



6 / A COLLECTIVE VISION GROWING IN CHIKUSADAI



Family members in Hazama neighborhood meeting with us to discuss the new neighborhood plan

Let us go further, to see what it is like, and what happens, when we take generic centers one by one and discuss them one by one. In Hazama, one neighborhood of the Chikusadai district in Nagoya, I worked with members of a large community of several thousand people, face to face. The coherence and agreement of the community members created by the fundamental process was remarkable. As we discussed the important issues, one by one, there was strong and often detailed agreement about several quite detailed matters. Once again it was possible to cast in *words* the form of generic centers, which were then established as agreements, before they were acted on and put into the plan.

Some of the generic centers which were agreed upon included:

- *Preservation of cherry trees.*

This notation followed very fervent agreement — nearly unanimous — of the importance of cherry trees, and the preservation of these trees, since many cherry trees were planted at the birth of a daughter, and thus remain a memory of that daughter, lifelong. This discussion was in the context of proposals by the city to tear down the buildings in a crude fashion which would certainly have destroyed the cherry trees.

- *Protection of insects: hence planting and preservation of those types of trees and vegetation which would support insects and cicadas*

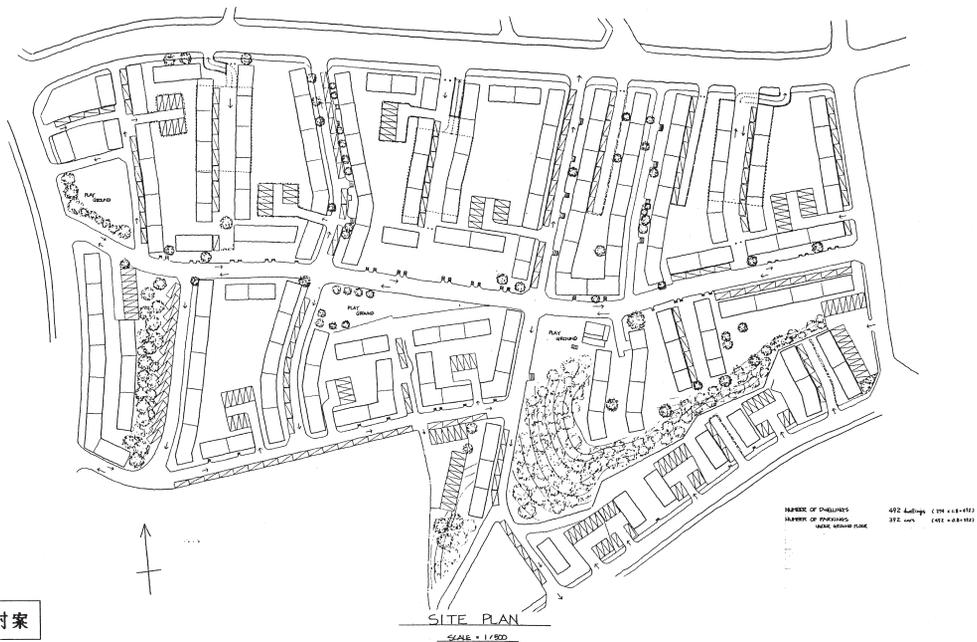
This notation followed impassioned discussion of the importance of natural life in the emotional health of the community members.

- *The placement of school playgrounds on the main pedestrian paths through the middle of the community*

FORMING A COLLECTIVE VISION OF A NEIGHBORHOOD



*Walking about the present neighborhood to see what aspects were important, what to keep, and what to take away (Left)
Listening to another resident expressing his views (Right)*



検討案

The site plan I made for Hazama with the members of the community, after discussion of the pattern language, and of the most essential generic centers. There should be no mistake about the plan's authorship. This plan was drawn by us, not by the community. But because of the process of obtaining the generic centers, which genuinely and truly came from them, it does reflect—I know—the actual feelings which they had.
Chikusadai, Christopher Alexander, Miyoko Tsutsui, Hiro Nakano, 1992

- Provision of narrow streets which would slow down traffic
- The best direction for the narrow streets, with regard to sun, wind and movement

This followed detailed discussion of the relative merit of lanes which ran north-south, and those

which ran east-west, the idea being that narrow streets running north-south actually give more total sunlight into the windows of the houses.

- Location of parking at the ends of the main drag, thus creating more frequent opportunities for casual and informal encounters

I think it is clear from my description how different this material is, in depth of substance, from the kind of thing which could be sketched on a drawing in a single design charette session. This is about the aspects of layout which really make a

difference to the way life can be lived. Here again, by talking through the various elements of their community, *and by taking them one at a time*, it was possible to get agreement one generic center at a time, from the use of the fundamental process.



7 / THE VISIONARY PROCESS

To go towards true belonging, we must also consider the deeper process by which people may draw, from their own experience, the aspects of the environment — its necessary centers — that will genuinely contribute to deep feeling in the environment.

If you ask me how to get the deepest stuff from people, the stuff which matters most, I would not have them meet all together, under conditions of imagined communality. I would rather talk quietly, to one person at a time, drawing from each individual his, her, their most important feelings, and their most authentic visions.

If I were asking a person, for instance, to describe the best treatment for the fire-prone wilderness of Claremont Canyon near Berkeley, where hundreds of acres of farmland have turned to brush and forest in the last half century, I would ask that person, first, to imagine the most realistic conditions under which he might be in the canyon — depending on where his house is. Perhaps driving through, or walking, or sitting, or visiting.

Then, once this was concrete and real, between us, I would ask him to close his eyes, “Imagine now, that you are doing this thing” — driving through, say, if that was this person’s choice — “What is it about the canyon that would raise the deepest feeling in you, as you make that drive. Imagine that you have just done it, you have driven through — and for some reason — it has had a profound effect on you, you feel completed, healed, illuminated. What was the canyon like, to make you feel like that?”

“Close your eyes, close your eyes, keep them tightly closed, and imagine that drive through the canyon, and imagine coming out at the far end, with a feeling of peacefulness and illumination. What was it that made you feel like that? What aspect of the vegetation? What was the road like? Were the trees wild? Were they cut back? Was the brushland tamed? Just tell me what you see, with your eyes closed, that would put you in that state?”

Talking like this to people, persistently asking them such things, until they tell you something true, working at it, working at it, until the thing they tell you is authentic. That is the way, one thing at a time, to get the real juice, the real stuff that will make the place alive.

This kind of stuff, *if real*, is almost always universal. Once one reaches that level of depth, what is being said is then rarely idiosyncratic or private. It moves from that realm, enters a new realm of psychology, reality of feeling, becomes something which will raise a deep effect in *all* of us. At least, that is my experience.

We see from this example how much hard work has to be done. I think *this* work has to be done by an architect. Or, if you like, an architect-psychiatrist. A person, anyway, who cares about people, who cares about the real forces flowing in people, the real visions which people have in them, who loves those visions, and who is then willing to write those visions down, step by step, one by one, in the form of a communal language which can be used and shared by everyone in that community.