

a
PATTERN
LANGUAGE

Towns Buildings Construction

Christopher Alexander
Sara Ishikawa
Murray Silverstein
Max Jacobson
Ingrid Fiksdahl-King
Shlomo Angel



APPENDING THE PATTERN LANGUAGE

I formulated the conclusions of my work as a polemic with Christopher Alexander's 'A pattern language', understanding his work as a manual for architects, which encompasses a certain amount of knowledge that Alexander and his co-workers managed to accumulate and which is broadly known and applied by contemporary architects. This exercise has allowed me to situate the concepts, discoveries and tools which I have been using during this year in a context of current knowledge of architecture. It allowed me to find out what purposes can the gained knowledge serve. The below mentioned operating techniques can be applied both to buildings and outdoor spaces. I have tried to give my conclusions a structure similar to the structure of 'A pattern language'. As my findings are in a great deal of ways of thinking about architecture, I tried to answer three key questions, which a person, who has to tackle a problem and is trying to identify an appropriate way to

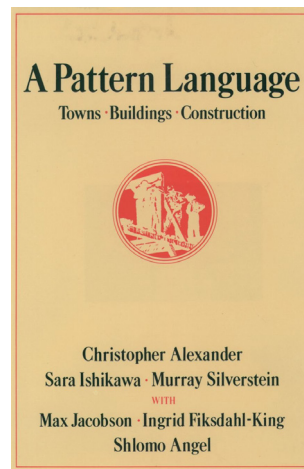
think about it, might ask.

IN WHAT SITUATION can I utilize this way of thinking about architecture? Where can I find precedents of this approach being used?

WHAT can this thinking method be useful **FOR?** What goals does it allow to achieve?

WHAT INSTRUMENTS, actions and instructions does this approach entail?

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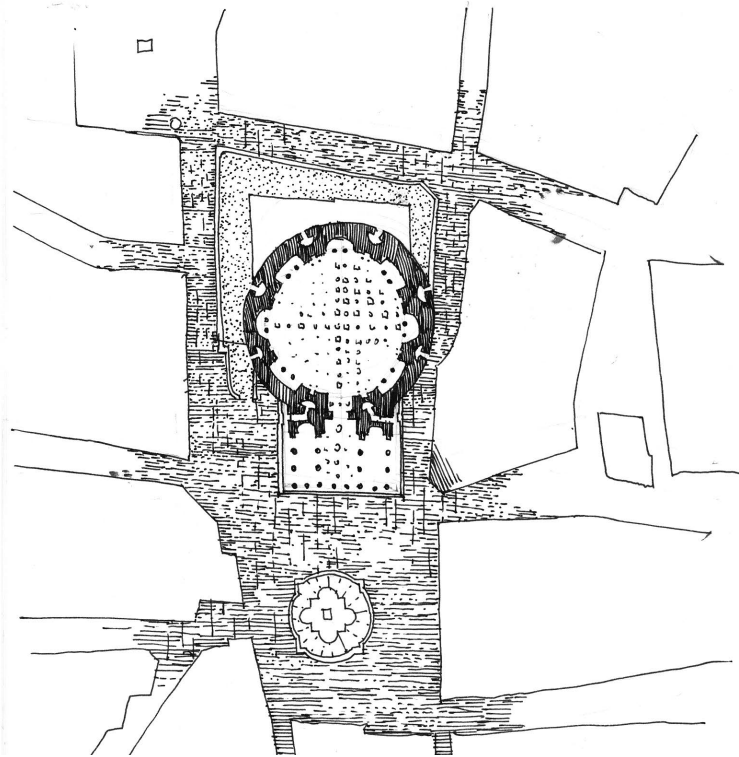


Cover of 'A pattern language'.

Source: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/79766.A_Pattern_Language (accessed: 24 June 2019).



126.1 SOMETHING IN-BETWEEN - THRESHOLD



Pantheon, Rome
Source: drawing by author.

Once you have designed any two neighbouring public spaces you might want to design the transition between them. This transition is broadly known as a threshold.

6 Threshold is a transition point between one realm and another. It is where the activity of transiting happens. Thresholds usually consist of three components. The two first components are obviously the two spaces which are neighbouring each other and between which a division was raised. The key quality of a threshold is the thickness of it, which is directly proportional to the size of the third component of the threshold. The third component is situated between the other two components and varies in size. It can have all characteristics of an autonomous space, however it can also be reduced to an extent, when it almost disappears. In its most reduced form the third component

of a threshold is articulated as merely a doorstep or a door.

It is generally difficult to determine the exact extents of a threshold. This difficulty is either caused by the modest size of the threshold or the ambiguous nature of the transition between the threshold and the spaces it borders.

