

1982

# THE SMITHSONS AT ROBIN HOOD

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/2467>

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/3930>

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The Graduate School in Arts and Social Studies  
The University of Sussex

John Furse November 1982

THE SMITHSONS AT ROBIN HOOD

## PREFACE

Yet another building site in the East End of London - an East End rebuilt almost out of recognition to those who knew it before the War. But this site is different - there are no tower-blocks for one thing. It's by Alison and Peter Smithson virtually the only British architects to have an international reputation and whose influence on architecture since the War has been out of all proportion to the relatively small amount of their work to be built. The school at Hunstanton in Norfolk and the Economist office building in St. James's London embodies significant innovations but their chief interest is housing and they have done much theoretical work on it. This site at Poplar however represents the first opportunity they've had to put their ideas into practice and inevitably perhaps it's very far from being just another block of council flats. (B.S.Johnson 1970).(1)

This thesis The Smithsons at Robin Hood can be seen as a logical continuation of This Was Tomorrow(2), in that it deals specifically with that tomorrow: the culmination of the Smithsons' thinking, on the problem of mass working-class housing, in the built form of Robin Hood Gardens, Poplar, London E.14., completed in 1972.

To the Smithsons, mass-housing simply means:

all dwellings not built to the special order of the individual: houses over which the occupier has no control other than that he has chosen, or has been chosen to live there: houses for which, therefore, the architect has a peculiar responsibility.(3)

Poplar is in Tower Hamlets, and the Local Authority is the Greater London Council: throughout we are solely concerned with local authority, council, tenants.(4)

The architects list, as the definitive article on Robin Hood, that published in Architectural Design, in September 1972,(5) and their version of the evolution of the building is contained in: Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70.(6) which is an autobiographical documentation of their aesthetic. Reference is made to the earlier, 1952, Golden Lane project designs, which can be seen to embody the essence of the Smithson philosophy of neighbourliness and communal living.

The B.B.C. Television film: The Smithsons on Housing - Are tower-blocks obsolete?, made by author B.S.Johnson, in close collaboration with the architects, and shown nationally in July 1970, is seen as particularly revealing. The accredited Johnson Script, dated December 1969, is included here as Appendix One.

Also included, as Appendix Three, is what became known as the Royaumont Document, a document which Peter Smithson certainly regards as the 'missing-link', in terms of the Smithsons' development:

a rare and historic document: the only firm link between the Team 10 emotions and manifestos of the 'fifties and the 'seventies when their ideas began to come to fruition.(7)

The architects' wholehearted commitment to Team 10 can best be seen in Team 10 Primer, edited by Alison Smithson, (8) in which their thinking can be read in direct conjunction to that of their international contemporaries. Regular contributions to Architectural Design (9) and other professional journals are equally informative. The Smithsons publish their own select Bibliography. (10)

A list of built work appears in Contemporary Architects, together with a detailed autobiographical chronology, and a brief critical appraisal. (11) It is essential to realise that, at the time of Golden Lane, Alison Smithson was barely twenty-four and Peter Smithson twenty-nine: Robin Hood was completed exactly twenty years later.

The outline of this thesis is as follows.

There are seven sections, which form the basis of the argument.

(1) A Golden Opportunity: re-examines the friendship with photographer Nigel Henderson and sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, in relation to the photographs, taken by the former, in Bethnal Green between 1949 and 1952, (12) in the light of their relationship to the diaries kept by his wife Judith, during her association with Tom Harrisson of Mass Observation.

The influence of the American Abstract Expressionist painter Jackson Pollock is also discussed.(14)

(2) Vin Ordinaire: considers the lasting influence of Le Corbusier and the ideas embodied in the building of the Unité d'Habitation, in Marseilles, in relation to the Smithsons' projected designs for Golden Lane. Le Corbusier's notion of the 'wine-rack', and the whole 'idea of street'(15) is regarded as the fundamental source for the mythical concept on which Robin Hood was built. Lansbury, built for the Festival of Britain, in 1951, is considered to be an unacceptable alternative.(16) The necessity for a pragmatic aesthetic is seen to be essential.

(3) The Missing-Link: analyses the undoubted importance of the Royaumont Document, in order to define its strict relevance to the built form at Robin Hood. The international commitment of Team 10, to the continuing ideals of the Modern Movement and the acknowledged responsibility the Smithsons own to CIAM philosophy, is related to their willingness to show the Johnson film, as their sole contribution to Team 10 Toulouse-le-Mirail in 1971.(17) Peter Smithson's Bath: Walks Within the Walls, first published in 1969,(18) is viewed as being of the utmost importance.

(4) The Johnson Script: and the Sound-track(19), reveal the Smithsons as most explicit in their intentions at Robin Hood. We discuss the concept of the 'exemplar', and 'demonstration', as envisaged by the architects here and in Signs of Occupancy(20). The reaction to the film is also noted.

(5) Against the Criteria: sets the built form of Robin Hood against the listed Criteria for Mass-Housing, included here as Appendix Two, as the method of objective criticism which the Smithsons themselves accept as valid.

(6) Robin Hood Observed: is concerned, wholly, with a descriptive analysis of the building, in the light of the Smithsons' stated intent. The evidence is set against the relevant, textual, Criteria for Mass-Housing and the theoretical arguments in Ordinariness & Light. Specific aspects of the building are discussed, in detail, and the comments of the tenants, interviewed in the course of frequent visits to the building, are noted. (21)

(7) A Failure of Nerve: establishes its standpoint from the thrust of Jeremy Seabrook's What Went Wrong? (22), a study of working-class reactions to the era of the Welfare State, and it draws attention to the conflict of ideas between the notion that it was possible to build mass working-class housing, in a spirit of well-mannered decency, and the social predicament in which council tenants currently find themselves. In the light of our experience of Robin Hood: the Smithsons' 'Holy Grail', we question the architects' dream. (23)

It is the purpose of this thesis to argue that the Smithsons' intentions were indeed a dream, and that Robin Hood is an ideological fragment of that dream. The building is, as Johnson suggests: 'very far from being just another block of council flats' (24), equally it is not the 'demonstration of a more enjoyable way of living' (25) that the Smithsons intended: the blend of common-sense and poetry - ordinariness and light - ultimately fails.

This particular ideology, specific to the Smithsons, was dreamed of in the 'fifties: Robin Hood was conceived, in that self-same spirit, in the 'sixties, and completed in 1972. Now, in the 'eighties, we must make a critical analysis of that ideology.

This will be undertaken by a critical comparison of the Smithsons' stated criteria, with the observed realities of the way of life experienced by those that have been chosen to live in Robin Hood.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to David Mellor, of the University of Sussex, for his thoughtful and constructive supervision of this thesis: his practical suggestions and ready availability proved invaluable throughout. His colleague Peter Dickens made many positive comments, as did Professor Norbert Lynton: I thank them both.

I acknowledge the willing co-operation of Alison and Peter Smithson, who talked freely of the problems that beset them at Robin Hood. Freda and Eduardo Paolozzi were extremely hospitable and vividly recalled the time spent, with the Hendersons and Samuels, in Bethnal Green: the frankness of Eduardo Paolozzi I much appreciated.

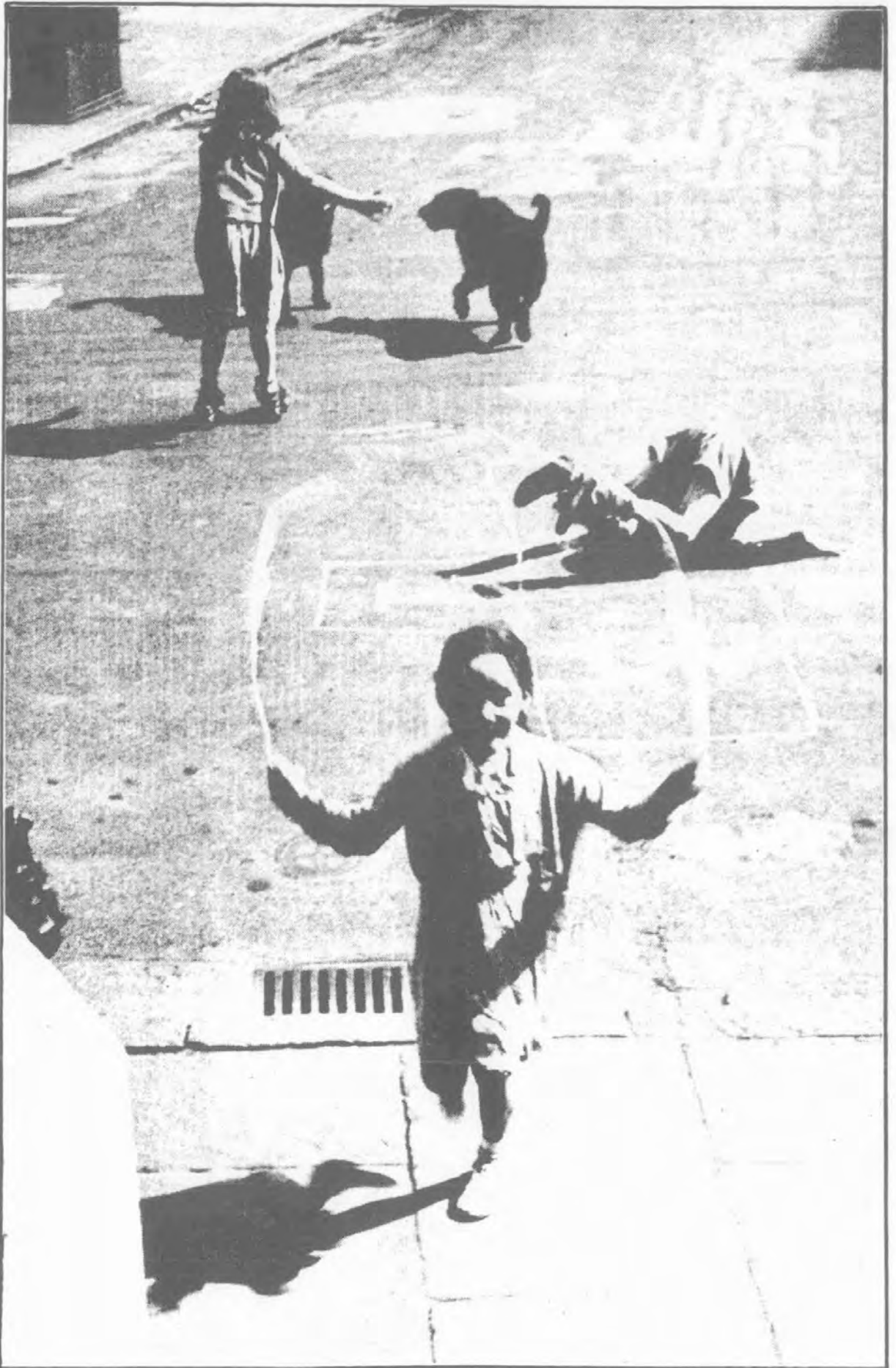
Virginia Johnson, widow of B.S. Johnson, kindly allowed me to copy her recording of the B.B.C. Television film: the Smithsons provided the accredited script. Past conversations with Team 10 members, Aldo van Eyck in particular, proved most informative, as did those with Charles Jencks, Martin Pawley and Ray Gosling. I thank Jenny Stein, formerly of the Whitechapel Art Gallery, for re-introducing me to the East End streets that I walked, with my father, in the early 'Fifties.

Friends and colleagues in the School of Architecture at Plymouth Polytechnic, and at the Open University, provided stimulating company: Dirk Hansen, Lecturer in Architectural Theory; Dr. Sidney Jacobs, Lecturer in Housing Policy; Dr. Di. Collinson, Lecturer in Philosophy, and Isabel Perkins in Bath, made valuable contributions. Polytechnic Learning Resources Centre staff were most helpful: I thank Jeanette Lake and Tony Smith in particular.

Paul Overy not only provided civilised East End lodging but sustained me throughout with his regular correspondence: this I continue to value. Finally, to my wife Soo, I offer a sincere thank you.

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ONE

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

## A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Where streets glint grudgingly, like shabby coins and, much pummelled, the body's putty sags. (Nigel Henderson 1949)(1)

The Smithsons' rejected competition entry, for working-class housing at Golden Lane in central London, embodies the essence of their thinking on mass-housing. In every emotional sense it is the precursor of Robin Hood and it dates from 1952.

In Ordinariness & Light the architects well describe the situation in which they found themselves:

The Golden Lane site is part of an area known as Bunhill Fields, which was scheduled for Comprehensive Development by London County Council. It had been almost completely razed by bombing and had been used as a tip for blitz rubble. The ground level prospect at the time of the competition was a dismal one of blighted Peabody Trust dwellings and multi-storey buildings. There are no fields on Bunhill now, but there is a magnificent high level view to the south of St. Pauls and the Pool of London.(2)

The problem was clear, in a shattered city with its constant reminders of an inadequate past, something new was needed. However worthy the efforts of those concerned, the days of the well-meaning philanthropists were over and now it was the turn of the professional. 'Homes Fit For Heroes'(3) had, in its time, a patriotic ring to it, but in the early 'fifties Londoners were in no mood for further heroics. They'd had enough of empty sounding slogans and however stirring the boast that 'London Can Take It' might have seemed in May 1941, ten years later they simply wanted somewhere decent to live.

The mood of the survivors of the 1939-1946 war can be deduced from Angus Calder's The People's War(4) and Tom Harrisson's Living Through The Blitz(5) in their acknowledgement of the political complexities and the high-lighting of the sheer ignorance, on all sides, as to what

it was that they had actually been fighting for. Calder quotes Arthur Koestler:

The nearer victory comes in sight, the clearer the character of the war reveals itself as what the Tories always said it was - a war for national survival, a war in defence of certain nineteenth century ideals, and not what I and my friends of the left said that it was - a revolutionary civil war in Europe on the Spanish pattern.(6)

Tom Harrisson, as we might expect, is concerned with more earthy matters:

By the middle of September(1940), half the population of Stepney was gone. Notes fixed on battered front doors gave new addresses, in Beacontree, Chadwell Heath, Dagenham, in Stratford and East Ham - further out, but still 'in London'. Few had left altogether. In one street, only a fifth of the householders were there by night - most by day. In less congested parts of London, few left. The pressure outlets became West End shelters and soon the huge shelters and the Underground. Those who stayed 'put' tended to be of a tougher calibre. In any case, by mid-month little remained of the earlier screaming and near panic.(7)

Whatever the private confusion, the resulting devastation was clear for all to see and so too was the opportunity it offered architects with the vision to take full advantage of it.(8)

Against this background the Smithsons offered an essentially practical solution, based on their utter belief that, in the 'life of the streets' can be observed those patterns of behaviour that must determine the form a building takes. What they had seen to be the foundation of day-to-day working-class life would be the foundation on which they would build their working-class mass-housing.

Amidst the wreck of post-war London what was projected at Golden Lane was calmly considered in the light of what the architects knew to be true. Quite simply, it was in the street - and in a certain mythical value ascribed to the 'street' - that, for the Smithsons, the concept of neighbourliness began. In Ordinariness & Light, in a section headed 'Human Associations', the theme is developed further in relation

to the concept of the 'street-deck' (9) and the point is stressed that it is not so much the street itself but the 'idea of street' that is so important.

It is the idea of street not the reality of street that is important - the creation of effective group-spaces fulfilling the vital function of identification and enclosure, making the socially vital life of the streets possible. (10)

It is not the pattern of a particular street that concerns them, more that here will be found the answer to a constant practical problem. Here will be seen not only the way in which particular individuals behave but also, they hoped, the way in which others with a similar instinct would behave elsewhere. A common pattern will emerge, on the evidence of which it would be possible to build; to build that is for the type of person you have actually seen acting in a particular manner - whose behaviour you have carefully observed. Strictly speaking the notion of class didn't enter into their thinking, here they were concerned solely with mass-housing and it was the typical behaviour of those for whom they hoped to build that they needed to be aware of.

The Smithsons also needed evidence readily to hand and fortunately they had a friend who could provide it - in black-and-white - pinned to the wall above the drawing-board. Nigel Henderson made images of the East End of London and it is these photographs, taken between 1949 and 1952, that undoubtedly provided the stimulus for much of the Golden Lane thinking and consequently for the built form at Robin Hood. (11)

#### Nigel Henderson

Henderson gets due credit for his contribution to the evolution of the Smithson aesthetic and the worth of these particular photographs is acknowledged by the fact that it was these very images that provoked much of the dissension at the CIAM 9 Congress, at Aix-en-Provence

in 1953.(12)

There is nothing remarkable about the photographs, nor is there meant to be, they are merely a documentary record of what Henderson noticed as he walked the streets, camera in hand, at that time and in that place. As far as the Smithsons were concerned this was their value, their documentary realism seemed unproblematical and, as evidence, they revealed nothing but the truth.

Yet, for all his profound disinterest, Henderson was no innocent when it came to the study of working-class life. He had moved, with his wife Judith and their two children into 46 Chisenhale Road, Bethnal Green, in order to be close to University House, where Judith was to take responsibility for a course called 'Discover Your Neighbour', in which Tom Harrisson of Mass Observation was also involved.(13) He was a student at the Slade, presided over by the painter William Coldstream another MO man and, before the war, had mixed intimately with men and women preoccupied with Socialist ideals. But the war had left him drained and disturbed - he too was tired:

When I came out of the R.A.F. at the end of the war, flying - which had initially been such a brilliant experience for me, had alas become a dreadful threat - a terrible ordeal which invaded one's dreams. My nerves felt like stripped wires; and now I think of one of those ancient electric systems - Leyden Jars - with a stale tartar of corrosion on the glass, around the brass terminals and the wires, fly-encrusted and looped irrelevantly about. I felt very tired and disheartened, no doubt in common with the great majority of human beings whose vulnerable psyches had been buckled and blasted by the backlash of Great Events - indifferent to the small scale of our usual concerns.(14)

And so he walked the streets of Bethnal Green and nearby Hackney - just looking - and sometimes further east into Bow, Stepney and Poplar, with nothing in mind other than to come to terms with civilian life. Psychoanalysis was little help and his attempts to draw and paint were unsuccessful. Eventually he borrowed a camera.

What Henderson saw, on his solitary walks, brought him little or no peace of mind. The East End had been the most heavily bombed civilian target in the country and the precision raids on Docklands had smashed down the cheaply built housing in what was already an impoverished area. The Blitz still casts its shadow over that part of London but, in 1949, it was a very real memory indeed.(15) As a flier himself he knew all about the effectiveness of aerial bombardment, how easy it is - dispassionately - to destroy the anonymous, unseen enemy, somewhere down below. But now he was down there with them, watching the attempt to rebuild the old way of life and seeing for himself the shattering effect of the physical and emotional battering they had taken.

The Smithsons were designing for a site, almost completely razed by bombing, which was being used as a tip for blitz rubble, and they were looking to the photographs, taken by Nigel Henderson with his borrowed camera, to provide the evidence that the life of the streets was as it always had been.

Seen in retrospect, Henderson's attitude to photography concerned two easily defined states of mind. Firstly, there is the sheer delight in image making, which resulted in the complex 'collages' made in the manner of his close friend Eduardo Paolozzi,(16) which relate more to his post-war experiences in the art worlds of London and Paris than to the back-streets of East London. Secondly, there is the preoccupation with the mundane 'snap-shot', when his eye caught the glint of something in passing and, almost grudgingly, he recorded it.

The photographs, taken by the Smithsons to Aix-en-Provence, are clearly the result of spur-of-the-moment whim. There is no obvious intention, no premeditated plan, the image doesn't crop up elsewhere. A group of children playing in the street, outside their house in

Chisenhale Road - 'Hop-Scotch' on a sunny day, skipping-ropes, sniffing dogs, a drop-handled bicycle and a three-wheeled bike.

They were first published in Urban Structuring(17), along with other Henderson street scenes, in a sequence entitled 'Patterns of Association and Identity' and accompanied by a short statement.

The 'life-of-the-streets' in these pictures is a survival from an earlier culture - and a subsistence culture at that. But we have not yet discovered an equivalent to the street form for the present day. All we know is that the street has been invalidated by the motor car, rising standards of living and changing values. Any revival is historicism. In the uninhibited organisation of the children's games we are seeing a vivid pattern, and in this is an indication of a freer sort of organisation.(18)

Ordinary photographs - 'snap-shots' - with no particular meaning, except in the context of the Smithson aesthetic, where the 'Hop-Scotch' grid reminds us of the architect's plan and the moving bicycle hints at the ever-present threat of the motor-car. The aesthetic, so carefully and sophisticatedly argued in Ordinariness & Light is centred on the concept of the invention of an architecture structured by notions of association and we must take note of the ordinary if the apt form is to be found.

The arguments, examples and illustrations in the book show how a very small shift in our ways of looking at the ordinary things that go to make up cities and towns could restore them to their rich classic connotations. Houses would once more feel like places of adventure, as well as security; roads be made to give a sense of cohesion and connection, as well as of release. For the Smithsons, to sense an 'ordering' in things is to feel liberated and free to use them. Ordinariness and Light will enable all who are exercised about the deterioration of urban life to share their dream of cities that can breathe. It may help, perhaps, to generate in society at large that kind of committed participation that their notion of 'ordering' implies.(19)

We see free-wheeling cyclists and carefully balanced players - there is something 'orderly' in the numbered, symmetrical, pattern of the chalk lines that form the grid - in the backstreets of working-class Bethnal Green. The photographs were taken from the front door-step

and upstairs window of 46 Chisenhale Road. There is an intimacy and spontaneity which gave the Smithsons immediate justification for what they had in mind:

In a tight knit society inhabiting a tight knit development such as the Byelaw Streets there is an inherent feeling of safety and social bond which has much to do with the obviousness and simple order of the form of the street: about 40 houses facing a common open space. The street is not only a means of access but also an arena for social expression. In these 'slum' streets is found a simple relationship between house and street.(20)

Henderson's observations of the 'life of the streets', in Bethnal Green, remind us of the Mass Observation survey in 'Worktown'(21) and it is certainly legitimate to place him in the lineage. The connection with Harrison is too strong to ignore and the images themselves have much in common. However his was not the eye of Mass Observation, he was not intent on finding something meaningful out there in the street. The MO men were peering intently at this strange 'animal' they had encountered for the first time - Harrison was both anthropologist and bird-watcher - Henderson had no preconceptions when he photographed the children playing 'Hop-Scotch'. He was the amateur playing with his new toy.

#### Mass Observation

Tom Picton's recent assessment of Mass Observation 'A very public espionage', (22) opens with the well-worn quotation from Christopher Isherwood's 'Berlin Stories', written in 1938, where the author defines his intention and explains his method:

I am a camera with the shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Someday all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed.(23)

In the main the MO men did record events that were taking place, events that typified a way of life that they felt ought to be better

understood, that ought to be fixed in the minds of those that had a responsibility for the well-being of the working-class. It was the ordinariness of daily life that needed to be observed.

Humphrey Spender, with his uncomplicated vision, is both meticulous in his eye for detail and well aware of the difficulties involved. When asked what prompted him to take a certain picture, he had no doubt as to what was expected of him; what Tom Harrisson had in mind.

Simply the general feeling that I was obliged to take photographs of everyday scenes, of people everywhere. Tom literally did say go into public lavatories and take pictures of people peeing. That I didn't quite have the courage to do. I took bus rides around, in a way killing time letting things happen. Again this principle of never fixing anything up, it must be a genuine incident.(24)

Waiting for something to happen, for the genuine incident, was the MO way. Whether the event was advertised or just stumbled across, a goal for Bolton Wanderers or a sad Austin hearse, it was all the same to them.

Henderson's photographs aren't quite without comment but there is none of the deliberate classification of the socially aware cameraman. None of Bill Brandt's satirical class-consciousness(25) and no intent to deliberately contrast the way of life in the working-class street with the self-indulgent opulence of which he was only too well aware.

Henderson has defined his position:

I thought I would try to write directly to illuminate my work, but I found I couldn't do it. It involved me in using words like a critic - in the pretension, for me, of exact word usage, Word-Brick; Wall-Sentence; Room-Paragraph; House-Concept, and the totality of the relationship of house to houses and to the environment.

A philosophy in short.

Then I tried to write about time. The Rodent Time I called it. Erosion, the saliva, the Lick of Time. Corrosion, the teeth. Agents of Destruction, Agents of Revelation. The Calligraphy of Time that shows, for instance, the sinews, the fibrous quality of wood - the lines of retreat or weakness of materials that reveal its innate quality; as sand subsides into water; as cracks canter across walls or stains seep up like explosions, flowering out as

pancakes. Or, as boots broach their layers arching under uneven strain like geological strata, their leather the rind of fruit, pithy, like cobbler's tacks eager to be out and off, like seed pips. A new boot is a fine monument to Man - an artefact. A worn-out boot traces his image with a heroic pathos and takes its part as universal image-maker in the Suburbs of the Mind. Time works like an analytical chemist with its tinctures and titrations. It gives us intimations of the reality of things.(26)

However we interpret what Henderson saw as his 'philosophy', one thing is quite certain; in his own mind it is a process that involved a little more thought than is required merely to lean out of an upstairs window and point a camera, hopefully, in the right direction. Equally, it is safe to suggest, that what he had in common with a man like Humphrey Spender lies deeper than a passing need to photograph people hanging around on street-corners, or to provide sociological evidence of the items in a tobacconist's window.

A phrase like 'Suburbs of the Mind' is essentially surrealistic and 'cracks canter across walls or stains seep up like explosions, flowering out as pancakes' hints at something more fundamental than a social pattern of 'association and identity'. What Henderson is attracted by is the decorative qualities of dereliction and the irrational juxtaposition, of words and images, to be found in torn posters and crumbling shop-fronts. This is what he saw in the coarse outline of the 'Hop-Scotch' grid and the crude numbers chalked onto the rough surface of the oil-stained road. What he had in common with so many of his generation was a love of 'collage'.(27)

The complicated interrelationship between the evolution of modern photography and the Surrealists is not our concern - Henderson is no Surrealist - but it is worth noting that, once inside his dark-room, the photographer is capable of creating a totally new reality, with unlimited scope for meaningful distortion. It is not a mechanical process.

Susan Sontag has summed up the attraction of Surrealism for the photographer and reminded us of the important part that chance can be allowed to play in the development of the final image.

Surrealism has always courted accidents, welcomed the uninvited, flattered disordered presences. What could be more surreal than an object which virtually produces itself, and with the minimum of effort? It is photography that has best shown how to juxtapose the sewing machine and the umbrella.(28)

But there is another type of 'collage', the method is not solely the way of the Surrealist and Henderson was well aware of it. Surrealism relies on a mixture of ingenuity and wit, together with meaningful subject matter, whereas the 'collages' made by Henderson's friend from the Slade - Eduardo Paolozzi - were conceived in a very different frame of mind.

#### Eduardo Paolozzi

Paolozzi was important to Henderson and his influence is clearly to be seen in the close similarity between the early 'collages' devised in the dark-room - the converted bathroom in 46 Chisenhale Road - and the experiments he was making at the time. He also became particularly influential in terms of the Smithson aesthetic. There is an explicit photograph, in Ordinariness & Light, which emphatically draws our attention to Paolozzi's acknowledged influence on the thinking that led to the proposed form for the projected scheme for Golden Lane.

The photograph is accompanied by the statement: 'Nigel Henderson's drawing room, Bethnal Green, east London, 1952. Silk screen elements by Eduardo Paolozzi, used as wallpaper'.(29) and on the facing page is a drawing for Golden Lane. This is clearly not a chance juxtaposition and the similarities are obvious.

But Paolozzi had something more to offer the well-bred Henderson, something far more fundamental than stylistic innovation - Paolozzi

was working-class and proud of the fact. Henderson, on the other hand, knew the right people and his family connections enabled him to meet many of the leading painters and photographers. A day spent in the stimulating company of Marcel Duchamp is remembered with pleasure: 'I spent a wonderful day with Duchamp, seeing in effect a sorcerer take hold of time ... and stop it, blow it like a bubble, pop it, blow again in such a light, throw-away sardonic manner. I was totally enchanted ... the day ... seemed to last for three weeks' (30) but the day-to-day association with his friend Paolozzi meant most to him.

While the Smithsons were concerned with working-class mass-housing, to be built on a site that was little more than a rubbish-tip, and Henderson was trying desperately to come to terms with civilian life, Paolozzi was enthusiastically welding together the most unlikely material into his particular form of 'collage'. His intention was to make new images, new objects, unlike anything that had been seen before. He was primarily a maker of sculptural forms and felt no great sympathy for the literary antics of the Surrealists; he needed no formula and was more than willing to take risks and leave much to chance.

For all their lip-service to the accidental, the Surrealists were undoubtedly privileged stylists, who worked well within the accepted limits of the established art world, and to fully understand their protest you needed to be well read and aware of the cultural pretensions of the intellectual avant-garde. Paolozzi had other interests and no love for the over-refined, middle-class, personalities who dominated the London art world.

In his introduction to the Arts Council Paolozzi exhibition, of 1976, Frank Whitford stresses the importance of Paolozzi's background and speaks of his temperament in apt, though somewhat lurid, terms:

For the toughie from Leith matured as a sculptor at precisely the moment when those genteel, middle-class ideas about art which had operated in Britain for so long most urgently needed a knee in the crutch and a butt in the head if British art were ever to become serious.(31)

In many ways it was an unlikely friendship, build on an increasing distaste for the Slade and the confidence to look elsewhere for their inspiration. The local, urban, landscape that preoccupied the Euston Road painters, including their leading advocate, former MO man William Coldstream, held no attraction for the aggressive Scot and the dull, tentative, almost monochromatic pictures they produced merely proved his point. Paolozzi's heroes came from Hollywood U.S.A. and were far more exciting than any that might be found in the dreary side streets and bedrooms of Camden Town.(32)

Henderson, still far from well, equally relished the opportunity to escape into the fantasy world of the cinema, away from the genteel posturing and the sterile thinking of the prevailing Slade doctrine. Paolozzi began to collect clippings from American 'mags', anything that caught his eye, which he pasted into scrap-books with little or no thought of meaning or classification. Instead of the traditional Slade sketch-book, with its Sickert inspired jottings made in local pubs and music-halls, he collected images ripped from the popular press, the everyday reading of the man and woman in the working-class street.

Not only did he paste together the images of adult life but he also collected the blatantly decorative figures of children's comics, with their crude colour, stark outlines and clumsily drawn gesticulations. His concept of 'collage' was simply the bringing together of disparate images, which might well turn out to be a sewing-machine and an umbrella, but unlike the Surrealists he needed no manifesto to justify what he did. What the Surrealists saw as Art Paolozzi thought of as

'Bunk'(33) and what he had in mind came closer to Schwitters' Merz than the cleverly conceived arrangements of French Surrealism.

Images that particularly attracted him tended to involve the stark juxtaposition of high-technology and human vulnerability, images that coupled innocence with mechanised brutality. The grotesquely muscular 'Popeye' was a particular favourite, seen painted on the side of an American B-17 bomber that had completed over a hundred successful - destructive - missions over Germany: 'Fun Helped The Flight'. An earthy fascination with overtly sexual 'pin-ups', 'Coca-Cola' and POP! later led him to be instrumental in the formation of the Independent Group, at the I.C.A. in 1952, in which the Smithsons participated with such far-reaching -self-documented - effect.(34)

To a certain extent Paolozzi fits conveniently into the confines of the machine-aesthetic, expounded by Le Corbusier, and there is little doubt that he was captivated by the immense power of the new technology and that the sheer physical activity involved in the actual making of a large piece of sculpture was much to his liking. Many of the ideas that were initially to be found in the early scrap-books were to be translated into heavy 'scrap-metal' sculpture. There is an element of excitement in the brutality of much that Paolozzi makes but there is nothing brutal about the man from whom Henderson and the Smithsons took so much.

For all the fascination of the new imagery Henderson remained essentially English and his 'collages' and 'photomontages' were far from the spirit of POP.

In spite of his connections with Hamilton and Paolozzi, Henderson's work has nothing to do with Pop Art, however. It belongs to a tradition that has deep European roots and relies on imagery which often has a nostalgic appeal: the battered Player's cigarette tin; the old Tit-Bits cover; superannuated picture postcards. 'What I miss about London is the cheap old books of every description I

used to buy to look at and to cut up. Old catalogues of all kinds, cook books, plumber's manuals, piano catalogues, Illustrated London News, tastefully posed nudes "Mes Modeles", Modern Bridge, Sports and Pastimes, Wonder Books, the "Miracle of this and that", Eddison, Eddystone, Euclid, Eucryl, Flags of all Nations, Manuals of Brewing ... (35)

The Henderson photographs, taken by the Smithsons to Aix-en-Provence, owe little to Eduardo Paolozzi and the stirring events at the I.C.A. but they do owe much to the notion of 'collage' that the two friends shared. Time and time again the Smithsons use the phrase: 'decoration of the urban scene' - we read it in the Johnson Script (36) - and at times it is extended to include the equally revealing: 'people are its predestined ornament' (37) as though they see them as little more than bit-players on a film set. Henderson describes his attitude to what he saw in Bethnal Green in somewhat similar terms:

... I was beginning to build up quite a large stock of negatives taken in the streets mostly in the Borough of Bethnal Green or adjacent Boroughs like Poplar, Hackney, Bow and Stepney. I would think of the small box-like houses and shops etc. as a sort of stage set against which people were more or less unconsciously acting. (38)

And he continues to relate these observations to what he obviously saw as the more creative aspect of his work:

Some particular marks (like the slicks and patches of tar on the roads, the cracks and slicks and erosive marks on the pavement, slabs, the ageing of wood and paintwork, the rich layering of billboards etc....) linked with the work I did more directly with the enlarger ... (39)

In the light of his own admission it can be argued that Henderson is of little importance within the internal history of photography: indeed he is rarely spoken of unless in very general terms, in relation to Mass Observation or in respect of the credit, given by the Smithsons, when discussing the evolution of Golden Lane, but, in the Bethnal Green photographs, which can be seen to combine all his varying interests, we can see why both Paolozzi and the Smithsons found him worthwhile. The

observations he made, that bring together the essentially disparate material that fascinated him in a 'collage'-like, descriptive, image, do reflect that day-to-day living pattern of the average East End working-class family.

There is no violence, no obvious ill-feeling and very little noise; it is as though, in his search for personal reassurance, Henderson was able to find - and record - the outward appearance of social stability. He pointed his camera towards the decorative aspects of the urban landscape, in which people acted out their 'bit'-part as predestined ornament, just as the Smithsons said they did. It might well be on the corner of Chisenhale Road, Bethnal Green, but he makes us think in terms of the quiet village street and there is a sense of the pastoral in what we see.

In common with the majority of 'observers', Henderson was unable to tell the full story and, like the 'Worktown' men, he left certain areas of working-class well alone. Humphrey Spender, when asked why he had avoided showing the undoubted poverty he knew to be there, was loth to accept that it was consciously avoided but well explained the need for tactful consideration for those who were being watched. He takes the line that it would have called for a different approach - a different set of skills - that it was not what he had been asked to do.

Is it avoided? I think you'll find that Tom(Harrisson) made a revealing comment somewhere about the possibility of getting inside people's homes and of course the main difficulty was always that once you got inside somebody's house then you were no longer taking the unobserved photograph so that necessarily the whole process was long winded and would have taken a long time - one would have had to become part of the family ... Also there was a feeling that people who are in impoverished circumstances, people who are out of work simply do not like their state being exposed, in many ways the photographs would have been an exploitation ...(40)

#### Judith Henderson

Unlike her husband, Judith Henderson was more methodical, as befits

a trained Anthropologist. As part of her 'Discover Your Neighbour' course, she needed to keep notes - a daily diary - on one particular local family. She needed to observe the day-to-day activities of an East End working-class family, without recourse to the camera.

The family she elected to watch were the Samuels, who lived just across the street, in 31 Chisenhale Road and they soon became the Hendersons' neighbours.(41) Paolozzi and the Smithsons knew them well and Nigel Henderson took their photographs many times. Of all those involved in the comings and going in Chisenhale Road, it is the daily difficulties of the Samuels that we know most about. Ordinary, law-abiding, working-class people - little more than urban decoration - acting out their daily lives under the watchful, caring, eye of the Hendersons, across the street in No.46, with little between them but a roughly chalked 'Hop-Scotch' grid.(42)

Father - Leslie, Mother - Doreen, and five sons; Leslie, Brian, Peter, Geoffrey and Douglas. They occupied the whole house. Next door lived Leslie's parents, his brother and sister-in-law and their two sons. Utterly typical, ideal in every way for what Judith had in mind. The sort of family quite common in Bethnal Green; common in the sense that their difficulties were common to that particular class to which they belonged - the working-class, then, as now, plagued by a constant shortage of money and the threat of unemployment. Ordinary common people:

Who are the common people? What picture is brought to mind by the phrase 'the common people'? It is perhaps hard to define them, but I would say it is those many of us who are without surplus. Those who live close to the standard minimum - a little above - a little below. They are the immobile people. The people who have to stay put whatever happens, for they have to be where their job is and where the brood is springing up.(43)

Perhaps the easy answer is to see them as those that rely on their

neighbours.

We know exactly how the Samuels looked, at least on one strictly formal occasion, dressed in their Sunday clothes, standing by the iron railings outside No.31.(44) The boys appear elsewhere in Henderson's work, leaning against flaking walls, merely decorating the urban scene - but this is a consciously posed set-piece. It has all the appearance of a piece of documentary evidence, to supplement his wife's diary, but when asked if there was any conscious collaboration with her on this project he denies that any sort of direct involvement existed: 'No. Not directly at all. A number of people used to come round. I used to listen to them talking. Judith was being very encouraged by Tom Harrisson'(45) and that's as far as he's willing to go.

The diaries have a straightforward feel for the truth and the events, as they took place, are reported in bland, matter of fact, words which are well suited to the trust that developed between the two families and their neighbours in Chisenhale Road. There is no attempt to introduce pathos or sentiment, it is made quite clear what the main day-to-day concerns were. Whatever the serious consequences of Leslie's all too frequent periods of unemployment, it is the small, irritating, household difficulties that preoccupy Doreen and interest Judith Henderson. The daily dissatisfaction, the need for change; if you can move the furniture around, somehow all will seem better - or at least look better - and you will have tried to make the best of things. Inside the house you can do as you like.

They had got fed up with always sitting in the kitchen and wanted to use the top room for a change. The room is divided into two parts by a doorway, intended for double-doors. When the S's moved in they were separated by a matchboard partition, but Mr.S. knocked this down. They distempered the walls in yellow and stencilled a lozenge pattern in green around the top and sides and stuck a paper frieze along the upper edge. This is in the front

part of the room only as they did it before throwing the two rooms together and the back part forms the sitting room.(46)

And, of course, once you start it's 'musical chairs' and round you go, hoping that the new arrangement will prove more practical. There's nothing like a change: 'The kitchen was furnished somewhat differently from the way I had seen it before, as there was a couch along the back wall and a cot next to it, taking up all that wall. The room looked very untidy as it usually does'(47) and, with five children, something just had to be done.

Sleeping them all comfortably was a constant problem:

Sleeping. Mrs.S. has recently rearranged their sleeping so that Brian, Leslie and Geoffrey now share a double bed and Peter and Douglas have a sofa bed. All the children sleep in one room, the parents in another. She thinks the babies sleep better with other children, as they are warm and do not get wet. She does not normally share her room with any of the children, and never has them in her bed, her husband disapproves of it.(48)

Nine rooms sounds adequate enough but there can never be enough space for this constant rotation of function. There will always be some rooms that have to be left as they are and consequently your real options are limited. A family of seven needs extra space and, like Le Corbusier, the Smithsons soon began to think of the street as the logical, and instinctive extension to the home. If your internal space, inside the house, becomes claustrophobic, you run into the open air - out into the back-yard or out into the street. Fortunately for the Samuels, at that time there was little traffic in Chisenhale Road.

Not all your difficulties can be solved by a good change round, not all the bright ideas will work, but the notion of change is important to the common people who always hope for something better in the way of living accommodation.

If all fails you turn instinctively to your family and to your next door neighbours. The Samuels soon learned to turn to the Hendersons:

Brian came over to borrow some coal ... they were burning a door for fuel. Said his mum only had 2/7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. in the house. Dad would be paid this evening for the two weeks he had been at work. So they were very short. Mum had been borrowing from a friend up the road to tide over.(49)

And the Hendersons were good neighbours:

She said they were short of money and asked me to give her my share of the money for the bag wash, so that she could pay the man when he came ... When she brought the wash back she asked me for 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d. which I owed her for a bottle of milk that she got for us from her milkman when ours was on strike. The money was to buy a loaf. They are borrowing from his mother just enough each day to keep them going so that they will owe as little as possible.(50)

As the Smithsons rightly realised: 'without links with our fellows we are dead'(51) and there is one such link that matters more than any other to the common people. No work means no regular income, with which to pay the Rent. For all the undoubted benefits of the Welfare State, the working-class, manual, labourer likes to feel his wage-pocket safely in his pocket as he 'clocks-off' last thing on a Friday evening. This particular link was a constant worry for the Samuels:

She looked rather worried. Told us that Mr.S. was out of work again. He went to work this morning and found a sign outside saying the firm was closed down. Some of the had come from a long way away ... they had had no warning about it the previous day. Mr.S. waited to see the boss at dinner time to see what was up. She explained that Mr.S. was friendly with the boss, he had been there a long time, and helped him out. The boss had said that he had been unable to carry on, owing to losses caused by the fuel cuts and consequent closing down, plus the difficulties of transport, deliveries etc.(52)

they found it difficult to cope with the unexpected:

She did not know at all what he was going to do, would see what the labour exchange had to offer in the morning. Hoped he would not be out for long again. They were just hoping to get their money straight again and now everything had gone wrong. He had signed on that afternoon and had been told that he would not be able to draw benefit for the first two weeks. Because he had just drawn two days pay.(53)

Reading the diaries we can understand why Henderson kept well away from the intimate, private, lives of those he photographed outside in

the East End streets. Nowhere is there any evidence of how things looked inside the houses, there are no photographs of the interior of No. 31. Both Henderson and Spender were correct in respecting the privacy of the occupants; there was no need to pry into the intimacies of family life. If people wanted to talk about their troubles they would do so to those they felt they could trust, in the way that Doreen Samuels came to trust Judith Henderson. This trust is clearly noted in the diaries.

Nigel Henderson was wise to stick to the streets and, in so doing, he drew our attention to one very important fact, a fact that much preoccupied the Smithsons at the time and one that is vital to the idea that provoked the thinking for both Golden Lane and Robin Hood. He had no preconceived plan - no prepared route - the photographs were taken within easy walking distance of his home in Chisenhale Road. As a result, they not only show how the surrounding district looked and how the local people spent their day-to-day lives but they make us aware of how dependent the East Enders were on the social and economic facilities of their immediate area. He reminds us time and time again of the small corner-shop, the local street-market - bag-wash and knife grinder - all within walking distance of his own front-door.

The East End is full of street-markets, some, like Chrisp Street and Brick Lane still cater for the needs of those who expect true value for their money, families like the Samuels who have no real, local, alternative.

Brick Lane. She said that Mr.S. goes there regularly every Sunday when he can, as a fixed habit, and brings home all sorts of things. Last time it was a whole lot of books and comics. He goes to other markets as well, and buys any household things they need, such as brooms, which she does not like getting herself. She buys the children things in the market too, specially second-hand things for the little ones. She got Geoff some leggings and some vests recently though she generally makes the children's vests out of grown up ones.(54)

Henderson's photographs of these small markets are particularly informative, not only do we see the carefully observed incident - the worried look on the old lady's face as she weighs up the price of a pound of potatoes - but also the unstructured 'collage' of the chance coming together of the bits and pieces that make up the greengrocer's stall. In the manner of Mass Observation we also note current market prices. The background of flaking walls and crumbling shop fronts we see as a stage-set, against which - hemmed in - the common people act out their intimate daily rituals. In their simplicity the photographs reveal how essentially personal the difficulties were: 'Mrs. S. lined up for two hours for potatoes and only got two pounds at the end of it' (55); the innocent eye records the minor happening, in passing and without comment.

Henderson was well aware of his limitations and, in a letter to Paolozzi - a 'Prose Poem' - he talks of what he would have liked to have been able to achieve:

I wish, looking back, that I had been better technically: that I could have sung the song of every small blotch and blister, of every patch and stain on road and pavement surface, of step and rail and door and window frame. The patched garments, the creaky shoes, the worn bodies, the stout hearts and quirky independent spirit ... the sheer capacity to get on with it of the disregarded ... the humour and the fatalism of those trapped, possibly by choice in the small tribal liaisons of the back and side streets.

(56)

But this is exactly what he did achieve, in his quiet, unremarkable photographs and there is a sense of the inevitable, a sense of fatalism, in what we see. In his uncomplicated way he does show the workings of a local 'subsistence' culture, the ordinariness of the daily routine and the sheer monotony of the lives of the inhabitants.

What light there is, is pretty murky and essentially artificial:

The gleam of the Pub and the Cinema-brazen, beckoning, the corner shops ... placarded, fly posted, glass surface panes, winking with light, faces looking out from magazine covers and surrounded

by the small necessities of life string and sealing wax and fags and playing cards - all looking like stranded trams.(57)

The Henderson aesthetic is an odd mixture of prose and poetry, coupled with an eye for decorative effects seen in passing. It draws our attention to the mundane and, every now and again, hints at the less severe side of East End working-class life. The photographs taken in Bethnal Green and the surrounding districts reflect the tone of voice adopted by the Smithsons in Ordinariness & Light and, as evidence of their thinking were ideal. In Henderson's unpremeditated documentation they saw exactly what they were looking for, the mixture of the ordinary and the 'Heroic' that so preoccupied their conception of what life would be like at Golden Lane. It was blatantly obvious that any proposals they made must take into account the instinctive meanderings of the street walker and take into account the small, daily, rituals of those who know they are expected to stand in line for their benefits and often need to queue long hours for potatoes. Only in the street itself are you aware of such things and they must be objectively observed. Through the Henderson photographs the Smithsons learned to see such things for themselves; their architectural vision was based on the seemingly peripheral influence of quite ordinary photographs. As experienced professionals they were quite willing to listen to what others had to tell them.

An early Mass Observation pamphlet encouraged observers to look carefully: 'How little we know of our next door neighbour and his habits: how little we know of ourselves. Of conditions of life and thoughts in another class or another district, our ignorance is complete'(58) and this is what concerned Judith Henderson in her efforts to encourage others to 'Discover Your Neighbour'. The intention of the course was to make available to professional people the facts of

working-class life. It was intended to be an 'analysis of the historical conditioning forces acting on a community and bringing, over a time a cohesive system of attitudes, sympathies prejudices - what you like - which would in some measure represent such a community. To fly in the face of such a system of attitudes and beliefs or to be unconscious or indifferent to their existence would be to render your work, among such people, useless', (59) and it was this attitude to mutual concerns that lay behind the conversation between the friends who came to visit the Hendersons at 46 Chisenhale Road. There, at that time - in that side-street in Bethnal Green, we can sense the true beginnings of the Smithsons' Golden Lane thinking which was later to realise itself in the built form of Robin Hood.

In Ordinariness & Light they state quite clearly their point of view:

In the suburbs and slums the vital relationship between the house and the street survives, children run about (the street is comparatively quiet), people stop and talk, dismantled vehicles are parked. In the back gardens are pigeons and so on, and the shops are round the corner: you know the milkman, you are outside your house in your street.

The house, the shell which fits man's back, looks inward to family and outward to society and its organisation should reflect this duality of orientation. The looseness of organisation and ease of communication essential to the largest community should be present in this, the smallest. The house is the first definable city element.

Houses can be arranged in such a way that a new thing is created - the 'street'.

The 'street' is our second definable city element.

The 'street' is an extension of the house; in it children learn for the first time of the world outside; it is a microcosmic world in which the street games change with the seasons and the hours are reflected in the cycle of street activity.

But in suburb and slum, as street succeeds street, it is soon evident that although district names survive, as physical entities they no longer exist. But we all know that once upon a time those streets were arranged in such a way and with such additional things necessary to sustain life, that they formed the third definable city element, the district. (60)

This is the essential philosophy of Golden Lane; the essence of Robin Hood and the true meaning of the Hendersons' contribution. None of the photographs appear in Ordinariness & Light - there is no mention

of 'Discover Your Neighbour' - both, in themselves, were of passing interest. It was, after all, the notion of 'street' - the 'idea' - that the Smithsons took with them to Aix-en-Provence in 1953.

Not surprisingly perhaps it was something equally down to earth that they took from Eduardo Paolozzi. It wasn't what he made in the studio that attracted them to the notion of 'collage' but what they saw on the wall of the Hendersons' drawing room - those 'silk screen elements used as wallpaper'.

The silk-screen process is simple, you can use the most unlikely materials to block out the areas you don't actually need. But you can't expect too much and there's always an element of chance in the effect you achieve.(61) It differs from the child's 'potato-cut' only in the sense that it is capable of crisp linear results. Colour is squeezed firmly through the gauze of the tightly stretched fabric on to whatever material lies beneath, leaving the protected areas untouched.

Paolozzi stuck pieces of plain paper to the screen, with no thought for specific organisation - just an overall effect. Through the gaps left between the paper he squeezed his colour.

Of all the printing processes it is the least dependent on obvious skill or craftsmanship. Once you accept the inherent risk involved in such a haphazard method, its formal possibilities are limitless. As long as the paper is firmly stuck, the screen can be used over and over again and any amount of 'prints' can be made. If necessary more than one screen can be used and endless variations can be devised. What it lacks in refinement is compensated for in the startling, random, effects that can be quickly achieved - in a matter of minutes, with a minimum of effort. Not exactly self-made but far from complicated.

Wallpaper has no meaning, nothing can be read into it; it merely hides the plaster underneath, or covers over the previous tenant's own

peculiar taste in such things. It is a convenient way of hiding something you find impossible to live with, especially if you have no real intention of staying.

Looked at in another way, in the pages of a highly sophisticated publication like Ordinariness & Light, it can take on quite a different meaning. Printed in black and white, flat and colourless, there is something that makes us look twice; something that reminds us of what the Smithsons were looking for, to enable them to take their thinking just a little further, in the search for the looseness of organisation that would reflect the random patter of the 'life in the streets'. Juxtaposed and making an instant 'collage' with the drawing on the facing page - for 'Golden Lane city' - we immediately see what they are getting at. Paolozzi had, inadvertently, hinted at what they needed. In the flat, formless, unconsciously made patter of the wallpaper lay the answer. What they saw was the immediacy of Paolozzi's image; its lack of mystique or premeditation. The simple pattern derived wholly from the manner of its production. There is no attempt at any form of representation, no clearly defined repetition, just a random arrangement of thin black lines and heavier, irregular, shapes, scattered across the surface of the paper. At times the elements seem to cluster together, at times there is plenty of clear space. In its place, in Ordinariness & Light - within an architectural aesthetic - we clearly see the similarities with the architect's plan and with the aerial photograph.

For all the importance they attribute to Paolozzi's 'collages', the Smithsons were only too aware of the formal possibilities inherent in an aesthetic based largely on chance:

In 1949 at Peggy Guggenheim's palazzo in Venice we saw the first manifestation of the new ordering, in the painting of Jackson Pollock. In a roomful of academic abstract painting Pollock

seemed too good to be true: the ghost of the twenties had at last been laid and the way was clear. At last we were free from the shadow of our international grandfathers, free to solve our problems in our own way. The painting of Jackson Pollock is a different sort from any that we had ever seen before. It is more like a natural phenomenon, a manifestation rather than an artifact; complex, timeless, n-dimensional and multi-vocative.(62)

A full-page photograph of the artist at work is given due prominence in the section of Ordinariness & Light entitled 'The stuff and decoration of the urban scene'.(63)

If we see the Paolozzi print as the next stage on from the Henderson photographs - the plan as opposed to the elevation - then Pollock's painting must be understood in terms of the evolution of the wider scheme of things, of the overall strategy that reaches out from the street into the surrounding district.

Pollock worked with his canvasses pinned to the floor of the studio and photographs of him in action are, of necessity, taken from above. The paintings are flat and, seen in reproduction, very close to the images of the detailed tracery of aerial photography taken from a high flying aeroplane.

The method of their making is simple, though the sheer scale posed certain problems:

My painting does not come from the easel. I hardly ever stretch my canvas before painting. I prefer to tack the unstretched canvas to the hard wall or the floor. I need the resistance of a hard surface. On the floor I am more at ease. I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. This is akin to the method of the Indian sand painters of the West. I continue to get further away from the usual painter's tools such as easel; palette, brushes, etc.. I prefer sticks, trowels, knives, and dripping fluid paint or a heavy impasto with sand, broken glass and other foreign matter added.

When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I am doing. It is only after a sort of "get acquainted" period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harm-only, an easy give and take, and the painting comes out well.(64)

Pollock's impact was immense and, whatever doubts we might have in retrospect, (65) it is perfectly understandable that, in his work, the Smithsons saw exactly what they needed. Of all the post-Cubist abstract painters, Pollock was the man who professed to rely wholly on chance. When he stepped into his canvasses, swinging his drip-can - flailing with his stick - he was at one with what he saw as his reason for being there, to let the paint 'speak' for itself and to flow where it willed across the flat surface, there on the floor. Whereas Paolozzi needed to paste his images together, or haphazardly arrange his paper on the screen, Pollock had complete freedom to do as he pleased. All he needed was a can with a hole in it and room enough to swing it from side to side. Little wonder the Smithsons were fascinated by what they saw on Peggy Guggenheim's wall. Not only was it new, in the sense that they'd seen nothing like it before, but it was undoubtedly pleasant to look at; there was a refinement and sophistication in the appearance of the painting itself that hinted at an underlying, natural, order. (66)

In the sense that it was the 'idea of street' that really concerned them, here it was the 'idea' of picture making that so appealed. With the Hendersons and Paolozzi there was the intimacy of the friendship and the conversations in Chisenhale Road, but, with Pollock there was something akin to hero-worship. Pollock was an 'Heroic' figure, with the charisma associated with truly original talents, and clearly the Smithsons were attracted by the image of the vigorous American. As image-makers themselves they fully understood the value of publicity.

In retrospect it is comparatively easy for them to rationalise the events and personalities that helped them formulate their ideas for the projected scheme at Golden Lane and again and again, in their writing, they tell how it all came about. It was such an empirical, pragmatic, aesthetic, where the evidence was demonstrably there for

all to see.

There is absolutely no doubt that the visits to Bethnal Green were important and that Nigel Henderson's photographs did supply the clear evidence that they needed. No doubt at all that the blunt Paolozzi, with his insistence that all human experience is one big 'collage', drew their attention to the formal possibilities in the chance happening. It is readily acknowledged and too well documented to question. In Chisenhale Road they did discover Judith Henderson's neighbours - the Samuels - the common people, who spent much of their time walking the streets, or standing in line, patiently hoping for a fairer share of the necessities of life.

But the Smithsons, for all their willingness to learn, were already highly trained young professionals, with a growing, well justified, reputation of their own. What they took from the Hendersons, what they saw in the works of Paolozzi and Pollock must now be seen in relation to the events taking place within their own profession. The East End influences must be set within the context of their own significant contribution to the architecture of their times.(67)

Not all they saw, in Bethnal Green, came as a revelation - they were far from naive in their understanding of working-class life. Both came from industrial towns where the difficulties would then be only too apparent. The involvement with MARS and the I.C.A.(68) well illustrates the commitment to the Modern Movement and their ability to work with others to see that its ideals were maintained. In their writing, particularly in Ordinariness & Light, this comes across most forcefully and, later, in Without Rhetoric(69) the bits and pieces fall conveniently into place. There is a touch of the 'rag-bag' about their publications but the informative mixture of prose, 'poetry', diagram and photograph, does succeed in completing the picture of the

total aesthetic. Both Ordinariness & Light and Without Rhetoric are, in themselves, skilfully organised 'collages'.

In the Preface to the former they sum up their position so far:

It is a tumultuous rag-bag of a text, naive, embarrassingly rhetorical, but stuffed with good things. Its survival, however will not rest on the text but on the drawings; for in this work (the 'Golden Lane' study) was seen for the first time a random aesthetic reaching-out to town-patterns not based on rectangular geometries, but founded in another visual world.(70)

And that was the visual world of Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi; of the professionalism of Jackson Pollock, not that of the architect.

But there is a very important visual image in Ordinariness & Light that reminds us of an event that took place far from the confines of Bethnal Green and the Guggenheim palazzo: and we read: 'The world's most ingenious architect has a new idea. Many architects are still groping towards notions Le Corbusier had twenty years ago. Now he has a new idea. "Prefab flats dropped into a steel frame like bottles into a rack". - from Picture Post, July 2, 1949.'(71). It is a fact that we cannot ignore. Of all the attempts to resolve the persistent problem of working-class, mass-housing, there is one building that still dominates European thinking: Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, which, for all its 'Heroic' period spirit, dates from the immediate post-war period.

In this specific context we must realise that, while the Smithsons were visiting their friends in Chisenhale Road, Bethnal Green, East London, Le Corbusier was in Marseilles and that, when they travelled south, with Henderson's photographs, the Unité was very much on their mind.

TWOVIN ORDINAIRE

VIN ORDINAIRE

We have built a block of 360 flats  
in Marseilles - a box of homes.  
(Le Corbusier 1953)(1)

The Smithsons' admiration for the Unité is well documented: 'The nearest thing to what we were looking for': 'As ever with Le Corbusier, this building has in it seeds of what we want to do'(2) and, for all the observations of their friends in Bethnal Green and the eye-opening Pollock, it was 'Corb' in whom they finally believed: 'Mies is great but Corb communicates'(3); it is the Marseilles block that dominated their formal thinking.

Form, in the plastic - sculptural - sense, is very much a prime preoccupation and, like Le Corbusier, they see a building as a three-dimensional construction that must, above all, look good. It must have a quality which, while deriving from its function, must be at a level beyond mere mechanics. Like a piece of Constructivist sculpture its order will be sensed, rather than fully comprehended, and its rightness will be self-evident.

Unité d'Habitation

Le Corbusier's reasoning at Marseilles is clear. In his own account of the building of the Marseilles block he is explicit:

Marseilles - The Bottle and the Wine-Bin.

We have taken a momentous step, introducing an entirely new concept into the theory of housing - and into its practice. The dwelling is regarded as a thing in itself. It is a container. It contains a family. A thing in itself, with its own reality, its own criteria, its own requirements. It's a bottle.

A bottle may contain champagne, Beaune, or just vin ordinaire, but the one we are talking about contains invariably a family. They may be rich or poor, but in any case they're just human beings. It must be designed with the same rigorous observance of order as if it were a machine, an aeroplane, a motor-car or any other product of modern civilisation. It will consist of many organs made separately and put together to make an organism. With the technical resources at our disposal there are a thousand ways of doing

it, but they all boil down to the same thing - the use of machinery, of scientific method, of mass-production. Quality guaranteed. Elimination of waste, whether of space or of material, to arrive at perfection.

And, having made our bottle, the dwelling, we can plump it down under an apple-tree in Normandy or under a pine-tree in the Jura. We can equally well shove it in a pigeon-hole, that is to say into a space of the fifth or seventeenth floor of a steel framework. It won't make any difference to the thing itself or the way we make it.

Yes we can put it anywhere we like in what we might call the supporting skeleton. Or, more simply, a wine-bin. We just stow the bottle away in the bin.(4)

The Smithsons' reaction to this concept is not without a certain hint of reservation - to them it sounds just a little too rigid. Perhaps with Paolozzi in mind they comment:

The box-frame, the rack into which our dwellings are slotted: the structural bridge on which a variety of dwellings are placed like conserves on a shelf: in different ways both are constricting. We need a structural idea for our multi-level dwelling, as flexible and natural-seeming in approach as the dragonfly on a rush stalk.

(5)

and, for all the rather fey analogy, it shows a personal concern that perhaps Le Corbusier is going to far. For all their devotion, here, they do not have the total conviction that he has in the infallibility of what he has in mind. They need to consider the alternatives. The Smithsons, for all their doggedness, are wary of committing themselves to a final solution: they have always been extremely wary of packing people. The whole aesthetic, images and words, sets out to demonstrate a way of thinking, and a methodology, far removed from the dogmatic philosophies of intransigent system-building. This is the importance of the links with Team 10 and the deeply held conviction that it is absolutely vital that the social implications, of what is to be built, must be thought out in sympathetic detail right from the start. Later there will be opportunity to consider the suitability of the wine-rack, when the particular problems of a specific building have been noted.

Of all the built forms of the Modern Movement it is the Unité, that

'ocean-liner'(6) of a building, set in 'the heart of the Homeric landscape of Marseilles'(7) that epitomises the ideals of the 'Heroic Period of Modern Architecture'.(8) Here the problem of mass-housing was finally resolved. In this single block - this 'prototype' - twenty years after the Weissenhof Siedlung(9) Le Corbusier had the answer.

At the same time as Nigel Henderson walked the streets of London's East End and his wife Judith kept her eye on the Samuels, Le Corbusier had achieved a 'miracle' and the Smithsons were convinced. In both Ordinariness & Light and Without Rhetoric they duly acknowledge its continuing influence and, to them, it was without doubt: 'the most significant building of our time'.(10)

It is their opinion of the Unité that concerns us and, in this context, we must analyse what they say:

It proves beyond all doubt that the vertically openly spaced green city is possible and can provide a way of life in many respects superior to that provided in the best horizontal garden city. Privacy is assured, sun penetrates, balconies make family life possible, shops are not very far away, mechanical equipment is excellent, the view is superb and will remain superb, as will the acres of surrounding garden. All this is the result of an inventive, an exploratory, social attitude, a remembering of the idea that a city (even a miniature city) is to cater for the fundamental human needs.

In the Unité for the first time we have a modern building of inch by inch interest, a building that grows greater in time and does not storm the eye and leave the heart unmoved. The factory-made parts, the pre-cast elements, the patterns of shuttering are arranged with consummate skill for ends new to modern architecture. (11)

There is little hint of criticism, though they do offer a case for the heretic with: 'In Unité seen negatively the turned-out cell faces impersonal sun and space. Man scurries along from Victorian lifts down gloomy corridors to the solitary confinement of his private drawer'(12) but they are lastingly loyal to what Le Corbusier saw as an essentially human solution to a structural necessity.

Seen in context, certainly in retrospect, it fitted conveniently within their current preoccupations at Golden Lane and they were quick to recognise in it those qualities that most concerned them at the time. In the Unité they were able to see the articulate form that made it such a good looking building; the straightforward honesty in the use of the concrete, that left no doubt as to the method of its construction and, most significantly, Le Corbusier's sensitive concern for the welfare of its inhabitants. The carefully considered ordering of the 'extensions of the house'(13) was the very essence of the idea and, for all his grandiose statements 'Corb' never forgot the small, intimate, details that were designed to make the notion of communal living such an attractive possibility. When he talked in terms of the 'wine-rack' and his vin ordinaire, he knew that, in reality, he was talking about the common people - the ordinary working-class family - the French equivalent of Leslie and Doreen Samuels and their five children, who might be only too pleased to be stowed comfortably away in the manner that he had in mind.

In the Unité d'Habitation Le Corbusier has almost fallen over backwards trying to establish a definite relationship between the 'individual' and the 'collective'. Thirty years ago he visited the Carthusian Monastery of Ema in Tuscany, and noted the extraordinary unity of organisation, which preserved the individual in seclusion while giving expression to the communal life and faith of the Order.

The Unité achieves just such a clarity.(14)

It is, after all, the notion of the wine-rack that must concern us here, the idea that, once you had your vertical/horizontal framework, what was slotted into it - stowed away there - would retain its individual personality; the quality of life peculiar to the 'vintage'. The contents of the bottle must be recognised as having a particular flavour irrespective of whether it contained Champagne or Marseilles vin ordinaire.

Opinion may well differ as to the lasting worth of the Unité as a definitive 'prototype' but there is little dissension in terms of its immediate effect on the Smithsons. Reyner Banham, their Independent Group colleague, in his The New Brutalism(15), which chronicles the evolution of that most important post-war British movement, is quite adamant in his assessment of the building's major contribution:

The crucial innovation of the Unité was not its heroic scale, nor its originalities in sectional organisation, nor its sociological pretensions - it was, more than anything else, the fact that Le Corbusier had abandoned the pre-war fiction that reinforced concrete was a precise 'machine-made' material.(16)

Le Corbusier's ability, to construct emotionally disturbing relationships out of coarse - 'brutal' - material, without sacrificing linear purity or sculptural refinement, obviously struck home. In Without Rhetoric the Smithsons are equally clear in their personal evaluation of this essentially physical aspect of the block: 'That the degree of finish could indicate use was already spelled out in the early 'fifties by Le Corbusier's Unité in Marseilles with its 'container'( rough - the urban framework) and 'contained'( well-finished - the house cell)'.(17)

There is little doubt that the attractive combination of tough 'reality' and the sensitive concern for intimate detail is what makes Le Corbusier so meaningful to them. The well-worn look of the rough concrete hints at a capable self-sufficiency, within the confines of the surrounding district, while its innate resilience can be seen to symbolise the will to survive of those who live in what he built. Within the 'wine-rack' there will always be room for finesse. If the exterior suggests a confidence and a conviction that all is well inside the building, this will enhance the image of social stability so necessary in working-class communities.

Le Corbusier's concern for the physical, and moral, welfare of the

inhabitants may, at times, seem naive, but he was right to accept that it is the day-to-day organisation of the family unit that is so time-consuming and right to concentrate so much of his thinking on seemingly mundane domestic arrangements. The Unité is built around the realisation that a routine is necessary, if an orderly way of living is to result and that any effective, practical, organisation must stem from the person who spends most time in the house. His efforts to ensure that the house-wife and mother, who spends much of her time at the kitchen sink, should have all she needed are very much in evidence, in the Smithsons' interpretation of this attitude of mind, in the designs for Golden Lane and in the built form at Robin Hood.

At Marseilles, Le Corbusier made every attempt to ease the daily difficulties experienced by the house-wife, by placing the necessities of domestic living within easy reach. Not only were the kitchens themselves efficiently organised, but the Unité had its own shopping-centre and there was no need to traipse into the nearby city. The block was self-sufficient and those who talked in terms of a 'human beehive' missed the point. Le Corbusier set out to put the families at their ease and to encourage a confidence in their ability to make the most of the communal opportunities offered there on their own doorstep.

The philosophy was simple; if peace of mind leads to family harmony and that sense of well-being spreads throughout the whole block, then there will be no need for any imposed, outside, order. Self-discipline will derive from the benefits of self-sufficiency, as it had in the Monastery of Ema.

