

*Communitas, Civitas, Humanitas:
The Art of Creating Authentic Sense
of Community and Spirit of Place*

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ABSTRACT

Communitas, Civitas, Humanitas: *The Art of Creating Authentic Sense of Community and Spirit of Place*

By understanding the nature of sacred place and man's interaction with it, and by grasping the needs of community well-being, we can intentionally develop celebrations on a variety of scales that elevate community development potential and help people to experience a greater sense of community pride and togetherness, which fosters better human relations and better relationship between humanity and the planet.

This study examined multiple aspects of community spirit development topics including the benefits of community celebrations and their history, the process of identifying unique community identity and spirit of place, the history and role of city centers in developing sense of place and community spirit, the importance of experience to human development, the qualities and technologies of sacred space; and the relationship of levels of celebration to the experience of the proximate self.

This exploration was inspired by three needs. First, for the purpose of compiling a curriculum of instruction and training for municipalities and organizations that want to achieve applicable and authentic community goals; second, to expand the knowledge of the events industry regarding community space programming for the enhancement of quality of life; and, third, to gain greater understanding of how differences in development stages can predict what types of public celebrations people of different consciousness levels will attend and enjoy.

The study investigated the following discipline range: aspects of the natural world including the elemental world; field of mind (thought field); the nature of human experience and its relation to the senses and memory; sacred geometry and architecture; geomancy; astrology; city center development and management; public space management concepts; various systems related to levels of human consciousness development; and, the transpersonal realm.

INTRODUCTION

Wholeness. Relatedness. Connection. These form the essence of meaning for people of all species and nations, for our communities, and for the Planetary Being. These are the deepest yearnings of all souls. But as humans we struggle to remember that we need meaning, especially in our age of rampant consumer exploitation where everything around us has been re-interpreted as a commodity, including ourselves. What the world needs now, in my humble opinion, is the transformation of our communities from being market-driven instruments of profit at all expense (if you'll pardon the spreadsheet pun) to being the places for the conscious cultivation of inclusive wellbeing that extends literally from the ground up. Ecologist, activist, and editor Satish Kumar expresses it well when he tells us about the three essential components of life, coming down to us from the Hindu spiritual traditions described in the Bhagavad Gita: soil, soul, and society.¹

The work of building meaningful community is both complex and simple. Especially since the time of the Industrial Revolution, we have become more and more disconnected from the natural world around us with the result nowadays of being disconnected even from ourselves. We are out of touch with our most sacred and basic needs at the expense of making ourselves into, to paraphrase Kumar, instruments of commerce. We no longer understand how to bring ourselves back to lives of deep meaning, to wholeness, relatedness, and connection for ourselves and our extended communities. The infrastructure and rituals of community connection once available to us have been largely abandoned. What remains are artifacts that no longer embody their once-transformational gifts. These days, we get Santa Claus to usher in the frenzy of

Black Friday, instead of connecting with the return of light to the Earth, bringing with it the true gifts of transformation, sustenance, and meaning.

This investigation covers a wide range of topics that concern soil, soul, and society including aspects of the natural world such as telluric energies, and the elemental world. It touches on field of mind (thought field); the nature of human experience and its relation to the senses and memory; sacred geometry and architecture; geomancy (the ancient practice of determining location); city center development and management; and, public space management concepts. It explores the societal shift from participant to spectator, taking a look at various systems related to levels of human consciousness development and the transpersonal realm. Though this list may seem to be comprised of disparate topics, they are integrally related and their integration is important to understanding spirit of place. That is why the reader will find examples repeated from time to time as I relate to and connect a variety of topics and concepts.

This work was inspired by three needs. First, it serves the purpose of compiling a rudimentary curriculum of instruction and training for municipalities and organizations that want to achieve authentic community spirit goals; second, it contributes to expanding the knowledge of the events industry regarding space programming for the enhancement of quality of life; and, finally, it offers insight into greater understanding of how differences in human consciousness development can predict what types of celebrations and events people will attend and enjoy. It presents multiple aspects of community spirit topics including the benefits of community celebrations and their history, the process of identifying unique community identity and spirit of place, the history and role of city centers in developing sense of place and community spirit, the importance of experience

to human development, the qualities and technologies of sacred space, and the relationship of types of celebration to the experience of the proximate self.

I have been privileged to work at the highest levels in a variety of disciplines concerned with urban core life, ranging from business and economic development to public space programming, from architecture and the built environment to religious ritual and major festival production, and from community development to brand management and marketing. This unlikely combination (toward which I believe I have been divinely guided occupationally) has instilled both information and inspiration and it has led me to an epiphany, a transcendent experience revealing the nature of *communitas* and the essence of the spirit of place, which will be described in Chapter 3.

This body of work is an expression of information I have gleaned from years of learning, working, and living my own direct experience of placemaking and of conducting the public liturgical equivalent of celebration. These expressions form the evidence that supports my beliefs regarding the sacred nature of place, particularly the interrelationships between place and conscious interaction, which are not exclusively human. These are my translations of wholeness, relatedness, and connection into my own vernacular of *Communitas*, *Civitas*, and *Humanitas*, which combined transform our environments into conscious and sustainable communities. This book holds the assumption that in Divine Mind, there are no judgments of right or wrong. It is mankind who makes cultural, social, and value judgments about good and evil. Shiva the Creator and Shiva the Destroyer are the same in serving ultimate creativity.

Herein I bring together professional experience, a lifetime of study, and my own opinions to offer guidance which communities, municipalities, organizations, and

individuals can use to create opportunities for sustainable community vitality and for the creation of *communitas*, which is so important to true community building and to understanding and developing authentic spirit of place. This work is about the art and science of placemaking, told through multiple lenses of personal experience along with the help of research, in order to take long-view looks at the main ingredients: experience, spirit, place, consciousness, and community celebration.

We will touch on the unfortunate role of modern development, in which faux community and identity have sundered authentic community life. We are so caught up in building the next new and brilliant construction that we lose sight of what truly is authentic. Legendary architect Louis Kahn, mentor and teacher of my own beloved master architect mentor (Peter H. Dominick, Jr., who will be discussed in Chapter 3) may have famously asked his bricks what it was they wanted to become,² but I will bet that Kahn never asked the land on which he used them about its cosmic purpose nor the people and other entities who would be affected about their intrinsic needs. Kahn was famous for finding inspiration from the materials he used, and for encouraging his students to do the same. His buildings around the world are considered examples of perfection. Perhaps his built environments would have been different had the land been asked how it wanted to be used, if the people of that land had been consulted.

By understanding the nature of sacred place and man's interaction with it, and by grasping the needs of community well-being, we intentionally can develop spirit of place on a variety of scales that elevate community development potential and help people to experience a greater sense of community pride and togetherness. Such understanding can foster better human relations and better relationships between humanity and the planet.

Sacred space applies to natural environments, to the built environment, and also to field of mind (thought field). We will explore those aspects of sacred space, their qualities and uses, and some ways in which the resonance of sacred space can be restored.

Originally, my quest for this learning was charted around a desire to discover more about the transcendent nature of public celebration. But, transcendence itself is a tricky subject because of its relativity to context. It may be possible to find a transcendent experience in the most mundane activity, depending upon the consciousness of the person or people experiencing it and its relation to the proximate selves of the experiencers. Through ritual, our conscious minds retreat as our subconscious minds take stage for the interpretation of symbolism and for the revelation of archetypal embodiment. We shift from the calculating left side of our brains to the symbolic and creative right side. Resonance between development levels of the experience and the experiencer are important to the quality of revelation achieved. After all, St. Theresa of Avila found ecstasy among mundane, even harsh life. For us non-saints, we need a bit more preparation, especially since modern times are so out of touch with those times in which there was no separation between us and the cosmos. To illuminate that, we will take a look at various popular systems of identifying levels of consciousness to consider assumptions about how people respond to different kinds of stimulation and their experience of the transpersonal realm.

Having studied to become an internationally-certified celebrant, one who helps people embody their life passages, I know that transformation can be aided by carefully-designed ceremonies that orchestrate the three stages of ritual passage: separation, transition, and incorporation.³ Similarly, I've come to believe that entire communities can

conspire for transformation through carefully-designed public celebration. Ancient civilizations understood this and, in resonance with the cosmic and natural forces around them, they used public ceremony to bring meaningful transformation to themselves and to their environments.

The Earth has turned tens of millions of times since mankind first stood upright and began the practice of group celebration. Whole species and civilizations have come and gone in that period of time. But, common to all people in all times has been the need for celebration together, the need to live together authentically in community relationship. By taking a look at this wide range of topics, we can begin to appreciate how important the practice of well-designed community and celebration can be, how vital their careful cultivation is to the quality of life for both people and places. This exploration includes examples and tools for use by those who intentionally want to create authentic community, using well-programmed space and community celebration as the media for that transformation.

I owe a debt of gratitude to many people who have helped me prepare for and write this book. Thanks go first to my Higher Self who provides insight and guidance and who occasionally offers flashes of Truth to propel me on the right path. Thanks to Bernard O. Williams, Ph.D., who has believed in my search for this material and corrected my path when I've gone astray. Thank you to Patricia Norris, Ph.D. who has gently provided the container in which I could explore freely and who has encouraged and supported this many-year documentation of my adventure. Thanks to Ann Nunley, Ph.D. and Bob Nunley, Ph.D. whose friendship, encouragement, and invaluable assistance have created the opening for which I could do this work at all. It was Bob

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CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF SPIRIT

Spirit

The word spirit comes from the Latin word *spiritus*, which means breath. It is thought of as that non-corporeal quality most associated with one's essence of life and soul and as the energetic quality that constitutes one's animating force. It abides in all living things (and, by the way, everything is alive). It connotes the presence of consciousness and can be associated with the sacred. When one speaks of a spirit, it frequently means a ghost, deity, or demon, some force of cause without material manifestation. Spirit can also mean a unifying feeling of camaraderie, loyalty, and inclusion, as meant in the term "team spirit." Therefore, spirit can apply to things living, things existing without form, to divinity, to the interconnectedness of beings, and to the quality of places.

Where spirit of community is concerned, it is important to understand the concept of *communitas*. It will weave throughout this work as the common denominator. *Communitas* is a word not used often in common conversation; however, it aptly describes the transcendent nature of the community spirit which can be achieved during celebration. A Latin noun, the word *communitas* may not appear in standard English dictionaries, even though many books have been written about it, such as Edith Turner's 2011 anthropological overview, *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*⁴ and Barbara Ehrenreich's *Dancing In the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*.⁵

Communitas refers to one's personal encounter with a feeling of togetherness that is existentially and spontaneously experienced. The feeling can be associated with a sense of "intense community spirit, the feeling of great social equality, solidarity, and

togetherness...characteristic of people experiencing liminality together.”⁶ It involves collective ecstasy, a sense of spontaneous love and solidarity that can arise within a community of equals. Between individuals, M. Scott Peck described it in his landmark book, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values and Spiritual Growth*,⁷ as falling in love, the state of collapsing individual ego boundaries and merging identities with our beloved in ecstatic, even erotic, communion. Neither *communitas* nor falling in love is a conscious choice. At some point, ego boundaries snap back into place, however, we are forever changed because we are left with lasting impressions from our experiences. The point here is the state of oneness. People crave it. Once we’ve had it, we are no longer the same as we were before this experience. We have been transformed. We’re genetically and spiritually encoded to need it for our wellbeing and happiness.

In times before institutionalized religion, people communed with their gods through *communitas*. They reached ecstatic experience in groups through ritual celebration. This bonded the community and helped provide a sense of security, mutual trust, and a group identity.⁸ Though many experiences derived from public celebration may be secular in nature, the experience of *communitas* is associated with the sacred. Transient and mood-changing, this feeling helps the experiencer cross the liminal threshold of common everyday experience and to shift, however briefly, into a transcendent sense of unity. From my own experience of *communitas* comes my belief that any time a community celebration is made, the circle that is scribed into the dirt (even if imaginary) to serve as the perimeter of an event also instantly establishes the

potential for *communitas*. I refer to this as the “sacred circle,” about which more information will be presented shortly.

Communitas is an experience of group mind. It has the potential to arise whenever two or more are gathered. Like a tuning fork, frequencies among living beings can be brought into alignment (and everything is alive). It is my intention to show that depending on one’s proximate level of consciousness development, she has the potential to experience unity (even ecstatic unity) with others of like-mind. The dominance of charismatic people (from Adolph Hitler to Billy Graham to Rush Limbaugh) and the groups who fervently support them have the potential for energetic entrainment of those whose consciousness level is similar. And, it’s not only human-to-human interaction that can affect this kind of bonding resonance. The harmonics of music can bring musicians and audiences into the alignment of oneness (energetic coherence). Singing together can help harmonize otherwise complex groups of individuals. Likewise, standing stones of proper piezoelectric qualities and placed in proper proximity have an energetic alignment affect.

Perhaps the best-known use of the word “spirit” is the term “Holy Spirit.” According to the late John O’Donohue, an Irish Catholic priest and author of books and poetry, *“In all sacramental theology the power and presence of God in the soul and community is the active presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is never here on a private safari of its own, it always brings the Trinity together with it. The Holy Spirit is the face of the Trinity as it touches us. The intimacy of this nearness coheres nicely with breathing as the key divine attribute of the Holy Spirit.”*⁹ It is together that the Father and

the Son manifest the *spiratio*, the Holy Spirit. The result of this union is a trifecta of Spirit.

Author Joe Goldblatt points out an eloquent description of the difference between the secular and the sacred in his published discussion with five scientists who lived in the Arizona Biosphere for a year. The Biosphere is an enclosed, man-made bubble environment and when its initial inhabitants were asked how they survived their experience, they replied, “*We survived because of science. We lived because of celebrations. Every month we celebrated birthdays, anniversaries, births of new creatures and our personal and professional triumphs. These celebrations sustained our spirits.*”¹⁰ Therein lies the important essence of *communitas*.

While considering what I would say about the qualities of sacred space, it occurred to me that what I originally thought to have been discreet topics has turned out to have one common root. The foundation of this investigation is built upon one unifying premise: *everything is alive, and we are in a constant dance of energy with it all---both seen and unseen*. When I refer to community or to people, I intend to imply *extended* community that includes *all* beings and, as I already stated, everything is alive: rocks, trees, water, goats, fish, clouds, devas---everything! It is by including the entire diversity of life that we can best serve higher transformative needs.

Everything is made up of vibration. To paraphrase acquaintance and physicist Bill Tiller, the parts that we can see are only those energies that have slowed down enough to be visible. When we work with sacred space, therefore, we work both with the seen and the unseen. Keeping in mind Tiller’s research on intention,¹¹ we also know that intention

creates reality, which is convenient since it means that we have the power to change the energetic nature of our environments and to heal those energies which are chaotic.

Part of Earth's mystery comes from her being the only planet in our solar system that supports life as we know it. And she does it abundantly, in millions of forms. Indeed, she is herself a conscious, living being, "*a single physiological system, an entity that is alive at least to the extent that, like other living organisms, its chemistry and temperature are self-regulating at a state favourable for life.*"¹² Both science and esotericism agree that the Earth is a living being. First used by the Greeks more than 2,000 years ago, the name Gaia describes this living entity. Other well-known terms are Mother Earth, the Biosphere, and Planetary Being. Thermodynamics, atmospherics, and chemistry alone confirm her living status as scientist J.E. Lovelock describes in his epochal book, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*.¹³ And quintessential esoteric practitioner, Alice A. Bailey, references the life force of Earth in the way she talks about the spirit, soul, Logos, and Life of the planet: "*The spirit of the Earth is to the planetary Logos of the Earth, for instance, what the personality (or form nature) is to the soul of man.*"¹⁴

Because our planet supports life and we human beings are here observing that fact, we've created lots of genesis stories and theories about why Earth is so different from all the other planets and why we are so special as human beings. Among these stories: we're special because we're not too close to nor too far away from the sun to prevent life; because God made us, and humans are the only superior life forms in the entire universe; because of a cosmic collision that involved the gods fighting in the sky; because we "condensed" into visible form from having been an invisibly fine density; or,

because a spider, by singing her way through primordial ooze, created Earth. There are many other Creation stories, but these capture my own interest and imagination.

No matter what creation story one believes, throughout the world mankind has all but disconnected from our once deeply-dependent relationship with nature. In spite of my own intimate friendship with many animals and trees, I had not known until recently that our original and most important disconnections began centuries ago as we dismantled our intimate spiritual and cosmological connections with nature during the rise of monotheism. Ironically, we apparently did this in the name of God, first at the hands of manipulative spiritual authorities, and then because we had grown to actually believe that nature was not sacred, living lives in which nature became profanely foreign to our modern ways of living. Thus, what once had been sacred, we are today responsible for having corrupted. Out of fear and disrespect, we turned away from the one relationship that truly could nurture us divinely, and on whose existence we depend: Mother Earth.

Though we are ignoring her best interests and perhaps irreversibly polluting her body and etheric fields, our link to her is one that ultimately cannot be destroyed. William James admonished that “*She is self-sufficing in a million respects in which we are not so. We depend on her for almost everything, she on us for but a small portion of her history. She swings us in her orbit from winter to summer and revolves us from day into night and from night into day.*”¹⁵ He encouraged us to ponder a divine vision of Earth through the eyes of philosopher Gustav Theodor Fechner:

On a certain spring morning I went out to walk. The fields were green, the birds sang, the dew glistened, the smoke was rising, here and there a man appeared; a light as of transfiguration lay on all things. It was only a little bit of the earth; it was only one moment in her existence; and yet as my look embraced her more and more it seemed to me not only so beautiful an idea, but so true and clear a fact, that she is an angel, an angel so rich and fresh and flower-like, and yet going

her round in the skies so firmly and so at one with herself, turning her whole living face to Heaven, and carrying me along with her into that Heaven, that I asked myself how the opinions of men could ever have so spun themselves away from life so far as to deem the earth only a dry clod, and to seek for angels above it or about it in the emptiness of the sky,---only to find them nowhere.¹⁶

Sacred places have many cultural interpretations, among which is the idea that they are the spots where Heaven and Earth are knit together,¹⁷ where the energies of the Earth merge and draw down Heaven. Such places are known as tirthas in India. They are places where the veil becomes thin between earthly and otherworldly dimensions, where gods and spirits descend to earth, where mortals can ascend, and where sacred energies inside the earth emerge. In India, stone linga, representing the potency of Lord Shiva, are placed to mark the holy spots where heaven meets earth.

Hindus call the sacred places to which they travel tirthas, “fords” or “crossing places.” ...as a place of pilgrimage, however, the tirtha is a spiritual ford, where earth and heaven meet, or where one “crosses over” the river of samsara---this round of repeated birth and death---to reach the “far shore” of liberation. The tirtha, like a river ford, is a place where that “crossing” might be easily and safely made.

A tirtha is an earthly place, charged with power and purity. We call it a “sacred” place, but it is important for us to realize that there is not a Hindu term which means quite what we mean by “sacred.” The term “pure” is used, as is “good” and “auspicious.” As for sacred, in the sense of bearing the essence of the Divine, we might say that in the Hindu view the whole earth is sacred, for it is all the embodiment of the Divine.

The tirthas are primarily associated with the great acts and appearances of the gods and the heroes of Indian myth and legend. As a threshold between heaven and earth, the tirtha is not only a place for the “upward” crossings of people’s prayers and rites, it is also a place for the “downward” crossings of the gods.¹⁸

A Christianized variation of marking places of sacred power includes the archetypal symbology of St. Michael (or interchangeably, St. George) slaying a dragon (energy), his spear piercing the beast and penetrating the ground, thus holding heaven to

earth on that spot.¹⁹ In reality, this legend is an updated version related to the pagan control of earth energies, or dragon lines. In practice, standing stones or trees placed by ancient builders took the place of the sword to permanently anchor the site as well as to collect and disperse earth's life force energies.

The spirit of the Earth is apparent in her energies that abound throughout the globe, though few people are in tune with them. There are not many practitioners today who would know how or where to anchor an energy spear. However, locating the most powerful energy sites is a technology still available to us if one knows how to interpret ancient information.

Though tirthas and other vortices of Earth energies are often tangibly felt by people sensitive enough to perceive them, there is little empirical evidence, there is plentiful impirical knowledge of Earth energies. Some of the scientific evidence that does exist comes from Bethe Hagens and William Becker, known as the Becker-Hagens Grid, or in familiar terms referred to as the Planetary

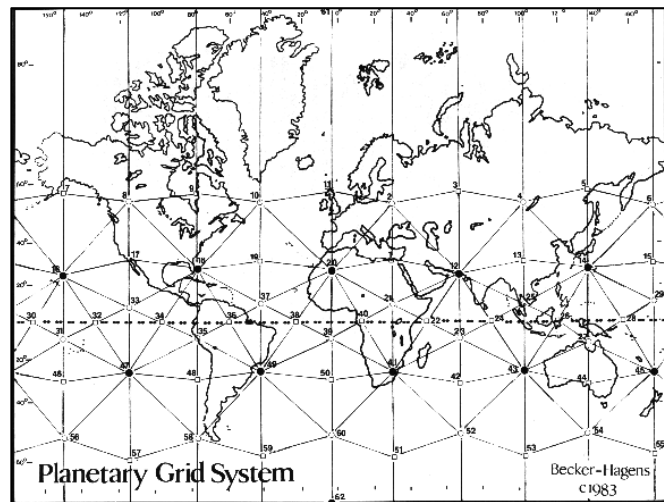


Figure 1 Hagen-Becker Planetary Grid System (www.cristalinks.com)

Grid System,²⁰ inspired by the work of Christopher Bird. To my knowledge, this work is not peer-reviewed. New findings in new fields seldom have that advantage.

Temple and earth energy expert, Freddy Silva, has found that by decoding sacred numbers from the Rig Veda and following the ways in which Vishnu could bring order to

the world, he can locate a “geometric-geodetic blueprint of power points”²¹ that form a global pattern. He calls this phenomenon of Earth’s energetic spirit the triple steps of Vishnu, which site sacred landscape temples along the surface of the earth, such as Mount Kailas (the terrestrial embodiment of Mount Meru) and others located on every continent. The triple step refers to the geometry of the geography that involves three sacred energetic locations in geometric proximity to each other. It is as if Vishnu walked the earth and with each footfall a sacred energy site appeared as three locations in proximity to each other, setting up a triangle two-dimensionally on the earth’s surface. Each footstep of Vishnu’s was holy as he trod the globe. Looking at the above illustration of the Hagens-Becker Grid, one almost can see the triple steps of Vishnu.

Triangles have been sacred shapes throughout history and cultures. A quick example would be to refer to the Holy Trinity. In the modern Seven Rays esoteric tradition, triangles form the foundation of the sacred work of humanity in order to bring the Plan of God (fostering right human relationships of goodwill, raising the level of consciousness development, and inspiring thought and constructive action on behalf of humanity) to Earth. Two points of a triangle represent unresolved duality and the third point represents the potential for unification and resolution. By consciously intending energetic connection through co-meditation, men and women around the world use daily meditation in groups of three to create a grid of triangles that surrounds Earth. Their technique is described here:

A triangle is a group of three people who link each day in thought for a few minutes of creative meditation. They need not necessarily live in the same locality, and many international triangles exist.

Each day members sit quietly for a few minutes and link mentally with other members of their triangle, or triangles. They invoke the energies of light and goodwill, visualising these energies as circulating through the three focal points of each triangle, and pouring out through the network of triangles surrounding the planet. At the same time they repeat the Great Invocation, thus helping to form a channel for the downpouring of light and love into the consciousness of humanity.²²

This sacred work in Triangles is intended to help in the transformation of the living Planetary Being. Maybe not so coincidentally, this spiritual triangle work implies a reiteration of the energetic spirit found in the triple steps of Vishnu.

CHAPTER 2: DISCOVERING THE NATURE OF PLACE

Place

Understanding spirit of place begins with recognizing the commodity of place. Its use and underlying energetics determine the nature of its spirit and involve all manner of energetic encoding, including natural elemental and electromagnetic presence as well as the effects of thought fields by humans and other sentient beings. Working with the mysteries themselves began with primitive people's intuitive and practical knowledge of the telluric nature of Earth and the cosmic energies of the universe.

Since the Earth is a living being, its electromagnetic fields (and sometimes the man-made disruptions of those) are everywhere present, though seldom understood. Thought forms (the energetic imprint of intentional thought) alone can carry the residual frequencies of heaviness or lightness formed by the intention behind their formation. Although I believe every place can be sacred, the intensity of such imprinting can linger and profane a place, requiring that it be healed intentionally in order to bring it back to its original sacred state through energetic correction. For instance, fields of war or places of traumatic violence can carry heavy and even chaotic residual energetic imprints until they are "cleared."

The Earth is alive with energetic signals that come from a multitude of sources. Some are naturally occurring and some are manmade. Although it may not be possible to assess a venue for its complete energetic identity, the mindfulness of knowing that

ambient energies could affect a location may help us find ways to provide some assessment and even to neutralize some effects.

Determining the energetic life of a space can be important to its effective use. In some cases, simple instruments such as Gauss meters can help identify electromagnetic frequencies. For more subtle energies, dowsing or kinesiology can be used to decode subtle earth energies that are equivalent to the acupuncture points of our own bodies. Dowsing is an energetic kinesiology technique sometimes referred to as radiesthesia (a time-honored and effective combination of radiation and perception) that uses the same principles as muscle testing. Known to have been used by ancient Egyptians and Chinese more than 7,000 year ago, it works on the idea that the human energy field contains information that can be accessed for discernment. Probably the best-known uses for dowsing are to locate water, ore, or areas of geopathic stress. Uses also include identifying disease, determining freshness of fruits and vegetables, and to assist decision making. Dowsers commonly use tools that include copper rods, tree branches, and pendulums.²³

Multiple energies form natural webs around and above the Earth and where their interacting energies cross can affect their vicinity. Manmade frequencies come from cell phones, microwave towers, radar, radio stations and many other sources. I doubt very much if there are any pure spots left on Earth that are not affected by microwave, radio wave, or other manmade frequencies. In addition to man-made energies, the Earth also is crisscrossed with multiple earth ray energy grids that emanate from the planet and affect our well-being.

Modern science has identified some of the species of terrestrial energy types. Among them is the Curry Grid, a global network of electrically charged lines of natural origin that diagonally cross the Earth's surface running northeast to southwest and southeast to northwest to the poles, each line being about three meters apart. The points at which these lines intersect present potential health risks because of the concentration of either double positive or double negative electrical charges in those places, which may be harmful to organic cellular development in similar ways that leukemia is found more often in those living under power lines.²⁴ The Hartmann Net is also electrical in nature and potential risks may occur at the intersection of its north-south and east-west line orientation. It's thought that both Curry and Hartmann lines may be earthing grids for cosmic rays,²⁵ receiving energy infusions from the heavens that perpetuate their electrical currents. As we will discover later, the Hartmann Net may also be the source of ancient references to the Seven Gates (of Heaven).

Schumann Waves are naturally occurring electromagnetic currents that oscillate between Earth's surface and sub-atmospheric strata. Because Schumann Waves, or the Schumann Resonance, are similar in frequency to brain waves, it's thought that they *"help regulate the body's internal clock, thus affecting sleep patterns, hormonal secretions, the menstrual cycle in women and so on."*²⁶ Though unseen, these energies have effects on us that are real and recognizable. For instance, people are so dependent upon living amidst the Schumann Resonance that when NASA sends astronauts into space, they provide a built-in simulator to produce the 7.8 hertz²⁷ of energy lost when they leave Earth's surface, to help them maintain equilibrium and prevent the disorientation of space travel.²⁸

Other known Earth energies include ley lines and their attendant downspouts and earthing points which link them to the energies of subterranean waterways.²⁹ According to geomantic and Feng Shui energy practitioners, the flow of *chi* (life force energy) in our living and working spaces also influences our luck, health, relationships, and fortunes. Through geomancy (outdoor Feng Shui) we know that life force energy also affects the luck, health, relationships, and fortunes of our communities. We're affected by energies that arise from underground, by those swirling around on Earth's surface, and also those coming from above, such as ultraviolet light that breaks through the protective barrier of Earth's atmosphere. Ambient straight line, circular, and spiral energy distortions both at ground level and on upper floors of buildings are called black lines, energy clouds, and energy drains, among others, and contribute to sick-building syndrome.³⁰

Geomancy is the ancient holistic art and science of interpreting and manipulating energies in the landscape to manifest beneficial interaction between humans and nature.

*"All religions and cultures have had their own versions of geomancy, the tactics which link humanity to the cosmos through the arrangement of our earthly environments."*³¹

Though better known in its Asian form which began nearly 3,000 years ago and its resurgence in the 12th Century European Renaissance, formal geomancy originated in the Islamic culture³² as a divination tool not unlike that of *I Ching* practice. As the *I Ching* states, *"Heaven and earth determine the places. Through the thoughts of men and the thoughts of spirits, the people are enabled to participate in the possibilities."*³³ Through geomancy, people can participate in the possibilities of their locations. Geomancers have been replaced in the Western world by architects, whose training unfortunately does not often include developing the skills to interpret and manage environmental energies.³⁴

In addition to being able to read the landscape, both geomancy and Feng Shui practitioners rely on instruments to help them make critical and scientific measurements. The oldest instrument known is the sundial. Though its use was far too limited, it made its own contribution to the idea of energy work. *“It was only a shadow that moved, and not a part of the instrument itself. Sunshine and shade are the original meanings of Yin and Yang.”*³⁵ The compass is the most basic instrument of Asian geomancers, and had its origin in geomantic work before it ever was used in navigation. Dowsing rods replace the compass in the Western world, and rely on the energetic intelligence of the human body for results. The luopan, developed in China centuries ago to aid in geomancy and Feng Shui, is still used today. A metal disk with a compass in the center, the luopan includes concentric circles of instruments that calculate astrological, astronomical and symbolic interpretations, allowing geomantic interpretation of the most auspicious energy alignments.

