

A
PATTERN
LANGUAGE

TOWNS • BUILDINGS • CONSTRUCTION

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A Pattern Language is the second in a series of books which describe an entirely new attitude to architecture and planning. The books are intended to provide a complete working alternative to our present ideas about architecture, building, and planning—an alternative which will, we hope, gradually replace current ideas and practices.

volume 1 THE TIMELESS WAY OF BUILDING

volume 2 A PATTERN LANGUAGE

volume 3 THE OREGON EXPERIMENT

Center for Environmental Structure

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

91 TRAVELER'S INN*



. . . any town or city has visitors and travelers passing through, and these visitors will naturally tend to congregate around the centers of activity—MAGIC OF THE CITY (10), ACTIVITY NODES (30), PROMENADE (31), NIGHT LIFE (33), WORK COMMUNITY (41). This pattern shows how the hotels which cater to these visitors can most effectively help to sustain the life of these centers.



A man who stays the night in a strange place is still a member of the human community, and still needs company. There is no reason why he should creep into a hole, and watch TV alone, the way he does in a roadside motel.

At all times, except our own, the inn was a wonderful place, where strangers met for a night, to eat, and drink, play cards, tell stories, and experience extraordinary adventures. But in a modern motel every ounce of this adventure has been lost. The motel owner assumes that strangers are afraid of one another, so he caters to their fear by making each room utterly self-contained and self-sufficient.

But behind the fear, there is a deep need: the need for company—for stories, and adventures, and encounters. It is the business of an inn to create an atmosphere where people can experience and satisfy this need. The most extreme version is the Indian pilgrim's inn, or the Persian caravanserai. There people eat, and meet, and sleep, and talk, and smoke, and drink in one great space, protected from danger by their mutual company, and given entertainment by one another's escapades and stories.

The inspiration for this pattern came from Gita Shah's description of the Indian pilgrim's inn, in *The Timeless Way of Building*:

In India, there are many of these inns. There is a courtyard where the people meet, and a place to one side of the courtyard where they eat, and also on this side there is the person who looks after the Inn, and on the other three sides of the courtyard there are the rooms—in front of the rooms is an arcade, maybe one step up from

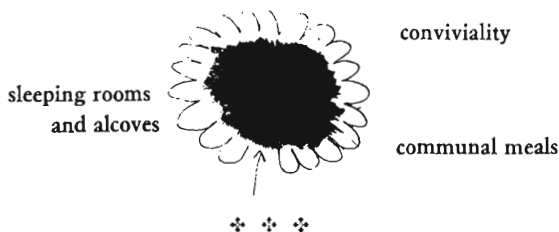
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the courtyard, and about ten feet deep, with another step leading into the rooms. During the evening everyone meets in the courtyard, and they talk and eat together—it is very special—and then at night they all sleep in the arcade, so they are all sleeping together, round the courtyard.

And of course, the size is crucial. The atmosphere comes mainly from the fact that the people who run the place themselves live there and treat the entire inn as their household. A family can't handle more than 30 rooms.

Therefore:

Make the traveler's inn a place where travelers can take rooms for the night, but where—unlike most hotels and motels—the inn draws all its energy from the community of travelers that are there any given evening. The scale is small—30 or 40 guests to an inn; meals are offered communally; there is even a large space ringed round with beds in alcoves.



The heart of the conviviality is the central area, where everyone can meet and talk and dance and drink—COMMON AREAS AT THE HEART (129), DANCING IN THE STREET (65), and BEER HALL (90). Provide the opportunity for communal eating, not a restaurant, but common food around a common table—COMMUNAL EATING (147); and, over and above the individual rooms there are at least some areas where people can lie down and sleep in public unafraid—SLEEPING IN PUBLIC (94), COMMUNAL SLEEPING (186). For the overall shape of the inn, its gardens, parking, and surroundings, begin with BUILDING COMPLEX (95). . . .

94 SLEEPING IN PUBLIC



. . . this pattern helps to make places like the INTERCHANGE (34), SMALL PUBLIC SQUARES (61), PUBLIC OUTDOOR ROOMS (69), STREET CAFE (88), PEDESTRIAN STREET (100), BUILDING THOROUGHFARE (101), A PLACE TO WAIT (150) completely public.



It is a mark of success in a park, public lobby or a porch, when people can come there and fall asleep.

In a society which nurtures people and fosters trust, the fact that people sometimes want to sleep in public is the most natural thing in the world. If someone lies down on a pavement or a bench and falls asleep, it is possible to treat it seriously as a need. If he has no place to go—then, we, the people of the town, can be happy that he can at least sleep on the public paths and benches; and, of course, it may also be someone who does have a place to go, but happens to like napping in the street.

But our society does not invite this kind of behavior. In our society, sleeping in public, like loitering, is thought of as an act for criminals and destitutes. In our world, when homeless people start sleeping on public benches or in public buildings, upright citizens get nervous, and the police soon restore “public order.”

Thus we cleared these difficult straits, my bicycle and I, together. But a little further on I heard myself hailed. I raised my head and saw a policeman. Elliptically speaking, for it was only later, by way of induction, or deduction, I forget which, that I knew what it was. What are you doing there? he said. I'm used to that question, I understood it immediately. Resting, I said. Resting, he said. Resting, I said. Will you answer my question? he cried. So it always is when I'm reduced to confabulation. I honestly believe I have answered the question I am asked and in reality I do nothing of the kind. I won't reconstruct the conversation in all its meanderings. It ended in my understanding that my way of resting, my attitude when at rest, astride my bicycle, my arms on the handlebars, my head on my arms, was a violation of I don't know what, public order, public decency. . . .

What is certain is this, that I never rested in that way again, my

feet obscenely resting on the earth, my arms on the handlebars and on my arms my head, rocking and abandoned. It is indeed a deplorable sight, a deplorable example, for the people, who so need to be encouraged, in their bitter toil, and to have before their eyes manifestations of strength only, of courage and joy, without which they might collapse, at the end of the day, and roll on the ground. (Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*.)

It seems, at first, as though this is purely a social problem and that it can only be changed by changing people's attitudes. But the fact is, that these attitudes are largely shaped by the environment itself. In an environment where there are very few places to lie down and sleep people who sleep in public seem unnatural, because it is so rare.

Therefore:

Keep the environment filled with ample benches, comfortable places, corners to sit on the ground, or lie in comfort in the sand. Make these places relatively sheltered, protected from circulation, perhaps up a step, with seats and grass to slump down upon, read the paper and doze off.



Above all, put the places for sleeping along BUILDING EDGES (160); make seats there, and perhaps even a bed alcove or two in public might be a nice touch—BED ALCOVE (188), SEAT SPOTS (241); but above all, it will hinge on the attitudes which people have—do anything you can to create trust, so that people feel no fear in going to sleep in public and so that other people feel no fear of people sleeping in the street.