Power of Story (114)

The truth about stories is that's all we are. — Thomas King

Storytelling, an ancient art, needs to be rediscovered and updated. Stories help humankind to understand, reinterpret, and reframe the meanings that undergird their existence. Can we use new communications technologies to weave together words and images, scientific information and poetic inspiration, and incorporate multiple voices (including the larger community of plants, animals, birds, and elemental forces) to tell multi-faceted stories of our earth communities? Can stories help us to weave together the communications and global challenges that face us as we learn to live co-creatively with each other and the natural world?

Written by Rebecca Chamberlain

Everyday Heroism (116)

In popular media, protagonists are usually richer, stronger, and better looking than "ordinary" people. "Ordinary" people, even if they have names, are turned into stock characters. Many of the situations, moreover, in which the protagonists find themselves are extraordinary. This approach has the effect of making people feel that their own lives are boring and unimportant. Indeed, many people feel that "escaping" into a mediated reality, whether it's television, video games or movies, is the only way to "live."

No matter what the movies tell us, most real heroes don't fight intergalactic evil or psychopathic killers. The real struggles are at the "human level." We need to produce — and consider — more popular media that involves "ordinary" people and "everyday" lives. Celebrate the heroes among us and strive to be one yourself. Even an "ordinary" one.

Speak the truth even if your voice shakes.

Written by Douglas Schuler

Thinking Communities (118)

Creative thinking is a human activity essential for self-realization, and for providing sustainable solutions to the myriad problems of our ever more complex global society. Three main factors prevent thinking communities from developing: lack of suitable locations for "semi-solitary" deep thought, lack of affordable communications infrastructure for such communities to develop, and too many social, professional and financial constraints preventing people from breaking out regularly for a sufficient period of time.

This pattern supports creative individuals and small groups with a pressing need for finding the time and concentration to work on a major project, but who lack access to locations, and are inhibited by many personal constraints. The pattern helps them to connect with individuals and organizations interested in providing affordable thinking facilities, and then to design and build their thinking communities. These communities allow their members to concentrate deeply, while also to meet peers who are working on their own projects. This semi-solitary mix of deep thought and social interaction should significantly increase individual and societal creative thinking capacity.

A finely meshed, worldwide network needs to be created of affordable locations where people can concentrate and work on their individual creative projects, while simultaneously being able to meet up with peers working on their own acts of creation. The web will provide the communications infrastructure to develop the concepts of Thinking communities and match supply and demand of thinking locations. Social, professional, and financial constraints need to be addressed by developing concrete guidelines and solution patterns.

Written by Aldo de Moor

Great Good Place (119)

People often don't have access to places in their neighborhoods that are outside their home or workplace. People need places where they can feel at home and hang out for extended periods without the need to spend lots of money. Unfortunately there is a scarcity of what Ray Oldenburg calls "great good places" that are convenient and welcoming. In many regions of the world people have forgotten how to "hang out" with friends, a lost art that refreshes the spirit and — sometimes — leads to social action as well.

Communities need to ensure that "third places" where anybody in the community is free to go and stay for as long as they want. These places can be cafes, plazas, community centers or simply places with chairs or benches. These locations can be privately owned but they must support the needs of the community for them to serve as genuine third places.

Written by Douglas Schuler