

## **# 37 ORGANIC COMPONENTS: The Building Blocks of Functional and Sustainable Human Settlement Patterns**

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### **I. SUMMARY**

**Organic Components Are the Building Blocks of Functional and Sustainable Human Settlement Patterns. Until Scholars and Practitioners Learn What this Means, They Will Continue to Advocate, Plan, Design and Build Settlement Patterns That Are Dysfunction. A New Book by Emily Talen Creates a Detour on the Pathway to understanding the Organic Components of Human Settlement Patterns.**

### **II. DISAPPOINTMENT**

The author read with interest Robert Steuteville's review of Emily Talen's 2019 book *NEIGHBORHOOD*. The review published in the 19 January 2019 issue of *PUBLIC SQUARE* is titled **THE ONCE AND FUTURE NEIGHBORHOOD**. Based on a scan of Talen's book, the author believes it is important to clarify SYNERGY'S Perspective on the Organic Components of Human Settlement Patterns.

**In spite of exhaustive research and exhausting detail a reader Talen's book is left with exhaustion and disappointment.**

The author has only been able to scan the book. In spite of the extensive graphics, the small print and long paragraphs with little typographical variety or visual relief makes anything beyond 'scanning' a mind numbing exercise. As luck would have it, there is an index that provides the opportunity for a reader to find which personalities, locations and perspectives are cited as well as which key personalities, important locations and incisive perspectives are absent.

### III. JUST THE FACTS

For example on page 139 under the topic “Lessons Not Learned” Prof. Talen whacks **Columbia, MD** and **Reston, VA** for being **Auto-Dependent**. The author is familiar with what happened in these two cases. See BIO / CV Page linked from [www.emrisse.com](http://www.emrisse.com)

In **Columbia, MD**, Jim Rouse and his staff wanted to down play the Automobile in the design concept and site plans. This interest was based on staff research and experience in developing The Village of Cross Keys. Bob Gladstone (Gladstone Assoc and Quadrangle Development) told Jim that if he did not plan to serve the car he would go bankrupt. Jim did not look forward to that outcome in spite of what turned out to be a very flexible partnership with Fraser Wilde and Connecticut General – the money partner in the project.

In **Reston, VA**, Bob Simon got the same advice and decided to stick with his designers concept for Lake Anne Village. He lost his economic interest in Reston to Gulf Oil, the prime investor. Reston would have ended up just another subdivision like Fox Mill and others in the Dulles Corridor but for The Reston First Families and their relationship with the Fairfax County leadership. In addition, Bob returned to live in Reston and inspired the residents to maintain the spirit and goals of Reston to the extent possible in spite of auto domination in the remainder of Reston outside of Lake Anne and later, the Town Center..

This reality is familiar to any who UnderStand the development process of these two successful Community-Scaled Planned New Communities.

Make no mistake, it is handy to have Talen’s book and the resources concerning “communities” (no Capital “C”) and the extensive examination of the Perry Neighborhood in a single place. However, much of importance is missing. Also missing are cairns to mark the way through the vast expanse of Core Confusing Words and crippled Vocabulary. See END NOTE *On Vocabulary and Capitalization*.

In the end all there is in Talen’s book to provide guidance for future planners, designers and builders are the eight “qualities” of Talen’s “neighborhood.”

- 1, “It has a name,”
2. “Residents know where It is, what It is, and whether they belong to It.”
- 3, “It has at least one place that serves as its center.”
4. “It has a generally agreed upon spatial extent.”
5. “It has everyday facilities and Services, although It is not self-contained.”
6. “It has internal and external connectivity”
7. “It has social diversity within It, or It is open to Its enabling.”
8. “It has a means of representation, a means by which residents can be involved in Its affairs, and an ability to speak with an collective voice.”

**Except for “Quality Number 5”, ALL of these “qualities” do not just apply to NEighborhoods. They apply to DOoryards, CLusters, Villages and COmmunities as well.**

All one needs to do for a clean sweep is to broaden “Quality Number 5” by removing the word ‘everyday’ and replace it with ‘appropriate.’

