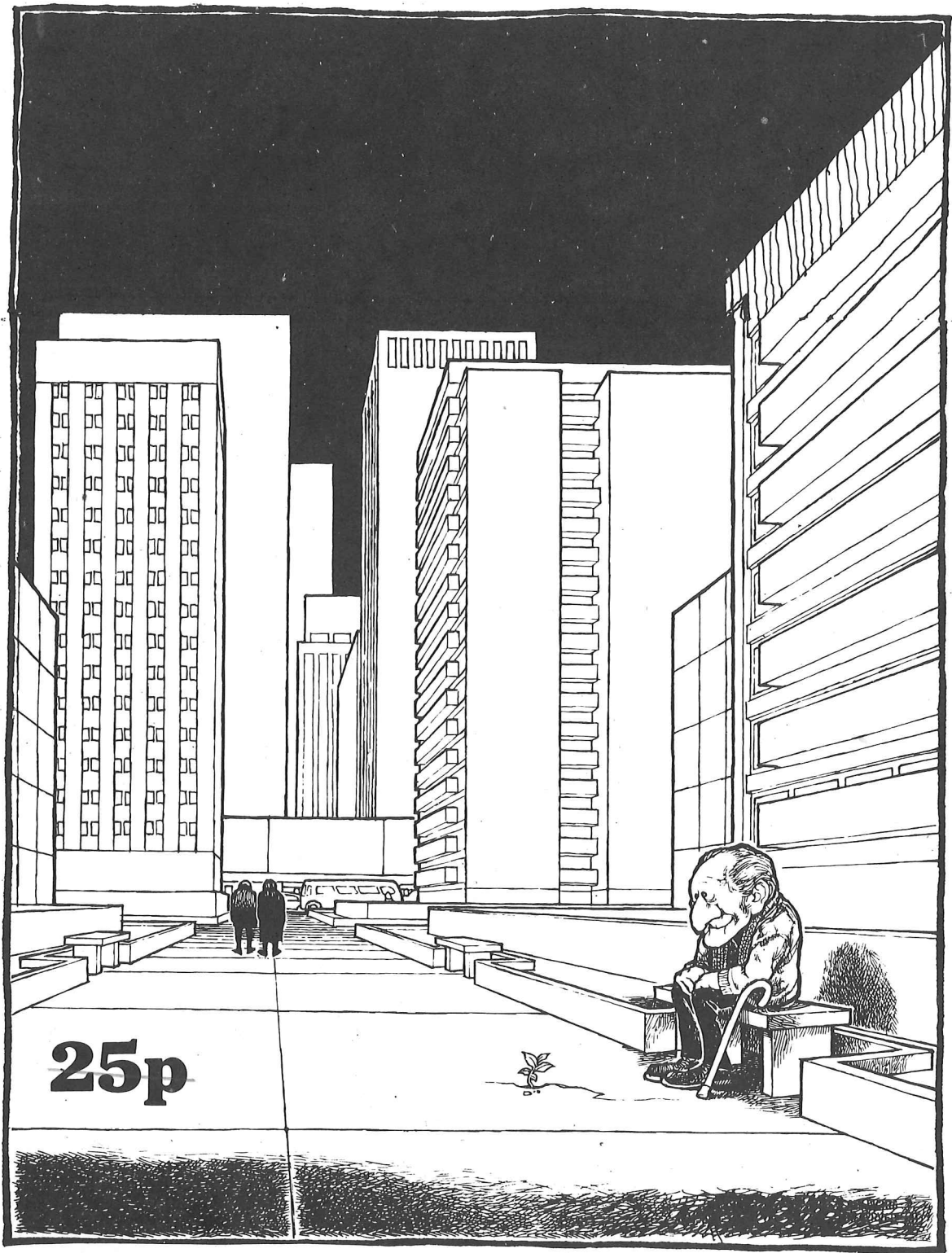


# URBAN DEVASTATION

A SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET by James Finlayson.



## THE PLANNING OF INCARCERATION

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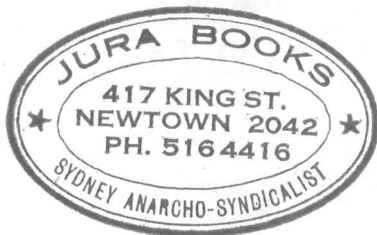
BY JAMES FINLAYSON.

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A SOLIDARITY PAMPHLET.



INTRODUCTION.

This pamphlet sets out to do the following:-

1. Describe and analyse the breakdown of the fabric of present day cities in the light of the development of capitalism from the 19th century till now. It looks at the economic influences, the crisis of authority, breakdown of social order and the conflict of class forces as they affect the structure of the urban community.

2. Consider political activity which can divert the city from its road to barbarism. Consider what political action is taking place now, and speculate what may have to be done in the future.

It does not deal with housing in detail. It looks more at housing estates than inside houses. The reason is partly that the housing question is so vast it could fill a separate pamphlet, but mainly that the case can be made without dealing with this particular aspect.

Neither does it touch

much on ecological issues. Not out of disinterest: the questions raised are crucial to survival. But the subject has been dealt with far better by others.

The pamphlet seeks to argue:

(a) that only an egalitarian socialist society can resolve the present problems of city life, and that this will have to be within the urban context, facing up to demographic factors of large populations, requiring ecologically safe technology to service a chosen life-style. There can be no return to the countryside.

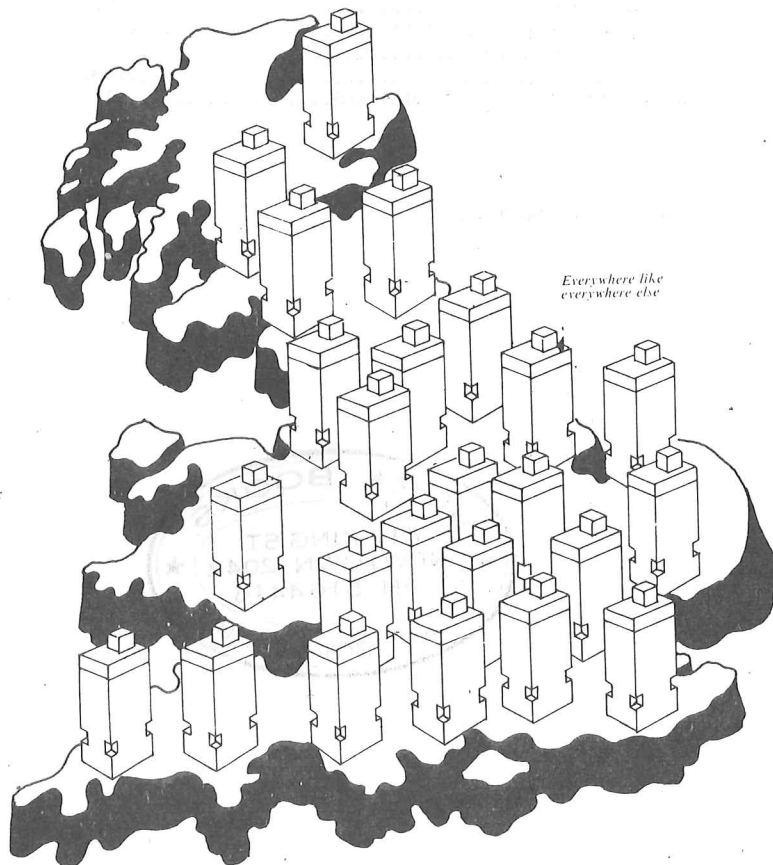
(b) that the hierarchical concepts of building design and town-planning, which have affected urban construction throughout history, and which are based on priorities of function and usage, are still the basis for successful design. Visual display of functional hierarchy will be observable in a non-hierarchical, libertarian society.

(c) that the Architects, Planners and Engineers (APEs), although still the agents, as in the past, of the ruling class, have undergone another status change and

extended the role they play. The APE was a slave in early societies, a servant cum master craftsman in the Middle Ages, a wealthy member of a professional upper class in the 19th century. Today they are specialists and technocrats with expertise and knowledge which they can use to their own political advantage, often bypassing client, official and bureaucrat (d) that the breakdown of visual order in urban areas, which is a reflection of a breakdown of political and social order at all levels, is an integral part of bureaucratic capitalism's crisis of authority.

The diagram on the last page cryptically explains this crisis in the city. Beginning with the city as a unit for production and consumption, it traces the activities of the ruling class to make it "efficient" for this job. The people meanwhile had other desires: to make it a place to "live" in as they wanted - unmanipulated by the needs of capitalism in the form of social democracy. This conflict and its attendant results created the mess we now see.

**REGIONAL ROUND-UP**



# Hierarchy, Function & Space

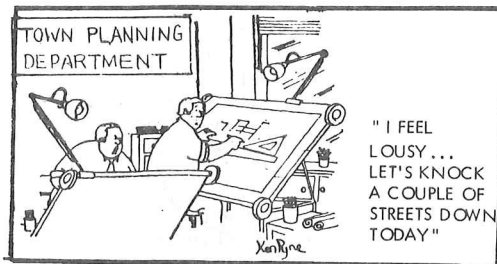
"Hierarchical social relations produced hierarchical space; egalitarian relations egalitarian spaces." (Murray Bookchin, 'The City in History', Harper Colophone Books).

"...only a truly chaotic urban life can challenge the slavery patterns..." (Richard Sennet, 'The Uses of Disorder', Pelican).

The quotations capture some of the ideas in these books and it is the intention to try to comment on and answer these as they are crucial to the ideas posed.

These books deal with two aspects of urban life which are not central to this pamphlet. Bookchin's book gives a precise account of the socio-cultural-political aspects of the history of the city, tracing the land-use forms and economic forces responsible for its shaping. Sennet deals with the psychological/political conditioning of people, paralleled in the method of pre-planning the urban structure. Positing the thesis that people, uncertain of the time ahead, take steps to ensure that nothing disruptive will occur, one of the results is a rigid planning of cities which will not give rise to "disorder", or allow human beings to exist in the chaos and freedom which will develop the human potential.

These books do not deal in depth with the design problems, the technological solutions, the architectonics, but they are none the worse for that. Literature dealing with this aspect has been conspicuously absent in left-wing circles. On the other hand, the literature of the Architects, Planners and Engineers is unlimited in its advocacy of design/technical solutions. All but a handful of the advocates however are blissfully unaware of a need for parallel political solutions.



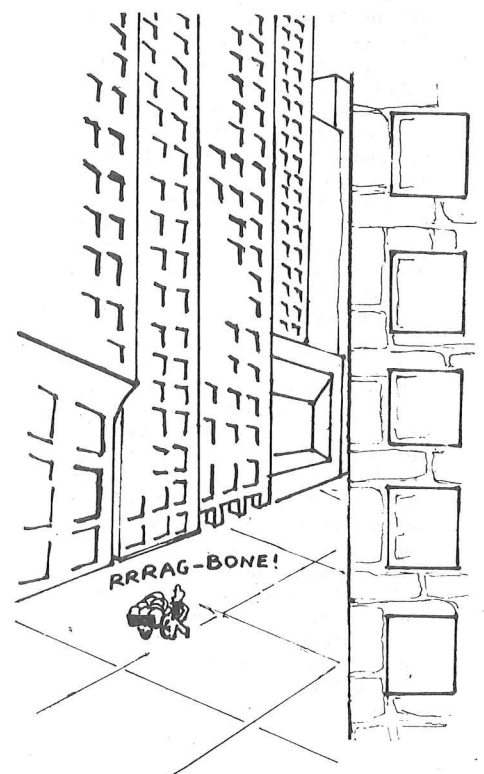
In attempting to regulate this imbalance, this pamphlet may appear "too technical". As it is necessary to explain the reasons behind the environmental hotch-potch, these descriptions have remained in. The physical factors are stressed to describe the incarcerated city.

Architecture is the design on a human scale of inter-related spaces which serve the needs and activities of those who use them. A "non" space is a space which has no function allocated to it by the designer, and which cannot be given a use by the building users. Space here is defined as the space enclosed by the building or buildings internally and externally.

Bookchin's assertion (at the head of this chapter) requires some examination. Relationships between spaces whose functions are derived from a socially hierarchical society are themselves hierarchical. The Victorian city is an example. But a series of spaces, functioning on the basis of egalitarian priorities, would also have hierarchical relationships. For example the relationship between regional, district, area and local assembly places (where democratic decision-making could take place), or the relationship between houses or amenity buildings and work-places; or the relationships between houses themselves derived from type, numbers, use and position. In rural societies we see, more clearly than in the urban area, hierarchical space relationships between man's created fabric and natural elements: the river, the sheltered valley, the pastures, the crop fields. It is sometimes asserted that although the chief's hut in a tribal village occupies a central position, the circle of huts equally spaced around it are in an egalitarian relationship to each other (albeit one of subservient equality). But what is missed by cursory visual examination, is that some huts are nearer to the river and its ford, others closer to the fields, others to clay beds, others to the source of timber.

In conclusion there is no such thing as a non-hierarchy of spaces, since there is no such thing as a non-hierarchy of human functions. There are always priorities. Therefore there can be no egalitarian space. Priorities in planning, when transcending bourgeois political values, can reflect the needs and aspirations of an egalitarian society.

Sennet's quotation with the use of the word "chaotic" allows comparison with the reference to "chaos" in this text. They are used in different contexts and could lead to confusion. Sennett rightly sees the need for an environment not so rigidly structured or so totally pre-planned as to castrate the activities of the population. A "chaotic" life-style is what he advocates. "Chaos" in the context of present day planning is used in this text to describe the visual breakdown of the environment, a breakdown which results in the loss of sense of location; all within a rigid pre-planned structure. The end result is the incarceration of people in localities, a feature Sennett attacks in his book.



# Historical Context

The intellectual attack on the nineteenth century city came from several sources: Marx and his followers, the Anarchist writers, and the liberal and radical do-gooders, philosophers and planners. To the traditional left, the city is the expression of the reality of market forces, of competition between different elements in capitalist society. It is the product of economic class relationships. As the arena where the class struggle was most intense, cities were fashioned in certain ways to meet the needs of the ruling class. The distribution of housing in relation to factories, the planting of barracks in working class areas and the creation of easy access for troops and cavalry are obvious examples. The cities also visually displayed the dominance of one class over the other. An ascendancy was achieved by one class. But differing social and cultural life-styles created a demarcation line between the contending classes. This affected the pattern of the city. This contrasts with rural areas, where the demarcation is hazy and where one culture dominates the other by the partial integration of the weaker into the stronger.

