

Learning from Comparing Scales

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Are there specific problems to be addressed at certain scales? Or should each problem be approached using a variety of scales? Leon Battista Alberti introduced the analogy between different scales in his ten books (Alberti, 1452). His famous sentence has been picked up several times since then in architectural theory.

But is the analogy really there? In this research, we approach the analogy between scales by checking if the elements of the city, as defined by Kevin Lynch (Lynch, 1972) can also be recognised on a smaller scale? Among Lynch, people form mental maps of their surroundings consisting of five basic elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Using a study of literature we find several suggestions for similar elements on the smaller scale of a public place. There, these elements can be replaced for example by passages, borders, places, centres and public art. This was tested for a specific well known public space design.

Elements of the City, Lynch

PATH

NODE

LANDMARK

EDGE

DISTRICT

Superkillen, Copenhagen, BIG

PASSAGE

JUNCTION

CENTRE

BORDER

PLACE

But a more interesting conclusion is that investigating this analogy between scales, makes us look at the smaller scale in a fresh new way and changes the focus of the design commission. Does a public place need a centre? Does it need a hierarchical design? Do we need art on public places? This strategy makes us curious to apply the same strategy in reverse as well. Which will be the important elements on the scale of the city if we transpose known important elements of the design of a public place to the scale of the city? On this poster we transpose the important elements on the scale of architecture among Von Meiss to the scale of the city.

References:

- (1) Lynch Kevin, *The Image the City*, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972
- (2) Von Meiss Pierre, *Elements of architecture, from form to place*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York, 1990
- (*) image not from Von Meiss, but from Krier Léon, *The Architecture of Community*

Hafencity, Hamburg, KCAP

LIGHTHOUSE

HARBOUR

PUBLIC AREA

BUILDINGS

Elements of architecture, Von Meiss

FABRIC

OBJECT

SPACE & PLACE

FORM & MATERIALS