

In each of the examples, the “design” is less important than the *choice* of just *this* center. That is what governs the life and atmosphere of that place. If we look at the comparable details from a contemporary Californian suburb shown on the left of each pair, we may be astonished because in the Californian case the accent is so often on the non-essential image, not on the essential centers. On the left of each pair, one sees examples of developer architecture and post-modern “image” architecture, which put the accent on image, not on the essentials.

In the redwood planter box, the accent is on the box, not on the flowers. The box is supposed to create an impression of concern for plants. In the Italian case, the rough plastered trough for flowers is unobtrusive, what matters is the flowers. The flowers are intense, they are at just the right height to see them, smell them, experience them. The place stays in your memory.

In the fancy staircase balustrade, all the emphasis is on the *impression* which the balustrade will make — not on the problem of holding on. In the economical iron railing, which comes from an 11th-century palace, the essential thing is the beauty of the steps, and getting upstairs to the door.

In each pair of examples, the left hand one is image-conscious, and sterile; the right hand one is simple, often cheap, and goes to the guts of the situation in a way that matters, and in a way that has the capacity to enhance life. The right hand ones are real; the left hand ones are phony.

In addition, the Ravello centers illustrated on the right of each pair, are the ones whose presence is already latent in the culture. They go to the heart of the structure that is already there, they summarize and encapsulate the essence of the real life that is going on in people’s hearts.



11 / THE SYSTEM OF PATTERNS EMANATES AS A WHOLE

For a building project, it is not enough that individual patterns or generic centers solve essential problems and work well. In order for a system of patterns to provide the basis for a true unfolding from an existing situation, it is necessary that the system of centers works *as a whole*, emanates *as a whole* from the situation, and has the capacity to create a holistic and ordered system which is *coherent and complete*.

Whenever we define one center, it is always defined by other centers: a larger wholeness in which it is embedded, some centers which are parallel to it in scale, and some smaller centers that cooperate to bring it to life. Defining one center actually means seeing, at least in rough outline, all these relationships together, and sensing the way that they cooperate to create the whole. In some instances, we might not yet know what subsidiary centers are needed to make the center in question come to life, but we do know that something needs to be there. We

may pose it as a question for further investigation. Therefore, even when making the first attempt at defining a list of centers we need to see the system as a whole. When it is written in such a form we can test it. Does it form a coherent whole in our mind? Can we envisage it? Does it seem to answer the needs and latent centers as we understand them from the project’s requirements? Does the system as a whole create a life-filled entity which will make the purpose of the project meaningful? Finally when reading the list of centers, does it shed some light on the project itself? Do we understand better what are the problems felt by the people who initiated the project, the deep reasons for its existence? If those questions are answered in the affirmative, than we have a good beginning.

The following example, a project for the cultural center of the city of Samarkand, shows what it means to focus on this larger wholeness.

The project, sponsored by a competition for

Samarkand held by the Aga Khan foundation in 1991, called for the reconstruction of a central city area about 1000 meters by 500 meters, and which was to contain a great variety of activities that would form a new city core.

I wrote the following “poem” — a list of partially formed centers — at the very beginning of our work on the Samarkand project, almost the day we began, long before we had worked it through.

1. *It is a sequence of public squares, gardens, and buildings, which will form the new center of the city of Samarkand, uniting historic and traditional buildings and quarters.*
2. *There is a new dimension here, a center of spiritual life. It is not a commercial center, not a cultural center, not a religious center in the old idea. It is not a convention center. Somehow, this new center of the city of Samarkand, unites old and new, weaves together the thread of the silk road, the tomb of Timur the Great, with the modern world, and a vision of the world in which comfortable human concern, and a spiritual awareness of the importance of life, is visible, felt, and active.*
3. *It is an inspiring place to go. A place of pilgrimage, which will receive visitors from the five continents, in increasing thousands.*
4. *A network of beautiful paths, formed by columns, colonnades, brick walls, buildings, gardens. This network of paths, which passes across the whole area, is formed by the building masses which arise out of it, and by formal gardens.*
5. *Do the paths open into courtyards, ponds, gardens, hidden places? Are they formed only by mysterious buildings, rising in color, tile, and marble? Are there figures, statues, animals, Gods, people, statues standing at the places where the paths cross?*
6. *Are the animals themselves covered with mysterious animals?*
7. *Is there any reference to voyages?*
8. *The main thing one is aware of is a network of green and beautiful jewel-like streets. Each has lush trees, seats, platforms, streams.*
9. *These green streets, made by their trees, benches, sitting platforms, and edges, form a lacework of*

places to walk. They are like parks, long and narrow, you can explore for many hours, walking around these streets.

