A Pattern Language from the Japanese culture for the good old future

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Christopher Alexander was keenly aware that in today's world we can no longer generate that 'quality' which we experience as 'comfortable.' He captured the quality of "comfortable" by capturing a principle that occurs in architecture which is cultivated over a long period with a Pattern Language.

We figure that his idea of capturing qualities through pattern languages will become useful in modern day Japan. After the loss in WW II, Japan's social structure was made by copying the ways of Western society, resulting in the clash between the old style comfortable Japanese culture and Western imported policies. When we feel comfortableness in something, it can be said that we are also feeling the quality of "good old" from it, even if we do not have an actual memory of it. It is this feeling of the quality of "good old" rooted deeply in our culture that brings comfortableness.

In this paper we propose the Pattern Language for good old future from Japanese Culture. This is a pattern language meant to capture the repeating principles that occur in the Japanese culture that gives us the feeling of this quality of "good old". By utilizing this pattern language, people of Japan can re-create the quality of "good old" in future buildings and towns - a "good old future". With the patterns they can think and decide what really best fits them, creating comfortable environments without running counter to the advancement in technologies.

The paper will present 3 of all 15 patterns, No.1 REVERSE VOID AND FULL, No.2 INNERMOST AND EXTRAORDINARY, and No.5 MICROCOSMOS REPRODUCTION in detail, along with a summary of the rest of the patterns recorded in the appendix. We envision that, with this method, qualities for a "good old future" can be captured for any culture.

Japan developed trying to catch up with other countries. The "good old future" which will be realized by these patterns is a brand new vision in how to guide Japan. We suppose "good old future" is one possibility in Japanese society's new vision of itself. We hope it will support Japanese people in thinking about their own future by themselves.

1. INTRODUCTION

Christopher Alexander saw the problems with recent architecture. *"Alexander had a feeling of wrongness about modernized architectures. Architects forget the comfortableness"* in *Pattern, Wiki, XP (Eto.K, 2009).* Therefore, he tried to build architectures having the quality of "comfortable" by Pattern Languages that describe successful architectures in the culture which were made over a long time.

"Patterns are the rules, through which our culture maintains itself, keeps itself alive." The Timeless Way of Building (Alexander, C., 1979)

We also see the problems with recent Japanese society. After the loss in WWII, Japanese social structure was made by copying the ways of Western society. The country enjoyed economic success, but they forget how to make the quality "comfortable" for themselves which is cultivated in long times in Japanese culture. People in Japan adopted the foreign method and framework, resulting in the clash between the comfortable Japanese culture and Western imported policies. We think modern Japanese people need to feel and make the quality "comfortable" more and more.

We find the quality of "comfortable" is the quality of "good old" for Japanese People. When we Japanese feel the quality of "comfortable" through something, it can be said that we are also feeling the quality of "good old" from it, even if we do not have an actual memory of it. It is because the things having the quality "comfortable" really fit our physical moving and our way of thinking in deep.

We also have come to understand that the quality of "good old" occurs with a Pattern Language, i.e., an accumulation of skills and insights honed over a long time. What this Pattern Language aims to do is to realize a "good old future" society, in which we can feel the

quality of "good old" and create things having the quality by ourselves. Our society can take recover our deepest roots that are really fit and comfortable for us and can grow gradually, adapting itself to the flow of the times.

2.Pattern Language for good old future from Japanese Culture

2-1.Making Process

In this section, we would like to introduce the process of making such Pattern Language.

We are 5 students in the "good old future" project in Iba Laboratory at Keio University in Japan. After 5 members started to make patterns, we welcomed one more student in our project. Then, 6 members went to field works, added new patterns, and revised our patterns. Their age is from 19 to 22.

■Mining

We have navigated each member to his/her interested fields: working style, discrimination over poverty, education, urban design, aesthetic, gourmet, leisure, etc. and assigned related works, literature, and references from Japanese culture. Then, we mined examples of our ancestors' lives having the quality of "comfortable", which are being forgotten over time, by reading books and listed each on sticky notes.