Man believes in liberty, and he claims to think for himself. But if he wants the fruits of independence, he must be prepared to collaborate with others. Individualism and collectivity - we have here a perfect duality. There can be no individual liberty without external order. That order may be freely consented to, but it is none the less a discipline. Discipline has much to give. (18)

But it is not only a matter of social organisation and a developing self-confidence, there is also the personal 'poetry' - beyond the stated philosophy and the justification of the method, there lies the problem of how it should actually look. The making of architecture is very much a personal concern, a 'collage' of ideas, but it will inevitably depend on the stylistic inclinations of the individual architect and the varying degrees of professional expertise at his disposal. It will also depend, to a considerable extent, on the prevailing mood of the times and the realities of specific situations.

### Golden Lane

At Golden Lane the Smithsons intended to re-build in the spirit of post-war optimism, in the light of their commitment to the ideals of the Modern Movement. To them it was a moral obligation to do so and, with events in Marseilles fresh in their minds, they set out to give a new look to local authority housing.

In the Preface to Ordinariness & Light the comment is made that little had been attempted, let alone achieved, by those responsible for the re-building of the shattered city and that, inexcusably, the new generation had been left out in the cold:

... re-building in England had been so feeble that for the ordinary person it was not possible to feel that any attempt to build the dreamed-of post-war world was being made. In the comprehensive development areas in London - Lansbury, Poplar, for example - it was the same dreary old piecemeal tinkering of between the wars. Somehow a defeated world - and this was not the result of practical restrictions, it was a true bankruptcy of sustaining notions.

and they ask the question: 'What could the authorities possibly have lost'.(19)

Thirty years later the Smithsons still have no love for Lansbury and it is understandable that they should feel so dismissive. In their terms, of socially conceived working-class mass-housing, it has

a lack of organisation, it is in no way 'Heroic' and makes no positive contribution to the way of life of the surrounding district.

### Lansbury

Conceived as little more than a live-exhibit for the Festival of Britain(20) Lansbury adopted all the respectable compromise architectural forms of pre-war suburbia and, in that sense, was far from what was needed in the derelict East End. Its thinking was traditional and, as far as the Smithsons are concerned, far from optimistic.

The official press hand-out explains the intention:

The buildings, of varying heights, will be grouped round closes and spaces of different sizes, each with its individual character. In some cases there will be children's playgrounds in the centre of blocks, completely protected from traffic. The layout is in fact a series of neighbourly groups linked together by open spaces. While this type of layout is new to the East End of London and the contrast between new and old forms of development is likely to prove striking, the architectural treatment of most of the buildings will include the use of London stock bricks and purple grey slates which are traditional building materials for this part of Poplar.(21)

Lansbury backs on to Crisp Street Market and that is the main shopping centre for the inhabitants of Robin Hood and but for that, in this context, it would be of little lasting concern. As an alternative to what the Smithsons proposed at Golden Lane it made little sense:

Housing in terraces and low flat blocks form pleasant spaces on a human scale. The shopping centre and market square is a three-storey development of maisonettes over shops, there are two pubs and a single-storey covered market for the sale of perishable goods. The buildings are grouped to form a narrow shopping street, which extends into a rectangular market square, the whole being exclusively pedestrian: the first shopping precinct to be built in London.(22)

A collection of small terraced and semi-detached houses, with gabled roofs and mean windows, was certainly not what the Smithsons had in mind. They had no love of past forms, the time had come to think in terms of the immediate future - to make new - and like Le Corbusier, in Marseilles, they had the answer.

### Golden Lane

In the graphically startling designs for Golden Lane we clearly see its most important innovation - the 'street-deck' - and we are shown precisely how it was intended to function. The debt to Le Corbusier is readily acknowledged(23) and it is the one essential element in the original thinking that survives, intact, at Robin Hood.

As ever it is a simple idea, the 'street' lifted high off the ground away from the threat of fast-moving traffic. Day-to-day living would be made that much safer and therefore more pleasurable. The choice, between the pedestrian precinct and the pedestrian deck, was easily made, once it was decided to opt for an organisation dependent on a continuous, elevated, street network. Living would still be horizontal and each deck would have a large number of people, with their front doors opening onto it. In terms of the Le Corbusier 'wine-rack', the deck would be the lateral strut and the front door the cork of the bottle resting on it.

The real innovation, as far as the Smithsons were concerned, was the width of the deck: 'wide enough for two mothers with prams to stop and talk ... and still leave room to pass'(24); it was designed to allow for easy access and to provide ample space for the activities of the traditional street to continue, if the spirit the conventional way of life was to be retained. Whereas the narrow access-balcony was meant for the private use of those who lived immediately off it, the deck was conceived as an extension of the public areas of the building and available to all those who passed along it. Privacy was still a consideration but only once the front door was closed. The Smithsons saw the deck as the equivalent of the ordinary street with which the inhabitants were quite familiar - not at all unlike Chisenhale Road.

The graphics are deceptive, with plenty of white paper and thin, sharp, lines that serve to exaggerate the internal distances and reduce what would have been the undoubted physical presence of the concrete structuring; but there is no question that what they offered was based on rational - common-sense - thinking. It is easy to accept that the inhabitants would indeed make the most of the freedom of access and take the opportunity to move easily and conveniently, from one level to another, within the building. Stairs, at regular intervals, cross-roads and intersection, would offer constant choice and they would soon orientate themselves to the complexities of the street network. A personal familiarity with the immediate sections of the system would be quickly established and the shopping areas, set within easy reach - off the deck - would soon become the equivalent of the local-shop, as experienced in the traditional street pattern. Soon there would be no need to look elsewhere for the daily necessities. It was hoped that, in time, individual house-holders would be encouraged to open their own shops, to cater for specific local needs, using the extra space available. There was even talk of market-stalls.(25)

It would take time, the community must be allowed to develop quietly and at its own natural tempo - the Smithsons designed with this very much in mind. What they offered would be merely the starting-point for further development, as the need arose. The ideology behind Golden Lane - as with Le Corbusier's Marseilles Unité - is the concern for social harmony and the psychological growth of a stable community, firmly built around the specific needs of those that lived there. It was never intended to be the definitive answer, in the sense that it would resolve universal problems; it was an answer to the peculiar difficulties on Bunhill Fields.

If what they were offering, as an alternative to the 'same dreary

old piecemeal tinkering of between the wars'(26) or even to the 'blighted Peabody Trust dwellings'(27), there on the blitz tip at Bunhill, was to work, then the local peculiarities must be considered very carefully. For all the sophistication of the graphics and the wit of the accompanying 'collages', it would, in the end, be nothing but the equivalent of Le Corbusier's vin ordinaire that flowed freely out onto the decks, once the front-doors opened. What they had to offer, in the projected designs for Golden Lane, would need to relate directly to the working-class way of living traditional to that part of London.

The designs, for Golden Lane, have a particular flavour and an immediate appeal, that well explains their continuing popularity with architectural theorists within the profession.(28) Like Henderson the Smithsons do have an eye for the ordinary and, in their concept of the 'yard-garden', they set out to resolve the most difficult and, in a sense, the most controversial problem that confronts those concerned with working-class mass-housing.

Living together is difficult enough at the best of times and, in less than ideal conditions, it can lead to unnecessary tensions which destroy any hope of lasting social harmony. Neighbourliness is often a matter of tactful diplomacy, of knowing how far it is wise to offer advice or to interfere with what is happening close to home; a yard or so from your own front door:

Brian came over in the morning, helping in the kitchen. Later Mrs. Wilkins who lives next door told Muriel that she had seen Brian go to the meat safe when no-one was there and take something out of it and go down the garden with it. Subsequently Muriel found an apple missing from her room, asked Brian if he had seen it. He looked very guilty, but denied it. Later Nigel spoke to him and said that he should ask if he wanted any of our food, and we would let him have it if it was to spare. He looked extremely apprehensive throughout.(29)

In the concept of the 'yard-garden', the Smithsons, were well aware of the need to counterbalance the necessary public character of the

deck, with the intimate private space within the dwelling. Though the intention of the scheme was to encourage social growth - the tenants of Golden Lane would be expected to 'discover their neighbour' - they knew that there was more to working-class life than evidenced by the Henderson photographs.

The street, for all its importance, was not the only outlet; there was the back-yard, where the peculiar needs of a particular family was most likely to manifest itself. Out the back, in the comparative quiet of the yard, the more irrational aspects of the occupants' behaviour can be observed. Not by the tactful Henderson, or by the polite men of Mass Observation, but the Smithsons knew from their own experience that it was so.

In the listed Criteria for Mass-Housing they ask the following question: 'Is there a place for the belongings peculiar to the class of the occupants: poodles, ferrets, motorbikes, geraniums, and so on?' (30) and, in the proposals for Golden Lane, the solution was to be the 'yard-garden'.

Again it is a simple concept, the casual passer-by would be able to play his part: 'These yard-gardens, which can be seen from the deck, bring the out-of-doors life of a normal house - gardening, bicycle cleaning, joinery, pigeons, children's play, etc. on to the deck, identifying the families with their 'house' on their deck' (31), there would be the same open 'see-through' plan of the traditional street. The 'yard' might well be small (32), but at least it meant that there would be further space, outside, in which it would be possible to make a personal contribution to the predetermined way of life within the framework of the building. In terms of the 'wine-rack', the 'yard' would be part of the bottle itself.

The fact that it would be partly visible from the deck was seen as its

most socially acceptable characteristic; those two women with prams, who had ample room to stop to pass the time of day, would no doubt be talking of the happenings - the 'goings-on' - over the 'yard-garden' wall.

The passer-by would be able to offer advice, in the growing of geraniums or the maintenance of a motor-bike and the pattern would continue throughout the whole network of the building - just as it had in the small back-streets of Bethnal Green. Links would soon be made, with others of similar interests living in other parts of the continuous system of interrelated streets and the more eccentric tenants would have space in which to express themselves. Each inhabitant would be free to decide how best to use his, or her, 'yard-garden' and there would be no need to restrict their choice. If they chose to keep pigeons, or to grow geraniums, either would be perfectly fitting in the overall scheme of things. Not only would the social harmony benefit and become enriched by the tenants' peculiarities but, so too would the look of the architecture. The quality of life, chosen by those who determined the varying uses of the 'yard-garden', would be clearly reflected in the form of the 'wine-rack' itself. As the Smithsons saw it, the concrete block - the slab - would develop a character of its own, inevitably, through the differing personalities of those that lived in it.

What they proposed was not particularly new, Le Corbusier himself had suggested similar solutions(33), but the Golden Lane graphics clearly indicate how far they were willing to let chance play a part in the evolution of the architectural form of the building.

In the self-explanatory 'collage' elevation: 'vignette patterns of life and sky', reproduced in Ordinariness & Light(34), the linear outline of the building is set firmly on to a photo-montage of the blitz

tip at Bunhill Fields. We can readily discern, as from ground-level, the decks and the access-stairs leading from them. People, in their role of 'predestined ornament' are shown moving freely throughout and, to the right, a large shrub tilts precariously outwards from a 'yard-garden', to hint at what might happen, in time. Time for plants to grow, for individual personalities to develop, before the full impact of the way of life would be felt on the face of the building. The opportunity would be there, at Golden Lane, for a whole new concept of working-class housing to manifest itself. Instead of cluttering up the city, with row upon row of small terraced houses here would be a new order, based on that other visual world of Henderson and Paolozzi, that would prove to be the way of retaining the intimacy of the old street pattern:

Living high should not mean living like caged-birds, but should provide what the old order had, with added views, privacy from over-looking, and safety of movement. Movement up and down as well as along and round the corner, so that our immediate neighbours are increased not decreased.(35)

The building would emerge 'collage'-like, step-by-step, yard-by-yard and how it eventually looked would depend entirely on the ingenuity of its occupants. To what extent the authorities would allow their tenants to express their peculiarities, is not discussed, and it might well be that certain limitations would prove necessary, to ensure that common-sense prevailed, but the mutual understanding of the need to live-and-let-live would be essential if any true communal stability is to be achieved. Self-discipline would be needed.

Le Corbusier understood that, only too well: 'It is essential to create the right frame of mind for living in mass-produced houses'(36), the delicate balance between the mechanics of the structure and the scope allowed for personal whim is difficult to maintain. His own experiences in the Quartiers Modernes Fruges, in Pessac, were a stern

warning. The instinctive reaction of the French working-class, which transformed his strictly formal low-cost housing into a sadly predictable collection of imitation suburban villas, utterly confounded his thinking and personally mystified him.

He ought to have realised that manual labourers are unlikely to leave well alone, they become discontented if their hands are idle, and, in Pessac, the temptation proved too much for them:

... in Pessac Le Corbusier produced the kind of architecture that lent itself to conversion and sculptural ornamentation. And what did the occupants do? Instead of installing themselves in their containers, instead of adapting to them and living in them 'passively', they decided that as far as possible they were going to live in them 'actively'. In doing so they showed what living in houses really is: an activity. They took what had been offered to them and worked on it, converted it, added to it.

What did they add? Their needs.(38)

But Le Corbusier learned his lesson and, in the Marseilles Unité, made quite certain that it wouldn't happen again.

The Smithsons were less cynical, they had the Henderson photographs, and what they proposed as the equivalent of the idea of 'street' and the innovatory 'yard-gardens', would offer more than adequate opportunity for the deployment of idle hands. There would be plenty of scope for personal expression, built into the structure of the building; the occupants of Golden Lane would feel no need for conversion or ornamentation, beyond that which can be seen in the explicit graphics. As far as they were concerned, there was little evidence in the Henderson photographs, or in the day-to-day behaviour of the Samuels, to suggest that anything too out of the ordinary would occur. For all the stress on the peculiar needs of the individual family, there is a sameness - a 'typical' behaviour pattern - about the activities observed in the back-streets of Bethnal Green and 'Worktown'.

When the Smithsons ask: 'Are the gardens and streets(or their

equivalents) necessary to the life of the occupants?' (39) they know only too well, that 'necessity' and need are relative, to specific time and particular circumstances, and that easy answers, based on all too glib generalisations will prove inadequate. Certain things they knew they had to take for granted, designing for the anonymous local-authority, council tenant, does involve an inevitable distancing from the individual and there is evidence to suggest - beyond that of Nigel Henderson - that certain inherent characteristics are to be seen in the daily activities of the common people. It is in that sense that they can be thought of as being common. (40) But the essence of the aesthetic is that the ordinary must be flavoured with 'light', which is drawn from the peculiar situation, of a specific problem - often by chance - hopefully through the personal contribution of others, so they themselves must be wary of generalising.

Nigel Henderson's photographs do little more than show how the working-class people of East London reacted to their collective, social predicament in the early 'fifties; and the Smithsons' designs for Golden Lane must be considered to be equally specific. They are the proposed answer to a particular problem - the need to provide the answer to the housing problem on the blitz tip at Bunhill Fields.

The fact that their projected solution was rejected, there were no equivalents of 'street', or 'yard-gardens' built there and then, can be seen as less than the personal disaster the Smithsons felt at the time: as with the Unité, much has been written about the concept and the enlightened - sophisticated images that served to publicise the architects' intentions. In the Preface to Ordinariness & Light, they speak of the 'painful rejection', but as ever they justify their stance:

... in this work (the Golden Lane study) was seen for the first time a random aesthetic reaching-out to town-patterns not based

on rectangular geometries, but founded in another visual world. This random aesthetic - or at any rate the graphics of it, if not an understanding of what it was reaching out towards - has since become part of the vocabulary of 'advanced' urban design all over the world, even down to the arrows on the drawings.

The main themes we still believe in passionately: the restoration of the feel of the land; the invention of an architecture structured by notions of association - of place; the re-direction of our cities and towns towards safe-movement, openness and light by inserting into the old structure urban events at the scale of our new patterns of communications.(41)

That other 'visual world' - of Paolozzi and Pollock, involving chance and irrational juxtaposition, seems metaphorically and literally streets away from the mundane observations of Nigel Henderson, but it is very much a question of 'graphics' and their appearance on the printed page, when used to justify a random aesthetic.

All Henderson did was supply the evidence, to justify the aesthetic at Golden Lane - to show how the common people reacted in specific circumstances - and draw our attention to the fact that, however unpredictable they occasionally were, they needed, daily, to lighten the ordinariness of their lives; how they needed room to move. The daily doings of the Samuels clearly illustrated that any change would be slight, often private - concerned with intimate sleeping arrangements - personal things - small readjustments that seemed, at the time, to make all the difference:

Nigel went over to their house and Mr.S. showed him his 'study' which he had made over the week-end, in their front room upstairs. He had cleared the furniture out and put up their bed in the back room. The idea was to use it as a quiet room for the grown ups. Mrs.S. could do her machining there out of the children's clamour. This was clearly an idea copied from us and he was very proud of having done it. Nigel has been telling him that it is essential to have some place to be on one's own.(42)

The 'graphics' of Golden Lane are clear-out and nothing untoward is seen to be taking place. Plenty of room to move, plenty of well-defined space and the 'predestined ornament' looks particularly well-behaved. There is nothing in Henderson's photographs to suggest otherwise, and nothing in Ordinariness & Light, that disturbs the notion that the

hoped for social harmony would be anything but inevitable - once the proposed thinking were put into concrete effect. What we see might well, in retrospect, be considered something of a 'prototype', but it would be built around a concept of a way of life and not a preconceived architectural form. Unlike Le Corbusier's Marseilles solution, it was not intended as an answer to a pressing, general, problem; it was specific to the dismal prospect at Bunhill. It was neither the time, or the place, for further 'heroics'.

Yet, Golden Lane did embody and essential optimism, a conviction that the local authorities were doing their utmost to rebuild, and to restore the feel of, the shattered London communities. In their proposed design, the Smithsons set out to restore the confidence of the common, working-class, council tenant, by offering the opportunity of a positive, personal, contribution to what would be substantially improved living conditions. In so doing they intended to elevate the idea of 'street' and to provide, off their deck network, the ordinary 'extensions of the home' that would relate the new concept directly to traditional daily experience.

They were not alone in their thinking, there were kindred spirits who felt as they did and the sense of failure the Smithsons felt over Golden Lane was, in part, compensated for by the impact their ideas had on the young progressive architects, who felt that the time had come for a practical reassessment of the original aims of the Athens Charter.(43) In the light of the devastation, caused by the war in Europe, and the growing fear that the more established members of CIAM had become too complacent, in their adherence to out-dated - pre-war - solutions, the stormy scenes at Aix-en-Provence were inevitable. Le Corbusier was right and the Unité was the eye-opener he had said it would be.

The Smithsons' Golden Lane 'graphics', coupled with the evidence of the Henderson photographs, added to the disillusionment felt at the past notion of a 'final solution' in architecture. Those in sympathy with them called for a radical change, and the well-documented founding of Team 10 resulted in an essentially international grouping of young men and women who believed passionately in the social implications of architectural form:

By the 1950s, younger architects realised that while the Athens Charter doctrine was succeeding in rehousing people, the life they were expected to live was dreary and socially obsolete. Something valuable had been forgotten. (44)

### Team 10

The aim of Team 10 is stated, by Alison Smithson, in her introduction to Team 10 Primer:

#### The Aim of Team 10

Aim of Team 10 has been described as follows:

Team 10 is a group of architects who have sought each other out because each has found the help of the others necessary to the development and understanding of their own individual work. But it is more than that. They came together in the first place, certainly because of mutual realisation of the inadequacies of the processes of architectural thought which they had inherited from the modern movement as a whole, but more important, each sensed that the other had already found some way towards a new beginning. This new beginning, and the long build-up that followed, has been concerned with inducing, as it were, into the bloodstream of the architect an understanding and feeling for the patterns, the aspirations, the artefacts, the tools, the modes of transportation and communications of present-day society, so that he can as a natural thing build towards that society's realization-of-itself.

In this sense Team 10 is Utopian, but Utopian about the present. Thus their aim is not to theorize but to build, for only through construction can a Utopia of the present be realized. For them 'to build' has a special meaning in that the architect's responsibility towards the individual of groups he builds for, and towards the cohesion and convenience of the collective structure to which they belong, is taken as being the absolute responsibility. No abstract Master Plan stands between him and what he has to do, only the 'human facts' and the logistics of the situation.

To accept such responsibility where none is trying to direct others to perform acts which his control techniques cannot encompass, requires the invention of a working-together-technique where each pays attention to the other and not to the whole insofar as he is able.

Team 10 would like to develop their thought processes and language of building to a point where a collective demonstration (perhaps a little self-conscious) could be made at a scale which would be really effective in terms of the modes of life and the structure of a community.

It must be said that this point is still some way off.(45)

The dramatic shift, from guiding CIAM ideology, was simply one from pre-war Modernism to a more open, pragmatic, philosophy where there would be no Utopian 'Master Plan' and the architecture must evolve in answer to the practical, and emotional, needs of the particular. It would be the individual architect's responsibility, to see that he or she took note of the 'human facts' involved, in particular 'society's realization-of-itself', by considering carefully the factual evidence that a specific building project was right, for that place, at that time.

In that sense, for the Smithsons, the Marseilles Unité was not the answer, but it had in it: 'the seeds of what we want to do', Lansbury was merely: 'the same dreary old piecemeal tinkering of between the wars': and Golden Lane had not been physically realised. At that time they needed their friends in Team 10.

Ordinariness & Light is the 'manifesto', the clarification of the Smithson aesthetic and in it they work their way, slowly, page-by-page - image-by-image - towards the thinking that led to the building of Robin Hood. They leave the strict, formal, control of the Unité behind and tentatively search for an alternative they sense will lie somewhere between the harsh realities of ordinary, working-class, daily 'street' life, and the 'poetry' they believe to be the inherent necessity for architectural invention. Somewhere, they are saying - perhaps in another visual world - they will find the built form, that will satisfy the need for a: 'structural idea for our multi-level dwelling, as flexible and natural-seeming in approach as the dragonfly on a rush

stalk', and bring a sense of security and social optimism to the vin ordinaire. The philosophy of Team 10, and the lasting affection for 'Corb', is clearly seen in the continuing preoccupation with the welfare of those that are chosen to live and work in what they build. Golden Lane and the aesthetic displayed in Ordinariness & Light, can indeed be seen as a sequence of sophisticated 'graphic' images but, nevertheless, both show a very real concern for a more worthwhile and enjoyable way of life.

THREE

THE MISSING LINK

## THE MISSING LINK

I think that the best one can do is to get these people and give them the maximum possibility of choice and see whether, by their example, the rest of the working-class population could be encouraged and re-directed.  
(Alison Smithson 1962)(1)

In September 1963 the Smithsons returned, from the Paris meeting of Team 10, in order to finalise the designs for what they then knew as 'Manisty Street':

Three small sites in the area of Robin Hood Lane, Tower Hamlets, became available for redevelopment by the then London County Council in 1963. For these sites (known as 'Manisty Street') we prepared designs for the two separate buildings on a common theme, with access to the dwellings off 'decks'; which we hoped would ultimately be joined up with those of further buildings to be built when sites became available to form one big linked dwelling group.(2)

And so began the commitment to Robin Hood.

In Paris they had studied the tapes of the previous meeting, held at Abbaye Royaumont, in September 1962 (3), with a view to their immediate publication, as a follow-up document to CIAM '59 in Otterlo (4) and to be seen as an authentic record of what was actually said, at a time of particular importance in the evolution of Team 10 thinking. It would be read in conjunction with Team 10 Primer, first published in 'Architectural Design', in December 1962. (5)

The delay caused by the mysterious disappearance of the original transcript, is explained in Alison Smithson's introduction to the Document, included here as APPENDIX THREE, where she is at pains, also, to clarify the necessity for the format it takes.(6)

Thirteen years later, in 'Architectural Design', under the heading Team 10 at Royaumont, Peter Smithson stresses its undoubted importance as the link between the thinking on Golden Lane and the form that

derived partly from it at Robin Hood:

This text is a rare and now historic document. Once thought lost, and then found and edited, it is the only firm link between the Team X emotions and manifestos of the 'fifties and the 'seventies when their ideas began to come to fruition ... at Toulouse le Mirail, at Terni, in the Berlin Free University, in the Housing Association neighbourhood in Eindhoven, in the Housing Wall at Byker, in Nagakin steel capsule bachelor apartment tower in Tokyo, in the Catholic Church at the Hague, and in Robin Hood Gardens.

Most of these projects had been conceived as general notions or were in the preliminary design phase at the time of Royaumont: and in the expositions and discussion of this text can be heard the voice and thought that was to bring them into being.(7)

As read, in 'Architectural Design', the thought of the delay in publication tends to lessen the impact of much that was said, but the Smithsons' strenuous efforts to be heard clearly justifies our concern. It is important to remember that, three years earlier - in 1972 - the tenants were moved into Robin Hood.

There is no mention of Royaumont, or the Document, in either Ordinariness & Light, published in 1970, or Without Rhetoric, published in 1973, though there is much, in both, that clearly relates to what was on their mind in 1962.

We present, in this thesis, the first edited version of the 'Royaumont Document', which dates from May 1971. (A3 for reference).

In the transcript, Peter Smithson, always reasonable and quietly persistent, is persuasive in his need to find the just solution and the 'poetry' he values so highly. He worries when the delight he finds in the theory of architecture isn't appreciated and he can't offer sound advice. The vast scale of Toulouse-le-Mirail troubles him, it may look perfectly feasible, on the drawing-board, but once it's out in the open - 'on site' - then that might be a different matter:

That is a public problem but it is curiously complicated by the fact that things you put on paper tend to be built. I will bring it back to the thing I really understand and that is that we have to find a way of graphically describing a general strategy with-

out committing ourselves beyond the limits of what we know. The difficult part about that is that you have to get the job. That is also quite real because people have to trust you.

That doesn't help I'm afraid. I thought I was going to help. You have to say 'Yes', but also have a strategy for withdrawal, because, as Alison says, you must stand back from what you do, because afterwards people must live there.(8) (A3)

We may well sense that he is voicing concern: that he really does want to help; that he certainly would not have accepted the job at Robin Hood if he had felt in any way apprehensive.

On the other hand, Alison Smithson is more abrasive and less concerned for the niceties. She is down-to-earth, blunt; determined that what she says will make good, practical, common-sense. Words are important to her and there must be no misunderstanding:

But also you're looking for a method of briefing people. Suppose you say, now we want to keep the densities even, you know, you don't want to work a linear system. How do you know that some idiot isn't going to charge off across country with those terrible sort of fungi growing, or does one mind?(9) (A3)

Obviously she does mind, and her commitment to the ideals of Team 10 is total. In one of the Document's most dogmatic, and most revealing, statements, she is in no mood for compromise. Horrified at what she regards as the utter irresponsibility of Aldo van Eyck, in submitting for discussion a scheme drawn up by a young man outside the 'family circle', she can't let it pass without comment. The affection she feels for van Eyck is irrelevant and she attacks. We hear the dryness in her voice and listen carefully to what she has to say. It is important:

... we build absolutely on the foundation that Le Corbusier and CIAM laid for us, and I feel it is a terrible thing that van Eyck hasn't made this boy see what we all believe in in Team 10 ... Now he must make this boy understand about Le Corbusier, about CIAM, about the struggle we're all involved in ...(10) (A3)

For all his commitment van Eyck has erred and must be told so in no uncertain manner. There must be no deviation from the ideals of CIAM

- the struggle must continue.

As she sees it Team 10 has accepted its responsibility and there must be no misunderstanding. People do have to live in what they build and the debt to Le Corbusier, and to CIAM, must never be forgotten. And we hear her say just that, in 1962.

The agreed theme of the Royaumont meeting was 'Repetition': how to extend the idea once the 'prototype' or 'archetype' had been established, but the conversation meandered freely at the whim of the participants.

Three main 'emotions' can be seen to relate specifically to the making of Robin Hood. Firstly the preoccupation, left over from the proposals for Golden Lane, as to the advisability in actually offering a choice to the inhabitants, in order that a positive, personal, contribution might be made towards the look of the building. Secondly, the individual preference for the 'archetype', as opposed to the 'prototype', whereby the building itself would establish a 'rightness' that would lead others to emulate. Thirdly, with an eye to the Henderson photographs, the contentious question that the 'slum' could be - whether indeed it should be - the unit on which working-class housing might be built: whether to look there, for the way of life, around which to develop a viable concept of mass-housing.

The Smithsons' personal contribution, (11) (A3) is not specifically related to either Golden Lane, or Robin Hood, but is concerned with the evolution of a method, a system, whereby areas of quiet, might be protected from the ever-increasing noise of inner-city traffic. First published in 'Architectural Design' (12) and to be seen in Urban Structuring, under the heading 'Greenways and Landcastles' (13) it has obvious links with the plan to restrict the deafening din at the end of the Blackwall Tunnel:

Greenways are needed to get about, in quiet, on foot, or on cycle. The diagram is made up of those routes that exist plus linkage through green squares and mews to new green strips plotted on marginal territory between industry and residential: to play a dual role of access greenway and buffer strip. Schools and hospitals are linked to it, and all housing has access to some part of the system.(14)

The implication is, if one knows where the quiet places are, and where they are likely to remain, it must be possible to link them together, in such a way as to allow breathing space around what you build. A building must not be an entity in itself, it must be seen to make good sense within the surrounding district; it is, inevitably, part of an extended system. It must make a positive contribution to the daily lives of those that live outside it, and they must be fully conscious that it is there.

At Royaumont, Alison Smithson drew an apt analogy when she likened the manner in which a building reaches out, into its surrounding district, to the extended fingers of 'Strewelpeter'(15) - 'Pumpernickel' as she called him:

... you might be able to put your finger on a method of explaining to someone that as soon as they got to a certain distance away from the centre, that the pole of the centre - you felt the power of it dropping off, which gave the possibility that if you extended your system like the fingers of that German fairy-tale boy - Pumpernickel - at a certain moment it gets so long that you need another finger to it, you see. So that there could be a break-off point here so you don't feel the pole lessening as you get to the end. Now we haven't got this technique - but could we find it? You should be able to feel you're four stairs away from the centre, ten stairs away from the centre, you know.(16) (A3)

At Robin Hood, the 'fingers' reach easily along the path, across the East India Dock Road, to Chrisp Street and the open market - you can see them from the upper deck - but it's some way to the nearest Underground, at Mile End, and a bus-ride to the main shopping-centre at Stratford East. But this is what she had in mind, the essential links, the common needs, that will determine the extent of the contribution the building will make. Beyond will be the personal necessities,

family ties - travel to work and then to the private places that only those involved need know of.

'Strewelpeter' is a cautionary tale, terrifying in its way, and the lengthening fingers must learn not to overreach. The long nails are brittle and can easily break. But it's the image of the spidery fingers that Alison Smithson has in mind, the idea that a building, like Robin Hood, can contribute by reaching out, in an irregular, linear, way, towards what it needs for social survival. The analogy is apt, but there will be need for caution: Lansbury is close and the feel of an alien form might call for swift withdrawal. If a particular neighbourhood is felt to be, instinctively, 'foreign' or unfriendly, then there must be a built-in strategy for instant retreat. A building can't allow its meaning to be threatened by unsuitable near-neighbours, nor must it allow itself to become a disgrace:

Just look at him! there he stands,  
With his nasty hair and hands.  
See! his nails are never out;  
They are grimed and black as soot;  
And the sloven, I declare,  
Never once has combed his hair;  
Anything to me is sweeter  
Than to see Shock-headed Peter. (17)

The 'archetype' can ill-afford a poor image, within its immediate neighbourhood - it must not appear slovenly.

Team 10 rarely concern themselves with the actual look of a building, they accept individual mannerisms as inevitable, but they are increasingly wary of the dangers inherent in the concept of the 'prototype'. Even Le Corbusier makes them slightly nervous at times.

At Royaumont, two helpful definitions were given, one by Candilis and one by van Eyck:

... an archetype it is an exceptional thing - the archetype and I don't think that each day an archetype can be invented.  
Prototype is a thing of standardisation ... one puts a thing to

the test. That becomes a prototype and is repeated.(18) (A3)

A prototype is a fixed thing which is authorized and forced on you to do, whereas the archetype of a thing is an inspiring grand form, which somehow is basic, it seems to be so valid that you can evolve your own thought from it.(19) (A3)

The Smithsons built Robin Hood as an 'exemplar(sic)'(20) more an 'archetype' than 'prototype', and something of what they had in mind was talked of, at Royaumont, in relation to the idea that a 'prototype' might lead to a social, rather than a strictly architectural solution. Peter Smithson is heard thinking aloud:

You know we want to push the problem even further back, so that the attitude towards producing the system produces a proliferation of archetypes. I know that sounds crazy, but you push the problem back so that it is the general approach to urbanism and architecture which produces solutions. It may be that sort of street thing ... that one is trying to push the attitude that produces the archetype right back to its roots about what it is we are doing.  
(21) (A3)

If a particular problem is to be resolved, in a specific place at a specific time, then the lesson to be learned from the solution can only be seen in relation to that particular building - as it stands. It may well inspire others to find an equally apt answer elsewhere, to invent something close to the spirit of the thing, if the meaning is clearly understood. Golden Lane became something of an 'archetype', and Robin Hood is certainly to be seen as a 'demonstration' - the Johnson Script tells us that: '... we regard it as an exemplar - a demonstration of a more enjoyable way of living in an old industrial part of the city. It is a model of a new mode or urban organisation'  
(22) (A1)

In 1962, at Royaumont, Peter Smithson was talking in terms of the ideal and the need to offer hints to others:

... we also think that there is an ideal, that is, what we would like. And we would like to offer our ideal to other people. This is what Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe say. They say, you don't have this thing, but we feel that there is a new mode of living, a new way, and we can illuminate this by making a building in a certain way. The building is a demonstration of

an ideal, which you can choose.(23) (A3)

It is vital that we understand the true meaning, that we 'push back' far enough - to the roots - to see why a building looks as it does. The 'demonstration' at Robin Hood has its roots in the back-streets of Bethnal Green and the idea of 'street'. It is a social 'exemplar(sic)' not an architectural 'archetype' and the tenants' contribution has to be taken into account.

The thought that those that live in it, might make a building what it is: that the choice is one between the limited freedom of Golden Lane and the greater restrictions of the Unite, caused Team 10 some concern. Alison Smithson's thinking, in 1962, was a continuation of the idea of the 'exemplar(sic)' and the 'demonstration': 'I think that the best one can do is to get these people and give them the maximum possibility of choice and see whether, by their example, the rest of the working-class population could be encouraged and re-directed'(24): if the way of life is seen to be more enjoyable, by others, then the extended 'fingers of Pumpernickel' will do the rest and the word would get around.

Again, it will depend on how far you are willing to go, what real opportunities are feasible within the formal structure of the building. 'Emotions' need to be contained, in a building, and maybe Golden Lane was to have been the limit, beyond which it would cease to be practical.

At Robin Hood it is taken for granted that family, domestic, life will spill, inevitably, out onto the decks and that the easy access will lead to the neighbourliness around which the thinking is built. Privacy too must be considered and, in the Document, Alison Smithson - ten years after Golden Lane - hints at possible doubts:

... the sort of people that we really have to build for are the people who, if you suggested that they live in that way, terribly lively, hung out their washing, put flowers out and bits of blinds

and things, they would be absolutely horrified. This would be showing themselves too much to their neighbours. ... They want to be very private, they don't want to be asked to make a terrific number of public decisions.(25)

It is worth noting that there was no thought of retraction in the 'Architectural Design' version, of 1975, and maybe here is the start of the thinking that makes Robin Hood that much different from what was proposed at Golden Lane.

As ever it is a matter of balance, to what extent you can trust the tenants to contribute in a positive manner to the growth of a building. The life-of-the-streets is not always what it appears to be, Judith Henderson's diaries proved that, and there is a risk in accepting it at face value. Team 10 knew this, for all their social commitment, and are extremely wary of the notion of the 'slum'. They do not see it as an ideal, around which to build working-class homes. It may look socially stimulating, but that's not necessarily the same thing:

The only virtue you discover in the slum is their collective mutual support in their suffering. That is the only thing that is mutual about it. For the rest it is absolutely an individual man trying to push a little bit beyond that wall for a rabbit or for a chicken. That's a terrible situation.(26) (A3)

As Peter Smithson rightly pointed out, what we might see as being quite natural, might well be the result of having no choice at all: '... in a slum situation, you had no choice in that you had no choice. You were in a house and you went out because the house was too small, and to use the street for certain functions and place and so on'.(27) He is quite adamant that there must be no question of forcing people to act in prescribed ways, in order to instil a sense of order or 'logic' into a building. The Smithsons' openly pragmatic philosophy depends on the belief that, what patterns of behaviour do emerge will derive from decisions made, within the building, from day-to-day need.

There is also the sensitive question as to whether, for their own peace of mind, tenants ought to be offered freedom of choice. Might they not be happier, and life more enjoyable, if all the decisions were made for them? Alison Smithson touches on this in Team 10 Primer and, later, in the Johnson Script:

... We might say one of our primary aims in trying to find adequate solutions for larger groups of houses is to make a haven within which the individual should be able to establish private identity, find meaning for the small acts of his or her daily life, and ultimately some satisfaction through a sense of well-being, in being here at all. (28)

What is so attractive, in the Golden Lane idea, is that the balance appears to have been kept: within an area of 16' x 18'. Whether it's a real space or an 'illusion', it hardly matters, the opportunity is there, and it's a constant Team 10 preoccupation - the need to establish order and restraint, and still allow for a little breathing space within the system:

To be able to express yourself in that place that you are living. To alter it according to your own - to do it according to your own fashion. It's not just to buy or to add something to it because you need it, because of your requirements, but to do it in your personal way. These two things are freedom of choice. (29) (A3)

Whether the contribution is made, as a result of need or whim - personal expression sounds a trifle urgent - it will certainly take time; it will not happen overnight. Not only will the building need to learn how to absorb the wear-and-tear of constant daily use, but the tenants too will need to see how best to use the facilities offered. Continuity is essential, if there is to be a sense of confidence - if the idea is to work:

What will be interesting is to see if the scheme actually makes anything of anybody - if in 30 years time someone says that what made them try, or do something, was living on a really remarkable housing estate. (30)

With council-housing there is no guarantee that this will happen, tenants come and go and there is often an air of disenchantment with

what is seen as merely a temporary lodging, on the way to something better - more permanent - a home of one's own.(31) Maybe the 'wine-rack' stays much the same, but the personality of the 'yard-garden' moves on. There is no guarantee that they will stay long enough, to make a positive contribution to the look of the building.

Inside it is another matter and there will be little evidence of change: little that will affect the appearance of the building. It is here that the private contribution will be made by the individual tenant families:

I was desperate said Vicki Scott. We wanted a new look - something different from our neighbours! And we wanted the best. I'd seen some lovely paper with large poppies that would look just right. My Dad came round one evening and boxed in the basin with some wood off-cuts he'd picked up at our local DIY shop for a couple of pounds and when I finished papering and painting I got him to lay the Vinyl flooring.

All of a sudden our dreary little bathroom and loo were turned into something good enough to belong in a picture book.

I let Vicki go the whole hog said William.(32)

In 1972, the year of the move into Robin Hood, the Smithsons published 'Signs of Occupancy'(33), in which they reverted to a lasting preoccupation: that of quality. In it they offered further evidence as to the importance of the Team 10 discussions at Royaumont.

The piece opens with a rather surprising statement, which rather puts paid to the plight of Vicki and William: 'The ideal house is that which one can make one's own without altering anything. Make one's own in the usual way, that is within the limits of the fashion of the time, and without feeling any pressure either to communicate one's trivial uniqueness or to absurdly conform'(34) and continues with an equally revealing comment:

That this is possible scarcely needs demonstrating in England. The most casual walk in Kensington or Bath ... a look through open doors into an elegant hall or a laocoon of rusting prams ... the sounds floating out of upper windows ... lights onto lined curtains or the old 40 watt bulb over a pensioner's tea ... the smell of

flowers, or old fat, or cats. The richness of the mix within an apparently static format is incredible. The search for a style which can match this ideal has been the floating centre of our design effort.(35)

### Bath

Bath is important, and figures much in what the Smithsons now see as their aesthetic. Walks Within the Walls sees Peter Smithson at his most perceptive and contains much that is revealing of the man and his method:

Bath demonstrates above all that it is perfectly possible to build a memorable, beautiful, and cohesive community structure of fragments. Some have to be absolute, many have to be consistent and fully realised in a built-way; but given this, much can be indifferently designed and slipshodily built without a loss of control: indeed such failings in the whole may even be a source of that sense of control - the nowhere places are grey zones for the psyche; we seem to need them.(36)

If we 'walk' with him, and listen to what he had to say - in 1966 - it is clear that that 'housing estate', with a 'form-language' understood by all; contributed to by all'(37) was of the utmost importance to Robin Hood, and hints at the further development of the Golden Lane concept.

Those fragments of Bath which seem most liveable ...  
have one open side ...  
have plenty of pavement ...  
have their own 'garden' and also a sense of being connected to other open spaces ...(38)

Obviously it is more involved than that; there is no concern for Bath in Ordinariness & Light(39) but the underlying reasoning is there - quality does matter, and an awareness of it, will certainly allow life to be that much more enjoyable. Peter Smithson is concerned that we look carefully, or at least be alert to the small detail, easily missed, as we meander through the well-ordered streets. It is most essential that we take note of it:

... overgrown terracing and mounds, disused waterways and bridges, springs, farmhouses, cows, pigs and horses, gardens and allotments all 'within the walls'. There is everywhere this feeling of being

inside the shell of a previous culture.

There are very few places in the world where one can still see and feel the force of past form. Places where through choice or poverty the past still lives in the present - the doorsteps still in place, the first stones on the pavements and the roads, the original locks and hinges - not all there, but neither too elaborately restored nor replaced by counterfeits.(40)

With Peter Smithson we: 'follow pedestrian ways and quiet streets as far as possible; for to see what there is there to be seen one has to walk, one has preferably to be alone or with one other person, and one should not talk'(41) and we think of Nigel Henderson, and his need for solitude, and the men of Mass Observation, with their sense of decorum, not wishing to pry into the private areas of working-class life.

In Walks Within the Walls, as in the Royaumont Document, we hear a trained mind, a thinking man, clarifying his thoughts as he feels his way towards a satisfactory conclusion - working his way, slowly, from one idea to another.

The Royal Crescent may appear uniform, may seem to be so, but in fact:

... the regularity of the order masters without effort the irregularities - that some houses are bigger than others, that they are not symmetrically arranged, and that there are minor variations of window size and level from house to house. (Of modern housing collectives only Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation at Marseilles carries off as successful a master-ordering).

Royal Crescent's completeness is not only a matter of organisation and composition, it is complete as a made object: railings, coal-holes, road, gutters, kerbs, paving - certainly not all original, for there is obviously later ironwork and trim; but walking along the pavement, crossing to the railings over the road one walks in a 'live-shell' of a previous culture.(42)

It may sound just a trifle unworldly, too trusting perhaps, but, if we do listen carefully, we can see what he means; that the 'quality' is there, and that it is very much part of the thinking that led to Robin Hood.

In the Document, we hear something of the same train of thought, though here it is Nancy that offers the solution:

What I find I more and more like are places like Nancy where you feel a tremendously civilised acceptance of collective structure. Built for ordinary people. But in the spirit of a golden age. It never existed of course but why shouldn't we dream about it? In which people didn't knock each other's heads off, and didn't speak until they were spoken to.(43)

Quality of place, quality of use, it is all so necessary if people are going to live together in council housing. The Smithsons see the joint contribution, of architects and tenant, as being epitomised by their notion of Bath: 'a pure exemplar, a text screaming for traditional pedagogic interpretation'(44), with its cared-for look, which in turn engendered attitudes of personal responsibility. Man-made order, and a social concern derived from an awareness of quality: this is the Smithson dream.

Formal control and civilised behaviour, plenty of pavement and open space and a 'garden', in which to make a personal contribution to the look of things. In this light Bath differs somewhat from the backstreets of Bethnal Green. If that's what you have in mind, as the source of your 'demonstration', then perhaps the 'slum' is not the ideal 'exemplar(sic)'.

At Royaumont, Alison Smithson sounded wary:

I think the key is the life rests in the fact that the people in a way have given up, the officials have given up. They are almost outside society and that is why they are able to act in this free way. They may be a sort of person who is able to act instinctively. I think the best one can do is to get these people and give them the maximum possibility of choice and see whether, by their example, the rest of the working-class population could be encouraged and re-directed. Because the sort of slum that the officials are still interested in, the sort of dead slum, already the people in it are typed. They're in the system. They have the hope that they can, in the system, get some better conditions, and everything about them - they are already on the treadmill. I think we have to be very careful in talking about the way of life possible in the bye-law streets.(45) (A3)

Peter Smithson felt in sympathy:

I am sure that we both probably agree about this. I think that in dealing with these people who occupy places in a free situation, you are dealing with sort of urban gypsies.

They are people who - in general - people, what they want more and more - wish to have, and I don't know whether this is a wish motivated from outside themselves or inside themselves, is moving towards a greater quietude, towards a less ostentatious getting together, to be more ordinary, to be more quiet, to be more anonymous in a way, and more suburban we would say. There is a tendency to think that the only values that are viable are the values of the life we see in primitive circumstances. It may be that there are more, that the values people are actually struggling for, and the things that they wish are far more difficult you can't actually see what it.(46)

perhaps less in sympathy with her next comment: 'They are the things you think they shouldn't want, in a way. The sort of awful separate rooms, and furniture, etc.'(47), bearing in mind the Samuel's attempts to make extra space for themselves, and the necessity for a rich social mix.

This was the thinking of 1962: what the Smithsons had in mind, when they returned from Paris to start work on the drawings for 'Manisty Street'. It is interesting to note that the 'collage', reproduced in Ordinariness & Light(48), shows little signs of occupancy.

Bath is no longer the ordered city it once was, the look of the place has changed and the Smithsons know it: 'Bath's thinning blood is being leached away by a creeping timidity, but her bones are still a marvel'(49) and it still holds out hope - at least to Peter Smithson.

... there are few corner-shops in Bath, but many hundreds of 'just-houses' as liveable in and relaxed as any anywhere, achieved through a rich and flexible form language based on the house ... houses/street/service street/ service yards/service buildings/ gardens/grounds.

As the builders of Bath decided that the terrace house format would work for them, we think that the stree-deck format will serve for city housing today; it is, we feel, a solidly established 'word' in the form-language of architecture capable of being articulated through its sub-forms towards an 'ideal'house'...

Now form-language can set up a dialogue between object and user ... the user responds by using it well ... the object improves: or it is used badly ... the object is degraded ... the dialogue ceases:

and it can revive ... for there is a secret and permanent life in things solidly established and intensely made, that can come alive for other uses, other generations - even when the damage is extremely severe, only a ruin or a fragment left - but in its first period of life if it is to realise itself, the object must have

love, or at least regard.

To evolve a form-language for the architecture of a machine-served society on the basis of the pleasures of common use is of course perfectly possible. (50)

It is the ideology of 'quality' that appeals, the 'dream' that people don't feel the need, or the necessity, to knock each other's head off, or to kick the hell out of what they build. The idea that there should be a cared-for look of things is the true 'exemplar(sic)' on which the Smithson aesthetic is founded.

The Royaumont Document is made up of such, well-meant, sentiments, Team 10 show considerable concern for the 'dream' and the ideals of the 'Heroic' period of the Modern Movement, and they are perfectly willing to accept their responsibilities. Accepting Peter Smithson's evaluation of its importance: that it is the only firm link between the Team 10 emotions and manifestos of the 'fifties and the 'seventies - when the ideas came to fruition, then it follows that we must carefully examine what the participants had in mind. In it, we suggest, lies the thinking that led to Robin Hood.

If we take it piece by piece, we can establish certain main themes. As Alison Smithson's introduction explains, there was no set order in which the members made their statements, and the passing comments heard in conversation were often more revealing. (51)

We understand that Guedes is coping with a difficult situation, but a building is not just a building, it is part of the surrounding district and it is the architect's responsibility to bring order and control into the area to suit the local need. Here the concept of the 'archetype' is discussed, the 'exemplar'; the fact that with our advanced communications network the word will spread quickly enough. Slum life and the problem of the 'urban gypsy', in relation to privacy and personal contribution, to the look of a building, leads to the

notion of Nancy and Bath, and the belief that the architect must offer a 'dream' - of what life might be like. If the problem - the need - is clearly seen, then there must be the possibility of a just solution.(52)

Erskine is searching for an answer, a strategy, which involves the 'flavour' of the district and the subtle use of local materials, the use of which is probably the answer to his problem.(53) whereas Voelcker is aware of the advantages of neutrality and the need for understatement. (54)

The Smithsons' own 'Exposition' is unedited, and can be read in full in APPENDIX THREE.(55)

Coderoh provokes comments on Le Corbusier and the Unité when he suggests that it might be possible to encourage a positive contribution from the inhabitants, by offering a minimal starting-point, to which they could then add their own personal necessities:

I studied the problem of doing a very simple structure, made up more or less of a floor and a wall and a cantilevered ceiling. And the rest would be filled in by the owners themselves ... The idea is to build a multi-level structure, with all the services and all the drainage and everything, and doing more or less the same thing as for the finishing of the whole thing done by the people themselves. The general work that was being done for the workers and the people's houses in Barcelona was not satisfactory, hadn't got the human aspect in this thing that I proposed to do. (56)

Peter Smithson's thoughts on this approach were blunt:

Since the drawings Le Corbusier made of his Algiers project, practically every architect in the world has made at least a project in which there were platforms with three possibilities ... but it doesn't work. I think it's an absolutely hopeless approach. If you have a block, the sanitary block fixed, what you're left with is free space, isn't it? - to divide into bedrooms. In fact there is no difference from house to house. The organic concept of the house is the same in each house. Therefore it's just the same as curtains ... (57)

and he adds: 'If you take the Unité d'Habitation the freedom is only in the furnishing, in the curtains and so on'.(58) It is obviously not what he has in mind, there are too many inherent structural limitations in that method.

Alexander's statement provoked little comment(59) but Kurokawa is reminded that it is possible to effect a change by not building - by allowing new space to develop by not overloading, or increasing, the existing density. There is a danger of this when working to an extended modular system: it is the responsibility of the architect to illuminate - to give worthwhile life - to a district and not encourage the speculators to destroy the good that is already there:

... inside ourselves we always realise that the function of an architect is to illuminate. He is after all an artist - and that there is no meaning to life except that given to it. And that the function of a building, in its ideal sense, is to illuminate life. (60)

Stimulation is not always desirable, why not ease-off or leave well alone? If you add a piece to the existing system, you run the risk of interfering - 'meddling' - with something that might well be sufficient in itself:

What is the point of putting buildings there? Couldn't the best public investment be just a new piece of open space, because surely if you build a building in these things you compromise the whole system, because you have existing houses with little gardens and now you put a building which looks down into this garden - so the garden is no longer private. (61)

It is vital to retain privacy and essential to preserve what peace and quiet there is: it is not always better to build: 'But why not simply remove the cars, remove the pressure? Why stimulate it? You see, if you load it all with superimposed networks, eventually the bits in between the networks aren't worth having'. (62)

The terse reception of van Eyck's ideas: 'the exact opposite of what we're looking for' (63) amount to a derisive dismissal, but Bakema elicits a response, which clearly relates to the idea of the 'extension to the home' and the analogy of 'Strewelpeter': 'I have the strongest feeling that dislocation of the elements is a better technique, on the whole, for making a collective, than sticking them together. It's just

that we agree generally on the business of systems of linkages but they needn't be physical'.(64)

The Smithsons obviously feel that, in their language, it's a safer policy to let a building form its own associations - there are no rules that can be applied with any certainty - it's how it looks in its particular place, that will make its meaning clear. Peter Smithson tells Giancarlo: 'I can communicate - I can communicate by form'(65), it's nothing to do with 'Expressionism', which he views with the utmost disdain: he has no time for self-indulgence which involves the risk of imposing a foreign personality on a district.

If there is any doubt, as to the wisdom of the scheme - opt out - don't get involved. Dean and Richards would have been advised to do so, their 'ad-hoc' and overloaded plans were far too complicated. It takes courage to withdraw, but it's the honest thing to do:

You have to say to the client, 'Well, it looks as if we can't pile on all these functions without them compromising each other'. I think you have to do this because otherwise the function of the architect is merely to bring out, otherwise you give the problem to an engineer. You see what I mean, a combination of engineer and speculator.(66)

The architect must know exactly what he is doing and he must keep control of the situation throughout. If what is proposed is to be considered as an 'archetype' then it can only be seen as such in an identical set of circumstances. A 'prototype' is a different matter.

With Woods we are back with the concept of the 'archetype', the extended fingers of 'Strewelpeter, and the lesson to be learned in Bath - the main Smithson preoccupations at Roysaumont and the essence of the drawings for 'Manisty Street'.

We are asked to regard Ordinariness & Light as the evolution of the Smithson aesthetic: 'Urban theories 1952-60 and their application in a building project 1963-70' is its subtitle, but the immediacy of the

conversations at Abbaye Royaumont, between the members of Team 10 and their 'family' friends, is certainly informative. It is no longer a question of sophisticated 'graphics', the tone-of-voice is heard to be authentic and the emotions relate very directly to what we now see at Robin Hood.

The Royaumont Document has no 'Summary', though Alison Smithson did make an attempt to draw certain conclusions: Team 10 edged nervously towards a definitive statement, but nothing was finalised.

The fundamental concepts, that relate directly to Robin Hood, we see in the idea of the 'archetype' - the 'demonstration', the need for a tentative easing-out, into the surrounding district, where patterns of essentially, social, associations will form naturally in relation to it. This is absolutely basic to the Smithson thinking in 1962.

So too, is the insistence that the ordinary be taken into account, as it once was in Bath. But, perhaps, most important of all, is the fact that the Smithsons expect those that live in their buildings to accept their responsibility and to learn to care for the 'quality' of the architects' 'dream'. When privacy - and peace and quiet - are seen as social, as well as architectural necessities, it is essential that the right balance is kept, between the need for local stimulation and the apt degree of social change, that the district can afford to absorb. It is not always a case of adding more 'flavour': sometimes the architect has to leave well alone.

There is no doubt that the Document reveals the Smithson mind at work, but it is largely concerned with 'emotions' - less so with the manifesto. If we need that we must turn to the B.S. Johnson Script and to Team 10 at Toulouse-le-Mirail in 1971. (67)

FOUR

THE JOHNSON SCRIPT

THE JOHNSON SCRIPT

Why bother to describe this housing site?  
 Because we regard it as an exemplar - a  
 demonstration - of a more enjoyable way of  
 living in an old industrial part of a city.  
 It is a model of a new mode of urban  
 organisation which can show what life could  
 be like ... (Peter Smithson 1969)(1)

When they talk of Robin Hood the Smithsons stress the social advantages of their architectural innovation - the 'street-deck' - and draw our attention to the opportunities suggested by the communal, quiet, 'stress-free' zone, out there in the middle, between the two housing blocks. They talk in fact of a problem solved, in a tone-of-voice well suited to the Manifesto.

The Smithsons on Housing, made by author B.S.Johnson for B.B.C. Television, in 1969, respected this and in no sense is it a critical study. What we saw, in July 1970, was very much a combined effort.(2) The film was subtitled: 'Are tower-blocks obsolete?' and was introduced by the following statement:

Alison and Peter Smithson are British architects with an international reputation. Currently working on a new development in Poplar, they demonstrate their belief in a practical alternative to tower-blocks; a substitute, in their opinion, as new and relevant for London as the first Georgian square.(3)

The Johnson Script, accepted by the architects as authentic, is included here as APPENDIX ONE (A1 for reference) and is dated December 1969. It is sub-divided into NINE clear-cut sections.

- 1 THIS IS A FILM ABOUT
- 2 MODEL OPERATION
- 3 PARTICULAR PLACE
- 4 LANGUAGE OF ARCHITECTURE
- 5 LANGUAGE OF URBANISM
- 6 ARCHITECT'S DREAM
- 7 VANDALISM/VALIDITY
- 8 QUALITY OF LIFE

## 9 LEISURE

In it, as ever, the architects speak with one voice and it reads very much in the manner of other Smithson statements: it is a 'collage' - part 'rag-bag' - part intellectual argument and, as we might expect, part 'poetry'. On the sound-track(4) what we actually hear is the result of Johnson's often idiosyncratic editing and the ordered juxtaposition of specific points of emphasis, interchanged in the cutting of the film. It stays close enough to the accredited script to satisfy the Smithsons - they did after all take it to Team 10 Toulouse. The tone-of-voice remains suitably optimistic throughout, though Alison Smithson's opening remark is somewhat terse:

Society at the moment asks architects to build these new homes for them - but I mean this may be really stupid - we may have to re-think the whole thing. It may be that we should only be asked to repair the roof and add the odd bathroom to the old industrial housing and just leave people where they are to smash it up in complete abandon and happiness so that nobody would have to worry about it any more.(5)

Johnson introduced the film as follows:

Yet another building site in the East End of London - an East End rebuilt almost out of recognition to those who knew it before the War. But this site is different - there are no tower-blocks for one thing. It's by Alison and Peter Smithson virtually the only British architects to have an international reputation and whose influence on architecture since the War has been out of all proportion to the relatively small amount of their work to be built. The school at Hunstanton in Norfolk and the Economist office building in St.James's London embodies significant innovations but their chief interest is housing and they have done much theoretical work on it. This site at Poplar however represents the first opportunity they've had to put their ideas into practice and inevitably perhaps it's very far from being just another block of council flats.(6) (A1)

It was indeed to be a film concerned with the language of architecture and the architects' dream of what housing could be like. It was also visually quite startling.

Johnson encouraged his cameraman to make the most of the dramatic scale and scenic effects and, unlike Nigel Henderson, spent much of

his time in the air - out on the decks - peering down into the open space of the 'stress-free' zone. The camera zoomed in and away from particular points of interest - Alison Smithson appeared to change her dress in mid-sentence - and an air of racy voyeurism kept the whole thing moving at a merry pace. Face-to-face with the camera, the Smithsons attempted to stick doggedly to the script.

Johnson had in fact made two highly successful experimental films, for the British Film Institute (7) but clearly found some difficulty in coming to terms with a specific architectural theme, and the precise meaning of Smithson terminology. At times there is an air of disbelief in what we hear on the sound-track.(8)

The film is very much a hotch-potch of spontaneous comment and inexperienced picture-making and, as such, certainly revealing. There is an undoubted sense of the truth about it: the 'amateur' in Johnson, as with Nigel Henderson, led to an informative mixture of the ordinary and the enlightened. At times the Smithsons sound naive, at others sophisticated and extremely professional, and much of what they say at Robin Hood has the undoubted conversational tone-of-voice we remember from the Royaumont Document.

After Alison Smithson's tart opening remark which, in the Script, reads: ' Why bother to make a quality object if they are going to smash it up: why not a load of rubbish like developer's blocks? Why rebuild at all? Leave the solid working men's dwellings, leave the industrial row houses, if society is just throwing its money away'(9) (Al): Peter Smithson makes the definitive statement that sets the mood of the film as far as he's concerned:

We're certainly under an obligation to give the - absolutely - to provide the best possible quality irrespective of what people expect and what people are going to get. We regard it as a demonstration of a more enjoyable way of living in an old industr-

ial part of the city. It's a model - an exemplar - of a new mode of urban organisation and we think we have here a site big enough so that when it's finished you'll be able to smell feel and experience the new life that's being offered through a full range of the senses.(10)

He then re-affirms his commitment to the ideals of the Modern Movement, accepts his responsibility, and the obligation, to build in the spirit of past 'heroes' and relishes the challenge to what he sees as the 'architect's dream':

Modern architecture is the dream dating only from the 20s. Its forms, the language to clothe these forms were invented by our architectural grandfathers. They believed in the social objectives of high quality architecture for everybody. We were brought up on this dream of first period modern architecture, the period we call Heroic, for to us Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe were as mythical and as real as Odysseus and Achilles. The dream was of whole new clean cities, sun and light coming in onto glass, white and strong colours, trees and green between all buildings. Few cars, because there were few, and what few there were were relatively channelled and put away: they could be a decoration to the urban scene.(11) (A1)

It was totally unacceptable, when a workman on the site thought that what they were trying to do was 'too good' for the people who were to live there. The obligation was to build to last so: 'the thing out-lives first intentions and serves subsequent generations'(12) (A1) - it was to be an 'exemplar(sic)' and a demonstration of quality: in its way an 'archetype' for the future. Not only those that lived in it, would recognise its value, but those who came to see what the Smithsons had made of their long-awaited opportunity would be stimulated by what they saw, and be encouraged to apply the basic 'truths' elsewhere. It would be a model in every sense:

Its form - we hope - will respond to the way people wish to live today, with their belongings, their domestic appliances, their cars. Like the first Georgian square built in London it is a model for those who see it and those who live in it - at the same time a thing outsiders will recognise as new and desirable, and a place its inhabitants will enjoy generation after generation.(13)

We soon encounter some of the familiar Smithson, pragmatic, beliefs

that the form can only emerge from the day-to-day habits and behaviour of the people: it must not be imposed upon them. It must be a very specific form, that will be seen to derive from that particular place, that one district: there in the East End of London - in Poplar - at the north end of the Blackwall Tunnel.

Mental roots will ensure that: 'oddments of past character'(14) will be taken into account: 'rose bay willow-herb, children overturning wrecked cars, the smell of curry on the stairs of rejected tenements'(15) and we must, with them: 'sense  
smell  
touch  
experience'(16) - for only in this way will we really understand why Robin Hood came to look as it does.

Inevitably there are oddments of their own past character, we can't forget the thinking for Golden Lane and, as ever, it is readily admitted:

In the late 'Forties and early 'Fifties when we first started thinking about housing - the lack of identity and lack of pattern - any pattern of association - we used to talk of objects as 'found'. As if anything and everything can be raised by association to become the poetry of the ordinary. And in this way an industrial site is so easy to identify with compared to a semi-detached housing estate - a site of industrial blight or one's industrial heritage it depends on how you look at it - can very easily be used to renew a district to re-identify and become a real piece of urban renewal.(17) (A1)

Their assumption was that it's a matter of inserting the new form, easily and naturally, into the old framework - as a catalyst - to allow new ideas and associations to develop, and new identities to spread out into the surrounding district - just like the extended fingers of 'Strewelpeter'. We are immediately reminded of Royaumont and the firm links with the earlier 'emotions'.

If the old framework is strong enough to cope with the 'newcomer', all well and good: if not 'renewal' will be that much more difficult

to achieve. Sadly, in Poplar, the old framework is disintegrating quickly, unemployment is high and there is little encouragement for its inhabitants to put down roots. 'Docklands' is in trouble and, in 1969, the Smithsons were well aware of the fact:

When we started work three and a half years ago and you could still walk up to the fifth floor of the now demolished tenements you could look out over the upcoming roar of tunnel traffic all the way up into the East India Dock. Calm piece of water - a few ships. Now when we've reached the fifth floor level again it's been filled and when you should be able to see it from the houses you won't be able to. The ships on the Thames are literally passing either downstream to Tilbury - to the container port at Antwerp ... (18) (A1)

The inhabitants of Robin Hood can literally see the hope of work passing them by - the ships, come to the 'Isle of Dogs', turn at right-angles and go past.

This has been the cause of constant concern, and the authors of the London Docklands Strategic Plan (19) were blunt in their estimation and clearly troubled by what they clearly saw as a major catastrophe. As they saw it:

East London, and particularly Docklands, grew up at about the same time as the older industrial areas in the Midlands and North of the country. During the last war it was the most heavily bombed civilian target in the country. Since then, apart from the more insidious decline in population, many docks closed in quick succession. Now it has all the symptoms of decline of the older urban areas of the country many of which have long since been recognised as needing special help towards improvement. The signs are not just the unemployment statistics, which are only the tip of the iceberg and do not fully reflect the economic state of the area because it is part of a larger conurbation. The signs are the overall, economic, housing, transport and environmental state of Dockland and the Docklands boroughs and the rate at which things are deteriorating. (20)

The conclusion that: '... it is irrefutable that Docklands and East London is typical of the older industrial areas of the country with an urban fabric that is wearing out and declining rapidly and which does not satisfy the aspirations of many people in these times' (21) well reflects what we can observe for ourselves.

In 1979, local historian Bill Fishman insisted that it was the people themselves that mattered: 'Dirt piles high in the crumbling streets. Why clean it up when the bulldozer is on the march? And the wasteland continues to extend itself as the rubble heaps replace the cosy one-storeyed back-to-back brick structures that once nurtured the same families for generations'(22), and he firmly believed, even then that: '... the collective spirit was born out of a street culture based on the pub, the all-purpose corner-store, the neighbour with the ever open door and sustained by root feelings of continuity and community'.(23)

Twenty-five years earlier Nigel Henderson had sensed much the same thing and had persuaded the Smithsons to see it that way too. Now, in 1969, they had the chance to put the 'philosophy' into practice, and in the Johnson Script we hear them explaining exactly what they intended should happen. It would not be easy, but at least it was a practical problem, not one of sophisticated 'graphics' or emotive discussion. Here, at the end of the Blackwall Tunnel, they came face-to-face with certain basic facts.

The site itself was thought truly horrific - but then that was part of the challenge:

Some sites are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them. Robin Hood Lane is a miserable motorway offcut engulfed by traffic on three sides - inevitably the motorway box to the east, the main feeder-road to the Isle of Dogs to the west and the East India Dock Road to the north. Against this maelstrom, Peter and Alison Smithson, have erected a protected palisade of housing with a stress-free keep - a sizable communal green space - inside. This palisade takes the form of twin sinuous barrier blocks.(24)

The Johnson film is concerned with the language of architecture - Smithson language - 'and the architects' 'dream', and as such is to be thought of in conjunction with Ordinariness & Light and Without Rhetoric as illustrative of a continuing aesthetic development: practical, often simple, solutions to irritating social discomforts are their concern -

quiet places 'Greenways & Landcastles' - they did not intend to shirk their responsibilities in the face of the maelstrom:

We've tried to overcome the problem of this high level of traffic noise in a number of ways. At the edge of the background of pavements - as near as we can get to the source of the noise - we've built an acoustic wall which is higher than motor-cars which throws the noise back towards the road instead of allowing it to pass through towards the building. But to stop it looking like a prison the wall-panels have angled gaps between them so if you walk along you can keep seeing through but there's no direct path for the sound to pass through. Inside this a line of trees helps to break up the sound of the traffic.(25)

Perhaps 'maelstrom' is a slight exaggeration, but the noise is a constant irritation and a fact that had to be considered carefully, if any true peace and quiet was to be found within the building:

The buildings are not organised like filing-cabinets one after the other. The site is a bit like a kipper with the same functions on the inside in each building. On the outside we put the noisy next to the noisy - that is the walkways or decks and the living rooms. But the living rooms themselves are protected by these vertical pieces which stop the noise travelling across the face of the building and by designing the windows so that they can set in a position which admits air at the top but can prevent the entry of direct noise at the bottom. Using various devices you can get the noise level in the living room down to a reasonable level.(26)

There's no threat of traffic, invading the site: no noise problem there - no danger to pedestrians:

On this site we've put the moats in the ground on the traffic side of the building and there all vehicular movement and garaging takes place. So coming to the building as a walker from the bus-stop you never come into contact with vehicles. And conversely the driver of the dust-cart has no fear of knocking down an old lady.(27)

What traffic noise there is will come from outside the building. Inside all will depend on the use made of the central 'stress-free' zone. What looks like a 'keep' is merely a device to deter the antics - and noise - of footballers.

