Book Review

Review of Vaughan, Laurene, ed*. Designing Cultures of Care.* New York: Bloomsbury. 2019. pp. 243. Price $100 (Hardcover); $80 (eBook).

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What does it mean to design care and how does one do it in diverse situations and venues? Laurene Vaughan, an artist and Professor of Design at RMIT in Australia, has compiled sixteen essays on these questions, from architects, planners, and designers. They range from visual design projects to configuring and reconfiguring physical spaces, including cities. The essays raise the issue of what it means to care beyond the 'simple' concern that the user will find the object or space convenient. 'Caring,' as these essays suggest, must involve the user from the start, including planning, and throughout the implementation. The goal is loving empowerment, particularly for marginalized people. Caring must also be flexible and should grow with the people it helps.

The book should be important to designers, architects, city planners, community organizers, social and behavioral scientists, as well as to the people for whom care is necessary. The essays bring together a philosophy of caring that extends the dialogue of how to plan. Because the volume was assembled before the COVID-19 pandemic, the question of what constitutes 'care' in a world of contagion must be addressed in present and future design considerations. This will be discussed at the end of this review.

The editor has brought together articles that primarily focus on Australia and New Zealand, although other areas of the world are covered, such as Norway and Sweden. This is refreshing for North American readers, who may not be familiar with developments in those places. Furthermore, the intent of the collection is to broaden the notion of care. Each essay addresses a different issue. Cathy Smith and SuAnne Ware, in Chapter 3, portray the underrepresentation of women in the architectural profession in Australia. It further shows a women's collective redoing and repurposing physical spaces for a women's shelter, factoring in the specific emotional needs of the adults and children who will be staying there.

Brad Haylock (Chapter 4) displays how "caring" design – in this case, visual information – can be displayed in such a way that the observer not only can see what the information means, but also how to act to effectuate change. The observer here is the person who looks at the information portrayed in media, such as a poster. The author follows Paolo Freire's empowerment writings – where the goal is to get marginalized and disempowered people to be their own activists. The visual presentation is simple and dramatic. It can easily lead to individual action and community organizing. One article (Chapter 6), by Laurene Vaughan, Shanti Sumartojo, and Sarah Pink, reviews the redesign of a psychiatric care facility. The 'old' type of facility created a harsh space, where there were few amenities,

the medical power structure was visible, and the residents were put at risk for self-harm and suicide. The new design sees the resident as having needs to help her/himself and to enjoy life as much as possible – consistent with appropriate safety measures. Surfaces are smoother, colors warmer, and there are real views of the outside. In addition, suitable space is made for the caregivers themselves, who are now no longer simply relegated to the back room. In simple words, the new space tries to care for all its people. There may be more diverse opinions as to what constitutes an agreement of a "caring" environment in such settings (see, for example, Hunt and Sine 2015, 2).

Neal Haslem, Keely Macarow, Guy Johnson, and Marcus Knutagard, in Chapter 9, write eloquently about ways to address homelessness. They bring together people who need housing and policy makers, suggesting that "homefulness" is the goal. Contrasting the cities of Melbourne and Malmo, they find a more receptive audience in the latter. This idealistic reformulation of the goal of getting people to housing, however, may run into the stonewall of other neighborhood participatory groups blocking such housing, as other researchers have found (e.g., Einstein, Glick and Palmer 2020, 311-2). Caring is not necessarily a goal shared by everyone in the same way.

Of special interest to those people studying aging as well as disability are two essays. The first is by Rachel Clarke (Chapter 7). Clarke describes the tools developed and the meetings held by Newcastle, Australia stakeholders, including the Elders' Council, to pursue an Age-Friendly City, a program encouraged by the World Health Organization. One major goal here, for example, is to promote mobility (95). The second piece (Chapter 8), by Yanki C. Lee, Niels Hendriks, and Albert Tsang, features a dementia understanding kit. The kit includes exercises where people have to do activities that provide the experience of a person with dementia. One, for example, is putting on an oddly buttoning shirt (102-3) People not familiar with dementia can use the kit to understand the needs of a person with dementia and incorporate accommodations into their planning. Still, the question remains, whether one needs a "memory town" (where the resident sees structures [houses, streets, buildings] familiar from one's childhood or early adulthood) to help people with cognitive and memory loss to function at a higher level (see, for example, Power 2019) or whether aging in place is most desirable (e.g., Kalita 2017).

In an ending dialogue between Mick Douglas and Laurene Vaughan, the issues of what constitutes the differences between empathy and care are addressed: "Laurene: '. . . empathy is affect or emotive, where care is actionable'" (226). She later goes on to say: "'Design's ability to take steps into uncertainty or the unknown underpins what designers do and they learn to do, either formally or informally'" (227). This last point is crucial, given the current pandemic because it is evident historically that both pandemics and epidemics have transformative influence over design. For example, the early Twentieth Century flu influenced the open spaces of the Bauhaus created world ("Modernist Architecture: The Bauhaus and Beyond" 2020). It even influenced the creation of the modern bathroom (Feldman 2020), while other epidemics have led, for example to the redesign of nursing homes (Drinka et al. 1996). The COVID-19 pandemic, because of its uncertainties in terms of intensity, surges, mutations, and asymptomatic people, raises serious design questions. Medical and similar facilities must be designed to prevent infection among residents and caregivers. Other spaces must be designed for periodic closures and distancing (Chang 2020). It can best be surmised that the "watchword" for design in general may be "a more semi-permanent feel" (McConahey 2020, D1). This semi-permanence, however, leaves room for more creative and empathetic designs and in turn, forms of care.

This well written volume raises the important question of how to care in new and creative ways, and of how co-creating open-ended designs can support a bottom-up process of transformation of what 'care' can and should mean in particular situations. It is useful for anthropologists in almost every specialty.

It is also useful for social scientists, architects, designers, urban planners, artists, musicians, and community activists. Lastly, upper division and graduate students will find it readable.

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