'MEAN-STREETS':

ANALYSIS OF A CONTEMPORARY URBAN PHENOMENON

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...a mis padres, Eduardo y Dora.

ABSTRACT

The author describes the phenomenon of 'mean-streets', a growing problem in the contemporary urban context. These streets defy the traditional notion of street and encroach upon the life of the community. The broader implication of 'mean-streets', that is, the danger that they will overwhelm the totality of the city, is the focus of the work. The author undertakes two basic tasks: first, to generate an awareness of the phenomenon and second, to identify the necessary qualities the 'mean-street' lacks. These qualities are not solutions nor formulas but are an approach, a first step, in understanding street design.

RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur décrit le phénomène de 'mean-streets', problème qui devient de plus en plus répandu dans le contexte urbain contemporain Ces rues défient l'idée traditionnelle de la rue et elles empiètent sur la vie communautaire. Cet oeuvre met au point l'implication plus large du phénomène de 'mean-streets', c'est-à-dire que ces rues menacent d'accabler l'intégralité de la ville Le but de cet oeuvre est premièrement de créer une conscience du phénomène , et deuxièmement d'identifier les qualités qui existent dans les rues mais qui manquent aux 'mean-streets'. Ces qualités ne sont ni solutions ni formules mais plutôt une façon, une première étape, à comprendre le dessein des rues.

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INTRODUCTION

Several months ago, while on a walk in downtown Montreal, I stopped at a street corner. The street was dark, cold, windy. There were no people around, and consequently, nothing seemed to be happening. The space, frozen in a timeless, noiseless capsule, seemed dead. The only sign of life on the street was the occasional light beam reflected off the steel and dark glass buildings. This uninviting, even forbidding, atmosphere led me to see that the physical space of this street was negative, for it did not encourage people to stay. In fact, I did not stay very long.

This personal experience led me to research the development of the street in contemporary cities. The concept of the street has often been misunderstood. Political and economic struggles have left the street open to attack. Yet, inspite of this and alongside technological and social change, the street has persisted as an institution that enhances our collective urban life. As we gather in streets and move along them, we come to realize that streets are threads woven into the fabric that is the city.

The contemporary city, though, evinces a different perspective. The downtown core is now dominated by a central business district (CBD). While a large CBD is reflective of a vibrant economy, the district itself lacks vibrancy. The use of the streets in this area for business purposes, during business hours, results in a lack of social interaction.

In the CBD, streets are no longer social spaces. Streets are designed primarily for efficiency and function. Streets are considered channels, and cities become places where individuals merely move from one point to another. Streets are no longer human places, no longer part of our emotions and dreams. They have become 'mean-streets'. Thus, from a broader point of view, the phenomenon of 'mean-streets' goes beyond individual concerns for it negatively affects our understanding of the city as one whole, integrated structure.

'Mean-streets' are everywhere. They are spaces lacking the ingrained qualities a street develops over time. This work discusses these qualitative aspects inside a street. The emphasis is on identifying the phenomenon of 'mean-streets' and on creating an awareness of this phenomenon that negatively affects our experience of cities.

The thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one, Streets, discusses the concept of the street through the identification of five key qualities and through a historical perspective. Chapter two, 'Mean-streets', discusses the phenomenon of 'Mean-streets' by contrasting it to the five key qualities identified in Chapter one, by outlining the concept of the 'Mean-city' and by a discussion of playing elements, that is, issues and causes related to the phenomenon of 'Mean-streets'. Chapter three presents the concluding remarks, the concerns and the perspectives of this work.

CHAPTER I

STREETS

1. THE CONCEPT OF THE STREET

1.1 DEFINITION

> "The word street is derived from the latin *sternere*, to pave, and so relates to all latin-derived words with **str** root that are connected with building, with construction."[1]

A street has been logistically defined as the paved surface which links two points. It additionally denotes, as its etymology suggests, " a delimited surface-part of an urban texture, characterized by an extended area lined with buildings on either side".[2] A street is a physical space. It is the volume, together with the ensemble of streets, which generates one bigger mass. Overall, streets are ingrained parts carved out from a broader urban mass.

Streets are necessary for the city's function. As urban streams they carry with them most of the city's vital services (e.g., water, sewage systems, energy and transportation). Streets, though, must not be only understood as connecting routes. Streets are destinations. They are places to stay.

The concept of the street transcends the definition of a mere physical structure. A street is not just an area. It is "the matrix; urban chamber, fertile soil, and breeding ground. Its viability depends as much on the right kind of architecture as on the right kind of humanity".[3]

A street then is a human place. It is the volume "where many of our conflicts or resolutions between public and private claims are accessed or actually played out".[4] A street, connected to the buildings and activities that happen there, is the ultimate extension of our social, public and inner lives.

A street is a cultural place It belongs to us. It is part of one's intimate experience. A street transcends time, and cannot be viewed as an immobile object. The experience of a street is two-fold: once perceived, it is then continuously recollected in memory visions.

A street assumes the variety and complexity of the people present and actions that happen there. Through it "one can read the rough outlines of the history and pattern of association of a city".[5] A street is the record of the expressions and experiences of those who live in it. A street depends on the interaction of people in the same way broader urban life is enriched by the ensemble of streets' life. This places the street's role as the city's body and soul. And, moreover, as a public urban place, the street evokes significant aspects of a particular economic, political and cultural situation. A street is a social institution that reflects the spirit of a people. A street is its people, or as Joseph Rykwert observes:

> "An individual may clear or mark out a path in a wilderness: but unless he is followed by others, his path never becomes a road or street, because the road and the street are social institutions and it is their acceptance by the community that gives them the name and the function..."[6]

1.2 AS ARCHITECTURAL SPACE

Streets are not empty vessels or shells They relate to the complexity of our body and mind. They respond to our needs and dreams, and as architectural spaces they have an affect on our social and inner worlds Streets develop in an effort to encourage certain behaviours. This implies that the street, as a build environment, provides cues for behaviour and that the environment can, therefore, be seen as a form of non-verbal communication.[7]

Amos Rapoport elaborates on this idea of behaviour appropriate to a particular setting:

> "The fact that people act and behave differently in different settings suggests another important point, which is that people act appropriately in different settings because they make congruent their behaviour with the norms for behaviour appropriate to the setting as defined by the culture."[8]

A street is a three-dimensional extension. It is a volume that increases with acquaintance and has therefore the ability to alter its dimensions. A street cannot be prescribed. It cannot be formularized. Though we usually relate a street to a definite form, its dimensions and its capacity to change depend on our physical and non-physical dimensions. A street is motivated by our interior 'human spaces', and can only be measured within these same parameters.

Our actions and decisions express themselves in the street. As an architectural space the street demands human intervention. A street is a setting rich in communication; it is an education in itself. It affects our awareness, it reveals and instructs On a wider scale this means that the city as a whole becomes an efficient teaching device. In city areas where casual life is nonexistent, residents tend to isolate themselves from one another. Where the city instead offers richness and variety, people are attracted to each other. The space is used to encourage exchanges, and people learn by doing so.

Jane Jacobs believes that individuals learn responsibility from exchanges on the street:

> "In real life, only from the ordinary adults of the city sidewalks do children learn-if they learn it at all-the first fundamental of successful life. People must take a modicum of public responsibility for each other even if they have no ties to each other. This is a lesson nobody learns by being told. It is learned from the experience of having other people without ties of kinship or close friendship or formal responsibility to you take a modicum of responsibility for you."[9]

A street has the potential to increase our public responsibility. It is the expression of a social group. It refines human feeling and perception. However, when it restricts our expressive emotions and we cannot interact freely, we are impoverished. A street can then be a clear or vague, a positive or negative teaching device in the process of understanding the city as an integrated social place.

1.3 QUALITIES

I have identified the following qualities as essential characteristics in the development of the urban street: Identity, Sense of Place, Unity, Sense of Life and Humaneness. These five qualities are indispensable for establishing the conditions for the success of a social space as they emphasize an understanding of the street as a three-dimensional extension of our inner lives.

In the identification of these qualities, three basic notions are contemplated. The first one is concerned with the understanding of the street as part of the urban context, the history and locality of the place. The second notion is concerned with the close relation between the different existing physical components inside a street which make the street one, whole, integrated space. The third and most important notion, identifies the street as an extension of our bodies and souls. It addresses those qualities which make a street part of the people's social but also individual worlds. We can then talk of the series of relations that pertain to our emotions and thoughts and, in time, become part of our memories

The qualities identified are not patterns nor formulas. These qualities are part of a different approach to street design. Through them I want to emphasize that an analysis of any street cannot be quantitative, nor can it be dictated by equations or universal theories. These theories reduce the whole problematic of the world to an extremely simplistic point. Simple analysis views the street problem as that of a physical structure that can be solved by following a series of physical patterns or simplified guidelines A street deserves more. Identity, Sense of Place, Unity, Sense of Life and Humaneness are, in the end, one quality: the quality of human thought and emotion reflected in the street.

1.31 IDENTITY

Identity is the mirror of the soul and the body of a person or thing. Identity clarifies roles and relationships as it distinguishes individuals. It is the characteristic that distinguishes a person, place or thing from another. Identity, then, marks a street as unique, clear, readable as only that particular street.

Identity cannot be described in chopped-up bits.[10] It is a whole. Identity reveals itself in the totality of the space: what delimits the space and what objects are in it. The sense of identity is enhanced when all the elements in the street are correspondent or complementary to each other. It is not the expression of individual objects in a street which give it its identity, but their interaction as one whole which gives, overall, a common identity for the street. Ian Nairn asserts that totality or wholeness is critical to identity:

> "...the identity of any sizable place is likely to be the sum of all kinds of smaller identities, with, in all the best examples, probably one or two larger threads drawing them together."[11]

Martin Heidegger states that "everywhere, wherever and however we are related to beings of every kind, identity makes its claim upon us".[12] Identity is thereby the intrinsic quality that defines not only the space itself; it is the relation to the people who use the space. Identity is perceivable , it is experienced. Identity is, then, that which the receiver gets that can only be identified as belonging to a particular space and not to any other space.

A street is a three-dimensional extension of our social lives. It possesses an identity: its unique soul is attributable only to that particular street. The identity of the street reflects only what that particular street embraces: that is, what happens in a street is not only dictated by the physical space, but by the people and events in it. Most importantly, the identity of a street depends, then, on the interaction of these people and events.

Identity incorporates the following elements:

1.311 Substance

Christopher Alexander writes of that "central quality without a name which is the criterion of life and spirit in a man, a town, a building, or a wilderness".[13] René Dubos further suggests that there is a continuity in the appearance and spirit of places allowing the identity of a particular place to persist through many external changes "because there is some inner, hidden force - 'a god within' ".[14]

Substance is the 'center of gravity'. It is the space's blood and its inner force. Substance is the force that sustains the identity of a space against negative external forces. It "underlies all outward manifestations; the permanent subject or cause of phenomena, whether material or spiritual; that which is real; existing essence".[15]

Substance in a street is the people, the action and the interaction of events that happen there. The strength of substance will dilute or reinforce the identity of the street: the more constant it is, and the more it reflects one unique spirit, the stronger this identity will be. Substance, like the soul in a human being, is the underlying and strongest element in the building of a clear and strong identity of place.

1.312 Character

Character is the *raison d'être* of a space. It is its "distinctive mark, evidence or token; a feature, trait".[16] Character is the nature, the ability and the potential a space has to perform a definite purpose.

Character incorporates many different elements to form one whole. Raquel Ramati suggests that the ambiance of a street is derived from its shops, its architecture and scale, its landscaping and from its people and their activities within the buildings.[17] The ambiance of the street is thus the relation of interdependent components which do not develop overnight. A street needs time to develop. The same may be said of its character: it is only enhanced and developed over time.

1.313 Meaning

As I have stated, a street is a three-dimensional extension of the human being. It is a volume which embodies a significance for man and implies particular underlying intentions. As an architectural space it transmits a purpose It can then be said that the street is a volume that depends on meaning for affirming its intention.

Meaning is the significance and importance of something. It is the information to be transmitted, the message itself, and "is always explicable, definable, and translatable".[18] A street is not alone in space, it consists of relations. Hence, just as a street depends on its connection to other spaces, so does meaning depend on that which happens in the street.

Charles Jencks comments that all objects are experienced as part of situations, connected with other objects. "These relations make up their structure as well as their meaning... Any action or 'life-situation', therefore, has a structure and a meaning."[19]

When relations between objects persist, meanings become stronger. A space that continues in time, affirming its purpose and validity, is then referred to as a meaningful space When people accept the space as theirs, meaning is said to have acquired a cultural connotation, as it becomes deeply rooted in the people's social and cultural lives.

Meaning is essential for transmitting our intentions. It is "imputed to landscapes by the intentionality of experience".[20] But for meaning to become deeply rooted in our lives it has to be accepted socially. Meaning, when it is imposed on those who use a space, does not respond nor does it transmit what the people using the space intend it to be or do. Meaning is then intrinsically related to the substance of a space. When a space lacks a strong substance, the meaning becomes vague. And this, has a negative impact on the identity of a street as it confuses our understanding and experience of its landscape.

A street cannot be understood in physical terms for it "can be grasped only in terms of a particular set of personal and cultural attitudes and intentions that give meaning to that setting".[21] Meaning, character and substance together form the raw material of the identity of places.

On a traditional market street, the substance [i.e., vendors and people interacting together] supports the commercial character of the street. Elements used by these vendors [i.e., wood stalls, displays of fruits and vegetables, straw baskets] reaffirm this purpose of generating an informal character, a sort of traditional street marketplace. The street transmits this intention and is easily read by people as such. This particular street expresses a strong unique identity: its people and the events that take place there.

1.32 SENSE OF PLACE

"An individual is not distinct from his place; he is that place."[22] Accordingly, sense of place refers to what Relph calls "being inside and belonging to your place both as an individual and as a member of a community".[23]

Place is human location, a location that goes beyond the idea of belonging to a mere physical structure. Place involves human experience; it involves time. When a space becomes familiar to us it is said to become a place in us. Place is an experience closely linked to our memories; place is permanent in man

Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that sense of place is only acquired over a long period of time; it is an "archive of fond memories and splendid achievements that inspire the present; place is permanent and hence reassuring to man".[24]

> "It is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years."[25]

As the sense of place in a street is only developed over time, it inherits the blend and diversity of experiences that happen throughout its development. Sense of place is that inherent quality so often found in charming older areas of cities Sense of place is a quality inside the human condition. As sedentary beings, we feel the need to identify ourselves with our surroundings. We need to be in a recognizable place: "...sense of place is not a fine-art extra, it is something which man cannot afford to do without" [26]

Sense of place is a vital quality for the development of a street as part of a wider context. It identifies the need for the street to become part of us. The following elements are necessary to develop this quality in a street.

1.321 Belonging

Belonging means that a street is connected to a broader, but local, context in two related ways:

1) Belonging in a geographic context

The street develops in harmony with the local climate, incorporating in its development the topography and outstanding physical features of the area. The street is the expression of an intention to respect important local elements ... at have been decanted over years. It then develops hand in hand with the history of the place.

When a street truly belongs to a specific geographic context, it is clearly of that place and no other. A street in the old part of Rome which responds to the local historical and climatic conditions cannot be mistaken for a street in old Cairo or old Mexico, for each one has its own history and each one has its own sense of place.

2) Belonging in the socio-cultural environment

The street also belongs to the non-physical context which surrounds it and, as such, it is the expression of local concerns. The street does not act as an overpowering environment which coerces or inhibits our individual and communal expressions, but, instead, provides the place for inherited socio-cultural patterns to develop over time. The street is a cultural place and thus it gives local people the opportunity to participate in its development.

1.322 Continuity in time

> *"If you want to make a living flower, you don't build it physically, with tweezers, cell by cell. You grow it from the seed."*
>
> *Christopher Alexander*[27]

A street cannot be made; it is not the one-person design nor the constructive stage. A street is the result of development over time. Continuity in time permits this development It brings with it permanence, and this is directly translated into rootedness of a space.

> "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. ...To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one's own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular."[28]

Continuity in time increases the sense of place in a street, making it part of our lives. Jencks maintains that "there is no humanity without memory and there is no architecture without historical reference".[29] Yi-Fu Tuan says that "we can try to reconstruct our past with brief visits to our old neighbourhood and the birthplaces of our parents".[30] A street that continues in time acts, then, as a history text as it retains traces of what happened there, and later passes them on to future generations.

Continuity in time, though, does not imply that streets and buildings should be made 'forever', nor that the materials used should look ageless. Instead, it simply asks that the most important elements in the street's structure should be retained, while respecting as much as possible the life-cycles and antiquity values of these elements.

Buildings and streets should express their age: bricks and tiles, torn wood segments and stone, fallen leaves and grass, fading coats of paint and wall cracks; they must meet in some undefined shared boundary Materials must crumble and age. In this way, streets will retain their sense of belonging both to a time and context, and at the same time, belong to our individual hearts.

1.323 Flexibility

No building lasts forever, and no space is static in time. Spaces are objects of human use, and as the human being evolves, so do spaces have to adapt and evolve. Flexibility fills in the gaps, making it possible for a street to become the object of human use. Thus flexibility gives real permanence to long-time existing structures.

Flexibility is linked to continuity in time. While continuity in time maintains the structural elements that give character to a street, flexibility brings elasticity to the development of a street. In this sense, flexibility does not mean chop and change, but the capability of being adapted or accomodated in time.[31]

According to Christopher Alexander:

> "...several acts of building, each one done to repair and magnify the product of the previous acts, will slowly generate a larger and more complex whole than any single act can generate".[32]

1.33 UNITY

"The environment, past and present, is all one, and it can no more be isolated and chopped up than the human body can."[33] Space is not a fragmented experience. It is a marriage of elements which support each other. Space is one whole.

A place is one integral and unbroken cosmos: objects are not just placed; they must also relate. A place is coherent when it can be read as the totality of all its elements. A street, then, is one, and this oneness is only achieved if the street possesses a strong unity, that is, relationship and balance.

1.331 Relationship

> "Relationship is simply what you use every day of your life to make it coherent. ... Relationship is what you practice when you put the rocks in the bourbon. It is simply the art of bringing together or operating on A and B so that the result is more than the sum of A and B separately."[34]

Relationship is everywhere. Cities are the unity of all their parts, and streets are understood as one part of the next. Cities are one cosmos, and in them streets relate to each other and to other public spaces to form one whole fabric. In this same way, streets, as definite volumes, are clearly outlined by definite physical dimensions. Streets are then the composition of horizontal, vertical and depth planes in addition to the objects contained in them. Hence, streets are concrete places and can be recognized as such because the different physical components in them (i.e., paved surfaces, buildings and the variety of street furniture) are related to each other. There is a "kinship"[35] between these components: one needs the other and one does not destroy the other. Relationship, then, must not be understood as a repetition of what has been done, but as "consciousness of what is going on next door".[36]

1.332 Balance

Vitruvius once said that there is beauty where every part of an ensemble has its fixed size and shape, and that nothing can be added or taken away without destroying the harmony of the whole.[37]

Balance is a force which maintains an order so as to avoid excess on one side. It provides unity and coherence. Balance respects the natural hierarchy of the elements in a space so that none overshadows its counterpart.

Balance has no true mathematical value. It is linked to subconscious levels of experience of the individual. Thus, limits of balance cannot be truly prescribed. The idea of balance can, nevertheless, be grasped as Peter F. Smith suggests "through the energising of a visual 'gestalt' so that they are regarded as forces acting within a system, or weight subject to a gravitational pull".[38]

Within these parameters, balance becomes in itself a force that maintains a peaceful interaction of elements, while it prevents any of those elements from becoming excessively stronger than the other.

Kim Todd reinforces this notion of balance in architectural space linking two elements, colour and light:

> "Color has an important impact on the perception of balance. Since warm colors tend to stand out and cool colors to recede into the background, site areas that are balanced in form but imbalanced in color can indicate by their color selection areas of dominance and subordination. ... Smaller areas of warm colors or less sharply defined shapes are needed to balance larger areas of cool colors. ... Areas of dense shadow appear as large, heavy masses, in contrast with areas in full sun, which may appear two-dimensional and flat."[39]

Balance in space concerns the distribution of objects, the distribution of light and shadows, of textures and colours. Balance maintains an evenness of heaviness and lightness, weakness and strength, staticness and dynamism. Balance is thus the tool for moderation and the coexistence between opposite forces.

1.34 SENSE OF LIFE

Sense of life reflects the spirit of the street. Sense of life is present in all streets. Although in some streets it will be passionate and in other tranquil, it is always strong, for sense of life is in "a person or thing which imparts or excites spirit, vigor or enjoyment; that upon which success or energetic prosecution depends, ... energy".[40]

A space alive is an interactive space where a wide variety of objects seem to exchange with each other. Sense of life on St. Laurent boulevard in Montreal is seen in the interaction of a wide variety of cultures. This cosmopolitanism is evident in the shops and small market displays, the change of music from one block to another, and the people themselves on the street.

Sense of life can be synthesized in two faculties: diversity and animation. Diversity refers to how things are placed in space, while animation is the way in which these objects interact and move. Both generat the conditions needed for a street to acquire a sense of life: diversity and animation enhance the number and quality of the nature of situations and events that happen there.

1.341 Diversity

Diversity denotes variety. It suggests an increase in the use of the space by providing more and different opportunities for its use. As complement, it acts against flatness and monotony. It enhances contrast and helps define hierarchies of space.

Diversity in a street is expressed in different colours, materials, textures, and what Jacobs calls the need for short blocks, a variety of ages and conditions of buildings, a mixture of uses, and the appearance of different ages of people for different purposes at different times.[41]

> "To understand cities, we have to deal outright with combinations or mixtures of uses, not separate uses, as the essential phenomena... A mixture of uses needs [nevertheless] an enormous diversity of ingredients".[42]

The more elements in a street, the more varied the street tends to be. These elements include anything that can realistically be put into a street. Diversity of objects and people together add immense quantity and variety of action and sense of life to a street. If diversity is then incorporated into a street space without distorting the street's unity, it will provide the opportunity for people to use the street. Moreover, the more varied the street, the more varied the people attracted to it: people of different ages, from infants to the very old, help to develop an authentic sense of life in the street. This idea is further sustained by experiements by Luis Racionero at the Department of Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley showing that wherever the possibility of public contact does exist, people will seek it.[43]

Diversity highlights the contrast between old and new. In time, spaces become complex organisms capable of responding to the variety of the people who use them. Kevin Lynch refers to this as an accumulated concentration of the most significant elements of the various periods gone by. He asserts that even if these reminders are fragmentary, they "will in time produce a landscape whose depth no one period can equal".[44] Diversity, then, is an endless recollection concerning both the past and the future.

1.342 Animation

Animation comes from the latin word *animus*, which means the force that puts something in motion. It involves dynamism, and enhances the diversity of space. Animation, as essential as it is for the human being, gives human dimension to a physical space, making it part of our experiences. Animation is life itself.

Animation is a 'liveliness' experience. It is in the movement of people, sun, rain and wind, seasonal colour of the leaves, variations in shadows and light, window displays, signs. Because it enriches the perception of the space and stimulates more animation in itself, when it is not present the street becomes a dead space. In other words, it has no motor, no soul in itself, and provides no real opportunities at all.

1.35 HUMANENESS

A 'human' street is a street for people. It provides the conditions for living experiences to take place. A street, then, is not purely a functional channel for without humaneness a street is just a void in space

Humaneness reflects the human condition. It expresses the world as the counterpart of the self: it makes the street personal. Humaneness, then, responds to human perceptions and individual experiences. It provides the elements by which an individual finds enough security and enjoyment towant to stay in a particular place.

Humaneness, as "the quality of pertaining to man"[45], is then that endearing quality which makes a space beloved. Humaneness enhances the performance of the street, bestowing receptiveness and friendliness on it. Humaneness is built on two basic principles: Security and Feeling.

1.351 Security

Security is protection, defense, shelter. It is the state of being without fear and with certainty. Security provides confidence to stay in a certain place. As people become part of a street, they take part in the events and action that happen there. Without security, our place in space becomes vague for we find ourselves with no firm ground to stand on.

Security is molded and transmitted in two ways. In the first instance, it is developed by the physical elements in a street. Second, it is derived from non-physical factors and, as such, it depends on our interaction as part of a broader, global community. Hence, we can refer to security as physical as well as personal.

Physical Security

Physical security is transmitted by the scale of the buildings,[46] the elements projecting outwards from the buildings such as cornices, eaves, parapets and moldings, and the diversity of street furniture such as trees, signs, canvases and light poles Scale, in addition, is transmitted by enclosure, which concerns the degree of openness a street has That is to say that enclosure acts against the sensation of infinity that a street can have at the ground level, as it does against immensity which may be given by an exaggerate proportion in the vertical towards the width of the street.

Todd observes that different dimensions of space affect our perception of ourselves:

> "A space that is wide open instills in viewers a sense of their own smallness, or perhaps a sense of awe. A small space creates a feeling of human dominance, intimacy, or crowding. ... The key element in establishing scale in the design of space is enclosure."[47]

Physical security also deals with the idea of bounded domain. Or, as Heidegger explains: "a boundary is not that which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which

something begins its presencing".[48] The street, as bounded domain, becomes a place that transmits confidence to people to become part of it.

A bounded domain acts against strong or imposing external forces that alienate us from becoming part of a particular context. A bounded domain acts against lostness which translates in the end into insecurity. Frampton suggests that to creat a bounded domain it is necessary to maintain defined urban forms as opposed to 'ethereal' or 'mere theoretical' plans. In modern urban zoning, however, we increasingly find universal theories and buildings which reflect a careless attitude in creating a bounded domain.[49]

I have discussed physical security in terms of scale, enclosure and bounded domain. Phenomenologically, though, physical security also implies the idea of protection and shelter, and as such it is related to the idea of transmitting a certain security against extreme environmental conditions. However, this does not mean isolation from the exterior world, nor does it refer to the idea of creating artificial environments by duplicating pleasant exterior conditions in 'box-contained' spaces. Instead, the street must be designed and better developed in time to cope with whatever nature offers it. In hot climates, shadows and wind-tunnel effects should be encouraged, while in cold and rainy climates, overhead planes, entrances for direct sunlight and places to take refuge are of primary consideration.

Personal Security

Strong personal security is based on personal interior peace. However, as human beings that interact and depend on interactions with other people, we derive personal security from both our interior tranquility and the consciousness of our place in society as part of an interactive and interdependent community. Or, in more practical terms, as Jacobs suggests, the peace of our streets depends on "the need for eyes upon the street" belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street, and the "fairly continuous use of sidewalks" to increase those eyes on the street.[50]

Personal security in an urban environment means safety to use the streets. It is the basis for a strong community life and individual well-being Because personal security depends on the use of the streets by people, in areas where people are not present and where night spots are scattered, the number

of street crimes are likely to increase.[51] Jacobs concurs that the safety of the street works best where people are using and most enjoying the city streets voluntarily.[52] Almost inevitably then, the extreme lack of interest and disuse of a street leads to an irreversible process of urban decay of the street.

Jacobs refers to this public responsibility of the individual:

> "The first thing to understand is that the public peace - the sidewalk and street peace - of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept primarily by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves."[53]

Safety in a street is the people themselves. It is not an individual nor a private business. Safety requires communal help. It concerns everyone of us, and cannot be reduced to a matter of assigning limits up to where 'one is responsible'. Safety then can never be understood as the imposition of any artificial or mechanical means to ensure peace.

Though a street is likely to be safe when people are present in it, this is only true when people care about whatever happens there. In this way, personal security is only possible when we, as part of a community, are not only present but act as one to help in maintaining a global personal security. When a street transmits the need for social interaction and different levels of complexity, it encourages personal and communal well-being. A street that transmits no confidence nor trust though, attracts no people nor anything else for that matter. Security cannot be imposed. It is inherent in our individual and communal lives. We cannot create it. We have to develop it over time.

1.352 Feeling

Feeling is an invisible power in a body which draws something to it. It is that very special force that touches deep inside our hearts, evoking a particular emotional state. It produces enchantment; it invites and engages. Feeling can be evoked by anybody, anything: objects, buildings or streets. Feeling escapes all rational definitions. It is a sudden breath, a moment of passion; a pause ...calm.

> "It is...the broad brim of the big hat, like arms spread wide, open to the world, confident, huge,... The embrace of the child's arms about the grass. ... It is the solid and entrenched repose of the old man lighting a cigarette: hands on his knees, solid, resting, waiting, listening".[54]

For as much as feeling brings emotion into our bodies, it must also be understood as a dialogue between the physical and spiritual bodies which produce moving sensations in the spectator. "Feeling is associated with spontaneity, spontaneity with informality or indifference to form, and thus (by slipshod thinking) with absence of form".[55]

A street is more than the physical surface or buildings which line it. A street is a world in itself. It is the richness and complexity inside the human being. A street is the direct reflection of what happens inside our individual and communal worlds. It is then a place which blends fantasy with the mundane and responds to both our functional demands and dreams. For this reason, a street is an 'ethnic domain' that occupies a place in our memories, capable of affecting our inner most reactions.

As described by John Evelyn in his diary (ca 1645):

> "... I passed through the Mercerla [Venice's main street that connects Plazza San Marco with the Rialto Bridge], one of the most delicious streets in the world for the sweetness of it, and is all the way on both sides tapestried as it were with cloth of gold, rich damasks and other silks, which the shops expose and hang before their houses from the first floor, and with that variety that for near half the year spent chiefly in this city, I hardly remember to have seen the same piece twice exposed; to this add the perfumes, apothecaries' shops, and the innumerable cages of nightingales which they keep, that entertain you with their melody from shop to shop,... ".[56]

An ethnic domain is a created universe. It is man's own domain, as it embraces his own particular universe, and provides him with space to move in that he has created. An ethnic domain, though, does not force on man a particular way of behaviour. Instead, it is a world that evokes symbols made to be felt and experienced, and acts as a catalyst in helping to transmit an intended feeling.

> "It does not suggest things to do, but embodies the feeling, the rhythm, the passion or sobriety, frivolity or fear with which any things at all are done. That is the image of life which is created in buildings; it is the visible semblance of an 'ethnic domain', the symbol of humanity to be found in the strength and interplay of forms".[57]

Feeling is essential for the human use of any street. A street that transmits no feeling has no humaneness and this does not generate conditions for positive and pleasant experiences. As feeling is developed by the people who, in real terms, live or seem to spend the most time in the street, it cannot be extraneous to their world of emotions, nor can it be imposed on them. Or, as suggested

by Todd, anything that creates in people a feeling of uneasiness or discomfort will cause sufficient reason for them to seek satisfaction of their needs elsewhere.[58] It must then be left to man's individual decision and will to assimilate a given perception to his own interior dimensions.

Feeling enhances the perception of a street as a place made to be deeply experienced. It stimulates the attention of people for coming and participating in it. Thus, it adds to the opportunity for increasing human contact. Feeling is an inherent part of the soul and body of a street, and so, like a smile, it enhances what is inside.

2. A HISTORICAL REVIEW

2.1 FROM MESOPOTAMIA TO FUNCTIONALISM

Throughout history streets have played an active part in the development of our cities. Streets have been 'human' places; they have been made by man and for man, that is, for his needs but also for his enjoyment.

Kevin Lynch suggests that streets provide us with the essential freedom of movement on which city life depends

> "They make and reveal the city. But in the rush to connect, we have ignored their other functions. Should we not re-invent the street to reflect the reality of mixed uses?"[59]

Mesopotamian and Egyptian cities resulted from an understanding of streets as spaces for people to gather. Their walled-cities were a maze of streets, alleys and dead-ends that transmitted their social organization into a hierarchy of spaces varying in degree from the most public to private domains. They were social institutions that encouraged social exchanges, and their pattern was the response to the geographic variables of the place. The narrow streets, with their canopied buildings, expressed an awareness of how to deal with the extremely hot weather experienced during the daytime. Streets derived their design and development to the local context over time: they belonged to that place. Because these streets responded to local needs and interests, the local people identified them as belonging to their own particular culture.

The old section of Cairo had, and still retains, the ingredients of a traditional oriental city. Streets are narrow, but colourful, full of diversity and animation. Streets are personal and provide sufficient space for people to linger and become familiar with the place. While Cairo's wider streets are lined with shops to increase the use of the street as a social space, private alleys give access, in a hierarchical

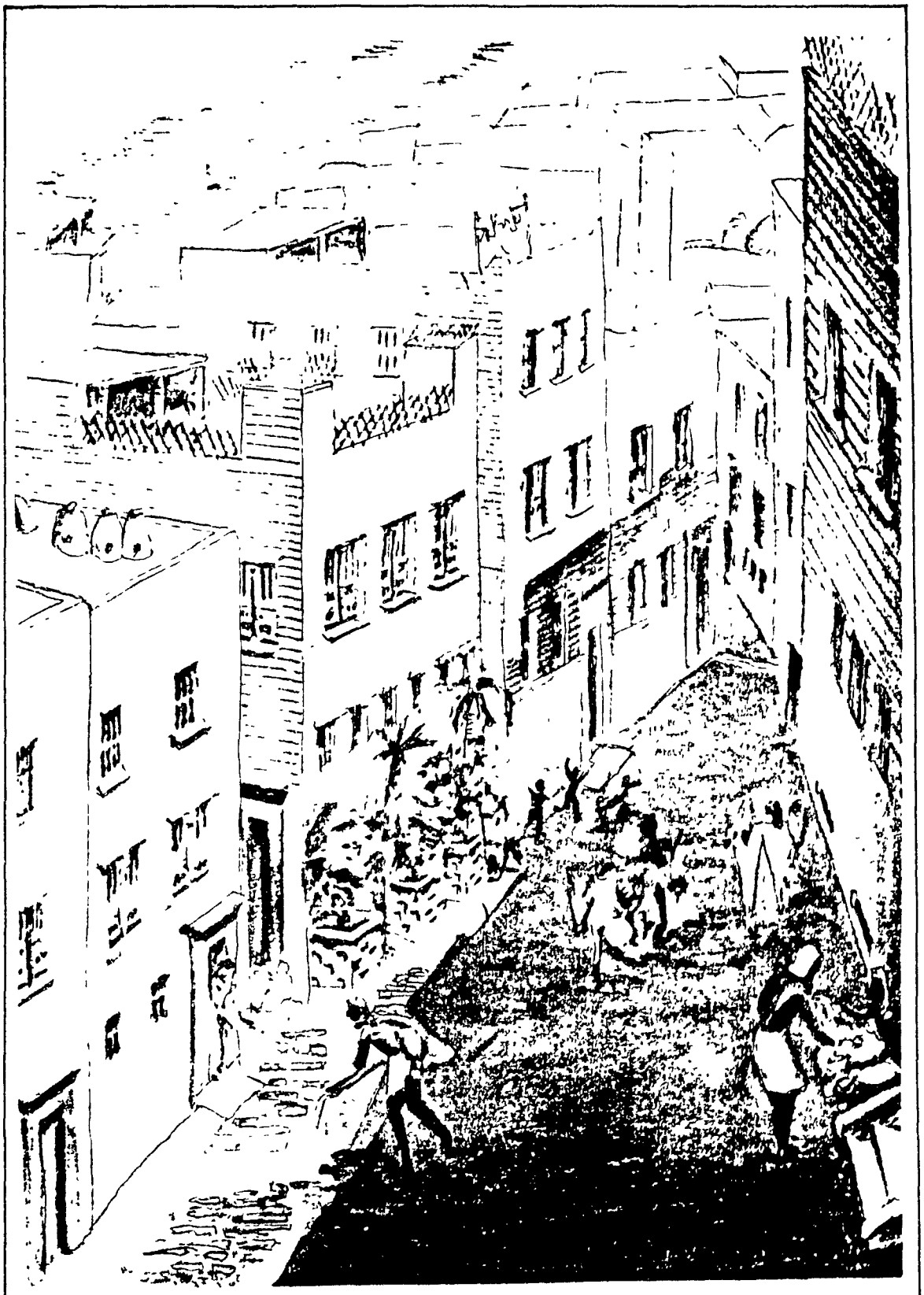

Fig. 1 Restored perspective of a street in the Empire period at Thebes

order, to private domains. The oriental city pattern is then the result of harmony between environmental, social and economic forces.[60]

Norbert Shoenauer elaborates:

> "North-south streets are wide and their sidewalks are shaded by canopied buildings; east-west streets, running parallel to the path of the sun, are narrow and bending and often contain overhangs to prevent overexposure to the sun of the south-facing buildings. The northern prevailing winds follow the commercial streets, and at intersections a drop in pressure results; thus air is drawn down the narrow side streets by suction."[61]

Fig. 2 Old Cairo: Street Plan of Northern Cairo

In Greek thinking man was the center of life on earth, and the earth the center of the universe.

> "Concentric spheres surrounded the earth; the outermost sphere, as the sea of divine harmony, caused the revolution of the celestial bodies. But in this universe motion had to be created by a mover, and the bodies had to possess souls and aspirations giving matter itself mystical qualities. This Aristotelian system consisted of continuous matter without any void."[62]

Gutkind finds in this basic concept the reason why Greek architecture did not consciously create space and space relations, and why Greek cities were then mere accretions of individual buildings rather than the result of coherent and integrated space relations. In fact, no word for space even existed in the Greek language at that point. Cities, in the way temples were considered sculptures, were an "agglomeration of sculptures".[63] Streets were then arranged according to the previous location of the individual buildings.

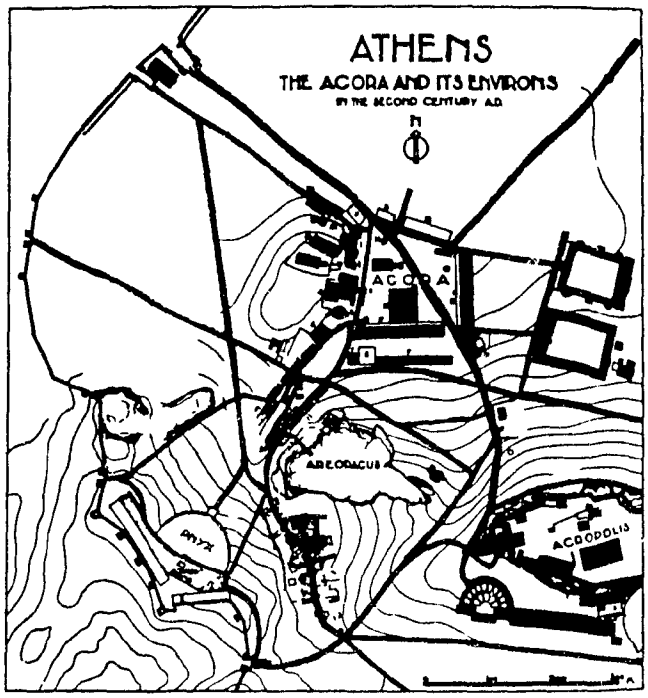

Fig. 3 Athens: The Agora and its Environs in the second century A.D

Streets in Greece were the reflection only of the Greek way of understanding the world. This is to say, they could not be implanted into another culture without losing the strong significance that Greeks gave to their cities as instruments capable of transmitting their understanding of their world: a mix of reason and emotion.

Hence, streets were mirrors and grounds for translating their inner most ideas into realities. Streets represented Greek ideals of civic life, bringing into an urban form their theories of the ideal state and society. Streets, and the bigger context of the Greek polis, were the result of a communal understanding in which the totality of the Greek thinking can be summarized and tranlated into visible forms.

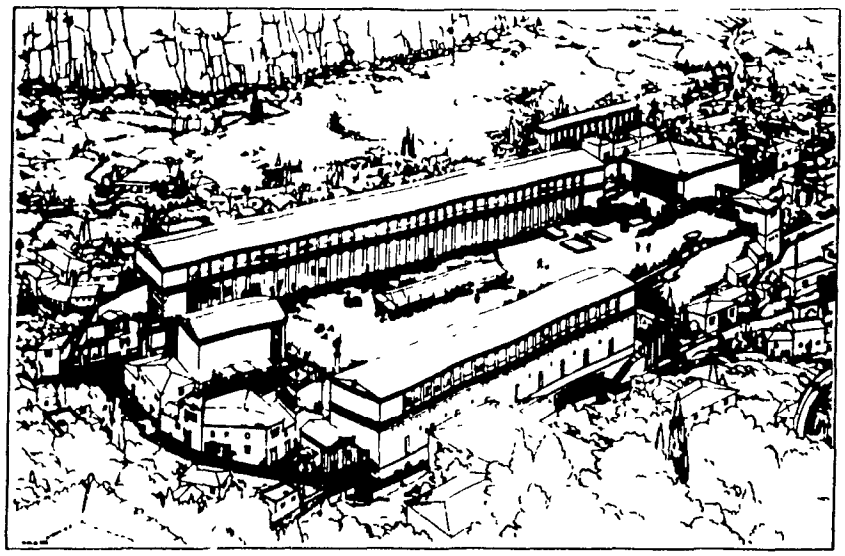

Fig 4 Reconstruction of the Agora at Assos

The Hellenic civilization was linked with the development of the Greek polis, an urban-rural entity, which beyond its cosmic connotations, exhibited a political and socio-economic interdependence between city and rural surroundings. After the Persians invaded Greece many cities had to be rebuilt. While Athens chose to adopt its former organic pattern, Miletus, after its destruction in the year 494 B.C., underwent a very different experience. Its design, credited to Hippodamos of Miletus, was conceived to confront any eventual invasion. Miletus was then the first known example of a gridiron layout where rectangular city blocks resulted in a completely regular street plan.

Romans were practical people and as such they were proud of their material achievements. Romans preferred standardization to spontaneity. They regularized everything to formulas and rules. A grid system was imposed on cities, even over important topographic features. Streets crossed at right angles, and provided the best access to functional needs. Hence, much the same way cities are now planned, Roman streets were laid out according to pragmatic city planning.

> "The grandiose public buildings, the fora and temples, the colonnaded streets, the roads and aqueducts should not deceive us. They were nothing more than practical solutions of practical problems."[64]

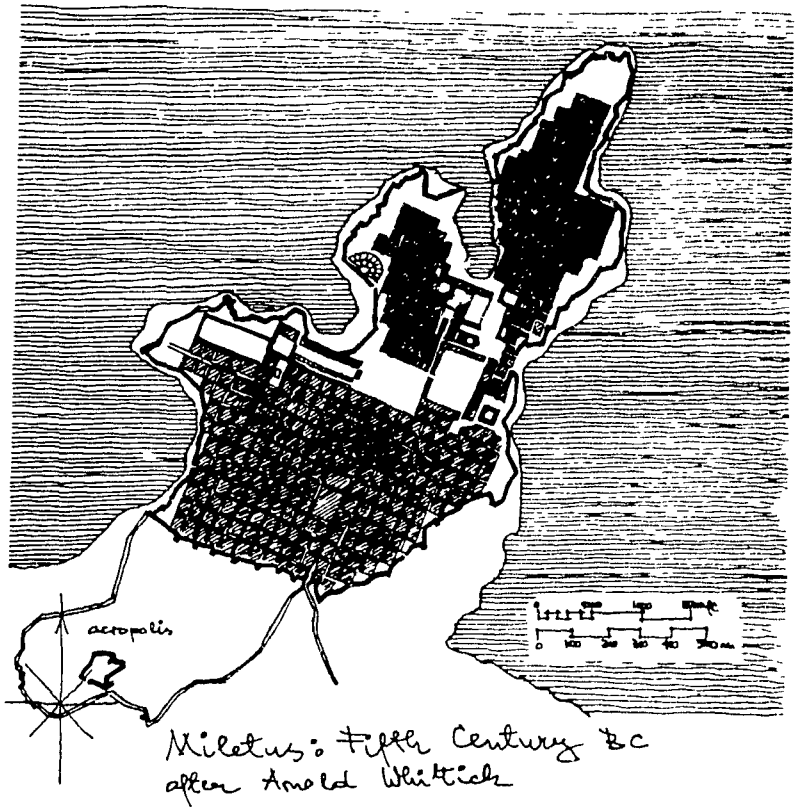

Fig. 5 Miletus: Fifth Century B.C.