The concept of the 'stress-free' zone is not original; the Smithsons admit that, but it ought to work:

There is already in London one place that has a central stress-

free zone and that is Gray's Inn. Gray's Inn is still an extraordinarily civilised place. It has become more liveable as traffic has got worse by contrast to the areas surrounding it. This little pool of calm in central London is one of the discoveries almost of the last ten years.(28) (A1)

To equate East End council housing, with the somewhat austere, well-mannered, legal enclave might well seem very much part of the 'dream', but if it leads to the apt solution to the problem, that's all that really concerns him. We hear Peter Smithson's reasoning: 'the idea that one could have a room - chambers - there looking out on to this quiet central tree-filled area is marvellous'(29), even though the Script merely states facts, we can sense here the continuation of the Royaumont thinking.

In their attempt to hold on to the thread of the agreed format of the film, the Smithsons had to make spontaneous readjustments: had to react quickly to the sudden shift of view-point - had to adapt to the demands of Johnson and his camera. In the sense that we overheard them talking freely at Royaumont, here we listen to them thinking aloud at Robin Hood.

It is a film about the form the building takes and the apt language needed to describe it, to the architects' satisfaction. Johnson's efforts to condense the material at his disposal means we have to tread warily, but it is a straightforward enough statement of the fundamental belief, that they do have this 'peculiar responsibility' for those with little or no choice but to live in Robin Hood. It is a Manifesto.

Obliged to build, they must ensure that they offer a quality of life that reflects the 'poetry' of daily - forty-eight hour - living: that admits to a dull monotony but enjoys the occasional moments of 'light'. This is the Smithson ideal, a new concept of what mass-housing might be, that would make inner-city living less of a daily ordeal for seven hundred local authority tenants, in a particular area, in the East End

of London. And it would be a way of life that did not wholly depend on working-class expectations: what had come to be accepted as the lot of council tenants, was not what they had in mind. Irrespective of what some people might think, it would be far from being just another block of council flats.

It may sound a trifle arrogant: 'We're certainly under an obligation to give the - absolutely - to provide the best quality irrespective of what people expect and what people are going to get'(30) but it is not their intention to impose their ideas on an unwilling community. The obligation is to those that are to live in the building and to those friends in Team 10 who have high hopes of Robin Hood: the 'Holy Grail' - the Smithsons' first opportunity to build housing.

Essentially they see it as: 'a demonstration of a more enjoyable way of living' and it isn't possible to shirk that responsibility. They mean what they say, and Alison Smithson's thoughts on adding the odd bathroom, or repairing a sagging roof, can't be taken seriously - at least not in 1969.

The fact that some people might think that what they had in mind was beyond the understanding of the common people, was not acceptable - the man on the site was utterly wrong. A civilised way of living is not a matter of social class, it is merely a matter of common-sense. If the building is designed to encourage a sensible and realistic attitude to communal living, then the demonstration will act as an example throughout and working-class tenants will see for themselves and will not need to be re-directed. Once they sense the opportunities offered, and experience the new way of life that has built up around them: the concept will work.

The extent of the damage caused by the Blitz is still very much in evidence, any new building will need to be carefully linked with what

is left standing. If the needs are carefully noted, then the old tired buildings nearby will be revived by the new arrival. This is the theory and they have their method:

Right from the start we identify with a site and its neighbourhood, begin to put down mental roots - hooking onto rose bay willow-herb, children over-turning wrecked cars, the smell of curry on the stairs of the rejected tenements. (31) (A1)

And they keep their eye on the larger 'fixes' further afield. What we actually hear on the sound-track is: 'the smell of toast on the stairs of dejected tenements' but the feeling is the same - the need to sense the mood of the district, before you start to build. In the manner of the Bath walks, they grow to understand the special character of the particular area in which they find themselves. Much they learn from historical, reference, sources, but it is the 'life of the street' to which they instinctively turn: where they can actually experience the emotional feel of the surrounding area.

Small things matter: 'anything and everything can be raised by association to become the poetry of the ordinary' (32) (A1) and again, inevitably, past personal memories will play a part. The Smithsons are proud of their early associations with the industrial North East of England; they find a certain honesty in the old industrial landscape that they do not find in the less harsh suburbia - they identify more instinctively with the forthright character of functional building. It is easier for them to talk in terms of urban renewal when there is an acceptance of the idea of change, and the need to replace out-dated methods and conditions with modern technology, in the cause of greater efficiency. Their commitment to the ideals of the Modern Movement is clearly to be seen in this conviction.

Not all see it their way however: the East Indiamen went that way - so too did the dock, leaving behind a loss of necessary labour and a

lingering emotional shock. It was a simple matter to the authorities, the new container trade meant an inevitable decline in conventional handling methods: less hands were needed.

... for containers, the labour requirement was drastically reduced. The container is no more than a massive storage box, which has to be packed and unpacked at the start and end of its journey. But its contents do not have to be handled at any point during its journey. It is simply sealed on dispatch and placed on lorries, railcars or ships by gantry crane. Thus it passes through the port without needing any detailed work by dockers.(33)

A way of working life changed dramatically, when the container depot opened at Tilbury in 1965.

Let no one underestimate the magnitude of this change. The situation, whereby the traditional methods of cargo handling were being drastically and inevitably altered, demanded drastic action if the port of London - and with it our jobs - was going to have a future ... it is the employers' special responsibility to so organise the manpower available to him that the work can be done as quickly and as efficiently as possible.(34)

The Smithsons knew that times were changing rapidly: 'we realised we had to be strong enough to be self-supporting - big enough to be self-supporting. That you have to carry the sole responsibility for renewal of your part of the district (35) (A1), the building had to be of an apt scale to fend for itself.

It is clearly important that Robin Hood is seen to be what it is - a housing block - and that it is not, in any way, mistaken for what it is not. The building must explain clearly how it is intended to be used: 'These long horizontal recesses can only be decks for walking along and the entry points to them by way of lifts and stairs - the vertical movements - are clearly indicated by change of scale and volume'.(36) There need be no doubt about that, nor about the practical use of the deck, where there is ample room: 'two women with prams can stop and talk'(37) (A1) - it is wide enough for the milkman to bring his cart along and the 'eddy places', set back outside the front doors, can be used as the tenants wish.

As we heard, on the sound-track: 'a doormat is not kicked aside by the passers by and you can put out a few pots of plants or leave parcels'. Somehow it all sounds a trifle meagre, in direct comparison with what they had in mind for Golden Lane, where the 'yard-garden' was to provide necessary elbow-room, as well as making a positive contribution to the look of the building:

These yard-gardens, which can be seen from the deck, bring the out-of-doors life of a normal house - gardening, bicycle cleaning, joinery, pigeons, children's play, etc. on to the deck, identifying families with their 'house' on their deck. (38)

At a more intimate level, due care is taken with the detailing - whatever you touch will be smooth, the material will suit the need and there will be nothing harsh or crude in the making of the quality object. Children at play can be easily and conveniently supervised from within the house, from both front and back:

On the inside away and protected from noise we've placed the bedrooms and the kitchens. The kitchens are so planned that a mother can keep an eye on a two year old child playing out on the access deck on one side and also from time to time look down on the other side into the safe places which are intended for somewhat older children. (39)

The constant concern, for the well-being of children, for the idea of family life, is very much at the heart of the Smithsons' concept of civilised living. They recognise that, generation after generation will think back to the days of their childhood: they feel they have a particular responsibility to ensure that those memories are happy ones and that they must provide adequate facilities for children of all age groups.

They must also protect the older tenants from excessive noise. No ball games are played in Gray's Inn - in that quiet central zone - so why at Robin Hood. The dramatic mound is the simple answer:

In the middle of the stress-free zone the ground is modelled upwards to deter people from playing football and so making excessive noise. Though provision for football is made elsewhere on the

site. The mound doesn't look very large (on the model) but it is in fact two storeys high and will be a surprising eminence in the flat landscape of the site.(40)

It is intended to limit, rather than to restrict, and they do offer an alternative - a choice in fact: the older children can play elsewhere. At an essentially practical level, the problem is easily solved. No reason at all why common-sense ought not to prevail; there will be peace and quiet, out there, in the central 'stress-free' zone. As the Smithsons saw it, there was no need for severe restraint, or strict control; they set out to minimise the effects of the 'maelstrom din' by a subtle use of architectural form, simple devices to stop the noise travelling across the face of the building: and the mound. Again it was a case of the acceptance of responsibility and the: 'architect's dream does become the accepted social objective'(41) (A1): it the tenants make the most of the opportunity offered.

The Johnson Script is clear on this, the tone-of-voice is reasoned and well-considered: vandalism is talked of in terms of the situation as it is, there is little emotion: '... we think the amount of vandalism is fantastic ... it's terribly disheartening for all who are building to have work smashed up - even before occupation'.(42)

What we hear on the sound-track is less phlegmatic:

At the moment there is a terrific lack of fit between those things that people own - the way people treat things they own and the way they think about and treat what is in the public area of ownership. This is reflected terribly obviously in the - when you go to any dwelling - any house in any part of the country the inside is almost always well kept - well furnished - clean. The outside - particularly in state housing - broken lifts smashed glass in entrance halls - all the things we know about.(43)

The admission, in the Script, that: 'quality is no protection against vandalism'(44) is surprising:

... there are the makers (and) the destroyers. If we are not to remain torn apart by our individual natures the framework of society has to make sure the destroyers don't undo as quickly or quicker than the makers can make.(45)

Perhaps Alison Smithson's terse opening comment - it is repeated at this point in the film, with an added: 'You know we may be asking people to live in a way that is stupid - they - maybe they want to be left alone'(46) really did set the true tone of the 'Manifesto'.

Johnson, himself, makes no personal comment, beyond the juxtaposing of the filmed sequences he thought necessary in the editing, and we must remember that the Smithsons made no protest at the time and had no personal reservations in taking the film, as their sole contribution, to Team 10 Toulouse in 1971.

To open with such a provocative statement was certainly effective television, but hardly fits with the original intention to encourage the Smithsons to postulate their dream of what housing could be like. It comes close to an open admission that already the dream had become something of a nightmare, that in 1969 it seemed probable that the new realities: 'of traffic, vandalism, absence of quality' had overrun the concept of 'whole new clean cities, sun and strong light coming in onto glass, white and strong colours, trees and green between all buildings'(47) (A1) and that the 'glut of supermart - the glut on the roads' was the only real foundation left, on which the architects might build. What they talked of was no 'dream': no aesthetic. In their acceptance of the problem at Robin Hood, they came face to face with the facts of life.

And they talk of the quick escape:

the people who will live in Robin Hood Gardens will use this way out of London in their cars: they are the privileged few in our society - not much responsibility, the users of the Welfare State without heavy taxes to give them angst ...(48) (A1)

and, quite suddenly, the 'dream' is aligned with larger leisure patterns - again we are left with a rag-bag of ideas and find it less easy to sense

smell

touch

experience: what they have in mind.

The Script is one thing, what they were actually heard to say, in front of the camera, another, and we have to be very wary of drawing the wrong conclusion. We must be particularly careful how we interpret, in words, what the Smithsons meant by 'examp~~lar~~(sic)' and 'a demonstration of a more enjoyable way of living'.

In Signs of Occupancy(49) they relate Robin Hood to the concept of the 'ideal' house, suggest its undoubted merits, and explain how the tenants can be encouraged to understand the building in which they live.

... to indicate clearly how the place is to be used. So that its occupiers are left in no doubt, yet be unaware of having been 'told', which is intended to be the quiet part and which the noisy, where one is expected to walk and where to drive, where to play, where to deliver or bring the ambulance. The form-language of the building to indicate and enhance use ... We have tried to evolve the form-language to indicate and enhance use ...(50)

It is seen as a matter of intelligence, on the part of the tenant, providing the architectural language is self-explanatory and that it really does indicate how it must be used. A balance must be kept between the strict control, by formal arrangement, and a subtle series of hints, that it is better to do things in a certain way: to, in fact, act sensibly.

As the Smithsons readily admit: 'written down all this seems so banal that one wonders why it is worth saying'(51) - they do repeat themselves, time-and-time-again - but, in the light of their aesthetic and in practical terms at Robin Hood, it is essential that the notion of a form-language, based on the pleasures of common use - by the ordinary common people - is seen to be the basis of the architect's pragmatic 'dream'. By caring about the everyday worries of ordinary working-class tenants they see it as quite possible to offer 'quality'

building - call it architecture - and not be satisfied with what would be thought of as just another block of council flats.

Johnson realised this and there was much good-will on his part, but the words we actually heard left too much unsaid. The tone-of-voice can be interpreted as disdainful, though the Script certainly tells us what we really need to know about the thinking that led to the building of Robin Hood. Then, there were no tenants, so their side of the argument was never heard.

Seen in conjunction with the definitive article in 'Architectural Design' (52) the language of the architecture is clear enough, and in Signs of Occupancy we read:

At Robin Hood Gardens the street-deck is clearly for horizontal movement: lifts are shafts of vertical movement; where deck and shaft meet is a definite place. The street-deck itself is articulated so that the part by the individual front doors offers itself for being taken possession of by the householder. The dwellings are stated as enclosures but the exact internal use left open to interpretation to reflect the interchangeable use of rooms that ordinary dwellings require. Vehicle movement is kept in a moat, visibly and obviously below ground level. A moat which contains the noise, and holds the heavier-than-air vehicle fumes below the level of the dwellings and the people occupied spaces. French-windows are seen to open only on the quiet side. (53)

And the Script is specific enough:

devices to combat noise  
the mullions on the face to stop noise  
going from one flat to the next  
stop outside noise spreading across the  
face of the building  
.....  
Building forms on the site protects central  
area from surrounding noise and creates a  
quiet stress-free zone. (54) (A1)

It leaves little doubt that:

once inside building is grooved, people walk along  
deck-ways clearly for walking movement  
there are pause places: eddy points by  
front doors out of general flow so your  
door mat is not kicked by every passer-by... (55) (A1)

Even the sound-track makes good sense: 'Three long horizontal recesses can only be decks for walking along and the entry points to them by way of lifts and stairs - the vertical movements - are clearly indicated by change of scale and volume ...'(56) but the only way to evaluate the truth in what they say - to see if the tenants really do find it a more enjoyable way of living - is to examine their reactions to the building.

Team 10 seemed unimpressed, at least by the Johnson film: 'The Smithsons on Housing' was not too well received in the hot-house atmosphere of Toulouse-le-Mirail.(57) The showing was ill-timed, in less than ideal conditions, and the building at the end of the Black-wall Tunnel seemed far away. The 'family' and their friends had been preoccupied with something much more immediate. For all the talk of 'poetry' and the 'architect's dream', a much harsher line of argument had developed, in Toulouse, on the contribution of the tenant and the part he might play in the early stages of the design.(58) Quality of building was considered less important than freedom of choice: 'The people who know who-what-and-where are the ninety-five per-cent who have no privilege'(59) and Peter Smithson was heard to remark that: 'it is difficult to fall in love with a state-owned house you didn't earn'(60).

The formal arrangement of Toulouse-le-Mirail worried the Smithsons: 'keep losing the lifts ... can't find your way around - can't read it - can't fall in love with it'(61): Alison Smithson was quite blunt: it made a 'person into an animal'(62) and it seemed that, like Royaumont, Team 10 Toulouse was to be important to them.

In his Architectural Design: 'Reactions to Toulouse le Mirail'(63) Peter Smithson refers to the Unité idea, and talks of Bath with some affection, but has little to say about 'le Mirail' itself. A study for Golden Lane appears in telling juxtaposition with an aerial photograph

but it is all very mild, even polite, and little is said of the common people - the vin ordinaire of Toulouse - who were moved to live there. There is no mention of Robin Hood.

Both the Johnson Script and The Smithsons on Housing leave too much unsaid, it is not a choice between: being asked to repair the roof and add the odd bathroom, and building something of quality that will indicate proper and careful use - there is more to what they say than that. If you build for the ordinary working-class tenant, you need to keep specific things in mind: you must have certain criteria - and you need to listen attentively to what the common people say:

It is almost impossible to prove you are working for the people. The people are alienated by the intellectual - yet the people are the strength. ((64))

Team 10 may well have viewed the Johnson film with some, justified, suspicion: there were no representatives of the vin ordinaire invited to Toulouse-le-Mirail, but the idea that an architectural language: 'a form-language of common use and the pleasures of common use' (65) might be possible is reasonable enough: if there is reason on all sides. It is common-sense to take into account the specific needs of the immediate district, to protect the inhabitants of Robin Hood from the din of emerging Blackwall Tunnel traffic is a necessary concern; and to offer a communal 'stress-free' zone, to ensure that the opportunity is there, for a quiet - civilised - time to be had by all, is not a 'dream'.

The Johnson film is not the end of the story: part rag-bag - part Manifesto - we see it to be, but it is unreasonable to dismiss it as mere justification of a particular architectural solution. To criticise the film is one thing, but to dismiss the thinking is another, and, before we make our rational analysis of the built form at Robin Hood, we need to observe carefully what it was they actually offered.

FIVE

AGAINST THE CRITERIA

AGAINST THE CRITERIA

No single dwelling in the country  
measures up to them.  
(B.S.Johnson 1965)(1)

The only valid architectural criticism of Robin Hood, at least as far as the Smithsons are concerned, must be made in the light of the listed Criteria for Mass-Housing, first published in Architectural Design, in 1956: made much of at the Team 10 meeting in Otterlo in 1959, and forming the basis of B.S.Johnson's sympathetic critique 'The Moron Made City'.(2)

Bearing in mind the dating and the importance of the Royaumont Document, I have taken the 'Criteria for Mass Housing', published in CIAM'59 in Otterlo as authentic. They are listed here as APPENDIX TWO.

It is essential to realise that:

The term 'mass housing' applies to all dwellings not built to the specific order of an individual: houses over which the occupier has no control other than that he has chosen, or has been chosen, to live there: houses for which, therefore, the architect has a peculiar responsibility. The criteria are intended to apply to all housing irrespective of number, type of ground occupation, type of access, etc.. The most conventional houses and layouts, and the most ingenious, can equally well come under their scrutiny.  
(3)

There are thirty Criteria which, as Johnson points out: 'have that sort of simplicity which makes them appear obvious until it is remembered that no single dwelling in the country measures up to them'.(4)

Eight years after the inhabitants moved into Robin Hood, they turn up again, in Places Worth Inheriting - 'A shopping list for quality of place produced for the Association of Consultant Architects by Alison Smithson'(5) in much the same form. Not all apply specifically to what we see at the end of the Blackwall Tunnel, but they must be our starting point, when we need to ask our questions as to the effectiveness of the reasoning at Robin Hood.

How the building is used, by those that have been chosen to live there, is another matter; firstly we must satisfy ourselves that the essentials of the Smithsons' Criteria are indeed incorporated in the built form.

A. The dwelling.

- (1) Can it adapt itself to various ways of living. Does it liberate the occupants from old restrictions or straightjacket them into new ones?

In terms of comfort, convenience, and most practical needs, there is no doubt that the flats are a vast improvement on anything the majority of the tenants have previously known: certainly they are seen to be more spacious than the poky two-up-two-down nineteenth century housing, or the rejected - dejected - tenements that were demolished to make way for them. (6) They offer the tenants the opportunity of a new life - a fresh start - in up-to-date accommodation, free from the continual worry, largely financial, caused by the inevitable wear and tear deterioration of the older housing stock. Maintenance and the necessary running-repairs are the responsibility of the Local Authority.

There is plenty of room; the flats are of varying sizes to cope with specific requirements - family units differ in number throughout both blocks. If, like the Samuels in Chisenhale Road, you feel the need to rearrange your living-space, there is scope for spur of the moment improvisation. Physical limitations are few - no need to fret as to who sleeps where and furniture can be moved easily from one room to another. In the case of the elderly persons flats, at 'garden' level, all the facilities are on the one floor and there is no built-in difficulty in the form of a staircase.

It is the responsibility of the authorities to ensure that they are

fastidious in their selection of suitable tenants, for specific flats, and that they bear in mind personal preferences when allocating.

Liberation is partly of the mind, restrictions are often self-imposed and habits of a life-time aren't left behind in the removal-van. Often it takes time to settle in to the new surroundings, but the opportunity is there: a new way of living is possible. Any thought of the straight-jacket need not apply, the tenants have more space - extensions of the home: the 'street' deck and the 'stress-free' zone are designed to extend the scope of the daily life in the building, not to limit it.

Limitations of a practical nature might well be beyond the control of the architects; shortage of money to replace torn or tattered curtains - the tenants' responsibility - is a factor that can't be built into the aesthetic. If the Local Authority is unable to provide adequate furnishing-fabric, beyond wall-paper and limited floor covering, then it is to be seen as an inadequacy in the social system, not in the design of the building. Peter Smithson sees it as offering yet another opportunity for self-expression and further encouragement for a sense of thrift in the tenants' budget: what better way to spend the 'slack' money?(7)

There is a lot of window-space, plenty of: 'sun and light coming in onto glass'(8) and, with the front-door opening directly out onto the deck, inevitably the wear and tear on the hall carpet is considerable. How the tenants spend what little 'slack' money they have will be the concern of the individual; a family decision. The stalls, in nearby Chrisp Street Market, offer a wide-range of cheap material.

Robin Hood was designed to adapt itself to the needs of the tenants, its whole concept is one of opportunity and freedom of movement and the way of life envisaged there was not concerned with restraint:

You know what they call this place around here? They call it Alcatraz. At least the people who don't live in it do. My friends ask 'How can you live there?' but they can't believe how nice it is inside.(9)

And, of course, it is the view of those that actually live in the building that we must concern ourselves with. The outsider can only listen attentively to what is said, and see for himself the way the building is used. We must be wary of generalisations: hence the worth of the Smithsons' own Criteria, that offer us such a positive sequence of guide-lines for our analysis.

In offering the inhabitants of the various flats the social outlets within the building the Smithsons cannot be accused of thinking in terms of 'Alcatraz': the 'acoustic wall' is so designed to 'stop it looking like a prison'(10) and the notion of the 'straightjacket' is inconceivable. Robin Hood is not thought of in terms of the 'filing-cabinet. If the tenants are seen not to make the most of the chance they have most certainly been given, then they can be said to have imposed their own restriction: they will have failed to understand the workings of the building.

The way of living, in Robin Hood, is limited in the sense that the inhabitants are restricted in their social aspirations, but the built form, in which they live, was thought of in that context. It can only be thought of in terms of working-class, mass housing: the Smithsons designed the building to suit the specific requirements of what they saw as the common-people.

- (2) Are the spaces moulded exactly to fit their purpose? Or are they by-products of structural tidiness or plastic whim? Is the means of construction of the same order as the standard of living envisaged?

The Smithsons' thinking around the problem of mass-housing centres

on the social implications, rather than on stylistic neatness, which they see as something of an unworthy consideration. Team 10 rarely talk in terms of the appearance of a building, they concern themselves with the practicalities: the most efficient and humane method of resolving a specific 'emotional' difficulty: 'architecture need do no more than assist man's homecoming'(11): 'We have no right to turn houses into towers or casbahs for purely formal reasons'(12) is basic to their joint philosophy.

If the working-class tenant, an essentially anonymous being as far as the architects are concerned, is to be seen to have 'typical' patterns of behaviour, then that is their prime consideration. How to design an apt form for that 'typical' way of living. If the built form, at Robin Hood, then suggests: 'council house anonymity'(13), that is considered preferable to self-indulgence, or to any form of 'expressionism'.

At Robin Hood, the Smithsons organised the space with exact purposes in mind:

... the buildings themselves have been deliberately organised to create an area in the centre of the site protected from noise - a stress-free zone.

The buildings are not organised like filing-cabinets one after the other. The site is a bit like a kipper with the same functions on the inside in each building. On the outside we put the noisy next to the noisy - that is the walkways or decks and the living rooms.(14)

And what we might well suspect as being 'plastic whim' is nothing of the kind: '... the living-rooms themselves are protected by these vertical pieces which stop noise travelling across the face of the building'(15). It is not a question of: '... visual syncopation, a partly randomised set of vertical fins, and horizontal continuity'(16) it is, as far as the Smithsons were concerned, a purely practical necessity: an answer to a specific local irritant: the traffic din.

The standard of living is known and accepted for what it is - East End working-class - a question largely of economic survival, seen by Henderson and noted by the Smithsons in terms of a 'subsistence culture' (17) dependent on others for stability and heavily reliant on the continuing availability of local government resources. Inherent domestic difficulties are heightened in times of economic decline and the threat of unemployment.

At Robin Hood we see the Smithson concern for formal elegance, based on the essential function of the building, and sense the carefully ordered balance between the tough - 'brutal' - exterior and the subtle arrangement of the living areas. Within the positive, linear, vertical elements - the lifts and the staircases - and the long, lean, horizontal indentations of the most compelling feature - the street-decks - we are aware of the reasoning: concrete for protection - survival - glass to let in light, an apt juxtaposition of matter-of-fact acceptance and a hint of mild optimism, which is intended to reflect the aspirations of those that have been chosen to live there.

The ordering is intentional and reflects a sophisticated concern for the reality of the situation. It is too well thought out to be merely 'structural tidiness', too pragmatic in its thinking to be thought of in terms of 'plastic whim'.

- (3) Is there a decently large open-air sunlit space opening directly from the living area of the house? Is there a place in the open air where a small baby (1 - 3 years old) can be left safely?

Much will depend on how the stress-free zone is used, if that is seen to open out directly from the living area then there is certainly ample space, in the open-air, especially for the elderly tenants who mostly live at garden level. If they appreciate that it is designed specifically with this in mind then they will make suitable use of the

facility offered. If this is not understood, then the notion of the communal garden will fail.

Higher up - off the ground - there are the decks, which are intended to function in the manner of the traditional ground-level street, part necessary access and part playground for the younger children. Out there, in the open-air, there is certainly adequate space. They are not merely balconies, they are conceived with the intention of providing a 'decently large' area to function as an extension of the dwelling. It is also essential that those tenants, who do live off the ground, see the stress-free zone as part of their individual home, and not merely as inevitable space between the two building blocks. This too must be viewed as opening 'directly from the living area of the house'.

Prams can be left safely, there is no threat from passing traffic and the small alcoves by the front doors are sufficiently sheltered. The narrow balconies are ideal and the sunlight penetrates deeply into the flats, through 'French-windows' which open inwards. It will depend on the individual mother how she uses the extra space outside but there are few physical restrictions.

(4) Can the weather be enjoyed? Is the house insulated against cold weather, yet made to easily open up in good weather?

The flats are designed to make the most of the warm weather and to protect the tenants in the cold of the London Winter. Windows open easily and plenty of sunlight is allowed to enter the building. It is conveniently organised so that fresh air passes through the whole flat and there is nothing claustrophobic about the internal organisation of the living area. The higher you live the more air there seems to be.

In the cold weather the heating is certainly adequate though the surrounding area is bleak and the wind cuts through the central garden

which offers little additional shelter. The open-ended design of the building means that the site is exposed to the elements and the decks are, of necessity, open on the one side.

Internally much will depend on the personal standard of living within the particular family, whether adequate floor covering or heavy curtains are available. The Smithsons clearly see this as being the tenants' contribution to the practical day-to-day life of the building - in the old nineteenth century housing the problem would have been more acute. They are not insensitive to the difficulties of 'survival' in bleak weather but it is the opportunities offered - in the open-air - that primarily concerns them.

(5) Are there extensions of the dwelling (garden, patio, etc.) appreciated from the inside?

Through the front door it is possible to see what is happening out on the deck and it is possible to peer, through the curtains, at the passers-by. Little need go unnoticed, or unappreciated, as in the traditional working-class street. On the inside of the building it is possible to keep an eye on what is taking place in the central garden or in the flats opposite. The tenants can make use of both deck and balcony as they wish.

In a sense there is little privacy and it is not easy for the tenants at Robin Hood to remain unobserved; curtains are regarded as an absolute necessity even at the highest level.

The Smithson concept is based on the notion of neighbourliness, the idea that a communal spirit of care and consideration will evolve due to the inevitable common-sense use of the building. It is essential that one notices the little things that go on around the family unit:

The kitchens are so planned that a mother can keep an eye on a two to three years old child playing out on the access-deck on one side and also from time to time look down on the other side

into the safe places which are intended for older children.(18)

Robin Hood is very deliberately designed to dispel feelings of isolation and it is vital that the inhabitants do not feel that they are ignored. No-one must think that they are uncared for. Privacy is a necessity but it is comforting to know that one's neighbours keep a discreet eye on what is going on next door.

It is possible to see far out over East London, or down into the Isle of Dogs, and there are dramatic views in all directions. You need to be a Londoner to pick out the landmarks - the large 'fixes' that help to determine the links with the surrounding district but there is certainly no need to look inwards.

(6) Does it take account of the 3 - 5 year olds' play?

The Householders' Manual(19) is clear on this and there are several options:

Play areas for smaller children - in the four round play-pits in the central garden. In the covered play area with toddlers' swings at garden level at the south end of the Tunnel side building. Toddlers' swing at garden level in the Cotton Street side building between flat Nos. 4 and 5. In the fitted play area at the junction of Poplar High Street and Robin Hood Lane.

It also offers sensible advice:

Please encourage youngsters to use these play areas rather than play on unsuitable parts of the estate. Please also encourage youngsters to look after play areas and play equipment.(20)

Critically, no mention is made of the decks - the 'street-in-the-air' so designed to enable the life of the streets to continue, safely, with no threat from passing traffic. Henderson's photographs of the children, Samuels and others playing in Chisenhale Road, are made concrete at Robin Hood and the Smithsons insist that here: 'outside the house is the first point of contact where children learn for the first time of the world outside'(21). No need, perhaps, to include this in the advice given in the Manual, this is for the children to discover for

themselves, as working-class children always had in the past. What the Smithsons offered was that extra element of safety, so that even the young '3 - 5 year olds' might be seen to be playing happily out in the street. Robin Hood was built with children very much in mind - they are regarded as the very essence of working-class family life.

(7) Is it easy to maintain (keep fresh looking with just a cleaning down)?

The windows can be cleaned, without too much difficulty, from the balconies:

Cleaning the outside of windows. The outside of windows can be cleaned from the access and escape balconies or by reversing the windows. To clean the lower fixed glass portion of the windows, first move the safety stay (top lefthand) into the lower hole which will secure the window with an opening of about 5", enough to put the arm through in safety. Remember to replace the safety stay after cleaning. All windows in the larger flats at the south end of the building are of reversible type. (22)

The decks can be scrubbed and the paint-work sponged clean. It is the local authority's responsibility to keep the exterior in good order and the communal facilities are maintained by them. Repainting and the replacement of broken glass is also their concern. They mow the grass in the stress-free zone.

(8) Is there a place for the belongings or special tasks peculiar to the class of the occupants - skis, camping gear, mending motor-bikes etc.?

Perhaps: 'Is there a place for the belongings peculiar to the class of occupant: poodles, ferrets, motorbikes, geraniums, and so on?' (23) would be more appropriate to those that live in Robin Hood, but the intention of the question is clear enough. The answer is not quite as simple as it might have been at Golden Lane, had that project been realised.

At Robin Hood there are not the 'yard-gardens' opening off the decks

and all activities envisaged in that scheme must take place elsewhere. There are few opportunities offered. Motor-bikes must be kept at ground level - down in the moat - the lifts aren't constructed with that weight in mind and the decks are intended to be totally free from any form of traffic. Dogs are not allowed.

There is ample room for potted-plants, in the eddy places or out on the balconies, particularly in the larger flats.(23)

Most of the vehicle maintenance takes place, as intended, in or outside the garages slotted into the base of the building on either side. These can be used for storage, though in fact there is adequate cupboard space within the flats, and much of what might be regarded as 'peculiar' to this particular class of occupant occurs within the family. The East End working-class, as the Smithsons saw them, would be perfectly capable of adapting to any restrictions; they would make do.

(9) Is there enough storage? (There is never enough storage.).

Individual families either cope, or live surrounded by the usual domestic clutter: cupboard rearrangement is possible:

Wooden bedroom cupboards. Wooden bedroom cupboards are fixed with only two screws and can be moved to suit your own particular furniture arrangements.

Kitchen cupboard next to window. The cupboard next to the window in the kitchen is fixed with only two screws and can be moved and re-fixed to fit closely up against a large or small gas cooker.(24)

There is ample room for free-standing furniture and it will depend on specific needs. The garages can also be used for any unwanted large item. Not all families have a car.

(10) Can the dwellings be put together in such a way as to contribute something to each other?

Robin Hood can only be seen as a complete unit, for all the distance between the two blocks, the emotional links are obviously strong and

the central zone is seen clearly as the 'vortex' around which the building functions. The two separate blocks complement each other and have too much in common not to be thought of in terms of one building. The Smithsons certainly see it as such and all they say reflects this concept of the two forming the total piece of architecture. It must be noted that the intention was to extend the development - to evolve a system by which the further built blocks would create a sequence of new relationships, with each other, through the open green spaces that divided them.(25)

The arrangement of the individual flats is conceived as a positive attempt to fit separate dwellings, snugly into an orderly geometric grid. It is closely related to Le Corbusier and the notion of the 'wine-rack' and, though there is no concern for the limitations of the curtain material, there is a well considered system of 'colour-coding' which was intended as a 'key' to the social order of the building.

These garden facades are highly coloured; each main level is given a key colour, grey; for garage level, green; for garden level, yellow; for first deck level, orange; for second deck level, blue; for third deck level (Blackwall Tunnel South bldg. only). The actual key colour is used for the lift lobbies, signs etc., and variants on the colour are used for the front doors and deck triangular windows and for french windows on the garden side of the flats. The variant colours repeat as they relate to flat type. This colour coding is an attempt to identify the individual flats for the smaller children and also of course to build-up with the tenants' curtains and so on the life and interest of the faces of the buildings.(26)

There is none of the deliberate control of the Unité, except in the hint of visual organisation suggested in the 'colour-coding'. Unlike the proposed designs for Golden Lane the look of the building will not be determined by the use of the 'yard-garden'. Only in the space provided, outside the largest flats, might there be room for a shrub or a garden shed and any change in tenancy would, consequently, have little effect on the building as such. What we see ought to stay very

much the same, irrespective of the personal contribution made by the incoming tenant: Robin Hood was designed with the typical in mind.

(11) Is the house as comfortable as a car of the same year?

The flats can be made comfortable enough, it's up to the tenants to make what they can of them with the amount of 'slack' money available. Taste is not a set thing, what was thought adequate in 1972 might well be thought inadequate today, but Robin Hood was built to outlast any passing fancy and in times of economic austerity comfort might not be considered the first priority. Certainly the Smithsons thought carefully of the practical conveniences within the home - this is what they saw as their priority.

(12) Is the technology suitable to house construction: does it take account of electric runs and do without traditional 'style-left-overs', such as door frames?

There are door frames and curtain rails but the styling is suitably anonymous. As a 'house' Robin Hood reflects the Smithsons trust in the continuing validity of the doctrine of the Modern Movement.

B. The immediate extensions of the dwelling.

(1) Has the relationship between the dwelling and its means of access been chosen for some good reason?

For all the emphasis on the social advantages of the deck, and the opportunities offered by the communal stress-free zone, the Smithsons fundamental intention is to strengthen man's links with society: to set what they build realistically within the existing framework of the surrounding district. The means of access is consequently vital to the success of the whole concept:

The approach to a house is the occupants' link with society as a whole - a lengthy climb up a rickety stair or down into a basement up an avenue

up an estate road  
along an air-conditioned artificially lit corridor.

These are man's links with society, the vistas down which he looks at his world; they frame his perspective view.

This is what really matters and not the minimum room area, heights etc., etc., for any interior can be made a home, any place decorated or altered.(27)

It has long been a preoccupation, the idea of Patterns of Association and Identity(28) is fundamental to Golden Lane and the conviction that the emotional link, formed with the immediate neighbourhood, outside the front door, is of the utmost importance and the very essence of the thinking at Robin Hood. Lifts and access-stairs are conveniently set at either end of both blocks and a further staircase rises, deck by deck, mid-way along each side. Staircases continue down into the moat.

The way-in is clearly defined and there is no alternative entry - van Eyck's: 'Architecture need do no more than assist man's homecoming' has been taken to heart.(29) When you climb your particular stairway, or lift yourself up to the top decks, there must be no doubt in your mind that you are coming home.

Outside the building the limitations of the site restrict total control - the existing road network could not be altered. It is easy enough for the dustcart to enter the moat, not so easy for the old lady to cross Cotton Street on her way to Chrisp Street Market. The buildings would have spanned the main roads if the scheme had been extended.

(2) Does the reason include 3 - 5 year olds' play, if not where do they play?

Younger children are encouraged to play away from the lifts and access-stairs by the provision for play in specific areas elsewhere. It is certainly hoped that they will be told to keep away from the lift-shafts. The very intention of the street-deck was to encourage them

to improvise - to invent new street-games to suit the building. It was not envisaged that there would be ball games played on the decks. Notices, in both blocks, make that quite clear.

Inevitably the access-stairs will play their part, linking one level with another but, at Robin Hood, concern for the safety of the younger children is much in mind.

(3) Does the idea for dwelling produce a clear external image?

Robin Hood can be nothing but a housing block. It looks what it is - a well thought out arrangement of dwellings, set into an elegantly designed frame-work of tough concrete. The form indicates its use, indented decks, vertical access and the curtains and personal paraphernalia, seen at the windows, speak clearly of working-class living. To the knowing it will hint at the post-war reaction to the thinking of Le Corbusier - to others it will seem like 'Alcatraz'. The image in either case is clear and there is nothing negative in the various reactions to it. In the Johnson Script the Smithsons well described how they saw it.

(4) Can these images add up to a composite one and is this composite image socially valid?

To the objective observer, within the context of the re-built East End, Robin Hood is seen to offer quality accommodation to a mass of working-class families, who would otherwise be forced to live in inadequate conditions elsewhere. There is a severe housing problem in East London.(31) In that very important sense it is undoubtedly socially valid. The image of the common people well housed must be considered valid.

If some see it in another light: 'council housing, anonymity - the authorities didn't have the money ... social deprivation'(32) that is

another - 'architectural' - matter and lies outside the immediate social implications of this specific building. In listing their criteria the Smithsons talk of their 'peculiar responsibility' and that must also be taken into consideration.

- (5) Are the extensions of the dwelling - garden, patios, balconies, streets, access-galleries, staircases, etc. sensible in relation to the physical environment of the dwelling and the activities of the occupants?

The whole concept of Robin Hood is concerned with common-sense reactions to the opportunities offered. If the tenants make the most of the social advantages, a more enjoyable way of living will result. Within the building, the elements that make up the whole are designed with the utmost care - sensibly - so that nothing interferes with the notion of neighbourliness and the need for an orderly way of life.

The Smithsons organised the extensions of the dwelling so that the communal facilities were sited practically - within easy reach - in what they considered to be the most sensible place for them to be.

For elderly tenants: 'A drying area is available at garden level in front of the south end of the tunnel side building', and: 'Two drying rooms are equipped with tumbler-driers operated by coin-in-the-slot. One drying room is at garden level at the south end of the tunnel side building, and the other at garden level between flat nos. 13 and 14, in the Cotton Street side building' (33) no need to climb the stairs.

Nothing is considered too mundane:

#### Incinerators.

There are incinerators for sanitary towels and surgical dressings at the tops of the staircases at the extreme ends of each building (four in all).

Keys are provided with each flat. The use of these prevents the possibility of drain blockage. (34)

The garden is designed with orderly behaviour in mind, the access

points are where they needed to be. Any activities, envisaged by the Smithsons, would be centred around the tenants' sensible understanding of the opportunity they had been given.

- (6) Are the gardens and streets (or their equivalents) necessary to the life of the occupants?

Most certainly, since the whole idea of Robin Hood is based on their use.

- (7) Is the delivery and collection antiquated and laborious?

The traffic moats were designed to ensure that all refuse could be easily cleared. All weighty goods can be carried into the building and lifted on to the upper decks. Coffins can be lowered in the lifts.

- (8) Is it a labour to go out or to return home?

Within minutes of leaving your flat, and closing your own front-door, it is possible to be out of the building. The lifts are in pairs and there is no reason for delay. Tenants living off the lower decks will find the access-stairs equally convenient.

- (9) Does the public vertical circulation really work? Is there any indication that where people have been put up into the air that it really is getting them somewhere?

If what the Smithsons say is true - that the idea is sound - that:

Living high should not mean living like caged birds, but should provide what the old order had, with added views, privacy from overlooking and safety of movement. (35)

it ought to work at Robin Hood. Once people get used to the idea of living off the ground - 'up in the air' - then coming and going ought not to be a problem. Robin Hood is not a tower-block. If the idea proves practical, later generations would find it easier to accept - they will have known no alternative. The older tenants are largely housed at ground level.

The emotion of actually 'getting somewhere' will depend on how the

individual tenant copes with the new experience.

Le Corbusier appears to have had his reservations but Robin Hood is built with this in mind:

Here is a suggested solution. A wretched kind of 'modernism' this! The pedestrian in the air, the vehicles hogging the ground. It looks very clever: we shall all have a super time up on these catwalks. But these pedestrians will soon be living in 'Metropolis' becoming more depressed, more depraved, until one day they will blow up the catwalks, and the buildings, and the machines and every thing.

The pedestrian, from now on, will be confined to raised walks built high above street level, while the traffic lanes remain at their present ground level. Madness!

Is man to spend his life from now on gesticulating up in the air on a series of (inevitably) narrow platforms, climbing up and down stairways - a monkey up in the tree tops?

Madness, madness, madness. It is the bottom of the pit, a gaping pit of error, the end of everything.(36)

We must remember that Robin Hood, as we see it now, is merely a fragment of what might have been: '... decks we hoped would ultimately be joined up with those of further buildings to be built when sites became available to form one big linked dwelling group'(37) so any just assessment of the evidence, of success or failure of the idea, must be considered in that light.

To the Smithsons Robin Hood was a 'demonstration', to be built upon - extended -to form a whole new district, it was not an end in itself. What seems to have concerned Le Corbusier was that the inhabitants of such a development might not be 'getting' anywhere.

#### C. The 'living unit'.

- (1) Is the scale of the unit related to the size of the parent community?

(The pattern of a village can be transformed by the addition of one house, in the great city an equivalent gesture might need a unit of 5,000 houses.)

The East End is used to large buildings, it is an old industrial part of the city, with warehouses and other substantial buildings associated with Docklands. Robin Hood was designed to fit well along-

side the Blackwall Tunnel, snugly by Cotton Street - the busy feeder-road to the Isle of Dogs - and to rely on the services offered in the East India Dock Road. Within this setting it was intended to relate to an essentially run-down industrial area.

This was what so excited the Smithsons:

... anything and everything can be raised by association to become the poetry of the ordinary. And in this way an industrial site is so easy to identify with compared to a semi-detached housing-estate - a site on an industrial blight or one's industrial heritage - it depends on how you look at it - can very easily be used to renew a district to re-identify and become a real piece of urban renewal.

This has something to do with urban sprawl and that industrial sites are somehow forthright and honest.(38)

As the inheritors of the responsibilities of the Modern Movement they saw themselves essentially as urbanists.

- (2) Is the work pattern of the community understood with all its implications for the unit? (A work-pattern of all-family travelling to widely separated places is typical of cities and towns, and often also of villages.)

The Smithsons were well aware of the continuing decline in local work opportunities, due to the closure of the East India Dock: 'we realised that we were in a situation of flux and change'(39) they knew that Robin Hood had to be: 'strong enough to be self-supporting - big enough to be self-supporting'(40). We must again note that what they had in mind is not what we see at Robin Hood.

Regular bus routes, along the East India Dock Road, or north to Canning Town and Stratford, reach out into the surrounding district. The London Underground system is, currently, of little help to those that live in Robin Hood.

- (3) Does it fit the site with its climatic and physical peculiarities, its existing build and human structure, and accept their sociological implications bearing in mind that we are concerned with renewal?

We have observed that the building depends largely on the use made of its open spaces and exposed decks - Le Corbusier's concept of the health-giving qualities, of the fresh-air, experienced on the promenade-deck of the ocean-liner, is to be borne in mind when considering the effects of East London's changeable weather. If the sun shines, then the tenants can make the most of it: out in the garden, on their own balconies or by taking advantage of the walk-ways outside their front door.

When it rains there is little shelter until you enter the building itself: the decks are soon drenched, as would be any traditional street.

The physical peculiarities of the site are heightened by the already well-established road net-work, and we have seen the efforts made, by the Smithsons, to reduce the effects of the constant din of the traffic by the construction of an acoustic-wall, and subtle organisation of the formal elements on the face of the building to reduce the amount of noise that penetrates the individual dwellings.

Social implications have preoccupied the architects, and in the Johnson Script they dwell on the notion of renewal. In the building we note the carefully considered communal areas, intended to generate the desired feeling of neighbourliness amongst those that have been chosen to live together. In relation to the surrounding district, it is clear that Robin Hood was envisaged as a positive statement: a 'demonstration' in answer to a specific social need, and a starting-point for further developments. It was not thought of, by the Smithsons, as an end in itself.

(4) Where do the 5 - 12 year olds go to? And what do they have to do?

Provision for football is provided in the fitted play-area to the south of the site: there are swings for the girls and there are the

decks. There is also the garden - the 'stress-free' zone, between the two blocks. A working-class twelve year old is considered old enough to play-out, in the surrounding streets, and to shop in the nearby market. The 'life of the street', that so preoccupied the Smithsons in Bethnal Green, can be clearly observed in the behaviour of this age group.

- (5) Can the unit support shops? And which are the natural 'pressure points' for such facilities? Are the community facilities a social mirage or are they real?

There are no shops at Robin Hood, nor is there provision for the use of existing accommodation as such. In this respect it is different from Golden Lane. Chrisp Street Market is the nearest shopping centre, though there are smaller shops, close by, in Poplar High Street. There is also the East India Dock Road.

The community facilities are real enough and are listed in the Householders' Manual: there is a Clubroom provided for the use of the elderly people and once there was a Caretaker.

- (6) Where can November 5th. be celebrated? (Bonfire night, Bastille Day or July 14th.)

The garden - the 'stress-free' zone - out in the middle, is the best place for any celebration: it is the common meeting-ground.

- (7) Is there something worth looking at out of every dwelling or does one merely stare out at another dwelling opposite?

The views out over London are spectacular, on a clear day you can see way out into Essex or down river towards Southend. To the south there is Greenwich and the tall estates across the river. The distance between the two blocks is considerable.

- (8) Does the development offer protection and shelter of the same order as the parent community?

Local authority housing provides shelter for those who would otherwise be living in less than satisfactory conditions. It supplies a social need and is a community service.

(9) Is the unit really generated by an objective study of the situation or are we just saying that it is?

Ordinariness & Light - Urban theories 1952-60, and their application in a building project 1963-70.(41), is Alison and Peter Smithson's answer to this final question. What we make of it - the aesthetic that led to the building of Robin Hood - is the concern of this thesis. The personal observations of those who have experienced the way of life, in the building, are vital to the argument. Ordinariness & Light does not, indeed could not, take this factor into account.

The severe doubts, implicit in our analysis, generate the need to question the 'common-sense' of what the Smithsons intended. We must question the validity of the architects' dream.

There is little doubt that what they built at Robin Hood might well satisfy many of the points raised in the questions they themselves ask in the listed Criteria for Mass Housing. They have certainly not been ignored. It may well seem trite to worry overmuch where the tenants celebrate November 5th. but, as Johnson rightly observes, the questions do have a simplicity that relates directly to the living pattern of the common people. They are the questions that must be answered, objectively, by those that are willing to accept that 'peculiar responsibility' to build homes for ordinary, working-class, 'council' tenants. Those that have been chosen to live in blocks like Robin Hood.

If the questions are not asked, errors of judgement will creep in and there will be little 'common-sense' in what is built. The risk is too great.

In 1965 the Smithsons told Johnson:

We live in moron-made cities. We wish to see towns and buildings which do not make us feel ashamed, ashamed that we cannot realise the potential of the twentieth century, ashamed that philosophers and physicists must think us fools, and painters think us irrelevant. Our generation must try to produce evidence that men are at work.(42)

Robin Hood really was their 'Holy Grail'.

It is important to know if the inhabitants find it easy to get to work on time - if they get stuck in the lift on the way down into the moat to collect their car. Refuse ought to be collected regularly and the elderly tenants must be able to cross Cotton Street, safely, on their way to Chrisp Street. The external image of Robin Hood must be seen to reflect the thinking of Ordinariness & Light. If it doesn't, then, in the building, something went wrong.

In terms of this thesis, it is vital that we consider the evidence as to the current usage of the building, and demonstrate, objectively, through our analysis and observation, that specific questions need to be asked. We can accept what the Smithsons say, in Ordinariness & Light, as fact - or we can question the generation of the building, in the light of what we know of Robin Hood.

In Ordinariness & Light we are told the following:

The important differences between the Robin Hood Lane scheme and our earlier housing projects are:  
First, in one important detail the kitchen in the larger dwellings is at deck level to save lugging food and so on up the stairs; to make possible the supervision of small children playing outside the front door; and somehow to 'normalise' the dwelling.  
Second, we have given the highest priority to making as large as possible 'inviolable' quiet open space that all share. For since the first deck studies in 1952 we have become in our bodies aware of the stresses that urban noise and traffic movement induce, and realise that for the present time our most important need is for quiet places. To achieve a calm pool in this particular place, we have played down the idea of 'linkage' which was the main theme of the earlier 'Golden Lane' studies. In a sense we have replaced an image of the city in which connectedness was stressed, with one in which the survival of the 'person' and the 'thing' within the ever-changing communications net is held to be pre-

eminent.

Third, and in support of the above, all on-site movement of vehicles takes place in a 'moat', thereby screening off their noise and presence.

Fourth, only a few of the largest dwellings have 'yard-gardens' up in the air with them. In the rest the bedrooms can be opened up to the stress-free central zone.

Fifth, the design of the skin of the building is developed as part of the series of protective devices against noise - dwelling to dwelling as well as external sources.(43)

The publishers whet our appetite with the information that:

The general theme is 'the invention of an architecture structured by notions of association'. The authors argue that the form of the city and the town must correspond to the human needs of the present; looser knit than in the past, even the quite recent past; more open and changing. And for the city and town to correspond to this pattern of society there must be better systems of physical communications, and new form-concepts through which society can recognise and realize its new self.(44)

They hope that Ordinariness & Light: 'will enable all those who are exercised about the deterioration of urban life to share their dream of cities that can breathe. It may help, perhaps, to generate in society at large that kind of committed participation that their notion of 'ordering' implies'.(45)

There are sceptics, who find Robin Hood offensive, unworthy of the claims made for it, and have no sympathy with the Smithson dream. One of the most persistent critics, Charles Jencks, sees it as a dismal failure:

Their Robin Hood Gardens, in the East End of London, simply does not do the trick. Robin Hood Gardens is not a modern version of the Bath Crescent, in spite of the large urban gesture and V-shaped plan. It does not accentuate the identity of each house, although Smithson admires Bath for being 'unmistakably a collection of separate houses'. It suppresses this in favour of a visual syncopation, a partially randomised set of vertical fins, and horizontal continuity - the notion of a communal street deck. These 'streets in the air' have surprisingly, all the faults which the Smithsons had recognised in other similar schemes. They are under-used; the collective entries are paltry and a few have been vandalised. Indeed they are dark, smelly, dank passage-ways. Little sense of place, few collective facilities and fewer 'identifying elements' which the architects had reasonably said were needed in modern buildings ...(46)

Jencks concludes that:

The Smithsons' laudable intentions of providing a community building on the scale of the Bath Crescent and offering the same degree of individual expression in an architectural language understood by all, these positive aims are denied by the built form. Such contradictions between statement and result have reached impressive proportions in modern architecture and one can now speak of a 'credibility gap' that parallels the loss of trust in politicians.(47)

This final point concerns Jeremy Seabrook, in What Went Wrong? - that the writer of the manifesto, or architectural aesthetic, talks too much in terms of what they predict will happen, and makes little allowance for the unexpected. In Ordinariness & Light, an objective study of the situation in which Robin Hood would be built, there is no mention of the harsh realities of East End living. No comment on the rising unemployment - no mention of the re-emergence of the National Front. It is only in the Johnson film - The Smithsons on Housing - face-to-face with the camera, that they admit the reality of the situation.(48)

Jencks' assessment is a considered one, he had visited Robin Hood and has photographs to prove it, but he finds it increasingly difficult to come to terms with the tenets of the Modern Movement. He does not now have any sympathy for the notion of form designed to generate a more enjoyable way of living. In his recent criticism he has tended to concentrate on the reading of the external image, and it can be argued that he lacks an understanding of the working-class mentality.(49)

Unrelieved concrete (except for curtains) popularly identified now with the image of an industrial process. The variations of vertical fins are not strong enough to identify each apartment. The packed-in scale gives the feeling of there being a dense human wall.(50)

He half-suggests that it might indeed be 'a labour to go out or return home', and senses a lack of 'defensible space'(51), but leaves us uninformed, as to what it is like living in Robin Hood.

The criteria he uses tend to be too formal, they restrict his view of the contribution made, by the tenants themselves, to the look of the building. They do not take into account, sufficiently, the 'poetry' provided by those who decorate the urban scene. As far as the Smithsons are concerned, Jencks speaks a different language and misses the point. They have no love for the concept of Post Modernism: they find him glib and unconvincing - it is the opinion of the outsider.

Better to ask the people themselves:

I don't like the outside very much - but once you get inside your own flat it's really very nice. You've got fresh air back and front - either on the street deck or on the balconies.(52)

What Jencks sees as a: 'dense human wall' the Smithsons know to be a necessary protection from the incessant din rising from the exit from the Blackwall Tunnel. That is the reality of the situation. What they offer might not be wholly successful but the intention is clear enough.

Does it matter that the 'image' is one of: 'an industrial process' - in an old industrial part of the city? The tenants are unlikely to be conscious of the linguistic connotation, they will be preoccupied with other things. They too have their criteria.

To me, the inside of the flats is much more important than the outside. When I came to view it first I thought it was dismal - all that grey stone ... we're very satisfied here. My daughter lives on the fifth floor and she likes it too. The noise from the Blackwall Tunnel is there all the time - but you get used to that.(53)

It's nice to be near your daughter and, if the building looks dismal, that's just one of those things: at least you can make the inside look cheery - stick up some gay wallpaper. There's no use not liking it when you have no say in the matter.

If you live on a council estate, the implication is that you can't look after yourself: if you could, you'd be living elsewhere. It may not be strictly true but that's how the outsider tends to see it. The

observer must not be misled by the external image.

In a working-class community the family ties are strong:

My Dad came round one evening and boxed in the basin with some wood off-cuts he'd picked up for a couple of pounds and when I'd finished papering and painting I got him to lay the vinyl flooring. All of a sudden our dreary old bathroom and loo were turned into something good enough to belong in a picture book. (54)

It may well be that their contribution involves the sort of 'awful things' that appal Alison Smithson: 'I'd seen some lovely paper with huge poppies that would look just right - then I fell in love with some cheery daisy paper' (55), but tenants too have to put down their 'mental roots'.

The Smithsons know that they must take note of such things, it is an integral part of the aesthetic - learned in Bethnal Green. There it was the Samuels who: 'distempered the walls in yellow and stencilled a lozenge pattern in green around the top and sides and stuck a paper frieze along the upper edge' (56) now it's the tenants in Robin Hood. Paolozzi did much the same thing for Judith and Nigel Henderson.

In an alternative sequence of Criteria, listed by Johnson in The Moron-made City, the architects ask: 'Will the lampshades on the ceilings, the curtains, the china-dogs take away from the meaning of the architecture?' (57), but, of course, the question is a rhetorical one. We can only assume that the answer must be 'No' - such personal touches can only enhance it. The evidence that the tenants feel at home, that they have settled in, is fundamental to the concept of the notion of neighbourliness.

When Peter Smithson commented that the only freedom, in the Unité, was 'in the curtains' (58), he was thinking of the need for the equivalent of the Golden Lane 'yard-garden' and not on the opportunities for the personal contribution within the home.

The Smithson Criteria for Mass-Housing provide a critical framework within which to establish our own criteria, in relation to Robin Hood, and draw our attention to certain specific necessities. They take into account the physical and emotional needs of the tenants and remind us of the architects' 'peculiar responsibility' when building for the common people. It is vital that mass working-class housing avoids any hint of the 'straightjacket' - it must not be a labour to go out or to return home. If either were found to be a fact of life, at Robin Hood, then the 'demonstration of a more enjoyable way of living' (59) is a dream indeed.

The authors of the Docklands Strategic Plan suggested that there are three major elements in environmental satisfaction:

- (1) the individual and his social attributes.
- (2) the beliefs or perception of the individual, i.e. his feelings or attitudes.
- (3) the external objects at which the individual's feeling are directed, i.e. the social and physical aspects of living-space.

There are also two related levels of living-space.

- (1) the dwelling and its immediate surroundings.
- (2) the local facility environment, i.e. the presence or absence of particular facilities within easy reach of the building. (60)

There are fundamental similarities and we must be aware of them in our observations of the way of life at Robin Hood; the evidence must be related to the situation as it is, built around the Criteria that 'common-sense' tells us are apt, to the particular problem, at the north exit of the Blackwall Tunnel in the East End of London.

SIXROBIN HOOD OBSERVED

ROBIN HOOD OBSERVED

I am a camera with the shutter open, quite  
passive, recording ...

(Christopher Isherwood 1938)(1)

For all the reasoned argument of the Smithson aesthetic Robin Hood is not all that they say it is. Certain blatant inconsistencies, between the ideas expressed so lucidly in Ordinariness & Light and the stark facts observed in the building itself, give cause for concern. They can be listed.

- (1) The way-in is not as clearly defined as the architects would have it. The access-stairs are dank and uninviting. The lifts are no more than oppressive metal containers and are unreliable.
- (2) There is a lack of common privacy due to an excessive use of window space on all sides. You are constantly overlooked.
- (3) The central garden - the 'stress-free' zone - is not a quiet place and the tenants abuse its intention to a degree that the Smithsons could not have envisaged.
- (4) The effects of vandalism have worn away the sense of trust and neighbourliness on which the whole thinking of Robin Hood depends.
- (5) The writing-on-the-wall is vicious and continually draws attention to the increasing difficulties faced by the black immigrant at a time of economic strain.
- (6) There is little or no contribution, made by the inhabitants, to the look of the building. Very few of the dwellings are in any way personalised beyond the choice of curtains.
- (7) The 'street-decks' are not used in the way the Smithsons hoped and consequently the design innovation at Robin Hood - the idea of 'street' - is a sad failure.

This final point is the most serious disappointment to the architects

as it cuts deeply into their belief that it is essential to provide an equivalent to the old traditional, working-class, street, if a more enjoyable way of living is to be encouraged. The idea of 'street' is the very foundation of the thinking at Robin Hood:

The 'street' is an extension of the house; in it children learn for the first time of the world outside the family; it is a microcosmic world in which the street games change with the seasons and the hours are reflected in the cycle of street activity.(2)

Formally Robin Hood may be perceived as elegant and sculpturally refined, but the way of life generated, in part, by the form-language, but largely by social and environmental factors, is far from civilised.

If we set the observed facts against the listed Criteria for Mass-Housing it soon becomes clear that the rational answer, to the thirty statistical Smithson questions, does not tell the full story.

A. The dwelling.

- (1) Can it adapt itself to various ways of living. Does it liberate the occupants from old restrictions or straightjacket them into new ones?

The tenants are generally content with their living space and once inside many feel secure and protected from the obvious signs of stress and social strain in the communal parts of the building. They speak of the advantages: 'I don't like the outside very much - but once you get inside your own flat it's really very nice. You've got fresh air back and front - either on the street-deck or on the balconies'(3) - occasionally they complain about the lack of maintenance, blame others for their inability to repair the damage quickly enough: 'them windows were broken three weeks ago - kids kicking a ball out there - nothing's been done about it - I keep asking'(4).

There is a lot of broken glass, windows are temporarily boarded-up

and the tenants blame it on the younger children. It is seen as the result of where twelve year olds play with their balls. The 'No Ball Games' signs are ineffective and are either vandalised or ignored.

The noise, within the flats is minimal, ironically partly due to the fact that the street-decks are under used - there is little or no irritation from children playing in the 'street'. At garden level it is more of a problem and the elderly tenants are less happy. Inside, the flats are spacious and carefully designed and living at ground level is something they fully appreciate. There is the noise from the 'moat' and doors slam at night.

The local Police, habitually alert to nuisance factors, walk through the building regularly - as a matter of routine, and are loth to criticise. One young W.P.C., stationed in Chrisp Street, commented:

You'll see worse if you look further down the road. Nowhere near as bad as some - the estates to look at are up towards Mile End - not down here. Noise? The balconies overhang - you don't get the noise from people above. That's good. Not many places they can hide in either - that's what causes the trouble - when you can't see them. Not like the blocks with glass stairways - they aren't so good.(5)

Elderly people like to know that the Police are around: 'they don't come round enough - never here when you need them'(6) is a common complaint, now that there's no Caretaker actually living in the building.

Higher up, many of the inhabitants are less content and we see clear evidence of their concern. Many of them have covered the windows that look out onto the deck - the 'street' - with wrought-iron trellis-work as though there is a need for something more substantial than thin net curtains. Here they complain of the lack of privacy: 'people coming and going all the time - you never know who's out there - especially at night - with all these Blacks around'(7). This is a common reaction and you rarely notice an open door. Nothing is left unattended: 'they

even nick your milk-bottles - you never see who it is'(8) - 'it's not like it used to be'(9) - in the traditional working-class street.

There is something of the simulated barricade about much of the window 'decoration' - as though there is a need for fortification - but there is no evidence of real threat.

Tenants can be grouped together: 'these three here is all widows - we pay forty quid a week'(10): with something in common - with a neighbour - living alone is less of a strain. All three flats had a colour photograph of the Pope, in the small triangular window by the front door, and all the widows were Irish.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Church was a minority interest not only for the Anglicans, traditionally the representatives of the upper class, but also for the non conformist sects which had earlier been part of the emergent working class culture. There are exceptions, the Roman Catholics continued under the domination of their Church which thus remained closely involved with the Irish working class; the primitive Methodists were always radical, trade union, and Labour voters, under the banner of Christ the Man of the People.(11)

We sense their fear and they talk of the financial difficulties: it is obvious that there is little 'slack'(12) money to spend on home comforts. However we look at it there are few outward signs of enjoyment or signs of optimism in what they have to say. Common people tend to talk in terms of the common difficulties and there is no evidence, at Robin Hood, to suggest that the physical structure of the building is in any way a contributory factor to the general air of social despair. That is caused by concerns that lie outside the intentions of this thesis.(13)

Whatever restrictions the tenants impose upon themselves, in this way, is a matter of personal choice and the notion of the 'straightjacket' is irrelevant. We have seen barbed-wire around the balcony of a flat in the Blackwall block - the young W.P.C. assured us that: 'there's a

slag family in there - we let them get on with it'(14) but the degree of alienation, and the need for that kind of protection, will depend on specific circumstances. There is evidence to suggest that the end flats are the most vulnerable: 'they move the problem families into them - then they move on - that's why the windows is smashed - it's always like that. I get a lot of lip from them'.(15)

Robin Hood can adapt itself to various ways of living, the extent of the 'restrictions', self-imposed or otherwise, will vary according to the personal way of living of each particular family. At ground level the elderly people are certainly content with the accommodation - if only those who live above act in a civilised manner. An eighty year old man:

I've been here right from the start - I met the architect - I told him it wasn't no good this way. I'm eighty now - she' seventy-five.

They throw all their rubbish out the window - hot fat - you can see where it's burnt the grass - right by the pathway: there. That should have been a garden - we would have looked after it - sit outside - not now. I tell them but they don't listen - kids too they all do it. And they play football when they come home from school. It says No Ball Games - up there. Youngsters - thirteen or fourteen - you can't blame them - where else is there to go? They bring goal-posts - I tell them - milk-crates - there - we shut ourselves in can't hear the language then - it's not right - disgusting - young girls too. She's had her windows broken - ball right through - three times - they don't care - none of them.(16)

It's quite clear that there is a problem, the signs are that the tenants on the higher levels do jettison their rubbish through the kitchen window - there are marks that scar the grass: there is the evidence that hot fat is tipped out of the flats above.

And worse:

It says 'No Dogs' but they've all got dogs - bloody great things some of them. They wrap up the .... - you know - dirt - in old newspaper and throw it down - here onto the grass - you can see it. Have you seen the stairways? No dogs - they've all got dogs. It drops onto the grass - above your head. I told him to sweep it up - it stinks in the sun. It's not right - someone should tell them. I would ...(17).

The need for a 'yard garden' is fundamental to those who have always had its equivalent - the backyard. Associated with this, in the minds of the elderly tenants, there is the need for some extra territorial space of their own. We notice that they sweep the path outside their flat, even try to clear the litter from the entrance to the access-stairs. Observed at Robin Hood the act looks oddly out of place, a left-over from a previous culture - the way of life in the traditional working-class street. The wife of the eighty year old man told us:

Every day I sweep away the cigarettes - then two girls come down every night with their dogs - they stand there for hours - we can hear them talking. You can see what the dogs do - smoking - I even wash down the wall. But they don't care - every night it is - after dark they come down and just stand there - two of them - same two every night. What can you do? If I don't do it no-one will.(18)

The Smithsons built Robin Hood for those they assumed would see the 'common-sense' in such actions, would see the necessity in seeing that the building was kept clean. They did not envisage the tipping of the hot fat and they did assume that orderly restrictions would be obeyed. To them 'No Ball Games' meant just that.

It is worth noting that the elderly people, who now live in Robin Hood, are of the generation that survived the 'Blitz' and who might well have been observed by Nigel Henderson, forty years ago in Bethnal Green. They are the survivors of the 'earlier culture - and a subsistence culture at that'(19) that the Smithsons noted in the late 'Forties and early 'Fifties, when they were concerned with the project for Golden Lane.

Robin Hood houses a variety of working-class age groups, from the very young to the very old: large families - problem families - widows on their own, the social mix is considerable but all are working-class. It has to adapt itself to that difficult, constantly changing, community and there is little evidence of the notion of the 'straightjacket' in

the sense that the obvious lack of self-discipline leads to a degree of personal freedom, beyond the limits expected by both architects and the Local Authority.

- (2) Are the spaces moulded exactly to fit their purpose? Or are they by-products of structural tidiness or plastic whim? Is the means of construction of the same order as the standard of living envisaged?

Robin Hood houses the working-class, the 'common-people': 'It is perhaps hard to define them, but I would say it is those many of us who are without surplus. Those who live close to the standard minimum - a little above - a little below' (20) and, today, the standard of living in the East End is low.