■KJ Method

We have pulled out up to 250 examples and grouped them by using a convergent thinking called *the KJ method (Kawakita,"The Original KJ Method" 1976)*. This technique is used to arrange the complex collection of examples and cases according to their similarity. This KJ method is very suitable for making Pattern Language because it is the bottom-up method of grouping. Members who make groups by the bottom-up grouping KJ method can find new groups which they have ever known. And this group comes to be one pattern.

Focusing on points that demonstrate the quality "good old", we have discussed the degree of similarity and organized the sticky notes accordingly into 44 groups. Addressing each group with a name, we have identified 12 pattern models and completed them as 12 patterns, which are stated below.

■Field Work

According to *"The Production of Houses"(Alexander .C, 1985)*, Alexander said it's important for everyone who is concerned with the house building to have *"a feeling that we were actually making these buildings"*. Even though we want to create a society which has a good old quality, it's hard to join the process of creating buildings such as the old temples which Japanese people did before. However we tried to join to it by watching them with our eyes.

Moreover, since we live in modern times and have obtained elements from references, it is necessary to go out to the field and understand the hints still lying undetected in the quality of "good old." In order to elaborate on the content with persuasiveness, there is a need to undergo such activities. Thus, we are planning to conduct field works out to places where we can experience the good old atmosphere. For example, we have listed not only the historical sightseeing places such as Kamakura, Kyoto, and Asakusa but also the outskirts of Tokyo, rural woodlands, and local farms.

As we plan above, exploring the sights will help us confirm whether we can acknowledge the quality of "good old". Through these field works, we found these patterns were in many old architectures, towns, and atmosphere. We can recognize the pattern in the field. This experience gave self-confidence for our making patterns. And more, we found new patterns which were recognized many times and added 3 patterns into our Pattern Language.

■Writing & Revising

In result of the KJ method, we confirmed that each group possesses the quality of "good old." Through some field works, we documented the pattern models based on the Alexandrian format. Our Pattern Language follows *"Context", "Problem", "Solution"*, an*d "Consequence"*. In this paper, we add *"Scene"* which is the description of the knowledge of Japanese Culture which helps understanding the Pattern Language. Then, we held a writer's workshop after completing each pattern. After that, we try field work and held writers' workshops repeatedly and revised all patterns.

2-2.Pattern Language for good old future from Japanese Culture

Below, we will introduce 3 patterns (name in bold style) out of all 15 patterns. Summaries of the other 12 patterns are in Appendix of this paper.

<Pattern List>

-No.1 REVERSE VOID AND FULL

-No.2 INNERMOST AND EXTRAORDINARY

-No.3 CHAIN OF STYLISHNESS

-No.4 COMPARISON BY SHAPE

-No.5 MICROCOSMOS REPRODUCTION

-No.6 BLANK AND IMAGINATION　（SPACE FOR IMAGINATION）

-No.7 AWE

-No.8 YIN AND YANG

-No.9 POWER OF INFINITY

-No.10 LISTEN TO MATERIALS

-No.11 PERSONAL UNIT (PERSONAL MEASUREMENT)

-No.12 A BROKEN PREMISE

-No.13 ORIGINAL FORM

-No.14 WARMTH IN HAND

-No.15 AMBIGUITY AND COEXISTANCE

No.1

REVERSE VOID AND FULL

<Cultural Scene>

A Japanese term, "Mono no aware" implies the aesthetic appreciation of the pathos in the transience of things and bitter sadness of their disappearance. Since Japanese people already knew that creations never remain, and accepted such reasonable theory, they valued abiding by it. Along time ago, traditional Japanese houses had functionless and hallow spaces called "Utsu." In those places, low-dining tables were placed for dinner, a knitting box was set up to do needle work during lunch, and Futons were spread to sleep at night. Though having limited amount of space, our ancestors took advantage of it in a flexible manner using a variation of tools and flow of the day. As explained, the ways of adding meanings and function to space were exemplified in daily lives.

