



*Why planners hate Nature  
(if they do...)  
and  
what we can do about it*  
EcoEdge Conference, 2005

### The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight

(Thom Hartmann)

How can we change our world and the world around us?

- Transform ourselves: become fully alive, alert and aware of our surroundings and the divine everywhere
- Change our technologies
- Change how we think of and use science

How?

- Reconnect with the wisdom of our ancestors
- Build communities that work
- Transform culture by transforming politics

(Hartmann, 2004: 230-2)

### Cree story

## Four tasks each day


1. Learn at least one meaningful thing
2. Teach at least one meaningful thing to another person
3. Do something for another (best if they don't know)
4. Treat all living things with respect

(Hartmann, 2004: 242.3)

### Four parts to this presentation

1. Summarise my 1992-1996 research
2. Framework for a radical curriculum
3. Case study of team development in Melbourne based on my learning model
4. Help!

### Glass Foyer State Library of South Australia

*I thought you were the social planner.*

# Part 1: The Inquiry

1988 to 1996

## Ecological Impacts of Outer Suburban Residential Developments, 1988-91



## Roxburgh Park, Melbourne, 1988-91



## The Roxburgh Park Team, 1989



## *Learning to See Each Other* 1983



## Environmental ethics

*the most fundamental aspects  
of the relationship between humanity*

*other life forms*

*and the Environment or Nature,  
as well as the moral obligations of  
humanity to the Earth community*

## Environmental Ethics and Planning

US and Canada 1991

- Paucity of planning literature related to environmental ethics
- Recent scholarly debates about identity of the planning profession silent on this fundamental issue

## Environmental Ethics and Planning

US and Canada 1991

### Findings:

- Essential environmental ethics instruction: < a handful of programs
- Instruction **not** keeping up with newest concepts
- Canadian universities: greater coverage
- Little if any pattern

Martin and Beatley, 1993

## Teaching of Environmental Ethics

seems to be based on a **particular faculty member's interest**, rather than a program or planning profession's commitments to the importance of the subject

Martin and Beatley, 1993

## Sample of Planning Schools Australia

1994-1995

	Sample	Total Population	%
Students	158	1905	8
Educators	47	101	46
Total	205	2006	

## Who said what about teaching environmental ethics

### Heads

out of touch with coverage of environmental ethics topics  
exaggerated coverage

### All but one Head

reported higher degree of topic coverage than did educators and students

### Students

did not recognise many topics educators and Heads said were being taught

Who said what about teaching environmental ethics

### Educators

reported more coverage than did full university sample

Males reported more extensive coverage than did females

## Interest in environmental ethics

### Educators:

- interest weak or very weak
- assessed student interest as weaker than students did in their self-assessment
- did not understand extent of that interest

What the Heads said...

## Our school's mission

*"to provide the opportunity to enter the planning profession and advance their career through further study."*

*"We concentrate on producing . . . consciously . . . balanced people who are capable of seeing both sides of an argument and producing a balanced report. . . . [It is] not our job to turn out 'missionaries'. . . ."*

*[I have] no problem with someone having very strong personal values . . . [but] the value is to be detached and to do good research and come up with decent proposals."*

Sydney, 1994

*"The planning programs ought to be making sure that they've got the environmental [ethics] side covered in their teaching programs. They don't give two figs."*

\*\*\*

*"My job is to stop people rattling on about philosophy but to show me . . . a palpable vision."*

\*\*\*

*"It's something which would obviously come up but doesn't appear anywhere as part of our central mission."*

Heads of 3 Australian Planning Schools

## Students' Views

*"Ethics is not perceived as 'practical' and schools that churn out practitioners get support from government and industry.*

*Planning is now politics and there is nothing very ethical in politics nor is there anything ethical in 'the public'."*

Male student, Macquarie University

*"If ecology is 'the subversive science,' then we must teach 'the science of subversion' (Leopold was a great practitioner).*

*If we accept the ethic of care and respect for the rights of nature, we first need to expose planners to these philosophies and then need to guide them towards weaving this thinking into their professional lives."*

Male postgraduate student, Macquarie University

*". . . almost all the staff here have tenured positions for over fifteen years, small teaching loads and big consultancy work outside and don't care about areas of academic and ethical concern and have no incentive to learn."*