Inside the building, you notice the minor details that tell of the difficulties: torn carpets, worn furniture, an ill-assorted collection of bits-and-pieces that add to the personal paraphernalia and clutter that we have come to expect. The tenants speak of minor problems: a young married mother: 'you need so many curtains here - we used to change them in the Winter - my Mum still does - heavier to keep out the cold. Now we have to make do with these - they don't match - all the year round. My sister-in-law gave me her's - she didn't want them any more' (21): there had been no choice. We can see the effect it has on the look of the building and Jencks is right, in that respect, it does signify 'council housing' (22).

The formal arrangement of the space is as the Smithsons say it is - the building has been: 'deliberately organised to create an area in the centre of the site protected from noise' (23) and the buildings are not organised like filing-cabinets. Each space, as the Smithsons saw it, is conceived as having a specific purpose. What they say in the

Johnson Script is easily observed at Robin Hood. There is, indeed, little or no evidence of 'plastic whim', beyond the lighter touches in the, equally sensibly designed, 'play-pits'. If anything the means of construction is of a higher order than the current standard of living: there is an air of sophistication, as one would expect, from the designers of the Hunstanton School and the Economist building.

Robin Hood lacks regular maintenance and running repairs - even re-painting - just aren't completed quickly enough. Doors are not replaced, broken glass is not swept away - walls are rarely washed. The access-stairs smell.

Local authority resources are less than they once were, and what structural tidiness there might have been, is certainly counteracted by the extent of the damage done to it.

The communal spaces are ill-used and so many of the areas provided, for activities outside the home, are left to deteriorate into little more than refuse-tips.

We can note the Smithsons' concern for the organisation:

... the buildings themselves explain how they are intended to be used.

These long horizontal recesses can only be decks for walking along and the entry points to them by way of lifts and stairs - the vertical movements - are clearly indicated by change of scale and volume. (24)

It is not that the space doesn't make 'architectural' sense, we see clearly that it does - with the vital exception of the means of access to the upper decks - but that the behaviour of the inhabitants gives us further cause for concern.

- (3) Is there a decently large open-air sunlit space opening directly from the living area of the house? Is there a place in the open air where a small baby (1-3 years old) can be left safely?

At garden level the building offers instant freedom, the front-doors

open directly out into the garden - into the 'stress-free' zone. The elderly tenants are able to sit outside, alone or in groups, talking with their neighbours next door.

Higher up there is no garden but the decks offer an opportunity to make the most of what sunlight there is. Opening from the flats are the balconies on which it is possible to sit.

It is very much a question as to how the tenants view the garden.

One young house-wife, living in the Cotton Street building:

I don't sit out there - everybody can see you there - they stare. The kids don't leave you alone - I stay up here with the window open - it's O.K. I go to the park across the way - it's good to get away from here - as it is. It's not like it was when we first came - it's the Blacks and the Chinese here now. Too many of them. Last week they came and played football out there - outsiders - don't live here. They can come from anywhere - you can't stop them coming can you?(25)

Her neighbour felt much the same:

When we first come the kids pulled lorry-tyres up to the top of that hill there - let them down towards the old folk's doors they did - did a lot of damage they did - then they stopped. Now they ride their bikes up and down - that's why the grass is worn. They do it all the time - sometimes it's them little motor-bikes.(26)

The eighty year old man below verified what she said:

You should have been here last Sunday - motor-bikes it was - they raced round and round and over the paths by the trees - speedway they said it was. Tried to catch each other coming back - dogs everywhere barking - dangerous it was - motor-bikes I ask you. You should have been here then - I saw it - I heard it.(27)

We have in fact observed motor-bikes roaring through the sensibly thought-out 'stress-free', quiet, central zone, out there in the middle between the two blocks. The large mound has proved no deterrent. It is a dramatic feature - almost 'surrealistic' - but it has merely become incorporated into the new set of 'street games'.

The Smithsons saw it as another innovation:

At the new city scale making a garden should be like making a range of hills. Hills are a great formal idea, ever various, expressive of mood, expectant of weather. Today we might make contour relief by means of the same earth shifting equipment that opencasts coal.

Only the scale of modelling is bold enough to tell from above at the new city scale of things.

'Capability' Brown raised eyes from the parterre to rove among fine silhouetted trees, over undulating fields and inviting screens of woodland. We will be lowering our eyes to look down from our street-decks and homes - another dimension entering our lives.

The land must be reclaimed, even if resistance squads have to plant ivy in peoples' gutters. The bulldozer that has been employed to ruin quickly can be employed to make quickly. It can attack the pre-war jerry-built houses; and ultimately the Housing Manual type estates up and down the country. Spiritually dead houses can be bulldozed into contour relief ready for our new homes to look out on. (28)

The 'decently large open-air sunlit space opening directly from the living area of the house' was certainly conceived as something more than a deterrent to noisy, would-be, footballers and speedway riders.

Undoubtedly the space is there, so too are the decks and the narrow balconies, though mothers tend to keep their youngest children in doors where they can keep a close eye on them.

- (4) Can the weather be enjoyed? Is the house insulated against cold weather, yet made to easily open up in good weather?

There is no doubt that the flats are designed to make the most of the good weather, all the thinking is concerned with the availability of space outside the dwelling. The notion of the 'stress-free' zone, the idea of 'street' rely on the understanding that people will always get out of the house if they can. Easy access is essential and the amount of window space, in this light, is an advantage.

In bad weather the building is cold, it is undeniably bleak out on the high decks. If the curtains are inadequate, the carpeting thin, for all the efficiency of the heating-system, the tenants will suffer. If they are ill-dressed, they will feel the cold.

- (5) Are the extensions of the dwelling (garden, patio, etc.) appreciated from the inside?

Inside Robin Hood it is difficult not to see what is happening and

there are many watching eyes. With so many windows it is not easy to remain unseen. The fact that all windows, of the occupied flats, have some form of curtains suggests that the tenants themselves feel a lack of privacy. People passing through the building tend not to loiter, there are no shop-windows to distract us, and we sense that Nigel Henderson would have moved quickly on. Out in the middle, in between the two blocks, it is possible to feel threatened.

The tenants spend little time peering out over the deck parapets, they take the views for granted. Some are saddened by the changes and others can't remember anything different. A young teenager felt too much was made of how things were:

They keep talking of what it used to be like - it makes you sick - I don't give a .... you just have to see it like it is - no good living in the past - half of them never lived here anyway - came from over there ...  
Can't see the point in belly-aching about it - it's the inside that matters anyway - waste of time looking for things that aren't there - daft that is - I don't give a ....(29)

The Smithsons designed the 'extensions of the dwelling' with a view to encouraging the confidence necessary for the tenants to make the best possible use of the outside of the building. Like Le Corbusier in the Unité they knew that, however practical the interior space might be, the inhabitants would spend much of their time elsewhere. It was essential that the communal areas be seen - 'appreciated' - as being pleasant places to be. They concentrated their thinking around the notion of neighbourliness with this in mind.

The tenants in Robin Hood do appreciate the necessity for the lifts and access-stairways, that it their way in and out of the building: it can be seen to be a necessity. Some are not so sure about the decks. A thirty-five year old father, with two children:

... there's always someone out there - passing by the window. You can't see who it is - you hear the footsteps - hear them talking.

I like to see what's going on - you can on the inside - look down into the garden across the way. I don't like to open the front-door to look - the window is no good - can't lean out. You hear them at night talking - not kids. You can't see who it is.(30)

I walk the dog - we're told not to have dogs - not allowed but ... I take it into the playground there - walk around the block - then I can see what's what. Don't like not knowing who's down the way. People come and go all the time - you never know who you're going to get next door - keep chopping and changing. Some stay - not always ... No - I don't spend any time out there - except with the dog. We've all got dogs - well most of us - for company I suppose - don't know why ... really - keeps the kids away though ...(31)

If the writing-on-the-wall was less spiteful, it would be almost possible to believe what the tenants tell us: life isn't easy but then they have got used to that: 'you just have to put up with it' is a common philosophy in Robin Hood.

Talking with the tenants can be truly informative, though, as the men of Mass Observation found in 'Worktown', they are not always the most reliable of witnesses.(32) We are on safer ground if we have understood the situation for ourselves. Questions need to be carefully chosen and the naive observer is easily misled into accepting the 'typical' as fact. We read the words scrawled on the wall of the lift-lobby, but it might be unwise to take it too seriously: to read too much into it.

There is, undoubtedly, racial tension in Robin Hood: 'Blacks Rule' in the Blackwall block - 'Burn all Niggers' on the Cotton Street side, but that sort of language is common now in East London. It causes concern to the tenants who need to use the stairs at night, or wait for the lift - on their own - in the dark: 'you never know who's there - it looks so black outside'. It is not only the older children who need safe places outside the home: not all the 'extensions of the dwelling' are enjoyable places to be in.

(6) Does it take account of the 3 - 5 year olds' play?

The Householders' Manual is out of date - the play-pits have been vandalised. All four are smashed and have not been repaired. The

toddlers' play-ground is unused and it's difficult to see where a three year old could play. Mothers with young children are wary:

I don't like my kids playing out on the walk-ways because there's a ledge at the bottom of the glass which they can climb on to and fall over the top.(33)

No - not down there - not on his own ... it wouldn't be safe - my man would kill me. There's nothing for them to do - they've wrecked the play-areas - it's the older children who does it. I keep mine indoors unless I go with them. All that broken glass. It's not the same as playing in the street - like we used to - you're safe then - you can see what they're doing - here it's too dangerous. I'd never forgive myself if anything happened ... No I wouldn't let them - I couldn't not here.(34)

Working-class children have always 'played-out', in the street, close to their own front-doors: at Robin Hood the evidence is that they don't. We rarely see the younger children unless they are accompanied by their mother.

It is sad to see the smashed play-pits, which were designed with such care. Close by the entrance to the building, by Woolmore Street - on the Cotton Street side, there was a small concrete 'pleasure-boat' and a small wooden bench and table - for picnics in the sunshine - a sensitive touch, modest and neat alongside the steep block above - from which mothers could keep a safe eye on the children playing below. Now it is nothing more than a concrete, circular, pit, full of jagged piping and broken wire-netting.

Why do they do it?

It's a game to them - they use the netting as a trampoline - it's a new game - bouncing up and down - or it was, now they're on to something else. Eight or nine they are - no more - that's one of them there. Language is terrible - only nine she is - that one. I told her to stop and she told me to 'f' off - what can you do? I can't catch her.

He's throwing bricks into it now - look - they bring them in from across the road - soon there'll be nothing left. Mothers do nothing - schools are just as bad - never seen her father - they'll wreck it all if they get half a chance. You don't see small kids in there ... mothers won't let them - would you?

You can't blame them can you - they was brought up like that.(35)

And in the Householders' Manual it specifically requests that they:

Please encourage youngsters to use these play areas rather than play on unsuitable parts of the estate. Please also encourage youngsters to look after play areas and play equipment. (36)

Photographs taken in 1978 show the play-pits intact: those taken in 1982 illustrate only too well what the tenants' tell us. They have been wrecked and we have observed the method of their destruction: the nine year old was throwing bricks into the already smashed pipe that had once been the funnel of the little 'pleasure-boat'.

The Smithsons conceived Robin Hood in a spirit of well-ordered family life, they did not envisage that the carefully designed elements, that were intended to extend this spirit, would so soon become the target of social abuse. When asked directly 'Why do that?' the nine year old girl had nothing to say.

(7) Is it easy to maintain (keep fresh looking with just a cleaning down?)

Robin Hood has become grubby. Rain washes the decks but it can't reach down into the access-stairs which are consequently filthy. It is hard to see how this could be remedied, without a regular dowsing with disinfectant. Dogs foul the stairs, which have a dank stench of urine at all levels. Tenants despair:

Vomit all over the wall - why should I clean it up? Saturday is the worst - week-in-and-week-out - they come back from the pub ... p... against the wall by the door there - you can hear them - they don't care. They throw-up in the stairways. It stinks out here in the morning - I tell her to stay in - it's not right ... (37)

Individual flats are often well kept and clean, others less so - it's peculiar to individual tenants how they want to live. In the 'moat' the oil stains increase and the walls are greasy. Regular maintenance is the only practical answer to the question, but that's not possible in the present economic circumstances.

Theoretically it would be easy to clean, walls can be washed, but the spray-can is an effective weapon of discontent and any attempt to tidy-up is instantly frustrated. Eventually the frustration builds up and the authorities become careless. It is their responsibility to re-place the doors, to repair the charred refuse-shutes - sweep up the broken glass: Robin Hood needs a full-time maintenance staff if it is to be 'fresh looking'.

The Smithsons were clear in their intention: 'The bits of the building one touches, or brushes against are smooth: we try to suggest possible pleasant patterns of use through the form of the building'(38) but we now observe the effects of daily wear and tear, and the mindless smashing of the play-pits.

Refuse-shutes are never truly clean, we do not expect them to be, but equally we do not expect them to be burnt-out holes in the wall, and we do not expect refuse to be jettisoned out of kitchen windows.

It's often too easy to apportion the blame:

It's Blacks ... they don't know different - as soon as they move in the trouble starts. They don't know no better. Before they came there was no bother - it's them that causes all the damage - you can see it ... they don't live like us do they? Don't know how to behave. There's so many of them now ... more than there used to be - that's the trouble. Now it's the Chinese - all the same - up there - look at them windows - you can see for yourself ...(39)

In the Blackwall block we note that there is a certain truth in this assertion. Windows are not clean, curtains are not washed - glass is not replaced. It is in the Blackwall block that the majority of the Black families are to be found: there are the larger flats that were designed to provide suitable accommodation for larger families.

In terms of the listed Criteria, this is a question not easy to answer, as the drab personal effects of many of the tenants add to the dreary appearance of much of the building. The actual structure has worn well but it does not look fresh.

- (8) Is there a place for the belongings or special tasks peculiar to the class of the occupants - skis, camping gear, mending motor-bikes etc.?

Robin Hood does not offer the facilities suggested in the projected scheme for Golden Lane and there is no real equivalent to the 'yard gardens'. The flats that do have a space outside - eight in all - are fortunate. To say that the area by the front-door is their equivalent we see as ridiculous:

The 'alcoves' off the street-deck are intended as shielded 'pause places' before entering the house - a stoop rather than a doorstep. These spaces offer themselves naturally for potted plants, flower boxes, etc., - the normal paraphernalia of domestic outside show. They are the equivalent of the 'yard-gardens' of the Golden Lane project, providing the identifying elements of the individual dwelling.(40)

In Jencks' terms, they just don't do the trick.

The tenants make use of the storage-space and the garages but there is little evidence of the activity the Smithsons had in mind.

A man in his fifties:

I miss my work-shed - had a bench in it - always had one in the old place - out the back. Here there's nothing - she don't like me bringing it indoors so ... used to make bits of furniture - tables and that - put things up when she needed it. I miss that - miss the little bit of garden - made a difference that. Can't walk out here - mind you the flat's fine - plenty of room in there - but it's not the same ... I've got used to it I suppose ...(41)

With the lack of outside space communication with neighbours is restricted and we see little evidence of passers-by stopping to talk. This is a severe limitation to the concept of the idea of 'street' - no wall to gossip across.

We see the Geraniums, out on the narrow balconies, but no potted-plants in the alcoves, though the elderly tenants, at garden level, do have the occasional flower-pot by the front-door. Plastic plants are more popular on the higher decks, entwined in the wrought-iron trellis

work across the window. In nearby Lansbury we observe the opposite.

Dogs are a problem, they are not officially allowed to keep them.

Oddly enough they do not foul the decks - just the access-stairs - and we have, from time to time, observed human excrement there, in the dark passage-ways.

(9) Is there enough storage? (There is never enough storage.).

There's room enough - we don't have that much. Clothes in the bedroom cupboards - dry. We left them where we found them - the people before us moved them.

He keeps his tackle in the garage - if you put it at the back it's O.K. - he doesn't seem to worry. They only kick-in the garages if they know whose it is. Some of my stuff is still at my Mum's - we won't be here for ever - we didn't bring everything with us. We knew we weren't going to stop long. When we move - he says Brighton - we'll fetch it all over together.(42)

The flats are well-fitted with cupboard space and there are 143 garages. Each family seems to manage and the limitations of access - stairs or lifts - means that little heavy furniture is practical and this invariably makes for more room. It is a fact, at Robin Hood, that the majority of tenants buy light-weight furniture: 'no - nothing big - just wood. Trouble is that it breaks easily - kids knock it about. He won't buy anything stronger - say's it's not worth it - wait until the kids get bigger: when they're at school'(43).

There's no evidence to suggest that storage space is a problem - it seems adequate. Some flats appear cluttered and others look bare: the majority have the expected 'mementos' - photographs and ornaments and there is the occasional canary.

(10) Can the dwellings be put together in such a way as to contribute something to each other?

At Robin Hood there is little choice, it must be seen as a single unit. Whether, if it had been possible to extend the scheme as intended - out into the surrounding district and across the East India Dock Road, it would have made the all-important difference that the architects

imply, is a matter for speculation. We doubt it and the evidence suggests otherwise. Without the variety of structural innovations, as projected for Golden Lane, it would seem most likely to have merely further restricted the idea of 'street'. As it is Robin Hood draws our attention to the difficulties experienced in any split community. There is no doubt that part of the difficulty, currently experienced by the tenants, is due to the division between the two blocks:

... it's not that bad here but over there it's terrible. Have you seen it - by the Tunnel? They ought to stop it now. It's Black nearly all of it. You can't get up the stairs sometimes - I can't go there. No - not any more - I don't ... I stop over this side. My mate lives there - she says the noise is terrible - all night and she's got three kids. It's not fair on them is it? We're luckier but now they've put Blacks here too - you can see where they live - dirty they are. One's a cabbie - he cleans it everyday - he's older been here for some time he has. I don't mind him - lives up the top. I've never spoken to him.(44)

The essential communal area is the 'stress-free' zone, we can see that most clearly. It is the fundamental notion - the communal meeting place for the tenants of both buildings, around which Robin Hood is planned. Tension between the opposite sides can reduce it to an arena in which aggravation builds up.

(11) Is the house as comfortable as a car of the same year?

The 'People's House' - the 'People's Car'? It seems an irrelevant question today. We observe that the way of life, in Robin Hood, is far from comfortable. There is a sense of disenchantment in much of what we have been told. It is a fact of life that the East End is becoming a harsh place to live: run down and dominated by increased traffic along the East India Dock and Commercial Roads. Small shops are closing, facilities are being cut back - the people do not think in terms of comfort:

Comfortable? Depends what you mean. We've got carpets and a good bed - some haven't. We've got the 'tele' - see for yourself. We can't complain - others are worse off. I work locally - Mile End

- furniture so we get things cheap. She'd like more - no chance. But I don't blame her - you take things for granted don't you? Are you comfortable where you are? Who is these days with them? We more comfortable than most of them here. (45)

We can compare the life at Robin Hood with more affluent parts of London, but that is meaningless given its context. Compared with the life observed by the Hendersons in Chisenhale Road, there are certain obvious similarities. The Samuels were able to make minor adjustments to their home - were able to feel that they were improving their sleeping arrangements: 'Mrs.S. has recently rearranged their sleeping so that Brian, Leslie and Geoffrey now share a double bed and Peter and Douglas have a sofa bed. All the children sleep in one room, the parents in another' (46) and now, in Robin Hood, we notice the same working-class mentality.

It is not a matter of comfort, as the outsider sees it, it is the thought that the new arrangement will offer a more practical solution to what has become a nagging problem. In the sense that the Smithsons meant it, the very ordinariness of working-class living leads to 'common-sense' solutions. As they saw it the 'common people' had an innate common-sense, around which it was possible to build a more enjoyable way of living.

This conviction is very much related to the events they witnessed in Chisenhale Road, where they had seen for themselves the reactions of working-class families - the Samuels in particular. In their riposte to Banham's assessment of their contribution to what he saw as 'The New Brutalism' they quote:

Alison and Peter Smithson were deeply and directly influenced by the photographs of street life in Bethnal Green taken by Nigel Henderson, and by contact with his wife Judith who at that time (around 1950) was doing active social guidance work. During this period the Hendersons and the Paolozzis all lived and worked in Bethnal Green.

and follow with:

To us Wilmot(sic) and Young who get mentioned in the text as 'influences' are Johnny-come-lately academic sociologists (to us then and now a word used pejoratively).(47)

What they could not have foreseen, though in this thesis we question their objectivity, was that the working-class would allow their traditional values to be eroded to such an extent. This is Seabrook's concern in What Went Wrong?.

- (12) Is the technology suitable to house construction: does it take account of electric runs and do without traditional 'style-left overs', such as door frames?

Peter Smithson feels that Robin Hood: 'looks of its time'(48), that it does not have the contrived 'nostalgia' of Lansbury - there is nothing of the 'same dreary old piecemeal tinkering of between the wars'(49) about it.

Robin Hood Gardens was designed unreinforced concrete box-frame construction (utilizing the cross-walls for the cantilevers over the decks), with lightweight concrete block internal partitions plastered both sides.

During the working drawing period the structure became more and more suited to being cast in large pieces ...(50)

Lansbury was built of traditional London brick.

The technology is indeed suitable and the traditional elements are cut to a minimum. Tenants do not comment on the construction and there is no evidence that they are concerned with 'stylistic' incongruities. Since the advent of the 'slab-block' they have become accustomed to such formal structuring.(51)

#### B. The immediate extensions of the dwelling.

- (1) Has the relationship between the dwelling and its means of access been chosen for some good reason?

We can only repeat the Smithsons' statement:

The approach to a house is the occupants' link with society as a whole - a lengthy climb up a rickety stair or down into a basement.

up an avenue  
up an estate road  
along an air-conditioned corridor

These are man's links with society, the vistas down which he looks at his world; they frame his perspective view. (52)

We don't doubt that the relationship has been chosen for some good reason, that the aesthetic, as expounded in Ordinariness & Light, is reflected in what we observe at Robin Hood. There is no doubt in our mind that the decks are the very essence of the idea of 'street' and that the central 'stress-free' zone is vital to the notion of neighbourliness. It is clear that the way-in to the building has been designed carefully to provide access-points at the strategic points. The ways-in are sensibly placed at the four corners of the building: Woolmore Street and Poplar High Street, into the Cotton Street building, the High Street and Robin Hood Lane on the Blackwall block side. We can observe the 'common-sense' in that arrangement: there is no viable alternative. The service 'moats' are equally well designed with an entrance and exit on either side of the building.

The Smithsons built Robin Hood with an eye for detail, a feel for the natural 'poetry' and with a fundamental belief in a need for a sense of 'quality' - of a civilised way of life.

If, as Aldo van Eyck suggests, 'Architecture need do no more than assist man's homecoming' (53), then Robin Hood - the Smithsons' 'Holy Grail' fails dismally.

They ask: 'Is it a labour to go out or to return home?' (54) and it is a vital question and not one to be answered in terms of mere physical convenience. In a limited sense it is easy enough to get in and out of either block, and we do not dispute it. But there is more to it than that - the notion of homecoming is as fundamental as the notion of neighbourliness and it is that aspect that we must consider.

Walking back from Chrisp Street, across the waste-land, across Cotton Street, there's really only one way in to the Cotton Street building. We see the 'moat', note the dustcart, turn right - and right again into the lift-lobby. Two lifts, side-by-side. The writing-on-the-wall is offensive.

The lift is a metal container, it smells of urine and the floor is wet.

Not all the words are obscene or hateful, lists of favourite 'Pop-Stars', West Ham United footballers: 'Up the Irons' - but there is much that is. 'NF' - National Front - killthis, kill that: 'Vote Labour and get a nigger for a neighbour', 'I hate Pigs'. Society has come to expect this new kind of 'architectural' language(55), and obviously the tenants are only too used to it.

Coming in, from Poplar High Street, across the pedestrian-crossing and over the narrow 'draw-bridge' that spans the 'moat', we notice the way-in towering above us. Beyond can be seen the garden, with its green trees and grass, and beyond that, the Blackwall block.

Stairs to the left, the lifts to our right. Walls covered with daubed slogans in bright red paint. This time: 'Burn all niggers'.

The access-stairs are equally gloomy, they stink of stale urine and everywhere there are pools of water. We catch a glimpse of the mound, in the central garden, but need to watch where we're putting our feet. No room here to stop and talk and still leave room to pass. When we hear footsteps we never quite know what to expect. When we hear Charles Jencks: 'the collective entries are paltry and a few have been vandalised, indeed they are dark, smelly, dank passage-ways'(56) we must agree.

It is worth noting that he made his assessment in 1977 now, five years later, in 1982, the position is clearly far worse. Ironically,

at night, the stranger feels less threatened, though the tenants themselves find this the time they least like to be walking outside:

I know that there are lights - but I still don't like it out on my own. Don't really know why - nothing's ever happened to me but I feel nervous. It's not that I ... it doesn't frighten me but it's not ... I can't really say why - you know what I mean ...(57)

Coffin-like metal lifts and dank passage-ways have, at Robin Hood, become those 'links with society', those 'vistas down which he looks at his world', and it must give us cause for concern.

The Blackwall block is even less welcoming. Up from the 'moat' - greasy walls, tacky underfoot, water everywhere - broken glass - you use the lift if you live on the top deck. Homecoming is a constant reminder of the difficulties faced daily in the East End.

A young West Indian:

I don't get no trouble - they don't bother me much. They think I'm a 'Paki' - Trinidad - it's the hair and the 'tash'. No - I feel O.K. here - with my sister. No-one tries it with me - I carry this blade ... strapped to my arm ... no it's O.K. - they don't bother me.

Maybe - but it's the way I am and they leave me alone - my mates don't care - we can look after ourselves. The National Front is more towards Whitechapel - we don't go down Brick Lane - we keep this way - this way - this side of The Londoner - that's where Poplar starts - other side is Limehouse - Chinese there - we stay this side.

You get the Front in Stepney - I don't bother ... Skins ...(58)

Coming up, out of the Cotton Street 'moat', the central staircase is particularly dark, there are no lifts and it is the only way-in to the block at this point. A low ceiling, up once and double back - up again and out on to the small balcony overlooking the garden. It is a good vantage point from which to observe the Blackwall block.

Up and up again and out on to the first floor deck. We observe that the rubbish-shute is blocked, the metal cover is missing and that the floor beneath it is greasy.

There is no doubt that the deck is all that the Smithsons claimed it to be, it is certainly no mere access-balcony and there is ample room

for prams to pass. We can understand the notion of 'street' - the idea as they saw it - from where we stand, on the deck itself, it is a feasible concept: we are not now looking at the sophisticated graphics in Ordinariness & Light. The parapet is low, but safe enough, glass below and smooth to the touch. The view is spectacular - out over the Isle of Dogs.

Time and time again we have seen the decks deserted - empty - no sign of life, certainly no 'street-games', only the noise rising from Cotton Street below. Occasionally we have noticed desultory play - we have talked to tenants who live off it:

No not out there - the mothers don't let them - they think it's dangerous - so high up. They go outside - in the park over there - in the churchyard. On the stairs sometimes - in the hall by the lift - not here. They go outside - over there ...

It's not like the street - you can't kick a ball - it would go over the top - down into the garages. They play football in the middle - they run up and down the hills. They're not supposed to - you can see the signs - they don't take no notice.

Who's going to stop them - the mothers don't - glad to get rid of them I expect.

I'm glad - I don't want them breaking my windows - don't want them outside here - leave me alone. They feel the same - right outside your front-door.

Prams? Not up here - not this bit - over the other side - by the tunnel - that's where most of the kids are. Along there - they're older ... keep out of their way I do.(59)

Up again, another balcony, push-bikes leaning against the wall - the deck is wide enough for cyclists - long enough to make it worthwhile.

Skate-boards and roller-skates - in their time. The idea is feasible.

We note that the rubbish-shute has been burnt, litter in the side alcoves - the door to the lift-lobby has been wrenched off its hinges.

End flat boarded up - empty.(60)

The Smithsons intended that the way-in should encourage tenants to feel at home and the access to the building was seen as an essential ingredient of the 'demonstration' - of a more enjoyable way of living. As built we have no doubt that it is a failure in this respect: at

Robin Hood the built form of the access-points is a major stumbling block to 'man's homecoming'.

(2) Does the reason include 3 - 5 year olds' play, if not, where do they play?

We have seen no evidence that they play out on the decks, the mothers do not regard them as streets, though, in the majority of cases, the children have known nothing else. They have not lived in the traditional working-class street. It is conceivable that the Samuels would have been equally sceptical and our observations reveal little or no evidence that the '3 - 5 year olds' indulge in the type of street-games photographed by Nigel Henderson.

It is clear that they spend more time indoors:

... they prefer to watch television - the children's programmes are very good don't you think? It keeps them indoors. I like to know where they are - it's easy if they sit here.

No - they don't play-out very much - not the young ones. I take them to the market with me - to the shops - they like that - but they stop in most of the time.

It's not like it used to be - I don't mind them watching - they do at school. I sit with them - it's for the family isn't it?

We all watch - everybody does - you can see them. I like to watch with them - the programmes are very good.

Down there? No - not unless I go with them - the playgrounds are dirty - smashed-up by the older kids. All the netting's down - I can't understand why they do it - jump on it - break it all up.

It's not safe for the baby down there - there are a lot of dogs.

We keep to ourselves - except for the family - they come over a lot - from Stratford - up there. They like it here - my Mum and Dad - they can see what's going on - nosy like. They've got a car ... I look forward to them coming. The kids like it ... look forward to it ... (61)

Three is a little young to be playing-out in the street - five is school age - and the playground, at the Poplar High Street end of the building, is designed for the older children. We wouldn't expect to find young children there, unless accompanied by an older brother or sister. It is the slightly older children that we observe loitering around the building: nine to eleven year olds mostly.

(3) Does the idea for dwelling produce a clear external image?

There is no doubt that the image we have of Robin Hood is clearly that of mass working-class housing: this is what the Smithsons intended and we can accept it for what it is. The building 'reads' easily, it is as Peter Smithson described it in the Johnson Script. We have noted the structural elements, the appearance is one of social service - an essential service provided by the Local Authority.

If we accept the concept of mass-housing, then Robin Hood offers an external image of that need. Architecturally our 'reading' of it might well vary: we either see it as being tough and elegant, reflecting the way of living familiar to those who know the East End, or, in the case of Charles Jencks, as a 'dense human wall'. Some have seen it as resembling their image of 'Alcatraz' whereas some seem not to notice it at all.

No - I can't describe it - it's grey - stone - concrete - with a green patch in the middle - by the Blackwall Tunnel. Lumps in the middle - mounds of grass. The buses stop there - by the pub ... the Royal Oak - it's across the road from the church - by the old school.

Is that what it's called - Robin Hood? Robin Hood Lane is there. I'm up in Balfron Tower - the high-rise by the under-pass. We can see it from there - we're high up - by the Tunnel.(62)

The Smithsons realise that it is vital that the building should have an image, that it should be accepted within the context of the district that it has become part of: it's a case of 'Struwelpeter's' fingers. It must be seen to play its part in the process of renewal and inject new life into the locality.

Robin Hood, as observed from either Cotton Street or the exit from the Tunnel, is clearly an addition to a sequence of architectural events that began with Lansbury - a post-war attempt to adequately house the East End working-class. As such its image is quite clear and it cannot be mistaken for anything but that.

(4) Can these images add up to a complete one and is this complete image socially viable?

Walking down from Bethnal Green, through Victoria Park, down Burdett Road - past the old Labour Exchange, where Leslie Samuels queued for his Welfare money - by Mile End and Bow, through Lansbury and Chrisp Street Market, we are made only too aware that much needs to be done before the East End housing problem is, even partly, resolved. It is clear that the problem is acute.

Thirty years ago, walking these very same streets, Nigel Henderson made his photographic observations on working-class life. Today we see the same drab streets, on our way to Robin Hood. For all its faults the building is proof that something was tried, that the Local Authority did deem it worthwhile to rehouse those families. This is a socially viable image.

We question the completeness of that image, in the light of the closely observed, specific, details within the building. Broken glass, boarded windows - the grubby entrances - charred refuse-shutes, do not add up to an image that exudes confidence in the success of the scheme. Our observations suggest that others might question the validity of mass-housing:

Well I think these flats have done it all wrong, like see, when the people used to live together and talk to one another ... as soon as they get inside they shut the door and you don't see nothing of them.  
With these flats people are different altogether ... people have changed, they're not so close, people don't mix with one another, I don't know why ... (63)

I've lived in Poplar since I was six. All that sort of 'muck-in' business seems to have gone. I don't know why. (64)

The 'common people' are asking questions now, they too would like to know: 'Whatever happened to Council Housing?' (65).

The public sector has become a prime target for attacks by

commentators who favour a reduction in council house building and seek to support their case with lurid and selective accounts of the cost of such housing provision.

We are convinced that it is the only real method of solving this country's appalling housing problems and have spelt out the reasons for this conviction ...(66)

It is clear that the image could be enhanced, if the authorities were able to maintain the building more effectively - Robin Hood can be said to suffer from neglect.

It is clear that the main purpose of the cuts cannot be to save money, for the amount of money involved is not decisive. The main purpose is clearly stated to be a rise all round in the rents of council tenants ... one of the immediate results will be a reduction in purchasing power all round for working-class people ... The cuts in subsidies reinforced by obstacles to future local authority borrowing must be seen as part of a plan to reduce the total amount of local authority building ... When housing is left to private enterprise only houses for the well to do and middle class get built to a reasonable standard ... A decent standard of housing for the mass of people and the elimination of the present shortage of accommodation depend on a continuation of a high rate of municipal subsidised building for many years to come.(67)

We see the complete image as incomplete in this respect.

Robin Hood is not only a fragment, that fall short of what the Smithsons intended, it is also a fragmented piece of the total overall strategy, for the renewal of a run-down inner-city area and, as such, is lacking in support.

- (5) Are the extensions of the dwelling - garden, patios, balconies, streets, access galleries, staircases, etc. sensible in relation to the physical environment of the dwelling and the activities of the occupants?

Observed objectively - one-by-one - it is obvious that much will depend on the tenants' willingness to accept their responsibilities and learn to use the facilities sensibly. They must not urinate in lifts, vomit on the staircase, set fire to refuse-shutes, throw fat out of the kitchen window or allow their dogs to foul the communal areas. If they do not comply with the simple regulations: 'No Ball Games' - 'no dogs

are allowed', then Robin Hood will not be used to its full potential and the carefully designed elements in its construction cannot be seen as being sensibly conceived - in relation to the activities of the occupants.

The garden was not thought of as a speedway-circuit, yet this is how it is often used. It was not seen as an arena, in which the opposing sides met to cause aggravation to each other: the concept of the 'stress-free' zone is being abused.

There are no patios, but the narrow balconies are serviceable - it is there that we observe the lines of washing, the Geraniums and the occasional bird-cage. There are no longer drying-rooms in the building - they have been vandalised.

'Streets' - the decks - are certainly as the Smithsons intended, we see them as sensibly conceived but ill-used. In fact, as Jencks hints, they are used as little more than access-galleries: they cannot be viewed as 'extensions to the dwelling' in the sense that they were meant to be.

The staircases are ill-designed and constantly abused: they are not wide enough or light enough: they are claustrophobic and we feel threatened by the enclosed space. Ill-lit, foul smelling, they have all the unpleasantness that we associate with the public-convenience: they are the 'critical commentator's' delight. The tenants treat them with the disdain they deserve, as alternatives to the coffin-like lifts they are not a structural success. They have become little more than a quick escape - the way out of Robin Hood.

It may well be that the Smithsons did relate the various necessary elements sensibly to each other, but we are quite convinced that they no longer function as intended. The activities of the current tenants

are not those envisaged by the architects in 1962.

(6) Are the gardens and streets (or their equivalent) necessary to the life of the occupants?

For all the abuse of the garden, and the lack of life out on the decks, it is clear that both remain essential to the lives of those that live in both blocks. The 'stress-free' zone is a necessity, the only physical barrier between the two opposite sides of the building. It does offer an open space, which clearly defines the site as a whole. Inevitably it is a redeeming feature.

The decks are a necessity, they provide access to the individual dwellings. We can only accept that without either Robin Hood would not be the building it is. The fact that the points of access lead both in and out of the building, reminds us of Alison Smithson's thinking on 'Struwelpeter' and the need for the long fingers to reach out, from the building, into the surrounding district. However, we note that the necessities of life - the market, in Chrisp Street, the Underground at Mile End - even Victoria Park - are outside the immediate 'reach' of Robin Hood.

(7) Is the delivery and collection antiquated and laborious?

Our observations of the 'moat' suggest it works well, there is no difficulty in turning the dustcart and there is ample room for other traffic to pass. Furniture-vans can draw up at the foot of the stairs and the lifts, at either end of both blocks, descend to the lowest level. The entrances, from Woolmore Street and Poplar High Street, are seen to be adequate for light deliveries. Coffins can be carried through the building to the waiting hearse. We see this aspect as being neither antiquated or laborious.

(8) Is it a labour to go out or to return home?

We have noted how easily one can leave the building. Within minutes you are at the bus-stop in the East India Dock Road. Tenants leaving for work can be away from the block quickly and, if they're lucky with the bus, can be well into Stepney and on to Aldgate within half an hour of closing their front-door. Travelling north is just as convenient: 'you can be in Stratford in a quarter-of-an-hour - the buses are better going that way - it's easy for me now the kids are at school' (68). In the purely physical sense it is not a labour: in terms of the Smithson aesthetic, the experience is far from satisfactory. It is not in any sense enjoyable, waiting for a bus, opposite the 'Fat Cat Pool Hall' on a wet night in the East India Dock Road. Fortunately Upton Park is within walking distance though there are buses. (69) We do not see it as an 'exemplar' of what the architects had in mind, when they explained it so convincingly in Ordinariness & Light.

They worry about the children:

... I feel sorry for the kids today. You see everybody lived in houses. I could be in the kitchen and my children playing in the street. But I could come to the street door occasionally to see how my kiddies was, well everybody else's children would be out there. It was like a community, everybody was playing with one another but the children don't today. Now in the flats you can't let them go downstairs, you don't know if they're going to be picked up, raped or took away or mugged no matter who it is. I'm frightened to go out after dark. (70)

If tenants are frightened to go out, we must see that as a labour, however convenient the placing of the access points.

(9) Does the public vertical circulation really work? Is there any indication that where people have been put up into the air that it really is getting them somewhere?

Living high - Robin Hood is not a tower-block - can be seen to make little practical difference to the lives of the inhabitants, if the extensions to the dwelling are used effectively. Even if the decks are

ill-used, they do at least offer easy access to the street below. The absence of fast-moving traffic, we observe to be a definite advantage, in this particular part of the East End. The site does sit in the centre of what might well be, even objectively, considered to be little short of a 'maelstrom'. (71)

We would not dispute that description. At times the noise is deafening and the difficulties experienced in crossing Cotton Street safely, can be considerable. It is not always the most convenient way-out that proves the least problematical: there is no pedestrian-crossing at the junction of Woolmore Street and Cotton Street, the most sensible exit for those who head for Christ Street Market. We see the problem as only partly resolved, by putting the people up into the air.

Equally Robin Hood, as built, has none of the exciting variations of high-level living, as envisaged for Golden Lane, or in the earlier plans of Le Corbusier. It is not our opinion that the tenants live like 'caged birds', or that the notion is necessary 'Madness' (72) but the options are limited to vertical access and horizontal living: Robin Hood does not have the sequence of events that might lead to a natural flow, of pedestrians, around it.

If we see the tenants' social behaviour as symptomatic of not 'getting' anywhere: leading consequently to a lack of decency and true neighbourliness, we would be loth to suggest that it is the height of the building that is the prime cause.

### C. The 'living unit'.

- (1) Is the scale of the unit related to the size of the parent community? (The pattern of a village can be transformed by the addition of one house, in the great city an equivalent gesture might need a unit of 5,000 houses.)

We have admitted an affection for Robin Hood, it can look splendid, and, in that sense, it is a definite asset to the East End. The members of the architectural profession, who awaited its arrival, were not, in respect of the Smithsons' past reputation, disappointed. It is a building that demands our attention:

The making of architecture may be regarded as a dialectic between ideas and forms. Certain ideas and metaphors have the power to suggest buildings. Equally certain buildings, by virtue of their form, can imply a use and even suggest a way of life. Each is no more or no less architecture. Both are rare. Few ideas have been built, few buildings are anything other than the latest mode in shape making.

... The Smithsons start with a series of ideas - metaphors - which have the power to suggest both buildings and larger urban complexes. It is against a commitment to an architecture evolved from a set of articulated and often elaborated ideas that their contribution must be seen. It is through the medium of their latest built work, Robin Hood Gardens, that this commitment as urbanism and as architecture must be analysed.(73)

Within the aims of this thesis, that attitude is regarded as being inadequate: we must analyse the effects of the built form on the tenants and, in the light of the Smithsons' 'demonstration', through their attitudes, we will arrive at our assessment. Our affection for the structural and formal elegance, as we see it, must not detract us from the objective intention of our thinking.

- (2) Is the work pattern of the community understood with all its implications for the unit? (A work-pattern of all-family travelling to widely separated places is typical of cities and towns, and often also of villages.)

There is no set work pattern that we can attribute to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of Robin Hood. Those in work are only too willing to travel, those who remain unemployed have nowhere to go. Rent has to be paid. A comparison between the opportunities offered, by local industry, in 1952 and 1982 well illustrates the current economic trend. The closure of the Docks and the decline in related industries has hit

the East End working-class hard.(74)

- (3) Does it fit the site with its climatic and physical peculiarities, its existing build and human structure, and accept their sociological implications bearing in mind that we are concerned with renewal?

The noise is a constant irritant and renewal is hard to define in this context - at times the various plans for restructuring the area remind us of the drastic solutions suggested in the MARS Plan for London though recent, proposed, leisure developments for the Isle of Dogs fit well with proposals, made by the Smithsons, in the Johnson Script:

The idea of a scatter of events as the city pattern is very acceptable to our minds - provided the communications are good. But each event has to be raised to the urban scale to combat the forces of the big city. As the city becomes bigger - becomes an urban region - for people to be able to understand it in the same way as we hope they will be able to read Robin Hood Gardens - the urban region's movement systems, its leisure areas, its zones of differentiated use will all have to become themselves bigger, and more obviously interconnected and structured.

The scale of the London Docks is the sort of scale we're talking about. An area equal to Mediaeval London. A tiny area to have as a water landscape in the area of greater London. A few water parks at that scale - not needing grass cutting - no trouble with football wearing the surface off. Water as leisure-pleasure structured housing groups in the present European fashion.

For Tower Hamlets such a fashion could be an economic bonanza - like having an oil-well in the back-yard.(75)

What they have in mind, reaches beyond the physical limits of the building itself: they undoubtedly at a scale beyond the single unit and we again note that Robin Hood is but a fragment of what was intended.

- (4) Where do the 5 - 12 years olds go to ? And what do they have to do?

Our observations suggest that they play-out, or take to the streets - they play in groups and always seem to be on their way to somewhere else. Rarely do you see children of that age on their own. They spend a lot of their time with their mothers, who are loth to let them out of their sight.

A man tried to persuade a 10 year old boy to commit an act of gross indecency with him. He asked the boy to go up the steps with him for a sweet and when the boy refused, showed him a pornographic magazine. Henry Feldman, 31, unemployed admitted the offence. (76)

Convicted of indecently assualting a three-year old girl, Linus Virgini, a paint mixer, of no fixed address, was remanded on bail for reports. The assault was at an address in Poplar. (77)

They read, weekly, of such events in the East London Advertiser:

They're not allowed out on their own - not any more - you can't be sure that they're safe nowadays. Kids get attacked all the time around here - in the parks on the estates - I like to know where they are. I'd rather keep them in unless we all go shopping - I don't like not knowing. Even the market's not safe - unless I'm with them. I tell them to stop in.

Twelve's not very old is it? I don't think so ... (78)

Many of the fears are unfounded, but they are very real to the parents of young children.

But they do damage the building, there's no doubt about that:

You just watch her - nine years old she is - rude little bitch. You watch what she does - there - jumping on the netting - up and down - bouncing. She's always at it - only nine. Them Black ones is the worst - you should hear the language. I told her to pack it in - she swore something dreadful at me. I'd fetch her one - clip her ear - if I could catch her - but she's a nippy little thing that one.

Takes no notice of what you say - there she's at it again - I'll catch up with her one day - rude little bitch ... I will ... (79).

For some it's hardly a 'stress-free' zone, the elderly tenants find it hard to understand: as do Alison and Peter Smithson. We have seen little evidence that the younger children, living in Robin Hood, make any more use of the opportunities it offers, than do their parents. The architects are right to stress the importance of this question - they accept their responsibility in asking it - if the tenants are to accept their responsibility, then the education of the young must form a major part of it.

- (5) Can the unit support shops? And where are the natural 'pressure points' for such facilities? Are the community facilities a social mirage or are they real?

All our evidence suggests that the tenants have no real need for such facilities, within the building. In practical terms the security risk would be too great: it would not be 'common-sense' to introduce them now in Robin Hood. Possibly, in the past, it might have been a feasible suggestion - as it was for Golden Lane - but now it would not be regarded as a sensible thing to do. Even the shops in Chrisp Street Market are heavily wired-up - barricaded - when closed for the night. The small local Police Station particularly so. It would be irrational to ignore the evidence.

The tenants view Chrisp Street with affection, especially those who remember its pre-war attractions:

You did your shopping in Chrisp Street - all the stallholders knew you - you got things a little cheaper. Old Pikie - he was down there in the Market about half-past-nine on Saturday night. All those who were out of work, he'd get all the meat he had left and cut it up and practically give it away ... And we used to have a bloke come round with a portable harmonium - he was very good, well known - he made a good living. Then we used to have gypsies come round selling pegs. The people would buy something because they were afraid they might get a curse if they didn't. They used to come down selling sweet lavender - the man used to be on one corner, and the wife would be on the other corner, and the wife would sing 'My sweet lavender - sixteen branches a penny', and the husband would answer from the other corner. They had really good voices ... I think there was a pub on every corner and they all made a living. Now down Chrisp Street there was a pub called the Mother's Ruin - the women would go there with all their peas and they'd sit round and peel them into their laps while having their beer; they'd be getting the dinner ready.(80)

Our observations, in Chrisp Street today, leave us in no doubt that times have changed, and that those who use it see it differently. It remains the shopping-centre for the daily necessities, anything more they find in Stratford, where they shop at the large supermarkets.

There is also a shopping-precinct in the recently completed Watney Estate, a mile or so along the East India Dock Road, towards Stepney, but Chrisp Street is within easy walking distance of Robin Hood.

The community facilities, as listed in the Householders' Manual are real enough, but only the Clubroom - which houses the elderly tenants' regular 'Bingo' sessions - functions as was intended. Teenagers are currently barred. There is no Caretaker, there are 143 garages: the Drying facilities have been vandalised and cannot be used.(81) The family ties might well be strong - kinship is all very well - but there is little obvious love shown, for one's neighbour, in that part of East London.

The Smithsons certainly considered carefully, and built adequately, what they saw as the necessary community facilities. It was not in any sense a 'mirage'. Consequently they find the senseless auto-destruction utterly incomprehensible. In their terms, this sort of action does not constitute 'civilised' living. We have observed the effects: the well thought out list of facilities, within the building, has been severely curtailed.

(6) Where can November 5th. be celebrated? (Bonfire night, Bastille Day or July 14th.)

They cheered a lot, when the 'Hammers' won the Cup(82) - they hung out their flags and we watched them take to the streets in celebration. Today, November 5th. seems less important, but there's plenty of waste land close by - across Cotton Street. National celebrations call for the national flag and that means only one thing - the National Front - to the majority of East Enders.

Henderson's photographs, of the Samuels' house in Chisenhale Road - bedecked with the 'Union Jack', unconsciously signify something more sinister than they did in 1952.

(7) Is there something worth looking at out of every dwelling or does one merely stare out at another dwelling opposite?

We find it difficult not to see the distressing effects of the

irrational behaviour - which is the real 'Madness' - and there is much to see, out of every dwelling. Each flat looks down into the 'stress-free' zone and into the smashed play-pits. The boarded windows are obvious, the tattered curtains, in the less than well-cared for flats clear for all to see. We suspect that the tenants do spend much of their time looking across at each other. It is natural, perhaps neighbourly, to want to know what's happening in the flats opposite. It would be taken for granted in the traditional, working-class, street, where the 'over-the-garden-wall' gossip would be one of the main methods of communication. Now we read the 'gossip' on the walls of the lift-lobby and names are named: 'Tracey is a slag', 'Clinton Jones is a Black bastard' (83) - we note them in passing.

We can guess why the family, in the Blackwall block, needed barbed-wire for protection, there is that constant threat of racial tension as more Black families are seen to be moving into the building. (84)

There is no doubt that the views are spectacular, even the obvious dereliction of Docklands has a certain nostalgic attraction, and the recent 'Billingsgate' development, on the Isle of Dogs, hints at a tentative optimism for the economic future of the district. If we look away from the building, there is much that offers scope for the imagination: if we look at the immediate surroundings - the 'extensions to the dwellings' - there is, too often, a jarring note that is sadly out of place.

(8) Does the development offer protection and shelter of the same order as the parent community?

The Local Authority, in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police Force, are committed to a policy of social care and protection. This they cope with, to the best of their ability, in times of financial cut-backs in the social services. Robin Hood is one of many such

developments that are feeling the squeeze.(85)

- (9) Is the unit really generated by an objective study of the situation or are we just saying that it is?

This is perhaps the decisive question: was it? Is Ordinariness & Light little more than a sophisticated argument, to which the intentions at Robin Hood were added, as a glossy justification for the aesthetic - to provide a conclusion to the Smithsons' thinking on mass-housing?

We question the objectivity. It seems that the reasoning that is pieced together, in Ordinariness & Light, bears little relationship to what we know - the facts that we have observed - at the north end of the Blackwall Tunnel.

The method - the objective - is hardly fool-proof:

#### PARTICULAR PLACE

Our general objective on any site is to knit together the new thing being inserted with what is good in the surrounding area: hoping in this way to inject new life even into things and buildings tired and old.

Right from the start we identify with a site and its neighbourhood, begin to put down mental roots

hooking onto rose bay willow herb  
children overturning wrecked cars  
the smell of curry on the stairs of  
rejected tenements  
oddments of past character ...(86)

We read it in the Johnson Script and hear it on the sound-track:

I feel the objective when we get a new site is to link together what is good in the surroundings by the insertion of a new building. To inject thereby new life even into ... buildings and things that are old and tired so that from the start we begin to identify with the site - to put down mental roots ... of how children overturning wrecked cars - the smell of toast on the stairs of the dejected tenements - oddments of past character.(87)

We can sympathise with the 'urban poetics'; it sounds the right way to go about things, but it relies heavily on the ability of the incoming tenants to see it in that light. A poetic way with words, which leads to a built form that implies a necessary sense of decency and respect -

for a certain inherent 'quality' in its architectural make-up - may not in fact be the most objective approach to the problem of mass working-class, East End, housing. We cannot believe that it is.

Peter Smithson asks us to: sense

smell

feel

touch

experience(88), and to respond to the new

way of living that he offers: 'a more enjoyable way of living in an old industrial part of a city'(89) but, quite bluntly, it is extremely difficult for us to see it his way. In the subsequent section: A Failure of Nerve we will argue why.

In terms of the listed Criteria for Mass-Housing we have shown, in our analysis of the built form, and in our observations and interviews, that there are undoubtedly many of the qualities, that the architects intended, inherent in the building. Robin Hood does measure-up to the questions asked. In terms of the alternative criteria, listed by the authors of the Docklands Strategic Plan, we have doubts. The element of 'environmental satisfaction', at Robin Hood, we see as minimal.

We accept the fact, as did the men of Mass Observation, and the polite, middle-class, Nigel Henderson, that we are outsiders - we do not live in the building. It is not our intention to empathise with the tenants: we offer our comparative analysis in historical terms. We are willing to accept the Smithsons' harsh criticism of Lansbury - it is easy to see why it is unacceptable to them, reflecting as it does, all the thinking that we now associate with the Festival of Britain and obvious 'nostalgic', pre-war, 'style-left-overs'. For all its air of a settled community, the fundamental difficulties remain: corner flats are vandalised - the writing-on-the-wall is much the same as that we have noted at Robin Hood.

Lansbury has one positive advantage, over Robin Hood - it has had time to develop: it does have the feel of a 'particular place'. Trees have grown and, in spite of the clumsy links with the old Christ Street it has become accepted. Conceived as a 'tonic', it does not rely on two, specific, architectural innovations for lasting success: it plays safe. Lansbury currently draws our attention to the continuing malaise in East London, but it is not the answer, as we see it.

Robin Hood was conceived as an essentially 'Modernist' answer, to a particular post-war problem: the renewal of the housing stock, in an area devastated by the intensified, German, bombing of Docklands. In the manner of Le Corbusier's Unité, it was an attempt to house, in a civilised and humane way, those who surely deserved a better way of life. In that sense it was a continuation of the 'heroic' idealism of CIAM, and can be seen to reflect the Smithsons' unshakeable faith in the international beliefs of Team 10.

Our observations have shown that, at Robin Hood, it is these very tenets that cause us concern. The access to the building is, to our mind, ill-conceived: the 'stress-free' zone is abused: the lack of common privacy is a constant worry: the vicious writing-on-the-wall is hard to ignore, and is undeniably related to much of the mindless vandalism that has broken down the communal facilities. The tenants do not make use of the decks and, consequently, the idea of 'street' does not have any factual validity. The 'street-deck' does not offer a viable alternative to the traditional working-class street.

In the light of the listed Criteria for Mass Housing, our final assessment must be that, socially, the building does not work. The lucidly argued Smithson aesthetic fails at Robin Hood.

SEVEN

A FAILURE OF NERVE

## A FAILURE OF NERVE

Man believes in liberty, and he claims to think for himself. But if he wants the fruits of independence he must be prepared to collaborate with others. Individualism and collectivity - we have a perfect duality. There can be no individual liberty without external order. That order may be freely consented to, but it is none the less a discipline. Discipline has much to give.

(Le Corbusier 1953)(1)

In 1978 Gollan published What Went Wrong?: Working People and the Ideals of the Labour Movement: 'A book in the tradition of Orwell's classic *'Road to Wigan Pier'*(2), in which the author, Jeremy Seabrook, set out to discover the reasons for working-class discontent, and the increasingly obvious disenchantment with the Labour Party:

I have tried to explore a feeling of pain and resentment which remains in working-class communities, in spite of the considerable material improvements of the past thirty years or so.(3)

Seabrook argues his case well and much of what disturbs him we have seen for ourselves at Robin Hood. There is a discontent - a resentful sense of self-destruction - the source of which can be seen to lie beyond a dissatisfaction with the daily way of life expected of local authority 'Council' tenants. We suspect it also lies beyond the understanding of those with a 'peculiar responsibility' to build communal dwellings, and certainly the Smithsons are bemused by the blatant abuse of their building.

In our interviews with the tenants we soon concluded that there is something seriously wrong with the aesthetic, though many of the older inhabitants still sound like characters who might well have stepped out of Ordinariness & Light, in their lingering sympathy with the Smithsons' concept of neighbourliness:

You all mucked in and helped one another, which to my mind doesn't happen today like it did then ... we would never think of locking a front door - we wouldn't even think about closing it, you'd go in and out of each other's places. Now when it gets dark you put the bolt on the door. This is where I feel sorry for the kids today. You see everybody lived in a house ...(4)

But they realise that times have changed:

I could be in the kitchen and my children playing in the street. But I could come to the street door occasionally to see how my kiddies was, well everybody else's children would be out there. It was like a community, everybody was playing with one another but the children don't today. Now in the flats you can't let them go downstairs, you don't know if they're going to be picked up, raped or took away or mugged no matter who it is.(5)

We have heard it time and time again but there is no mention of such harsh realities in either Ordinariness & Light or Without Rhetoric. No mention in the Royaumont Document, where the tone-of-voice is very much concerned with the necessity of providing a civilised way of living, through an understanding of the ordinary day-to-day monotony of working-class life - highlighted occasionally by an event that might well lift the spirit, of the participant, to a degree of intensity almost beyond their understanding.

This combination of the ordinary and the 'poetic' the Smithsons saw in the Nigel Henderson photographs, but we see little evidence of it in our experience of Robin Hood. We see little that is uplifting in the vicious attacks that take place in the area:

Fire-raising skin-heads mounted a vendetta of hate against a Pakistani with two arson attacks on his home ... one of them with a petrol bomb. And at the Old Bailey last week the jury heard how one of the teenagers involved also daubed National Front slogans over the door and walls of the same man's flat and had earlier been convicted of criminally damaging his car. The three - one with a self-inflicted swastika-shaped scar cut into his head - were arrested after a Molotov cocktail was hurled at the door of his flat.(6)

The fear of such attacks is also very real: the access-stairs do not offer a sense of security and this is what makes the tenants lock their front-door.

It goes well beyond the all too common effects of vandalism, in its sapping of the confidence of the local community, and engenders an almost inevitable sense of alienation.

### Vandalism.

Vandalism is a phenomenon that can be explained rationally, in strict sociological terms. We suggest that it takes three recognisable forms.(7)

- (1) Routine vandalism: which results in damage to windows etc. and the defacement of walls with graffiti.
- (2) Play vandalism: which causes similar damage but is the result of a certain amount of daring competitiveness. 'Who can do the most damage?'.
- (3) Vindictive vandalism: which is by far the most harmful and close to the criminal activity for which the East End is well known. This results in lifts being put out of action and the systematic wrecking of communal areas. In extreme cases it leads to racial violence.

Stanley Cohen, in his: 'Who are the Vandals?'(8) makes the valid point, that we can over-react:

If we turn to the more conventional forms of vandalism, it is again interesting to note that the behaviour is conceived - by social scientists and the public alike - in terms of stereotypical labels that from the start obscure any attempts to understand the phenomenon. The most commonly used labels are 'wanton', 'aimless', 'pointless', 'senseless', 'malicious' or 'meaningless'. These labels are part of a stereotype which again serves to justify particular forms of social control. Society is saying in effect 'If you do such meaningless things, don't ask us to be meaningful in what we say or do about you'.

Conventional vandalism is not as meaningless or wanton as these labels imply. The acts both make sense to the actor (for example, to settle a grudge or gain revenge) and possess a distinguishable pattern (for example, the property damaged has certain physical and social characteristics). Vandalism by teenage gangs, which attracts all the labels the original Vandals conjure up, is often far removed from this imagery.(9)

What we have observed, at Robin Hood, can therefore be seen as part of a pattern and not specific to that building, or as a particular

localised reaction to the Smithsons' concept of neighbourliness. We note that the defacement of the walls, of the lift-lobbies and access-stairways, can be seen as a matter of 'routine': that the nine-year old Black girl, bouncing on the wire-netting that surrounded the play-pit - in the 'stress-free' zone - is 'playing': that the destruction of the doorways - the burning of the refuse-shute - the wrecking of the communal drying-rooms is 'vindictive': and we accept what Cohen has to say.

Studies in the East End of London indicate that most vandalism occurs at a younger stage of the life cycle than the peak age for property offences (fourteen) but some also occurs in the context of general rowdiness offences in late adolescence. There is no evidence that vandalism is - as is often believed - the first stage of a delinquent career.(10)

However we regard the cause of the phenomenon, we see the effects, at Robin Hood, as having a serious, detrimental, part to play in the tenants' unwillingness to contribute to the look of the building: we do not regard the writing-on-the-wall as, in any way, positive.

We accept that it is a common occurrence in local authority estates:

Even in play and malicious vandalism however, the property destroyed has certain distinguishable characteristics. In the first place, it is mostly public rather than private property. It is also more likely to be derelict, unused or in a state of half completion. In the case of council estates, the estates most likely to be damaged are large flatted ones as opposed to the older cottage estates and are more likely to be in deteriorating areas of the city.(11)

It is a serious problem, at Robin Hood, where there is a lack of regular maintenance, and no Caretaker: it does lead to a break-down in the effectiveness of the communal services. If a mischievous nine-year old helps to wreck a play-pit, or doors are wrenched off their hinges on the access-stairs, we must regard it as cause for concern.

At Robin Hood, the systematic destruction of the drying-rooms out a necessary facility. Chunks of concrete in the driers - paper and

ragged lit, the quick escape down into the 'moat', before the old lady living next door had time to realise what was going on. No hope at all of catching them, or those who did the same thing to the equivalent service, housed in the Blackwall block. Both rooms like the end flats were in a vulnerable position: open to the hit-and-run attack.

An elderly couple, crippled father and unmarried daughter, told us that they liked living in Robin Hood - in a garden-flat - in the Tunnel side building. It worried them that the flat next door was boarded-up - waiting for glass to be delivered - as it had been like it for some time:

The end flats is usually got-at - the tenants move out as quick as they can - then they put the new ones in. Near the stairs is the worst place - the kids do it - they don't think do they? They hang around in the evening - in the lobbies - nothing to do - you can hear them talking. We keep out of their way - they don't care what they say - even to him. What can he do? He sits out on the grass in the Summer - but now they've started throwing things ... it's awful out there sometimes. A right do sometimes. We leave well alone ...(12)

The flat was clean and well-furnished: outside the front-door we could see green trees, the green of the larger of the two mounds, and the Cotton Street building beyond. From time to time the daughter strolled, out onto the path, to throw crumbs to the pigeons. They had put down a door-mat and there was a plastic container, for milk, and plastic flowers in a small, white, metal stand. The windows had been recently cleaned and there were mops and brushes, standing in the hall: nothing out of the ordinary.

Father watched the television, which drowned any noise there might have been, coming from the exit to the Blackwall Tunnel, or from the 'moat' under the bedroom window.

Irritations seemed few, nothing they hadn't experienced before: noise from motor-bikes, slamming car doors - but that was a small price

to pay, their friends lived next door - were 'good neighbours' - and they had a real dread of having to leave the area. Both were born in the East End: both old enough to remember the 'Blitz' and the early 'fifties.

Inside Robin Hood, we have observed much of what would have fitted well, within the Smithson aesthetic: would have looked socially apt in the justifications for the way of life envisaged for Golden Lane. Outside, it is another matter.

In November 1977, as a post-script to the special 'Jubilee' edition of Architectural Review, Peter Smithson made a short, personal, statement. Under the heading: 'Some words of wisdom from a few Jubilee luminaries as they glance back at their last 25 years'(13), he had this to say:

The greatest visual change for me has taken place in the neighbourhoods with which over the last 25 years I have become most familiar. The change of the look of the streets of Chelsea and Kensington, of Bayswater and Pimlico, and in Belgravia far to the east. Most of these streets were grey, scaling, and unloved in the late '40s and early '50s. Now they are energetically lived-in, painted, gardened and worried over. The original fabric is still largely intact and still able to speak. They are just on that edge from neglect to care which arouses our sense of their original wonder. They are not yet counterfeits of themselves or Disneyland. Nevertheless we smell the possibility, and it pushes us architects on, to the invention of that new ordinary and real which must always be there to replace that which prosperity is consuming.(14)

We argue that, still further east - a long bus-ride from Belgravia - the visual change had been even more dramatic, leading to another sort of reality, where things were beginning to look very ordinary indeed. It would seem that Robin Hood had been conveniently forgotten.

Prosperity, as Seabrook suggests, is not only a matter of material improvement, a case of: 'swinging on the tit of plenty'(15), it must also depend on a worthwhile contribution being made by those who derive benefit from it. The analogy, with the thinking behind the built form

at Robin Hood, is obvious. As Le Corbusier rightly insists: 'Individualism and collectivity - we have the perfect duality'(16). What the tenants of the Cotton Street and Blackwall blocks lack, is discipline.

In terms of the 'language of architecture', we must comment on the failings, of the Smithson aesthetic, at Robin Hood. It may well be that, if they'd won the competition, in 1952, for working-class housing at Golden Lane - to be built on the blitz-tip at Bunhill Fields, there would have been no need for the: 'demonstration' - the 'exemplar' at the end of the Blackwall Tunnel: they would have found their 'Holy Grail', and kept faith with Le Corbusier and their friends in Team 10. If, as we suspect, Robin Hood, is fundamentally a building of the 'fifties and not of the 'seventies, then not only is the aesthetic questionable, but the idea outdated.

We feel nervous in proposing this, for it may mean that the whole concept of neighbourliness - of living together in close domestic harmony - is a thing of the past, and that what we have observed at Robin Hood, hints at an urgent need for a complete re-thinking of any lasting criteria for mass-housing.

The fact that the Smithsons agreed, with Johnson, that The Smithsons on Housing(17) should begin with:

Society at the moment asks architects to build these new homes for them - but I mean this may be really stupid - we may have to re-think the whole thing. It may be that we should only be asked to repair the roof and add the odd bathroom to the old industrial housing and just leave people where they are to smash it up in complete abandon and happiness so that nobody would have to worry about it any more.(18)

suggests that, in 1969, they too had doubts.

In a sense, perhaps of disenchantment, it questions the whole concept of 'Council' housing, and makes a nonsense of the notion of that 'peculiar responsibility' they feel to be the basis of the listed

Criteria for Mass-Housing(19). If they are to build, for the anonymous client, then perhaps the need is to think in terms of 'alienation' and public 'withdrawal'(20), rather than in terms of community spirit and the notion of neighbourliness. We suggest that it does mean, that the only true criterion, that is socially valid, is that they build for a particular place, at a particular time, and abandon any pre-conceptions they might have, that relate to the idea of the 'demonstration', the 'exemplar', or the formal archetype. If, as the Smithsons insist, the success of Robin Hood will depend on the fond memories of those that once lived there, then a change of heart is needed now.

It is clear that the access-stairs are a disaster - the 'way home' is far from enjoyable, whatever criteria we apply: the 'perspective view' is ill-conceived. The Smithsons know this, and they also see that the decks are not used in the manner they intended. Even now this causes surprise: they were utterly convinced that the idea of 'street', built around the evidence of day-to-day, working-class, life, they saw in Nigel Henderson's photographs, was the answer to the specific problem in Poplar.(21)

The vandalised communal areas are an affront to their sensibilities, but the deserted 'street-decks' hit hard at the fundamental basis of their architectural thinking.

Now, today, Henderson's photographs look very much of their time - Bethnal Green as it was, not as it is, and the way of life in the East End today, bears little relation to that, in Chisenhale Road, in 1949.

We started talking about V.E. day. They said what fun it was: how there had been a huge bonfire in the park and outside in the streets. Mrs.S. said, "You really got to know your neighbour that day". There had been a piano out in the street and Mr.S. had sat down to play with just a few people around. When he turned around after a quarter of an hour there was a huge crowd of people right down Ellesmere Road. He played for ages and

they sang and danced, everyone mixing up and doing 'Knees up Mother Brown' with much abandon.(22)

Judith Henderson noted it, in her diary, for University House.