Tadao Ando who is famous as the architect worldwide adopts "Utsu" in his works, for example one can consider his "Gojou Cultural Museum". More ideas come to people in the space without functions, more possibilities can be made about how to use the space. Therefore thus space can prompt people to imagine and think by themselves.

<Context>

There always can be many changes in your environment and in your mind, for example, the changing seasons, weather and the change which you want to do.

<Problem>

Since you need to adjust to various changes, you can need to keep coming up with new ideas and methods every time.

<Solution>

Purposely leave space in the room adaptable to change.

<Consequence>

Such a space with hollow called "Utsu," can also be a platform of "Utsuroi," transforming it into a place for change. In other words, people would be able to become more flexible by overcoming sudden changes rather than blocking them away in a negative attitude. This will also enable them to remember excitements of one-and-only moments, reminding them that nothing stays the same. Moreover, with this in mind, a view of life as something transient and empty is generated.

No.2

INNERMOST AND EXTRAORDINARY

<Cultural Scene>

Like the inner shrine of Mount Koya, the residence of the Gods has been placed behind the main hall of the temple or deep in the woods from ancient times. The path to the gods' residence runs through the shrines in the order of *"Shimosya," "Nakasya," "Kamisya," and finally "Okusya." Thus, it is as if the path is guiding us towards an uncommon world from daily life.

Traditionally constructed houses are also made with spacing of depth, drawing us on a long way from the entrance to the living room, the hallway to the Japanese parlor, then to the bedroom. Therefore, this distance emphasizes "depth" in any space and tracing such areas was considered good.

Furthermore, Basho Matsuo, writer of "haiku" poems, expresses aesthetic and dignity, in one of his works; *"Through the curtains of the deep inner room, I catch a glimpse of the northern plume."* So we can see that Japanese people have been valuing the concept of depth in time and space for centuries.

*Japanese shrines are named depending on the height where they are placed.

E.g. Shimosya (lowland area,) Nakasya (middle area,) Kamisya (upper part of land,) and Okusya (Deep from the main hall.)

<Context>

There are places to worship the gods and to offer prayers.

<Problem>

Since you want to keep the place a private space but other people also think alike, a crowd will occur.

<Solution>

Create an inmost space and time to deeply delve into the objects.

<Consequence>

Because such "depth" is unidentifiable, it arouses both mental states: curiosity that inspires people to further investigate and the fear of learning the answer. Once in a nervous situation, people who strive for further engagement tend to surpass those who don't challenge themselves. Additionally, you can prepare for greeting God with a calm mindset, feeling your thoughts and emotions circulating inside yourself due to the pressure to proceed.

No.5

MICROCOSMOS REPRODUCTION

<Cultural Scene>
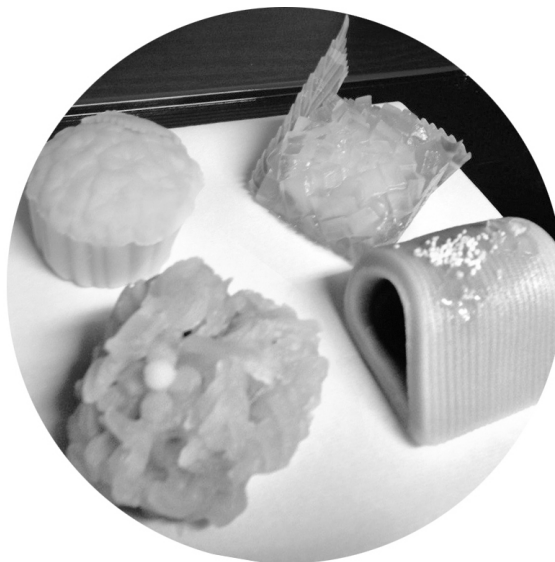
"Bonsai," originated in and imported from China, had developed as part of the important Japanese culture to cherish the sceneries of nature through plant cultivation in gardens. After the miniature tree is transferred to a shallow-sided pot and is gently taken good care of, it allows the viewers to imagine it as a full-size tree with a compact form of aesthetics. The unique practice of looking further into the "unseen" aesthetics of Bonsai shows the tacit interaction with miniature trees. The purposes of bonsai are primarily contemplation and self-realization on a grand scale through continuous dialogues with the traditional art form. Additionally, Bonsai transforms its theme each season, placed at Japanese-style restaurants

to demonstrate the seasonal aspects of nature. Such display offered an opportunity for the viewers to talk about the theme and added a cultural topic in communication.