Female student, Sydney University

## Students' perceptions of educators

- Need educating to teach competently about environmental ethics
- Often stay with issues they are trained in
- Use outdated material
- Not interested in environmental issues
- Cynical about global environmental problems
- Little desire to work for change
- Not fully committing energies to teaching or professional development

## Part 2: The Prescription

1992 to the present

### Advice from educators and students

How to teach an ethic of caring for Nature

1. Challenge dominant positivist paradigm
2. Integrated and comprehensive approach
3. Understand the basis of human separation from Nature
4. Develop respect for Nature
5. Adequate time for learning
6. Appropriate assignments
7. Integrate theory with practice
8. Obtain appropriate resources
9. Real-life examples

### Suggestion

Community-based field trips  
and local case studies

- Direct participation of planning students in community projects — linking theory to action
- Explain both philosophical and ecological principles and problems
- Necessary so students not left dispirited and without hope



So...

Do planners hate Nature?

If so, why?

Planners don't really HATE  
Nature



## They don't know Nature

can't find Nature, can't validate Nature, can't touch Nature, can't feel Nature, can't be Nature, not connected to Nature...

- A certain kind of person self-selects into planning
- Taught by people like them
- Like order, rationality, clarity, consistency, predictability
- Don't want to rock the boat
- Don't like complexity, confusion, chaos
- Binary thinkers: tick boxes, approve/disapprove
- Don't see life as interconnected

## They don't know Nature

can't find Nature, can't validate Nature, can't touch Nature, can't feel Nature, can't be Nature, not connected to Nature...

- Don't feel part of Nature
- Rarely given opportunities in their work to connect with colleagues, wider environment
- Some yearn for those opportunities; others satisfied
- Many feel powerless, frustrated
- Toxic workplaces for planners
- Planning education supports this model

## The Challenge 1

A new ethical paradigm

- ∞ relational view: individual as integral to society and Nature
- ∞ begins from a feeling of care (as in a family), rather than rights (as in a business)
- ∞ equity (fairness) takes precedence

## The Challenge 2

*Who or what is worthy of consideration?*

How can planning education nurture a sense of caring and commonality with all Life that extends the planner's moral community to the wider realms of the more-than-human?

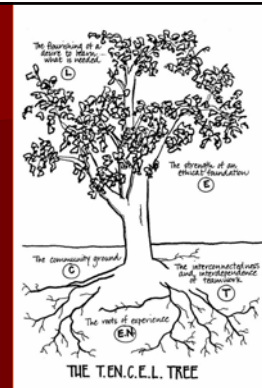
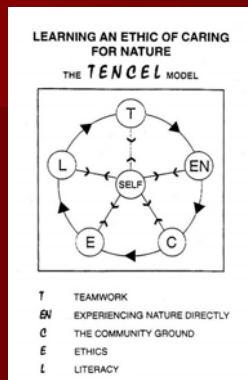
*An ethic of caring for Nature*



The **T E N C E L** Model:  
Nurturing an Ethic of Caring  
for Nature  
in the Education of Australian  
Planners

## The T E N C E L Model

- ∞ **T**eamwork
- ∞ **E**xperiencing **N**ature directly
- ∞ The **C**ommunity ground
- ∞ **E**thics
- ∞ **L**iteracy



## 15 Components

### Teamwork

1. Leadership
2. Human relations skills
3. Listening
4. Acknowledging individual learning styles

### Experiencing Nature Directly

5. Comfort, joy and delight
6. Grounding in the land (engrossment)
7. Time, reflexivity and solitude
8. Skilled and compassionate mentoring

## 15 Components

### The Community Ground

9. Collective consciousness
10. Community stability and harmony

### Environmental Ethics

11. Commitment and patience
12. An ecocentric ethical vision
13. A balance between idealism and pragmatism
14. Ontology must precede ethics

### Literacy

15. Knowledge-sharing and the development of new literacies and skills in ethics and ecology

## Critical relationship 1: *Self cooperating with others*



## Critical relationship 2: *Self anchored in Nature*

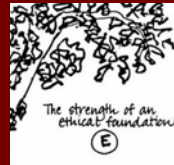




### Critical relationship 3: *Self grounded in community*



### Critical relationship 4: *Self as responsible to all life*



Who or what is deserving of consideration?

