again the details of this study may be less important
than the potential implications.

From an analytical perspective. it was virtually impos-
sible to assemble data on the various relevant categories
of the environment which were in any way comparable or

easily relatable to the human experience of milieu.
Secondly, although a good number of my fellow residents
were elderly and retired they scarcely even thought about
place at all. For them the processes of home and reach
had primarily a social meaning: telephone, taxi and mail
kept them happily involved in their non-place-based net-
works. There was only a samll range of activities which
could be affected by the local physical environment:
waiting for the bus, going to shop, church, or library.
They had become much better adapted to placelessness and
individualism than I. This is probably prototypical of
the apartment complex which sits on a main thoroughfare
within the comtemporary city.

Yet when we probed to the roots of our recurrent com-
plaints and feelings of unease we all discovered a set of
"common enemies". Chief among these was the principal
"gatekeeper" to our immediate milieu - the landlord - in
whose hands rested all discretion over details like elec-
tricity, gas, water, plumbing and protection from vanda-
lism. He was inaccessible most of the time even by tele-
phone. Other gatekeepers on our immediate environment
like police and fire departments were similarly unpredict-
able in the time distance of access. Most of what actual-
ly went on within the zone of immediate reach was a func-
tion of remote interests for whom our street was but a
thoroughfare. But, most seriously of all, we were denied
opportunity to express any responsibility for the upkeep
of our place or for creating there any sense of community
through mutual sharing. We were forced to adopt an atti-
tude of surviving as individuals and thinking only of our
own horizons of social reach and to blunting our sensi-
tivities to other dimensions of reach within our own ex-
perience or being sensitive to those of others. It is
hard to think about the city as a whole or of engaging in
civic life if one's everyday *genre de vie* becomes so pre-
occupied with individual survival.

Perhaps this is the most serious long term consequence of

the demise of *place*: if one cannot practice a giving and receiving in one's normal everyday routines, is society as a whole not denied the precious input which only individuals *in situ* could contribute? Jane Jacobs' account of Hudson Street would suggest that indeed it is (Jacobs 1961). In a very detailed study of crime patterns along that stretch of Main Street we found that there was a dramatic spatial correspondence between incidence of crime and the presence of resident owners. Oscar Newman's "Defensible Space" certainly supports the thesis that place-based round-the-clock activities are a better deterrent to crime than police surveillance (Newman 1973).

To consider the demise of place and its consequences for personal and community life as the result of fascist decisions to centralize everything may make attractive rhetoric but not the most helpful explanation in the long run. Rather it may be pedagogically more provocative and practically more feasible to design exercises which could help "insiders" within their everyday milieux to become aware of the longterm implications of an individualistic and fragmented life style both for the quality of their own lives and the general character of their residential and work environments. Such "consciousness raising" efforts would be of little avail, however, if there were not a simultaneous attempt on the part of managerial interests to become educated themselves: to sort out subjective bias and role-constrained decision making from whatever *reason* would require for the good of the whole. A geographer, sensitized to "insider" and "outsider" experiences of place, and aware of the reciprocity of home and reach within his/her own life experience, could surely offer some help on such a pedagogical venture.

Returning to my home place now I feel strongly about the kind of education we need. We need an ongoing attitude of self-awareness which would help us assess the meaning of our vastly expanded horizons of reach. The old rules of thumb on "housekeeping" may be appropriate in some

realms but they are hopelessly inadequate in others.
What seems technologically desirable in some realms can
be socially and ecologically disastrous in other areas.
Let me illustrate.

Many of the early leaders in Irish agricultural develop-
ment have come from farms lika ours where livelihood
success demanded independent enterprise and hard work.
Barriers to be overcome in the wake of World War II were
those classical conditions of West European agriculture:
inefficiencies of production technology and fertilizers,
fluctuations in produce markets, inadequate size or level
of specialization to permit economies of scale, etc...
Having suffered through these constraints in their youth
and having learned the values of self-sacrifice and un-
relenting effort they naturally construed utopia in terms
of economic rationality. The best service they could ren-
der society was to work toward a national development
plan for agriculture which would enable every farmer to
be free from these constraints. The past 25 years has
seen dramatic changes: local creameries have been ratio-
nalized, markets and fairs regionalized, transport hori-
zons expanded and commodity prices guaranteed and child-
ren no longer walk to school. (Now *they* will never have
to *long* for something they never had.) As each individual
entrepreneur and his family become more emancipated from
former constraints they are also deprived of former
opportunities to contribute toward the collective sense
of place. A bag of mixed blessings - the now familiar
tension between rationality and reason - have fallen on
each aspect of local life. Many rejoice in the disappear-
ance of drudgery and poverty but many also wonder why we
no longer see many "local characters" or hear any famous
story tellers. To translate the story into the language
of home and reach one could say that the horizons of
technological and economic reach have expanded so quickly
and so individualistically that one can no longer find
support or centeredness from the older commonly-held

conceptions of shared reach. Even within the lives of individual families there is often dissonance between the "reach" capacities of members and an increasing social distance between neighbors. From an ecological viewpoint also (the housekeeping aspect of place) there is little thought for the long term consequences of the growing dependence on supermarket food and fertilizers on largescale production for distant markets. Plastic bags, tin containers, and empty bottles are becoming a real eyesore around many of our homes. If one were to ask what the meaning and potential significance of *place* would be for us, or for places similar to ours, we need to redefine what we mean by "community" and "place". One has to see both in dynamic terms, as horizons for basic life processes, rather than as artefacts or nouns.

The creation of community cannot today rely on former props like sharing limited resources and confronting together some common challenges at harvest time. Today our common challenge - still implicit rather than explicit - is of a different kind: the psychological and emotional consequences of fragmented *genres de vie* juxtaposed in physical space but strangers in social space. Catalysts for community creation still survive: football teams, local newspapers, common occasions of worship and recreation; and the ubiquitous *pub* still provide the bases for contact between people and nurturing the sense of local identity. The creeping paralysis which we share with many rural regions in Western Europe - for a *place* point of view - is the general penetration of Eurocratic policy in agriculture which not only fosters ecological and social scandals in land speculation but fills the countryside with a motorized caste of development interests seeking to enlist each individual family in remote-controlled nets of consumerism. By the accents we use, the jokes we share, the songs we sing, you can still differentiate South, West and East, but in overt "geographical" terms there is little difference any more.

Let me conclude with just a few points which may have particular relevance to the Swedish situation today.

Personal identity and health require an ongoing process of *centering* - a reciprocity between dwelling and reaching - which can find its external symbolic expression in the sense of place or regional identity. Decentralization efforts from "top down" need to take account of this fundamental feature of lived experience both for individuals and for society. There is a need for would-be consultants to such planning efforts to take cognisance of their taken-for-granted assumptions about the relationships between people and place. Ultimately centralization blueprints can only touch the externalities of local life and their long term efficacy depends upon the re-awakening of creative energies from local communities.

A viable style of life for local areas cannot cling to old Newtonian conceptions of community and region or adopt a competitive "ghetto" attitude toward society and national spatial organization. A style of community life oriented toward self-education regarding the constantly changing horizons of reach for people, activity systems, and technology, could be a powerful catalyst for developing civic habits of sharing rather than competing and discovering how much the health and happiness of individuals and communities can be enhanced by allowing people to contribute to the whole.

To a society whose central concerns have tended to overlook the importance of place and regional identity a line from another popular song may be worth an ear: "You'll never know what you're missing 'til you try!"

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