

CHAPTER 20

ONE PATTERN AT A TIME

The process of unfolding goes step by step, one pattern at a time. Each step brings just one pattern to life: and the intensity of the result depends on the intensity of each one of these individual steps.









Suppose now, that for a given act of building, you have a pattern language, and that the patterns in this language are arranged in proper sequence.

To make the design, you take the patterns one by one, and use each one to differentiate the product of the previous patterns.

But how exactly, does each pattern work.

At any given moment in the unfolding of a sequence of patterns, we have a partly defined whole, which has the structure given to it by the patterns that come earlier in the sequence.

And we are now faced with the problem of injecting the next pattern into this whole, filling the whole with it, infusing the whole with the structure of this pattern, making just those differentiations in the whole, which will bring this next pattern to life, throughout the fabric of the whole.

How exactly does this work?

Suppose, for instance, that you want to create a WINDOW PLACE which is alive.

Start by remembering all the particular window places you have known: especially the ones which were most beautiful. Close your eyes, and concentrate on them—so that you get a direct instinctive knowledge of the pattern, rooted in your own experience.

And concentrate, also, on the particular aspects of the WINDOW PLACE which make it live: the light, the seat,

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the windowsill, flowers growing outside perhaps, the quietness and separateness, which make the window place a "place."

Ask yourself how this pattern would look if it were already in the place where you are wanting it.

To do this, you need only close your eyes, and imagine that you are coming through the door. Imagine that the room or place which you are shaping has a **WINDOW PLACE** in it.

Your knowledge of the pattern, interacting with your knowledge of the place, will speak to you, and tell you just what form the pattern takes, in this particular place.

To keep the pattern strong, it is essential that you don't yet put in any other details. You do not yet need to imagine the positions of the window panes, in detail, because that will be done by later patterns. You do not need to know, yet, what exactly is the height of windowsills, because the pattern **LOW SILL** does it for you, later. You do not need to know, yet, just exactly what the ceiling height is, there, because the pattern **CEILING HEIGHT VARIETY** will do it for you later.

The only thing you must have clear, at this stage, is the whole, the space of the **WINDOW PLACE** itself, how large it is, how the light comes into it, how people sit, so that they are related to the light and to the inside of the room, and, above all, just how the window place does indeed define a *place* which is identified, and light. These

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things you must know, because these are the ones which this pattern specifically deals with.

The most important thing is that you take the pattern seriously.

There is no point at all in using the pattern if you only give lip service to it.

For example, I remember one case where a man was designing a beach house, with two apartments one over the other—and an outdoor stair, leading to the upstairs one. He was telling me how the patterns he was using entered into his design: and he said that the stair landing at the top of the stair was the **ENTRANCE TRANSITION** for the upstairs room.

I said to him: Look, this little landing, which is maybe three feet by four, is not an **ENTRANCE TRANSITION** at all. You are calling it that and trying to pretend to yourself that you have created this pattern there. But it is just the top of the stair. An **ENTRANCE TRANSITION** is a place where the light changes, a place where the level changes, where you are suddenly filled with a sense of new experience, a change, a wiping clean, that happens just before you go inside.

*If you really want to make an **ENTRANCE TRANSITION** there, at the top of the stair, you must close your eyes, and ask yourself: What would it be like, if this was the most wonderful entrance transition in the world?*

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Imagine. I close my eyes. I see a place from which there is a sudden view, which you can't see from the bottom of the stair. I see a place which is filled with the scent of jasmine in the summer. I hear my step as I reach this place up on top: it changes, because, perhaps, there is a creaking board. So now I begin to imagine a stair which is almost closed in, by wooden fretwork, the top placed with an opening which looks out on the sea; a trellis overhead with jasmine climbing on it; a seat across from the door, where I can sit, to smell the breeze; the stair made loosely, so that the boards creak as I begin to climb the stair

Now you have really done something.

Now this entrance transition is more than just a phrase; it is an actual living thing. But now, of course, it is a little strange, perhaps. How do I have to build the stair, to keep it closed in further down, with fretwork to let light in; how must I place the landing at the top, so that it looks back at the sea? It is no longer just the "top of the stairs" somewhere. It is a place which I will not forget, because it has a character. And this character is not created wilfully, by me—it has been generated, simply, by paying serious attention to the pattern.

Indeed, each pattern, when you really do it, creates an almost startling character.

When you insist, and genuinely form the pattern, and go

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all the way with it, it generates a character: it looks almost strange; slightly startling. It is extreme; you know that someone has been working here. It is not bland, but full.

For instance, in the second picture of this chapter, the roof overhang of the SHELTERING ROOF is immense.

There is no lip service to the sheltering roof. The people who built this built it with all the courage and the certainty that it was really needed. There are no half measures; no compromises; this is a sheltering roof, in full.

In the third picture, the FILTERED LIGHT is once again intense.

This picture is important, because it shows that taking patterns seriously does not require money. Here, in the simplest hut, the people inside felt so strongly about FILTERED LIGHT that they strung beans on strings, across the window, in the most extraordinary way. They took the pattern seriously, and it created, for them, something unique.

It is the same intensity you may find in a rock or tree which grows under extraordinary circumstances. When a tree grows in a corner, wind from one angle, rocks beneath it, it may take on a wild character, intense, created by the interaction of the special circumstances, with its genes. When the patterns are given their full in-

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tensity, and allowed to interact freely with circumstances, we get the same.

And in the first picture, we see LIGHT ON TWO SIDES OF EVERY ROOM as intense as possible.

Almost everyone has some experience of a room filled with light, sun streaming in, perhaps yellow curtains, white wood, patches of sunlight on the floor, which the cat searches for—soft cushions where the light is, a garden full of flowers to look out onto.

If you search your own experience, you can certainly remember a place like this—so beautiful it takes your breath away to think of it.

Look at the great room from the Topkapi Palace in this first picture. It is almost as though the room itself is one great window. You can make a room like that, if you pay enough attention, are serious enough about the windows, look to see where the light is, place the room, not in some place where it just gets light on two sides, but in the best place, where it can get light from all around, and the best and most beautiful light there is on the site. Then it can happen.

You may not believe that you can make a place as beautiful as that.

So, when you come to this pattern, **LIGHT ON TWO SIDES OF EVERY ROOM**, you check in a halfhearted, perfunctory manner, to see if every room has two walls to the outside,

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and that there are a couple of windows, more or less in the right place.

But that produces nothing. It is only when you pay attention, in the full belief that every room you make can be as beautiful as the most beautiful light-filled room which you have ever seen—then you are serious enough. At that moment it will happen. All it requires is the will.

To do it you need only let it happen in your mind.

Say to yourself: I am coming into that room, I am not in it yet, but I come in through the door, and there, to my surprise, is the most beautiful room that I have ever been in. The pattern LIGHT ON TWO SIDES is there, as intense and beautiful as in any room that I have ever known, as intense as in the picture of the Topkapi Palace . . . you say all this to yourself, before you walk in through the door. And then, with your eyes closed, in your imagination, you walk from the next door room, throw open the door, and step inside . . . and there it is.

And there it is. Suddenly, without your making any conscious effort, your mind will show you how this light on two sides is, in that particular place, as beautiful as you have ever known it anywhere.

Do not consciously try to create the pattern. If you do this, the images and ideas in your mind will distort it, will begin to take over, and the pattern itself will never

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make its way into the world: instead there will be a "design."

Get rid of the ideas which come into your mind. Get rid of pictures you have seen in magazines, friends' houses Insist on the pattern, and nothing else.

The pattern, and the real situation, together, will create the proper form, within your mind, without your trying to do it, if you will allow it to happen.

This is the power of the language, and the reason why the language is creative.

Your mind is a medium within which the creative spark that jumps between the pattern and the world can happen. You yourself are only the medium for this creative spark, not its originator.

I remember once, sitting in Berkeley, trying to work out a site plan on paper, for our houses in Peru. One of the LOOPED LOCAL ROADS into the site was not yet properly in place, and we could not find a suitable way of fitting this pattern road into the design, the way the patterns told us to—so I decided to take a walk around the site in my imagination.