- Human-centred ethics
- Animal-centred ethics
- Life-centred ethics
- "Everything"-centred ethics
- Biosphere as a whole

### Moral Considerability

*Who or what deserves consideration?*

- Defining criteria of **deservability**
- One end of spectrum:
  - only people deserve consideration
- Other end:
  - any organism with an interest in its own preservation and which
  - makes plans for the future

... is deserving of consideration

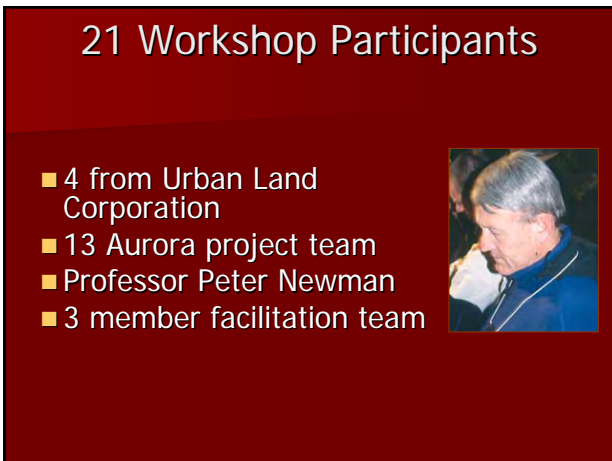
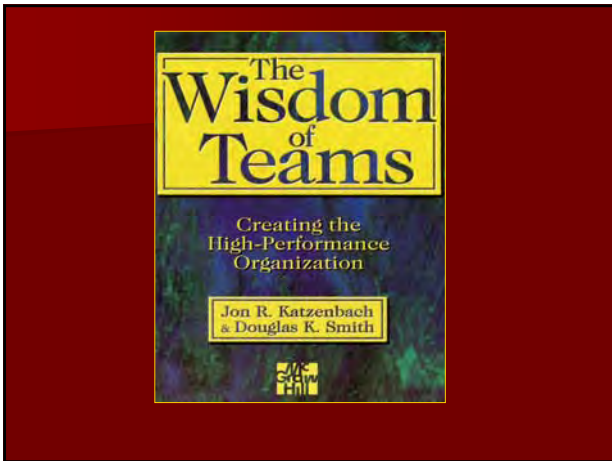
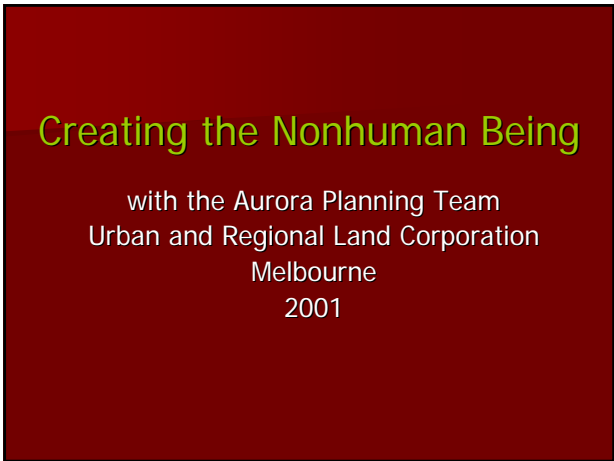
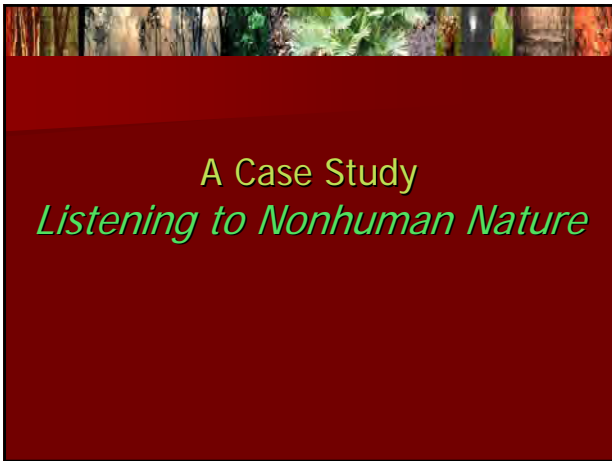
### Critical relationship 5: *Self seeking understanding*



### Everyone's responsibility

*Every planning school should address environmental ethics in its curriculum.*

### Part 3: Testing the Model



Congratulations! Welcome to the Team !