A recent equivalent survey, for the Institute of Community Studies, at Bethnal Green, well illustrates the change that has taken place:

'I don't like this area, it's a National Front area. I don't feel safe here. I just go to work and come back that's all. I don't socialise.'

Things were so bad that many of the older people, white or black, would not go out at night, and they did not necessarily feel safe even at home. The flat occupied by one of the women in our sample had been broken into three times. Her son had put iron bars in, and now she felt she was in prison. She kept a rolling pin hanging by her front door and never went out after dark.

"Never go out after dark" became a refrain in the interviews.(23)

In terms of the 'language of architecture' and the 'architect's dream', we list seven obvious failings in the built form of Robin Hood.

They are quite simply: (1) Inadequately conceived access.

(2) A lack of common privacy.

(3) Abuse of the 'stress-free' zone.

(4) Vandalised communal areas.

(5) Racial hatred.

(6) Little personalisation.

(7) Empty street-decks.

In listing them in this way, we accept that not all the 'failings' are directly related to the Smithson aesthetic: the tenants have much to answer for, in their often irrational behaviour. We accept Cohen's analysis of the cause and effect of 'vandalism', and we consider the examples of what Jeremy Seabrook sees as working-class resentment. It is not our intention to apportion 'blame' but to assess the findings of our critical analysis of Robin Hood.

(1) Inadequately conceived access.

The 'way home' to the individual flats is less than easy, and we

see it as a far from enjoyable experience. Lifts are unreliable and the access-stairs are dingy and dirty. We agree with Charles Jencks: they do have all the faults that one expected would be remedied, by architects who had made much of this specific problem in their earlier theoretical writings.(24) It has always been a major Smithson concern: 'the misery of a wet woman in a London winter humping a pram, baby, toddler and shopping by ill-thought-out steps to a flat'(25), yet, at Robin Hood, it is particularly difficult to 'hump' anything upstairs, let alone pass anyone coming in the opposite direction. The stairs are used: we observe that first-deck level tenants rarely use the lifts as it hardly seems worthwhile.

Access by car, or motor-bike, is easy enough: there is a gentle ramp and the 'moat' is wide enough for two cars to stop, and still leave room for a third to pass. Drivers are asked to travel at '5 mph' and it is common-sense to do so. Coming up from the 'moat' the stairs are particularly greasy and oil-stained.

(2) A lack of common privacy.

This is not surprising, as the Smithsons tried hard to introduce the notion of neighbourliness into the building, and into the minds of the inhabitants. It was intended that no-one should feel neglected, by their neighbour or a caring local authority: they would always have someone to rely on in times of need. This we see as a 'left over' of past experience, partly taken from the Hendersons' observations of the Samuels, but also from their own understanding of working-class life in the north-east of England.

The amount of window-space is considerable, intentionally so, and there are few places, in the building, where one can remain unnoticed. It is possible to hide in the 'alcoves' near the lift-lobbies, which

is where we observe the most vicious 'graffiti' and is where, the tenants tell us, the young teenagers gather after dark. If you need to hide, that kind of privacy is possible.

The windows that open onto the 'street-decks' do, as was intended, act as an 'extension to the dwelling': we note that many have 'trellis-work' across them and all are curtained. Some are boarded-up.

Out on the decks we are conscious of an invasion of privacy, as outsiders we are aware that we are passing close to what is undeniably 'private property': one cannot cross to the other side of the street, to avoid any possible intrusion. Down in the garden - the 'stress-free' zone - where mothers were intended to keep a watchful eye on their children, it is much the same. From both sides of the building, we find ourselves under observation: there is a lot of glass and many staring faces.

### (3) Abuse of the 'stress-free' zone.

In a sense, we find that the staring faces contribute to the abuse of the central garden: there is little seclusion in an area the Smithsons have compared with Gray's Inn, which they see as:

More and more pleasurable as the areas around it have become uninhabitable through traffic noise.(26)

... this little pool of calm in central London is one of the discoveries of the last ten years. The idea that one could have a room - chambers - there looking out onto this quiet central tree-filled area is marvellous.(27)

The comparison is physically apt - the areas are roughly the same size - but at Gray's Inn there is an inbuilt sense of discipline and an instinctive adherence to the stipulations laid down for its use. Those who have their chambers set high amongst the trees do not, from time to time, go out into the middle and smash up the facilities, or deafen their colleagues by riding motor-bikes around the perimeter. They do

not inflict their raucous music on their neighbours: 'No Ball Games' means just that - the tenants of Gray's Inn are law-abiding.

The quiet garden, at Robin Hood, is often deserted and then we hear the noise of the traffic, rising from the Blackwall Tunnel, and from Cotton Street - the feeder-road to the Isle of Dogs. Far from being 'stress-free', we see it merely as an open space, that divides the two sides of the building.

#### (4) Vandalised communal areas.

It can be argued, as Oscar Newman does in Defensible Space (28), that vandalism is less likely to occur, if the 'destroyers' (29) feel that they are under constant observation. Those that live in a building must be encouraged to watch over it. At Robin Hood much of the serious - 'vindictive vandalism' takes place in and around the central garden area, which is, to our eyes, constantly watched. The presumed indifference of the tenants - the sense of alienation - we see as a tacit acceptance of the inevitable. They do little to stop it. We answer Stanley Cohen's question: 'Who are the Vandals?', with the simple fact that it is the tenants themselves who are responsible for the degree of damage at Robin Hood.

The Smithsons are distressed by the amount of destruction: they are particularly concerned by the fact that many of the signs and name-plates have been ripped from their sockets - these were designed as positive identification of the individual's 'patterns of association and identity' (30), they were put there to 'assist man's homecoming'.

It is not only the 'vindictive' nature of much of the tenants' indifference that disturbs them - the sheer carelessness and obvious lack of common-sense, is clearly beyond their comprehension.

During the prolonged dustmen's strike, in 1979, all three sets of

access-stairs, in the Cotton Street building, and two out of three in the Blackwall block, were impassable, due to the amount of refuse that had been thrown down them from the flats above. Not only did the tenants choose to discard the usual household rubbish in this way, but it was thought an opportune time to dispose of all the unwanted furniture for which they had no further need. What couldn't be squeezed down the stairs, was either tipped over the edge of the decks, or crammed into the unoccupied flats. Windows were smashed and doors kicked in to facilitate this. It was a deliberate - systematic - piece of mindless behaviour.(31) It is not only the teenagers, who gather after dark in the lift-lobbies, that give us cause for concern.

The Smithsons' aesthetic we see as being outdated in this respect: their conception of civilised behaviour, and the need for tenants to make a positive contribution to the look of a building, does not, for all its lip-service to the influence of Pollock and Paolozzi, take the irrational act into account. When that act becomes common - even, perhaps, typical, then their notion of neighbourliness is seen to be suspect. As we see it, the 'common-people', at times, lack discipline and this must be taken into account.

#### (5) Racial hatred.

At Robin Hood, and we must concern ourselves, in this respect, solely with that one building, the majority of the Black Londoners are housed in the Blackwall block. They are largely West Indian in origin and live in the bigger flats, simply because they have bigger families.

It is to be noted that, in the photographs that supplement what the Smithsons see as the definitive article on Robin Hood, in Architectural Design(32), dated 1972, there are groups of immigrant children to be seen.

The East End has been the traditional home of successive immigrant communities: when you build there you accept that the social-mix will be multi-racial. Equally it has been the traditional territory of successive political parties who oppose the concept of such a society: currently the most prominent are 'The National Front' and the newly formed 'British Movement'. Neither has any real political power but both are provocative forces in the area.(33)

At Robin Hood, much of the unpleasantness is due to the emergence of the 'British Movement', with its following of young - teenaged - 'skin-heads'. The writing-on-the-wall is concerned with the enmity between the 'skins' and the young Black community. At Robin Hood, if we believe what we read, on the walls of the Blackwall block 'Blacks Rule'; in the Cotton Street lift-lobbies it's 'Kill all Blacks'. We are nervous of attributing too much to this physical, and emotional, division. Beyond the barbed-wire 'barricade', we have observed nothing to justify an assumption that the building is so - positively - divided.

We have no doubt that the majority of the older tenants view the newcomers with some suspicion: they blame them openly for what they see as disruptive acts. They call them: 'foreigners' and 'coloureds'(34), and have little affection for them. Large Black families do spill out onto the decks, and into the garden: they make a lot of noise in making their presence felt. The older tenants, looking for a peaceful life, resent this.

Ironically, the Black families can be viewed as living the life of the streets that the Smithsons intended: they make the most of those 'extensions of the dwellings' that are the fundamental essence of the thinking that lies behind what we see at Robin Hood. In conversation, Peter Smithson has expressed some confidence - even optimism - in the

contribution made by these 'urban gypsies'(35) to the look of the building. We have observed that there are fewer black faces, at the windows in the Lansbury terraces, but it is outside the concern of this thesis to determine whether this is deliberate Local Authority policy.(36)

There is no doubt, that much of the alienation felt by the white tenants in Robin Hood is due to an irrational fear of the young - teenage - Black: 'Help young Blacks - mug yourself', is a common piece of local 'graffiti'. RASTA reggae can grate, especially when it sets out to disrupt the peace and quiet of the 'stress-free' zone, but it can be suggestive of a 'more enjoyable way of living', generated by the newcomers to that 'old industrial part of the city. The Smithsons talk readily of renewal and of the need to put down mental roots: we are wary of apportioning blame in this particular respect.

#### (6) Little personalisation.

Except in the choice of curtains there is little personalisation. What we observe, at Robin Hood, cannot, in anyway, be compared to what was projected at Golden Lane. In fairness to the tenants, we note that the opportunities are limited: the little 'eddy' alcoves, outside the front-doors, are no substitute for the Golden Lane 'yard-garden'.

The Smithsons imply that this is so:

intended as shielded 'pause-places' before entering the house - a stoop rather than a doorstep. These spaces offer themselves naturally for potted plants, flower boxes, etc., - the normal paraphernalia of domestic outside show.(37)

We have seen nothing, that relates to the photographs that illustrate the intention(38), have observed no such recent contribution at Robin Hood. What we view as a growing sense of alienation, suggests that deliberate personalisation is decreasing.

Unwitting contributions are undoubtedly made: the 'ad-hoc' attempts

to replace broken windows, even the barbed-wire 'barricade' and the sagging washing-lines, add to the overall look of the building. If Charles Jencks, co-author of Adhocism: The case for improvisation (39) considers that this merely adds to an appearance of what he views as 'social deprivation' (40), we can only refer him to the Team 10 discussions, at Royaumont in 1962, and the images used, by the Smithsons in Ordinariness & Light, to augment their exposition of 'The Idea'. (41)

We consider the lack of the 'yard-garden', as described in Ordinariness & Light (42), a severe limitation at Robin Hood, but we accept that the 'ad-hoc' reaction, to unforeseen events, enables the tenants to make an, unconscious, contribution to the look of the building which, in Smithson terms, is equally valid.

(7) Empty street-decks.

Our observations, of the empty street-decks, give us most cause for concern: as we see it this is the fundamental failure of Robin Hood. It may well be, that the Smithsons' decision to put the main emphasis on the 'garden' side of the building is the prime reason for this:

We have given the highest priority to making as large as possible an 'inviolable' quiet open space that all can share. For since the first deck studies in 1952 we have become in our bodies aware of the stresses that urban noise and traffic movement induce, and realise that for the present time our most important need is for quiet places. To achieve a calm pool in this particular place, we have played down that idea of 'linkage' which was the main theme of the earlier 'Golden Lane' studies. In a sense we have replaced an image of the city in which connectedness was stressed, with one in which the survival of the 'person' and the 'thing' within the ever-changing communications net is held to be pre-eminent. (43)

We again quote Jencks:

The long empty streets in the air don't have the life or facilities of the traditional street. The entry ways, one of which has been burned, are dark and anonymous, serving too many families. (44)

There is little doubt that the tenants view them as wider than usual

access-balconies: 'decks for walking along'(45), perfectly serviceable but lacking that extra dimension, of the original idea, where:

Ways-in-the-air could be a framework, like drains, to which everyone connects up. They would be a fixed fact no more cramping than other public services, but sufficiently revolutionary to make urban re-organisation a fact, to make re-identification a fact, and the organisation of the fact possible.(46)

For all its faults, we do not suggest that Robin Hood has similar problems to those discussed by Newman, in Defensible Space(47); the 'extensions to the dwelling' do open onto the decks: 'These corridors are not juxtaposed with apartment units and so are feared by residents and unused'(48): it is only in the areas, by the access-points, that a comparison can be made. The decks are certainly used as a 'way-home' whatever their failings as an equivalent to the idea of 'street'.

When Peter Smithson, in his introduction to the Royaumont Document, talks of the: 'emotions and manifestos of the 'fifties'(49), he reminds us of the responsibility to the ideals of Team 10.

To understand what Team 10 stands for, one must recognise the disillusionment which set in in the early 1950s over the Athens Charter which had been formulated at the Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) in 1933. CIAM had been formed by Gropius, Oud and Le Corbusier, and its far-reaching effects had created the vision of the new functionally organised city. By the 1950s, younger architects realised that while the Athens Charter doctrine was succeeding in rehousing people, the life they were expected to live was dreary and socially obsolete. Something valuable had been forgotten.(50)

In reaction to this, the Smithsons turned to the photographs of Nigel Henderson, and re-thought the idea of 'street'. Team 10 and the regular meetings, with their international colleagues, reminded them of the need to consider wider issues: the necessity for the archetype - the 'exemplar': that what they built must be part manifesto. In a sense we regard the projected designs for Golden Lane in that light.

At Royaumont, the concern for the 'exemplar' is clear:

I think that the best one can do is to get these people and give

them the maximum possibility of choice and see whether, by their example, the rest of the working-class population could be encouraged and re-directed.(51)

They clearly felt the need for a positive 'demonstration', after all the theorising, on the problem of mass-housing, all they had to show for their labours was the 'manifesto' of Golden Lane. Nothing had been built.

Then came the opportunity:

Three small sites in the area of Robin Hood Lane, Tower Hamlets, became available for redevelopment by the then London County Council in 1963. For these sites (known as 'Manisty Street') we prepared designs for two separate buildings on a common theme, with access to the dwellings off 'decks'; which decks we hoped would ultimately be joined up with those of further buildings to be built when sites became available to form one big linked dwelling group.(52)

They would build, not on the 'blitz-tip' at Bunhill, but at the north exit of the Blackwall Tunnel:

Some sites are born great, others have greatness thrust upon them, Robin Hood Lane is a miserable motorway offcut engulfed by traffic on three sides.(53)

The Smithsons could have said: 'No', but didn't: they were in sight of the 'Holy Grail'.

You have to say 'Yes', but you must also have a strategy for withdrawal. Because as Alison says you must stand back from what you do, because afterwards people must live there. You can have a project for yourself which is to realise yourself, to get to another point, but when it becomes a building project it's not something for realising yourself or for making money or anything else - it's a thing which will last for 200 years and this is why the great responsibility lies to withdraw before you make the thing which lasts 200 years which you know to be wrong ... (54)

The Johnson Script is evidence that they felt confident: they felt no need to withdraw from the position they adopted, in the drawings for 'Manisty Street' in 1963, when they offered: The Smithsons on Housing as their contribution to Team 10 Toulouse-le-Mirail in 1971. For all the 'ad-hoc' quality of the film itself, the script is clear enough.

Robin Hood is to be regarded as an 'exemplar': a built manifesto

designed to meet specific 'emotional' needs. Those needs, we suggest, are not only listed, in the Criteria for Mass-Housing, they also constitute, what the Smithsons regard as the 'architect's dream'.(55)

We accept Johnson's statement, that the Criteria 'have that sort of simplicity which make them appear obvious until it is remembered that no single dwelling in the country measures up to them'(56), but we also accept them, as a logical sequence of questions against which to measure our assessment of Robin Hood. Their very ordinariness, we see as reflecting the essence of the pragmatic Smithson philosophy. In that sense, the Criteria for Mass-Housing is itself a manifesto.

The questions they ask are particularly apt, in relation to a building specifically designed with the anonymous 'council' tenant in mind. We need to know the answers: 'Can it adapt itself to various ways of living? Does it liberate the occupants from old restrictions or straight-jacket them into new ones?' - 'Has the relationship between the dwelling and its means of access been chosen for some good reason?' - 'Does the idea for dwelling produce a clear external image?' - 'Are the extensions of the dwelling - gardens, patios, balconies, streets, access-galleries, staircases, etc. sensible in relation to the physical environment of the dwelling and the activities of the occupants?' - 'Is it a labour to go out or to return home?' - 'Where do the 5 - 12 year olds go to? And what do they have to do?'. In our analysis and through our observations and interviews, we have arrived at certain conclusions.

Robin Hood we see as a Smithson manifesto: we do not see it as being 'just another block of council flats'(57). Unlike the previous 'exemplar' - the projected designs for Golden Lane - it was built, and is occupied by those for whom it was intended: East End - working-class

- Local Authority tenants. Robin Hood offers us the opportunity to take Peter Smithson's advice: and to sense

smell

feel

touch

experience the building as it is.

In the light of the Smithson aesthetic, we are asked to see if it lives up to the claims they make for it.

Our observations at Robin Hood, as it is today, we see as proof that life there is less than enjoyable: it is obviously not the answer to that particular problem and neither is it the hoped-for 'exemplar' the Smithsons thought it would be. In 1982 it does not offer the solution to the vexed problem of mass, working-class, housing. It provides adequate shelter, for those who need to rely on the Local Authority for 'survival', and in that sense the architects have not shirked their 'peculiar responsibility', but it is a far cry from what was envisaged at Golden Lane, or in the pages of Ordinariness & Light: we suspect that the designs, made in 1952, remain the true 'demonstration'.

If the competition entry had been successful - if they had built then - what they had in mind might well have lasted for two-hundred years: maybe the tenants would have come to see, for themselves, that a new quality of life was possible, instead of setting out to 'smash it up in complete abandon and happiness so that nobody would have to worry about it any more'. (58)

There is no hint of 'alienation' in the Henderson photographs and ample evidence, in the Bethnal Green diaries, that, when in need, the ordinary working-class family turn to their neighbours for help: it did really look as though the 'common people', in the East End of London,

didn't go around knocking each other on the head, any more than they did in the broad walk-ways of Bath, or in the secluded stairways of Gray's Inn.

In the 'fifties, soon after the end of an exhausting war, it all made sense - good 'common-sense' - and there was, indeed, a golden opportunity to build new, on the foundations laid bare by the aerial bombardment, and on 'the foundations that Le Corbusier and CIAM laid for us'.(59) As experienced young professionals, the Smithsons didn't need the Hendersons, or Paolozzi, to tell them that. Architects, and especially young architects who trusted Le Corbusier and the thinking that lay behind his 'miracle' in Marseilles, had good cause to believe that their time had come. By the time they came to build Robin Hood that opportunity had been missed: the post-war spirit had flagged and the myth of the class-less society exposed for what it was: a divided and alienated working-class was becoming increasingly resentful. The notion of neighbourliness had become out-dated:

If you talk to old working-class people, however oppressive the poverty and insecurity under which they lived, they will always recall that the greatest consolation was the quality of the human relationships; how comforting it was to share, with kin, neighbours, work companions. But now, in the face of the vast improvements in material conditions, it is the people who are all wrong. Things are better; but all that has been gained has been gained at the expense of human relationships.(60)

Certainly our interviews, with the current tenants at Robin Hood authenticate this statement. Seabrook talks of 'People Under Siege'(61):

People talk as though they were under siege; victims of some universal and impenetrable conspiracy. A fictive sense of shared values evolve ad-hoc to fill the vacuum which ought to be occupied by a shared sense of social purpose. These values are reductive and inconsistent; often vengeful and cruel.

It is as though we have never seen such terrible times as those we are living through. The whole world, even the familiar world of the High Street, with its bright luminous posters announcing this week's reductions, is suddenly full, not of neighbours and shoppers, but of threatening creatures with names such as we have

never heard - muggers and extremists, vandals and paedophiles. Monsters and aliens are all around us.(62)

It could be seen in the streets of Bethnal Green, not by Nigel Henderson - he'd long-since moved on: not apparently by Alison and Peter Smithson, as there is no evidence of it in either Ordinariness & Light or Without Rhetoric, but the 'common-people' could see it, they were able to sense

smell

feel

touch

experience it, every day of their working lives, and they were the East End equivalent of Le Corbusier's 'vin ordinaire' - they might well be those chosen to live in Robin Hood, at the end of the Blackwall Tunnel.

Peter Smithson walked the streets of Bath in September 1966, the year the Greater London Council settled on the final site, and stipulated the requirements at Robin Hood. Bath - Walks Within the Walls(63) is neatly produced, pocket-sized and easy to read. It has ninety-seven black-and-white photographs, that supplement the text and show us exactly what to look for. In ninety-one of those carefully selected photographs there's not a soul in sight: not a face at a window - no kids playing 'Hop-Scotch' - not even a stray dog. Four shots for the cover - back and front: no one to be seen - the Royal Crescent is deserted:

Royal Crescent, Bath, 1767-80. One of the first examples of housing treated as a palace - the coliseum was another model. Although making a grand urban gesture, the individual houses still have an identity, marked by vertical separation and several variations in articulation(chimneys, fire-walls, fences). The Smithsons are acutely aware of this symbolism, which makes their failure to provide its equivalent all the more poignant.(64)

is Jencks' reaction.

We are concerned at the absence of the 'common-people', in this ideal 'housing estate' (65), looking here very much like an empty stage setting and lacking the players: 'the decoration of the urban scene' (66) we expect to see. It is as though Peter Smithson is preoccupied with the urban form and not its 'predestined ornament' (67): the families that live in the terraces, and off the walk-ways, that he photographs with such loving care. The brief statement, that up-dates the thinking, written in December 1979, ends with the somewhat wistful comment that: 'Bath's thinning blood is being leached away by creeping timidity, but her bones are still a marvel' (68), and it hints clearly at a failure of nerve, on the part of those responsible for the building of new 'places worth inheriting'. (69).

In the introduction we again hear the persuasive voice - as ever reasonable and quietly persistent, that we heard at Royaumont and on the sound-track of the Johnson film:

... parades are for walking and showing-off outside houses, not for military parades; gardens and lawns are for the enjoyment of people in the houses beside them, not to isolate the palace from the town; streets belong to the houses on either side - they are places for carriages and sedan-chairs, for walking, for social intercourse, not for lines-of-fire and King's Birthday parades. Ordinary day-to-day living in Bath was given the attention and love that was elsewhere devoted only to the glory of the state. (70)

Only Peter Smithson could put it quite like that: a trifle 'fey' - unrealistic perhaps - yet sensible and pragmatic, in a civilised way. All he says, in Walks Within the Walls, is decently argued and concerned with what he senses to be the 'poetry' of the ordinary.

Nigel Henderson had an equally 'poetic' view of everyday life:

I wish, looking back, that I had been better technically; that I could have sung the song of every small blotch and blister, of every patch and stain on road and pavement surface, of step and rail and door and window frame. The patched garments, the creaky shoes, the worn bodies, the stout hearts and quirky independent spirit ... the sheer capacity to get on with it of the disregarded ... the humour and the fatalism of those trapped, possibly by

choice in the small tribal liaisons of the back and side streets.  
(71)

is how he saw it: later there is the Smithson method:

Right from the start we identify with a site and its neighbourhood, begin to put down mental roots ... (72)

... to see what is to be seen one has to walk, one has preferably to be alone or with one other person, and one should not talk. The reveries that Bath can induce is an important part of the lesson. There is a certainty about these 'live shells' that can reach and astound us still if we keep quiet. This certainty, of knowing what to do, what is correct, recurs in nations. It is perhaps not to be puzzled over, for like the tides of the seasons, what we should do is let it flood into us. (73)

The moral imperatives are admirable - it is the method of Ruskin and, in its way, of Mass Observation: an accredited method of sociological surveying. (74)

Alison and Peter Smithson published Ordinariness & Light in 1970:

in another pause in general building in England in the hope that it will yet catch the tide. For society is just beginning to experience the desolation of our environment. What we felt then (i.e. in the early 'Fifties) as professionals carrying the responsibility by default, with desperation and strong countering energy, many ordinary people now also feel. (75)

together, no doubt, with the 'feeling of pain and resentment' which so concerns the author of What Went Wrong?.

The Smithson aesthetic, which led directly to the built form at Robin Hood, relied heavily on the thinking behind the Golden Lane idea, particularly the idea of 'street': it was to be the basis of their solution, to the problem of mass-housing and would be dependent on: 'living patterns not architectural ones'. (76)

The patterns they had in mind would not be pre-structured but would result from the day-to-day activities of the 'common-people': the pre-destined ornament - the 'bit-players' - who would act out their very ordinary lives in a setting, designed to encourage civilised behaviour. In so doing they would learn to appreciate the worth of good neighbours

and inevitably develop a common-sense awareness, of the architectural language, of the building in which they lived. Tenants would soon understand the need for 'quality' and lead orderly lives, not unlike those led by the 'Quality', who patronised Bath Spa in the eighteenth century. This in turn would, most certainly, lead to a more humane architectural form, that would be seen as an 'exemplar': the true archetype for the future.

Alienation, as an idea, will not lead to the perfect duality that Le Corbusier had in mind: the disciplined way of life, that must evolve from a fusion of individual liberty and external order, is impossible if tenants insist on shutting themselves away, behind closed doors, or erect barbed-wire 'barricades' to ward off unwanted intruders.

We need to ask: 'What went wrong at Robin Hood?'.

In simple everyday language, the Smithsons made the fundamental mistake of building for the present and not for the future. They were so intent, on putting their idea of 'street' into practice, that they missed a golden opportunity of making a real, lasting, contribution to the everyday lives of the East End working-class: they built absolutely on the foundation that Le Corbusier and CIAM laid down for them.

It can be argued that they were misled by Nigel Henderson, that the photographic evidence, they so needed, did not give a true picture of day-to-day living in the East End of London: that he was too much of an outsider and did little more than take rather ordinary 'snap-shots', on his way home to Chisenhale Road. Henderson was, after all, a self-confessed amateur and the Smithsons already well-established professionals: to build on the evidence of those particular photographs can now be considered irrationally naive.

There is no doubt that they were misled, by the optimism of the

early 'fifties, into believing that it was possible to re-build a post-war - class-less - society, in which those in need would be cared for by the Welfare State and housed in a manner fit for 'heroes'. This we accept, but it is not the whole story: there is also the 'architects' dream', the notion of the 'Holy Grail', and the responsibility to Team 10 and the Modern Movement.

The designs for Golden Lane, made in 1952, established the Smithsons' international reputation as theorists on housing: they were utterly convinced that their 'perfect duality', of ordinary day-to-day, working-class, life and the 'poetry' they regarded as inherent in 'quality' architectural form, if achieved, would inevitably result in a civilised and therefore more enjoyable, way of living. With the tenants' 'ad-hoc' contribution, to the look of the building, a 'council-block' in the East End of London would have the same sense of smell, touch and feel to it, that they had experienced in the streets of Bath.

They had to build Robin Hood to prove to themselves, and to their friends in Team 10, that what they had said so many times was indeed true: they took the Johnson film to Toulouse-le-Mirail as evidence of what they had achieved in Poplar. 'The Smithsons on Housing', like Walks Within the Walls, did not provide conclusive evidence, it lacked the one - predestined - element over which they now realise they have little control: the tenants, who act as 'ornament' (77) to the aesthetic, and whose way of life determines the success or failure of the idea, were nowhere to be seen.

In Robin Hood they are very much in evidence, but they do not reflect the pattern of behaviour seen, in the sophisticated collages, in Ordinariness & Light, or comply with the picture that Nigel Henderson 'painted' of East End living. The 'collage' that we see is not pleasant

and there is little obvious sign of the hoped-for 'poetry', in an old industrial part of a city, where the way of living is harsh and far from enjoyable.

Peter Smithson's comment that: 'Robin Hood is more of its time than it is of Poplar' (78) is revealing, in that it is an admission that the built form derives from the thinking of 1962 - ten years after the 'failure' of Golden Lane and the time spent, with the Hendersons, in Chisenhale Road - and not from an objective study of the situation as it was, or from a rationalisation of the changes that were inevitable, in the East End of London, before the tenants could be moved into the building.

In the sense that Le Corbusier's Unité at Marseilles, built in the nineteen fifties on foundations laid in the 'Heroic Period' of Modernism, is of its time: the Smithsons' failure of nerve, in not taking into account the probabilities of increased alienation and working-class resentment, has left Robin Hood as a built 'exemplar' of the Smithson aesthetic and not a demonstration, of a more enjoyable way of living, for the common, East End, working-class.

**NOTES**

PREFACE

- (1) Introduction to: The Smithsons on Housing - Are tower-blocks obsolete? B.S.Johnson's B.B.C. Television film, shown on B.B.C.2. in July 1970.
- (2) MA Dissertation: Graduate School in Arts and Social Studies, University of Sussex, August 1977. John Furse.
- (3) Newman, O., CIAM'59 in Otterlo (Karl Kramer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961), p.79.
- (4) Poplar: lies east of Whitechapel - east of Stepney and Limehouse and is essentially Nineteenth Century in origin. Present day Poplar grew with the Docks and is bounded by the rivers Lea and Thames, the West and East India Dock Roads, and the Limehouse Cut. Robin Hood is at the northern exit of the Blackwall Tunnel. See: Leff, V., and Blunden, G.H., The Story of Tower Hamlets (Research Writers, London, 1967): Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar (London, 1975). Poplar: The Official Guide (1954) contains a detailed street-map of the pre-war district and lists local industry and commerce.
- (5) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), pp.559-573.
- (6) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970).
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- (11) Emanuel, M., (ed.) Contemporary Architects (Macmillan, London, 1980), pp.759-761.

- (12) Henderson, N., Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949-1952 (Midland Group, Nottingham, 1978). Exhibition Catalogue.
- (13) Harrisson, T., Living Through The Blitz (Collins, London, 1976), is a reliable source of information concerning the concept and practice of Mass Observation. Picton, T., 'A very public espionage' Camerawork No.11 (September, 1978), p.2. is an authoritative critical appraisal.
- (14) Jackson Pollock (b.1912 - d.1956).
- (15) Smithson, A, and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light pp.39-61.p.77.
- (16) Banham, M., and Hillier, B., (eds.) A Tonic To The Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951 (Thames & Hudson, London, 1951).
- (17) Smithson, P., 'Toulouse-le-Mirail' Architectural Design (October, 1971), pp.597-601.
- (18) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Adams & Dart, Bath, 1971. Bath University Press, 1980).
- (19) The Smithsons on Housing - Are tower-blocks obsolete? APPENDIX ONE
- (20) Smithson, P., 'Signs of Occupancy' Architectural Design (February, 1972), pp.91-97.
- (21) I regularly visited Robin Hood, between October 1978 and August 1982. During that time I spoke with approximately one hundred of the tenants. A selection of their responses, to questions relating to the way of life in Robin Hood, are included in Section Six: ROBIN HOOD OBSERVED.
- (22) Seabrook, J., What Went Wrong? Working people and the ideals of the Labour Movement (Gollancz, London, 1978).
- (23) Kitchen, P., 'An Architectural Partnership' Times Educational Supplement (10.12.1971); p.17.
- (24) Introduction: The Smithsons on Housing (B.S.Johnson 1969)
- (25) APPENDIX ONE, p.243.

A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

- (1) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952 (Midland Group, Nottingham, 1978), p.1.
- (2) Smithson, A, and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970), p.54.
- (3) The Addison Act of 1919, which launched the nation's first full-scale council housing building programme was based on Lloyd George's slogan 'Homes Fit For Heroes'. It was conceived not merely in recognition of the war effort but arose partly from the Government's very real fear of revolutionary working-class action. Externally, the Bolshevik revolution represented a disruptive threat whilst internally there were two linked sets of forces at work. First, industrial unrest and rent strikes in Glasgow in 1915 had effectively, by forcing the introduction of rent control legislation, put a stop to any extension of the activities of the less scrupulous private landlords. There was now no possibility of the Government looking to private enterprise, to provide - for rent - the better quality housing promised to the returning troops. Secondly, the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population of Scotland (the Hunter Committee), established because of working-class agitation, in 1912, reported its findings in 1917. Many of its recommendations, influenced by the events in Glasgow, were concerned with the provision of municipal housing for rent, and it carried considerable weight in the advisory committees of the wartime Coalition Government, and in the framing of post-war legislation.  
See Whatever Happened to Council Housing? (C.D.P., London, 1976).
- (4) Calder, A., The People's War (Panther, London, 1971).
- (5) Harrisson, T., Living Through The Blitz (Collins, London, 1976).
- (6) Calder, The People's War, p.605.
- (7) Harrisson, Living Through The Blitz, p.65.
- (8) Jackson, A., The Politics of Architecture (Architectural Press, London, 1970) sets the Modern Movement in its social and political context and is particularly revealing on its post-war re-emergence

in '7 Public Service', pp.166-180.

Anderson, S., Britain In The Sixties: Housing (Penguin, 1962), is also informative in this respect.

- (9) The Smithsons have always acknowledged their debt to Le Corbusier in relation to the evolution of the 'street-deck'. It is advisable to accept the derivation, as illustrated, in Le Corbusier's Towards A New Architecture (Architectural Press, London, 1970) which clearly shows the importance of the promenade-deck of the Cunarder 'Aquitania'.(p.92). The notion of the 'street-deck' as a 'walk-way' is explicit.
- (10) Smithson, A, and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.52.
- (11) See Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949-1952: Nigel Henderson Paintings Collages Photographs (Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 1977). Exhibition Catalogue: Whitford, F., Nigel Henderson: Photographs Collages Paintings (Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, 1977). Exhibition Catalogue.
- (12) CIAM - Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne - founded in 1928. See Le Corbusier, The Athens Charter (Grossman, New York, 1973).
- (13) Mass Observation is closely linked with the University of Sussex which houses the Tom Harrisson MO Archive. Picton, T., 'A very public espionage', Camerawork No.11 (September 1978), and Tom Harrisson, in his Preface to Living Through The Blitz, tell of its beginnings and later development. Harrisson has this to say: Mass Observation began, in 1937, as a several-pronged reaction to the disturbed condition of western Europe under the growing threat of Fascism. In particular, M-O (hereafter for short) sought to supply accurate observations of everyday life and real (not just published) public moods, an anthropology and a mass-documentation for a vast sector of normal life which did not, at that time, seem to be adequately considered by the media, the arts, the social scientists, even by the political leaders.(p.11).
- (14) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.3.
- (15) By daylight on a clear Saturday, 7 September 1940, his (Hitler) lightly armed bombers switched finally to London, taking existing fighter defences by surprise. They started great dock-fires before dark. Then 247 planes bombed indiscriminately until near dawn. London was not to have another alertless night until 3 November. By that time it had taken well over 10,000 tons of HE

and as many canisters of incendiary. What official Britain had expected in fear for nearly two decades came to pass in its own different way. The blitzkrieg was on ...  
(Living Through The Blitz), p.58.

- (16) Eduardo Paolozzi (b. Edinburgh 1924) see: Schneede, U.M., Pop Art in England (York City Art Gallery, 1976). Exhibition Catalogue.  
Eduardo Paolozzi (Arts Council, London, 1976). Exhibition Catalogue.
- (17) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring - Studies of Alison & Peter Smithson (Studio Vista, London, 1967). p.4.
- (18) Ibid., p.10.
- (19) Smithson, A, and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, dust-jacket.
- (20) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring, p.15.
- (21) The observers who took part in Mass. Observation's investigations into Worktown in the late thirties claimed to be, like Flaubert's ideal of the novelist, "always present, but nowhere visible". They spent three vigilant years in Bolton only lightly dissimulated as Worktown. (Seabrook, J., New Society (10.12.70), p.65.  
  
Spring 1936 - Tom Harrisson returns to England from Melanesia and travels to Bolton, because it was the birth place of the founder of the Unilever combine, the only fragment of Western civilisation to have "impacted into those cannibal people on their Melanesian mountain". Mellor, D., and Smith, D., Worktown (Gardiner Centre Gallery, University of Sussex, 1977), p.3.
- (22) Picton, T., Camerawork No.11 (September 1978), p.2.
- (23) Isherwood, C., Goodbye to Berlin (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1947) p.7.
- (24) Mellor, D., and Smith D., Worktown, p.10.
- (25) Bill Brandt (b. London 1907) educated in Germany; studied with Man Ray in Paris 1929-30. Returned to England 1931 and began photographing a cross-section of British social strata. See: Brandt, B., The English At Home (Batsford, London, 1936).
- (26) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.57.
- (27) Collage: from the French coller - to glue/to stick.
- (28) Sontag, S., On Photography (Allen Lane, London, 1977), p.53.
- (29) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.49.
- (30) Nigel Henderson Paintings Collages Photographs (Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, 1977). Exhibition Catalogue contains relevant

biographical information, based on conversations with the artist. Hints as to the complex family background are to be found in: Guggenheim, P., Out Of The Century: Confessions of an Art Adict (Andre Deutsch, London, 1980), in which Jackson Pollock also figures prominently.

- (31) Eduardo Paolozzi, p.7.
- (32) The reference to Henderson's time at the Slade, and the allusion to Camden Town, relates to the influence, at the time, of the Euston Road School:  
A reaction against theory and experiment, the conviction that every day life and local subject matter still had much to offer the painter.... Started in 1937 as a painting school, this association of teachers and pupils working together ceased to be an educational establishment in 1939 with the outbreak of war but the title remained, indicative of an objective approach expressed through a cultivated reticence of style ... Gaunt, W., English Painting (Thames & Hudson, London, 1964), pp.243-244.
- (33) Wieland Schmied, in Eduardo Paolozzi (Arts Council, London, 1976) 'Bunk, Bash, Pop', pp.21-25. well explains Bunk. Merz can be best understood, in relation to Surrealism in: Themerson, S., Kurt Schwitters in England (Gabblerbocchus, London, 1958).
- (34) The story of POP is related in: Russell, J., and Gablik, S., Pop Art Redefined (Thames & Hudson, London, 1969), and in: Schneede, U.M., Pop Art in England (York City Art Gallery, 1976). Exhibition Catalogue.  
See also This Was Tomorrow. (University of Sussex Library, J. Furse M.A. Dissertation, 1977).
- (35) Whitford, F., Nigel Henderson: Photographs Collages Paintings, p.9.
- (36) APPENDIX ONE
- (37) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.58.
- (38) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.5.
- (39) Ibid., p.5.
- (40) Mellor, D., and Smith, D., Worktown, p.11.
- (41) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.29.

- (42) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring, pp.9-14.
- (43) Carrick, E., meet "... the common people ..." (The Studio Publications, London, New York, 1940), contains Winston Churchill's well known definition.
- (44) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.29.
- (45) Mellor, D., 'Nigel Henderson' Camerawork No.11 (September, 1978), pp.12-13.
- (46) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.38.
- (47) Ibid., p.39.
- (48) Ibid., p.31.
- (49) Ibid., p.36.
- (50) Ibid., pp.50-51.
- (51) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.34.
- (52) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.38.
- (53) Ibid., p.38.
- (54) Ibid., p.32.
- (55) Ibid., p.36.
- (56) Ibid., p.55.
- (57) Ibid., p.55.
- (58) 'M.O. Pamphlet 1937', quoted in Camerawork No.11, p.1.
- (59) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.3.
- (60) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, pp.43-46.
- (61) The method is very basic and the amount of control over the medium is minimal. Paolozzi was invited to teach in the Textile Department of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, London, by the then Principal William Johnstone, whose policy towards art education is documented in his autobiography: Points In Time (Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1980).

- (62) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.86.
- (63) Ibid., p.85.
- (64) Excerpt from 'My Painting', first published in Possibilities 1 (Winter 1947/48, New York), and quoted in: Chipp, H.B., Theories of Modern Art (University of California, 1968), pp.546-548.
- (65) Peter Fuller has a pertinent article: 'Jackson Pollock', New Society (26.4.79) reprinted in: Fuller, P., Beyond The Crisis In Art (Writers & Readers, London, 1980), pp.98-103.
- (66) Paintings by Jackson Pollock were first seen in England in January 1948. See: Lynton, N.C., The Story of Modern Art (Phaidon, London, 1980).
- (67) Contemporary Architects (Macmillan, London, 1980), pp.759-761.
- (68) MARS - Modern Architectural Research Group, formed in April 1933, was a loose alliance of progressive designers and architects.
- The group is made up of modern architects and allied technicians who have been willing to profit by those experiments in form and function which were worked out almost simultaneously in many countries during the last quarter of a century and which have produced a modern style both rational in character and international in distribution, and to assume some of the architect's social responsibilities. Jackson, A., The Politics of Architecture (Architectural Press, London, 1970), p.35.
- The Smithsons admittance into the MARS group in 1953 confronted an establishment of modern architects who since the war had not only seen their ideals widely assimilated by government and society but had also become older and influential and were therefore able to utilize more conventional national and international institutions for the furtherance of their aims. When the organisation of the parent body CIAM was handed over to a committee of younger members including the Smithsons, their reformulation of an avant-garde movement rejecting previous and other dogmas led to its disintegration and the subsequent disbandment of the MARS group at the beginning of 1957. Ibid., pp.184-185.
- (69) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Without Rhetoric 'An Architectural Aesthetic 1955-1972 (Latimer New Dimensions, London, 1973).
- (70) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.11.
- (71) Ibid., P.77.

VIN ORDINAIRE

- (1) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block (Harvill Press, London, 1953), p.7.
- (2) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970), p.77.
- (3) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer (M.I.T. Press, 1974), p.32.
- (4) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block, pp.42-44.
- (5) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.79.
- (6) Jencks, C., Le Corbusier and the Tragico View of Architecture (Allen Lane, London, 1975), p.139.
- (7) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block, p.8.
- (8) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., The Heroic Period of Modern Architecture (Thames & Hudson, London, 1981), first published in Architectural Design (December 1965).  

In the period just before and just after the first world war a new idea of architecture came into being. In an amazingly short time it mastered its necessary techniques and produced buildings which were as completely realised as any in the previous history of architecture. The period ended when absolute conviction in the movement died around 1929. ... The Heroic Period of Modern Architecture is the rock on which we stand. Through it we feel the continuity of history and the necessity of achieving our own idea of order. ... The Heroic Period of Modern Architecture, p.5.
- (9) The Weissenhof Siedlung Exhibition, held in Stuttgart in 1927, is generally accepted as the first full expression of the International Style. See: Hitchcock, H.R., and Johnson, P., The International Style (Norton, New York, 1966), and The Open University Press Units 13 & 14 (Course A305), which include an informative chronology.
- (10) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.89.
- (11) Ibid., p.89.
- (12) Ibid., p.87.
- (13) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block, p.58.
- (14) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.112.

- (15) Banham, R., The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic? (Architectural Press, London, 1966).
- (16) Ibid., p.16.
- (17) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Without Rhetoric, p.75.
- (18) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block, p.23.
- (19) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.9.
- (20) A full description of the exhibits seen in the Festival of Britain is to be found in: Banham, M., and Hillier, B. (eds.) A Tonic To The Nation: The Festival of Britain 1951 (Thames & Hudson, London, 1951).
- (21) Ibid., p.140.
- (22) Ibid., p.140.
- (23) See A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY: Note (9).
- (24) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.57.
- (25) Ibid., p.57.
- (26) Ibid., p.9.
- (27) Ibid., p.54.
- (28) See: Smithson, P., and Smithson, A., Bibliography: Built Work including Projects and Diagrams: Bibliography: Essays and Books (The Smithsons, Cato Lodge, 24 Gilston Road, London S.W.10).
- (29) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 1952, p.43.
- (30) APPENDIX TWO
- (31) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.31.
- (32) Ibid., p.57. shows a drawing 'Golden Lane yard garden, 16 by 8 feet'.
- (33) Le Corbusier, Towards A New Architecture, 'Freehold Maisonettes': The Hanging Gardens. pp.228-231.
- (34) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.58.
- (35) Ibid., p.34.
- (36) We must create the mass-production spirit.  
The spirit of constructing mass-production houses.  
The spirit of living in mass production houses.  
The spirit of conceiving mass-production houses.

If we eliminate from our hearts and minds all dead concepts in regard to the house, and look at the question from a critical and objective point of view, we shall arrive at the 'House Machine', the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too) and beautiful in the same way that the working tools and instruments which accompany our existence are beautiful. Le Corbusier, Towards A New Architecture, pp.12-13.

- (37) Pessac is a suburb of Bourdeaux (France).
- (38) Boudon, P., Lived-in Architecture (Lund Humphries, London, 1972), Preface.
- (39) APPENDIX TWO
- (40) Young, M., and Willmott, P., Family, Kinship in East London (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1962), remains the standard work.
- (41) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.11.  
 Nairn, I., Modern Buildings in London (London Transport, 1964), contains the following description of the successful entry:  
Golden Lane Housing, Finsbury (Chamberlain, Powell & Bon 1955-62).  
 I suppose I have made twenty visits to this compelling bit of modern London, over the years. Beginning with surprise and delight, sliding slowly into disillusion with the grime and stained surfaces, emerging again now with such a powerful sense of place that a few blotched concrete balconies can be taken in their stride. Golden Lane was the result of a competition in which all three architects sent in entries. They were then lecturing at the Kingston School of Art, and agreed to team up if one of the entries won. Powell's did, and formed the basis of the present neighbourhood, but with repeated alterations and extensions. The density here is very high (200 persons per acre) and is organised in tight courts employing constant changes of level of a few feet to create a sequence of individual comprehensible spaces. Most of the housing is in six-storey blocks made up of maisonettes strongly defined by floors and crosswalls. These are the source of the stained balconies and stairwells, which are indeed very depressing. There is one tall slab, of sixteen storeys, which has much crisper detail and a remarkable jeu d'esprit on top, rather like a concrete aeroplane. This was frankly done for fun, and even if it does not succeed was still a marvellous thing to do, in this most humourless of all times. The block on Golden Lane was built last and foreshadows the extension which faces Goswell Road and was finished in 1962. This is long and curved, with a heavy cornice using the repeated segmental curves which have become a fashion in Britain in the last few years. e.g. in Sir Basil Spence's university buildings at Brighton. Underneath it the maisonettes are arranged tangentially to the curve, with projecting two-storey bow windows which change shape for geometrical reasons with each unit. The result is so complex that it defies description, and unlike most such attempts it does manage to achieve organic complexity, so that you feel that the result is right even if your intellect can't see why. The detail is mannered, but in the right way - i.e. you can regard it with affection, like a funny friend, rather than feeling

invaded by it. The landscape and townscape ideas throughout are first rate, and will need several more years before they can be properly seen. (Underground to Aldersgate). pp.4-5.

- (42) Nigel Henderson, Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949 - 52, p.43.
- (43) This influential Modernist manifesto resulted from the fourth meeting of CIAM, held in 1933 aboard the steamship Patris 11, which cruised from Athens to Marseilles. See: Le Corbusier, The Athens Charter (Grossman, New York, 1973).
- (44) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer (M.I.T. Press, 1974), dust-jacket.
- (45) Ibid., p.3.

THE MISSING LINK

- (1) Royaumont Document: APPENIDX THREE, p.279.
- (2) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970), p.188.
- (3) The eighth meeting of Team 10 was held at Abbaye Royaumont, outside Paris, in September 1962. Team 10, at that time, comprised: J.B.Bakema (Holland), Aldo van Eyck (Holland), Shad Woods (France), G.Candilis (France), Alison and Peter Smithson (England), Jerzy Soltan (Poland), J.Coderch (Spain), Giancarlo de Carlo (Italy), Charles Poldgni (Hungary) and Stefan Wewerka (Germany).  
See: Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer (M.I.T. Press, 1974), p.112.  
Invited participants were Miquel, Richards, Kurokawa, Stirling, Schimmerling, Josic, Guedes, Oiza and Wilson.  
In Team 10 Primer, de Carlo and Wewerka are listed as 'invited participants' and there is no mention of Dean, Erskine or Voelcker.
- (4) Newman, O., CIAM'59 in Otterlo (Karl Kramer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961).
- (5) Smithson, A., 'Team 10 Primer' Architectural Design (December, 1962) pp.559-602.
- (6) In editing the original Royaumont Document, for the Smithsons, I was instructed to retain the flavour of the discussions and avoid, wherever possible, any temptation to re-write, what was haltingly expressed by the non-English contributors. Alison Smithson, in her introduction to 'Team 10 at Royaumont' Architectural Design (November 1975), p.664., explains my part in the 'saga' and my personal involvement, as an 'observer', with Team 10 at Toulouse-le-Mirail. What she refers to as the 'compacted form' is the version of the Document included here as APPENDIX THREE, p.262.
- (7) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Architectural Design (11.1975), pp.664-690.
- (8) APPENDIX THREE, p.343.
- (9) Ibid., p.334.
- (10) Ibid., p.341.

- (11) Ibid., pp.297-303.
- (12) Smithson, A., 'London Roads' Architectural Design (May, 1960), pp.186-188.
- (13) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring - Studies of Alison and Peter Smithson (Studio Vista, London, 1967), pp.62-74.
- (14) Ibid., p.73.
- (15) Hoffmann, H., Struwpelpeter 'Merry Stories and Funny Pictures' (Pan, London, 1972). We can only assume that the name 'Struwpelpeter' momentarily escaped Alison Smithson: Pumppernickel is a type of German rye-bread.
- (16) APPENDIX THREE, p.337.
- (17) Hoffmann, H., Struwpelpeter 'Merry Stories and Funny Pictures', p.6.
- (18) See:(67), p.220.
- (19) APPENDIX THREE, p.278.
- (20) APPENDIX ONE, p.243.
- (21) APPENDIX THREE, p.278.
- (22) APPENDIX ONE, p.243.
- (23) APPENDIX THREE, p.281.
- (24) Ibid., p.279.
- (25) Ibid., p.280.
- (26) Ibid., p.282.
- (27) Ibid., pp.280-281.
- (28) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer, p.88.
- (29) APPENDIX THREE, p.305.
- (30) Kitchen, P., 'An Architectural Partnership' Times Educational Supplement (10.12.1971), p.17.
- (31) With the increasing level of unemployment, in Dockland, this can no longer be regarded as a continuing social trend.
- (32) Woman. 'Council House Transformed' (August, 1978), pp.52-53.

- (33) Smithson, P., 'Signs of Occupancy' Architectural Design (February, 1972), pp.91-97.
- (34) Ibid., p.91.
- (35) Ibid., p.91.
- (36) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Bath University Press, 1980).  
 Peter Smithson's brief introduction is as follows:  
 These walks were originally taken in September 1966, and their first publication was in the October 1969 issue of Architectural Design. Since then Bath has been subject to the pressures of an ever increasing prosperity. Inevitably this has caused changes - changes which I feared might so impinge on the moods of the Walks as to make them seem mere exercises. To guard against this, in the Autumn of 1979 all five walks were taken by a young architect who faithfully followed the original text and noted the places where change had taken place. Subsequently I re-walked the whole line of Walk 1, and I was relieved to find in myself an echo of my original sense of discovery and wonder: reassured. I checked all the points of change that she had indentified. As a result, Walks 3 and 4 both now start in different places, and all Walks have small deviations of line and a few changes of text and photographs from the originals.  
 Bath's thinning blood is being leached away by a creeping timidity, but her bones are still a marvel.(9.12.1979), p.22.
- (37) Ibid., p.1.
- (38) Ibid., p.22.
- (39) It is noted in Without Rhetoric, p.66.
- (40) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls, p.1.
- (41) Ibid., p.2.
- (42) Ibid., p.13.
- (43) APPENDIX THREE, p.282.
- (44) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls, p.1.
- (45) APPENDIX THREE, p.279.
- (46) Ibid., p.279.
- (47) Ibid., p.280.
- (48) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.188.
- (49) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls, inside-cover.
- (50) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Without Rhetoric 'An Architectural

Aesthetic 1955-1972' (Latimer New Dimensions, London, 1973), pp.75-6.

- (51) Emanuel, M., (ed.) Contemporary Architects (Macmillan, London, 1980), is a reliable source: it lists the major works. pp.759-760.
- (52) APPENDIX THREE, pp.266-283.
- (53) Ibid., pp.283-292.
- (54) Ibid., pp.292-297.
- (55) Ibid., pp.297-303. It was made quite clear, at the time of the initial editing, that the 'Exposition' was to be read as a complete statement: all reactions to it were deleted by Alison Smithson.
- (56) APPENDIX THREE, pp.303-304.
- (57) Ibid., p.304.
- (58) Ibid., p.305.
- (59) Ibid., pp.305-309.
- (60) Ibid., p.311.
- (61) Ibid., p.313.
- (62) Ibid., p.314.
- (63) Ibid., p.319.
- (64) Ibid., p.322.
- (65) Ibid., p.325.
- (66) Ibid., p.330.
- (67) APPENDIX ONE, p.242.

A translation of the Candilis contribution, relating directly to Toulouse-le-Mirail, was made, in March 1971, by Sue H. It runs as follows:

Above all, I think it's as well to place the history of Toulouse in its historic moment.

In this country, France, since the war, funny things have been happening. I've had the luck to assist in the whole of this architectural and town-planning movement in France, since the beginning, and more and more this movement is taking on such dimensions as I think will escape, on an increasing scale, to the whole world.

Module, extension of the problem - 45-50 Unité of Le Corbusier residence, I'm speaking of the size of the module, 350 flats in one block. The most important part of all the work which was going

on in this country. Immediately after there are some programmes ... to create from the extension of town upon town, for an element of 20,000 inhabitants ... because in this country one is impartial, one accepts things. Because I don't believe that in Germany or in England this phenomenon could be revealed.

Good, this competition has been won. And there is a second phase of the business. In this political complex in France there is a very great error. The local feelings of the people who - it is absolutely extraordinary to see it - truly not even the President of the Republic, nor anybody, can impose on the inhabitants of a town something with which they are not in agreement. It isn't possible.

The Mayor of Toulouse is an elected man. He is elected today but he could be put out the door, immediately, in a few days. The Mayor of Toulouse has become an enthusiast, he has become a client. He cannot do just what he likes ... is not strong ... the Mayor of Toulouse asked us to ... but that has no importance - the people of Toulouse must like that. Because otherwise nothing can be done.

Well, he has asked us to explain everything to the representatives of the town of Toulouse. Moreover, he said very nicely, there will be 2,000 people - 2,000 people in a large cinema. And who are the workmen, the tradesmen, the employees, the civil - servants, the middle-class, the upper-class, and finally the very well balanced industrialists. And you are going to say what you are doing.

Well, there is another problem. The realisation of an idea, and to surrender to and affirm the interest of the people in these problems. I don't know if it's like this elsewhere. If there is ... change in a car in France, the new Citroen for example we are going to change a bit. Everybody speaks, everybody is interested. But when one builds, or rather when one demolishes their towns, their way of life, the people don't want to know. They are unconscious of this problem. Well then, everybody - equally - to be in contact with the barbers of Toulouse, with everyone. Well, it was decided - that it's quite impossible to explain, you've already seen that - how difficult it is to explain to a group who do not

...

Woods: They are not hairdressers!

... they're not hairdressers ... but we tried. In three weeks we made a film, with the amenities we have. Because it was thought that only through one of the actual media could we move anybody vis-a-vis introducing a way of life ... I can move them all too simply ... that that reunion took place in Toulouse, it was a great occasion - a great success - formidable, and since then they are obliged to project the film in all the schools of Toulouse, the pupils of Toulouse, they see the film, they go to their homes in the evening, they talk to their parents too, they go to the cinema of Toulouse where the film is shown - free. And all that has become something. Everybody knows what it is all about. Not everyone understood everything, of course - each understands what he wants to understand. And that's jolly good.

And now we are at the third phase and that has gone off far less well. It is the realisation phase. Because the result of the competition - I have myself been nominated for the whole of my life - perhaps my son - perhaps my grandson, Chief Architect of the whole concern. That is to say, even in 20 years or 30 years, if a Ms. Untel wants a house there, he must ask Ms. Candilis.

Well, what is to be done? We have made this plan, which you are going to see and afterwards, imagine now that a well-known architect says to me: 'There is the plan - what do you want to do? - either I say 'yes' or I say 'no'. Right - he's going to come back in ten days and ask how things are. And if I say 'no - not yet', in twenty days it'll be the same thing. Well then we must find the right method, that when we have disappeared ... this takes on a new direction which is consistent with the organisation which we have provided for. As to that, in an exceptional way we have insisted that we have the ... to be able to build that which corresponds a little with a tenth of the whole thing, but absolutely ...

Now I think our responsibility is extremely important. And it is at this moment that we've got ourselves into this position. What must be done?

A lot has been spoken here about archetypes. We have touched lightly on prototypes. It is necessary once and for all not to make this confusion - archetypes and prototypes are two quite different things. Between archetype and prototype there is the key, which may also be utilised. For me, who is Greek, I translate it into this popular Greek expression 'Achnaria' - everything which ... the steps of others. And that's very funny because ... of an ass, you know, it is admirable the whole thing. It is an ass who has imitated his father and his grandfather and he works on 'achnaria' which follows the steps of his father. They are mysteries, the 'achnarias'. It's an element of repetition. It is the production of a standard put to the test. It is a prototype. It is just that. Now to do the same thing - it's a prototype.

Archetype, I think that's more of an 'achnaria'. We talk a lot about archetypes. I think it's an extremely honourable thing to say - that thing is an archetype, it is an exceptional thing, the archetype, and I don't think that each day an archetype can be invented. Prototype is a thing of standardisation ... one puts a thing to the test. That is not the point of this.

I don't think I have the role to give uniquely some prototype. There is here, and that might be more important, an opportunity to give the keys to an organisation. And of all our team it's probably Shad(Woods) who has pushed his ideas, precisely ... which must be defined to the hierarchy. Because it is unthinkable, irrational, for us to build a town of 100,000 inhabitants in ten years.

That's not true at all. Towns are never built by architects. They are built by Society, by the people, by the inhabitants of a town. And they are built by following the 'achnaria' of their parents, of their grandparents.

So, we've come to the choice of actually specifying and of ... it must be made. But above all we've come to the fact that it is necessary to find keys of an organisation which must be permanent and which is much stronger than the productions of reality, which is going to be followed, which is going to follow us.

That is the third phase. We have come to the third phase. We have not succeeded in solving it - far from it. All the time we are having ideas and dispensing with them. So what's going to be built?

That is our decision. And that must be well made, because, if it is bad, all the rest will be bad. And if it's good all the rest will be good. I think then, that the problem for us is quite

the reverse. It is not to judge if that is good, because it is that which may permit us to think out another plan. Because we - above all we - mustn't fix things.

But the fact is here ... in the time and by the people and by the economic and social media, but only in one direction and this direction must be absolutely strong. It is precisely liberty, in order that she may be liberty, who must have around her a very strong discipline, invisible but existing.

After that I think that it should be exposed, since it is of a secondary nature. Perhaps we must make certain definitions or specifications between this project ... quite simply I think I mustn't explain, you're going to see that in the film.

Today we've found this system in which there are different things which are probably essential. But I think of the essential state - it doesn't change ... their field of problems. One of these things is precisely that which was talked about earlier. How does one build that 'stem'? Shad(Woods) can show you that there will be some things and later there will be some homes. In Toulouse it's different. This element which is at the same time like that, but at the same time it's equally like this. This element, the superior element, the element of habitation not only is it linked directly with ... but also it partakes of a way of life. I know it isn't really, but who creates all that - and builds up equally the 'stem'? 'Stem' is composed of a thousand things - churches, big shops, little shops, markets etc.. One cannot invent the style and the structure of all those things - then. So there I am in sympathy with the one who has a good go at it. It will be magnificent. One can decide, design, one can foresee and have a vision of these rudiments. One can actually, more or less, see, as usual, those rudiments. Because here in Toulouse not only in perpendicular relation, but equally in relation with the structure of the 'stem'. Perhaps there is also another reason. It is what used to exist before on this plot of ground. And this is approaching the same question which Shad(Woods) and I asked Giancarlo de Carlo: 'where does one begin?'.

Alexanderpolder, where there is nothing of course ... and it doesn't matter where one begins. Or one creates conditions which used not to exist. In this case, the conditions do exist. For it isn't Alexanderpolder, it isn't a 'polder' at all. There is Toulouse.

Here we have the French aeronautical industry: Caravelle - very important. And here we have an extremely important chemical industry. And in these areas, I don't know why, the extensions of the town was passing into it. On the other side of the Garonne is a veritable occupation. And this area which the ZUP has chosen was residential at one time. Castles of the grand bourgeois, and the geological structure creates one thing: a natural 'stem' of greenness. That exists, that extraordinary element which had to be exploited. And we thought it will be a formidable thing it - it is the 'stem', it is the active life - it's the whole activity of town life. The house is here, is there. We thought that the position as it is ... because one gives who is there a double personality of being. At the same time, with the active life of our ... there is an atmosphere of nature and of parks. It is merely the style of what used to exist, all that ... equally parallel to the system.

Now, that is one thing. Shad(Woods) said very fairly, today

even, there is quite a possibility the 'stem' exists at our homes, the idea of a linear centre. Is this idea of a linear centre an invention today? No, this linear centre always existed. There, or dictated by the local conditions. And this is precisely the case in Toulouse.

Life is one awful coincidence. When I came to France in 1945, a few months later, in 1946 - it was just after the war - thinking I wasn't going to stay all my life, I wanted to profit from seeing and knowing France. Well, I remember I made a journey - Nantes, the Langudoc, Lourdes - towards Spain - Perpignon. I had to change trains at Toulouse, at 10 pm.. So I wandered around - I had to wait another two or three hours for the train to Paris - I went into the town itself and had a glimpse of this linear centre, which is the urban structure of Toulouse itself.

It concerns two developments: radio-concentric around this point - very important - which is called the Capitol. The Capitol is ... of Capitulle, who are the leaders of this country, and around this Capitol there are some cannons, as in Amsterdam. There are boulevards, patios, squares and cafes ... and on the left of these linear things there are the housing estates.

The climate of this town, the Mediterranean influence on the lives of the people - the nearness of Spain perhaps creeps through ... and the linear centre it exists. Today we are in conditions, as everywhere else, where this centre is defined by cars - but it exists: it is very strong. You are in Toulouse, when you're in this stadium. In Toulouse this notion is a simple coincidence, but even so, for me, it has remained enormous.

Well, there are those very important differences between the two things. Now to the point of view of figuration. I think that the whole problem between cars, pedestrian, 'stem', was itself following, as Shad(Woods) said, following the first example, that we made in Berlin. We have, in the first plan ... that did not exist - in the first sketch of Toulouse that didn't exist. There was something like it, but there was no liaison between the point where the cars stop and the pedestrians begin. And the possibility of the pedestrian to choose this ... where he can go home. This scheme is realisable, it is in the domain of the actual reality. Tomorrow, perhaps, Giancarlo(de Carlo), one can have a different ... different conditions of circulation, perhaps more pressurised than that of Richards. But in the reality of today, that gives all the 'pros' without giving the 'cons'. Because it is simple and a clear solution, quite simple and possible. It's for that reason that it's been adopted. And this solution has opened other doors which have been hidden without it. It was one of the keys.

There is a town, big or little, it isn't a question of a merely inexplicable size and ... of communication between the people. It is a kind of communication between the people, not in a mechanical way, not direct, but indirect - which cannot be measured. I don't think one can say: 'it is 50 metres' - '200 metres', as it was said earlier. No, that can be much smaller, it can be much bigger. Those are things which happen in a mysterious way. But we must make the possibility of finding the possibility of conditioning this mystery. It is a law which any scale divides - can also give us a key to our organisation of tomorrow. The Greek structure - is it justified? Is it not justified?

Coderch: Candilis, I beg of you. I am very Mediterranean, but there is something which makes me ill, when you say ... make a house like a family house; you need to work like a Finn at least. But you've begun with much bigger things - to build like that ... You are going to build - you've begun to build, haven't you?

Not at all...

Coderch: That's what you said, didn't you?

Yes - we're going to begin.

Coderch: ... because I feel it's impossible - it's like educating a child in two weeks.

I said exactly that, at the beginning. I find it impossible to build.

Coderch: ... there are some mean now ... now that you are the key to the chest.

You mean? But I believe we are there fairly - we have tried ... That is a means too, but it isn't all, because all the people who live in Toulouse, they don't know how to build their town - even the architects. But I understand that very well, but I've never said to you I know what must be done. I tell you bluntly that voluntarily we are in the ... and that it's our will to be present. Now, perhaps, harm has been done - one apologises, but one wants to live in the condition of our time - that's all.

Now if you tell me that you need six months to make a house, perhaps that's not very much. I think one must have up to six months for making a house - because all our life we're making our house.

Coderch: They are schemes I don't understand - how you alone can make all those houses.

What I do must be clear. Meanwhile you can help me in what I am doing. It is dividing up localities which ... a unity among them. We had to find them. It is the urban structure of that which is ... This structure is at 'y' - is it abstract: is it formal? Through love of style, is it rational? Or functional? I don't know at all. Is it dictated by the ... even of this area? I tell you that all that together, that the things are interlocked between them - one tries to see clearly. One doesn't arrive.

From time to time there is that element, precisely of function, which is dominating - from time to time - by the love of style. A perjorative way, if you like - I do not accept. From time to time other examples of adaptations to the purely geographical conditions of this area ... well the choice of ... it creates for us some rudiments where something happens, and those things - perhaps it is equally good - give other keys of the organisation. There, in a manner of speaking ... general. From this moment on we have a great responsibility for myself, I think that I can add nothing else, because I think it's clearer to see the film now, and afterwards to ask questions. And before seeing this film, I want us to be in general agreement as to why the film has been made. It is purely to explain to men - it is to strengthen the position of our client. Without him we can do nothing. To see how ... that one thinks of doing. Will this vision be the total, final, vision of the work? I don't believe it - but a point of departure - well!

THE JOHNSON SCRIPT

- (1) APPENDIX ONE, p.243.
- (2) Johnson worked in close collaboration with the Smithsons, for whom he had a great admiration. He had published 'The Moron Made City' London Life (October, 1965), pp.45-51, and had supported them wholeheartedly in their campaign to save the 'Euston Arch'. See: Smithson, A., The Euston Arch (Thames & Hudson, 1966).
- (3) The Smithsons on Housing: 'Are tower blocks obsolete?'.  
Alison and Peter Smithson are British architects with an international reputation. Currently working on a new development in Poplar, they demonstrate their belief in a practical alternative to tower blocks; a substitute, in their opinion, as new and relevant for London as the first Georgian Square. Radio Times (July 1970).
- (4) Virginia Johnson, widow of B.S.Johnson (b.1933 committed suicide November 13th. 1973) readily allowed me to copy a rough tape the author had made, from the original television showing. That is the Sound-track referred to here.
- (5) Sound-track.
- (6) Ibid.
- (7) 'You're Human Like The Rest Of Them' (YHLTROT) was produced with the assistance of the Production Fund of the British Film Institute. It was first shown, at the National Film Theatre, on May 5th. 1967 and awarded Grand Prix at both the Tours and Melbourne international Short Film Festivals in 1968. The script is published in New English Dramatists 14 (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.221-230.
- (8) In attempting to follow the written script, the Smithsons at times sound less than sure of themselves.
- (9) Sound-track.
- (10) Ibid.
- (11) APPENDIX ONE, pp.250-251.
- (12) Ibid., pp.253-254.
- (13) Ibid., pp.243-244.
- (14) Ibid., p.244.

