

PLACE MATTERS:
Finding Deep Ecology within Towns & Cities

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

Deep ecology is a branch of ecophilosophy with a focus on wilderness philosophy and that appears to hold little relevance within an urbanising world. Yet deep ecology's holistic account claims that *everything* is interconnected – not just those entities definable as wild or natural – but *everything*, including all those things that deep ecology has remained wary of and aloof from – machines, exotic species, department stores, concrete and tar.

This dissertation is an exploration of deep ecological metaphysics, specifically that of transpersonal ecology, within towns and cities. It considers how engagement within towns and cities may influence or change the metaphysical premise of deep ecology, and looks at how revisiting the holism therein may alter how we understand world and self, particularly with reference to towns and cities.

The particularities of the place within which this research is grounded are described. The suburb of Risdon Vale and the author's sense of place are introduced in terms of locality and locale, and with reference to two streams within place discourse – memory and place, and geographer Doreen Massey's 'global sense of the local, a global sense of place'. Three phenomenological encounters are narrated and discussed. The first encounter, entitled 'gum-tree-man', initiates a discussion of Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's gestalt ontology. The second, 'touch me, this tree', takes a fresh look at the concepts of wildness and wilderness from the perspective of gestalt ontology, and the third, 'capillary shawl', moves to consider self and the notion of consciousness as emergent from encounter between the author and her washing machine.

A notion of place emerges that forms the basis for the development of a concept termed 'the locality of place'. The locality of place and symbiosis are offered as alternatives to transpersonal ecology and Self-realisation. Accusations that deep ecology harbours fascist tendencies are addressed in light of the emerging ideas. Deep

ecology emerges as a poignant ontological perspective holding relevance and significance for considerations of self, place and world.

Finally, a re-conception of towns and cities, including of our selves, technologies and exotic species is explored. The notions of relational familiarity and unfamiliarity are offered as means of understanding current trends in relational enmeshment, and the increasingly problematic nature of these trends is discussed. An embodied turn towards familiarising ourselves within our own relational enmeshments is offered as a means of increasing our understanding of ourselves, world and *where we are at* within towns and cities.

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And Jet Lan...

*Look at the stars,
Look how they shine for you,
And everything you do,
Yeah they were all yellow,*

*I came along
I wrote a song for you
And all the things you do
And it was called yellow*

*I swam across
I jumped across for you
Oh all the things you do
Cause you were all yellow*

(Extract from the lyrics of 'Yellow' by Coldplay)

Sections 2.1 and 2.2, and subsection 3.4.2 of this thesis have been published under the title of 'Holism with a Hole: Exploring Deep Ecology within the Built Environment' (Booth, K. I., 2008a). Subsection 4.2.3 has been published under the title of 'Risdon Vale: Place, Memory and Suburban Experience' (Booth, K. I., 2008b).

“Everything hangs together – everything is interrelated”

Arne Naess 1912-2009 (1995a: 240)

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