There’s evidence that in the Western hemisphere, the Olmec culture also had its own form of geomancy that utilized electromagnetic alignment provided by a compass. They used their readings to design public spaces.

Like many other ancient cultures, the Olmec priesthood designed buildings for ritual use where orientation played an important role. The orientation of the whole San Lorenzo plateau, which was artificially modified to make it animal-shaped, is to azimuthal north-south. One of the ceremonial caches contained the clue: a highly polished bar of haematite with a trapezoid cross-section was discovered which, when examined...was found to be capable of functioning as a lodestone floater compass, as it was magnetized in that way.³⁶

Once landscape energies have been interpreted and a location chosen for a defined purpose such as burial, building a house, church, a celebration, or offices, then the place can be *“fixed.”*³⁷ Such dedication can be carried out in many ways, but most of them have

similar elements. Before modern times, Christian churches are known to have been oriented according to the apparent position of sunrise on the day of the year devoted to the patron saint chosen for the church's dedication.³⁸ Keeping in mind that the attributes of many saints imitated pagan practices and many churches were sited on previous sacred site locations, one can see that cosmic influences were inherited and continued in early Christian traditions. Christian practices are not unlike that of the ancient Egyptian culture, because they intend to align the environment on Earth by dedicating it to a specific celestial object in the heavens, such as a constellation. "*As above, so below.*"³⁹ The Egyptian foundation ceremony included a similar cosmic correlation, acknowledging the sacredness of working with energies to "fix" a place. The Egyptian foundation ceremony is described as follows:

In ancient Egypt the method of obtaining the desired orientation of the axis of a temple is recorded as having been determined by direct observation and measurement. This was carried out during the foundation ceremony known as Pedjeshes (Stretching the Cord). The ceremony is recorded in the major monumental inscriptions in the temples of Adydos, Denderah, Edfu, and Heliopolis. The reigning king and a priestess representing Seshat, the goddess of writing, arrived on the site, each carrying a golden mallet and a cord with a peg at the ends. After some preliminary magical ritual, the priestess drove home her peg on the omphalos, while the king aligned the cord to the celestial object under observation, and fixed the peg into the ground. This established the orientation of the future temple, relating it directly to the position of the celestial object at the time of its foundation.⁴⁰

The SCEMB system was developed by late 19th Century Englishman and ley hunter, John G. Williams, to prove the electromagnetic alignments of ancient European energetic earthworks. SCEMB is an acronym "*made up of the initials of classes of objects [Williams] counts as legitimate in determining alignments: standing stones, cairns and tumuli, earthworks of pre-Roman date, moats and mounds of pre-Roman date, and burial*

barrows. The system differs from classical leys by excluding everything of Roman and post-Roman date.”⁴¹ As electromagnetic current lines themselves, Williams believed that he could show proof of ley line alignments among ancient energy earthworks through this method.

The energetic act of consecrating a new space, or blessing it, is an ancient practice which appears today in interesting new ways. Among them is the “*topping out*” practice in building construction, where a pine tree is placed on the top of a building when its superstructure has been completed.⁴²

I personally observed an interesting consecration ceremony in about 1995 at Hood Canal Naval Base in Bangor, Washington, when the U.S. Navy commissioned the refurbished ship, the U.S.S. Rainier. The Navy called the affair a “*coming alive*” ceremony. When we first arrived, the ship was empty and no lights were on, no flags flew. The ceremony included a version of “*beating the bounds*” (a form of perimeter identification to be discussed later in this chapter) when the ship’s first crew, at the cue of the commander’s whistle, trotted on board and ringed every bulkhead railing. Bells were rung, bands played, lights were turned on and flags unfurled as the audience witnessed the ceremony and were treated to a tour afterward. The emcee for the ceremony explained that this process “*breathed life into the ship, bringing her alive.*” In this manner, ship is imbued with spirit.

Before inhabiting a new home, I recommend that one perform a similar consecration ritual to clear old energy and encode new beneficial energies,⁴³ and create a ceremony to bring the home alive, signaling one’s new relationship of intimacy and intention for bonding with abode.

I am familiar with a special location with strong energetic qualities, near Council Grove, Kansas in Chase County. It is in the heart of the Tall Grass Prairie. It once was home to Native American tribes who gathered there, hence its name. It also is the location of the annual meeting of the Council Grove Conference on Consciousness Studies, founded by Elmer and Alyce Green. They directed the voluntary controls research for the Menninger Foundation and chose the Council Grove venue because of its remote and private location, its ability to host all the functions needed for a closed conference, and because it was situated on sacred land. In everyday life, the site is in the Flint Hills property of White Memorial Camp, which is a working church camp. However, colleague David Yarrow has studied it for several years and believes that energetically it is quite important due to the qualities of its ley lines and other energy lines. Originally from Syracuse, New York, David Yarrow is an Earth advocate interested in agriculture and food systems.⁴⁴ While interviewing a Wisconsin electrical engineer for an article that he was writing he was electrocuted, fracturing ribs and his spine. After regaining consciousness, he was hospitalized for eight months and was in recovery for the next several years. Since then, David has travelled many states promoting his messages of sustainability. He already was steeped in knowledge of the land. His trip back to the living left him with heightened sensitivity to Earth energies. He is a gifted dowser and has charted earth energies in many locations, including the Council Grove and northeast Kansas vicinity.

Yarrow has dowsed and documented the entire region and provides unique insight into its vital energetic properties. Here is part of a conversation from a personal email

exchange with Yarrow describing those energies and how they may be linked energetically to a larger area of Northeast Kansas:

Just looking at the aerial photos [of White Memorial Camp] with my site map, animations can't begin to reveal how extra-ordinary the energy fields and ley lines [and vortex fields] are on that site. These ley line alignments with distant hills sharply heighten my belief that this site is a very ancient earthwork temple that that is laid out at landscape scale, encompassing a few miles. That entire region going north to Council Grove is a very empty, unsettled, vast landscape, with no roads or structures. Perhaps some would refer to these wide open, unsettled grasslands as "desolate," but I found them attractive and entrancing. I view them as like the Moors of central England. I thought this was an appropriate place to hide a great mystery such as a dragon. So, at this early point in my explorations and discoveries, my intuition suggest[s] that there is indeed a dragon in the Flint Hills -- a white dragon in the Heartland. Those white-ringed hills south of Emporia are likely the head of this etheric energy creature -- the crown chakra. This energetic being coils up to the north. Council Grove seems to be the midpoint in the anatomy of this etheric energy being -- the heart chakra in the Heartland. And the tail in the north near Manhattan turns to the east along the Kansas River. Topeka and Lawrence, both sited at "S" bends of the Kansas River, and the base chakras -- the red and blue spin centers in this landscape energy field.

At any rate, I have stumbled [upon] some information about Lawrence which suggests there are two "dragon paths" that traverse through Lawrence. One runs east to west. A dragon path is an energy path that is of a higher vibration than even ley lines -- a higher order in the total energy envelope or matrix that encloses the whole planet. Or, I might only have an over-active imagination.⁴⁵

Yarrow's discovery lends credence to indigenous claims that among the hills of central and northeast Kansas lie vortex areas where the earth breathes. Spiritus sancti.

Places for Celebration

Considering all of this information about spirit and the energetics of place, the revelry of community, and the degree to which citizens can experience communitas during celebration, the combination of these aspects can contribute to the energetic well-being of

an entire locality. The intention to find joy, relate to neighbors, sing, dance, and laugh are all filled with life energy that surely can affect the nature of space conditioning favorably. Scribing the “sacred circle” periphery in which to convene celebration sets a powerful intention of fun and merriment---of joining together for a transformational group mind experience.

Profaned ground should not be used to site a celebration without first carrying out the actions necessary to restore its sanctity, such as “clearing.” The chaotic nature of existing energies surely would fight against those of celebration, prohibiting coherent experience. Outdoor spaces are best for public celebration because the event’s energies can mingle with those of the natural environment, even in the city, for exponentially powerful results. With the earth beneath our feet, the sky over our heads, and mankind connecting both, it seems right and proper that Heaven could momentarily be brought to Earth using people as the medium. Though staging a public celebration shares much in common with constructing a small city (provision of life safety, sanitation, running water and electricity, shelters and other constructions, traffic routing, transportation, etc.), if designed with the spirit of celebration as the priority, these temporary small cities can become ideal venues for *communitas* by providing the convenience, the safety, and the space intentionally designed to do so.

In ancient history, celebrations were held around the campfire or staged in a sacred grove or in an area known to be most sacred to the community. When Christianity arrived, at first citizens could revel inside churches (many churches historically had been located in places that already had been gatherings for ceremony, ritual, and celebration) until it was deemed unseemly to do so, such as when ministers no longer condoned the

loss of authority encountered when people were jostling about in ecstatic joy. At first, community festivals were allowed to be held inside churches and inversion (the practice of all citizens showing equality by the ritual exchanging of their societal roles) continued to be encouraged---until papal egos got in the way. But, as “civilized behavior” held more sway socially and politically, and as control of congregations grew more important along with the need to enforce intercessory rites, festivals were moved out of the church into the church yard; then, out into the town’s streets; and then finally, in most cases, they were banished altogether.⁴⁶ The joyless cloak of Puritanism brought with it a spike in suicide as citizens no longer were allowed to pursue joy and pleasure in acts of celebration, or even in this lifetime.⁴⁷ The systematic stripping away of people’s sense of unity and group ecstasy stole the soul away from true community and the need of human beings to fully share the experience of life together became taboo.

It seems important that we develop mindfulness about space---about the spaces in which we live, the space of our communities, our regional vicinities, and the planet herself so that we can develop the reverence with which to relate authentically in our environments. In our natural environments, built environments, and also our fields of mind (thought fields) we can find ways to conduct our lives so that we energetically live in harmony. We can remember that everything is holy because all is part of one creation. Only mankind has the power to change that holiness, to create energetic incoherence and chaos that somehow hides the divine from us in plain sight. Perhaps we cannot change how history has evolved, but we can intentionally consider the space around us when we choose our thoughts and actions; and wherever we are we can offer healing.

The Center and the Boundaries

Until the rise of Christianity in the Middle Ages, spiritual practices throughout the world's cultures involved three main ingredients: man, terrestrial nature, and cosmic connection with the heavens. In all but Christianity, they still do. But, let us stop here to consider where all sacred knowledge came from to begin with: it came from man himself! Channeled perhaps, but nonetheless, man's entire orientation to the Earth and stars all originated from the point of view of the terrestrial observer, himself. With man, the *axis mundi* was established and the directions determined. Within him, the center of the universe abided.

The most powerful and divine sacred place is the center of the world.

Anthropologically, man himself is the interpreter of the "center," and literally is himself the embodiment of that center. All concept of direction emanates from man himself.

Man's response to orienting himself in space is to "mark" it, thereby marking the center of the Earth, an important act in each world culture. How are these spots identified? In the past, magic, science, and religion were considered to be one and the same thing.

These powers were embodied together in the same person, often a shaman who could interpret and manipulate divine energy and who served as scientist, priest, and magician.

Throughout all cultures, there have been those who have had the power to divine the sacred, such as the location of the center of the world and other auspicious places. Today, it can be done by using the "divining rod" of dowsing, by the use of other kinesiology methods and by keen observation and understanding of the landscape, such as that employed by the practice of geomancy.

For instance, the Temple of Apollo, famous for being the site of the Oracle of Delphi, is the sacred place where Apollo brought forth his wisdom through the body of the Oracle. It was thought by ancient Greeks to be the center of the world. The Oracle's tripod was inside the temple's holiest of chambers from whence she made her pronouncements, and it was situated directly atop an omphalos, a sacred stone which marks the center (the navel) of the world---the place where Heaven and Earth meet. In towns and villages throughout the world, omphalos stones mark the center, establishing that place of divine power.

In each culture there existed a symbol for marking the sacred center. All center posts represent the same idea, serving archetypally as trees of life and as connections from above and below. The centerpole of a kiva holds fast this same divine connection to the center of the earth and to the place where spirit ascends and descends. All center posts represent the same idea, including Jacobs Ladder,⁴⁸ the iconic symbol of Heaven and Earth transit points where in Jacob's vision he saw angels ascending and descending, (also linked to the concept of tirtha, described in Chapter 1). In addition to omphalos, throughout time trees have been planted to demark these center spots, serving archetypally as trees of life and as connections from above and below (trees reach into the sky and under the earth). The tree symbolizes the World Tree, the tree on which Krishna was crucified (as well as other deities such as



Figure 2 – Oracle's Omphalos Stone; Delphi Museum
(<http://www.turoe.ie>)

Mithra, Dionysus, Osiris, and more than a dozen others)⁴⁹ and then later the “tree” symbology became the simpler wooden cross on which Jesus was crucified.

Sometimes, the center of the city was marked by a sacred spring around which the city had been founded and which informed the organizing of the city layout itself. For the purposes of government, judgment of the law, and meetings of the people, the city center sometimes was determined by measuring out the literal center of the landmass involved. That center served the social order and was designed to reflect eternal laws. An array of stones was set up in the open at the center. By marking the center, the place could have dimensional relationship to the order of the universe. Not only does the center mark provide a link between earth and heaven, but also (in the ancient traditions of old English, Celtic, Nordic, and Germanic societies) that geographic center marked the stone circle location of the “Thing” or the ritual center where public convening took place in the open for all manner of public process, including celebration led by kings, chiefs, priests, and judges who convened and presided over these gatherings.⁵⁰ The king’s scepter symbolized the world pole (world tree) which identified the center of his kingdom. It was also in these public gatherings that court was held in the open and community justice was meted out.

As nomadic and agrarian cultures gave rise to settlements and urban environments, the quaternary concept arose. It embodied the ideal city of the New Jerusalem whose organization opened out from a center in all four directions, or quarters.⁵¹ The ancient Egyptian hieroglyph for “city” is the circle quartered, like a four-pieced pie, perhaps a precursor to ancient European customs. Even today there is evidence of that ancient ideal city concept in modern parlance, such as Paris’ Latin

“Quarter” or the term “headquarters,” both derived from the original quaternary concept of the ideal city.⁵²

New ideas about the lost civilization called Atlantis now postulate that it was designed in a quaternary layout with limited entry point access routes, as was Plato’s ideal city, Magnesia.⁵³ An excellent visual example of the quaternary plan still can be seen in aerial views of Avebury, England, which predates Stonehenge by nearly 500 years and which is still being lived in today.



Figure 3 - Avebury Quaternary Layout
(www.sacred-destinations.com)

Protecting the space within the bounds of a village, a church parish, or

even a simple homestead required not only the fortification of its boundary edges, but also the creation of entrances where both people and welcomed energies could pass.

*“Creating gateways along a boundary is essential for the exchange between the worlds within and without. Portals provide for the proper entry of strangers, initiating them into the customs of the place.”*⁵⁴ To avoid the passage of unwanted energies, blocking stones were erected to buffer them. By setting stones at right angles to the axis of a gateway, unwanted energies could be prevented from entering, and beneficial energies likewise could be contained. In Asia, blocking stones still are used, as well as pillars, as are water-oriented entries over which a hump-backed bridge span prevents bad straight-line energy from entering.⁵⁵

By defining a center and literally creating passageways to that center, ambient telluric energies also can find passage. The absence of a well-defined center in many of

today's modern cities, and the subsequent sprawl of suburbs, "*leaves us cut off from the rejuvenating power of nature.*"⁵⁶ It has occurred to me that even the metal balusters placed in front of today's Target stores have similar purpose, but they are blocking unwanted vehicles from entering instead of unwanted energies, that technology having been long-lost.

In European pagan times, the act of fortifying and enlivening the *sacred circle* boundaries of the city (not necessarily round) was done first by digging furrows along boundary perimeters (similar to Avebury), leaving unplowed spots in the four directions as entryways. Ritually, plowing of the boundaries was performed on a seasonal basis by people literally "*walking the bounds,*" sometimes armed with willow wands or hazel switches with which they literally "*beat the bounds.*"⁵⁷ Boundaries not only served energetic needs of the community, but also its needs to protect property rights. To this day in England and Wales, walking the bounds is continued as a tradition of energetic enlivenment. Before maps and the science of land surveying, "*knowledge of the limits of each parish needed to be handed down so that such matters as liability to contribute to the repair of the church, and the right to be buried within the churchyard were not disputed.*"

The relevant jurisdiction was that of the ecclesiastical courts. The priest of the parish with the churchwardens and the parochial officials headed a crowd of boys who, armed with green boughs, usually birch or willow, beat the parish boundary markers with them. Sometimes the boys were themselves whipped or even violently bumped on the boundary-stones to make them remember. The object of taking boys along is supposed to ensure that witnesses to the boundaries should survive as long as possible. Priests would pray for its protection in the forthcoming year and often Psalms 103 and 104 were recited, and the priest would say such sentences as "Cursed is he who transgresseth the bounds or doles of his neighbor."⁵⁸

When pagan practices were banished in Post Reformation times, this perambulation practice was revived as a Christian festival that included the Rogationtide Ceremony of walking the bounds, and the maypole ritual which “*represented the annual whirling of the heavens around the fixed earth,*”⁵⁹ both energy-related ceremonies have survived into the 21st Century. Lest we think that the Earth is not fixed as the center around which the heavens whirl, we first should consider the viewpoint of man, around whom all practical life on Earth surely does revolve. Wherever he is, surely that place is the center of his own existence, his own spine being the pole by which it is marked.

The design principles of sacred geometry and unseen energies were declared to be witchcraft in the Puritan era and could not continue mainstream. So, shrouded in secrecy and cryptic symbolism, their knowledge went underground with the Masonic and Rosicrucian orders, except in Asia where the ancient art and science of working with the energies of place, geomancy and Feng Shui are still practiced today.⁶⁰ In my opinion, this left the practice of architecture as an incomplete art of environmental design in a progressively profane world.

Holy places are not only significant terrestrially, but also they often bear direct astronomical relationship to the cosmos, so as to invoke the subtle powers of the pantheons in the sky, connecting and merging the powers of sunlight, moonlight, starlight and cosmic rays with nature’s powers on Earth. Once upon a time, part of making the Earth sacred involved knowing the night sky. Today, in modern cities, we cannot even see the stars. Thousands of years of observation helped cultivate a refined understanding of time, the periods of earth and sun movements, seasons, days, even hours...and now we have almost no remaining connection to it.

Though we will not explore the details of constructed sites such as the astronomical observatory of Stonehenge or the Atlantean Avebury Circle, it's worth noting that even in pre-historic times when people were thought to be primitive and dull, their understanding of the night sky was quite sophisticated. Ancient priests' understanding of Earth's orbit in space, the rising and setting of the sun and moon, eclipses---and even astronomical calendars---made them indispensably important to the interpretation of Earth energies, and thus to the survival of the community. The occult practice of gematria assured the emulation of divine cosmic proportion in living communities thousands of years before telescopes or science as we know it existed, assuring proportionality on earth with the celestial beings seen above. Their ancient wisdom about the distances from Earth to the Moon and the Sun, along with their relative circumferences and diameters, was astounding considering it predated instrumentation.

Gematria is an ancient occult practice that uses the assignment of numerical values to divine cosmic proportion and right use. Believed to originate in Assyrian and Babylonian cultures, gematria is used prominently in Kabbalistic practice and in many other numerology techniques. Probably the best-known numerical reference is 666, perverted to be interpreted as the evil sign of the Devil. In fact, its meaning refers to the Chaldean canon of measures and stands for the solar force of the universe, also describing the divine proportion of a rectangle's length (its solar measurement) to that of its width (its earth measurement, or 666 units long and 296 units wide).⁶¹ Those numbers, rich in cosmic meaning, informed the sacred outworkings of settlement and the built environment on Earth, bringing Heaven to Earth for the perfection of those living here.

Nature Temple

There was a time when mankind still was in tune with Earth's energies and intuitively knew how to employ them in concert with divine energies. These days, surrounded by urbanization, we're out of touch with the cycles and energies of nature, out of touch with our cosmic connection, even though natural temples exist all around us. One definition of a nature or landscape temple (naturally-existing sacred space), contributed by earth energy practitioner Marko Pogacnik, is that of "*an invisible energetic fabric penetrating a landscape, thus expressing its divine being.*"⁶² He goes on to describe the energetic qualities in a landscape temple:

We can assume that energy lines and centres in a landscape would have an analogous function [with the human chakra system]. They impart impulses of cosmic life power and spiritual-soul development to the physical landscape and its manifold life structure. These impulses find their source in landscape temples which are an expression of the spiritual-soul configuration in a certain landscape area.⁶³

Established by Earth's original nomadic and agricultural cultures, special places in nature where springs bubbled to the surface were "*...held in special reverence by early peoples as a place where the earth had blessed her children with one of her life-giving properties.*"⁶⁴ These early peoples honored the spirit of Earth revealed not only in springs and wells, but also in unworked stones, trees, hills, and the astronomical phenomena of the heavens.

Science, magic and religion were an integrated discipline in ancient times, simply forming divergent aspects of the same corpus of applied knowledge. Specialists in astronomical observation were thus also members of the priesthood, guardians of all knowledge concerning the apparent paths of the major luminaries and their use in compiling calendars, astrological prediction and divination.⁶⁵

Many nature temples have been enhanced by man, but there are also nearly pristine places of unenhanced natural power that physically exist all over the Earth, where even today people can sense the numinous through contact with the powerful energies of nature. These may be spots where heaven touches Earth; more likely they are spots where the divine energy of Earth herself is potent with the holy powers of the natural environment. A handful of planetary power spots worth naming here include the Ganges River, Mount Kailas, Ayres Rock, the Grand Canyon, Mount Fuji, the Himalaya Mountains, the Mississippi River, Niagara Falls, and Angel Falls among hundreds of other natural spots that all exhibit dramatic natural geologic qualities. These places have so much power that simply visualizing them feels uplifting and inspiring.

The very rocks, waters, and winds of Earth contain vital energy that is magnified wherever extreme physical geologic features appear, such as cliffs, mountain ranges, and waterfalls. These vital energies come from the energetic imprint, the life force and spirit of the surrounding landscape itself. All living things (and remember, everything is alive) embody an etheric energetic force or spirit that is responsible for their development and growth. This etheric force sometimes is referred to as devic energy or as an entity's deva. In some cases, these gossamer energies can be seen. When they are seen, one realizes that their images already populate our popular archives of archetypal images, such as fairies, fauns, gnomes, trolls, etc., also referred to as elementals. *"As a rule, the largest and most magnificent natural forms contain the most powerful devic energy,"*⁶⁶ according to Nathaniel Altman in *The Deva Handbook*. Not only could one be overwhelmed by the scale of the landscape at, say, the Grand Canyon, but one also could be transfixed by the pulsing of powerful Earth energies at play and, if given time to resonate in this field,

could experience transcendent states of consciousness, traveling psychically between Heaven and Earth.

Since before the days of Atlantis, mankind has been aware of Earth's natural subtle energies, tuning-in to and manipulating earth's electromagnetic fields and certain other subtle life energetic forces. The coursing of Earth's electromagnetic pulse is physically evident in many places. Known as straight tracks, corpse roads, hollow roads, spirit paths, songlines, ley lines and other names, they demark powerful Earth energy. Literally scribed into the earth in some places, these lines are completely straight even to the point of going up and over treacherous mountain ranges where it would not be hospitable for people routinely to travel.⁶⁷

These straight tracks invariably involve intersection with, or more accurately connection of places of temenos which began as sacred places in nature. Some call these straight tracks "ley lines," but there is some disagreement over whether leys are manmade or natural. They certainly are dowsable, according to the majority of sources. According to dowser Jane Thurnell-Read in *Geopathic Stress*: "*Ley lines are generally recognized as man-made phenomena, occurring where sacred stones, which have been charged energetically in some way, are laid in a straight line. A ley line appears 'naturally' and spontaneously if at least five such stones are placed in a line, with the two furthest stones no more than 25 miles apart.*"⁶⁸ Evidently, programmed standing stones served as an amplifying mechanism for existing earth energies in ancient times. Some believe, however, that ley lines were creating new energy lines not there before.

In Britain, many of the old straight tracks have been paved over for modern use. Once thought to be evidence of invading Romans' advanced engineering skills, most of

the Roman roads in Britain now have been proved to be the repaving of already existing straight-line roads.⁶⁹ Even the holy places connected by the straight tracks have been recycled, morphing from hollow hills⁷⁰ and stone circles to churches. Revered for their holy power, such places of natural energy needed to be subsumed as new cultural doctrine emerged (or took over), in order for new cosmological and religious authorities to control the locals. Layer upon layer of changes build on the most powerful sacred places.

A great example, and one of my favorites, is Glastonbury Tor, thought also to be Avalon and the origin of the legends of King Arthur and Merlin.⁷¹ Originally, the site was considered to be a natural hollow hill otherwise known as a fairy hill and regarded as an entrance to Fairyland.⁷² “*The singular conical peak...was considered a major fairy site: the striking, solitary hill was said to have harboured the fairy king himself, Gwynn ap Nudd.*”⁷³ Joseph of Arimathea had brought a mission of 12 men to establish Christianity in Britain shortly after the Crucifixion of Jesus, building a simple church and living in huts on the Glastonbury site (the successive appearance of 12 rulers throughout history alludes to the original reference of these 12 men and possibly also the original 12 apostles).¹ In our modern world, the importance of connection to nature is so forgotten that even churches no longer are built in sacred places. Today, most churches are located to suit criteria that largely include cost and convenience. The sanctity of modern churches has been diminished by their profane locations and orientations, whereas the potent natural temple site at Glastonbury has attracted succeeding cultures for use as a sacred site for millennia because of its true nature temple powers.

In our Western culture, the beginnings of early Christianity incorporated pagan beliefs and practices by including the concept of elementals, and oftentimes even had practices that recognized them. For instance, early churches were not constructed on a straight path, lest they be destroyed by fairies. Many are the stories of foundations begun that either were relocated overnight by unknown forces, or were sent asunder. The tradition of bridesmaids and groomsmen at weddings was adopted during early Christianity from a pagan practice that was used to trick fairies into not knowing who were the real bride and groom, so that fairies could not kidnap them.

In all parts of the world, it was not only humans who used the old straight paths. Otherworldly beings also traveled along them. These elemental beings are known by many different names and known in every culture. Some Native Americans call them kachinas. Britons are famous for their legends of fairies and leprechauns. The Japanese recognize and fear the Kami. The orishas, kelpies, and menehune of other cultures are all beings of finer material density than our own (so that they are invisible to most of us), but with powers essential to Earth's everyday life.

These beings are the ones who tend to our natural world, whose survival no doubt is threatened as we simultaneously pollute and destroy their natural habitat along with our own. Known as elementals, their races include the devic hierarchies who are responsible for the material formation and growth of the manifest Earth. Their jobs range from the care of rocks and plants to water and wind.⁷⁴ They bring matter into form and oversee the development of the material aspects of Earth. Dryad hierarchies and fauns tend trees and plants. Undine hierarchies watch over waters. Salamanders tend the deserts, stones, and are the embodiment of fire. These invisible beings inhabit our space alongside us, unseen

by our unseeing eyes because of their higher frequencies and, therefore, finer densities. The hierarchies of their species range from the lowest elemental to the highest angelic realms. According to Nathaniel Altman in *The Deva Handbook*, “*although nature spirits exist throughout the natural world, they are most often found at obvious physical forms such as waterfalls, cliffs, mountaintops, volcanoes, forests, and lakes,*”⁷⁵ giving further insight into the power of planetary nature temple spots discussed above.

Humans are no exception where elementals’ duties to nurture life are concerned, so each of us also is “tended” by our own elemental being. Perhaps the most interesting deva is this human body elemental, our energetic double who tends to our own physical growth and development (and who can take us flying as we leave our heavy-matter dense bodies at home!). It’s our body deva (our ghost-double, inherent in our etheric energy body) who still may be present as long as three days after our physical bodies die.

Although other world cultures continue to respect and communicate with the spirit world, the Christian faith cast out that world. Non-Christian cultures such as those found in Asia, Africa, India, the Middle East and so forth, still recognize the unseen world. In Europe, it was the rise of Puritanism that spelled the utter demise of every-day communication with nature cultures, when the church proclaimed all otherworldly beings as evil and branded individuals’ relationships with natural forces as heretical. Our connections with nature were banished from our belief system except as demonic references. Traditional places of nature worship frequently were demolished. For our inherited culture in America, this was the beginning of the devastating disconnection of man from Nature. Indeed, in France Joan of Arc was burned at the stake not only for talking directly with God without an intercessory, but also for communicating with the

devic world.⁷⁶ Witch hunts and the rise of dogmatic religious patriarchal authority grew out of the rise of the Reformation and Puritanism, and drove underground our common connection to the devic world, along with our connection to nature as our authentic temple. The Inquisition was as much about severing man from his own true connection to the divine natural world as it was about spreading the Word of God. When one can communicate directly with the divine, why would she need a priest to do it for her?