Fig. 6 Colonnaded street and arch. Timgad, Algeria. Second century A.D.

In most Roman cities traffic was regulated. The use of private carriages was permitted only during certain hours. Non-public delivery vans were excluded from the center of Rome between sunrise and sunset, and goods were unloaded during the night.[65] Roman streets were the response to functional problems, and the elements in them, colonnades, for example, beyond providing protection from sun and rain, gradually separated pedestrian from vehicular movement.

Fig. 7 Strada dell' Abbondanza at Pompei

Roman cities, however, were also clear expressions of the ostentatiousness of the people of the empire. According to Gutkind, Romans "reveled in grandiose monumentality, in superorganization, convinced that their empire would endure forever. But [they] failed. Their cities remained empty demonstrations and their art sterile and secondhand".[66] Roman cities were brutal, monumental and ostentatious, and in this respect are most similar to our present cities.

Fig. 8 The Pantheon, portico column bases and the modern paving over the original steps

Medieval streets responded to defense concerns of the time. Cities were strategically located, usually along shores or over rocky places, and their form, consequently, was fairly irregular.

Medieval cities had a definite edge, an unmistakable demarcation line where the rural area ended and the city began. Inside, solid rows of buildings defined very narrow streets. Streets, though, were full of diversity. They displayed a mix of materials and colours, and all the different architectural details present in the buildings' facades exhibited a rich microenvironment and showed an awareness of what was going on next door.

Buildings related not only in height and mass bulk, but also their facades had similar materials and design patterns. Buildings with arcades expressed a consciousness in the people of having a unified city pattern. Salisbury, which has often been described as the most medieval of English cities, well exemplifies the richness in the cities of this period.

> "Salisbury is a city wonderfully rich and varied in color, rich and yet mellow. A multitude of blackened half-timbered gables with cream and yellow plastered bays, rich red brick buildings and blue-grey flint and grey stone structures create ever changing picturesque streetscapes."[67]

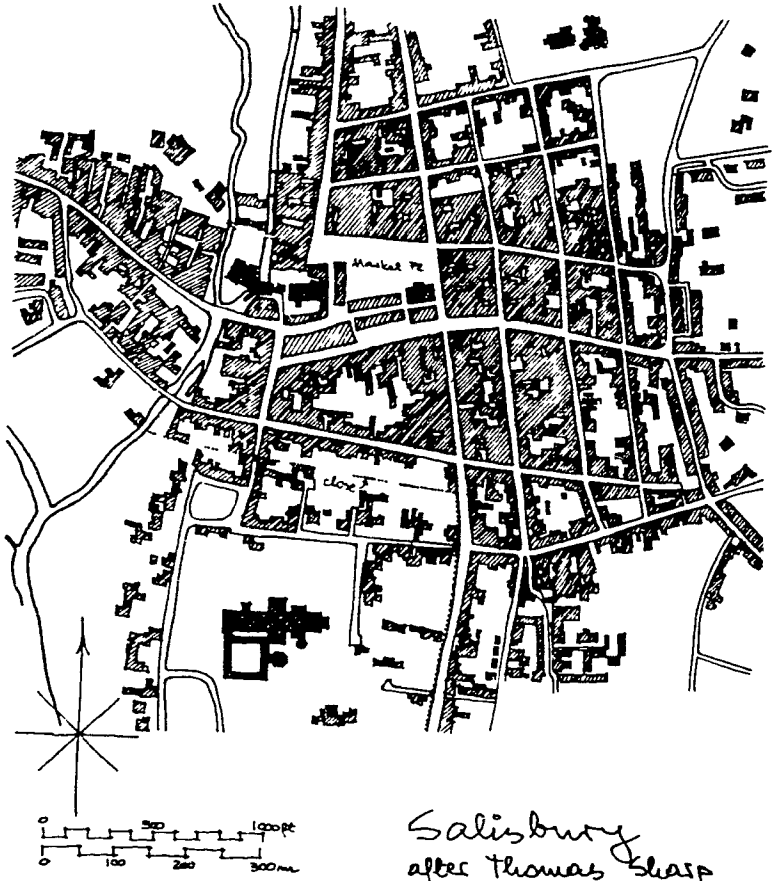

Fig. 9 Salisbury. Plan and perspective of a medieval street

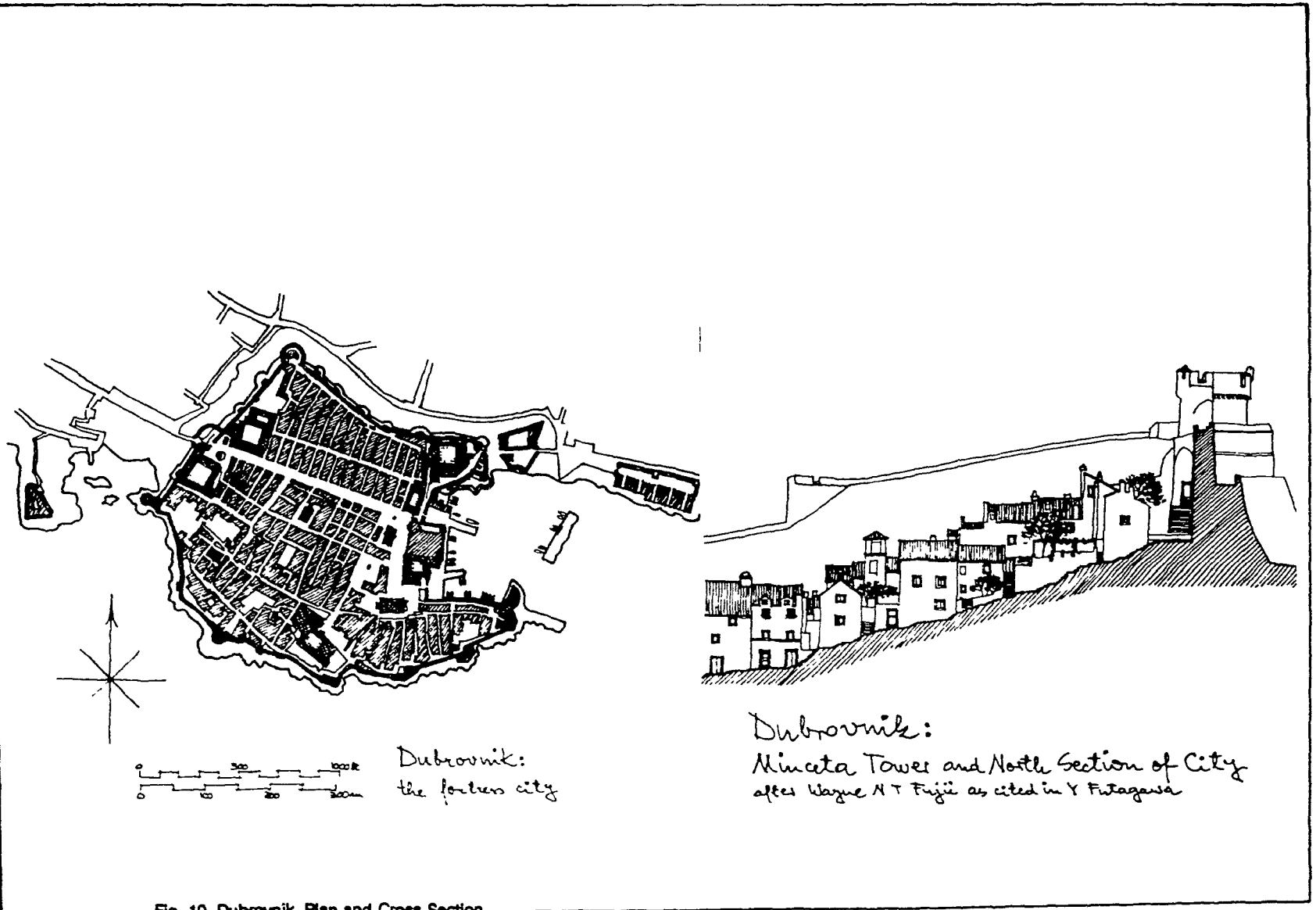

Fig. 10 Dubrovnik. Plan and Cross Section

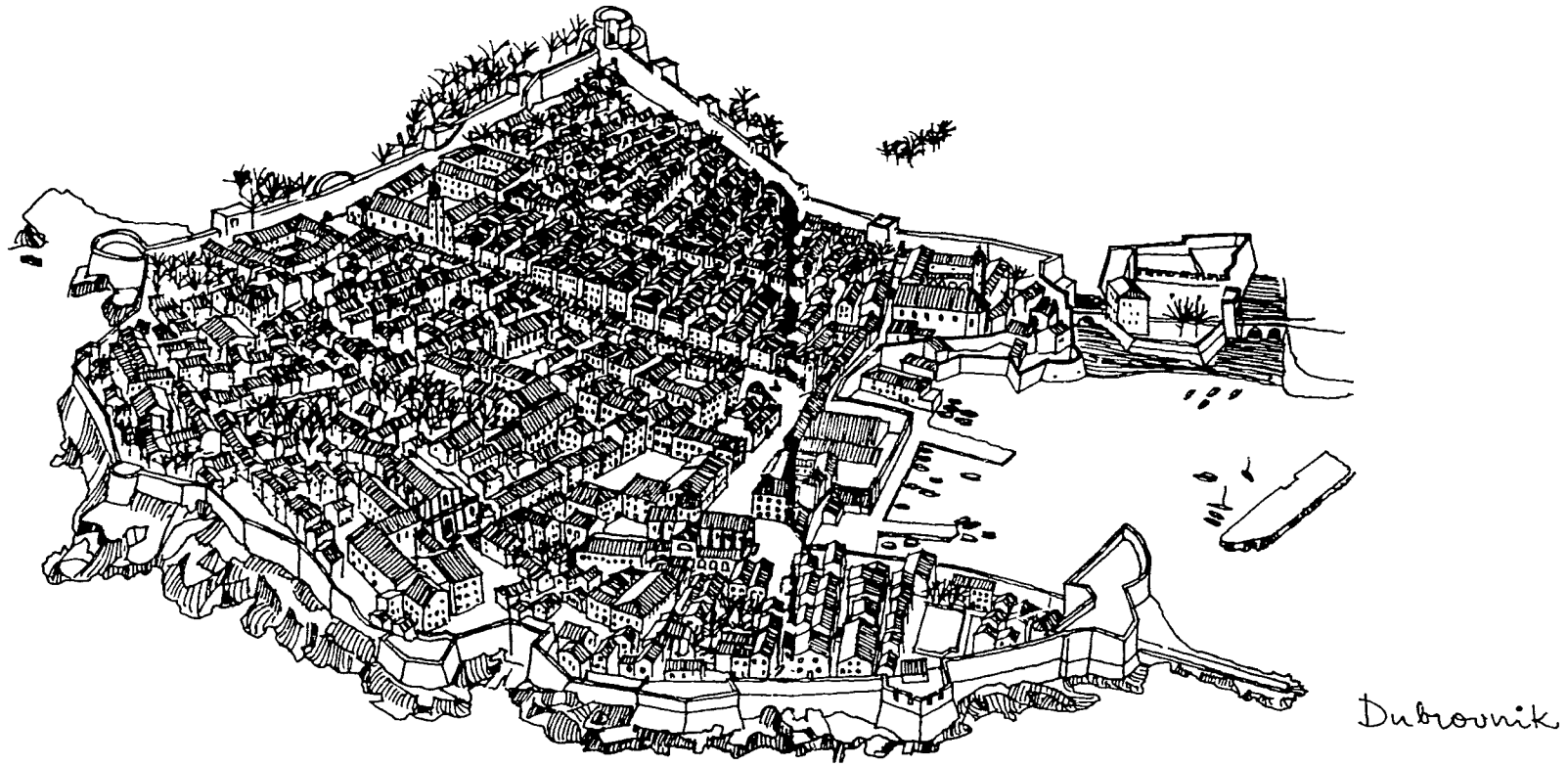

Fig. 11 Dubrovnik. Aerial View

Dubrovnik: Cross Section
after Hans Hartvig Skaarup

Fig. 12 Dubrovnik. Cross Section

In our discussion of human spaces full of colour and variety, we cannot overlook Near East civilizations. Islam was indeed, and continues to be, one of the most passionate and interesting civilizations throughout all of history. Cities were arranged in a hierarchical order much more sophisticated than medieval cities, and streets still follow this organic pattern today.

In Islamic cities, streets are gathering places They are narrow, twisted and shaded alleyways. There is ongoing action, diversity, and animation, together, they enhance the sense of life of streets. Islamic streets truly express the richness of their culture. They are colourful and constantly stimulate our personal feelings and emotions.

Islamic streets, though, cannot only be viewed from their exterior. They are best understood and felt when experienced from the inside. The multitude of decorative treatments of surfaces, the use of almost every conceivable technique and the development of a rich repertory of designs yielded an architectural expression with no parallel in the architecture of the non-muslim world.

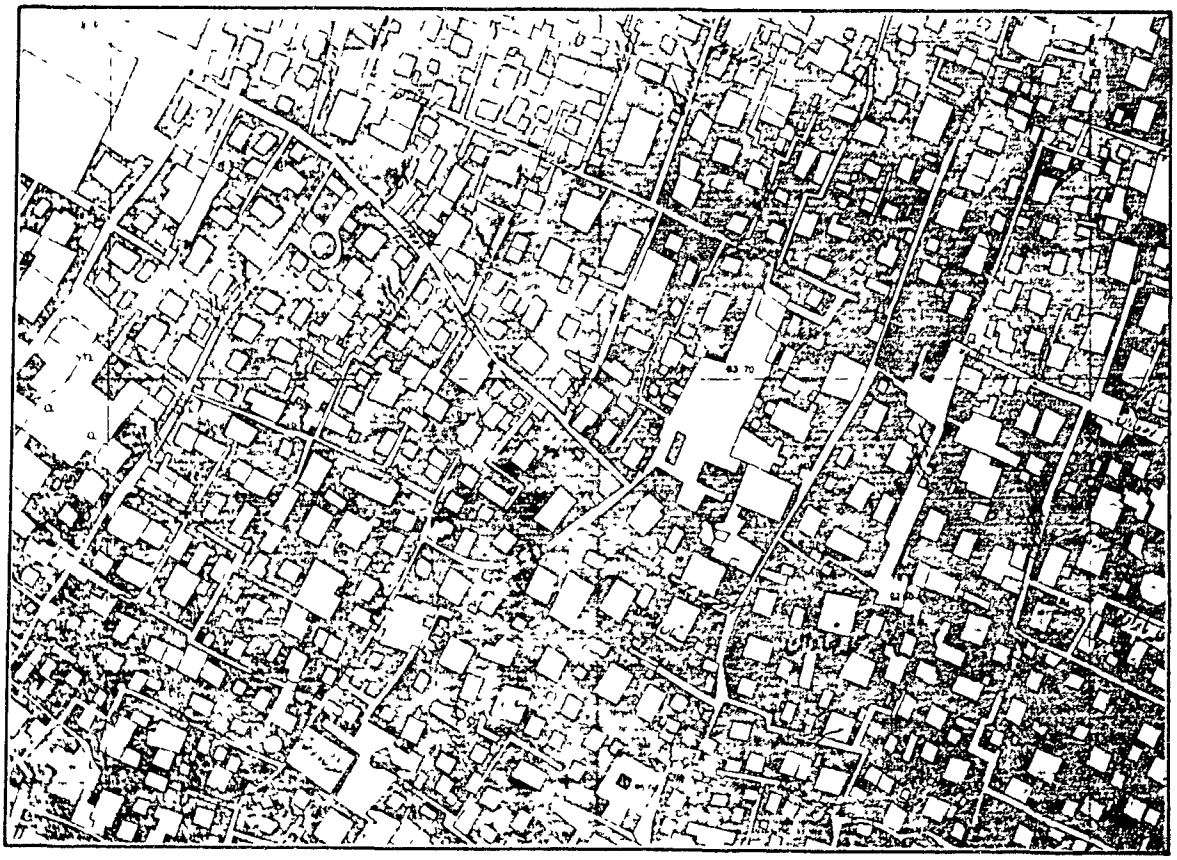

Fig. 13 Plan - View of Yazd, Iran

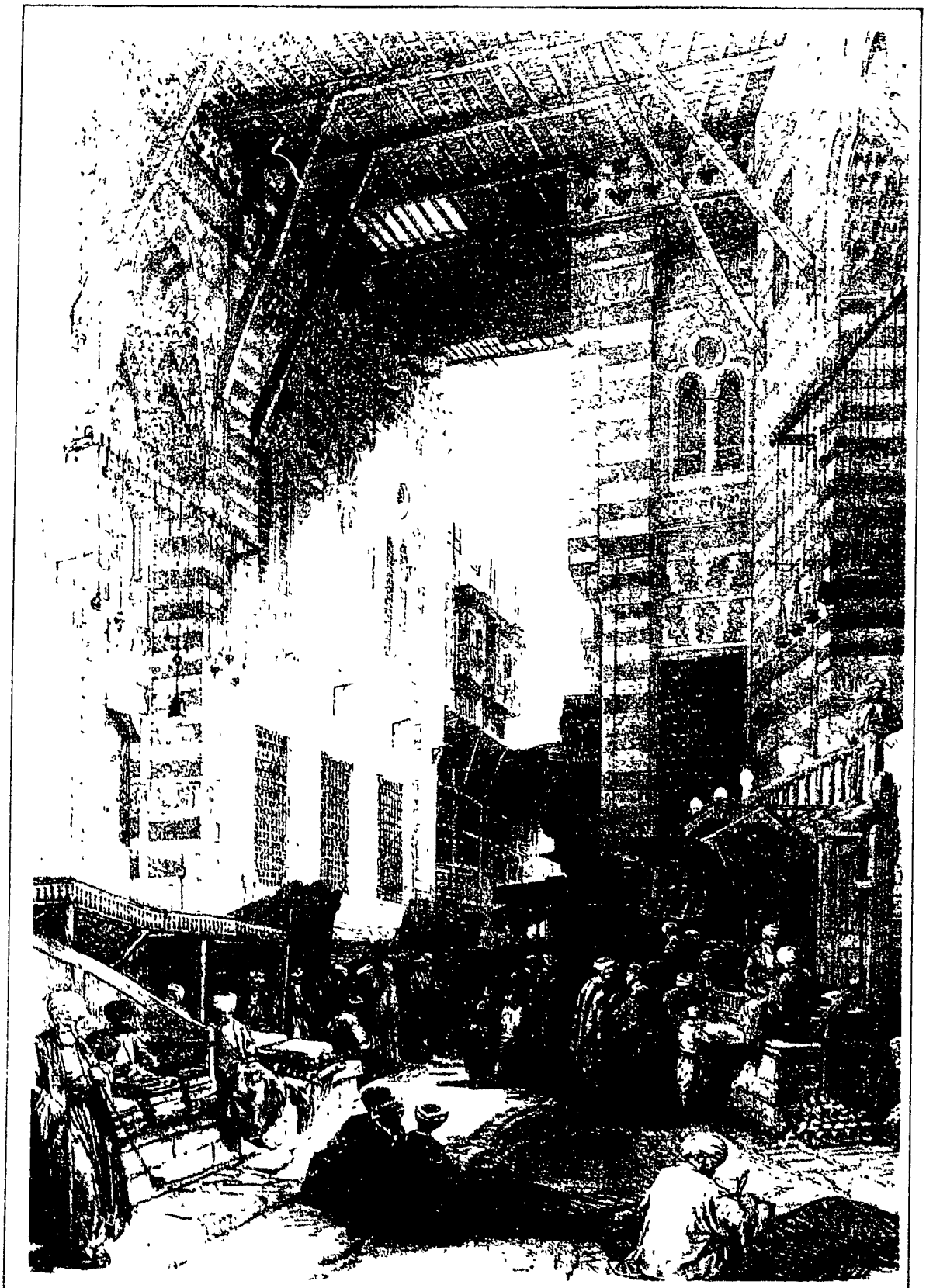

Fig 14 Cairo The bazaar of the silk merchants, 1849

Spatial elements vary from context to context. Streets change and tradition faces evolving demands. Streets have developed as physical representations of our ability to adapt while at the same time they have retained important cultural patterns developed over time.

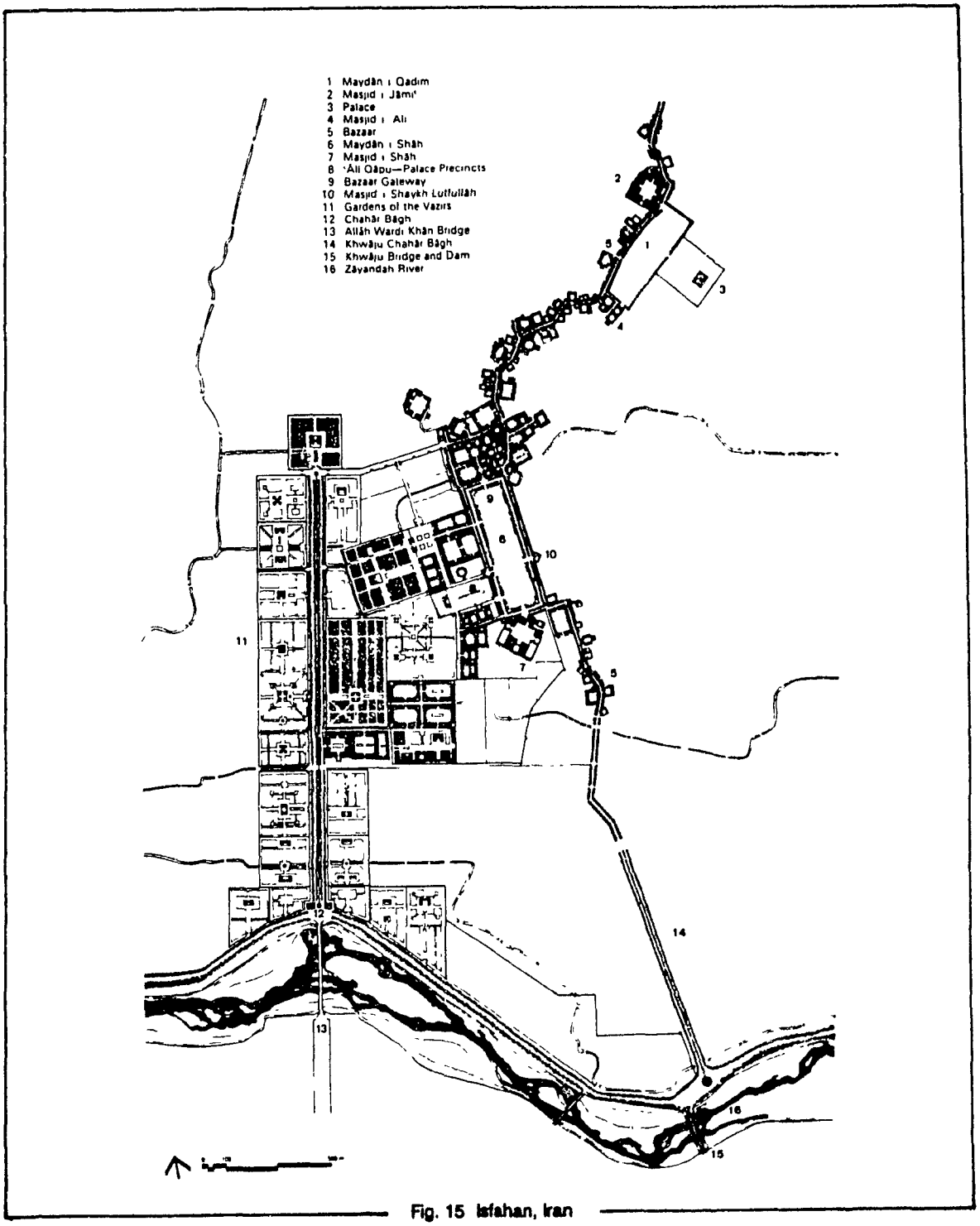

Fig. 15 Isfahan, Iran

In a traditional street, such as in Isfahan, Iran for example, the street functions as a spine that joins bazaars, mosques, schools and bath houses. It expresses the hierarchy of social spaces developed over time, as it shows the sequence of several different public, followed by semi-public, and then by more private spaces.

Chinese and Japanese streets follow this same philosophy. Though Chinese streets have been governed by a simple hierarchical order, and form rectangular blocks, they retain a record of the people who have lived there. In traditional Chinese streets, buildings are together one whole unity. Buildings respond to the local conditions, and thus they are organized so that their outdoor spaces are sheltered from the cold northern winds and act as sun traps.[68] In these ways, streets follow environmental, political and religious forces imposed by tradition.

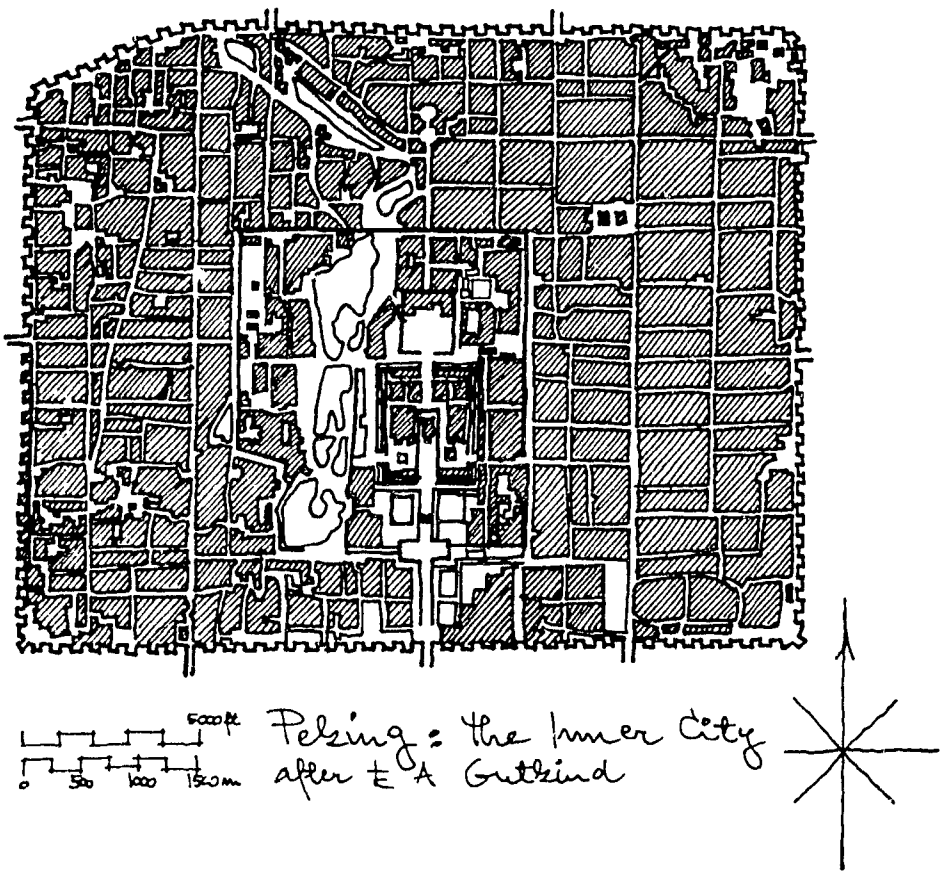

Fig. 16 Peking: The Inner City

Japanese streets, in their own way, display the many and varied aspects of the Japanese people. In traditional Japanese streets there has been an interaction between the different activities, showing the dichotomy between the contemporary Japanese society and the traditional cultural patterns. The Asakusa Temple in Tokyo, Japan, gathers diversity into one unifying framework as it becomes a 'living' history text that grows over time. The street is the result of the local culture, while it transmits a strong sense of place.

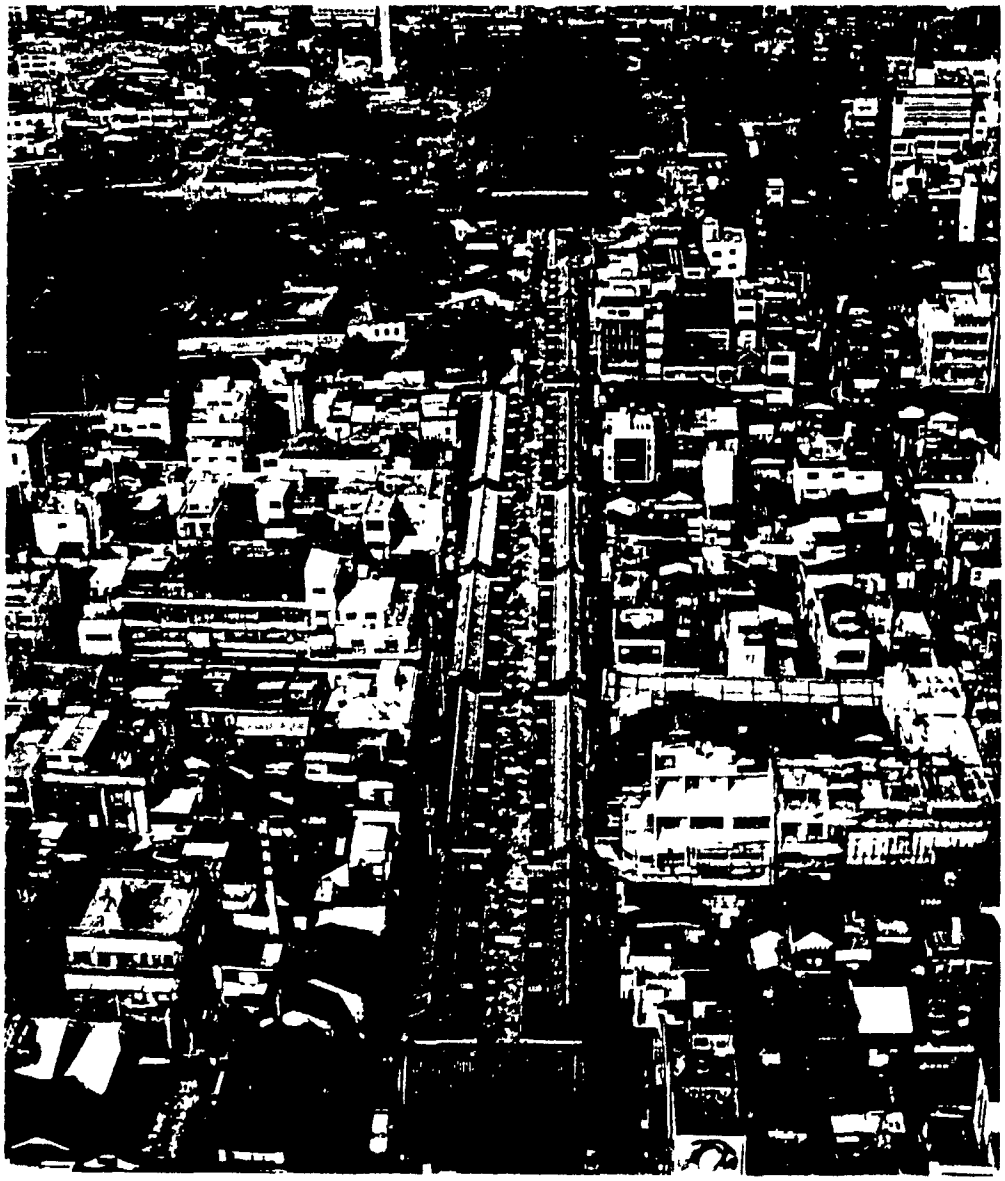

Fig. 17 The Asakusa Temple. Tokyo, Japan

The advent of the Renaissance marked the re-discovery of many ideals. The Renaissance was the revival of interest in the classical influence of Greece and Rome. Renaissance man was interested in the rules and regulations for the perfect classical style. Streets were meant to base their designs on the 'Golden Proportion': the height of the buildings equals the width of the street. This goes according to Alberti's principles, who based his own work on the writings of Vitruvius.

> "The streets of the city were to be uniform in appearance - all doorways the same, all buildings the same height. At crossing points were to be arcades or triumphal arches - the doorways to these public rooms. Major streets and intersections should be protected by porticoes, under which the old men may spend the heat of the day...".[69]

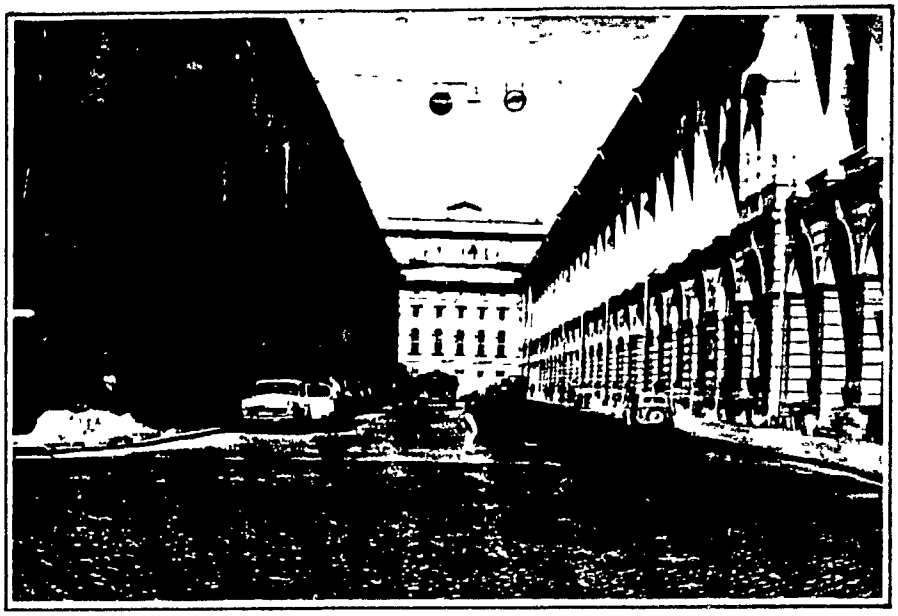

Fig 18 Rossi Prospekt. Leningrad, U.S.S.R.

Few new towns were built during the Renaissance period, but considerable building activity commenced in the reconstruction and extension of existing towns. Medieval streets which were narrow and crooked, were now subject to geometric clarification. Wide avenues with distant vanishing points were inserted inside the organic maze of the medieval urban fabric.

Shoenauer explains the basic planning principles of this era as the use of wide avenues and straight streets with a vista, the chess board pattern of ancient city building, and the extensive use of squares and groups of open spaces not only as monumental, market or traffic places, but as domestic or residential squares as well.[70]

Street dimensions were changed due to military considerations as well as to the increasing demands of wheeled vehicles. Avenues became important symbols in the post-medieval city: axes focused attention on a palace or a large building or monument that recalled the authority of the ruler. Streets were theaters for excellence. They were urban extensions, themes reflecting the political and social struggles of the time.

From the Renaissance on, the street fully developed its importance as an architectural theme. A stage which included a perspective of houses, churches and gardens was built in 1508 for a play by Ariosto at the palace at Ferrara. Sebastiano Serlio in 1537, offered an illustration of a "street space as a rich and diverse microenvironment within a holistic framework".[71]

Serlio's stages identified the street as an urban stage:

1. *The Tragic Scene* becomes the street of public buildings in classical style.
2. *The Comic Scene* illustrates a residential street, less formal, with stores and apartments combined.
3. *The Satyric Scene* represents a path through the woods, outside the city.

Together, these three streets comprised the paradigmatic environments of the Renaissance, the public realms within which the dramas of city and country life were to be acted out.[72]

Andrea Palladio, in the mid 1500's, built three-dimensional versions of the streets of Olympus into the scene of his theater in Vicenza. He formed a 'replica' of the Renaissance ideal city within a theater. In The Strada Nuova in Genoa, Italy, the street-space was made up of connecting walls and horizontal elements that unified the existing differences between the buildings In The Strada Nuova, the street was one theatrical space where the buildings, nevertheless, kept their own individual vocabulary. The street, identified with the theater and vice versa, corresponded then to the Renaissance idea of the street conceived as the supreme stage.