What the city of the slave-owner, the religious caste, the medieval merchant, the military tactician, the burgher, and the industrialist had in common, was an ability to function, and a visual order reflecting the ruling class's power. This was accepted by the subjugated class, who participated in its working for the greater part of their life (excepting periods of political crisis) without the sense of alienation which abounds today. Today, however, vulgarised and brutalised by their environment, people vandalise much of their surroundings, not only in times of political turmoil, but on a day-to-day basis.

From the traditional anarchist milieu, there was expressed a strong opposition to the centralisation of population and industry in large unhealthy agglomerations. Running through the ecological tenor of their arguments was an opposition, not only to the squalor of life in 19th century industrial cities but to the very idea of life in cities. The desire to return to some sort of rural or semi-rural existence - in modern terms "doing one's own thing" - which would lead to a

"free for all" setting down of house and small factories engaged in primitive to middle technology, interlaced with fields of vegetables, crops and farm animals.

This vision rejects the concept of urban living, objecting to the waste, despoilation and disfiguration of modern technological society. But, instead of laying the blame at the door of modern bureaucratic capitalism, urban existence per se is made the culprit. It therefore ignores the complications involved in the creation of an environment for millions of people living together, declaring it to be intrinsically wrong. It blinds itself to the complex interweave of activities, which make cities places where



many people want to live in reasonable proximity. In the final analysis, it is saying that a post-revolutionary order could not create an acceptable urban lifestyle, free from all the ills and alienation of present-day capitalist society.

But unless people can create this life for themselves, the prospect is either the encroaching total barbarism of present-day cities, or a population explosion on the farm (with overflowing cesspits), or massive nomadic chaos in the countryside (with tents and "clip-in" homes).

This philosophy achieved some reality as a result of the writings and work of several late 19th and early 20th century architects, planners and authors. For various reasons they have been described as the Decentrists.<sup>2</sup> These include the influential American writer, Lewis Mumford<sup>3</sup>; the garden city<sup>4</sup> planner, Ebenezer Howard; the biologist

and philosopher, Patrick Geddes; the regional planners in the U.S.A., Stein, Wright, and Bauer; the City Beautiful planner, Burnham in Chicago. Finally, there was the eminence grise of modern architecture, the conceiver of Radiant City, Le Corbusier. Their various utopias came to fruition in several of their own schemes. But it is their ideology which has been the most influential in creating the modern environment of today.

In all cases, nature (vegetation) was seen as an essential element in creating palatable urban living, from Howard's tree-lined suburbs to Le Corbusier's tower blocks and motorways in the park.

In all cases the approach was totally elitist and authoritarian. The living patterns and activities of the humans who were to live in the various Utopias, would be decided once and for all by the expertise (or lack of it) of the planner.

Despite their criticisms of cities many radicals still gravitate to them and it is in the urban context that most of them would try to solve the environmental problem. It is necessary therefore to look at how the form, function and living patterns of urban areas are changing, and at how they could change within the framework of libertarian ideas.

The first question is, why is the city (with its visual representation of its functional order, always apparent in the past) now falling apart? Is this to be viewed in the same context as all other manifestations of the breaking up of the bourgeois order such as the decline of the authoritarian family, the demise of religion, the revolt of youth and school kids, the free for all in clothes, art, and pop music, the questioning of work, the attack on male domination, the increase in extra-marital sex and the discarding of other sexual taboos?

1. For a comprehensive view, see "Fields, Factories and Workshops". P. Kropotkin.

2. See "Death and Life of Great American Cities". J. Jacobs.

3. Author among others of "The Culture of Cities" and "The City in History".

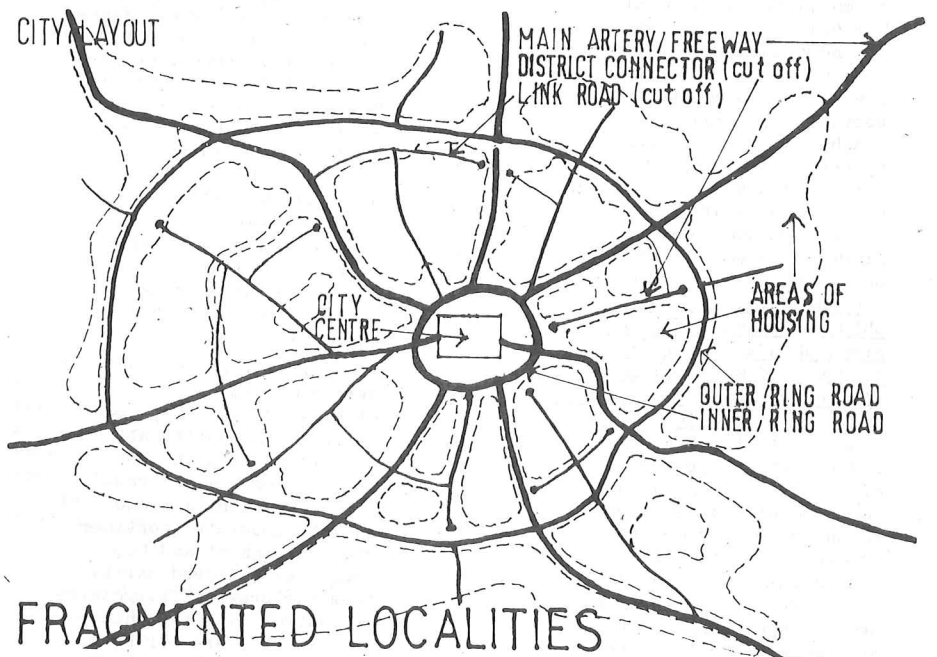
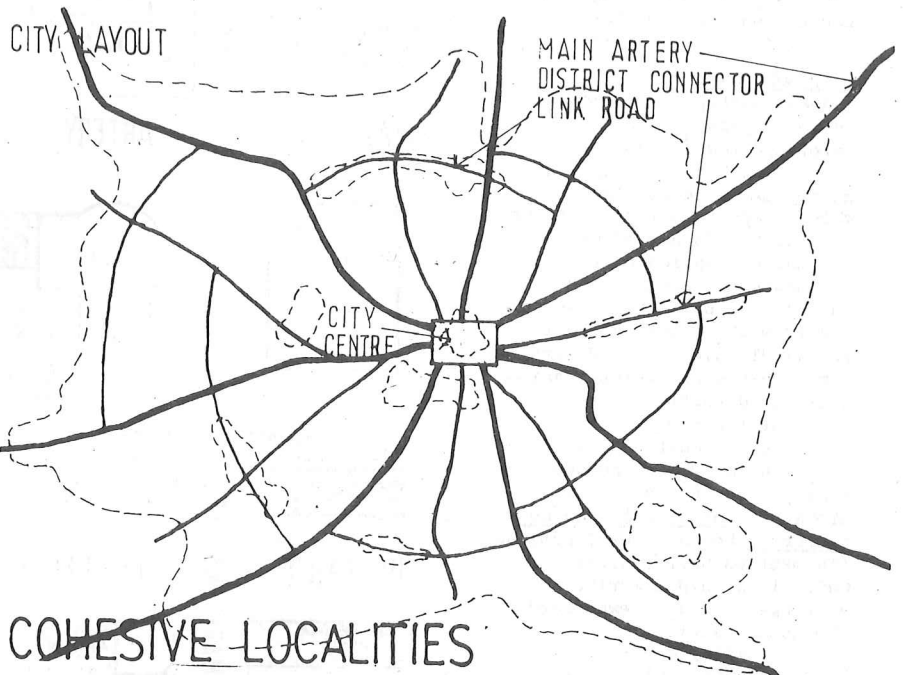
4. Author of "Garden Cities of Tomorrow".

THE VICTORIAN CITY.

The form of cities throughout history has been a hierarchical, skeletal structure, based on road and pedestrian circulation patterns, with the hierarchy further defined by the correct positioning of building types, the method of their layout, their design and their detailing. This is not to be confused with the social hierarchy, reflected in the residential location of the different classes of inhabitant. Although the one does not mirror or parallel the other, they do overlap. Many nodal points, used to define the physical hierarchy, reflect the dominant ideology of the time: churches, banks and statues of generals. What is meant by the above is best illustrated by examining the city we know, the Victorian one, especially as this is the one being pulled down about us.

Take a group of people unfamiliar with an old city to a pack street of houses. With little or no directions they will find their way around the city, simply by "reading" the hierarchy of the constructed environment. From the small street serving houses, to a slightly more important distributor street, to a secondary artery, to a main artery, and so on into the centre: all done by discerning ever-widening streets and pavements, types of building placed on corners (showing dominance of one street over the other), changes in type and scale of buildings, changes in height of street lights, the appearance of bus routes, corner shops giving way to larger stores, everyday shops among the houses, particular and specialised shops appearing as the centre is approached. The whole matrix has an observable logic.

This is the visual presence of bourgeois environmental order. This pyramidal hierarchical layout paralleled the centralised political structure. It was a city where the capitalists used government and local authority as their agents, where land use was in their hands, and where the working class was not yet organised.



# What is Happening

A description of what is happening to the reconstructed urban fabric is required before we can try to understand the cause, and what are the underlying forces at work.

## LOST HORIZONS.

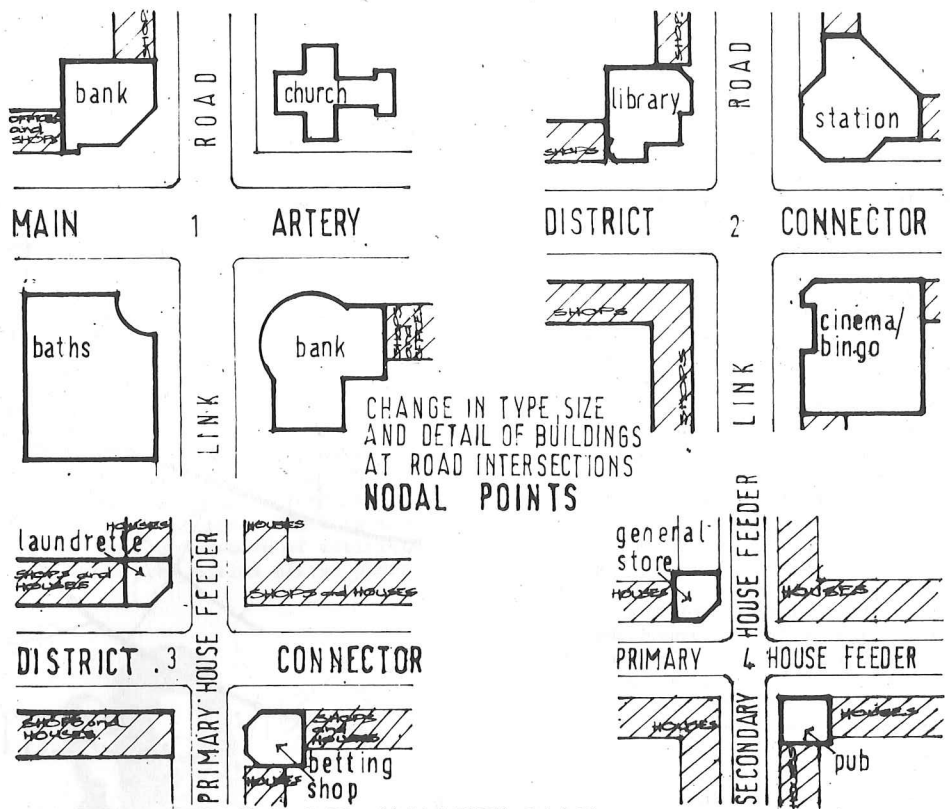
Most people, when circulating in the majority of recently developed towns and cities, or in the New Towns, observe an environmental confusion which leads to a loss of "sense of place". "Sense of place" is a human perception of the immediate environment and an identification with it, springing from the knowledge that the middle distance and further surroundings all relate logically and directly to it.

One of the identifiers of a "sense of location", a hierarchy of roads and pavements, often exist in new developments but do not read as a hierarchy because the functions (themselves hierarchical) which it should describe are no longer visually expressed in the urban fabric.

For example, a person stands in the vicinity of a ring road, near to a housing development, imprisoned by swards of grass, lines of wilting, wind-blown saplings, footpaths leading in all directions, gazing longingly for her/his objective - say someone's house - hoping to find a nodal point<sup>6</sup> in the townscape (a spire or a chimney) which would give her/him a bearing on the intended location. The situation becomes more depressing if the objective is spotted, but cannot be reached directly, without verbal directions, or in extreme cases a map. In this chaos, routes are perhaps signposted and so the "explorer" moves off via an underpass or pedestrian bridge.

Reinforcing the fact that this confusion exists in great abundance, is the evidence of more and more signposts, required with more and more new development.

As the logic of the road and street patterns of the old cities collapses, people now need signposted directions to the community centre, to the shops, to the library and to the pubs, provided of course such 'amenities' have been thought of. In the old towns and cities, the environment told people where they were, the buildings "spoke" to them and "gave them directions". A major contribution to the new devastation is of course made by the Architects/Planners/Engineers physically responsible for planning the urban landscape. It is



## HIERARCHY OF JUNCTIONS

the great irony that never before have the planners had such a plethora of aids and props to use: a myriad of statistics, plot ratios, density figures, ergonomic studies, sociological findings, traffic data, computer library references, comprehensive Building Regulations, Health and Fire Safety Acts - ad nauseam. Despite this specialised information, the result has been, in the main, utter failure. A perfect example of the workings of bureaucratic capitalism, in that experts have ended up knowing "less and less about more and more".<sup>7</sup>

Today's cities are a series of separated and dissipated enclaves, reflecting the political divisions among the contenders for power. Traditional capitalists and social democrats, together with Government and Local Authorities (freed partly from the previous structures of control by 19th century capitalists) are all bent, with their agents the APES, in the manipulation of the working class for their own ends. City after city has scheme upon scheme to incarcerate the population in factory, office and home.