I sat in my chair, in Berkeley, 8000 miles from the real site in Lima, closed my eyes, and began to take a walk around the market. There were many narrow lanes, covered with bamboo screens to shade them, with tiny stalls opening off them, and fruit sellers selling fruit from carts. I stopped by one old woman's cart, and bought an orange from her. As I stood there I happened to be

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facing north. And then I bit into the orange—in my imagination. And just as I bit into it, I suddenly stopped and asked myself, “Now, where is that road?” And, without thinking, I knew exactly where it was, and what its relation to the market was—I knew it must be over *there*, towards the right, from the direction I was facing. I knew that to be natural; it must come sweeping towards the market, and touch it over there.

Then I stopped, and came back to my room, and my chair, and my effort to make the design. I realized at once that this position of the road, which had come to me so naturally, was quite different from all the ones we had been trying on paper in those last few days—and that it was exactly right, and satisfied the demands of all the patterns perfectly.

It was the vividness of being there, and biting into that orange, that allowed me to know, spontaneously, the most natural place for that road to be.

You may find this way of letting patterns form themselves, unusual.

To do it, you must let go of your control and let the pattern do the work. You cannot do this, normally, because you are trying to make decisions without having confidence in the basis for them. But if the patterns you are using are familiar to you, if they make sense to you, if you are confident that they make sense, and that they are profound, then there is no reason to be afraid, and no reason to be afraid of giving up your control over the

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design. If the pattern makes sense, you do not need to control the design.

You may be afraid that the design won't work if you take just one pattern at a time.

If you take one pattern at a time, what guarantee is there that all the patterns will fit together coherently? What happens if you put the patterns together, one at a time, and then, suddenly, with the ninth or tenth, you find that it is quite impossible, because there is a conflict between the design which has emerged so far, and the next pattern in the sequence?

The greatest fear we experience in the process of design is that everything will not work out. And yet the building will become alive only when you can let go of this fear.

Suppose, for instance, you are trying to decide where to place the entrance to your house. As you are doing it, images of other problems flit through your mind. Will I be able to fit the dining room in if I put the entrance here? But on the other hand, if I put it over there, maybe I won't have room to put the bed alcoves in properly; . . . what shall I do? How can I place the entrance so that all these problems will work themselves out when the time comes?

But you cannot create a pattern at full intensity, so long as you are worrying and thinking about other patterns, which you will have to deal with later in the sequence.

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This frenzy will always kill the pattern. It will force you to create artificial, "thought out" configurations, which are stiff and lifeless. This is the thing which prevents people, most often, from creating a pattern at full intensity.

Suppose, for example, that we are trying to build a house which has fifty patterns in it. It seems almost inconceivable that these fifty patterns will not somehow conflict: and it seems essential, therefore, to work out some overall scheme in which enough compromises are made to allow each of the patterns to be present to some extent.

This frame of mind destroys the patterns.

It destroys all possibility of life, because as soon as you begin to compromise the patterns there is no life left in them.

But there is no need for this frame of mind. It is not necessary to make compromises between the patterns.

When you start to think about compromises between patterns, you are not taking account of the fact that every pattern is a *rule of transformation*. The fact that every pattern is a rule of transformation means that each pattern has the power to transform any configuration by injecting a new configuration into it, without essentially disturbing any essentials of the configuration which was there before.

Suppose that I want to create a MAIN ENTRANCE.

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The character of the **MAIN ENTRANCE** as a rule means that I can take any configuration, which lacks this pattern—it may be a real building which exists already, or a partly thought out building in my mind—and apply this pattern to it—that is, inject a **MAIN ENTRANCE** into it, in the most beautiful and extreme form possible—without disturbing the essentials of what I have already.

There is no reason to be timid.

If I am going to create a beautiful **MAIN ENTRANCE**, there is no point in worrying about whether I will later be able to create a beautiful **ENTRANCE TRANSITION** there.

At this time when I inject **MAIN ENTRANCE** into the design, I need think only about the **MAIN ENTRANCE** pattern, in all its fullness and extremity—in the certain knowledge that when I come, later, to the **ENTRANCE TRANSITION** pattern, I will once again be able to inject *that* pattern, in all its fullness and extremity also.

The order of the language will make sure that it is possible.

For as we have seen in Chapter 19, the order of the language is the order which the patterns need to operate on one another to create a whole. It is a morphological order, similar to the order which must be present in an evolving embryo.

And it is this very same order which also allows each

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pattern to develop its full intensity. When we have the order of the language right, we can pay attention to one pattern at a time, with full intensity, because the interference between patterns, and the conflicts between patterns, are reduced to almost nothing by the order of the language.

Within the sequence which the language defines, you can focus on each pattern by itself, one at a time, certain that those patterns which come later in the sequence will fit into the design which has evolved so far.

You can pay full attention to each pattern; you can let it have its full intensity.

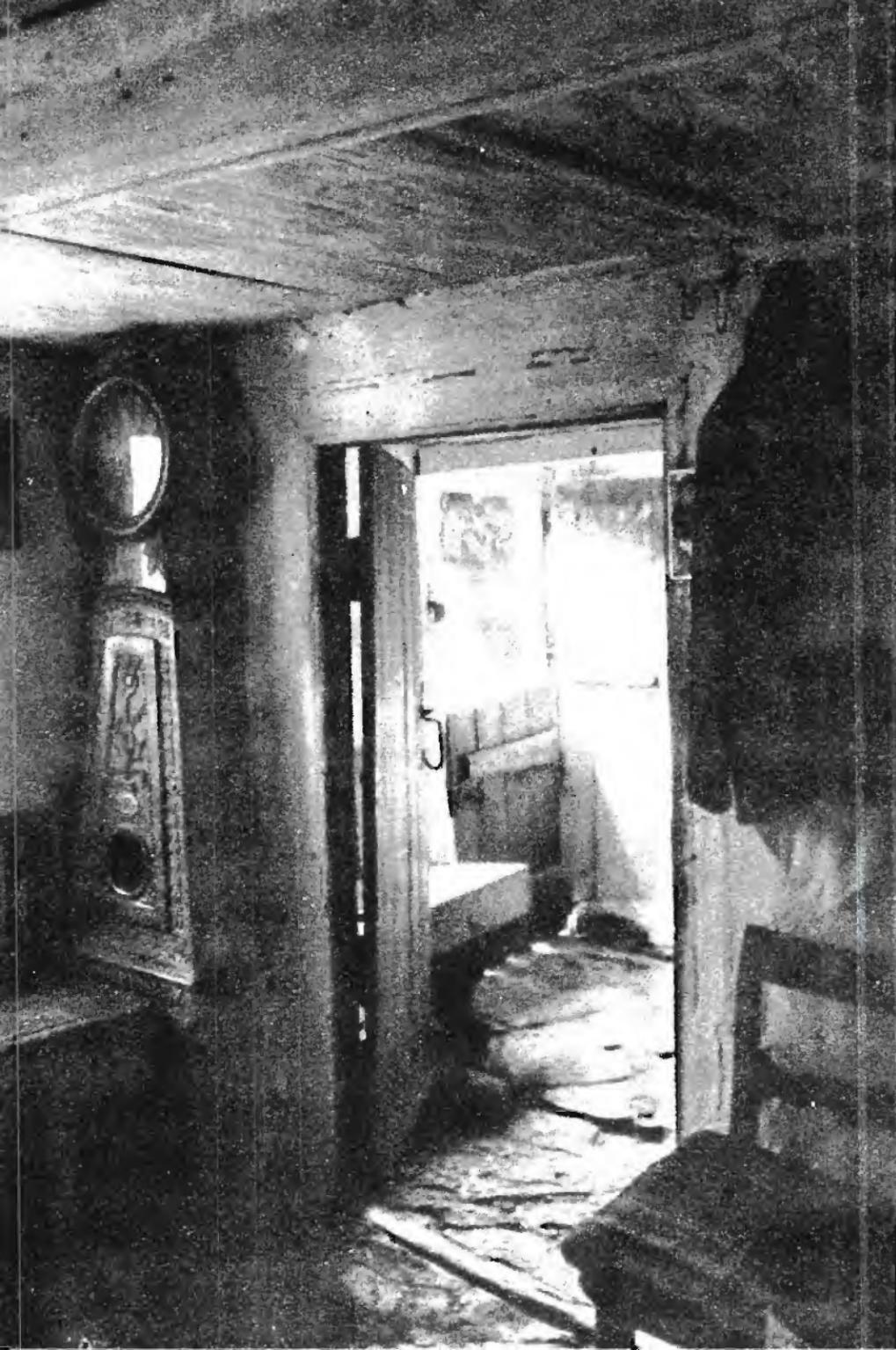
Then you can give each pattern just that strange intensity which makes the pattern live.