- (15) Ibid., p.244.
- (16) Ibid., p.243.
- (17) Ibid., p.245.
- (18) Sound-track.
- (19) Docklands Development Team London Docklands Strategic Plan (Docklands Joint Committee, London, 1976), contains the following observations:  

At the time of the 1971 census, when the number of empty dwellings is allowed for, there was insufficient separate dwellings for all households in any of the Dockland boroughs. (The term 'dwelling' means a house, flat or maisonette which is self-contained and does not involve sharing kitchens, bathrooms, lavatories or front-doors with any other household. A household usually means a family but can include groups of people living together.)

Despite high levels of new building in all boroughs between 1967 and 1972, gains to the local housing stock were small due to the number of dwellings being demolished. Tower Hamlets, Newham and Southwark had 25 per-cent, 16 per-cent and 16 per-cent of the housing stock in poor and unfit condition according to a survey carried out in 1967 compared with a Greater London average of 5 per-cent ... p.10.
- (20) Ibid., p.13. See also: Wilson, D., Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change (Fontana, London, 1972), and Poplar: Official Guide (Poplar Borough Council, London, 1954), in which local light-industry is listed.
- (21) Eyles, J., Environmental Satisfaction and London's Docklands: Docklands Problems and Policies in The Isle of Dogs (University of London, 1976), p.1.
- (22) Fishman, W., The Streets of East London (Duckworth, London, 1970) p.14.
- (23) Ibid., p.92.
- (24) Burney, E., (ed.) 'Manplan 8' Architectural Review (September, 1970), p.169. An issue devoted solely to working-class housing and consequently a reliable source of contemporary solutions.
- (25) Sound-track.
- (26) Ibid.
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.

- (29) Ibid.
- (30) Ibid.
- (31) APPENDIX ONE, p.244.
- (32) Ibid. p.245.
- (33) Wilson, D., Dockers: The Impact of Industrial Change, p.11.
- (34) Ibid., p.283.
- (35) Sound-track.
- (36) Ibid.
- (37) APPENDIX ONE, p.247. See also: Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970).  
 These pedestrian decks are no mere access balconies. Two women with prams can stop and talk without blocking the flow, and they are safe for small children, as the only wheeled vehicles allowed are the tradesmen's hand and electrically-propelled trolleys. p.57.
- (38) Sound-track.
- (39) Ibid.
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) APPENDIX ONE, p.252.
- (42) Sound-track. The Smithsons, in conversation, deny that this was so at Robin Hood, in spite of tenants' claims to the contrary.
- (43) Sound-track.
- (44) APPENDIX ONE, p.254.
- (45) Ibid., p.255.
- (46) Sound-track:

Nevertheless it's very depressing for the contractors and the builders - and contractors - the contractors and the architects to feel that all the effort they're putting in - the massive effort they're putting in is going to be smashed up. (Peter Smithson).

I mean society at the moment asks architects to build these new homes for them - but I mean this may be really stupid - we may have to re-think the whole thing. It may be that we should only be asked to repair the roof and add the odd bathroom to the old industrial housing and just leave people where they are to smash it up in complete abandon and happiness so that nobody would have to worry about it any more. You know we may be asking people to

live in a way that is stupid - they - maybe they want to be left alone. (Alison Smithson).

- (47) APPENDIX ONE, p.251.
- (48) Ibid., p.256.
- (49) Smithson, P., 'Signs of Occupancy' Architectural Design (February, 1972), pp.91-97.
- (50) Ibid., pp.94-95.
- (51) Ibid., p.95.
- (52) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), pp.559-573.
- (53) Smithson, P., Architectural Design (February, 1972), p.95.
- (54) APPENDIX ONE, p.248.
- (55) Ibid., p.247.
- (56) Sound-track.
- (57) The film was shown in a small, exceedingly hot room, away from the main complex. In a letter home I made my first observations on Robin Hood: 'B.S.J. certainly made a visual zooooooming cock-up of the film - it was generally rated a disaster (also by the B.B.C. of course - and B.S.J.) good colour but jump t e.g. A.S. wearing 2 different dresses in one speech - that didn't help! The building Robin Hood Gardens looks good - in Poplar - really rather sophisticated. (J.Furse Toulouse-le-Mirail, Monday April 12th. 1971).
- (58) Aldo van Eyck and, especially Giancarlo de Carlo were very much in favour of this. I made notes at the time to supplement the tapes I was to edit. The tapes, according to the Smithsons, are lost.
- (59) Aldo van Eyck: Toulouse-le-Mirail (April 1971).
- (60) Peter Smithson: Toulouse-le-Mirail (April 1971).
- (61) Peter Smithson: Toulouse-le-Mirail (April 1971).
- (62) Alison Smithson: Toulouse-le-Mirail (April 1971).
- (63) Smithson, P., 'Toulouse-le-Mirail' Architectural Design (October, 1971), pp.597-601.
- (64) Alison Smithson: Toulouse-le-Mirail (April 1971).
- (65) Smithson, P., 'Signs of Occupancy', p.97.

AGAINST THE CRITERIA

- (1) Johnson, B.S., 'The Moron Made City' London Life (October, 1965), pp.45-51.
- (2) Ibid., p.45.
- (3) APPENDIX TWO, p.259.
- (4) Johnson, B.S., 'The Moron Made City', p.51.
- (5) Smithson, A., Places Worth Inheriting (Association of Consultant Architects, London, 1979).
- (6) Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar (London, 1975), includes reminiscences of Bill Brinson, who lived in Grosvenor Buildings demolished to make way for Robin Hood:  

... there was very little work about - in this part of London there was thousands out - so we moved to Poplar to Grosvenor Buildings. My father was out of work a long time ... It was a huge block of privately owned buildings. We had three rooms ... there was eleven of us in there, so you can just imagine.  
 Oh, yes. It was one big community.  
 No. There weren't any kitchenettes - you had a gas-stove in a scullery and off that a toilet ... They're knocked down now, abolished now. I used to look after a stall in Chrisp Street Market. (B.Brinson 1975), pp.87-88.
- (7) In conversation, Peter Smithson is convinced that the tenants have the 'slack' money, to make a positive contribution to the comfort of individual flats. 'Slack' money is left-over money, after all essentials have been purchased.
- (8) APPENDIX ONE, p.251.
- (9) Building Design. (14.9.1973), 'Robin Hood Revisited', pp.20-21.
- (10) The Smithsons on Housing: Sound-track (B.B.C. July 1970).  

We've tried to overcome the problems of this high level of traffic noise in a number of ways. At the edge of the background of pavements - as near as we can get to the source of the noise - we've built an acoustic wall, which is higher than motor-cars, which throws the noise back towards the road instead of allowing it to pass through towards the building. But to stop it looking like a prison, the wall-panels have angled gaps between them, so if you walk along you can keep seeing through - but there's no direct path for the sound to pass through. Inside this a line of trees helps to break up the sound of the traffic.
- (11) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer (M.I.T.Press, 1974), p.43.
- (12) Ibid., p.43.

- (13) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture (Academy Editions, London, 1977), p.24.
- (14) Sound-track.
- (15) Ibid.
- (16) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.23.
- (17) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring - Studies of Alison and Peter Smithson (Studio Vista, London, 1967), p.10.
- (18) Sound-track.
- (19) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), pp.570-573.
- (20) Ibid., pp.570-573.
- (21) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970), p.45.
- (22) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14.' p.573.
- (23) Ibid., p.569.
- (24) Ibid., p.573.
- (25) Ibid., p.573.
- (26) Ibid., p.563.
- (27) Ibid., p.569.
- (28) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring - Studies of Alison and Peter Smithson, p.9.
- (29) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer, p.43.
- (30) Ibid., p.43.
- (31) There are currently 4,000 Bengali families on the waiting-list.
- (32) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.24.
- (33) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' p.573.
- (34) Ibid., p.573.
- (35) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.34.

- (36) Le Corbusier, The Radiant City (Faber & Faber, London, 1967), p.122.
- (37) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.188.
- (38) Sound-track.
- (39) APPENDIX ONE, p.246.
- (40) Ibid., p.247.
- (41) See PREFACE, p.3.
- (42) Johnson, B.S., 'The Moron Made City', p.45.
- (43) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.194-195.
- (44) Ibid., dust-jacket.
- (45) Ibid., dust-jacket.
- (46) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.23.
- (47) Ibid., p.24.
- (48) APPENDIX ONE, p.242.
- (49) Charles Jencks was born in 1939 in the U.S.A. and now lives in London. He studied English Literature and Architecture at Harvard, and has a Ph.D. in Architecture from London University, where he studied under Reyner Banham.
- (50) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.23.
- (51) See: Newman, O., Defensible Space: People and Design in the Violent City (Architectural Press, London, 1972).
- (52) Building Design. (14.9.1973), 'Robin Hood Revisited', pp.20-21.
- (53) Ibid., pp.20-21.
- (54) Woman. 'Council House Transformed' (August, 1978), pp.52-53.
- (55) Ibid., pp.52-53.
- (56) Henderson, N., Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949-1952 (Midland Group, Nottingham, 1978). Exhibition Catalogue. p.39.
- (57) Johnson, B.S., 'The Moron Made City', p.51.
- (58) APPENDIX THREE, p.305.
- (59) APPENDIX ONE, p.243.
- (60) Eyles, J., Environmental Satisfaction and London' Docklands (University of London, 1976), pp.2-3.

ROBIN HOOD OBSERVED

- (1) Isherwood, C., Goodbye to Berlin (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1947) p.7.
- (2) Smithson, A. and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970), p.45.
- (3) Building Design. (14.9.73), 'Robin Hood Revisited', pp.20-21.
- (4) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/80.(W). (W) denotes white, as opposed to (B) Black.
- (5) Woman Police Constable:(W) stationed in Chrisp Street.
- (6) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/70s.(W).
- (7) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/60s.(W).
- (8) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/60s.(W).
- (9) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/60s.(W).
- (10) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/late 50s.(W).
- (11) Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar (London, 1975), p.97.
- (12) Peter Smithson, in conversation, uses this term.
- (13) Detailed economic factors are not listed but can be summarised in general terms: 'Government grants to the English cities worst hit by the urban crisis are only worth three-quarters of what they were two years ago, according to figures prepared for the Association of Metropolitan Authorities'.  
Cities in crisis 'worst hit by cuts'. The Guardian(21.9.82),p.2.
- (14) Woman Police Constable:(W) stationed in Chrisp Street.
- (15) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/early 60s.(W).
- (16) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/80.(W).
- (17) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/80.(W)
- (18) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/70s.(W).

- (19) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring - Studies of Alison and Peter Smithson (Studio Vista, London, 1967), p.10.
- (20) Carrick, E., meet "...the common people..." (The Studio publications, London, New York, 1940).
- (21) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/30s.(W).
- (22) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture (Academy Editions, London, 1977), p.24.
- (23) The Smithsons on Housing: Sound-track (B.B.C. July 1970).
- (24) Ibid.
- (25) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/late 20s.(W).
- (26) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/30s.(W). I heard this story from B.S.Johnson: the young teenagers apparently used the doors, of the garden flats, as one would in a 'roll-a-penny' stall at a fun-fair.
- (27) Tenant(Robin Hood): Male/80.(W).
- (28) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), pp.561-562.
- (29) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/teenager.(W).
- (30) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/35.(W).
- (31) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/35.(W).
- (32) See: Picton, T., 'A very public espionage' Camework No.11 (September, 1978), p.23.
- (33) Building Design (14.9.73), p.21.
- (34) Tenant. (Robin Hood), Female/30s.(W).
- (35) Tenant. (Robin Hood), Female/75.(W).
- (36) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' p.570.
- (37) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/70s.(W).
- (38) Sound-track.
- (39) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/40s.(W).
- (40) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' p.569.

- (41) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/50s.(W).
- (42) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/30s.(W).
- (43) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/30s.(W).
- (44) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/40s.(W).
- (45) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/40s.(W).
- (46) Henderson, N., Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949-1952 (Midland Group, Nottingham, 1978). Exhibition Catalogue. p.31.
- (47) The Architects' Journal (28.12.1966). 'Banham's bumper book on brutalism, discussed by Alison and Peter Smithson, p.1590.
- (48) In conversation with Peter Smithson (1980).
- (49) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.9.
- (50) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' p.569.
- (51) Bentham Road Housing, Hackney, dates from 1956-59. See: Nairn, I. Modern Buildings in London (London Transport, 1964), p.31.
- (52) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' p.569.
- (53) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer (M.I.T. Press, 1974), p.43.
- (54) Newman, O., CIAM'59 in Otterlo (Karl Kramer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961), p.79.
- (55) At Toulouse-le-Mirail, Team 10 accepted the need to incorporate wall-surfaces designed to incorporate 'graffiti'. Bakema saw it in terms of 'Walls equal Information': - use of walls is use of information: 'the language of the writing-on-the-wall helps the people learn to use the building' (Alison Smithson).
- (56) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.23.
- (57) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/19.(W).
- (58) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Male/23.(B).
- (59) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/50s.(W).
- (60) It is an observed fact, at Robin Hood, that the flats situated by

the access-points and lift-lobbies, at all levels, are prone to vandalism: they are likely to remain untenanted for long periods. We note the suggestion that problem-families are housed there as a result.

- (61) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/early 30s.(W).
- (62) Local resident: Chrisp Street: Female/late 30s.(W).
- (63) Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar, p.35.
- (64) Ibid., p.42.
- (65) Community Development Project. Whatever Happened to Council Housing? (C.D.P., London, 1976).
- (66) Ibid., p.7.
- (67) Ibid., p.21.
- (68) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/early 30s.(W).
- (69) West Ham United F.C. play at Upton Park, Green St. London E.13.  
Peter Smithson, in conversation in 1969, had the notion that it was possible to 'read' the success of an area in the current Football League status of its local team. Skelmersdale would fail, as a community, because it wasn't large enough to support a First Division side. He talked of this again at Toulouse-le-Mirail. The current status of West Ham United is respectable in this respect.
- (70) Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar, p.122.
- (71) Burney, E., (ed.) 'Manplan 8' Architectural Review (September, 1970) p.169.
- (72) Le Corbusier, The Radiant City (Faber & Faber, London, 1967), p.122.
- (73) Eisenman, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), p.557.
- (74) Poplar: Official Guide (Poplar Borough Council, London, 1952).
- (75) Sound-track.
- (76) East London Advertiser (9.5.80), p.8.
- (77) Ibid., p.8.
- (78) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/30s.(W).

- (79) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/late 70s. (W).
- (80) Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar, p.74.
- (81) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14'  
pp.570-573.
- (82) 1980.
- (83) We have noted a full range of obscenities, largely directed at the young Black community: our observations, in the East End, suggest that Robin Hood is no worse than many other estates in this respect.
- (84) We have observed a definite increase over the four years: the comments offered by the tenants justify our assessment.
- (85) See:(13).
- (86) APPENDIX ONE, p.244.
- (87) Sound-track.
- (88) APPENDIX ONE, p.243.
- (89) Ibid., p.243.

A FAILURE OF NERVE

- (1) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block (Harvill Press, London, 1953), p.23.
- (2) Seabrook, J., What Went Wrong? Working people and the ideals of the Labour Movement (Gollancz, London, 1978), dust-jacket.
- (3) Ibid., p.9.
- (4) Liberation Films. Fly A Flag For Poplar (London, 1975), p.88.
- (5) Ibid., p.122.
- (6) East London Advertiser (9.5.80), p.56.
- (7) Cohen, S., 'The Politics of Vandalism' New Society (12.12.1968) pp.872-878.
- (8) Ibid., pp.873-874.
- (9) Ibid., p.874.
- (10) Ibid., p.876.
- (11) Ibid., pp.875-876.
- (12) Tenant. (Robin Hood): Female/59.(W).
- (13) The other 'Jubilee luminaries' were: Reyner Banham, Toni del Renzio, Paul Reilly and Joseph Rykwert.
- (14) The Architectural Review (November, 1977): 'PS', p.316.
- (15) Larrabeiti, M., 'End of the Road to Wigan Pier' The Observer (19.11.1978), p.35.
- (16) Le Corbusier, The Marseilles Block, p.23.
- (17) The Smithsons on Housing (B.B.C. July 1970), Sound-track.
- (18) Ibid.
- (19) The term 'mass housing' applies to all dwellings not built to the special order of an individual: houses over which the occupier has no control other than that he has chosen, or has been chosen, to live there: houses for which, therefore, the architect has a peculiar responsibility. (Alison & Peter Smithson): Newman, O., CIAM'59 in Otterlo (Karl Kramer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961), p.131.
- (20) See: Pawley, M., The Private Future (Thames & Hudson, London, 1974).
- (21) Henderson, N., Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949

- 1952 (Midland Group, Nottingham, 1978). Exhibition Catalogue.
- (22) Ibid., p.40.
- (23) Young, M., 'Never Go Out After Dark' New Society (15.1.1981), p.99.
- (24) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture (Academy Editions, London, 1977), pp.21-24.
- (25) Kitchen, P., 'An Architectural Partnership' Times Educational Supplement (10.12.1971), p.17.
- (26) APPENDIX ONE, p.248.
- (27) Sound-track.
- (28) Newman, O., Defensible Space: People and Design in the violent City (Architectural Press, London, 1972).
- (29) APPENDIX ONE, p.248.
- (30) Crosby, T., (ed.) Urban Structuring - Studies of Alison and Peter Smithson (Studio Vista, London, 1967), p.9.
- (31) We observed and photographed this particular act of tenant behaviour and discussed it with the Smithsons later the same day. (May 1979).
- (32) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), pp.559-573.
- (33) In the General Election, of May 3rd. 1979, the sitting Labour Member of Parliament: Peter Shore, was returned with a reduced majority, though his personal vote exceeded the total vote cast for all other candidates. Voting took place in an atmosphere of disenchantment with Labour, heightened locally by the only too obvious effects of the seemingly endless 'Dustmen's Strike'. Stepney and Poplar stank and only 31,262 people bothered to vote. The full result was as follows:
- STEPNEY & POPLAR
- |                           |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| P.D.Shore (Lab).....      | 19,576 |
| R.Hughes (Con).....       | 6,561  |
| R.Winfield (Lib).....     | 2,234  |
| V.Clarke (Nat Front)..... | 1,571  |
| E.Johns (Ind Lab).....    | 672    |

K.Halpin (Comm).....	413
P.Chappell (Workers Rev).....	235
NO CHANGE Maj. 13,015.	

In the 1974 Election Shore's majority, over Conservative was 20,976, and he polled 24,159 votes.

- (34) For the reactions to successive immigrant communities, in the East End see: Lebzelter, G.C., Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939 (Macmillan, London, 1978).
- (35) See: APPENDIX THREE, p.279.
- (36) Our observations, at Robin Hood, suggest that it is.
- (37) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Robin Hood Gardens London E.14' Architectural Design (September, 1972), p.569.
- (38) Ibid., p.569.
- (39) Jencks, C., and Silver, N., Adhocism: The case for improvisation (Anchor Books, London, 1973).
- (40) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.24.
- (41) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light: Urban theories 1952-1960 and their application in a building project 1963-70 (Faber & Faber, London, 1970), pp.31-38.
- (42) Ibid., pp.56-57.
- (43) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, pp.194-195.
- (44) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.23.
- (45) Sound-track.
- (46) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.59.
- (47) Newman, O., Defensible Space: 'Territoriality', pp.51-57.
- (48) Ibid., p.58.
- (49) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., 'Team 10 at Royaumont' Architectural Design (November, 1975), p.664.
- (50) Smithson, A., (ed.) Team 10 Primer (M.I.T. Press, 1974): cover.
- (51) APPENDIX THREE, p.279.
- (52) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.188.

- (53) Burney, E., (ed.) 'Manplan 8' Architectural Review (September 1970), p.169.
- (54) APPENDIX THREE, p.343.
- (55) APPENDIX ONE, p.250.
- (56) Johnson, B.S., 'The Moron Made City' London Life (October, 1965) p.51.
- (57) Sound-track.
- (58) Ibid.
- (59) APPENDIX THREE, p.341.
- (60) Seabrook, J., What Went Wrong?, p.72.
- (61) Ibid., Part Two: 'People Under Siege', p.70.
- (62) Ibid., p.71.
- (63) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Adams & Dart, Bath, 1971. Bath University Press, 1980).
- (64) Jencks, C., The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, p.23.
- (65) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Bath University Press), p.2.
- (66) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.84.
- (67) Ibid., p.58.
- (68) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Bath University Press); inside-cover.
- (69) Smithson, A., Places Worth Inheriting (Association of Consultant Architects, London, 1979).
- (70) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Bath University Press), p.2.
- (71) Henderson, N., Nigel Henderson Photographs of Bethnal Green 1949-1952, p.55.
- (72) APPENDIX ONE, p.244.
- (73) Smithson, P., Walks Within the Walls (Bath University Press), p.2.
- (74) Moser, C., Survey Methods in Social Investigation (Heinemann, London, 1958).

Observation is invaluable for studying small communities in action and for seeing how people live and how they behave in given situations. Instead of asking people what they did, one

can observe what they do, and avoid biases of exaggeration, prestige effects and memory errors. Observation of this sort can provide a first-hand and authentic picture, without being as dependent as interviewing on securing peoples' co-operation. (Preface).

- (75) Smithson, A., and Smithson, P., Ordinariness & Light, p.11.
- (76) Ibid., p.55.
- (77) Ibid., p.58.
- (78) Peter Smithson, in conversation.(1978).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

THE JOHNSON SCRIPT

- 1 THIS IS A FILM ABOUT
- 2 MODEL OPERATION
- 3 PARTICULAR PLACE
- 4 LANGUAGE OF ARCHITECTURE
- 5 LANGUAGE OF URBANISM
- 6 ARCHITECT'S DREAM
- 7 VANDALISM/VALIDITY
- 8 QUALITY OF LIFE
- 9 LEISURE

ROBIN HOOD GARDENS

FINAL SCRIPT - THE SMITHSONS (December 1969).

A 1 THIS IS A FILM ABOUT

P the language of architecture

A the architects' dream of what housing could be like

2 MODEL OPERATION

P Why bother to describe this housing site?

Because we regard it as an exemplar -

a demonstration - of a more enjoyable way

of living in an old industrial part of

a city. It is a model of a new mode of

urban organisation which can show what

life could be like - in a big enough piece

so you can sense

smell

feel

touch

experience

Its form - we hope - will respond to the

way people wish to live today, with their

belongings, their domestic appliances,

their cars. Like the first Georgian square built in London it is a model for those who see it and those who live in it - at the same time a thing outsiders will recognise as new and desirable, and a place its inhabitants will enjoy generation after generation.

### 3 PARTICULAR PLACE

- A Our general objective on any site is to knit together the new thing being inserted with what is good in the surrounding area: hoping in this way to inject new life even into things and buildings tired and old.

Right from the start we identify with a site and its neighbourhood, begin to put down mental roots

hooking onto rose bay willow herb

children over-turning wrecked cars

the smell of curry on the stairs of

rejected tenements

oddments of past character

or large identifying fixes of the district

or city

even region - in this case the two large

power-stations

South of our site runs the old London & North Western Railway line to their dock terminal,

with running rights through the city to  
Euston.

.....

In the late 40's and early 50's when we were first worrying about the lack of identity in housing, the lack of meaningful patterns of association, we used to talk of "objects as found": anything and everything can be raised by association to become the poetry of the ordinary. In this sense you can adopt an industrial landscape very easily.

Compared with a site amid semi-detached houses sites set in industrial blight - or industrial heritage - depends how you look at things - are capable of taking on a new role, renewing, re-identifying their district. This is something to do with the new urban scale, also industrial sites are forthright and honest - perhaps this is a personal trick, because of our NE background we see ships - for example - as connectors of people both to their particular district and to the world outside.

Moving ships as decoration to this particular urban scene:

the river at the end of the Isle of Dogs approaches site, turns at right angles, goes past.

The river a geographical fix.

.....  
The site touches two historical fixes:

1806 East India Dock, the 1844 railway,

these two almost an architect's working life apart.

Three and a half years ago, standing on the

fifth floor of the late 1880's improved

flats for deserving working people, you

could see out over the upcoming roar of

tunnel approach traffic, into the East India

Dock - the calm sheet of water, a few ships.

When we finally built up again to fifth

floor level the dock was being filled

with rubbish:

now when you should see it

you don't

We are left with a handful of china shards

found on the site -

Chinese ware, perhaps from ballast, perhaps

cargo fallout used locally.

.....  
This is not to say we relied for support

on the East India Dock or any one feature:

we know we are in a situation of flux,

we realise you have to be self-sufficient.

Life has gone from the two big fixes, the

ships moving on the Thames are literally

passing - to Tilbury, to Antwerp, to

Rhinemouth Deltaport.

In the face of change we have to be strong enough, big enough, to be self-supporting while contributing to renew the environment, the district.

.....

#### 4 LANGUAGE OF ARCHITECTURE

P What's marvellous about this site is that it is big enough to show what we mean by a new mode of urban organisation - say a whole sentence in the language of architecture. The language of architecture explains and enhances use - how to use, perhaps how not to misuse.

Site is grooved to take all service and car parking below natural ground level, so movement kept out of sight, and noise kept in, so people walking into the building do not get mixed up with dustcarts and delivery obvious and pleasant to use

once inside building is grooved, people walk along deck-ways clearly for walking movement, there are pause places, eddy points by front doors out of general flow so your doormat is not kicked by every passer-by; milkmen, postmen, and two women with prams can stop and talk. The bits of the building one touches, or brushes against are smooth:

we try to suggest possible pleasant patterns  
of use through the form of building

.....

devices to combat noise

the mullions on the face stop noise

going from one flat to next

stop outside noise spreading across the  
face of the building

.....

Building forms on the site protects central  
area from surrounding noise and creates a  
quiet stress-free zone.

There is already a place in London which has  
a quiet stress-free central zone - Grays Inn.  
More and more pleasurable as the areas around  
it have become uninhabitable through traffic  
noise.

## 5 LANGUAGE OF URBANISM

- A London has these simple good places but above  
this scale there is hardly anything:  
architecturally London has never faced up  
to being more than a collection of villages
- P The idea of a scatter of events as the city  
pattern is very acceptable to our minds -  
provided the communications are good. But  
each 'event' has to be raised to the urban  
scale to combat the forces of the big city.  
As the city becomes bigger - becomes an

urban region - for people to be able to understand it in the same way as we hope they will be able to read Robin Hood Gardens - the urban region's movement systems, its leisure areas, its zones of differentiated use will all have to become themselves bigger, and more obviously interconnected and structured

.....

A The scale of the London Docks is the sort of scale we are talking about. An area equal to medieval London. A tiny area to have as a water landscape in the area of greater London.

A few parks at that scale  
no need for grass cutting  
no trouble with football wearing the surface off.

Water as leisure-pleasure structured housing groups is the present European fashion For Tower Hamlets such a fashion could be an economic bonanza - like having an oil-well in the back-yard

France has a regional plan - Languedoc-Rousillon - virtually Marseilles to the Spanish border, for water towns for leisure the sort of habitats that are in the front of Elle magazine every month

And near Saint Tropez architect Spoerry has built a town on the water's edge - using traditional Provencal materials and language of building, but a pedestrian town.

House owners in Port Grimaud take their cars in to unload and then go outside the town to park. It works. It is a success, started only June 1966.

We could allow ourselves such pleasures we need not be puritanical about the dock water being so near the Thames and Lea Valley, and therefore too much water for us to allow ourselves.

.....

Venice sinks in the mud

they will be around collecting to save it

We in London might miss making a new Venice

- it's virtually the same size St Katherine's Dock to the East India Dock.

.....

P All the detail we have talked about so far is the stuff of Architects' dreams.

#### A 6 ARCHITECT'S DREAM

Modern architecture is the dream dating only from the 20's. Its forms, the language to clothe these forms were invented by our architectural grandfathers.

They believed in the social objectives of high

quality architecture for everybody

We were brought up on this dream of first period modern architecture, the period we call Heroic, for to us Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe were as mythical and as real as Odysseus and Achilles.

The dream was of whole new clean cities, sun and light coming in onto glass, white and strong colours, trees and green between all buildings.

Few cars, because there were few, and what few there were were relatively channelled and put away:

They could be a decoration to the urban scene. Certainly, in the Heroic period there was no traffic in areas of 'model dwelling for workers in industry' - the era incidentally, to which subsidies belong.

It was a dream of freedom of glut after the Edwardian era - simple kitchens - a few objects - nothing between you and good spaces, nothing to distract enjoyment of the sun shining and trees being green.

In 1952 we felt that this had to be qualified, believing the traffic America had then we would have in 20 years, and so on.

The new realities were going to be

traffic

vandalism

absence of quality

P Now you see cars everywhere

Building today are the towers and slabs developed  
in the 20's, built in the 30's in Europe: and  
what we're saying is that these models have been  
overrun by what everyone has today - by the  
plentitude of late 60's  
the glut of the supermart  
the glut on the roads

.....

#### 7 VANDALISM/VALIDITY

P The architect's dream does become the accepted  
social objective

The turn of the century dream of garden cities  
to improve minds, manners and the type of  
mankind resulted in the council estates that  
we see in every town and village in England.  
Now we have Heroic period modern.  
Fitted carpets inside and vandalism outside.

.....

A The accuracy of the brief governs the architect's  
accuracy in pin-pointing the dream, aids identity.  
The G.L.C. brief to architects is continually  
revised by feedback from tenants' use and G.L.C.  
maintenance.

The G.L.C. is perhaps the world's best authority  
in briefing architects: certainly we have not

been told of another equal

The building of the mutated Heroic period dream is being done in a very responsible way, yet to our eyes the G.L.C. seems to get small thanks from society: we think the amount of vandalism is fantastic

.....

P But the architect has an obligation to build well: not just for the first occupying generation. The architect and the builder make a big effort to make a perfect thing that will sustain itself, sustain the message: it's terribly disheartening for all who are building to have worked smashed up - even before occupation.

Why? By whom?

A Why bother to make a quality object if they are going to smash it up: why not a load of rubbish like developers' blocks?

Why rebuild at all? Leave the solid working men's dwellings, leave the industrial row houses, if society is just throwing its money away.

P One of the men on site said it's too good for the people it is intended for. What makes us try to build well? What are our motives?

Motives behind housing often political

but architect cannot get involved:

his obligation is to build so thing outlives first intentions and serves subsequent

generations.

Architects in past worked like this:

in East London a number of famous churches -

St Anne's Limehouse, the one nearest to the site.

St Anne's Limehouse, 1712-24.

Nicholas Hawksmoor not politically involved in

Coal Tax or idea of churches as social panacea.

The political boat rocked before they could be

all built. Fifty authorised. Ten built.

Work that does get built has a many-sided

obligation to outlast social situation,

politicians, bureaucrats and first users.

St Anne's itself lives on, lives today as a

perfected thing we can take our standards from

capable of giving pleasure, telling us about

other ideals.

A But quality is no protection against

vandalism

there are

the makers

---

the destroyers

the engineers

---

the soldiers

.....

A Unless a building outlasts first users, we build

up no body of a city:

no housing pool allowing choice of where, how  
to live:

most importantly, no comparable body of quality  
in built environment

.....

This was the after-war situation we stepped into  
a vandalised environment

an underlying attitude of make do anything will  
do. When no comparisons possible, there are no  
standards.

Maintenance of quality objects a life necessity.  
Londoners are not particularly good at this: if  
culture of cities were a criteria for joining  
the Common Market, any African state would have  
as good a chance as us!!

P there are  
the makers

---

the destroyers

If we are not to remain torn apart by our  
individual natures the framework of society  
has to make sure the destroyers don't undo  
as quickly or quicker than the makers can make.

A The architect's dream changes society, speaks  
about change in society, its desire for change:  
although it is not the architect's business  
to devise social mechanisms to deal with  
vandalism, it is our duty to stress the need

for them.

There must be some obviously understood way, such as shifting responsibility for ownership. Tenants must become co-owners, be given total responsibility for building and environment which belong after all to other generations who are an extension of ourselves, not just some nebulous characters.

## 8 QUALITY OF LIFE

P At the moment there is a lack of fit between the inside - fitted carpets - well kept equipment - in the garage the perfect car: outside bashed lifts - wrecked play shelters - cracked staircase glass.

But people are changing and the quality of life they now expect - more expansive more disciplined - is most obvious in their leisure pattern.

## 9 LEISURE

A The people who will live in Robin Hood Gardens will use this way out of London in their cars: they are the privileged few in our society not much responsibility, the users of the Welfare State without heavy taxes to give them angst - not for them the worry of the quality of the motorways  
fences inconsistent  
signs  
posts

distractions

poor quality protective devices for passer  
and by-passed.

Quality is our worry

The road programme quality depresses those  
younger than ourselves, so much experience in  
Germany and America yet have not learnt,  
a nation of ostriches.

But our personal attitude to Urban Motorways  
is overlaid with 'at last' a chance of a great  
reversal, a device which could get traffic off  
domestic streets, any and all traffic not  
serving houses.

P We are longing for the Motorways and the  
transit systems to settle down so we can get  
on with building a quiet, humane, living  
environment.

.....

APPENDIX TWO

THE LISTED CRITERIA FOR MASS HOUSING

### Criteria for Mass Housing

The term mass housing applies to all dwellings not built to the special order of an individual: houses over which the occupier has no control other than that he has chosen, or been chosen, to live there: houses for which, therefore, the architects has a peculiar responsibility. The criteria are intended to apply to all housing irrespective of number, type of ground occupation, type of access, etc. The most conventional houses and layouts, and the most ingenious, can equally well come under their scrutiny.

#### A. The dwelling.

1. Can it adapt itself to various ways of living? Does it liberate the occupants from old restrictions or straightjacket them into new ones?
2. Are the spaces moulded exactly to fit their purpose? Or are they by-products of structural tidiness or plastic whim? Is the means of construction of the same order as the standard of living envisaged?
3. Is there a decently large open-air sunlit space opening directly from the living area of the house? Is there a place in the open air where a small baby (1 to 3 years old) can be left safely?
4. Can the weather be enjoyed? Is the house insulated against cold weather, yet made to easily open up in good weather?
5. Are there extensions of the dwellings (garden, patio, etc.) appreciated from inside?
6. Does it take account of the 3 - 5 year olds' play?
7. Is it easy to maintain (keep fresh looking looking with just a cleaning down)?
8. Is there a place for the belongings or special tasks peculiar to

the class of the occupants - skis, camping gear, mending motor-bikes, etc.?

9. Is there enough storage? (There is never enough storage.)
10. Can the dwellings be put together in such a way as to contribute something to each other?
11. Is the house as comfortable as a car of the same year?
12. Is the technology suitable to house construction: does it take account of electric runs and do without traditional 'style-left-overs', such as door frames?

B. The immediate extensions of the dwelling.

1. Has the relationship between the dwelling and its means of access been chosen for some good reason?
2. Does the reason include 3 - 5 year olds' play, if not where do they play?
3. Does the idea for dwelling produce a clear external image?
4. Can these images add up to a composite one and is this composite image socially valid?
5. Are the extensions of the dwelling - garden, patios, balconies, streets, access galleries, staircases, etc. sensible in relation to the physical environment of the dwelling and the activities of the occupants?
7. Is the delivery and collection antiquated and laborious?
8. Is it a labour to go out or to return home?
9. Does the public vertical circulation really work? Is there any indication that where people have been put up into the air that it is really getting them somewhere?

C. The 'living unit'.

1. Is the scale of the unit related to the size of the parent community? (The pattern of a village can be transformed by the addition of one house, in the great city an equivalent gesture might need a unit of 5,000 houses.)

2. Is the work pattern of the community understood with all its implications for the unity? (A work-pattern of all-family travelling to widely separated places is typical of cities and towns, and also often of villages.)
3. Does it fit the site with its climatic and physical peculiarities, its existing build and human structure and accept their ecological implications bearing in mind that we are concerned with renewal?
4. Where do the 5 - 12 year olds go to? And what do they have to do?
5. Can the unit support shops? And where are the natural 'pressure points' for such facilities? Are the community facilities a social mirage or are they real?
6. Where can November 5th. be celebrated? (Bonfire night, Bastille Day or July 14th.)
7. Is there something worth looking at out of every dwelling or does one merely stare out at another dwelling opposite?
8. Does the development offer protection and shelter of the same order as the parent community?
9. Is the unit really generated by an objective study of the situation or are we just saying that it is?

Listed in CIAM'59 in Otterlo: Edited by Oscar Newman (Karl Kramer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1961) p.79

APPENDIX THREETHE ROYAUMONT DOCUMENT

TEAM 10 at Abbaye Royaumont: September 1962.

This is intended as a follow-up document to CIAM'59 in Otterlo (edited by Oscar Newman with the help of Brita Bakema and published by Karl Kramer Verlag 1961) in that it is a record of a group of architects talking to each other over a period of days, trying to thereby clarify their thinking as architects. It is a record of trained minds working closely together over an agreed common ground, covering familiar well investigated themes, an example of their attempt at further self-training and refining of their thinking as practicing architect-urbanists.

This document - like the Otterlo book - can also be read in relation to the Team 10 Primer (edited by Alison Smithson and published by Studio Vista 1968) which is the written down thoughts on their favourite themes by these same Team 10 members; and the whole of the documents can be read against the immediate post-war publication of CIAM - Can Our Cities Survive? (J.L.Sert and CIAM published by Harvard University 1942) and The Heart of the City (edited by J.Tyrwhitt, J.L.Sert, E.N.Rogers and published by Lund Humphries 1952).

The 1970 text is edited for Team 10 by John Furse from the only whole copy located that September - its original wrapper unbroken - in the possession of Guillermo Jullian de la Fuerte, an observer of several Team 10 events: to his orderliness and dependability Team 10 own their thanks. All other copies but one emasculated one, originally assumed to be complete, had been lost.

The typescript was taken off the tapes by Clarissa Woods, late 1962, a task of personal devotion to Team 10 for which we all love her.

A manuscript edited by her was to have been published in paper-back form 1963/4; to this end all participants were given the chance to edit a copy of this document and such documents individually edited and returned, travelled to Washington University, St. Louis and back to Paris, 1964, and so on, in an aluminium suitcase: one is reminded of Lawrence's suitcase and can only think that somewhere there is a library of suitcases.

Alison Smithson 1971

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GUEDES

This is a wall it's - all sorts of things. It's a relief, it's a mural - now the back side of an old restaurant in Lorenzo Marques. But long ago this was the front side - the ocean side - but now the paint has peeled. But it doesn't matter because it looks better when paint is peeling.

The mural has a pool underneath into which the image of the mural is reflected. They don't fill it with water any more.

This is all taken at the worst time of this mural. I believe that all things have a best time - a time of day, a time of night - when things look best.

This is one of the first buildings I built in Lorenzo Marques. It is the house for a judge - a house with two chimneys. This is the first of the tower idea with a head. This is a house which was made out of concrete, a concrete structure and the whole things in an old way. This is the side elevation of the house in Lorenzo Marques. The two areas - the back area and the front area - are reached by ramps and they're in the court-yard between these two bodies.

This is a wall. This is a texture of a wall which will last for many years and the dirtier it gets, the more handled - the better it gets. This is a mural at the end of a group of houses which is the real reason for that group of houses. This is the mural at a bad time.

This is all I will show of a very large building in Lorenzo Marques which originally was shops and a block of flats above and later on became a service-station and offices. In the kind of place I live this is the sort of thing that happens. You start off by doing something and then it becomes something else.

At the beginning it was only two storeys high and then it became

seven storeys. So the mural grew with it. It's made out of pebbles set into cement plaster - seven storeys high.

And this is the shelter of the little ones in Lorenzo Marques and this is the kind of mess that surrounds it. The block which sticks out is the service block to the water-tank above - only twenty feet off the ground. And this is one of the best moments, at sunset or almost sunset, with some of the pyramids in light and some in shadow. It's a very bright building, white and blue. These are the outdoor storage rooms and these are little courtyards for each of the rooms. Upstairs, staff quarters for the nuns who run it and staff quarters for the servants. The nuns are elderly. There is also a courtyard upstairs.

And this is the chapel - a big pyramid.

These are sun-screens. And this is the inside of the pyramid before the light was hung up. And this is the inside of the chapel.

This is a bus-stop at night - very crude bus - breezy bus. This is a tropical climate.

And this is an embroidery of a bus. I keep a private embroiderer who embroiders my drawings for me

And this is a building that says 'Yes'. This is an industrial area and the slum area and all the Africans that live in the slums are very fond of this building - the building that says 'Yes'.

These pictures were taken before the venetian-blinds were up. There are now quite a number of venetian-blinds in Africa and after you've done the building you've just got to put up with the venetian-blinds. I've heard they are made in Holland - the Venetian blinds.

This is the administration of an existing factory, a rather ram-shackle old factory that makes soap and beauty products by extracting

oil from vegetables. And here is the residence of the caretaker.

I got this job because these people asked me to design a new letter head and then we decided to change the name of the firm. And then I made a trade-mark for them which is the mural on the building. I'm re-designing their packaging for them now.

I'm very keen on flags - I've also designed flags. There is a great need for flags in Africa these days. One could become a flag consultant really.

And this is a painting of a building already built, but it's a painting made from a drawing of my son. I use lots of his ideas - they have quite an influence on me.

And this is a pillar of smiles that was done for the shelter of the little ones, but I did the shelter of the little ones free and I haven't had time to have this made. I want to make it out of concrete and there's going to be a number of these things for the children to jump around in. The idea is that each of these pillars will be a form which one can associate with smiles - with tears - with joy.

They called it 'Waterford' and I hated the name and I tried to change it to something else. I wanted to call it 'Impondi' which means root in Swazzi but they didn't want the idea of a root - they thought it was too phallic. It's a boys' school.

I would like to go through these notes very quickly. I will call this the politics of stiff architecture.

We always come back to wanting the ready-made - we are mostly toying with a system of spaces and services. Our only hope is to keep a constant critical position at a total level. The long in-and-out flats, the castle of learning never built - the game is up for the Stirlings.

It makes me want to cry to just listen to the conditioning that led to this building. The trap-doors, the sumps in the floor for the virgins and the corpses of machinery to move in and out. The squatting towers and the great water-tank hovering above - I think that one makes architecture not because one needs to put a tank 100 feet up in the air but because one wants a tank up in the air - and the lovely cock-eyed glass boxes, the first real hall of mirrors on the outside. The polygonal obelisk on the wavy, glassy, sea-roof.

This is a church for Mechabo which is a little village outside of Lorenzo Marques. This central part is a roof and the little children on either side have got their own funny roofs which are more to their own size.

Normally Sunday church is quite a ritual among the Portuguese and although the church is designed for 400 people on Sunday the men come. They come to pray and watch the girls and they stand in the aisles. They don't sit down. You want to make a series of pockets where they can also attend to Mass. The confessionals are now being taken away - the priest didn't like those. At one stage I wanted to make those rather tall boxes so that when people were confessing their sins there would be an echo in this box.

JB If the priest has taken away such a thing, which was profound for you to make it - because you say in easy words and then there are people who are laughing - I shouldn't like to laugh.

But you must laugh - the important thing about it is that you can laugh about it.

JB For me every human being has his own appreciation for things he sees. I can only speak about my own appreciation for what I see - and when I see this I see corners which are of a certain value for those that are in the building; but they are of a certain value too for those that are outside the building and I can imagine that in a certain corner outside some people come together and speak about life in a more profound way than the priest who did

bury and cut away the whole inside. You can laugh - I cannot laugh about these things - I should like to kill the priest.

If we make a structure like that we are not only architects but pure architects - so pure that we are in close relationship with trueness which is interrelating all aspects of life. That is why you should speak about total. That was a new word for me you know. But if we don't go away from that word and we stay to it we stay an architect, an artist, who is really doing his job - in doing something which is his answer and his opinion about the total thing which is all of life.

There are other people who have another meaning about life. Can you talk to this priest about this difference he has about life when you designed this? Because I think we are very near the situation in architecture we are very near to a form of conception - a structure - for a town or for a building - the way in which we like to interrelate things, being an artist, doing it in this way. Sometimes it is accepted - sometimes not.

I think we are in a certain period in which we are confronted nose-to-nose with the structure of society. We cannot go on playing because everybody is saying 'Put him in the category of those who are playing' and then he is a play-boy in architecture and he is of no danger to the old society. From the moment they see there is seriously a danger for the structure of society you are out in prison. That's the situation in the world.

I should like to know something about your thinking - something about what is inside of you, when the priest closed the corners which are essential for you.

Well the priest only removed the confessionals - he didn't close all my corners - so my point was this. I operate in a rather clandestine manner, I try to get things done and made, and I believe people need these things and I want to get them built. So I play against this priest to the extent that this thing is going to be built. I was sorry about the confessionals but I prefer to get it done incompletely than not getting it done at all. I tried to swindle him so much that he came along and said the Bishop preferred to have some confessionals and they finally put four more boxes in - which is rather nice actually. It was even better, I think, to have this little box sticking out.

Then the priest had not understood what was happening - he thought that people confessing would tend to move into the box with the priest and he thought that would not be a very good thing for the girls confessing.

JB Somehow it was the corners you made which gave trouble. Always when you make corners you get into trouble. I think it is so that society doesn't like to have corners which society cannot control. When you are making a group of houses, or you make a house with many corners, it is always the corners that are objected to. When you make something flat, clean - so that you can walk in one minute to that side and that side and you see nothing is happening or everything is happening - then suddenly you are accepted. Then you make a corner it seems to me there is always trouble - why is it?

You see you can identify the crevice with the little corner and that is why it is flattened out.

vE They were more afraid of the priest and the girl. That is why they took the corners away. But I don't think people loathe corners - I think that people want corners.

JB People but not administrators.

vE The role of architects is to create a network of crevices.

JB The true Functionalist time, in which you had the feeling that some of the administrators were really representing the problem. I think our period is just the period in which we do find out what those we did trust - that those we did trust - that they were really participating in the problem - were isolated from the problem, so that trusting them, we make isolated buildings. We do not make what is part of the problem of the people who are going to use them because we don't come nose-to-nose with them and we don't get part of the problem.

I can only be a complete architect if I can participate in the whole thing completely, not independently, but working with the people who are going to be in this building - which are going to be part of this building. And knowing them so closely that one can understand them completely.

StJW The first stage of architecture everyone knew the secrets; Mom, Dad, Grandma, the children, they all knew how to make their hut. The crisis begins as soon as there is so much complexity in a society that Grandma can't know it all - then you get the whole problem of responsibility of the professional.

JB When Aldo said the old patterns were built for Kings, it reminded me I worked for three months in Illinois and I said, to a department that analyses social things: 'Is it possible that you try to find out for me what per-cent of buildings in America are done and decided about in a circle where the client really is at the table - the man who will use the building'.

If you build a bungalow you are with the man who will use it and you are with the man who will build it and you are all

together and you can decide.

I did find out that about 40 to 60 per-cent - that is even in America - of the constructions are decided about without having this contact. Some of that is state-financed housing programme, bridges and this kind of thing.

When we were in Berlin, we found that in our circumstances about 10 to 15 per-cent of all things that are built are decided about with the man who will use it at the table at the moment of decision. And all the other things are decided about by means of a committee who is representing - and there you can fill in all things.

Now there comes a very small question but for me it is the key to the problem. Are we in a situation where those who say to me: 'I need a big office and in this office will work, say, a thousand people and these people will have to work in sections - like this and like this' - when I speak with the man, very often I find out that the decision about how the structure would be and in what numbers the people have to work together is simply superficial - not analysed. And if it is analysed it is only analysed thinking about the efficiency of the work that will come out of that table on which the man is working - will he do more or less in this condition or that condition? But the whole condition of man working at a table - has he a window-sill where he can put his cigarette-box, if he likes, or his milk-bottle? What the meaning is, that he has a choice to do this or not, cannot be analysed. So you come to a certain decision, that you are the only one - being an architect - who must make this decision if the man will have a window-sill or not. They could make it afterwards - wonderful, wonderful that they make it afterwards because that's my theme.

I'm sure that whatever society, if you don't give to the immediate environment of the table where the man is working some kind of traditional elements - as the window-sill - elements of choice ... which make the limits he has to accept to make his writing in this big office is chosen by him - in a certain periphery. He has accepted the order to work in the building. Good, so he has to go there, but then he goes home and he is at home for eight hours a day - or five. Will the architect be able - in programme - to provide circumstances around that table so that the man still has some choice for the way he will work for today or tomorrow? They don't know - they ignore the values of that moment of choice for that man who is working at that table.

So I say that the committee representing the people who will work there are not representing the essential values of that man. They are only representing what can be analysed and that which cannot be analysed they pretend that they represent it. They pretend, because otherwise they would be very glad when I say: 'Hey - you did not think about the milk-bottle'.

'The milk-bottle?' - we have a big canteen sir and it is not allowed to have the milk-bottle there'. So think about it because the same is done in housing - the big buildings and the house and the grand number and so on - the committees are very honest.

But the committee can only represent what can be in the notes of the meeting. And what can be in the notes of the meeting? What twenty people around a table accept that can be in the notes.

But it is not that which must be in the notes - this is of no value for the whole building. We know now what is not of value for the building - that is the notes of the committee.

Now I must see to the rest - that's my responsibility - and that's a profound things.

I wanted to know whether Stirling operates at a conference level, which I don't believe, or whether he knows himself all these delights. For instance, yesterday, I got licked on my back-side because I said that the roof is going to make noises. I think it is a wonderful thing if a glass roof expands and crackles.

JS It is also what Smithson talked about, as an architect you are working in a generalised situation with these extremely specific people. And it is like C.P. Snow says - you cannot know the root problem of their requirements because it is too deep, far, far, too deep. You would have to have lived ten lives to know this. So then you have to accept what these scientists say, and what they say: 'What we require is this - that and that' - you really do have to accept this.

Now you are then in a situation of having to accept what the client says, in this high scientific age. And you do solve all these requirements and in doing so you come up with a building like this.

PS I don't think you arrived at this 'a priori'. It was just that you solved it in a certain way, and in order to bring it under artistic control, you opted for this way of doing it. Then of course you have the sort of Brechtian thing that when you have solved it in this way you then say you must look at it as if you were not yourself and say: 'Is this a responsible way of doing it in terms of what it will do to its environment?'. I'm not very clear about this, but the difference between our situation and previous situations is that we are capable of seeing a building as only a fragment, not as an isolated act like a poem which you can read and put in your mind and keep separate. It's not like that. It's one thing of many things and its effect on this collective thing then produces a subjective argument. I think that the one thing within the collective thing at the moment is the important thing.

Therefore when you design a building you've got to get outside it and say: 'Now is this formal solution which brings this data under artistic control adequate to the environmental situation?'

This is not really a question but a sort of footnote because you see I don't think the situation is psychologically necessary in Lorenzo Marques, where the urban situation is such a chaos really, that you are unwilling or incapable of accepting that your building is also a symbolic act in the construction of Lorenzo Marques. I think you see your buildings as buildings.

I see them as buildings but I'm sorry that I can't see them as the

other thing because they cut off from being the other thing.

PS It's more obvious, particularly in a place like Holland, where the density of construction is such that you simply can't envisage a building as a building any more. Because it's about two feet away from the next building - therefore you can't build a building in the old sense.

But I don't think you can get away and see them, mostly on their own, except a building like the school which is up the side of a mountain and completely isolated and will always be somewhat isolated. I think that when you are building with other buildings you know fairly well what is going to happen. For instance, yesterday, I showed a slide of that shelter of the little ones, how it fits on a suburb which is complete speculative chaos. Then I think when you're thinking of a building like that you're thinking all along what's going to happen around it and perhaps you design it more stiffly - more strongly - to be able to cope with the situation.

PS What one is looking for in a problem is its essence, its roots as it were, and these inevitably - as human problems - stem from the same thought in that we are men in a situation that if we search out the deepest roots in the situation you come up with an archetypal solution. Just like a London house or what we were talking about earlier - buildings on a plot. It's an archetype capable of infinite development and flexibility. It isn't necessarily stiff it's just that we have a tradition which stems from the construction of formal archetypes. I think this is the problem with Kahn - if you look into the generation of that building - I'm talking about the Richards Medical Building - it offers the most elegant approach to another architecture.

But what has happened is that because architects are trained primarily formally and also because of the greater difficulty involved in following an attitude rather than a building form people will copy irrespective of what the intentions were. Stirling's intentions may be - an intention which I can't follow - to make a student laboratory situation like a factory. That may be a viable alternative. If that was his intention its interpretation could be a million. If Erskine did it, it would be different - but it still might be viable. But I'm sure that this is not what is going to happen. What will happen is that the language of this building will enter the vocabulary of architects. The same as the Richards Medical Building which is not a completely successful projection of Kahn's general philosophy. The important thing is that the archetype of the Kahn method lies in somewhere else - not in that building.

What is important about the building is not what it really looks like. He takes the services and open spaces as two systems and you do the same thing in the city - you make a selection of the things that are going on - and these things become the poetry of the city by means of selection. Kahn always talks about the city street as a building - he hasn't said how to do it. Everybody sort of talks of the street as a building but nobody tries to work with it as a concept.

AS Now I think we're being a little unfair here if you criticise this just because it has taken Kahn's shape. What is it that we see in Kahn? We trust Kahn's shape because he has done diagrams of Philadelphia which we feel have a message for us and we trust Kahn rather blindly I think because his buildings no more fulfil what he says really - I'm thinking particularly of this laboratory which he is doing with the community house which is just like Hadrian's Villa. Therefore it is unfair to criticise Guedes on just shape, because it does express the ventilation and there is a certain routing too in it and if he says perhaps what art was in it he could make it sound as good as Lou talking about his services and servant areas and waterways etc..

And I also think that Stirling has opted out of the situation that we are gathered here to face. He has brought along a little building which he cannot load with any generality and we might say 'Well people will crib at the form' but it is in a way as if Lou had brought along that very first clinic. There is nothing there to tell us about Stirling's general theory - what is his attitude to everything he is going to do? How does this little building relate to the Preston housing? How does it relate to all the little individual housing? I would like to hear him make a statement about how he thinks he is going to proceed now and how he can explain away all the things he has done in the past. It is hiding behind scientists.

What does he think housing should do? He has admitted that there you can know about it - but what does he know about it?

PS This is your question as well.

VE The marvellous thing about a man like Kahn and also the objection to a man like Kahn is that he is so extraordinarily naive. He has that enormous intelligence extraordinary people can have - a different kind of intelligence. That's what I mean - he doesn't go further.

PS What Guedes thinks is that here is an entirely different architect operating at that level.

SW Tell us something about this school - because it is a question of responsibility.

The idea is to design a school which can be built over a period of seven to ten years; which is the time we expect to have enough money given to us to do the school in, and to do it by bits, so that each of

these bits can serve for an intermediate purpose. For instance, the junior residences or dormitories, when we open in January, will be one a dormitory the other one a dining-room -living-room - hobby-room, another one a classroom, another one a general room where some of the voluntary staff that we're going to get will work in. Next year it will be the basement of the service block.

During next year we will increase our capacity to another twelve boys and we will be using part of the hall-of-residence as the school house and perhaps as the dining-room. The school is going to grow in that way. Now all these spaces were designed for a particular purpose and what is the sewing-room in the final stage will now be a kitchen.

AS Could you not get a system of growth so that what is a kitchen could perhaps be extended to be the final kitchen? Particularly when you're short of money and it's going to take such a long time - why bother with all this business of temporariness? Could it not have a more natural growth?

I think you can cook in a space of six-by-six or eight-by-eight for fifty people. And it is very cheap to have a sink and a gas-stove that is completely flexible and moveable put into this space to cook for these people and then allow this to become something else later. I think one gives these buildings temporary use and then also uses them for something else. I put plants in. I can also begin to put in all the little things that are going to clip onto this. For instance, one of the things we want to do is to provide for pots for the children. Reptiles, mice, dogs, they can have all sorts of things. We're going to have pet-boxes - all sorts of things - so that we can be finishing this off bit by bit.

AS But couldn't this also have a growth structure?

WW But you have a system of course?

This is the only means of doing this. I think the part that

fascinated me was that the way the thing had been designed could be made to fit that. And this goes on to be something else. I'm also fascinated by the way buildings are designed for something and then become something else.

JB There is a kind of feeling that we must come to a system which gives a possibility of change and growth. I do not think of change and growth in the sense of flexibility. I mean change and growth by finding a method of building for the anonymous client, who is now about 70 per-cent of the clients. But then there comes a decision - there is a family which needs a house of a certain size - it is said by the committee. They call it standard size. There we must say that it is a decision which it is not allowed to take. Who makes this standard? The family needs this number of rooms or this space. Who made it? If you look back you cannot find the root where the decision was taken. This is completely a confusion. What can we do - building for people we don't see? To say 'I lived there- you can still see what I did on this spot'. And that is the big value of the slum. The slum is the first time in history that the anonymous client got his own environment.

CA Actually there are three-thousand million people in the world and there are not too many designers, and you want designers to take that position? The number of people who can benefit from it is very, very, small. And I've got the same comment about your remark: 'what is the sin of intuitive design?', you made about ten minutes ago. I think the sin again is there are three-thousand million people in the world.

If you take this attitude, or what Bakema calls the nose-to-nose attitude with your client - if you want that to be the way architecture is to work - you can't really serve three-thousand million people, because there aren't enough designers. And, as I understand the purpose of this conference is to develop prototypes - organisational prototypes ... I'm not talking about plastic prototypes like Stirling's thing. The only sense in which that is an organisational prototype is what you said - that it represents the idea of the factory used as a university building. That is the thing that ought to have been discussed here. We've been talking about the plastic situation of the building. We didn't even take up the point, is it really right that a university building should be dealt with as a factory. That's a prototype problem and that is the only kind of problem which we're really fit to discuss. There are very few of us. There are three-thousand million people in the world.

AS With the power of communication nowadays maybe all we need is one good designer.

VE I think there are two kinds of prototypes. There is the prototype which is the prototype for architects. There is what he is doing - building what may not be a prototype for architects but

it may be a prototype for the society in which he is living. The moment one man does it, in that society in which he lives, then of course the dimension of higher form of thinking in architectural terms will be understood.

PS This generalising aspect doesn't have to be - that is if a person does this thing marvellously, he doesn't have self-consciously to generalise this thing. Particularly even in a mechanical sense he doesn't have to do it, because communications are so good that were he to do this thing, make this building and make it work, as the director of such a thing, we would know about it. That is why in a mechanical sense there is no need for him to generalise it intellectually because the person who needs the information to use it intellectually can get it anyway. It is this question of self-consciousness about an act. Doing it well is of tremendous value, irrespective of any intellectualisation about it - and a useful thing.

AS I think we are certainly not concerned with prototypes.

PS Archetype.

VE I don't think anybody here is talking about prototypes. A prototype is a fixed thing which is authorised and forced on you to do, whereas the archetype is basic, it seems to be so valid that you can evolve your own thought from it.

PS You know we want to push the problem even further back so that the attitude towards producing the system produces a proliferation of archetypes. I know that sounds crazy, but you push the problem back so that it is the general approach to urbanism and architecture which produces solutions.

It may be that sort of street thing ... that one is trying to push the attitude that produces the archetype right back to its roots about what it is we are doing.

CA This is a very old idea and it doesn't work. And Gropius also said that he wanted to introduce an attitude that was so deep-rooted that everybody would be able to solve their problems from the heart down - always. But the fact that it doesn't work you said ten minutes ago yourself. That there was hope that this attitude would become widespread enough so that new forms would be able to grow properly all over the place wherever called for. But you said yourself that that attitude had not actually taken root everywhere. In fact it is psychologically not correct. Whereas you can latch on to prototypical sort of components of the kind I am talking about and repeat them, you can't latch on to attitudes of the kind you are talking about and repeat them, because they don't sink in properly.

I don't think you would repeat them. I think you have similarity in those attitudes and that things would operate at an example level which is the way things can operate. And again we can go back to the

plastic things and some things seem to happen at the example level but are not copyable. And then a lot of other things become prototypes which become style. And then the whole thing goes stiff. That is why I was trying to make a difference between a stiff kind of architecture and a not stiff kind of architecture.

JB You are thinking about conditions under which certain things could happen at a certain place. Now there are other people in your circle, the sociologist or the priest or the technician, and he - if he is a creative man - likes to have an open talk with you about his opinion, about conditions which are necessary so that you and me and all the others can be essential. I think that in our time we cannot escape from ourselves enough to speak really about conditions. We are also speaking as an architect - they are always speaking as technicians.

JS The viable images which we can find in the industrial slum are really things like the bye-law street pattern and the back-to-back housing pattern. Both of these forms, as Bakema very well put it, substandard in terms of living conditions, but super-standard in terms of atmosphere and the life that can grow in these places. If you go up to the Lancashire towns the external life outside the home is terribly strong, the sort of pub life, the street life is extremely strong, and I think every way of perpetuating this - plus sort of higher standards of in-house life - is really what we want.

AS What Bakema said, I think, was the life rests in the fact that the people in a way have given up, the officials have given up. They are almost outside society and that is why they are able to act in this free way. They may be a sort of person who is able to act instinctively. I think that the best one can do is to get these people and give them the maximum possibility of choice and see whether, by their example, the rest of the working-class population could be encouraged and redirected. Because the sort of slum that the officials are still interested in, the sort of dead slum, already the people in it are typed. They're in the system. They have the hope that they can, in the system, get some better conditions and everything about them - they are already on a treadmill. I think that we have to be very careful in talking about the way of life possible in the bye-law streets.

PS I am sure that probably both agree about this. I think that in dealing with these people who occupy places in a free situation you are dealing with sort of urban gypsies. They are people who ... in general people what they more and more wish to have, and I don't know whether this wish is motivated from outside themselves or inside themselves, is moving towards a greater quietude towards a less ostentatious getting together, to be more ordinary to be more quiet - to be more anonymous in a way - and more suburban we would say.

There is a tendency to think that the only values that are viable are the values of the life we see in primitive circumstances. It may be that there are more, that the various people are actually struggling for and that the things that they wish are far more difficult - you can't actually see what it is.

AS They are the things you think they shouldn't want in a way.

JB If you don't know, if you don't see what it is, then I think the position of an architect in our day is to prevent a decision about these things. And now I think you come to a point: 'What are you doing here?' - well, perhaps it is a very poor platform on which you come down, but it will be a 'Porgy and Bess' platform, a good platform. I think you come to a kind of non-system.

AS I think we cannot take a 'Porgy and Bess' platform. That's what I'm saying, that the sort of people we really have to build for are the people who, if you suggested that they live in that way - terribly lively, hung out their washing, put flowers out and bits of blinds and things - they would be absolutely horrified. This would be showing themselves too much to their neighbours and this is terribly strong in the London lower-middle class and middle class where they are much more recessive than people in the North. They want to be very private, they don't want to be asked to make a terrific number of public decisions.

JB Oh - wait a minute.

AS Or show their hands.

JB It is not what I mean, it's really completely another way. Let me explain it.

PS Can you explain why you used the 'Porgy and Bess'?

JB I'm thinking about the exhibition we made in Berlin. It was asked that people bring what was built after the war in Belgium - Holland - I had to do it. And then at a certain moment I don't bring their buildings. There was one image we made - a street in a slum with many people simply being in the street because the house is too small. I'm not romanticising the slum. When the weather conditions make it possible to go out of the house, they immediately go out of the house. Conditions are too poor to live in the house in a private way. And at a certain time there was a German man, who said: 'A year ago 'Porgy and Bess' was here' and he did look at the last picture and then at the right, and somehow 'Porgy and Bess' were there.

We are specialists who see that the emotional conditions and the conditions which cannot be analysed, and which are in our fingers when we have a piece of paper, that those things are dried up - are not used - and this is a kind of link to the whole pattern of things which are drying up life.

PS The logic of the situation that follows from that is I think this that in a slum situation you had no choice in that you had no

choice. You were in a house and you went out because the house was too small, and to use the street for certain functions and place and so on. Now we can't possibly suggest again that we create circumstances which force people into certain patterns. Therefore you suggest that you have either to create systems which offer choice, or you assume that one is creating an archetype which other people will follow, and therefore within your system there will be lots of possibilities, or you can take the situation where you say - 'well, because the standard of living has gone up, people are free to move'. They are free to choose in a much wider way, that is if he makes his housing and lives in his housing with absolute intensity and you get a Guedes thing - it is of such strength that people will hear about it on the bush-telegraph and say 'I would like to live in Guedes' way'. And they go to live in this settlement.

Therefore there was no need to build up a system of choice, because individuals had already created choice in which people were free to move, because the rise in the standard of living made it possible to move.

Now, of course, within the two systems is a subjective problem. And that is that because most of us are in a Protestant idealistic tradition that is we also like to think there is an ideal, that is what we would like. And we would like to offer our ideal to other people. This is what Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe say. They say, you don't have to have this thing but we feel that there is a new mode of living, a new way, and we can illuminate this way by making a building in a certain way. The building is a demonstration of an ideal, which you can choose.

Therefore, if we tend also to be system builders, which I think - you see - I think there is a division between the system builders and the individualists which is organic - it's a structural difference in personality. Then the people who are system builders they've got a real problem, I think, because on the one hand they want to offer an ideal, and when they offer an ideal, it brings them back to the first category. As examples, because they offer an ideal and therefore the only logic of this is you must keep pushing the standard of living up so that people have the opportunity to move from one sort of idealism to another. I was just describing the reality, as it were, with precision.

The problem that arises to this is maybe where the standard of living is low, therefore where once you build a building, the people have to live in it and this is where the three-thousand million business becomes valid. In which case you have a special responsibility.

You have to offer a choice and that offer must not, in my terms, be offered in any historically orientated way, that is towards the reconstruction of an old way of life, but must be orientated towards a dream.

But now the rest of the world, the immensity of the world comes about.

StJW Well now, Peter Smithson sounded to me as if he were working around to the position where he thought the only thing you could do now, in order to get back to the initial warmth, is to make no

decisions, to give absolute choice.