Not everyone is lost in scale. When one travels in Bavaria they will often see a ‘Welcome’ sign as one approaches an Urban Enclave. Depending on the scale of the enclave the sign welcomes the traveler to that component. In addition, the sign notes the names of the other components of which that component – be it CLuster, NEighborhood, Village, COmmunity, or “District” – is part. Sometimes the name of the REgion (‘state’ / Bavaria), nation-state (Germany) and often the EU are included on the welcome sign. These signs indicate that the residents know exactly where they are.

## **THE AUTHOR’S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

Having lived and worked in Planned New Communities [Columbia, MD (8 years), Reston, VA (8 years), Fairfax Center, VA (14 years) and The Woodlands, TX (currently 2 years)] as well as in DOoryard, CLuster and VillAge scale enclaves in California, Montana, Maryland and Virginia, the author has a Perspective that fundamentally differs from that of Professor Talen. See *again BIO / CV / Page* linked from [www.emrisse.com](http://www.emrisse.com)

**With respect to NEighborhood articulation, Talen was on the right track at one point. On page 206 she cites Walter Christaller and his Central Place Theory. But then she loses the trail.**

The author is old enough to recall when Constantinos A. Doxiadis was an important figure in the attempt to make the world a better place via Urban Renewal. He made much more important contributions to “The Science of Human Settlements” than his pied piper routine staged for Urban Renewal Agencies. (*Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of Human Settlements*, Oxford University Press, 1968.)

Doxiadis, a citizen of Greece, was able to read Aristotle in the original Greek and understood that Aristotle did indeed articulate that Human Settlement Patterns were – and they still are – complex ORGANIC Systems. Doxiadis also understood Christaller’s Central Place Theory. In the field, he applied Christaller’s theory to the distribution of Ancient, Mediaeval and Contemporary Urban Settlements (enclaves) in Greece.

Doxiadis was known for assigning Greek names for the specific scales of Urban Settlements – e.g. Eperopolis for “small URban REgion.” He was also credited with being one of the first to predict that the entire planet would eventually be a single URban System that he named the Ecumenopolis. See Yuval Noah Harari: *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (2011) and *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*(2015) for the facts supporting this perspective.

As noted in Chapter 15 of *THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE* (2000), Doxiadis focused on the scale of entire URban Agglomerations and not on the scales of the COMPONENTS that made up that URban Agglomeration. In other words he did not apply one of the ‘laws’ that characterized ALL Organic Systems: Every large Organic System is make up of smaller Organic Components.

The author’s early professional experience with the industrial enclaves in the Mohawk Valley of New York suggested that the entire Valley was composed of CountrySide and COmmunities. Each COmmunity was composed of Villages; each Village was composed of NEighborhoods; etc. , etc. This Perspective was used as the basis for the SubREgional “Comprehensive Sketch Plan” for Herkimer and Oneida Counties, NY. This Comprehensive Sketch Plan was submitted as an element of the SubREgion’s 701 program in 1967. This Perspective as was

refined as the author gained experience in the planning, design, development and management of Planned New Communities.

By the time the author had the opportunity to oversee the design and planning as well as help supervise construction and then manage the governance structure of a Planned New Community of Village scale he had:

1. Supervised the planning for a Village scale Planned New Community where one of the key issues was whether to have the Highlands Village made up of an agglomeration of NEighborhoods and Clusters (like Columbia, MD) or to be more like the Planned New Community of Hook in the United Kingdom. Hook was designed as a whole with no obvious components. See *The Highlands Project* Page 6-20. The report on this study was judged by the staff of the HUD New Communities Program to be one of the most comprehensive and innovative of the PreAps that the office received.
2. Lived, worked and participated in the governance of Columbia, MD, for 3 years and was familiar with the planning and governance structure of Reston, VA, Peachtree City, GA, The Woodlands, TX, and other Planned New Communities. See again BIO / CV page linked from [www.emrisse.com](http://www.emrisse.com)

## **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER**

The author took advantage of this experience to plan, design and help implement Burke Centre, VA, a Village scale project with five NEighborhoods. Each NEighborhood is composed of about a dozen distinct CLusters. There are three levels of Organic Components in the physical plan with Village, NEighborhood and Cluster scale Amenities. There is also a three level governance structure. For example, CLusters and NEighborhoods can determine the level of annual Village assessment based on the cost of services each Component's residents desire. In other words, it was **NOT** designed as a 'The Biggest Dog Rules quasi-democracy'.