Except, what does one do with her innate relationships with the natural world around her when, like me, she can communicate with critters of different species? How can we “forget” our abilities to be in such resonance with a pine tree that we *become* it and perceive life through its intelligence, when we can *be* the grass in the meadow or the buffalo on the Plain? The answer is that we go silent and do everything we can *not* to be noticed, literally for fear of death. But no matter how long it takes, sooner or later that spirit of knowing yearns to re-emerge and once again find expression. Today, though common society would still shun someone who can talk with trees, at least in the Western world one need not fear death at the hands of The Church.

In the end, man’s ideology cannot triumph over the power of the Earth, and she will survive probably at our own peril. We are completely dependent on her very being, her health, and her path along her own cosmic existence. A new understanding of how to rebuild our relationships with other beings and to collaborate with the natural world may be our saving grace if we are to survive in an overstressed and polluted environment. It seems to me that it is time to realize the equality of other living beings and to realize that humans do not have divine dominion over them. Instead, we need to find inclusive ways to act as stewards to guarantee respect and protection to them. In a ground-breaking

announcement recently, India's interior ministry has taken a step to do just that by declaring dolphins as non-human persons and banning their use in entertainment such as theme parks.

Building Sacred Space

Ancients believed that until man has been initiated into the spiritual mysteries, he had not fully realized his own sacred potential as man. Uninitiated man was little more than a beast walking upright on the earth. The sacred marriage of heaven and earth, experienced through man, comprised that initiation, bringing the highest nature of man to completion through the resolution of his inherent duality.⁷⁷ The purpose of sacred architecture therefore has been to create the crucible for the creation of higher states of humanity, *“for it is certainly a question of alchemy; the transmutation, not of metal, but of man.”*⁷⁸

Freddy Silva's recent revelation about the Seven Gates is relevant here. The ancients understood energetics and telluric electromagnetism in ways we do not. Long ago, the cultivation of divine man was taken seriously and was supported with energetic technologies now mostly lost to us. If one thinks about the power manifested by the earth in the triple steps of Vishnu locations throughout the globe, one can begin to understand the power which could be emulated as an energetic technology, created by man, which by understanding telluric energies could be built into sacred temples as electromagnetic bands, making them true temples of transformation. But there's a catch: because of the “secret code” required for activation of these powers, only those who have prepared themselves properly can receive it. On all others, the temple's gifts of transformation remain dormant.⁷⁹

The Seven Gates refer to the energetic passages alternating negative and positive forces established in the passageway to a temple's inner sanctum. To be more precise, Silva has found that at the temple of Saqqara there are seven positively-charged bands of stone-induced frequencies set up to "screen" the entrance to the holy temple, which he interprets as the Seven Gates. Through these magnetic fields, the "tuned-in" man naturally responds, reaching purification before entering the sanctum.⁸⁰ According to Silva, there is some indication that these bands involve the energetics of the Hartmann lines mentioned earlier. To those who are prepared, gifts of heaven were granted here on Earth through their interaction in the temple. To those who are not, the secrets are not revealed. Silva likens this to having a sacred PIN number that unlocks the payoff from the temple, with the prepared man being the ATM card passing through the gates.⁸¹

The initiatory tradition of the sacred mysteries, which arrived in the West to become the basis of the highest Gothic accomplishments, came originally from Egypt and was passed on to the Phoenicians, who built the Temple designed by Solomon in Jerusalem nearly 1,000 years before the birth of Jesus. The Temple was sited by Solomon's father, David the musician, who also slayed the material powers of the giant Goliath. Solomon's Temple and the Gothic cathedrals were built on places of even older sacred importance. The very foundations of these edifices superseded earlier sites known for concentrated telluric energies that had been accumulated in sacred dolmens and wells. They were built on places already being used to bring heaven to Earth to affect cosmic connection. Not surprisingly, Solomon built atop sacred springs on the site where Jacob witnessed angels ascending and descending from heaven on a ladder, archetypally representing the world tree, or the axis mundi---the center of the world.⁸²

Until the late Gothic period, there were no architects per se who designed, supervised, and constructed as we know them today. Instead, there were priests and craftsmen, many of whom were stoneworkers. Among early Christians, an Order initiated into certain Masonic mysteries was called “architect,”⁸³ and perhaps that name was carried forward to become the name of the modern occupation as we know it today. The Masonic architect was concerned with the craft of building the morally and spiritually aware man, in addition to being part of stoneworker guilds that traveled to the sites of large building projects. Stones contain piezoelectric properties which, when understood, can be used powerfully in an alchemical transmutation of man, as described above by Silva.

As cultures changed and agrarian societies began settlement, their new sacred temples were located either to absorb known ancient sacred places or their locations were divined by a geometer. Where there were no obvious natural manifestations of spirit such as springs, trees, or hills, other means were needed to “fix the place.” Many methods of site divination existed. For instance, among them were “technologies” as bizarre as that of the “Dun Cow,”⁸⁴ who is believed to have naturally located the blind spring (an unseen, underground spring that does not reach the surface) location that became the center of Durham, England. Blindfolded, the cow was allowed to wander until it lay down (collapsed), thereby fixing the divine spot. This gives credence to the idea that all places are sacred if man’s intention makes them so.

Once fixed, sites were dedicated to a saint, cosmic luminary, star, or constellation to which the site was being devoted. Through time, Christians transformed the astronomical calendar by replacing cosmic deities with saints who subsumed the earlier

pagan deities' places. Thus it was that "*in northern Europe, the holy hills once sacred to pagan religions, are often dedicated to St Michael, the Christianized solar deity whose spear transfixes the earth current symbolized by the dragon, fusing earth and heaven at a fixed point.*"⁸⁵ And thus it was that those holy hills over time have had abbeys, monasteries, and churches built upon them.

Once dedicated and the location fixed, as we discussed earlier, the first of the celestial technologies came into play. At this point, the geometer turned the process over to surveyors and craftsmen who understood the technologies of creating proportion, form, and volume in stone. Typically, at sunrise on the day of the calendar named for the site's patron saint, the alignment of the building would be revealed via the shadow cast by a stick driven into the ground at the altar location. The stick, or pole, essentially served the purpose of a primitive sundial, called a "gnomon."⁸⁶

A circle was traced around the stick, and during the ceremonial day...the shadow cast across the circle by the extremes of the sun's movement across the sky would determine two critical points. When the points on the circle are connected they form an east-west axis. When a cord is stretched from one point on the circle to the other, and used as a compass to form two half circles, the intersecting shape is the vesica piscis, a 'fish,' which, when its points of intersection are connected, forms a north-south axis. The intersections of the other circles, which are centered on the ends of the cardinal axes, allow the establishment of the four corners of a square. The circle thus generates a square and the four cardinal points have been established perfectly in relation to the altar. The square then determines the plan of the temple and its proportions.⁸⁷

With astronomical alignments thus achieved---all based on the sacred geometry of cosmic order---layout of the foundation proceeded. Literally. The outline of the building was either drawn into the dirt, or marked with sticks and cords. The cord used for creating the basic alignment, called a Druid's Cord,⁸⁸ was simply a string (adopted from the ancient pagan culture) that had been knotted in regular increments. It was not a ruler

based on meters, inches, or cubits, but simply a string prepared for proportional measurements. The structural foundation was measured out from the Druid Cord. Thus, sacred architectures of the past were not exact in their creation. They emulated nature's own organic structure, governed by geometric proportion and rhythm.⁸⁹ Rather than quantitative measurement involving "numbers," the symbolic concept of number was used instead. Instead of one inch, two inches, three inches, one used measures in which something was twice or three times the measure of something else. It's a subtle shift, but an important one. It represents a different way to measure reality. *"Ancient science was based like that of today on number, but whereas number is now used in the quantitative sense for secular purposes, the ancients regarded numbers as symbols of the universe, finding parallels between the inherent structure of number and all types of form and motion."*⁹⁰

Number forms the basis of the Golden Section, or the Golden Mean, whose proportion comes from ancient number canons related to the moon, sun, and Earth. The number 1080 represented the spiritual energy of the receptive lunar aspect of nature, responsible for telluric energies and those of underground springs and streams. The dynamic proportions found in the Golden Mean form the basis of the Fibonacci progression, which also is based on number. *"Its polar opposite, the positive, solar force in the universe, was also referred to as a number, 666. These two numbers, which have an approximate golden section relationship of 1:1.62, were at the root of the alchemical formula which expressed the supreme purpose of the Temple [Solomon's Temple],"*⁹¹ and indeed all kinds of other sacred architecture. One finds the Fibonacci progression present in the organic world, from the spiral proportions of a pinecone to the sprouting of leaves

from a plant stalk, to the gentle curve of a nautilus shell, and also in the organic building techniques of sacred architecture. To determine the Fibonacci progression, simply add unit numbers, using the last two numbers in the sequence to determine the next proportional relationship, and so on: $1 + 1 = 2$. $1 + 2 = 3$. $2 + 3 = 5$. $3 + 5 = 8$, etc. Using Fibonacci proportions encodes a structure with subtle organic traits,⁹² and imbues it with order and divine harmony. These same sacred proportions emulate the ideal or cosmic man. *“This array of universal proportions within the body of Ideal Man becomes the basis, in many civilizations, of a canon which governs the metre for chant and poetry, the movements of dance, and the proportions of crafts, art and architecture.”*⁹³ Thus, the proportions of the human body are intimately correlated to the proportions of sacred architecture and to cosmic proportion. And, music, dance, art, and architecture are included as important to the cultivation of life.

Here enters the next level of sacred technologies: volume and harmonic resonance. Arguably, the world’s best example of this perfection may have been Chartres Cathedral, built in an astounding 26 years compared to the decades and even hundreds of years required to construct other Gothic cathedrals. Its rapid completion was accomplished by the focused attention of the Knights Templar and their supporters. There is so much to be said about Chartres that this description no doubt will be inadequate in many ways and will most certainly leave out many details. However, a handful of basic ideas are important to enumerate in our context. Chartres was built in the early 12th Century by the Cisterian Order at the instigation of Abbot Bernard de Clairvaux (later to become St. Bernard) and in collaboration with the Knights Templar who had learned the

Ark of the Covenant's wisdom from their decade of exploration at the razed site of the Temple of Solomon.

The siting of Chartres was not a matter of chance. It was sited on a dolmen, well, and tree grove previously established by Druids as a place of initiation, chosen because of the seasonal powers emanating from the Earth below.⁹⁴ This site was chosen by St. Bernard de Clairvaux specifically to bring together those known telluric forces of Earth with those of the cosmos. *"Chartres is a place where spirit pervades, or can pervade, matter; a place where spirit incarnates, more especially at the time of the great pulsations of the Wouivre, seasonal pulsations, analogous to those of the blood-stream, which govern the dates of pilgrimage. It is then that initiation may perhaps be received."*⁹⁵

Once dedicated, fixed, and aligned, the stonemasons were ready to create what essentially would become a sound box for the music of the spheres, bringing the Earth's telluric energies from below and uniting them in a sacred marriage with the harmonies of the universe, to serve as an initiation chamber for man. The height of the ogive chamber was determined, in part, by the depth of the holy well lying below the structure. In the case of Chartres, the water table is 37 meters below the choir and the vault height is 37 meters above the floor.⁹⁶ The volume created must be specific in dimension to perform the correct vibratory effects. The proportions of the vertical void, the sound box proper, appear to be tuned to the Gregorian chant harmonics of RE-FA-LA, creating musical tones of one third and full octave intervals.⁹⁷

Chartres was built to be a cosmic temple *"...designed to resonate with the music of planetary motion. In its proportions were to be found every type of musical harmony,*

*set out in numerical ratios; and since these numbers corresponded to sounds and letters, the whole structure was an architectural litany, containing the names by which all the various powers in nature were invoked, and thus forming a pantheon, a complete representation of Universal Mind.”*⁹⁸ Acoustically, Chartres’ high vaults were made to produce a resonator effect. The true Gothic monument required “*perfect adjustment between weight and thrust; the weight that creates the thrust becomes itself its own negation. The activity in the stone is therefore in a state of constant tension, which the art of the master-builder can ‘tune’ like a harp-string. For a gothic cathedral is not only a musical instrument by similitude.*”⁹⁹ It is said that Chartres’ stones were tuned so well that “*you could make it ring with a fingernail,*” whose touch would cause Chartres’ void to pulse with reverberation.¹⁰⁰

Chartres was not the only celestial soundbox. For example, in Britain the early church in Glastonbury sustained the enchantment of the Earth through the sounds of the Perpetual Choir.¹⁰¹ Author John Michell located the sites for three such ancient choirs. In addition to Glastonbury, they also were located in Salisbury and at Llantwit Major in South Wales. In 1801, Iolo Morganwg recorded that “*in each of these choirs there were 2,400 saints; that is there were a hundred for every hour of the day and the night in rotation, perpetuating the praise and service of God without rest or intermission.*” The function of the choirs was to maintain the enchantment and peace of Britain. However, it must be stated that in all the ancient literature the choirs were referred to as a “Triad.”¹⁰² Based on the importance of sacred sound, these nonstop chanting sessions were handled in a round-robin fashion involving thousands of people, and were designed to enhance the dominant astrological relationships of the current season with the most appropriate chants

to maintain *en-chantment*. That was a time when the sacred knowledge of harmonics was still known. Perhaps their vibrational approach to en-chantment was in order to sustain their own triple step of Vishnu, previously discussed. Do we detect yet another use of Triangle here? And is it possible that Christian interpretations of the Holy Trinity are attempts to transmute the known qualities of triune powers?

Alignment with astrological phenomena was common among ancient cultures, with examples found throughout the world. It seems no wonder to me, since half of people's lives in ancient times was spent in nighttime darkness in close relationship with the night sky. In my own lifetime, a personal experience with the night sky has shown me how important the night sky can be to one's orientation to the world. While staying at John of God's Casa in Abadiania, Brasil, the night sky was spectacular from our jungle location, with only a faint hint of Brasilia (several hours away) appearing on the horizon. But, the night sky also was quite disorienting because there was not a single familiar constellation visible to me. In an unsettling, primal way, I felt disoriented. Although I appreciated seeing the Southern Cross with my own eyes, I could not find my cosmic center. I did not know where on earth I was or what time or season it was.

It is interesting to know that if one drew a line connecting the local sitings of many sacred temples, both in northern Europe and in Egypt their patterns would form terrestrial constellations that emulate their dedication. In France, the Notre Dame (Mary, mother of Jesus) Gothic cathedrals, when looked at from high above, form the earthly pattern of the constellation Virgo.¹⁰³ The pyramids of Egypt, taken as a whole, reiterate the pattern of the constellation Orion, which is the heavenly body of Osiris.¹⁰⁴

Throughout dissimilar cultures around the globe, astronomical connection is seen as important for healing and location of initiatory structures.

One of the most important sacred sites of modern time bears direct relationship to astronomical phenomena. The

center of the Islamic world is the Ka'aba (called the Al Masjid Al-Haram) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and it is a perfect “cosmic cube” which contains the now-broken remains of a stone that fell from



Figure 4 - The Ka'aba and Encircling Pilgrims (theguardian.com)

the sky. “*All over the world, stones have been said to move, heal, or pronounce--- common properties which are universally recognized.*”¹⁰⁵ The black stone enshrined inside the Ka'aba measures about 10 inches wide and 12 inches long and is encased in silver. It is thought to be a meteorite, which Muslims believe pre-dates creation, and fell at the foot of Adam and Eve. It is claimed that the original Ka'aba was built by Abraham, before Islam, but the current Ka'aba probably is dated from about 500 A.D.¹⁰⁶ The current structure is stone, wrapped with black silk. The cosmic cube shape has its origins in time before altars, and when used in round environments, such as the interior of the shrine in Mecca, it represented the earth within the heavens. The Ka'aba is surrounded by eight lines that radiate toward the four cardinal points of the globe and to the corners of the world, further anchoring it as the axis mundi. The ritual of circumambulation or circular walking of the Ka'aba symbolizes “*the manifest and comprehensible world.*”

*When a near-equality is drawn between the circle and square, the infinite is able to express its dimensions or qualities through the finite.”*¹⁰⁷

My own introduction to the technologies and processes of the built environment came originally from having been a design student in the architecture department at the University of Kansas, where I learned about drawing systems and how to render architectural drawings with triangle, compass, T-square, and scaled rule. I did not know that what I had learned there and had seen in art history classes as the soaring beauty of Medieval cathedrals---which took my breath away---had little, if anything, to do with architecture as I understood it, but rather that they depended upon processes that involved no architects, no blueprints, no renderings drawn in perspective. And so, as seeker and architect A.T. Mann says, I “*had to leave the practice of architecture in order to pursue its mystery.*”¹⁰⁸

Healing Technologies

Sacred places of healing, initiation, and vivification have been located throughout the world since before recorded history. Not only has there been a decline, but also an absence altogether of sacred building since the post-Renaissance rise of Christianity, except that today “*only the Islamic religion takes great care to orientate its sacred buildings, keeping its mosques towards Mecca, the Holy City.*”¹⁰⁹ However, it’s also clear (to me) that architecture has never been the only technology used to accomplish sacred goals of the transformation. It seems that the energies of the Earth are critical, that the effects of the cosmos are necessary, and that the intersection of both in the enlightened

mind of man is required to produce the alchemy needed for true transformation, for healing, and for life-giving gifts.

In many cases, the transformative technologies used in ancient healing involved personal protocols prescribed for human healing encounters. For instance, the healing temples of Asklepios throughout Greece---thought to be either the first hospitals or the first health spas¹¹⁰---used salt water bathing to cleanse newly arrived patients as well as dream interpretation to diagnose and prescribe cure.¹¹¹ Other rituals and activities at Asklepios Temples included cavern-like stone mazes, interaction with snakes, rituals, fasting, massage, and even theater.¹¹²

Just as places can be used for healing people, there also are places themselves that need healing. There are many reasons why a location may be in a chaotic condition or may have lost its sacred nature. Violence, hatred, electromagnetic or geopathic stress, even subterranean sewer systems and clutter from daily living can compromise and pollute localities. Though the ancient knowledge of sacred cosmic technologies may be lost, there are techniques that can be used by people today to condition sites, to diffuse chaotic or malignant energies and to restore equilibrium and peace. All of these techniques involve using clear intention, but also include a variety of other methods.

All built structures require regular and periodic space clearing to clean up the residues of stuck energies. “*Space Clearing is the art of cleansing and consecrating spaces,*” according to Karen Kingston,¹¹³ a Feng Shui practitioner. The result of space clearing is sacred space. According to Kingston, space clearing first involves cleaning out physical clutter and dirt. After that, the rituals of clearing begin by breaking up and moving out congealed energy residues and psychic debris. I personally refer to congealed

energies as clotted chi. Once that task is complete, one can introduce higher energy levels, and then psychically shield the refreshed environment. That is an example of one simple series of steps to maintain coherent space in one's immediate environment. For simple celebrations in small places, I routinely provide space clearing techniques that include clapping, declarations of intention, energetic boundary marking, and bell ringing; however, for large venues, holding intention and understanding ambient energies may be the most that can be done conveniently.

One of the more curious location healings of recent years involved ley lines in Seattle, Washington. The Geo Group created The Seattle Ley Line Project, which was an artwork funded by the Seattle Arts Commission. Dowser Chuck Pettis, organizer, located and mapped Seattle's ley lines using a pendulum and map, with the intention of neutralizing negative energies and amplifying power centers through public art projects to be installed throughout the region.¹¹⁴ Pettis discovered the need for energetic clearing caused by the defiling presence of sewer lines, power lines, and ambient but chaotic earth energies.

In other healing work, energy practitioner Marko Pogačnik works throughout the world to purify places where mental and emotional stresses have left imprints of chaos.

Here is an example of his worldwide work:

To work with the traumas imprinted into the city organism of Prague during the siege by the Prussian army in the eighteenth century, we went as a group to Smihov, the hill from where the army's cannons shot mercilessly upon the city below. Each member of the group imagined standing beside a gun. We imagined that the cannonballs that had been directed upon the city, together with the pain they caused, were returned to enter the mouths of the cannons, to find peace.¹¹⁵

They also imagined balls of light rolling across the area, like rolling a snowball in which all the emotional rubbish sticks to the ball, which becomes bigger and bigger.

Next, the group pushed all the balls together to form one snowball pile. They then surrounded that location, visualizing violet color light, the color associated with transmutation, to purify the energy caught in the balls.

War is hell no matter where or when it happens. In our own country, volunteer groups assumed the tasks of finding and burying the dead who were left lying where they fell from our country's Civil War. Of the 750,000 who died in that war, more than half originally went unburied, nameless Union soldiers lying next to Confederate soldiers in the same bloody killing fields. More than a decade after Clara Barton began her appeals to Washington, D.C. to do something about this situation, the first national cemetery system was established; but, as late as 1871, only 303,536 Union soldiers had been found and buried (the interment of Confederate soldiers would require the southern states' separate organization of burial initiatives).¹¹⁶ Only slightly more than half of those buried had been identified. The not-so-simple act of interment was a way of honoring the spirits of the dead, of consecrating their remains, and of clearing the fields of the war from the heartbreaking energy of dying in war. It is an ongoing process of reconsecration, as bones still occasionally are revealed in flood-ravaged creek banks and fields.

Apparently even the powers of the Earth and the angelic forces of Heaven can come to the rescue to collaborate in healing, according to Pogačnik. He claims that the Earth *"is now activating her basic power sources and enormously accelerating her vibrations, so propelling all levels of her life to greater speed."* He sees, senses, and channels Earth energies and has made this determination through the information he has received intuitively. He claims that in and around Dachau he was able to perceive *"the destructive patterns projected upon the place during its oppression by the concentration*

camp and the accompanying emotional traumas.” He claims that when asking the angelic world for healing guidance there, he discovered that “*Dachau is the location of the most powerful, prolific source of the Earth’s nourishing system. The Angel of Earth Healing described the system as the one which secured and nourished life in all its diverse facets.*”¹¹⁷ From this I conclude that the more devastating a profaning act can be, the more Heaven and Earth can conspire to heal it.

CHAPTER 3: LEARNING THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCE

Experience

In the bustle of our daily lives, it is easy to become so desensitized that we do not experience being fully present in the moment. Distractions take our concentration to our cell phones, the cars around us on the busy street, the anticipation of our calendars, and managing life at work and at home. Experience itself can be missed, even though experience is the single-most important proof we have that we are alive. Indeed, we lose all orientation to our place in the center of the universe when we are not present to our own experiences. We may know where we are located, but we do not know where we are.

So many of us have lost track of the art of encountering our own lives locationally. We have become desensitized to the revelation of place as we rush through it at 60 miles per hour or even on foot as we simultaneously text or allow the distraction of our iPods while we jog. The simple act of using GPS mapping keeps us ever on the leash of looking at or hearing the instructions that muddle our authentic directions, meanwhile not seeing where we are, not experiencing the relationship between ourselves and our world. It is sense of place that suffers in this whole new way of alienating ourselves from it, of separating ourselves from the very cosmos of our existence. We have already unplugged from our sense of cosmic connection. Now we also are unplugged from our most sacred anchor to our existence: our sacred sense of place.

Indeed, the very notion of *engagement* means that we cannot treat places as mere sensory data, as *sights*: we cannot truly experience places simply by arriving and gazing at them, even if attentively. Being in a place, rather, means *doing* in it. But places are not mere bundles of stuff to do---activity tables in a museum to supplement the paintings---any more than they are mere accretions of stuff to see. A place is a realm of affairs for Nature and for humans; the term of our first entry into a place is recognizing our individual potential to be involved in those affairs. When we sense that potential, it manifests as a sort of *invitation* to enter into them---a ‘solicitation to action,’...a beckoning to discovery, of the place and of our selves, through what we might encounter there and how we might face it. This is the element crucial to seeing a place: discerning what it invites us to do and answering the challenge.¹¹⁸

By taking a look at human experience as it relates to groups, we can see that celebration has provided a vehicle for important human development. Through millennia, celebration has been used to bring people together, to commune with the divine, even to help assure the right conduct of the cosmos. The distant roots of celebration served as the catalyst for the gods’ actions on Earth, as willed by the intentions of the people. They danced and sang and drummed and clapped their way to direct relationship with each other and with the divine, experiencing intimately the spirit of place. The collective consciousness, the embodiment of the symbolic, and the directive of intention kept the hotline open between man’s creative divine and cosmic out-workings in heaven and on earth. Earth, sky, and man: another triune arrangement.

In ancient times, people did not experience themselves as separate from the world around them. By relating to their place in the cosmos, they were able to understand themselves internally through the nature of that relationship, through their cultural interactions with tradition, ritual, and the eternal, inevitable changing seasons. To paraphrase Jeremy Naydler (*Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred*),¹¹⁹ ancient people such as the Egyptians were able to experience themselves

in the vertical dimensions, whereas today we are for the most part relegated to interpreting ourselves horizontally, without the presence of the cosmically-embodied gods to inform us. Without that vertical anchoring, we do not always know where we are in the grand scheme of life. We do not experience ourselves integrally, but instead as observers of what happens horizontally around us.

The demise of these understandings and practices was surely writ large by early adoption of monotheism and made complete by The Church itself when people no longer could look to their own divine connection (sometimes under penalty of death), but were required to relinquish that essential power in favor of finding Truth, guidance, and direction from the holy intercessory, from somewhere other than their own guidance, from an external source “out there.” In so many ways, the history and evolution of celebration shows the path of man’s separation from his own divine spirit, the further reinforcement of duality, whereas it also illuminates the potentially restorative elements of celebration from which we can start anew.

As odd as it seems, the VIP hospitality industry has figured it out and knows that people are craving experience and that, through experience, they can find personal meaning. Through careful programming, the hospitality business is cashing in on their knowledge of how to create a sense of place and they do it by catering to the senses. Through some of their tactics, we will explore the importance of experience, how it’s created, manipulated, and remembered.

Several years ago, I had the honor of attending an invitation-only hospitality leadership think tank in Vail, Colorado presented by *Hospitality Design Magazine*.¹²⁰ At the time, my biggest business development client was a high-end architecture firm with

100 architects on staff in Denver, Chicago, and Dallas, my client had designed and built several Disney resort hotels in California and Florida; as well as designing several HGTV Dream Homes and *Sunset Magazine* Designer Dream Homes. The firm's principal (my mentor architect Peter Dominick) had been invited to the think tank, but was not able to attend. He arranged for me to be his representative and the experience was transformative for me. I learned from among the most progressive leaders in the global hospitality industry and they all bore the same message: *experience is the single-most important driver for human beings*. Because of the leadership innovations from some of those present at the think tank, entire industries have changed their production, distribution, and marketing business models. If capitalists are willing to change their strategies, equipment, staffing, and even their products drastically enough to monetize the staging of experience, there must be something to it!

Discussing the nature of experience may seem redundant, since all human beings live daily in the world of experience. But, its relationship to the senses, to memory, to the perception of reality, and to attracting and cultivating attendance are germane to this discussion. We human beings are so hooked on experience because it is how we know we are alive. Think about it: how else would one know?

Making Memories

Memory is man's archive of his reality. It is his record of life experience. Based on his beliefs, thoughts and experiences, "*Memory is just a thought that is attached to an experience or event in the past.*"¹²¹ Knowing that we all create our own unique realities, experience is the result through which we sense being alive. Our thoughts about what we

are experiencing travel across our brain's corpus callosum and transform from sensory input to memory. In order to complete the synthesis and integration of information, the brain must be able to provide the translation of experience into words. That information then passes through the anterior cingulate, the relay point in the triune brain between the mammalian brain and neomammalian brain. The mammalian brain "*mediates messages from both the inside world of the body and the outside world of the senses and the neomammalian brain of the neocortex, which is more concerned with events in the external world such as language, self-reflection, awareness of mortality, and true empathy.*"¹²² Voila, memory of experience! More mental files to contribute content to our perceived realities....

According to economist James Gilmore (*The Experience Economy* 2011), one of the presenters at the hospitality leadership think tank mentioned earlier, there is a multisensory dimension to experience that plays into memory, including how personally meaningful it is, the way it is shared with others, the intensity and duration of experiential elements, the complexity or simplicity of the encounter, as well as cultural and other social sensitivities that play into what is remembered. He states that "*...a strong memory is not required for every experience, but the greater the (positive) memory created and the longer it lasts, the more value is created.*"¹²³ That is the bottom line of how important experience can be to business and to personal living. According to Gilmore, that memorable value comes from the sights, sounds, tastes, aromas, and textures that create a unique experience. In other words, the basis of experience is sensory input and the better the experience, the more memorable it will be. So, our life's best memories come from experience based on input from our senses. That makes sense, for how would we know

that we are having an experience if we had no senses through which to interpret what is happening? The hospitality industry is taking that information to the bank.

