

# CLUSTER OF HOUSES

HOW A GROUP OF TWELVE FAMILIES CAN DESIGN THE COMMON LAND BETWEEN THEIR HOUSES AND THE HOUSES THEMSELVES. A PROJECT OF THIS KIND WILL START LATER THIS YEAR IN MARSTA.

The project shown here is the result of an experiment, in which twelve people worked together for several weeks under conditions as close to real as possible, to test the process by which twelve families would ultimately be able to do the same.

It was understood, from the beginning, that twelve families would build houses for themselves on a piece of land whose total area was about 4800 m<sup>2</sup>. In an early discussion, people agreed that they would use about 1200 m<sup>2</sup> for common land, and keep about 300 m<sup>2</sup> for each individual house.

At another early discussion, the group read the pattern language, and chose the patterns which they would use to shape the common land. Where there was disagreement about a pattern, discussion went on until the group could write a modified pattern which everyone agreed with.



The first three patterns were Common land, Paths across roads, and Tiny parking lots. These patterns made it clear that there should be more common land than usual in a housing project, placed so children could reach it safely; that there should be a path separate from roads, running from road to road; and that cars should be in small lots, of six cars or less, so as not to destroy the land.

When the twelve people stood on the site, it was obvious to everyone that there was one place, with a view of a distant mountain, and a tree, which should be common - and that the area near the big road was too noisy for anyone's house and best for parking; and that it would be very good if strangers walked through the cluster, so as to make it not too secluded.

The path was placed to cross the common land with a small grove of trees on one side, for quiet, and a public outdoor room or terrace, with a workshop and a swimming pool, on the other side, where people could be noisy. Since the path passes these two places, people will always find each other, and be in touch with the "action".

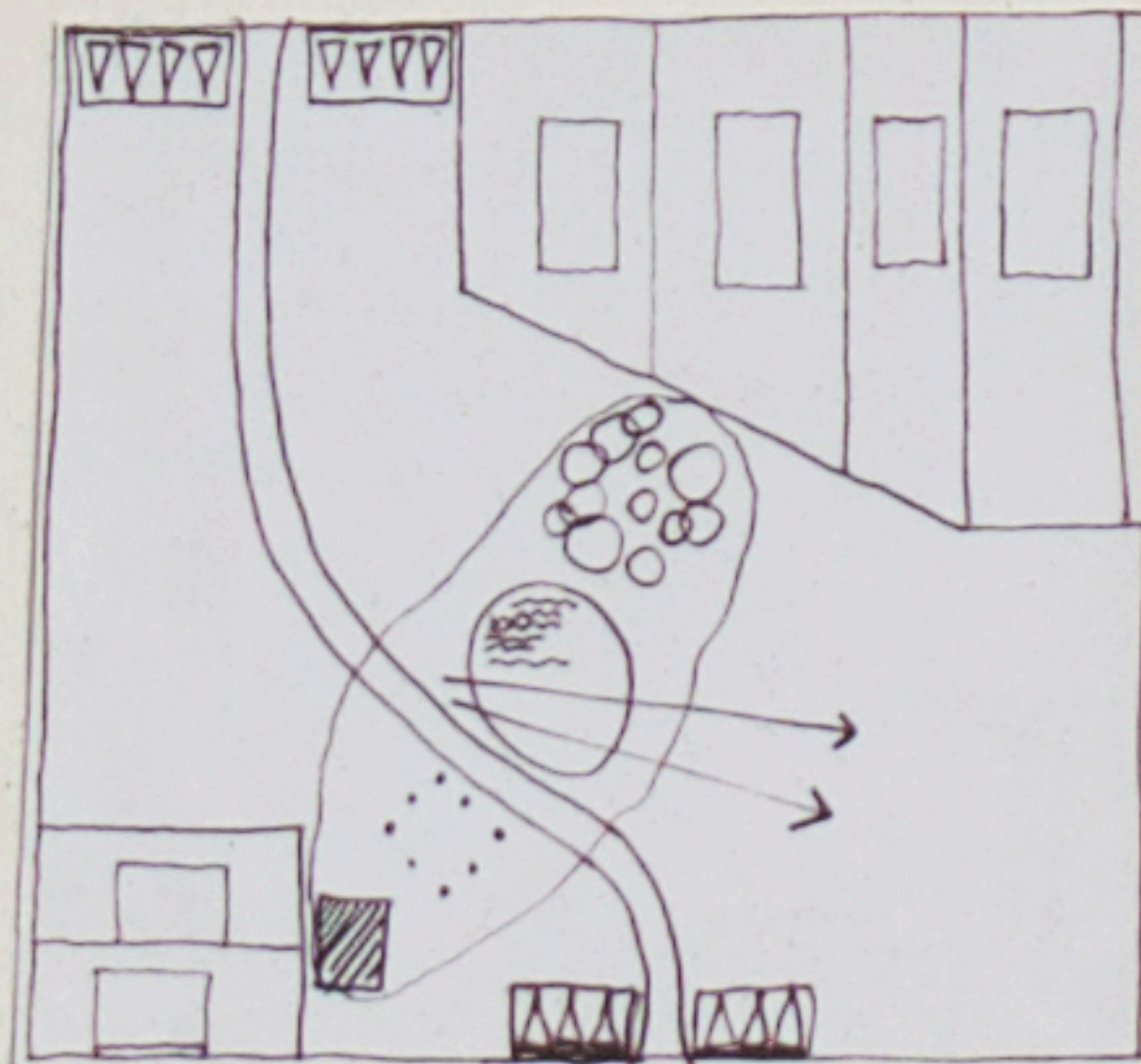
Cell gateway. This pattern says that a small cluster should have entrances which are clearly marked, and felt, so that people know they are coming into a special world - even though it is a public world. People made garages for cars, with a wooden gateway between them, with the idea of planting flowers to climb on the gateway.



