PATTERNS: SOCIAL PREFERENCES

The proposition investigated in this chapter is that *patterns of social preferences* focussing on the variables of human needs could be introduced by menus to have the designer consider them.

Choices can be made by the designer that are to some degree related or not related to the needs of people. The aim of this chapter would be to analyse human needs and to group them in fields to express patterns.

Van der Rhyn (1992:63) warns that:

'The concept of human needs, for one, is very controversial, as it is constantly changing, culturally determined and reflected by trendsetting in design'

This study attempts to steer clear of the problems that can be created by the cultural and fashion issues of human needs, and hopes to stay focussed on the patterns that people need as has been expressed over centuries in the built environment.

8.1 INTRODUCTION: MODERN LIFESTYLES AND OLDER SOCIAL PATTERNS

The following comparisons illustrate the differences between the patterns of older city social spaces and the way we live in the twenty-first century:

- Markets of stalls in open space courtyards *as activity centres* in town squares or courts, in contrast with the enclosed mall-type *shopping centres* built around anchor shops that promote high turnover of sales.
- Public space as created in older cities in contrast with the invasion of motor cars affecting the quality of these spaces.
- Street scapes with activities and open terrace activities on the street area compared with modern security issues, such as fencing and access control to buildings.

Most of the studies done on the social aspects of architecture, are related to the city and the development of theories on how the city (or cities) should function. Analysing the city and its different buildings does focus on the greater scale of architecture and on social activities expressed in built form.

Some architects specialise in urban design and become experts in 'larger-scale' architecture:

- How the buildings in a city should be composed,
- How the space created by a group of buildings should be created,
- What building types should be grouped together, etc.

8.2 THE CITIES AS ROOTS OF ARCHITECTURAL ENTITIES AND SOCIAL CENTRES

Rossi (1966) said:

'As the first men built houses to provide more favourable surroundings for their lives, fashioning artificial climates for themselves, so they built with aesthetic intention. Architecture came into being with the first traces of the city; it is deeply rooted in the formation of civilization and is a permanent, universal and necessary artifact.'

Rossi looks at the elements of which cities are composed and the ways in which these are grouped together to form neighbourhoods. He also analyses the elements of a city in terms of building types and reveals the underlying fundamental structure of all buildings of a specific type. He is therefore proposing the possibility of a typology giving laws to architects how to build in the city.

De Carlo (1982:36) mentions the squares and streets in historical cities:

'Used as we are to read towns on maps, we tend to identify squares as expansions of streets: expansions which usually occur at crossings, where one or more secondary streets flow into a main one. Being used to read streets as channels for the movement of persons and vehicles, we tend to accept the existence of squares as one accepts the existence of joints in fluid pipes: swellings necessary to solve the fitting between different flows, avoiding eddies and reducing as far as possible losses of pressure. In reality, the third dimension; form, time and use give towns a much higher degree of complexity than can be represented bidimensionally on their plans. On the other hand, urban streets are channels of movement, but also places for activity, exchange, individual and collective experience and socialisation.'

It is in this socialisation experience that patterns exist that people long for in city-living. Special places can be created by squares, streets and street scapes, and the architecture can complement these spaces.

This section of the study does not attempt to analyse the extent of urban design principles (though it may touch on the borders of this field.) It does, however, attempt to analyse social patterns of what people seem to prefer in their social interaction with regards to the built environment. Cities are where people are organised and grouped to live together. The urbanisation of the world population is probably also an irreversible process.

Urban design 'specialists' would draw up master plans for cities or campuses, for example, and use different methods to develop and update these master plans until it is built as planned.

On the other hand, as stated in the introduction, spontaneous patterns of building are also developed by ordinary people, and are sometimes in sharp contrast to the 'specialist' or architects' ideals. These patterns could be valid and valuable to society. These could be ideas from ordinary people and the way cities 'evolved' over the centuries. Rudofsky (1977:9), analyses the subject and states:

'Architecture without architects , as I call the topic at hand, is not just a jumble of building types traditionally slighted or altogether ignored, but the silent testimonial to ways of life that are heavy on acute insight, albeit light on progress. It goes to the roots of human experience and is thus of more than technical and aesthetic interest. Moreover, it is architecture without a dogma.'