According to Vidler:

> "This synchrony of street and theater was not coincidental but represented the double role of urban space and theatrical space in humanistic culture; even as the public realm of the street took on the functions of the theater of daily life."[73]

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Fig. 19 Sebastiano Serlio's Stages

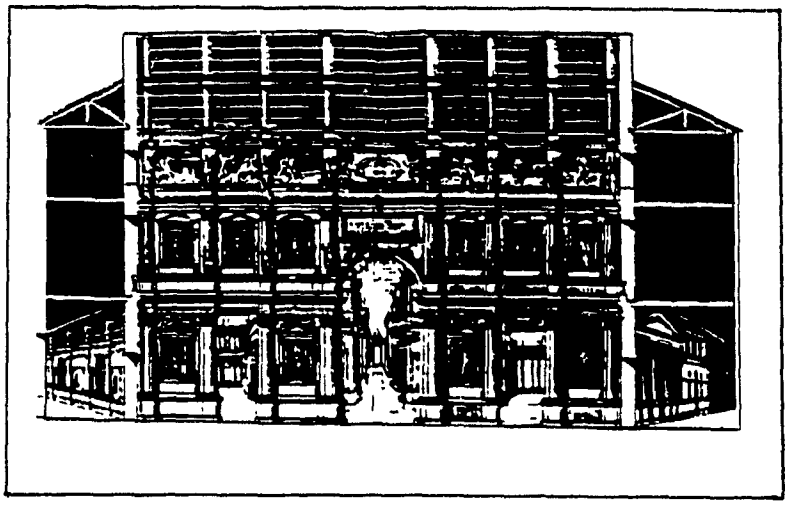


Fig. 20 Andrea Palladio. Teatro Olimpico. Begun 1580

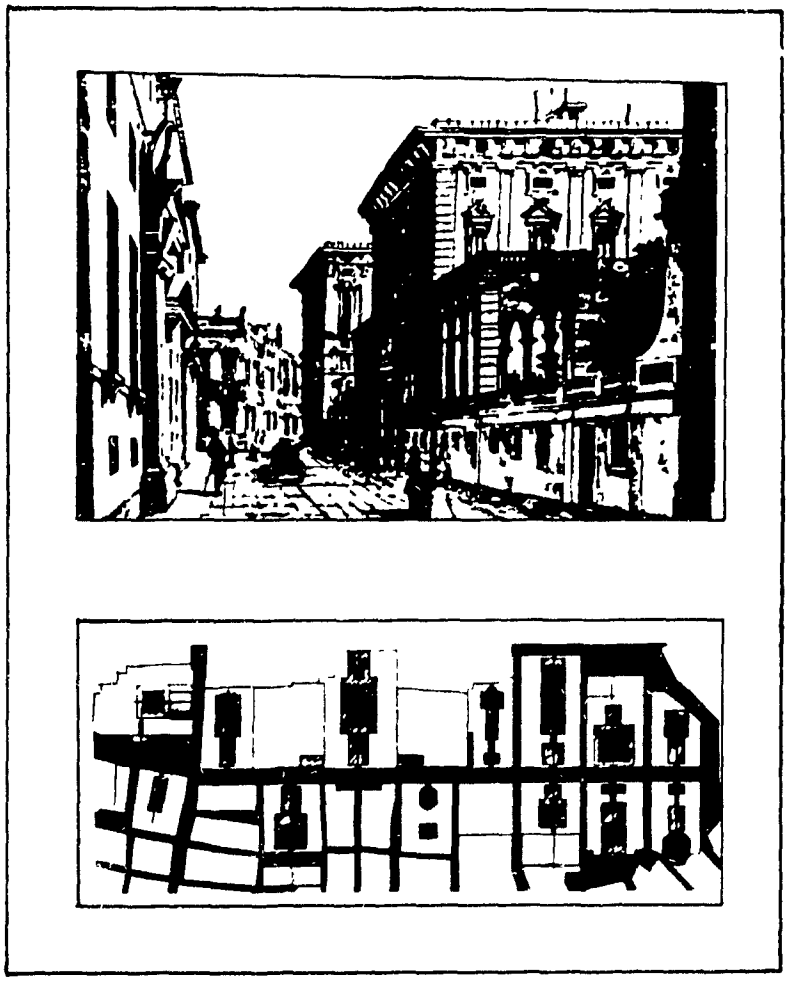


Fig. 21 The Strada Nuova. Genoa, Italy. Perspective and Figure-ground plan

The search for an ideal street aroused great interest in many intellectuals. Street was illusion and utopia, fiction displayed for real observation. Leonardo da Vinci demonstrated his own interest in the street theme when he developed new town planning principles. Streets, as physical spaces, were designed to meet the future demands of growing cities. Leonardo clearly anticipated the different struggles in the city and proposed what can be called the prototype of today's underground traffic system:

> "The roads m are 6 braccia higher than the roads p s, and each road must be 20 braccia wide and have 1/2 braccio slope from the side towards the middle; and in the middle let there be at every braccio an opening, one braccio long and one finger wide, where the rain-water may rub off into hollows made on the same level as p s. And on each side at the extremity of the width of the said road let there be an arcade, 6 braccia broad, on columns, and understand that he who would go through the whole place by the high-level streets can use them for this purpose, and he who would go by the low level can do the same. By the high streets no vehicles or similar objects should circulate, but they are exclusively for the use of gentlemen The carts and burdens for the use and convenience of the inhabitants have to go by the low ones. One house must turn its back to the other, leaving the lower streets between them. Provisions such as wood, wine, and such things, are carried in by the doors n, and privies, stables, and other fetid matter must be emptied away underground, from one arch to the next must be 300 braccia, each street receiving its light through the openings of the upper streets."[74]

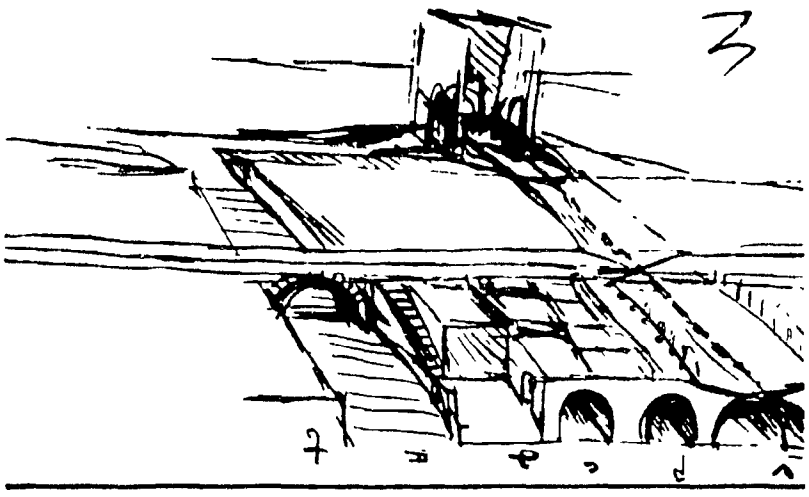


Fig. 22 Leonardo Da Vinci. System of waterway with dual streets

In 1769, Pierre Patte included in his Memoires sur les objets les plus importans de l'architecture a profile of the ideal urban street of the time. The street, according to Patte, was meant to respond to the climatic conditions of the place and to incorporate different activities that would add to the street's life. He made an exhaustive and detailed analysis that included all the different components of the street such as carriageways, side-pavements, buildings and sewage systems. Patte also advocated lining streets with shops to decorate the street and give it a lively atmosphere [75]

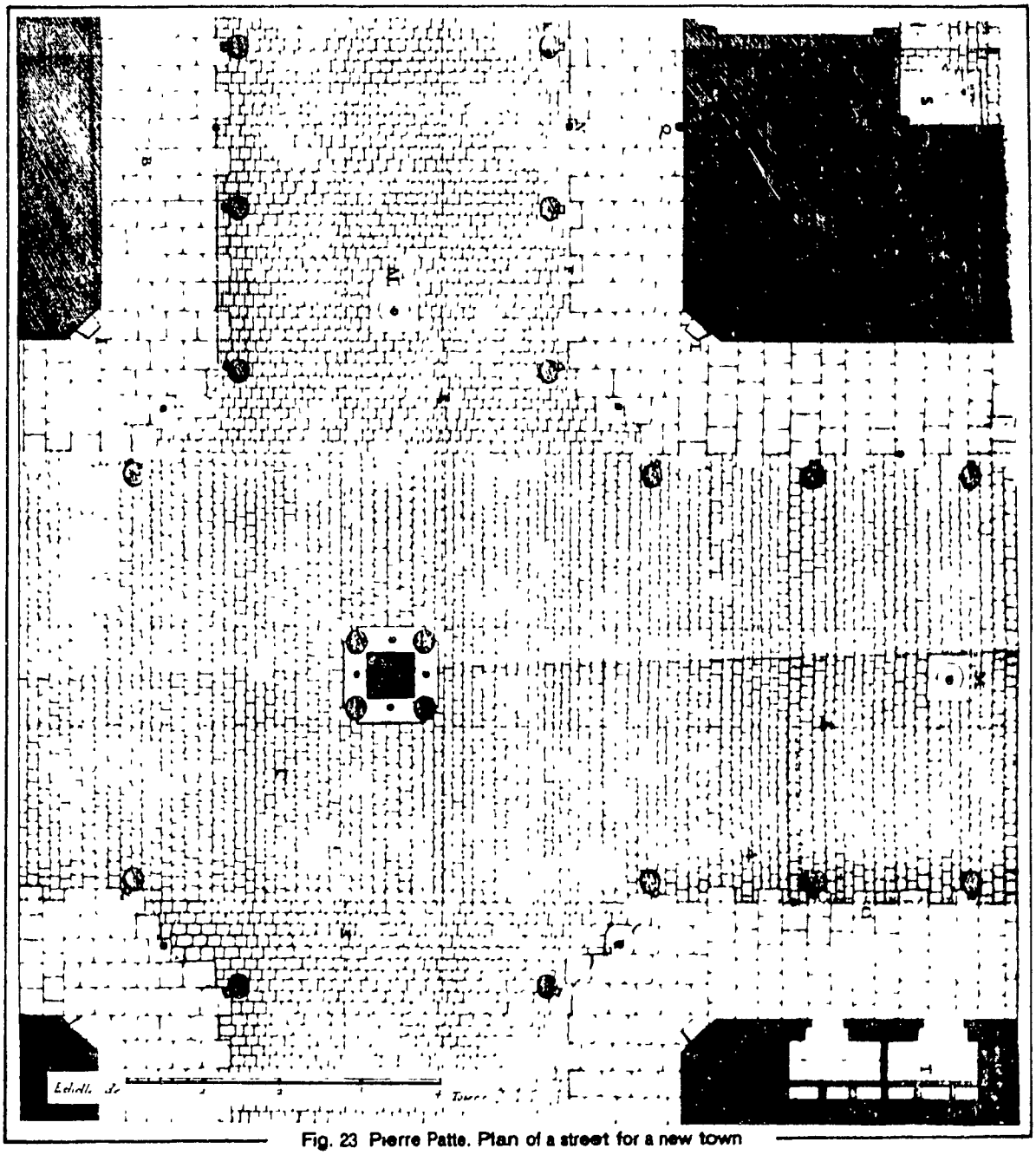


Fig. 23 Pierre Patte. Plan of a street for a new town

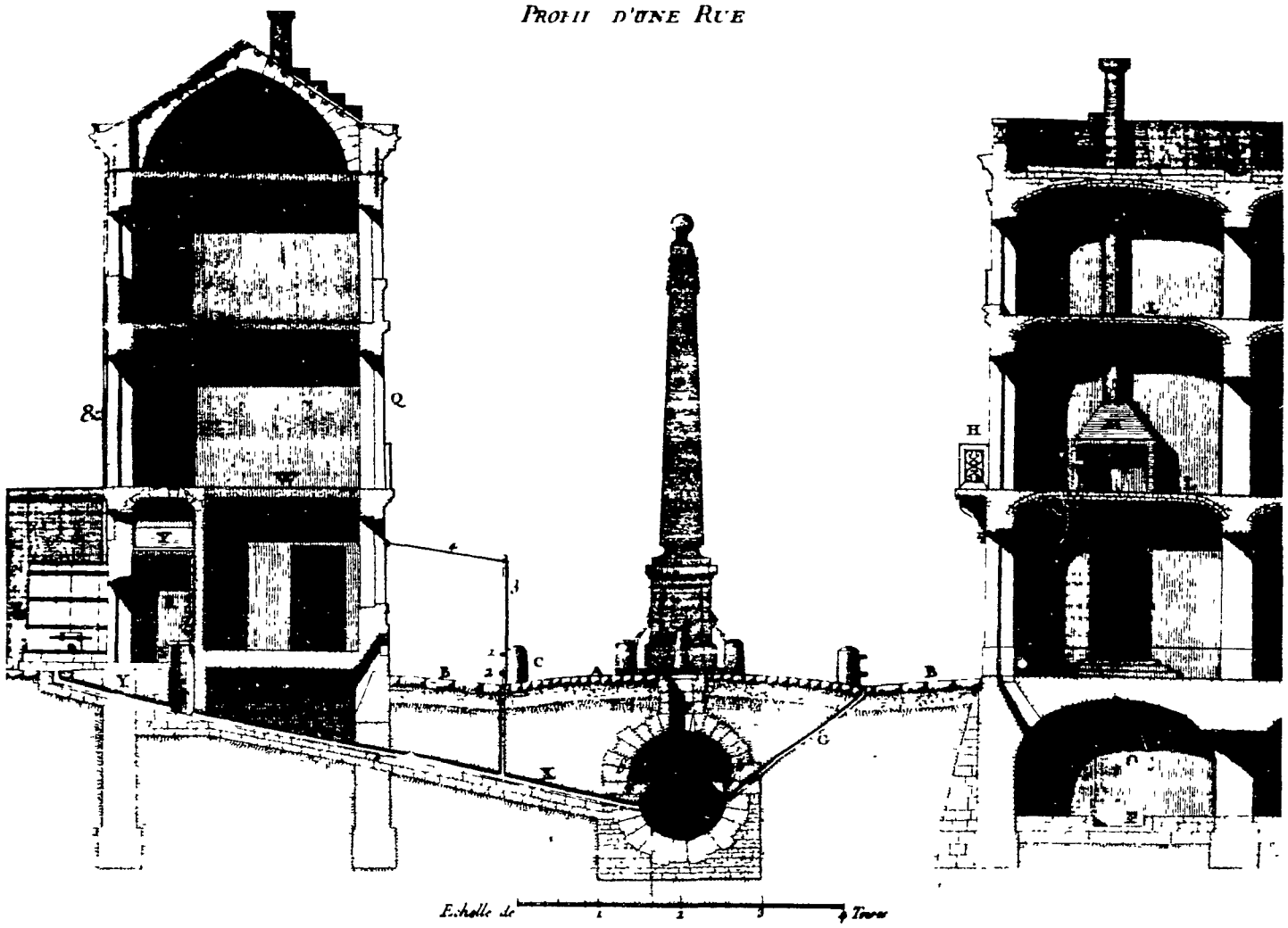


Fig 24 Pierre Patte. Cross section of a street

It was, however, Friedrich Weinbrenner's 1808 project for Langenstrasse in Karlsruhe, Germany, that best exemplified the idealization of the street as an architectonic theme. The project was no more than a simple and sterile abstraction, too much so for human use, as it did not permit the variety and quantity of exchanges necessary for the development of the street.

Weinbrenner's project was not a translation of people's lives. It represented no feelings, no dreams. The unified colonnade acted as a mask that hid the irregularities and particularness of the buildings in the street at the expense of formal unity The project was, then, no more than a project, for it was conceived to hide what the continuous acts of individuals would add in time.

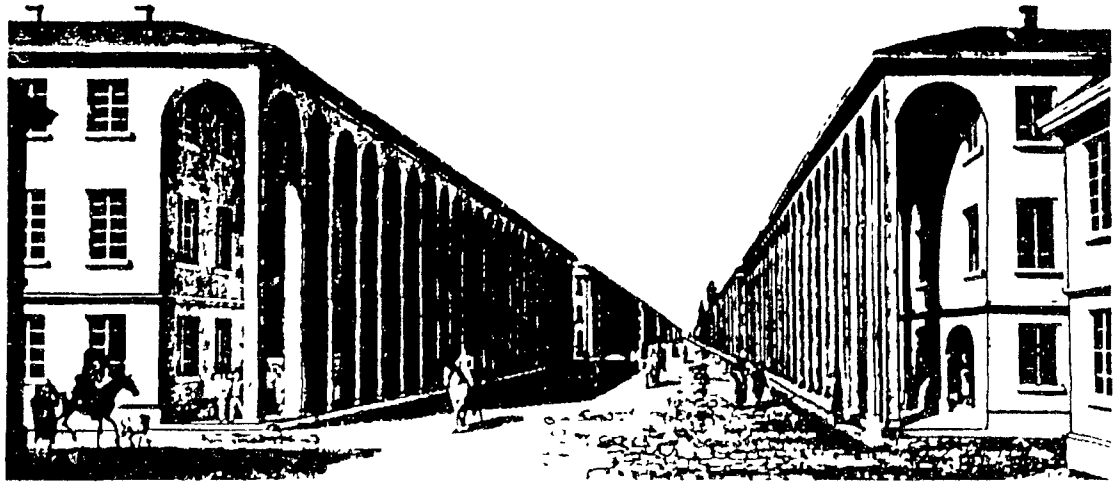


Fig 25 Friedrich Weinbrenner Project for Langenstrasse, Karlsruhe 1808

The historical period known as the Enlightenment had a profound effect not only on Western thinking but on the development of cities and the use of urban space. In the 18th century critical thinkers sought to enlighten and change what they saw as a complacent society. Publishing, music, the arts and architecture increased and cultural trends reflected the economic expansion and prosperity enjoyed by the expanding middle class.[76]

London, Paris, Vienna and Rome were all impressive cities and most other European cities also began to undertake considerable urban improvement. The Enlightened Despots embellished their cities with theaters, opera houses, large plazas, airy boulevards and public gardens. The development of public transportation and the use of street lighting made cities even more liveable and enticing.[77]

Two of the most notable souvenirs from this golden age of the street, which enhanced the pleasures of strolling about the city, were the coffee-shop and the storefront window display. People lingering in front of window-displays, coffee-shop customers reading and chatting with each other, created an inviting social atmosphere on the street [78]

During the Enlightenment and then through the Industrial Revolution, the street came, however, to face demands cities were unprepared to meet. A great number of streets were usurped by fast-wheeling traffic People were separated into those who walked and those who rode. They did not exchange roles, and, thus, the traditional equality of all street passengers was never again to be restored.[79]

Vidler expands on this idea·

> "The industrial revolution in England and the political revolution in France, each in different but ultimately interdependent ways, and in an incredibly short period of time, forced new forms of life and understanding on the inhabitants of the rapidly expanding cities."[80]

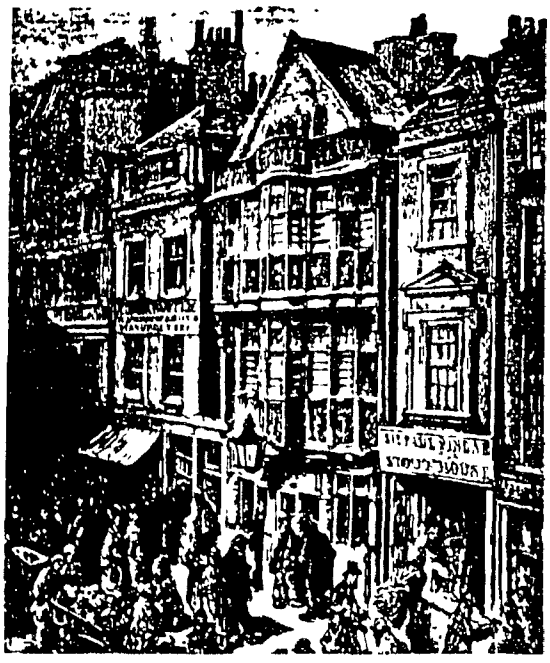


Fig 26 'Bishopsgate Street', London

Fig 26a 'Wentworth Street', Whitechapel

Gustavo Doré's engravings

This was reflected and displayed with special and particular intensity in city streets. Migration, overpopulation, and a rapid physical change accelerated development of urban settlements and produced an environment of psychological and social struggles within the societies.

In reaction to this, metaphor devices were commonly used for plan and 'riot alike', acting as conscious modes of representation. Metaphors were important means as they helped in the effort to organize and assimilate the perception of these changing new realities.

> "...cities were landscapes-sometimes jungles or forests-and later, gardens or parks; they were machines, engines, and factories that functioned according to laws of economics or inertia; they were bodies, healthy or sick, with characteristic symptons of disease or fitness; they were sentient beings, however monstrous or deformed, with humors and psychologies that varied with the circumstances of their environment".[81]

Fig. 27 'London Street Scene' 1872

Fig. 27a 'A street in old Paris'

Gustavo Doré's engravings

Streets not only had to absorb the growing needs for the circulation of goods, of people and vehicles, they had to cope with a growing migration of people to the cities Thus, streets became overpopulated structures. Poverty, the allocation of more people to the same building, and the

increase in the height of the street's volumetry transformed the street ambiance. Because streets were narrow, they reached the point where they could no longer sustain increasing demands.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau remarked of his first impression of Paris, in 1781:

> "How greatly did my first sight of Paris belie the idea I had formed of it. I had imagined a city of a most imposing appearance, as beautiful as it was large, where nothing was to be seen but splendid streets and palaces of marble and gold. [But], as I entered through the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, I saw nothing but dirty stinking little streets, ugly black houses, a general air of squalor and poverty, beggars, carters, menders of cloths, sellers of herb drinks and old hats."[82]

In order to satisfy the universal need for greater freedom and a better standard of living, cities were rebuilt and endowed with more open spaces than ever before. Parks, as well as boulevards and avenues, were built amidst an already conglomerated urban mass.

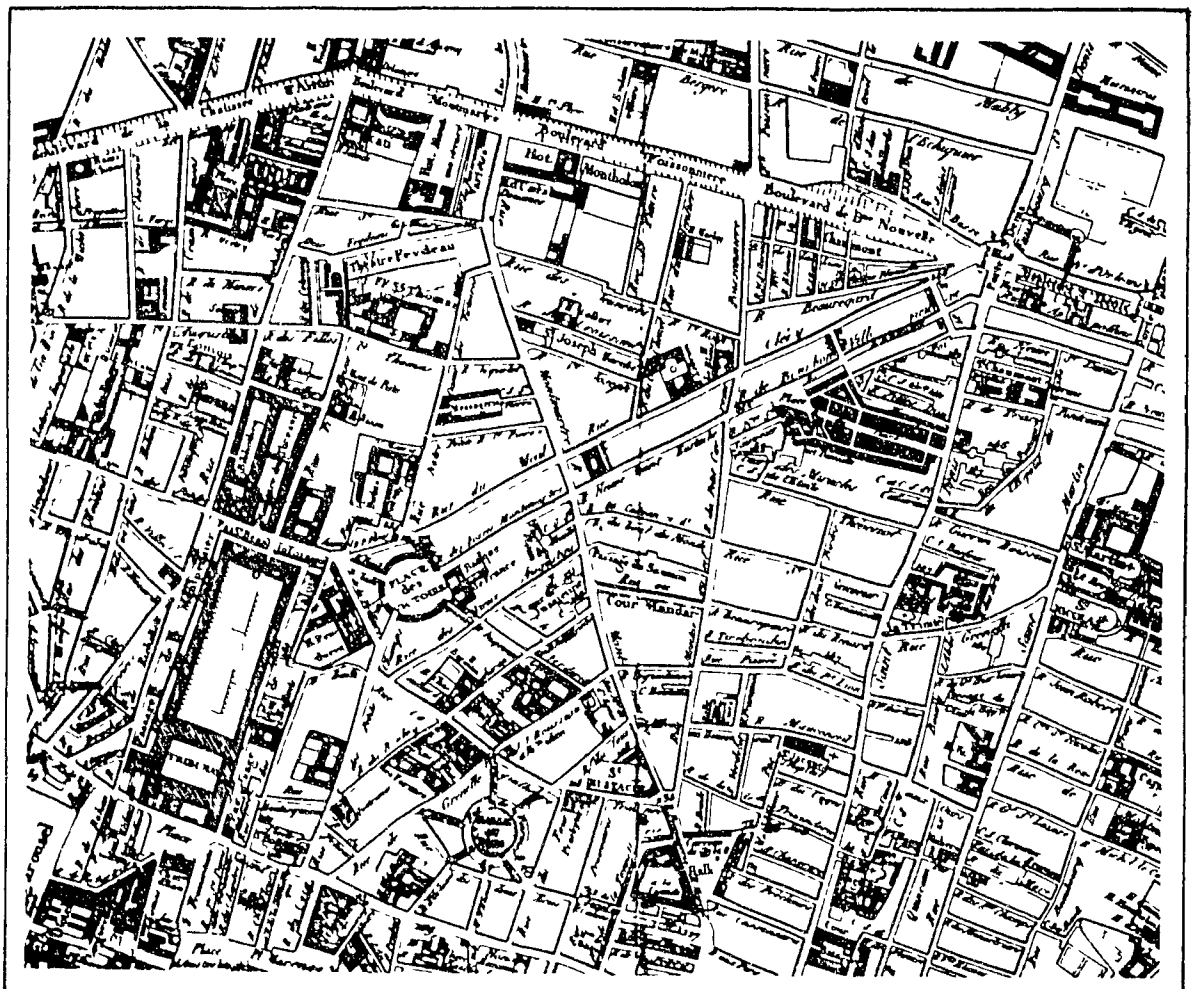


Fig. 28 Paris The Quarter of Palais Royal, from Maire's Plan. 1808

Paris was the most outstanding example of this renovation of urban life. It was here that, finally, the ideas of Napoleon I's paradigmatic institutions of the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Ecole Polytechnique affected the practice of urbanism. Napoleon III, through the plans of Haussmann, implemented his own dreams to make the City of Lights outshine London.[83]

The new boulevard was perhaps the most urban product of the nineteenth century. It was a monument to the ideal of a city; a vista, a path of movement and a social institution at its very best. The old streets were sordid and often unsanitary, so the new quarters were designed with wide avenues which would provide more air and light to the buildings' interiors. Boulevards had, above all, a strategic purpose for Louis Napoleon was driven by the desire to cut into the districts of barricades, which he viewed as "hideouts of the majority of released prisoners" [84]

> "The prolonging of the Boulevard de Strasbourg had a 'utilité stratégique'; the Rue de Rivoli's straight alignment 'did not lend itself to the habitual tactic of local insurrections'; the covering of the Canal Saint Martin with the Boulevard Richard Lenoir, thus cutting through the most intransigent district of all, the Faubourg Saint Antoine, was dictated by the 'interests of public order,'.. [85]

Streets were paved, carefully planned routes for both pedestrians and vehicles They were embellished with trees and statues, and carried underground piping for rain water, sewage and gas. Paris was cleaned, and avenues and boulevards provided space for both leisure and social interaction

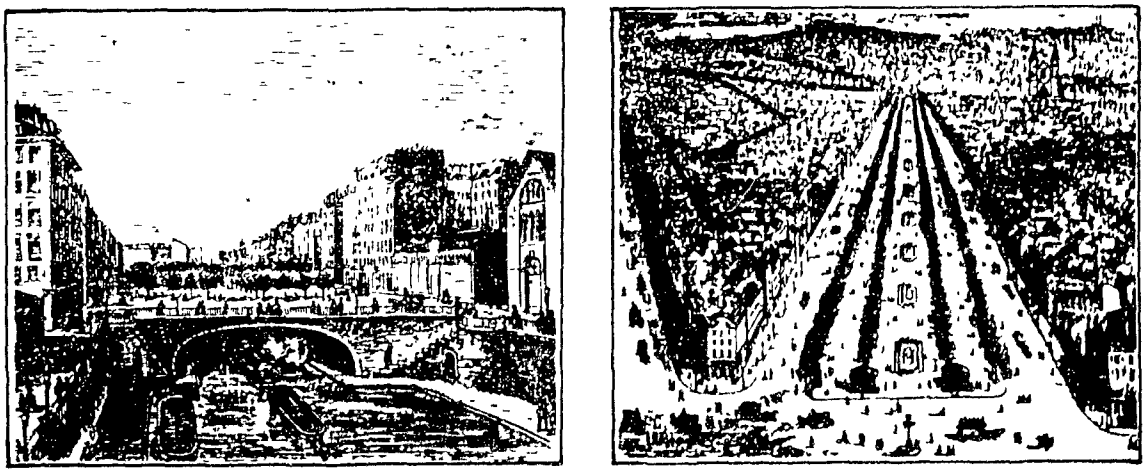


Fig 29 The Boulevard Richard Lenoir, built over the Canal Saint Martin, 1861-63
Fig. 29a Perspective View of the Boulevard Richard Lenoir 1867-1873

Baron Haussmann Plans for the Renovation of Paris

The 19th century was ripe for utopian solutions as cities suffered increased social, economic and sanitary problems which were derived from the uncontrolled population growth accompanying the Industrial Revolution. No country was more affected than Great Britain. Its cities were overpowered by a growing poverty and the increasing concentration of large-scale industries and workers. Moreover, the gulf between the rich and the poor acquired dramatic configurations.

Utopias of the 19th century were fundamentally concerned with improving the living conditions of mankind. They preached pragmatism but stressed social utility. Robert Owen, perhaps the most well-known of the English Utopians, provided a theoretical framework for what he and the Utopian Movement considered a perfect and self-sufficient community.

Owen elaborates:

> "Courts, alleys, lanes and streets create many unnecessary inconveniences, are injurious to health and destructive to almost all the natural comforts of human life...a large square, or rather parallelogram, will be found to combine the greatest advantages in its form for the domestic arrangements of the association."[86]

Owen only took into consideration populations between 300 and 2000, and did not accept the real dimensions of an actual city. Other important Utopians came after, among whom Buckingham and Pemberton must be mentioned. It was, however, Ebenezer Howard, following the tradition of the Utopians, who proposed new ideas for the 'Garden City'. In it, streets were to be less congested, and the city less crowded and dismembered.

> "Clean streets with free countryside all around; a belt of fine gardens and orchards, so that from every point in the city, with a few moments' walk, one can reach the pure air, the grass and the distant horizon."[87]

Howard's ideas seemed more viable than those of earlier Utopians. Streets in the 'Garden City', though, lacked the essential conditions of concentration and diversity of cultural and economic activities. This static, sterile planning did not take into account human dreams and desires, only 'needs' as the Utopians saw them. In the end, the 'Garden City' proved to be unrealistic for it did not take into account the real growth of cities. Neither was it self-sufficient. It ended as a town, just like any other, dependent on the pull of the capital.

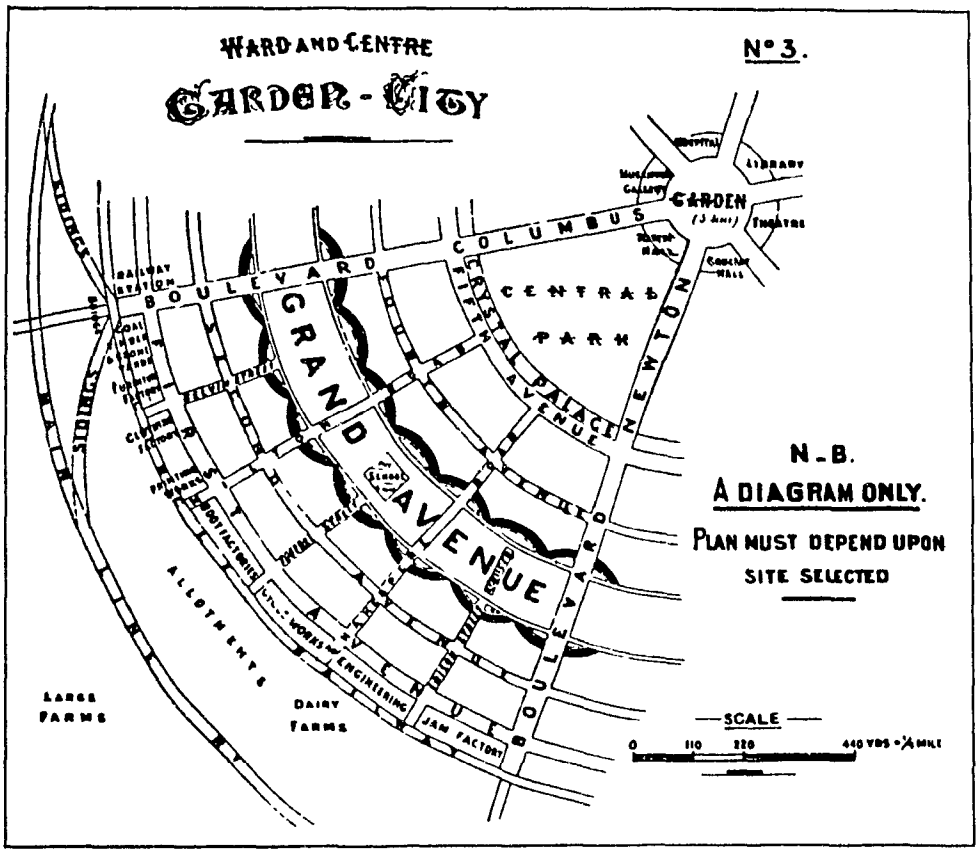


Fig. 30 Ebenezer Howard. Diagram for the Garden City. 1898

In the 1920s a distinguished group of American regional planners adopted and expanded Howard's ideas. The aptly named Decentrists sought to solve urban problems by decentralizing the city and decreasing its size. Their general outlook was negative and gloomy for they viewed the street as a bad environment for humans.[88]

The Decentrists believed houses should be turned away from the street and face inward towards sheltered greens. This isolationist ideal would destroy the street's humaneness, leaving it to be more a transportation channel than anything else. Their basic unit of design was not the street but the block, the super-block which segregated commerce, residences and green spaces.[89] As the Decentrists were more concerned with urban failures than with successes, it is unfortunate, then, that their pessimistic attitudes have been embraced as gospel by many present day planners.

In the 20th century, cities all over the world experienced unprecedented growth. A better standard of living became a universal obsession tied with the practicality of rapid communication and efficient movement within cities. More than any previous era, the 20th century sought and implemented practical approaches to urban congestion.

Prior to the 20th century, cities had been an eclectic repetition derived from classical patterns. Twentieth-century cities, though, were industrial, overpopulated areas. Thus, cities could not be rebuilt under elitist theorems. In the 20th century there was no longer place for utopian "town thinking". The scale of cities necessitated new ideas, large-scale projects, and an understanding of orienting design towards mass production.

The Italian Futurists were the first important movement claiming to change the city's structure on a large scale. This movement aimed directly and deliberately at a mass audience. The Italy of the 20th century, as described by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism, "meant youth, speed, the beauty of the motorcar and the aeroplane".[90]

While Futurism was greeted enthusiastically in most sectors of the artistic community, it was five years old by the time an architect, namely Antonio Sant'Elia, embraced it. Sant'Elia condemned what he saw as anachronistic museum cities and praised a new architecture. He pointed out in his Manifesto of Futurist Architecture: "We now prefer what is light, ephemeral, quick... Our houses will not outlive their tenants. Every generation will build its own city."[91]

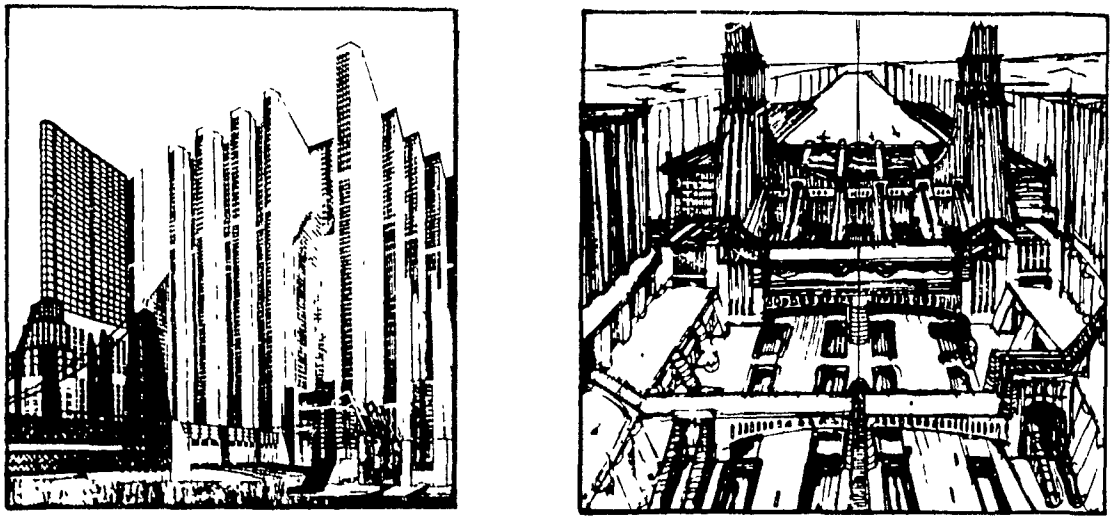
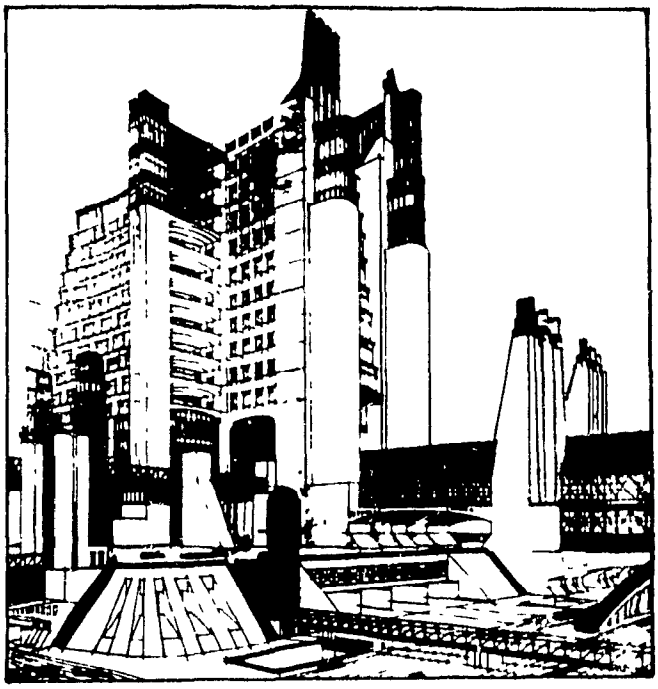


Fig. 31 Chiattone. Structure for a modern metropolis. 1914
Fig. 31a Sant'Elia. Città Nuova. Project. 1913-14



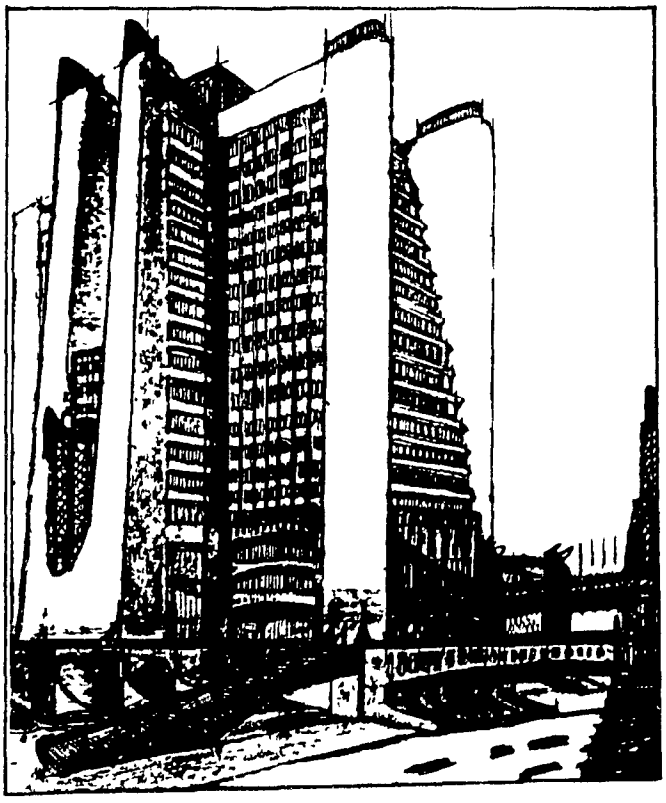


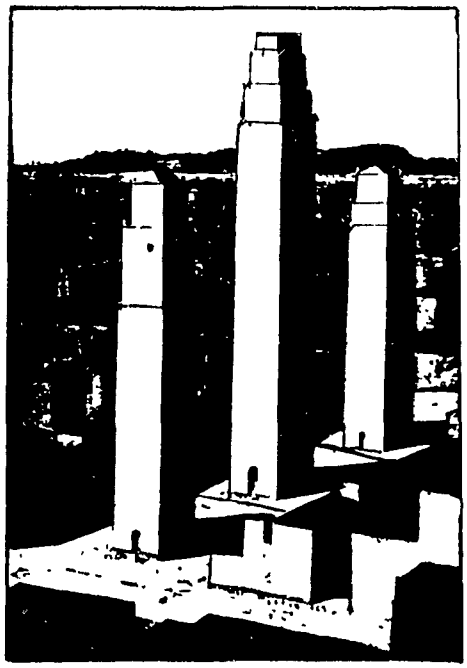
Fig. 32 and 32a Sant'Elia. Città Nuova 1913-1914

Futurist life was essentially urban. The futurist city was meant to express both human and mechanic energy. Streets could no longer be static stages. They had to provide the space for fast and efficient machines. Streets could not only function at ground level, but instead should plunge many storeys down into the earth, joining the metropolitan traffic, and interconnecting at different levels by metal gangways and swift-moving pavements [92]

Sant'Elia's ideas, though, fell short of real implementation not only because of his early death, four years after his joining the movement, but mainly because the city, as he saw it, was meant to be an artificial environment. And yet, with their notions of beneficial demolition the Futurists foreshadowed much of the philosophy of modern city planning.

In the 20th century, streets became not only congested spaces, but were soon outgrown by faster means of communication. Technology and the development of the elevator permitted, as never before, the increasing use of high-rises, and this meant a more efficient use of valuable land. As traditional streets were increasingly seen as a waste of land space, the basic structure of the city was about to change.

Functionalism brought about a change in the physical form of the street and altered its traditional social role Cities soon became expansionist functional masses. Streets were channels; they were thoroughfares cutting their way through huge superblocks. However, Functionalism did not emerge in just one day all the attitudes and 'accidents' had been building up for centuries. All the situation needed at the time was the means for explosion, and this was provided by advanced and affordable technology, improved communications, and the possibility for cheap and fast mobility.[93] Functionalism then became a major element in the development of 20th century space.



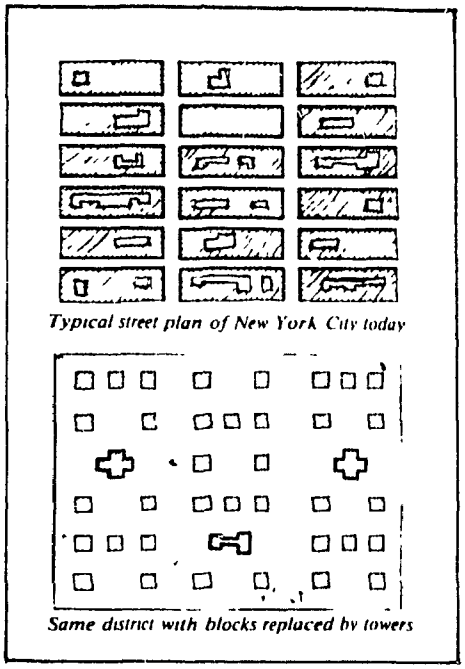


Fig.33 Raymond Hood. City of Towers. 1927 Fig.34 Diagrams of the Vertical City, based on work of Rem Koolhaas

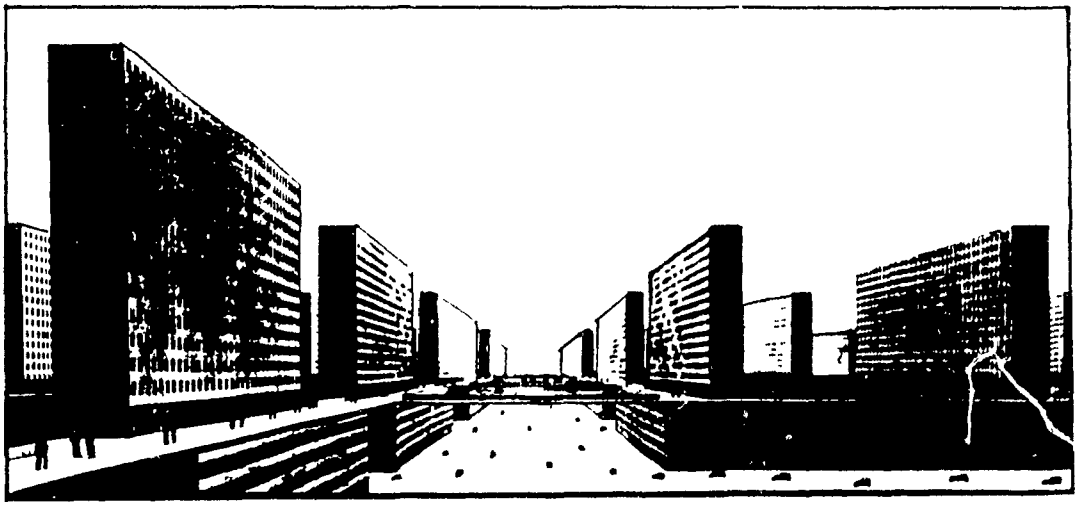


Fig. 35 Ludwig Hilberseimer. The Ideal City. 1920

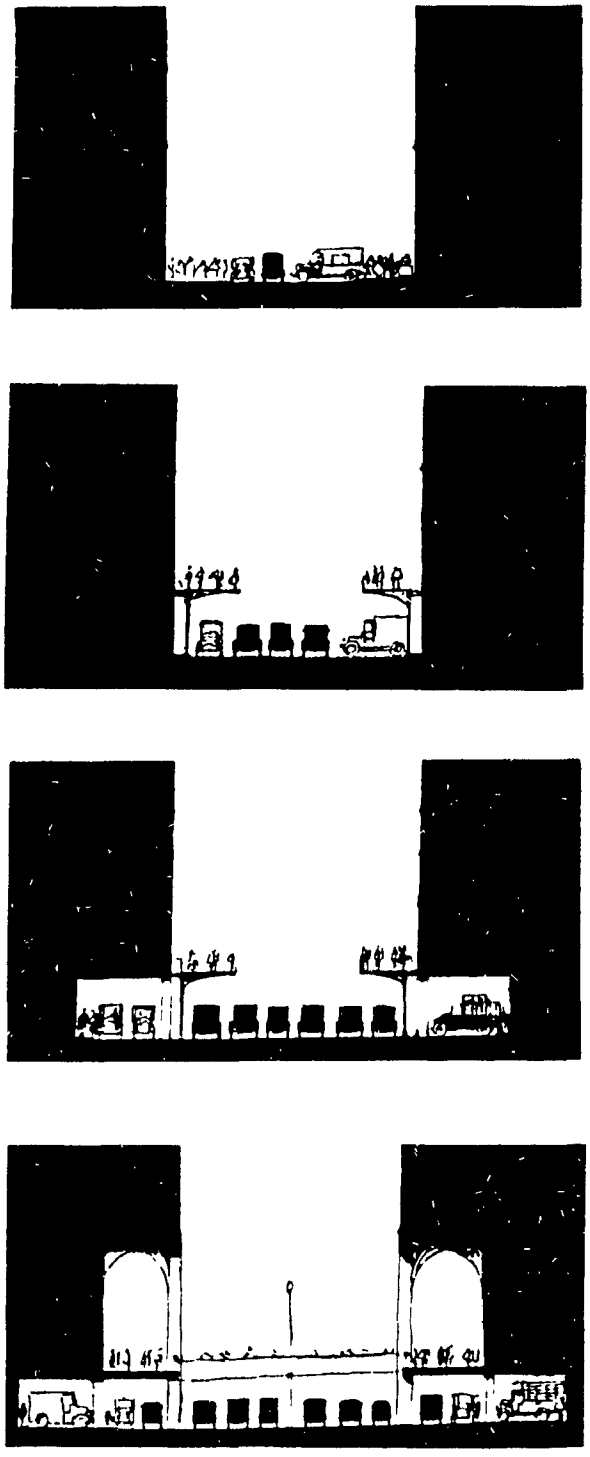


Fig. 36 Process to Increase Street Capacity, 1931. From First Regional Plan of New York (1930)

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF SPACE IN THE 20th CENTURY

It has been called the "architectural expression of the intellectual and aesthetic revolution"[94] of the early twentieth century. Functionalism originated as a dream of a small group of idealists in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and France during the 1910s and 1920s. The movement spread throughout Europe, and later, especially after World War II, became the guiding force for most European and American urban developments.

