

time. Here it is more real. It is dependent on real smells, real relationships, real practicalities. So if this second workshop were built according to a master-plan it would inevitably be unrelated to the terrain, cafe, road. If, instead, it is built in this natural spot which emerges from people's actions and volitions, it will be related — in a way that makes sense — to the road, cafe, terrain, and parking and view.

The effect of time on the process of adaptation is huge, and leads to types and styles of order quite different from any planned arrangement. Even in this first very small increment of construction, the dynamic time-dependent process creates and maintains relatedness. The static master-planned process does not. In a community growing over time, such increments will happen hundreds — more likely thousands — of

times. If a dynamic process is followed, so that each time the next step follows existing things — preserves the structure, and creates and maintains relationships — we get a harmonious living community.

If, instead, a static master-plan-based process is followed, and the 20 or 100 things are built according to the original drawing or plan, then they will exist, for the most part, without real functional relationships: the whole is unrelated in its internal elements; there has been no structure-preserving going on, step after step, and the whole remains dead.

Thus, the main problem of community development, of growing a neighborhood, is to do it in the dynamic way not in the static way.

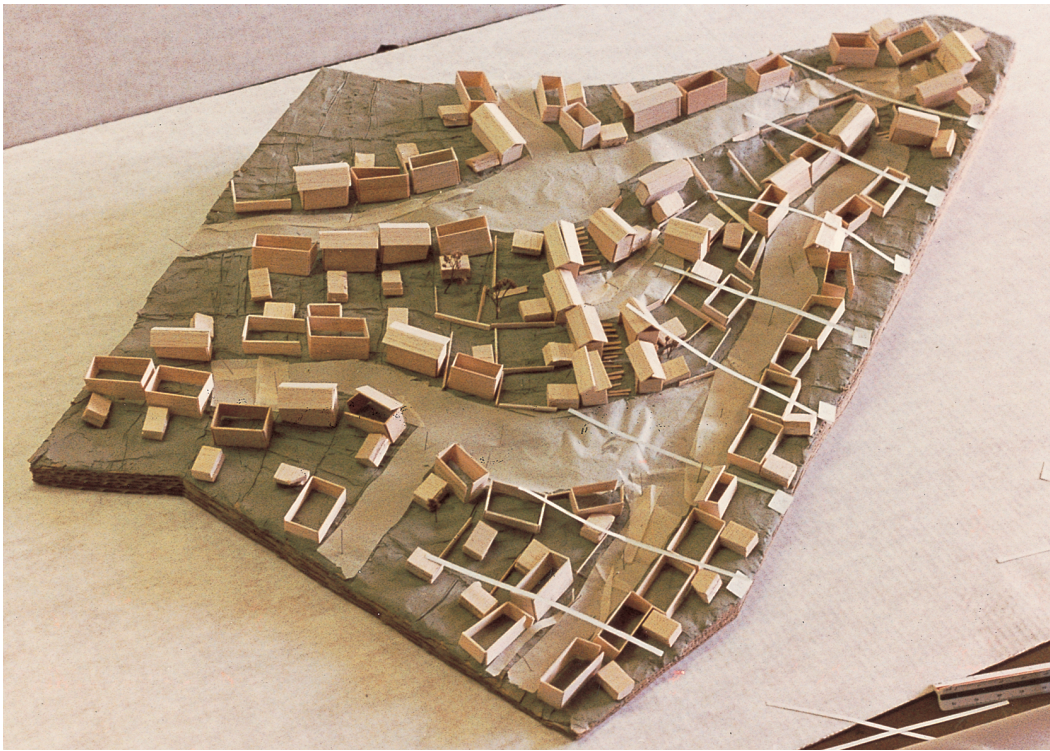
That is the big challenge. How can it be done?



3 / SANTA ROSA DE CABAL, COLOMBIA



The first step taken in designing a new neighborhood. Santa Rosa de Cabal, Colombia. Neighborhood of seventy-six houses, built by families. Construyamos and CES, Christopher Alexander, Ingrid King, Kleoniki Tsoutropoulou, Fanta Lawrence, Seth Wachtel, Jeannie Radcliffe, and others, 1990.



A model built as a record of the work done by the seventy-six families. Note that this model was made after the staking out shown in the previous photo on page 336. The plan came from the process on the site, not from a drawing. Santa Rosa de Cabal, Colombia, 1990.

In Santa Rosa de Cabal, in the mountains of Colombia, we worked for seventy-six families. We started in 1988 and promised them they could all design their own houses, using a very simple method. First we laid out the streets of the neighborhood together, on the land. The stakes marking the layout are illustrated on page 336. The model, and the drawing for permission came *from* the stakes, not vice versa.

The people were very poor. They dug the trench for the main sewer themselves. Then each family laid out a house, using for the design process a sequence for a Colombian house which we had developed with them. The working of the process and the houses the people of Santa Rosa made using this process — each one unique to a different family — are illustrated in chapter 12, pages 398-408.

There were tremendous delays. The bank staff could not understand the idea that each house was different. They talked about resale value as a

reason for standardizing the houses (just like an American mortgage company). The umbrella organization supporting the project, *Construyamos* (spanish for “let-us-build”), was one of the largest and most powerful self-help organizations in the world. Hernan Mesa, head of *Construyamos*, at first said that our process could only work if all the houses were identical, mass-produced by collective labor. Then he gradually began to accept our idea about the family’s individual life and their dreams as the underpinning of the process.

It took time to convince him and the bank of the importance of this idea, but we succeeded at last. Yet then, four years later, one day Hernan again insisted that (in the name of social justice) every family must have an identical box. Finally, we and the family members persuaded him and the planners and the banks that each house *must* be different to give each family its dignity. The families, of course, already knew this and had supported this idea throughout.



Starting work on the main sewage trenching, Santa Rosa de Cabal, Colombia, 1991.

So we overcame that problem. Even in the earliest site model, the houses are visible as outlines. You could already see that every one of them would inevitably be unique, if it were carefully and properly related to the land and to its unique location in the neighborhood.

In chapter 12, we shall see how, in practice, creation of this uniqueness and the careful adaptation of each house to the land was actually achieved. There we see the differentiated subtle form beginning to appear. By 1995 the neighborhood was, in its first form, complete.



4 / FEEDBACK, DIAGNOSIS AND REPAIR

One of the most fundamental aspects of structure-preserving transformations (and belonging) is that at each moment we respond to the given environment, in its current state, and seek to move it further away from its current deficiencies and towards something which extends, enhances, its structure while preserving the essential wholeness which is there.

This is most easily embodied in the idea of “diagnosis.” We examine a neighborhood, looking meter by meter as we go along the streets, for

each place that is wholesome, good, in a well-ordered state, and for those places which are damaged, unhealthy, not in good repair. This is the idea of feedback as a necessary component of all growth and all development. We look at the whole, look at whatever there is about it which detracts from the life and wholeness it could have, or seems to be reaching for — and then take the next step to repair the wholeness, to move the whole towards a state of greater life.

I am not talking about broken fences or