In what situation

Thresholds are located inside buildings as transitions between inner spaces or entry spaces: foyers, hallways. Courtyards and cloisters can also be identified as thresholds.

Thresholds can also be distinguished where an indoor space encounters an outdoor space. Such thresholds include porticos, porches, terraces, verandas and various walkways.

Lastly thresholds can serve as transition zones between different areas in cities. These thresholds can be recognized in places where one urban space merges with another.

What for

Thresholds enable overcoming a boundary. Thresholds allow to moderate the experience of transiting. Thresholds can prepare the user for the space he is about to enter or present the user with a rapid change of environment. Thresholds can provide one with a feeling of privacy, safety. Thresholds can take part in maintaining a moderate indoor climate. Thresholds often manage to escape the rule of ownership as a result of which they are capable of being a common meeting ground.

With what instruments

Tools which allow to design a threshold move apart two spaces, they duplicate a space so that it can be read as an autonomous space or, as a part of the two it connects.

Some of the tools which allow to create a thick threshold are:

- > **255. blurring**
- > **254. off-centering**
- > **257. incorporation through variety**
- > **256. punctuating space**

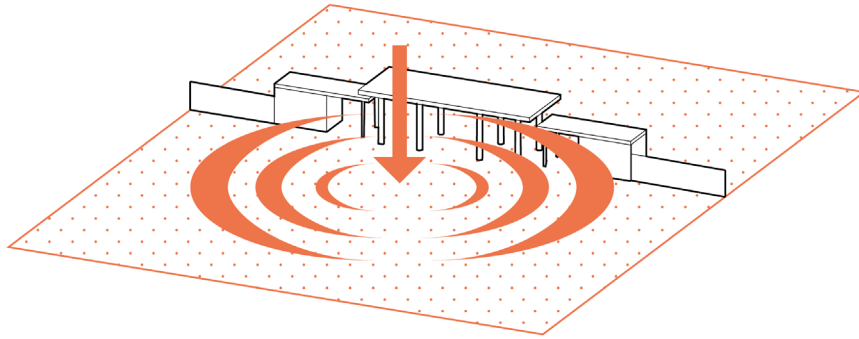
These tools entail formal, functional, compositional, material and structural operations.

For transitional spaces refer to:

- > **34. Interchange**
- > **98. Circulation realm**
- > **101. Building throughfare**
- > **112. Entrance transition**
- > **114. Hierarchy of open space**
- > **119. Arcades**
- > **120. Paths and goals**

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Threshold.
Source: drawing by author.

Thickening the threshold





98.1 LOITERING REALM / WALKING AIMLESSLY



Vida, Bogota, Boa Misura.

Source: <https://www.floorature.com/blog/boa-mistura-in-bogota-plaza-de-la-hoja-11041/> (accessed: 24 June 2019).

It is a mark of success of a public space such as a **small public square(61), pedestrian street(100), park, building thoroughfare(101), public outdoor room(69), building edge (160)** if people come there to do nothing else but to wonder around.

'Loitering is the act of remaining in a particular public place for a protracted time, without any apparent purpose.'¹ In many countries loitering is seen as an act which precedes a criminal offence and is thus prohibited. The regulations on loitering are enforced with the use of road signs, barricades, security cameras, fences, use of unpleasant surfaces which warm up in sun, homeless-hostile architecture elements or presence of police or security guards. In practice spaces, in which loitering is prohibited, try to disperse people. They only permit the stay of a narrow group of authorized

¹ (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loitering>)

individuals.

Loitering is remaining in a place for a long time, studying it, paying attention, getting inspired. Loitering is an aimless activity.

In what situation

Any public space.

What for

Increasing the feeling of safety, providing a common place of people to build relations in, avoiding dominance of one agent over a space, widening the accessible space in cities, broadening the freedom of participation in public life.

With what instruments

Loitering-friendly spaces invite everyone. If you wish to make the space which you are designing loitering-friendly, you should make sure that it permits multiple ways of moving through the space and multiple ways of staying in the space. The first aim can be best achieved if circulation is handled by the entire space or if the circulation routes are organized in a network in which as

many as possible nodes are connected to one another.

The second aim, providing multiple ways of using a space, can be achieved if forms used for the floor, walls and furniture do not belong to most common typologies which are immediately recognized by the user as serving a familiar purpose.

A loitering-friendly space has the capability to energize the body of the user. This influence of the loitering-friendly space is similar to the way in which a sport equipment expands the field of action of a sports person. It gives one the feeling of vitality, of being alive.

One way to energize the body of the of a person is to imbalance it. Body of the user can be imbalanced by dynamicaly altering the horizontal and vertical dimensions of space, complicating the route of a person passing through the space, tilting walls and floors from the vertical and horizontal planes, using bending, ductile material for the floor.