10. *Each one of the streets arrives on some new treasure. Each building is like a treasure, arrived at by the green streets.*

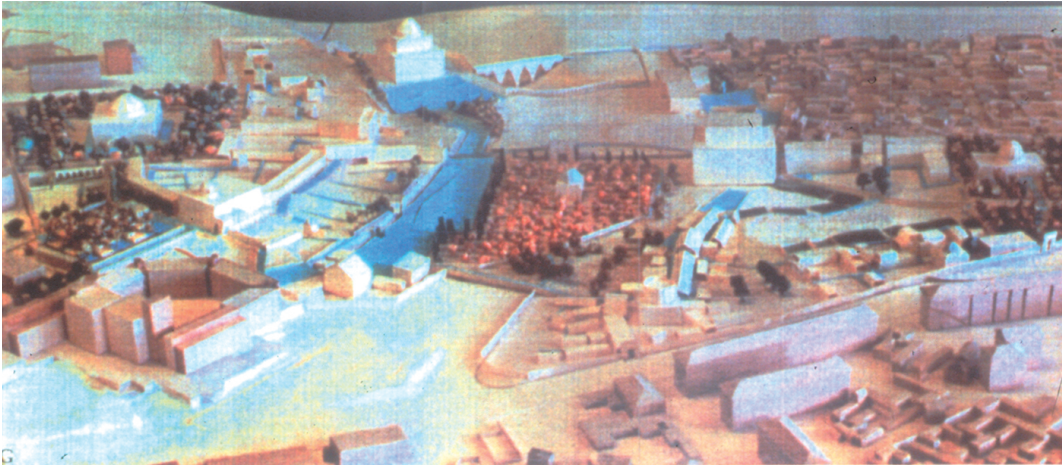
11. *Samarkand, historically, and in the time of Ulugh Beg, was a crossroads of the world. In the Tang dynasty period, every conceivable exotic substance, or idea, or artifact, or art on earth, came through Samarkand. No matter where it went, or where it came from, it went through Samarkand.*

12. *Somehow, then, one may imagine these green heavenly paths, as a network — almost a mythical bazaar in which reference to these many exotic substances exists.*

13. *The blue tilework of the Timurids, the hand-painted blue tiles, with small black, yellow, and white detail, on mud brick — these tiles, and the yellow bricks are in evidence on walls, domes, courtyards throughout the center. It is a thread which connects.*

14. *The whole network of paths is almost like a forbidden city. A place which is walled, punctured at very occasional places which allow one to enter, a special area that contains its own magic.*

This was the very first list I wrote for the project. After trying to understand the system of patterns as a whole, and as we worked on it, the list was then transformed as a whole to modify the global feeling and content of what this place was going to be — as it matured in our understanding. We kept on thinking of the *whole* way of life which would be created by these patterns, and then changed the patterns, intensified them, improved them, made the centers more explicit, as our understanding of this whole increased. We kept on working at it until the living whole revealed itself, as fully as we could manage, in the list of centers. After much more work, the list — or pattern language — for the project ended up with the following centers: Note, the earlier statements are written in the active form, in italics, which sketches the content of each possible center. The second, longer list which



A model of the new city center for Samarkand built for the Aga Khan competition. This model embodied, in diagrammatic form, the geometric meaning of the pattern language we wrote for Samarkand, 1983.

