



## Peer Reviewed

### Title:

Special Report -- Caring about Places and Places

### Journal Issue:

[Places, 20\(2\)](#)

### Author:

[Hester, Randolph T.](#)

### Publication Date:

2008

### Publication Info:

Places

### Permalink:

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2rt6880p>

### Acknowledgements:

This article was originally produced in Places Journal. To subscribe, visit [www.places-journal.org](http://www.places-journal.org). For reprint information, contact [places@berkeley.edu](mailto:places@berkeley.edu).

### Keywords:

places, placemaking, architecture, environment, landscape, urban design, public realm, planning, design, special, report, caring, climate, change, randolph, hester

### Copyright Information:

All rights reserved unless otherwise indicated. Contact the author or original publisher for any necessary permissions. eScholarship is not the copyright owner for deposited works. Learn more at [http://www.escholarship.org/help\\_copyright.html#reuse](http://www.escholarship.org/help_copyright.html#reuse)



**eScholarship**  
University of California

eScholarship provides open access, scholarly publishing services to the University of California and delivers a dynamic research platform to scholars worldwide.

# Caring about Places and *Places*

Randolph T. Hester

but also related in order to make sense of them. This extends the idea of place from places—however wonderful, one at a time—to sets of places that, taken together, describe the place of people in the world.

In light of this critique, what are we now to make of the virtual worlds in which so many work and play—even dwell, considering the proportion of time spent there? These range from e-mail and other activities complementary to our physical space and resources, to such inventions as “Second Life,” which seem to arrogate all of life to themselves.

And what are we to make of shifting roles in the environmental professions? John Habraken, in that first volume of *Places*, warned that as professionals, “our genuine concern for the built environment as a whole is not matched by our behavior, methods, or skills. The reasons for this ambivalent attitude are, of course, part of the broader dilemma of modern professionalism: when does expertise nourish the common good?”

I hope that the fascination of discovery that has accompanied *Places* over all these years will continue in an unfolding landscape of new ideas and images, through fresh insights into existing places, through patterns of life better understood, through places being imagined where newly empowered groups can establish claims that express both their identities and our collective aspirations.

It was part of Don Lyndon’s and my hopes at the outset that the journal would reflect the widest possible range of views about how places are imagined, experienced, conceptualized, and designed. Now that “place” is becoming increasingly complex in this globalized and mobile world, how can *Places*, the journal, reflect these new conditions?

Today has been an “Orchard That Measures.” And by any measure that orchard, at twenty-five, is in full bloom. Some say it is aging, but I see blossoms both sensually delightful and robust with budding ideas.

That orchard may well have started small—*Prunus Appleyard*, *Prunus Porter*, and *Prunus Lyndon*, the most poetic of all orchard trees. But the orchard has grown to include all of us. And today it measured accomplishment. The main accomplishment: place matters. The shape of place matters. Place is not placeless. Place is not without propinquity. Place is not irrelevant, as many in the academy claimed three decades ago—and, in fact, some still claim today. Place matters because for every one of us dwelling is an intimate relationship with place. And *Places*, the magazine, has singularly made that clear. For twenty-five years, *Places* has been the orchard that measured place in all its dimensions. *Places* has informed, inspired, and cajoled. Today was no exception. Place matters, and the dream of place matters.

What is most obvious from today’s event is that *Places*, the journal, is like places, the places. *Places* is a magazine that we collectively hold in our minds, care about, and have made part of our lives. *Places*, the magazine, has made us into a community—some of us of a single place, others dispersed without propinquity, but with a shared vision. We know that to shape place is to be alive.

Some may believe, as Donlyn states, that places primarily instill the choreographies of society. Some of us don’t even know what “choreographies of society” are, but we trust that Donlyn does. Others may hold that places are primarily concretized symbols of society. Some may see places as livable streets. Still others

may see places as Aldo Leopold’s inhabited ecologies. Some others may see places, as Dr. King did, as the single garment of our shared destiny.<sup>1</sup> Some argue that places develop native wisdom. Others argue that places simply let natural daylight in to gladden a kitchen table. Some few of us may emphasize that places enable ecological democracy.

But whatever our emphasis, we are a community of place and part of the *Places* community, because we know we depend upon places and *Places*, and because places and *Places* depend on us. This is cause for optimism, because the community of *Places* has cultivated a healthy orchard. But it will continue to be productive and fruitful for another twenty-five years, and far beyond that, only if we all assume in some manner responsibility. It is our *Places*.

The external enemies of place are substantial—thin democracy, virtual capital, and placeless theory among the most ferocious. But internal enemies of overly polite debate, insularity, education as a concept without dimension, neglect of oppositions and conflict, and failure to propagate new orchard stock are actually more threatening.

We and a very few absent members are the only stewards *Places* has. We are both the orchard itself and the caretakers of the orchard. We can celebrate the spring blossoms. We can share the fall harvest, and we can enjoy the ripened fruit of *Places*. We can plant new trees to replace the old and expand the territory. But we are also in charge of pruning, watering, and daily maintenance. We are the stewards of *Places*.

## Note

1. “All life is interrelated. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality; tied in a single garment of destiny”—Martin Luther King, Jr.