

## Introduction

IN APRIL 1965, the Conservation Foundation convened a conference in Warrenton, Virginia, to discuss “future environments of North America.” At that conference, Lewis Mumford, one of the most respected public intellectuals of the twentieth century, was called on to make “closing remarks.” After several days of presentations, Mumford said, “The ‘probable’ future is not necessarily the actual future at all. It is always a summary of the past, and all its predictions are predictions about the past, not about the future. The other future is that based on possibility.”<sup>1</sup> For Mumford, that “possibility” was the idea that to secure human survival, we must transition from a technological culture to an ecological culture. An extension of this transition is the current hybridization of technology with ecology—known as *ecotech*—that has effectuated a direction for the twenty-first century.

Mumford’s various writings in books, journals, and magazines as well as his many association memberships offer clear evidence that unless we are able to control technological advancement, our basic humanity will be severely and negatively affected. Moreover, Mumford was clearly a multidisciplinary thinker in the intellectual tradition of the Scottish Patrick Geddes, whom he referred to as “master.” Geddes had pursued a variety of disciplines, including biology, botany, sociology, economics, and town planning. According to his biographer, the sociologist Marshall Stalley, Geddes “could never limit himself to one discipline and was forever relating his life and his knowledge to the

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1. Lewis Mumford, “Closing Statement,” *Future Environments of North America*, ed. F. Fraser Darling and John P. Milton (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1966), 718.

ecology of nature and of mankind.”<sup>2</sup> Such a perspective leads to the conclusion that Geddes was an *ecohumanist*, and his entire career would serve as an example to those who followed him—especially Lewis Mumford and Ian McHarg.

SUCH INTERDISCIPLINARY THINKING combined with empirical observation first attracted Mumford to Geddes, as he explained: Geddes “taught me how to take in the life of cities . . . not as a mere spectator or as a collector of statistics or a maker of abstract models, but, to begin with, as a citizen and a worker, participating in the total life of a community, past, present, and prospective.”<sup>3</sup> However, another attraction piqued Mumford’s interest: education. Geddes promoted the development of the whole person, not so much through classroom experiences but through life experiences gained by observation and analysis.

Those who are intellectually endowed to seek, to invent, to create, and to learn seem to have a natural affinity to pass that endowment on to others. In a unique way, the best educators have developed the capacity to constantly broaden the net for knowledge, continually challenging current thinking and theories with viable alternatives. So it was with Mumford and McHarg.

This book does not focus on Mumford as a classroom teacher or educator in the traditional sense, although he did serve as a visiting professor at several institutions during his career; rather, it assesses his conception of an educational philosophy, grounded in human ecology—or, as it would evolve into, *ecohumanism*. This philosophy would be the cornerstone of embracing the necessity of moving toward an ecological culture. Mumford’s *ecohumanism*, as an educational philosophy, would have its greatest influence on and fullest expression in a graduate curriculum pioneered by McHarg, the renowned landscape architect and regional planner at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). Mumford’s relationship with and mentoring of McHarg would become the key elements toward the advancement of a new way to achieve an ecological culture—through an educational curriculum based on fusing *ecohumanism* to the planning and design disciplines.

To Mumford, the intellectual, and McHarg, the educator, nothing less than an ecological imperative began with an understanding of natural systems and extended to embrace human systems. This imperative would be the guiding mantra to ensure success in planning, designing, and developing regions and cities. It would be the crucial variable for cultural survival. And

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2. Marshall Stalley, *Patrick Geddes: Spokesman for Man and the Environment* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1972), xiii.

3. Lewis Mumford, *Sketches from Life: The Autobiography of Lewis Mumford* (New York: Dial Press, 1982), 155.

survive we shall if the Mumford-McHarg prescriptions can be passed to future generations. Thus the pivotal role of education moves into the forefront beginning in the elementary levels. However, we must earnestly develop university and college curricula that recognize that converting the technological culture to the ecological culture is the only path to follow if we wish to preserve our unique humanity and continue to have a suitable habitat.