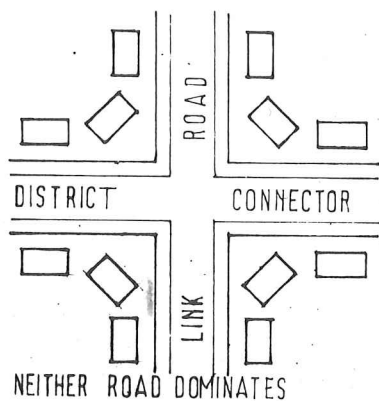
The chaos and confusion arises from the fact that

the effect of social democracy has dissipated the strength of the traditional capitalists and so several elements fashion the city where only one did in the past. Attempting to return to the overall control by one force, the bureaucracy (in the form of government, local authority and civil servant) attempts to assert itself. But in the political milieu of the late 20th century, they meet with little success. The Victorian capitalist incarcerated the working class with little or no opposition. Today competing elements try to do the job, and have to contend with a working class able to fight back.

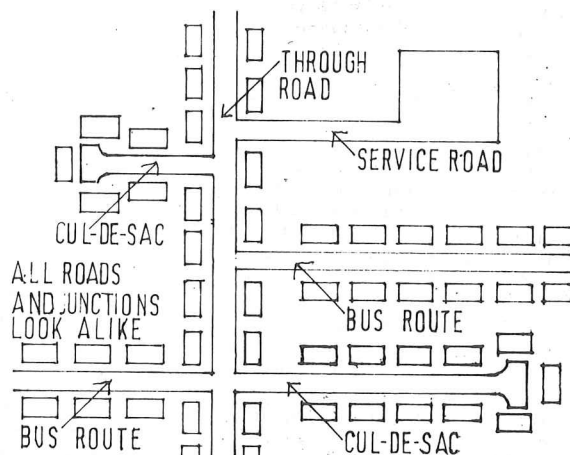
5. For a developed exposition of an aspect of this concept, see "Ma' A Japanese sense of place", Gunter Nitsche, Architectural Design, March 1966.

6. A particular feature, a building, statue or monument used to define a particular spot, to which people could relate, to find a bearing.

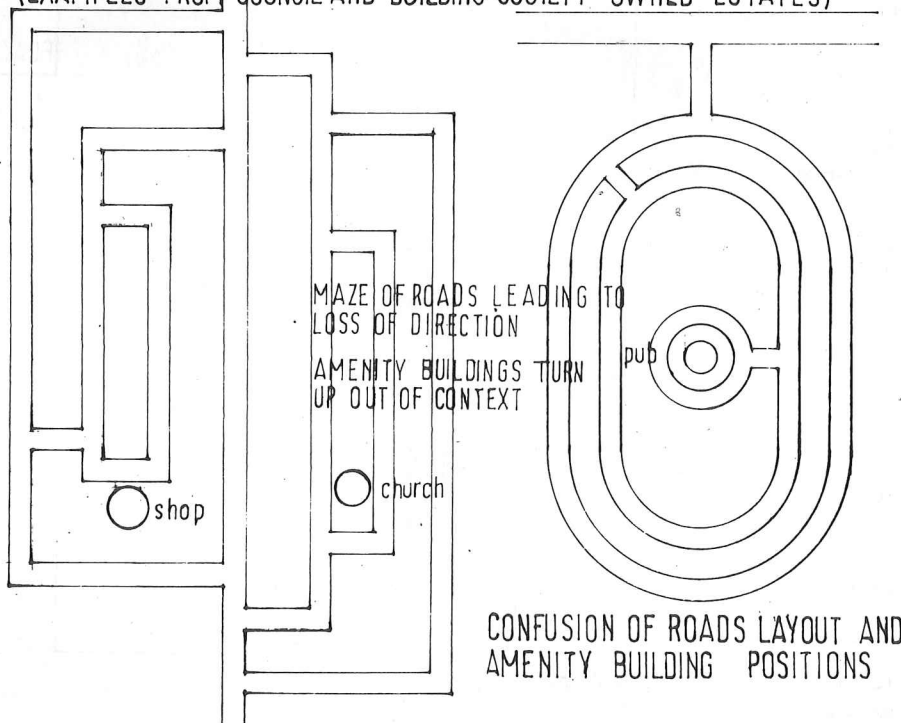
7. Compare this with today's scientists, who "know more and more about less and less". "Crisis of Modern Society", by Paul Cardan. A Solidarity Pamphlet.



NON-HIERARCHIAL ROAD JUNCTIONS



BREAKDOWN OF FUNCTIONAL HIERARCHY  
(EXAMPLES FROM COUNCIL AND BUILDING SOCIETY OWNED ESTATES)



Redevelopment of Urban Areas

This is a description of the recognisable zones of the city: the central business area, the area of middle and working class housing in its state of transition, and the commuter belt.

THE CITY CENTRE AND INNER RING ROAD.

The city and town which we see emerging from the debris has a centre of developers' office blocks, multi-storey car-parks, underground shopping malls, acres of tarmac, great lengths of windy pedestrian bridges and dark underground paths radiating from the centre by rigidly directed routes. The inner ring road has to be manoeuvred either by underpass or beneath concrete columns, or round the

safety fences. This is the effective barrier which separates the centre from the rest. Housing has been eliminated from many centres, as the land there is more valuable for commercial interests (office blocks and large multiple stores) for both developer and council. This completes the creation of a "no-man's-land", only frequented by day by the office workers and shoppers, and by night by the visitor to the occasional pub, theatre and cinema.

Beyond the inner ring road, we come to the swathes of open ground, grassed and treed. The space is there, not only because of considerations of lead poisoning and traffic noise, but as

an attempt to camouflage the stark reality of a physical element, which many feel cannot now be made to come to terms with the urban landscape. The scale of this road is too great in relation to the human scale of the location, it crashes through. Consider the number of houses demolished, the thousands of lives lived along the new routes. And when space is scarce multi-storey housing blocks are built 30-40 feet from the ring roads and inner city motorways. Glasgow and Gateshead have several examples of this occurring.

Beyond the grass we come to the area of feeder roads from the ring road, and to the original arteries in and out of the cities. This



is often an area of multi-storey housing, adjacent to factories, with meagre amenities. (If council housing is not adjacent to factories it is often directly connected by an important bus route and fast road.) The whole is put down as scattered individual units in a vast sea of land, lacking the homogeneity which kept cities together in the past, and experiencing a self-created micro-climate of wind and cold. It is the world of the car and bus - pedestrians must pick their way over the long distances, through a maze of roads, exposed to wind and rain on the overpass, and to physical attack on the underpass.

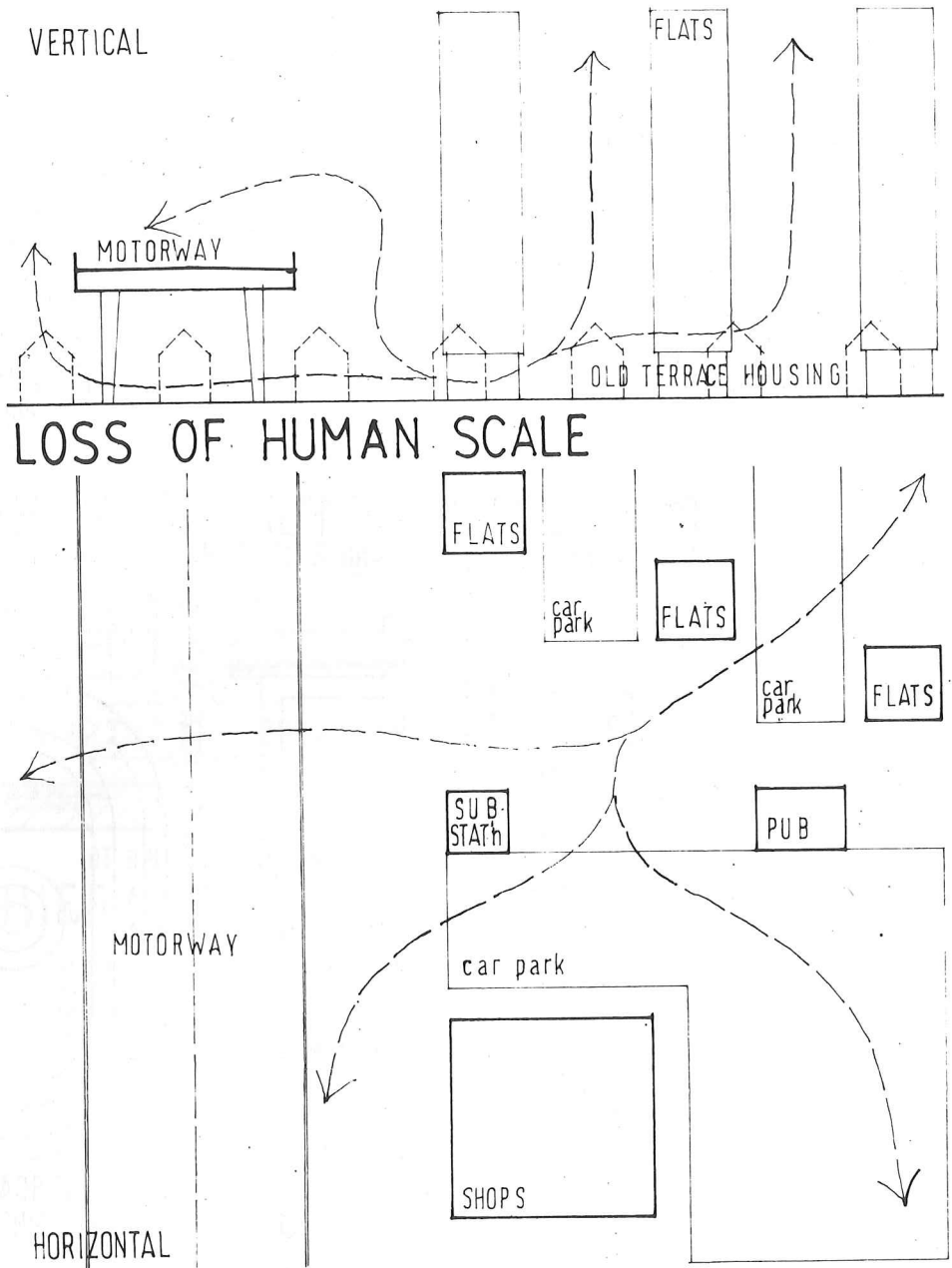
The once popular walk from the inner suburbs to the city centre becomes a frightening encounter or a put-off.

If you are unfortunate enough to live in a city which also has a major motorway disgorging into its centre, the problem multiplies because of the huge land use to accommodate it. The suburbs of Hunslet and Holbeck in Leeds have been devastated, due to the entry of two motorways to within half a mile of the city centre. It is worth looking at the redevelopment of Plymouth, after the wartime bombing. Old Plymouth, like most seaside towns, had narrow streets running parallel to the shore - to keep out sea winds. The new Plymouth, committed to monumentality and grand classical gestures, has great wide streets, some at right angles to the sea. The result is that the gales howl through the streets. Further compare this with Tel Aviv, where the high blocks on the sea front prevent necessary breezes entering the areas behind the blocks, which become overheated.

THE IN-BETWEEN ZONE OF MIDDLE AND WORKING CLASS HOUSING.

Between the inner and outer ring roads are those parts of the city strung out along the primary and secondary arteries. The fate of the communities abreast these roads is of extreme significance. These arteries bring commuters by bus and car to the city centre, to work in offices and shops. Many of these people live in suburbs beyond the city limits and the APES go to great lengths to facilitate their egress and exit.

Thus the artery is upgraded to a freeway, and barriers put along its



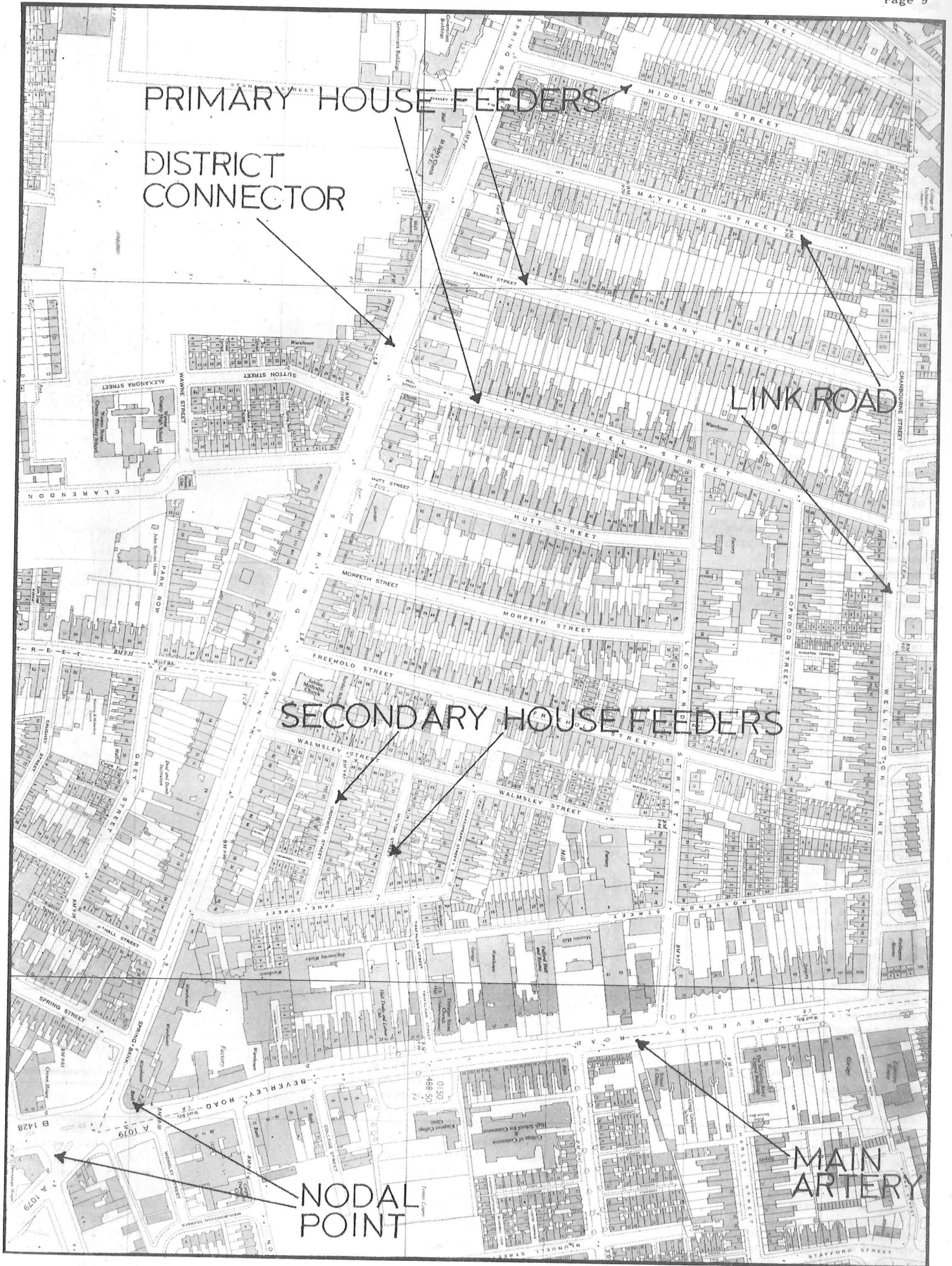
length, preventing pedestrians from crossing and limiting on and off access for local traffic. Sometimes under or over passes are built. The net effect is to sever the community, blight it and destroy it. In other cases, these roads are widened and the houses and shops astride them demolished. In one year they do what may take ten years of blight in other cases.