An increase in population, a change in living patterns, including the rapid development of urban communities, demanded the emergence of new constructive techniques, faster developments, and comprehensive plans that could cope with the greater scale of cities

One of the main concerns of the Functionalist movement was the idea of starting with a clean slate. Architects and designers reduced real day-to-day conditions to abstract concepts. Regionalism and environmental identity were ignored. This resulted "in exciting designs on paper, but yielding segregated urban buildings and spaces"[95] devoid of kinship to a local context

Under Functionalism the idea of free-flowing space evolved, perhaps without any conscious intention, into individual buildings isolated by parking lots and highways. Streets and public open spaces were considered channels serving only the main utilitarian purpose of getting one quickly from A to B, with little regard to the quality of the trip.

Christian Norberg-Schulz comments that spatially the new settlements did not possess enclosure and density Instead, they usually consisted of buildings freely placed within a park-like space

> "Streets and squares in the traditional sense are no longer found and the general result is a scattered assembly of units This implies that a distinct figure-ground relationship no more exists, the continuity of the landscape is interrupted and the buildings do not form clusters or groups."[96]

In conglomerated twentieth century cities, the search for better standards of living, more accessible green spaces, together with a reaction against eclecticism and 'revival' styles which were being followed in a decadent picturesque manner agitated for new ideals.

However, the misinterpretation and the extreme abstraction of Functionalism led to results far away from the real needs of local environments The World Wars, changes in political structures, and the desire for economic profit, encouraged massive urban projects which, ironically, abandoned many of the important principles with which Functionalism began.

Five major movements were important in the development of the Functional movement:

- The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement
- De Stijl in Holland
- The Bauhaus in Germany
- The French-movement led by Le Corbusier
- The International Movement in America

The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement that flourished immediately before and after the Revolution of 1917 generated one of the great art movements of this century. Yet, it remained comparatively unknown as it did not receive significant attention in either books or exhibitions until recently

When discussing the Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement, one cannot refer to a unique style in formal terms for there is no unifying theme or element. It is a movement that encompasses an extraordinarily high level of experimentation among all the arts It produced a wide interaction and collaboration between painting, sculpture, music, literature, theater, architecture, design, film, photography and typography While this movement was at first elevated to an official level by Soviet leaders, it was later denounced and officially repressed by Stalin in the 1930s. The Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement heritages disappeared, were detroyed and were confiscated. Only in the late 1960s were its books and the few remaining journals rediscovered and some significant works were restored [97]

Through the Russian Avant-Garde Movement emerged a new formal vocabulary. Under Suprematism the ultimate reduction of painting to essential forms and pure geometric shapes took place. Malevich, as well as other Suprematist artists, believed that painting should be constructed only from geometric elements such as the rectangle, the circle, the square and the cross From these pure forms, painting should express metaphysical and symbolic truths. The Constructivists went one step further and sought the use of these formal qualities as the base for any valid artistic creation; they then translated these ideas to graphics and three-dimensional design.[98]

Under the Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement, French Cubist and Italian Futurist ideas were translated into constructivist forms The city of the Future as expressed by Liubov Popova and Alexandr Vesnin in their 'City of the Future' (1920)[99] or by Gustav Gustavovich's 'Dynamic City' (1919-20)[100], was seen as a functional and integral structure with a clear volumetric identity

Cities, as if viewed from an airplane, were 'painted' in a picturesque way Buildings and streets were represented as mere lines, some wider than others. As with painting, the architectural works of this movement reduced the complexity of what happened in cities to mere geometrical and industrial forms, ignoring any close-up view of reality. That is, the Russian and Soviet Avant-Gardists applied regularized methods of composition to particularized urban contexts

Ironically, the movement saw its end when it was sanctioned by a government that viewed itself as egalitarian, utilitarian and oriented towards the masses of society The government feared that this elitist movement would gradually undermine its power, believing that the movement did not represent the aspirations of the general masses. But neither did the political regime of the time allow the aspirations of the general masses to be expressed openly

As with the Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement, the members of De Stijl were involved in all areas of design and the fine arts, from painting and architecture to furniture and coffeepots The principal exponents of this Dutch movement of the Twenties were Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg, the architects J.J P Oud, Gerrit Rietveld and Mart Stam [101]

De Stijl was concerned with the dissemination of social renewal through ideal abstraction This quest for social revolution through art came undoubtedly from utopian collectivist thinkers who had experienced the horrors of World War I Yet, as in the Russian and Soviet Avant-Garde Movement, its exponents looked to abstract forms as a source of inspiration, instead of the real needs of the people and of daily life Hence, their asocial interpretation of how public spaces were actually to be used never came to be the real representation of a broader social context

The Bauhaus, a collective training school formed in 1918, had a strong political ideology behind the teachings of Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer and Josef Albers among others The formal objectives of the Bauhaus were similar to those of De Stijl. The aim of the Bauhaus was "to

unite art and technology under a purified aesthetic that removed all ornament and articulation from form and stressed beauty of expressed function".[102]

In the Bauhaus ornament was decadent, 'less' was 'more'. The Bauhaus was concerned with purity and perfection in the assembly of a building However, as with earlier abstract ideals, the formal components in it such as white stucco walls, exposed concrete and glass, and flat roofs, which Groplus considered honest materials, became a set of motifs. These motifs could be applied anywhere, without considering the climate or geographic determinants or specific inherited social and cultural patterns of the place

Distinguishing 'building' from 'architecture,' the language of the Bauhaus, in the form of slogans, grew away from the language of the common man. Just as the Bauhaus vocabulary never came to reflect the aspirations of the working class[103], so, too, did the work of Le Corbusier fall short of this ideal

In Le Corbusier's 'L'unité d'habitation de Marseilles' the buildings were modified by the users to suit their individual and communal worlds. The inhabitants quickly filled the functional interior spaces with traditional furniture Alan Colquhoun comments that many such projects, when translated to a real context, attain only a limited degree of acceptance.

> "One of the most striking examples of this is the modification of Pessac, where the organization of homes according to the principles laid down in the "Five Points" has been altered to conform to petit-bourgeois norms requiring small windows, shutters, pitched roofs, and so on."[104]

Moreover, when looking at Le Corbusier's large scale projects such as the Plan Voisin in Paris (1925), La Ville Radieuse (1935), and the Plan of Chandigarh in India (1951), we see not only a total abstraction from the existent grid, but also a drastic, in fact, too sterile separation of activities: working, walking, recreation and social encounters The extreme idealization in Le Corbusier's schemes never came then to represent the complexity in present urban life

Le Corbusier considered traditional streets too narrow and wasteful to function well. To him such streets were the focus of uncleanliness and deteriorated living conditions. There was not enough space and the views were restricted as compared to those of his dwellings facing an open space.

The city of the past was unclean, undemocratic. And, for Le Corbusier, an improvement of this environment necessitated for its realisation "a change in the entire layout of the city, a new arrangement of transport...".[105] Thus, Le Corbusier's concept of the city in the park was an intentional departure from the tight block patterns of the traditional European city Meant to give freedom and open space, the twentieth century city was then designed for comfort and efficiency.

Le Corbusier planned for the vehicle. He included great arterial streets to allow one-way traffic, an idea that was rapidly and enthusiastically accepted by 20th century development The Radiant City then, as one of his best known works, was conceived not only to provide space for people, but to provide it primarily for the automobile. Moreover, it was meant to provide for the optimal insulation of the one from the other.

Jacobs writes critically of Le Corbusier's Radiant City:

> "His city was like a wonderful mechanical toy. ... It was so orderly, so visible, so easy to understand It said everything in a flash, like a good advertisement. ... But as how the city works, it tells, like the Garden City, nothing but lies."[106]

Le Corbusier had undoubtely the greatest influence on today's city He, as no one else in modern architecture, dominated the period from 1920 to well into the 1960s. As an advocate of social change, Le Corbusier wanted social well-being to be derived from new physical layouts He saw the need for improved security and leisure conditions. While his ideas were implemented, the social world did not change much People continued with their ways of life The separation of activities praised by Le Corbusier was too drastic for the cities' inherited way of living

In the end, Le Corbusier's ideals were adjusted and re-interpreted In the Modern Movement what was meant to be economically feasible was carried on high-rise buildings sprung up at once, green areas, in contrast, were left to imaginary states of conscience The re-interpretation of Le Corbusier led to much misinterpretation

In Peter Eisenman's view:

> "In the Modern Movement, the building as a free-standing element - the building-in-the-park idea of Le Corbusier - became a pervasive notion. Beyond its inherent limits, Le Corbusier's metaphor was initially abused by the production of

> objectlike buildings, whether they were "in the park" or not - objects standing on plazas in isolation, in parking lots, with public or street space poorly conceived and often merely left over. ... The new tower buildings, devoid of necessary relationships to the street grid or context, destroyed the integrity of the street space. ... *Thus, the original polemic of Le Corbusier had a reverse effect.*"[107]

Functionalism and the Modern Movement fell short of their goals because they based their premises on abstraction. They ignored the major social values that streets and open public spaces had developed in history. Traditional streets were based on composition and careful organization. They were carved out of the building mass. The scale for new functional projects did not allow for urban detailing. Streets were poorly implemented. As Functionalists became obsessed with efficiency, they reduced reality to slogans. Contemporary socities, however, have demonstrated that their large and complex issues are too difficult to be reduced to a synthetic vision.

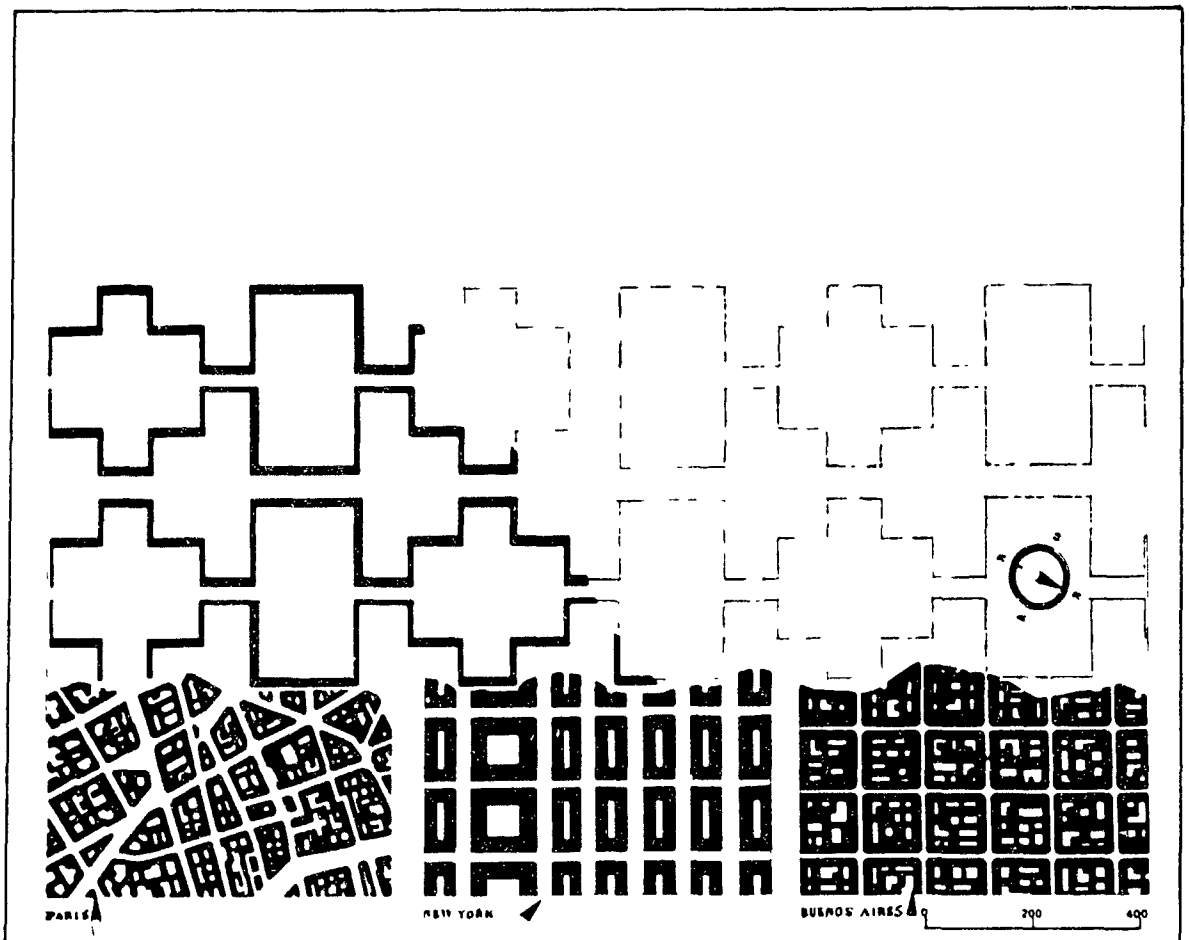
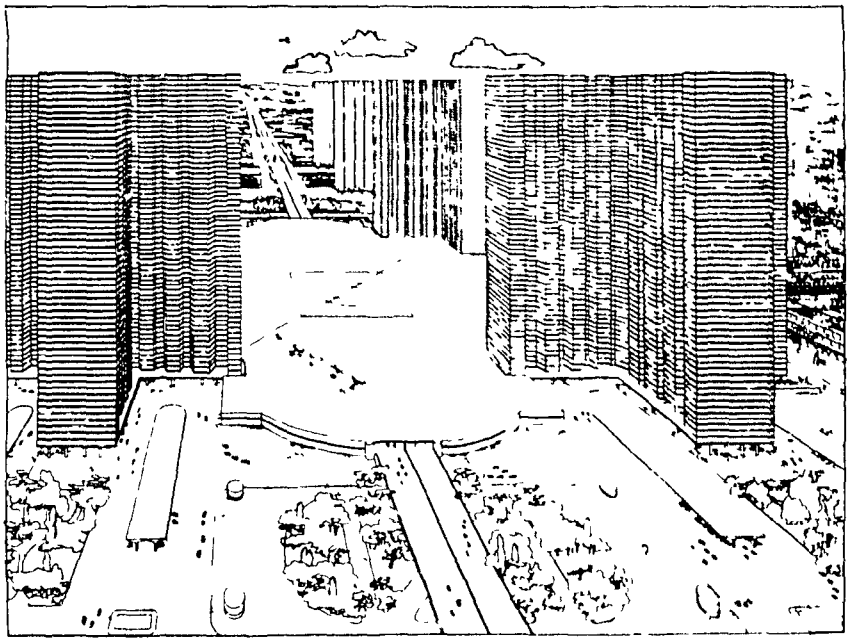
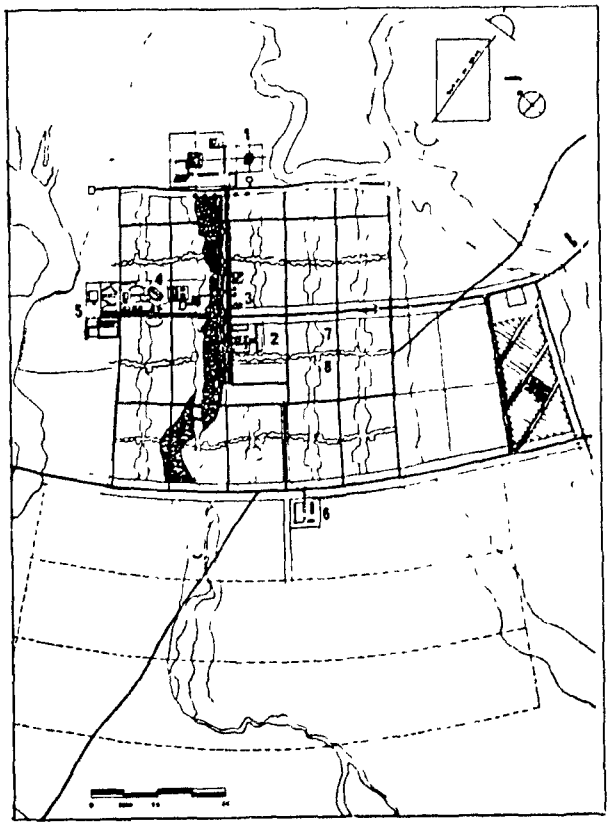


Fig.37 Le Corbusier. La Ville Radieuse compared to traditional block patterns of Paris, New York and Buenos Aires



Le Corbusier
Ville Contemporaine 1922
Perspective
Le Corbusier's advocacy of vertical towers with low ground coverage has had a profound influence on modern urban design. Like Hilberseimer, he was fascinated by the idea of segregated traffic systems and with the emerging transportation technologies of the twentieth century. Ville Contemporaine is predecessor to Plan Voisin and La Ville Radieuse



Key
1 The Capitol
2 Commercial Center
3 Hotels and Restaurants
4 Museum Stadium
5 University
6 Market
7 Open Spaces with Schools Clubs Sports Facilities

Le Corbusier
Plan of Chandigarh, India
The Functionalists tended to use the grid as a means of segregating activities into defined zones. In Le Corbusier's plan for Chandigarh, for example government is physically set apart from the city. Another problem with the rigid application of the grid is that there is no logical way to establish a center (Courtesy Foundation Le Corbusier/SPADEM)

Fig. 38 and 38a Le Corbusier. Ville Contemporaine. 1922 Plan of Chandigarh, India. 1951

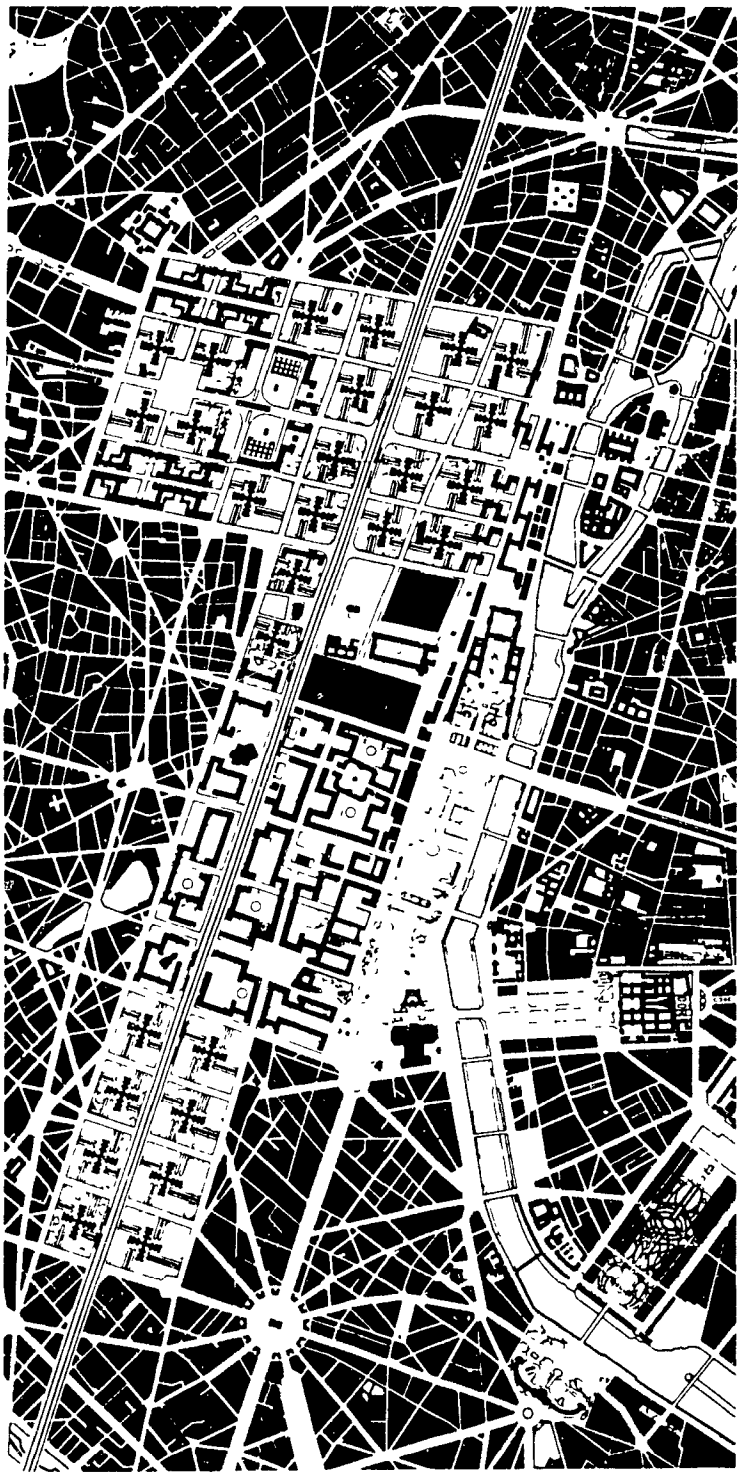


Fig. 39 Le Corbusier. Plan Voisin. Paris, France. 1925

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CHAPTER II

MEAN-STREETS

1. DEFINITION

'**Mean**' is defined as "inferior in rank or quality, mediocre, comparatively less".[1] It represents deficiency in some way or another, and relates to a lack of certain given conditions. 'Mean', in other words, is understood as 'average', that is, lacking strong positive qualities.

The '**street**' has been defined as a place which transcends the mere definition of a physical linkage between two points Streets cannot be measured or quantified. They respond to both our dreams and needs Streets relate to the complexity of our body and mind, and they perform as catalysts that encourage or condition the development of individual and communal behaviours Streets are settings that refine human feeling and perception Streets reveal and instruct, for our personal world is formed out of experiences, and streets provide the variety of experiences through which we learn Streets, then, become social institutions on the condition that they are first understood and accepted as such by the community

The 'mean-street' is a space that lacks the qualities inherent to streets. It lacks both the complexity and diversity that streets have come to represent throughout history. The 'mean-street' does not represent a setting rich in communication. It restricts our emotions and feelings. It does not

encourage exchanges so casual public life is unlikely to occur The 'mean-street' is an architectural space incapable of showing people how to understand the city as an integrated place In simpler terms then, the 'mean-street' shows very few characteristics of 'a street' at all

The phenomenon of 'mean-streets', on the increase in contemporary urban life, is a negative factor in the development of central areas in cities The 'mean-street' is a space that shows little interaction between public and private realms The 'mean-street' is a vacuum that siphons off conflicts and resolutions Hence, in spite of how efficient it is, or how strictly it follows functional or planning regulations, the 'mean-street' is devoid of deep social and cultural content

The 'mean-street' lacks strong inner significance It is a street which is destroyed and rebuilt time after time. For as it is not thought of as an extension of our social inner lives, it does not enrich urban life and it fails to provide the ground for both intimate and communal experiences Thus, it fails to truly occupy a place in our memories The 'mean-street', in essence, is a dead space that denies the qualities which are critical to the development of any 'human' street

2. QUALITIES

The following qualities were identified as intrinsic to a street Just as these qualities are important in the development of a street space, so too does their absence, or the miscomprehension of them impoverish the street's role

The phenomenon of 'mean-streets' envisions different degrees of negativeness the greater the lack of these qualities, the more negative the space It is important to understand that all of these qualities, together, transmit one unique spirit They add to and increase the human life of a street, and when not present, the street fails to fulfill its social role Identity, Sense of Place, Unity, Sense of Life and Humaneness, essential for the development of a street, are present in the 'mean-street' as follows

2.1 Identity

The 'mean-street' has no clear identity. It is a street that lacks a strong substance which distinguishes it from another street. The 'mean-street' is fuzzy, vague, and thus, it contradicts the notion that "each

place is different, that each case must be decided on its own merits, [and] that completely different solutions may be needed for apparently similar cases" [2]

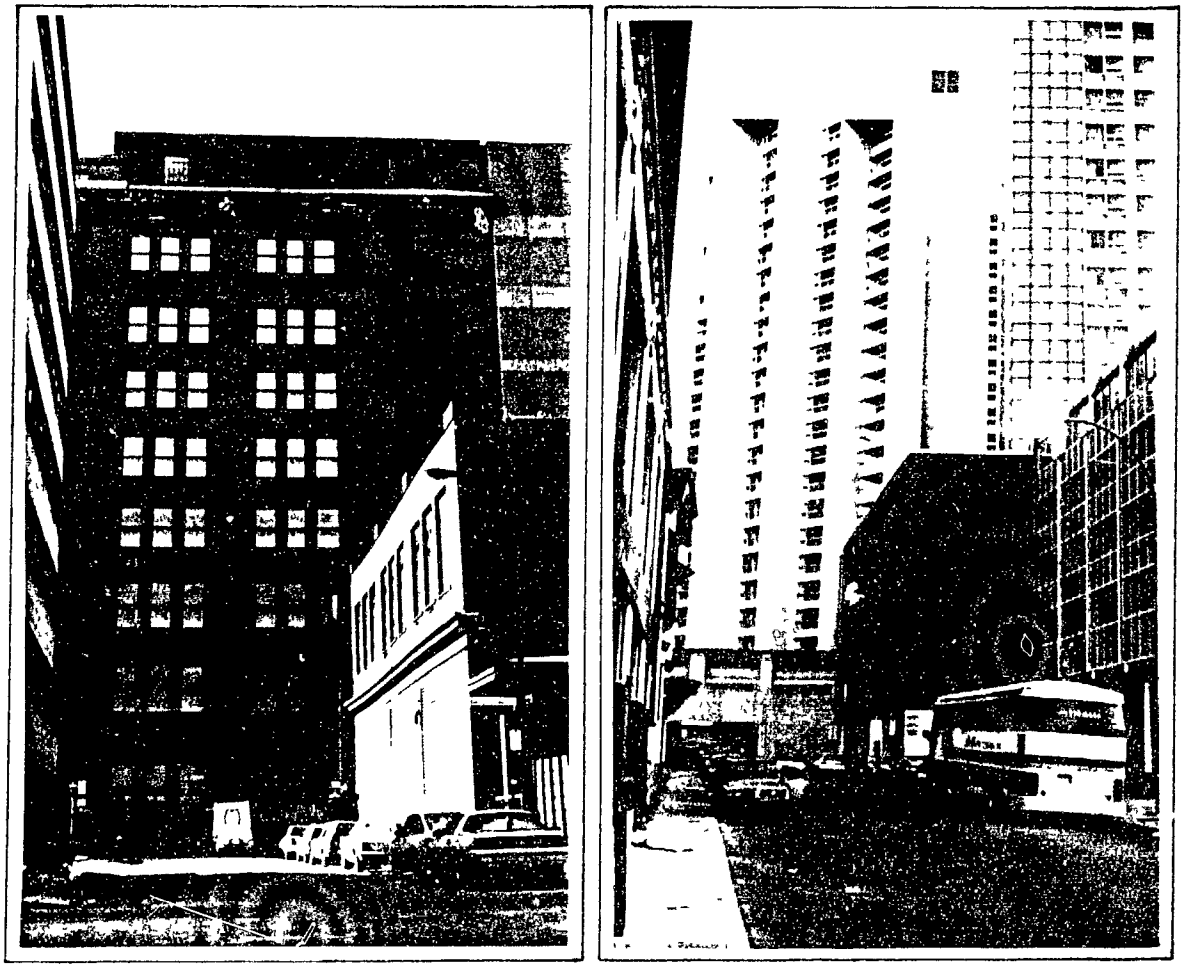


Fig 1 The 'Mean-Street' Who are these streets?

Identity, the mirror of the soul and body of a person or thing, cannot be read in chopped-up bits In a street, it is one whole which results from all that happens in it That is, the identity of a particular street is not only made by its physical space, but, more importantly, by the people and events in it. The 'mean-street' is a street that is difficult to particularize In it, events rarely take place and people are rarely taken into account as part of the gradual development The identity of the 'mean-street , thus, does not come from that which happens in it, that is, its events and people, but is a mix of separate and extraneous influences giving, overall, a confusing idea of it The identity of the 'mean-street' is not one force, not one strong identity.

It has been said that only over a period of time people get to know a street. As this relationship persists, meaning becomes stronger The 'mean-street' is a space where events and action lack a continuous or long-term relationship The 'mean-street' fails, then, over a long period of time, to become an effective tool for communication

Meanings are lost in the 'mean-street'. The vocation of the street is difficult to identify People become disoriented and do not know how to respond The 'mean-street', thus, cannot be referred to as a meaningful street within us for its meaning fails to acquire a social and cultural connotation derived from that which happens within the street

2.2 Sense of Place

Placelessness, or a lack of 'sense of place', denotes a lack of defined location in space The 'mean-street' has no strong sense of place, and thus, it can be located anywhere in space

> "Placelessness describes both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude which does not acknowledge significance in places It reaches back into the deepest levels of place, cutting roots, eroding symbols, " [3]

The 'mean-street' lacks a strong sense of belonging This is evident in both the geographic context as well as the socio-cultural environment In the first instance, the 'mean-street' does not reflect important inherited local elements This means that there is no strong connection with the history of the place. Additionally, there is little awareness of a people of how best to respond to the local climate, the topography and the outstanding physical features of the place In the second instance, the 'mean-street' displays no attachment to the non-physical context which surrounds it The 'mean-street' is not "the translation into physical form of a culture, its needs and values as well as the desires, dreams, and passions of a people" [4]

The 'mean-street' is not confined to a defined place It is a space whose context can easily be misread The 'mean-street' thus, as identified in the following two cases, demonstrates an underlying attitude of no respect for history nor for the particularness of the geographic place This attitude negates the idea that the street belongs to the place.

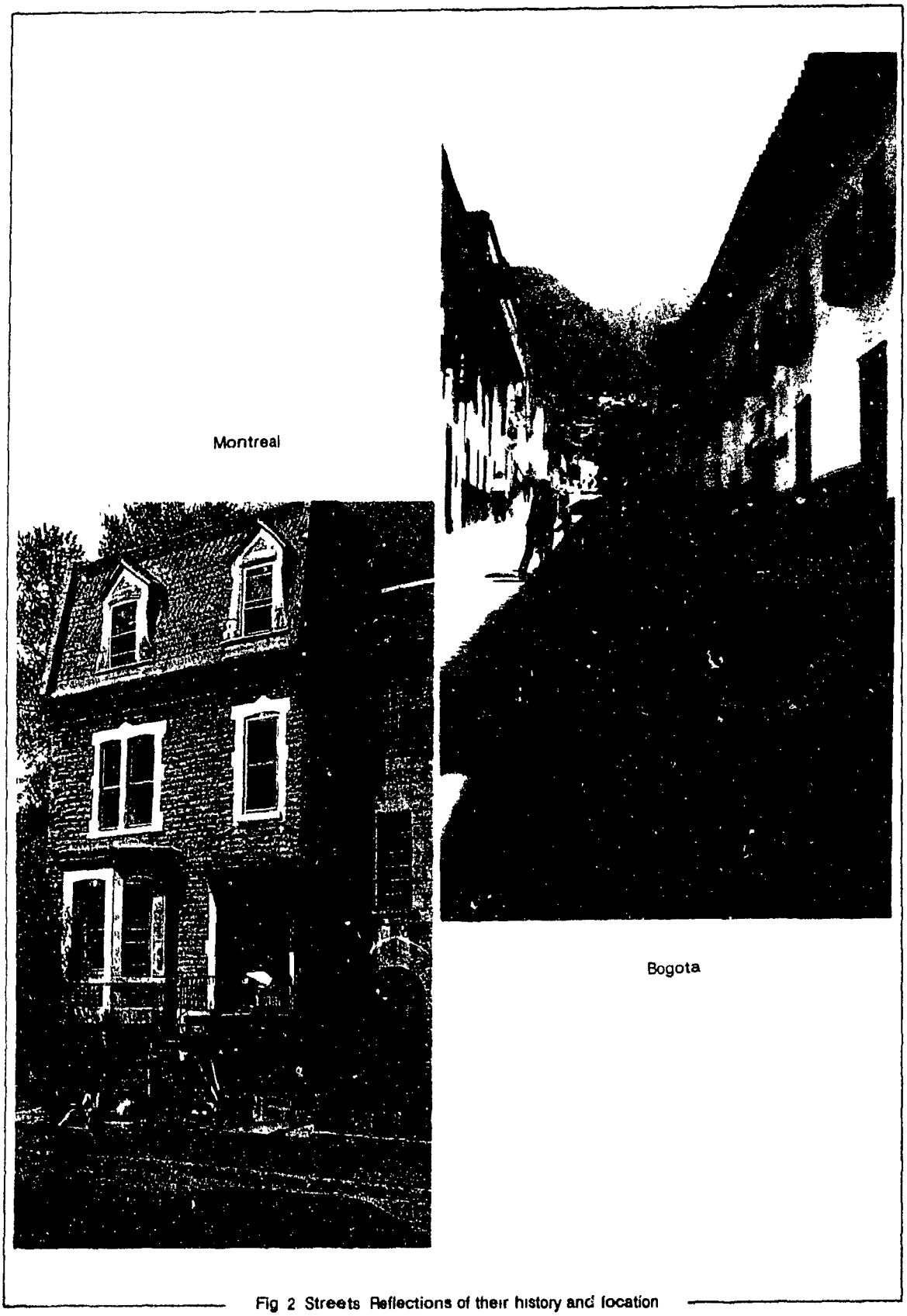
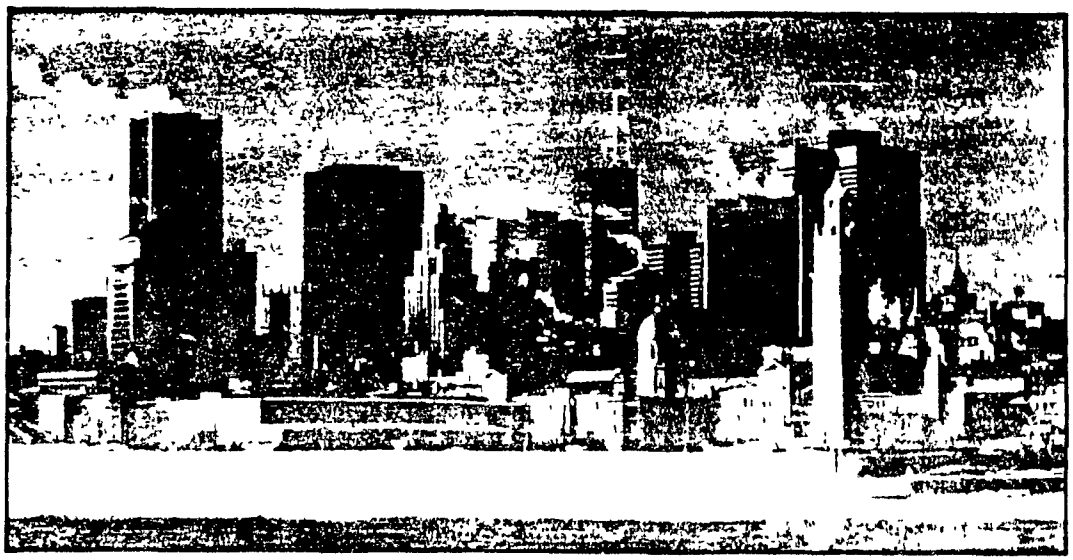


Fig 2 Streets Reflections of their history and location



Montreal?

Bogotá?

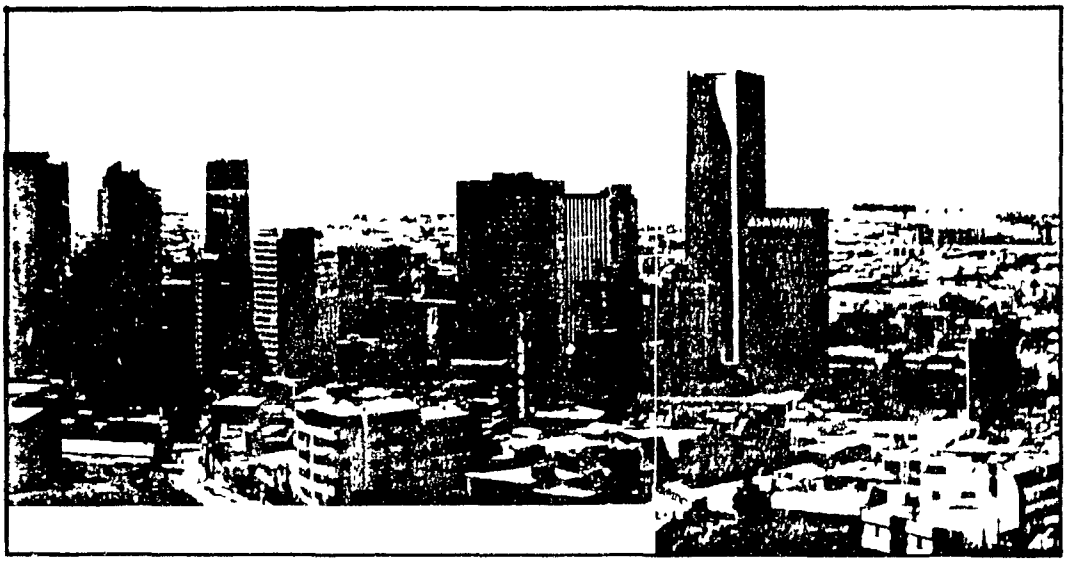
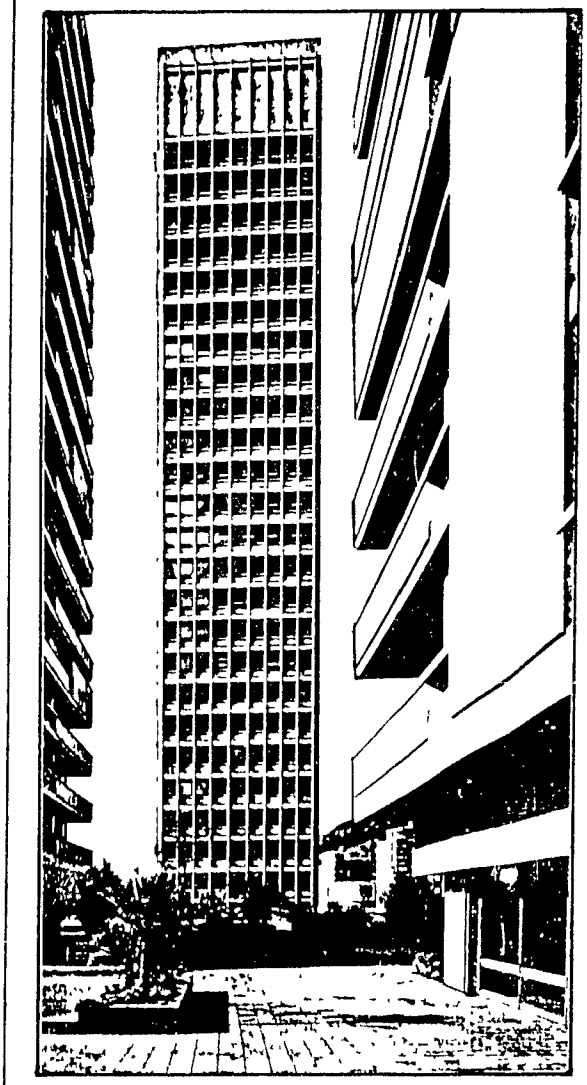


Fig 3 Where do I belong?



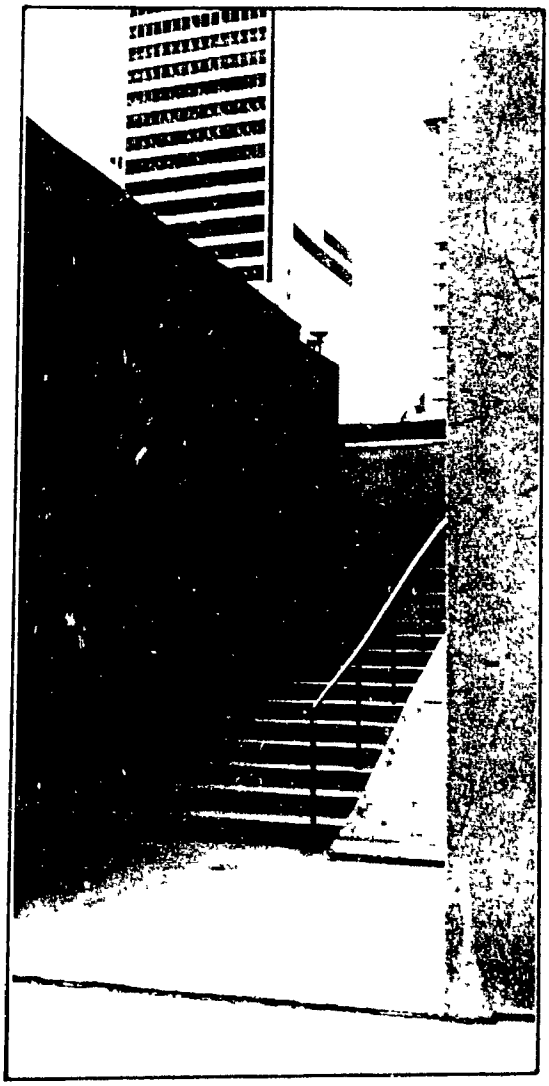


Fig. 4 ???????