## The Holistic Nature of Ecohumanism

Lewis Mumford was a thinker, historian, social critic, and philosopher; Ian McHarg was a landscape architect, regional planner, doer, and educator. Both shared a rejection of *reductionism*—a philosophy that concentrates on looking at parts to describe and understand the world rather than viewing the world holistically. Conversely, they promoted an acceptance of *holism*—a philosophy that emphasizes the interaction between many parts of the whole, thus focusing on systems and the interrelationships of their parts. The common denominator at the base of their respective life’s work was simply *ecology*—or, perhaps more specifically, *human ecology*. Mumford and McHarg dedicated themselves to making us aware that in a universe of complexity, an inextricable bond develops between people and their environments, and the human pursuit of building towns, cities, and even regions rests on essential principles of how people can best relate and adapt to a natural environment. Mumford promoted this philosophy through a voluminous output of writing, encompassing books and journal and magazine articles. McHarg advocated this idea through the development of a graduate curriculum in landscape architecture and regional planning, first based on natural systems ecology and later expanded to incorporate the human dimension.

When Mumford wrote *The Culture of Cities* (1938), he expressed the notion that humans—the organisms—are not strictly implicated in an “environment in space,” which “has its own line of growth, . . . its own curve of development, its own span of variations, its own pattern of existence,” but are “also implicated in time, through the biological phenomena of inheritance and memory; and in human societies it is even more consciously implicated through the necessity of assimilating a complicated social heritage which forms, as it were, a second environment.”<sup>4</sup> This is the starting point to configure an acknowledgment of the interconnection of the two “environments”—the natural and the human. Pushed a bit further, this acknowledgment becomes the key element in fashioning an understanding of the *boundaries* of ecohumanism that combine the scientific knowledge of ecology with human

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4. Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), 300.

social values. This in turn gives rise to the *concept* of ecohumanism, which can be succinctly defined, as suggested by professor of ecology, evolution, and behavior Philip Regal, as implying “insight into patterns of connectedness among individuals and between individuals and institutions and with the non-human environment.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, “the humanist commitment to the ethical and material quality of the human condition means that the earth must be regarded as home and habitat.”<sup>6</sup> The human in nature therefore becomes the guiding light in understanding what we are and what we may become. We are, in the context of nature, “parts of this earth, having developed or evolved as aspects of nature; engaging in the natural processes shared by all life.”<sup>7</sup>

FROM THEIR INITIAL MEETINGS during McHarg’s student days at Harvard University in the late 1940s, when he heard Mumford lecture, an intellectual power drew the two men together. In 1954, McHarg began a career in higher education with his appointment as an assistant professor of landscape architecture and city planning in the Graduate School of Fine Arts (today known as the School of Design) at the University of Pennsylvania. Mumford was a visiting professor on the same faculty. The men formed a strong collegial bond, and Mumford’s growing influence on McHarg’s intellectual development became profound—so profound that McHarg’s curriculum would rise to international prominence as an interdisciplinary model for the graduate education of planners and designers as well as environmental studies scholars.

This book explores Mumford’s vision of embracing ecohumanism as the principal facilitator to move a technological culture toward an ecological culture and McHarg’s formulation and implementation of that vision through an interdisciplinary graduate curriculum. Mumford set the stage, as it were; McHarg choreographed the actual performance. The emphasis on Mumford’s and McHarg’s educational legacy shows the importance of using ecohumanism as an educational pedagogy to train the next generation of planners and designers, who will shape the ecological culture.

## Structure and Organization of the Book

The essential thrust of this book is that Mumford’s insistence on changing a technological culture into an ecological culture had its most important

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5. Philip J. Regal, “Ecohumanism: Refining the Concept,” in *Ecohumanism*, ed. Robert B. Tapp (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2002), 62.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Harvey B. Sarles, “The Human in the Context of Nature,” in *Ecohumanism*, ed. Robert B. Tapp (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2002), 215.