CHAPTER 21

SHAPING ONE BUILDING

From a sequence of these individual patterns, whole buildings with the character of nature will form themselves within your thoughts, as easily as sentences.







We are ready, now, to see just how a sequence of patterns can create a building in our minds.

It happens with surprising ease. The building almost "makes itself," just as a sentence seems to when we speak.

And it can happen as easily within an ordinary person's mind, or in a builder's mind. Everyone, builder or not, can do this for himself, to make a building live

Assume, to start with, that we have a language for a house.

Look at the patterns in the order they come in, one at a time.

Add nothing, except just what the patterns demand.

Slowly, you will find that an image of a house is growing in your mind.

Here are the rough notes I wrote down during the week it took to design a small cottage in this way.

I decided to build a small cottage/workshop at the back of our office. A place large enough to live in; a place where guests might stay; and a place where someone could live and work, as a workshop; and a place we could rent to a friend, when it wasn't occupied by one of us.

There is a large house in front; another cottage behind; an old garage; outside stairs leading to the upstairs of the large house. I decided that it would not be practical

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to spend more than about \$3000 for materials. At \$8 per square foot for materials (I knew that we would build it ourselves so labor was to be free), we could build a cottage of 400 square feet.

Here is the language I chose for the building:

WORK COMMUNITY
THE FAMILY
BUILDING COMPLEX
CIRCULATION REALMS
NUMBER OF STORIES
HOUSE FOR ONE PERSON
SOUTH FACING OUTDOORS
WINGS OF LIGHT
CONNECTED BUILDINGS
POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE
SITE REPAIR
MAIN ENTRANCE
ENTRANCE TRANSITION
CASCADE OF ROOFS
ROOF GARDEN
SHELTERING ROOF
ARCADE
INTIMACY GRADIENT
ENTRANCE ROOM
STAIRCASE AS A STAGE
ZEN VIEW
TAPESTRY OF LIGHT AND DARK
FARMHOUSE KITCHEN
BATHING ROOM
HOME WORKSHOP

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LIGHT ON TWO SIDES OF EVERY ROOM
BUILDING EDGE
SUNNY PLACE
OUTDOOR ROOM
CONNECTION TO THE EARTH
TREE PLACES
ALCOVES
WINDOW PLACE
THE FIRE
BED ALCOVE
THICK WALLS
OPEN SHELVES
CEILING HEIGHT VARIETY

The first thing was repair.

The existing cottage is disconnected. The garage is a bit derelict; the trees and grass at the very back need pruning and are very overgrown. Above all, the people who live upstairs in the main house, and at the back, have no overall sense of connection to one another. Also the most beautiful part of the garden—which faces south, and is under the locust tree, is unused, because there is nothing near it or around it, and no paths which naturally go to and fro to make it naturally usable.

To solve all these problems, I tried, first of all, to make a building which created SOUTH FACING OUTDOORS and POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE.

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For SOUTH FACING OUTDOORS, I imagine a nice big terrace, out towards the back of the main house, in the sun. If we put it to the south and west of the cottage, it will be in the other opening in the trees, and get plenty of sun: a good place to work, make things; perhaps we can put a workbench out there in good weather; and a place for a couple of chairs and a table, where we can sit and have a drink. We need to spend a day on the site, watching the sun, to identify the exact places where sun falls (**SUNNY PLACE**); it is tricky, because the sun comes through the trees, only in a few special places, and we must be very accurate about placing them.

All this puts the cottage as far to the north as possible. To form **POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE**, I also place the building well back into the site, so that it leaves a well-formed space between the garage and the trees in front. In that position, there is space for a cottage, running north-south, up to about 13 feet wide, and up to about 25 feet long. As far as connections with the existing cottage are concerned (**BUILDING COMPLEX, CONNECTED BUILDINGS**), there is no bathroom in the existing cottage, so it will be a great help if we build a bathroom which the two cottages share. There is a natural place for that, right between the two buildings.

Next NUMBER OF STORIES, CASCADE OF ROOFS, SHELTERING ROOF, ROOF GARDEN give me the overall shape of the building.

Mostly it will be a one-story building; but we want to try the two-story structure, and it would be nice to have

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a sleeping loft upstairs. This two-story part of the thing should naturally be to the north end, so that it forms a ROOF GARDEN to the south. Given its position, it makes sense to think of this sleeping loft as about 8 x 13, opening out to a flat roof to the south, over the one-story part of the cottage. This goes some way towards creating the CASCADE OF ROOFS. So that our neighbor to the north doesn't have a high wall right next to his garden, it makes sense to imagine lower, alcove roofs falling off to the north. And the same somewhere to the south perhaps, and the same again where the entrance is, there might be an entrance porch. This will make a number of lower roofs, low enough to touch, around the edge of the building (SHELTERING ROOF and CASCADE OF ROOFS).

Within this overall shape, CIRCULATION REALMS and WORK COMMUNITY tell me how to complete the site.

CIRCULATION REALMS is not good; and the connection with the main house needed by WORK COMMUNITY isn't good enough. The main trouble is this. There are two paths to the back: one up the driveway; the other through dark bushes. The one up the driveway is OK, but not a direct connection; and the main house's back porch goes out sideways to it; not direct. To make the connection clear, and the circulation, we will open up the back of the back porch, so it connects directly to the terrace of the cottage. It will only be a few feet, then, from the back porch, to the coffee, umbrella, chairs, workbench—or whatever else we put on the terrace—and it will be natural to go back and forward all the time. We can lay

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tiles into the earth, to make the connection; also, looking at the bushes under there, which are so dark—we need to prune them, cut out dead wood, to bring more light in along that path. We might even prune out enough dead wood so grass could grow there, with the trees just standing in the grass.

SITE REPAIR tells me exactly what to protect around the building.

The tree to the north is down, as our neighbor wanted; in exchange we will, I hope, be able to build up to his fence—since he can get sunlight all the way onto his lawn now. It is a shame cutting down a tree: but the trees at the back grew too thick; one less and the others will grow stronger; and, most important, it helps to repair his garden to the north of ours, by giving him SOUTH FACING OUTDOORS too.

In clearing the site, the little apple tree next to the garage seems more beautiful than ever; and the wild onions, with their white flowers, growing around the foot of it are lovely. We have put stakes around them, to protect them while we build: they get trampled very easily (*SITE REPAIR*).

Combining SITE REPAIR and ROOF GARDEN, I imagine the roof garden about eight or nine feet up, beautifully framed and surrounded by the lower branches of the trees to the east and west: on the site I stake out the rough position of this roof garden, so that it will fit just right into the trees.

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Now I begin more carefully to work with my eyes closed, to imagine how the patterns will be, in their best, most natural, most simple form, as the building comes to life.

MAIN ENTRANCE gives me the approach to the building, and the position of the entrances.

There are two ways to approach the cottage—either from our back porch of the main house, or up the driveway. Where is the entrance and what is it like, to make these two approaches work? In both cases I come across the terrace in front, to reach the entrance. I had originally thought of an entrance with a porch or arcade: but it seems too dark in there. As I close my eyes, I see a front door, standing forward a little from the main room of the cottage, just behind the bramble bush, and next to the acacia which is still standing. I imagine a small seat on either side of it: a natural place to sit in the sun: and the entrance frame elaborated, perhaps carved or painted, not much, just slightly, perhaps bulging forward. Since I know that the bathroom will be to the back, next to the existing cottage, towards the north, and I assume there will be a short arcade connecting the two buildings, and giving access to this bathroom, I am not certain of the relation between the main entrance and this arcade behind it. Also I am not certain if the entrance is at a slight angle, to face the driveway more, or if it faces due west. Before I thought it ought to be west, but clearing the site has made the diagonal seem possible. Somehow it seems natural that it should occupy the little diagonal

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between the apple tree and the acacia. There is also the question of the stair. Shall it be near the entrance going up—perhaps even outdoors—or shall it be back in the far corner, tucked away (**OPEN STAIRS, STAIRCASE AS A STAGE**)?