The 'mean-street' exhibits no permanence nor flexibility It is a volume that maintains no records Continuity and progression, the roots essential for the gradual development of a place, are cut by destruction and constant change Hence, as the structure of the street space is modified continually, its buildings express no truly deep significance In other words, the 'mean-street' is a space where changes happen so often that people have no time to make the street part of their lives And, the more sudden the changes, the less rootedness is acquired The urban landscape is no more than a backdrop or a window display As people view it in that way, they care less and less for what happens in the street

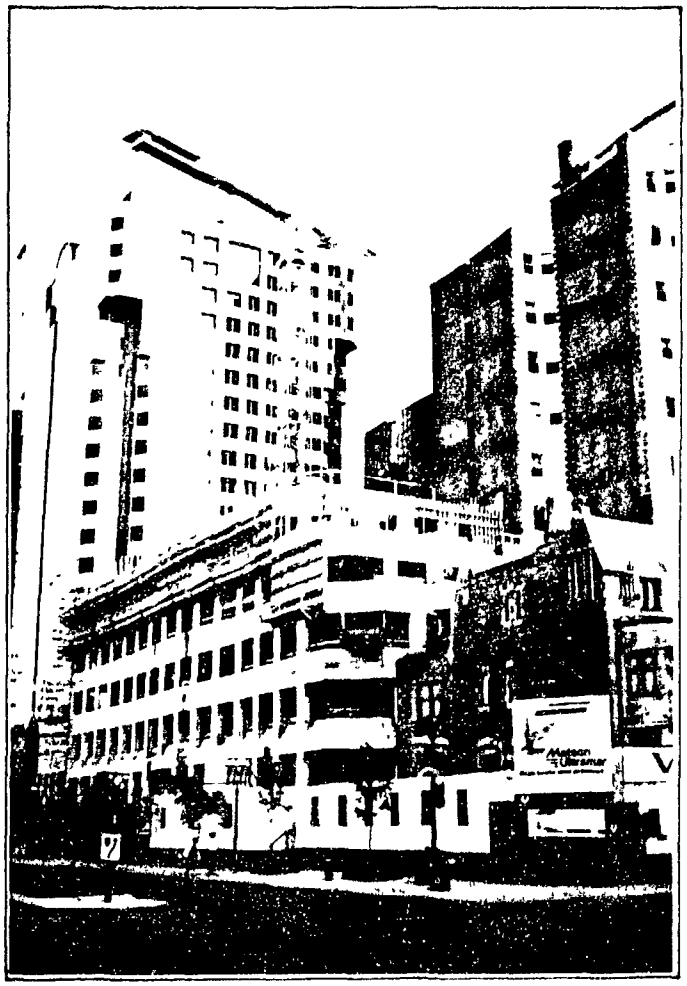


Fig 5 In the 'mean-street', continuity is cut by destruction

Flexibility in the 'mean-street' is widely misunderstood. While continuity maintains the structural elements that characterize a space and that locate it in time, flexibility adapts to human use. In this sense, flexibility does not mean chop and change, but the "capability of being adapted or accomodated"[5] in time. Flexibility fills in the gaps, making it posssible for a street to become an object of human use

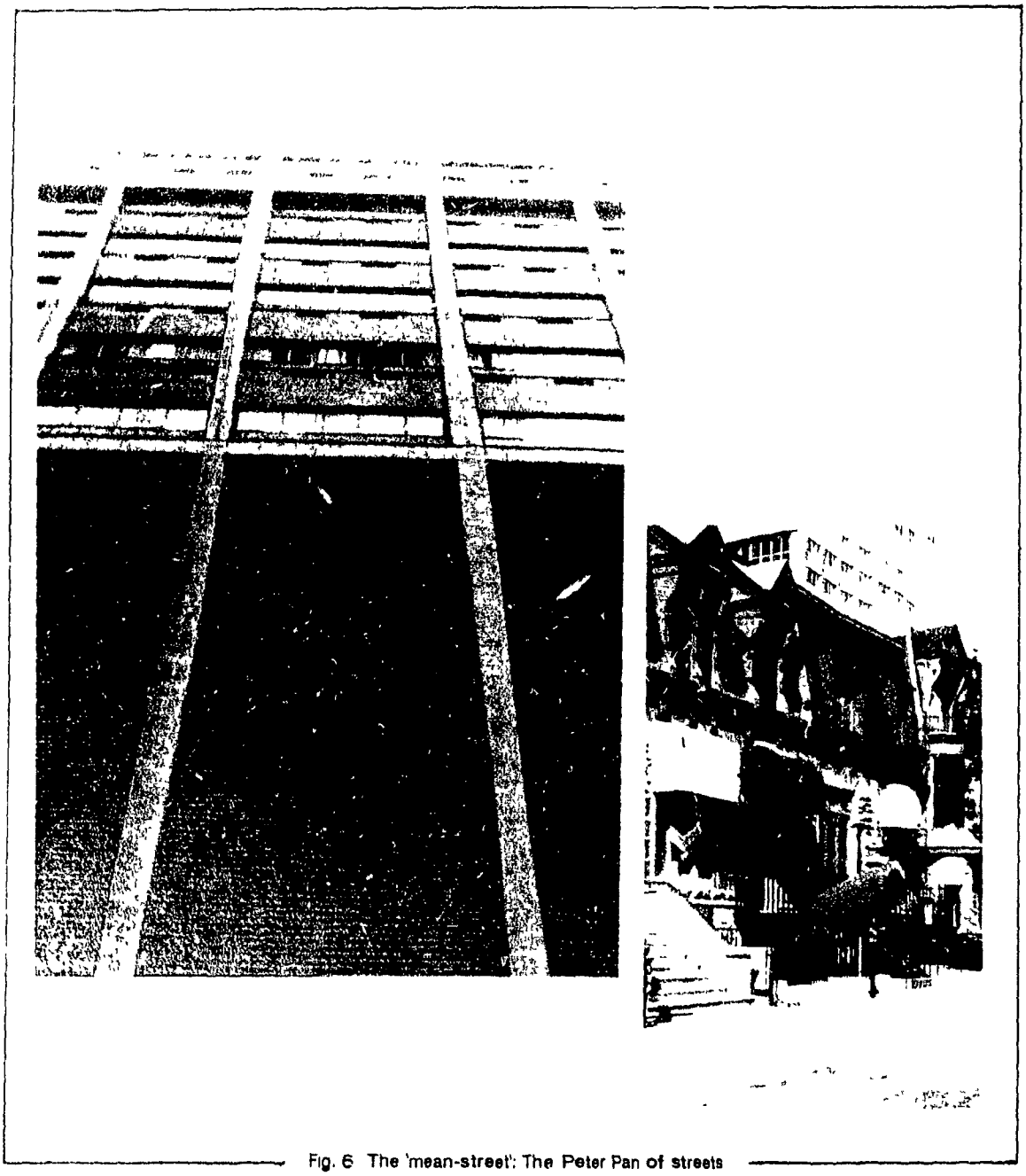
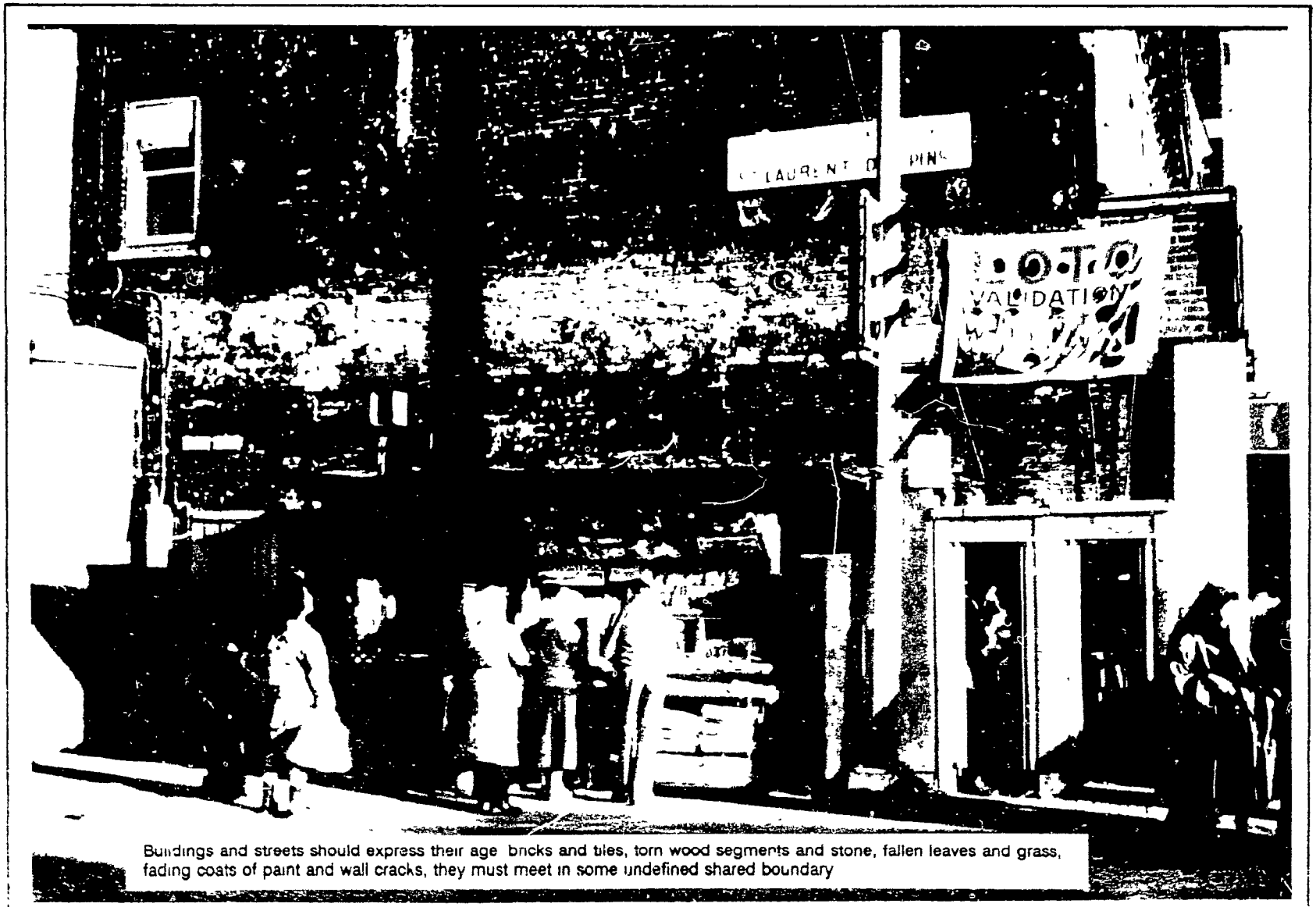


Fig. 6 The 'mean-street': The Peter Pan of streets



Buildings and streets should express their age bricks and tiles, torn wood segments and stone, fallen leaves and grass, fading coats of paint and wall cracks, they must meet in some undefined shared boundary

Fig 7 St Laurent Boulevard Montreal A street that belongs to our individual hearts

In the 'mean-street' however, flexibility means sweeping change. It represents the actions of individuals who prefer to start from zero, destroying what was done before. Flexibility is then misunderstood as the excuse for destroying in order to cope with today's demands, and yet, that which is built is rigid. In the new landscape, everything is planned, nothing can be added, nothing can be changed without it first being destroyed. The 'mean-street' is conceived not to age. Unlike the wood, brick and stone of traditional streets, the glass and steel of the 'mean-street' are not allowed to weather and age gracefully.

The 'mean-street', understood as a space that has to be eternal, imperishable over time, is a clear reflection of an attitude of denial of a world that grows, keeping some elements, but adapting in time. The denial of physical death cannnot be more contrary to the nature of man.

A street is perishable. A place is permanent. A place is reassuring to man; however, its permanence is only developed over time. For a street to become part of our memories it needs to develop a strong sense of place. However, dramatic changes in a short period of time in a street do not allow this experience to take place. The 'mean-street' allows no sense of place to develop at all.

2.3 Unity

The 'mean-street' is a space that cannot be easily read as one clear entity. Its different components stand as separate individual entities. The 'mean-street', in other words, is a chopped-up environment where the buildings or any objects which are part of it are an expression of a lack of awareness for what happens next door.

Unity is the relation of parts rather than the mere addition of them. Unity not only relates to the 'interior' of a street, but as well to its relationship to the urban context. In traditional streets the height and bulk mass in buildings were conceived to correspond to the already existent volumetry. Doors, windows and balconies, as well as the use of materials and colours, were meant to enhance the street's unity and awarenesss of belonging to a communal space. The 'mean-street' exhibits a different perspective. The design of buildings does not correspond to what the adjacent neighbour has done previously. The 'mean-street' reflects a lack of urban understanding.

The 'mean-street' is not woven into the urban fabric. It is a street that is not in harmony with its surroundings. It is also a street that does not follow or relate to the existing surrounding uses. The 'mean-street' stands alone in space. It displays no respect for what goes on around it. In today's cities, 'mean-streets' increasingly disrupt the whole unity of the urban place. Individual buildings, unrelated in scale or architectural style, stand out as objects among unformed spaces:

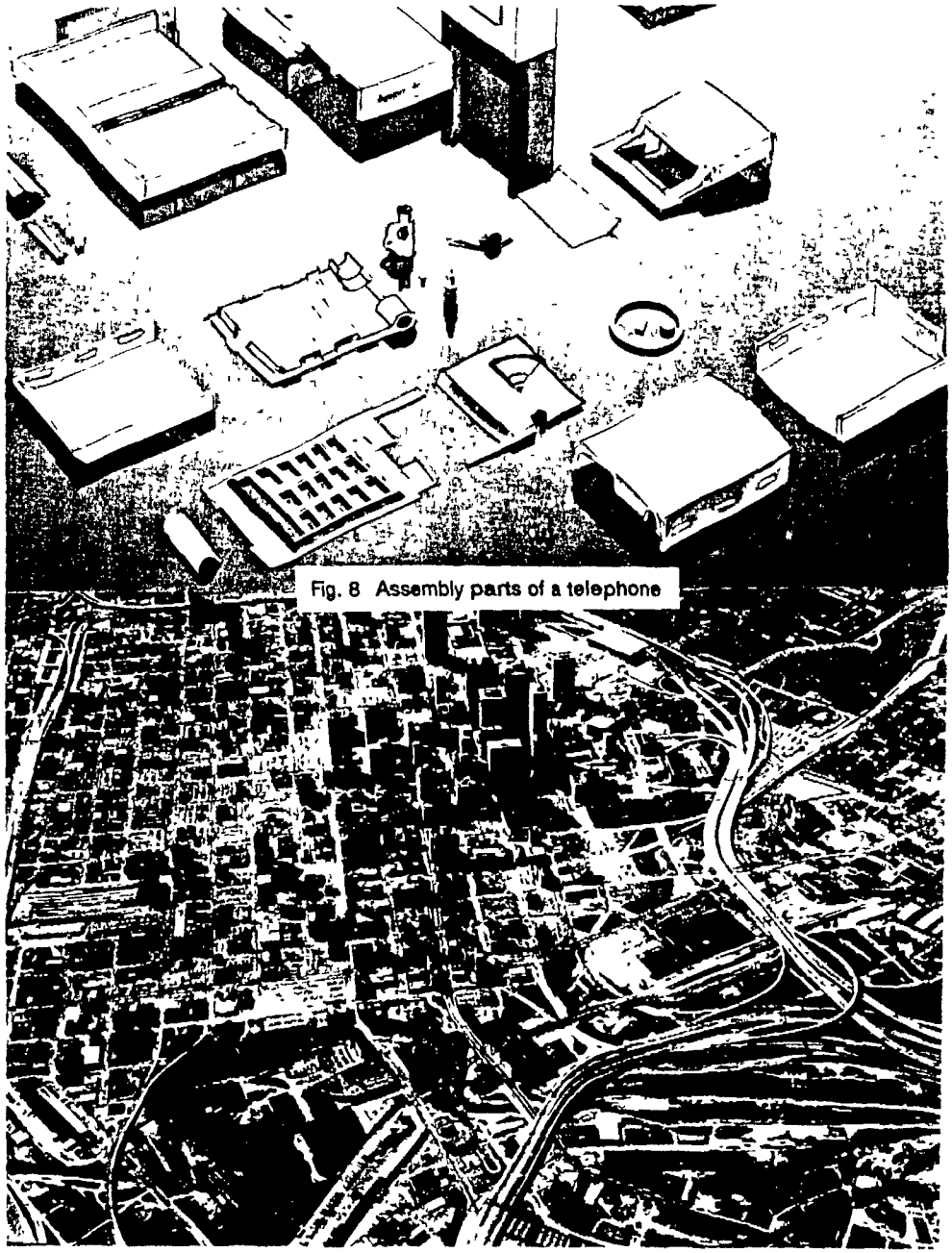


Fig. 8 Assembly parts of a telephone

Fig. 9 Houston, Texas or assembly parts of a telephone?

Differences in height, style and bulk mass are intrinsically discordant in the 'mean-street'. The design of architectural details in the facades and street floor and the materials, colours and textures in them, seem to be conceived individually In this way, the 'mean-street' has then no strong overall sense of unity. It reflects the lack of understanding, by people, of streets as part of a collective urban entity which concerns all of us.

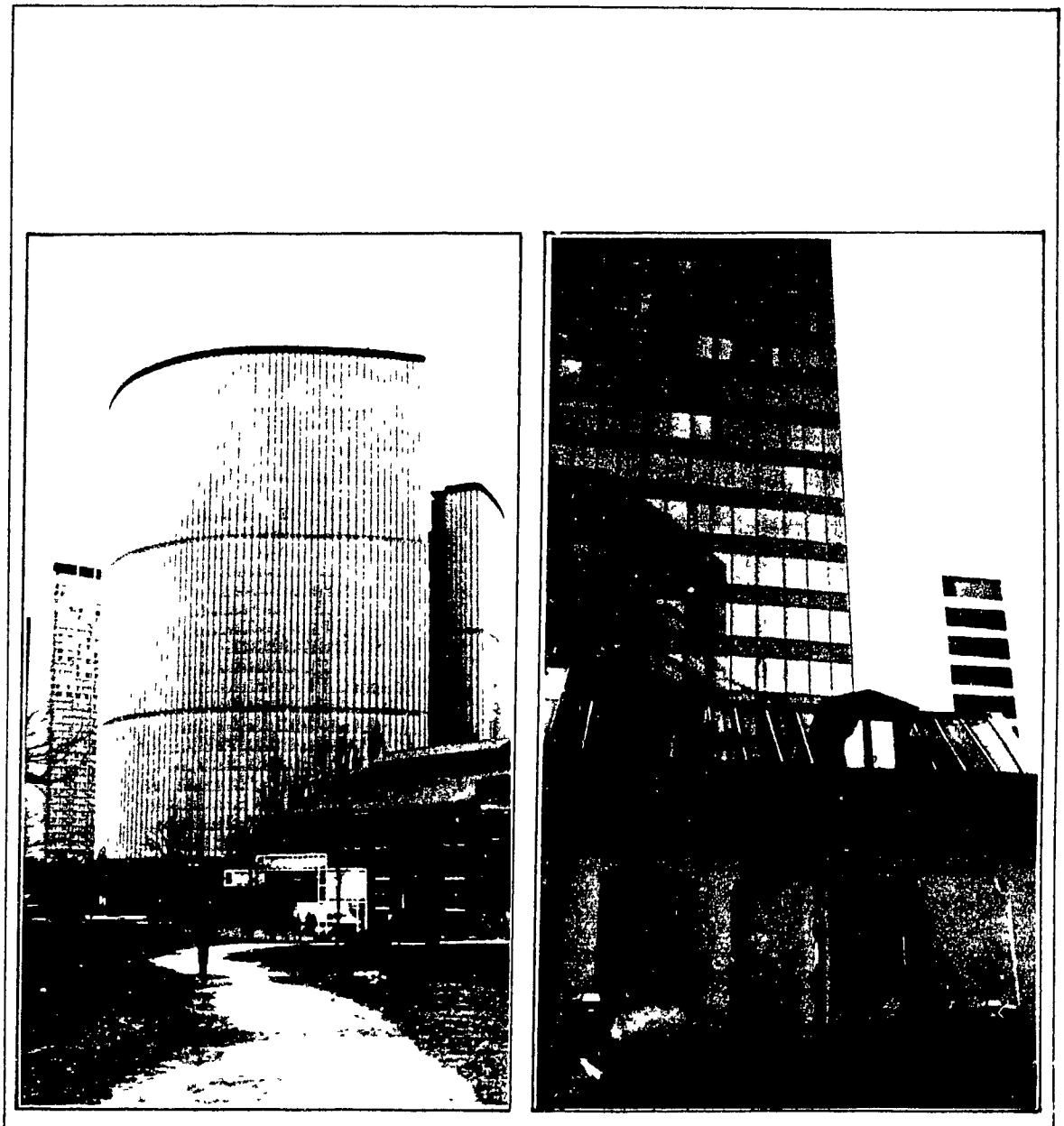


Fig. 10 The 'mean-street'= mass disproportion

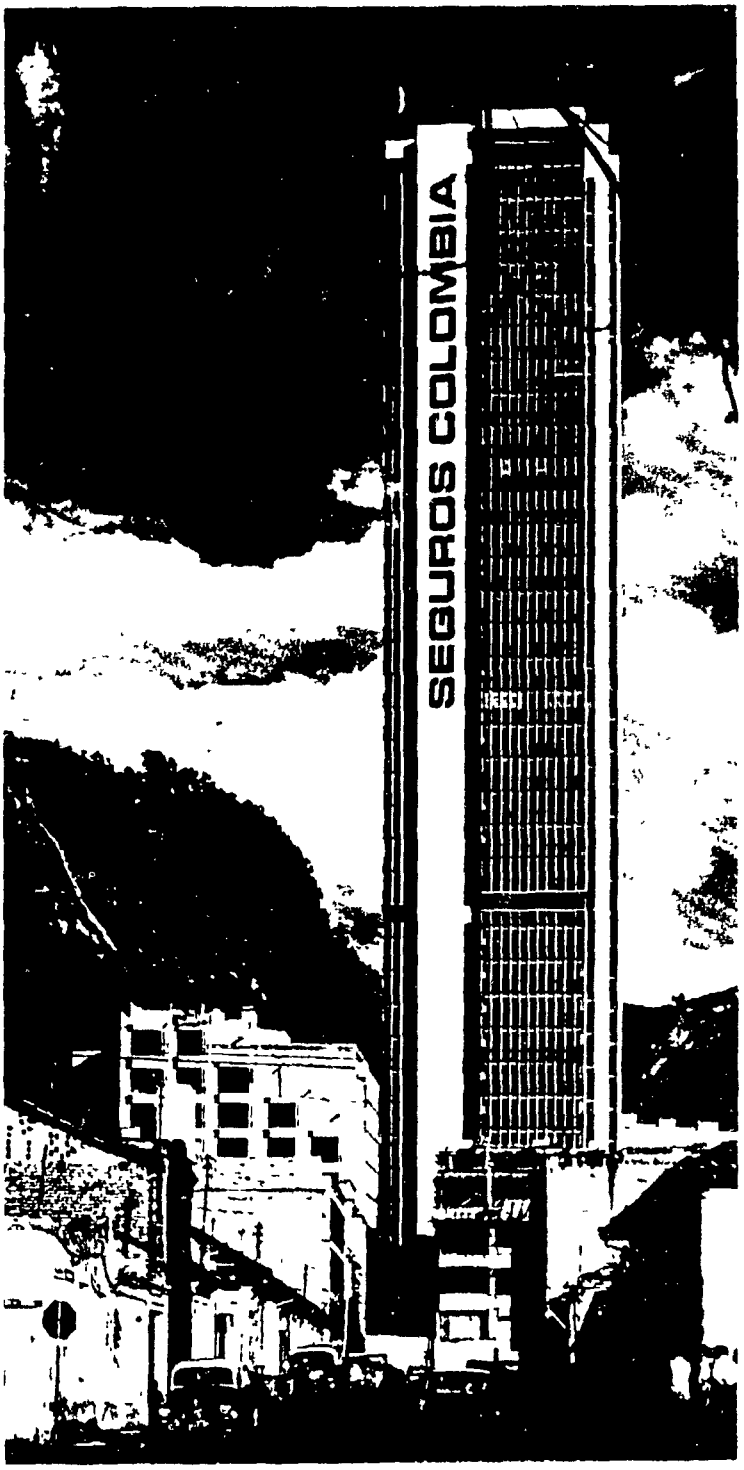


Fig. 11 Big building bullies little buildings

In the 'mean-street', high-rise buildings stand as walls, oblivious to what happens at street level. Traditional two-to-four-storey high buildings, balconies, windows and carefully crafted decorative details are overwhelmed by the imposing massive disproportion. Overall, these buildings have no clear bond that ties them to each other.

The 'mean-street' perspective is one of a broken space of holes and voids whose buildings appear as masses rather than linking surfaces Schulz argues that to become a true form, the street has to possess "figural character". And this is only achieved by means of a continuous bounding surface.[6] In the contemporary city, holes destroy the consistency of the urban fabric Without connecting paved surfaces, buildings have little if any relationship to one another:

Fig. 12 Washington, D.C.· Holes in the urban fabric

The understanding of buildings in the 'mean-street' as individual entities, their exaggerated size and the location of ground level activities which tend to interact only with themselves, such as banks or offices, does not relate in use and size to any urban context at all That is, the buildings in the 'mean-street' lack a strong relationship with what happens in other adjacent buildings, sidewalks, small plazas and outdoor commercial extensions. In the 'mean-street', immense sterile office entrances stand adjacent to children's playgrounds and open plazas In addition, the increasing number of garages, parking lots, service entrances and restricted access to areas for the exclusive use of building dwellers further interrupt the continuity of sidewalks and the sequence of paths and places which people had used and would still prefer to use At street level, buildings exhibit little if any relationship to one another and to the open spaces adjacent to them And the city, as a result, expresses no unity at all.

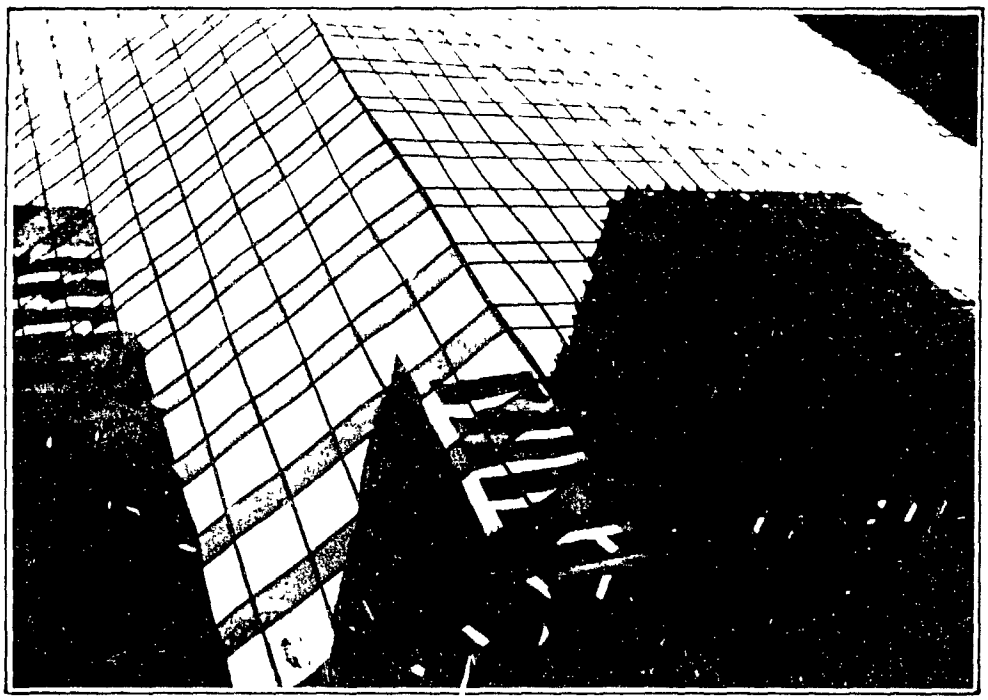


Fig 13 The 'mean-street' The superimposition of one building over another

Overall, then, the 'mean-street' is a space with no balance. Small, big, complex or simple, the different components in it seem to be fighting against each other with no sense of collectiveness at all The 'mean-street' is the superimposition of one building over another. It is a phenomenon that undermines the totality and wholeness of present urban contexts.

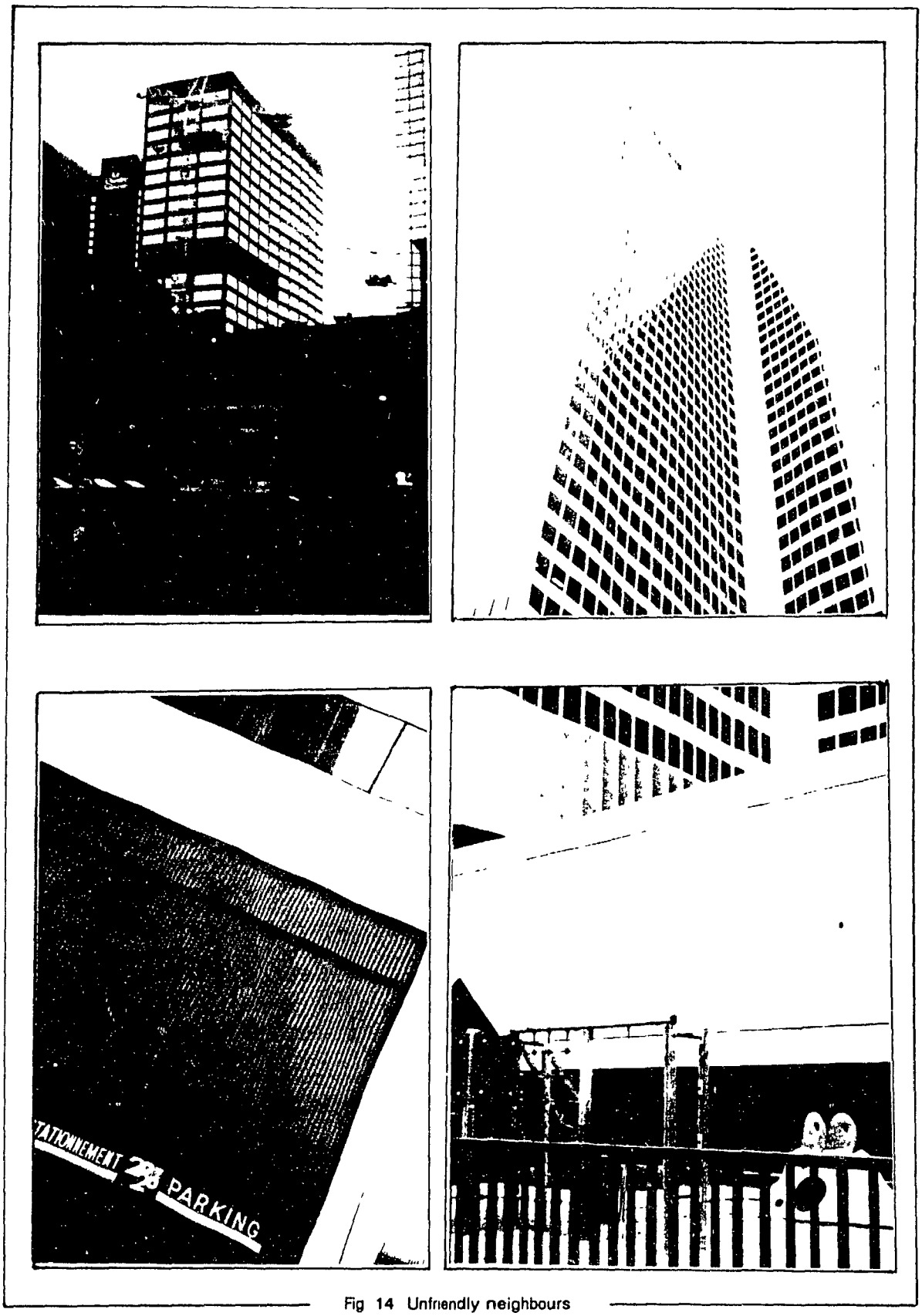
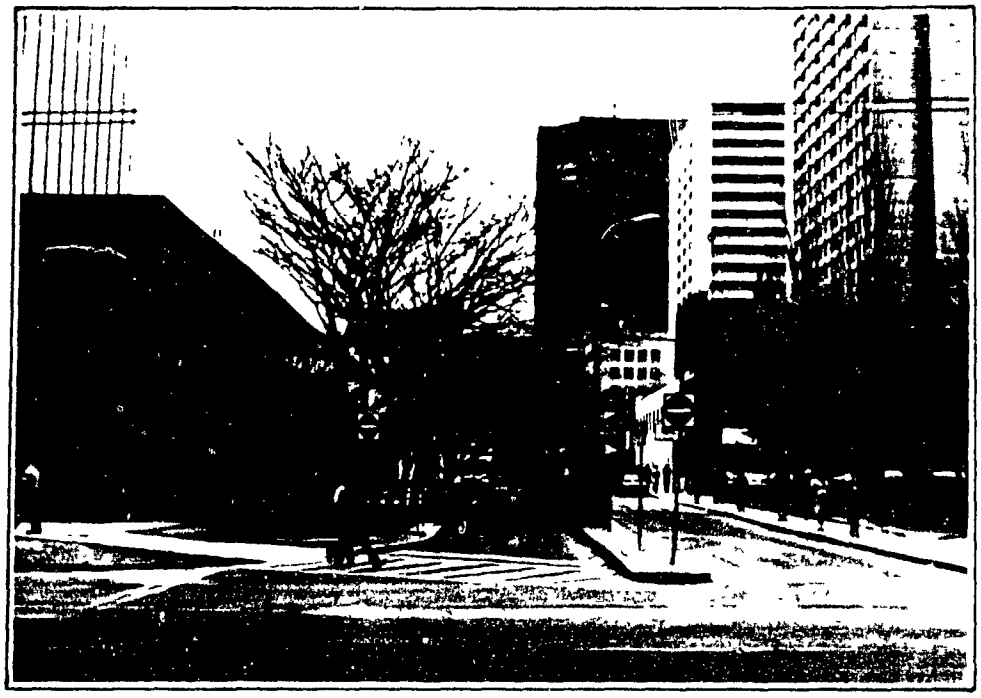


Fig 14 Unfriendly neighbours



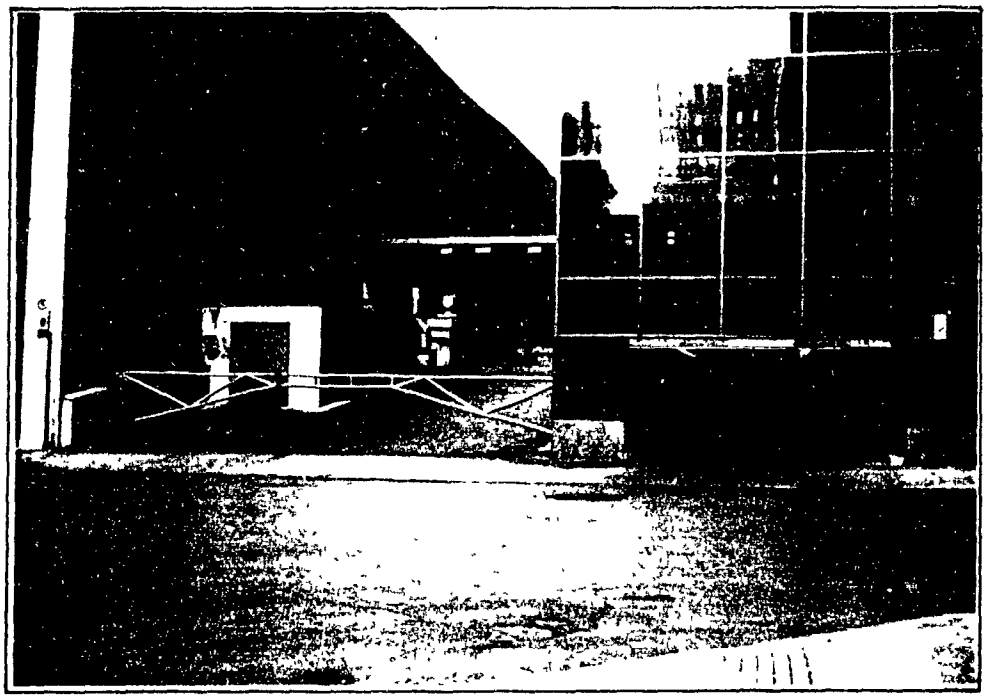


Fig. 15 The lack of relationship at street level interrupts the continuity of our paths

2.4 Sense of Life

There is little diversity and animation in the 'mean-street' The 'mean-street' expresses no variety of colours, materials or textures It is a space that lacks visual complexity It is monotonous, grey, and like still life, encourages nothing but stillness and sterility

> "In the dull grey light of a winter day in a northern city there is little visual stimulation which captures our interest Streets of grey concrete, aluminum facing and mirrored glass combine with the pale sky to produce a nondescript environment "[7]

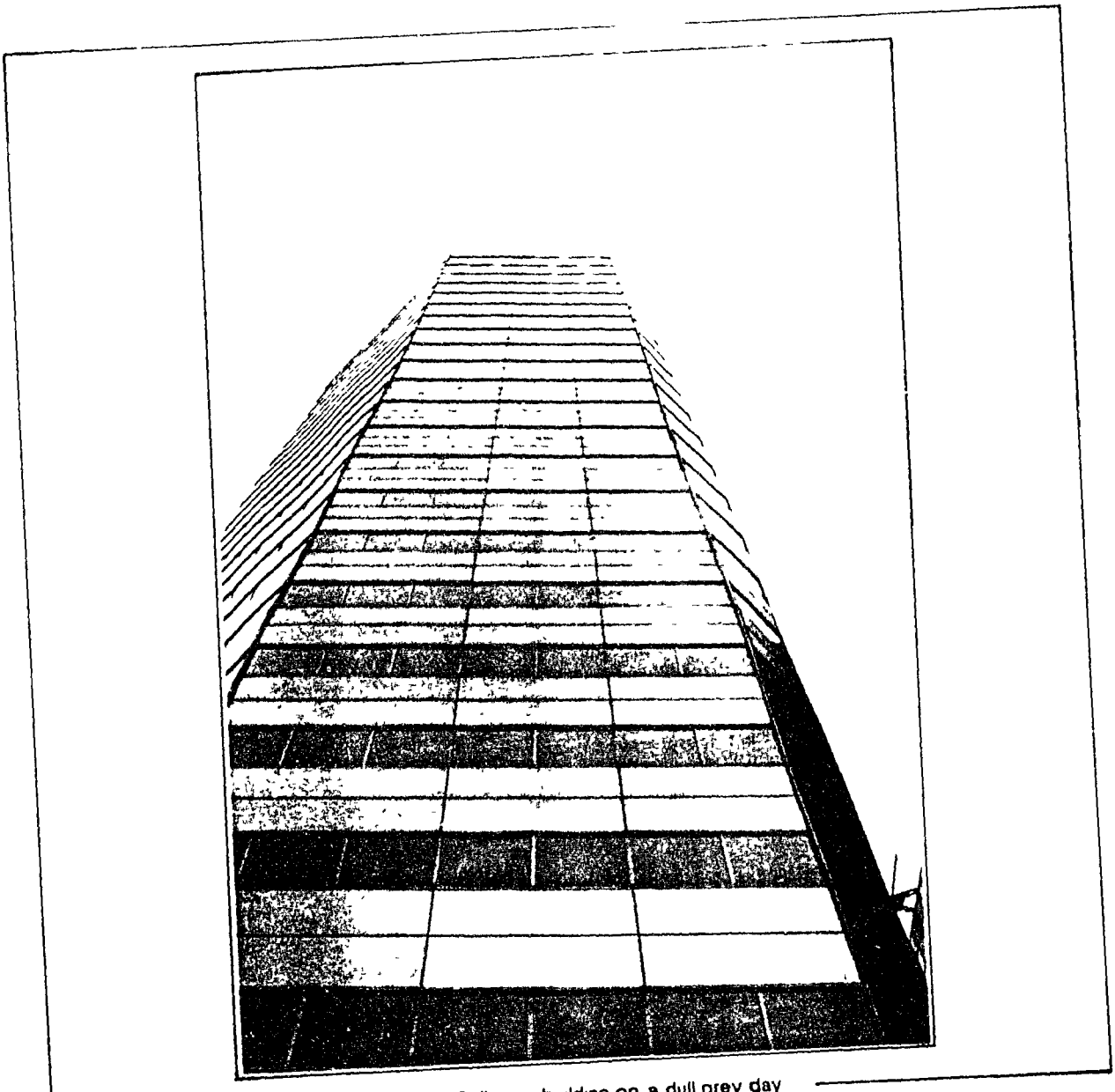


Fig 16 Dull grey building on a dull grey day

The 'mean-street' is a simple space. It discloses plain and flat surfaces, long blocks and a lack of variety of ages and uses of buldings At both the ground level and higher levels the 'mean-street' is a wall with no expression It is like a black hole which sucks in all moving objects The 'mean-street' does not encourage life in it It represents the attitudes of individuals who allocate space to one use. Not only is this inefficient, but it is often socially isolating and confusing for the people [8]

Jacobs comments on the effect of this isolation

> "In places stamped with the monotony and repetition of sameness you move, but in moving you seem to have gotten nowhere, north is the same as south, or east as west "[9]

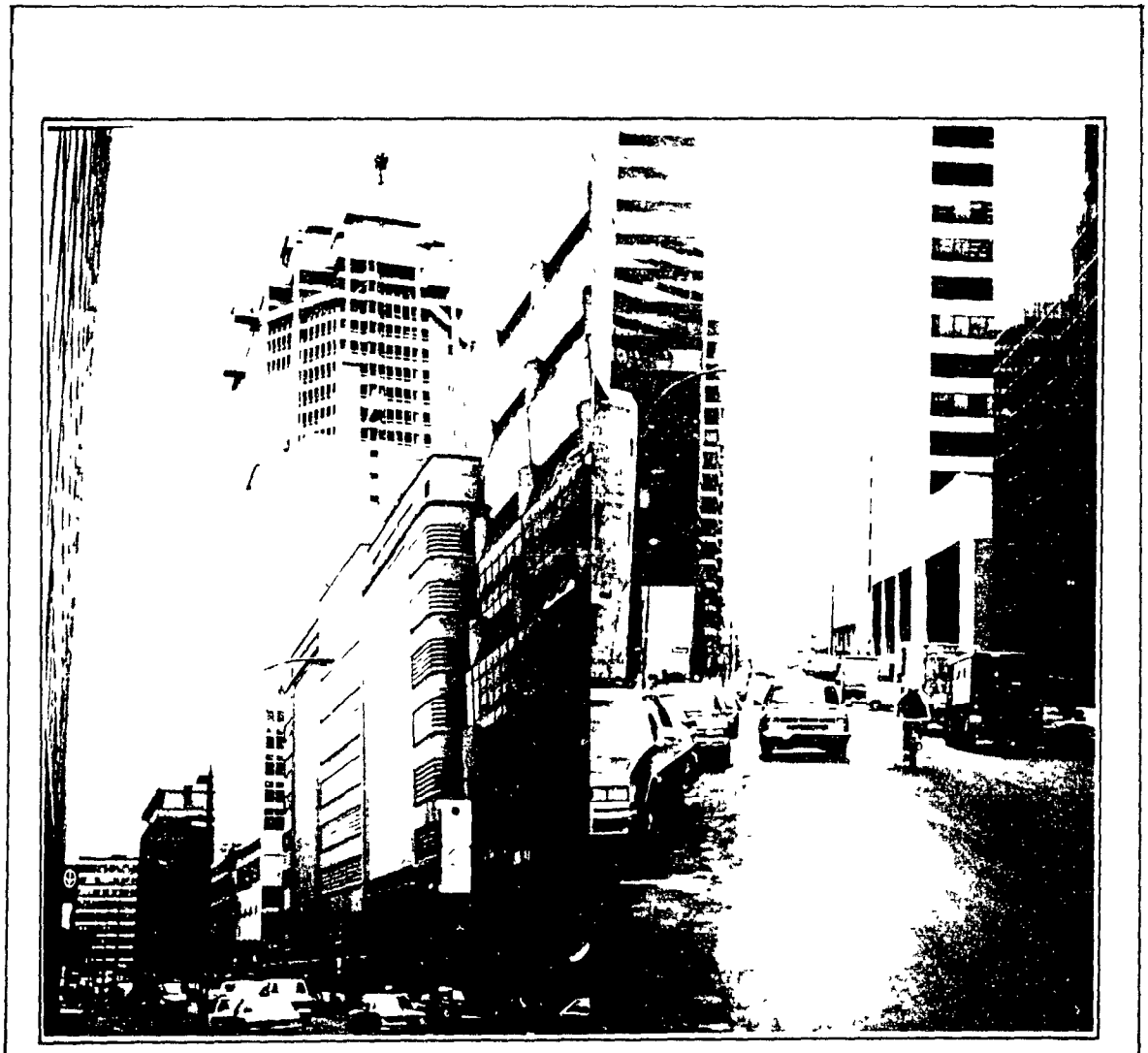


Fig 17 Isolation, confusion, monotony

The 'mean-street' is a sterile environment It provides no opportunities for anything at all. The 'mean-street' is exclusively made for a type of people As it allocates space for only one use [i e., white collar businesses], it does not encourage the use of the street outside business hours Therefore, in the evening, at night and on the weekend the 'mean-street' is deserted

In the 'mean-street' there is little interaction of events and people People use the space for purely functional purposes, causing further isolation and solitude people become individual objects who seldom interact The 'mean-street' is then a street where individuals go back and forth alone

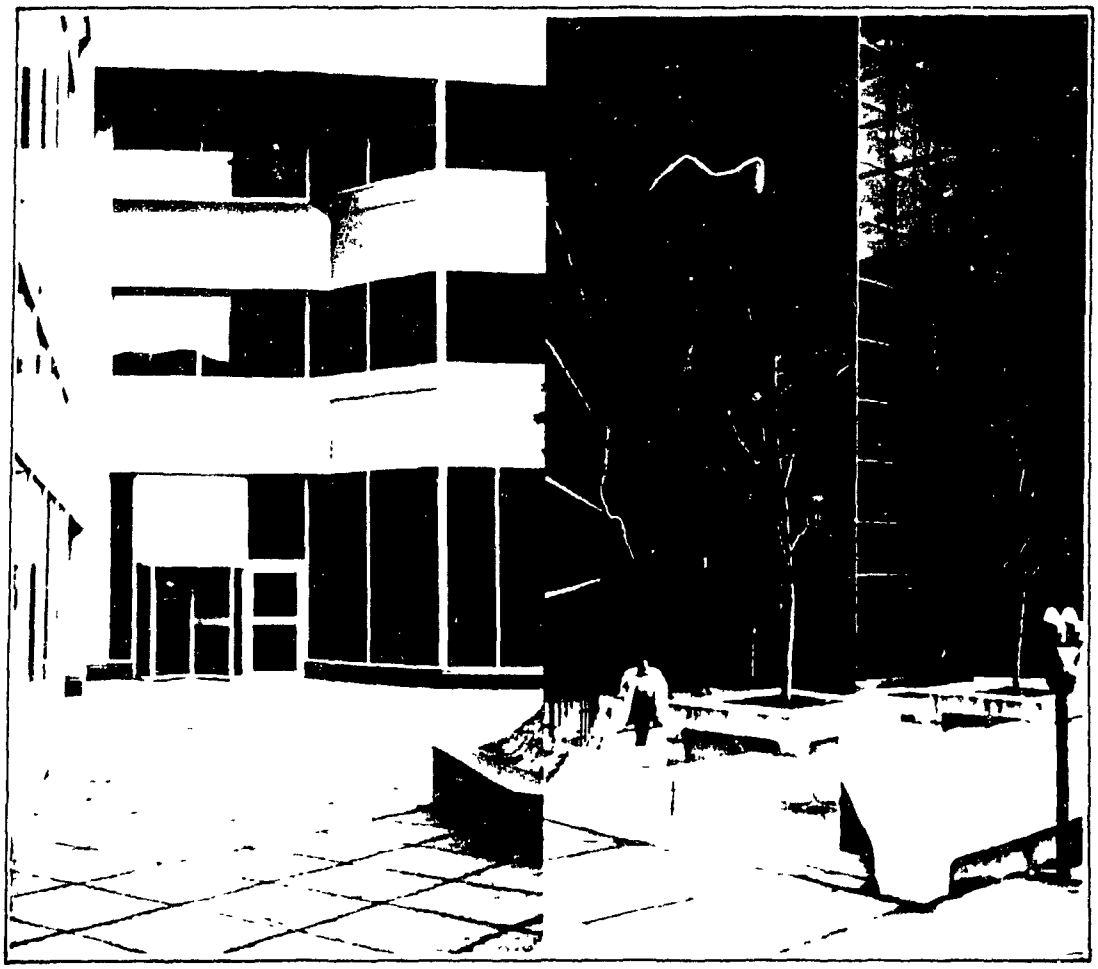


Fig. 18 The 'mean-street' in broad daylight deserted

Diversity of objects and people combine to form an immense quantity and variety of action which contribute to the sense of life on a street The 'mean-street' does not provide a ground for quantity and variety of action; thus, people find little and poorly varied opportunities for the use of this space. When a space does not offer a variety of opportunities, people find it difficult to understand and learn how to socialize and interact as members of a given community. Hence, the 'mean-street' offers no opportunity for economic or social diversity In today's central areas, children, young couples and retired people are implicitly prohibited from using certain spaces. And this contradicts the role of a street for providing diversity of events The 'mean-street' simply does not encourage use by people of different age groups It kills the diversity in our cities.