It appears that memory is based on experience and that experience is based on sensory input and the context in which that input is generated. The next question to consider, then, is how to engage our senses intentionally while we're doing good experience-making business? For these examples, I shall draw here on two personal encounters: one with the legendary hospitality mogul Ian Schrager whom I met while representing my architect at the HD Summit, and the other with the man to whom I refer to as "my architect," Peter H. Dominick, Jr., FAIA, who was my client and mentor mentioned earlier. Their wisdom reinforces each other's philosophies about how to stage experience through engagement of the senses.

The name Ian Schrager is not known to most, but he is the man who created the boutique hotel concept which later resulted in such well-known brands as the W Hotel.

Ian Schrager first gained international recognition when he created the iconic Studio 54 with his late business partner Steve Rubell. He then ventured into the hotel industry when he opened Morgans Hotel in 1984. With this new hotel the concept of Boutique Hotels was introduced to the world. 'The lobby as social theatre', 'hotel as a lifestyle', 'urban retreats', the hotel as a 'home away from home' and 'cheap chic' are all concepts that are credited to Schrager.¹²⁴

As one can tell, as a premier innovator Schrager already was onto the most important of the coming trend concepts: experience. He also is the innovator behind the Heavenly Bed Experience concept used by Westin Hotels worldwide. His HD Summit discussions centered on the importance of sensory experience, relaying to us that from the moment one arrives at a hospitality destination, all sensory input must be considered important: the view that forms one's sense of arrival, the feel of the bedding, the colors and succulent conditions of the floral arrangements, the sounds outside the window, the

smiles at the reception desk, the impeccable cleanliness of each space, the fragrances throughout. For the ultimate memorable experience, the tiniest details matter. He surely has been successful with that philosophy, as his latest condominium design projects in Miami are pre-selling for \$34 million apiece.¹²⁵ He told us that the experience begins with the sense of arrival at the destination and hopefully never ends because of the long-lasting good memories that guests take with them when they leave.

It was Peter Dominick with whom I worked directly and personally, sitting at the feet of this great mentor to learn about the built environment of experience. Peter's firm 42|40 Architecture (previously Urban Design Group, Inc.) designed and built three Disney properties: The Grand Californian at Disneyland in Anaheim, California; and, Animal Kingdom Lodge and Wilderness Lodge at Disney World in Orlando, Florida. They also designed and built many personal resorts for celebrities, tycoons, and international luminaries. In all, attention to detail was crucial to success.

As Schrager also believes, Peter's attention to sensory detail began with the sense of arrival. It was not a new concept. Gian Lorenzo Bernini (my favorite designer from Renaissance fame) demonstrated the first grand arrival in the design of St. Peter's Square, using principles of visual constriction and release to funnel people's sense of expectation, arrival, and to influence their experiences.

In the case of Peter's Disney designs (done with his design partner Randall Johnson in the lead), on the streets leading up to the gateway for each hotel, special attention was paid in landscaping to creating beauty, order, and a sense of building anticipation. A formal gateway announced the actual arrival at each property in a monumental welcoming and theme-setting manner. The porte cochere (literally the coach

entrance) at each resort hotel began to build the grand theme, the new context for reality, and while sheltering guests from any weather inconveniences the first contact with service staff began there, complete with smiling, costumed bellmen.¹²⁶ But, that progression of building the experience of arrival was only the prelude to what waited just inside the front door: grand themed lobbies alive with sights, sounds, colors, aromas, textures, elemental reiterations of earth, air, fire, and water to complete the illusion of the new reality, the new experience of place. The design premise behind this progression mimics that of the hero's journey, the ceremonial journey of ritual transformation that proceeds through the stages of separation, transition (arrival) and integration. The effect of this progression has powerful effects on the human psyche and is used around the world in celebrant work to help people embody life cycle change.

Having worked with every detail of those projects in the production of Peter's Master Architect Series book, I can assure you that the smallest doorway, gate, reception desk surface---all of it---was given attention, was chosen intentionally to delight the senses, transporting guests from their normal lives into a flawless fantasy dream experience, uninterrupted by any incongruities of competing realities, such as seeing the Wizard behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*, or seeing the teenager inside the Mickey Mouse costumed character. Though all experience is voluntary (one can close one's eyes, plug one's ears, stay inside one's house), when stimulus is staged so intentionally and with such great skill, it would be hard not to fall under its spell, even if only subliminally. At this point in American life, so many people have had the Disney experience in person that it has upped the ante for those of us producing community events, increasing the challenge to make people's comparative experiences as perfect and memorable.

Both Schrager and Dominick understood that by knowing how to stage the engagement of sensory input they could create memorable experience for their clients. Crass as it may sound, that is both great for people and good for business! And it certainly speaks volumes about how to create a sense of place.

Experience and Our Society

Business aside, I suspect that people attend community events to satisfy some personal need for group experience. A former colleague gave me an insight into people's needs many years ago. Lee Kelly, public affairs director for Boeing in Seattle, Washington, represented Boeing's Board Chair Phil Condit as his right-hand-man while serving on the SEAFAIR board of directors, for which I was CEO. Lee told me that one thing they knew at Boeing was that "*the more high tech our society becomes, the more high touch people will crave.*"¹²⁷ That makes sense. The isolation of technology can be construed to have a numbing effect, starving people from sensory input and direct human-to-human contact. So, as an extrapolation of that idea, it also makes sense that along with so much interaction with automation and the digital world, people would highly value stimulation of their senses.

But, what kinds of experiences do people crave most? According to James Twitchell, author of *Living It Up: America's Love Affair with Luxury*, the ultimate experience is redemption through epiphany,¹²⁸ though I would argue that it is the experience of Samadhi or unity. Maybe they are the same thing? Twitchell also was present at the HD Summit mentioned earlier. In conversations with him, he likened people's drive toward conspicuous consumerism to that of earlier indulgences granted by

The Church for a fee, and to The Church's displays of holy relics and items of luxury intended to drive audiences. Evidently, cash was the real King then, too. Twitchell compared the similarities of The Shopping Mall to that of The Church, claiming that the former has now replaced the latter in both attendance and in its ability to offer indulgence and absolution. Once luxury could be bought affordably in the private sector, there was less need to flock to church in order to behold it. Evidently, a bit of redemption comes along with buying a bit of luxury such as a Gucci purse or an Armani suit; but it's most often a temporary sensation. In what admittedly could be construed as crass, but probably accurate, Twitchell compares religion with what casinos offer.

Let's continue the infelicitous comparison of the religious promise of salvation and the gambling luck of hitting the jackpot because inside [both] these systems we may see the powerful allure of material luxury. As I've argued, although we don't usually think of them this way, they are both entertainment cultures. Entertainment cultures have one thing in common. They efficiently exchange some kind of experience for money, and most often the experience has a high affective component. By that I mean a physical sensation is at the heart of the transaction. You *feel* different.¹²⁹

This different feeling equates to an experience of finding meaning, feeling complete, relieving angst, filling the cave of emptiness we often feel inside. But alas, it is no hero's journey and no authentic transformation can result. At one time, one could buy an indulgence from The Church. One still can find a momentary transcendence by witnessing the relic of a saint; or, buying that Gucci purse for the same return on investment. As we will discuss later in this chapter, perhaps the energetic levels of the chakras can show us through which levels of transformation these all-but-equal forms of entertainment resonate. Evidently, people are craving the experience of the transcendent; but, they're not finding it in a lasting way either through religion or through sacred shopping. For, once she gets that Gucci purse home, the effect begins to wear off and

quickly enough one is right back where she started, not having been truly transformed and needing to feel different once again.

Sacred shopping at the altar of the television has become an absolute obsession in our Western society, often confused by desperate people as authentic experience. Multiple cable channels exist through which to buy luxury items, with one television shopping channel having more than “23,000 incoming phone lines capable of handling up to 20,000 calls a minute.”¹³⁰ Food channels have multiplied like rabbits. Not even pretending to provide real sustenance, they do not teach anyone how to cook, but instead provide entertainment about one of the most basic human needs: food. These shows relate to luxury by introducing the celebrity element and by being designed to serve (if you will pardon the pun) as spectator sports.

Buying, not making, is what cooking shows are mostly now about---that and, increasingly, cooking shows themselves: the whole self-perpetuating spectacle of competition, success and celebrity that, with “The Next Food Network Star,” appears to have entered its baroque phase. The Food Network has figured out that we care much less about what’s cooking than who’s cooking. A few years ago, Mario Batali neatly summed up the network’s formula to a reporter: “Look, it’s TV! Everyone has to fall into a niche. I’m the Italian guy. Emeril’s the exuberant New Orleans guy with the big eyebrows who yells a lot. Bobby’s the grilling guy. Rachael Ray is the cheerleader-type girl who makes things at home the way a regular person would. Giada’s the beautiful girl with the nice rack who does simple Italian food. As silly as the whole Food Network is, it gives us all a soapbox to talk about the things we care about.” Not to mention a platform from which to sell all their stuff.

The Food Network has helped to transform cooking from something you do into something you watch — into yet another confection of spectacle and celebrity that keeps us pinned to the couch. The formula is as circular and self-reinforcing as a TV dinner: a simulacrum of home cooking that is sold on TV and designed to be eaten in front of the TV. True, in the case of the Swanson rendition, at least you get something that will fill you up; by comparison, the Food Network leaves you hungry, a condition its advertisers must love. But in neither case is there much risk that you will get off the couch and actually cook a meal. Both kinds of TV dinner plant us exactly where television always wants us: in front of the set, watching.¹³¹

What strange conundrums for us, when our basic needs for human sustenance have become so artificially commercialized that our open mouths are empty and our hearts cry out for meaning! What people truly crave is not being served by the kinds of shallow experiences which we are being sold with great alacrity in our society. We are being sold spectator viewing and accepting it as experience. We are being sold the perception of transformation rather than authentic transcendence. How does one know what is real? Well, if you can buy it (whether it is an indulgence through The Church or that Gucci bag that fulfills your dreams), it probably is not authentic. Not that buying stuff cannot be fun, because it can be! And stuff can be great to have. Still, stuff never brought true epiphany or redemption to anyone. Real experience requires full personal engagement of our senses in ways that provide authentic wholeness, relatedness, and connection.

For an authentic experience of *communitas*, let's go back to the Making Memories section and consider the nature of our most favorite memories (*...the greater the (positive) memory created and the longer it lasts, the more value is created*). Chances are that those kinds of memories came from experiences shared with other people who had come together for a common purpose such as a celebration, a concert, or to root for their favorite team. Those are authentically transcendent memories, when ego boundaries collapse enough to feel the common bonds of relationship with others and when all of our senses are engaged. It might seem odd to apply biblical sayings to celebrations or team games, but there may be something beyond our understanding in the nature of *communitas*, as stated in the expression "*wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*"¹³²

For the experience of community harmony, vibrational theorist and musician Harold Moses' YouTube exposition of "The Bach Principle" demonstrates how J.S. Bach envisioned the well-being of the community through using the harmonics of music as a guide for the interaction of citizens, referring to them as symphonies. Moses gives an interesting presentation as well as visually using musical scores to depict how community can form right relationship. According to Bach:

I want to demonstrate to the world the architecture of a new and beautiful social commonwealth. The secret of my harmony? I alone know it. Each instrument in counterpoint, and as many contrapuntal parts as there are instruments. It is the enlightened self-discipline of the various parts, each voluntarily imposing on itself the limits of its individual freedom for the wellbeing of the community. That is my message. Not the autocracy of a single stubborn melody on the one hand, nor the anarchy of the unchecked noise on the other. No, a delicate balance between the two---an enlightened freedom. The science of my art. The harmony of the stars in the heavens. The yearning for brotherhood in the hearts of men. This is the secret of my music.¹³³

By demonstrating the concept of right-community, Bach's theory employs music as a powerful metaphor for human harmony. The principle calls on people to "*be conscious, self-disciplined and balanced, impose limits on our individual freedoms in order to honor others in order to form right relationships, be open to spontaneous beauty while allowing the social commonwealth to establish equilibrium.*"¹³⁴ At the root of this principle is the belief that everyone is capable of participating at some level regardless of class or skill, and that community is at its best when all show up to participate in harmony. This is rather reminiscent of the ancient practices of inversion during celebrations, in which everyone in a community has a role to play---even if it is pretending to be someone else.

The resonance of living in harmony with our communities is one way to reach wholeness. Another way is to be in direct harmony with the Earth herself. Harmonics can come to us in subtle energies derived from contact with the Earth herself, too. To illustrate how important our personal and experiential relationship is with nature and with the Earth, being out of contact literally can make us sick. To demonstrate how a symbiotic relationship can bring one's body into a greater state of health, biophysicist James Oschman recommends an energy medicine therapy called "Earthing." It is a simple technique that one can experience simply by going barefoot. According to Oschman:

We evolved with our feet on the ground, barefoot, sleeping on the ground, or walking in leather shoes, like moccasins as the Native Americans do, which are conductive. We've evolved in a barefoot state, and when you're barefoot, electrons from the earth come up through your feet and spread through your body. The electrons are stored in certain specific parts of the body which are known as the ground substance. Everywhere under the skin there's ground substance, which is a reservoir of electrons in a design created by nature, so that if you get injured the immune system delivers the free radicals exactly to the site of injury, and the area around has electrons available to neutralize those free radicals that leak away from the site of the injury. I call it collateral damage. It's like the bombs landing in the wrong place. It's the immune system delivering free radicals that damage healthy tissue, and you don't want that to happen. That's the start of inflammation, and once you have an injury and you're not grounded, not connected to the earth, you start to get damage to healthy tissue. The immune system recognizes that and delivers more free radicals, which sets up a vicious cycle, which can go on for years.¹³⁵

How authentic are our individual relationships and experiences with our planet? Are we experiencing a relationship intimate enough to be truly grounded? It appears that our ultimate health is integrally linked to Mother Earth in myriad ways. If we can fully recognize that, then our reciprocal, respectful, and kind treatment toward other forms of life with whom we share her can perhaps help re-establish a truly symbiotic and authentic relationship where we can experience each other, for the transcendent benefit of all.

My quest continues to understand the nature of the sacred circle, and the qualities of the magic inside it. Exploring the nature of experience brings important clues to the pursuit of that quest. If, as our hospitality industry gurus suggest, experience is man's single greatest driver, then how can we use it to the highest good of all?

As a student of Transactional Analysis, it occurs to me that Eric Berne's concepts of time structuring may apply to the phenomenon of human experience, and that the level on which we engage may have much to do with the quality of our experiences. Berne's theory of personality identified six progressive stages of how we engage with others: withdrawal, rituals, pastimes, activities, games (ulterior motive type games), and intimacy.¹³⁶ Perhaps as we cultivate unconditional intimacy within ourselves first, then with our families, our communities, our planet, and our divine connection to the Source, our ever-more-authentic experiences will bring us peace and the sense of transcendence and redemption that we seek.

For my part, creating celebrations designed for the greater good can be an important contribution. I believe that by helping municipalities and organizations discover their individual identities, together we can create celebrations and public programs based on uniqueness and designed to encourage the authentic experience of *communitas*. To make order out of chaos so that people can communicate with the transcendent. And make memories that will last for a long time.

Celebration Revelation

More than 25 years ago, I personally experienced a phenomenon that shares more than a millennium of religious tradition: a Roman Catholic papal vigil. And, my experience

prompted an epiphany that propelled me into a two decade journey in the pursuit of knowledge and even to the writing of this book. I am not Catholic, nor even Christian. At the time, I worked for the Archdiocese of Denver through the National Catholic Conference of Bishops to produce Denver's World Youth Day for Pope John Paul II and the Vatican. The final event in a week-long tour de force of more than 100 simultaneous events was an overnight vigil attended by about 200,000 registered young adults from 72 nations of the world. Another 100,000 unregistered pilgrims also attended. It came at the end of a week of penance, prayer, and pilgrimage. Picture this: a sea of humanity, dirty, enveloped in a cloud of dust, exhausted, hungry and thirsty, with one bright, clean point of light on the right-hand edge of the dust cloud, toward which the entire crowd all was focused---the stage on which the pope would appear for an early morning mass the next day.

In many ways, it was quite a contradiction: the dirty, striving human masses and the shiny-clean and spotless stage set aside for Church luminaries. But, what was dawning on me, as I observed from the headquarters compound on a nearby hilltop, probably was not what was going on in the minds of the participants in the park below. The crowd, regardless of the squalid situation, was enchanted. They were entranced, happy, and in some blissful state of prayerful receptivity and awareness. What I could see from my vantage point was the whole of it, the big picture all in one glance. And, I was on the outside looking in. That is when it came to me that what was happening wasn't really so different from what I had experienced at other events. Taken as a whole, this event looked, acted, and felt very similar to a Rolling Stones concert (minus the dirt); very like Final Four basketball games I had helped produce for the NCAA; and, not

dissimilar to the enchantment of a Dave Brubeck performance I had helped present, in which he so engaged his audience that there was an almost electric quality in the air. I had personally witnessed all of that. What dawned on me is best summed up in the words of Gertrud Mueller Nelson, Montessori educator and artist, as follows:

The making of ritual is a creative act fundamental in human life. It is also a divine gesture. Genesis tells us the first purpose of such creative action is to give form to what is formless---‘*In the beginning God created the heavens and earth. Now the earth was a formless waste, there was darkness over the deep, and God’s spirit hovered over the water.*’ Then God proceeded to create a world of order with space, matter, time, life, and humans in his own image. Through ritual and ceremonies we people in turn make order out of chaos. In endless space, we create a fixed point to orient ourselves---a sacred space. To timelessness we impose rhythmic repetitions---the recurrent feast. And to untamed or unbound matter, we give a shape, a name, a meaning. What is too vast and shapeless, we deal with in smaller, manageable pieces. We do this for practicality but we also do this for high purpose---to relate safely to the mysterious, to communicate with the transcendent.¹³⁷

There, on that still hilltop looking down (which, by the way, I was seeing visually only in black and white at that stage of my exhaustion), the news arrived like a thunderbolt that I never will forget. The good news was that wherever people gather, under whatever name, in whatever millennium, once the sacred circle is drawn and one steps inside, magic can happen regardless of the program. Since then, my quest has been to understand the nature of the sacred circle and the qualities of the magic inside it. Though my experience working for the Vatican would extract a personal and emotional toll that would take me a decade to heal, the gift of its wounding was a flash of insight that requires no corroboration, permission, or referenced footnote for proof. I have always known that this insight came to me from an unquestionably divine source. Again, Nelson tells us:

Since the beginning of time, people have always known the necessity for a sacred form or space, even if it was only a circle drawn in the dirt. The important element is that its purpose be separate, sacred and safe. ‘*Come no nearer,*’ said God to Moses. ‘*Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.*’ This holy ground is both container for and protection from the tremendum that lies beyond. It is the very business of religion to invite the great creative power in and to create the barriers that protect from what is too powerful. These forms and barriers are sometimes spatial, or temporal. Sometimes they are found in the form of rules. Sometimes they are literally structural or architectural. After the simple barrier of the circle in the dust, enclosed space for sacred functions can be more developed.¹³⁸

There was a second part to the flash of illumination: the quality of the magic inside the sacred circle depended upon the mindset from which it emanated. What I know, and cannot prove, is that whenever the sacred circle is drawn and two or more are assembled therein, the divine enters. I suspect even that, violent though it may be, the sacred could be found even at a cockfight or among terrorists working in the name of Allah, if the right combination of camaraderie, shared spirit, and sense of place are present.

This gift to me has at times been a blessing. Understanding how it works gives me a unique advantage when I create programs and events. But, at times it also is a curse because explaining it to the “uninitiated” is not easy. I was aware, as I stood on that hilltop all those years ago, that what I was witnessing was the true experience of *communitas* and that it shared in common historic ritual that has been reenacted for tens of thousands of years, tying peoples together with the common bonds of their hearts and spirits over time. Since that time, I’ve pursued the meaning behind this revelation and how it is possible that all celebration might offer opportunities for transcendent experience and transformation.

Future Experience

Through their own powerful human needs and mutual collaborations, people are beginning to feel the stirring of their souls' needs for authentic group experience, for the experience of oneness held in authentic *communitas*. They are seeking experience at a deep, personal, and cosmic proportion. They are beginning to initiate, based on their own innate demands, solutions for transformative experience that harken back to pre-Christian revelry. Under the term "transformational festival" is springing an authentic return to the group experience of ecstasy. Sound familiar? It should. After centuries of repression and fear, people's collective spirit is beginning to emerge, no longer caught in a life-and-death struggle with religion. Joan of Arc would probably approve.

Multiple examples of these new festivals have emerged around the globe in the last couple of decades: Entheos, Lightning in a Bottle, Sonic Bloom, Mystic Garden, Burning Man, The Boom, Yaga Gathering. They all include music, art, dancing, and community gatherings with the purpose of fostering kinship and community. Based on safety, trust, holistic and healthy lifestyles, and love, they seek to provide the fundamental human needs of connection, so intrinsically prevalent (in my opinion) because of people's disenchantment and unfulfilled needs from the current societal alienation of flatness. TEDxVancouver speaker and transformational festival organizer and participant, Jeet-Kei Leung, explains: "*Transformational festivals are fulfilling deep human need for connection by creating safe containers to reveal ourselves and discover each other.*"¹³⁹ Leung claims that the fundamental frequencies required to be whole humans include inspiration, connection, and healing, which he claims are the bedrock

principles of transformational festivals, wherein one can find immersive environments of these qualities. Exactly those human qualities so despised by The Church.

Currently located outside cities where the natural environment also can add its energetics to the mix, it will be interesting to watch the evolution of these festivals and to determine the mark they leave on people's lives after they exit the festival and re-emerge in their daily lives.

Transformation and the Proximate Self

As a preface for this section, Djwal Khul (The Tibetan known also as “DK”) has explained through the work of Alice Bailey that mankind has mechanisms through which to be in touch with the “*differentiated manifestations through which Deity seeks to express itself. The subject of the vital body, its relation to this universal energy, and its seven points of contact with the physical organism...*”¹⁴⁰ This preface helps explain the structure of what I am proposing here. These seven points are grouped around the chakra system of energetic conductors of prana, or life energy. According to DK, they are the media through which our souls animate our forms. I propose that through these points we exhibit our levels of consciousness, energetic awakening, and intention. Our potentials for transformation to higher levels are constantly active. Our abilities to resonate with different types of community programs and celebrations are determined by our own levels of consciousness and energetic development.

To consider the idea that consciousness development may influence one's response to celebration, taking a side-trip with philosopher Ken Wilber may be in order. According to him, if the proximate self, one's consciousness navigator, has not developed

at higher levels, it cannot experience higher levels nor benefit from their information. In Wilber's All Quadrant/All Level integration system, "*...each basic structure or wave actually consists of both hierarchy (or increasing holistic capacity) and heterarchy (or nonhierarchical interaction among mutually equivalent elements). The relation between levels is hierarchical, with each senior level transcending and including its juniors, but not vice versa.*"¹⁴¹ To transcend and include, one must have begun to transcend in order to comprehend and embody the higher, more subtle realms. Again, according to Wilber, "*...the senior dimension embraces the junior, but not vice versa.*"¹⁴²

Comparing this logic in the context of public programs and events, it can be proposed that the effects of well-conceived and organized events can reveal a coherent whole out of which best-practice standards can be indicated and through which organizers can cultivate All Quadrant/All Level community integral qualities that match the core values and consciousness development levels of their citizens. Different strokes for different folks!

By applying this integral aspect of heterarchy to community development, and using well-conceived and organized public events as developmental opportunities for community well-being, I have found that the aspect of heterarchy can be applied to a transpersonal phenomenon of unity experience when people of all diversities are gathered for mutual celebration, thus showing that even in communities, the relationship between levels is both heterarchical and hierarchical psychographically.

However, differences in developmental stages may predict what types of public celebrations people of different consciousness levels will attend and what their experiences will be. For instance, what's good for folks in Sedona, Arizona may not be

meaningful to folks in Topeka, Kansas. People of all consciousness development levels report peak experiences during events; however, they are only reported at certain types of events for certain people, implying that peak experience is directly related to the type of event and its coherence with individuals' specific levels of development. Under the tutelage of the Institute of Noetic Sciences' chief scientist, Dean Radin, new random event generator studies are now underway during Burning Man, hoping to shed new light on the transformational festival phenomenon. We all await the results.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs may be helpful, though how to sort out equivalent levels of events may prove daunting. People who report peak experiences while attending mosh pit events may be developmentally anchored in their lower chakra centers, making physiological and safety needs a priority in their psychography. People who report peak experiences during pep rallies for teams or political candidates may tend to function from mid-developmental levels that resonate more with belonging and self-esteem. Events that present creativity, spontaneity, and diversity tolerance, such as the relatively new phenomenon of transformational festivals mentioned earlier, may appeal to those whose consciousness levels are developed at higher levels, bordering the transpersonal realm and reporting more frequent peak experiences from them.

Each developmental level may respond to the type of event with which its proximate self (one's navigator for its individual level of consciousness development) can best resonate. For instance, events intended to reach the transpersonal levels of experience must be programmed and presented to reach the specific audience that will resonate with that level of consciousness. People functioning at lower developmental levels may not be able to benefit from events programmed at a higher development level

because their observer selves cannot identify with the level in which those events are programmed. It seems that what we each are after for personal fulfilment may be a good predictor of what our individual levels of consciousness or hierarchy of needs may be. Monster truck rallies may not interest someone who is seeking deep relationship with spirit, whereas it might be right-on as a truly transformative experience for someone vested in mid-chakra development.

Using Jenny Wade's information on the evolution of consciousness, and comparing it to Wilber's work, Wade stresses that the cornerstone of holonomic and mystical theory is concomitant with the implicate order: all levels of consciousness, no matter how unevolved, are equally valid.¹⁴³ Higher stages of consciousness can comprehend lower stages, but not vice versa, meaning that all levels of form exist at the same time, but in a multitude of realities. Different stages of reality can manifest in entire community environments whose successful celebrations are the ones that appeal to participants' specific stages of consciousness development.

The body's physical location of numinous experience may reside in the brain's right hemisphere, but may represent only part of what occurs during transpersonal states of consciousness. I believe that the right hemisphere is the portal to the Divine Creative, in which peak experience, transcendent flight, and trans-egoic states occur---rather like a separate consciousness from the everyday world. Though I cannot prove or even test any of it, I assert that not only does synchronization of brain waves occur among individuals in environments of stage-specific types of group celebration, but also that there appears to be some sort of entrainment among many of the individuals involved in the group. A

resonance of Mind, if you will, like that of a tuning fork or a room full of synchronized clocks.

Although transcendent experiences seem to vanish from waking consciousness, my festival work shows that when people of similar levels of consciousness development are in celebration with each other, a trance-like altered state can be exhibited that manifests as a group experience kinship. As an aside, I long have believed that events affect people's experience based upon the chakra level (consciousness level) to which their programming appeals. I believe that transcendence can happen at any of those energetic levels. For instance, I believe that a teen rave with a mosh pit can overtake people's experiences at the root chakra level bringing them to a point of entrainment with each other that transcends their daily lives---and very likely results in someone hurling himself from a stage in sacrifice to be passed over the heads of those in the pit below. The memory of such an experience would be pleurably intense and long-lasting. Likewise, I am sure that the Denver pilgrims waiting in that overnight papal vigil were having a similar transcendent experience, but one based on higher chakra resonance.

For the sake of simplicity, we will use the chakra system as a structure for discussing energetic comparisons of possible transformational alignment regarding celebration. Although it is an exercise in guessing, the guesses follow accepted principles of body-centered energetics and the suggestions of equivalent celebrations are my own theoretical assumptions. This is not a scientific or exhaustive investigation, but instead is a quick look at ways that some systems of energetic development and needs might compare. Originally, I compared more than half a dozen systems including Anodea Judith's *Wheels of Light*,¹⁴⁴ Abraham Maslow's *Hierarchy of Needs*,¹⁴⁵ Ann Nunley's

holodynamic Inner Counselor Integration chart,¹⁴⁶ Jenny Wade's Holonomic Theory of Consciousness Evolution,¹⁴⁷ Ken Wilber's Great Nest of Being,¹⁴⁸ Freddy Silva's Seven Gates of Heaven (originating from Egyptian funerary texts),¹⁴⁹ and Elmer Green's Planetary Field of Mind.¹⁵⁰ There were some correlations, but only a few of the systems seemed to have similarities that could easily be compared for the purposes of this work. The following section conveys what I found.

Chakra & Consciousness Development Energy Comparisons

The following descriptions provide insight into intuitive alignment among chakra energies and consciousness development stages; however, determining what types of events may resonate with specific chakra energies is difficult. It is reasonable to project that two major groupings may be reasonable for such comparison: first, we'll discuss events that resonate with energies and consciousness development "below the belt" in the first three chakras and then discuss those "above the belt," meaning from the heart center up.