Loitering -friendly space often uses ma-

terials in individually designed patterns, murals, mosaiques.

Loitering-friendly spaces are embedded with shelter elements. Shelter elements invite activities akin to loitering such as resting, sleeping.

Loitering, being an aimless activity, is well accompanied by nuclei of intense activity such as dining, drinking, shopping.

For other improvised uses of public space refer to:

-> **63. dancing in the street,**

-> **58. carnival,**

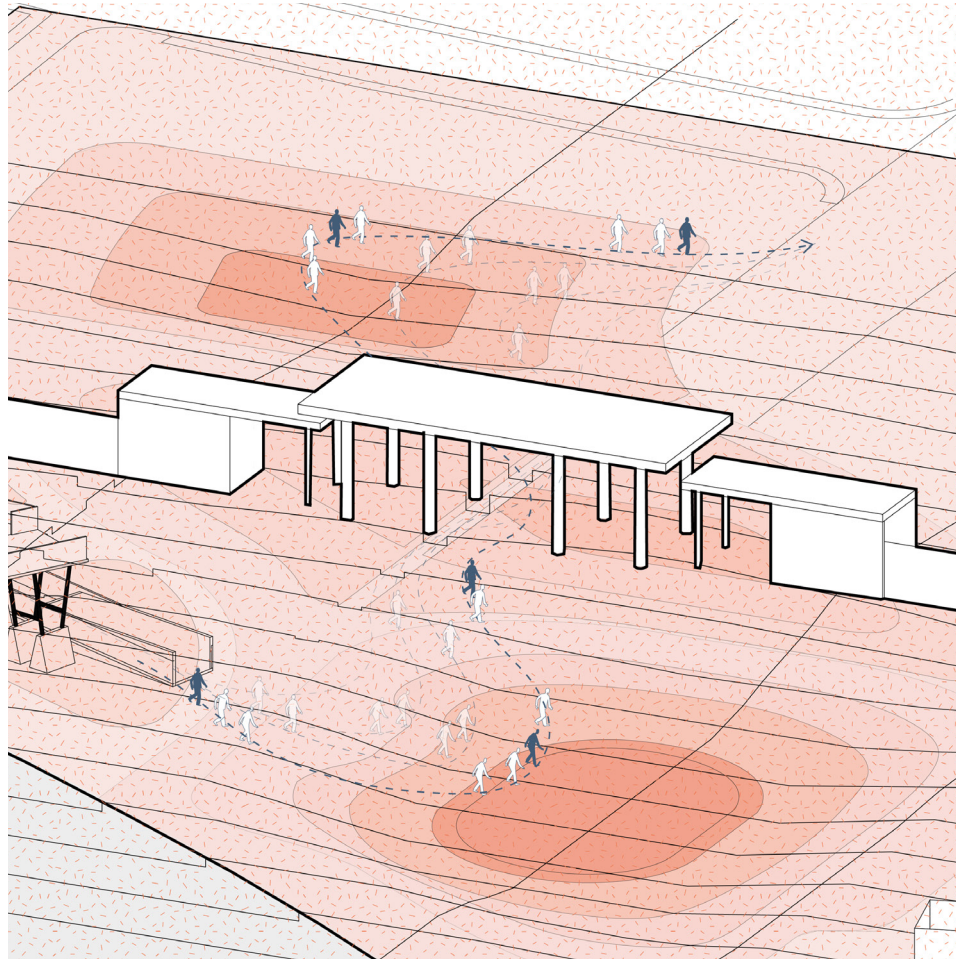
-> **94. sleeping in public.**

For goal oriented uses of public spaces read:

-> **124. activity pockets,**

-> **241. seat spots.**

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Loitering realm.

Source: drawing by author.