According to Jacobs:

> "Everyone is aware that tremendous numbers of people concentrate in city downtowns and that, if they did not, there would be no downtown to amount to anything - certainly not one with much downtown diversity."[10]

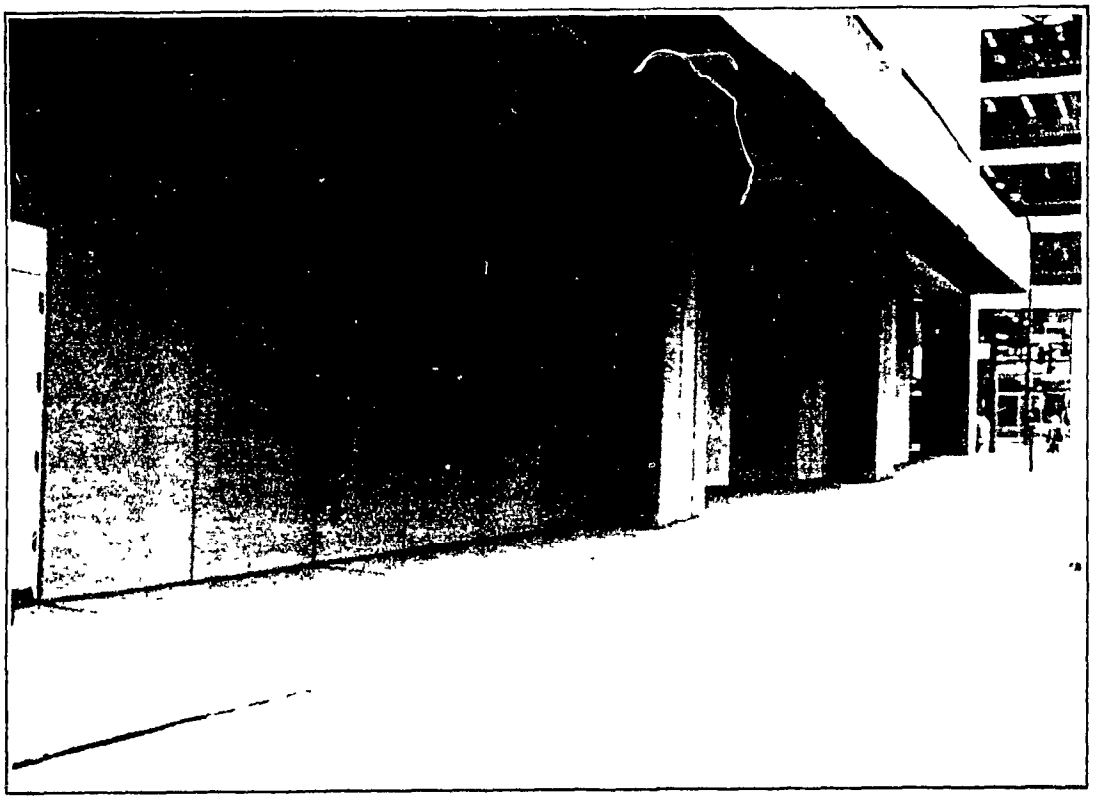


Fig. 19 A dead space

The 'mean-street' is a dead space. In it there is no motion, no animation, that is, the interaction of the various forces of life itself· animals, direct sunlight changes, gentle breezes, windows opening and closing, the coming and going of people, the seasonal changes we see in the colours of leaves is practically nonexistent. The 'mean-street' is an unexciting, uninviting space. It has no motor inside. It offers few surprising elements, no complexity, no contradiction This lifeless space has no magic, no invisible power that draws to it

And, as Christopher Alexander comments

> "In a world which is healthy, whole, alive, and self-maintaining, people themselves can be alive and self-creating In a world which is unwhole and self-destroying, people cannot be alive they will inevitably themselves be self-destroying, and miserable "[11]

The 'mean-street' is self-destroying, it is soul-destroying.

2.5 Humaneness

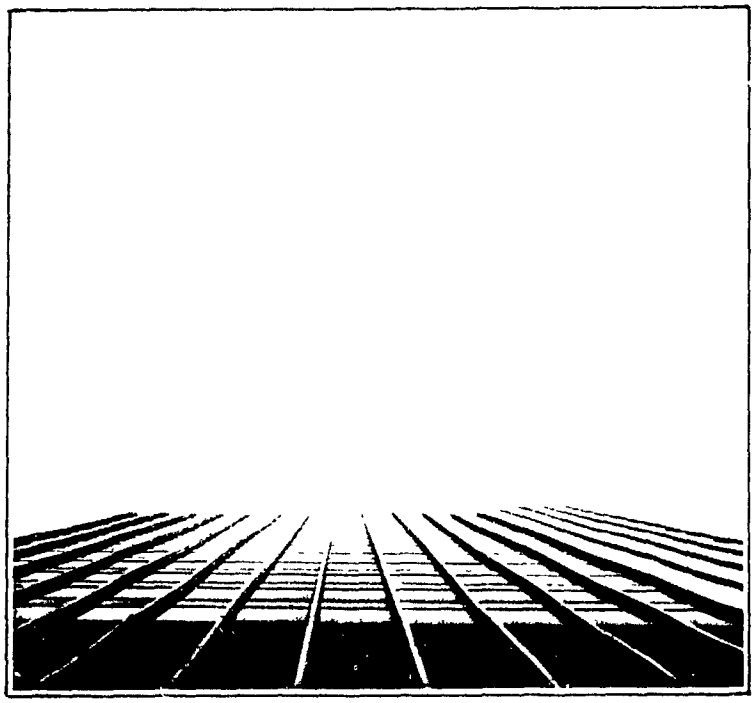


Fig 20

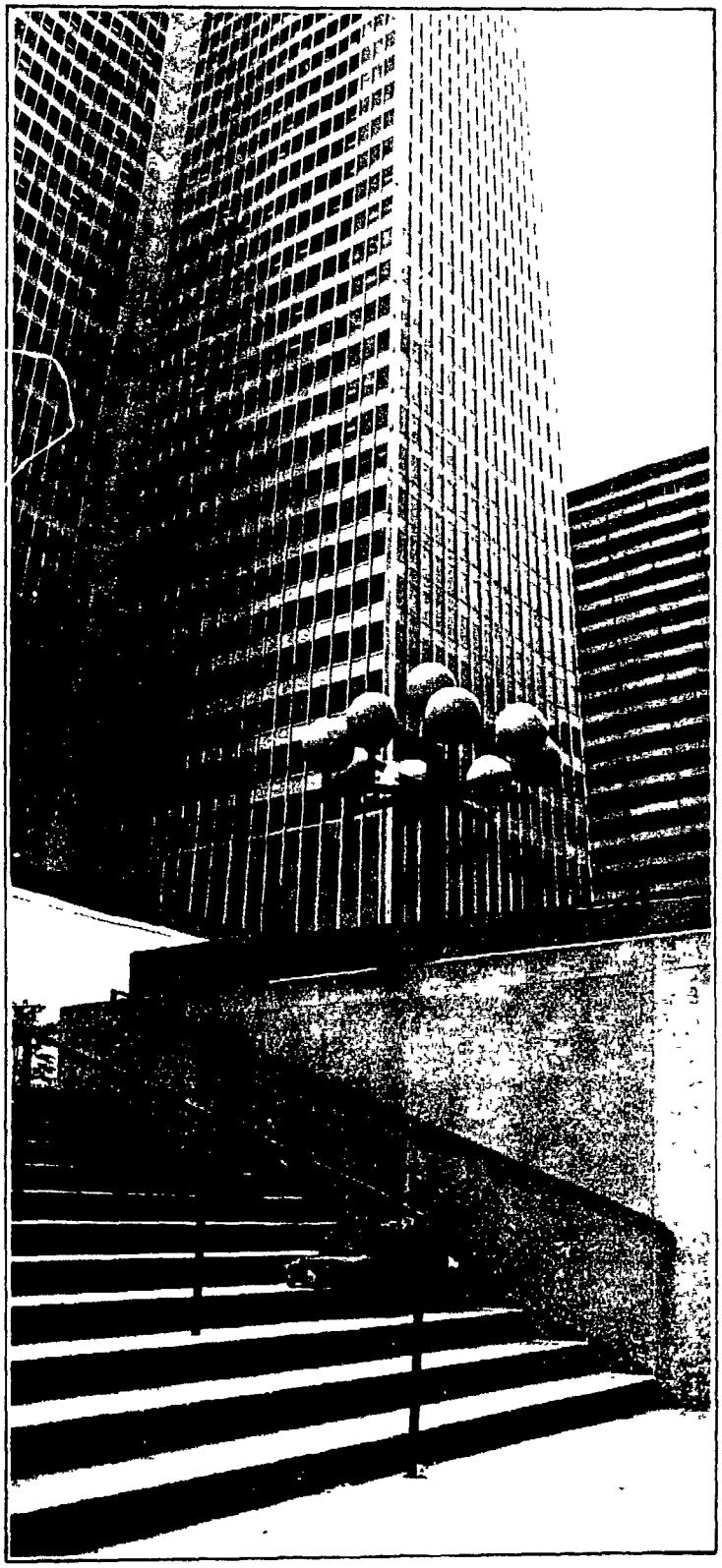


Fig. 21

The 'mean-street' is no human extension, no beloved nor friendly place. It is no street for people. It provides none of the conditions necessary for living experiences to happen; that is, in it we find no security nor enticement to stay there. The 'mean-street' is no more than a void in space.

The 'mean-street' is a street that provides no physical security. Buildings are monumental. "Too many high-rise buildings have no detail at ground level to which human beings can relate."[12] And, as no enclosure is provided, when either looking at the ground level or when looking upwards, immensity and infinity make a claim upon us. In the 'mean-street', the human being feels excluded and infinitessimal for he is oppressed by the heaviness of the street.

Today, central business areas exhibit dramatically high buildings in comparison to the width of the streets. Not only are streets narrow for today's demands, they are dwarfed by the imposing size of buildings. As more tall buildings are then constructed, both natural and man-made conditions in the 'mean-street' are further aggravated. While the number of people who have views does not increase very much and the entrance of direct sunlight is drastically diminished, the number of dark and gloomy spaces and the number of people with blocked views increases a great deal.[13] Both noise and pollution reach dramatic levels. In today's urban conglomerates, man is, in fact, completely alienated from his natural environment.

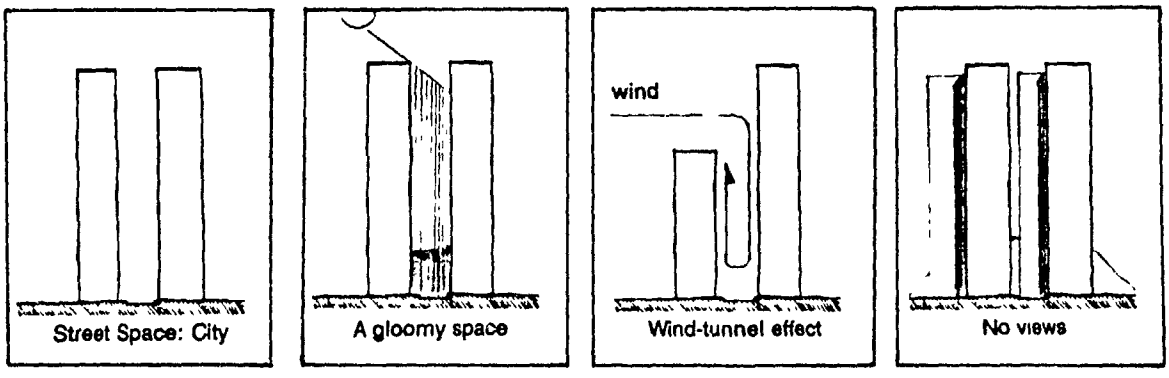


Fig. 22 The 'mean-street' space

The 'mean-street' subjects the user to harsh environmental conditions. This does not mean that the street should isolate the person from the outdoor world, but that it should be designed to cope as

host as possible with whatever nature presents. As the 'mean-street' does not offer proper 'shelter' for the user, a strong demand is made on interior spaces. This, though, has a negative effect on the life of the street space.

"An additional cause for dissatisfaction in the surrounding community seems to arise when a new building creates a 'canyon like' effect at ground level."[14] This effect is created by boxes of tall buildings around a constricted space. In cold climates this causes displeasing and extremely cold wind conditions at street level. Strolling or just walking by become unpleasant experiences.

In today's cities, the 'mean-street' is a merely functional space It does not encourage social peace by providing interaction in the first place Instead, for individual and communal security to occur it must be enforced Human and non-human mechanisms control what happens in the space. Security is then 'created', but it is not real, for it is not developed over time, nor is it the result of the voluntary controls of the community social life; that is, it does not display the "need for eyes upon the street" (belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street), nor does it show a "fairly continuous use of the sidewalks" (to increase those eyes on the street).[15] In today's modern buildings, safety is imposed by mechanical devices such as alarms and better street lights. Without people though, is the street really safe? Moreover, if something happens in it, who will care?

Fig 23 The 'mean-street': Is it really safe?

Security today is a business just like any other. Reality demands heavier controls, but, as with the typical case of a guard inside a shopping mall, if ever something happens just outside its door, he will likely respond with the indifferent attitude that, in the end, "It's not my business". However, is this really humaneness, even if today we posses better alarms and tools to ensure public peace?

Moreover, what would really happen in these type of spaces if security was not enforced and controlled? Are 'mean-streets' for people, and do people really have the freedom of appropriating the space for their needs and wills, without having these enforced security mechanisms?

Security can only come from the people, their interaction and their interest in developing public peace. Without a strong social life and community interdependance, security cannot be truly achieved A society, though, that has to enforce its control mechanisms, is likely to lack a strong community life. And the control mechanisms of today's society are no longer driven by the day-to-day life of its inhabitants: they are imposed on people.

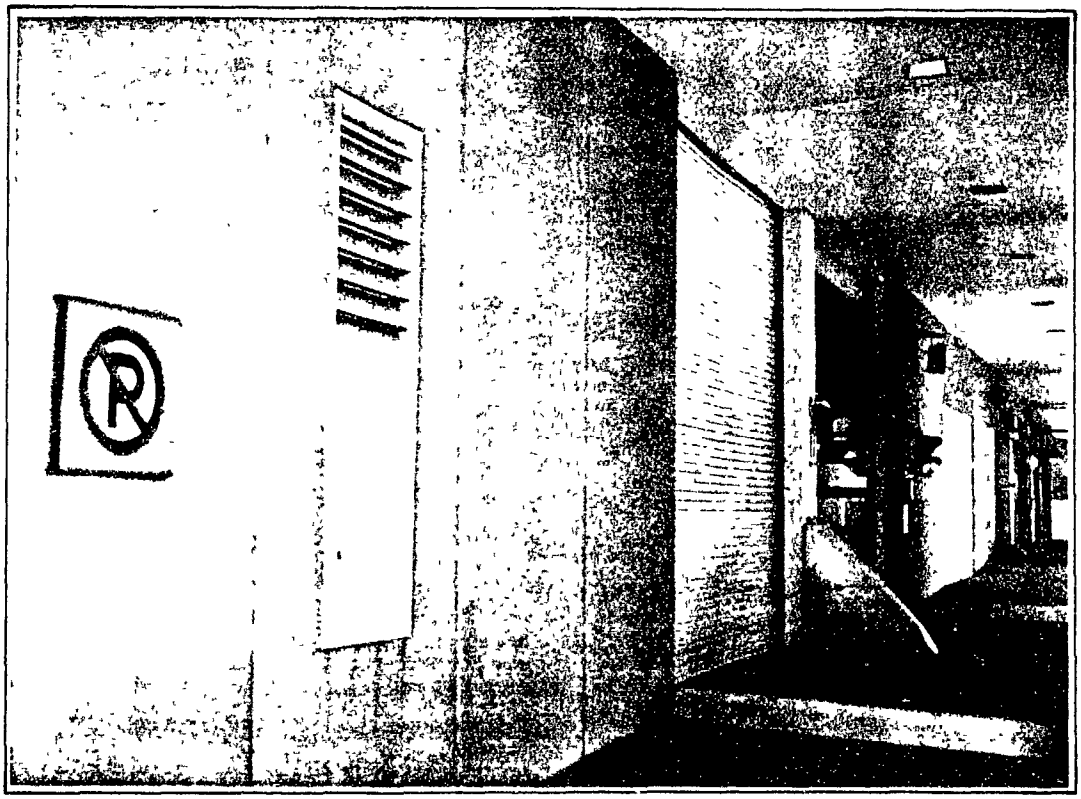


Fig. 24 Are 'mean-streets' really for people?

The 'mean-street' possesses no warmth. It lacks spontaneity. It is cold and has no feeling. Its microclimate induces psychological stress and enmity before comfort or friendliness. The 'mean-street' is not a positive street for it produces no smiles or satisfactions.

Gloria Levitas discusses the ideas of ecological psychologists Gump and Barker and says that a behaviour setting that provides immediate satisfaction improves the quality of life. She further asserts that architecture should not aim primarily at improving the intellect or developing an idea of beauty but should increase the number and intensity of "smiles, involved postures, chats, exploration, and the assumption of responsibility".[16]

The 'mean-street' offers no fulfillment of our dreams. It cannot be defined as an ethnic domain that represents people's experiences and perceptions. It does not provide the necessary elements to 'taste' the space and feel it as ours. The 'mean-street' is no existential space; it lacks "a relatively stable system of perceptual schemata, or 'image' of the environment".[17]

Schulz wrote that man's interest in space has existential roots. "It stems from a need to grasp vital relations in his environment, to bring meaning and order into a world of events and actions."[18]

The 'mean-street', however, does not provide the impetus for man to seek a relationship with his environment, much less to give meaning to events and actions there. The 'mean-street' in fact contradicts the task of the architect, which Schulz defines as [helping] "man to find an existential foothold by concretizing his images and dreams".[19]

The 'mean-street' can mask negative elements. In doing so, it becomes a facade that does not reflect what is inside. The 'mean-street' simulates reality though it fails to be real for it ignores the street's meaning and significance. The 'mean-street' thus misrepresents itself: today's service lanes and cargo entrances, with their overhanging canvases and window-displays, masquerade as shop entrances

In the 'mean-street' feeling is not real. It is the expression of some superficial means meant to generate an emotion in people. Feeling, when it does not reflect what is really true in the street, is just ordinary pastiche: it adds nothing to the street's humaneness. It covers up the imperfections and

expresses the duality of what is allowed to be displayed against that which cannot be shown, is socially unacceptable or commercially unattractive. Feeling in the 'mean-street', like pastiche, when gone, leaves the street naked with only its ambiguities, thus showing the lack of real significance inside our hearts and souls.

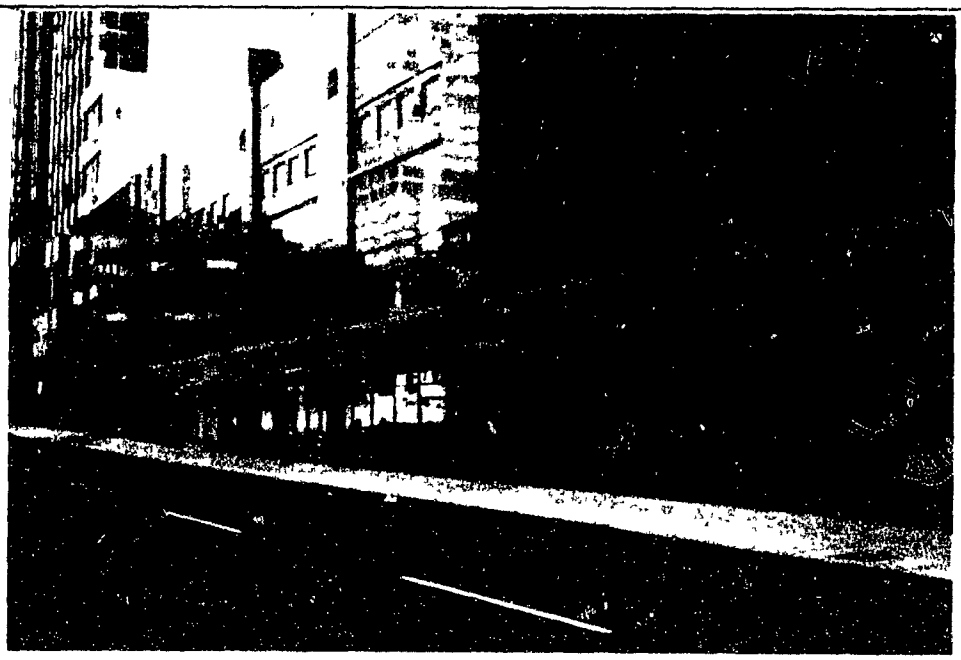


Fig 25 Canvases simulating shop entrances

Fig 26 The 'mean-street': Feeling = pastiche

3. THE 'MEAN-CITY'

The 'mean-street' is not an isolated phenomenon. The 'mean-street' contradicts the social purpose that streets, as jigsaw pieces in an urban puzzle, have developed over time. The 'mean-street' hence, constitutes a growing phenomenon that has a profound effect on the development of today's downtown areas.

Fascination with highways and efficient streets has had a strong impact on the development of present urban entities. Cities were divided by functional channels, and a chasm between 'pedestrians' and 'vehicles' diminished the street's potential as a place for social exchange.

New ideals tended to improve the architectural building as an individual entity. Nevertheless, emphasis on separate projects at the expense of space around them, new technologies for high-rise construction, together with increasing demands for massive projects and improvements in communication have completely changed the structure and social significance of our urban streets. Many downtown areas became, then, entities formed by private 'icons', rarely connected to each other.

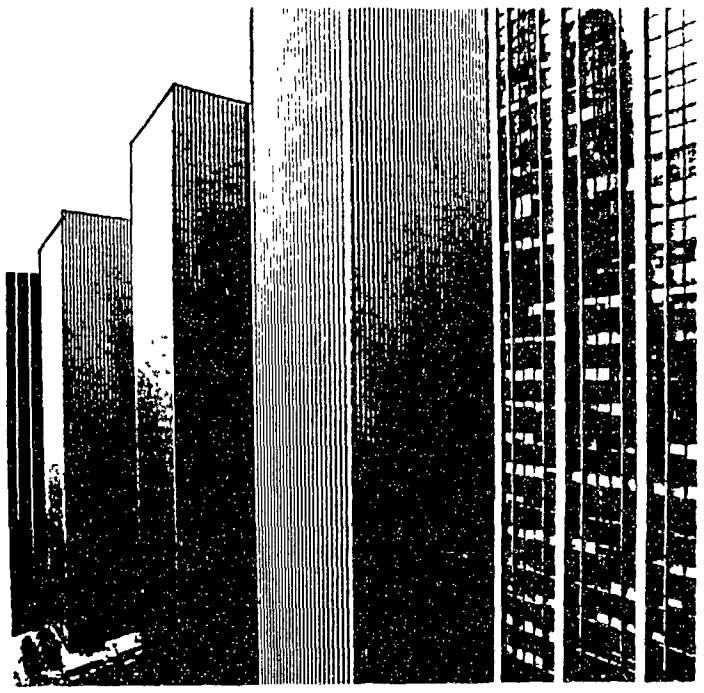


Fig. 27 The 'Mean-City'

"The modern city with shiny glass and steel buildings, devoid of ornamentation and historical content, may convey a message of a clean, mechanized world, almost futuristic in nature; but does this architecture convey anything beyond this mechanization and a seemingly sterile past, present and future?"[20]

The contemporary city while a physical organism, is ethereal, vague. It is difficult to understand and difficult to integrate. It corresponds closely to the ideals of its inhabitants and is the tangible expresssion of a nation's spirit, or lack of spirit,...[21] The contemporary city, like the images in the movie Metropolis by Fritz Lang, corresponds closely to these ideas: it is "a vast, overbearing, overpowering city, mindless of the fragile humans who inhabit it".[22]

Fig. 28 Vision of a 70th century city in a comic strip

"Architecture no longer exists" Bofill once said, "only impersonal cities, without description and without style which nobody has ever dreamt of or desired"[23]. The 'mean-city' thus, is a place that has no clear identity. It is made of anonymous products by anonymous builders It is the result of changing attitudes and has no continuity in time City to city, one is increasingly similar to the other.

The 'mean-city' is "full of identical concrete blocks, identical rooms, identical houses, identical apartments in identical apartment buildings".[24] It is confusing It is made of isolated objects which do not transmit significance and meaning to people's lives

The city interpreted as a structure of individualistic solids has produced, so far, a segregated entity. Separate and isolated events occur with little relation to each other. In contrast to the city of the past

which suggested development evolved from social order, "the city of today testifies to the hasty, unthinking, unrelated piling up of buildings".[25]

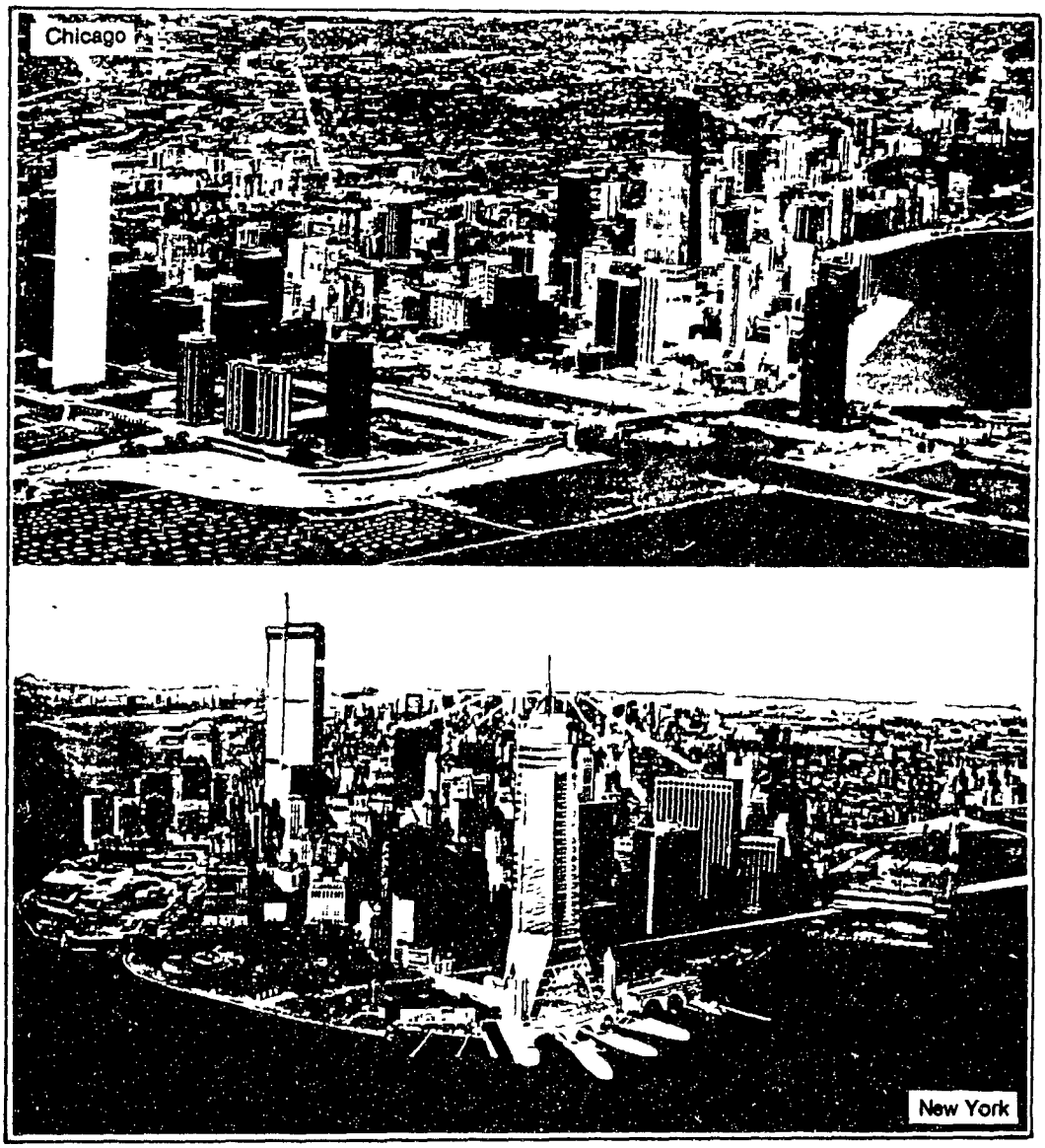


Fig. 29 The 'Mean-City': 'The piling up of buildings

Jacobs writes:

> "Most big-city downtowns fulfill - or in the past did fulfill - all the necessary conditions for generating diversity. That is why they were able to become downtowns. Today,...they have become too predominately devoted to work and contain too few people after working hours. This condition has been more or less formalized in planning jargon, which no longer speaks of 'downtowns' but instead of 'CBDs'-standing for Central Business Districts."[26]

Like the 'mean-street', the 'mean-city' is not a human space. It is not an extension of our inner experiences. Immersed in convenient means of transportation we move only from point to point. The city becomes a functional machine of mere departures or arrivals.

The 'mean-city' represents a duality of powers: high and low; front and back; differentiating the good from the bad; and that which is to be shown from that which has to be hidden. A city, though, cannot be seen in this way for it is the good and the bad. The 'mean-city' must then be seen by more than individual buildings; it should be seen by the ensemble of spaces, including the increasing negative spaces, namely, 'mean-streets'.

Fig. 30 Paris, Avenue des Champs Elysées

Fig 31 The poor man's Champs Elysées

Fig. 32 Back of above street

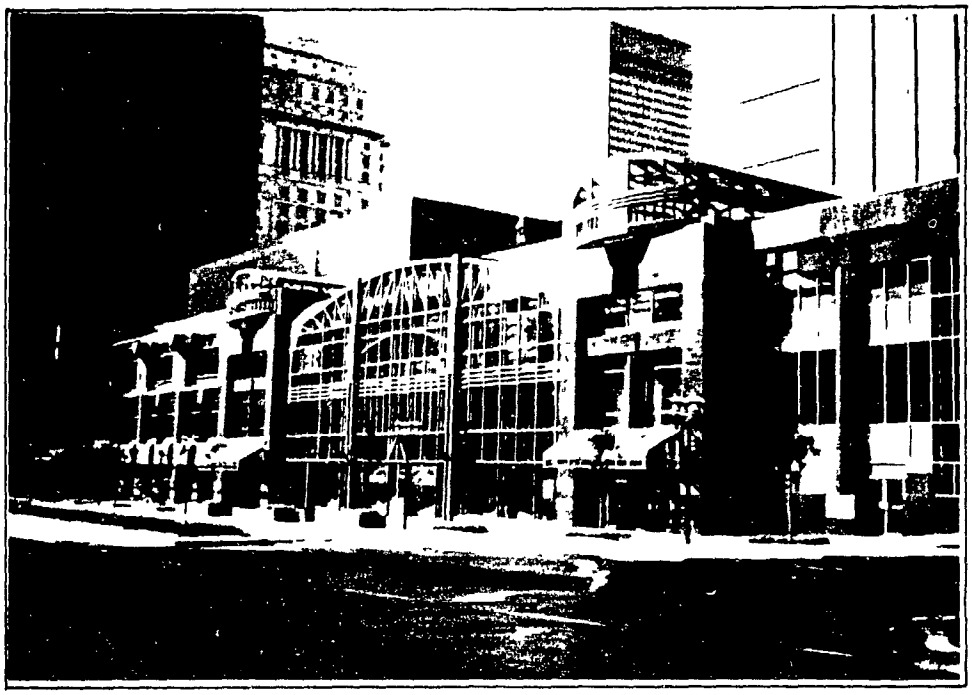


Fig 33 McGill College Avenue, Montreal Front view

Fig. 34 "Rear" view of McGill College Avenue

4. PLAYING ELEMENTS

The following elements play an important role in the phenomenon of 'mean-streets'. They are the result of a group of individual and global behaviours which together represent wider social trends and have, therefore, a profound effect on the development of cities.

It is important to note that these elements are meant not to be taken as 'features' that characterize 'mean-streets', but they are instead issues that stand well behind the general back-drop. Hence, they are gravitational forces and have to be considered as major causes in the phenomenon of negativeness present in the contemporary city.

4.1 Land Use, Zoning and Urban Renewal Policies

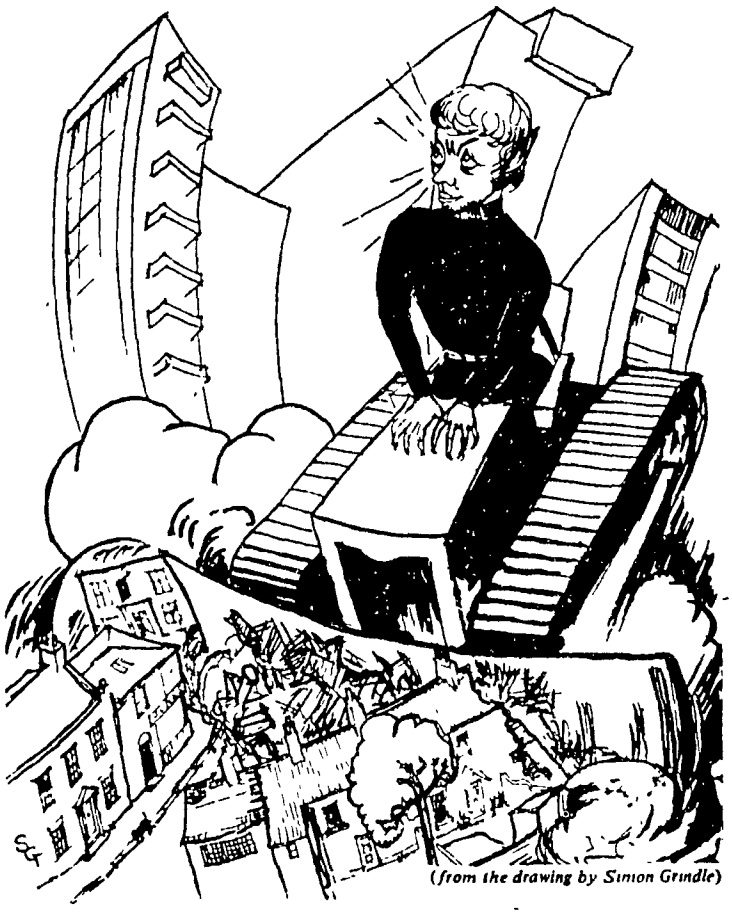


Fig. 35 The Planner's Vision

Jacobs pointed out in 1965:

> "Twenty years ago it was commonly believed that to benefit cities a plan must be sweeping and comprehensive... Slums were bulldozed to make way for monolithic public housing projects. Neighborhoods were bisected, trisected and sometimes vivesected for links in city-wide expressways systems. Historic and humanely-scaled landscapes were demolished to make way for highrise apartment or office buildings. Zoning was aimed at segregating the different components of city life from one another "[27]

Zoning and urban renewal policies often do not take into account the interactive development of cities. In them, time is reduced to the constructive stage. Complexity of urban life is further reduced to abstracted utopian ideals. Such policies prefer to start from scratch. A clean slate makes development much easier, and urban renewal policies claim to support development by destruction.

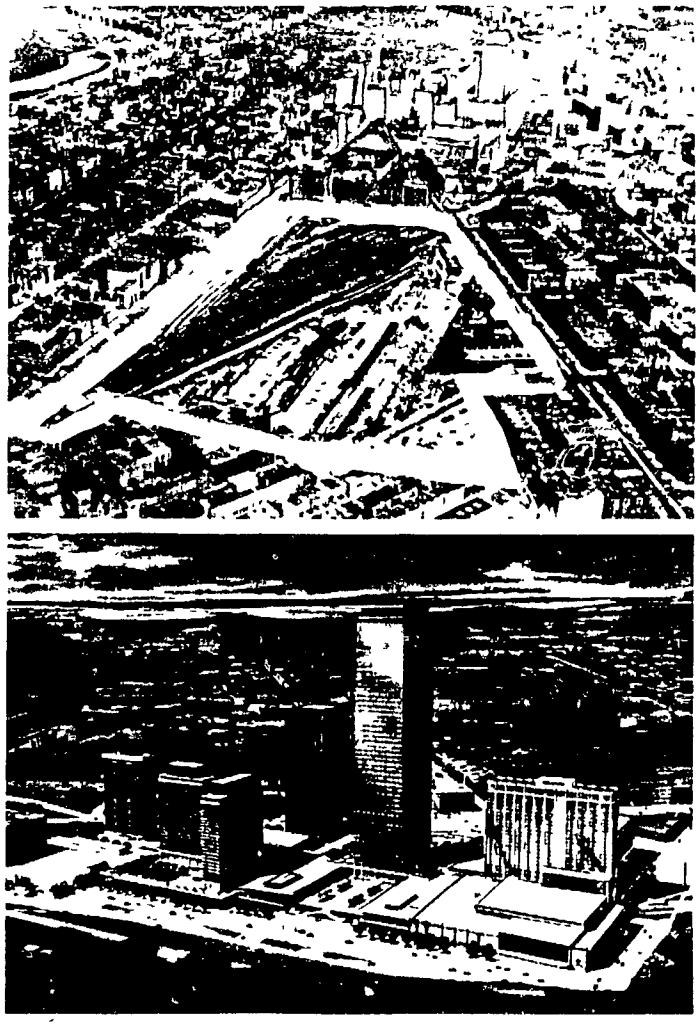


Fig. 36 Boston, Massachusetts. The Development of the Prudential Center. 1959

Isolated superblocks, formed by urban renewal plans, close off historic streets, drastically altering the scale of the city. Developments are considered as individual and particular cases. The result is an incoherent and discontinuous network of streets and public spaces

Cities are constantly faced with demands for growth At the same time, though, cities struggle to preserve their decreasing heritage. The 'mean-city' is dramatically changing its landscape, and legislation is often not strong enough to help maintain important landmarks and buildings. Moreover, for many, it is not clear whether the city's legislation has a direction or what this direction might be.

Legislation in cities is often conceived in very general terms. The legislation is not imbued with any spirit, and, because of this, it is subject to interpretation. In simpler terms, then, legislation tends to be too ambiguous for the particularness of each case presented by the city.

Today rigid zoning legislation subdivides cities into geometric districts separated by traffic arteries. Based on technical considerations rather than real life performance, zoning policies become too restrictive for evolving human settlements. The gradual segregation of land uses into discrete zones induces urban discontinuity and an increasing loss of public exchanges. Sectors which were originally formed by varied uses [i.e., residence, commerce, offices], have been transformed into one exclusive use [i.e., business], losing all the attraction and humaneness they once had, especially during nights and on weekends Downtown areas are dead areas that exhibit no animation.

