Jessie Henshaw March 16 at 12:13pm

Takashi, great connection! Don't we need to do some serious effort to revive what should be understood as "classical pattern language". That's the pattern writing method Alexander presented in The timeless way of building". Even Tim Berners-Lee now feels there were some deep oversights in how the formatting of the internet was first done.
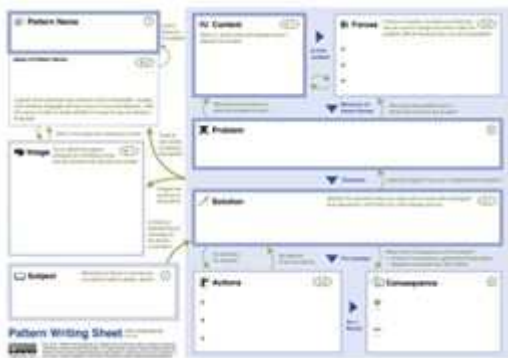
For PL I think it is very important to start a trend of connecting design patterns with the deep thinking the classical template calls for, to preserve the roots of PL and hold pattern language together. Not anchoring PL in the practice of explicitly described holistic designs seems to be letting the deep truths it would expose drift away.

General Pattern Language Design Pattern Template

Takashi Iba March 16 at 6:41pm

As a reference, I have been using this sheet for beginners to learn how to write a pattern of human actions, which shows a sequence of mining and writing patterns.
This sheet is presented in my paper: Takashi Iba, "A Journey on the Way to Pattern Writing: Designing the Pattern Writing Sheet," Conference on Pattern Languages of Programs, IL, USA, Sep., 2014

Jessie Henshaw March 16 at 8:55pm

Takashi, Yes that's the one I based my simple template on. The only real difference in mine is my adding a field for describing the "method of true observation used", given that all of Alexander's work and architecture in general is always predicated on true observation, though only rarely explicitly stated.

What I don't get the sense people are doing is going through these necessary steps, of deeply observing the context as an environment of natural forces as a first step, to then identify a set of its forces to devise a unifying response with emergent properties for. Douglas Schuler and I are talking about how to "repack/reconstruct" existing descriptive design patterns like his "Liberating Voices" pattern set, using this explicit design template format. Takashi, have you done any efforts like that??

Helmut Leitner March 17 at 9:27am

Jessie, I am curious: what do you mean by "true" in "method of true observation"? Is there an untrue observation?
A pattern is an abstract concept. As such, it can't be observed, except by the subject who holds it in her mind. A pattern instance (or pattern exemplar) can be observed. Rather, a part of a pattern, e. g. some sub-pattern or force (what I name a "pattern aspect"), may be observed.

But, if some "method of observation" can be said to exist, will it exist related to a pattern language context, a pattern language, a pattern, or a pattern aspect? Better, start by giving examples.

Jessie Henshaw March 17 at 10:46am

It's indeed very interesting that true observation is needed in every part of the design process, for recognizing and applying both simple and complex patterns of relationships and understanding how things can fit together in new ways, but there's almost no discussion of it. I added it to the template as a result of finding it in CA's definition of design patterns in the "Timeless Way of Building".

- Page 218 offers "In this sense, then, a pattern language which is deep is a collection of patterns which correspond to profound observations about what makes a building beautiful."
- Page 246-47, 254-57 -- CA's outlines for specifying patterns that Takashi and I base our template designs on
- Page 257 "The process of observation does not proceed in linear fashion from the problem to the solution, nor from the solution to the problem . . . it is a global process, in which, by any means We can, looking at the matter from all directions at once, we try to identify a solid and reliable invariant, which relates context, problem, and solution, in an unchanging way.

I was familiar with it already from how Lou Kahn referred to it as "reading book zero", a discipline of value free attention to the nature of place and form. Goethe's way of "generative observation" would be another example of the same thing, as would the way all artists learn to see what is before them as it is, apart from what they think. So the ability to do it varies, as a "gift" and "craft" and "method" for being devoted to one's subjects, also exemplified by how all the great architects and scientists throughout the ages were able to see what's possible in very new ways.

So... I should write an essay on why "true observation" is needed in the PL template... Does this begin to hint at what I'm after? I'm thinking of the template as the door to the deep thinking of CA's approach to design, how to explicitly describe holistic design, that can be part of every pattern.

Jessie Henshaw March 17 at 6:50pm ·

Helmut, I guess the above doesn't directly respond to your question. What I mean by "true observation" is observation that enables you to ask good questions and successfully work with the subjects observed, not misled by assumptions and wishful thinking, etc. For Alexander it also seems to be a matter of sensitivity and the ability to recognize and learn about the unfamiliar, to see without blinders.

Isn't that always one of the easiest places for misunderstanding of the forces in a context to slip in?

Jessie Henshaw March 18 at 2:56pm

Helmut, Perhaps I didn't clarify what kind design pattern is not a concept, but functioning in the context independent of the observer, as a design of nature.

For example I think we might say "The well-placed park bench gets more use whether anyone knows how it resolves the forces of its local context or not." Doesn't that make sense. I'm speaking of "design patterns" as present *either* in the the work of a designer or working relationships occurring naturally,... *as well as* in the concepts of a designer.

In architecture it's common to refer to designs as "healing into" their environments as the natural systems of the place either connect with or withdraw from the artificial intrusion. That recognizes that nature always have the last say in what patterns actually work and what do not.

Continued On Pattern Science Community