**Forty years after initial buildout the physical structure as well as the three level governance system that reflects and serves the Village's Organic Components is flourishing and prospering as originally designed according to the current Village management.**

Burke Centre by the numbers: 1,700 acres, 5,862 Dwelling Units, 5 NEighborhoods, 65 CLusters. There are about 18,000 residents resulting in 10.59 persons per acre at the Alpha Village Scale. That is very close to the 10 persons per acre 'golden mean' [Sweet Spot on the Cost of Services Curve) documented in *THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE* (2000)] for Alpha COmmunities where the Mobility and Access is dependent on Large Private Vehicles.

A comprehensive search of *The Washington Post* archives would document that from the very start Burke Centre was considered a special place. Burke Centre's web site documents that Burke Centre is a special award winning and well managed Village staking out a clear position for a democratically governed Village that exists within a bloated 'local government' that has over a million citizens (Fairfax County, VA). Burke Centre is treasured by its residents and most of its components do in fact meet Talen's "Qualities."

Burke Centre is a best choice for those seeking "A COmmunity in Harmony With Nature." It was designed with about 340 acres of dedicated OpenSpace, a comprehensive trail system that provides walking and bike access to elementary schools. shopping and job opportunities.

Burke Centre is relatively remote (17 miles) from the Centroid of the National Capital SubREgion (the Census determined Core includes the Federal District, the City of Alexandria and Arlington County. To help overcome this geographical restraint, the developer provided Parkway and pathway access as well as land for Virginia Railway Express' Burke Centre station and parking. Before the light rail system opened the developer worked to insure there was METRO bus service to METRO stations and the SubREgional Core.

A 'town center' provides Village and some COmmunity scale shopping, medical offices, restaurants and other Services. A second commercial center at the edge of Burke Centre provides a second full-line grocery, a startup ENterprise incubator (established in the 1970's) and other Services for Burke Centre and adjacent Villages.

At the time Burke Centre was designed and implemented the author did not yet recognize the importance of the DOoryard Component. He later had the opportunity to work with an URban Designer from Sasaki Associates on a CLuster of Single HouseHold Attached UNits that were laid out in DOoryards. He lived in that DOoryard / CLuster / NEighborhood / Village within the Fairfax

Center Planned New Community for 14 years. During that time he participated in the planning and governance of the COmmunity and of the Employment NEighborhood that included the lake-side residential CLuster that was laid out in DOoryards.

## **PROFESSOR TALEN IS IN THE SAME BOAT AS MANY OTHERS**

Professor Talen is not the only one at sea over UnderStanding the importance of the Organic Components of Human Settlement Patterns. The following is a glimpse at two examples:

On pages 356 and 357 of his 2014 book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari intends to show how the only two subsets of Empires (families and ‘communities’) atrophied and ‘collapsed.’ In describing this process Harari relies on both “neighborhood” and “village” to help him illustrate his point.

In the 19 February 2019 edition of the *CityLab* daily newsletter, Richard Florida summarizes the work of Prof. Elizabeth Delmelle in *Urban Neighborhoods, Once Distinct by Race and Class, Are Blurring*. Without examining Professor Delmelle’s research strategy and parameters, a glance at the three maps that are provided indicates that the vast areas of the same color on the maps cannot depict just a single ‘neighborhood’ or contiguous ‘neighborhoods’ that could be functional without other Organic Components – both larger and smaller.