Let's begin with descriptions of the first group of energies and their attendant consciousness orientations, looking at the energy centers "below the belt" from the root to the sacral and solar plexis chakras. Judith, whose work mentioned earlier informs all of the following chakra information, describes chakras as "*Swirling intersections of vital life forces, each chakra reflects an aspect of consciousness essential to our lives.*"¹⁵¹ The line-up of our primary chakras is called the sushumna, referred to as a super highway for our vital energies, with each one synthesizing its own particular type of consciousness. To visualize the shushumna, consider the symbol of the caduceus, which is depicted as

the interlacing image of two snakes, the origin of the symbol of healing, around a rod or staff. The two nadis surrounding the shushumna and represented by the two snakes are the Ida and Pingala which cross at each of the chakras. These nadis represent the distribution of prana, the life force of breath. The Ida culminates in the left nostril and is associated with the feminine and the left side of the spine. The Pingala culminates in the right nostril and is associated with the masculine and the right side of the spine. The balanced function of the Ida and Pingala together symbolize transcendence, surrounding the center channel of the shushumna (the rod or staff) around which these nadis flow. This image represents healing, wholeness, unity.¹⁵²

The Root Chakra - The root chakra embodies the energy of survival and grounding. It's located in the coccygeal plexus at the base of the spine. Its element is Earth and its color red, the longest wavelength and therefore the slowest frequency in the visible spectrum.

- Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs places biological and physiological survival at this level, including air, food, water, shelter, warmth, sex, sleep, homeostasis, security, order, freedom from fear, morality, the family, and health here.
- Nunley iterates this level of integration as that of physical needs that include stamina, security, survival, safety, vitality, and courage. She also includes some qualities that integrate as high as the level of the solar plexus, such as self-value, independence, determination, self-discovery, individualism, and self-assertion.
- Wilber's Great Nest of Being equates this part of the nest to matter and physics and also to biology and life.

The Sacral Chakra – The sacral chakra holds our sexual and emotional energies and is located in the lower abdomen, the genitals and the womb. Its function is desire, pleasure, sexuality and procreation. Its element is Water and its color orange.

- Although Maslow's hierarchy does not correlate directly to the sacral chakra, he includes some of his biological, physiological, and safety needs which may equate to the root chakra. There may be enough of a progression of need boundaries to stretch some of them to the sacral chakra level such as freedom from fear, law and order, and security of body.
- According to Nunley, some of our personal needs also may be held here, including our self-assertion, self-value, independence, determination, and self-discovery, though her integration chart shows inclusion of qualities ranging from the root chakra to the solar plexus.
- Wilber's Great Nest of Being correlates psychology and the mind from levels that include the sacral chakra, the solar plexus, and the heart chakra.

Solar Plexis Chakra – The solar plexis chakra holds our will power and personal power. It may also hold some of our emotional nature as it is the location of the "gut instinct" response. It's located between the navel and the solar plexus. Its element is Fire and its color yellow.

- Maslow, once again, shows no direct correlation to the solar plexis chakra.
- In similarity with holodynamic traits of the Inner Counselor, it represents our personal needs for self-value, independence, determination, self-discovery, individualism, and self-assertion. In all of the first three chakras (root, sacral and solar

plexis), according to Ann Nunley's holodynamic process, personal needs are energetically held. Personal needs include self-value, independence, determination, self-discovery, individualism, and self-assertion.

- Wilber includes this energetically with psychology and the mind.

Now that these energies and levels of consciousness have been compared, let us look at what types of public celebrations may resonate with these "below the belt" energies. I propose that the cock fight or dog fight consciousness may reside here among the first of these three chakras, almost lusting in the survival need for release from individual ego and the vicarious proof of fighting for one's life. The intense presence of this chakra's energy could permeate a space potently enough to help move participants into a peak experience that equates to this level of energy.

Although I believe that music (rhythm in particular) works toward conditioning for transformation at all levels of being, it is likely that different types of music resonate at different levels of development. This level is where I predict the primal and violent rhythms of heavy metal or acid rock most likely would correlate. Perhaps it is at the sacral level that music begins to influence the emotional nature beyond response to primal rhythm, which strongly affects the root chakra. Rhythm alone is transformative and assists in altered states of consciousness, as shown by anthropologist Felicitas Goodman, who has demonstrated the cultivation of ecstatic trance using rhythm and ritual body postures.¹⁵³ Tribal drumming and dancing is well known to invoke transcendent states. With the help of mind-altering libations, Bacchanalia is famous for drinking and dancing and debauchery---most definitely transformational experience

below the belt! Recalling Wilber's stance that if the proximate self, one's consciousness navigator, has not developed at higher levels, it cannot experience higher levels nor benefit from their information; however, someone evolved at a higher level could resonate with primal music.

Related most directly to the sacral chakra, probably the most well-known example of a festival devoted entirely to sexuality is Kanamara Matsuri,¹⁵⁴ colloquially called The Penis Festival, a Shinto fertility festival in Kawasaki, Japan. It was founded on an ancient folk tale during the Edo period in Japan, but today is celebrated by thousands of local people and tourists who arrive on the shrine site to revel in images, souvenirs, graphic candies and edibles, and activities that include a parade related to the penis and the vagina. The shrine location, where a cast sculpture of the penis known in the folk tale, is famous as a site where prostitutes pray for health and where couples pray to improve their chances of conception.

Monster truck events and contemporary warrior events, such as football and other sports games, resonate below the belt because they are regimented spectator events where winning (survival) is the baseline. There is no opportunity for individual involvement except secondarily as a spectator, though it's my belief these events probably resonate mostly at the solar plexis level, just below the heart, because there is often strong affinity and emotional involvement with the iconic meaning of teams. For instance, in my own life when teams are winning from cities I have loved to live in, I feel personal pride that is something akin to love, friendship, and belonging. But, it is action that typifies celebrations appealing to the lower chakras---the action of physicality, aggression, win, score, and touchdown. In my own essay writing for a speech delivered in 1996 to the

Totem Council of Girl Scouts in Seattle, Washington, entitled “*Women’s Work in the New Millennium*,” I referred to this style of consciousness and activity as masculine. We will discuss the feminine side in the upcoming information about celebrating above the belt.

Looking at “above the belt” resonances, the following describe the four chakra centers involved:

Heart Chakra – The heart chakra embodies our sense of love and belonging, friendship, family, intimacy, and affection. It’s located over the sternum. Its element is Air and its color green.

- Maslow includes social needs of love and belonging, friendship, family, intimacy, affection and love in this level.
- According to Ann Nunley’s holodynamic information, it holds both our interpersonal and group needs. Interpersonal needs include setting healthy boundaries, kindness, empathy, appreciation, and intimacy. Group needs include synergy, cooperation, respect, reciprocity, recognition, and teamwork.
- Wilber, once again, leaves the heart chakra in his nest of psychology and the mind.

Throat Chakra – The throat energetically holds our communication and creativity. It is located in the throat. Its element is Sound and its color blue.

- Maslow’s chart coincides with self-esteem, confidence, mastery, independence, achievement, and respect.

- Nunley compares this with integral needs that include integrity, self-knowledge, compassion, commitment, vision, consistency and balance (though she also includes the third eye in these same comparisons).
- Wilber's Great Nest includes the throat chakra in his level of psychology and the mind.

Third Eye/Brow Chakra – this is the site of our spiritual sight, to know, perceive and to command. It's associated with clairvoyance, intuition and imagination. It is located in the center of the head at eye level or slightly above. Its element is Light and its color indigo.

- Maslow echoes this definition with aspects of his self-actualization needs level. He mentions realizing personal potential, seeking personal growth (which also is shared with the crown chakra), morality, problem-solving and lack of prejudice.
- Nunley shares some levels with the throat chakra, but also indicates integrity, self-knowledge, compassion, commitment, vision, consistency, and balance.
- Wilber refers to it as the level of theology and the soul.

Crown Chakra – The crown chakra embodies universal consciousness, information, knowledge, and understanding. It is located at the top of the head. Its element is Thought and its color violet, the shortest wavelength and therefore the highest frequency in the visible spectrum.

- Maslow refers to this chakra with aspects also shared with the third eye that include self-actualization, realizing one's personal potential, peak experiences, and self-fulfillment.

- Nunley's transpersonal needs category compares with the crown chakra characteristics of self-actualization, self-realization, transpersonal needs center, and enlightenment.
- Wilber's highest level of the Great Nest of Being correlates, with his description of spirit, mysticism, and the causal plane (duality and non-duality).

The entrainment and focus of the overnight papal vigil is a good example of celebration "above the belt." Entrainment among hundreds, even thousands, of people who are mutually in prayer or contemplation creates a group Mind effect in which proximity alone surely reinforces that entrainment. Equally valid as above-the-belt celebration is the audience response to the inspired Dave Brubeck concert mentioned earlier as well as the experiences felt at some of the world's transformational festivals such as Burning Man. No doubt, when rhythm and movement are involved, the effect of the transformative experience is even greater. Music events based on melody more than percussion will fit here as well, leaving head-banging to below the belt fans. Festivals celebrating the commonality of community, such as founders' days, community art festivals, holiday parades, etc., will qualify above the belt.

As mentioned earlier in reference to my Totem Girl Scout Council leadership conference keynote speech, the emergence of the feminine brings balance both to our personal lives and to that of our communities. Perhaps the solar plexis chakra is the location of this transformation, this digestion and synthesis of masculine and feminine energies that we experience as gut intuition. In that keynote I proposed that feminine qualities could bring balance to a world out of balance and engrossed in masculine

pursuits such as winning, scoring, and dominating. I proposed that balance comes from what the sacred feminine does best in nurturing, mothering, loving, and creating---where inclusivity, consensus, intuitive decision making, integrity, well-being, dignity, relationship, and teamwork are more important than productivity. I proposed bringing forth a new balance between the feminine value of love and the masculine value of power. It is this essential difference, these two sides of human duality that summarize my theory of above the belt (higher chakras) and below the belt (first three chakras) proximate energies. And they illustrate my contention that the proximate self in general responds in resonance with celebrations that match one's energetic level of consciousness, according to the development level of one's own integration of duality.

CHAPTER 4: CITY CENTERS: DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PLACE AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT

The Temple Model of City Center

Once upon a time, the city center was a sacred container for the community, its interactions and its sense of togetherness. What we now think of and experience of the modern community's city center (sometimes referred to as downtown or Main Street) is the result of a long, slow disintegration of what once was known to be the holy center of cosmic divine order on Earth. Though the idea of organized community began with groups and tribes needing safety and shared subsistence, the origin of the city center has its roots in ancient history, in city-states and in temples before them.

By the time of Solomon's Temple in the late Aries Age, the city (the temple) had taken on detailed cosmic and spiritual foundations, perfected from earlier knowledge. Today, city centers may still embody some aspects of the original city-temple's commerce, government, and cultural life purposes, but they no longer reflect their highest purpose, which was to be the center of more encompassing spiritual and community guidance and civilization development, to be as the temple had been in Jerusalem.¹⁵⁵

In all ages and all cultures of urbanized civilization, from China to Egypt to Jerusalem to Glastonbury, until the early Piscean Age, the center city functions were synonymous with the purpose of Solomon's Temple. The earliest example of cosmic sacred proportion use was at Hathor Temple in Egypt, constructed about 3200 B.C.E. It is found to share the same mystical proportions used in later cosmic centers and temple

geometry.¹⁵⁶ Solomon's Temple (dated at about 2500 B.C.E.) and Stonehenge (built about 2000 B.C.E.) both exhibit the same divine celestial proportions, too. It is only recently clear that there were people living in proximity to Stonehenge on a daily basis, and we now know that it may have had other activities in common with centers of community as well. Temples were designed to assure harmony and to cultivate divine reality for the people through the use of sacred geometry:

...every feature of existence was determined by reference to a living canon of proportion, formed after the perfect model of the cosmos, and also reflecting the structure of the human mind. It was believed that any situation in life may be represented as a dynamic pattern for which there exists a precedent in nature. Cosmology was therefore the reigning science, for by knowledge of the laws of growth and celestial motion it was found possible to divine the appropriate response to any circumstances, to harmonise conflicting interests, to predict and thus to influence the course of events.¹⁵⁷

There is evidence that some form of community existed more than 31,000 years ago when early peoples were painting scenes of communal life inside Chauvet Cave in France.¹⁵⁸ The earliest scientific use of astrology dates even earlier, to 37000 B.C.E. at the dawn of the Egyptian civilization. Egyptian civilization predates all others and was first to discover the astrological ages through information passed on by their Afro-Kamitic ancestors.¹⁵⁹ Record of urbanized communities, with citizens living in them rather than in agrarian settings, began to emerge about 4000 B.C.E. giving rise to the concept of city/state organization.¹⁶⁰ Because there are few if any remains, it is difficult to show how ancient civilizations such as Atlantis or Lemuria compare.

Before the age of science, before the advent of the printed book, before the invention of alphabets and even before the concept of the zero in arithmetic was created, mankind was interpreting his own meaning and that of the cosmos through his built

environment. The trail of ancient sacred architecture unfolds across continents, across time, and across cultural boundaries. Every major civilization appears to have originally possessed the great mysteries of sacred architecture; but, upon examination, each one also built upon the secret knowledge of others that came before them. As a side note, apparently money changers have been “in the temple” throughout history, too. Perhaps that is the reason that today’s downtowns usually are the center of banking and finance for a community, but somehow have lost the sacred references. There is evidence of trading artifacts being found throughout England’s ancient structures, dating back to pre-Neolithic times, at the time of Stonehenge.¹⁶¹ In addition to being an astrological observatory, perhaps Stonehenge also was a center of trade in its day. It appears that money has managed to replace God in many aspects of contemporary life.

From sketching out a simple timeline, it appears that by the mid-Piscean Age in western civilization, sacred cosmic geometry no longer was being used for temple-city design, but instead was being used for churches (i.e. Chartres Cathedral, built in about 1200 A.D. in France), leaving cities without development help from the heavens---the City’s role in divine providence had been replaced by the Church. It’s not surprising that during the Inquisition sacred customs quickly changed, becoming occult with meaning hidden in symbolism, for those with knowing eyes to see. Though cosmic technology was no longer available, energetic guidance was still needed. Foundations laid for buildings were considered to “*profane the natural state of the world by artificially enclosing space.*”¹⁶² Indeed, as spirit was enclosed by successive generations, its restriction “*was the first step on the road to urbanization---the remoulding of the earth in man’s image.*”¹⁶³ As the built-environment’s influence on urbanization grew, so did the need for

technologies that could maximize the effects of these ancient spots of geomantic energies. These technologies were considered so sacred that no one person was entrusted with knowledge of their entirety. Processes, forms, craft, tools, astronomical and esoteric knowledge each were kept as separate bodies of information. Information was passed cryptically, encoded in archetypal symbology. Although Egyptian culture was not silenced by the same rampage that shut down cosmic knowledge throughout the Christian world, symbology also typified their sacred wall texts, requiring translation and interpretation, slowing down dissemination of information.

Our cities have lost their connections to the ancient technologies of the divine cosmic order, but people still retain remnants of desire to gravitate toward the energy and common space found in the spirit of the center city. Once regarded spiritually and socially as the center of the universe, city centers today can only strive to be the common center points of their communities. Downtowns' purposes today are to be the centers of their communities' unique spirits, providing a sense of place and belonging for their citizens---or at least they should be. Center cities can retain vestiges of their higher purposes by intentionally cultivating common gathering places for their citizens to live, work, learn, and play in community. It may not reflect the fully-sacred connection between man and cosmos once intended, but by developing strong downtowns we can help a broad diversity of community citizenry come closer to cultivating community spirit, to living in the New Jerusalem.

Understanding the evolution of the city center helps us comprehend the sources of some of our concepts regarding today's downtowns and our relationships with them. From the current downtown development industry comes an axiom that states "*as goes*

downtown, so goes the community,”¹⁶⁴ which surely was as apt a statement in antiquity as it is today. It means that one can discern the vibrancy and success of an entire community of citizens by observing the condition of their city center. Let’s explore some highlights of the history, role, functions, and evolution of the city center and the factors that impact its sense of place and community spirit.

Today, our modern urban areas can be much larger than a single city center can accommodate. For instance, as the fifth largest metropolitan area in the United States, metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona’s five million residents may live as far apart as 50 miles because of the land mass expanse (sprawl) of the metropolitan area. Expecting citizens both to personally relate to Phoenix and to gather in its city center area is both impractical and imprudent, as adequate infrastructure to accommodate that many people’s needs and safety does not exist. However, as Phoenix grew, like many other major urban areas, it grew into and around nearby smaller cities and towns that independently accommodate their own citizens’ daily needs and safety, and also their needs for authenticity of relationship, common identity, and shared sense of place.

Sometimes, small towns on the edges of a metropolitan area are referred to as fringe cities. The Phoenix metropolitan area includes Mesa (the state’s second largest city), Scottsdale, Tempe, Chandler, the Town of Gilbert, Peoria, Litchfield Park, Laveen, Buckeye, Avondale, Apache Junction, Queen Creek, Cave Creek, Glendale, Ahwatukee, and several other smaller towns. Of those, several are fringe cities. Almost all of these communities have their own city center, a separate government, and a unique heritage and personality that is authentic just to that location. That uniqueness forms each community’s sense of place and spirit, absorbed by its residents as an organic function of

emersion in daily living. Each of those city centers embodies some combination of centralized commerce, government, and culture. Therefore, each of those city centers is the best place to represent its own community's needs for identity, well-being, socio-political guidance, and cultural expression. Through interaction with the functions of community life comes the recognition and development of community spirit, the resonant understanding of a community's identity and mutually-held values. Occasionally, the focus of "the center" falls on a thriving district or neighborhood, if it is prepared well enough to meet the diverse needs of residents. Such areas include Lower Downtown ("LoDo") in Denver and Kansas City's Country Club Plaza.

Over time, aspects of a city center can take on iconic meaning for citizens. For instance, the rich ethnic and cultural diversity of New Orleans can be compared to the stew for which it is known throughout the world. "*Gumbo is a social metaphor for New Orleans,*"¹⁶⁵ and serves as an example rich with diverse sensory resonance. Center city skylines also can take on their own unique silhouettes, forming iconic images that represent only their own downtowns. Well-known iconic city center silhouettes include New York City, Shanghai, Toronto, Dubai, Paris, Tokyo, Seattle, and Dallas, among only some. Even my hometown, Topeka, Kansas, has its own unique skyline which I would recognize immediately as being unique to Topeka because of its classic state capitol dome.

The sacred concept of center city has been degraded over time, but none more harmfully than the rise of land use and development in our own country following the Industrial Revolution, when the advent of the automobile brought on the need for transportation planning. By 1916 the Federal Aid Road Act had been passed, clearing the

way for roadway development. The entire basis for this development revolved (and still does revolve) around relieving road congestion and qualifying success by accommodating peak demand,¹⁶⁶ regardless of the effect on the infrastructure of place.

Quality of life and the fracturing of the sacred center wasn't the concern of transportation planning, but new roadways opened the door for the development of suburbs, often destroying the city center and leaving it for the most part to industrialization and disconnecting it from the community of people whose lives were now lived elsewhere.¹⁶⁷ The cascade of city center disintegration has been a victim of public policy and private developer agendas that have eroded the combination of vital qualities needed for its sacred survival. According to one of the most influential voices speaking out on behalf of urban diversity, safety, and flourishing neighborhoods, Jane Jacobs sums up her take on the demise of diversity and lack of mutual community support:

Probably everyone is aware of certain general dependencies by a city on its heart. When a city heart stagnates or disintegrates, a city as a social neighborhood of the whole begins to suffer: People who ought to get together, by means of central activities that are failing, fail to get together. Ideas and money that ought to meet, and do so often only by happenstance in a place of central vitality, fail to meet. The networks of city public life develop gaps they cannot afford. Without a strong and *inclusive* central heart, a city tends to become a collection of interests isolated from one another. It falters at producing something greater, socially, culturally and economically, than the sum of its separated parts.¹⁶⁸

The mantra of modern city centers, as taught by the downtown industry's official governing body the International Downtown Association, is live, work, play, and learn. This mantra embodies the goals toward which downtown managers and developers are instructed to strive if they want vibrant and successful center cities. It is true that successful downtowns require a residential base which can support 24-hour living. This

base of around-the-clock living can support a strong business sector whose employees live in proximity, similar to a village. Through cultivation of a vibrant residential base and a robust business sector evolves the need for arts and entertainment to accommodate the lifestyle choices of the downtown constituency. Shops, restaurants, theatres, museums can successfully join that mix. The addition of opportunities for learning completes the cycle of livability for the center city and guarantees its on-going health and vibrancy. The right combination of primary and secondary uses is necessary to infuse the vibrancy and safety of the street and build a successful structure for economic vitality as well. But, without the inclusion of the sacred technologies, the center may still languish, unable to fulfill the needs of its citizenry.

Though modern downtown goals have been devised in the last century and may only approximate people's scope of needs, they do harken to deeper meaning rooted in ancient cosmological belief. The original sacred temple, proscribed in its dimensions and proportions, accommodated room within its boundaries for family living and sustenance, the marketplace, civic and governmental concerns, intellectual offerings, sacred spiritual space, and cultural meaning. With the exception of losing the anchor for cosmology and spiritual cultivation, the center city to this day strives to retain some aspects consistent for the good of the community. Particularly in the United States, where there is a mandate for the separation of church and state and where cultural diversity is our herald, the commonality needed for *communitas* may be difficult to program in an inclusive manner.

Our modern city centers have evolved from actually containing the entire community in ancient times to being the symbolic living and beating heart of today's extended communities. Today, successful and vibrant center cities retain the

community's concentration of commerce, they serve as urbanized residential neighborhoods, and they provide the common ground on which the entire community can gather for some celebration. They are everyone's neighborhood throughout the community. According to William Holly Whyte, widely referred to as the father of modern downtown development, "...*the social life in public spaces contributes fundamentally to the quality of life of individuals and society...[and] we have a moral responsibility to create physical places that facilitate civic engagement and community interaction.*"¹⁶⁹

Although it is ideal to cultivate downtown residential density, many downtowns do not enjoy the full benefits of resident living. As a consequence, downtowns often are not represented at the ballot box, leaving them as areas that may require intentional attention of broadly-dispersed citizens. Neighborhoods have a sense of their own personalities based on the psychographics and demographics of who lives there, but at its best the center city will carry the entire community's sense of identity so that one's sense of place will be most identified with downtown. Downtowns are the original gathering places for community. It would be rare to find citizens' sense of place connected to a shopping mall, or their community spirit associated primarily with the street on which they live. Those larger identities properly belong to the city center.

The reuse of original infrastructure plays an important role in maintaining continuity and cultural integrity. So frequently, cities fall victim to the urban renewal chimera of change in favor of a new start. "*Newness, and its superficial gloss of well-being, is a very perishable commodity,*" warns Jane Jacobs. Sustaining the roots of community, including preservation of historic buildings and sites, feeds vitality in depths

of relationship not met by new infrastructure---particularly if the new has come from the greedy private agendas of clandestine money for development. Often, the new is constructed around the mission of planned shopping, rather than enrichment of community diversity.

The concept of city center development is as old as history, with evidence of planned community (intentional community planning) stretching back over millennia. Although technologies have changed with the ages, people's needs for common experience and identity with the center of their communities have not changed. The city center has emerged as the embodiment of those needs. Because of people's common experience of their downtown as the center of business, government, and culture, the entire community feels ownership of it, making it everybody's neighborhood, everybody's emotional community home. Often, downtown is the site of the local courthouse and the courthouse square, the main library and post office, museum, theatre, shops, restaurants, and financial institutions. So, it is common for community celebrations to be located there, where everyone perceives common ground.

People crave opportunities to gather and to share common experience. Because city centers are the archetypal locations that belong to all of their communities' citizens, they are the most logical and the best gathering places for a variety of shared activities that include commerce and culture. They are neutral territories where all citizens can gather. *"Conceiving of downtown as 'neutral' makes it possible for a corporate plaza to serve as civic space, allowing the concerts to attract audiences who can be recognized as reflecting and representing the people of the city as a whole."*¹⁷⁰ It is imperative that citizens intentionally cultivate their city center so that its uniqueness of place can

effectively inform and strengthen community spirit and cultural identity. Perhaps the act of public celebration is as close as we can come to imbuing sacred qualities in our modern city centers. For, as goes downtown, so goes the community.

The Benefits of Celebration in the Center

Events are an important part of people's lives and are important to the growth and prosperity of a community. A vibrant, healthy community is one that works together to find ways to interact, learn from each other, contribute to a greater common good, and have fun. Through a context of celebration, events provide the vehicle for community development that enhances both quality of life and local economics in important ways.

Discovering a community's authentic identity can help improve its quality of life. This authenticity, this spirit of vital and vibrant place, has been largely overlooked as an ingredient in city planning for most of the last 100 years in the modern era of city planning, land use, development, and public celebration. The skilled art and craft of community celebration has been sadly absent, dismissed as fun and games and therefore disrespected by those who deal in more tangible aspects of development such as money, bricks, and mortar. The living and breathing heart, the citizens and the authentic sense of place, have been included only peripherally, if at all, and our communities now provide their citizens with little inspiration and often little interaction, interest, or opportunity for *communitas*. Place itself forms the essence of community, though spirit precedes place as a formative condition of place and is the context for its existence.

There are six primary advantages to event celebrations in a community, which I have developed and use consistently to influence community leadership regarding development of signature celebrations. They are the following:

Indication of Community Vibrancy – The degree to which a community celebrates together indicates the vibrancy and therefore the viability of that community as a culture and a people. Vibrancy refers to life, to being alive, to being full of life energy. Simple observation can help one determine if a community is vibrant. It is the presence of the human spirit that breathes the energy of life into the concrete canyons and frozen facades of our cities, similar to the ship’s “coming alive” mentioned earlier. Planned shopping does not qualify for this category. What we’re after here is far more soulful and interactive.

Downtowns are particularly important vibrancy indicators since they usually represent the business, social, and geographic heart of a community. Celebrations planned in the city center automatically are infused with some degree of those qualities. In return, city centers benefit from the familiarity and bonding that an event will leave behind. Historically, town centers have been built around a courthouse square that is intended to host community gatherings. Unfortunately, in today’s world, many urban centers have been co-opted with misguided development practices that have eradicated the parks that once were used for gathering. In many of those cases, center city celebrations often close the streets for celebration, and parks designed by city planners are too sterile and poorly-designed to meet the needs of community gathering and use.

Here we will depart for a moment to address the difference between festivals and special events. The difference is both content and intention.

For the purposes of space programming and special events, all spaces in the city center can become stages for community experience. People who work in the field of space activation consider each space as a potential stage for activity, as described later in Public and Private Space Management. For instance, a Claes Oldenburg¹⁷¹ urban sculpture may adorn a public plaza, adding new identity to a previously plain environment. Or, a public bulletin



Figure 5 - Claes Oldenburg, Clothespin, Philadelphia, PA
(www.bluffton.edu)

board kiosk may provide an opportunity for citizens to post activities of interest for the whole community to see, creating a new touch point for all. Closing a street to provide it as a canvas for a temporary installation by a trompe l'oeil chalk artist such as Julian Beever¹⁷² can provide days of curiosity and gathering for community members. To well-known event designer and dancer, Marilyn Wood, even the windows of a high-rise building can become a stage for modern dance and ballet. Her performance art installation of dancers and silhouettes in the windows of the Seagram Building in New York City¹⁷³ were an excellent example. Building roofs can become launching pads for cascades of fireworks that resemble waterfalls. Traffic islands can become installation locations for public art. The sides of buildings can serve as projector screens for old Elvis movies, with adjacent parking lots being turned into impromptu seating areas where people can bring their own blankets, chairs, or even old overstuffed

sofas to sit and watch.¹⁷⁴ City streets can become the serpentine route for a community parade that celebrates the holidays and provides the kick-off to the Christmas retail season with the official arrival of Santa Claus.

Overhead, cross-street wires can carry waving flags or informative banners. Lamp posts can sprout kite-like colorful flagging that creates excitement and visual appeal.

All spaces, public and private, are potential locations for programming. Even citizens get in on the act of staging urban environments when they take pride and ownership in public spaces. In Fremont, Washington, a sculpture of people waiting for the bus,

“Waiting for the Interurban,”¹⁷⁵ has been so embraced by citizens that they spontaneously began dressing the bronzes for the seasons with aprons, jackets, hats and other clothing. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, citizens recently have taken on a yarn-bombing project called “Knit the Bridge,”¹⁷⁶ in which the Andy Warhol Bridge was wrapped with handmade blankets.

These small, short-duration special events provide interest and delight, but they are not likely to engender *communitas*. They are more recreational in nature and not designed with the intent of intimate group experience in mind. They are designed to attract attendance based on a rudimentary baseline of fun and entertainment, where the focus of participation is “out there” instead of “in here.” However, they do create vibrancy and a sense of place based on interest and fun.