Rudofsky also indicates the resistance amongst architects and designers to give credit to the exhibition that followed his book. There was also resistance to these building types, as though the architects were threatened by architectural types that did not require 'architectural design' from professionals.

8.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND STUDIES
8.3.1 CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER AND OTHERS (USA)
Alexander, et al (1977) identified the following elements, building types and events, amongst others, that he says exist in timeless patterns and the way people preferred to build over centuries.(See also Pattern Language; Review of related literature.)

The simplicity of these patterns can be incorporated into designs to show what is good and/or what is preferred, and the elements, building types and events can be linked to the ideal theories and principles to help the designer think of people's needs.

ELEMENTS	BUILDING TYPES & ENVIRONMENT	EVENTS
Entrance	Restaurants	Work
Light	Shop/ Market	Play
Streets, Squares	Homes	Family Life, Elderly
Gates	Streets	Walking
Water	Roads, Public Space	Networking
Outdoor Room	Clustering Homes	Construction
Scale Limits, Etc	Boundaries, Etc	Transport, Etc

Table 8-1 Alexander, et al: Elements, Building Types and Events categorised.

8.3.2 LEON AND ROB KRIER (EUROPE)

Leon Krier (1981), analyses the following elements of building in the European city context:

- MONUMENTS
- ARCADES
- COLONNADES
- ORDER
- FOCUS
- LAYERS
- FACADE
- TEXTURE

Rob Krier also addresses social patterns or typologies in the urban context, but with many different concepts. *(See Fig 8.1, circular public space patterns)*

He says that historically and socially, the cities are built patterns of human lifestyles and some cities have elements that make them more attractive and more pleasant to live in than other cities that ignore these elements.

Some questions may arise that the designer will be challenged with in the choice of his / her design concept:

- Are these elements still valid for the way people ?

- Must new types of spaces be created that better incorporate the problems of transport and vehicles and pedestrian circulation?
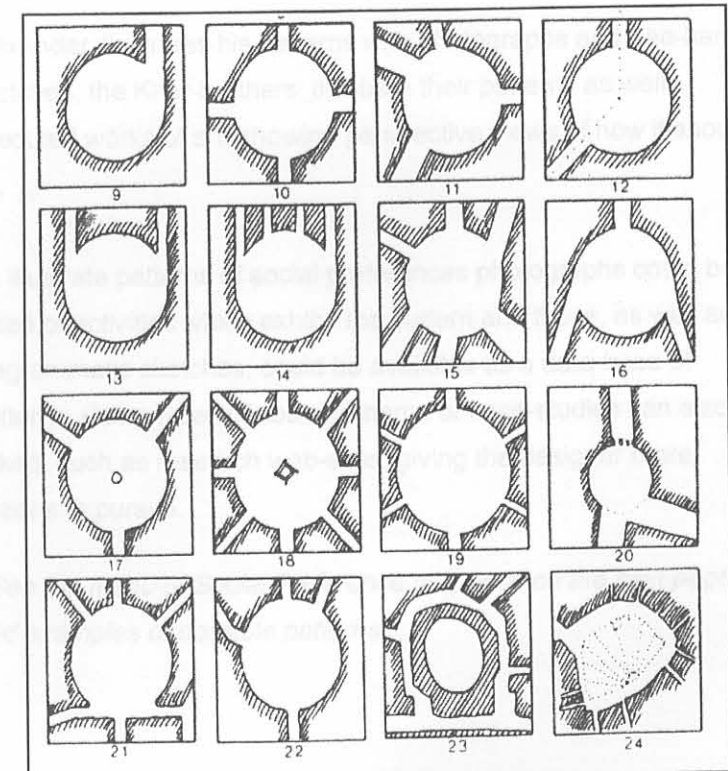
Fig 8A Rob Krier : *Patterns of circular public space*

8.4 URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES; LANDSCAPING AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:

Input from an urban design specialist may be needed to develop architectural design patterns on an urban scale. This can be developed separately, and linked to the web-site, or it could be accommodated at a later stage in the development of the software tool. Links could be provided to other web-sites that have other relevant information, such as:

- Urban design principles,
- Landscape design patterns,
- The important social issue of sustainability, specifically in relation to the built environment.

