



9 / IMPLEMENTATION



*Heilongjiang: Yangko stilt dancing*

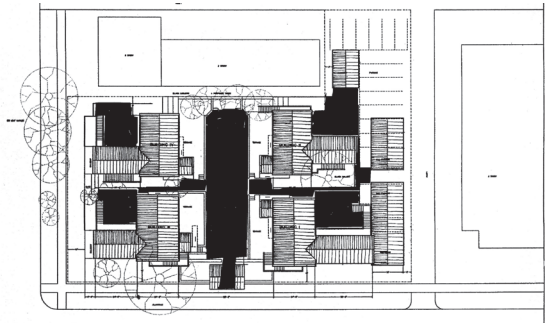
As I have said earlier in this chapter, I have found in all the years of my professional life that the shape of public *space* needs to be taken as seriously as the shapes of *buildings*, but this is very hard to implement, because our present consciousness focuses more easily on building-volumes than on spaces.

Above all, it means that our method of visualizing, or agreeing, on what we want to build, has to be thought through again.

In my experience, codes or systems of rules are unlikely ever to be enough. They are too abstract, too conceptual. They seek to be general — in the hope of creating a framework of order in which genuine freedom can exist. But in fact they do not say enough about the space, and do not guarantee the emergence of shaped space with genuine deep feeling — hence life.

This means that plans like zoning ordinances and master plans cannot be enough. They

are not physical enough, they do not describe the attributes or necessities of living space, they do not insist with sufficient force and artistic clarity on the actual shape of space. What is needed to support the individual acts of construction that



*Plan of the Agate housing, Eugene, Oregon: the plan shows the hulls of public space in black, formed at two levels, between the four apartment buildings.*





*The entrance gate from the street to a very small domain of public space, a public hull in miniature. Agate Housing, Eugene Oregon; Christopher Alexander, Hajo Neis, James Maguire and others, 1992.*

make up the life of the town, is a three-dimensional diagram of the actual shape of the needed space.

A very physical document of the positive space—more physical even than a model—which shows in great detail the connections, shape, subtlety and physical presence of the space which is to be created, the interlock of spaces, the flow of space.

This plan could look like the three dimensional drawing of Samarkand (page 94), or the plan of Eishin, which was staked on the ground, and was therefore understood by everyone (see Hosoi's comment, at the stage when only stakes and flags were in the ground: "We could see . . . the buildings . . . standing . . . there," page 179).

Once we have this diagram—it is an understanding, and agreement, a vision, which each player is then to help embody.



*Hand-made tiles: the sparkle to give life to the hull of public space. Christopher Alexander*





*A hull which is, in this case, almost all water. Extension to a small Cambridge College, Jeremy Dixon and Edward Jones.*

A major change; this process requires wide acceptance, throughout society, of an attitude in which transportation engineers have *secondary* — not primary — control over the shaping of roads. *Transportation engineers must make their work on cars SUBSIDIARY to the work which defines the pedestrian hulls as places which people can use, and own.* Even a street becomes a living room. In an unfolded world we find that all living structure is anchored by a hierarchy of circulation and living rooms. The common living rooms are shaped by buildings, by the exterior volumes of buildings. Every space that exists is either a public space, which is a hull, or a private space which forms a positive and useful garden.

We ask, then, that each player makes a contribution to this growing whole.

We cannot legislate this. Rules, laws, restrictions, are too exact, too restrictive. Instead we ask that each individual actor think about it, work within it, contribute to it.

What we understand is a scheme of wholes. The remaining acts of construction are then to be like brush strokes, which will gradually complete the painting. We know that some brush strokes, by virtue of their feeling, or their force, will themselves transform the vision of the whole. Still, though, it is the whole which is being conceived, like a sculpture of living space.





*Formation of a bull of public space, on the sidewalk of a Tokyo street*