

distinction is a lovely one for our purposes here. To Hertzberger, space should be like a musical instrument that suggests how it is to be played but does not predict all the wonderful music that can be made by its owner. Contrast this with space that is a tool, tightly designed for a single highly specific task or purpose.

The trick of designing, then, seems to be a more intelligent and mature view of time, change and human behaviour in space. The designer needs to know above all else when to make a move in space that frames or invites behaviour, and when to leave the space more ambiguous. This is extremely hard to get right, and perhaps we can never expect fully to do so. There is probably no substitute for experience and observation in teaching us how this all works, and the problem for architects and such designers is that they get so little experience. Even in the most active and successful of careers most architects will only construct a handful of major buildings, and it is hard to learn from such limited experience spread out over such a long period of time. Many other professions, such as medicine, for example, allow for greater degrees of specialization and operate repetitively on such a rapid time scale that it is much easier to see what works well and what does not. Of course, the older ways of working that relied on vernacular processes solved this problem by relying on the accumulated experience of successive generations. In such a rapidly changing world as ours, this seems unlikely to be successful again.

Patterns of settings

An alternative approach has been suggested by Christopher Alexander in his now classic treatise on *A Pattern Language* (Alexander 1977). He believes that this can lead to a 'timeless way of building' (Alexander 1979), and he has many enthusiastic followers. What Alexander means by 'patterns' seems similar to what in this book we have been calling behavioural settings. Alexander argues that we experience remarkably few frequently and regularly repeated patterns of behaviour in our lives. He describes his own:

Being in bed, having a shower, having breakfast in the kitchen, sitting in my study writing, walking in the garden, cooking and eating our common lunch at my office with my friends, going to the movies, taking my family to eat at a restaurant, having a drink at a friend's house, driving on the freeway, going to bed again. There are a few more.

We can all write our own personal and individual list of these patterns. Whilst they will undoubtedly vary from one to another, Alexander argues there are only about a dozen such patterns. If they work well then our life can seem to go well, and *vice versa*. Alexander does not support such arguments with any empirical data, but his idea feels about right at least for the sort of lives many of us will lead. Of course