- PS Intellectually that is the position I see in these terms. In fact, my own objective position is a very different one. What I find I more and more like are places like Nancy where you feel a tremendously civilised acceptance of collective structure. Built for ordinary people. But in the spirit of the Golden Age. It never existed, but why shouldn't we dream about it? In which people didn't knock each other's heads off and didn't speak until they were spoken to.
- JB That's my nightmare and not my dream.
- PS Wait a minute - it's not a nightmare. When you find it, what makes me unhappy is when one goes into a social situation where this might have been possible, and now I'm talking about Scandinavian countries, because they have a collective means of realising such a dream, then what it really looks like, I find a tremendous fall off. The European's experience of America is primarily what has happened to the dream of America. In the same way, what is disappointing about Scandinavia is what has happened to the dream of a collective city, a collective environment, in which you gave something of something and received something back - in exchange for certain limitations on liberty at certain levels. You had an increase of things at other levels.
- And I now, myself, see that in some sort of situations, I see that as being the acme of civilisation in that it should be able to produce these things without having to have it forced on them by a King - a voluntary acceptance. I think this is merely an emotional thing, because Bakema would say it in the end, that in spite of the fact that he would like to see each person able to make his mark, he would still like to see the most elegant structure. In Nancy you can see the mark of the individual as well as you can see the constructive structure.
- vE The casbah organis  has nothing to do with 'Porgy and Bess'. It has all to do with Nancy. Casbah is paradoxically tied to the word organis . We have to re-define both the idea casbah and the idea organis  - it's a word unity you see.
- PS Why don't we have a picture of Nancy instead of a picture of a casbah - just for a change?
- StJW I give you a Nancy. I give you a Cambridge college and you condemn or question everything historical about that.
- vE The only virtue you discover in the slum is their collective mutual support in their suffering. That is the only thing that is mutual about it. For the rest, it is absolutely an individual man trying to push a little bit beyond that wall for a rabbit or for a chicken. That's a terrible situation. It may look very nice to us. It's absolutely not the same thing. You're identifying your little Moroccan village one moment with 'Porgy and Bess'. Now those are two extremes. One is an under-privileged suppressed group in an anonymous society and the other is the exact opposite.

You identify those two things. It is very dangerous.

### ERSKINE

When we get together here we are really, to a certain degree, looking for generalisations. We are trying to fit our thoughts into some kind of context. To try to find out - a way out of what one could call the Lou Kahn impasse. That's been used as a symbol here. You find the necessity, the kind Alexander was talking about, to find some sort of generality which would have a possibility of generation and application for meeting these world situations. One of the things I've wondered is whether all out generalisations tend to be too specific talking about what is the best way of living, the best way of dwelling, and it always seems to me in all these discussions that there is no best way, unless you know who you are talking about and who you are talking with. And that this element of choice came up this morning, and it introduced the question of was it to be 'Porgy and Bess', was it to be bidonvilles, was it to be Hong Kong slabs? You assumed, Peter, in North America or in Scandinavia, as one had arrived at a fairly high standard of living, there would be opportunities of choice. This actually is not so. You've observed it yourself. But environmentally for example, around Stockholm, one has rather little choice. They are all very much the same thing. I think this is partly naturally so, in a way, because this is the way they arrived at their high standard of living; by generalising.

The next thing, I found myself working in a rather highly organised society, which has accepted the process of generalisation for the common good. You find then that somehow you are not able to opt out of the generalisation, you are forced to accept a certain type of

environment, which nonetheless has been decided, as Jaap would say. And the next process I found myself going through was the process of trying to offer as many choices as possible and the whole of this idea of participation.

When trying that in this sort of small context we have up there, in small communities of - not this one but another one - small industrial communities of about a thousand people, where you are perhaps building twenty or thirty or a hundred dwelling, perhaps only ten dwellings a year, you can't really speak for everybody. You build the buildings, you talk with them before you inform the whole community of what you are doing. This is possible against the background of general information of what planning and architecture is.

Then, for example, you build the building after these discussions and then you get to the final stage - the detailed arrangement of the interiors, perhaps the thing that will take just a small detail of the colouring, for example, wallpapers and painting. I tried going around discussing it with everybody and giving everybody the possibility of choice in this detail. I'd covered the larger parts in the earlier process. You start discovering that there are quite a number of people who simply say - I don't know if this is general but it was so in Sweden in the cases I worked with - they quite simply say 'What do you recommend?'.

I came to the conclusion that you can also easily arrive at the situation where, by giving choice, you're not giving choice so to speak, because you are forcing people to choose things which they are not frightfully interested in making the choice about. They are detail choices.

It seemed very apparent to me that some of the people I was talking

with - I thought they should be interested in planning, that they should be interested in architecture and so on; and I was prepared to give a lot of energy and time to discussing their programmes - they were not interested. They were interested in other things, possibly motor-cars or journeys abroad or business or painting - or God knows what.

Actually, in this case, probably one should work rather carefully through a certain environment which will have to be produced in the course of the economical and the technical structure of the production method - have to be produced as a unit. Within that, offer a number of finished and rather complicated choices, and at the side of that, arrange a situation of free choice for those who want that.

It became obvious to me, just touching again on what Peter said this morning, the actual situation which one has in Sweden doesn't seem to lead to this kind of situation where you get these unlimited choices, though your financial possibilities are considered. Anyway, moving to this small township - Coderch and I were talking at lunch-time about France and other countries - the enormous numbers that are being dealt with. Here, in Sweden, it's rather the opposite. You have seven million population spread over an enormous country which is very much bigger than Japan, which has ninety million. Take in this case a community of four thousand people, with their very decentralised administration system, with surrounding countryside, and that brings it up to a total of seven thousand people. In European terms this is a village.

They've got their planning organisation in the town itself and the decisions are made directly and in direct reference to the town's situation - physical, economic and so on situation. The town itself

makes furniture. Up until recently in small workshops spread through the whole community.

The central situation is very confused, because there is a railway right through the middle of it, and the tendency is to have a split community - north and south development.

Obviously the first thing you ask is why on earth build fairly large numbers of dwellings - there are 350 dwellings - so far out of the community. And there, straight away, one is caught up in a kind of planning mechanism which functions imperfectly. They had rather little planned - a general plan - but no detailed plans. The detailed plan we were making got involved in land ownership, and this was going to take a certain amount of time - and at the same time the expansion of industry needed more dwellings.

This I didn't mention, one of the things they did was to make this into a main road through the centre of the town. This is already in the process - really you've got a double barrier - this road has already been built.

We've suggested another feed-in road here which takes this industrial district. Start building off this main road as it was built - you know with a pretty cut going under the railway and everything. Building another road, feeding into this industry, all linking up with a system of green communications, for cycles and for people walking. Dimensions, of course, were small.

AG What is the distance between this unit and the centre of the city?

About a kilometre - the distance is not big in a city but it's very big in a small town. It's been done to meet a situation which originally would not be allowed to continue, and this was being used partly to create dynamics for developing the centre.

CA In the end, when the whole thing is built, it is going to be a town mainly of single buildings, except for this relatively high concentration at one particular point. What actually will happen then? There will be people who occupy these private houses, there will be people who live in the barracks. Will there not tend to be that sort of social feeling between these entirely different forms of housing?

I've just been thinking about that. You ask me what is going to happen.

CA This is often the way the New Towns have been built in England, now most people agree that the way they were done is rather unfortunate.

Do you know one of the things that is unfortunate? They haven't looked after the central function - environmentally. There is a lot of talk about environment - this is the big thing everywhere. It's the big thing in Sweden now. Well, I've organised these towns, and they are not again what you'd expect. It's a kind of New Town situation again, except they are not as cleverly planned. They are not even pretty. What does work is that the people themselves make an environment to a certain degree - to a considerable degree. If you've got the dwellings there, you've got all the ugly things - you've got the fountains there and the kids are playing in the fountains instead of grown-ups standing and looking at them. You've got one of the better restaurants in Stockholm.

CA If you're going to build a city centre, why can't they build it in with the first housing?

PS To get the site in the centre they've got to produce a strategy.

Now we get back to this position that I think the French must be more like the Swedish.

PS You mean they expect you to build flats? You mean it's a normally accepted thing?

Basically I am fairly convinced that a large amount of the building programme in Scandinavia is wrong because it is too small. It is high

on the equipment standard but it's low quality on space. Architects, planners and Socialists are pushing the whole time for a higher space standard, even suggesting reducing equipment standards to do it.

Turning back, you always find that the amount you can save on equipment is not frightfully much, because just the structural insulation is frightfully expensive. Climate and high wage situation.

Another thing is the formed habits. The people do want this equipment. You're in a stage of development when people are concentrating on equipment to a considerable degree. They've got a background of low space standards even in their Winter dwellings. They also have a background of fifty per-cent of the population has a week-end cottage. Fifty per-cent of the population has two dwellings - the week-end cottage is also small, but it is in very wild nature. And they are just too damned busy buying motor-cars and television sets and journeys abroad and so on. The only thing you can do is to go back and do the same kind of things the commercial bods are doing - to trust to the conception of investment in capital goods of the typical dwelling. And this is the kind of long-term programme that you run at the same time as you try to improve the standard of these small dwellings. You move up from two-room dwellings to three-room dwelling to four-room dwellings.

Here I can get this straight - what people consider they want. This is frightfully important, nonetheless, because they are the people you're designing for. We reckon we get three and four-room flats - we include the living-room - two-bedroom and three-bedroom flats into this.

This building was built and moved into a year ago. This is also built. This is drawn. And they're finding it damned difficult to

sell the larger flats. And the only thing you can do about this is to go out and try to convince people that your conviction is right, that another room, where kids can separate themselves out from the family if they want to, where parents can get away from the children, will keep the family together. This is a long-term programme.

WW Is it an isolated settlement because I don't see trees around it. They don't fit in. I mean if you go by car or walking, how far is it to the next house of the village?

Not here, you go up here - go up and further down again. There's a green strip running through it. This is rather important because of the shape of that thing. But this is in the outer edge of a one-family house community. There has not been a sufficiently long-term programme of land purchase, in other words. This is where I was wondering about Shad's 'stem', for, as far as I can see, we can never sell it. The tendency for us is very very definite towards the high-power unit, turning over a large quantity of goods at a low price and high quality, based on rationalisation, and small shops will disappear. So there is no possibility of splitting a centre here and there.

JB When I live there how can I see?

Oh very simple indeed - all the people are moving along. If you're looking for a symbol, I'd be damned careful about putting a symbol in, because I don't believe in it.

JB It's something you can do for people for whom we build, to clarify simply what is the reason to be there.

Here you have the main approach roads - low. Secondary approach roads, third approach roads - there. Coming along this road you get a very clear peel-off, you are past your community and you follow your road along when it leads from the centre. This is all you need - you don't need signs - you don't need sculpture.

AS But how does it show that the road goes the other way too? It's like getting on a London bus, if you don't know it, you can easily get on the right number going the wrong way.

PS When you were living here, which seems closed in like a castle, it's a spirit problem rather than a symbolic problem.

StJW The thing mainly about this is that it looks as if it were trying to be self-sufficient - at least in my case that was going to be a college - this isn't. And the funny thing is that you build here first, the very kind of dwelling which has children in it. I mean you build, it seems to me, the wrong type first.

Well I'd agree with both Peter and you. I think both you and I have fallen into the same bloody trap.

StJW I haven't fallen into a trap.

Grouping may not be necessary but it seems almost somehow to cut out the choice of forming groups. It is somehow a democracy without individuals or whatever you like to call it. But it has certain justification, it becomes very apparent if you are looking at older communities, you know, this obvious thing that modern architects do meet in convents and places like that - that functions in the older communities on the one hand tended to explain themselves, physically and visually. On the other hand, it tended to give possibilities of contacts, but nowadays the opposite situation tends to be operative. That most of the technical solutions one opts for, amusements and religion and so forth, don't on the one hand give human relationships, and on the other hand, don't give a physical explanation of the way they work.

Perhaps you're wondering about the old industrial town that was on this morning and why it works and to what degree. But it leads to the conviction, nonetheless, that it is very insufficient for a number of reasons which have also been discussed and certain efforts to meet this situation.

Nowadays, to get out of this kind of situation, so many of the kind of vital community functions are looked after by technical methods.

What sort of groups there are below the definable groups, the usual ones one talks about, the schools, the shopping centres, medical units etc.. All these technically definable groups - units. And below that there seems to be a grouping tendency which is very important - which I call 'gossip groups'. You know the mere accident that you happen to be living near somebody - if it is a certain type of environment. Try and give a positive value, if you wish to use it. But equally important, you must be able to opt out of it in any situation. That's the trouble with all the 'bidonvilles'. It looks very romantic but it really doesn't give a choice. You are forced into contact, as you were saying this morning.

There are many of these Sedish communities which tend to be extremely undefined, they really only allow for the kind of separated existence in which you have to use your motor-car to arrive at the contacts you wish. This was an attempt to find some sort of physical structure.

JB Which is a reaction against the situation.

Again, it's like old Lour Kahn's kidneys, the servant things dominating the served, sort of idea. I had the speculation then that the surrounding of the town - here - would be built as a series of groups, each of a more or less definable local character, related to one another through their methods of communication with one another.

CA How many of these families will have cars?

Nearly half the families will have cars and nearly all of them will have motor-boats.

WW Do you see the difference between your project and those who are building in Europe new towns for ... ? What do you expect, what kind of life do you expect in this little country? You know what we were bothering about in our New Towns and I just wanted to know if there is a special point which is different from those

horrible situations in our New Towns. I don't see it.

What is it you are looking for? Here you have dwellings - you have commerce, you have crèches and you have small workshops where people can start making the legs for chairs. What is it you are looking for - more?

WW A town is quite different, you know, and has quite different functions.

PS I think it has something to do with flavour.

I think you are actually at one of the cruxes of the problem.

AS Except you say it is a wood-working community - what more flavour can you get? This repeating the question you were asking Werwerka - what more do we expect other than some visible sign of linkage?

I think that's largely what's missing. I think it's too separated off.

AS It doesn't have a sort of neck.

PS Do you expect the smell of wood-work?

AS Like the trees when you actually get there.

There is also quite a lot of smell of wood-work when you go in. The whole of the interior is done with quite a lot of wood. All these points where there is a risk of abrasion from people knocking against it.

PS It's glued - that's stupendous.

The trouble with this community is that it really is like a glass of absolutely sterilised water. There is really no flavour at all. You talk about these workshops but you should see them. It's not even a bit like old Jaap's 'bidonville'.

#### VOELCKER

Two levels of connection. One at this stage is terribly abstract

and on a rather big scale. The other one is very detailed and relates to a building which is just on the point of starting to build and is almost on the cabinet-making scale.

First, this sub-regional scheme, really a map of a statement of fact tells more than the diagram. The aim of this study in progress is to determine the structure of a rural area, to consider the pressures of the location from outside, to consider the internal social and economic forces and to try to make a programme for development which will reciprocate the internal working of the location; and, if possible, will act as a catalyst to reduce and adjust unbalance in the population structure of the larger region and possibly over a wider area. So that some anticipation of trends in development can be made.

In more detail it is necessary to anticipate the effect the Common Market will have on the size of farming units, methods of handling, storage and transport. These factors will transform the built structure of our location rapidly and have the potential to give the region - and each location within it - its very particular identity and the separate identities of these sub-regions. It is a sort of structure that is emerging - one has very mixed feelings - it's very centralist. My aim is to keep this centralist trend down.

The region can be defined topographically. The diagram for the sub-region indicates the significance of international and national movements, together with change points - the ports and airfields. Linear establishments are placed on these. This is the point about working within limits. That is the large scale - and just very quickly the small scale - which for me is exactly the same problem but in different terms.

The building is an office block, and in terms of old-world aesthetics

I suppose each functional element would be defined with as much precision as possible. It would be evaluated, then assembled. Some adjustments would be made to the parts so they could be fitted more easily together.

In this building I've decided that the most important place is the smallest - actually the very smallest office cell unit in it. For here, with the most general and intense contact between the building and each person working in it. I decided that the components that would be designed to form this office must therefore be the components from which every part of the rest of the building is made up. In this way, the actual scale of place values which people will determine by using the building, may well differ. This evaluation may well differ from one person to another, can be associated very directly through the simple variations in assembly of the standard component forms of this simple office. The whole building is a combination and permutation of those. You can put a standard door in there - you can put shelves ...

In the development and repetition of this you get all sorts of permutations and combinations. For instance, the storage parts of the building are just those units put onto each other like that. It seems to me that it's a way of programming the building in the same way one programmes a bigger area, where one's got involved with complex levels of movement and transport.

VE That wouldn't have been so of course. This is pure theory. This is something like that - or a thing like that. It couldn't happen. It's a space, a normal space, and within this space there are two objects ... and the possibility of this man sitting here and this man sitting here is such that these things apparently belong to somebody else. It may be used for an archive - it may be used for putting coats in - somebody else's coats. What is going to make this really come off.

AG Are there milk-bottles?

StJW Aldo, will you ask him what happens to the corners?

JB How is the floor?

Ordinary concrete block.

AG That's a sky-light?

Yes, and here's a committee room.

AG How does one get upstairs?

JB Do you use the same elements for this? Well I think it's very interesting to see how these elements are flowing around.

It is based on this one person who works in the office.

JB But here, this is an assembly hall, and now you have to span from here to here but you did speak about an element which was related to one person with his cupboard and his milk-bottle. So what will happen here with your elements - where you use them for all these people being together, perhaps with all their milk-bottles?

VE You have made a construction element that each person can identify as his, a construction element, but you are afraid or don't believe in the possibility of a construction element that is simultaneously a special one. That is to say - that is his thing. He's also in it.

Now you can have three people sitting in that office, which will probably happen - lack of space - and what happens then? The usual thing - start squabbling about that one cupboard.

If I made these spaces more precise it would be impossible to extend it through the whole building.

VE I can very well conceive of someone making an element here. Without having contact with another man working there too. I'm not saying he is closed off in his own little cell, he has a home where he is. I can also imagine the same element being used here to complete the other function, suddenly it has multi-meaning, having another inherent quality which makes it valid here too and even makes it valid for another span, for another construction. But I don't quite feel that the intention is there. Somehow, the barrier of rigidity - another kind of rigidity - you've achieved. Why shouldn't that man feel that this place is his own, if it is suited only to one man? Just like a bed is for one person. You don't have two people sleeping in a bed for one.

StJW John, are you happy, do you think that this - what you call component approach - works? You referred to it as being embarrassing. What is embarrassing?

By tradition one tends to look at buildings as objects - objets-d'art.

If one, in this present situation, can break down the components into ... I was trying to think - talking, picking up threads that had come up previously - the Erskine discussion there.

PS But you've made a basic element which is suitable for a sort of one person cell thing and then you transpose it into a multi - thing.

It's an assembly that one hopes that one's trying to do, that is will lose those connotations in a different form of assembly elsewhere, except for familiarity.

PS But you've neutralised it rather than Aldo-ised it.

Yes.

vE Now I feel that this form is too powerful to be neutral and not powerful enough to succeed in what it wants to succeed. So it almost defeats its own ends. The degree of formality in this building allows people who work there is solved - it is in itself congenial. I think the whole question of multiplicity of people working in a colossal office where you say you've lost all your identity is not here. And apart from that fact, he's made a room with two people in it. If that room is not preposterously awful, two people would be able to accommodate themselves humanely in the room quite easily in an improvised fashion. They won't lose their identity, two together in a room. Nevertheless he found it necessary to do this. I can imagine somebody having 20,000 people in an office saying 'good heavens! - how can I create this huge building in such a way that everybody feels it is his place?'. The desire to do this seems to belong to a huge building where there are an enormous amount of people entering it and going up to work and finding themselves in a huge office building where there are typewriters and lots of other people typing. To find that little place which is within this huge thing - this is a very small little thing - comfortable.

PS You're leading into this element some sort of thing that you hope the person will recognise as being the way this building is assembled and the way he somehow uses it. It is a sort of symbolic building block - a sort of Stonehenge.

StJW It's his intent to get the simplicity of a certain architecture, old architecture, where the structural system corresponds to the use of the space. One-to-one relationship - space to technical means. Wonderful - a dream of the past and you're trying to impose it here. This tendency to try to impose a discipline, this is a sort of anarchism.

The ideal is to make one thing.

StJW But isn't that a dangerous idea John? And could you do that in town planning? Make one thing do everything, stand for everything - work for everything?

### SMITHSON

I start with the study Alison made of metropolitan London, I think, looking back on why this had been done, of the sort of psychological pressure following the publication of the Tokyo plan, which seemed to be a way of structuring a metropolis, but probably an unacceptable way. In a big city, you're faced with this enormous mass of housing, which you can't make anything of: as you move through it, or use it, it's tremendously confusing, and in a way you're unhappy with it. In it exists the fragments of old structure, old villages, old streets, and the names of things exist - but very often no feeling of their identity. And this study is a sort of probe, to see whether there could become things within a big city which were more definitely real. That is, a real place would have a real structure, and maybe a real administration for that part. It tries to approach this from a noise-energy angle. That is, you can assume that where the major roads are and the railways there is a big source of energy and noise. Therefore if you plot onto a map, for example, the motor-way system which is a dot and the railway system which is a line you maybe get left with quite big islands which are potentially places in which you could still live within a big city, and build up within them a system of quiet ways. That's really all there is to this.

And then you take the other side, analyse it the other way round, and say, 'Where are the existing green spaces and schools and hospitals and walk-ways?'. All which have trees and slow-speed places, and try to figure out whether within these islands of slow movement you can

create a secondary structure of walking, bicycling, like you would in a New Town, where the children go, and so on, from place to place.

Now the object of this would be that if you study such a structure, for a planning authority, when an application came in for the redevelopment of a quarter - at present they've got very little criteria for shaping whether they should give permission or not, because they don't really have a feeling for what kind of structure they wish to emerge - you might be able to say, 'Well, we give you permission for these houses if you make a link between point 'A' and point 'B', and create, say, those little green marks here which are suggestions for sort of grown-up children's play spaces. That is, you could bribe a developer to give you some open space or a roof in exchange for increased density or something. And you could also begin to build up a structure, which a sensitive architect could start to build a relationship to, so that on the perimeter of such an island, the noisy elements, the railways and roads, would have the factories and warehouses and so on related to them, as sort of hard crust. On the inside, you could lower the pressure of circulation and start building these green connections.

I realise that when you've done this, you still have the architecture problem. Were you the developer of a particular fragment you're still left with a grouping problem - what way you would bring out these connections etc. - and that we have to answer to.

The only other thing we find on this small map is the tight little sketch of the sort of fragmented residential development on a frightening, terrific scale which will have to try to make green strips and so on. But this is just an attempt to take existing elements we've developed before and put them into a map to see how minute a real

huge building is. Each of these little elements is a huge building, tiny in relation to this vast metropolis. This is an attempt to understand a unit of development in the scale of the metropolis. This is the river, this Hampstead, you see it's a huge area to consider any sort of structuring in terms of putting up a big building which will help to make it feel better. It can't be done in that way. That's that.

The other study is a problem which Erskine also has worked on, and it's the problem of Cambridge, where you might say an existing structure of this sort already exists. That is, there is a system of footways which links much of the town. Here is a diagram of an interrelated slow-speed green-way system with a vehicular route system separated from it. The problem is, I think, interesting at another level. That is Cambridge is an historical city. It is a world city like Delft or Kyoto - one of those places people go for pleasure - it is also the centre of a region and that region's buying power and mobility are increasing. Therefore there is tremendous pressure to eat away the historical centre to provide shops and offices and so on. Now the planning authority have decided not to allow any more factories, but to allow limited expansion of shops. I think this is true. But the shopping, the natural tendency is to go to the maximum point of intensity, because that's where people are. It's also where there is a maximum availability of site, and where this commerce is allowed to enter into it, it brings in its trail hundreds of motor-cars, trucks and so on, and depots and warehousing, even when you consider it on a small scale. So that this problem for the historic cities is not just Cambridge, it's almost everywhere. That is you have places you value, you don't quite know why, and if too many people come to use it in

any way, it destroys it, because it eats itself, like, you know, a little island which is very beautiful and it has publicity in 'GO' magazine and the next year a million people descend on it, and the very thing they went there for - quiet - was destroyed. Therefore you have to say, 'Well, do we wish to keep these quiet places?', and, if you say 'Yes', you have to adopt a technique to allow their survival. And furthermore, you might say, 'We ought to be able to create places which are pleasurable to use. That is, it seems ludicrous that we can't. You know, why should our new towns and shopping centres not be a pleasure to go in? That's a completely ridiculous failing on our part.

In Cambridge, as the market-research and so on show that the amount of development that is needed here would be totally destructive to the historical part, you have no option but to implant away for the historical centre, a new centre which is discreetly linked to car parks and proper servicing and so on, in an attempt to release the pressure on the historical part, and create new values in the new centre. Now, that might have a lot of secondary effects that I have never thought of before, but, which have been discovered in other places - Erskine told me about them - that is, that many of the things like small restaurants and wine-shops and cheese-shops and all these things, which are hand-crafts (hand making of things, family businesses and so on) which give pleasure to people who own them, only survive in these old places because their rents are low.

Now the only way to keep rents down is to move the commercial pressure, remove industrialised commerce, that is, supermarts and so on that have got much higher levels of rent because they operate in a different way. If one wished those old things to survive, and this is

a question of choice, you have to actually produce an operation of this sort of pressure, a removal of pressure.

What is suggested is a new shopping centre in an area away from the traditional centre and that is linked with the existing centre, and that car-parking is provided to service the historical centre, and so allow its survival. But it is located so that - we don't allow cross traffic through the old centre - it reduces the vehicle pressure and these new car-parks are the origin points of the walking system. You know, when you get out of your car you become a pedestrian. If it's too far, as when the pedestrian system crosses the old medieval network, there are one-way systems of streets with buses running on them. If the journey is too far, you hop a bus and there is a cyclical system of bus routes which carry you around on small journeys. I was looking at the drawing you made this morning, really Disneyland: they have made it a pleasurable experience by recreating a French marketplace in the middle-ages, taking the traffic out and putting in electric buses. This more and more is becoming the technique of the development of shopping centres. At one level I'm very suspicious of this, you know, because I feel that we ought to be able to do it so that we don't have this flavour of the recreation of past mode. But, I think that in a way the problem of imitation of a historical space doesn't apply here, because all you are doing is making a real historical space work. Back, more or less, to its original level of working.

Coming out of that, one interesting thing emerged afterwards, thinking about it, and that was, supposing that this regional centre developed in such a way now that it can deal with the expanded regional requirements. At the beginning, supposing Cambridge did it first, it will become more attractive as a place. Therefore it would

draw its users from a bigger region. But these other regional centres, for example Norwich, which is the next regional centre, would commercially feel the competition of this - its trade would go off, and so on. Therefore it would reorganise itself to become more efficient. You then have a situation where you might say that all these cities were acting again, for another ten year period. But supposing that the rate of growth of the economy keeps on going up, you then get to a point where you would have to expand each of these places, so that what they do have - which is this close contact with the country and the smallness of the size and the comprehensibility of this town - 'is it worth preserving?'. 'Is this something you would destroy by enlargement?'. And then you say, maybe, 'If I want to keep them as they are, then we ought to create a new regional centre, where, in the same way we take the pressure off here by moving this, you create a new sort of centre which we've never seen before'. Shad is making a study for a skiing town for twenty-five thousand people in the French Alps - a hotel for 25,000 people. This is the sort of thing which is inevitable if you suddenly find that one hundred and fifty thousand people in the city of Lyons, or somewhere, are capable of - have the money to go on - ski trips. You have to deal with this.

Well, you might have to make a regional pleasure town, where, if you got a three-day week-end, which may be in twenty years time. If all the people who have the three-day week-end descend on Cambridge, the tourists would destroy what they came to see. But I don't think it is out of the question, as in John's agricultural centre, that if the pressure is too great in these market towns, to cope with a different sort of agricultural organisation, that you have to quite ruthlessly to allow the survival of some things, to create new things.

That's the whole story, with the exception of the fact that there is no doubt about it, that cities such as Cambridge already have in their power the possibility of producing controls which cost very little money, to improve their situations as of now.

For example, metering and decent car-parks and a few controls, a few extra pedestrian ways could be got for very little. I feel it's because the municipalities haven't realised what they've got there, what the problem is. I felt that very much also in Kyoto. If they're not careful, the reason the tourists got to Kyoto will disappear. One of the few places where there is quiet left in the world, where one feels that you can go for regeneration - or whatever it is - is being destroyed. You don't attempt structuring in any more grandiose sense than by arranging the car-parks, good access to them, you maybe have to do nothing more - you know you don't have hit-on-the-head developers all the time, they would naturally tend to drift in such a way - these are painless structuring devices.

#### CODERCH

I think that more or less the explanation is that it all derives from a study made ten years ago about a slum in Barcelona. Accommodating these people in a new development. I liked the ambiance I found there. I decided to study the problem from the point of view of more or less leaving the things as they were, only changing more or less the sanitary conditions which were bad and inhuman.

Considering these houses were made up of sheet metal and fibro-cement which was full of leaks. I studied the problem of doing a very simple structure, made up more or less of a floor and a wall and a cantilevered ceiling. And the rest would be filled in by the owners

themselves. It is now ten years later. The idea is to build a multi-level structure, with all the surfaces and all the drainage and everything, and doing more or less the same thing as for the finishing of the whole thing done by the people themselves. The general work that was being done for the workers and the people's houses in Barcelona was not satisfactory, hadn't got the same aspect in this thing that I proposed to do. It is only going to be an experiment that I want to build on my own and it is going to be a sort of proposal for something that can be done, a proposal that officially I couldn't do then. My idea is to make a very complete study of all the possibilities I can find ... and then decide the point where the house structure must be, then I will decipher and build the staircase, the toilet, and leave the rest to them.

StJW I think our real problem is between these positions. Our problem is much bigger. We need it because we hate our new buildings. We hate our buildings, we know what's wrong.

The future we don't know what will happen with this. We don't know the solution. We know nothing about it. We have the hypothesis only.

dC I think that in our society the two very important facts are mobility and multiplicity of choice, and the new architecture can give somewhat in the sense of mobility, and represent somewhat more or less, mobility, but cannot represent in many ways the multiplicity of choice. Modern architecture - the modern architecture which I know and which I have made and I make now is an architecture which in an idealistic way, results from general problems, and to put the individual in this situation without control if the individual agree with this solution, and without giving to individuals the way of representing themselves in architecture. The need to represent themselves is fundamental. And this way may be the way to make a step forward towards a new scale.

PS Since the drawings Le Corbusier made of his Algiers project, practically every architect in the world has made at least a project in which there are platforms with three possibilities - but it doesn't work. I think it's an absolutely hopeless approach. If you have the block, the sanitary block, fixed, what you're left with is free space, isn't it, to divide into bedrooms. In fact there is no difference from house to house. Therefore it's just the same as curtains.

- RE I don't think it would become a general principle, because there are not that number of people who want to make the elevations of the houses themselves - and if there are some people who want to do it, I think it is a jolly good thing they are allowed to do it. The only thing you can control is some sort of basic hygiene. Make no assumptions - it had better be understood - that this is for those people who have definite impulse, and this is by no means the majority of the people. I suppose what one's really talking about in this case is - are there any alternatives which could be positive - between structuring everything and structuring nothing.
- PS If you take the Unité d'Habitation, the freedom is only in the furnishing, in the curtains and so on.
- VE To be able to express yourself in that place that you are living. To alter it according to your own - to do it according to your fashion. It's not just to buy or to add something to it because you need it, because of your requirements, but to do it in your personal way. These two things are freedom of choice. You can just choose in a repertoire of possibilities the thing that suits you best. It's quite a different thing from the capacity of every body to express themselves if they were given a Meccano box.

#### ALEXANDER

This work has been done in connection with an Indian village, a very simple collection of huts. The houses are mud houses but they have exactly the same shape as an ordinary pitched-roof house here. One of the things that really concerned me is whether these components, the streets between the houses, the houses, the field, and this place where the school is, are the correct components to build a village of. Given the kind of behaviour that you'd expect of a village, and the kind of situation the village finds itself in.

I think that introducing flexibility into a system isn't really a very deep approach to the problem of having something that can change and meet changing needs. It's fruitless to try and build a structure that's got flexibility in the sense of universal space, or something like that, because that really assumes already that you know quite a bit about the change that is likely to occur. And also, if the pieces

of structure themselves are going to need to be changed - if the needs change, and the only kind of solution to that problem that I can see is likely to bear real fruit is to try and produce a structure which is itself the kind of structure which is easily able to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.

If a changing system in contact with a changing environment is to maintain its adaption to that environment it must have a property that every one of its sub-systems with an independent function, is also given enough physical independence as an isolated component, so that the inertia of those components which for the time being require no change, does not make it impossible to modify other components which do need it.

In the terms I'm talking about, you have to interfere with too many of the components, and, as a result, you don't effect this change. If the various new problems that come up, related to the existing city, in such a way that each time a new thing happens you only have to modify one component of the existing structure without interfering with the others, it will then be feasible to make these adaptations as fast as they become possible, because you're not held up by the inertia of all the other components that happen to be interfering with this one - and dependent on it - and so on.

Each of these components represents the coming together of a number of needs. The house is there as a shelter, as a place to store food, as a place to bring up children, as a place to have your cattle near. The street is there because it meets the need of some space between the buildings because they can't be right on top of each other. It meets the need of having to move about, in the monsoon it meets the need of having somewhere for the water to go. If you examine the

coming together of needs in detail, do the needs really come together in the groups which the existing components represent, or don't they?

There are three kinds of needs. First of all there are what we might call felt needs, 'I need water to irrigate my crops - I need to be able to get to the market in a monsoon', in other words - 'I need a dry road'. Secondly there are what we might call the imposed needs, and these are things I got mainly from combing documents like the 'Five-Year Plan' and talking to officials and various people of that sort. Example would be removal of 'Untouchability', to remove that is a social intention. I'm also including the need for health - or need for some elementary kind of sanitation. The third kind of need is the kind which is perhaps most easily forgotten - the needs which are explicit in the existing structure.

In India, in the rural areas, people tend to live in extended family units, that means a man and his sons and all their sons tend to be living roughly in the same area. The existing pattern of the village recognises this fact. And that's the same also with the need to have a bath in the morning before you do anything. They won't touch food or work before they have poured water over themselves. It may only be a token, just like that, but that's a sort of feeling they have again - it's a need, a satisfied need.

I got a list of about 200 things, finally, of these three kinds, falling into a number of divisions. Of the 200 I got, I finally whittled away to 140, because they duplicated slightly or seemed less important and so on. And what I did next with these 140 needs was to ask for each need. Let's say - take number one - does it interfere with need number two in any way? If you satisfy need number one does it become easier to satisfy need number two, or more difficult? Or

are they really not connected. And I asked that question for every pair of needs. So that is 140 squared. The results were tabulated. Where it was a question I could get opinions about from someone who was obviously the sort of man who would know about that, then I would talk to him. But often it was a matter of common sense, and often there were things that no one had thought of relating in this way before, and in those cases the decision was mine. The most I can say is that they are connected because there was some feeling that maybe they were about similar problems. I was wondering if one can actually see some sort of functional thing getting in the way - one getting in the way of the other - or actually helping the other. How do the needs really come together.

It's not an abstract problem, it's a mathematical problem. I got the results of my thoughts about that on a computer at M.I.T.. All this computer does is just what I've said. Of course it does it mathematically. I sent to M.I.T. this list of 140 things, each saying opposite each one which others it was connected to. I got back - I've got the list which is broken into 12 little sub-lists. And each list contains a grouping of needs that was, according to the pattern of their interaction, very tightly connected and what's more, independent of all the others.

I tried to invent, diagrammatically only. I'll show you how they fit together to form ABCD each one like that and then how ABC and D fit together to form the village. I was working on one actual village, but I think what I've done here, the needs are the same in maybe a hundred villages in the same region. I was saying about prototypes and I think I was taken to mean sort of actual buildings and things, but I would never dream of calling that a prototype to be repeated.

But I think the diagrams I've got can say what these groupings are, might be thought of as prototypes because the actual physical form they would take on site, and in given surroundings and so on, would be different from one place to another.

### KURAKOWA

We have many types of plan. One is for single person and another is the family unit. But when you take off the partition of this box, you can make a single unit for a family space. And the next change is - we have many kinds of people - poor or rich; many. One is bathroom only and one is lavatory and bath. Another is a combination of lavatory wash-basin and bathroom. Another is the kitchen. This is a small kitchen for a single person and a large family type kitchen unit. Also the Hitachi are preparing to make a bed unit for children. A small plastic box.

This zone is the study and this zone is space for equipment and this zone is space for living. We have traditional Japanese measurements here. This figure is also applied to public housing corporation, so I use some standard organisation of the plan made by public housing corporation.

PS Do you change the size of the living space?

When you change equipment the space will change also

vE How can you enlarge or decrease your total area?

I cannot - I cannot but the middle part of space you have a kind of partition - so if you want to enlarge that space.

vE This is proper in the initial stage, but later on I have to throw somebody out. Isn't it true that to expand and contract your house you have to have enormous space in the whole city to do that?

PS This changes only within a given area. The only thing you can do with it is to occupy two houses. You can break through here - that can all become one and then you come to a stair. And then, as Shad says, you buy the staircase.

AS All units are equal? Equal in area?

SW No - they are not all the same - sometimes he adds space.

This is the minimum unit for families. But for the private apartment it is possible to use five units, using the same system, and then maybe use a sixth unit.

PS There must be a maximum size because otherwise you only have two sorts of space.

We have a limit for this construction. This means that the maximum size is this one, and not there, this is the maximum. In Japan I think this space is the largest for an apartment.

PS Part of the argument for the building is that the elements speak for the people in them. Why did you choose the sanitary unit to be one of the most powerful elements? That is not the whole of life - going to the lavatory.

I think some movable equipment - such as the lavatory and the bathroom - is a lovely thing.

PS It is a lovely thing, yes - but why?

This expresses the living way of the family, I think it necessary to express some real living way of family that makes group form.

CD Perhaps we question the expression of these because the manufactured unit which is fitted into the building for the convenience of the particular occupant of the building, that equipment such as bathroom and kitchens is really more fixed than movable. The manufactured articles, though it is possible to move them easily, should they really be expressed as pieces of movable equipment, because really they are integral in the structure of the apartment. Not the physical structure but the accommodation of the apartment. Is this a problem in your mind, that really what is essentially a part of the building itself is shown as a movable thing just because it is a manufactured thing? Physically it is movable but psychologically it is very much part of the building.

JB I look at the building and I see many corners - I am very happy. And I think about what we said yesterday morning, that in life it

is very difficult to make some corners. And when I think about those corners, I think about corners to live in. And it is the same when we think about a town. It is difficult to make towns in which there are corners in which people like to meet. They are organised spontaneously, simply - 'Hey that's my corner - I'm staying here'. I think there is a big danger, you know, that we are still looking for systems to solve our questions of over-crowding so that the corner, even in this project, is filled up now already with equipment. We have to think about it, that the people for whom we work is not the firm who likes to sell its equipment but that we have to try to find out how we can give this movable equipment in a way that the whole enterprise gets anonymous, anonymous in the whole thing, so that what is identifying is variations in ways of living in space because we are architects we have to make space for people. You go to a firm and try to order what he is doing. But you are in the same danger as we are I think. You go into the firm. Five minutes after you've entered, you are part of the firm. You didn't know it. And you go out and you think you are really doing the thing you have to do. I think you are still part of the firm who likes to sell his equipment or his traffic schemes or a thing like that. I think that really being an architect is to say at the right moment; what am I doing with this equipment? Where is the space?

There is another point. You did work with this firm in a way that the change in equipment was possible - it was an important thing in your talk - it would be wonderful if we could find firms with whom we could work so that change in kinds of corners became possible.

PS I think there is an interesting metaphysical point involved here. And that it - I've been thinking about what we said yesterday and that is we always make discussions of systems and organisations as if they were mechanisms, but, inside ourselves, we always realise that the function of the architect is to illuminate. He is after all an artist and that there is no meaning in life except that given to it. And that the function of a building, in its ideal sense, is to illuminate life. You say to make people aware of a full life and so on, but we all know what that means. And it may be that what is always difficult in crossing boundaries between one culture and another is that which illuminates the meaning of life in one culture may be without meaning in another culture.

What I am trying to say, is that I am sure that in Japan the mystique, the mysterious thing that attaches to equipment - particularly miniature equipment, carefully organised equipment - is far more important to an ordinary person. One is trying to talk about making things and illuminating the way they live from a traditional way to a new way so there may be a lot that ... for me also too much fuss is made of mechanism.

In the traditional Japanese house, you have the concrevity of the space and then the corridor here and then we have the lavatory here. They enjoy the lavatory. It is a strange thing but the Japanese do

this. When we change the space of the lavatory, in an ordinary family house, the traditional Japanese house, we have flexibility and stimulation - of equipment.

JS Every time you set up a system you immediately set up a permutation and therefore if you are trying to find a system you should find one that gives a maximum of possibility of variations and permutations.

PS This is the fact of the way cities grew. They had spots for old villages. And then your communications system joined. Well all you can do is this sort of de-pressurising thing, then you move the points of intensity. You take a road off and invent a new communications system that allows them to survive and other things to grow. And you have your problem. I mean you've got something going down and other things coming up and that creates new points, new connectors between points. You know that this one can't grow.

JV But if we separate parts of the small scale elements as soon as they start to grow are capable of re-combining on a larger scale you can then develop the structure by doing it upward in the whole city.

PS Every component contributes to the ordinary workability of the total, and if you want to take away part or enlarge a part, the rest of the system - this is a system building - can cope with it, a local growth of intensity or diminishment of intensity because the system is such that it is capable of absorption. You don't have to change all of the elements to change one of the elements and you have to build up a system of this nature. A net of varying intensities.

We can vary the intensity of the net at various points but every road serves every other road and you could change the intensity at a point without having to change the whole net. If you have a system coming to a central system of roads you get a point at which the capacity of the central road is incapable of absorbing any more or it becomes redundant. The valuable thing is to say that there is no system which is universal to all situations. This is the problem of the village, like Erskine had. I mean you might be able to build, at a point, a thing of significant structuring which had nothing to do with the communications system, because the operation is a different one.

You know, in old days, Kyoto had this communications net-work, that in old days had wooden side-walks, rickshaws. But now when you get into Kyoto, the car is entered this way and the bicycles and the motor-bikes etc. and sometimes very big trucks this way.

Kyoto is now thinking to develop this area and then I consult with

them to make a net-work for this area. So I call this building an artificial side-walk. I put this building like this, a traditional house and then I make the side-walk here. And also land value along the side-walk very expensive and on the opposite side of this space land value is very cheap. So I project this building here and then suggest to the Government to buy. So this building means the stimulation between a building which is public investment and existing building groups. So the possibility to make a mixed net-work is by public investment only.

PS What is the point of putting buildings there? Couldn't the best public investment be just a new piece of open space, because surely if you build a building in these things you compromise the whole system, because you have existing houses with little gardens and now you put a building which looks down into this garden - so the garden is no longer private.

There is a programme to make some common institution for this area because many labourers and many people want to have some meeting-hall, or meeting-hall for cooking - or something like that. So they want to have some buildings. So they think the architecture of the side-walk is better.

PS First of all you get a little building and a lot of people come to it - and then the land values go up and a man builds a shop, you know - and so on. And it gradually eats away and that finally you end up with no place to live. It must have no commercial value.

JB It has to serve the local population which is there.

This district is only part of Kyoto. In other districts they have some commercial activity. So for the rest of Kyoto maybe another kind of stimulation, another kind of system, is necessary.

AS I think the problem with Kyoto is one of not stimulating it at all. I mean that when we went there we were probably just in time to see Kyoto before it was gone. The brown sea of house roofs were absolutely wonderful. But all over there were people building three-room, four-storey, concrete blocks on these little sites. And the sky-signs, you know patent-glazing - all wrong things. Just sporadically - all over, people decide to put in a bit of

stimulus of one kind or another. And Kyoto is one of those places that ought to be thought of seriously before it is destroyed, the way we have destroyed our old European towns by letting in too much traffic or just letting people put up buildings which break the skyline for really no good reason. And I think the stimulation should perhaps be channelled into certain areas - either round the railway station or areas that have already been spoilt.

The fact is that it's old Kyoto which still exists - and when I say it's old Kyoto that still exists I suspect that most of it only goes back to about 1890 because most houses have sort of Art Nouveau detailing in the woodwork. But this area of brown-grey roofed Kyoto is only a fraction of the old historical Royal Kyoto, the old town plan used to go right across what are fields and new places. I really think that Japan in particular ought to take a lead in thinking seriously about what they do about their cultural cities - what they do before they just destroy them wantonly with bits of stimulation.

PS It isn't just a museum - it still works. Or does it?

The name of the district is 'Shinti' - a crook. You know a traditional Japanese crook - and in this housing district they have many, many, craft industries - many people, many workers, many labourers. But if the cars go into it many people are killed every day.

AS But why not simply remove the cars, remove the pressure? Why stimulate it? You see, if you load it all with superimposed networks, eventually the bits in between the net-works aren't worth having.

### van EYCK

I don't know if you've read or heard of this very simple image - the story of the house as a small city, and the city as a large house. I want that to be the basis of all I think in terms of architecture.

The large house, the little city, image provides scope for multi - meaning. It creates a climate in which the four terms - house, city, little, small - released from the bondage of their definition, can occur to each other liberally. The image is of course ambiguous and consciously so. It would not have the necessary scope otherwise, nor would it be an image. Its ambiguity is of a kind I should like to see transposed to architecture.

The ambiguity imparts a kind of clarity which does not render invisible what is equally there, for the in-between realm includes - never excludes.

Now a man who can tarry is a relaxed man, can encounter himself without anguish and discover himself well prepared to meet another man. The in-between realm is a frame of mind. The kind of architecture which will ensue from it presents it and transmits it and transfers what it sees. It is therefore that I identify architecture with the in-between realm - with a frame of mind - I see no other human point of departure than this. I think my subject is the frame of mind I have just identified. Ultimately we cannot measure what we cannot relate to ourselves. It is fruitless to identify what is equivalent. I am concerned with ambivalence, not with equivalence. I am not concerned with the unity of opposites. I do however suggest that the time has arrived to adjust the mind to the essential sameness of house and city, with regard to their human meaning, in order to come to terms with what reality differentiates them with regard to each other - both are a bunch of places you see.

I said something about this in Bagnols. I always say the same thing again. Now, in order to illustrate the idea of ascending dimensions - which is, in a way, I think the subject of our conference - in order to illustrate the idea of ascending dimensions and degree of complexity from house to city, as a natural sequence towards integrated entity, the tree analogy is sometimes put forward. The tree analogy, apart from the fact that it fails to transcend the limits of analogy as such, is a naturalistic rather than a natural one. You see analogies compare directly instead of identifying indirectly. Direct analogy leads nowhere - neither to the idea of tree nor to the idea of city, neither

to the idea of leaf nor to the idea of house. The real problem of ascending and descending dimension of number, degree or complexity lies obviously far beyond the limited meaning of part-whole, which this hopeless analogy performs. The tree is a tree, you see. From leaf to root across the seasons - from seed to lifeless trunk.

Now for this project. This is the first time I've seen someone concerned with anxiety - not the facts that go into making a city but his anxiety towards cities - and he's made a drawing of it. The idea is that this is a diagram of the process of mind, it's not a city. He chose two images - he has taken two forms. One is this square and in that form you can discover this star. Those are just two forms which are absolutely juxtaposed in character, sort of imbedded in the shape. Two forms, one a star, one is - as it were - contripetal, the other centrifugal. You can juxtapose these two forms on to each other - either the black one on the red one, or the red one on the black one.

You see, he says now, that irrespective of multiplication, irrespective of whether we are concerned with house or city, we are only concerned with that which makes it necessary to live, irrespective of whether it is one person or a million. That is to say, you have the idea of living and you have the idea of the servicing of that. That is to say the means and the end. The whole story of major structure being the symbol of our time and the minor structure which is the intimacy of ourselves being the minor seems to me preposterous. But here is no hierarchy, one of those shapes represents that which serves and the other represents that which is served. Now we are making a scheme between the living and that which serves the living. Two realities. But they are not conflicting realities, because having superimposed them there is also a very large region where they are both - where

they cover each other. It's just where service and living interact. It's absolutely indeterminal. If you took the biggest map you could buy of a city, the biggest scale they make - the biggest possible scale - perhaps 6 inches to the mile, 1 in 25 - and you put it all together in a big map so it would be as big as a house and then you made a photograph of it - wouldn't it be that?

PS Yesterday you were knocking John for using precisely the same technique at a minute scale. John chose an element.

I wasn't knocking the element - I was telling why it doesn't work.

PS Now tell us why your works. In your opinion it's not complicated enough to look at a tree as a grouping of small elements into large elements and those elements into larger elements and so on.

JV I wanted to ask you here ... I'm with you on the distinction between the analogy and the unit. What I think here is that you have associated the unit, which I accept you think in your own mind, with change in situation, in spite of the fact that the image you are trying to relate to a thought process. By nature you have thought in terms of very extreme poles. They are not necessarily the extremes - they are relative to our experience.

The ideal method of thought is that these become identified - the house with the city. It's an idea of thought, not a fact. What we're concerned with - with the city and with the house - is reducing this polarity, let it bounce off, then by extension of our experience to the extent that we can reduce the polarity within our experience. You are trying to put an idealistic thought pattern into a built thing. It's an image of an image.

Aspect of ascending dimension. Leaves, twigs, branch etc., till you get the whole tree.. Increasing degree of complexity, increasing degree of size.

JV It's a different sort of poem.

I just said - this, of course, is not as ambiguous as a tree and its geometry perhaps hasn't got the poetic content of this, but you're sort of falling short of your obligations if you just think about these two - I haven't specified whether this is a house or this a neighbourhood - it ascends, and it is always for the same people.

JV I accept that but I don't accept your thought process.

I'll have to manage to sit down at a table for about half a year and see for myself whether I can identify that image more clearly, with the ascending dimensions, the question of service and living and all the questions which we discussed this morning and this is the first step to that.

PS Whether we think the tree business is a viable thing - I mean which - the leaf and the big tree - what you are postulating is a sort of enlargement of a mental technique to deal with something else. It doesn't illuminate the basic statement any more. It's just another demonstration.

CA You know damn well that a tree is not a big leaf, that it is useless in that respect to bring the parallel image.

What did you say?

PS He knows very well that a tree is not a leaf.

As long as he doesn't know that, he won't be able to make a house - he won't be able to make a chair and he won't know how to sit on it. I'm sorry for you. The poetic reality that you do is discarded if you think a tree is not a leaf.

This man is supremely naive. He has that kind of supreme intelligence which naive people have. It's his dream of society. Somehow you find a formula for it - an image. When we all design a house we somehow find one image which catches the enormous complexity of the entire - getting up in the morning or hating somebody or feeling warm or feeling cold, or liking to see a white wall or wanting to go on the balcony - or eating or cooking - everything. Somehow we find a formula for it - an image - and it's somehow there you say it's a fine house. But the moment it becomes a city you can no longer do it.

There are a few lines written here:

"A place for rest in a restless city

Not a rest house in a restful region

An oasis within a metropolis

There was tension and the direct menace

of existence in experience, having been cut  
off from the earth and its sources that offer  
such subsistence in a widest sense.

We desire a safe place, however, to comprehend  
and live with the danger

We must express ourselves citizenlike  
about the security and danger  
of which we are an inexplicable part."

So the city, you see, we must explain ourselves within city life,  
find ourselves, realise ourselves in terms of the security and the  
danger of which we are an inexplicable part. Therefore no illusory  
living space because the illusory living space does not exist anyway.  
Our world brings first, order, and a new kind of chaos with it. It is  
that chaos which is our living space. By means of this order personal  
space ensues. That is the desert, the desert of freedom, personal  
space ensues in that desert of chaos so the only objective of order  
of our time is to create that form of chaos in which we find place.  
And thanks to this desert, life in natural environment and Garden  
Cities have lost all meaning.

JB I have the feeling that one of the reasons for our protest was  
that the reason for architecture was lost. And the reason of  
architecture for me is very simple - that we make shelter for  
people that we have to protect against something - but  
simultaneously, and that is the thing, we must first identify  
in terms of space from which a piece is taken to be a shelter.  
You create an environment that man can identify himself in total-  
ness. That is really my doubt about what he is doing here.

AS What worries me is that it all goes north, east, south, west and  
just keeps repeating.

PS I think it is the exact opposite of what we're looking for. We're  
looking for systems which allow things to develop as they need to

develop without compromising each other. Here you have a system which takes absolutely literally the concept that a city is a big house. But the city is not a big house and it's a completely false analogy, a false image.

I think you've misled this boy. I really do. I think you've abrogated your responsibility to define what you mean by a city as a big house.

SW Aldo, do you honestly think that this is poetry in the sense that illuminates our life in some way today? Do you really think that this is poetry?

Uh-huh!

SW Then there is no point in talking about this any more. We're talking about different poetry.

### BAKEMA

When I think about it how we came together and I think about the circular which was written, I remember that there were invited people and there were mentioned some images and I think I was specified under the image of 'castle' - something like that. And I would first like to say that the word 'castle' is meaningful for me when I think of a big building in which there are many corridors, many well known places and many secret places which is a joy to discover them. The word 'castle' gets meaning for me when I think about towns in Holland which are extended in a way that there is no secret at all in this environment we're creating. I like to live in an environment in which there can be surprises. A surprise in this sense that the way in which the environment is made could give, perhaps every day, perhaps every minute - perhaps once a year - a kind of shock about existence of place, the very symbol of space.

Being an architect, we have a very simple tool which is available for our work. We have to make space. But the reasons for doing so are very complicated. I see a big danger in the fact that the

complication of the reason for which we have to use the tool is result -ing in complication and forgetting that we have to do a simple thing - that is to make space, that people get a piece of space. A piece of space that gives a possibility to get some understanding of the total space from which the little piece is taken. Give - make a space for a man in a way that living in this space it becomes a kind of tool in his existence to get a little more understanding about his existence. I think I belong to that group who finds, by working, also the meaning of life. And perhaps at the end of his work he will find the meaning of what is connecting all of what he did do.

We made these entrances and it is only for the entrance that I show it to you, because these entrances are related to the town we were working at the end. It was not just a wall with a hole in it. It became a various thing - that there was a moment that you did see you had to go inside and a second moment and a third moment, and there were a series of things that you experience visually when you go from the outside to the inside.

The moment before you go to your front door, you introduce, as an architect, a moment of choice. Now I think an architect has to think it over - to make the moment of entrance to the front door full of possibilities of choice. And I think that many circumstances in life are immediately related to this fact - that you are standing on the ground and you are looking in space. And then you make a house. So somehow we have a very high responsibility.

Our idea was that it was free for the architect to make such a thing in the way he thought it had to be. He is no more making houses the way he likes them to be but he makes the group in the way he likes it, but respecting the big scale and the small scale in the one visual

group

PS I think there is a danger involved in this city - one big building thing - it's taken too literally where it is, in fact, a metaphor and it doesn't have to be everything connected to everything as all geometrics tied to all other geometrics. This is system building which results in a system which is one big thing - I have the strongest feeling that dislocation of the elements is a better technique on the whole for making a collective than sticking them together. It's just that we agree generally the business of systems of linkages but they needn't be physical.

### de CARLO

It seems to me that until some years ago there were two parties of urbanists - the first thinks that it was necessary to produce a city more and more big, because all the values of social life were possible in a big city; and another party which thought that it was necessary to cut the growth of the city when the direct relation between the men who work in the city was interrupted. In reality, the first opinion, that it was necessary to have a big city was contradicted by the congestion. And another question - very important - is that there is no difference between the city and the country because we have only a gravitational field, and this gravitational field has some concentration, and here is the city in the traditional sense. But there is some destructive point of this gravitational field and this is the mixture of country and town, and on the limit it is only country. But it is impossible to see the division between the country and the town.

On the development of the south side of Milan, it is necessary that I give you some words on the situation. This is the true Milan, the Milan you see in the centre of Milan, and there is extension which has the form of a regional system. These community authorities and a group of owners, together, asked me to make a study of the extension, thinking of this localisation as an extension of Milan. It is a little

agricultural village which has no reason to remain, and it is like working on a completely free site. I search to have a gravitational field and there are some compensations. These compensations are the hinges of the structure of the city. I am charged for the planning problem and for the direction of the realisation of the scheme but not for making, like an architect, all this city. It is not at all possible that an architect may build a city of these dimensions, alone, without the participation of many forces - and above all, the forces of the people which live in this location.

I have two levels of control of this structure. The first one is the general structure of the city, the second one is the level of the architecture, the beginning of the pattern of this architecture. The first level - I think it is impossible to design all the structure, because this is an event - the second event is conditioned by the first event and it is impossible to think of the second without having appreciated the result of the first, and appreciated the elements of conditioning of the first element. And in this case I think it is possible to fix some points which are the points of the beginning of the structure. And at this point I think they have the points which I have called hinges. The point where the most quantity of interests are simultaneously present, because they are the points of generation of the structure, and between one point and another point I have to define an elastic system - which can take form in relation to the conditioning - which points, when they are done, give to the structure its entirety. From the point of view of architecture, I think that it is the same - but with the idea that it is necessary to have the participation of the natives.

vE If you have determined, rightly I think, the hinges - a hinge in

itself is nothing without a door hanging on it, you have to have a door screwed on to a hinge, otherwise the hinge is no good.

And the second question - interior - is the proceeding to give freedom to the inhabitants to express themselves, in changing the organisation of their space and express themselves through the organisation.

JB How can you give to society your method, your way of thinking for the realisation of this town? Or is it that you think this can only become fact when you, Giancarlo, dedicate yourself from this moment completely to this town in order to follow step by step things which are happening?

It is necessary that I find a method which is able to go on without me. If I am necessary the method is completely wrong.

PS It seems to me that you've come to the essence of the problem, because there are two possible approaches to this. One I would call the Le Corbusier approach, where you spend a lot of your life developing archetypal solutions to problems. Not only archetypes - they're prototypes. The other way is that I think you have to evolve a methodology. That is, you have to take the lower-down structure within the major structure, discover a structuring of the minor structures and you offer that structuring of the minor structures to the architects. They then have a way of disciplining so that it is freer from the style problem to a certain extent because the form is explicit in the structuring which is the result of a certain common-sense. You've got to offer them a methodology of construction and I really think that unless you do that it's going to fail - and I give you a marvellous example of this.

You know, in London, they had a situation on the south side of the river and they - near County Hall, I'm talking about the Shell Building - they did a lot of urban studies on this site. The land was owned by the municipality, they had complete planning control. They said they wanted a high building. They, as it were, almost channeled the solution out, but in fact, when all comes to all, that method which was a visual method of composition depended on the sensibility of the architect who was actually employed, and I am tremendously suspicious - and when they actually built it, it was a disaster, although it obeys all the rules in a visual sense - it's disastrous. It's a building you'd have been able to figure out a methodology by means of which any result would have been, as it were, a reasonable result in a human sense that would have been better than having a big formal disaster.

I am absolutely positive that you can't leave a problem as this basic structuring thing and my own feeling, instantly, is that you've got to sit there and produce archetypal solutions. Not only produce the methodology - because most people can understand form but they can't understand channeling. I think the great thing is the first stage. If the methodology is clear it has a meaning at many levels, which you can explain. I think you have to do this.

VE The goal of urbanism in the architectural world is to make a concentration of concentrations and the relation between them.

PS I can communicate. I can communicate by form.

I want to defend myself from the accusation of expressionism because I dislike expressionism.

PS You've always been an expressionist.

I dislike expressionists. I think that Expressionism does not contain a technological dimension, and for that it is Expressionism - it doesn't contain the technological dimension. The fundamental question for the organisation, for the methodology of construction, and it is for that that expressionism is out of the question. To give this technological dimension that Kenzo Tange finds. Because I think the technological dimension of Kenzo Tange is too mechanical and it is possible to find a dialectical dimension which permits to have a growth of the system.

PS That is why I call it expressionist because you have a romantic notion of the interrelationship of things which is a historical one essentially. That this was the way in which it was done. But it seems to me that if you wish the possibility of the supermart and the professional offices and so on to allow themselves to develop, it's really not a question - it's private theory. All I am saying is that you, it seems to me that you take, in order to get a concentration of activities in which each activity partakes of other activities, they have to be done in such a way that they don't compromise each other. That is they're free to develop their own systems - in the Kahn sense - they become what they need to be. It does mean there is a separation of these elements in a physical sense, but they are just as connected in a group sense and in a metaphysical sense. To be connected they don't have to be stuck together. I think the objectives are correct but I really think the techniques are expressionistic.

The structures have to be loaded with the evolution of the thing it produces. You can't have a completely open situation. It's impossible. The art gallery that has completely free space and roof light everywhere is no art gallery. There is too much freedom.

SW He has established a form. He hasn't left any freedom.

PS That's what I think myself. It is the images which are suspicious. I mean the intentions are correct. I use correct in the accepted sense.

It is impossible to say anything on the results.

VE In the end it just means the person who commits himself to that methodology, he that passes the method on - whether it is in words, or in colour, or in form - is, of course, an autocrat in relation to his materials. The only thing is that if you do it badly you impose it upon people and they cannot escape. But I believe that he must somehow give that method, that idea, and pass it on.

JB I think you have to find the methodology out while doing it.

### DEAN - RICHARDS

We are presenting more of a problem than a solution. The problem of a railway station - Euston. What to do with it in its new environment.

The railways were only brought to the perimeter of the old city. A subsidiary net-work of transportation had to be made - the Tubes were made, and I suppose the London Underground system is very similar to that in Paris, connecting up perimeter terminal stations, the first sort of essays of cross town rapid transport systems. The towns grew and the Tubes became overcrowded and the present situation is that the cross town traffic has almost come to a halt. A new system is required to integrate the new net-work with the old city, rather than super-imposing it on the old city; is a very possible thing.

One suggestion, which we're making now, is to slowly build up a net-work of tunnels, not very many, cross town motor-way tunnels, similar to the cross town Tubes. It is probably not very much more expensive than building above ground, what with the cost of the land. And it allows the existing town to grow more naturally, rather than be carved up. It seems to me that the growth of towns must be a natural sequence of events, rather than having something immediately imposed. If transportation is to be really efficient, it should really have to

do the least amount of work. They shouldn't have to take commuters right across town, they should take them to the centres of greatest intensity of development. The new Euston Station will probably be a sub-centre of London. It will be a little city in itself.

In the last century there was, around Euston itself, a large hinterland extending outwards from the actual centre of the city which Euston and the other terminals served. In fact, over the course of the last century, this hinterland from the station somehow diminished in value - it decreased its worth because people living with railroads for a time found they weren't a very pleasant thing anyway; they were dirty and noisy and not very nice to have houses by. So small industries grew up and the town around the railhead became some of the worst parts of the town, sort of negating the actual convenience of having the shortest distance for the commuter to travel from the railhead. The parts of the town that grew up around the railhead have diminished in value so much that they are really ripe for development.

To my mind this is the most natural, the most organic way, that cities can grow. Parts naturally die and need to be rejuvenated somehow. The growth of a city is an organic thing. There were a number of studies made to develop the whole station as a major shopping centre. Generally it was felt that this was not the best place in London for such a place, because of the immediate influx of motor vehicles, and already on the site there has to be provision for three thousand, possibly four thousand, cars, and the immediate road network cannot really cope with more.

This is a small town centre with a daytime population in the neighbourhood of 15,000 and that drops at night to just a few thousand, who are in the hotel possibly. It is intended that this will be a 500 bed

hotel and there will obviously be living facilities for some shop keepers, pub owners and such like. But there has been no attempt in this to build housing over the station. I think this ought to be stressed because there is already quite a large housing estate. To build over a station is expensive and you could only afford luxury dwellings where people would probably not feel like living anyway.

WW It's fantastic. Vertical and horizontal traffic, wailing, driving cars, driving trains. I can't see it any more you know. Are you going to present an approach or is this the result - or what is it?

This is an approach

JB What is the meaning? What are you doing? I have the feeling that the meaning of what's going on here is the essential thing. I think that the reason of a city often is - was - will be - I don't know, related to where two roads are crossing. In history you see that those who had to cross the road did need help and did say, 'Now I stay here and will go tomorrow the next distance'. So you did need a small hotel and you did need help to repair carriages and so on. Then you see the railway came - they followed very often, existing roads. A railway station is really the place where you go, of course, from one thing to another, and this moment of change is really for making a town. It becomes a town centre so that will be a place where people like to buy things. Because they come from the train and go to the car or to the sub-way and say: 'Well, let me buy a little bit - my wife asked me to take it with me, I'll do it here'.

But there is another wonderful. We find more and more that in big organisations, small scale things are very important, which are fitting in old towns. But I think the new town, when we make it, could be the crossing of the highest traffic routes by here and there around the crossing could spread out the new town, as always the town begins. And, in fact, I think there is a big - we have to compromise of course, because you are working in an old town which has its centre somewhere, but you feel that this likes to be a centre and the existing here of being a centre.

There is, just about now - I'm sure not only in London, but just about everywhere - a natural realisation of the simple fact that where two routes cross, there is the focal point of the community. In London things are happening that way, very slowly - very slowly. At Paddington Station there is a vast new office development. At Victoria the same thing is happening. Also at Waterloo and now at Euston.

PS What worries Wewerka is that these are ad-hoc things that are happening.

The systems of flow are somehow hidden inside the buildings. It's just this business of forms. You can say you are looking for perhaps some expression of what the building is. But the various sorts of methods of flow, either for trains, for cars - or people or something - perhaps they sort of tend to be secondary elements to the static elements where people stay in a still position, where people are moving. It's like water in pipes. At one time the great thing was to express the pipes the water flowed in, to express the wires the electricity flowed along, but now perhaps there is the great realisation that these are in fact secondary functions of living and that the primary function is where one sits down and does some work or talking, or some sleeping or something, and those are the primary things that should be expressed. The flow systems are secondary.

AS I think what Werwerka smells in this scheme is that you have overlaid the thing that has to be built - the station and the taxis and the pubs handling, and all the things you genuinely know about and that will be there - and Euston Road - with this poetry of the idea of the north-south motor-way; the sort of modish thing of the traveller, which certainly developers don't intend to make that big at this stage; the good social idea of hostels for London University; the recreation - keep-it-alive idea - the greyhounds. In a way bringing back to the station the very thing which didn't make it a little city of transport in the big city, that is, the hotels in the station weren't popular because if you wanted to go to bed early you had the trains all the time.

Well you introduced another noise element. There are all these things which have overlaid the real problem.

Now, apart from Cannon Street, possibly Fenchurch Street, they never really had any need to come into the centre, because we all know that when these things were built, people lived in Bloomsbury and people only travelled by train when they were going to the country - long distance transport. And over the years, perhaps Victoria and Waterloo have become commuters' stations and you now hope that this will become a commuters' station, but you are muddying the situation. What we really want to know is what is a railhead now. In a way, you have either to throw away the old reality of Euston, or you have just to tell us some simple step about the new reality of Euston.

CA The idea of keeping the station alive after mid-night is expressionist itself isn't it? It has nothing whatever to do with the station.

A hundred years ago a station was a building of great events, a big hall. Now the station is not wanting to make a statement about itself. It's just wanting to be a little place where you change your method of transportation.