Since the cluster fell naturally into two groups of six, each group of six met also, and made decisions about the larger public paths and spaces outside their houses. For example, Centripetal pedestrian paths says that a path must be a place, almost like a room, partly enclosed, with a middle, so that people feel comfortable staying there, not just walking through. Each group used this pattern to make the paths outside their houses better shaped, with seats in them; and the pattern even affected the exact shape of the boundary wall where the houses met the paths.

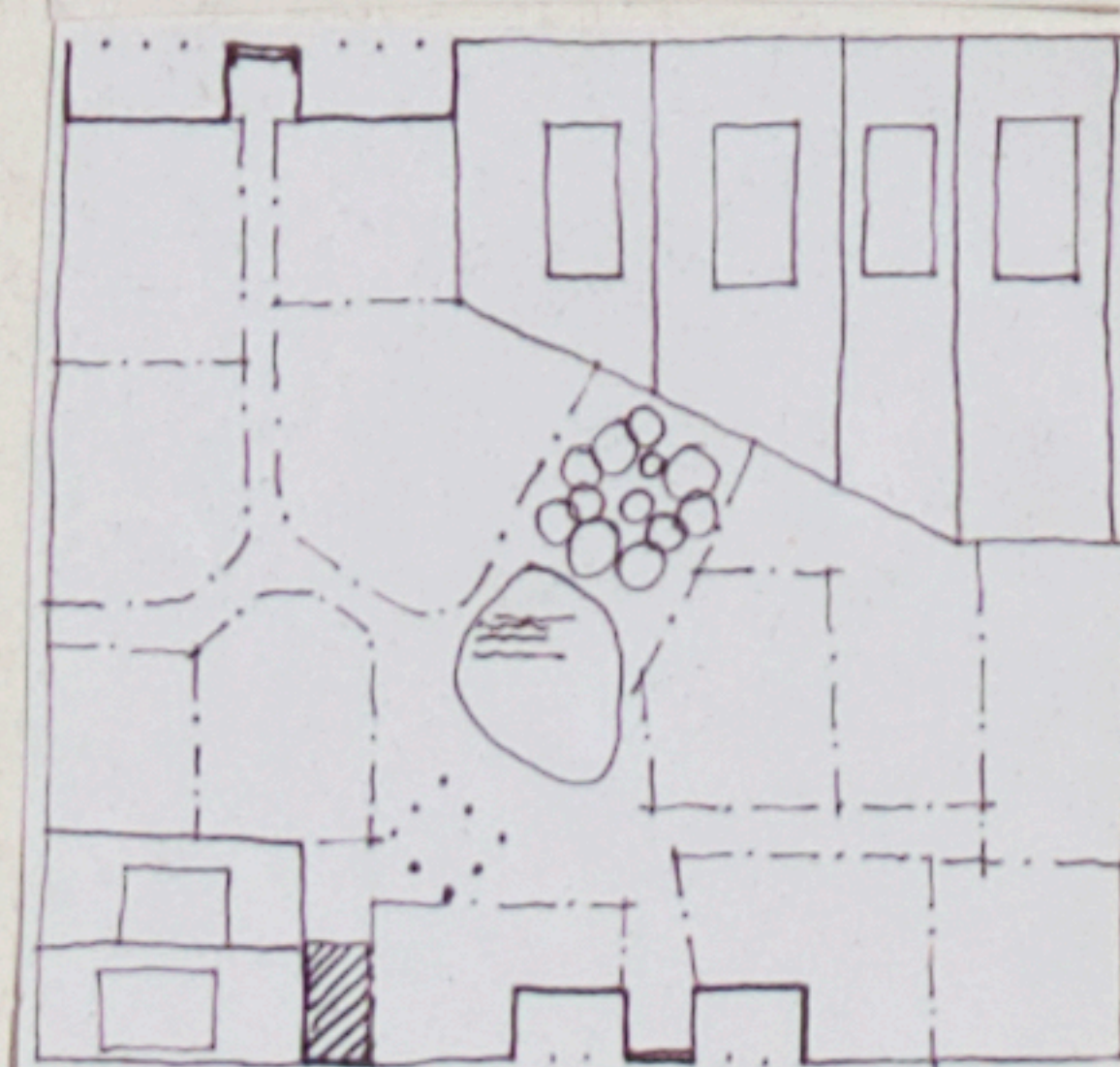


Private terrace opening to the street. This pattern says that each house should have a private terrace, near its living room, but placed so that one can see from it, into the public space of the street beyond, and wave or say hello to someone out there, without the privacy of the house being disturbed. Each of the twelve houses has such a terrace, and the way these terraces make the paths alive, was also discussed and modified by the groups of six at each end of the cluster.



