



8 / A COLLECTIVE VISION ACHIEVED AT EISHIN

To pursue this idea of reaching a collective vision about archetypal matters, in greater detail, I'll go back to the example of the Eishin campus that my colleagues and I built in Japan. I want to describe the physical and social circumstances, while we were doing our work. Then, if you will, you can extrapolate from this example to the typical urban situation in your home town or in the city where you live. I hope you will see what I am driving at.

The area of the campus we built is about 900 feet by 900 feet, roughly some nine city blocks. It was a small high school including a college extension to university education, and has some 1500 students. Originally the school had been located in Musashino Shi, near downtown Tokyo. Then in 1981, the school authorities decided to build themselves a new campus because they felt a need, as they explained it to me, for a new *culture*, that is, for a new way of living which they could share.

I started out to describe, *with* them, what would be the essence of a life worth living on that campus. The process I am talking about here is that we created, with them, a unique pattern language for a particular neighborhood — a verbal statement, shared by the people of the neighborhood, that in effect catches hold of what the people in this community, and in their commonness, have in their hearts.

So how did we begin? What was the pattern language all about? We sat with people representative of that community — must have been 100–150 people in all, faculty, students, administrators — talking. At the time of our discussions they lived and worked in an urban school that was very much like a New York asphalt jungle: a cell-block approach to school architecture, with a big building in the middle, asphalt all around, and that's it. In our discussions we started talking about what life might be like if, *instead*, it was a kind of a campus that people really wanted.

They were not quick to answer these questions. It was hard for them. Sometimes I remember having to tease things out of people. They would say, "Well, what do you mean, What do we want? A school is a school. What am I supposed to tell you?" It was almost as if there was a reluctance to allow the private poetic vision that each person had within them to come out. Perhaps because it was embarrassing, or it was too soft-hearted or it was too dreamlike. I remember at one point, I noticed that I could see something in a particular person I was speaking to. It was one of those discussions: "Well, what is there to say, it's a school isn't it?" and so I patiently went into the thing with him and I said: "Look, try to forget about this school that you are in now, completely forget it, and just imagine a place which feels like the most wonderful place you have ever worked in. . . . and in which, for you as a teacher, it makes you happy everyday that you are there. *What is this place like?*" Still the answer came back, "I don't know." So I had to push a little further, and I said: "I really want to know, I want to know what is in your heart, and I'm not going to stop talking to you until you tell me." And then "Look, if it's too difficult just close your eyes — then just see it. Close your eyes and tell me what you see. Imagine that it is wonderful *in your own terms*: You didn't know that it was there, and you suddenly came upon it, as if by accident. What is it that you found?" And then at some point the man I was talking to said: "Ohhh! You know, I imagine myself walking along a little stream between classes, I'm just thinking of my next class and preparing for it and so I imagine walking by this little bit of water and then sit down and have five minutes and then go into my next class."

Now, when I finally got *that* from him, when I finally got to that level, then that statement found its way into the pattern language we were making up. The idea of a place with water, where a teacher could wander between classes, was now part of the collective dream. It was included,

finally, because we discovered, soon, that it spoke, too, for all the others — and they accepted that it was part of their communal dream. So altogether the pattern language for that campus is really like a poem of two hundred statements going from the very, very big things about this place all the way down to the little tiny ones about window sills and plants and so forth. It describes in almost poetic but concrete fashion what that world could be like.

Remember now, all this was written before we had designed anything. At that time, we were still trying to imagine the new campus, in our minds.

The beauty of having a verbal picture like a pattern language is its elasticity. It is easy to take its elements apart. This comes about, above all, because the picture is drawn in words. A drawing is too monolithic; even when it contains separable elements, it is much harder to take its elements apart or to discuss them separately. But with a picture made of words, you can discuss

the elements one by one, throw some out when they don't work, improve them, work gradually to a proper understanding and agreement based on debate and refinement.

We had a committee of faculty and students that was representing this process — a committee of about ten people. They used to meet with us discussing the pattern language as we gradually put it together. Finally, when there was a general agreement in the committee about an item, then that item would stay in; and if there were points that were debatable or arguable, there'd be some pretty ferocious discussions . . . until it got ironed out.

That committee knew that they were ultimately going to go back to the full community to get the pattern language, as a whole, voted upon. So they were doing their best to represent what they felt was in everybody's understanding. It didn't take all that long. It took maybe three or four or five months, not a long time.



Water and trees: the lake we built for teachers, where they could walk and dream, as they had asked of us.



9 / WE CREATED: THEY CREATED

I must make it clear that the pattern language, though it came from the mouths and hearts of community members, *was created by us*. It was hard to create, an artistic and poetic task: but although it was we who wrote it, and put it to-

gether, it was *their* dreams, their hopes, and their aspirations and desires from which it was made. So when they saw it, they recognized it as being theirs. It *was* theirs. And that is what I mean by a collective vision.