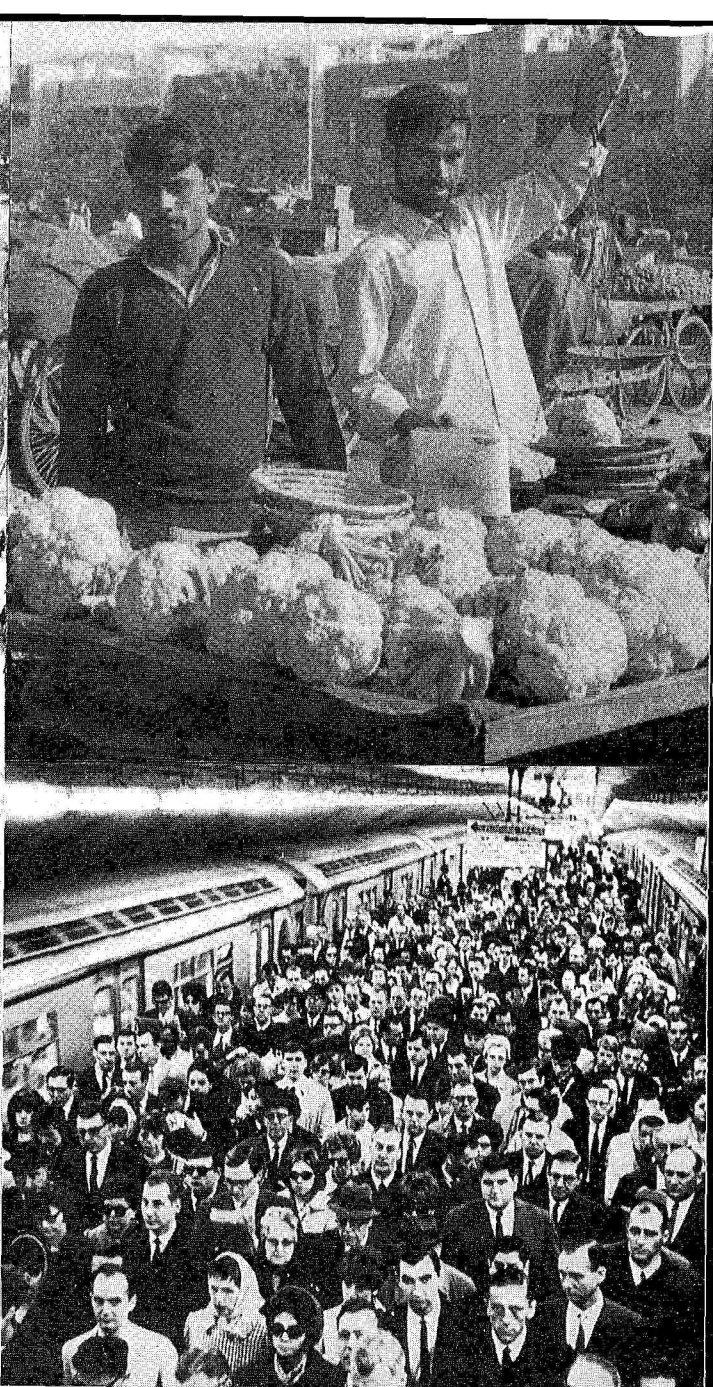


edited by Declan and Margrit Kennedy

the inner city



The Inner City

Architects' Year Book XIV

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The Inner City

edited by Declan Kennedy and Margrit I Kennedy

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FOR NORA, ANNE AND ANTJA

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Acknowledgments

THE INNER CITY is the fourth of the Architects' Yearbook series to be devoted to a single subject. The previous three, *The Pedestrian in the City*, *Urban Structure* and *The Growth of Cities*, were edited by David Lewis. As in these three books, most of the articles here have been specially written. However, as the acknowledgments below show, some have been reprinted, expanded or adapted from previous publications.

The editors may have changed, but the previous editor, David Lewis, eased the transition by sharing the pains of conceptualizing this volume. We wish to thank him also as a contributor, as member of the advisory board and as a friend. Thanks are also due to Theo Crosby, Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry and Dennis Sharp, in recommending subjects, authors and topics, and contacts.

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INTRODUCTION

DECLAN KENNEDY
MARGRITI. KENNEDY

Two extreme positions among urbanists and urbanites are now clearly identifiable. On one hand there are those who believe that the city or rather the inner city as we know it is a decaying relic of the past and will be abandoned soon. On the other hand we find those who see the city as a democratic unit between the neighbourhood and a national government. An example of the first group is Melvin Webber. His 'The Post-City Age',¹ was published in 1968, when it had become clear that many American renewal efforts were gigantic failures in inner city reconstruction. The second view typified by Robert Dahl's 'The City in the Future of Democracy'² in 1967, spread the notion that political power and resources for the cities are crucial to democratic government. A number of political scientists now argue that only a greater share of political power can help the city solve its problems.³ They hold that nations are too small and egoistic to solve the global problems of survival, and too large and removed from cities to prevent urban problems from rapidly approaching catastrophic dimensions.