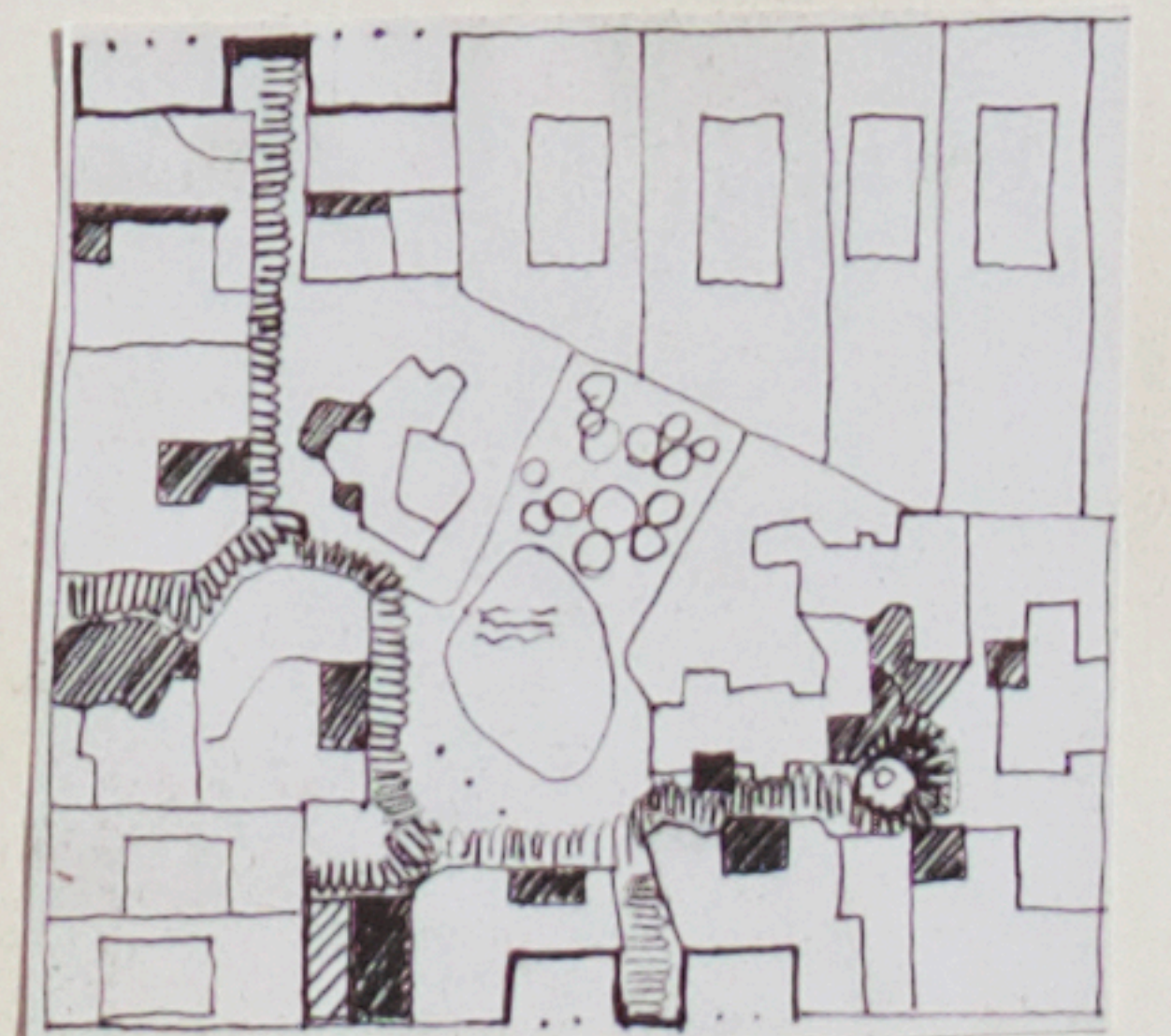
Olika grader av offentlighet. Med detta menas att folk tycker om olika grader av avskildhet. Vissa tycker om att vara med där det händer saker och där det alltid är en massa människor. Andra tycker om att dra sig tillbaka till något tyst ställe, där det inte finns några människor. Bland de 12 personerna ville 4 att det mesta skulle vara offentligt, 4 ville ha det mesta privat och 4 stod någonstans mittemellan. Så vi gjorde två mindre gångstråk med den avsikten, att människor, som vill vara i lugn och ro kunde dra sig tillbaka till de ensliga delarna av dessa mindre gångstråk, och att människor, som tycker om liv och rörelse skulle föredra att hålla till i mitten, på huvudstråket.

Now people finally chose the land they wanted for their own houses. We used a large box of sand, to represent the site, and people put sticks where they wanted to be. Luckily, different people wanted different places; but there were one or two spots where the sticks were too crowded. We agreed that a person who moved his stick to a place he liked less, could have a little more land for himself, and that a person who stayed exactly where he wanted to be, would have a little less land. Finally, people agreed on positions they felt comfortable with; and lines were drawn, between the sticks, to mark the boundaries of the individual land. The individual lots were not defined before this moment.