INTIMACY GRADIENT and INDOOR SUNLIGHT give me the overall layout of the inside.

INTIMACY GRADIENT doesn't mean much in such a small building, except perhaps for the following ideas. (1) A small seat or window seat inside the front door, (2) the stairs far enough back so it is a secluded "bed" area, and (3) the stairs placed so a person can go out to the bathroom without coming through the front door—in other words a kind of back access out to the little arcade that gives onto the bathrooms. INDOOR SUNLIGHT tells me that main usable spaces are towards the terrace, towards the garage, towards the main house—and that the north side, over towards our neighbor, is kept for dark closets, storage. It may make sense to place a whole row of storage alcoves over on the north side—this will also help to accomplish NORTH FACE. This may include kitchen counter and stove if they are added later.

STAIRCASE AS A STAGE, ZEN VIEW, TAPESTRY OF LIGHT AND DARK give me the position of the stair to the upstairs.

Standing inside the main room of the cottage, it feels as if the stair could go up on the side opposite the entrance.

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This makes the most sense; it helps form the room then, and its roof, which will stick up slightly, at the back of the roof terrace, and form a nice angle with the two-story section—a beautiful corner, facing south-west, nice to sit in to enjoy the roof. This means that the stair will go up, perhaps towards a window at its top, which looks out onto the neighbor's garden to the north (new view—the only place from which one can see out that way); and gives **LIGHT TO WALK TOWARDS**. Other aspects of **TAPESTRY OF LIGHT AND DARK**—there should be light, where the back area (kitchen area) opens out to the door which leads to the arcade—perhaps a little fountain or court there, forming light, inviting us out towards the small existing cottage. And, of course, from inside the main room, looking out towards the front door onto the terrace, is also looking towards light.

ARCADE tells me how to connect the building to the cottage west of it.

As far as the little arcade at the back is concerned, between the “kitchen” and the old cottage, with the bathroom off it, I talked to Susie in the cottage: we looked at the window of her bedroom, where I had hoped to make a door, and it was clear to both of us that if we made a door, it would ruin the inside of the room—it is so small, the second door would make it like a corridor. So, I suggested we leave the window frame where it is, and put a step on the inside, and two steps on the outside, like a stile. We will put a casement window in the window frame, perhaps make the windowsill 3 inches lower; and

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she can get out to the bathroom by going over the stile, down the two steps, into the arcade.

SLEEPING TO THE EAST *helps shape the roof in detail, because of light.*

I looked at the light through that window. There is a danger our new cottage may take away her morning light; so we will place bamboos to mark the roof line we expect, and move it, until there is still plenty of morning light coming in through that window. Looking out of the same window, it seems more important for the roof to pitch to east and west, with gable ends at north and south, so that the slope of it allows the light to come down easier into her cottage. The gable end makes more sense for the sleeping loft anyway—it can open directly onto the roof garden (**SHELTERING ROOF**).

ENTRANCE TRANSITION *shows me how to arrange the area in front of the building.*

I haven't been careful enough with this pattern—have left it a little too late. I have been thinking about the possibility of a **TRELLISED WALK**, or **TRELLIS** anyway, to help close off the terrace to the south, and help protect it a little from the big house to the south. This will also make the terrace more of an **OUTDOOR ROOM**, and help to make the direct connection to the house more important than the one from the driveway. So I close my eyes, and imagine coming up the driveway, passing under a jasmine-covered trellis, which ties into the garage, through into the brighter

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light of the terrace, which forms a kind of anteroom to the main entrance. Then this whole terrace becomes a kind of room. The trees, which form its corners, also help to emphasize its character as an OUTDOOR ROOM.

FARMHOUSE KITCHEN gives me the character of the main room inside.

Even though the cottage will be a workshop, and place to live, it makes most sense to think of the inside as a FARMHOUSE KITCHEN, with a big table in the middle, chairs around it, one light hung over the center, a couch or arm-chair off to one side When I start to imagine this, and imagine entering it, I realize that it is more important than I realized to keep it back, slightly, from the door, to make something out of the ENTRANCE ROOM that lies between—even though, in a building as small as this, this ENTRANCE ROOM may be shrunk to almost nothing. I imagine coming in, between two seats, into a glazed place, with light coming in, and then passing through a second doorway, perhaps a LOW DOORWAY, into the main room of the FARMHOUSE KITCHEN proper.

CONNECTION TO THE EARTH and TERRACED SLOPE help me to complete the way the building's outer edge is formed.

Of course, the terrace gives the connection to the earth. But I have been trying to imagine how to make the edge of the terrace, where it meets the earth. If the terrace itself is made of tiles (laid either in earth, or grout—not

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sure yet), the edging could be a SITTING WALL—but that seems too formal, too enclosed—or perhaps better, it could be made by a simple concrete block surround. This seems a bit stark. I close my eyes, and see the slight step, with blocks that are filled with rock-garden flowers—these form the edge except at the few particular places where there is an actual step to the path beyond.

The slope of the ground is not enough to need a TERRACED SLOPE; but there is a definite fall of a few inches from the back of the site to the front of the terrace. We decide to place a natural step, along the contour line, wherever it makes sense—so that we do as little earth moving or filling as possible, and the house sits just the way the land is.

As far as the connection to the earth goes, there are still two big unanswered questions. What exactly happens around the little apple tree to the south? And what exactly happens along the west wall of the building, between the entrance area and the bathing room arcade? It is possible that the place under the acacia tree might be blocked completely by a WINDOW PLACE which forms part of the entrance, or falls just inside it. In this case one would not be able to walk along this edge of the building, and could only get to the bathroom arcade by going into the building. Not sure if this is right; perhaps too tight.

WINDOW PLACE and ENTRANCE ROOM fix the detailed arrangement of the entrance.

In order to make progress on all this, we went out to the site, and looked around, trying to imagine all this more

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concretely on the land. We started especially with the front door. Should it be angled, to face the terrace, or facing west (into the acacia tree, or facing south, towards the garage)? Although facing south is less direct than when it is angled, it seems best—it creates a slight sense of ENTRANCE TRANSITION, doesn't allow such a complete view of the inside from the terrace—it uses the little apple tree very nicely, to one side: and it leaves the WINDOW PLACE to the west, just perfect, inside the front door, helping to form the ENTRANCE ROOM. We staked it out, with seven-foot-high stakes, so we could begin to feel its presence. There is a need to protect the apple tree and wild onions, from trampling—so it will be natural to make a low wall at a slight angle, perhaps curving out, to form the approach into the door—this will make the FRONT DOOR BENCH.

ALCOVE then generates a further differentiation of the inside room.

Now we stood inside the room, looking towards the door, towards the counter area at the back, to make the actual shape of the room work out just right. The WINDOW PLACE to the right of the door works beautifully. Another ALCOVE to the left of the door, on the left-hand side of the apple tree seems just right too.

Now STAIRCASE BAY shows us how to stake out the four corners of the stair, so that we get a realistic look at its effect on the room.

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I imagine it very steep (7 feet horizontal run, for a climb of 8'6"), and no more than about 2 feet wide—since it only leads to a sleeping loft. We fix the top of the stair, by knowing that the back counter of the kitchen will come in three feet from the north face of the building, and that the upper story will rise directly from that line. If the sleeping loft is 7 feet north-to-south, enough for a bed—and the stair comes up inside it, with a 3 foot landing at the top, this allows us to fix the top of the stair 6 or 7 feet south of the property line—and the bottom of the stair 14 feet south of the line. When we look at the stair, it blocks the south-east alcove a bit—so we splay the alcove, around the apple tree, to connect it better with the main room. A splay of two feet makes an enormous difference. We stake it out also, and imagine a window in it, looking west towards the apple tree (**WINDOW PLACE**).