Also affecting this area is development by industrial interests, in the form of factories, and to a lesser extent by commercial interests with a few office blocks. As in the centre, the people are moved out of their homes to make way for these changes.

THE OUTER RING ROAD.

And so on to the outer ring road. This road usual-

ly started life in the thirties, pulling together existing sections of roads circulating the city edge, and evolving into a complete road over the years. The planting of factories on them came whenever they had been rationalised as effective means of access. This road has not had the traumatic effect on the community that inner ring roads have had, but the pattern of development is the same, except that there are more low-rise council estates near it, often of pre-war vintage. Nevertheless it is ironic to see high rise housing so far from the city centre. Since one of the most vociferous arguments in favour of the multi-storey block was the fact that the high population densities gained - as against the numbers in 2-



HIERARCHICAL PLAN OF VICTORIAN CITY.

storey/4-houses to a block/with gardens - meant that people would live nearer to the city centre and its amenities. This presumably was compensation for broken lifts, isolation, vandalism and high-rise blues, not to mention a block occasionally collapsing.

An additional element which appears on the city outskirts is the estate of privately owned houses - or of houses owned by building societies. These estates, apart from the lack of high-rise blocks, are more or less comparable with a Council Estate, with dreary unimaginative layout and lack of amenities. In council and private estate, road and footpath hierarchy patterns are unclear. Amenity buildings and services are difficult to locate if they exist.

On the outer ring road, the relationship of open spaces (vast) to buildings (small) causes loss of human scale.

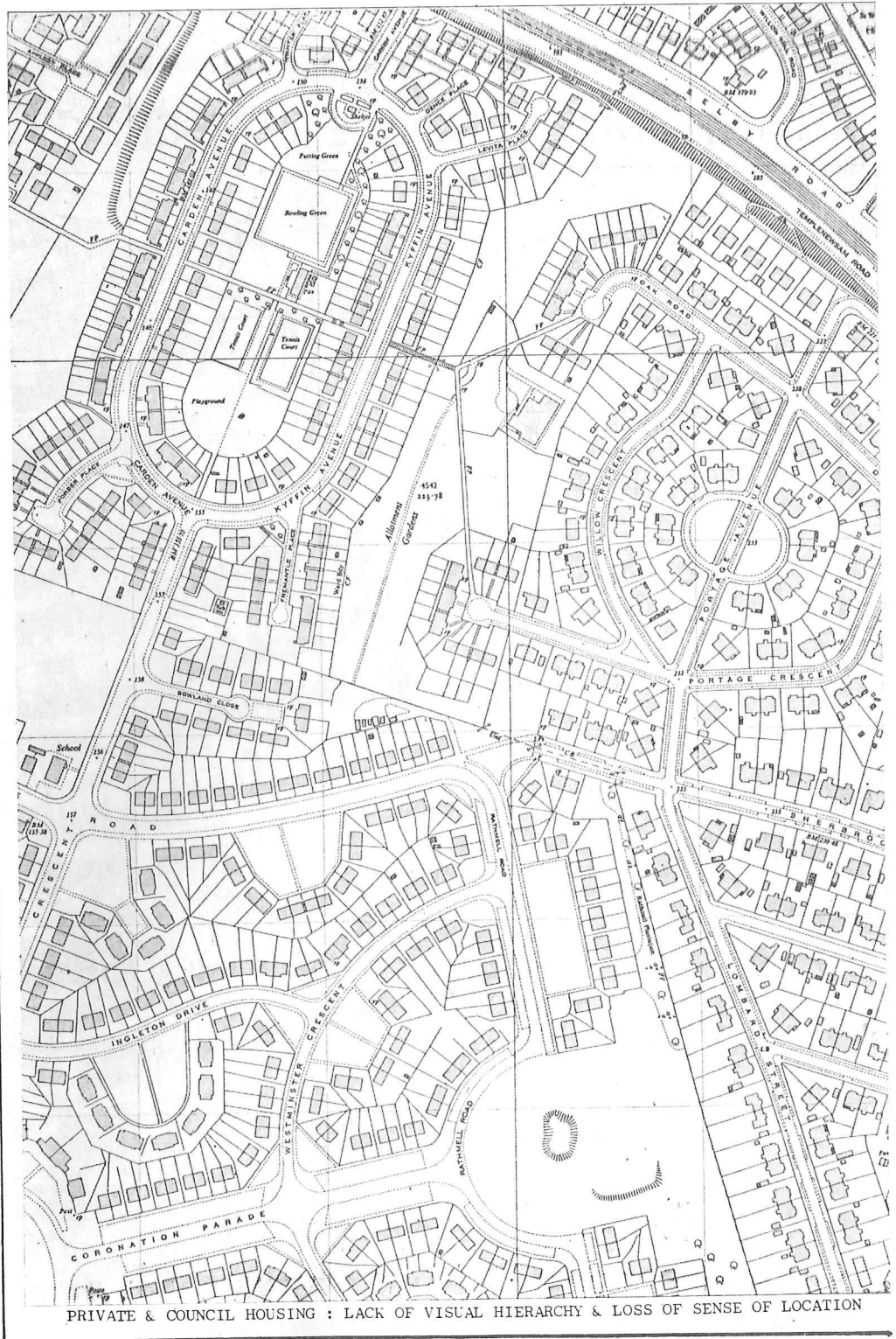
Finally, in the "in-between" zone are the older middle-class suburbs, which appear as islands in the general swamp, if they are secluded enough to escape the ravages of the new road systems.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FACADES.

To prevent visual confusion it is necessary to ensure the 'correct' relationship between the public and private (service) facades of collections of buildings. It is also necessary to reflect public, semi-public, semi-private and private, function and usage of buildings, in their design.

This is done simply by having a street or lane service the buildings. The lane is unobtrusively situated and lacks the importance of a street with a public frontage of buildings. This is achieved in the centre of bourgeois Edinburgh. Its panoramic thoroughfares are dependent on a system of well-hidden service streets which enable them to function and give them life.

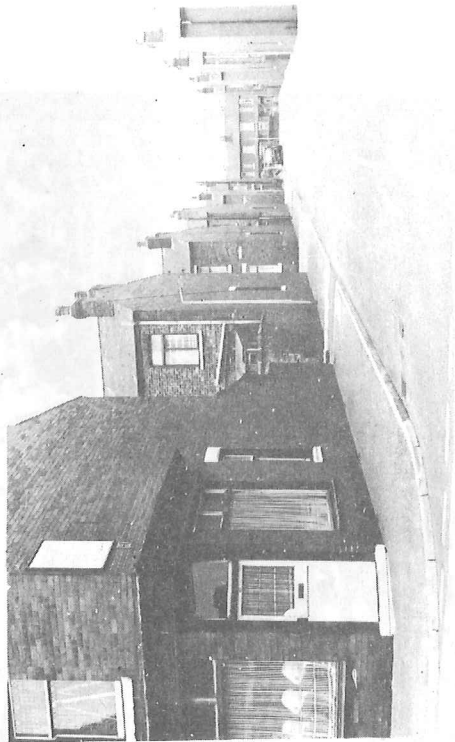
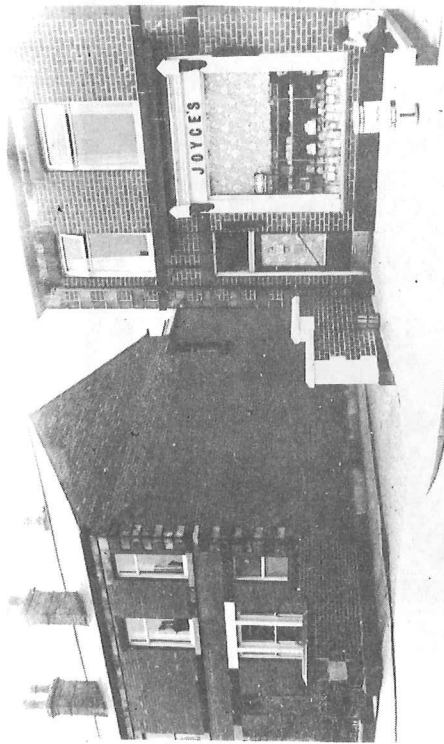
But in new developments one side of a street may have shop fronts, while on the other side are refuse bins, fire escapes and roller-shuttered delivery bays; in effect the rear of buildings. Around a corner perhaps there may be an open tarmac area, or the dark hole of a multi-storey car park at street level. Or, interspersed with shop units, there may be fuel tanks, service pipes and an electricity sub-station for an office block.



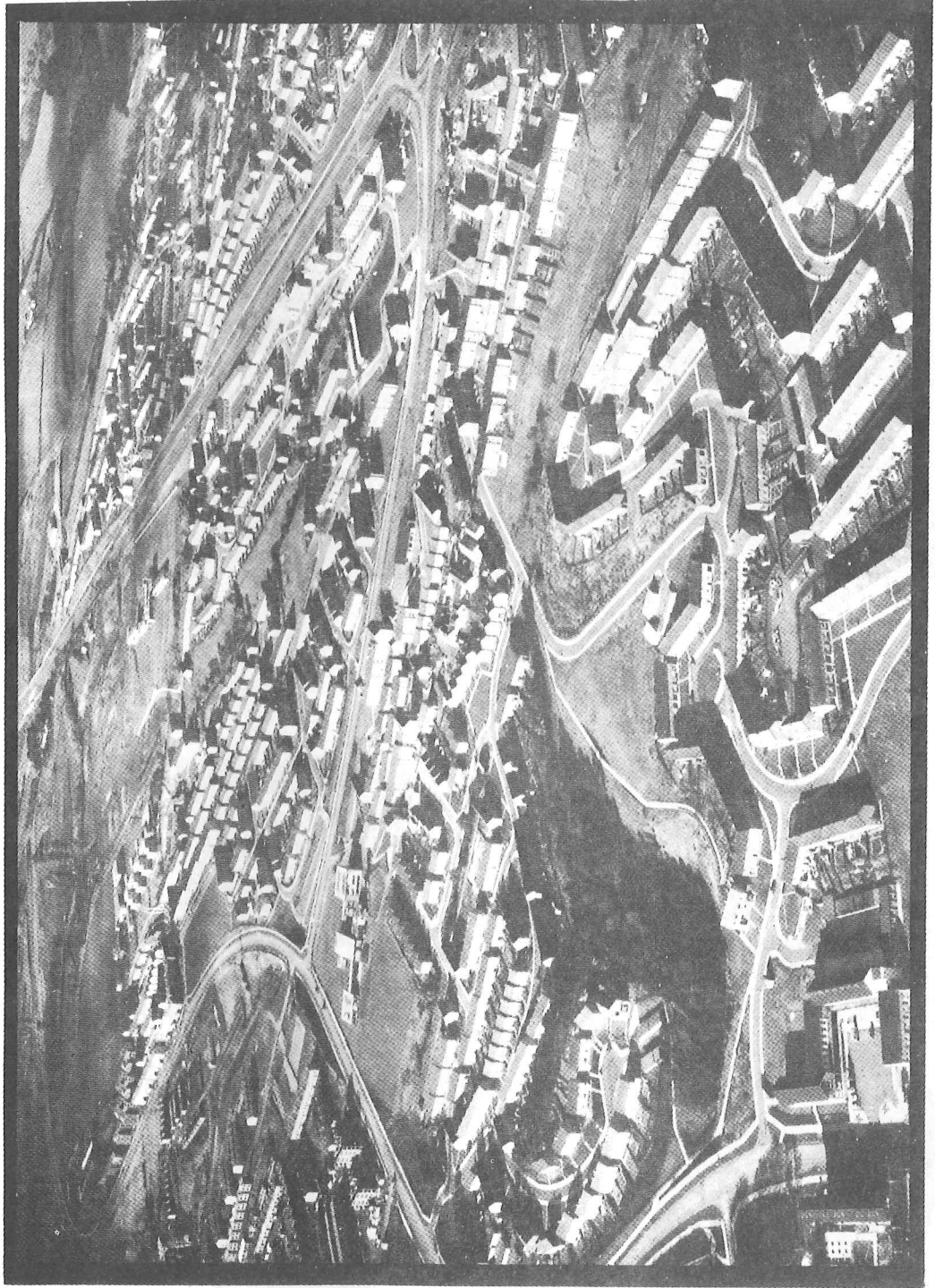
The juxtapositioning of building types<sup>8</sup> to suit their function and usage, and the corresponding design and detailing of their frontage is an important factor. For people to "know where they are", buildings must "tell" people what they are. In the old cities the building type was easily recognised because their function was subtly displayed in the design and detailing of their elevations. Now the bank looks like the TV rental shop, like the pub, or like the office of the building society.

The bookmaker's shop looks like the restaurant.