These fields could also be addressed in a checklist or with links to research data on this subject.

A separate menu in the software program or web-site should provide the input of what people seem to prefer. As with the other menus, the way the designer utilises or explores this information must be flexible and options left for the designer's discretion. Some projects may warrant more social preference input than others.

The creative process of design must not be complicated by too many issues. The sketches can be scanned into computer programmes for use on the web-site. There can also be links to design principle menus, containing patterns which accommodate people's needs.

8.5 PATTERNS OF SOCIAL PREFERENCES

Alexander illustrates his patterns with photographs and free-hand sketches, the Krier-brothers illustrate their patterns as well-executed works of art, showing perspective views of how it should be.

To illustrate patterns of social preferences photographs could be taken of activities which exhibit the pattern and these, as well as diagrammatic sketches, could be available as a data-base of patterns. Other types of social patterns or case-studies can also be linked, such as research web-sites, giving the designer more options to pursue.

(See the menu of Social Preference proposed on the next page, and examples of possible patterns)
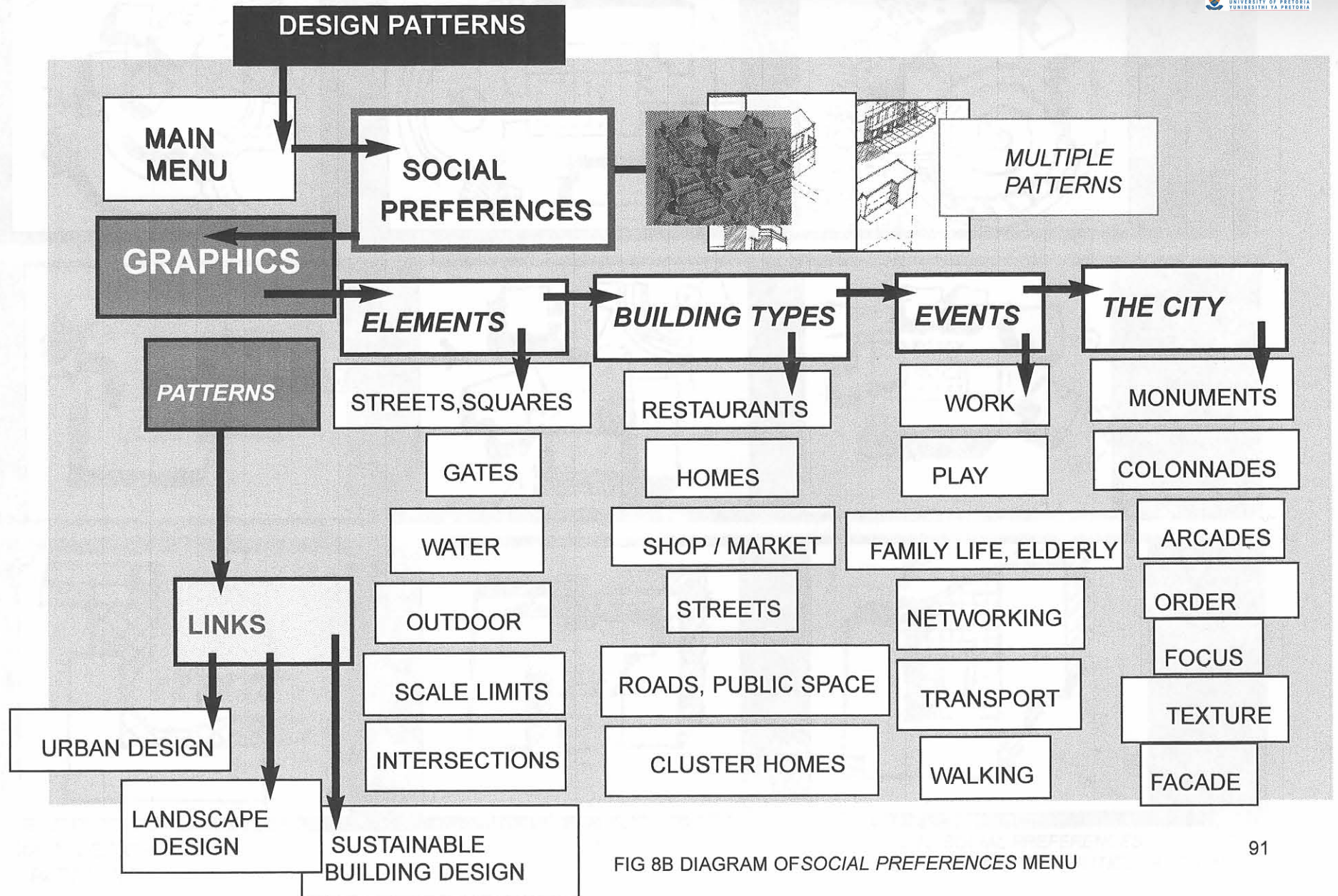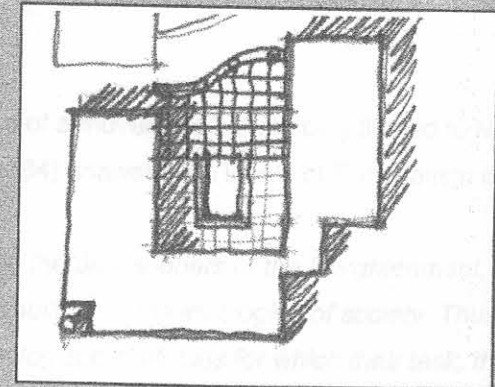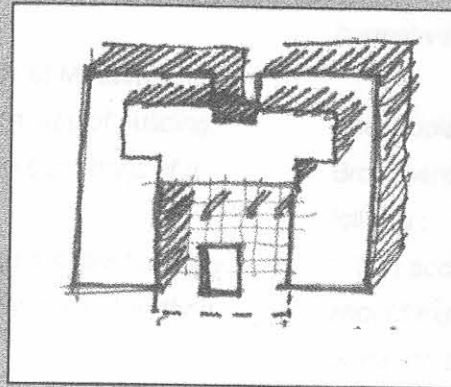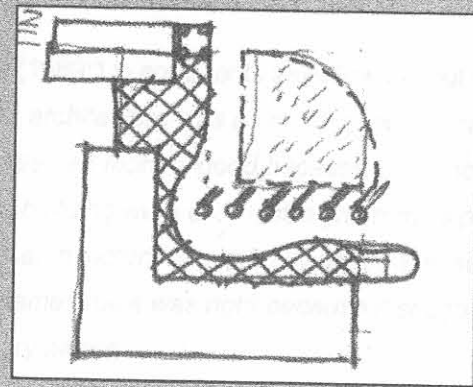
90