***All these professors need to UnderStand and come to terms with all the Organic Components of Functional Human Settlement Patterns.***

Recent research documents that during the “PreHistory” period (4000 BCE to 1700 CE) Human Settlement Patterns in the Americas – including those in Georgia, Louisiana, et. al. – were composed of Organic Components. This mirrors what Doxiadis found in ancient Greece and what has been unearthed in Northern Europe.

Human Settlement Patterns in the Pre History time frame consisted of recognizable patterns that – depending on the scale of the indigenous society / civilization They include:

Households (UNits),  
Household Groups (UNits, DOoryards),  
Extended Household Groups (CLusters, NEighborhoods),  
Clans (NEighborhoods, Villages, COmmunities),  
Tribes (Villages, COmmunities, SubREgions, REgions)  
Nations (SubREgions, REgions)

These patterns in this time frame may seem irrelevant to contemporary Settlement Patterns. They are NOT. As noted in *THE LITTLE BOOK*, the work of E. O. Wilson, Jared Diamond and Yuval Noah Harari document that Primitive Genetic Proclivities continue to have a major impact on the actions of Homo sapiens. The authors experience in living in intentionally designed DOoryards and CLusters substantiate this Perspective. Also see *Pocket Neighborhoods: Creating Small-Scale Community (small ‘c’) in a Large-Scale World*, Ross Chapin (2011) and *Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves*, Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrentt (1988). The powerful attraction of these Organic Components can also be gleaned from perhaps 50 books in SYNERGY’s library that explore successful contemporary “neighborhood,” “village” and “city” planning from Seaside to Greenwich Village.

[**Note on Vocabulary and documentation:** SYNERGY uses the term "PreHistory" for the period from 4000 BCE to 1700 CE in the Americas because "prehistoric" elicits images of the age of dinosaurs – the Mesozoic Era that is 252 million years ago to 66 million years ago, long before Sapiens existed.]

Almost everything one thinks they know about the Americas between 4000 BCE to 1700 CE turns out to be wrong unless they happen to have read Charles C. Mann’s *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, (1999) or more recent research on the topic. The history of the Americas that is important to our contemporary UnderStAnding of Human Settlement Patterns did **NOT** start in 1492. **The People of One Fire** conduct research and are a depository for the latest in PreHistory research. <https://peopleofonefire.com/>

## ON TO THE FUTURE

As the 21st century dawned, the last thing existing New URban REgions needed were more free standing Planned New Communities on green-field sites – no matter how ‘green.’ For a multi-REgional conservation INstitution SYNERGY prepared *The Handbook* in 2001. The intent was to use Organic Components to guide the transformation of dysfunctional Urban settlement patterns (aka, “suburban,” “exurban” and “rural” – no Capitals) settlement patterns into functional and sustainable URban fabric. A revised *Citizen Handbook* was produced in 2003.

A further revised edition of this volume makes up **PART TWELVE, (Chapters 41 to 44) Citizen Handbook: Three Step Process to Create Balanced Communities and Sustainable New URban REgions** of *TRILO-G* (2010). This edition of the *Handbook* includes graphic examples of the Three Step Process in Loudoun County, VA and in the Virginia SubREgion of the Washington Baltimore New URban REgion.

The Handbook does not advocate a simple process. Implementation would be achieved in the context of Profound Transformation of the existing Governance Structure and Profound Transformation of the current Economic System. These Transformations are articulated in *THE LITTLE BOOK* (final draft Aug 2018) available from the *PUBLICATIONS* Page at [www.emrisse.com](http://www.emrisse.com)

## END NOTE : ON VOCABULARY & CAPITALIZATION.

This NOTE updates both **APPENDIX ONE – LEXICON** and **APPENDIX TWO – CORE CONFUSING WORDS** of *THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE* (2000) as well as well as **PART THIRTEEN – GLOSSARY** of *TRILO-G* (2010).

In the evolution of a robust and functional Vocabulary to accurately articulate the complexity of Human Settlement Patterns, SYNERGY / E M Risse avoids the use of several Core Confusing Words and attempts to evolve words, phrases and letter sequences that are intuitively clear in the context used. The Core Confusing words that are avoided include **UNCAPITALIZED** use of the words “city”,

“exurban”, “family”, “local”, “rural”, “sprawl”, “suburban”, “suburban” and “urban”.