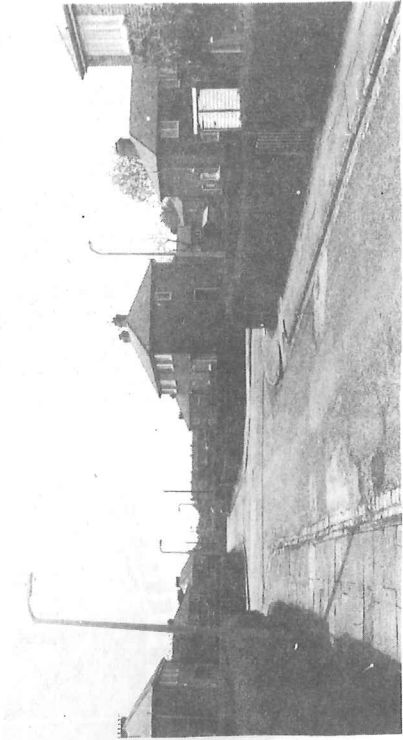
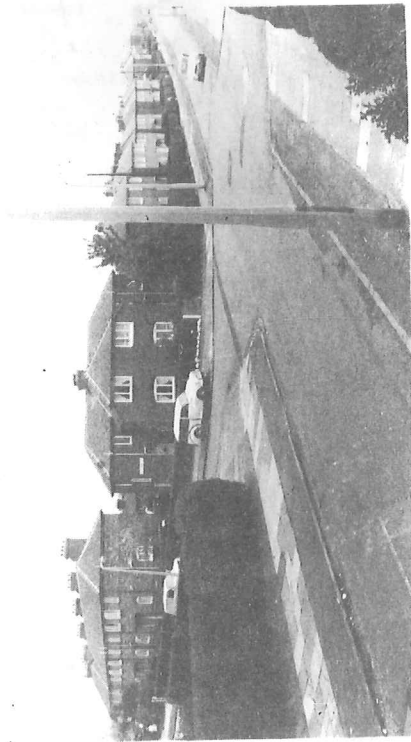
8. Examples:
- (1) A shop is a public building which everyone uses.
  - (2) A bank is a semi-public building which a limited number of people use.
  - (3) An office is a semi-private building used mainly by employees.
  - (4) A house is a private building.



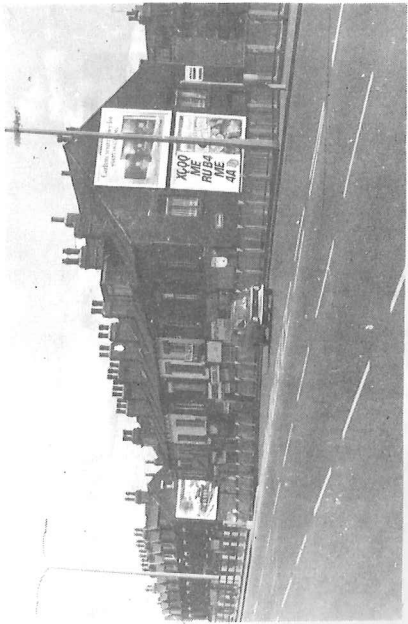
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"SENSE OF PLACE".



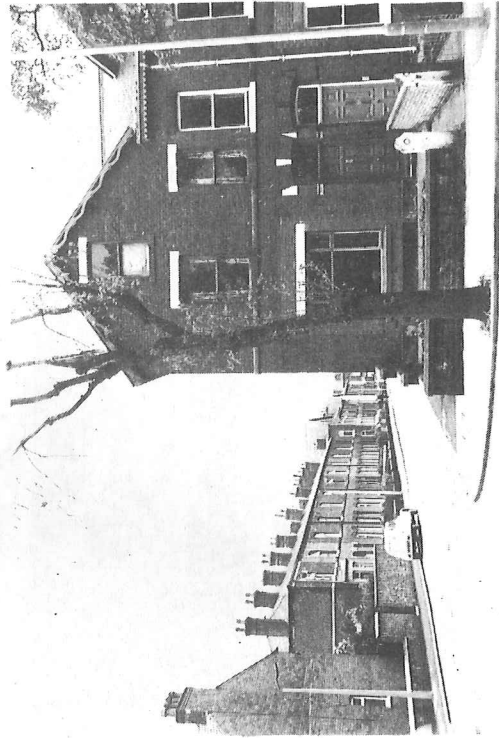
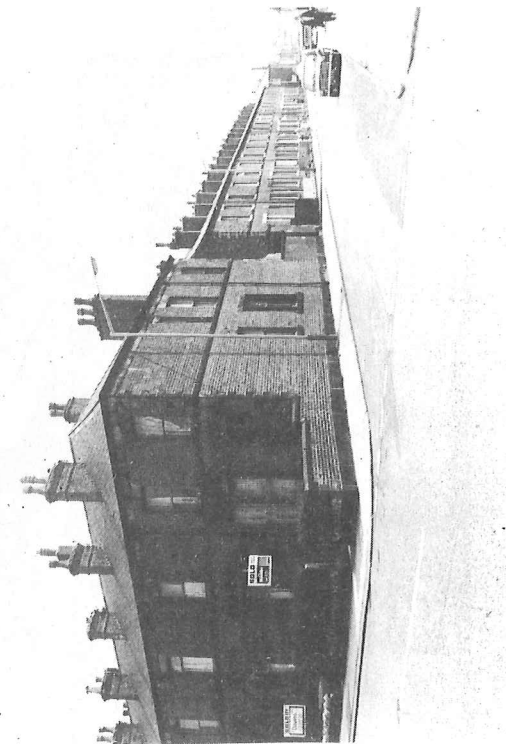
UNCONTROLLED SPRAWL OF A NEW TOWN.



INTER-WAR ESTATE.  
NO EXPRESSION OF HIERARCHY  
AT JUNCTIONS. BUILDINGS ALL  
OF SIMILAR TYPE AND LAYOUT.  
ROAD AND PAVEMENT WIDTHS THE  
SAME. "LOSS OF SENSE OF LOCATION".



SEVERING THE COMMUNITY: BARRIERS ALONG MAIN ARTERIES CASTRATE SHOPPING ROUTES. WIND BLOWN, EXPOSED PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES ARE THE ONLY MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM THE LOCALITIES.



HOUSE FEEDER STREETS RUNNING OFF A THROUGH LINK ROAD NOT YET UPGRADED TO ALLOW FAST TRAFFIC FLOW.

LARGE OPEN SPACES.

The enlargement of spaces (where previously the smaller space was intimate, had human scale and was less exposed to the weather) is a direct result of accommodating traffic and adhering to Building and Health Regulations Acts. Take a tight junction in an old town, which might be a nodal point or the recognised town centre. A decision is taken to keep traffic going through. Back go the buildings, situated on their own land, no longer touching the pavement heel, to give motorists better sight lines. Radius curves on road corners are increased to suit turning circles of lorries and buses.<sup>10</sup>

The scale is lost and, if it is a bit disturbing, a few standby trees are stuck in, to break up the view.

Requirements under Health Acts, Building Standards regarding daylight, and recommendations regarding sunlight, can affect the spaces between and orientation of buildings. To prevent shadow and loss of daylight, blocks of flats are kept further apart. To get improved sunlight, living rooms, bedrooms and kitchens can be orientated as required, creating buildings in some cases all facing one way. Contrast this with the old closely packed streets, often shadowed and lacking sunlight, with buildings facing street frontages irrespective of orientation. Social democracy and reformism have achieved health standards while destroying the intimacy of the old housing communities - one of the recurring dilemmas.

ROADS ON HOUSING ESTATES.

Probably the greatest confusion and lack of visual hierarchy exists in council and private estates, of both pre-war and post-war vintage. Roads, no matter what their functional importance in the hierarchy, have now uniform carriageway and pavement widths. As a result, at junctions, main arteries or distributor roads have no dominance over lesser roads, especially when building type and design remain the same. No emphasis is therefore given to these important corners. Nodal points, the supreme identifier of locations, are non-expressed. This is

bad enough. But it is made even worse, when buildings which could serve as nodal points and define the functional hierarchy occur totally out of context. For example, a pub in a leafy domestic street between two semis; a community centre in a cul-de-sac; a row of lock-up garages fronting on to the small shopping centre.

The confusion is absolute when the main road's junction with the 100 yard long cul-de-sac is no different from the one with the major bus route.

CURVES AND DIFFERING PLAN SHAPES.

One very noticeable feature of modern design is the shortage of curved, rounded or circular buildings, and the almost complete absence of shapes like triangles, parallelograms etc. Several factors have determined this. In the past, buildings were designed to fit the curtilage perimeter of the sites and as the patterns of roads emerged in the 19th century, the angles at the junctions created geometric shapes, which were fully built on to the boundary lines of the site. As roads swept round obstacles, curves were reproduced on buildings; an island site lent itself to the flamboyant gesture of a circular building.

One reason for the decline is that drawing 'unusual buildings' takes longer and is, therefore, less profitable for the boss of the architects' office. But the main reason is that new building techniques, grid systems and building components lend themselves more to the "right-angle only" building. These, coupled with the large increase in open space, create a fabric which is stark and full of exposed individual buildings. It lacks cohesion as it is devoid of any matrix. In other words it is compartmentalised in the same way as areas and sections of the cities are now separated from each other.

BUILDING MATERIALS.

By their rapid decay, many materials display the planned obsolescence built into them. This gives the feeling of cheapness and lack of permanence (even if there are concrete structures). Low-grade brick, metal infill panels, cheap tiles and felt roofing have replaced stone, decent brick, lead and slate. Transience i.e. planned obsolescence in building materials and building types,

contrasts with past societies, which sought to express a feeling of durability and permanence. (Admittedly an illusion and unattainable, as movement and change are the essence of the human condition.)

PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPACE.

An aspect of design essential to a coherently understood environment is the relationship of public to private space, and to the intermediate semi-private/semi-public space. Nowhere is this so ill-defined as at the entrance areas and access decks of multi-storey housing. The result is that the door threshold of the homes is the demarcation line. Areas which in traditional streets were considered part public/part private - the door step and immediate pavement - have been "abandoned" by the residents. The small narrow garden, one of the arbiters of private and public space in old streets, has no equivalent in the high-rise block.

CLEANSING.

The areas around the entrance to high housing blocks and the "non" spaces conglomerating there - beneath the stairs, behind the lifts, beside the dry riser and electricity sub-station, always appear to be collecting areas for wind-blown refuse and leaves. These areas are indeterminate. Neither residents nor council seem to want them. Because of their awkward form, they fail to allow the natural elements to keep them self-cleansing. The gutters and walls of the old streets lent themselves to this. Now these unintended refuse heaps collect the stuff. And, being neither council nor resident controlled, they are left with it.

CONCLUSION.

The purpose of this description is to illustrate the visual breakdown of an environment in which people feel, among other things, "lost" and "without identity". Disruption of the sense of location is a torture technique, practised on political prisoners with a view to "breaking" them. Is this a parallel situation?

9. If it suits them Local Authorities will "ignore" or "relax" the Regulations.

10. For illustration of good and bad examples of elements discussed, see "Townscape" by G. Cullen.



# Political Influences

## PROPAGANDA AND SYMBOLISM.

"In view of the manifest social and physical disadvantages of high-rise living, this gives a thoughtful citizen some anxiety. If his nature is optimistic and trusting, he assumes that tower-dwelling is a self-evident modern truth beyond argument and accepted as inevitable by all experts, the questioning of whose judgements would be as reactionary as to doubt the benefits of modern medicine. If by nature pessimistic and cynical, he believes that our servants/masters, after searching deliberation have chosen the lesser of two evils. In the light of the proliferation of this type of building, both citizens must feel that the costly foundations and fabrics, inconvenient lifts, expensive services and disruptive social defects, are balanced by known but unrevealed truths". 11.

Leaving aside doubts about modern medicine, this statement captures the feeling people had in the past. But today the public swallow very little of the propaganda of the ad-men, and of the apologists, pressurising them into accepting that the new urban life is better than the old. Modern capitalism has no ideology which its publicity media can use, to make the mess acceptable to those forced to live in it.

The western culture is symbolised by the developer's office block and the finance house. The Russians have their palaces of culture and university towers. Observe the similarity of both systems, in the design and function of factories, housing and schools. This gives credence to those who say that the bureaucrats of east and west are seeking similar solutions to their basic problems of how to exploit and control people. It also shows that the car is not necessarily the prime element causing the destruction of the urban environment.

The Victorian bourgeois order which has been analysed (and contrasted with the breakdown of modern bureaucratic environmental order) is not the order that people would return to. (There is nothing romantic about the Victorian slums,

with their overcrowded conditions, and lack of basic facilities such as bathrooms - and safe play space). There are those of the left whose "alternative" to bourgeois order is also unpalatable; the monumental cities of Russia and Eastern Europe reflecting the totalitarian order of the dictatorship.

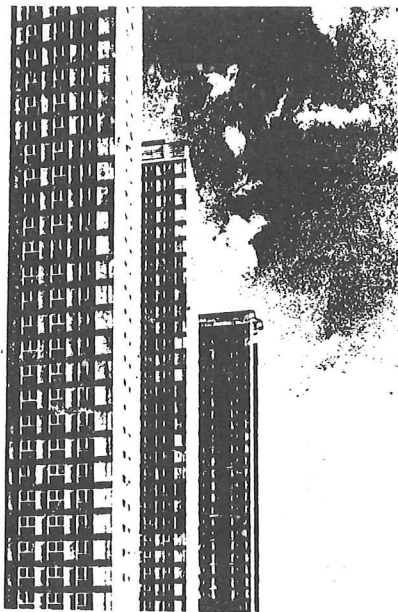
## THE INFLUENTIAL FACTORS.

We have examined the transport requirements and its corollaries such as its effects redevelopment, noting however that other major forces also lead to redevelopment. There are several other forces having a major effect on the environment.

(1) Large scale capitalism's killing off of the remnants of traditional private enterprise.

(2) The rise of, and the role played by social-democracy.

(3) The participation in the process by the APES.



## 1. Traditional private enterprise.

There is a constant attempt of sophisticated capitalism to eliminate competition from such remnants of traditional private enterprise, as have managed to survive.