CA What is the connection between greyhound-racing and transfer?

PS I think there is a suspicion the multi-structural building is expressing a mutual antagonism which is so intense it's not worth doing in the first place. That's the functional thing - it has no flexibility, no possibility of change and all these things because your functions compromise each other - structure, use and so on, different cycles of - you may be able to lock some of them together but it may be, on the face of it, the buildings that try to do this - Grand Central complexes and the buildings you have in Tokyo, the railway-station-store etc. - don't actually speak very clearly of any of these things. They are tremendously confused. You know, I'm tremendously afraid of this, that why you can't get at a formal solution is that maybe it's not right to try. You're not giving yourself enough elbow-room for this thing, because surely the interchange itself must occupy an enormous acreage. You've got the car-park, and getting from the car-park to the road and you've got your Underground connections. I think we are always trying to pile too much development on the site, and surely the advantage of modern communications systems is that we can lower the intensity, lower the intensity of use, because the intensity is going to be tremendous anyway. There is no need to make it more intense - rather the reverse.

You have to say to the client, 'Well, it looks as if we can't pile on all these functions without them compromising each other'. I think you have to do this because otherwise the function of the architect is merely to bring things out - otherwise you give the problem to an engineer. You see what I mean, a combination of engineer and speculator.

I think our feeling is that an office building can be placed anywhere, it can be placed over or alongside stations in preference to other areas which could be difficult to get to. The Vickers building is miles from anywhere - is the greatest planning mistake in London.

PS It's part of the same tendency, to decant offices, except that this puts them into areas of very good communications which is very logical. I'm really trying to be absolutely ruthless. If you work on it for a year and a half in the realities of the railway station, and you know that you have been unable to extract a

solution in terms of the railway, and maybe in terms of a crypto-ideal thing, maybe you have to go away and say, 'It's impossible'. Maybe it is impossible. Is there a simpler way? And say develop this and this, but not that and that - or that. Because it's the confusion thing and I really think you are trying to bring some sort of apparent system out of the confusion.

JB When I pass an autobahn in Germany, I always see that on all the bridges there are standing people and they look. I never know why - it's wonderful and I'm glad that I see them. In the problem we had to do, we said let's make this site so the people can stand and look at the trains, and we said, if people are standing here we may get some small shops, information centre for several things - tourism and so on. So the whole pattern came to life. Hey, that's a problem - delivery to these shops - I didn't think about that. There comes some complication to make delivery to these shops. And you have small shops and you have all these elevators and you have small corners here and the end is - well, a big battleship, you know. Somewhere here there are four thousand cars. Their existence is away. I think we will have to find with the programme the most essential identifying thing.

You're suggesting that we should express the essential functions.

In our mind, the essential functions are the static functions, not the functions of movement. And the essential functions, as you say, where two roads cross - the town springs up - it's the static components of the town that are expressed rather than the idea of station or car-park or anything else. We're not expressing this sea-terminus, a railhead or interchange. It is an attempt to play down that big movement thing although to resolve it.

PS It serves this region but it also serves the whole rest of the city as a gateway and interchange. I think even if you play it cool it ought to be that.

### WOODS

Bilbao. We've been looking, for some time, into this problem of how to group large numbers of dwellings beyond the visual group - looking for some kind of organisation. We thought that probably the simplest way would be to begin by trying to work out a linear organisation, because it has more possibilities of flexibility and development, and

also because it can in some way help us to solve the intensity problem - trying to establish something that would remain more acceptable.

We started with a line, as a way of organising things, and began by saying what was on the line, and what the line was - a grouping of human activities which have to be discovered - what these relationships are. We begin by saying that, in a context like this, we organise these things in a linear way. It's an attempt to find out what will be the relationship between things. We like the fact that the line is open-ended and that you can do almost anything you want with it.

One of the big problems is to try to reconcile speed - different scales of speed - between the automobile and the pedestrian systems. We think that these things are never complementary, they are never parallel, they always have to meet at points. And you can't imagine a man and a car proceeding together. Since the normal speed of a car is about thirteen to twenty times that of a person, we thought that the car could go around so that the person could go straight. This means the line becomes a pedestrian domain, and the automobile serves the line - it can go around instead of going through and destroying it. We are trying to apply then, to private transport, the same thing that applies to public transport. It doesn't go every place, it goes from point to point.

Although transportation is generally thought of as proceeding along lines, its only contact with the permanent scale is at points, so the man on foot and the machine for moving from one place to another can only meet at a point in space. It is seen then that the system of transportation, rail or road, cannot be taken as a generator of urban design. We propose that the city be considered as a living organism and that its structure be open ended and based on the possibilities of

continuous change. When we began to design on these principles, we found out of course that we were obliged to make compromises. We were trying to build in some possibility for change and growth, in the sense that instead of making a large scheme and then building it over a period of time, we were trying to find a structure that you could begin to build and it would be capable of adapting itself to new conditions until it was built, and perhaps, ideally, in the future be always capable of readapting. And this is what we think is the potentiality of the idea of this linear organisation. As soon as one begins to build any part of it, you change the environment, so you change the factors which determine what's true. The structure of the city and the human activities within it are defined by the relationship between them.

The plan for the Asua Valley, which we propose, indicates one way in which human activities may be associated within a city at the present time. The plan is based on the idea of the linear association of activities which generates and serves the dwellings along it. The stem consists of such activities as may be found necessary at a given scale of association, including education, commerce, work, entertainment and so on. All these buildings come into the stem at some point so that the whole pedestrian system is always tied to this. It was proposed at this point to group those activities which would be most clearly associated with centre; entertainment, the major shopping centre, theatres and cafés and this would be where the paseo would happen - you know the old Spanish thing - Las Rambles, Plaza Roy Reale in Salamanca - a place where people could be and at the same time see all these things happening without being disturbed by them. We feel that what was required here was less a plan than a way of planning; that by establishing certain conditions and relationships an organic

development can result in which each building can have its own form because each will have its own meaning in the total organisation.

This plan is really dangerous, it's not a graphic problem, we don't know what this thing can be, because we can't in two months what should be the development of a thing of 80,000 people.

PS You mustn't present what you don't know, in my opinion, and then it's a real problem if you can persuade someone to accept something in which you don't know.

AS But also you're looking for a method of briefing people. Suppose you say, now we want to keep the densities even, you know, you don't want to work a linear system. How do you know that some idiot isn't going to charge off across country, with those terrible sort of fungi sort of growing, or does one mind?

That's one of the things that one can't control.

PS That's what we're asking. If it grew to 800 metres long, an enormously long, endless, building, would you mind?

JV A line has its own articulation.

I'm interested in establishing certain conditions along this line - the idea of determining points, where you can enter buildings, but you can't determine them on the terrain.

PS Suppose you have to give the general briefing, the methodology to someone else - if only you could establish, say between logical access points, this is a useful distance - nothing more than that. Then if you said, let it become 800 metres long - this snake thing - some other factor intervenes which would control, because by the time it's that length it becomes another part of the structure, doesn't it? Searching for another level of control.

It has to do with some sort of reglement d'urbanisme.

AS This would really tie in with Toulouse.

PS Even when you built the archetypal thing - in a way some of the things you do, the length of the building for example, are instinctive. You know you've got to stop, because the form falls to pieces. But you can't say that to Joe Bloggs that you must stop at 500 metres because at 500 metres the form collapses - the urban form. The problem of these things - it's very obvious now they have built some - not very obvious - I can't extract any rules from them, some parts work sometimes and some parts don't work, in human terms. I mean some parts create good spaces, that are good to be in and good to use, and some parts are indifferent, even bad.

I'm sure I've said this before - but when they are very, and you feel very closed, you hate it when they are sort of middle height and rather open and when it disappears.

This is something that you can't control, otherwise you'd have to make the whole thing. What you control is densities, what you determine are points where car-parks can be, where schools could be - you can determine these things, and you can say that a building here would have to, in some way, link with a point, and you couldn't get away with overshadowing and overlooking. There would be conditions and you could make so many dwellings in this building. This very nearly determines the form.

JS In a way they're creepy.

Creepy - you mean these spokes going out?

JS Yes.

JB I think this is related to what Peter said, about this thought, this presentation, and they say to you - well we accept your thought, we don't understand it but we accept it - so you must build another kind of realisation. Well, I think the most important thing is how the thought and the realisation method is the same thing. Right, so these are the key points. Then there comes a next step. Where do you begin?

I think you have to begin at the key points.

JB I think so too, but I don't know if you think so. Good, now we begin at the key points. Now there comes a next step. What is your option to start such an initiative - is it necessary that you give an indication how you have to build at this key point.

Then I think you have to work with who is going to build at these key points. If it's a promoter, he has to accept - he doesn't have to accept a discipline, he has to work with you or you have to work with him. I don't think this is impossible, because it's happening. I think what we said is that by giving certain conditions for good building, buildings which have to serve their purpose well, that's as far as you can determine these conditions. You augment your chances of getting a

good building. But that's about as far as you can go, because you can't impose a good building on anybody.

JB Then isn't it true that you come to the same position as Giancarlo said yesterday evening?

That's why I said, yesterday evening, I don't know where it begins. This is as far as I can determine where it begins, here and here, that the top and crest of the hill should be the pedestrian way. I think that this feels right for me, that the cars should be in the valley, that the cars should stop some place. These are the things I can easily determine about this.

JB So it should be a simple building problem, the connection, the link between where the car stops and the house begins, or another thing - is residing in such a code. Because if the man doesn't accept that I think many things break down.

One other part of it that I think is important, which I forgot to mention, is, unfortunately they had this metro-sysstem projected - what I would like to give is the possibility not to have an automobile.

AS What's the next level of grouping - how do you join one cluster to another? I don't think there is a next level of grouping that has anything to do with this representation that was made here. This is a group that comes around a city, this is an extension of an existing group really.

WW The plan has, in a way, a schematical kind of distance from one block to another. At least it is in the hand of the architect who builds, but would it be possible to direct that foundational system in a way that such a possibility - in this question of number, of economics - perhaps a question of utter fantasy, you know, mistake - a mistake belongs to life.

dC C'est très important de ne pas chercher avant les mistakes.

PS I think it's cuckoo to plan mistakes. I think it's just a word thing. One of the things we were searching for in this Eiffel Tower business is to do with the same thing, of experience of space as the scale gets bigger, so that you are aware of the change of scale. This is not a question of error, it is another sort of control. This is really what Alexander is talking about - the next unit is also with us, a space experience problem, because that is how you know you have passed from one zone to another.

I agree with what he says and even the words he uses - mistakes -

because I think when you start planning at this scale - you see mistakes - it can't be otherwise.

AS No, but you might be able to put your finger on a method of explaining to someone that as soon as they got a certain distance away from the centre, that the pole of the centre - you felt the power of it dropping off, which gave the possibility that if you extended your system like the fingers of that German fairy-tale boy - Pumpernickel - at a certain moment it gets so long that you need another finger to it, you see. So that there could be a break-off point here so that you don't feel the pole lessening as you get to the end. Now we haven't got this technique - but could we find it? You should be able to feel you're four stairs away from the centre, ten stairs away from the centre, you know.

Yes, yes - I think so.

AS You see, if you start building this - how can you put into the method that they also feel the pull of the centre.

That's the point. Yes, quite - that is, in fact, what I want from you.

JB I think it's necessary that you make a research before you start building it. What kind of space definition will be included in this thought you gave them. Otherwise I think it will be chaos. When I see, for example, what here it was, I simply say it's chaos. When I see it, I like to say that to be clear - you know.

AS Well, we're being a bit clever, because if you look at a map - photograph - of a bit of Paris that doesn't have one of Montmartre or the Eiffel Tower, that you can also say is chaos.

JB It is very important what you say. Paris is not a chaos because Haussmann did digout the boulevards. At a certain moment there were no boulevards but then the Seine was still the identifying thing. The small streets which were there were in a way all directed to the Seine. I repeat, if you don't know where you are, and it's not in the simpleness. Now I think if Shad is thinking about this approach he has got to go so far that the identifying image has to work out and you have to hand it to the architect.

AS If we throw away the identity pyramid and say that it's the same all over, we've got to give some cut-off point, as the pyramid has.

PS The density pyramid itself is identifying. The minute you know what is the density - to smell that side is dense, to smell that side is loose, then you know where you are. This is obvious in Cambridge, you know where the town is and you know where the fields are. I think you have to take away the density pyramid. But you have to have another sort of density pyramid. As a matter of fact you may even get a pyramid in a zero-pressure centre.

AS But this is also what we worry about with the station

PS Let me get to this interesting point about it, which is just a check on what you said about Pumpernickel's finger. It's not only a problem of how to hand this over to somebody, but if this is the centre, and as Alison says, you could feel the pull in the same way as you feel the centre at the outside. But this thing keeps going; you've got to indicate in each section of this thing, by an extraordinary subtlety of space language or system language that you are getting further away from one thing but nearer to another thing. Because one of the rules of expressing things when you build in an ordinary way, with buildings, they are always the same, irrespective of their location. You simply take the same element and blend it to desirable things.

JS Do you find this in Nancy or Bath?

PS Yes.

JS Well then, can you describe what it is in Nancy or Bath?

But I find this thing, you find, in the Paris sub-way, and you can't see anything, but you can feel it. You can tell if you're at Volontaires or Montparnasse.

PS I'm only worried about the repetition involved.

This is what doesn't worry me.

PS It doesn't worry me at a theoretical level - it gratifies me at a theoretical level, but it worries me in this application.

AS Perhaps John could say something about the way he thinks.

JV Well, the way I think, it is the same way Shad's thinking of it. Figuratively speaking, one's got a series of ribbons, so to speak, or forces running through the roots here, which each have their own frequency and these frequencies cross at certain points - perhaps two - just two crossings very frequently, and there are perhaps thirty or forty or fifty of these, and there are points where you get three crossings, which are further apart, and this is building up the ribbon. And eventually you reach a point, and I think it wants a terminus because you don't know how this thing is going to grow - and you get forty or fifty of these, however many there are, figuratively forces all concentrating, say, at that point, the central point in this particular situation. What they do at the other end I don't know. I think if you have to define it - but I'm against defining it - the trouble is you have to define, otherwise the town will go on doing what we've always done, simply developing like that. But to go and define it with a building form seems to me to be the wrong technique, because it's a compositional technique.

- PS Doesn't this diagram just represent the stem forces?
- JB John, may I ask you, who do you have so the word compositional technique? Don't you think you're working in a compositional technique?
- JV I'll try to answer that one. It's very difficult to answer because I can't see very clearly what it is.
- JB I work completely in a compositional technique - me, one hundred per-cent.
- JV Perhaps then compositional is the wrong word - I'm sorry.
- JB I should like to state that in many papers we send out all over the world, there is somewhere said the compositional technique is perhaps of the 16th. 17th. 18th. or 19th. century, but in the 20th. century a compositional technique is wrong.

Jaap, I think it's a question of the level of this compositional technique.

- JB Let us say, simple, that the name composition is great. But it is a definition in space, and if it is good, then people say 'I know where I am', and if it is wrong, 'having all your systems I don't know where I am', it's a chaos.
- JV The difference for me in this, I think, is that what I want to find in the dynamic situation, the form, which together with a person in that situation, or number of people, making something more than that number of people.
- PS The crux of this argument is, really, you have to give the form to the building - you're urbaniste en chef. You have to give how to do it to others, in which case the form thing doesn't enter in. It can't enter in, otherwise you'll become the super architect for another man.

The system thing comes in here.

- PS But the system thing - this is what Bakema was saying - the system thing proceeds from form thinking. I mean is that true? You can't in fact, in our way of thinking, disassociate this because all the time he talks about systems building, we're building these systems - this chap who is also half an architect or the whole of an architect, as well as a statistician and so on, is also I suspect, thinking about them as buildings when he's analysing the system.

You can't.

- JB He gives some points, and he knows of all these patterns which can develop between these points. In fact you are just the same.

PS I don't see how you could have a system in which you could endlessly extend your experience.

Should we go on to Toulouse?

### CANDILIS

In France, since the war, funny things have been happening. I've had the luck to have been involved since the beginning of the town-planning movement.

The Mayor of Toulouse is an elected man. He is an enthusiast. The people of Toulouse must like it, otherwise nothing can be done. I was asked to explain everything to the representatives of the people of Toulouse. There will be 2,000 people in a large cinema. The intelligent are going to say 'What are you doing?'. The problem is to get their assent - to realise the idea, to capture their interest. I don't know whether it's like this elsewhere.

Generally when one builds, or rather, when one demolishes their towns, their ways of life, the people don't want to know, they are not aware of the problem. We made a film, which was shown in the schools and cinemas until everyone was aware of what the problem was all about. Not everyone understood everything of course - each understood what he wanted to understand. This is good.

I was the chief architect of the whole concern - for ever. We have this plan. We must find the right method. Our responsibility is extremely important - we are in this position - what is to be done? A lot has been said about archetypes, we touched lightly on prototypes. Two quite different things. I have the opportunity to give the key to an organisation - which is more important.

Towns are never built by architects - they are built by the society, by the people, by the inhabitants of a town. They follow the example

of their predecessors. It is necessary to find keys to an organisation which must be permanent, which is going to be followed, which is going to follow us. We have not succeeded in solving this, far from it. We have ideas, then dispense with them.

So what is going to be built? It must be well made, if it's bad, all the rest will be bad - that follows. And if it is good all the rest will be good.

### SUMMARY

AS Could we start off tonight - which is a sort of summing-up - by asking Coderch to say, in English, what he said to Candilis, because I didn't quite understand it and nobody seems to.

JC It's only to me it seems that to plan a house it would take me better than six months. I can't understand it.

JB I don't know very much about Spain, but I think there are many people who need other houses.

JC The thing I can say is that in Spain the houses are built historical. I don't know why. As I can't understand how to do it, that's why I asked Candilis.

AS Why I asked you to say it again is that it seemed to bring a criticism very appropriate to the moment, the question of moral responsibility, the position that Team 10 has always taken, for what you build. And on this point I'd like to take up again this business of this scheme that van Eyck took a responsibility to bring to this meeting. Because I think this scheme could have happened without CIAM ever having been. It could have happened if Corbusier had never been, and only as if perhaps van Doesburg or van der Leek or somebody had been, and van Eyck, we know has always been the strongest critic of CIAM. Yet we build absolutely on the foundation that Le Corbusier and CIAM laid for us, and I feel it is a terrible thing that van Eyck hasn't made this boy see what we all believe in in Team 10. He said he asked the boy if he would like to build it. 'Yes' said the boy, he'd build it just like that. Now van Eyck told us this without comment. Now he must make this boy understand about Le Corbusier, about CIAM, about the struggle that we're all involved in. In order to make himself, to make his mind - this boy might think he is therefore justified in building it if someone asked him, because so much work has gone into it. Because ultimately people have to live in it.

JC I think that a great many people have been working with great

care. I think there is something dangerous in it - that the young people believe that THIS IS THE WAY, that this is the normal way. That is the point I think.

AS Isn't there something in this worry that is also this that we now have of Toulouse - it has something to do with the fact that although it is necessary to make in the Candilis situation - you make a big, bold, attack on the thing but at the same time you're afraid of the thing, maybe?

JC I don't see in space, perhaps because of some generality that it is the right way.

AG You don't say that you mean that it is a modern attitude that disturbs you in one case, and the modern attitude you agree with although the results you may doubt - which in the case of these young boys - the modern attitude of them doing it, but you may doubt as to the result.

JC The first thing we made together - I was fighting with that same person, but after I realised that the human situation of this boy, it's quite a different problem. It's a serious job - but it's a job. That's my impression that it would be dangerous, that it would involve the responsibility of the educator. I don't agree that it is very important, they have worked very much. They are wrong I think.

SW What I have not understood ...

JC What I wish to say is not a very complicated question. In my limitations I think that it is very necessary for me many times to complete within six months only a little. I am able to make one thing - it is a great responsibility to compromise in this way. What goes out of here, I say to myself, is not so complete, and after I saw the film I found that it is very very complete. Then it is a sickness.

JB Could you explain Coderch - that you have to limit your work - it is a moral question? Many times you find out when we are thinking about a great number, which is still thinking about Corbu. You did speak so long about it and I thought it nonsense, Candilis, that you are speaking so long to us about ZUP. Suddenly I think it is very good that you did do it, it might be true that it really is impossible to do it - and the architects can find that it is impossible to give really to the man called great number an environment by means of the kind of activity he is doing now. And now I think that the crucial moment is that we ask ourselves if the way in which we approach the problem has in itself a solution, we have to find how it comes that Coderch is saying that you do it. Aldo says in one of the latest 'Forum's - "the wonderful poetry that is to say 'NO' to something" - it would be an indication to the administrators, if the architect says, with all the means I have, with all the dreams I have, I have found the limits in this way - I cannot take the job.

- dC Non, Coderch - I like you very much - you said No! I don't know who, in the beginning of our meeting, asked me about a Greek poet - Cavafy.
- vE I have to assume that Cavafy talks about the great 'No' and the great 'Yes'. It's like getting on a horse as a child, which is too tall for me. I don't say that you are, I'm just asking if you think you are. That's what Coderch is asking you.
- JC I tell you that it's true. I began to talk - at that moment I was shocked.
- PS The battle is there: a hundred thousand people need to have houses and that, the rationalists would say, 'I will enter the battle if I can think of a technique by means of which I can produce a general strategy and illuminate the quality of that strategy in other people's minds', yet in that part which is a demonstration of that quality which one hopes will emerge, not to pass the limits of your capacity to build, because that is - this enters into it very strongly - back to a capacity to build also has the capacity to illuminate. Now the ZUP problem, as I see it, is that it is important to do this work, this project, and the film was made - in a way to extend some parts of this scheme that are, as it were, mentally realised. That is a public problem but it is curiously complicated by the fact that things you put on paper tend to get built.
- I will bring it back to the thing I really understand and that is that we have to find a way of graphically describing a general strategy without committing ourselves beyond the limits of what we know. The difficult part about this is that you have to get the job. That is also quite real because people have to trust you.
- That doesn't help I'm afraid. I thought it was going to help. You have to say 'Yes', but also have a strategy for withdrawal, because, as Alison says, you must stand back from what you do, because afterwards people must live there. You can have a project for yourself which is to realise yourself, to get to another point, but when it becomes a building project it's not something for realising yourself or for making money or anything else - it's a thing which will last for 200 years and this is why the great responsibility lies to withdraw before you make the thing which lasts for 200 years which you know to be wrong.
- Again it is a question of degree because you always believe everything, when you've made it, is partly right and partly wrong. But there must come a point when you know that you can't do it any more - it's beyond you. And I think what Coderch feel, and what I feel, is that, with the knowledge we have and the technique we have, we are the limit of what we can safely do. This is not really a criticism of Toulouse, because in a way my heart sings for the bravery of entering the field.
- SW I think we should try to clarify what you mean by beyond the visual group because the only way I can see into Toulouse is by the visual group, Toulouse or Bilbao or Milan-Sud can be real by proceeding from the visual group to the next visual group. Because otherwise you stop, you make just one thing. Coderch makes one house. You make one castle, and what's happening is someone else

is making it - we have to have some kind of strategy for getting beyond this point.

StJW Because this is concerned with methodology - we didn't discuss the implications of Chris Alexander's method, but if he is right, then all the rest of us here are absolutely iron-age - using iron-age tools.

AS Except, Sandy, that our business is to lift the diagram on to the next level.

PS Yes, but that is just another tool, isn't it? And that is just what I meant about the limitation of techniques, that I was sort of grinding around to this point to give Alexander a chance to jump in - that if it is in fact that we use analytical techniques to arrive at a grouping system - or whatever you like to call it - there may be better techniques to do that sort of work which provide checks, if not creative, at least confidence making techniques which may interlock with ours.

AS I am nervous of all these things just as a bit of flannel - like sociologists and things, only nervous because I didn't learn anything you couldn't learn in a geography book about India.

StJW I would like to speak on behalf of Chris, who didn't explain his scheme, and the only point in it that I wish to raise is that the thing he was attacking was the architect gadding into the fray, each time the same old tools like impedimenta around him, they confuse issues with these old tools. I am not sure he has proved his case. I think he would prove it if he built the village perhaps, and it works well and he goes back and checks it.

RE You only have to think from the way our discussions go backwards and forwards in the most extraordinary unclear way to realise that some sort of methodical thinking with any source of thinking almost would be more methodical than this.

CA Where the problems are really problems of greatest organisation, rather than specific problems of dimension and that sort of thing, the techniques were not available actually. Lots of people dealing with many different kinds of decision theory are not the kinds theories focussed just on this kind of problem. I think that is why when you say when you come across examples of the use of theories of that sort in this field, that is the reason.

RE We imagine quite often that we can get a certain amount of precision in our assessment of these things. I can specify the fact it is quite apparent in these meetings, in spite of the fact that we are all in different countries and different situations, working with the same problems, we have enormous difficulty in understanding one another and this is not only a language problem, so in spite of all our ambition to understand the people we have to build for, it is quite well demonstrated in these meetings that we can't. What interested me in the idea of Team 10 in the beginning was what we said at Otterlo - that we must get together

because we don't really know what to do.

PS Yes. That's just a case of when you start thinking about bringing things together in order to bring them into a relationship with each other, you start thinking about it in a purely literary way. When you start working on the problem, you find that you need other techniques and maybe you have an instinct that the way of putting things together is to put them apart, and if this is the way this must be done - you do it. I think this is an artificial dichotomy between when you are talking about CIAM thinking, I think what they are talking about is that all these things, in a way, that we learned from the CIAM people which has to do with the corny old things - like everybody has a right to have a place to be able to realise themselves, and have a place to go and sit on the grass and all those things, which are so in-built in me as to be ... when I see these things being whittled away and nothing gained in place of them - do you see what I mean?

You say, well what the hell! We want to have all the things - like we want to have a house and have sun in it, plus the things we felt were missing. If you put the things in that you thought were missing, like having everything banged up against one another, and you lose all these other things, you step back and say, well - I've dropped off somewhere. Maybe it's just that. That's all I want to say.

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PLATES

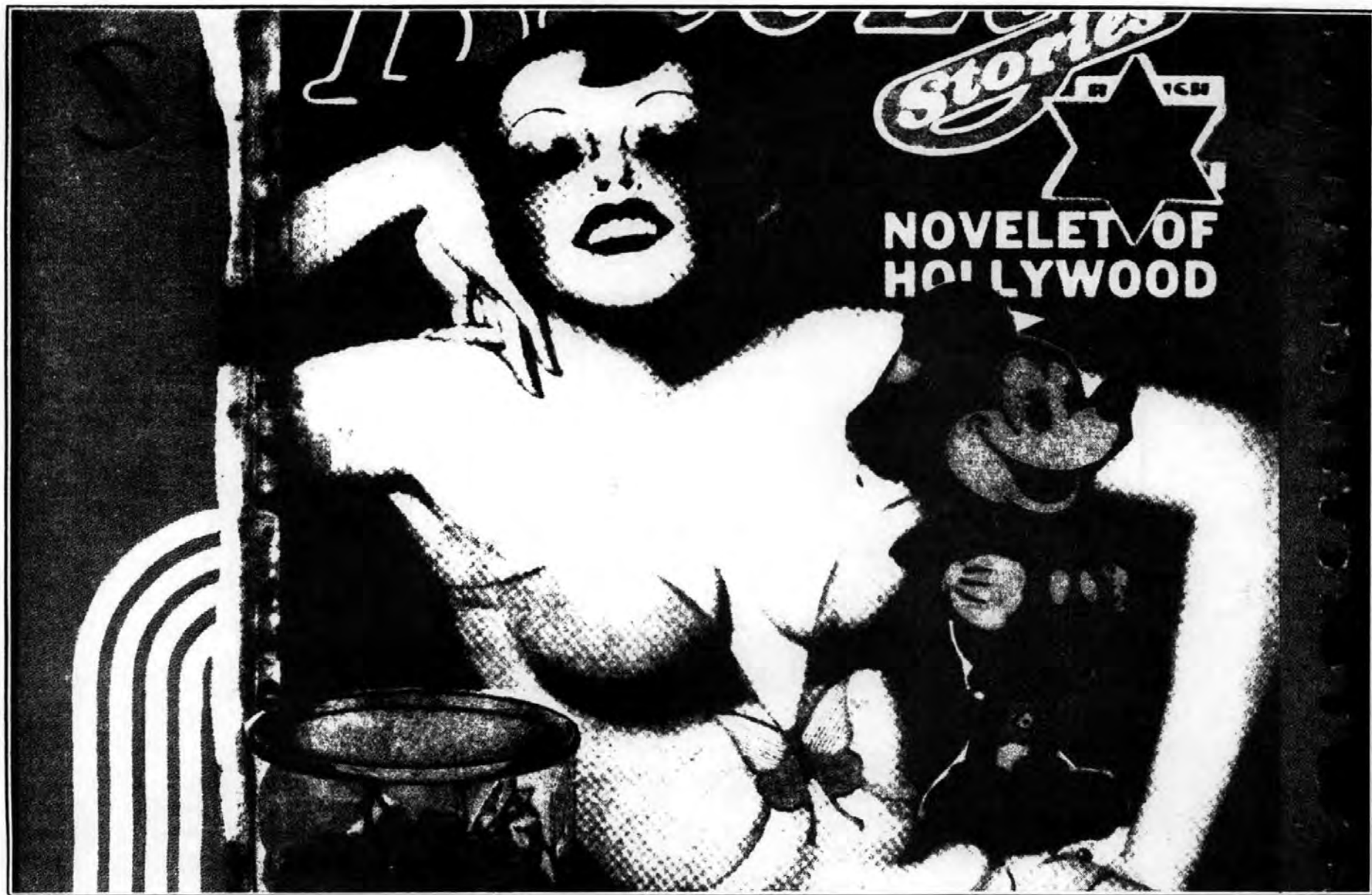
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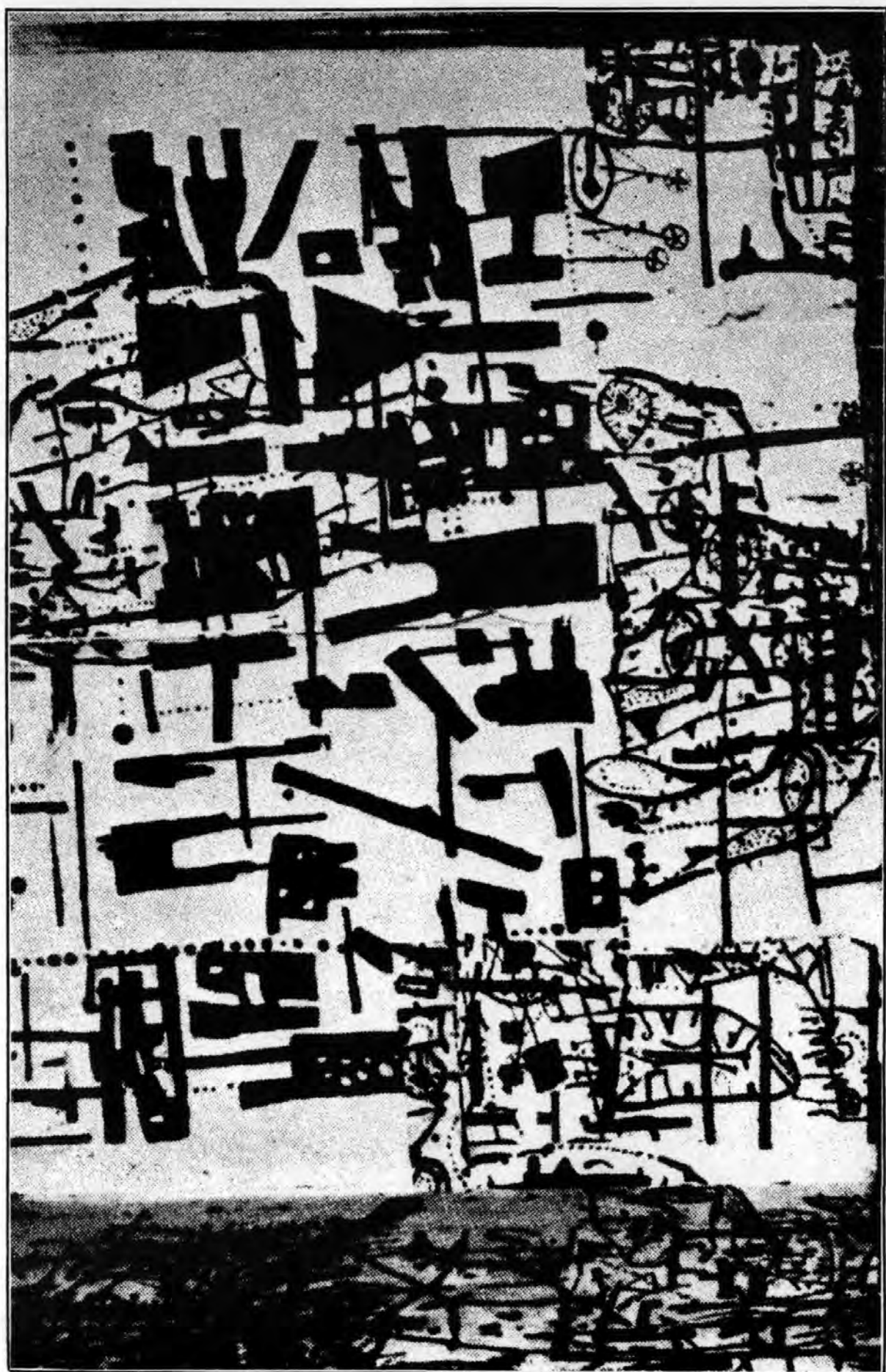
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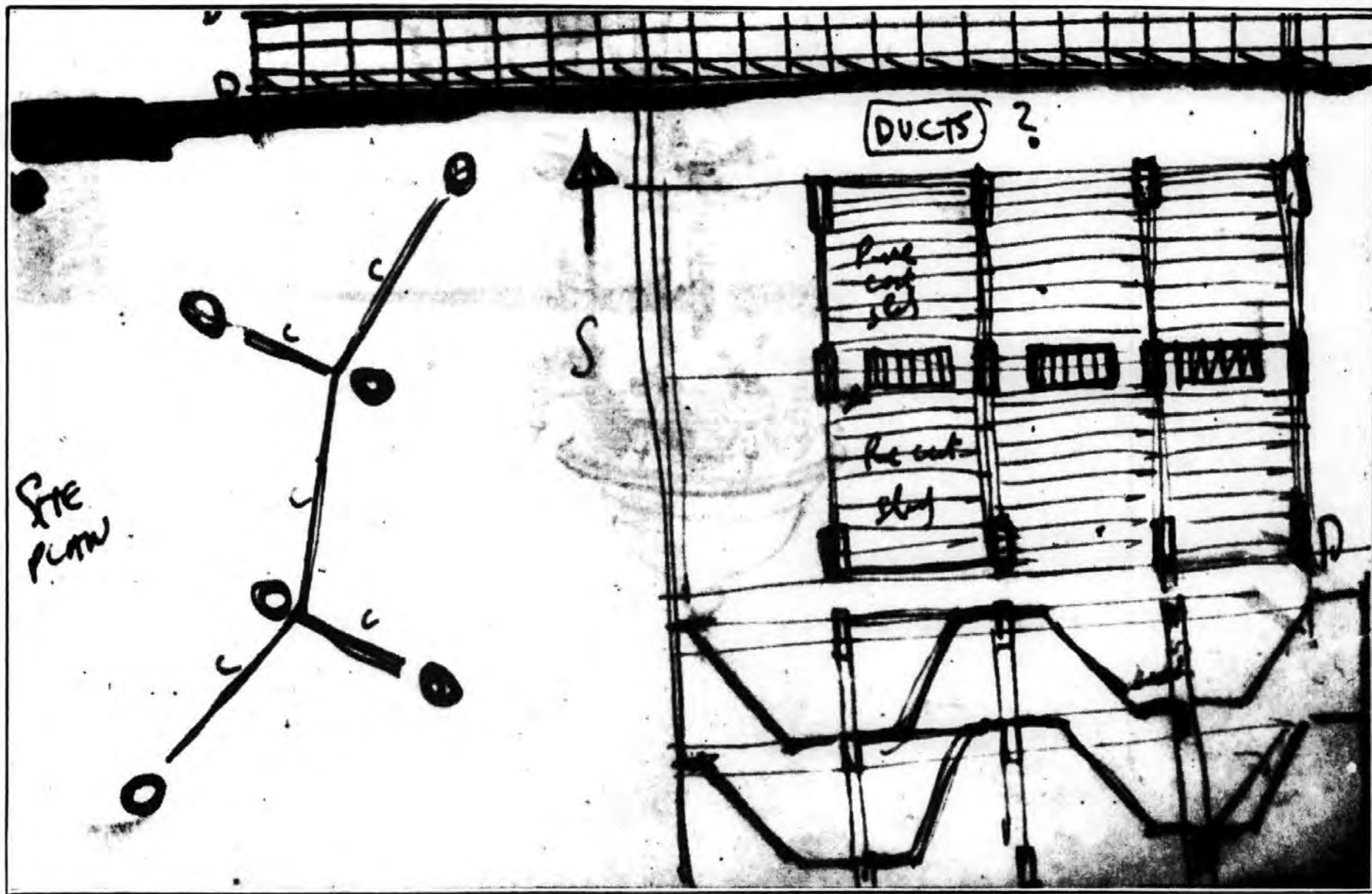


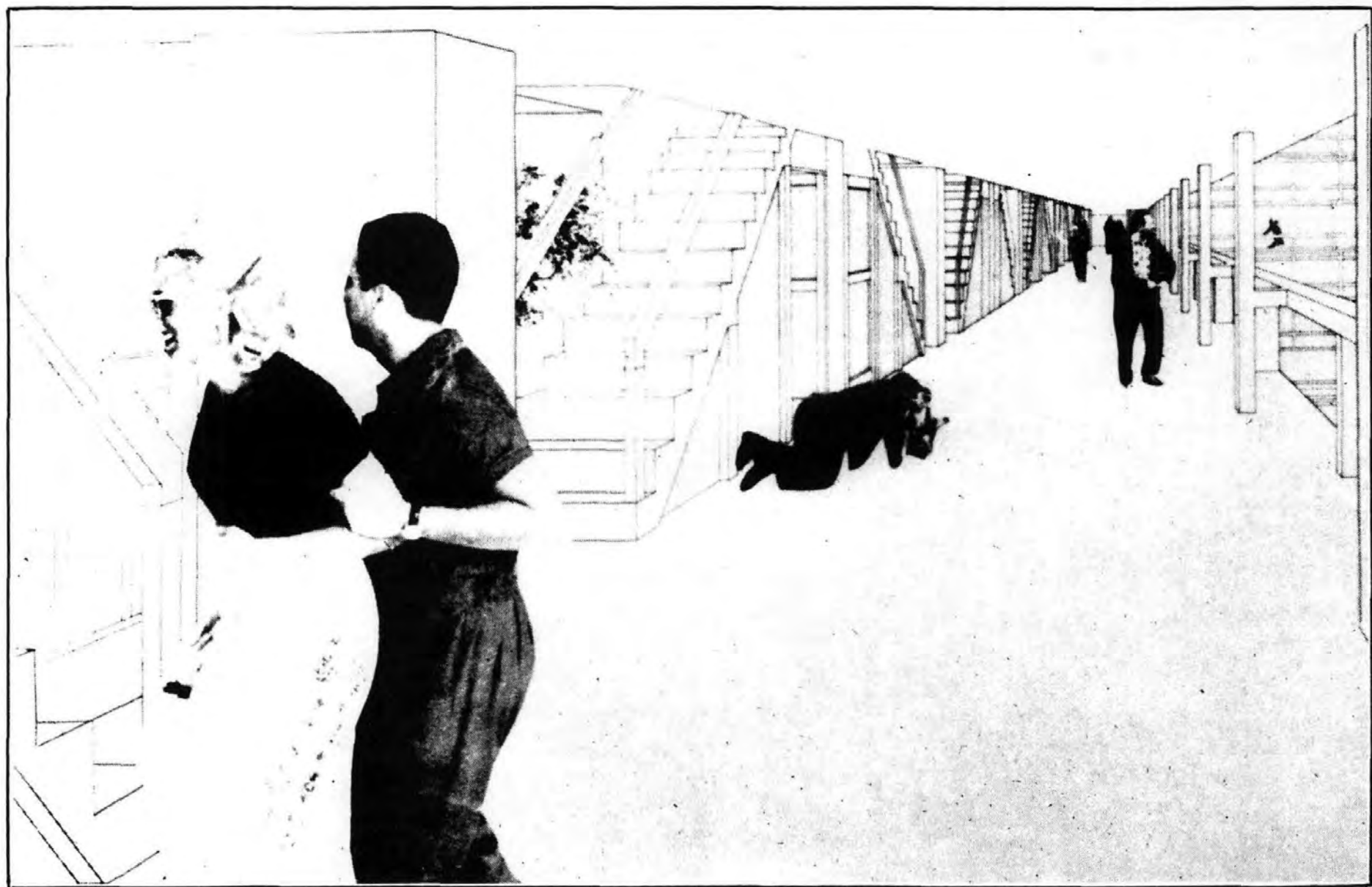


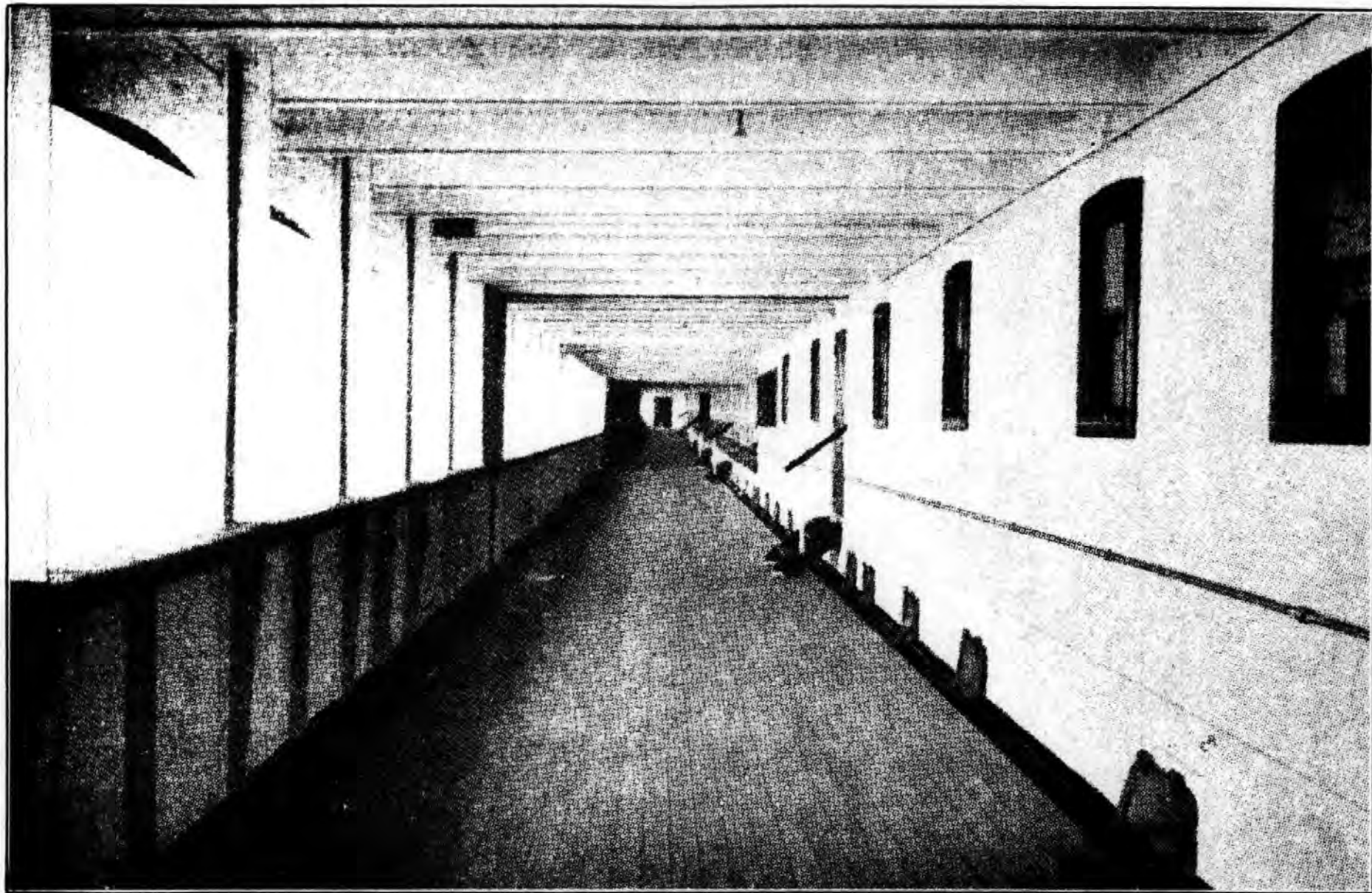






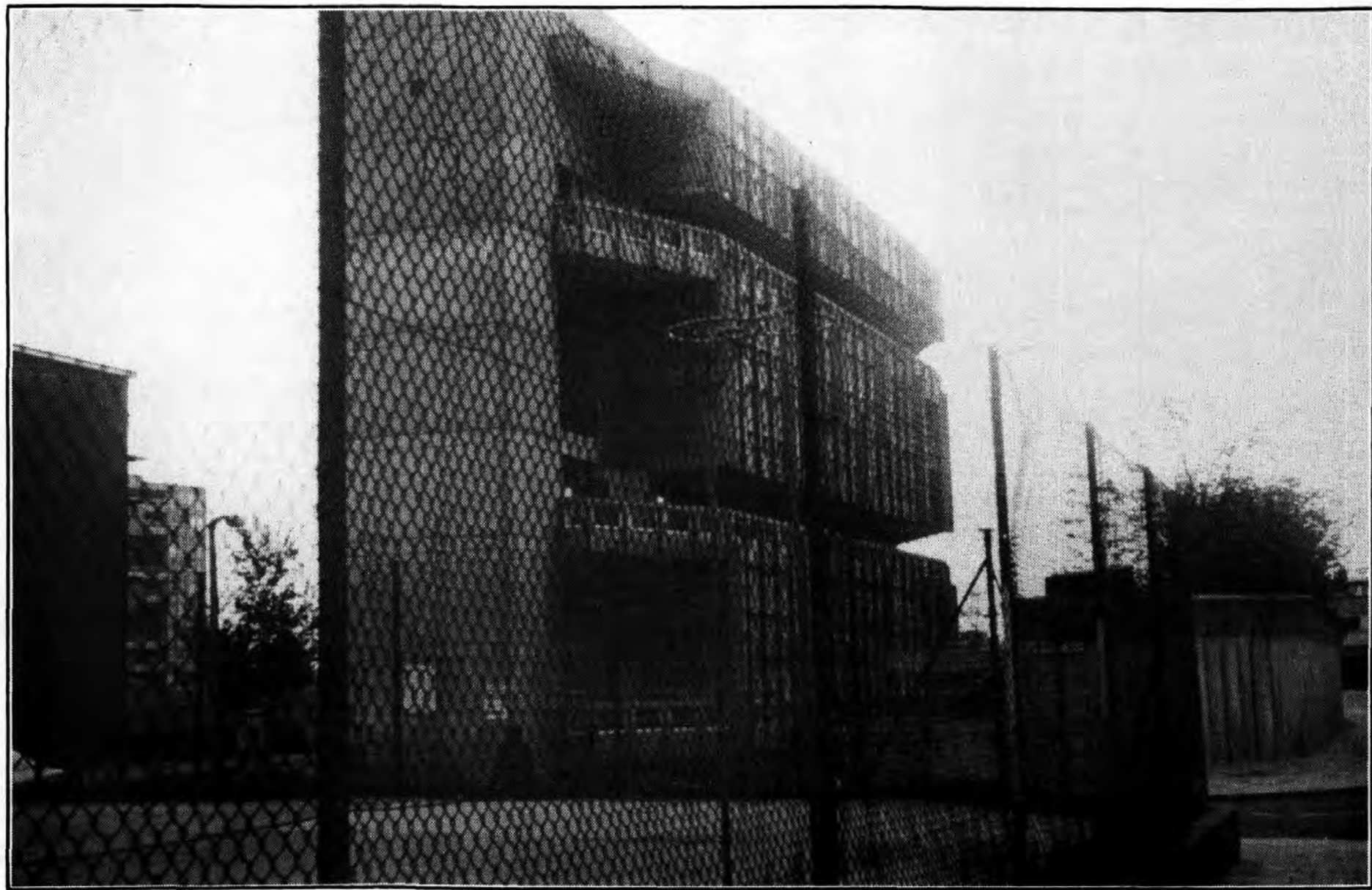




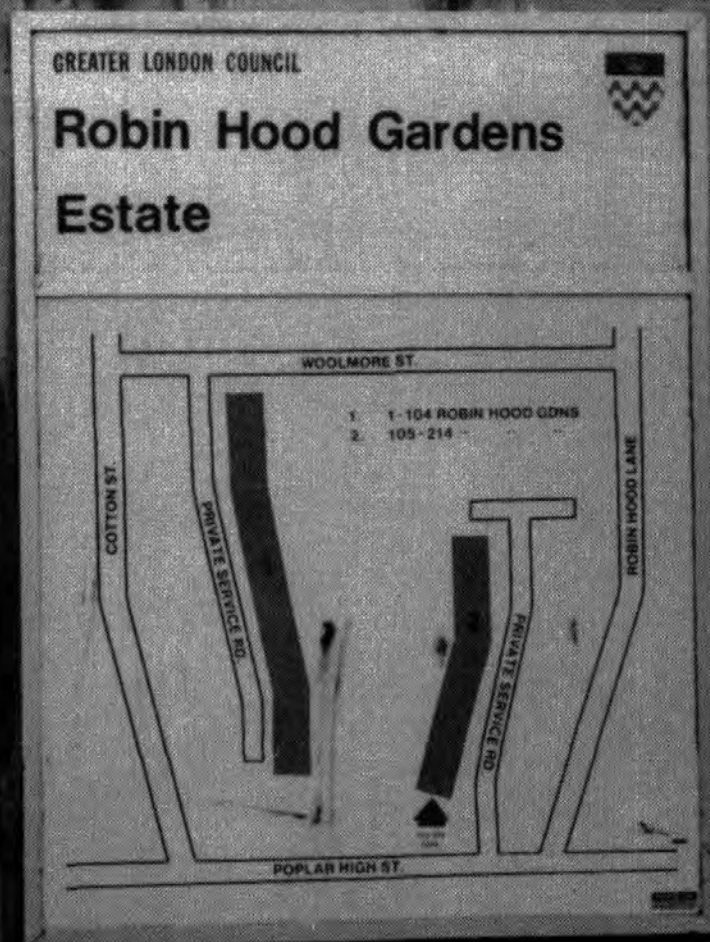
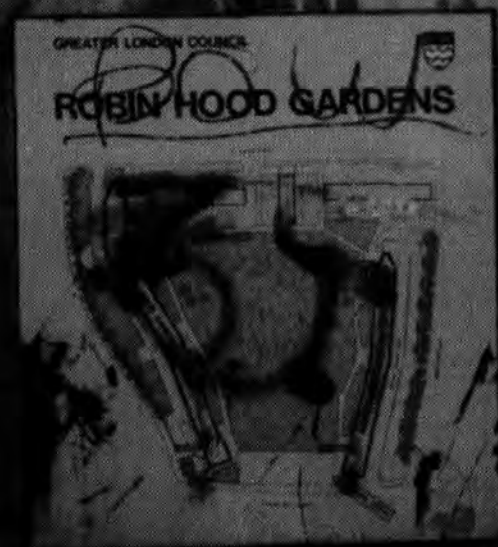


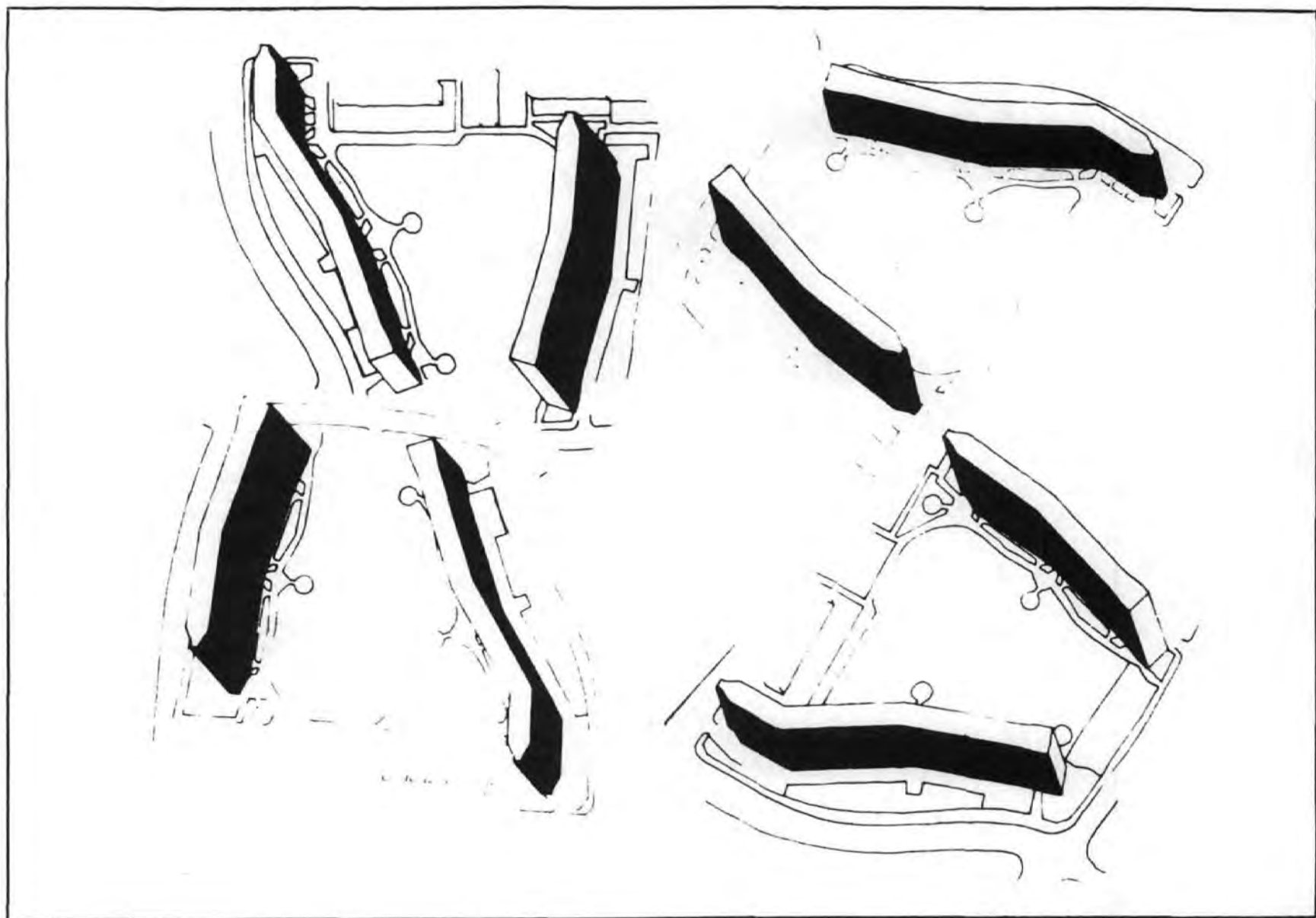


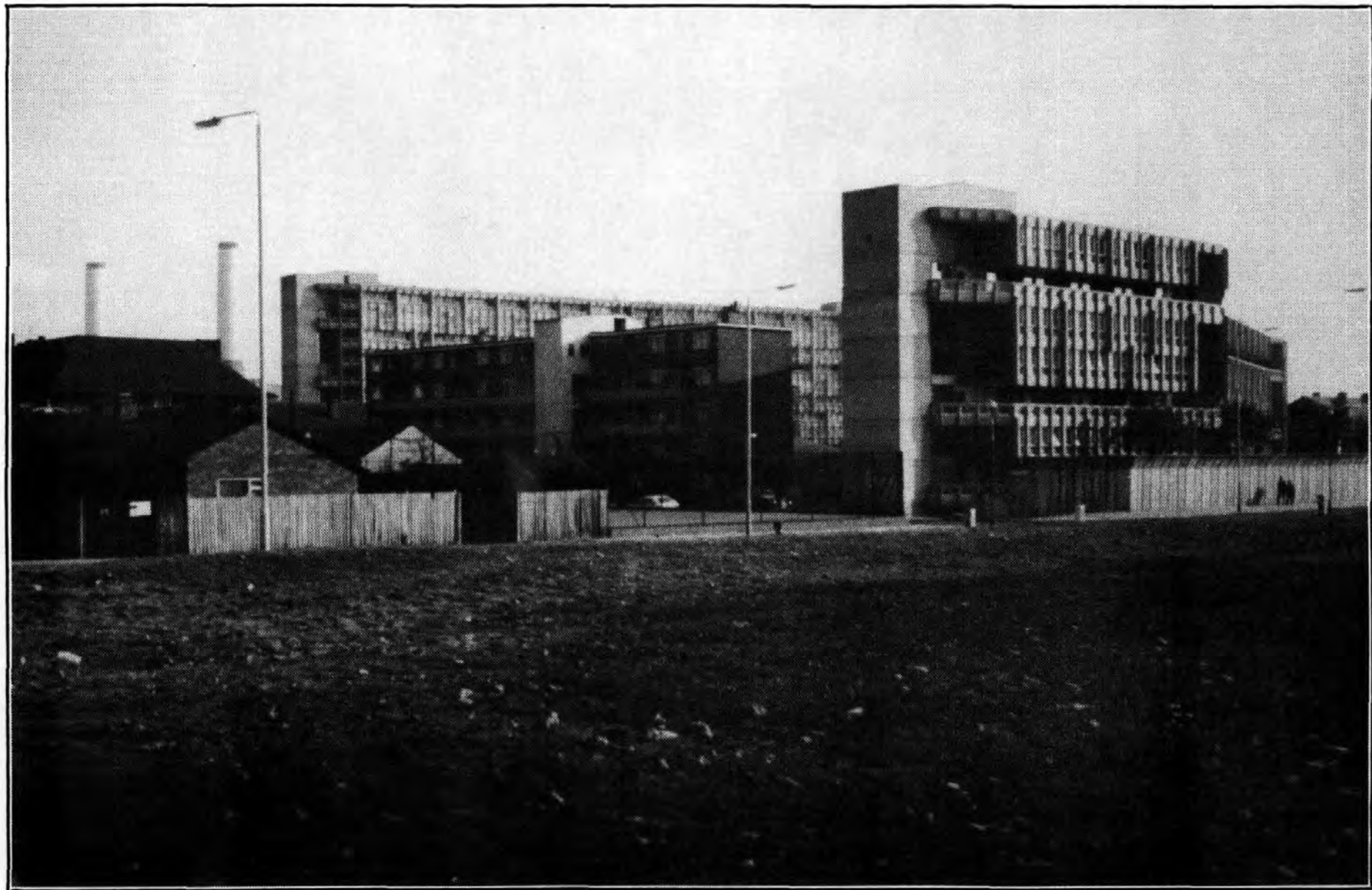
















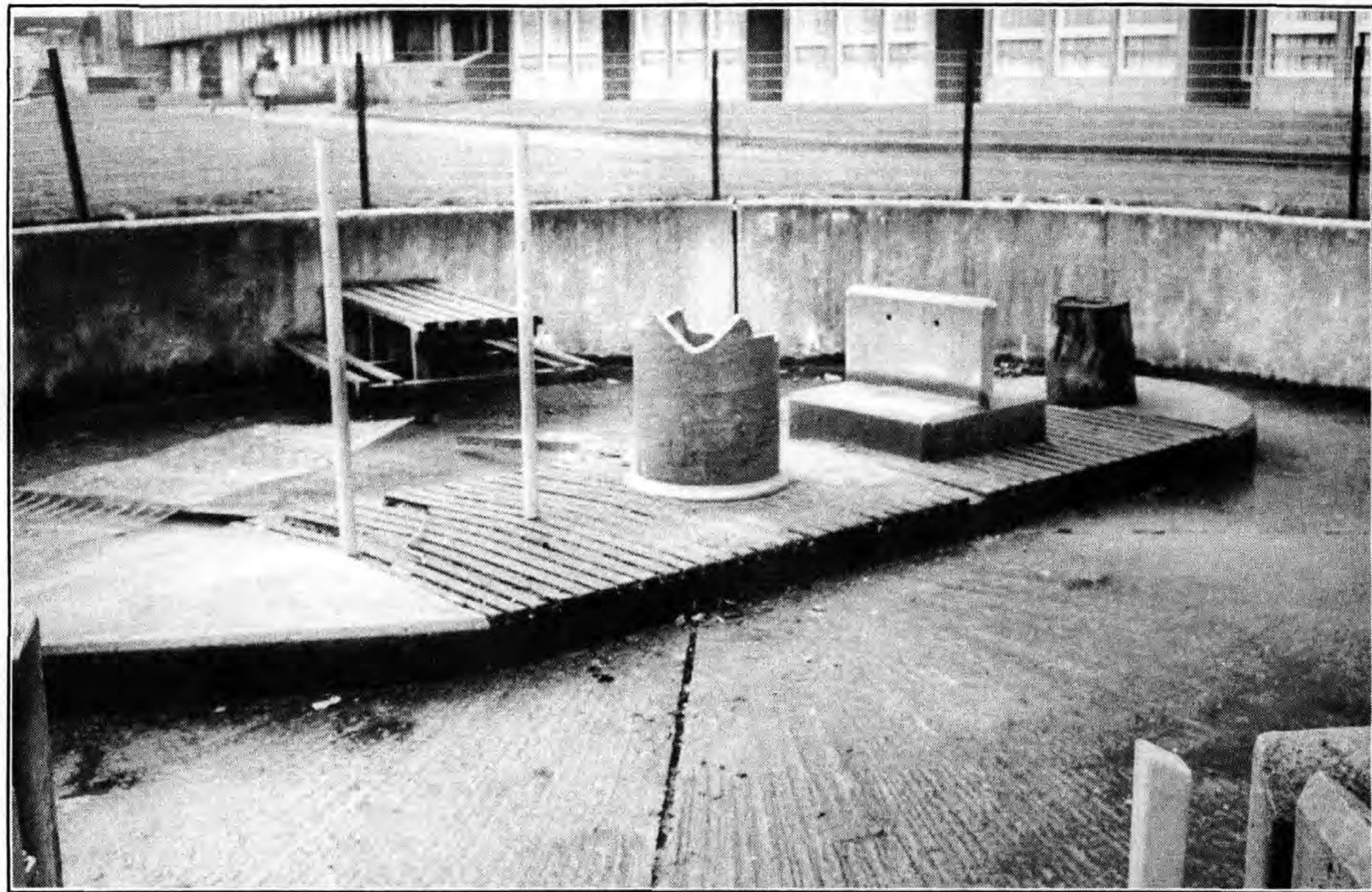


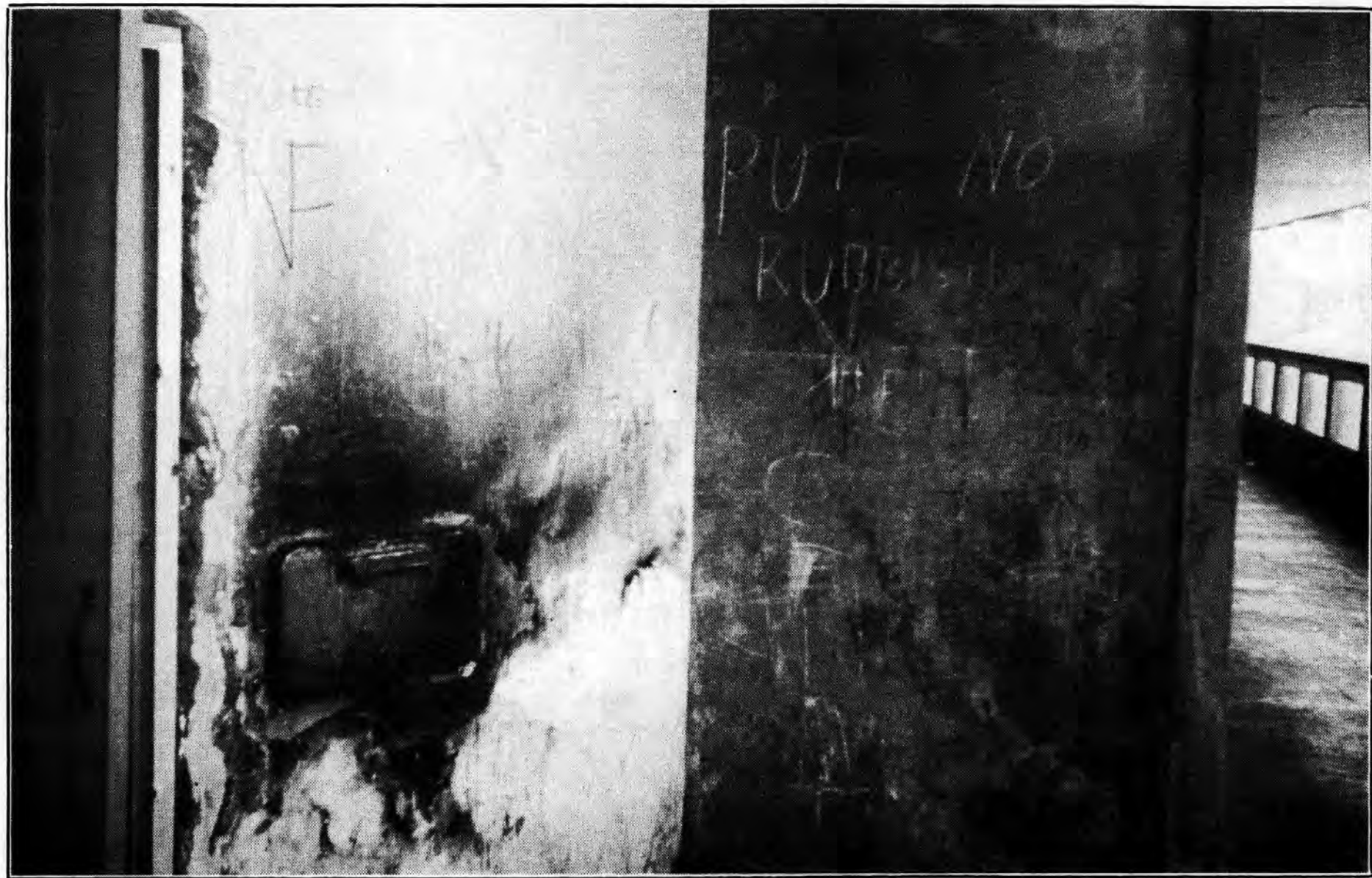














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