DESIGN PATTERNS

MAIN MENU → **SOCIAL PREFERENCES**

MULTIPLE PATTERNS

GRAPHICS

PATTERNS

ELEMENTS *BUILDING TYPES* *EVENTS* *THE CITY*

STREETS, SQUARES   RESTAURANTS   WORK   MONUMENTS

GATES   HOMES   PLAY   COLONNADES

WATER   SHOP / MARKET   FAMILY LIFE, ELDERLY   ARCADES

LINKS   OUTDOOR   STREETS   NETWORKING   ORDER

FOCUS

SCALE LIMITS   ROADS, PUBLIC SPACE   TRANSPORT   TEXTURE

URBAN DESIGN   INTERSECTIONS   CLUSTER HOMES   WALKING   FACADE
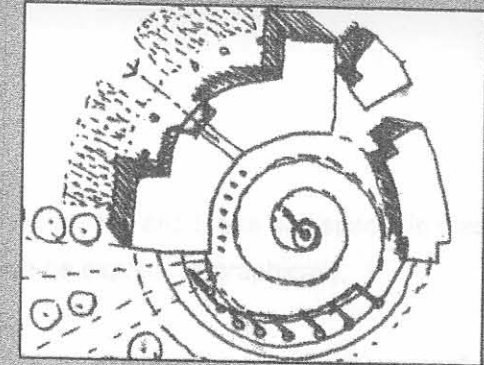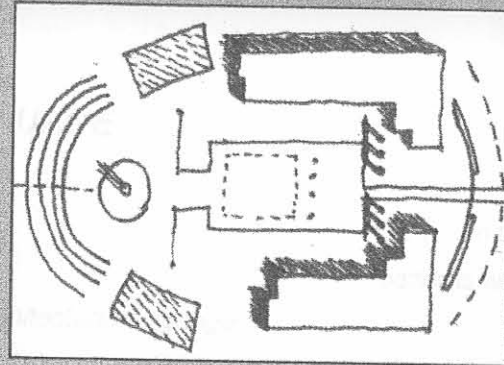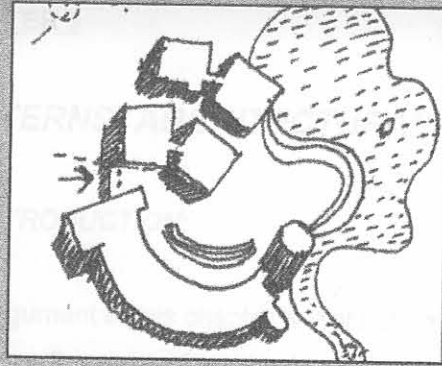
LANDSCAPE DESIGN   SUSTAINABLE BUILDING DESIGN

FIG 8B DIAGRAM OF *SOCIAL PREFERENCES* MENU

91
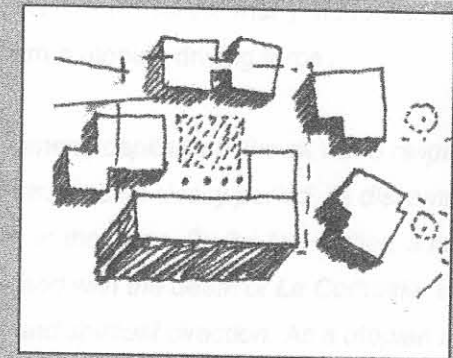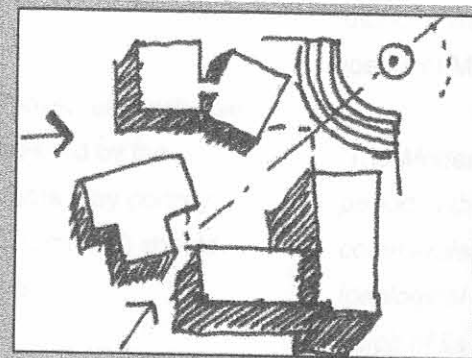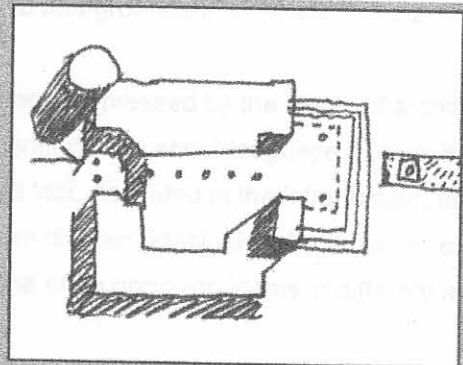
8.6 EXAMPLES OF PATTERNS

FIG 8C SOCIAL PREFERENCES:
PUBLIC SPACE POSSIBILITIES (AUTHOR)