Nowhere is this more true than of the shops and pubs which abound in the old housing areas and serve a social need. Now, by a fusion of Planning Acts, Building Regulations, rating and rent systems (all of which serve the requirements of modern capitalism), they are quickly being eliminated. Out goes the small tenanted pub and general shop; in come the huge brewery-managed houses and the supermarket. Building Regulations and Health, Planning and Fire Prevention requirements can be so onerous that the costs are prohibitive for most small businesses. A fire escape, staff toilets or a car park (all required by the Local Authority), can be the last straw. This is not an argument against Health and Fire safety. It is to show that these regulations can only be afforded by the largest capitalist enterprises.

It works in other ways too. Suppose a new estate is to be provided with shops (which isn't always the case). A planning proviso might say that there are to be no free-standing shops. And so the architect may 'in-build' shop units into the ground floor of an expensive multi-storey block, thus justifying higher shop rents. The result is that only the large stores can afford to pay. But they are guaranteed a monopoly site.

To achieve all its requirements, capitalism must have willing agents amongst the APES to fashion and structure the environment to their needs. These abound. For example, it is technically easy to create and tool an area to include a supermarket at the expense of smaller shops (say, by manipulating the car-parking places to shop ratio), and make it appear as if this were the only way it could be done.

These are perfect examples of the fusion of technique, expertise and specialisation with political needs.

11. "New Glasgow Society Review" (1967) I. Metzstein.

## 2. The role of social democracy.

Chaos in planning now results from different forces pushing for their political "rights" and desires. This contrasts with the past, when only one force (the bourgeoisie) dominated the process and therefore cities and towns reflected a totality which was their conception, e.g. the Georgian New Town in Edinburgh or Bloomsbury in London, (for their own needs) and the Scottish tenement and north of England back-to-back (for the work people). Several forces influence the social democratic/liberal capitalist society we live in. The strongest is the "labour movement". By this I am referring to Labour Party politicians and trade union officials, not to people who vote labour, or to rank and file workers. Their main concerns and pet hobby-horses are council housing, state health services, state education, and social services to ameliorate the disastrous social consequences on the very estates they have helped to create. Side by side with the institutionalised vandalism of these people and of the APES, is the actual physical vandalism of youth and adults on the estates. As this increases, so does the army of social workers, probation officers and psychologists, and doctors prescribing tranquilisers; all attempting to paper over the cracks and mask the awful reality. Some eventually accept the obvious that these places ought to be pulled down. Others open psychiatric clinics "to help people come to terms with their problems" inferring that the problems are in some way the fault of the person, rather than the fault of the conditions they are forced to live in.

Trying hopelessly to combat all this are the various conservative fronts, such as the Ratepayers Associations, who make it their business to fight the expenditure of the fore-mentioned groups on Local Authority services. Only in small part successful (usually in places where industrial workers are in a minority), their achievements are never able basically to change the trend of modern capitalism, which is to spend vast sums on Local Authority needs and state services to keep the system running.

A minor group, claiming to be concerned about the environment (sometimes in opposition to the "labour

movement") are the conservationists. In most cases they are middle class people, interested in buildings and areas of historical interest and in preserving green belts - though usually only when it affects them. They are also keen on public money being spent on doing these things. Observe, for example, the fight with public and private funds to preserve Edinburgh's Georgian New Town, as commercial offices, hotels and houses for the well-off. No suggestion that Edinburgh's ordinary people, hidden away in out-of-sight streets and estates by the subtle planning arrangements of this petty bourgeois city, should be housed there. Compare this with the difficulties for working class people fighting to preserve back-to-back or terrace housing, in an industrial city.

## 3. The participation of APES.

"...had these professions (politicians, road and town planners) been instructed to make life life difficult for the young, elderly, poor and disabled (and for everyone else it could be added), they could now be congratulated for having done so".<sup>12</sup>

Traditionally the APES have been first the servants and then often part of the dominant class, when constructing the political order in its concrete form. They no more created the concept of necrophilic architecture in Ancient Egypt than did the slaves who fashioned it. But through the ages, their influence grew.

Now, as with other aspects of capitalist phenomena, elements within the ranks began to have their own increasing political momentum/emphasis. This was not always related to the economic sub-structure or motivated by monetary gain. Many a Local Authority, unmoved by the costs of high-rise flats, but certain of their social unacceptability, remained until the last few years mesmerised by the arguments of the APES (the vast majority of whom do not receive inducements from contractors, and are not wealthy enough to bribe politicians), namely that these high blocks were the 'only way' to solve the problem of housing thousands of urban dwellers. In Glasgow, officials boasted of the



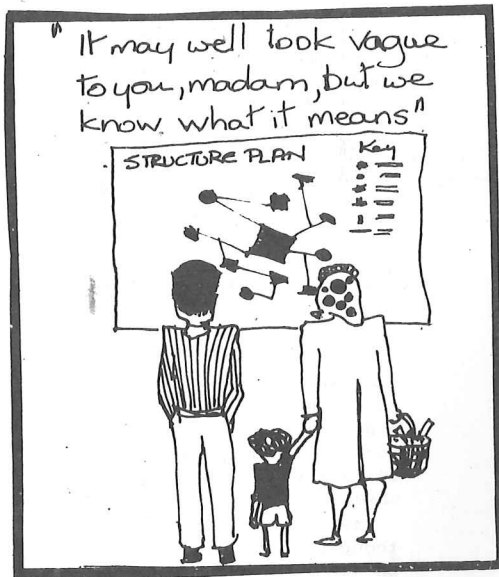
"I think it's something to do with the new motorway"

31-storey, Red Road Flats, 330 feet high, as the highest in Europe. Never a word about the predicament of 5000 people living in them.

There was unanimity of thought amongst most APES on the placing of tenants in these multi-storey blocks. For the social-democratic, radical, liberal or communist APE, this was a partial if not optimal solution to the housing shortage. For the conservative APE, these were good places to put people whom you basically disliked (especially when you increased their rents). Unanimity of thought serving supposedly different political ends!

APES believed in the high rise blocks. (They no longer do, apart from a few. Even Colonel Siefert, architect of Centre Point has recanted his sins.) Researchers evolved standard systems for building these blocks. Councillors, officials and M.P.'s were talked into accepting them as they were more 'economic', in terms of land costs (but not in terms of construction.) They then proliferated, were tacitly accepted, eventually took over. For a long time, no alternative could be put. The massive road schemes were pushed through in a similar way. With car production on a free rein, and increasing in volume (requiring further road expenditure) the state plays its role by finding this finance. Those who continue to advance and argue for this policy are APES mesmerised by structures for carrying roads and parking cars: they insist there are no alternatives. As with high blocks they will no doubt soon have chances to recant.

12. RFBA. Towns v Mobility Conference in Durham, Architects Journal, 24th July 1974. Mayer Hellman presenting paper.



The APEs thus achieve technical and political satisfaction. This is an example of how an APE, as a specialist, can usurp the functions of the "elected representatives" and attain his own ambitions. Consider an old housing area, wanted for "change of use" to commercial and industrial requirements, and that the area sits astride a main artery in the city. Perhaps, as an appendage, they want the road widened. At the first hint of protest from the residents to the Council, the APEs will argue that the area is blighting and will decay. At the same time, the area may have barriers put up by the traffic engineers, to expedite the flow of traffic. This immediately causes blight, because buildings placed on the artery, and designed to do specific jobs there, cannot function if they are cut off from the people who use them. The shops run down and die, to the advantage of the supermarket, placed somewhere in the vicinity by the APEs. Their prophecy becomes self-fulfilling. Meanwhile, as the arguments about the road go on, new buildings are placed on a set-back building line. Why? to accommodate the wider road. The APEs have presumed they'll get their way eventually - which they usually do.

What has become of the APE, as he strives for the middle levels of the bureau-

cratic pyramid? It is necessary to compare the APE of today with the equivalent person of the last century.

Victorian architecture was guided by a set of principles derived from bourgeois ideology, principles with roots in the philosophy of private enterprise and the cult of 'self-made' individuals. In a society willing to erect monuments (using ancient, classical and renaissance styles) as memorials to its success, the APEs education took place by aricled training in an office, free in most cases from any radical theories which might be floating around any Institutes of Further Education. Most APEs were part of the establishment, and had a stake in it.

Today's APE (and there are many more of them) does not have such a position, although he is constantly striving for minor status and authority. He is trained in educational establishments, where an "anything goes", "free for all" atmosphere of eclectics and adventurism prevails, in no way related to the existence of ordinary people. (Although there is growing evidence of a fight back by students). Everything is rationalised, in terms of profitability norms and cost benefits, and scourged by statutory requirements. After this training the APEs erect and build for the various contending groups in society, generally with little loyalty to any.

Compare this to the confident Victorian society, autocratically controlled by one class, its homogeneity derived from its strong authority and wealth, served by specialists, who in many cases were themselves part of the class, or at least drawn from the middle classes, in whose ranks there were few with political ideals different from those of their masters.

In the past the rigid lines were laid down and the APEs concurred with technic/design solutions echoing the bourgeois norms. Now the effect of the disintegrating power of each of the major contenders creates these free-for-all results - contributing its quota to the bureaucracy's crisis of authority.

#### PLANNING MENTALITY.

Two basic assumptions held by planners can help us to understand their reluctance to allow 'non-professionals' to plan their own lives. Firstly, that it is desirable to treat city problems as a whole. Secondly, that physical space should be planned for predetermined social use, i.e. 'projective needs'. This makes it easier to understand all such activity as (a) wholesale demolition to give the APEs a clean slate, (b) comprehensive (total or overall) planning, allowing for no continuity or on-going planning (the fitting in of the pieces later - the making of large scale changes). Sennet remarks that these assumptions allow for "no provision for the fact of history, for the unintended, for the contradictory, for the unknown. Planners are thus always out of control since these unforeseen acts will always happen." <sup>13</sup> The planners reaction to the failure of his plan is seldom that it was a bad plan. It is usually that the plan wasn't comprehensive enough! He regards his plan as being fulfilled merely on its own completion, without ever checking whether the plan does what it was meant to, or, if it doesn't, whether this is for the better or the worse. The planner thus regards participation as a procedure which will either underwrite decisions already taken, or, at best, seek opinions about policies under discussion.

The public 'participates', but only on the planner's terms.

Biddle and Biddle, in an amazing statement, which epitomises the whole bureaucratic ethos, sum up the argument in a nutshell: "though the great decisions on solutions will be made by legislators, judges, important executives, planners and programme administrators, the small-scale development of ordinary people can influence the big decision makers in their search for solutions." <sup>14</sup>.

13.R.Sennett: "The uses of Disorder." Penguin.

14.Biddle and Biddle: "Encouraging Community Development". (sic!!).

# Analysis

It is not being claimed that the incarceration of people in urban locations is done purely by physical planning. Other aspects are equally important - the economics of land use and sale, the market in housing, the letting and renting of accommodation, public and private transport in relation to limited or non-existent mobility of sections of the population, the relative poverty of parts of the community, the sort of education imparted by schools, etc. etc. However this pamphlet deals principally with the physical shaping of cities and towns, without forgetting the inter-connection between it and the above-mentioned elements.

Both bourgeois and bureaucratic capitalist cities have had to contend with the effects of mass housing in a way never before encountered. What we have seen is a move from the bourgeois city's strait-jacket to the padded cell of the bureaucratic city. The rigid structuring of the capitalist city, and indeed of cities of all previous epochs, has worked for the rulers who created them. Present day cities, although inflexible like their predecessors, have been in the main unsuccessful as control elements for pacifying and satisfying their populations.

This difference is a result of the effect that today's class struggle has on the environment, and of the conflicts caused by a bureaucratic society, which seeks the participation of the people to make it work "efficiently" and profitably, while at the same time rejecting that participation because it would lead to people striving to take more control. This leads to ludicrous contradictory situations.

An obvious example of this is the exhortation to the population to buy private cars, and thereafter confront onerous traffic regulations and restrictions, and cause inconvenience to those using public transport. As a humorous adjunct to this, the Government introduces breathalyser tests, while the local authorities demand increased parking spaces at pubs.

The bureaucracy, while attempting to move people from the misery of the old capitalist cities, by offering them the "freedom" of the council or private

estate with its attendant "advantages", is at the same time limiting this "freedom" by restricting their mobility, by inadequately servicing their needs on location, by curtailing their choice of work, housing and entertainment, by making movement to other areas difficult and inconvenient.

The new order planned to predetermine the whole environment, by structuring the activities of its population, has pushed people first to rejection and protest, and later to revolt. Trouble continues when the middle classes vote with their feet (or rather with their cars) and bale out, while the working class fights on the ground that they hold.

## PRIVATISATION AND ITS EFFECTS.

"City life and housing evolve in a direction which dislocates all integrated community living. This evolution tends to destroy local community life, both as a milieu for socialisation and as a basis for viable organic collectivities. These collectivities cease to exist. There is only a monstrous juxtaposition of individuals and of families, each living for itself or anonymously co-existing. Whatever their worth and wherever they may live, the individual is confronted by surroundings that are either hostile or impersonal or unknown." 15.

Privatisation is nowhere more evident than in the environment in which people live, resulting from the fact that modern capitalism has to a great extent overcome its unintentional tendency to socialise people, and tries to substitute an individualist philosophy through, among many things, hierarchy at work, constantly increasing consumption, and the sequestration of people in their separate homes and estates. A prey to vandalism and to the activities of hordes of social workers, many live in a constant state of siege among the boarded-up shops, pubs, churches, surgeries, schools and community centres (no discrimination between private and council ownership by the attackers). Blackhill (Glasgow), Kirby (Liverpool) and Craigmillar (Edinburgh) are grim examples.

Contributing to all this were the technocrats, who, in order to rationalise the standard units of their

construction system, stacked houses of one type vertically, or abutted them horizontally, preventing any intermingling of house types. Thus, the system was justified, and each human group isolated; young and old, married and single, individual and collective. Meanwhile the traditional left and the social democrats cry in unison for more of these buildings.

## PRESCRIBING CITIES.

All cities prescribe the activities of their population. These activities are prescribed by the ruling class, who, although themselves in part subjected to them, nevertheless are able to achieve some compensation through their freedom of movement and access to different living and leisure locations of their choice. The activities in an urban area in a libertarian society would also be prescribed, but only to suit human needs, and through the conscious decision of the population, who would themselves decide the function and form of their built environment. The issues are. Who does the prescribing? Who is subjected to it? And in whose interests does it take place?