In modern days, small figures of "anime" characters are presented as specimen of the unreal world. Another example would be miniature trains, which exemplifies the big and long trains to enjoy at home. As explained, the specimen inspires us to conceptualize a reviving and vital image, capturing the details of the object and converting it into a smaller size as duplication. Also, well-known Japanese fresh confections in Kyoto are skillfully made to express a seasonal reminder in spite of being small. In making Japanese confectionary, diverse and profound art techniques are used, such as representing the season by color and highlighting contrast to symbolize complex nature.

<Context>
You come across a mesmerizing scene.

<Problem>
You are trying to keep the memory that you have encountered in real life, but you forget as time elapses.

<Solution>
Exemplify and compress the grand scenery into a smaller size as a compact universe in details.

<Consequence>
You can immerse yourself into the grand scenery through an art form in a small scale. Such form of Japanese aesthetic will cover all aspects of the scenery in every detail. This will allow the viewers to witness the vitality and lively objects as if they are moving. The grandness of a microcosm and tradition will originate under the co-existence of complexity and authenticity.

3.Conclusion and Future Work

This pattern language helps modern Japanese people to recognize the quality "good old". Recognizing the quality is really important for feeling, thinking about, and creating the

quality "good old". If Japanese people are able to create things having the quality and discuss the things or the quality itself, they can try for their own future that they create and revise by themselves. We call this future "good old future", which will be a brand new vision of Japan. In recent decades, Japan relinquished their own sense of self in favor of westernization. Now they have to make their own vision by themselves without copying a different culture. Good old future will stir up a controversy over Japan's new vision. It can make people imagine and discuss their future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX ON PATTERN SUMMARIES_

03_CHAIN OF STYLISHNESS

Stylishness simply means to show off. What is more, it's not about a gorgeous or gaudy manner, but rather an aesthetic sense of controlling one's desires, the practice of aesthetics. So to speak, it is the pride that remains after the independence from expecting the forthcoming happiness. As a consequence, this sophisticated style has attracted many people as an ideal form of aesthetics and became a daily norm of food culture, fashion, competition, social and so on.

04_COMPARISON BY SHAPE

Japanese people like"comparison" that expresses anything you want as another one. For example, when rakugo performers act eating noodles, they use a Japanese fan instead of chopsticks. To note, when the designated object carries a deep meaning, much more than the products itself, comparison implies symbolic understanding. In case of meals that are offered in New Year's, meaning luck or fortune, shrimp symbolizing long-life refers to elder people because of its bent back bone, sweet chestnuts symbolize property because of its color of gold, shredded sea bream symbolizes the act of celebration because there is a play on words with "medetai (congratulation)" including the "tai (sea bream)" of same pronunciation.

06_BLANK AND IMAGINATION　(SPACE FOR IMAGINATION)

Japan has a culture that welcomes an "expression of abbreviation." In Japanese arts such as tea ceremony, flower arrangements, and poems, people use this disciplined manner effectively. By omitting and clipping out one part, people can appreciate the "blank space" or "lingering imagery" much more than expressing everything precisely. And also offsetting the leftover parts makes people use their imagination. This appealing expression of elegance has nurtured the Japanese way of perception.

07_AWE

Ancient Japanese people had faith in nature, seeing God in every universe. Each time a natural phenomenon occurred, they were concerned about the existence of God.
Though people were scared of it, they have wanted to approach the invisible charm because they felt that it taught the secrets and truth that nobody knows. This is has been a strange field and motivation for people to pursue in life.