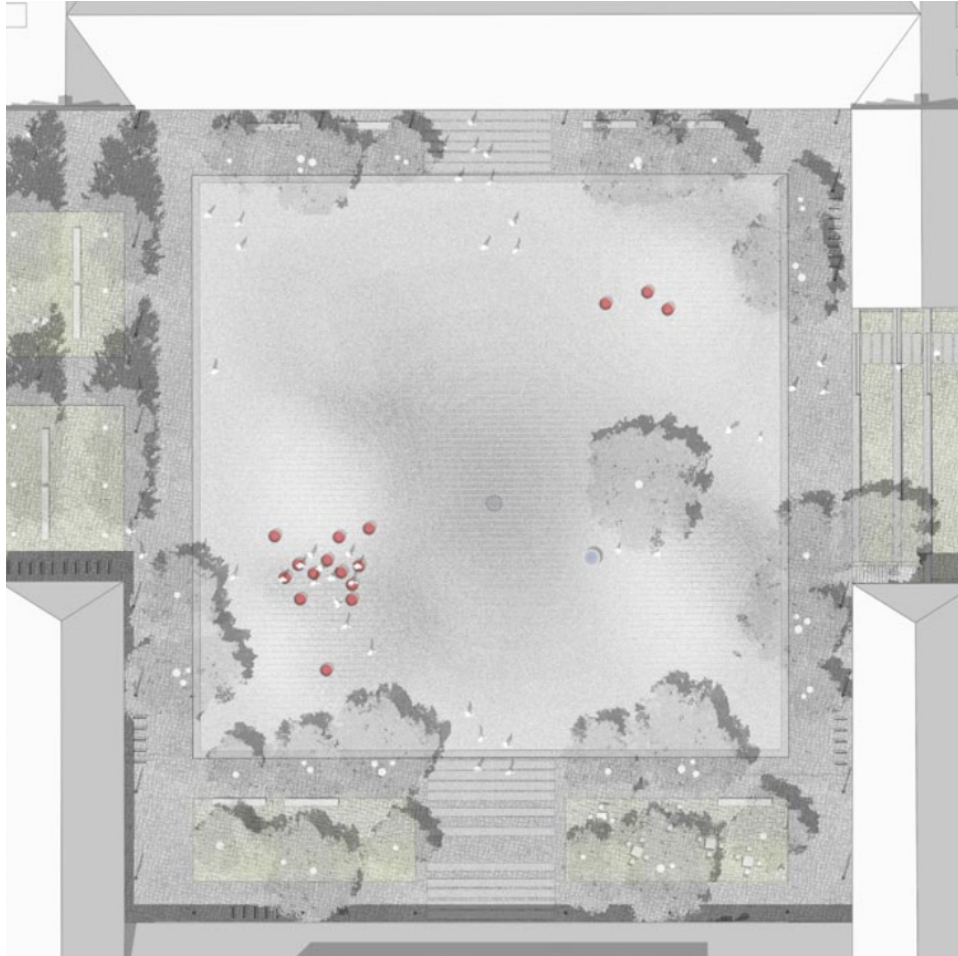
Thickening the threshold





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254. OFF-CENTRING



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Røde Plads, Herlufsholm, Bruun & Möllers.

Source: <https://www.bm-la.de/projekte/rode-plads-herlufsholm/> (accessed: 24 June 2019).

Thickening the threshold

In what situation

Off-centring is a strategy which can successfully alter instances where the centre of space is marked by an intersection of axes, a special element, gradation of size, height or rhythm to a certain point. It is questionable whether it can be successfully applied in situations where the centrality of space is achieved via the form given to it by the outer partitions marking the extents of it.

In central spaces the centre has a lot of importance and activity focuses around it. However the central organization of space may sometimes not stand in harmony with the function of the space which is when one may wish to off-centre it.

What for

Off-centring is a tool which allows to disrupt the centrality of a space. It can be useful not as much while designing buildings from scratch as while transforming existing buildings or outdoor spaces into non-hierarchical, non-symmetrical architectures.

Off-centring is a strategy useful in multipurpose spaces. Off-centring is one of the tools which lead to thickening a threshold by the means of which threshold space gains a chance to serve purposes other than transiting.

With what instruments

The essence of off-centring lies in affecting the perception of the user of the space. Off-centring puts his or her attention from the centre towards other elements.

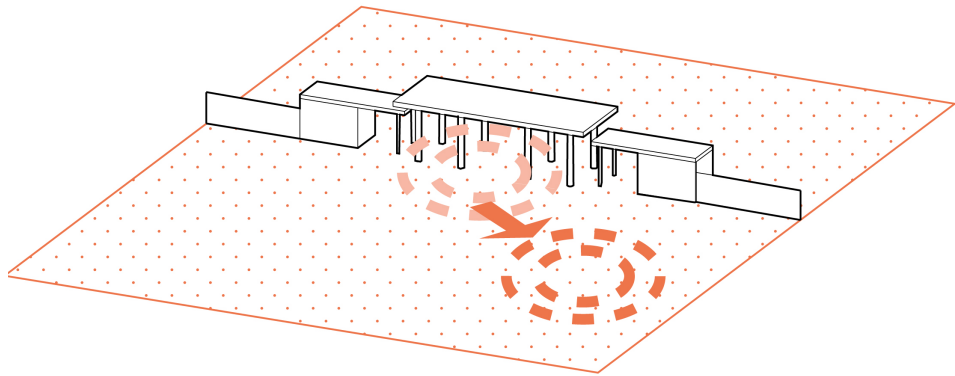
Generally off-centring happens via proliferation, competing with the centre by introducing new loci of centrality. Off-centring can be performed by recognizing the quality of space which contributes to its centrality and attempting to alter that quality. An exemplary activity could be introducing new directions which disperse the centre located at an intersection of axes. Introducing new elements which alter the gradation of elements can serve as another example. For means of creating a centralized space:

-> **190. Ceiling-height variety**

-> **129. Common areas at the heart**

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Off-centring.