Next, each family started to design its own house, at least in its rough outline, by the process described on the panel for HOUSE. When the designs were far enough along so that it was clear where the outdoors would be, where entrances would be, and where different rooms and windows would be, each person made a rough model, to put in the sand box, and we began to work out the problems which arose between the houses.

Now a very beautiful thing happened. Each person began to work with his neighbor, first the neighbor on one side, then the neighbor on the other side; and together they tried to make the space between their houses beautiful. Of course, they started by eliminating obvious conflicts between windows, or cases where one house took the sun from the next man's garden; but they also worked out details according to the detailed patterns. For example, one group of people decided to make their entrances open off a small public garden, with a tree, and with an outdoor seat in it, facing the sun, and from which people could watch the distant outdoor room, according to the patterns Treesplaces, Outdoor seats, and Public outdoor room.



Public outdoor room. When this work was finished, the group of twelve met again to design the details of the public outdoor room in the middle. It is a swimming pool, with steps and seats near it, with covered arcades along its edge; with a workshop behind, connected to the street; and with a place for common eating also.

Finally, each person went back to his family, and they designed the details of their individual houses, according to the process on the panel for HOUSE.

THE PROCESS GETS COMPLETED BY THE KIND OF PROCESS DESCRIBED ON THE LAST PANEL.