08_YIN AND YANG

"The principles of Yin and Yang" is an idea that separates all kind of things in the universe. There is no superiority between two extreme ideas, and they inter-depend on each other to make an order having harmony. Both ideas are of the same importantance: silence and noise, male or female, relaxation and strain, up and down, and, active and passive. Japanese have a tendency to prefer Yang (the shadow) to Yin (the Sun).

09_POWER OF INFINITY

"Boundary zone" connects "sanctuary" and "earth". When people mark this boundary zone, we tend to stretch a straw festoon. In the case of the Japanese art of tea ceremony, on the way to the tea room, people put stones which keep the visitors from entering. It means that the boundary line separates owner and visitors. It's not only about the owner's space, but also about another space that people can't enter easily. Finally, this pattern helps hone the Japanese custom of sensing the intentions of others.

10_LISTEN TO MATERIALS

With its four seasons and temperate humid climate, Japan has various types of climate change, depending, of ocurse, on the region such as from north to south and from the coast of the Pacific Ocean to the Japanese ocean. Appreciating their country's various benefits of nature, Japanese people had deep understanding of values of the raw materials of all of its regions. As a result, Japan has bloomed with buildings, clothing, and food culture both in harmony and peculiar to local areas. This attitude of respectful comprehension is vital in understanding the good or poor qualities of the materials, in using them in the best ways, in seeing their characteristics, and in matching with other materials. In such manner, Japanese people have been studying the nature and characteristics of raw materials through attentive listening and observation.

11_PERSONAL UNIT (Personal Measurement)

As the Anglo-Saxons uses *feet* and inches, Egyptians using *mh* and *seshat*, Japan has their own units of measurement called *sun* and *shaku*. Japanese kimonos and buildings are made using *sun* and *shaku,* a measurements based on physical senses. These items are made through measurement units that originated with the length of the thumb or middle finger so

they match the Japanese-standard size. In most cases, creations are made relatively bigger so that the users can make minor adjustments according to circumstances.

12_A BROKEN PREMISE

In the old days, the craftsmanship was a daily routine and an never-ending process. Travelers wove outworn straw sandals as soon as they arrived at their hotels. Kimono shreds were patched for reuse. *Chinka Bridge* in *Shimanto River*, *Shikoku*, was constructed with a prediction of a flood in mind. These examples show that objects are made with the assumption that they will break and so they leave the space for repairing and editing. Things that cannot be fixed and end up in waste were considered inconvenient in daily lives and not worth making in the first place.

13_ORIGINAL FORM

Recognized worldwide, some traditional performing art in Japan such as *noh, kyogen,* and *kabuki* have strict *kata* (forms). These forms are preserved in each school. During training, you will thoroughly assimilate the form before you can begin to generate your own style, adding originality. This practice is called mold-breaking, departing from old customs. It is only special and effective when one illustrates the exact flows of the form. Paradoxically, though, one must follow the form in order to create originality.

14_WARMTH IN HAND

Habituation is the state of the tools that discolor through time or wear out due to long-period usage. Natural materials such as trees and stones, leather, pottery, and dyed cloth, enhance their trace of beauty through variation. According to the world of antiques, the values of tools are decided based on the level of aesthetic habituation and the tune with one's hand. By feeling the fit of the tool with the hand, one can appreciate the warmth for the tool while building a bond between oneself and the tool.

15_AMBIGUITY AND COEXISTANCE

Japanese tend to make decisions based on set of choices such as "this and that" rather than separately "this or that." This unique thought process is not influenced by the western type dualism but valued because Japanese find a rationale in each choice. For instance, a veranda is an outcome of a combined comfort from both the outside and inside and personal

to public space. Additionally, Japan has invented hiragana, letting live the convenience of the words and sounds of the imported kanji and the indigenous Yamato speech. While Japanese people are seen as vague on decision making, they are finding ways to combine both sides to co-exist as a third way.