follows is given in small capital letters, to indicate that by this stage the ideas had materialized and solidified as *centers*— as potentially solid objects which were reliable and recognizable as entities.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY
 MASSIVE SURROUNDING WALL
 THE FESTIVAL PROMENADE
 VIEW TO REGISTAN
 THE OBSERVATORY
 THE ORCHARD OF PEACH TREES
 MAIN TERRACE
 OUTDOOR THEATER
 CRAFT SCHOOL AND BAZAAR
 THE INNER CITY
 SMALL HOTELS
 WALLED PATH
 MUSIC SCHOOL
 INNER CITY GATE
 FIVE SMALL WALLED GARDENS
 CHAIKHANAS
 MAIN STREET FROM THE REGISTAN
 FOUNTAINS AND STREAMS
 EXHIBITION HALL
 COVERED BAZAAR
 THE LIBRARY
 THE MANUSCRIPT MUSEUM
 ARCHED BRIDGE

THE MAIN BRIDGE
 SOCCER AND GAMES
 WALL OF ARCHES
 GATES IN THE OUTER WALL
 THE HOSPICE OR KULLIYE
 INNER PART OF THE FORBIDDEN CITY
 BLUE-TILED WALKS
 THE MOSQUE

The photograph above shows the model we made for the project, on the basis of this pattern language.

This example gives an idea of the vital role which generic centers can play in creating a whole. In this example these centers, *the list alone*, creates an almost magical atmosphere. As soon as we name them, *just from naming them*, we begin to feel the aura of the place. The patterns are evocative. It doesn't even matter in what order we take the centers. The mere list, itself, already conveys a profound atmosphere, and defines, in great degree the atmosphere of the place which will be made up of these centers. It creates the atmosphere right away. It is these centers which play the defining role. In Book 3, chapter 4, I show a drawing I made with my apprentices to show the physical character of this system of centers when they are realized.

Our entire approach during the pattern language stage of work on a living process, is to get a glimpse of the centers that will make the building which is to be designed, come to life *as a whole*. We keep on making lists, doing experiments, trying to find out what the list will generate, trying to find out the key centers, until we have a system of centers in mind, which, when it is let loose in a real situation, will make something that comes to life.

The essence of the point, is to find — or create — a set of centers which, together, will generate a complete and coherent object of the type we are looking for. We keep trying out our rudimentary list to see what sort of whole this list of centers will generate. We then use intuition and feeling to judge the deficiencies in the whole which is created, to make us aware of *more* centers that still need to be created.



12 / THE EISHIN SCHOOL PATTERN LANGUAGE

In the next (and last) example, I give excerpts from a much longer language, the list of centers for the Eishin school in Japan, constructed between 1983 and 1985. The full list contained about 200 patterns, and defines a way of life for a high school and university.¹⁴ At our client's request it was different from any existing school in Japan at that time (1981). We can see and feel, merely by reading the names of the centers and their rough description, that what was going to happen in this new school would be very different from what we are familiar with.

Above all we can see this new way of life as a *complete* whole. The way it works is completely defined by the list of centers. Thus in all important aspects the *life* of the new school is *contained* in these centers, and the list of centers defines this way of life in its entirety. This gives us tremendous insight into the vast extent to which the life of any given building or building complex, is defined by the list of centers which it will contain.

I. GLOBAL CHARACTER

- *There is an outer boundary which surrounds the site.*
- *Inside the outer boundary, there is an inner boundary which surrounds a smaller area; about one-fifth of the whole site.*

- *The area inside the inner boundary is called the inner precinct. It is a dense area where the school and college have their major buildings.*
- *Between the inner and outer boundary is the outer precinct: an area filled with gardens, sports fields, and various freestanding outer buildings.*
- *The buildings and the site are given their character by stone foundation walls, wood columns, white walls, a few special places with red lacquered wood, wide overhanging roofs, dark roof surfaces, stones and grass on the ground.*

2. THE INNER PRECINCT

- *The entrance to the inner precinct begins at the outer boundary. At a key point in the outer boundary, there is a gate.*
- *This main gate is a building.*
- *From the main gate to the inner boundary, there is an entrance street. The entrance street is flanked with walls or trees, and is extremely quiet.*
- *Where the entrance street meets the inner boundary there is a second gate.*
- *Inside the second gate, there is a public yard. This public yard is formed by a great hall, which forms the main side of the yard.*
- *Beyond the public yard and through a third gate is the essential center of the school and uni-*