Jacobs comments on this·

> ". .downtowns are not declining mysteriously, because they are anachronisms,... They are being witlessly murdered, in good part by deliberate policies of sorting out leisure uses from work uses, under the misapprehension that this is orderly city planning "[28]

Today, a growing number of downtown areas are sterile places. They are no longer social places as they are undermined by opposite interests, namely the misapprehension of city planning and the increasing number of empty pockets which act as vacuum areas that drain any activity away from them.

'Ghettos'[29] [i.e., business, diplomatic and government- 'protected areas'], exist as communities which share little with the outside, denying open access within the urban context. Demolition of residential projects, relocation of industries and the existence of obsolete facilities [i.e., abandoned train tracks, fairgrounds and bus terminals] have also created vast areas of wasted and underused space [i e., parking lots] within downtown cores. Urban silhouettes are then disrupted, and the resulting 'lost spaces' fail to connect to the urban fabric, undermining the possibility for an integrated urban fabric. Together with changing and unrelated zoning policies, the existence of ghettos and lost-spaces within the city's core does no more than to disrupt the unity of the urban environment The city no longer is a place where we all belong, but the segregating of antagonistic places within it.

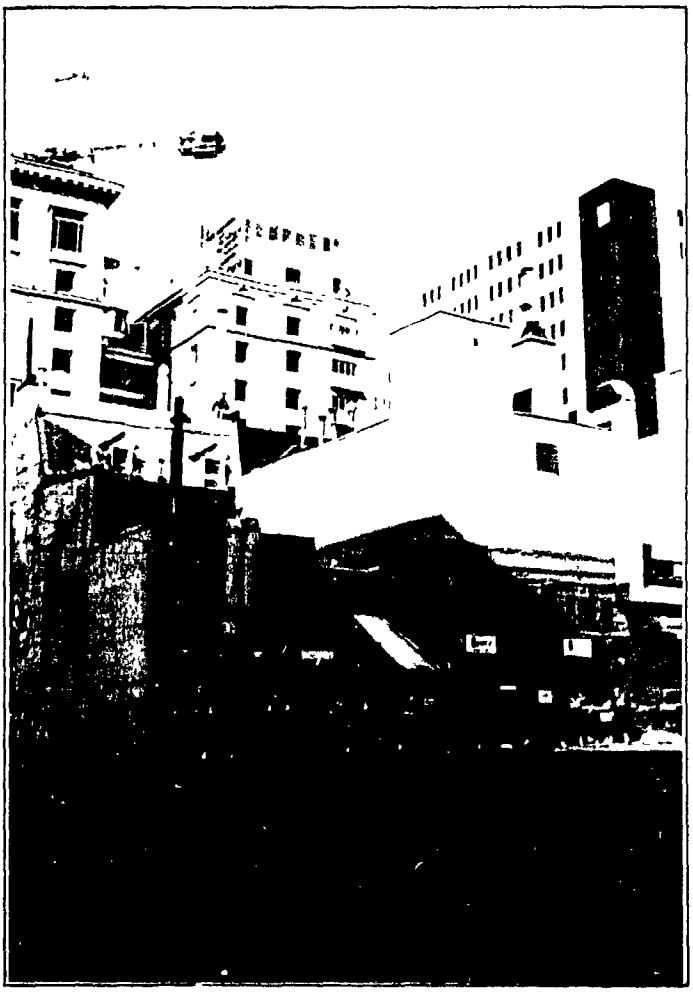


Fig. 37 Lost spaces in the urban fabric

4.2 Individualism and the Privatization of Public Spaces

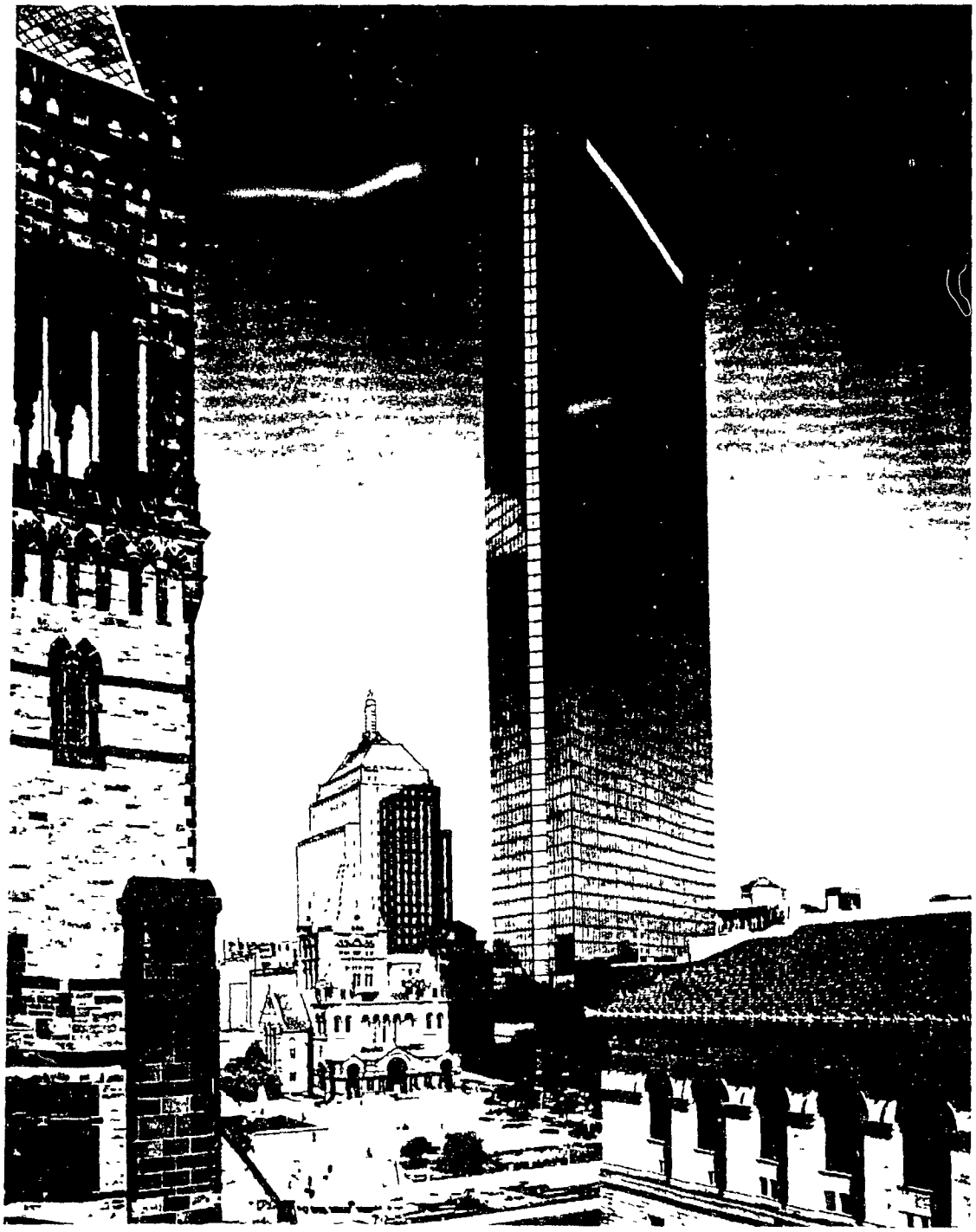


Fig. 38 I.M. Pei & Partners. John Hancock Tower, Boston, Mass. 1973

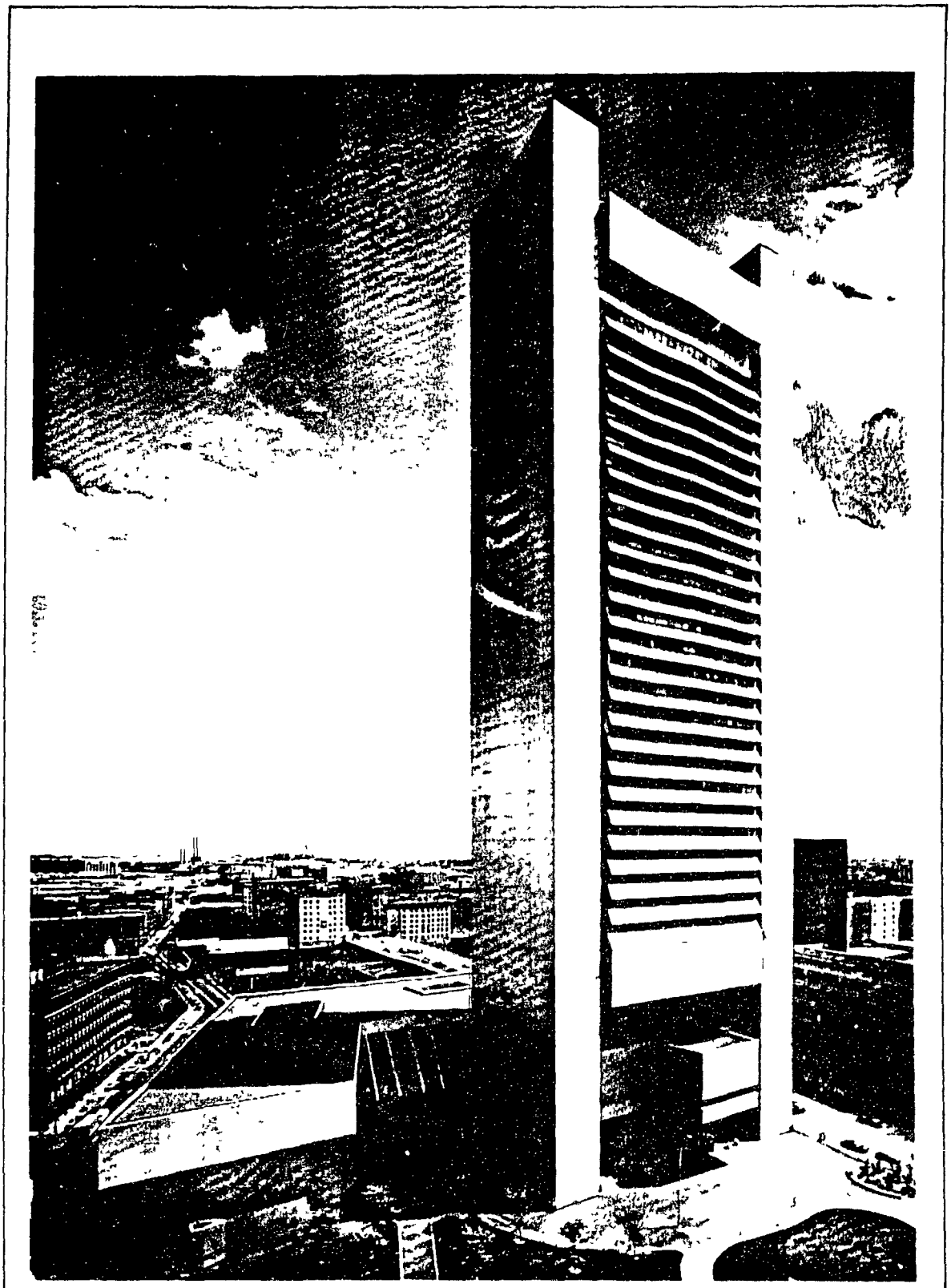


Fig 39 Federal Reserve Bank, Boston, Mass

Individualism is by its very nature a divisive force. It is the "excessive or exclusive regard to one's personal interest".[30] Taking individualism to an extreme can then result in eventual rupture with the surrounding context; that is, in eventual social isolation.

The production, distribution and consumption of goods and services is a primary concern of contemporary urban societies. Control of the economy, then, results in power and status for the individual and sets him apart from others. Individuals actively seek this power and status. When attained in the extreme, this power and status result in the divorce of the individual from the community. Placing his personal wealth and well-being above that of the community leads the individual then to abdicate his social responsibilities

Relph suggests that in everyday life a sense of social responsibility has been outmoded by a desire for individual freedom and comfort.[31] If individualism then results in a lack of strong communal responsibility, it is a logical consequence that today's cities express a loss of awareness towards the well-being of urban public spaces.

When public spaces are subjugated to the wills and needs of the individual, the resulting space becomes one of low social interaction. The contemporary city is increasingly a place where nothing seems to happen anymore; that is, nothing seems to happen through the casual public contact for this is likely nonexistent.

Individualism is expressed dramatically in the physical environment. While the economic health of the city strengthens its downtown, it also creates a heavy demand for floor space thus pushing the city towards verticality. However, this seemingly indiscriminate building of office towers condemns the street to individual and isolated buildings at its sides, and the city becomes an environment of private 'icons'. Few can then actually deny highrise buildings as technologically and aesthetically attractive objects in space; but what they imply, in terms of modern economics, is the affirmation of an individual image and status in terms of both the expression of economic and social power

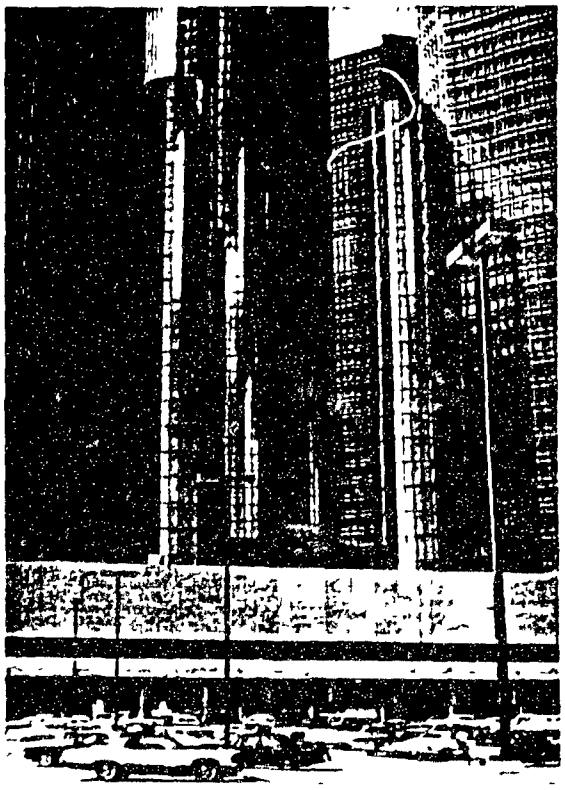
In the contemporary city, high-rise buildings exist as the ultimate way of expressing our place in society. Buildings are no longer simple structures. They are simple structures redundantly ornamented

with the most expensive and extravagant materials Buildings are elegant manifestations, and the marble or fine granite used in their entrances and facades show nothing more than this strong materialistic base upon which buildings are now judged.

Roger Trancik comments on this 'competition' between buildings.

> "The very idea of modestly fitting into the collective city is antithetical to corporate aspirations, and the chest-beating individualism of the American way... The city becomes a showplace for the private ego at the expense of the public realm."[32]

There is a correlation between individualism and a lack of awareness towards public space. Streets and plazas are dwarfed by the enormous shadows imposed by high-rise buildings Open spaces are controlled by private interests and the public has little or no control over the way in which private developers quite often take control of public space. The contemporary city is no longer public, but the result of the greed of private developers. Public space is then the result of whatever private interests leave, in the end, for the public realm.



"Parking lots and mechanical equipment present an impenetrable obstruction between the Renaissance Center and the rest of Detroit's downtown area The whole complex blocks pedestrian access to the riverfront "[33]

Fig. 40 The Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan

4.3 The Assessment of Day-to-Day Life by Quantitative Values

FIRST QUEBEC CORPORATION

TO : All Staff **DATE:** June 28, 1989

FROM: Carole Freeman **SUBJECT:** BOMA Office Building of the Year Award

A few months ago the Industrial Life Tower was awarded "Building of the Year" (in the category of 100,000 - 500,000 square feet) throughout Quebec, and all of Canada.

Last week at a convention in Atlanta, Georgia, the building won Fourth prize in the North American category.

Congratulations! You now work and manage one of North America's geatest office towers!

CF/dr

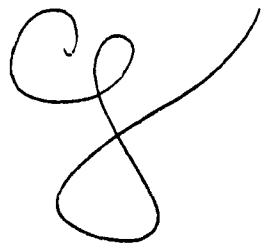


Fig. 41 'Industrial Life Tower', Montreal: 325,000 sq ft

The assessment of day-to-day life by quantitative values ignores the nature of man, for it reduces his complexity to equations and absolute numerical values. Reducing human life to numbers denies human performance. It measures man through values which limit his life to a discrete set of amounts and operations This applied to contemporary life also means that the way we move in space is judged in terms of mere economic values rather than by the quality of the experiences in it.

Reduction of human life to economics is present everywhere. it is in the way we assess our lives. In the way we eat, that is, by the daily number of carbohydrates vs the daily number of fats It is in the children we have and the direct amount of money we get for having them It is in the way we credit a doctor by the number of patients he receives, a movie maker by the number of awards he receives, a professional by the amount of diplomas he has, a rock singer by the records he has or the money he makes, a 'good date' by the salary he earns or the number of credit cards he has, an architect by the books he has read or languages he speaks, and a novel by the pages or price it has A building, thus, is today seen as an efficient object: it is judged by the number of floors, the parking areas, or facilities it offers Or simply by how much money was invested or how much marble was used to build it.

Human behaviour and the way our bodies function, though, cannot be synthesized with numerical values. That is, a good diet is probably better understood and judged by the health of the person, children by the happiness, comfort and unity they bring to a family, and a composer by his versatility, the marriage of his words and music, and the timelessness of his music In this way, a building is more completely understood if we take into account the richness of experiences its interior and exterior spaces produce in combination with both human needs and emotions

In the contemporary city, man has become a machine whose life is judged in terms of the quantity of jobs he can perform. In societies where almost everything tends to be reduced to functional and efficient values, and man has adapted himself to this, development of technology and wealth has reached unprecedented levels. But reducing all in our lives to economic values misses the real point of things Wealth and power are both fragile, and when lost we see that something more deep and persistent was lacking at the base. Time, then, is not necessarily money

Let's take the example of the diet again. We could probably eat the right number of proteins and carbohydrates we need to be at our ideal weight, but we may not be ingesting the healthiest food, for all that we eat may be only junk food. The point is numerical values do not always really represent or assess underlying motivations. The idea of the regime is to acquire a balanced diet that involves a variety of food sources In buildings, then, to follow exact numerical values does not reveal too much, not, at least, in terms of spatial quality for this cannot be quantified.

Architecture is an extension of our human bodies and souls. It is related to our feelings and emotions. It satisfies needs and lives on dreams. Reducing our cities to economics, that is, to equations and absolute values, is as alienating as reducing our very lives to these same values. Time and imagination, then, must finish off the job architecture has started

The complexity of the human being demands that not every aspect in it be reduced to mere mathematical equations. Experience has demonstrated that functional buildings may not be the best solution in terms of both building architecture and public urban space. Many design proposals, then, while valid within economic frameworks, may not be quite as exciting nor as socially attractive when applied to real human and city problems Perhaps nothing demonstrates this better than the lack of humaneness generated by the great number of high-rises and office buildings in today's downtown areas.

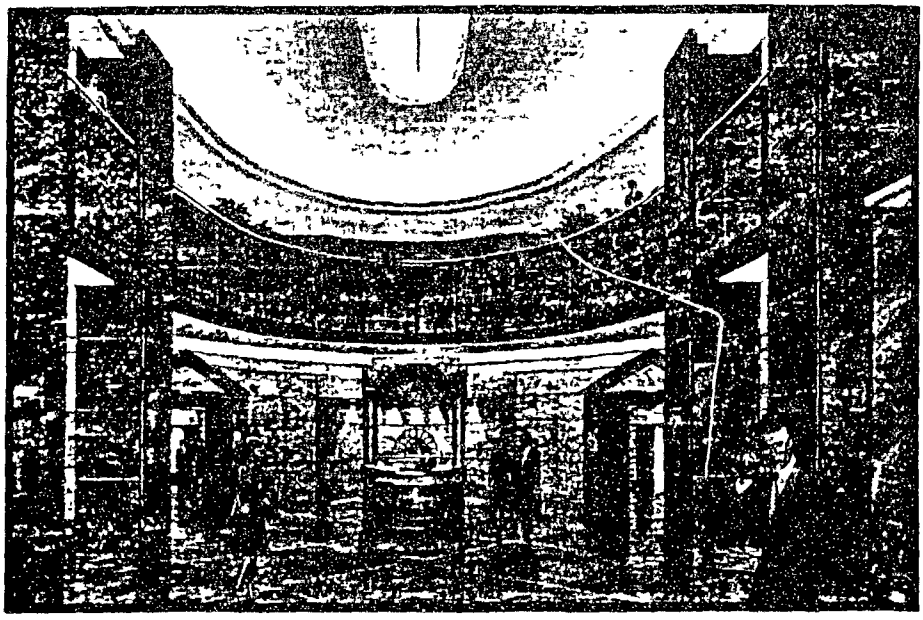


Fig. 42 The Industrial Life Tower. Lobby of polished granite and not much else

"Each of twenty office floors has commanding views in all directions. Seventeen floors offer eight corner offices per floor. Averaging 1,514 sqaure meters (16,300 square feet), each floor has been design-engineered for maximum flexibility and efficiency for both large and small tenants."

First Quebec Corporation[34]

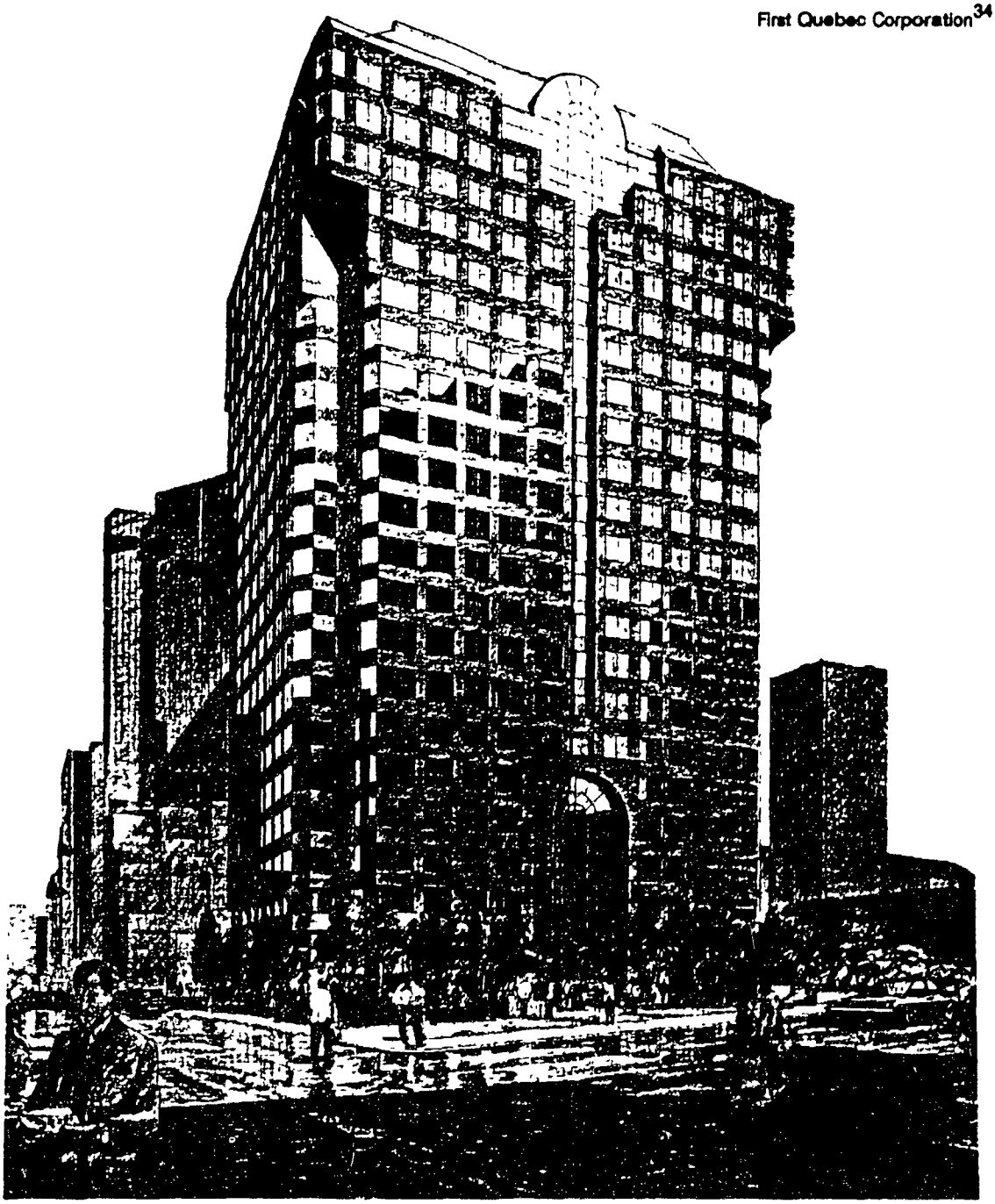


Fig. 43 Industrial Life Tower. Building of the Year

4.4 Internalization of Space

Internalization of space is defined as the placing of activities within the confines of the physical building. By emphasizing the enclosed space, internalization manifests itself in a minimal investment in open urban spaces. The lack of attention to and the implied indifference towards that which happens out in the street results in less maintenance and less supporting activities for the life of the street. Internalization, thus, causes a rupture from the exterior world.

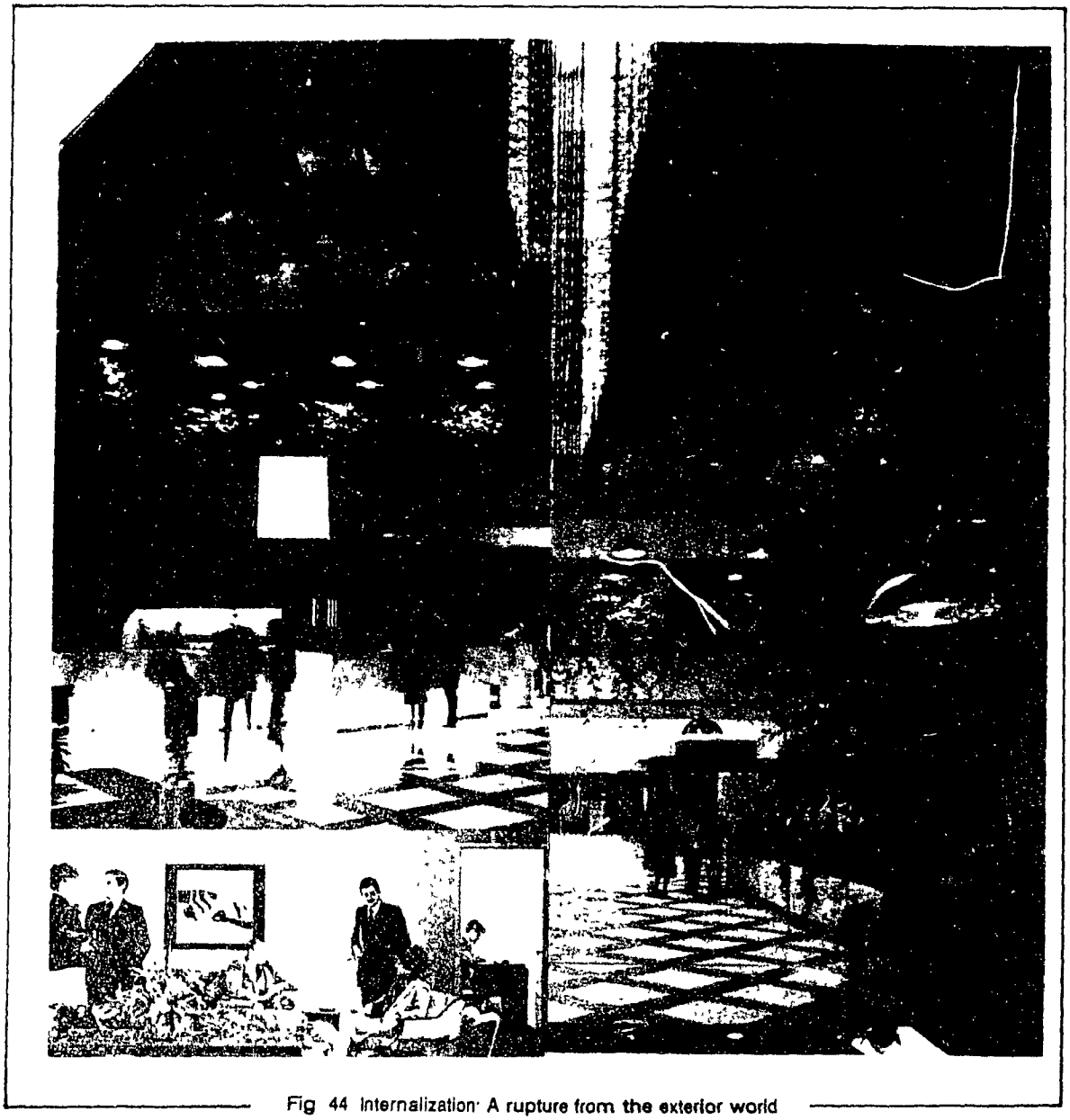


Fig 44 Internalization: A rupture from the exterior world

Point to point, city to city, internalization is seen in the multiplicity of social and cultural relations that happen increasingly between walls. Internalization of space concentrates on the interior, and today's cities are cities made of capsules. these capsules internalize social life and have no connection to one another.

The contemporary urban man seeks comfort, convenience and security, and today's outdoor spaces do not always offer him these sought-after elements By creating an illusion of controlled and suitable environments for man, internalized spaces become much more attractive to him In harsh weather conditions or at night, internalized spaces become then the favourite places to visit Internalization kills activity in the street and contributes to the spreading of dead exterior spaces in the contemporary city.

Moreover, the absence of one element produces the absence of another, and because people are not present, security within the street is further endangered. Internalization of space not only displaces the activity from the street and translates it inside, but it further accentuates the difference between safe interior places and no-man's exterior spaces. The open public space becomes, then, part of the process of progressive urban decay.

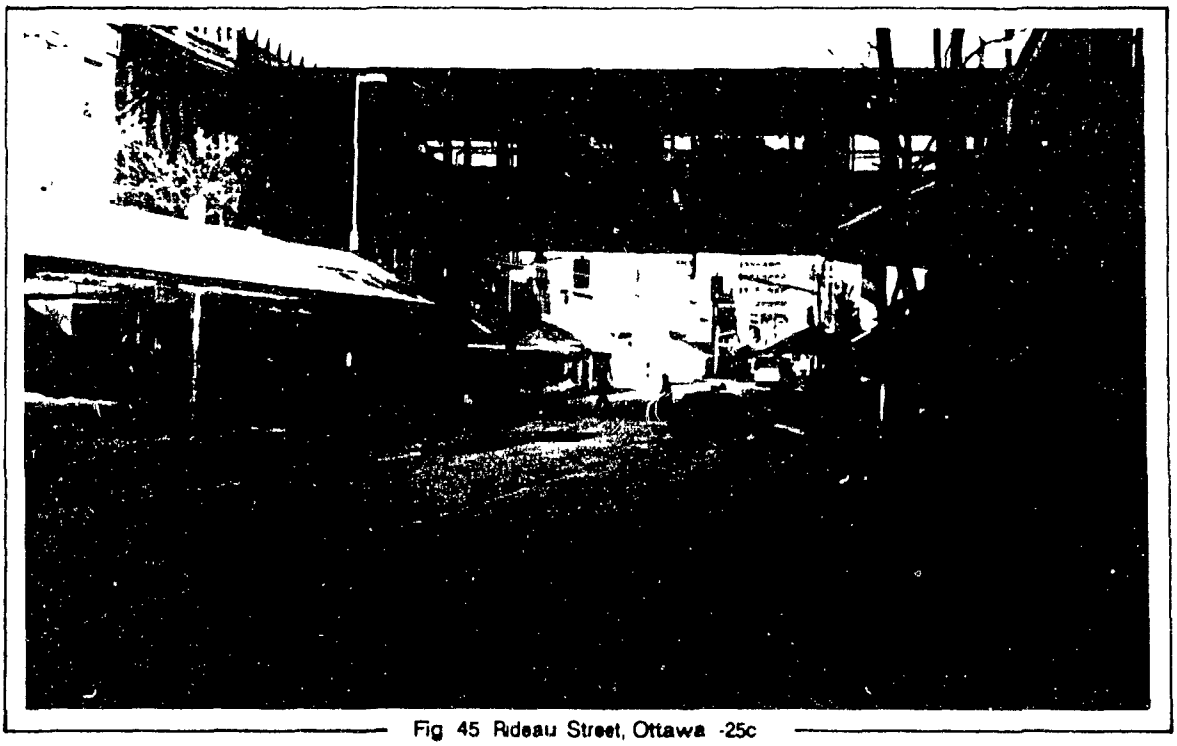


Fig 45 Rideau Street, Ottawa -25c

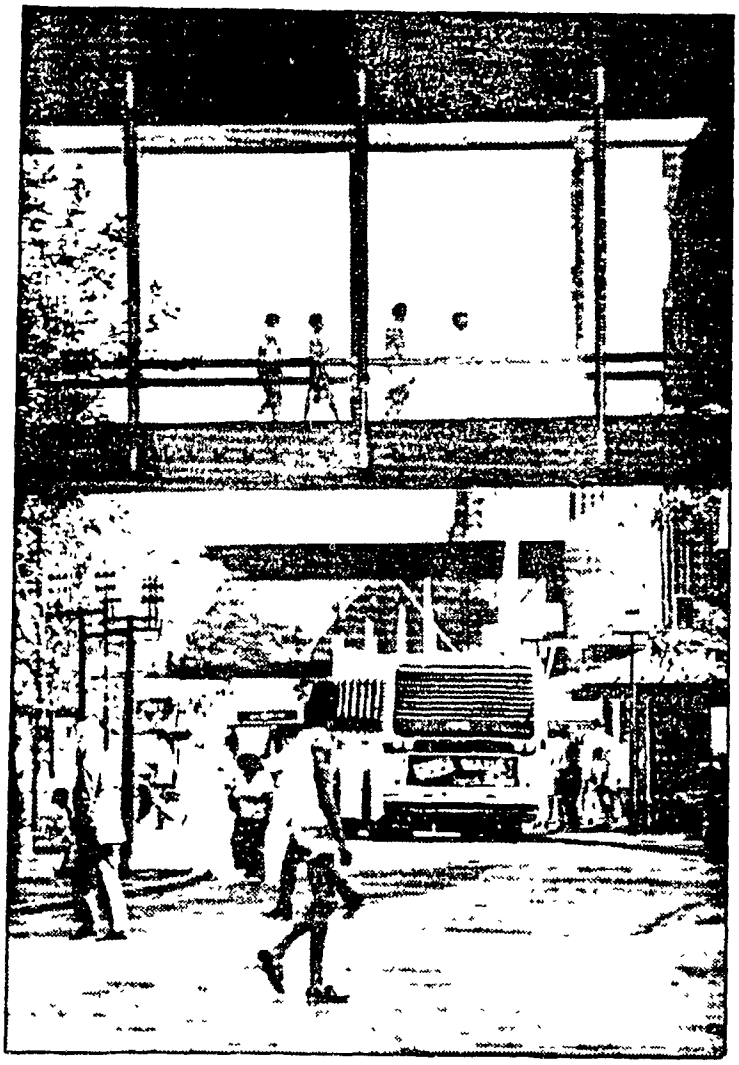


Fig 46 Minneapolis, Minnesota 25c

Enclosed circulation networks that separate pedestrians from the street by moving them 15 feet above grade have become popular in climates as diverse as those of Houston, Calgary and Ottawa. Although this system, known as "skywalks", is relatively new and needs more time to develop, it appears at present to be of questionable value for it has a negative impact on urban street activity.[35]

Lynch comments on the growing use of interior spaces.

> "As we spend more of our lives in interior environments, we are deprived of many natural clues to the passage of day and season. Office and factory buildings, long corridors, and subways are timeless environments, like caves or the deep sea. Light, climate, and visible form are invariant. Without external oscillations to keep our rhythms in phase, our schedules may become erratic."[36]

The desire to avoid unpleasant climatic conditions and at the same time to simulate others which are 'socially' attractive encourages alienation from reality. It means a sort of 'magical' counterfeit reproduction, a glass-painted capsule. Internalization of space reproduces natural conditions controlled by man. As with 'disneyfication[37]', it transmits beyond illusion a strong lack of 'sense of place'.

Internalization of space understood as competition for exterior environments discourages active street life. It casts a gloom on the street space. Internalization of spaces accentuates the duality between real and unreal. 'Disney-type' spaces confuse behavioural patterns, and a society with no clear patterns ends up with no conscious direction.

Strolling through shopping malls, people know little about what is happening outside. The way they behave is indirectly monitored and controlled. The point where reality meets illusion is, for many, no longer perceivable.

Fig. 47 Extreme idealization of the street. Pacific Rim Club in Vancouver's Pan Pacific Hotel

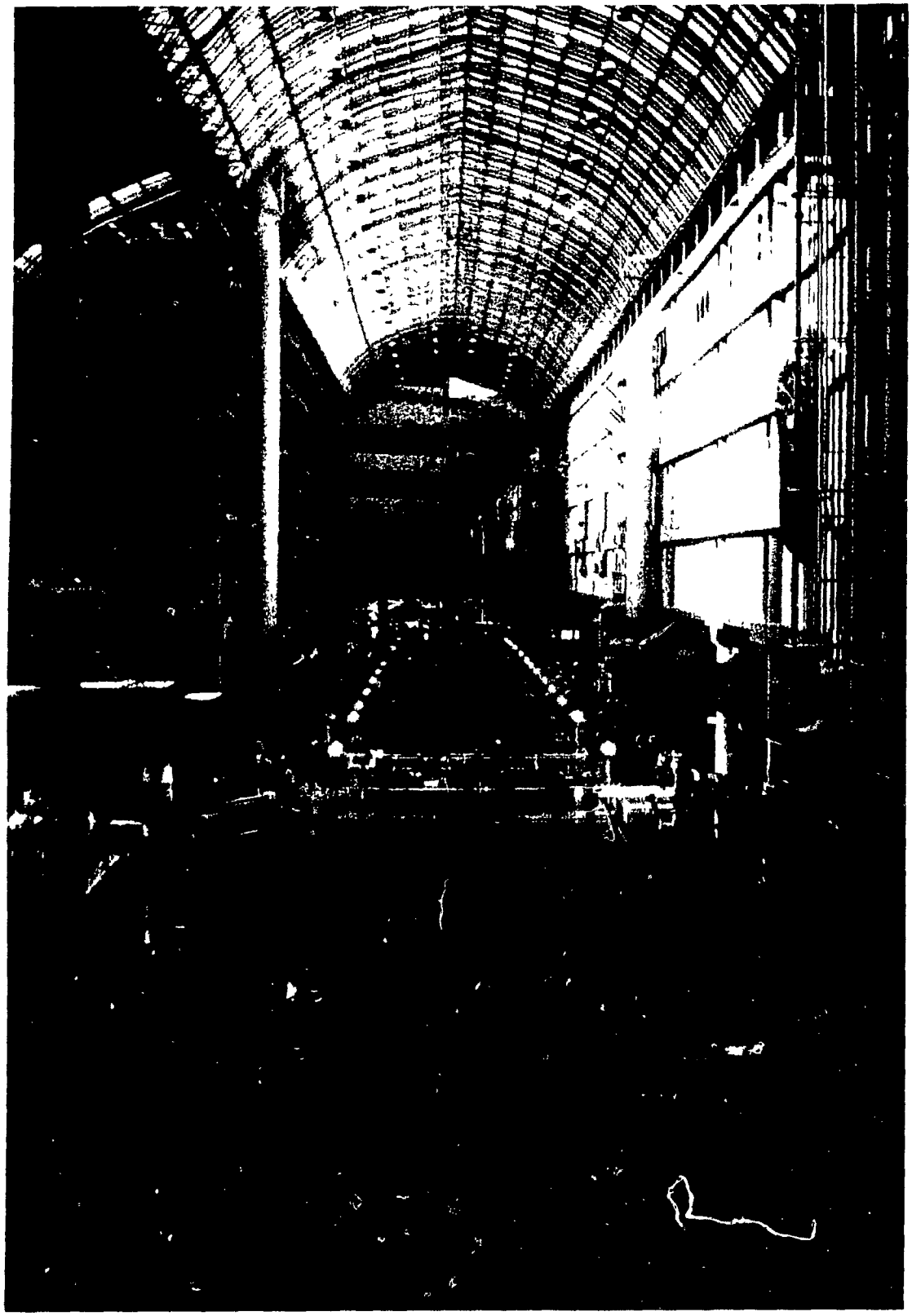


Fig. 48 Eaton Centre, Toronto

4.5 Proteanism or the Quality of Impermanence

The term **'Proteanism'** is derived from 'protean', which means "readily assuming different shapes"[38]. It refers to a marine deity, Proteus, the son of Oceanus and Tethys, whose distinguishing characteristic was the ability to assume different shapes; hence, it refers to one who easily changes his appearance or principles.[39] Proteanism is more than appropriate in a contemporary context for contemporary "man is so mobile that he has no time to establish roots, his experience and appreciation of place is superficial".[40]

Proteanism accentuates impermanence. It is the unstable present, the discontinuity in everyday life, and it denotes anticipation of an undefined future. The spirit of proteanism embodies a careless attitude towards lastingness and habituation. It continuously moves the scenery where one acts In the protean world, historical ties are constantly displaced by the arrival of new values as the existing urban landscape becomes a place undergoing continuous change And when places change rapidly, people do not know how to behave. "Thus, when change is wanted, a new setting supports the discontinuity."[41]

Relph comments:

> "Proteanism and the blurring of landscapes are widely evident in present-day landscapes. ... Instead of discrete regions with coherent and persisting identities there are landscapes that are without clear centres or edges, undergoing continuous and complex changes."[42]

Protean environments do not allow for efficient human interaction People tend to move around, establishing no roots and no deep dependance on a bigger community Connections between people become ephemeral and superficial, for they have become isolated objects in space. Proteanism, in this way, comes into close relation with the growing individualism of contemporary urban societies

According to Schulz, the environmental problem we are facing is not of a technical, economical, social or political nature.

> "It is a human problem, the problem of preserving man's identity. In his 'free' arrogance he departed from his place and 'conquered' the world But he is left with emptiness and no real freedom. He has forgotten what it means to 'dwell'."[43]

Proteanism is linked to the faculty of assuming different states of mind. It plays with memory visions. Images are recreated to produce emotional states. Proteanism is, consequently, an element which acts as a mask in producing unconscious reactions.

