Chapter 3. READING LIST

The present course is meant to be self-contained, so that students should not need any textbook other than this collection of notes. Nevertheless, a core of accumulated knowledge is set forth in the books by Christopher Alexander, my own books on architecture and urbanism, and several other texts. These books contain the details of the adaptive design method, as well as the background of how the discipline has evolved to its present stage. This is essential material for future designers to learn. Younger architects are eagerly looking for precisely these results. It is with delight and pleasant surprise that they find this material readily available, and in practical form. But that knowledge remains, for the most part, outside the conventional architectural paradigm of image-based formalist design.

“And what is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?” (Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland). Architects like to look at pictures rather than read text. Students learn to copy the famous architects visually, while the incomprehensible theory taught in the past tried to justify those buildings rather than offer any logical framework for understanding architecture. Those old theoretical texts are not, to my mind, useful in the least. The motives and thoughts driving conventional design for close to a century are rooted in an entirely different basis from the methods needed for adaptive design. This new framework is based on science and the experimental method: it is also based on human feelings and our visceral response to structures in the built environment.

While the following list of books does not contain all of the writings of Alexander and myself (nor indeed several useful books by other authors), it provides key references that define a basis for adaptive architecture.


New York. Chapter 5, “Neuroscience, the Natural Environment, and Building Design”, is written by Nikos A. Salingaros & Kenneth G. Masden.