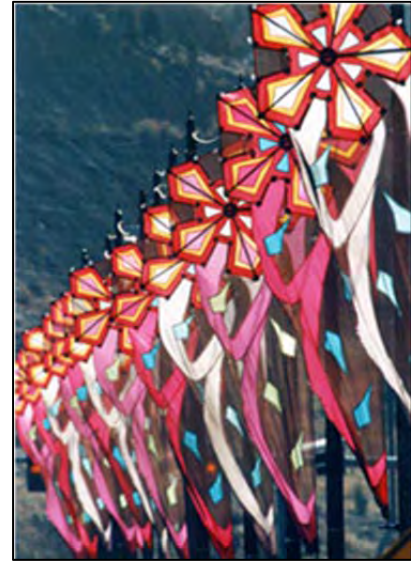


Figure 6 - Mettje Swift's Colorful Mountain Town Lamp Post Banners (animalcostumes.com)

Around the world, green spaces and pocket parks are taking on new importance as urban development gobbles them up and transforms them into concrete canyons, thereby destroying community gathering opportunities. As over-development and over-population spread, people are showing more signs of defending their remaining green gathering spaces. According to the Trust for Public Land, city open spaces “*produce important social and community development benefits.*”¹⁷⁷ They provide substantial environmental benefits, cooling cities and filtering air pollution. They make downtown neighborhoods more livable and offer recreational opportunities. They engender a sense of community and also reduce crime. Evidently, Turkish citizens agreed when they recently rioted to save the last remaining green space, Gezi Park, in Istanbul’s city center. The park had been scheduled for demolition to accommodate commercial development of a new shopping mall.¹⁷⁸ Their demonstrations eventually resulted in the cancellation of the development in order to preserve the green space. At some level, people intuitively crave connection with nature, even if they don’t know it consciously. Soil, soul, and society are sacredly linked and we are all hard-wired to long for that wholeness.

Public space can be a theatre for interactive experience and in its highest and best uses, it is just that. Communities can assess their social vibrancy by observing their center city public spaces for interaction. Are the sidewalks populated in the town center? Are people using the parks? Are people engaged in conversations on street corners? Legendary urbanist and organizational analyst, William Holly Whyte, was famous for his study of human behavior in urban settings, based on his early films that showed the vibrancy of the street, shot from adjacent buildings’ roofs. Whyte referred to the city street as “*the river of life...where we come together.*”¹⁷⁹ Armed with this information,

communities can strategically use celebrations to enhance their opportunities for vibrancy by locating them in the heart of town.

Town centers are central territory for all residents. They are neutral territory because they do not culturally belong to any one neighborhood. As the center of commerce, entertainment, culture, and celebration, the center city is “everyone’s downtown.” Celebrations help people become familiar with the logistics of the city center, how to get there, where to park, what shops are available. The carefully-planned infusion of people can bring vibrancy, spur business, and encourage collaborations among merchants, the business community, and citizens. The combination creates a stew rich in ingredients that together make a unique whole. Crowds engender feelings of safety, too. It is being alone on a city street that makes people feel unsafe, whether it is warranted or not. Once people are familiar with a vicinity, they feel more free to return and can do so based on familiarity where once the vicinity may have seemed even a bit intimidating.

Quality of Life – Celebrations are major contributors to a community’s quality of life by serving as catalysts for preserving tradition and cultural heritage and for bringing people together in order to form new experiences that create bonds of community pride and fun memories. Throughout time, celebration has been among people’s highest priorities universally because the experience of togetherness is a deep human need. Celebration is a necessary part of people’s lives, providing release from everyday stress, and creating new experiences. People come to events to be with other people and to transcend ordinary daily life through an experience of surprise and of the extraordinary---

to be delighted by their experiences. The perimeter boundary of an event, the sacred circle, forms the magical space within which life transitions from common daily experience to that which involves togetherness and perhaps even the liminal experience of unity, if the conditions are just right.

An example of how a community event can affect quality of life is evident in the Houston International Festival.¹⁸⁰ As a celebration of diversity, this festival carries that value throughout the community, impacting culture, education, business, and community spirit. In existence since 1971, the festival began as a celebration of visual and performing arts. It was so successful that in 1987 the name of the festival changed from Houston's Main Street Art Happening to Houston International Festival, expanding its mission to include the celebration of Houston as a world-class city of international diversity. One year later, in 1988, it began the tradition of choosing an international country to celebrate (in 1988 it was Australia). In 2013, that country was Brazil. Examples of the festival include its depth of involvement between the chosen countries and the diverse Houston communities. For instance, in 1990 when Great Britain was the chosen country, Margaret Thatcher helped the mayor of Houston cut the ribbon opening the Festival and ushering in a new international business symposium and celebration that introduced the active cultivation of world trade to the community. In 1995, Turkey was featured, and along with that partnership came a museum exchange between Istanbul's famous Topkapi Museum and Houston's Museum of Fine Arts. The sacred circle footprint had just expanded to embrace people from the other side of the Earth.

In addition to business and art exchanges, the festival features a 63-year-old grand parade that draws 400,000 spectators and another two million viewers on the local CBS

affiliate television station. The festival is the originator of the Art Car Parade which grew out of its commitment to performing and visual art, and is now copied throughout the world.



Figure 7 - Houston International Festival Art Car Parade
(www.beakerhead.com)

Additional programs that impact the community include a public school education curriculum developed by the Junior League of Houston that focuses on the featured country's history, literature, food, music, and art. *The Houston Chronicle* inserts education features and news stories that help prepare the community for the variety of opportunities available for celebration. This festival is a grand example of how celebration can improve quality of life in a community.

An additional example of quality of life contribution is Seattle's SEAFAIR,¹⁸¹ for which I served as CEO for a number of years. As one who sees community as a global affair, it was a personal goal to stimulate the international community for the good of community growth and prosperity. SEAFAIR is a combination of about 135 diverse community celebrations in a city which still has distinct ethnic neighborhoods that celebrate their heritages and cultural traditions. For instance, the Filipino community celebrates Pista Sa Nasyon and the Japanese community celebrates Bon Odori, while the Norwegian community celebrates the Syttende Mai (17th of May) Norwegian Constitution Day Festival in Ballard, Washington. In Issaquah, the home of spawning salmon, Salmon Days is celebrated. Although each of these and more than 100 other diverse community festivals is sanctioned as an official SEAFAIR event, they all come

together once a year for the official SEAFair Festival's Torchlight Parade. Each of those communities provides its traditional cultural unit for the parade in a grand, unified effort.

SEAFair has cultivated festival exchange relationships with the cities involved with Seattle's Sister City program and because of this, exchanges involve almost diplomatic stature. For instance, my own experience included numerous exchanges around the world, including Mazatlan, Mexico and Kobe, Japan. SEAFair sent our "court royalty" which consisted of King Neptune Rex and Miss SEAFair to the major parades in those cities, including Carnivale in Mazatlan and Matsuri in Kobe. In addition, the Mayor of Seattle (Norm Rice at the time) and I (as the festival director) accompanied the SEAFair delegation. Often, other Seattle leaders also attended, because important cultural and business relationships had been cultivated. For instance, Seattle's police chief once took Kevlar vests to the Mazatlan police chief. One of our festival exchange dignitaries took Autoclave sterilizers for donation to a Mazatlan hospital. Then, in exchange, during Seattle's annual SEAFair Torchlight Parade, Mazatlan and Kobe (and others) sent their royalty, mayors, and business leadership to Seattle for festival participation and other diplomatic business. This garners not only quality of life improvements for everyone involved because it encourages relationship and common experience---togetherness on a grand scale---but it also stimulates community growth and prosperity. Though local quality of life is the immediate goal, the greater goal is that this sort of mutual exchange and friendship can affect the planetary field of mind, contributing to world understanding and harmony, moving us closer to a community of one world.

One last example of community involves a national first carried out through the simple structure of SEAFAIR celebration. In 1996, I escorted the first U.S. student exchange into Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam after the Vietnam War. No U.S. students had been there until then. Our students were chosen from throughout King County, Washington. Only 12 could be chosen from a field of more than 300 applicants. Known as the SEAFAIR Ambassadors, these 12 took outbound trips to three cities each year, representing the festival and the Pacific Northwest. Once a year, we organized an inbound event, the SEAFAIR Global Symposium, usually attended by youth from about 35 countries. We arranged their home stays and developed their programming and tours. Although we could plan an outbound trip to Ho Chi Minh City, we knew that the Vietnamese government would not reciprocate by sending their outbound students to us in Seattle. It would be enough risk and work just to gain permission to conduct an inbound education exchange in their still-restricted geopolitical environment. Because of our success, the Washington Consular Corps presented an award for that achievement, which was largely the result of relationships fostered during mutual participation in festival events.

At the time, the rest of the world was already doing business in Vietnam, but the U.S. was not yet there. With U.S. Bank as a major SEAFAIR sponsor, we helped find a venue for them to go to Vietnam without requiring the normal business routes. Instead, they sponsored our student exchange and provided their director of international development as one of our primary chaperones. He had been born and raised in Saigon and was the perfect bi-lingual escort. Knowing that spirit works in mysterious ways, I had not been surprised to discover that---upon meeting him only shortly before leaving the

U.S. for our trip---he had been an American Field Service foreign exchange student 30 years earlier, ironically in my own high school in Topeka, Kansas, during the time when I was also attending and participating in the AFS Club.

This program was another example of the way community celebration can work in order to create greater quality of life and prosperity. We perceived that we helped open the door to U.S. business in Vietnam based on the catalyst of festival relationships. The government of Hanoi followed us with observers during our stay, and upon our departure invited us to return, going to Hanoi the next time. I left SEAFAIR before the next exchange there and do not know the results of that one.

Citizen Involvement – Quality of life also involves other benefits in addition to the examples above. Often, citizen involvement is a catalyst for significant community benefit. The opportunity for direct involvement through volunteerism can benefit both the community and the individual volunteers. When people celebrate together---particularly when they are personally engaged in the celebration's activities as active co-creative participants---the result is relationship development, bonding both among the individuals and with the event. This also develops a sense of community. Whether one is a volunteer serving an event or a participant in an event, new friendships will be made that strengthen those community bonds.

As people learn to know each other by working (and playing) together, bonds form based upon their common experiences. It's not uncommon to find long-time festival participants swapping photos of their families when they get together, because they have become friends and they have grown to care about each other at intimate levels. Not only

are they benefitted by their participation, but the celebration benefits from their contributions, and the community at large benefits because this involvement engenders community spirit and pride. As friends working together toward successful and fun community celebrations, a sense of satisfaction emerges as a byproduct of their achievements. After working together, festival participants share new mutual memories that build on previous experiences and the result of the work they do together helps both inform and form their community, introduce new ways to celebrate as traditions change, and often preserves tradition and heritage as described above for SEAFAIR. This is how community tradition begins. Tradition becomes a powerful force that when facing change must be dealt with respect and sensitivity, and with great consensus-building skill. Not only can traditions be sundered by poor management of change, but also citizen support of the community itself can be affected.

Volunteers who have been trained, and who have experienced working as a celebration corps staff, can develop into a skilled volunteer citizenry whose talents can benefit community in other ways where those skills can be translated and utilized. The bonds of friendship gained by common work are powerful forces. According to Paramahansa Yogananda, *"Friendship is the universal spiritual attraction which unites souls in the bond of divine love, manifesting itself in two or more individuals. If you open the door to the magnetic power of friendship, a soul or souls of like vibrations will be attracted to you. Friendship is a manifestation of God's love for you, expressed through your friends, who constitute the richest possessions a human being can have."*¹⁸²

The advancement of technology and the barrage of messages that people receive electronically every day can be mind-numbing because of the sensory stimulus of chaotic

and irrelevant sights and sounds. And, technology has brought world-class entertainment right into our homes where we can retreat from the busy world to simplify the messages we receive. The act of retreating in this manner and socializing less is referred to as “cocooning,” a term coined by trend futurist Faith Popcorn (Plotkin).¹⁸³ Looking around, anyone can see that she may have been on to something. It is easy to see entire dinner tables of people individually engaged with their smart phones, ignoring each other altogether. Cocooning is a serious problem in our culture. Why does one need to be with friends in person when one can visit so many more of them on Facebook? Because people crave live experience!

One of the antidotes for cocooning, fulfilling our need to socialize and enjoy live experience can be community celebration. Celebration can be a catalyst that brings people out of their cocoons. The soul of festival is the interaction of people centered on the experience of human encounter. Community celebrations offer coherent experience and unity, still a good cure for the isolation of people needing to have fun.

Economic Benefit – Events mean business. Successful community celebrations generate tourism and destination spending. Sometimes, tourism can be defined as being suburban tourism. An example of economic benefit is that as much as 30% of the Tempe Festival of the Arts (an event that I currently produce) attendees come from outside Tempe, the Phoenix Metro Area, and the state of Arizona. That means that the remaining 70% come from within a day’s or a few minutes’ drive. These are the destination-bound suburban tourists. We recognize that the 30% probably are snowbirds who come to the area primarily for other reasons and not specifically for the festival, but the impact of

their spending helps the festival achieve an \$11 million annual economic impact for our community. Events can attract target audiences, depending on their marketing strategies. Some prefer to remain local, some reach out regionally, some market nationally, and some, such as Tempe Festival of the Arts, intentionally target North America, though not the world. The festival occurs twice annually, bookending the high tourism season, in order to garner maximum economic generation for our community.

SEAFair was started in 1950 to promote the lifestyle of the Pacific Northwest, to drive tourism spending, and to help position the image of Seattle leading up to its 1952 centennial celebration. When I left the organization in 1998, hotels were so fully booked during SEAFair that even the festival could not find rooms for the pilots who formed the U.S. Navy Blue Angels precision fight team! The tourism goals evidently had been met.

Economic benefit also can accrue from the opportunity that a community celebration offers for promotions and cross-promotions with local businesses. A good example comes from the Tempe Festival of the Arts who collaborated with a downtown Tempe microbrewery located adjacent to the festival. The bar's owner and his family owned a collection of original Ansel Adams' photographs, which they framed and hung in the banquet room of their bar. They offered a promotion to the general public and festival attendees (which was cross-promoted by the festival) to view the originals and have a top microbrew for \$8. The bar benefitted from the promotion and extra sales, and the festival benefitted from the additional publicity built around the excellence of an artist such as Ansel Adams.

Local businesses also can benefit from community celebration because of the infrastructure expenses related to hosting the public, such as sanitation, staging, radio communications, security, signage, etc., as event-related vendors. As an example, the equipment expense alone for one festival that I produce is about \$150,000 per festival.¹⁸⁴ Cash marketing expenses, which are very conservatively planned, are about \$40,000; and, administrative expenses covering banking, staffing, warehouse rental, and other cash expenses are about \$137,000. All of those expenses are paid out into the community, where they support people's livelihoods, put food on the table for families, and help keep the doors open in the businesses involved in serving the event. Even the artists who participate in the Tempe Festival of the Arts who largely take their proceeds out of our community altogether (they come from cities and towns from throughout North America) manage to sell a combined average of \$1.6 million in art at each festival, supporting themselves and their own hometown vendors.

As a comparison, one of my previous festival client's annual expense budget was about \$6.5 million. So although community celebration should feel like fun and games to the participating public, they also can be important community businesses behind the scenes. Festivals and events that are operating at the scale of the above examples are synonymous with running any other type of business of the same size and they incorporate all of the same challenges and practices, though they seldom garner that respect because of the juxtaposition of people's personal experiences of fun while attending them. In fact, it is really serious fun and games!

Cities and states also benefit as a result of sales tax revenues and payment for city services. Some festivals have struck deals with their municipalities to provide gratis city

services, but in the case of one of the festivals mentioned above, about \$34,000 per festival is paid out just for police alone, which gives one an idea of the scope of expense considering that city services can also include sanitation, emergency medical teams, road closures, and other services not included in that amount. More and more cities are refusing to contribute city services to events and have instead implemented cost recovery measures. They have figured out that events can be a source of revenue for their ailing budgets.

Interestingly, one-off events (such as Olympic Games, Super Bowl, etc.) are not the best economic plans for communities. Research shows that although super-festival one-off events may produce an economic infusion, it is not sustainable.¹⁸⁵ Often, non-local vendors flood the market, leaving local mom and pop shops languishing; and, when they leave town, they take the bulk of their prosperity with them. Many times, the spectacular buildings built for these mega-events go unused when the show leaves town. Beijing has been coping with that dilemma, which we will look at later in this chapter. On-going community celebrations are more sustainable than one-offs, they are created locally by local people, involve local vendors for year after year of reciprocal business, and economic generation.

New or Improved Infrastructure – Community events and celebrations can serve as catalysts to provide either improvements to existing community facilities or can provide entirely new ones. Some examples of new infrastructure provided by events include the Eiffel Tower, a result of the 1889 World's Fair (Exposition Universelle) in Paris. The Pacific Science Center, Memorial Stadium, the Monorail, and the Space

Needle all came from 1962 World's Fair in Seattle. The Saddle Dome and Olympic Park are just two of the new facilities that were gifts of the 1988 Olympic Winter Games in Calgary, Canada. The Beijing National Stadium, known as the Bird's Nest, came as a result of the 2008 Olympic Summer Games, along with the rest of the Chinese infrastructure to support individual sports and access to those sites.

New infrastructure isn't always a legacy that community celebration can afford. Often, ongoing events offer their communities smaller contributions instead, such as new lighting for Civic Center Park in downtown Denver, Colorado, provided by Festival of Mountain and Plain...A Taste of Colorado, which I directed for several years. Such contributions almost always are improvements needed for the conduct of the event, but unaffordable or not planned by the municipality involved. Sometimes, events and communities can forge mutual collaborating partnerships with enterprise zones, block grants, and other public funding programs for the benefit of all. Through shared vision, and collaborative funding, the resources of both event and community can be leveraged to provide needed improvements at large.

Community Image and Identity Enhancement

Celebrations can be benchmarks created for the purpose of promoting a community both to its own residents and also to other audiences at large. The SEAFair example is a good one. SEAFair (in Seattle, Washington) was created as a vehicle to help position the image and identity of Seattle leading up to its centennial. But even since that time, more than 50 years ago, it has continued to carry that banner. Gigantic one-offs, such as the Super Bowl, do meet the criteria of media exposure, providing brand extension (image and awareness) for communities, even if the image portrayed may be contrived.

Whereas, SEAFAIR carries that good news year after year, an event such as Super Bowl provides a one-time massive, but short-lived, infusion of notoriety.

Through the power of media, targeted advertising and public relations (the result of public relations manifests in news reports and articles) messages are distributed that engender interest and opinion. Through the Houston International Festival, 400,000 people may have been on the most recent parade route, but another two million observers saw the event on television, from wherever the local CBS broadcasts reach audiences. So, 2.4 million observers got the message and formed some opinion both about Houston's image and about their personal relationships of connection to it.

Media is measured and valuable because of its power to impress people. Media can be strategically segmented according to the demographic and the psychographic audience desired so that no message is wasted. Advertisers invest money in their abilities to penetrate and impress the appropriate audiences. Potential event sponsors will gauge their returns on investment regarding their likely media inclusion before they invest their money in an event. Commercial sponsorship is a marketing budget decision and not derived from charitable giving. That is a separate source of potential revenue for some events. Contribution money constitutes good will (if an event is a charitable nonprofit) but does not come with commercial benefits to the contributor. Being able to calculate a sponsor's return on investment is part of the toolkit for event organizers. Print media is measured in a unit called an impression. Electronic media is measured by quantities called reach and frequency (which ultimately arrive at a facsimile number of impressions). Reach refers to how many people are reached by the message. Frequency refers to how many times those people are reached. Using a major festival which I

currently produce as an example, the success of the media campaign is important to understand. It included public relations (news stories picked up by print, television, radio, social media) and advertising (time and space purchased and/or leveraged). Print media garnered 27,374,185 impressions valued at \$115,697. Radio delivered 3,847,351 impressions worth \$91,606. Television produced 3,666,376 impressions worth \$61,386. And, online presence showed 2,318,763 impressions worth \$55,956. In all, the campaign reached an enormous audience of 37,206,675 impressions with a value of \$324,645. Not bad for a cash media expense of only \$40,000. Stellar performance.

These data were analyzed for cost per impression (which appears to be \$.009 each), to determine the efficacy of the media campaign. This performance does not reveal the locations of the audiences being reached, which in this case included national publications as well as regional and local ones, both to garner direct participants and audiences. That information would be included in the proposals and insertion orders negotiated prior to media buying. These kinds of summaries require proof, which comes from media reporting services that provide clippings and video substantiation of performance, as well as other auditing techniques. Finalizing the reporting is called both reconciliation and settlement.

Aside from media campaign efficacy, the message is even more important because it represents the cause for the investment: the thing itself. The message should be carefully crafted and then repeated over and over, done most effectively through development of different story angles. I like to develop stories based on various media departmentalization. For instance, for my local newspaper, can I develop story angles that appeal to news, entertainment, business, food, sports, or others? Can I find visual stories

for television? Can I involve local broadcasters in special appearances or involvement with my event? What brief messages or images can I use for targeted social media?

When SEAFAIR began, its purpose was to promote Seattle as the boating capital of the country and to promote the lifestyle of the Pacific North West (PNW). Those objectives are called “positioning.” SEAFAIR founders even invented a legend to embed the message into the community psyche (though they essentially stole it from another festival). They chose the “position” they wanted to occupy and the story they would tell. They accomplished that goal through the development of programming that they could publicize to promote their position. Program development included the new myth by creating the arrival of King Neptune Rex from Mount Olympus (there actually is a Mount Olympus in the Olympic Mountain Range visible to the west of Seattle). This “god of the seas” was crowned (just like the King of Mardi Gras) to ceremonially open the festival. Each year’s festival crowns a new king, who always is a significant male leader from the Seattle business community. King Neptune Rex has been important to garnering media coverage and news value for the festival and the community.

SEAFAIR’s addition of Unlimited Hydroplane racing on Lake Washington added a new location to the circuit of an already-popular professional sport, bringing in new gladiator-like heroes to leverage even more storytelling possibilities. Add the creation of a SEAFAIR community group called the SEAFAIR Pirates, and the media story angles became even more interesting. Then, add a programming collaboration with the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard Pacific Fleets to provide public tours of an entire battle group, and the concept of developing a boating image has been well-developed. Top it off with creation of a milk carton derby and – voila! – former spectators of the programs above

can suddenly become direct participants by making and racing their own floating (in most cases) vessels.

Some celebrations have more simple roots. The Tempe Festival of the Arts was founded by a small group of downtown Tempe, Arizona merchants who wanted to generate more foot traffic for their shops. Their “positioning” was simply to offer a new reason for people to gather in their vicinity. In the beginning, nearly 50 years ago, there were only a handful of “hippie-like” arts and crafts booths on the sidewalk. Today, as many as 400 professionally-juried artists from throughout North America close down a seven block venue on the main streets of downtown Tempe to accommodate more than 225,000 attendees who come to buy art, have a good time, and visit local shops. The word is out. All these years later, it’s become a Desert Southwest tradition and its stature is evident by virtue of its word-of-mouth reputation. Clearly, their media campaign also spreads the word, but its greatest value is word-of-mouth and tradition.

In summary, community celebrations can be powerful catalysts for the development of communities in so many ways, serving *Communitas*, *Civitas*, and *Humanitas*. They can bring people out of their homes and offices to engage in experience with their neighbors who otherwise may be perfect strangers. That is beneficial to the people themselves and to the vibrancy of the community. Bonds of friendship provide the warp and weft of the community fabric. Celebrations can provide the talking points about which a community can tell its own story to audiences far and wide, and through which audiences will form a lasting image about the quality of the community. The business of celebration can be an important contributor to the economic base, supporting shops and families throughout the community. Sadly, the prevailing image to unenlightened

community leadership may be one of mere fun, frivolity, and light-heartedness are not priorities in community development, not realizing the true value of celebration as a catalyst for serious value to the community.

The Role of Business Improvement Districts

Often, our cities seem to be overseen by developers, inadequate land use planners, poor zoning policies, and other factors out of touch with what's truly best for the people of a community. That could not be a more stark difference from the concept of community in ancient times, when the territory of the temple was overseen by a king or emperor, aka the very representative of the Sun on Earth.¹⁸⁶ These authorities were both the distributors of cosmic energy and the accumulators of it. Far out! Along with their astrologers and magistrates, the kingdom guided the conduct of the temple, which included all aspects of community life.

Today, the remnants of the temples---our city centers---are managed by professional practitioners who have learned their trade via various downtown and Main Street industry organizations. Instead of benefitting from cosmic guidance, the managing entities now are typically business improvement districts, Main Street organizations, or merchant associations. They derive their authority from land or business owners who want enhanced services that increase the value of their properties and whose largely self-serving private agendas may not embrace the common cause of serving community. In some cases, the land owners agree to tax themselves through legally-collected property tax assessments in order to pay for enhanced services, management and marketing

services beyond what a municipality would normally provide to any of its other neighborhoods via public taxation resources.

These organizations are generally incorporated as nonprofit organizations and their policies and plans are devised by boards of directors who hire professionals to manage the outcomes. In some cases, usually in smaller towns and communities, less formal merchant associations will form to voluntarily contribute funds for mutually agreed-upon services that benefit their businesses. Since merchants often do not own the properties they occupy, the merchants' associations they form do not have the authority to involve taxation and usually rely instead on voluntary membership fees to fund their work.

Through more than 30 years of working in the downtown industry of center city business improvement districts (also called assessment districts or enhanced services districts) and Main Street concepts, I've come to know first-hand the nitty-gritty work of managing and promoting the urban core---everything from cleanliness and security to streetscaping and façade improvement, events, parking, and start-up business incubators. Downtowns are interesting categories of community life in that they are at their best when they embody the heart of the community as the center for civic, cultural, educational, and business leadership. They are at their worst when their identities are stripped of that combination and become watered-down remnants of importance to their communities.

Downtown organizations embody instant leadership wherever they are because of their involvement with moneyed and political interests in the business community, providing an important vehicle through which to make change and help form policy. In

Kansas City, Denver, Tempe, and Mesa I've worked to breathe new life and economic vitality into urban environments challenged with remaining relevant to their communities. Those tasks have included recruitment of new businesses to fill-in the "empty teeth" along the street and to create new customer draw to benefit downtown's economic climate. I've worked with public and private partnerships that resulted in bond issues that successfully funded professional sports center infrastructure. I've worked with major festival and event development to foster new public experience and provide the opportunity for community celebration. I've worked with groups and boards to help cultivate new, informed leadership. I've watched as the wave of modern community development sent urban centers sideways over these three decades, as the heart of community was leveraged and sold to benefit private agendas at the expense of creating authentic cultivation of place for community.

It's a double-edged sword, yet two sides of the same coin. Enhanced services improve business value as their first goal for downtowns, but they also improve the center city environment for the people who use it, because people on the street attract the presence of more people on the street, creating vitality which is good for people and for business. Again, according to William Holly Whyte, "*What attracts people most, it would appear, is other people.*"¹⁸⁷ Since 1986, my occupation has been to provide professional management in various capacities for downtown organizations in Kansas City, Missouri; Denver, Colorado; Seattle, Washington; Mesa, Tempe, Gilbert, and Prescott, Arizona. Examples of enhanced services include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Street and Sidewalk Lighting** – People will gather at night where it is well-lighted, avoiding those places in the urban center that are not. Lighting allows people to see what is around them in the dark, providing a sense of safety and security.
- **Clean and Safe Programs** – The presence of other people provides a sense of safety, but additional visibility of uniformed safety patrols or police engender additional confidence. Cleanliness of the street promotes comfort and a sense of welcome to people. In addition to safety personnel, a Clean and Safe Program often will include power washing of streets and sidewalks, porters for trash picking, and trashcan maintenance.
- **Streetscaping** – Beautification of city streets and sidewalks provides a sense of welcome that attracts pedestrian use and can be achieved using tactics as simple as lining streets with trees, installing flower baskets or planters, and providing benches where people can sit and talk. Often, the design of light poles, benches, trash receptacles, and other street hardware is coordinated to reflect the personality of the community. In some downtowns, grants may be available through the downtown organization for building façade renovation to provide an attractive, uniform appearance. More complicated schemes might involve pedestrian-level and overhead banner installations, wayfinder signage in one or more languages, and center city gateway monuments.
- **Promotions and Special Events** – One of the roles of a downtown organization may be to coordinate promotional events that generate destination visitors and increased foot traffic for shopping, dining, and entertainment. Designed to drive

storefront business, such promotions might take the form of extended shopping hours, coordinated discount shopping days, or seasonal sidewalk sales.

- **Public and Private Space Management Programs** – Urban green spaces, plazas, and sidewalks can provide places for public programs that span a gamut of activities that enliven and serve as amenities that maximize pedestrian experience. Such activities provide a sense of welcome and a comfortable atmosphere. They also entertain and create fun, provide an element of surprise, and they provide an emotional transition from daily life to an experience of a unique spirit of place. Through experience, they help bond people to a sense of place.

Public and private space management practices are the tools of placemaking, of intentionally choreographing a special sense of place and an experience of the unique spirit of place that provides delight and special memories for people. Placemaking tools include three stages of street experience that complement and build on each other, primarily varying through duration of engagement. Those stages start with 1) passive observations which employ small activities that take only a moment to discover and enjoy by looking or listening, such as a fluttering pennant, a planter of brightly-colored flowers, or a street sculpture. In speaking of such activation, William Holly Whyte once observed:

I end then in praise of small places. The multiplier effect is tremendous. It is not just the number of people using them, but the larger number who pass by and enjoy them vicariously, or even the larger number who feel better about the city center for knowledge of them. For a city, such places are priceless, whatever the cost. They are built of a set of basics and they are right in front of our noses. If we will look.¹⁸⁸

The placemaking progression of stages continues with 2) deeper levels of activity that come through involvement in interactive participation, such as stopping to enjoy a street busker (street musician, juggler, mime, etc.) or buying a hot dog from a street vendor. Finally, 3) placemaking stages become active through engagement that requires longer attention spans and direct involvement that helps us abandon our sense of time and space, such as something as simple as providing a public chess board where people can join others for a game, or something as complicated as staging a street parade. Multiple levels of programming are the key to developing depth of experience for people. All three levels of engagement exist to provide consistent and rhythmic sense of place, important experiences that help forge community spirit. Such activities can help cultivate and define the uniqueness of place and bring people together for collective experience.

