The Writings of Donald Appleyard*

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Introduction

When I began graduate school at Berkeley, Donald Appleyard was the first name on my list of professors to seek out. It was a good lead. Each semester, Don’s seminars covered new issues, and his commitment to the exploration of ideas, to planning, and architecture, and to his students was unrivaled. I remember most vividly evening meetings at his home, where small groups of students presented their own work for critical review, and where we met Don’s friends from all over the country—some of the best scholars in design research. This amorphous field must have crystallized for others besides myself in that context.

It was in the fall of 1982 when the news came of Don’s death. The finality of his death seemed irreconcilable with the vital memories we each held. Compiling Appleyard’s written work is one way to pass along the influence he had on those of us who knew him. Some twenty years of prolific, scholarly, and creative achievement are evident in the artifact below: Donald Appleyard’s bibliography. The intention of publishing this bibliography is to gather the dispersed writings of Donald Appleyard so that his oeuvre is accessible to scholars, researchers, designers, and students. His future research agenda is underscored, so that others may continue the work which Appleyard began. In order to usher scholars, designers, researchers, and students into the corpus, five categories are used to summarize Appleyard’s work. The remarkable breadth of Appleyard’s interests is apparent in this list of writings, which range from environmental simulation to street livability; from urban conservation to environmental symbolism. There is, however, a unifying theme in his work which stems from his own philosophy that people and physical place are critically linked in the understanding, evaluation, conservation, or planning of any environment.

Environmental Perception, Environmental Psychology, and the Ciudad Guayauna Project (Reference numbers: 1, 2, 24, 29, 30, 32, 37, 38, 49, 56, 57, 79, 80)

Donald Appleyard’s work in the 1960s, with Kevin Lynch at MIT and with the Ciudad Guayauna project in Venezuela, explores physical form as reflected in human understanding. He focuses on the ways people structure their perceptions of environments and the nature of those mental representations that are influenced not only by the physical setting but also by travel mode, spatial and temporal context, familiarity, and social significance. Dominating these works is the general orientation of cognitive psychology that leads to an understanding of the environment as it is understood by its inhabitants, and to the design of responsive environments. Many of the ideas embodied in these writings can be found in the book Planning a Pluralist City, based on the Ciudad Guayauna research.

In his 1973 article “Professional Priorities for Environmental Psychology,” Donald Appleyard set forth a formal research agenda for the field. He felt the overriding priority was to integrate environmental psychology research into the day-to-day design and decision-making processes. The specific areas of research he outlined were: (1) participatory communication—bringing more people, particularly non-professionals, into the environmental decision-making process; (2) situational research—integrating social science research methods such as interviews and observation into all stages of the architect’s design process; (3) comprehensive checklists—detailed studies of the relationship between particular user groups (their needs, values, activities, perception processes) and specific environmental characteristics (surfaces, mass, views, enclosure, lighting, signs, smells) in order to understand the effective and perceived environment of those populations affected by them; (4) simulations and predictions—techniques for authentic, realistic representations of what a proposed environment will be like; and (5) manuals and cookbooks—publications which translate research findings into usable design guidelines for professionals.

Urban Planning, Design, and Conservation
(Reference numbers: 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 17, 22, 23, 25, 34, 77, 84, 86, 87)

In further writings about the urban environment, Appleyard brings an expanded set of concerns, which include not only psychology, but also economics, politics, sociology, and history, to his analysis of extant built and open spaces as well as to the planning of future environments. Appleyard was involved with his own cities, evident in the writings about Boston, Berkeley, and San Francisco. Most recently, he edited The Conservation of European Cities and contributed an eloquent introduction discussing the importance of integrating social and physical conservation in city planning.

Two urban design manifestos that Appleyard co-authored had similar themes: What is wrong with places being designed today? What are the qualities of good, humanistic, urban environments?; and What design characteristics achieve those qualities? His evaluation was always focused on people’s use and perceptions of their environment. The intent was to go on to develop design guidelines based on research for the public spaces of the city.

Neighborhoods, Streets, and Transportation
(Reference numbers: BART—12, 13, 14, 39, 41, 43; Livable streets—5, 11, 16, 18, 35, 44, 48, 54, 63, 75, 76, 81, 83; Transportation environments—26, 27, 28, 33, 45, 46, 65, 66, 85)

Appleyard was interested not only in the city’s built and open spaces, but also in the connections between them—the links, the systems within which we move from place to place. Precipitated in part by a major project for BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) in California, Appleyard completed a number of studies on transportation networks, traffic, and streets. Each is scrutinized primarily in terms of its impact on the community, especially the neighborhood. A key notion underlying these studies is that the street’s livability is central to that of the neighborhood, implying that we must consider transportation networks not only as functional circulation systems, but as living environments in their own right.

Appleyard had recently compiled his work in this area in two publications, a book entitled Livable Streets and a manual for traffic engineers, Improving Residential Streets. In this way he sought to bring his research efforts to bear on public policy and on community action.

The Process of Environmental Planning
(Reference numbers: Berkeley Environmental Simulation Lab—40, 42, 47, 51, 52, 62, 64, 70, 71; Participatory planning—9, 31, 36, 50, 72, 73)

Another kind of connection that concerned Appleyard was the link between extant and future environments—the planning process itself. His writings cover a range of issues in environmental decision-making, primarily
community participation and visual media as design communication tools. In terms of the latter, Appleyard spearheaded the development of the Berkeley Environmental Simulation Laboratory—an immense, intricate system for guiding a movie camera on a probe through small-scale models of environments. He had recently drafted a manuscript with Kenneth H. Craik and Peter Bosselmann, Understanding Environmental Media, reviewing work in the lab and providing a handbook on simulation as a tool in environmental planning.

One of Appleyard’s intentions was to present to the public visual simulations of alternatives for actual planning projects. The lab was just beginning to be involved in such activities—preparing a film for public television airing that showed different growth scenarios for downtown San Francisco. The simulator is now being used (as part of the city process) to examine in detail how proposed development projects will perform when inserted into the downtown context. Studies cover solar access, wind, and visual impact as viewed by pedestrians, passing drivers, and people looking from a distance at the skyline.

Environmental Symbolism
(Reference numbers: 53, 55, 58, 60, 61, 67, 68, 69, 74, 78, 82)

In the last years of Donald Appleyard’s life, one interest consumed an increasing share of his curiosity: meaning and social symbolism in the physical environment. He was intrigued by the different connotations palm trees held for Northern versus Southern Californians, by the symbolic importance of place for communities, and by the family home’s role as an expression of its inhabitants.

Appleyard’s untimely death left unfinished the book planned to coalesce his work in this domain. As Kevin Lynch described in his review of the unfinished manuscript (Places 1, Number 1) Appleyard was attempting to integrate a broad range of psychological and environmental themes: the formation of individual and societal identities; the expression of identity in the built environment; the landscapes of the local versus the tourist, and the issue of authenticity; the communication of status and power in the built environment; public places as theaters of social conflict; and as a summary the notion of a healthy place identity. The work sets forth a great deal of new thought on these subjects and, more important, raises many questions for others to pursue.

The citations below are organized first by the type of publication, next by year of publication, and then alphabetically. The majority of entries come from Appleyard’s own vita, and from a bibliography compiled by his friend and colleague, Kenneth H. Craik. The majority of writings are obtainable, while some are only available in select libraries (the Roth Library at MIT and the Library of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California at Berkeley probably have the most complete collections). In addition, SIRD distributes reprints of a large number of Appleyard’s works for a minimal fee.

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