THICK WALLS helps me define the inside edge of the farmhouse kitchen.

Now, standing in the middle of the room which is to be the **FARMHOUSE KITCHEN**, I imagine another seat or closets under the stair; perhaps a window under the stair too, looking towards the garden to the east: small windows over the counter to the north which forms the main **THICK WALL**. Talking about the second story, we realize that the load of its southern wall will fall right over the vault which forms the **FARMHOUSE KITCHEN**: it will probably need a rib in the middle, and this rib can give us a nice center to the room, a place to hang a light (**POOLS OF LIGHT**).

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CEILING HEIGHT VARIETY completes the upstairs and the downstairs.

This pattern is satisfied almost automatically by what has gone before. For the main room, I imagine one big vault, perhaps 8'6" high at the center. The back wall, where the kitchen counter is, the main alcove to the south, and the window place by the door, all spring off the perimeter beam, which will be at about 6'6"—going down to 5'6" or 5'0". Upstairs the sleeping room is low anyway, under the roof; and it has a still lower section, over to the west, where the bed is in an alcove which has no more than a 4'6" to 5'0" ceiling.

All in all, the design took about a week of continuous on-and-off thought.

I mulled each group of patterns, in turn, as the notes show. Sometimes, I spent as much as an hour thinking about one pattern. In these cases, I didn't actively think how to do the pattern for an hour. I did all kinds of other things, drove the car, played music, ate an apple, watered the garden, etc., waiting for the pattern to form itself in my mind, by taking on shape appropriate to this particular site and problem. In many of these cases, I got the key insight by walking into the design, so far as it was completed, and then asking, what would I see over there if this pattern I am now thinking about were in the building? Very often, the answer came almost immediately. But it only came if I was really there, could touch and smell what was around me.

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And I never made a drawing of the building.

The design was done completely in my mind.

Only in the fluidity of your mind can you conceive a whole. As the design unfolds, and the new patterns are brought into play, according to the order of the language, the entire design has to shift and resettle itself in your mind with every new pattern. Each new pattern in the sequence transforms the whole design created by the previous patterns—it transforms it as a whole, it shakes it up, and realigns it.

This can only happen if the design is represented in an utterly fluid medium; it cannot happen in any medium where there is the slightest resistance to change. A drawing, even a rough drawing, is very rigid—it embodies a commitment to details of arrangement far beyond what the design itself actually calls for while it is in an embryonic state. Indeed, all the external media I know—sand, clay, drawings, bits of paper lying on the floor—are all far too rigid in this same sense. The only medium which is truly fluid, which allows the design to grow and change as new patterns enter it, is the mind.

Representation there is fluid: it is an image, yet an image which contains no more than essentials—and it can change, almost of its own accord, under the transforming impact of a thought about a new pattern. Within the medium of the mind, each new pattern transforms the whole design, almost by itself, without any special effort.

SHAPING ONE BUILDING

Imagine trying to build sentences by shuffling words around on a piece of tracing paper.

What terrible sentences. The act of speech is a spontaneous, and immediate response to a situation. The more spontaneous it is, the more directly related to the situation, and the more beautiful. This spontaneity is governed by the rules of English which are disciplined and ordered; but the use of these rules, and the creation of a totality from them, takes place in the immediacy and fluidity of your own mind.

Just so with a pattern language. The patterns are disciplined; and the order of the language is disciplined. But you can only use these patterns in that order if you are willing to combine the discipline they give you, with the spontaneity and immediacy of direct experience. You cannot create a design by patchwork, on pieces of tracing paper. You can only create it, as if it were a real experience of a real building: and that you can only do in your mind.

It is only in the mind's eye, eyes shut, not on paper, that a building can be born out of the vividness of actual experience.

In the cottage I have been describing, we even built the building without the use of drawings—simply by staking out the building, as I saw it in my mind's eye, and then using a pattern language for construction, in the way described in chapter 23.



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Of course, this little experimental building is still immensely far from the great beauty and simplicity of the houses which are shown at the beginning of the chapter.

It will take years more of experiment, with ways of building, before we can do that.

It is too loose, too informal, the construction patterns which control its detailed shape are not harmonious enough, not disciplined enough . . .

Yet still, this building has just the beginning of a spirit, a hint of a touching quality, which is at least a few steps down the road.

Anyone can use a language to design a building in this way.

No matter who does it, the buildings which are made like this will be ordinary and natural, because each part in the design is formed by its position in the whole.

It is a primitive process. The primitive farmer spends no time “designing” his house. He thinks briefly where and how to build it, and then sets about building it. The use of the language is like that. The speed is the essence. It takes time to learn the language. But it takes no more than a few hours or days to design a house. If it takes longer, you know it is tricky, “designed,” and no longer organic.

And it is just like English.

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When I speak English, the sentences form themselves in my mind as fast as I can say them. And this is true of pattern languages also.

The quality that makes a building feel as though it has been there for a thousand years, the quality that makes it feel that it has flowed like writing from a pen, comes almost automatically when I relax my mind, and let the language generate the building freely there.

I still remember the first time I used a pattern language in this way. I found myself so completely caught up in the process that I was trembling. A handful of simple statements made it possible for my mind to flow out and open, through them—and yet, although the house which came was made by me, born of my feelings, it was at the same time as though the house became real, almost by itself, of its own volition, through my thoughts.

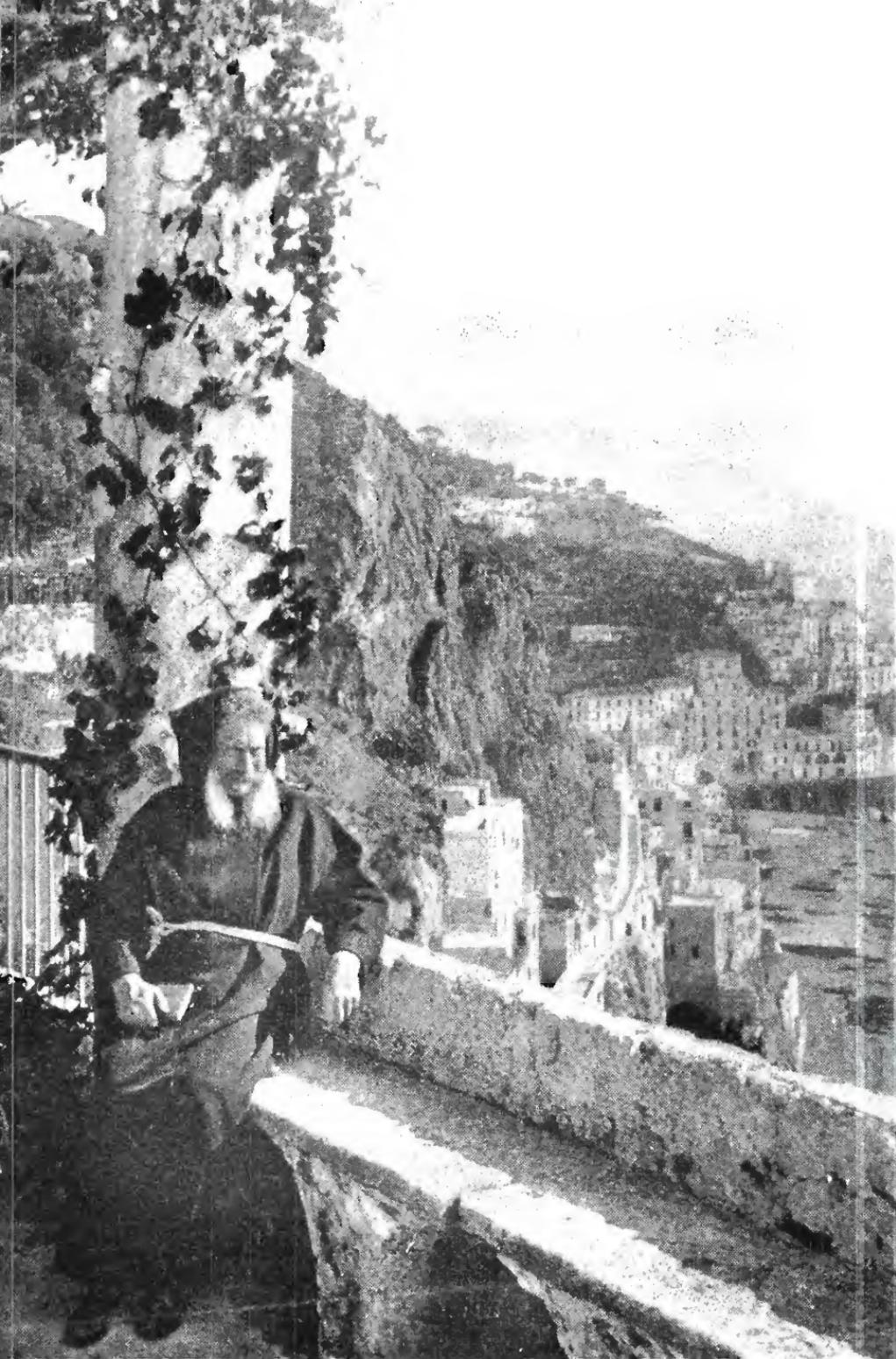
It is a fearsome thing, like diving into water. And yet it is exhilarating—because you aren't controlling it. You are only the medium in which the patterns come to life, and of their own accord give birth to something new.