- **Parking Operations** – Many downtowns, though not all, privately manage parking operations because of the need to control the turnover of parked cars to assure customer access to shops and restaurants. It is good for business and for community equality. Parking meters, lots, and garages may benefit from centralized management and enforcement to create continuity in the center city's parking policy and practice. It is common for employees to prefer parking in front of the shops where they work, but when they do that customers cannot park reasonably close and are discouraged from shopping, frequently taking their business elsewhere. Free parking can seem like an advantage at first thought but, when parking is free, anyone can park for extended periods of time, blocking easy access for others who want to shop nearby. If one considers this, the selfishness of the few can take on new meaning when compared to

the needs of the whole. It may seem counter-intuitive to citizens that it is a good idea to pay for parking, but by designating high turnover parking spaces in the densest shopping locations, and by charging more for those high-traffic areas, revenue for shops can actually increase because of increased access to customers, and customers are better served by the convenience of available parking.

- **Centralized Retail Management** – To assure that the market meets its citizens' needs and achieve a symbiotic mix of shops and restaurants that benefit each other's businesses, downtowns can adopt some of the practices of shopping malls. Of course, because shopping malls are controlled by one owner, they can dictate all of the conditions of conducting business to their merchant tenants; but, downtowns are more commonly made up of independent owners who do not want to conduct their business by anyone's rules but their own. In order to forge a cohesive and collaborative environment to attract customers, downtown businesses sometimes will agree to participate in limited practices that are not considered too invasive of their individual rights, such as holding common hours or participating in common promotional events. In rare but enlightened occasions, some will agree to work together to attract an appropriate mix of store types that create a more healthy overall environment for downtown business diversity and serve their market area more appropriately. This book will not discuss retail strategies, but will convey that the right configuration of business types and their mix of offerings is important to the overall success of any shopping area. Downtown organizations can help foster and manage such collaborative schemes and can provide the basic retail market analysis on which to base such agreements. Downtowns can work with property owners to enter into

tenant lease agreements that require baseline collaborations if they want to work together mutually for the betterment of their business environment.

- **Business Development Strategies** – Downtown organizations can help retain current businesses and recruit desired businesses to fill empty storefront spaces and offices by maintaining relationships with landlords, brokers, and independent businesses. Retention strategies might include simple communication of information such as upcoming road closures or special events and entertainment that may be of interest to employees, or help shop owners prepare for impact mitigation caused by new construction or special events. To help recruit new business, downtown organizations can arrange broker tours of empty spaces and introduce companies looking for space to landlords that may be able to provide their needs. Since downtown organizations do not own the businesses or properties involved, at best they can be good facilitators who provide important business connections and keep their eye on the overall goals for downtown business development. They can track financial, business, and employment trends and provide valuable information to owners and brokers. By embracing *Communitas*, *Civitas*, and *Humanitas* goals, downtowns can excel at serving community needs and create pertinence, loyalty, and growth that surpasses other communities' less-enlightened strategies.

CHAPTER 5: CULTIVATING COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

History & Meaning

The true history of human celebration has been lost. Unlike leaving tangible historical evidence, all that exists today to document ancient celebrations are the indirect clues found in ancient art, folklore, music, and artifacts. Events are ephemeral. They come together, enjoy their brief energetic life spans, and then disappear...often without a trace except for the experiential memories that reside in the hearts, minds, and spirits of their participants. Through the bits and snatches of the historic clues we have collected, however, we know that people have always gathered together to share experience and joy. Always.

Public celebrations often commemorate holidays, anniversaries, or community milestones (any reason is a good one) and are celebrated through the mediums of parades, fairs, special events, festivals, concerts, themed gatherings, and any other event vehicle instigated for a common purpose of community gathering. Public celebrations are a form of public art. They constitute a performance in which everyone present plays a part. In modern times, the stage often is a city street or an urban park, sometimes a banquet hall or enclosed structure. Historically, public events are centered in locations that are neutral for those doing the celebrating, whether around a tribe's campfire, on a victorious battlefield, in the dark and sacred womb-like environment of a cave, an open and lush city park, or on the gritty streets in the center of town. Where public celebration is concerned, any venue that is safe and physically accommodating is valid for venue

consideration as we discussed above in public space programming. Both traditional and non-traditional locations can become the stage for a public gathering.

The experience and purpose of festival purpose has changed over millennia. Once upon a time, people allegedly actually heard the voices of the gods;¹⁸⁹ but brain evolution (the development of the bicameral brain), changes in civilizations, and the social and moral norms of modern living have changed. What once was direct communication with the numinous is felt today largely as fun through entertainment. Yet, even now, the liminality of losing one's self in an experience of one-mind consciousness still can be achieved through community celebration. Certainly, the release and bonding found in the majority of today's staged celebrations are more restrained and controlled than centuries ago; but, the effects of celebration in the lives of citizens and the community at large are no less important.

Ancient Festivals

The earliest people used celebration to commemorate the rhythm of nature and cosmic cycles and to achieve sacred embodiment of those cycles. Based on astronomical observatories, such as Stonehenge, we know that celestial positions were an important key to knowing when to expect changes in daylight, temperature, and the four seasons, since "*Site selection for Stonehenge was determined by astronomical alignments that could best be observed at this site.*"¹⁹⁰ It's believed that the human action of celebration in such spaces activated a mystical communion among the celebrants, humankind, earth, and the cosmos. The result was ecstatic union, the marriage of Heaven and Earth. The

realization of the Holy Trinity, Heaven and Earth embodies in Man. Once again, we see ripples of that sacred Triangle concept.

Ancient Egyptians maintained important personal relationships with the gods and balanced cosmic cycles by conducting festivals that sanctified seasonal changes. To them, *“a metaphysical world poured into the physical, saturating it with meaning.”*¹⁹¹ For them, their lives embodied the vertical plane as well as the horizontal, including the visible presence of the gods. Today, we have lost the knowledge and practice of the vertical realm and live almost exclusively as flatlanders.

Ancient Egyptians reached synthesis with the cosmos through this divine balance of vertical and horizontal integration. To them, spatially related objects were not “out there” and external as they are to us today. Their relationship with their vertical and horizontal space offered them the experience not to be just observers of their world, but co-creators, in which the cosmos was not only outside themselves, but also within. To them, festivals provided communication with the gods and they possessed the spiritual and metaphysical technologies to make that communication tangible, to use it to assure the mutually-created order of the cosmos.

For instance, the annual flooding of the Nile, so important to growing food and providing escape from the brutal conditions of desert life, was assured by their sacred festival honoring and invoking the tears of Isis, called “The Descent of the Drop.”¹⁹² Officiated by a priest or the king, the festival required that the people gather for the festival’s rituals which sometimes included animal sacrifice, but also included casting *“into the waters a sealed papyrus roll containing a written command to [the river god] Hapi to flood to the right degree. Thus the authority of Horns (in the king) was invoked in*

*order to ensure that the river god acted in accordance with the universal principle of order.”*¹⁹³

Similar collaborations and cosmic commands were ritualized in other sacred festivals, assuring the rising and setting of the sun and other important orders of the natural world in which the people lived and co-created reality. It is important to grasp the essence of this concept: the god was not external to them and they were not beseeching the god. They were in cosmic intercourse, co-creating the outcome of cosmic order.

The collaboration of humans with gods has changed in our modern world. Cultures, on the whole, no longer participate in cosmic order through sacred ceremony. But, maybe they should! The rise of the Christian Church has had the most profound dampening effect, since the power of the people was relegated to working through intercessory decree. Remnants of some sacred festivals still exist, but in pale comparison to their original meaning. For instance, Beltane (the pagan festival held to assure new birth and the fecundity of largely pastures and agriculture) has modern traces in May Day celebrations in the form of misunderstood ritual and symbolism, whose original potent meaning is lost to most. Christmas is a descendant of Saturnalia and Kronia, celebrating the return of the seasonal light, length of days, and giving of gifts. Mardi Gras (Carnivale) may also be related to Saturnalia.

In this country, Mardi Gras is among our most-celebrated festivals, most likely because it still offers the opportunity for revelry that can release us from our daily states of consciousness through music, intoxication, and dance. People are attracted to the opportunity for transformative experience and especially to the intoxicating effects of rhythm and ecstatic movement.

So, what (you may ask) are the magic ingredients that entice otherwise normal people into the condition of ecstatic trance? Anthropologist Felicitas Goodman may be the best resource to explain that. Goodman is the one who discovered that the postures of cave paintings and effigies throughout the world, dating to about 32,000 years ago, held shamanic clues. She found that through rhythmic stimulation of the body combined with ritual body postures, one could induce dramatic altered states of consciousness.¹⁹⁴ Actually, with enough rhythmic stimulation, such as drumming, anyone can enter an altered state of consciousness. In all tribal cultures, rhythm and drumming is the transporter of consciousness. Through extended periods of rhythmic sound or drumming, and by holding certain postures, Goodman's practices facilitate one's access to other realities as well. She discovered that regardless of the culture, the postures of their effigies were similar and through ecstatic trance the same posture produced the same result, regardless of its origin. I know this is true, because I have personal experience with ecstatic trance generated by drumming while holding an individual posture. In a brief two-hour session I once was knocked to the ground by an animal that arrived by jumping on my shoulder to take up residence as my protector. Of course, it was invisible to all but me, and even to me it existed in another realm, though over time my left shoulder (in conscious reality) fell below the level of my right shoulder under the weight of it.

Freedoms derived by celebration arrive in other ways, too. For instance the use of masks and costumes provide both anonymity and the ability to shift identity, not only to play the role of another but also perhaps to become it, thereby aiding the possibility of trance and ecstasy. Anonymity can spark behavioral abandonment that allows identity to

switch for temporary relief from normal life. The earliest known use of carnival masks comes from the 13th Century when masked men anonymously succeeded in throwing eggs during Carnival.¹⁹⁵ In modern Mazatlan, Mexico, the custom of throwing confetti eggs is still practiced, though no one need wear a mask. Personal experience proves that not everyone puts just confetti in a Mazatlan festival egg and sometimes there are rocks! However, in the 13th Century, mask-wearing provided revelers with the ability to perpetrate many hoaxes anonymously. A remnant of that practice is with us even today, when robbers wear masks to obscure their identities. Through masks and costuming, celebrants can independently participate in the concept of inversion (role reversal), appearing to be above their own stations in daily life or below them, depending on perspective. With that identity on which to build, one also can cultivate a brief respite from one's own self, becoming however briefly, someone else.

Otherwise sober people, during early European celebrations of the Middle Ages, costumed themselves, drank to excess, danced through the night, and inverted the normal said order of the community. Inversion involved the entire community as a ritual behavior: fools dressed and acted as the king while the king condoned and participated by acting and dressing as a fool. Festivals dissolved rank and other forms of social difference and the community could "touch the face of god" through *communitas* because they all were equals. In some manner, inversion reinforced the idea that I am you and you are me, and we are one, manifesting an inner truth of oneness.¹⁹⁶ My hunch is that the resulting unity and merging of identities needed the formality of equality to get off the ground, so to speak.

Explaining the result of inversion, consummate event planner Marilyn Wood offers her theory that “*In traditional societies, public ritual and celebration kept communities together. They did this by dealing symbolically with the tensions or ‘fracture lines’ within the community that could divide or pull it apart.*”¹⁹⁷ Celebration served to reinforce and stabilize community values through release and common group experience.

In ancient times, people celebrated until they were “wild-eyed” with ecstatic happiness. They entered a trance state that allowed altered perception, including loss of self. This provided an emotional, spiritual, and psychic release through such forms of celebration as Dionysian cults, Bacchanalia, Saturnalia, and Beltane. All of these today are thought of as unsavory in their original versions, bringing a loss of dignity, though this still is the basis of Mardi Gras celebrations throughout the world. Anthropologist T.K. Oesterrich has compared this unruly European behavior to the rites of “savages.”¹⁹⁸ I propose it is the behavior of human beings.

Whereas celebration had begun as a practice in which communication with the gods was a common thread, the conquering march across the European continent by the Romans and the Catholic Church following the reign of Emperor Constantine brought a whole new relationship with The God. Though not intending to sound flippant, The Church was busy superimposing chapels and cathedrals on old pagan sacred sites (geographic transubstantiation) and other sites held sacred by earlier cultures---all in an attempt to conquer, subsume, and transcend only inasmuch as required to give enough lip service to the masses to forestall uprising. It also sought to replace ritual group celebrations by superseding them with liturgical calendars of celebrations such as Lent, Christmas, Easter, etc., all of which closely paralleled existing pagan celebrations.

In a 2009 NPR news report, I heard a news story about a recent “problem” with women in Egypt. It seemed that they were following an age-old ritual of costuming and dancing ecstatically in a celebration the news report called “The Raz.” Current authorities thought it was not dignified and regressively harkened back to the wild behavior of women during the celebration of the Maeanids in the times of the Dionysian cults. In my opinion, these women needed communication with the Divine as a way of gaining emotional stabilization and release, for which true ritual celebration is the perfect catalyst. They were exhibiting their primal need for a dose of *communitas*!

In the 13th Century, ecstatic dancing was banned from The Church. As the institution grew, so did its need to control people. As Christianity (particularly, in the beginning, the Roman Catholic Church) grew, there was less and less festival celebration. After all, it’s difficult to control a person blissed-out on dancing and merrymaking! Group ecstasy became something that “others” experienced, especially savages or less civilized lower-class people. Later, as the Reformation took hold, it was no longer acceptable to find ecstasy in this world; it would have to wait for the afterlife.¹⁹⁹

The capacity for abandonment, for loss of self in the rhythms and emotions of the group became a signal of some fatal weakness of mind and of heretical behavior. Suicide went on the rise throughout Europe, particularly following the rise of Puritanism, which denied joy and playfulness in any form, especially dancing. Monotheism supplanted the world of Dionysius, Pan, Bacchus, and Sabazios, and as people no longer communicated with them through celebration, they died. Throughout Europe, along with the demise of festivities came a rise in suicide rates. Though the lack of festivals probably did not cause suicidal depression, it removed the cure for it.²⁰⁰ The overriding human need for ecstatic

unity and release of ego has been underground ever since. It is now re-emerging as the hold of religion loses its grip on modern people. Recent Pew Foundation research on religion shows that across *all* socio-economic classes, age groups, and geographic regions of the United States, Christianity is losing its share of people who identify as Christians at a one percent per year rate.²⁰¹ Americans are identifying themselves more and more as spiritual instead of religious.

According to Steve Schmader, World President of the International Festivals & Events Association and a personal friend and colleague, currently there are more than “...5 million festivals and events large enough to require municipal support services, such as police, fire, parks, trash, etc.; add to that those one-time or less than annual major events (i.e., the Millennium Celebrations, the Olympics, World’s Fairs, etc.) and the uncalculatable number of corporate celebrations, weddings, religious gatherings, school carnivals, and others, and you start to understand the huge impact....”²⁰² Clearly, people must be demanding celebration for there to be such widespread and strong support for millions of annual festivals and events.

Primal Community Gathering

We have no direct proof of prehistoric celebration. However, we can surmise through artifacts such as those found in ancient cave paintings that people celebrated. One such example comes from at least 15,000 years ago in Bhimbetka, India.²⁰³ The paintings show lines of people, arm-in-arm, dancing and celebrating. One can only imagine what kind of celebration the pictograph commemorates. But, no matter the reason, as human beings from across the millennia we can summon enough of our own experience to share

some of their feelings of joy. The dates of some of the earliest cave paintings recently have been revised to be as early as 32,000 years ago, such as Chauvet Cave in the Perigord region of France.²⁰⁴ Solid data show that dating from at least the late Paleolithic Age (15,000 B.C.E.); humans



Figure 8 - Bhimbetka, India Cave Paintings (www.ruprestre.com)

have left artifacts of their creative endeavors as evidence of their celebratory experiences:

Early human groups also left behind impressive evidence of artistic creativity. The late Paleolithic was a period of particularly intense artistic production. Fine miniature sculpture, beads and other forms of jewelry, and carved bones have been found in abundance at sites dating from this period. But the most striking works that survive from this period are the cave paintings that have been discovered at dwelling sites in areas as diverse as southern France, the plains of Africa south of the Sahara, and the Middle East. Some of these paintings appear to have religious significance. They may have been intended to depict prominent deities or to promote fertility. Paintings at some sites may represent early counting systems or primitive calendars. The art of the Old Stone Age indicates that humans were becoming increasingly interested in leaving lasting images of their activities and concerns.²⁰⁵

Though 32,000 year-old-cave paintings show social activity, it is likely that the origins of ritual celebration evolved even earlier, following the discovery of controlled fire. Nearly 790,000 years ago, early hominids left charred campfire remains in the Gesher Benot Ya'aquov of Israel's Jordan Valley. Artifacts at that site indicate flake tools for hunting. Though there is no overt evidence of celebration, it is established that humans gathered there at the hearth for rituals such as cooking and eating.²⁰⁶ During the early hunter and gatherer period, people lived in tribes of one to two hundred individuals, which was the size group that could be sustained with limited food supplies and which could offer the best self-defense strategy for these early humans. With evolution came

more and more social development and it can be assumed that along with that came togetherness, common experience, and celebration. Wholeness. Relatedness. Connection.

Spectator Events

Celebration began its evolution into a spectator enterprise when Caesar Augustus declared himself a god and the Roman army grew in power. He demanded discipline from unruly soldiers and found an answer to that dilemma through the introduction of drills. Drills simultaneously presented orderliness in communities and provided a new form of entertainment and societal control. Now, people watched others who were costumed, marching, and being actively involved, instead of being engaged in active personal participation themselves. True celebration began to be experienced vicariously.

The human need for personal ecstasy has persisted. People still crave *communitas*. But, celebration that is socially acceptable largely has evolved into entertainment, which takes many forms. Military drills, still enjoyed today, evolved into marching bands and elaborately choreographed sporting events where athletes engage each other in the ritual of sport, supported by drill teams of sexy cheerleaders, and the public watches on. Everybody gets to wear costumes, even if for the vicarious thrill of involvement in front of one's own television set.

Today, our modern version of the gladiator is someone such as the 2013 Super Bowl's Most Valuable Player, Joe Flacco from the Baltimore Ravens football club, or professional boxer Manny Pacquiao, both of them the best in their sports. The Super Bowl, World Series, NCAA Men's Final Four Basketball Championship and National Basketball Association Championships are multi-million dollar businesses because of the

loyalty and spectator participation of their fans---fans who are still seeking stabilization, release, and communication with the Divine and can come close to the fix they need through being spectators. That is, to use an old term, close but no cigar!

Until 100 years ago (or so), the game of basketball had not yet been created, so these strong trends toward franchise sport spectacles are a relatively new phenomenon. Of course, there still are people who seek more personal ecstatic thrills, such as what they find at that cock fight mentioned earlier. Here is an early warning for major sports franchises: it is becoming prohibitively expensive for the average citizen to afford to show up for a good afternoon or evening of fun and pseudo inversion (largely accomplished through hero worship identification) with their hometown crowd, where he can feel important and part of a common cause. People increasingly may be forced to stay home for an even more second-hand experience of celebration by watching on television. Or, like me, folks who do not pay for live television viewing access of major sporting events instead must be satisfied with cell phone applications that are nothing more than colorful graphic depictions of a game. I wonder if the uptick in our society's depression and violence rate is a symptom of our living ever increasingly vicariously, with fewer opportunities for true public celebration.

Modern Community Events

Events and festivals today generally include elements of earlier times, but they are far more organized and scripted than their predecessors. Today, people seek "safety" (in other words, self-restraint). In spite of restraint, today's community events almost offer everything that people are craving: they offer music, dancing, costumes and masks

(though often only on the performers), and mind-altering beverages. It is a combination geared, frankly, to a deceptive shallowness of the true experience. However, it's true that attendees can experience some form of camaraderie, belonging, equality, and perhaps some modicum of release. But they probably will not hear the voices of the gods. For the most part, people's modern event experience still will be that of a spectator, though those who personally participate will garner a more personal experience from those who only watch on television. Perhaps the reason people participate in group runs or walks or cycling events for fun is that it is the closest they can get to their real need for release, and if they get high enough on their own endorphins from running, they might achieve a taste of it.

After studying the history and purpose of community celebration for more than three decades, I have developed my own unique method of designing events that is authentic to each community, believing that celebration authenticity facilitates enhanced group experience. Though today it is unwise to plan for the kind of release that would cause drunkenness and naked dancing in the streets (at least within the city limits), I do know that the kind of *communitas* witnessed during the Papal Vigil in 1993 can be staged. The context and container for that peak experience can be designed so that the chance of participants' experiences of the liminal stage of unity is maximized.

The root of a good public celebration is uniqueness and authenticity. Common identity is a key to one's ability to relate to others through community experience. With a common identity, everyone can start on familiar ground and, although it is not the same as inversion, it is a good substitute. Authenticity is evident in festivals that have strong roots (please pardon the pun), such as the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival in Mount Vernon,

Washington. The Tulip Festival is not an active spectator event. Participants in that festival include local growers, shops, and businesses and they are the ones who derive the most sense of community from the event. A driving tour, visitors to that locale will find miles of tulips, stripe after stripe of different colored blooms, in breathtaking countryside display. The festival is in April each year and celebrates the tulip harvest, a cyclical natural phenomenon in the Pacific North West, a way of life for the town's residents, and the basis of their economy and group identity. The 30-year-old festival lasts for a month and provides a level of direct experience both for its producers and for its spectators.²⁰⁷

Carnival is based on Christian Lenten calendar festivities. Though a pale reflection of its original incarnation, it has assumed a modern identity that still involves drinking and dancing and putting on masks and taking off clothing. Laws are even suspended momentarily to allow masks that conceal one's identity. We already have taken a brief look at Carnival in Mazatlan, Mexico. In the United States, people flock to New Orleans because it is culturally the location that still embraces outright public bawdiness. In any other U.S. city, the Mardi Gras behavior that occurs in New Orleans would not be allowed. From a risk management viewpoint alone, it is mystifying that insurance underwriters have not forced New Orleans to curtail the drunkenness and obligatory lewd behavior that's associated with Mardi Gras. In Venice, Italy, Carnivale is commonly referred to as a festival of hedonism. Domestically, a surrogate custom still persists among the festivities of Mardi Gras for the original inversion component: a new King of Mardi Gras will be crowned, deposing the old one. During Mardi Gras in Mazatlan, Mexico, this ritual involves a Handsome King (the new one) deposing the Ugly King (the old one), a ritual which symbolically bears the imprint of the King and

the Fool inversion from earlier times, and also the infant and grim reaper images associated with the New Year. The Ugly King will be deposed, maybe even burned in effigy, and the Handsome King will be crowned to reign until the following year, paying homage to the change of seasons and the impermanence of life. When first begun in New Orleans, a now-defunct inversion nod occurred when slaves and slave owners, along with all ethnicities, abandoned social rules and equally participated during the festival period. The inversions (reversals) of Mardi Gras may be vestiges of the penance and atonement of putting on sackcloth and ashes on Ash Wednesday, and then on Easter following St. Paul's request to put on the new man found in Christ, which is the origin of the Easter Bonnet.

The Calgary Stampede is a favorite example of authenticity. The Province of Alberta, Canada is very similar in geography and climate to our U.S. cities on the high plains plateau leading to the Rocky Mountains. Likewise, Calgary embodies agriculture, cattle, wide open spaces, and cowboys. Nearly 700,000 guests attend this 50-year old tradition. The Saddle Dome was built as a venue for the Olympic Winter Games and is now enjoyed by the Stampede. The festival is complete with activities that include a world-class rodeo, a rangeland derby, agriculture and livestock exhibits, nightly grandstand shows, and a live-televised parade. Throughout the festivities, participants are the focus of attention; but, spectators also have the opportunity to come together around common interest to celebrate their common experiences.²⁰⁸

The rituals and perversions at Burning Man Festival²⁰⁹ in Nevada are no less sacred. One of the founding festivals in the new breed of transformational festivals discussed earlier, it has a reputation for being liberally open-minded toward behavior,

some report that participation also embodies caring, community, and creative expression inside this week-long sacred circle of abandonment. At Burning Man, participants arrive to construct small livable installations where they form community and live together for the week. Though some activities are held in common, many occur in the individual constructed and themed camps themselves. At the end of the event, the entire assemblage of community disperses, leaving not a trace behind, until the next year brings the revelers together again for co-creative celebration, construction, and ritual. There are probably more ecstatic states experienced at Burning Man than almost anywhere else. I say “almost” because of European and Eastern European festivals that are similar to Burning Man and which in some cases predate it. At all of these events, there is more tolerance for behavioral release than at regular community and family festivals. That potential for release is rapidly appealing to more and more people who value and desire the experience of *communitas*, which I believe is “built in” to our psyches and genetic codes. These festivals at present are held in remote locations, obviously so that they do not upset the locals.

Special Events & Entertainment Promotions

An even more-removed form of community gathering includes the phenomenon of conventions, trade shows, and planned special events. Many familiar components are offered, including music, themed activity, even mind-altering beverages. But these events are not organized to foster community spirit, even though they promise community gathering and entertainment. They are economic generation models that use some principles of public celebration as a context for doing business. Examples include home

shows, bridal shows, gun shows, even Comic Con (one of the world's most successful participant conventions). Merchant promotions such as Girls' Night Out and BoGo ("buy one/get one") events also are economic models and not real community events.

Likewise, new sporting event phenomena such as Ironman and Rock & Roll Marathon are economic generation models. They started as a business first, seeking festival context as a vessel in which to drive participation and revenue. Even some of my own festival productions are based largely on a business model. Though some strive to conform to the authentic personality of their communities and their thematic foci, their goals and objectives are driven by revenue generation. One way to determine whether a modern festival is based in community spirit or driving business is to determine who participates at what level of management. Those with engaged citizenry at decision-making levels are probably the best ones for offering possibilities of *communitas*.

Over decades of working in the world of public events, I've come to think of the best of them as embodying the liturgy of community. Although I no longer remember who said it, somewhere I learned the expression that "*celebration is the very act through which mankind makes the transition from crawling beast to the upright and conscious human; no other species celebrates.*"²¹⁰ Perhaps it was colleague Bob Gregson, for I think of him as I remember the phrase. At their highest and best use, community celebrations can help raise that consciousness.

CHAPTER 6: IDENTIFYING FESTIVAL DESIGN BASICS

There are many tools and inspirations that can help identify the unique spirit of place from which to create signature events. Discernment of local identity can include research into its founding history, its climate, consideration of a location's energetic identification, a locale's relationship with the elements, the psychographic and demographic makeup of its citizens, understanding its industries and businesses, and astrological implications of a location's cartography, among others. The process of identity archaeology uncovers important information that can become inspiration for theme, context, and staging of a community celebration, showcasing the unique spirit of place.

Let's explore the principles and methods that can help reveal unique community identity. I developed these tools to use during consultations with communities and organizations who are seeking signature celebrations to help extend and strengthen the community's "brand identity." Once assembled, the information that is revealed about a community can get at the root of its authentic identity, defining its unique spirit of place.

Every place has its own unique fingerprint, though it sometimes takes good detective work to discover what it looks like. Each has its own community spirit identity. To create public celebrations that deliver meaningful experiences with the most potential to maximize community spirit, it is important to discover each community's authentic identity so that it can be incorporated into the fabric of the event's identity, too. It is important to do this work first, before any programmatic decisions are made.

Such discovery requires open-minded effort on behalf of the community and also requires guidance from practitioners who understand the process of uncovering true

identity. The process involves spiritual archaeology and a bit of anthropology, too, as well as the ability to understand psychographic values (lifestyles). In the design community there is an expression, “form follows function.” What that means is that before the very best possible design can be realized, one must understand intimately its uses. Similarly, the development of community celebration, if it is to be the best it can be, requires careful identification of purpose. Based on the qualities of what is identified lies the foundation for event development that will bring community together in meaningful ways, connect people to each other and connect them to the lineage of the community. Such identification can help promote the community from the authenticity of its own uniqueness, providing continuity and building important meaning to citizens.

The tag line for my consulting company is “*bringing people together by design.*” I believe deeply in this statement and also believe that whenever people come together to celebrate, they form lasting bonds that contribute to well-being for themselves, the community, and the planet.

When I first meet with clients who want help defining a new signature event for their communities, research often precedes the process and I will know who they are, the base of their economy, their history, and much more before I set the first meeting. Often, people will see something that worked so perfectly in another community that they are inspired to reproduce that same thing in their own community. But ideas seldom are successfully transplanted from one community to another because whatever is not authentic does not last. For instance, the popular carousel in the plaza at Westlake Center in downtown Seattle probably would not work in downtown Denver because of climate alone, let alone other gaps in suitability and pertinence.

