

Recently, another hurricane (Isaac) hit the southeast USA with a force that was greater than human resistance or defense. What we witnessed was an intense interaction of *land – water – people*.

*In the last couple of days I have been visiting the Mississippi River Delta region.
I am participating in a year-long study of deltas on 3 continents.
Each delta has its own particular issues but they all have one thing in common –
Their natural interactions have been radically modified by human settlements, creating disasters.
They are a wonderful spectacle when we are tourists, in uninhabited places.
This is an environmental issue, a social issue, and an economic issue.
Each aspect has its own constituency and its own arguments about priorities and who is right.
3 forces, 3 time and physical scales, with 3 agendas, all out of sync with each other.
It is a messy confrontation with no end in sight.*

What it makes me think about is

- 1_ the ideal and normative relationship of **environment – society – and economy** –*
- 2_ the varying scales of nature's forces that are sometimes beyond comprehension or preparation.*
- 3_ the Human Enterprise is a great wonder, very complex, and most stubborn of all life forms*
- 4_ we are responsive and adaptive to any and all forces that challenge our survival
and we innovate to survive.*
- 5_ we, like creatures of all sizes, are responsive, adaptive, and constructive.*

Project :

An Educational Village for an inner-city organization with a mission to educate at-risk youth with a trans-disciplinary curriculum of arts, science, humanities. This new site will allow this non-profit organization to experiment with new curriculum concepts and delivery, that will enhance and expand their current mission.

The definition of school and education will be much broader in its reach, more open minded in its content, and structure, and more interactive in its approach. The education system will be location and project-based, in theory, and will use the entire site as a classroom along with the new buildings. The school is also interested in embedding various business models that enhance the education model with a sense of entrepreneurship and to create long-term income for the organization, and revitalization for the adjacent town of Frazier Park.

Site :

Tait Ranch is in Frazier Park, a small town of 3000 pop. 2 hours north of Los Angeles off the I-5 at Tejon Pass. The site is 300 acres of constantly changing landscape (growth and erosion), mountains to foothills, to alluvium, to flatlands, to river wash to valley. All of this site will be a teaching landscape. These transverse (e-w) mountains at the southern boundary of the central San Joaquin Valley connect the Sierra Nevada's on the east to the Coastal Range on the west. This link allows animals to migrate without fences and is essential to the performance of the overall ecosystem of this region of California.

Program : education, play, recreation, commerce, agriculture, civic engagement, and residential,

An education village, a retreat, a conference center, a leadership institute, a think-do institute, a festival headquarters, a park, a store, a restaurant for experimental chefs, a community center, a city hall, and parade grounds, a community farm, markets, botanical gardens, research center, and natural history center.

Q 1

"Is it possible to have the sensibilities and values of an agrarian society, the density of a rural village, and the intensity of urban life?"

The project will work to answer these questions that will be the trigger for our curiosities and imagination as we explore the inevitable relationship of humans and their ever-changing environmental contexts.

Q 2

"Is it possible to conceive a grand ecology integrating a society of people that are purpose driven, the natural and reconstructed environment they inhabit, and an economic strategy that is resilient?"

We will compare the conceptual structures of environment, society, and economy and metaphorically convert them into conceptual structures for landscape and architecture.

the Themes

Time.....	<i>scale, interval duration</i>
Space.....	<i>medium for bodies in motion and at rest</i>
Light.....	<i>outer light of nature gives meaning to the inner light of the mind</i>
Scale.....	<i>worlds within worlds</i>
Cosmology.....	<i>single coherent framework of knowing</i>
Transformation.....	<i>transition from one medium or state to another</i>
Symmetry.....	<i>mirroring, conservation of energy, equilibrium</i>
Cooperation.....	<i>an evolutionary imperative, biological necessity</i>
Play.....	<i>intrinsically motivated activity and central to learning</i>
Pattern.....	<i>index of matter energy and form over time</i>

the format

Visual Thinking.....	<i>conversion of words into images</i>
Systems Thinking.....	<i>dynamic relationships of parts to whole</i>
Creative Dialogue.....	<i>art of listening</i>

the Concept

Cosmology.....	<i>to see the world as spontaneous and whole</i>
Beginners Mind.....	<i>to see the world as if for the first time</i>
Evolution.....	<i>to see the world as a process of change over time</i>

