

allowing people to shape their own world as they want it to be — is a natural right of people. And

it is the only way deep adaptation (and therefore ultimately, people's satisfaction) can occur.



### 3 / UNFOLDING AS A SOURCE OF UNANIMITY

Suppression of people's involvement in the shaping of the environment is not only wrong, above all it is needless interference. Participation need not be threatening to administrators. It does not wrest control from the people who must have control. Rather, it is a humane process which — when done right — can allow people to consolidate their needs in a coherent fashion which helps everyone.

Although interminable discussion about values, goals, and different points of view can unseat any social process if it is done in the wrong way — when the process is a disciplined process along the lines of the process described

in Book 2, chapter 13, these problems rarely happen. The main point, I think, is that the fundamental process, when used correctly in the creation of a pattern language, allows people, one at a time and together, bit by bit, to focus on their communality, to sharpen it, make it precise. This can happen because the process allows people to establish just one pattern — one generic center — at a time. So the deep agreement which lies in people is given space, and comes to the surface. The wrangling and confusion which makes administrators so fearful, only follows from a wrong-headed approach to the process of building consensus.



### 4 / START OF A COLLECTIVE VISION IN FORT LAUDERDALE

When people do sit down and discuss patterns together, one by one, the remarkable unanimity which comes from these discussions is often moving and profound.

During the seventies and eighties of the last century, the then prevailing rhetoric of pluralism tried to persuade us that because we are all different, we live in a world of competing interests, and that unanimity is not available or reachable. Yet the language of "interests" "conflicts" and "compromise," discussed by planners and social philosophers came chiefly from the special interests of particular players who want to do something one-sided — usually to do with money. It is these one-sided interests which have to be balanced, or negotiated — in my view, because they are not quite legitimate in the first place.

Ordinary people, who are not pushing a special economic interest, or other special interest, rarely have such profound conflicts. The reality of daily life, even as disparate and various as people are, is largely shared in its deeper aspects, and remarkably uniform. There is likely to be far greater feeling, among them, that what needs to be done is obvious and ordinary. Ordinary people (by that I mean people without special *economic* interests) usually do not have the same items at the top of their individual wishlists, nor do they have such ferocious allegiance to the items. Their items are softer and can coexist more easily, often without causing difficulty in the unfolding of the whole.

In February 1996, shortly after giving a speech in Fort Lauderdale, I held a community workshop for members of the Progresso commu-



*Another kind of community deciding its future.  
Women's resistance to deforestation, Chipko movement, Reni, Uttar Khard region, Himalayas, 1974*

nity, one of the city neighborhoods. About fifty people from the neighborhood community came to this workshop. I simply asked them what was in their mind as a way forward, what issues were most vivid in their thinking, and which generic patterns were (in their eyes) most important to the future life of that community.

Here are my notes on the issues that they raised. They are shown in random order, as I wrote them on my notepad during the discussion:

*New type of zoning.*

*Encouraging smaller land parcels.*

*New concept for the district, in terms of ownership.*

*Keep homeless encampment out of Progresso.*

*Start a connecting thread between businesses with economic success and expand this thread into a visible thread in the community.*

*Get Haitian community members to speak on their desire to buy.*

*Outreach to the Haitian community.*

*Mixed use with no pressure created by divergence between regulations for residential and regulations for commercial.*

*Do something about the exorbitant cost of land.  
 Make it a mixed use area.  
 Get backing to provide low interest loans in special zoning category of mixed use, if established.  
 Provide opportunity for low interest loans.  
 Bring down the cost of land.  
 Change zoning to allow small lot projects to occur.  
 Find ways to avoid federal and state regulations of code enforcement driving up the cost of projects in the area.  
 Need for an overall plan. How to start abating the blight.  
 Need an improved police presence.  
 Places for children to be safe.  
 Town houses and brownstones near to downtown for people who are in downtown and can walk to work.  
 User-friendly code departments and planning department.  
 See city staff as your partners who will assist you.  
 Habitat will contribute if lots are donated by the city.  
 Get Habitat to target the project neighborhood.  
 Encourage development of small improvements before attempting larger projects.*

These comments are transcribed verbatim from the comments made at the workshop, as I wrote them down. Of course these comments are only a sprinkling of what was undoubtedly felt by others who did not speak, but even as it stands it is consistent, one feels a consistent theme, like a gentle beat, running through these comments. It strongly suggests the beginnings of a consistent cross-sectional view, the beginnings of a common pattern language for the people of the Progresso neighborhood.

Consider the following examples of generic patterns which were then pulled, one by one, from this list which members of the community had given of themselves and their concerns:

1. *Smaller houses (funded by low interest loans)*
2. *A thread of businesses and shops*
3. *Mixture of shops, businesses and houses close together*
4. *Many small improvements*
5. *Smaller parcels of land*
6. *Small projects*
7. *Children's areas*
8. *Town houses near the south end*

These ideas — only crudely formulated here — were the first eight items on a first list of patterns that were considered by the neighborhood. Each one would merit detailed discussion; and would no doubt change considerably when subjected to careful discussion. But, going through them one by one, and thus unfolding the generic patterns from the present awareness of the community — the agreed elements that could bring life to the community — then the subsequent unfolding would gradually improve the place.

It was not hard to get these generic patterns from the discussion. And, as you can see, working at this level of detail, with discussion of geometric patterns one at a time, there is very little conflict; little argument to suggest that any of these patterns that are being brought forward, are objectively invalid.

Within a few hours, we already had the beginnings of a broad agreement.



## 5 / DESIGN CHARETTES

The process of taking individual generic patterns one by one, getting them right in isolation, then gradually adding them to a “bank” of good patterns, is quite different from the process that used to be followed in late 20th-century

community design: the so-called *design charette*. In the charette process that is typically followed, an architect enters the community and gathers people around, then people draw together on a huge piece of paper, often butcher’s paper, with