Giving Gifts  
and Reading  
Poems



Creating, Dressing and Introducing  
Lee and Zak





## Lee

almost 5 (androgynous)

- Safe street to play
- Interesting things to do close to home
- Quiet places
- Trees to sit under, climb, marvel at
- Centre of the Universe
- No boundaries
- T.V.
- Love from parents
- Exploring and making sense of the world
- Developing new understandings of the world



## Lee

- *I like playing at the park but the swings are always broken*
- *I play with all the kids on the street*
- *My mum drives me to school every morning*
- *I like eating lollies*
- *I like drawing and singing and dancing*

## Zak

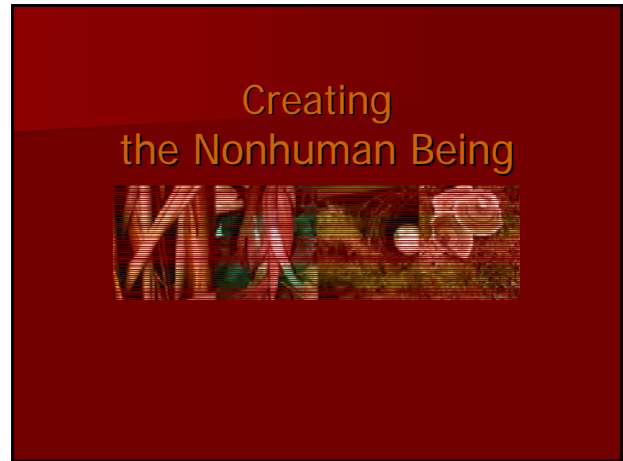
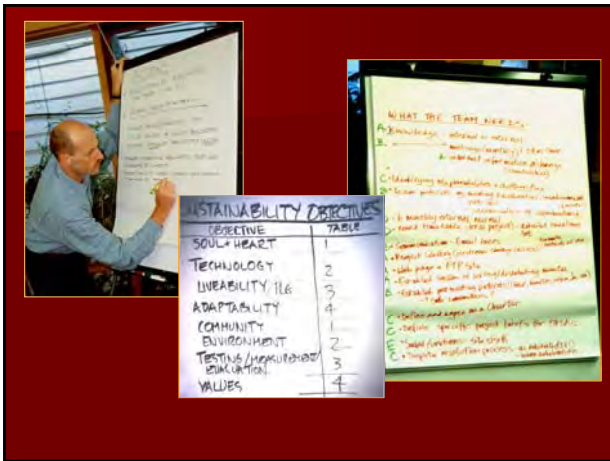
(male, aged 15)

- Peers very important
- Active – sport
- hang out, chill out
- Spaces away from home
- Extended range but safe
- Exploration spaces



Sunday dinner





### The Project Brief

*This representation will sit with you at all team meetings and will provide guidance on the needs of nonhuman Nature*

- design and construct a representation of nonhuman Nature to accompany you throughout the planning and development process for Aurora
- build a beautiful vessel to carry it in
- needs to be sturdy—to last ten years!
- source materials from surrounding habitat
- design and conduct a ceremony to introduce it to the Team

### Three Tasks

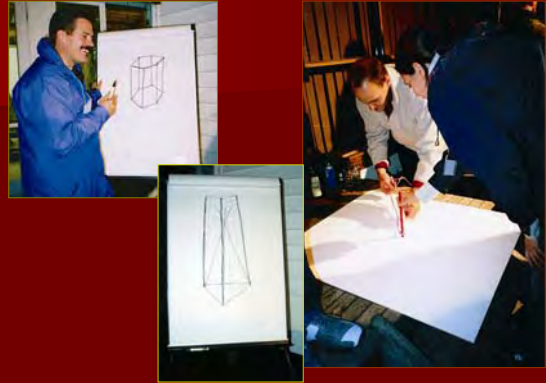
**Team 1**  
negotiate design of representation of nonhuman Nature

**Team 2**  
negotiate vessel design

**Team 3**  
prepare a ceremony to introduce the Being to Team members



Found objects  
for the nonhuman  
Being



## The Brief

(totally ignored!)