An interesting feature of life in the city now is that the bourgeoisie cannot escape from the problems so easily. They are now choked in their own traffic jams (e.g. Heath, when he was Prime minister). They cannot now whip people out of the way, or crush them under their carriage and horses. Their Rolls Royce is vulnerable to scratching from a middle class upstart Cortina, and to denting from a 1952 banger.



15. "Modern Capitalism and Revolution". Paul Cardan, Solidarity pamphlet. Page 63.

TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIANS.

It is true that at the political/economic level every effort has been made to accommodate on the road, the car, the lorry and (to the least extent) the bus. It cannot be assumed however, that this has been to the satisfaction of the lorry driver, car traveller or bus passenger.

The lorry driver may see his delivery location from the ring road. But he has no guarantee that he'll find the way to it. He may ask directions in a city centre. But the pedestrian, used to his 2-way pavements but unfamiliar with the one-way traffic system, may be of no help.

The car driver, if he finds somewhere to park, becomes a pedestrian and is catapulted into the urban morass, along with the alighted bus passenger. At a technical and design level, the APES have clearly not resolved the problems created at a social level. Their failure to relate the buildings required for urban functioning and activity to the dual system of mobility (foot and transport) is a major factor in creating the present chaos. Aptly recognised in the class societies of the past were: (1) the packman on foot, the man on a horse, the man in the carriage, the cart driver; (2) the pedestrian, the cyclist, the bus passenger, the chauffeur driven car owner, the lorry driver. All had the same physical access to the buildings. (Social deference and social inequalities, reflected in the type of transport, is a separate matter.) The failure to retain this system occurred as types and volume of transport (cars) increased.

But, can the problem of expanding traffic in cities be resolved by the APES? Although the car was not a problem in the past, the vast numbers of cars around now are. A quantitative change has brought about a qualitative one. The elimination or limitation of transport vehicles from parts of towns and cities (even when accompanied by the provision of priority parking, rules for goods deliveries and reasonable public transport) solves nothing. Banishing the car and the container juggernauts only sends them off to the outskirts of the cities, where there is more freedom of movement in the vast car parks and loading bays, beside the supermarkets and large pubs. The result is further isolation in the city centres and expanding suburbia on the outskirts - the U.S. experience.<sup>16</sup>

The physical scale has increased, to suit the car. The human scale has further deteriorated. And the car has still remained the imponderable. It is not simply a matter of preferences. Giving pedestrians priority, with the corresponding orientation and relating of buildings to them at the expense of the mobile group does not radically alter the situation, because the pedestrians have at some time to be transported.

People disgorged into the new urban centres by public transport instead of by car will still have to battle their way to their location. Get off a bus on the expressway, in the concrete tunnel beneath Cumbernauld town centre. Climb the windy steps among the loading bays. And then decide if this is the alternative to the car that you want. This New Town, much feted for its pedestrian routes, has so rigidly segregated its traffic that bus passenger, car driver and lorry driver are left circulating its massive road system, completely unable to get a bearing. Virtually all that can be seen from the roads are the backs of doorless, continuous house terraces, with inaccessible grass verges, no pavements and no human beings. As cities and towns were always built to the scale of the walking person, the massive road system, situated side by side with almost totally separated long pedestrian routes through exposed park and landscape to the town centre, only highlights the confusion of function. The two fail to come together effectively to provide the balanced alternatives. Finally it should be noted that the cities of Eastern Europe and the USSR are similarly planned to incarcerate the population, without the car being a major factor.

DESIGN AND TECHNICAL FAILURE.

If the circulation pattern breaks down, the system breaks down. This is why urban areas cease to be viable, usable places. The generator of the old city is the road and its pavement. Life in the city sprung from this. The important point was that the pedestrian and the mechanically-mobile used the street together. Now, road and pavement have separated and gone their own ways. But with their separation there has not been an accompanying separation of the functions and related activities connected with each of them. The reason is that they cannot be separated, as they overlap in the intricate

matrix of human activity. What has happened is that the APES have either attempted to design to serve them both - and failed, or have designed to service one at the expense of the other.

Cities, as the bureaucracy tries to make them into effective production and consumption units, have APES wrestling with the problems created by capitalism's priorities - e.g. centralised commercial centres serviced by private cars. So whatever solution is arrived at to contend with traffic movement in the urban context - be it pedestrian-orientated, traffic-dominated, or the usual hotch-potch of both - it never coincides with the needs of the mass of the people, for whom the frenetic activity of capitalism is irrelevant.

The solution must in the long run be a political one. No amount of "correct" design/technical solutions from "more skilled and educated APES" can resolve the problem. Traffic and pedestrians can be separated or they can be interconnected. Above all buildings and spaces related to road activity and those related to pedestrian activity must clearly express a separated function. If not, areas of chaos, (both functional and visual) will constantly occur and express themselves in the material fabric. Modern capitalism cannot solve this problem because of a mobility-mad syndrome derived from the need (in order to take business decisions) to commute between and within the zones of power in each city. Besides the car and its motorways, there are now longer airport strips for faster planes, and helicopter pads in city centres.

16. Note that this is an increase in city size due to the land devoured by the car, not to demographic change. It is not yet clear if there is an optimum number of people, which by sheer numbers alone create problems. So far it has been recognised that the land use patterns (i.e. what people do and how they spread themselves) is the criterion. The social existence of 1,000,000 people living in one style may be alright, while 1,000,000 living in another way could be fraught with problems.

In a traditional street, a motorist stops and gets out, a passenger alights from a bus, and together they use the shops with the local pedestrian. Later barriers are put up to speed traffic flow by preventing pedestrians from crossing at any point and by preventing motorists from parking. The motorist and the bus passenger can no longer use the shops. At the next stage, a hypermarket opens elsewhere, to accommodate motorists. This helps to deal the death blow to the small shops, already in difficulty with the curtailment of trade due to the barriers. These latter-day remnants of private enterprise are killed off by modern capitalism's new development. The result is that bus passenger and local pedestrian have to go to the superstore. This is reached with great difficulty, in its sea of tarmac, provided for the cars required to take away the bulky shopping. Or they have to go to a more expensive store, with a monopoly trade in a new local authority estate.

The all-important main artery performs two principal tasks:

- (1) to take people in and out of the city;
- (2) to be the lifeblood of all the communities along its route, providing the shops, the schools, the pubs, the betting shops etc.

But now it has ceased to perform the second task. The barriers go up to turn it into a freeway. From now on it may as well be a railway line, or an underground tube, such is the lack of connection with the places it passes through. The tasks have been separated and its ability to perform the second one is seriously impaired. The necessary structural environmental changes are deliberately never carried out. And so the community blights and dies.

We now observe a distinct compartmentalisation of the city, area by area. There is a hostile city centre, defended like a mediaeval keep by an urban motorway, either looking like a moat, or fearsome battlements - the inhabitants gone.

The horrific vision of a city foresaken by any life, with traffic circulating unendingly round its ring road looms in the mind. Surrounding this there are a series of enclosed camps, hemmed in by the arteries which once gave them life. People only enter and leave at controlled exit points to go to work. The whole is physically interconnected but without clear communication

routes. There is no social contact. Then a further series of scattered encampments cluster the outer ring road, in the same state of isolation: workers commute to the city centre from outer suburbs, others travel out to the ring road factories. They never meet. They have a totally separated working existence, the separation reinforced as their leisure activities do not overlap either.

And so on to the further compartmentalisation of the housing areas themselves. Many thousands, each in their niche. And in the home itself, some people existing separately in their own rooms. The urban construction, a visual monument to the political reality. The incarceration is the symbolic representation of the city of bureaucratic capitalism - of the political will of those who rule. The shape expresses the type of society and the means of controlling that society. Here unity is at last achieved.

Urban order of the past and urban chaos of the present are both planned. Chaos is not the opposite of planning in this context. The multi-pressures, the various demand, the dissected briefs, all contribute to the end results we see today. Chaos (i.e. visual confusion) has helped in creating incarcerated communities. It is therefore used to try to impose rigid controls over people's activities.

#### The Crisis of Capitalism in the Urban Environment.

"Capitalism is constantly obliged to solicit the participation of workers in the process of production (if the workers didn't participate to some extent the system would grind to a halt). On the other hand capitalism constantly has to limit this participation (if it didn't the workers would soon start deciding themselves and would show in practice how superfluous the ruling class really is".)17.

The contradiction of capitalism described above has a parallel in the urban context. Cities of capitalism as "units of production and consumption", require to be "efficient" in transport, use of space, commodity production and marketing and housing of the population. These result in the urban motorways and freeways, the tower blocks, the supermarkets, the factory, the separation of communities by massive open spaces. In turn comes loss

of sense of location, loss of human scale. And finally, by the incarceration of people in communities, comes the exclusion of human beings from city life. But cities depend on participation of people in city life. Result: conflict and crisis.

Traditional authority has been usurped. But the forces which helped bring this about, (social democracy and the official labour and trade union movement), are now themselves part of the Establishment. Accepted by the "progressive" elements of the ruling class, but abhorred by the backwoodsmen, they compete for fiscal and non-fiscal power and achieve it. It is for and on behalf of both new and old ruling groups that modern planning is carried out.

The element which opposes them is the unofficial labour movement, which although it exerts itself to establish a power base within the work confine, has yet to enter effectively the political arena outside the workplace. Apart from murmurings, regarding pollutants close to houses, dangerous traffic, home preservation in old suburbs, their influence is not yet felt in the planning and environmental field. Nevertheless their very existence and size gives headaches to both planners and social democrats, wondering what to do with them, where to house them, how to get them to work (and keep them at it), how to control their leisure activities. The problems they create, and the inability of the politicians to permanently lord it over them, are the roots of the crisis of authority within and beyond planning.

In order to facilitate the workings of their political system the rulers must involve others at various levels in the decision-making process. These elements are compelled partly to integrate them, to suit their requirements. So social democratic politician, civil servant, local government official all have a "finger in the pie" - and with the economically powerful they jostle for the power to structure the physical environment to their own ends. The results, consistently, are further alienation of the working class, on whose behalf they all claim to be working.

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17. "Modern Capitalism and Revolution." Paul Cardan. Solidarity pamphlet. Page 37.

# The Future & Its Possibilities

Libertarians want to create a self-managed society, producing and consuming what is collectively decided to be socially needed, exercising self-control as to the size of the populations desired and decided upon, all within the constraints of an ecologically safeguarded environment.

As there are millions of us around and it is not our hope that our numbers be ravaged by famine, plague, nuclear or germ war, or enforced sterilisation, the accommodation of our vast numbers in suitably balanced and inter-related eco-communities will be one of the greatest tasks facing us.

The present activities of the eco-counter-culture, with their "self-sufficient" farms, sewage-spreading shanty towns, energy producing wind-mills, may be all right for the few wishing to "do their own thing"; but they run away from the evidence that the existence of vast numbers of people make most but not all of these schemes unviable. And they tend to ignore the fact that advanced technology, under the control of the whole population, (and not, as now, in the hands of our rulers) could be harnessed, ecologically, to the benefit of all.

## THE STRUGGLE.

Today's city is a battleground between contending classes. This is reflected in its appearance - a feeling of conflict and struggle being expressed, as of someone not quite "getting it their own way". The strength and resistance and relative affluence of the working class is a contributing factor. In the Victorian city the working class were much poorer and only beginning to organise. The ruling class more or less "got it their own way". A coherent visual order was the result. It is clear therefore that urban society, dominated by one class, was able to portray visual and political order in the constructed fabric. It seems reasonable therefore to suppose that a society dominated by the mass of working people will be able to create an orderly urban environment, where the present-day rulers have failed.

Having described and attempted to analyse and understand the present situation, the job is to suggest possible ways for people to fight back.

At present most struggles take place in the limited area of increased rents, dangers from traffic penetration,

and preservation of the existing environment. At best such struggles are fights concerning the best deal within capitalism.

Many people choose to remain in the Victorian locus, with its tight working class streets, near to pubs and late night shops, (regularly decreed in official places as uninhabitable slum property). They prefer to stay there rather than on the new estates and on the ring roads. In Hyde Park - Leeds

Moss Side - Manchester (and many other cities) people have fought significant campaigns to prevent their incarceration in areas like Seacroft and Hulme respectively. But the "slum-romantic" approach is not the long-term answer. The enlarged struggle is for an environment which is totally acceptable to the majority of the people. This is part of the long-term political battle we are engaged in. The lessons of localised struggles will greatly contribute to understanding and restructuring the built environment.

Understanding, in this area, means appreciating the methods of construction and fashioning the fabric, in order firstly to exercise control over those with specialised skills and finally take the decision-making authority away from them. The APes will not be the decisive element in the creation of the new surroundings, beyond contributing their expertise. To do this, their present thought processes, methods and ideals must be comprehended and combatted. The urban fabric must become the creation of the whole population. 18.

## THE BRIEF.

'Briefs' are mainly given by the future owner of a proposed building. Those who will actually use the building are seldom consulted. In some cases the brief is written by the APE.

Thus he is both agent and "client".

Revolutionary APes continually confront Labour and Communist Party members and fellow-travellers among their colleagues. For all the latter the building of more houses,

more schools, more hospitals, etc., is the goal. Not a word about the quality of houses, content of education, methods of administering medicine. Many say that a "socialist" solution can be imposed on a capitalist brief. But the revolution starts with the brief, not with the solution.

And what about these briefs? They will come from society as a whole. Will there be house to house collections of families? Will there be communes? Buildings to house Workers Councils? What populations are considered optimum, and in what situations? How will transport be arranged? What balance between town and country? The requirements will be different, and there will be conscious priorities derived from living quarters and their arrangements; from relationships between local, district and central workers' meeting places, from the transport facilities etc. Briefs will not be given to the APes, by the rest of the population, to resolve. Rather they will be created by the people and APes together. The brief and the solution can transcend bourgeois elitism, and become one.

Ecological solutions would also be significant. Energy consumption, material use, atmospheric pollution, soil erosion, are subjects which have not come within the scope of the pamphlet, as each requires full and serious analysis. This is not to say that they are irrelevant or unimportant. They are crucial problems, which a libertarian society would have to deal with.

