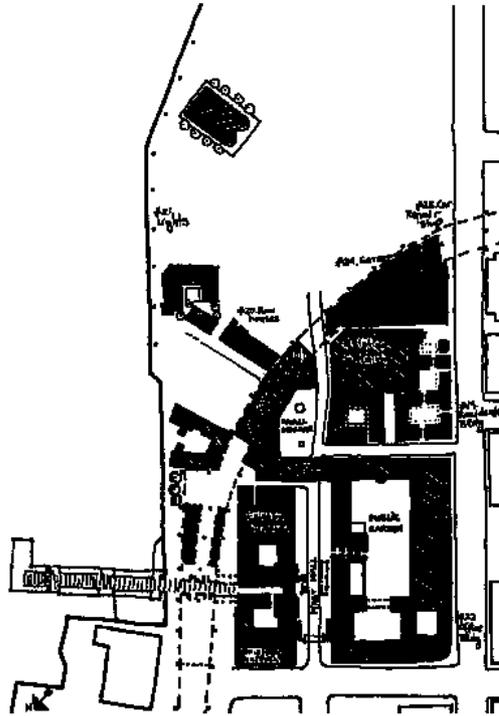


Figure 5.13 Alexander: organic design process, midway through the process.

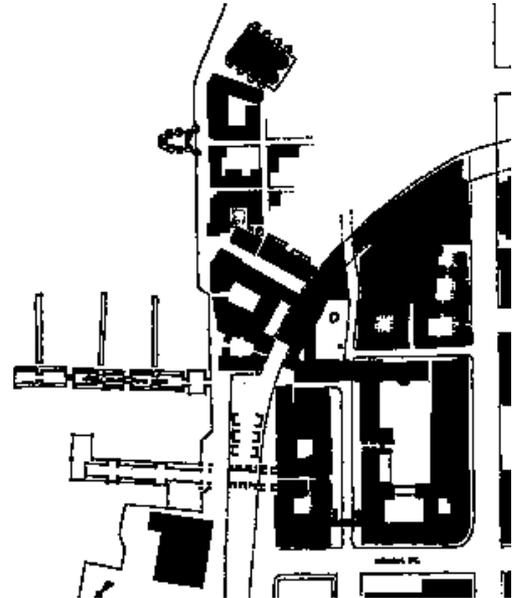
Figure 5.14 Alexander: organic design process, towards the end of the process.



5.13

‘There are equal numbers of large, medium and small projects’.²⁰ There is an argument in favour of reducing Alexander’s figure of 100 000 for the largest single city development so that even the largest developments would be in keeping with the small scale of sustainable settlements.²¹ The idea of developing the city as a series of incremental experimental steps without the guide of a comprehensive blueprint which defines in detail the form of the end product does seem to fit closely with the principles of permaculture.

Alexander’s second rule for the organic urban design process is ‘The Growth of Larger Wholes’. For the purpose of this particular rule every increment to the city should help to form one larger whole in the fabric of the settlement: ‘In the



5.14

process of growth, certain larger structures, or centres, emerge. These larger centres are distinct and recognizable entities, larger than any individual building’. These centres are normally public spaces, the creation of which is detailed in Alexander’s Rule 4 ‘Every building should create coherent and well-shaped public space next to it’. The essence of Alexander’s theory is the aim to heal the city or to make it whole by the creation of a field of overlapping centres or wholes. Rules 5 and 6 deal with the detailed design of buildings and structures, which is not the main concern of this particular book. However, it is interesting to note that even in the case of building structure Alexander is still analysing the elements, such as windows, floors or columns in terms of the creation of centres and wholes. This is how Alexander defines the centre: ‘A centre is not merely, as the word suggests, a point that happens to be a centre of some larger field. A centre is an entity; if you like, a ‘thing.’ It may be a