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formulation from an educational perspective in McHarg's graduate curriculum at the University of Pennsylvania. The intertwining of a number of circumstances and experiences that both men shared illuminates the movement from ecohumanism as a Mumford-based philosophy to McHarg's human ecology-based graduate educational curriculum. Thus, in the sense of Mumford's mission, this foundation would be the key to educating future planners and designers, as well as others, to facilitate the direction of an ecological culture in how we plan, design, and build our communities and human settlements.

Educational curricula emerge from a guiding objective (or vision); they then evolve, incorporating feedback from faculty and students. Such is true in the history of how McHarg fashioned and carried out the graduate educational curriculum at Penn that serves as this book's case study.

THE BOOK IS DIVIDED into four parts and thirteen chapters. Part I reviews foundation themes—or pathways—that provide a contextual framework that highlights the eventual interface between Mumford and McHarg as a composite of a rich intellectual history. Chapter 1 provides a justification for ushering in what is described as a *Second Enlightenment* based on the philosophical and operational concept of ecohumanism. Chapter 2 gives an overview of a number of historically important planning and design perspectives. Chapter 3 probes the essence of the thinking that shaped Mumford's ecohumanism, especially in regional planning and education, which in turn becomes key to ascertaining Mumford's influence on McHarg's development and establishes the Mumford-McHarg relationship that carries ecohumanism to ecological planning. Two roles are identified: (1) the contribution of architect and planner Artur Glikson, which transitions Mumford's perspective from ecological vision to practice, and (2) the role of Ian McHarg, which provides the ecological link between practice and education.

Part II, in Chapters 4 and 5, examines the difference between a practitioner and an educator; McHarg's theory and method of ecological planning; his distinction between ecological planning and ecological design; and, finally, the fusion of ecological planning with regional planning, which becomes important to deciphering the bridge between education and practice. *Design with Nature*, the brief but powerful title of the 1969 book that became McHarg's landmark contribution to the planning, design, and environmental literature, is also discussed. It is an indispensable representation of a theory and a method that has direct applicability to planning and designing human settlements. The Mumford influence became paramount, and designing with nature became McHarg's mantra—one that he pursued and extolled with a religious fervor.

Part III, in Chapters 6–10, presents the historical development of the curriculum at the University of Pennsylvania that would incorporate ecology and then human ecology into the education of regional planners and landscape architects. The history of this pedagogical development—told here for the first time—stands as a story of its own. And it is an important case study because McHarg sought compatibility between theory and practice in regional planning and landscape architecture. The curriculum would go through a number of iterations, which are presented in detail to assess the strengths and weaknesses that emerged over time and the evolution of the acceptance of using ecology in this educational milieu. The curriculum would become a tangible product of advancing Mumford’s dream through McHarg’s action to ensure the transition from a technological culture to an ecological culture. Chapter 11 closes Part III with a retrospective assessment of McHarg and the events that influenced the curriculum.

Part IV, Chapter 12, begins by focusing on an overview of McHarg’s legacy in practice and education, since a number of existing academic curricula in not only environmental planning but also environmental studies, landscape architecture, geography, architecture, and environmental engineering can be traced to his human ecological curriculum at Penn. Many faculties at colleges and universities earned their academic credentials in McHarg’s Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning and were instrumental in establishing or contributing to the development of interdisciplinary programs encompassing environmental planning and education at other institutions. The Penn curriculum may not have been replicated exactly, but outside programs have been modeled on its approach and method. For the future, the prospect is high that not only planning but also environmental design, community development, and the broader-based environmental studies programs will continue to be modeled on the Penn curriculum. Certainly, modifications and the infusion of new technological tools will be incorporated to improve data collection and analysis, but the pedagogical underpinnings are likely to remain definably “McHargian,” pervaded with Mumford’s ecohumanism.

Chapter 13 concludes the book by exploring a number of engagements for ecohumanism and its role in moving toward an ecological culture. These include a justification for moving into a Second Enlightenment in the areas of technology, planning, design, development, and education. Also considered is a future ecohumanism graduate curriculum as the basis for training the next generation of planners and designers to lead us into an ecological culture, thus securing the educational legacy of Lewis Mumford and Ian McHarg.