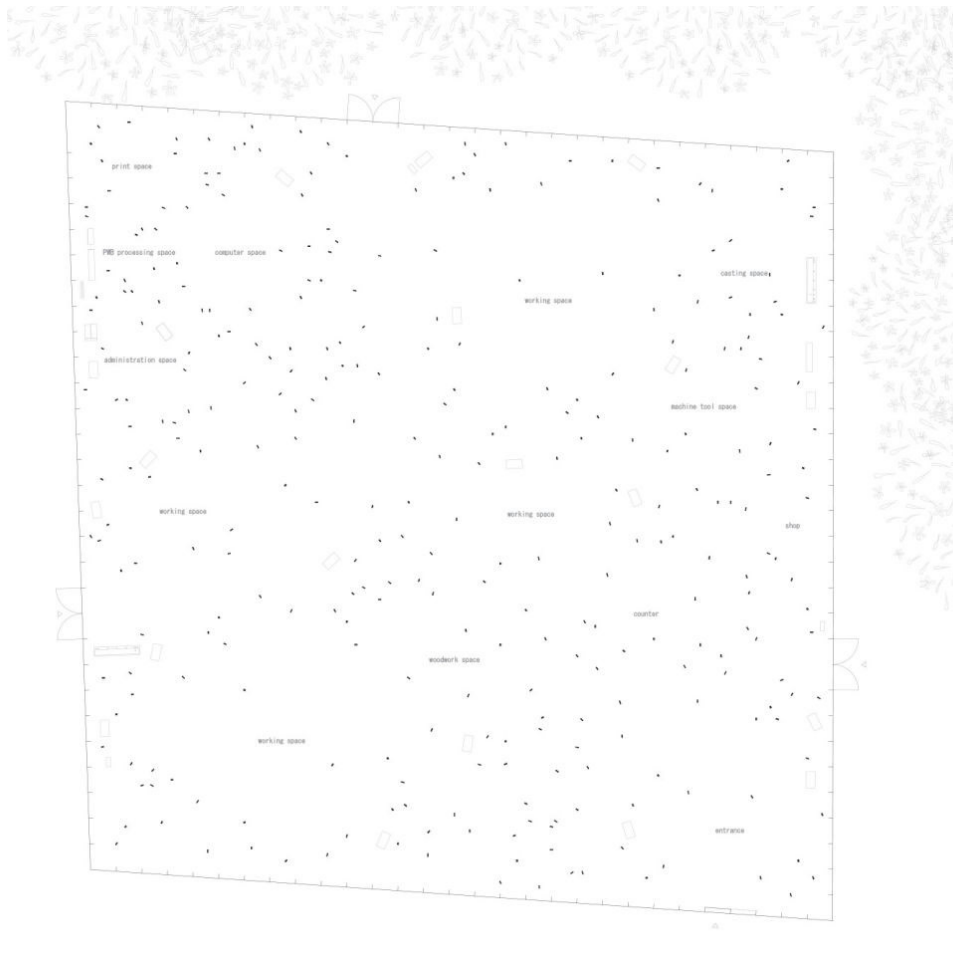
Source: drawing by author.

Thickening the threshold





255. BLURRING SPACE



Kanagawa Institute of Technology Workshop, Junya Ishigami

Source: <https://www.archdaily.com/66661/66661/kanagawa-institute-of-technology-8> (accessed: 24 June 2019).

'I don't know and I don't want to know, where functionality begins or ends. It seems to me, in any case, that in the ideal dividing-up of today's apartments functionality functions in accordance with a procedure that is unequivocal, sequential and nycthemeral. The activities of the day correspond to the slices of time and each slice of time there corresponds to one room of the apartment.'¹

'I have encountered many unusable spaces and many unused spaces. But I wanted neither the unusable nor the unused, but the useless. How to expel functions, rhythms, habits, how to expel necessity?''²

In what situation

Blurring spaces starts with a critical approach to an arbitrary division of

1 (Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, Georges Perec, pp 28)

2 (Species of Spaces and Other Pieces, Georges Perec, pp 34)

space. Questioning the physical division opens up a range of possibilities which emerge at the newly formed frontier of two spaces.

Spaces can be blurred in cases where not many specific furnishings are needed for enacting an activity. Spaces can also be blurred in situations in which users reconfigure the space according with their wishes, the particular situation or event.

What for

Blurring spaces hands over some of the freedom and control over a space to the users. Codes and regulations which restrict the modes of occupation are annulled along with the annulment of functional divisions.