the Words

Process.....	<i>inter-activity</i>	<i>(on becoming)</i>
Order.....	<i>inter-relationships</i>	<i>(on meaning)</i>
Unity.....	<i>inter-dependence</i>	<i>(on being)</i>

the Other Words

- *responsive, adaptive, constructive*
- *complexity, continuity, coherence, conversion, convergence, conservation, cooperation*
- *subjective, objective, projective*

the Questions

<i>time structures.....</i>	<i>"Is it possible to have a long-term vision in a short cycle world?"</i>
<i>intuition.....</i>	<i>"Is it possible that at the moment of birth we are all knowing?"</i>
<i>faith to reason.....</i>	<i>"What was gained or lost when alchemy became chemistry?"</i>
<i>social.....</i>	<i>"Is it possible that cooperation is an evolutionary imperative?"</i>
<i>economy.....</i>	<i>"Is it possible that we are 'hard wired' for scarcity and not abundance?"</i>

postscript

Land as varied and unique as Tait Ranch has many natural assets, most significantly its location, natural terrain, and water. The objective of an environmental and land use planning study parallel to a concept design proposal will be to identify these assets and propose ways to unpack their intrinsic value for the long and short-term benefit of SEA, the community it serves, and its neighbors in Frazier Park.

For 40 years SEA has quietly gone about its work improving the lives of children and families through education with the long-term intention of strengthening the communities of these individuals. It has conceived, invented, and developed programs and their delivery systems that work. Some of these programs are scalable in ways that could extend SEA's reach into the wider world.

From Dirt to Dollars and Beyond

"Is it possible to do good and do well at the same time?"

SEA and its programs have great value to its students and the entire organization.

Tait Ranch with its varied landscape can be used for a very broad range of uses. Teaching and learning, farming and food production, marketplace, high school, recreation, local civic events, environmental research and restoration, and active sports. Our objective is to leverage the natural assets of the site, for teaching and to create revenue streams for SEA. Tait will be used for events, festivals, weddings, and for farming and marketplace, light manufacturing, and experimental education programs. In 40 years, SEA has grown into a unique non-profit community organization, that works with inner city young adults and their families, teaching them life-long knowledge and skills. The process for imagining the potential and unpacking the value of TAIT will open the window to new ideas that extend SEA's reach while enhancing existing programs and projects. This is a great opportunity.

Vision and Action

"Is it possible to move forward with Vision and a sense of urgency?"

"Yes, and this relationship is essential to the long-term survival of any living organism, especially a human learning organization. The development of a strategic plan is essential to making short-term decisions in the broader context of a long-term vision. This is effective and efficient. It is a way to build into any day-to-day process, a mechanism for change that is coherent and flexible. Also, it is the basis for any system to operate with purpose, direction, and an economy of means."

Principle : Conservation (memory) and Change (action)

Learning from Others

"Is it possible to learn how we learn, individually and collectively, from each other and from nature?"

"Yes, this is possible and easy to do by using the concept of out-sourcing.

The quickest and most economical way to initiate change in an organization is to use the model of 'open source system.' There are a lot of people with a depth of knowledge, advanced ideas, and sound practices in many fields who are willing to participate and share knowledge and skillsets when the opportunity arises.

Bringing these people to the site with the ambitions of a curator and creating an intense matrix of activities like a social director with a vision will be the beginning of unexpected growth of learning.

Collective learning shapes the evolution of human societies.

We learn more, faster when we are in proximity to others.

Guiding PRINCIPLES

The following 3 concepts will serve as a framework that will guide our thinking throughout the creative process. Overall, our objective is to establish land use concepts, policy, and practices that are sustainable and resilient in the long term. SEA's longer-term objectives are to enhance and expand existing programs, broaden its social engagement, and increase its public profile.

Learning and Teaching

The objective is to create a variety of unique places and experiences to learn, at Tait Ranch.

Dynamic Equilibrium

The objective is to make constructive choices that integrate a diversity of parts and sub systems into a greater systemic whole, while keeping the integrity of the parts.

Dirt to Dollars

The objective is twofold. First we need to identify the natural assets at the Ranch and propose ways to unpack the intrinsic value for the long and short term benefit of SEA, the community of people it serves, and secondly, we need to make the land work by creating revenue streams to help benefit SEA Inc.