CHAPTER 22

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

In the same way, groups of people can conceive their larger public buildings, on the ground, by following a common pattern language, almost as if they had a single mind.









We know from chapter 21, that an individual person, can create a building in his mind simply by letting a sequence of patterns generate it, on the site.

Now we go one step further, and see how a group of people, also on a site, and with a common language, can use the same process to design a larger building.

It is often said that no group of people can create a work of art, or anything which is whole, since different people pull in different directions, and make the end product a compromise which has no strength.

The use of a shared pattern language solves these problems. As we shall now see, a group of people who use a common pattern language can make a design together just as well as a single person can within his mind.

Here is an example of a clinic.

It is a psychiatric clinic to serve a rural population of about 50,000 in California. The building has about 25,000 square feet of internal space, and sits on a piece of land whose area is about 40,000 square feet in the middle of an existing hospital. The building was designed by a team which included the director of the clinic (Dr. Ryan, a psychiatrist), several of his staff members who had years of experience working with patients, and two of us from the Center for Environmental Structure.

Again the process begins with a pattern language.

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We sent Dr. Ryan a sequence of patterns from the printed pattern language which we thought might be useful.

We asked him to pick those he thought were relevant; get rid of those which were irrelevant; and asked him to add whatever special patterns or new "ideas" which seemed to be missing, including, of course, those special parts or "patterns" specific to a clinic. Those new ones which he added are marked with asterisks below.

After our first discussion, we had a language of some forty patterns:

- BUILDING COMPLEX
- NUMBER OF STORIES
- SHIELDED PARKING
- MAIN GATEWAY
- CIRCULATION REALMS
- MAIN BUILDING
- PEDESTRIAN STREET
- *ADULT DAY CARE
- *ADOLESCENT DAY CARE
- *CHILDREN'S DAY CARE
- *OUTPATIENT
- *INPATIENT
- *ADMINISTRATION
- *EMERGENCY
- FAMILY OF ENTRANCES
- SOUTH FACING OUTDOORS
- WINGS OF LIGHT
- POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE
- HALF-HIDDEN GARDEN
- HIERARCHY OF OPEN SPACE

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COURTYARDS WHICH LIVE
CASCADE OF ROOFS
SHELTERING ROOFS
ARCADES
PATHS AND GOALS
PEDESTRIAN DENSITY
INTIMACY GRADIENT
COMMON AREAS AT THE HEART
ENTRANCE ROOM
TAPESTRY OF LIGHT AND DARK
FARMHOUSE KITCHEN
FLEXIBLE OFFICE SPACE
SMALL WORK GROUPS
RECEPTION WELCOMES YOU
A PLACE TO WAIT
SMALL MEETING ROOMS
HALF-PRIVATE OFFICE
LIGHT ON TWO SIDES OF EVERY ROOM
BUILDING EDGE
OUTDOOR ROOM
THE SHAPE OF INDOOR SPACE
CEILING HEIGHT VARIETY

Gradually this language changed.

As more discussion took place, people's ideas about the patterns which the clinic should contain, changed. They decided that INPATIENT was unimportant, since the nearby hospital would take care of overnight patients. Then it turned out that the clinic needed a single area for occu-

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

pational therapy—and that this would become the MAIN BUILDING.

Dr. Ryan decided that there ought to be a GREENHOUSE as part of this MAIN BUILDING: patients could help plants to grow, and then transplant them into the gardens, and look after the gardens.

Then the discussion of the GREENHOUSE made the HALF-HIDDEN GARDENS seem much more important, and they became an essential part of the conception of the building.

Later, when we realized the importance of the CHILDREN'S HOME, a place at the entrance of the clinic where parents could leave children while they were being treated, we introduced STILL WATER, and a FOUNTAIN where the children could play and splash about.

There was some debate about COMMUNAL EATING; finally it was agreed that this pattern should be included, because the advantages of staff and patients eating lunch together regularly seemed so essential. Only the fact that each person should cook for the others in turn was not included, since it seemed impractical.

Every aspect of the clinic's life, was discussed, and settled, in the medium of patterns.

The language has the medium in which people worked out their disagreements, and in which they built a common picture of the building and the institution as a whole.

Usually people have a great deal of trouble when they

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try to define the future of an institution—because they have no language, no medium, in which they can forge their definitions, no way of gradually building up agreements, no way of gradually settling disagreements.

But with the pattern language as a base, the group of people gradually come to see themselves, and their activities, and their environment, as one thing—as a whole.

And finally, when everyone agreed about the pattern language, we were ready to begin design.

At this stage, the people who were going to run the clinic, had a shared vision, a vision not only shared in its intentions, in its broad outline, but shared in the details too. As a community, they knew, now, just exactly what they wanted, how it was going to work, what kind of places there would be in it, . . . everything in short, they needed to know, in order to begin design.

Then we began the design itself.

It took a week, Monday to Friday, out on the site itself, walking around parked cars and obstacles, overcoats against the fog, walking, walking all day long, cups of coffee, crazy dancing around, as the building took shape, chalk marks on the ground, stones to mark corners. People wondered what on earth we could be doing out there in the fog, walking around, all day long, for so many days.

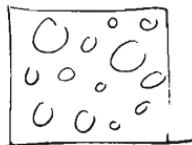
We began with BUILDING COMPLEX.

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The first pattern. We sat, at first, around a table in the nearby health center. How is this particular clinic going to reflect the building complex pattern? The pattern requires that any building be made up of visible components, which correspond to social groups: and—if the complex is at a low density—that the components actually be separate, connected by arcades and passages.

First of all, Dr. Ryan said, I see many many little cottages, each one individual and personal. How many do you see? Well, perhaps 30 separate cottages.

The entire building complex will have 24,000 square feet. I point out that if there are 30 cottages, each one will on the average have about 800 square feet—perhaps 25×30 —and that some of them will be even smaller. This didn't sound right. There was some discussion among the staff. Then he said, Well, let's perhaps say 6 or 8 separate buildings, clustered and connected, but identifiable and separate.



With this idea clear in our minds, we went outdoors to the site itself.

Next we placed the MAIN GATEWAY and MAIN ENTRANCE to the building complex.

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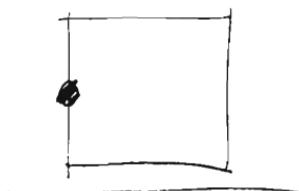
All the next patterns we took on outdoors. We walked out into the fog in overcoats, and looked around. I asked: Suppose there is one main entrance to this building complex: Where is it? Close your eyes; imagine; where do you see it?

Is it along the main street? Is it on the corner? Dr. Ryan said: I see it half way along the driveway which leads back from the road to the main hospital. I asked then: Well, let's decide exactly where it is. The pattern says that it must be immediate and visible from all possible lines of approach. If it is in this position, then there are two lines of approach—one from the main road, walking back; one from the hospital parking lot, if you have driven in, parked your car, and are now walking forward, towards the road again. Let us go to both these places and try to imagine the best position for it.