Moreover, blurring functions (go to **126.1 Something in-between - Threshold**) results in creation of in-between spaces at the edges of the concerned space. The in-between zone soaks in activities into the space. It is a known fact that public spaces are most successful when they provide opportu-

nity for many activities to take place in them simultaneously especially if the edges of the space are porous and absorptive (go to **124. Activity pockets**).

With what instruments

The essence of blurring functions lies in a mutual exchange of qualities at the frontier of the two spaces. Qualities which can be exchanged include material qualities, properties of light and shadow, proportions of spaces. The important thing here is the continuity and gradualness of the cross-contamination. This process leads to an occurrence and thickening of the in-between space which cannot be easily classified.

Spaces can be blurred with a different intensity. Space which serves one function can be suspended in a space which serves another function. Functions can be completely mixed in one space to an extent when the only tangible thing which remains is the vessel in which the functions are mixed.

Open plan. Columns placed to create zoning of spaces. Non-restrictive space.

For more information on edges of spaces refer to:

-> **160. Building edge**

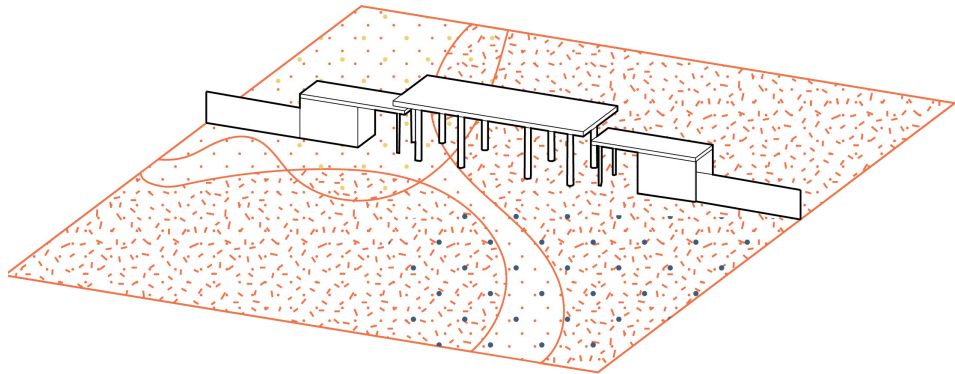
-> **193. Half-open wall**

-> **197. Thick walls**

-> **243. Sitting walls**

The pattern language

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Blurring space.

Source: drawing by author.

Thickening the threshold





256. PUNCTUATING SPACE



Israels Plads, Copenhagen, Sweco Architects + COBE,

Source: <https://www.archdaily.com/880388/israels-plads-square-cobe> (accessed: 24 June 2019).

'Before, there was nothing, or almost nothing; afterwards, there isn't much, a few signs, but which are enough for there to be a top and a bottom, a beginning and an end, a right and a left, a recto and a verso.'¹

In what situation

Without punctuation there is no rhythmicity, variety, diversity, clarity in a text. Same can be said about the punctuation of space.

If blurring spaces results in undermining the codes of behaviour (go to: **255. Blurring space**), it is punctuating space that inculcates them. Punctuating space can be boiled down to developing signage systems – codes – which buildings instruct the users with. Thanks to punctuation, users can orient themselves in a space. Punctuation informs them about functional disposition, circulation, allowed and forbidden behaviour. It is difficult to imagine a space where punctuation would not be needed.

1 Perc, Georges, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, New York, Penguin Books Ltd, 2008, pp 10.

What for

Punctuating space has a subcutaneous effect. User learns the meaning of punctuation marks and begins to understand their meaning in the given context.

With what instruments

Punctuation marks are generally more apparent than their surroundings usually because they are in some way exceptional. They are characterized by an excess or a sudden underuse.

Punctuation marks range from the ones that are strongly apparent to the ones which are perceivably present as absences.