- A representation of Nonhuman Nature to sit at all consultant meetings for 10 years
- A vessel for carrying it



tripod base







## The Non-Human Being stands for...

- all other forms of material and life, upon which people rely (knowingly or unknowingly) for basic necessities and
- in many instances more complex spiritual and social needs

## Two integrated elements:

- Being itself
- Vessel in which the Being 'resides'



## Symbolic representation

- nest of a forest-dwelling bird
- new life
- nurturing
- transformation

### Tripod

- supports Being within vessel
- profoundly simple and stable support structure



## Ceremony Program

- Everyone collects a small flammable item
- Representatives bring forth Being into fire circle
- Return to group
- Beat drum, light candles
- Smoking ceremony
  - absorbing spirit
  - nurturing a new future
  - embracing Nature
- Hand
  - spirit guide
  - choice of hand
- Water
  - fundamental element of life
  - drink from one well of life
- Burning
  - confirming our journey from darkness into enlightenment
- Shake hands in a circle



## Ceremony Rationale

- Celebration of nurturing the spirit in the formation of a new future
- Nurturing the Being to ensure we are one with Nature rather than apart from Nature



## Welcoming Ceremony

Based on fundamental tenets of most spiritual belief systems:

- earth
- water
- fire

- ☞ basic elements in Aboriginal storytelling
- ☞ major focus of most religions and spiritual belief systems
- ☞ smoking ceremony taken specifically from Australian Aboriginal belief system



## Welcoming Ceremony

- Team members collect a piece of material, not used in building the Being
- Burning those materials: symbolic of discarding of old ways
- Fuel added to the fire provided **light** by which the team can see the future, to take the project to new heights

## Circle of Fire

- Symbolised continuity of Nature
- Nonhuman Being placed in centre
- Team members formed a circle
- Nonhuman Being now part of the circle
- Each member passed through circle of fire and a special smoke: act of rebirth



## Special smoke

to enable members to take on new thoughts, including:

- ❖ the silent voices and
- ❖ Nature, represented by the Nonhuman Being



## Ash

- Ash from smoking ceremony used to mark each team member's hand
- The hand that would guide the creation of the project
- Members decided which hand to be marked, depending upon which hemisphere of the brain might dominate in creating the project

## Vessel

- Each team member given a vessel
- Filled with water from a common source
- Drinking water from a common source signified:
  - ★ formation of a common bond for the group
  - ★ nurturing of new ideas

## Welcoming Each Other

- Each member shook each other member's hand as a gesture of mutual welcome to the team
- Ceremony concluded with acclamation



## The Face of the Beloved



## Deferring to Lee



## Kelvin Walsh Debriefing



## Participant's comments

*Well done!*

*You took me from a very sceptical and slightly jaded person (at first) and very cleverly hooked me in.*

*The koala suits threw me at first, I thought "Oh god, what do we have here?"*

*But you managed to take a group of what I thought were fairly 'straight-laced consultants' and bring out a bit of the childish creativity which we often forget about in our day to day drone.*

## Did anything come of this?

- *Nonhuman Being* sits in a Perspex box at VicUrban (Docklands)
- No "vessel" to carry it in
- Not as portable or accessible as it could have been
- Not attending all meetings, as required by the brief
- No ongoing evaluation of effectiveness

## Part 4: Help!



## Applied Ethics

If we care for Nature in our work, let us:

- ♥ View each day as an opportunity to care for Nature
- ♥ Regard every professional activity as an opportunity for a radical act of caring

And each day:

- Learn at least one meaningful thing
- Teach at least one meaningful thing
- Do something for another
- Treat all living things with respect

## Great Movements:

The unthinkable becomes conventional

*" . . . every great movement must experience three stages: ridicule, discussion, adoption.*

*What happens in the process . . . is that the 'unthinkable' becomes conventional. . . ."*

Roderick Nash 1989

## Chellis Glendinning's Conversation with a cactus, 1994

*I'm not so good at this, but here I am.  
I trust we can have a relationship.*



## Thanks to:

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