I think of communities as being living, breathing organisms and the best way to relate successfully to them is to engage with them energetically, forming relationship and learning to know their personalities and quirks. It is important to make friends with a community before one can interact meaningfully with it. To begin making friends, begin by understanding where the community came from. Then begin the job of uncovering authentic identity. Begin a spirit of place archaeological “dig” such as the one that follows:

Geography

Find out about the geographic environment of the community. If it were Phoenix, Arizona, it would be located in the Sonoran Desert and be surrounded by lots of sand and dirt, rimmed with low-elevation mountains. If it were Seattle, Washington, the geography would keep anyone from traveling as the crow flies because hills and lakes are prevalent there and there is a lot of water surrounded on all sides by volcanic mountains.

Geographic features help define what is logical to create. They also serve as directional signs to show the way to what could work programmatically.

Climate

Climate can play an important part, setting limits to unique identity. In Phoenix, don’t plan summer outdoor celebrations because no one can safely or comfortably survive the 120 degree heat at that time of year. In Seattle, summer is the only time of year when it makes sense to plan activity outdoors, since that’s the time of year the skies are blue and the sun shines. A great example of a climate-based celebration is the Iditarod Dog Sled

race.²¹¹ Alaska's climate forms the identity of this celebration because of its snow and ice environment. The same is true of the St. Paul Winter Carnival,²¹² which erects castles out of ice which people can tour. Sapporo, Japan is known around the world for its Snow Festival.²¹³ One can stay in an ice hotel in Jukkasjarvi, Sweden, and be thrilled by all the surrounding activities.²¹⁴

History

Founding history can provide valuable clues to identity. The little town of Gilbert, Arizona has been one of my most rewarding clients and I want to expand in some detail about Gilbert because the encounter there provides good illustrations of the value of a town's roots. Their leadership committee of about a dozen people spent nearly six months on their identity endeavor. One may argue that he does not have six months to spend on process and needs to reach conclusions right away. That's fine. But, the result will not be lasting and will be good for show only, not for substance. On the other hand, these processes need not take six months; but, they take as much time as they need. Duration is a function of availability and willingness of the people who need to work together.

The Gilbert group's task was to uncover their unique identity and to discover several authentic directions that meaningful celebration could take for their community. The geography and the climate were easily discernible, but the history took some research. The original population was indigenous Native Americans. Many people are familiar with a well-known legacy of this region: Pima cotton. That cotton comes from Arizona, but even before the Pima tribe was there, there were the ancient Hohokam. They left a trail of their identity in numerous petroglyph sites and ancient dwelling structures,

frequently discovered during excavation for new developments and roads throughout central Arizona.

Early white settlement came to Gilbert because of the U.S. Army, which was engaged in territorial expansion and the challenge of protecting the West from the threat of Mexico's notorious Pancho Villa in the early 1900s. Gilbert was the depot point for hay to feed the U.S. Army Cavalry horses, and its early identity was "the hay capital of the world." (Now, that's a tidbit of history worth exploiting!) Alone, the group never would have considered the importance of hay to their identity. Without encouragement, they certainly would not have taken the time to immerse themselves in the essence and spirit of hay-ness. Once they did, however, they were energized and in resonance with all things hay. They gleaned ideas from hay celebrations around the world and they had fun describing their research explorations to each other. Regarding the hay identity, they determined that Gilbert citizens could begin a custom of shouting out to each other from across the street by saying, "Hay Dude!" This new tradition could begin to inform a subtle embrace of the hay identity. Henceforth, anywhere in the world if someone called out "Hay Dude!" one would know they "hayled" from Gilbert. They investigated hay bale constructions and sculptures from sites around the world and found wonderful examples of mazes, homes, sculptures, and even hay bale throwing contests. They found plenty of programmatic ideas that could become aspects of celebrations involving hay. They even discovered an iconic phoenix effigy sculpture made of hay that had been an event's grand finale bonfire, designed by festival fire sculptor David Goff Eveleigh.²¹⁵ Through the improbability of hay, Gilbert's founding history had found ways to engage community in relevant celebration.

Not only is Gilbert's founding history important to its identity, but its unique heritage of Westward movement also informs its modern-day identity. Arizona did not become a state until 1912. Westward expansion came late to this territory. It originally was part of the State of Sonora, Mexico until the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 finally made it the property of the United States, though it was not officially a U.S. territory until later. Its heritage is Mexican and Native American. Knots of white settlers moved in during territorial days and by the early 1900s it had become the Hay Capital. Though today Gilbert boasts a strong multi-ethnic population, the assembled citizen group chose other strengths on which to develop further unique identity for the purposes of creating celebration.

Lifestyle Choices

It is key to take the time to survey community members to find out what they value and what's important to them in their lives and what constitutes their lifestyles choices. By identifying psychographics (lifestyle preferences), one can understand meaning that is superior to utilizing only demographics, which say nothing about people's desires. Demographics still are important, however.

Though coming from cavalry beginnings, Gilbert has grown to be the Valley of the Sun's most affluent community. It enjoys the highest education and income levels demographically. It also is made up of the Valley's most diverse ethnic mix. Because of the varieties of ethnicity, Gilbert prides itself on its annual citizenship swearing-in ceremony and enjoys celebrating patriotism amid a remarkably bipartisan resident population. Because of this lifestyle imprint, Gilbert has attracted considerable endeavors

devoted to environmental consciousness, resulting in wetland protection (it's true---right there in the middle of the desert), a development devoted to environmental sensitivity, as well as Agritopia, an urban residential development complete with its own residential farm.²¹⁶ Patriotically, Gilbert is the home of Operation Welcome Home, an ongoing event honoring returning military veterans. More recently, a proposed new park containing a permanent replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall is being constructed in Gilbert and they are currently in fundraising for the \$5 million needed to create the wall and bring it to its formal dedication. Heavily influenced, too, by the Mormon religious tradition, the community honors wholesome family values and those of group support and assistance.

Business Environment

Take the time to understand the economic base and business strengths of the community. Knowing that will be a guide to activities that fit in and interest the population. As the original home of Boeing, Seattle was a natural location to create a first-class air show and to support the “motor head” environment of hydroplane racing.

Gilbert's unique identities have caused industry to notice. Business loves to locate among well-educated and diverse communities. We're familiar with Gilbert now, so we will continue with its identity. In Gilbert, business preferences have manifested as a high concentration of satellite technology companies whose employees want to live in the gentle, but affluent, Gilbert environment. That is “satellite” as in outer space, by the way. The prevalence of space technology and aeronautics companies (Boeing also has a manufacturing plant nearby) provides another important part of Gilbert's unique

personality. Its grown strong enough in this category that the nation's largest university (Arizona State University with a student body that exceeds 65,000) has built infrastructure nearby to open a new air and technology center, the new College of Technology and Innovation. One example of how that might manifest in future celebration is to consider what role industry could play if paired with public education to stage robot festivals in partnership with local schools. A



Figure 9 – Boulder Kinetic Sculpture Race & Parade (www.westword.com)

kinetics race and parade²¹⁷ would be perfect in Gilbert because it could maximize the collaboration of youth interested in making machines, industry willing to support that, and citizens eager to help stage and participate in a parade. Other high-tech companies, such as stem cell research and specialized cancer treatment centers, have located there.

Physical Features

Gilbert has no famous physical features which help identify its uniqueness with the exception of a small riparian area that is unremarkable in appearance. But, to locals its town center water tower is its iconic symbol. Just think, for instance, about locations around the world to envision what can be embraced as an iconic physical feature. Rio de Janeiro most definitely does have famous and recognizable geography in its Sugarloaf Mountain. Around the world, when one sees an image of Sugarloaf Mountain, one knows where it is. That is one example of special physical features around which identity can be

formed and reiterated in the context of celebration in some creative manner. In Paris, the physical feature is not a natural one, but since it was erected, the Eiffel Tower has been the iconic identification of Paris. Moscow's St. Basil's Cathedral is another unique physical feature that immediately identifies its community. For the United States, such icons might range from the Grand Canyon to the Golden Gate Bridge to the Statue of Liberty. When planning the ultimate July 4th celebration, it would be wise to incorporate the inspiration of the Statue of Liberty. Such unique features in any location can become powerful elements to be incorporated when planning a signature event and many communities do have such identifiers if one just looks for them. They may be taken for granted or lying dormant. They are powerful because they are symbolic and embody deep energetic meaning.

The Elements

Invoking archetypes of the elements can stimulate important alignments with people's psyches, engendering familiarity and anchoring their presence in a location. There are several different interpretations of the elements, but for our purposes, we will select the four classical elements of earth, air, fire, and water. We're using these elements to inform creativity in the design and execution of celebrations. Using the four classic elements as inspiration reinforces the archetypal resonance that humankind shares with the planetary being's most basic characteristics.

The essence of elements can provide creative inspiration for event programming and visual elements. These elements can be jumping-off points for celebration designers who want to provide context and meaning for celebrants' experiences, assuring that they

forge meaningful memories, for even though the experience may reside in the planetary field of mind and the Akashic record, all that remains with the participants are their memories. Akasha is a word brought to the esoteric community by the work of philosopher and occultist Helena Blavatsky, pioneer and founder of the theosophical movement. Coming from Sanskrit, it refers to the record of our life force as it resides---past, present and future---in the ethers where some clairvoyants can access the information. The following are brief descriptions of the elements, intended to provide enough information to provide opportunity for creative design.

Earth is solid and firm. It provides grounding and stability. It is peaceful and tranquil in its essence. Its material aspects include metal, stone, wood, humus, minerals, sand, flesh and bone, and every manifestation of that which is organic. Earth concerns the terrestrial worlds, embodies matter, and holds the qualities of heaviness. The passage of the seasons and the cycles of living and dying also are associated with earth qualities. Earth is held in duality with the sky and is given a feminine quality, reflected in its frequently-used name, “Mother Earth.” Earth refers both to the planet and to the planet’s material qualities.

Event organizers might use earth as a topic to set a creative context or focal point such as sculpture, a built environment, or activities based on earth-like materials such as hay bale mazes or brightly-wrapped or yarn-bombed trees. Animals represent earth energy and both they and symbols representing them can



Figure 10 - Living Floral Tree by World Gate Entertainment at Tempe Festival of the Arts (Cathy Bruegger)

be used as creative elements. Earth locales involving wood, fields, parks, caves, gardens, and other natural settings are good choices for using earth elements in event design. Earth is associated with the colors brown, black, and green. Using those colors in environmental design and site graphics can gently convey the essence of an earth theme.

Air is the essence of inspiration. Air sustains us, for without it we could not live. Air is the breath of life. Archetypally it represents the mind. Air also represents the sky and is held in duality with earth.

With the exception of its association with clouds and mists, air is invisible relying on secondary ways to reveal its proof. The wind in the trees is such proof. Creatively, event designers might employ such tactics as hot air balloons, kite flying,



Figure 11 – Berkeley Kite Festival (www.pixshark.com)

fluttering pennants, or other techniques that provide evidence of air. Daytime fireworks, which use colored smokes instead of fire, rely on air to provide the canvas for their artistry.

The Sound Garden sculpture in Matthews Beach Park on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration site in Seattle, Washington is a fun gathering spot. There, the sounds created by the wind passing through giant tubes provide the main event. Likewise, Aeolian harps are proof of air, playing their otherworldly sounds when their strings are struck by the wind. Air is associated with the color white.

Fire represents light in all forms. It symbolizes safety, a source of visual light, warmth, and is represented in daily life by the hearth (which in modern homes is the kitchen). Fire has a double power because of its ability to destroy. It is a raw natural force. Associated with generation, decay, and renewal, fire plays a role in life rituals for purification, sacrifice, and fertility. The simple lighting of candles can connote a ritual of comfort in our homes. Nature is



Figure 12 - Circus School of Arizona Fire Eater at Tempe Festival of the Arts (Cathy Bruegger)

replete with fire. The fire of the sun sustains us. Lightning infuses earth with potent antioxidants through the injection of free electrons. This infusion helps sustain life and can help provide important health benefits for barefoot critters walking the Earth.²¹⁸ Even the faint fiery light from the stars once was used by ancient cultures, believed to fuel orgone chambers made in hillsides and in underground earthen structures.²¹⁹ In ancient times, fire seasonally held community together with light while waiting for the return of the sun. Fire transforms and renews, converting organic fuel into the minerals needed to regenerate new growth through the process of destruction and transmutation. Campfires once extended light into the darkness of the night, lengthening the possibility of the day. People's unconscious memories are linked through fire to primeval times when our relationships with it were direct and life-impacting.

Fireplaces, bonfires, fireworks, and candles help people break free of everyday routines; they help us relax, sensitize, and celebrate. We gather together around campfires and gaze into the fire, letting our minds flow. Fire is usually experienced as a calming element that soothes both our body and our mind. In addition to conversations, storytelling, and ritualized traditions, fire has an

essential power of confirming community and strengthening a common worldview.”²²⁰

Fire art covers a range of expression including fire sculptures, fire acrobats and jugglers, fireworks, fire eating and blowing, and bonfires, among some. In public performance, fire helps connect community to its local environment and reconnect it to nature. *“In performances and land art the purpose of using fire has often been to return materials ritually into basic elements: air, water and earth.”*²²¹ Fire is associated with the colors red and orange.

Water exists in multiple forms: liquid, gas, and solid, providing many opportunities for creative use. Water is the essence of life. When exploring other planets and our moon, scientists have looked for proof of water as a way of proving the possibility of life. Water can wash away impurities, rain down on us to provide sustaining nourishment, and delight us with its sounds. Waterways convey travelers and commerce, oceans cover the majority of the Earth’s surface, and water makes up the majority of our own bodies. Using water in event design might take the form of fountains, visual focal points as waterfalls, or carry our lighted lanterns downstream. Here in Arizona, cooling misters provide an important life safety use in the hot months of summer. Events on lakes, such as my own Fantasy of Lights Boat Parade,²²² utilize water as the common denominator for the entire



Figure 13 - Fantasy of Lights Boat Parade, Tempe, AZ (The Arizona Republic)

event. Thailand’s Water Festival is that country’s largest festival and it uses water in the world’s biggest water fight.²²³ Seattle has embraced rain as its signature brand, promoting

itself though festivals such as Bumbershoot²²⁴ and even adopting the slug as its official mascot. Fog machines often set the tone for Halloween events. In northern climes, ice provides the creative inspiration for many celebrations, such as the Kiruna Snow Festival,²²⁵ St. Paul's Winter Carnival,²²⁶ or the seasonal celebration of an ice hotel.²²⁷ French pyrotechnic colleague Pierre-Alain Hubert once programmed the commemoration of the first East Asian Games on a Shanghai bridge that spanned the harbor by creating a moving cascade of fireworks waterfalls.²²⁸ Carried in special backpack containers by one thousand Chinese bicyclists as they



Figure 14 – Calgary Winter Olympics Bridge of Fire (www.scartissue.org)

slowly drove across the bridge, the event symbolized the connection and unity of the athletes and inaugurated the games. One can see a wonderful YouTube video of this event at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQy2QsDRd2Y>.²²⁹ In this case, fire was used to depict water. Figure 14 depicts a similar visual effect during an event commemorating the 1988 Calgary Olympic Winter Games in Calgary, Alberta. While living in Kansas City, I recall a winter celebration held on the Country Club Plaza that featured an ice sculpture contest in which the results were placed as sculptures throughout the area for a winter walking tour of the Plaza. Water is associated with the color blue.

Astrological Influences

Although I have not used astrological influences overtly to determine festival design, I have used them to determine the best locations for my own personal growth and development, based on cartography readings done by an astrologer. It makes sense that the astrological sign of a city could influence its identity and its unique spirit. The concept is interesting enough for me to believe that if cartography affects my own life, it's likely that it also affects the life of a community.

For this quadruple Aquarian, Seattle (from a cartography point of view) was described as the darkest spot in the universe. Depending on the astrological signs of people, they can determine where the most auspicious locations would be for different kinds of their own growth, such as romance, financial, friends, career, etc. Knowing that cities have their own astrological signs, and knowing that Seattle is Scorpio in nature might, according to astrologer Gail Fairfield,²³⁰ provide inspiration for event development. With ruling planets of Pluto and Mars, one might consider the secrecy of Pluto or the war-like qualities of Mars on which to theme a celebration. The sex appeal of Scorpio is legendary, so the topic of desire might serve as a wonderful catalyst for theming an event. One based on the tango could bring out the appropriate aspects of desire for public celebration and teach people to tango at the same time. Along with identifying a community's cartography, knowing its horoscope would help determine when certain celebrations would best be held to support community change, and also provide clues regarding what festival themes would be best.

There is more to say about astrological phenomena of place than just this, however, so let us take a look at more. The world over, the landscape is littered with

earthworks whose energetic sitings and layouts were carefully calculated to carry out their astrological or astronomical purposes. Legendary constructions include Atlantis, an important cosmic earthwork for manipulating earth energy. It is described by contemporary scientist and author, John Michell, as an immense earthwork that covered the entire surface of the planet. It was a “*universal system of natural magic, involving the use of polar magnetism together with another positive force related to solar power.*”²³¹ Its purpose is not fully understood, but it’s thought to have been used “*for the manipulation of certain natural elements, a form of spiritual engineering.*”²³² Atlantis’ ubiquitous locations have hidden it “in plain sight,” its ruins being visible today in places such as Avebury in England.

Early ritual and celebration sometimes involved elaborate venue-making that was tied to astrological alignment. England’s Stonehenge is an astronomical observatory whose alignment with the cosmic movements of the sun and moon were critical to its times. In that sense, it’s astrologically based. In the days of Stonehenge’s use, humans survived on their knowledge of the seasons, observed through the night sky and the rising and setting sun and moon. The Glastonbury Zodiac, in southern England, is nearly ten miles wide and depicts the entire zodiac, which is literally scribed into the surface of the earth, linking the earthly energetic environment to the cosmos above.²³³

Cosmic history evolves in approximate 2,100 year cycles, based on the arrival of emerging astrological ages, as our solar system makes its way around one full precession of equinoxes, coordinated with the wobble caused by the tilt of the Earth’s axis, to complete its one-revolution Great Year (one Yuga cycle) of approximately 26,000 years. Each 2,000 year period is referred to as a Platonic Month in the Great Year scheme.²³⁴

We're now emerging from the Piscean Age and are entering the Age of Aquarius. Each new age brings cosmic change not only in the heavens, but also on Earth and in mankind. Until the early Common Era, the changes were deciphered through portents interpreted by ancient astronomical scientists and priests so that people could be guided toward coming cosmic changes. These observations and interpretations of the heavens and understanding the portents and omens were essential for right government, for predicting change, and for preparing citizens for the emerging future. From the earliest Egyptian use of astronomical interpretations, until the 2nd Century A.D., the signs in the sky formed the base of governance, planting, spiritual guidance, and daily life. Celebrations were made to commemorate and embody these important cycles.

It was during the early establishment of the Christian Church in the 2nd Century, toward the beginning of the Piscean Age, that the Church required the destruction of cosmology records, resulting in the loss of astrological knowledge. To survive, the practice of astrology went underground and no longer was the prevailing science of the day, and no longer was used to interpret official guidance for communities. Along with that loss came ever-increasing desacralization of the city center as once-cohesive societies fragmented in governance and spiritual influence, and disconnected from their cosmic guidance.

Summary Examples

Once the underlying archaeology has been discovered using the above topics, it is then time to develop the basic creative elements to design a signature festival. Based on real identity and local conditions, the context would be designed to reflect that identity. Then

the theme of an event can be determined, including the point of view and the subject of artistic representation that reveals focus consistent with content. Once that is accomplished, site enhancements can be designed that include the visual design of the site that reinforces theme and remembering that repetition creates continuity. Performances can be added, an activation of kinds of programming that match the look and feel of the festival, including entertainers, mascots, demonstrations, etc. Including elements of nature, as inspired from the above descriptions of the elements, adds excitement and familiarity. Those steps reveal the thing itself and the details can be built around this basic structure.

As examples, I want to leave readers with an idea of festival development, based on the information presented previously about two places, each very different. Knowing what we now have discussed about the multi-faceted manner of determining right celebration, here are proposed ideas that provide synthesis.

Gilbert Rising

Following the facilitation of their group of about a dozen community leaders and citizens during a six-month period, together we discovered that a handful of topics defined the nature of the community. It was this list that would become our litmus test against which we would evaluate whether an alliance or an activity would reinforce or detract from our identity. That list included the following:

Authenticity – The people present valued honesty and integrity and did not like contrivance or spin. They came from many languages from the Hohokam to the original establishment of Mexican settlers. They honor their founders, their past, and their future.

They came from agricultural roots that included cotton, alfalfa, oranges, and other farming. They enjoyed the Valley's highest per capita income and education level. They believed that their community formed a true oasis in the desert.

Sense of Community – They concluded that they valued feeling “at home” in their community. They valued the small town feel of friendship and personal interaction. They embraced people of all cultures and were proud that their community is the most ethnically diverse in the Valley. They wanted to foster a welcoming feeling to everyone. They appreciated family values and environments. They liked their casual feel and way of living. They valued their community's icons that included the Latter Day Saints church, great Mexican food, the town's iconic water tower, and their original theatre in the round, the Hale Theatre.

Fun – They discovered that they liked to laugh, that they loved music and the arts, and that they liked exciting, bustling environments. They liked to talk with neighbors and meet new friends. They found these relationships rewarding and interesting.

Growth – They wanted to cultivate sustainability and growth in everything they do. They valued their environment of slow food, independent farming, and their riparian preserve and community gardens. They wanted to encourage growth through clean technologies and green industry. They loved their environment of water, light, and nature. They valued embracing and balancing both conservative and progressive values and standards and sought middle-ground synthesis of those. They all loved the embodiment of Spring.

Leadership – They believed that as community leaders it was their responsibility, their obligation, and their accountability to improve their community's livability by creating an agenda of signature festivals. The result would be to create a community rich in vibrancy (fun, excitement, activity, feeling of safety, interesting); to improve their quality of life (for living, working and playing); to foster citizen involvement; to improve infrastructure for better livability; to foster economic generation (for folks who were their neighbors, through increased sales tax revenue and tourism spending); to enhance their community image; and to preserve their community heritage.

The group determined that they needed a month-long celebration to express their activities and to draw audience from the snowbird population that is so prevalent there during the high tourism season between October and March. They summarized the month of activity by naming it *Gilbert Rising: a Celebration of Growth and Community Spirit*. They wanted to focus on three areas of growth in their community that included biology, social sciences, and the economy.

Biology - They proposed an alternative health fair to highlight health, including their myriad of massage therapists, naturopaths, chiropractors, herbologists, and others who formed a strong contingent in their community. They envisioned a trade show as well as yoga and Tai Chi instruction. They wanted also to promote their slow food culture with events calling attention to their local farming community, the promotion of health through growing and consuming organics, and the concept of taking time over dinner to be fully present with family and friends.

Social Sciences – To highlight the social sciences, they envisioned a series of activities that over time could fulfill a full agenda of programs for which their community would be known. They wanted a parade that included matching some of their satellite industry companies with local education in order to build kinetic sculptures collaboratively that could race on land and in the water. They wanted their parade to be costumed and also to honor their military heroes, local beauty queens, and ethnic populations. They envisioned projecting old cowboy movies on the wall of a downtown building, encouraging the community to bring their lawn chairs to gather and watch. Since Gene Autry's home had been in nearby Mesa, Rex Allen had been an Arizonan, and Tom Mix had lived (and died) in southern Arizona, they wanted to capitalize on the cowboy theme. They wanted to plan a literary and poetry event that could collaborate with the national phenomenon of Poetry Out Loud, a phenomenon in secondary and post-secondary education designed to support the spoken word. And, they wanted to capitalize on their historic notoriety as the Hay Capital of the World by developing an event that used hay bale constructions and sculptures, promoted the use of "Hay Dude!" greetings, and ended in a hay-construction bonfire. They wanted to promote student government in grades Kindergarten through 12th Grade in order to promote citizenship, to understand voting, to engage in student government practices, and to culminate those activities with a citizenship ceremony for newly-qualified immigrants. They planned to develop an art program in grades Kindergarten through 6th Grade in which trained volunteers could present the masters and lead hands-on exploratory workshops with children. In time, they wanted to add an art competition and exhibition that would travel throughout their school system.

Economy – They could address their economy by building all of the above activities with fiscally sound principles that would encourage earned income and sponsorship support, knowing that these activities would be supporting local companies as vendors and contributing to the community's tax base. They understood that well-run festivals, particularly cyclical ones that are repeated year after year, can powerfully contribute to their community's economic development.

As in all master-type plans, time alters how things look even if the agenda remains the same. In the case of Gilbert, they have been able to develop Operation Welcome Home, a social sciences project that has begun to form identity for their community, welcoming military veterans home from duty. And, as mentioned previously, that strength has taken them to a project not anticipated in 2009 when our facilitations were done by inspiring them to develop and build the new, permanent replica of the Vietnam Wall.

Dragon of Council Grove

First, regarding David Yarrow's earlier assessment of the land energies present at Council Grove, my guidance recommends a variety of ways that dragon could be celebrated and honored. Intuition tells me to include the installation of an Aeolian harp to be placed in a location from which there can be propitious communication with the dragon, perhaps to be located through dowsing. Aeolian harps are wind instruments through whose harmonics Earth and sky are brought into resonance. The campus for the

Council Grove Conference on Consciousness Studies is remote, surrounded on three sides by a man-made lake and sparsely populated. An Aeolian harp can provide resonance and sound that can accompany and honor the presence of the wind. This campus is in Kansas, named for the Kansa Native Peoples, the translation of whose name means “People of the South Wind.”

Looking at the qualities of the vicinity’s earth, sky, water, and air, honoring those and adding fire seems appropriate. The Flint Hills, where Council Grove is located, frequently are burned to supply nutrients which renew its grasslands, so in that manner, annual ritual already does provide fire. A dragon festival design could develop ways to celebrate dragon-ness, such as bonfires or fire sculptures that further honor that



Figure 15 - Mettje Swift Dragon Flames (www.bannerart.com)

element. Even conga line dances that encourage the twisting animation of dragon-ness might be fun and meaningful to participants around a campfire. Dragon masks and costumes, dragon acrobats, and pennants of red, orange, white, and blue could add to the visual fun. Temporary structures that amplify energies, such as pyramids, can be erected, offering opportunities for healing such as grounding, pyramid meditations, and even sweat lodges created and conducted by local Native Peoples (I have a distaste for the inauthenticity of those who are not Natives claiming that this technology is for their non-Native use). Ceremonies involving the holy Native American practice of “going to water” can be taught and conducted. Dragon kites, or all kinds of kites, can be flown. Late night

astronomical observations can be conducted to make contact with the enormous sky over Kansas. Cowboy poetry around the campfire, folk singing, native grass and wheat weaving can be taught. The creative possibilities are endless.

By now, readers will understand how these energies of the land can be translated into activities in which people can meaningfully communicate the energy essences through celebration, and add to the list themselves. Readers can understand the importance of recognizing the intricate interrelationship of spirit, place, energetics, celebration, the center, boundaries, nature, the basics of signature festival archaeology and the creative toolkit, and be able to begin their own festival design.

Summary

Wholeness. Relatedness. Connection. The integration of these qualities stands for, well, in a word: integrity. The art of living can consciously cultivate these hallmarks of wellbeing in myriad ways, looking to our inclusive stewardship of soil, soul, and society for divine guidance on how to do that, what and who to include.

By now, readers surely can grasp the true essence of inclusiveness as requiring the authentic consideration of the needs of all beings (and everything is a living being). The perfect integration of life---the authentic opportunity for *Communitas*, *Civitas*, and *Humanitas*---comes through the cultivation of both horizontal and vertical existence, never forgetting that we are made of star stuff, from where all life originated, and we are also responsible for our actions here on Earth. When we cut ourselves off from relationship to any of our cosmic or terrestrial environments, we guarantee isolation and a shrinking prospect of living fully. We cultivate flatland existence, where the rich

interplay of all-that-can-be remains outside our possibility of experience, where authentic celebration cannot sweep us away in the ecstasy of unity consciousness.

To the extent that we can live in community with all of our relations, we can expand our capacities for wholeness, relatedness, and connection. The ability to live and thrive in community includes the full range of community---the Earth and its sacred energies, the other nations of human and non-human people, and our divine connection to the cosmos in which we exist whether or not we ever look up.

Accepting our roles as upright beings, capable of thought and self-determination--and doing that with the higher perspective of being truly and fully conscious---can bring to Earth the true connections needed for transformation. By being present to the moment, to the place, to the community around us, we can find ways to connect, relate, and celebrate the wholeness of our interrelatedness.

Celebrations are commemorations, ways to fix time and space and to create common bonds. What do our community liturgies need to enact in order to forge relationship? What stories do our lives and locations call forth that authentically describe who we are? What myths and archetypes reverberate with meaning when we consider our existence? What beliefs do we hold about our origins that knit Heaven and Earth together? Whatever they are, let's get busy telling them, displaying them, experiencing them, remembering them so that we can find the common threads that bind us to each other, to our communities, and to the cosmic interrelatedness of our Planetary Being.

Survival may depend upon our ability to rise to these occasions. But, survival is not enough. Surely we are called upon, in all of our upright being, big-brained existence, to do so much more. We are called upon to become fully conscious. We are called upon

to transcend our mindless routines and be fierce enough to transform ourselves and the world around us. We are called upon to create community, to dance and drum and celebrate our way to higher humanity. Through the conscious combination of spirit, place and experience, we can participate in those possibilities.

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