

addressed the issue of street type. This chapter now considers how streets might form patterns, within which the central challenge is effectively to find a way of creating a diversity of patterns through a system of generic design guidance.

DESIGN APPROACHES – GENERATIVE PROCESSES

First, we need to consider how, in principle, patterns may be generated. For the purposes of addressing neo-traditional design, a particular angle to consider is how traditional patterns were generated.

The *New Theory of Urban Design* of Christopher Alexander and associates suggests an approach to design where specification is in the form of a program or process rather than prescription of pattern *per se*. Indeed, the *New Theory's* self-proclaimed most controversial feature is 'to generate urban structure without a plan' such that '*in some fashion*, the large-scale order will emerge, organically, from the co-operation of the individual acts of construction'.²

This has a resonance with bottom-up approaches to creation of form. With this kind of approach, there may be an underlying program, but no final pattern is preconceived. Indeed, in the design exercise illustrating the *New Theory*, the street pattern unfolds in an incremental way, giving rise to a textbook example of characteristic structure.

A comparable approach may be found in Michael Sorkin's *Local Code*, in which local rules may be used incrementally to build a city:

The code recognises that a vision already concretised pre-empts the greater possibilities of an incitement to open many interpretations . . . it seeks a city designed not simply through the deductions of a dominating generality but also via induction from numberless individual points of departure.³

Local Code is written like an abstract manifesto – there is deliberately no illustration suggesting any design outcome. Rather, it comprises a systematic set of rules covering a vast range of city-building concerns; patterns of routes are built up using explicitly defined branching algorithms. This is a very pure case of a constitutional approach.

Sorkin describes his code as a 'kind of utopia'. However, such a code need not be some remote or fanciful ideal. A constitutional approach is right here with us. It is, after all, the approach of the highway engineer.