Capitals are employed for the key elements of the settlement pattern Vocabulary because words that have specific meanings with respect to Human Settlement Patterns must be treated like Proper Nouns to avoid confusion. Within the guidelines of conventional grammar, ENterprises, AGencies and INstitutions are free to employ All Caps, Initial Caps and Interior Caps to differentiate and advertise their products and services. Parents create new Proper Nouns when they become parents.

**Why should those trying to UnderStand and articulate the complexity of Human Settlement Patterns be required to rely on confusing words and phrases and arcane rules of grammar?**

Due to the fact that Capitalization survives most inter-system translations, Capitalized terms are employed when a specific definition of a word or phrase is intended. ALL CAPS are used for emphasis. This is because *italics*, underlining, **bold**, **color** and **highlighting** are often removed in software translations – e.g. different software used by email providers.

Many words, phrases and letter sequences used in SYNERGY / E M Risse communications, Perspectives and books that APPEAR to exhibit ‘irregular capitalization’ are defined in the GLOSSARY linked from the *RESOURCES* page at [www.emrisse.com](http://www.emrisse.com). The evolution continues and some use of Capitalizes words have not yet been added to SYNERGY’s on line GLOSSARY. Many of the words used by SYNERGY are defined in *THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE*, APPENDIX ONE – LEXICON, however, these definitions were current when the book was last revised.

In addition to consulting the GLOSSARY, one can Google ‘e m risse’ followed by the word, phrase or letter sequences in question – for example ‘e m risse J / H / S / R / A’ – and find a definition and / or find the word, phrase or letter sequence used in context.

Links are not provided for referenced resources which are out of the control of SYNERGY. References to resources not authored by E M Risse can be located via an Internet search.

An expanded Capitalization strategy has been employed since the publication of CP # 33 (June 2014). In the past, a second capital has been used **WITHIN** compound words with specific meanings (e.g. OpenSpace, SubRegional, etc.) to focus attention on the need to understand the exact meaning of these terms.

As noted in APPENDIX TWO of ***THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE***, there are some confusing words for which there is no good substitute in English. In the past the words Unit, Cluster, Neighborhood, Village, Community and Region (including New URban REgions) have been capitalized. In Current Perspective # 33 and subsequent publications, a double capital is used to start the title of each Organic component of Human Settlement Pattern – e.g. UNit, CLuster, NEighborhood, Village, COmmunity, REgion. Also additional words will be given interior Capital's (e.g. HouseHold and SubREgional) as the need arises.

If you do **NOT** find the avoidance of Core Confusing Words and expanded Capitalization to indicate the application of a precisely defined Vocabulary useful to articulate a comprehensive Conceptual Framework for Human Settlement Patterns, you are welcome to create your own Vocabulary system to achieve UnderStAnding in the context of Awareness => Interest => UnderStAnding => Informed Action with respect to Human Settlement Patterns.

However: Do not be deluded and think that you will achieve UnderStAnding much less Informed Action using an inadequate Vocabulary which triggers Unfounded and Conflicting Neural Linguistic Frameworks. These words reflect Disorienting Naive Reality founded on Primitive Genetic Proclivities. See Current Perspective # 24 ***Live By / Die By*** linked from the *CURRENT PERSPECTIVES* page at [www.emrisse.com](http://www.emrisse.com) .

NB: Evolving a functional Vocabulary is an ongoing process and feed back is welcomed. Please DO NOT provide blanket negative feedback UNLESS you also provide an alternative strategy to evolve a functional Vocabulary. The continued use of Core Confusing Words and limited Capitalization of words – especially for the organic components of human settlement – is NOT an acceptable response. Also see ***Millennials Destroyed the Rules of Written English and Created Something Better: The Spelling and Grammar Rules Do Not Apply on The Millennial Internet***, Rachel Thompson, *Mashable* (2 APR 2018).