

Spatial Practice Towards Urban Identity: The Shift, Limitation and Contemporary Value of Christopher

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Abstract : Christopher Alexander's urban design theory challenges the technical rationality of the empiricism that prevails in the first half of the 20th century. Alexander emphasizes the wholeness of the city through progressive design, conceptual-based participation, shaping of centrality, and other principles. Based on Christopher Alexander's comprehensive book "a new theory of urban design" and by combining with other major works, this paper puts Alexander into the history of the post-modern shift of architecture and urban planning in the middle and late 20th century and analyzes the uniqueness of Alexander's systematization of spatial context. Despite the overemphasis on the initiative of design, Alexander's attempt to discover the "objectivity" of good space -the ability to generate people's urban identity-through an expanded concept of space, and a systematic approach to design restructures the visceral connection between urban space and human. The concept of urban identity is then decomposed into the identity of the physical setting, identity of process, and identity of meaning. Professionals need to learn from the reality and history of urban space to construct spatial "vocabulary libraries" and create the wholeness of the city, and in which process strengthen the subjectivity of the discipline simultaneously, to generate living structures in which urban identity could be ultimately cultivated.

Keywords : christopher alexander, a new theory of urban design, Urban identity, pattern language, urban design

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