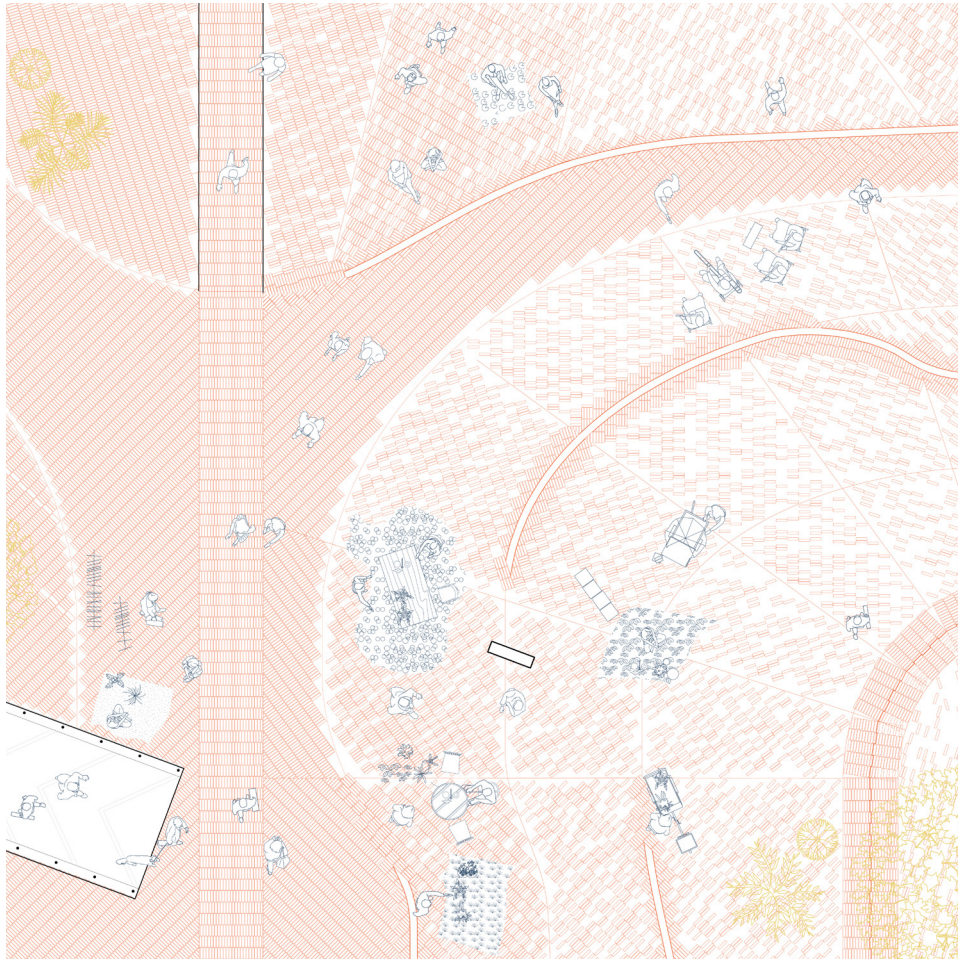
The first group of punctuation marks focuses attention. These punctuation marks intensify the experience. They make the space seem more cohesive, understandable, consistent. Instructions which lead to creation of these punctuation marks are: clashes, intersections, collisions of directions etc.

The second group of punctuation marks gives relief. The invisibility of these

punctuation marks sharpens the expression of other elements. These punctuation marks release the tension, they slow down, separate. They influence the senses with smaller intensity than their surroundings. They are perceived as absences. These punctuation marks can be created by the means of underuse, interruption, omission, reduction, moving elements apart etc.

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Punctuating space.

Source: drawing by author.

Thickening the threshold





257.AMBIGUATION



Museum Island, Berlin, David Chipperfield.

Source: <https://thearchitectureinsight.com/Architecture/david-chipperfield-completes-colonnaded-stone-gallery-at-entrance-to-berlin-039s-museum-island> (accessed: 24 June 2019).



Proliferation of meaning. Nuancing the meaning.

Drawing upon the material and immaterial qualities of the existing elements but expanding their meaning.

Ambiguation is related to third-ing-as-othering, a concept developed by Edward Soja and Foulcault's conception of heterotopia.

As a critical process ambiguation allows to reveal many properties of situations.

In what situation

When a situation is understood in a very simplistic, non-compromising way.

It is a way of addressing the coexistence of multiple programs, forms, agents in one space. Alternative to contradiction and imitation. Akin to smoothing developed by Greg Lynn.

What for

To enable acceptance, admission of things which were not fitting so far. Variety becomes the binder.

To completely change a meaning of an

existing element by changing the context in which it is read.

With what instruments

Reluctancy, contamination, differentiation, quantity, incompatibility.

Introducing architectural elements should be preceded by recognition of the qualities or elements of the environment which are going to be proliferated. Organizational principles in the resulting situation come from the nature of the elements themselves.

