

PATTERN DESIGN – CREATING VISIONARY DETAILS FOR OPEN SPACES

WHY WE INCLUDE THIS SESSION

Christopher Alexander and colleagues presented a powerful new theory of design with important ecological ramifications in *A Pattern Language* and the *Timeless Way of Building*.

Until recent times the prevailing architectural design and spatial planning epistemology considered built up and geographical areas as technical, social and economic entities for classifying, profitable use and exploiting. “For our purposes, let us define **design** as the intentional shaping of matter, energy, and process to meet a perceived need or desire. Design is a hinge that inevitable connects culture and nature through exchanges of materials, flows of energy, and choices of land use.” (Van der RYN)

Therefore we invite all of you to be designers in shaping the physical details of your profession and daily experience, aggregating your ideas for human purposes. For being an important player with smart-city technologies today, we have to take into account our common prodigious wisdom with accepted knowledge of appropriate technologies. Prodigious built up structures of former times “goes to the roots of human experience and is thus of more than technical and aesthetic interest. Moreover, it is architecture without a dogma”.¹

OBJECTIVE

In this session everyone is a participant designer in which technical disciplinary languages and barriers are exchanged for a shared understanding of the design problem. We honour the special knowledge that each person brings.²

A pattern language has the structure of a network³. We use it as a sequence, going through the patterns, moving always from the larger patterns, to the smaller, always from the ones which creates structures, to the ones which embellish those structures.

The patterns are ordered, beginning with the very largest, for regions and towns, than working down through neighbourhoods, clusters of buildings, open spaces, gardens, rooms and alcoves, ending finally with details of construction.⁴

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this session students will be able to:

- Understand the format of a pattern⁵
- Use the summary of the language⁶

CONTEXT

During our first two days excursion we will explain at various places typical patterns, like the city and landscape country fingers in the Bioregion Marchfeld, accessible green at Adamahs place, gardening details and positive outdoor places at Arche Noah and Alchemistenpark.

DURATION

Introduction	30 min
Pattern language	30 min
Diagnosis	30 min
Design	120 min

HOW WE TEACH THIS SESSION

1.. INTRODUCTION – PATTERN STRUCTURE

MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR THIS EXERCISE p.248 HANDOUTS

- I provide information about the master sequence on which you can tick off the patterns which form the language of your project (p. xxxviii)

RUNNING THE EXERCISE p.248

- I divide the students into groups of three and five, according to the total number of students, and explain the task. I give all relevant information verbally. Care should be taken to place people with similar interests or backgrounds in different groups. (p.285)

¹ RUDOFKY, Bernard (1977): *The Prodigious Builders*. London: Secker&Warburg.

² VAN DER RYN, Sim / COWAN, Stuart (1996): *Ecological design*. Washington D.C. * Covelo, Cal.: Island press, p.146

³ ALEXANDER, Christopher et al.(1977): *A pattern Language*. N.Y. Oxford University Press. p. xviii

⁴ l.c.: ALEXANDER (1977) p. xii

⁵ l.c.: ALEXANDER (1977) p. x

⁶ l.c.: ALEXANDER (1977) p. xviii - xxxiv

INTERACTIVE TALK p.274 p.302

- This is to provide a brief definition of a **pattern** as a general planning principle, that may occur repeatedly in the environment.
- Explaining with a handout the pattern “**POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE**” (106)
- In short, no pattern is an isolated entity. Each pattern is connected to certain ‘larger’ patterns which come above it in the language; and to certain ‘smaller’ patterns which come below in the language. (see xii)
- Planning and construction will be guided by process implementing organic order which allows the whole to emerge gradually from local acts, not from a fixed map of the future, but from a communal **pattern language**.⁷

2.. **PATTERN LANGUAGE – CHOOSING A LANGUAGE FOR OUR PROJECT**⁸

RUNNING THE EXERCISE

- Find the pattern which best describes the overall scope of the project
- Patterns at the beginning will tend to be ‘larger’ than the project, at the end are ‘smaller’
- Copy of the master sequence – see handouts
 - The pattern **POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE**’ (106) is connected first to certain larger patterns: ACCESS TO WATER (25), PROMENADE (31), MARKET OF MANY SHOPS (46), GREEN STREETS (51), ACCESSIBLE GREEN (60), SMALL PUBLIC SQUARES (61), STREET CAFÉ (88),
 - It is also connected to smaller patterns: ARCADES (119), ACTIVITY POCKETS (124), FRUIT TREES (170), TREE PLACES (171), GARDEN WALL (173), TRELLISED WALK (174), VEGETABLE GARDEN (177), COMPOST (178)
- Keep going like this, until you have ticked all the patterns you want for your project

3.. **DIAGNOSIS – SPACES WHICH ARE ALIVE AND WHICH ONES DEAD**

Once a set of patterns has been adopted by the planning realm for the new city, we may sketch the diagnosis for each pattern in the form of a map.

The map has four colours. Let put them in:

- **yellow** indicates places where the pattern exists
- **orange** indicates places where the pattern very nearly exists
- **Red** refers to those areas which are virtually unusable
- and finally **violet** (or red hatching) refers to those areas where the pattern does not exist at all

As an example of the diagnostic map we take ‘**outdoor space, positively designated**’. The areas marked yellow represent outdoor spaces that are good positive zones. The orange areas represent spaces that require some modification, and the red ones need more substantial repair.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this session students should be able to:

- Explain the principle of diagnosis, which spaces are alive and which ones are dead.

4.. **DESIGN ACTIVITY** (p.285) **DESIGN EXERCISE** p252

“Permaculture is a disciplined way of consciously designing human habitats which invites the participation of the users.”⁹ And the evidence from the last two or three thousand years of human history tells us that all the environments have been designed by lay people.¹⁰

- The sequence of drawings orients the structure of the existing map, establishes possible locations for new buildings and also locates possible outdoor sites that could function as small hubs of activity.¹¹
- In addition, new functions will be assigned for public open spaces
- The final drawing includes a plan for repair and improvements to the existing masterplan.¹² This proposal is then presented to the planning board.¹³

⁷ ALEXANDER, Christopher (1975): The Oregon Experiment. New York, Oxford University Press. p.27

⁸ I.c.: ALEXANDER (1977) p. xxxviii

⁹ BELL, Graham (1992). The Permaculture Way. London, Thorsons, p.102

¹⁰ I.c.: ALEXANDER (1975) p. 45

¹¹ I.c.: ALEXANDER (1975) p. 52-53

¹² MASTERPLAN Seestadt <http://www.aspern-seestadt.at/resources/files/2009/3/11/133/masterplan-broschuere-englisch.pdf>

¹³ I.c.: ALEXANDER (1975) p. p.171