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18. All this is not to say that some APes are not in revolt against the job they have to do. Several are active within educational establishments. Others have "dropped out", in order to be politically active. A minority of those still working are campaigning amongst their fellow workers.

THE DESCENT OF THE APE.

Political problems in a libertarian society can never be solved purely at a technical level. Conversely, technical expertise can never be used to resolve political problems, of the kind we have analysed. But the use of technology (and science) in the class war is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class. Contrary to what so many marxists believe, there is no such thing as a 'neutral' technology, which can be used indifferently for capitalist or socialist ends. The design/technical problems can never be separated from the political ones.

In Russia, in 1917, the new order looked desperately for an elite to tackle the multitude of technical problems facing any group wishing to significantly expand production. The absence of people capable of doing this was bemoaned by Trotsky. <sup>19</sup> Speaking at the level of management, which can quite easily be applied in this context, he said, "I consider that if the Civil War had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully."

The Bolsheviks looked to those who had either been hostile to the revolution or jumped on the band-wagon when 'victory' was apparent, to help them through and beyond the birthpangs. Today the social democrats call for a meritocratic elite (i.e. people like themselves, educated at fee-paying schools, owning large country houses, and advocating the merits of private medicine) to deal with the exigencies of the modern capitalist system. They would include APEs in this category.

Among traditional revolutionaries, the attitude to APEs (and to many other jobs which have an elitist and petty-bourgeois status in present day society) is one of tolerance. These are jobs which many of them consider irrelevant in the context of present day struggle. The politically conscious in such jobs are often instructed by the Central Committees to transfer to factories: the arena of "real" struggle.

This is tantamount to saying that those in petty-bourgeois jobs (even those with technical and design skills required in a post-revolutionary society) are

unnecessary to the revolutionary process. This means that they do not expect, or desire from them a developing revolutionary consciousness.

In the event, therefore, of revolutionary change, society would again be at the mercy of those technocrats and specialists, whose skills, reinforced by political hostility, would give them substantial political authority. This happened in Russia, China and Eastern Europe.

It may be that the traditional left would intend to use technocrats in this way; after all a society whose prime objective is to produce more than capitalism, and is prepared to harness the whole population to this task, would be well served by them.

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE AND ITS PROBLEMS.

Consider a situation of mass political consciousness, within the working class, during which the ruling class is expropriated, the political power being taken from them by the masses, acting without any self-appointed elitist "left" leadership.

The urban areas in the sorry state, left by the bureaucracy, would be inherited.

Consider the problems to be faced, the questions to be asked, and the priorities to be given.

Thousands would want to come out of the high rise blocks. Who would be the first? Who would want to stay? How would accommodation be allotted? Would the buildings left empty have no other use? Would they be demolished? Or left as memorials, like the Second World War extermination camps?

Those who came out of such buildings would join those wanting to leave the old slum areas. Who would be housed first? Where would they be housed? What kind of houses would be wanted? Where would one house be put in relation to others? Who would want a private garden? Who would want a communal one? Above all how would the multiplicity of choices affect the decision taking and the end result?

What would happen to the old housing areas after lots of people had left but many remained? Would people be moved? Empty houses or demolished individual sites do not help communities.

Every building used by the bureaucracy in its class domination of the people would be under investigation, as to its possible post-revolutionary use. Factories, offices, shops, schools, etc., might be adapted or removed. New buildings to

carry out the new functions of the new society would be built, the obvious ones being those for mass decision-making at local, area and regional level.

On a bigger scale, might the site of an urban area be abandoned? And what would that mean in terms of re-locating services: electricity, gas, water, sewage, tele-phones, etc.? Would the present concept of the supply of services be challenged?

If the city or town stays where it is, what provision would there be for more people moving in? How would the increase in needs of a city affect the surrounding countryside or another city in the vicinity - e.g. if, say, the water supply was shared?

Would the redesigned area be wholly or partially decentralised? Would some elements be centralised? It should not be forgotten that decentralised communities in dynastic China were the most despotic ever known.

What would the relationship be between buildings for production, distribution, learning, health, leisure, sport, community activity and housing? What numbers would be optimum, for the creation of varying communities within an urban area? How many different answers are there to all these questions?

These questions, as they deal directly with the urban planning of a new society must not be seen in isolation. They are intrinsically tied up with the political impetus of the new post-revolutionary society and would be answered only when decisions regarding priorities and goals are taken at a wider level, by the whole population. For example, the whole pattern and priorities of production and distribution will be a major factor. As will the types of "family" structure adopted and their attendant life styles. And the fate of public and private transport.

It is the the decisions taken by mass involvement of all people that will create the urban fabric of a post-revolutionary society.

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19. Report to the Third All-Russian Congress of Trade Unions (April 1920). See "From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy" by Paul Cardan, Solidarity pamphlet.



- REQUIREMENTS FOR CAPITALIST PRODUCTION.
- 1) GOOD LOCATION: TRANSPORT, POWER SUPPLY ETC.
  - 2) LARGE, CHEAP LABOUR FORCE.
  - 3) GOOD MARKETS FOR PRODUCTS.

CAPITALIST CITIES.

"EFFICIENT" USE OF CITIES AS PRODUCTIVE AND CONSUMPTIVE UNITS.

EXISTENCE DEPENDS ON PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE IN CITY LIFE.

"EFFICIENT" USE OF SPACE

"EFFICIENT" DESIGN OF MODERN BUILDINGS.

"EFFICIENT" TRANSPORT SYSTEM.

MAIN ARTERIES BECOME EXPRESSWAYS.

GROWTH OF URBAN MOTORWAYS.

COMPLEX ONE-WAY SYSTEMS.

BUILDINGS TEND TO LOOK THE SAME REGARDLESS OF FUNCTIONS ETC.

SENSE OF LOSS OF LOCATION IN CITIES.

TRADE VANISHES FOR SMALL SHOPS ALONG PRIMARY ROUTES.

EXTENSION OF CITY.

OUT OF TOWN SHOPPING CENTRES REACHED ONLY BY CAR.

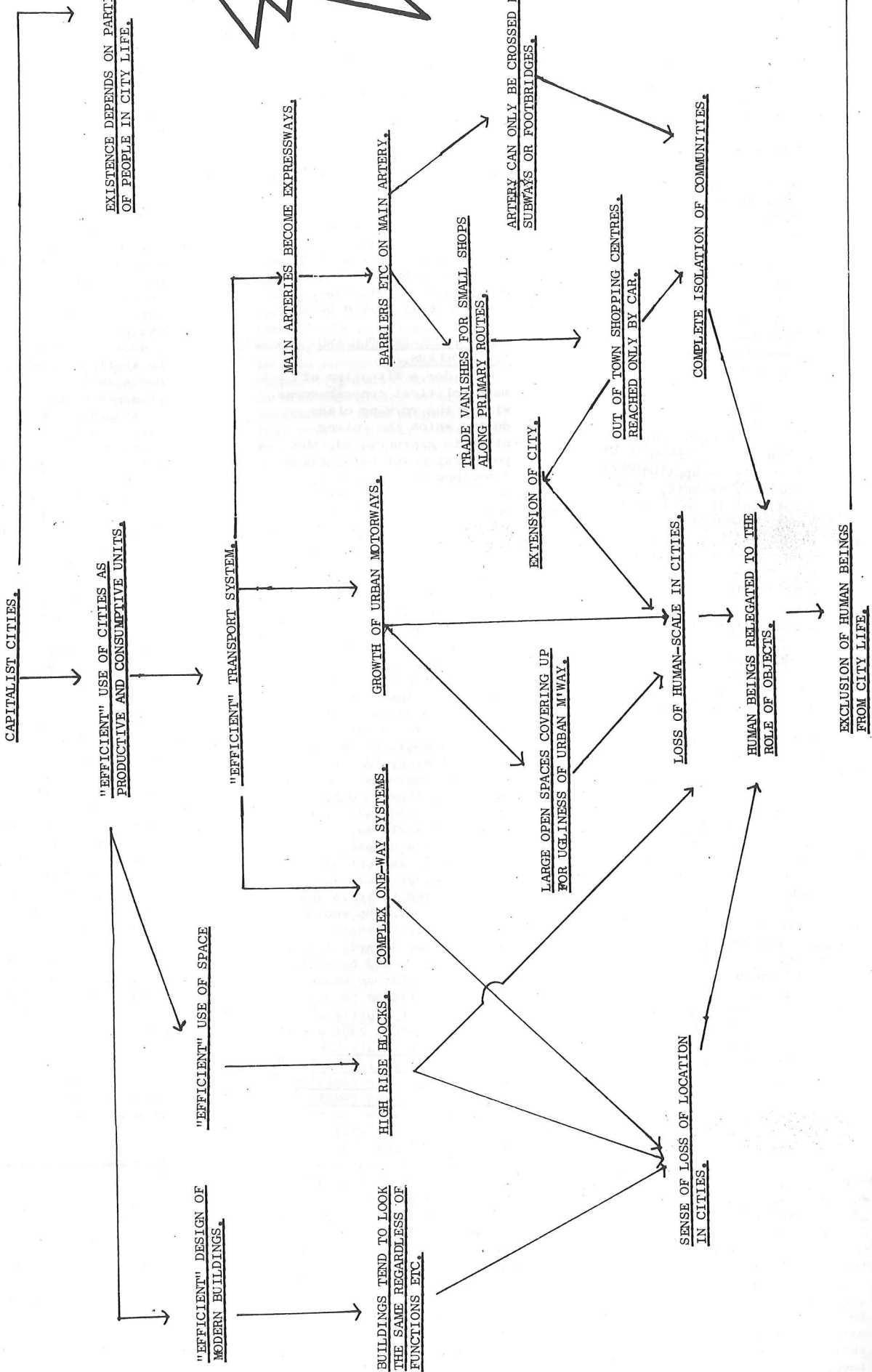
ARTERY CAN ONLY BE CROSSED BY SUBWAYS OR FOOTBRIDGES.

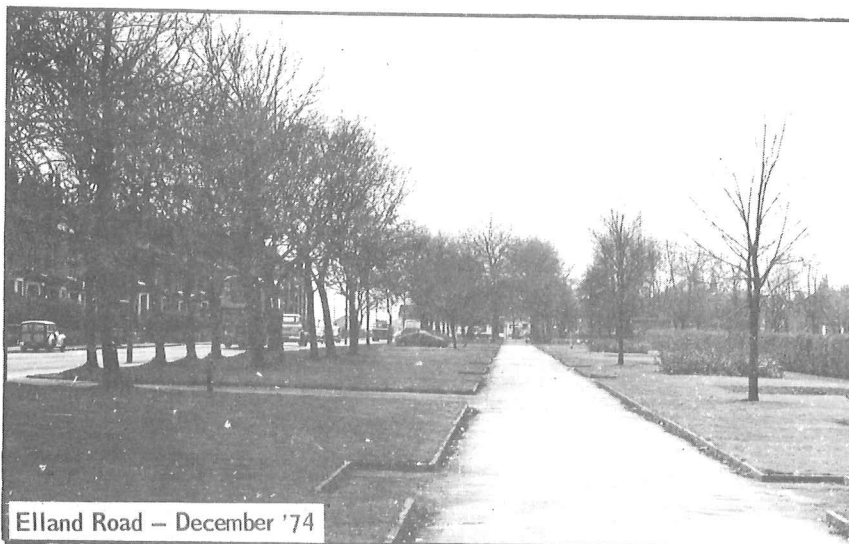
COMPLETE ISOLATION OF COMMUNITIES.

HUMAN BEINGS RELEGATED TO THE ROLE OF OBJECTS.

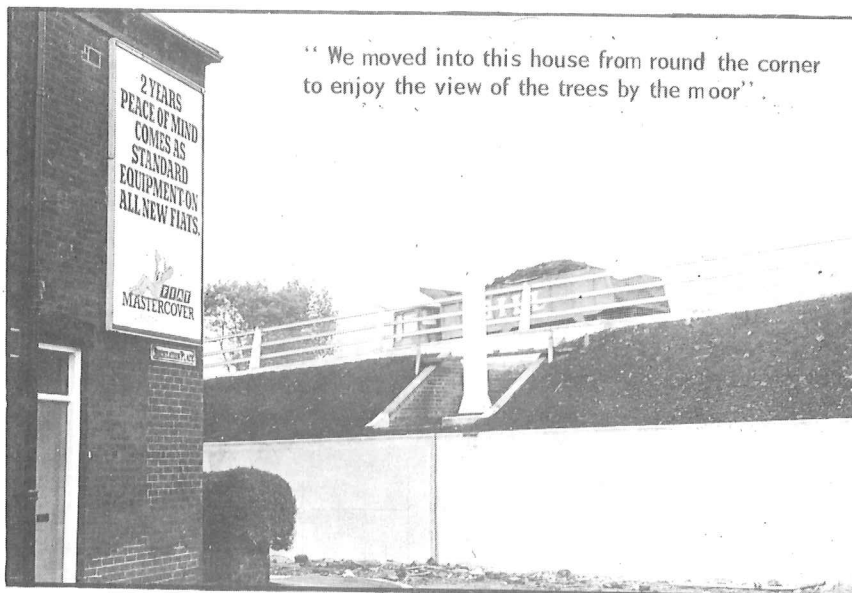
LOSS OF HUMAN-SCALE IN CITIES.

EXCLUSION OF HUMAN BEINGS FROM CITY LIFE.

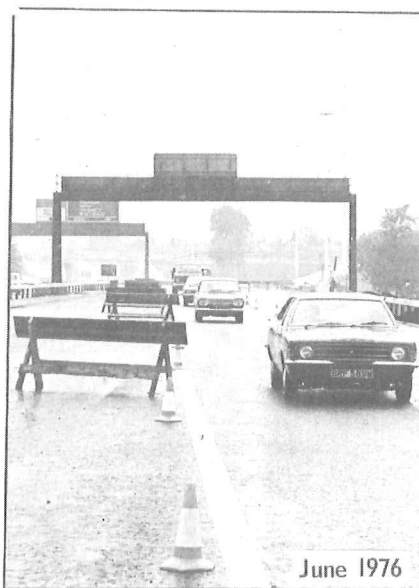




Elland Road – December '74



" We moved into this house from round the corner to enjoy the view of the trees by the moor"



June 1976