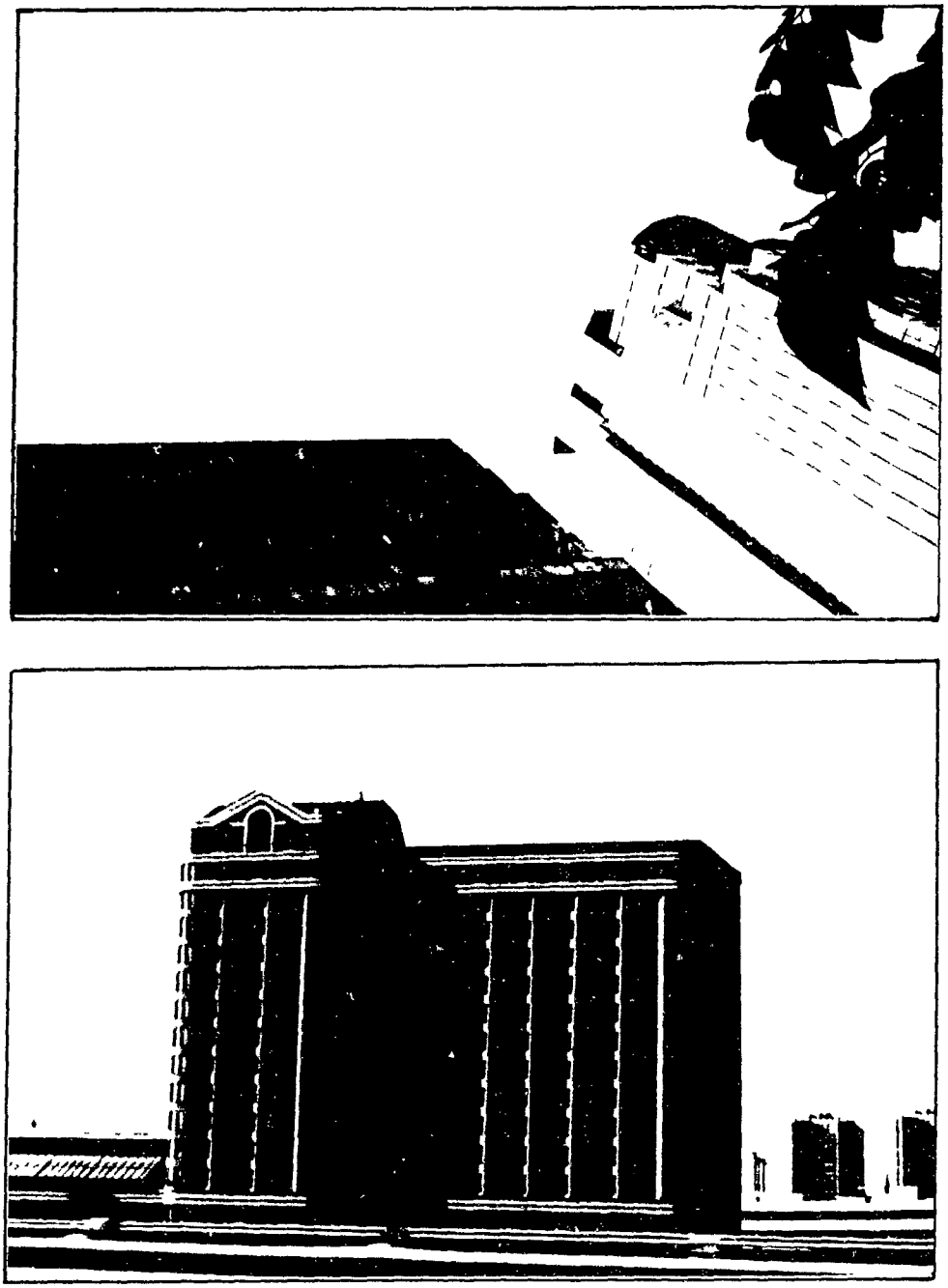


Fig. 49 Protean buildings

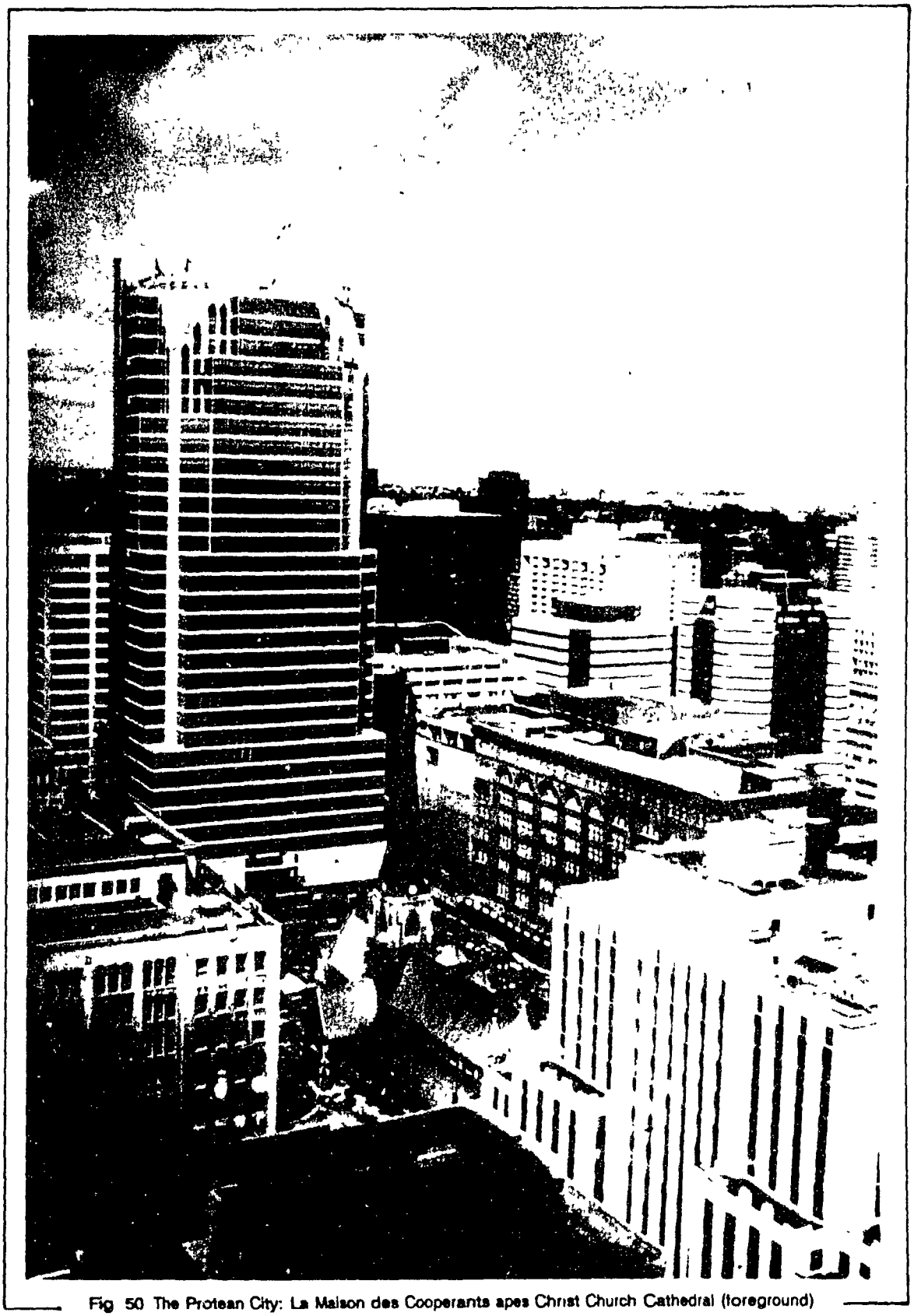


Fig 50 The Protean City: La Maison des Cooperants apes Christ Church Cathedral (foreground)

In today's post-modern buildings the facades are prescribed much as is the front cover of a book. Images are consumption-oriented and references to historical ties are commonly used to produce unconscious reactions Streets become protean environments for they are as ephemeral and superficial as reading a book by looking at its front cover.

Proteanism brings instability to places It creates superficial environments: appearance over significance, disposableness over continuity. And the contemporary world provides all the elements for making this possible. Streets are framed by scenery images, and, as these change, they act as make-up that fools our perceptions

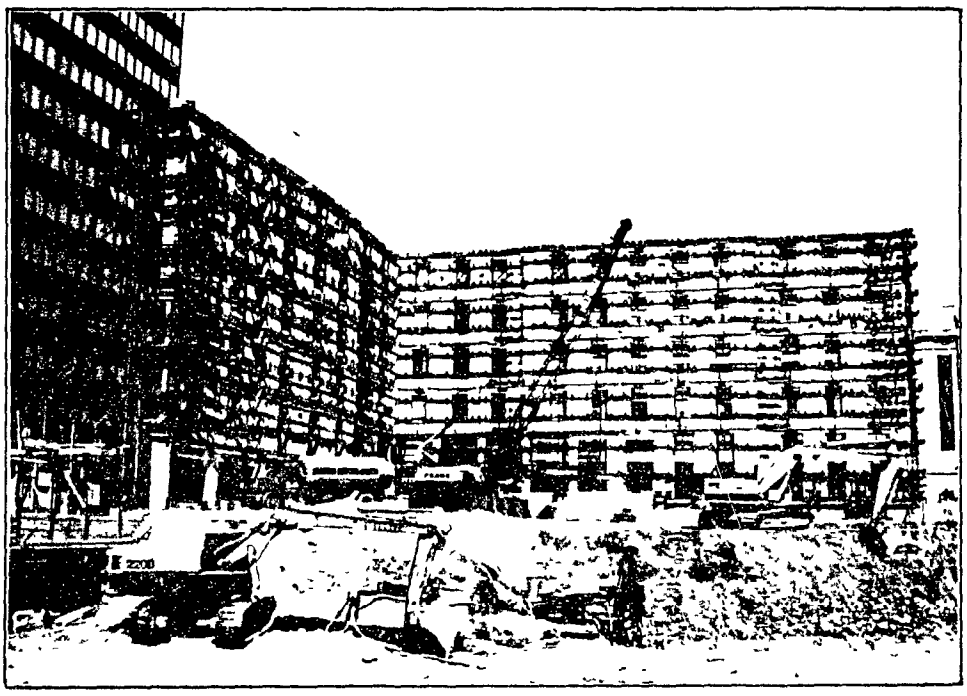


Fig 51 Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal. Extension to the old building

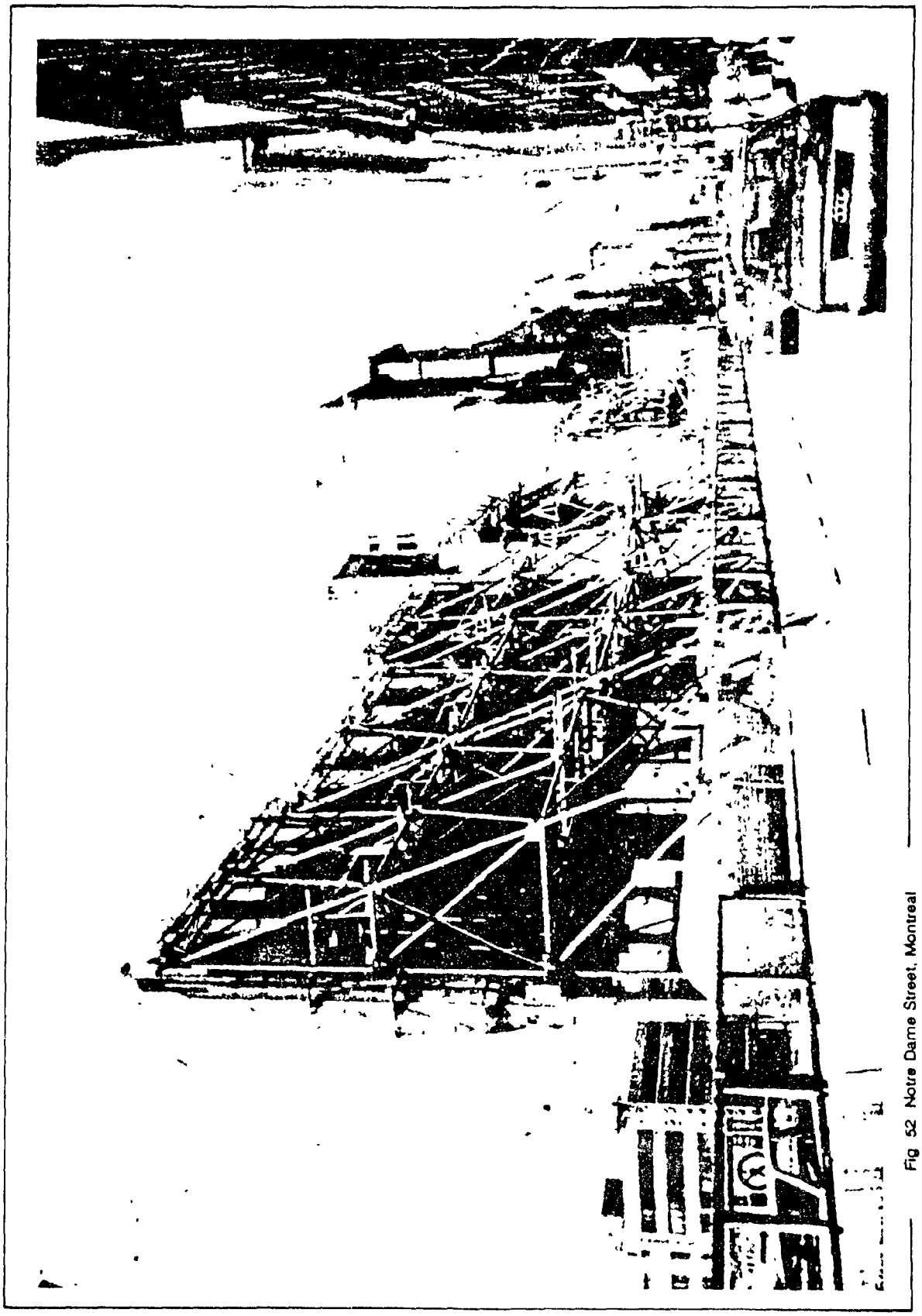


Fig 52 Notre Dame Street, Montreal

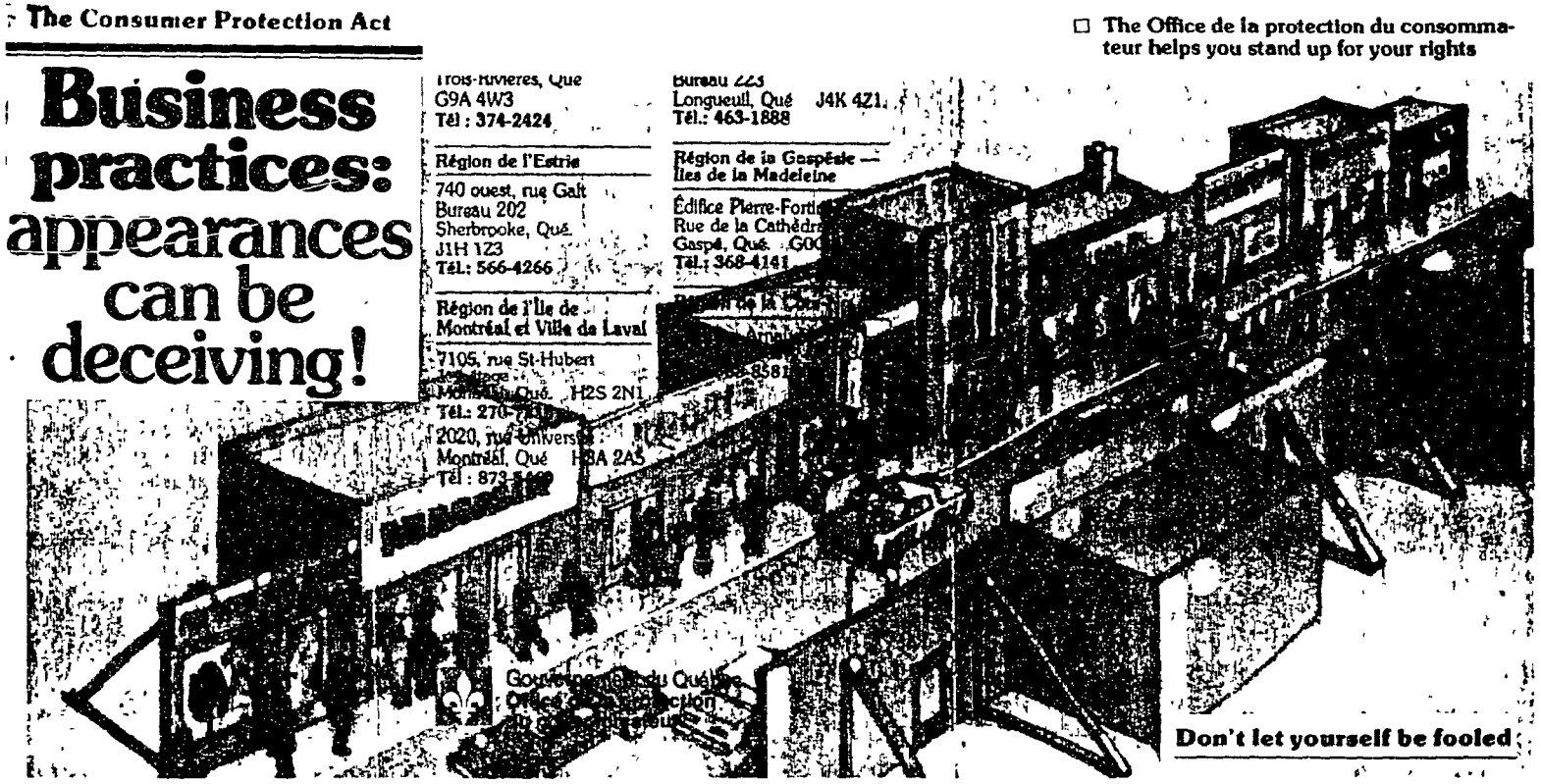


Fig. 53 Quebec Government Consumer Protection pamphlet

Proteanism is the immediate but unfortunately also the long-term response to a growing consumption-oriented society. Protean environments are spaces where social significance has already been devalued. They are part of the chaotic and mobile world where relations between objects tend to dissolve and meanings become transitory [44] Protean spaces are spaces with no deep meaning, and signify little but what they actually transmit: spaces with no depth As of today, then, the contemporary city is a protean world that discloses nothing but a 'masked-reality': it is as unpredictable as we are.

4.6 A Growing Tendency Towards Universality

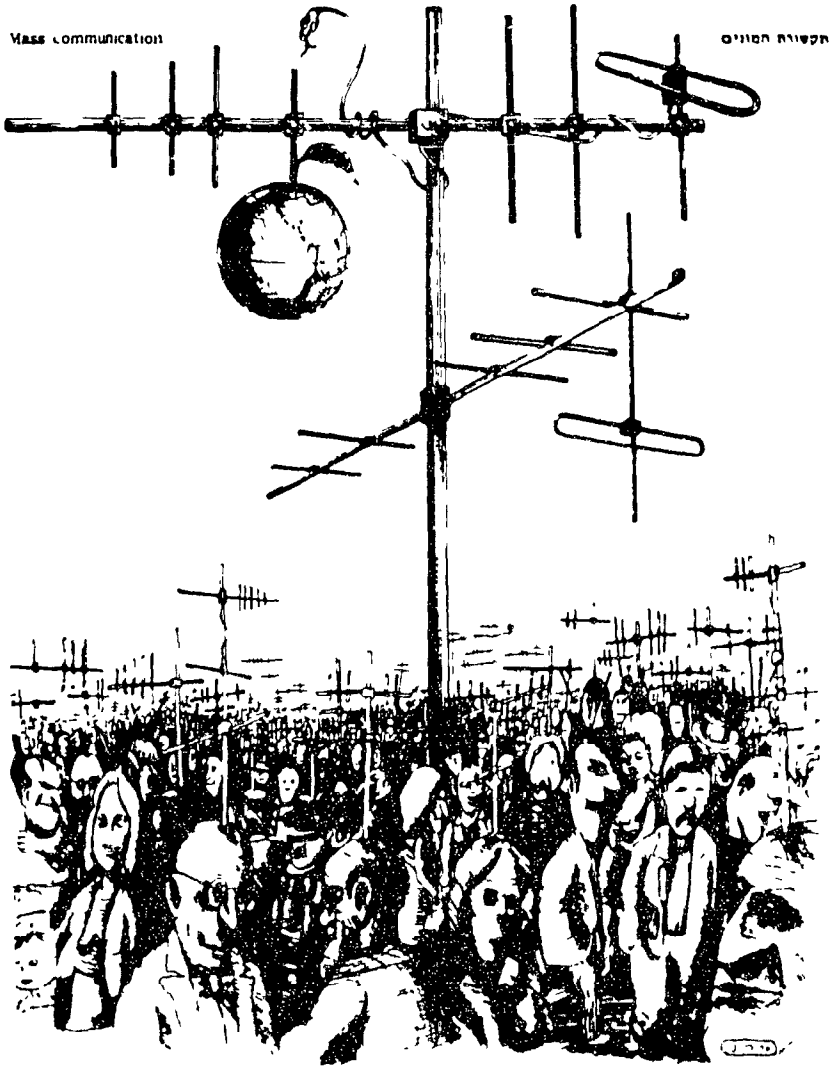


Fig. 54 Mass communication

Three main factors are associated with universality:

1. Advanced and more affordable technology.
2. Improved communication.
3. The diffusion of universal design philosophies.

Together, these three have dramatically changed the landscape of the contemporary world. Advances in technology have permitted the mass production of standarized and simplified elements. Due to improvements in communication systems one can stay in one place while receiving news from almost anywhere on the planet. And the search for universal slogans accentuates contemporary development towards mass oriented societies

> "Communication by transportation is only one form of communication, and the various media for the transmission of ideas - newspapers, journals, radio, television - have also an immense, if less explicit impact on places. They have reduced the need for face-to-face contact, freed communities from their geographical constraints, and hence reduced the significance of place-based communities."[45]

Advanced technology, improved communications and the diffusion of universal design philosophies, have had a strong impact on contemporary urban societies They increase sameness and uniformity. They rationalize design approaches and deny the concept of the street-space as the result of an interactive communication with people's interests In the universal world, each individual views himself "at the controls of a hypothetical machine, isolated in a position of perfect and remote sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his universe of origin".[46]

Universality favors the proliferation of placeless environments. It is the disjunction from the local context and a lack of attachment that affects the particularities of places. Universality thus generates atmospheres with a strong lack of sense of place

Frampton suggests that universal technology in the form of modern mechanical services, air conditioning and artificial light, for example, tends towards the elimination of exactly those features which would otherwise modulate the outer membrane of a given fabric in respect to a particular place and culture.[47]

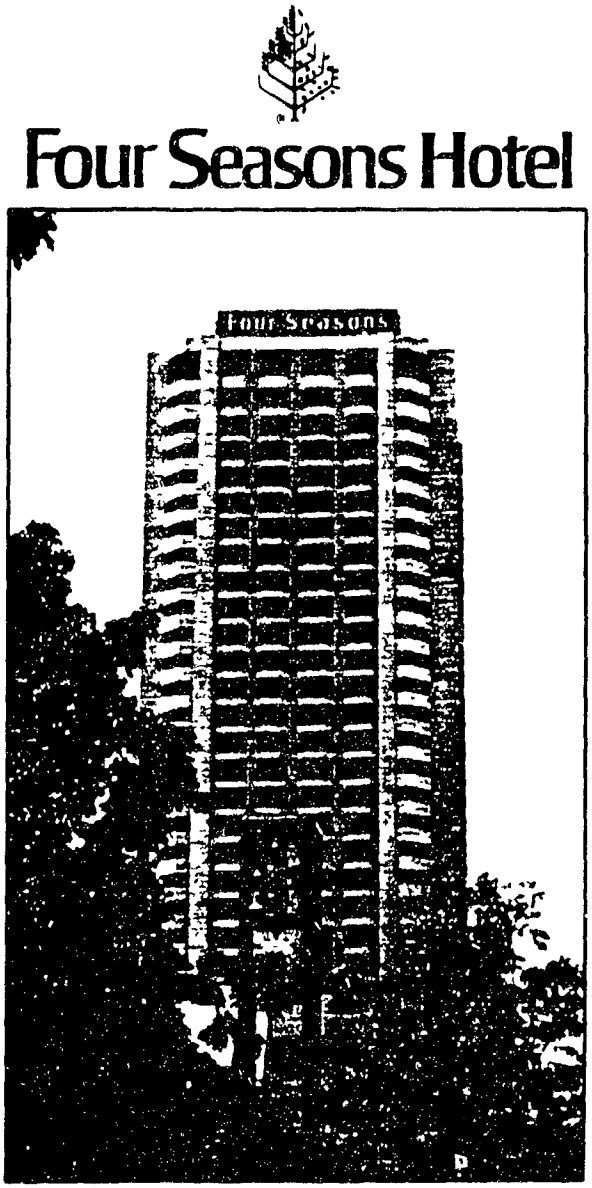


Fig 55 Where?

In his article "Towards a Critical Regionalism", Frampton proposes an understanding of things beyond consumerism - a way of looking at locality as the base for any criticism Critical Regionalism, though, does not mean any style, nor any kind of vernacular revival. Instead, it must be understood as a mediation of both the keeping of a certain degree of universal technology without losing the values of the local culture:

"[Critical Regionalism] is, in theory, a culture of building which, while accepting the potentially liberative role of modernization, nonetheless resists being totally absorbed by the global imperatives of production and consumption... It affords, above all, a hybrid situation in which rationalised production, even partially industrialised production, may be combined with time-honoured craft practices, provided that the scale of the investment remains sufficiently modest to permit idiosyncratic forms of disjunction and that the local culture retains a capacity to evaluate results in terms which are not exclusively dominated by economic criteria."[48]

Critical Regionalism calls for local cultural values and rituals of the place to be maintained against the forces of external values. It emphasizes what tradition and time have decanted as belonging to a very particular region. The growing tendency towards universality, on the other hand, seeks to replace traditional patterns by impersonal values In the universal landscape, the respect for locality is no longer relevant. The city-space becomes too objective and too simplistic for the varied nature and locality of particular human settlements.

4.7 An Increased Dependence on the Automobile

"I will build a motor car for the great multitude...so low in price that no man...will be unable to own one-and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces."

Henry Ford[49]

The modern child plays with it before any other toy, the adolescent longs to drive one, and the modern man is constantly barraged with advertisements urging him to buy one. The car, part dream, part animated object, is part of ourselves For many it occupies a place in their minds and lives well before any other thing, be it material or spiritual

The car is an important part of today's world The day-to-day activity of the city is determined by the necessity for fast and efficient ways of mobility. We depend on wheels to move from one place to another, and the motorized vehicle offers, along with speed and mobility, the possibility of minimal physical exertion while reaching a given destination. As far as modern man is concerned, this offers a great deal of comfort difficult to refuse

In contemporary urban life an increasing amount of space has been allocated to both the storage and movement of cars. More and more, the car is taken into account when making decisions in

modern life. However, as essential as automobiles are today for our transportation, they have negative impacts on the totality of the urban environment. The increasing number of automobiles has clogged the space available for circulation Automobiles occupy a volume traditional streets were not designed for In consequence, streets have become too narrow for the increasing demands placed on them. They have become congested urban spaces in need of redesign In today's cities the predominant types of spaces relate to vehicular performance such as highways, thoroughfares, and parking lots Buildings stand separately "encompassed by vast open areas without social purpose".[50]

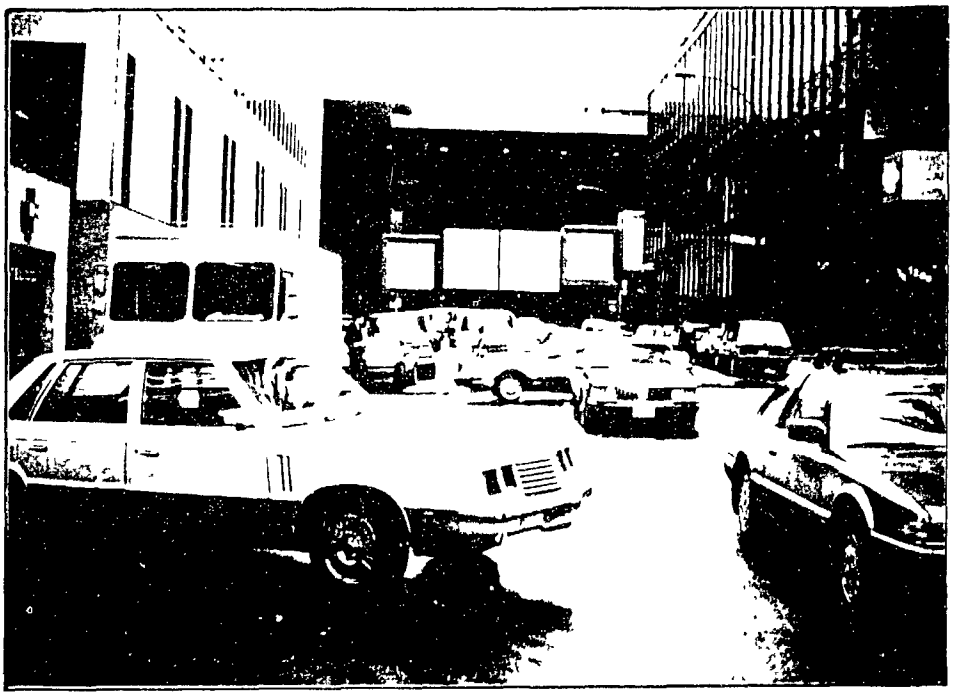


Fig. 56 Cathcart Street, Montreal

Today's cities change in an attempt to respond more efficiently to increasing transportation demands. Large investments in circulation channels [i.e., highways and expressways] have become of primary importance in cities' plans. However, when thought of only in terms of being the fastest linkage between two points, streets cannot be considered as social instruments that enhance people's interaction. That is, streets as channels for vehicles bisect the possibility of any community life.

In growing urban landscapes the use of cars has become an increasing necessity. This increase in the use of cars, however, is related to changes in urban lifestyles. Thomas Schumacher comments on the reduction of street use brought about by the use of the car:

> "Twenty years ago a housewife would walk to the grocery store. Now she drives to the supermarket, thus confining all the interactions to the market itself and none to the trip."[51]

The vehicle isolates man from exterior space. It reduces the number and frequency of street contacts. The vehicle, in addition, creates a 'moving capsule' in which man considers himself the center of the universe. An automobile increases the moving speed of an individual, which appeals to the human's emotion and passion for speed. A car enhances the dimension of man and changes his perception of space. It allows him the conceit that he is in a position to view the world in a broader way.

The perspective of space in the car, however, differs from that when man is walking or circulating at a slower speed. From the vehicle details are much less well perceived. Particularities of the place, walking, talking, shopping and interacting with other people, are no longer part of the experience inside an automobile. The physical space assumes then, in theory, the role of a two-fold space. In the first place it must be designed for those who move in automobile, and in the second place, for those who walk.

Too much dependance on automobiles induces the need for more space. It reduces the importance of cities as cultural and social spaces evolved over time. And "the more space that is provided cars in cities, the greater becomes the need for use of cars, and hence for still more space for them".[52] Too much dependance on automobiles increases disrespect for other functions It produces the "erosion of cities by automobiles".[53]

Fig. 57 Erosion of cities by automobiles

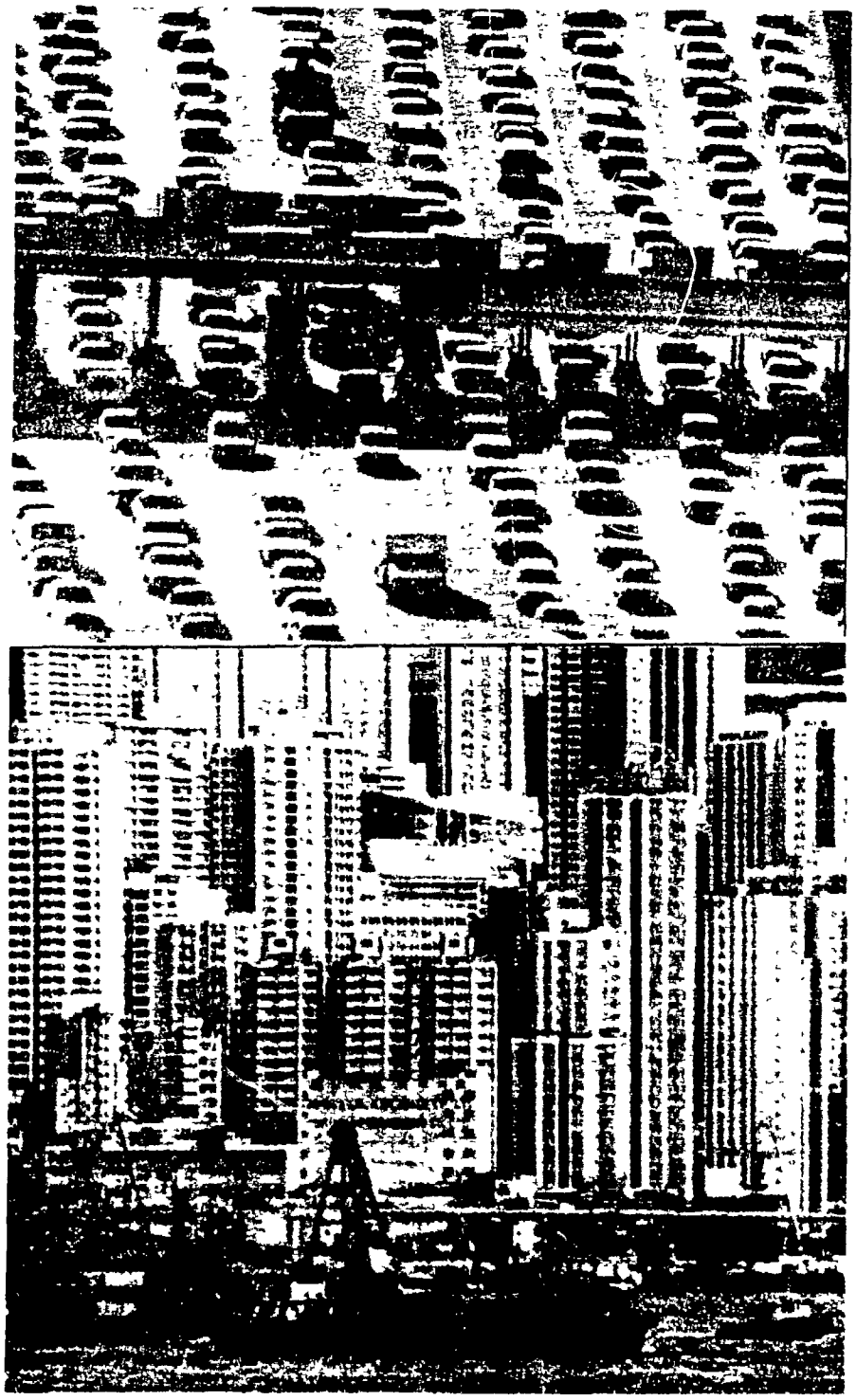


Fig. 58 More erosion of cities by automobiles

Cars are essential for the development of cities. They are part of our daily comings and goings. However, the mistaken belief that urban problems are only traffic related denies the complexity of cities. In Jacobs' words:

> " The simple needs of automobiles are more easily understood and satisfied than the complex needs of cities, and a growing number of planners and designers have come to believe that if they can only solve the problems of traffic, they will thereby have solved the major problem of cities."[54]

A deeper understanding of cities is needed, therefore, than the one held by current functional legislation.

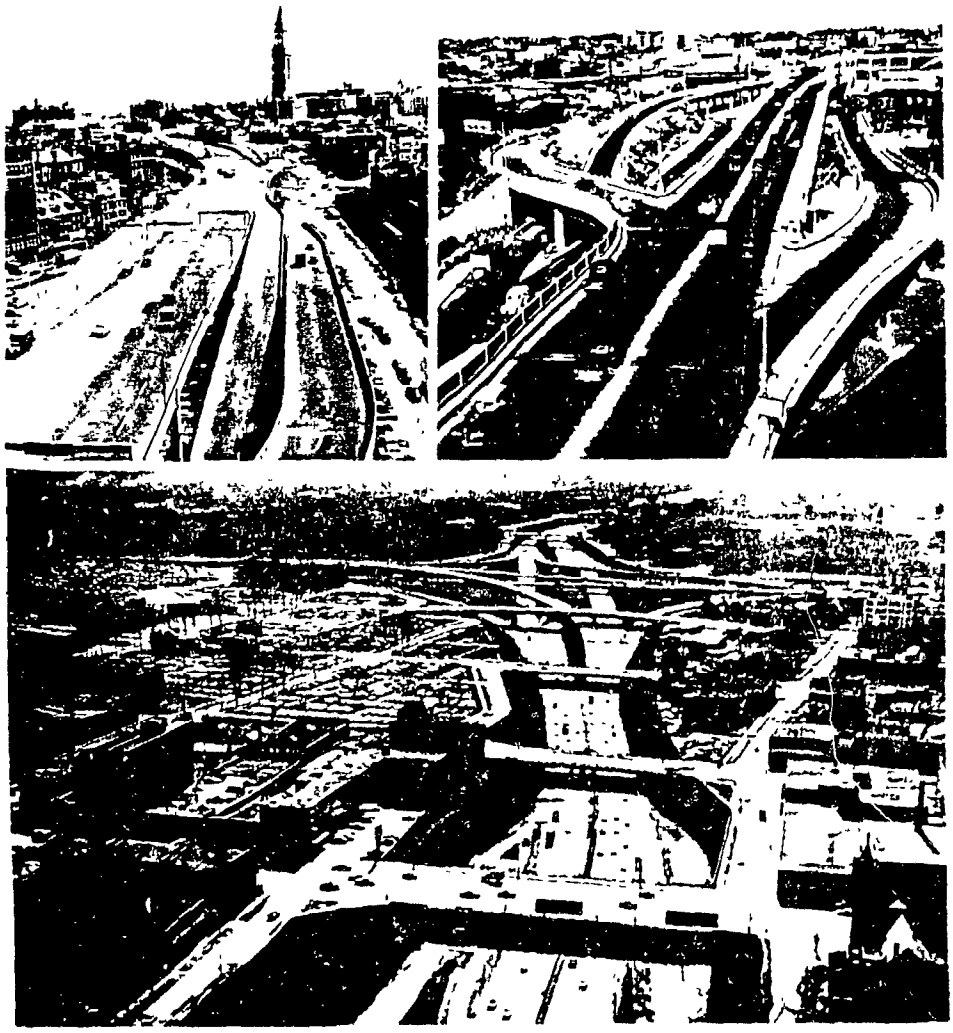


Fig 59 Is this what we have to look forward to?

ENDNOTES CHAPTER II

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25. Hans Aregger and Otto Glaus, Highrise Building and Urban Design (London Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1967), 20

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27. Jane Jacobs and Kate Sutherland, "Streets that Work," Canadian Heritage (May-June 1987) 32

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29 'Ghettos', refer to areas within the city which share little with the outside, that is, they keep, in some way or another, all that happens of their community life within their limits

30 An American Dictionary of the English Language, 1865 ed , s v "Individualism"

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34. First Quebec Corporation pamphlet, Industrial Life Tower.

35. Sinclair and Dewar, "Urban Space, Urban Psychology, Urban Design," 14.

36. Lynch, What Time is this Place?, 69.

37. Disneyfication connotes the simulation of real environment which are removed from their original contexts. Many key features in these environments (such as people, climate, historical references) are isolated and/or controlled

38. An American Dictionary of the English Language, 1865 ed., s.v."Protean".

39. Ibid., s v. "Proteus".

40. Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 183.

41. Lynch, What Time is this Place?, 40

42 Relph, Place and Placelessness, 134

43. Norberg-Schulz, Existence, Space & Architecture, 35-36.

44. Charles Jencks and George Baird, Meaning in Architecture (London, Barrie & Rockcliff: The Cresset Press, 1969), 228

45. Melvin M. Webber, "The Urban Place and the Nonplace Urban Realm," in Explorations into Urban Structure (Philadelphia University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964); quoted in Relph, Place and Placelessness, 92

46 Jean Baudrillard, "The Ecstacy of Communication," in The Anti-Aesthetic, ed Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Washington Bay Press, 1983), 128.

47. Kenneth Frampton, "Place, Form, Cultural Identity," Domus, no 673 (June 1986): 22.

48. Ibid., 17.

49. Henry Ford, quoted in Peter Blake, God's Own Junkyard (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1964), 57.

50. Trancik, Finding Lost Space, 5.

51. Thomas Schumacher, "Buildings and Streets: Notes on Configuration and Use," in On Streets (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1978), 133

52. American architect Victor Gruen, quoted in Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 351.

53. Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 349

54. Ibid., 7.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS

A street is more than a cobblestone or asphalt or dirt surface It is a record of our past, an expression of our dreams, an arena for the resolution of conflicts· it is where we live our lives The street fulfills our need for social interaction for streets are the full extensions of our public and inner social lives However, if we continue to regard streets as they are seen today, the whole of our cities will be overpowered by the phenomenon of the 'Mean-Street'.

The experience which inspired this thesis, that of encountering a 'mean-street' in downtown Montreal (see Introduction), was not an entirely negative one As I walked away from the street I turned onto another more lively one The street was lit by the moon and the atmosphere was conducive to dreaming and imagining Couples walked along hand-in-hand, an old man chatted with passersby, policemen in a freshly washed cruiser eyed a group of young women, while I imagined that children were bedding down for the night This street was alive and called continuously for participation in its life It was late and growing dark but I felt no solitude or fear

The city is one whole, an integrated network It is the marriage of lively and dead spaces, where the good and the bad interact To truly understand the city we must accept the integration of every inch of space, public and private. The paths we take as we make our way through the city do not indicate lines or channels but they represent a sequence of experiences, both positive and negative.

The 'mean-street', thus, is not an isolated phenomenon because these streets are part of our experience. While much negative has been said of the 'mean-street', in the final analysis it has to be understood as part of the city In downtown areas where life is supposed to happen, the 'mean-street' undermines this life and is potentially destructive to the rest of the city We cannot seek comfort merely in the beauty of its individual buildings

The first step in the resolution of this growing phenomenon is to create an awareness of the problem of this ensemble of endless spaces which are increasingly forming part of our day-to-day living There are no ready-made or pocket-book solutions to this problem Analysis of a given street cannot be quantitative, nor can it be dictated by equations nor universal theories Nowadays, we, architects and citizens, tend to view the street as a merely physical space whose problems can be solved by following a series of physical patterns or simplified guidelines However, establishing a systematic theory offers no real legitimacy for the present condition Contexts, even when similar, need different and particular approaches

I have identified five qualities that are essential in the development of the street Identity, Sense of Place, Unity, Sense of Life and Humaneness We must first see that these qualities are present in the street; for the greater the lack, the more negative the space These qualities cannot be expressed quantitatively but must be viewed qualitatively In this spirit, we must see that the street is an extension of our inner social lives and we ask the following questions What is our identity? Where is our location in space and in time? Are we one whole as a community? What to us is life and what is inside us (feeling, emotion, dreams)? The answers to all these questions are answers about our inner social lives, for who and what we are as a society, and as individuals, is reflected in the street

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