

upcoming Christmas holidays in mind, she asked in a worried voice, “How will Santa Claus get down the chimneys?”

This landscape of sealed isolation and our daughter’s anxious response to it provide a background for this book, reminders of two parts of the same problem. The first and more universal part of the problem, the devastating environmental effects of our reliance on fossil fuels, has been thoroughly treated by others and therefore has, in this book, not been given an in-depth treatment. Rather, it is the second and more personal part of the problem, a disconnect between our private, domestic lives and the rest of nature, that has been given the most serious and careful thought.

In the course of examining our individual detachment from nature, the book explores the historical importance of sheltering methods that once linked people practically and spiritually to their environments. We have largely abandoned such modes when high-energy systems can automatically adjust our buildings to weather and climate. And yet a close examination of older traditions shows that patterns of social behavior, rituals that followed nature’s complex rhythms, have been a time-honored condition of ecological balance, of personal choice, and of creativity. Consequently, this work posits the notion that these objectives can be reached by engaging rhythmic nature more closely than we now do. We can make shelters that actively enhance our participation in places, encouraging responses to climate that, through repetition, evolve into personal rituals, linking us to a place, adding meaning to our lives.

The book is organized in three major parts. The first part is more descriptive than analytical, concerned with people’s feelings more than with precise measurements. It opens with actual accounts of traditional sheltering rituals gathered from around the world. Some of these have derived from *migration*: people

moving long distances across great landscapes or merely across a room. Others have issued from *transformation*: changes of space resulting from repeatedly opening and closing a window, a shutter, a tent flap, or a courtyard cover. Finally, many have their roots in *metabolism*: crowding together to share body heat or gathering close to a warming fire. Regardless of their basis, the accounts all tell of a ritual connection between nature's rhythms and sheltering actions that enliven people's thoughts and free their creative imaginations.

The book then addresses issues of extraordinary urban growth, the way unprecedented changes of setting have altered the rhythms and rituals of our lives. First, a history of growth is traced in northeastern Ohio that typifies the changes in American life from wilderness to town over the past 200 years. The setting then shifts to Los Angeles, an urban region that exemplifies the ways our dependence on mechanical–electrical systems for comfort is progressively alienating us from nature. Since a majority of the world's population is expected to occupy large cities by 2030, the quality of life for most people will soon depend on the quality of urban living.

Finally, the book proposes and describes a practical tool that professionals can use to instruct urban growth for a better connection to nature for energy, comfort, and choice. It presents new studies of the *solar envelope*, the author's internationally recognized zoning device for solar access in cities. The solar envelope provides architects and urban designers with a design analysis tool by which to understand and implement solar access to buildings for passive solar heating, solar control, and daylighting as well as for active systems. It provides for low-impact development and opens new aesthetic possibilities for both designer and dweller. Additionally, this research explores the *interstitium*, a dynamic