For ways of ambiguation go to:

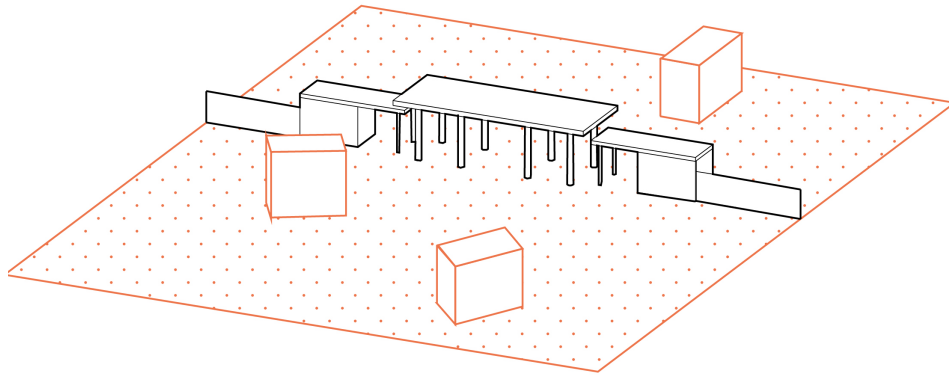
->254. **off-centring**

->255. **blurring space**

->256. **punctuating space**

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Ambiguation.

Source: drawing by author.

Thickening the threshold

The pattern language

Thickening the threshold



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258. ESTRANGEMENT



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Nantes School of Architecture, Lacaton Vassal

Source: <https://www.archdaily.com/254193/nantes-school-of-architecture-lacaton-vassal/5018d49128ba0d5d000b8b-nantes-school-of-architecture-lacaton-vassal-image> (accessed: 24 June 2019).

Thickening the threshold

Verfremdung (estrangement) was invented by a German dramatist Bertold Brecht. 'Verfremdung first and foremost means for Brecht <to strip an action of the character of anything that appears evident, familiar and understandable about it and to arise curiosity and astonishment about it instead.>¹ Brecht used deliberately alienating techniques. He provided the audience with an emotional distance from what was presented on the stage so that the audience would be able to reflect on it in a rational way. Brecht stripped the audience of any passive acceptance of the play. Making the familiar strange served a didactical function where the viewer was pushed into an analytical train of thought. Involvement of the spectator included quotation, repetition, interruptions, montage and gestures.

The estrangement strategy in architecte-

1 Ruby, Ilka and Andreas Lacaton & Vasal, Spain, Editorial Gustavo Gili SL, 2010.

ture involves inducing the state of increased awareness. It is not as rigorous as Brecht's verfremdung, which solely refers to the rational. It seldom does not access the rational via bodily sensations or emotions.

In what situation

Estrangement can be a valid approach whenever there is the ambition to go upstream and alter conventions. The aim to alter conventions should be then grounded on a conviction that the transformation has its moral, social or other justification.

There is a risk that it can be appropriated by institutions which wish to have a progressive image.

What for

Estrangement can be used to undermine the implicit nature of behaviour codes which are in force in a space. At first daily repeatable practices are disrupted. Masks are shredded. Agents and practices lose their meaning. Perception of self and others changes. Discovery and

surprise are introduced into people's daily lives. Outdated schemes of behaviour destabilize. People start to question the sensibility of the world around them and begin to reshape the environment in accordance with the new relations. The shape of the environment may be confirmed as suitable for the social situation or vice versa rejected as unsuitable for the new social codes.

A world occurs that the user can take hold of. He is not a spectator but an actor.

With what instruments

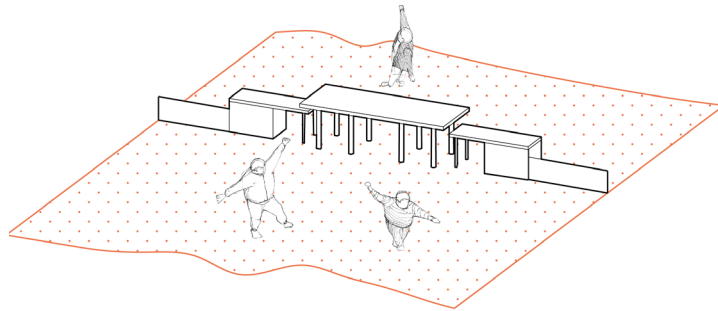
Estrangement can be achieved by proposing something seemingly out of place, details which are ambiguous, surprising, slightly scary, dangerous or amusing.

One of the methods which allow to achieve estrangement is rejecting types. This method has been incorporated by Lacaton Vassal. In their projects Lacaton Vassal use construction typology that is unusual for the given type of a building. This approach, called

'cross-typologization', helps undermine the implicit nature of behaviour codes. Lacaton Vassal use this strategy to question institutional codes with their architecture. They have proposed a car-park structure for Nantes School of Architecture and green-house structure for a residential building. Another operation which ended with a similar result was covering the windows of the faculty of administrative sciences with a red floral curtain. In the proximity of the over-powering flower effect traditional administrative conventions have difficulty being enacted.

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Estrangement.

Source: drawing by author.

Thickening the threshold





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CEASAR FRANCKSTRAAT, DELFT



Source: collage by author.

Thickening the threshold

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Source: collage by author.

Thickening the threshold