First, all six of us stood at the road end of the driveway, and looked back. I walked to the halfway point and said: Imagine that I am at the entrance—is it right now? I moved a few feet—now? moved again . . . now? They said stop, go back, forward a bit—there was very great agreement—and I made chalk marks at the nearest and the farthest points. They were about 10 feet apart only, in a total length of 200 feet.

Then we went to the other end—the parking lot, and did the same thing. Again I made chalk marks which now showed the best place to make the entrance feel good, for someone coming to it from his car. The two sets of chalk-marks were about ten feet apart: less than the size of the entrance itself.

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS



Now the position of the main entrance was fixed. I explained that we would now mark that, and that from now on it would be a given about the design—that we would no longer think about moving the entrance, in view of later things—but would let the design grow outward from this decision. A little frightening—what if things don't work out?

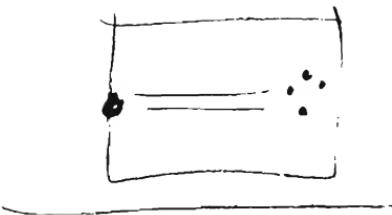
Next, with the main entrance fixed, we started to define the CIRCULATION REALMS.

I explained that this pattern required a single, simple pedestrian area, opening directly from the main entrance, and, further, a series of individual pedestrian realms opening off this one main path.

We stood at the main entrance, and wondered how this might be.

At the far end of the site, opposite the entrance, were four magnificent trees. It seemed natural, then, to make the main path go down towards those trees. And, with several small buildings opening off this path, some to the left, some to the right, it was easy to imagine a series of smaller paths, more or less at right angles to the main path, opening off it.

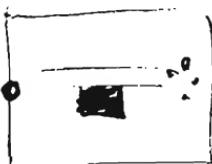
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Within the circulation realms we placed the MAIN BUILDING.

This pattern calls for a main building, in any group of buildings, to act as a heart and focus: and requires that this building have paths, tangent to it, with views into the inside, so that everyone who moves about the building complex is connected to it all the time.

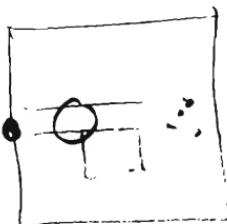
We spent some time discussing what part of the clinic might most naturally function as a main building. Finally, we agreed that the so-called occupational therapy building —where patients do various kinds of creative work— would make the best “heart,” and decided to make a large building, with a specially high roof, right in the middle, for this reason.



Then, outside the main building, an ACTIVITY NODE.

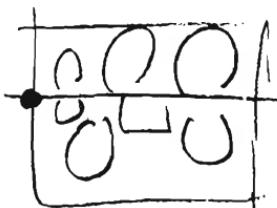
SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

If there was to be a node of activity, inside the building complex, it seemed natural to place it just at one of the places where the main "street" is crossed by two of the wide "streets"—and where several important buildings meet around it. We decide to open this crossing, to have a fountain there, and to make doors from the main building, from the administration building, and from the child care, with children playing, all open into this node.



Around the activity node at the key points in the circulation realms, we placed RECEPTION, ADMINISTRATION, OUTPATIENT, ADULT DAY CARE, ADOLESCENT DAY CARE, CHILD DAY CARE.

Now we placed the various different buildings on the site. Dr. Ryan had rather clear ideas already, about the positions of these buildings. He showed us where he felt they



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ought to go, and we discussed it, walking about the site.

One question came up. There were going to be two outpatient teams—Dr. Ryan had placed them to the right, after, just after the entrance, since that seemed to him the most natural position for the buildings which would be used most.

Since there were to be two teams, each with its own identifiable place, we thought about the circulation realms. We all stood at the activity node and asked ourselves how they might be placed, so that they would be clearly different—so that a patient would know which one was “his.”

Several of the staff stood, with their eyes closed, and suggested that if there were a courtyard, and the two teams opened off this courtyard to the left and right respectively, it would be clear and simple.

Then, in a special place, near the main entrance, COMMUNAL EATING.

Dr. Ryan agreed that the process of sharing food is one of the most fundamental in any human group. We discussed the various ways this might happen, and might help patients to become more emotionally stable.

He and the chief administrator for the clinic decided finally that it would make most sense to place a kind of café, in the first garden on the left, attached to the library and administrative services, visible from the activity node and fountain at the main cross roads within the project.

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

Now, within the individual building areas, we made SOUTH FACING OUTDOORS, WINGS OF LIGHT, POSITIVE OUTDOOR SPACE.

Now came the most difficult part of the process. At this stage, we had some rough idea of where the various buildings were; and some rough idea of the main paths and movement between buildings. Now came the moment when the actual position of buildings, and the shape of the outdoors had to be fixed. This is always one of the most difficult moments in the layout of a large group of buildings. It is tense, and rather nerve-racking. Until this has been accomplished, there is a diagrammatic quality about the things which have been laid out: the people walking about ask themselves whether there is any actual, concrete way of laying out the buildings which gives them sensible shapes, and which gives sensible shapes to the outdoor spaces too.

As always, everyone became rather nervous. Indeed, in this particular case it was especially difficult. We spent an afternoon, not knowing exactly how to arrange the buildings, went home and slept on it; and the next morning, finally found a way of doing it which made it seem simple and workable.

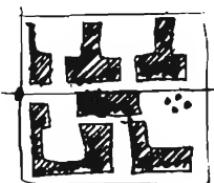
I thought, first, that every garden, in between the buildings, needed to be cupped towards the south. This made the left-hand side and the right-hand side, which so far had seemed symmetrical, become asymmetrical.

It was complicated by the fact that all these gardens, or courtyards, needed to be connected to the main pedestrian

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path—so there would be views of flowers, and trellises, glimpsed from the path, inviting people into the back spaces.

We realized, finally, that the double effect of the connection to the main path, and the facing south, coupled with the idea of buildings which were not too wide at any point, so that they would give natural daylight in all rooms, led us to a series of rough T-shaped buildings placed to the north of south-facing courtyards. At this moment, when, for the first time, we had a layout of the building space and open space, we finally knew we had a group of buildings that could be built.



There was no doubt, at any stage, that these patterns would make something buildable. But it is worth recording the fact that to those people who had not seen the process in action, it was very remarkable that the issue would resolve itself within the loose and slightly irregular array of buildings which had been formed so far.

This is an extreme example of the fear, the fear of plunging in, which people must live with, when they are letting their language generate a building for them. It was only because of the confidence that it would work, that everyone allowed the thing to remain fluid for so long.

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

Of course, it would have been possible to make some formal arrangement of buildings and open space—some formal geometrical arrangement, very much earlier. A formal arrangement would have guaranteed that there would be some feasible way of placing the buildings.

But it would have killed the spirit of the buildings.

It would have killed that subtle, rambling balance of coherence, and incoherence, which comes from the fact that every building is unique, according to its position in the whole.

Within the individual buildings, and in the proper places in the circulation realms, we placed a FAMILY OF ENTRANCES.

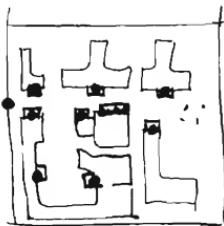
Finally, to make these buildings coherent, not only with respect to space and volume, but also for the person coming in, we dealt with the family of entrances: the patterns which require that, in some fashion, all the different buildings have similar entrances, which are clearly visible, as a group, from the main pedestrian paths, and which are also members of a family, so that one sees “at a glance” the way they span the full range of possible entrances.

We walked about the site, which was by now laid out in some detail, with chalk marks and stones, and asked ourselves what we would like to see from various points, what we would like to see of entrances. I talked about the FAMILY OF ENTRANCES pattern: then asked everyone to stand in different places in the site, with their eyes closed. Imagine, now, that the FAMILY OF ENTRANCES pattern is solved as perfectly as you can imagine—it is ideal; it is

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what you dream about when you think this pattern is there, in the most beautiful form it can be.

