



Box 1—Photo from the [Knut Knutsen cabin](#) from the sea-side at Portor. It is an early example (1949) of architectural cabin-aesthetics aiming at integrating the cabin into nature. It contrasts with what one might call scenery architecture intended to catch the landscape view, and make it part of the interior. It also contrasts with the older ways of building in the area, where the sheltering functions of the hearth/home were central. The Knutsen-cabin is difficult to find, and invites the inhabitation of the proximal zone (cf, body -text).

The interior of a **cabin**—if it has enough windows—is part of a natural scenery. The relations between people who live in closer relation in a **cabin**, and in this sense exceptional, are ritualised and repetitive. They are, in this sense, traditional. Though not traditional in the sense that they apply for the rest of the year. In this sense, vacations can both hatch examples for renewal at home, examples of stagnation (or, a combination of both). Whichever it is, the **cabin** calibrates the eternal (or, to be more precise, the perennial): it is the epitome of the durable. People, situations, landscapes.

But this is all at the *macro*-level. At the *micro*-level things change all the time: what we can call the metabolic time—hunger, satiation, appetites, health situation. In a large slice of a life-time, this level appears almost invisible to others: so, as we take a break, and attend the washroom, it is often to spend some *personal* time. However, this recluse circumscription of the *micro*-level, does not apply to children and the elderly. At the beginning and end of life, the micro-level of metabolic time is not recluse. But there is a thin line *between* the perennial *and* the personal: the *meals*.

However, with the meals a third temporality comes into play: for instance, a blueberry-pie made from locally gathered berries, will be different from a pie made from berries bought from the local store. Foraging takes place in *specific* locations that are part of—or will be included—into the local sense of the life and *situation* at the cabin. The blueberries from the store are *not* part of that world. **Restaurants** working from local produce, operate according to the same logic. There are also books on foraging, expanding the notion of what is edible in the situation, which is part of the **cabin**.

[Sankeboka—Velsmakende ville vekster](#) is a book of this kind. It is adequate in the shelves of the **cabin**. But more for consultation than a handbook: since it is fairly late, with a hard-cover open to the wear and tear of moist and friction in the knapsack. The space-time we are talking about, in this case, is *neither* perennial *nor* personal. Rather, it features the *proximal* zone. Foraging is proximal, in this sense. But so are daily exercise routines, walking the dog or trekking. These activities are *not* the same. But they resemble: in aspects the same, similar, different and other.



Box 2—A common feature of the access to cabins in the Portor area, is that they are difficult to find. If you haven't been there before they are virtually impossible/laborious to find.

The proximal thereby reveals itself as wed to an *activity system* made up of heterogenous elements that do *not* to the job for each other, but can be brought to *facilitate* one another (and are in this sense complex). It is, before anything, the realm of *design*: whether guided by tradition and apprenticeship, a formal education in design, or worked out in a DIY sense. *Moving on the stretch between matter and form, through a mesh of complex activities*. In the cabin—in the extended sense of its discoverable terrain—the human life-form articulates in more obviously environmental reference, than life at **home**/in the city.

However, this does *not* mean that it is ecological. Environmental only means that the entanglement of the human life-form is salient. Though, of course, it will *hide* the more we are only there for the *view* (and the ways of the garbage logistics remain kept [behind the scenes](#)). So, whether the approach to the environment is optically *detached* or gesturally *involved* will reflect itself in what crosses the table in the course(s) of a meal. If practically involved we take knowledge of the *terroir*, and also become part of it up to a point. Which is what we invest when visiting certain **restaurants**.

Which is to say that—if seen in the scope of the life at the cabin—the **restaurants** are bridges to innovation of life in the city: knowledge of locations, produce, farmers' markets, [reko-ring](#), allotment gardens and how to incorporate them into the equivalent of the *proximal zone* in the city (i.e. the *daily routines*). Following a design-approach, life at the **cabin** holds the potential of reflecting about life: practically and speculatively. In sum, life at the cabin holds the potential of being a *cradle*, or model, for the *choices* we make in living more environmentally. This is what *ecology* is about.

The designs for living modelling how we can live from less and yet live fuller lives. That is, the cultural aspects—more/less popular—of not only living *in* an environment, but living *environmentally*. Of course, not all people own a cabin. But in Norway, it remains a cultural reference, because many people have a cabin, and most people have visiting one as a guest (even though not always a delightful experience, on account of the idiosyncrasies of the owner, it remains a *cultural model*). A question, then, is how we can work with this in design: the *perennial*, *personal* and *proximal*.

It may be the point where the professional designer is challenged to move *beyond* the design of goods and services. For instance, growing, developing and explaining the importance of an infrastructure of sales-points for local produce: as a kind of political work at the level of the *citizen*. What are the designs that may facilitate innovation in the two major economical sectors that have been left out by neoliberalism: that is, *beyond* goods and services, *commodities* and *utilities*. That is, making something new out of commodities and utilities that are up for grabs, because left out.

Traditionally, commodities are *generic*: such as potatoes and live-stock. According to the logic of the *terroir*, *provenance* holds the potential of defining the commodity level. While making sure that such commodities are efficiently funnelled into the capillary structure of the city, could be an ecological definition a utility. In both cases, moving between life at the **cabin**, **restaurant** visits and daily routines in the **city** could thereby be designed as a cultural ant-road with the educational potential—a the level of the citizen—of living more environmental lives. That is, an ecological culture.

But it is not the only way, but an example. We may need to reflect more systematically about our options. According to Christopher Alexander (1979) the edges of the whole we live in—our current life-world—are complex and fuzzy: he suggests that *instead* of drawing a boundary around the



Box 3—part of the modern ethos of cabins is that, if the weather is OK, the meals are often taken in outside (in situations adjacent to the cabin). The meals are often part of a ritual routine: such as bathing before breakfast. But sometimes the weather is simply too cold.

whole, we can sense that it organises around a *centre*. This is not a centre such that can be marked by a spot. But rather what holds our life together as an *ensemble*: life at the **cabin**, **terroir-restaurants** and “**reko-urbanism**”.

To start, the seal of the *centre* is divided between the *perennial* and the *personal*. They become mitigated through the designs of the *proximal zone*: which means that, with an optical metaphor, [two spots merge into one](#). The sense of an integrated centre grows, develops and becomes self-explanatory. It corresponds with what Gibson in his environmental psychology called [affordances](#). Consider five steps: **1)** take notes of **a)** events and **b)** activities [steps]; **2)** monitor the proximal multiplication of affordances; **3)** *centre* the personal and the perennial; **4)** take stock of the discovered *truths* and *impacts*; **5)** move on... **1)**