One person suggested “a whole lot of porches”; each one with its seats, so people can wait, outdoors, for appointments, a couple of steps up. Nice wood columns—each one sticking forward from its respective building.



At this stage, the basic layout of the building complex, as a complex, was complete.

The decisions which had been made on behalf of the clinic “as a whole” were finished. Now it was time to go down into the details of the individual buildings, and the individual gardens.

For this, we asked the doctors and the staff to rearrange themselves, in small groups, each one responsible for one of these buildings—so that the individual buildings could be designed by the people who knew most about them, most about what was going to happen there.

Now different specialists on the clinic staff worked out the details of each different building.

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

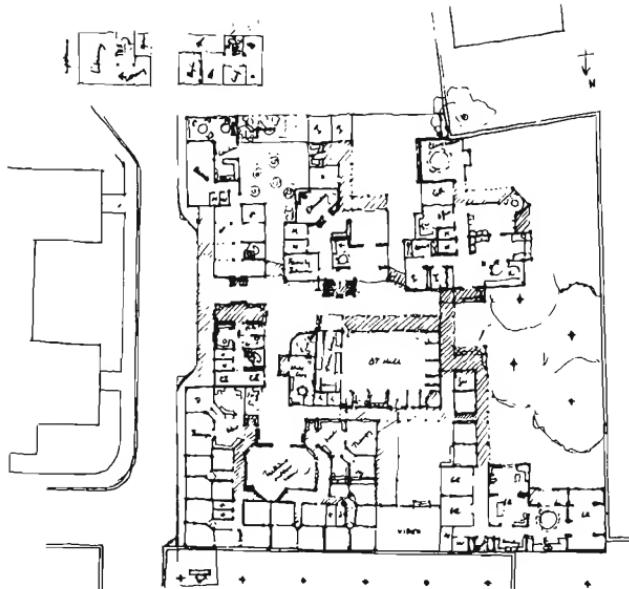
The doctors concerned most with children designed the building for child treatment and for adolescent treatment; the social workers most concerned with outpatients designed the outpatient areas; the administrative officer of the clinic designed the administrative building.

The director of the clinic himself designed the details of the large central building.

He put child care at one end, just inside the entrance, so that playing children would be visible, and children coming to it would feel comfortable and unafraid (as specified by **VISIBLE CHILD CARE**). He placed a large greenhouse at one end of the main social hall, with the idea that patients could learn to take care of plants, and might, in the end, take care of all the plants in the clinic's gardens (**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**). He made alcoves inside the main social hall where small groups can gather to talk (**FAMILY ROOM ALCOVES** again); and an arcade outside, along the main street, to create a zone of social space neither entirely private nor entirely public (as directed by **ARCADE**).

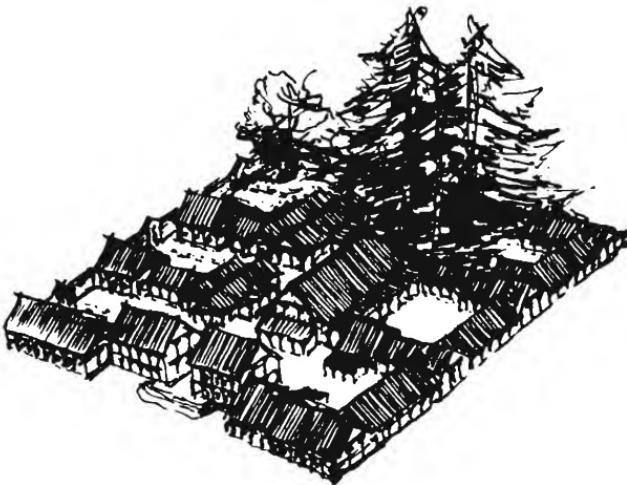
Each part of the building was designed, in detail, by a process like the process described in chapter 21.

The patterns which affected the design included, for example, **SHORT CORRIDORS**, which explains how long corridors in buildings make people feel inhuman; **RECEPTION WELCOMES YOU**, which says that a building for patients should not have a formal reception counter, but instead a more informal arrangement with comfortable chairs, a



fireplace, and coffee where people can be made to feel at home; **FARMHOUSE KITCHEN**, a pattern most relevant to houses, which shows how a kitchen with a big table is one of the most comfortable places for communal discussion—this pattern was used in three of the day treatment programs; **FLEXIBLE OFFICE SPACE**, which requires a large number of small workrooms and alcoves, instead of the continuous open workspaces typical of modern office buildings. **FAMILY ROOM ALCOVES**, also most often used in houses, shows how small, low-ceilinged alcoves off the edge of larger rooms give people a chance to sit alone, or in twos, and be quiet, without leaving the larger group altogether.

And we see then how a group of people can design a complex building.



Once they agree about the language, the actual emergence of the form is simple and fluid. When a group of people try to do something together, they usually fail, because their assumptions are different at every stage. But with a language, the assumptions are almost completely explicit from the start.

Of course they no longer have the medium of a single mind, as an individual person does. But instead, the group uses the site "out there in front of them," as the medium in which the design takes its shape. People walk around, wave their arms, gradually build up a common picture of the building as it takes its shape—and all, still, without making a drawing.

And, it is for this reason, that the site becomes so much more important for a group.

The site speaks to the people—the building forms itself—and people experience it as something received, not created.



SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

And they are able to visualize the building, right before their eyes, as if it were already there.

The idea that "ordinary" people cannot visualize a building is completely false.

The building grows, and comes alive, before their very eyes.

A few sticks in the ground, or stones, or chalk marks, are enough to bring the image to mind.

And then the building can be built directly from these marks.

Of course, this building, like the experimental building in chapter 21, is still immensely shallower than the buildings in the photographs which start this chapter.

It has great beauty of layout. But in its details of construction it still falls far behind. Indeed, in its construction it is completely spoiled.

For reasons outside our control, it was necessary that this particular building, once laid out, was then "detailed" by ordinary processes. It was taken to the drawing board, by people who had not laid it out, far from the site, and given mechanical "drawn" details, quite inappropriate to its design . . . until it became, in the end, no different from a thousand ordinary buildings of our time.

In short, it was almost destroyed, because it was not built in the right way. At first I hesitated, I was not sure whether to write this, or whether to include the picture, because it is so sad and so depressing. But then I realized how essential it is to include it: because many people may

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be willing to lay out a building in the way I have described, and will then try to get it built from drawings.

The life, pulse, substance, subtlety of the building can only be retained, if it is built, in the same way that it has been designed—by a sequential and linguistic process, which gives birth to the building slowly, in which the building gets its final form during the actual process of construction: where the details, known in advance as patterns, get their substance from the process of creating them, right there, exactly where the building stands.

In short, a building laid out by a pattern language process, and which comes to life because of it, will die again, quite certainly, when it is built, unless the process of construction is the same—unless, that is, the same spirit which generated rooms that are just right, entrances where they should be, light coming from the right directions . . . is carried on into the details, and also shapes the columns, and the beams, the window frames, the doors, the vaults, the colors and the ornament as well.

In the next chapter we shall see how such a construction process works.

Yet even this clinic, crude as it is in its construction, already touched the hearts of the people who laid it out.

SHAPING A GROUP OF BUILDINGS

In earlier chapters I have described, in theory, why the active use of a language is so important to a person. It is because it is the only process in which he is able to make his picture of the world solid and actual—his feelings are embodied in the active concrete manifestation of his language: he feels his world as whole; it comes from within him, and is then around him, physically.

In the case of this clinic, we observed this process in fact.

Dr. Ryan told us, after his clinic was built, that this one week he spent with us, shaping the building, was the most important week he had spent in five years—the week in which he had felt most alive.

Now, years later, seeing the building made real—even though he has since moved—he remembers that week, standing in the fog, making chalk marks on the ground as we laid the building out, talking about the place for the entrance, the place for the greenhouse, the places where people could sit, the fountain, the small gardens, the rooms, the arcades—he remembers this week as the best week in five years of his working life.

The simple process by which people generate a living building, simply by walking it out, waving their arms, thinking together, placing stakes in the ground, will always touch them deeply.

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It is a moment when, within the medium of a shared language, they create a common image of their lives together, and experience the union which this common process of creation generates in them.