The options open to us according to these theories are quite different, though neither questions the fact that we are going to have 'urban areas'. The first presents us with the problem of how best to remove the corpse called the 'inner city', infested with the worst urban ills. According to the other the inner city could again become the heart and focal point of the surrounding region, a centre of political activity, cultural, social and economic life, similar to its historic predecessor, the medieval city state.

The purpose of this book is to explore some of the consequences of contradictory demands made on inner cities: to uncover the reasons for their growing complexity and discuss various revolutionary approaches. It will also indicate that what happens to the inner city ultimately depends on the will of the people, the 'dominant paradigm', or inherent cultural

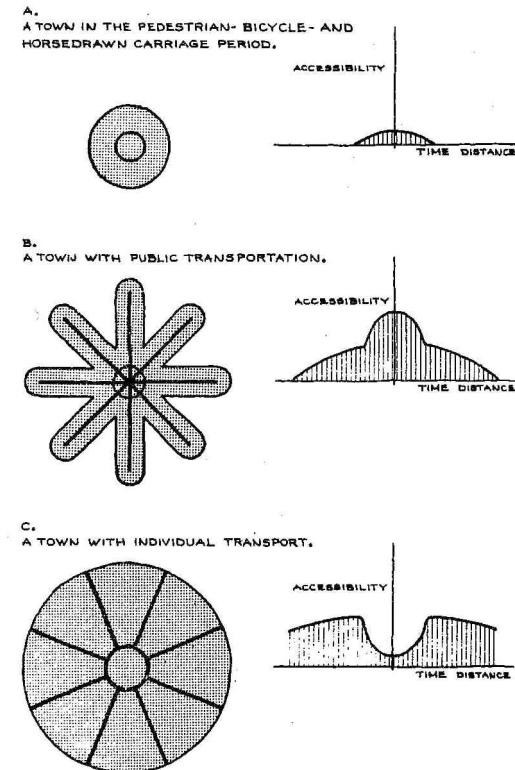
values of a given society, different social subgroups, or the number of individuals ready to 'love it or leave it'. An exact definition of the inner city, the central business district (CBD), or city centre, which can be applied to more than one city does not exist. However, most cities contain a 'core' area with high density developments, specialized and overlapping functions, and a lower density 'frame' in which CBD functions are mixed with residential uses, or other non-central activities.

The difference between the two zones is marked, and sometimes openly hostile. Whether the core expands and impinges upon adjoining communities or whether it contracts because of the evacuation of industrial premises and offices (thus inviting vandalism and decay) — it presents a constant threat to its immediate neighbours.

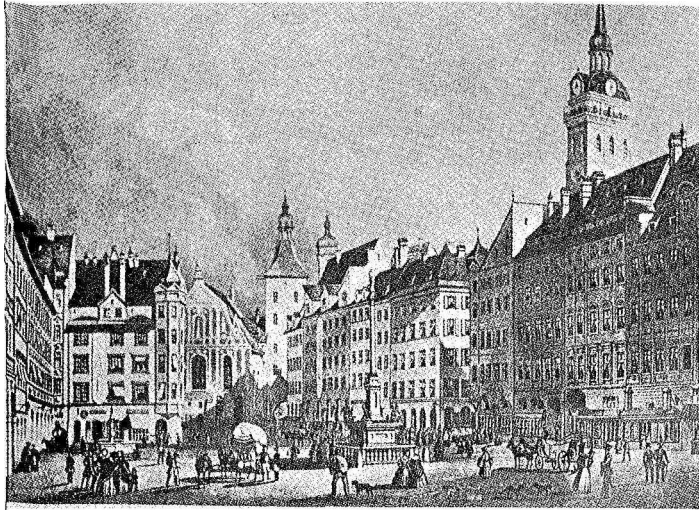
In the late fifties and early sixties, discussion about inner city problems was heated. Traffic congestion, decay, the moving out of business establishments, industry and the wealthier part of the population were soon to be experienced in all the major cities of the world. The year zero for the inner city seemed to be in sight; the blight of the inner city was making headlines in newspapers; and scholars of all the pertinent disciplines issued their analyses for what had happened and what should be done about it. Urban renewal programmes became the hope of the people trapped in the cities that something would happen and a turn for the better was in sight. Only a few years later 'urban renewal' had become a dirty word, symbolizing empty and expensive highrise apartments in a sea of poverty and deprivation, vacant buildings and sites, and the inevitable stories of displacement of the poorest and most powerless in the nation. It became more and more evident with every new failure that the problems of the inner city were far more complex than anybody had foreseen. First and foremost, inner city problems were not always problems of the inner city alone. For example, to solve traffic congestion in the inner city, planners found that they had to go to the source of the problem in the lower density suburbs. Here, clustered by race, income, class and education, some citizens found that the socio-cultural values placed on amply space and two cars could be realized. In other words, the thrust of the search for solutions to inner city problems not only had to go further towards micro- and macro-levels of inquiry, but also toward disciplines originally concerned with quite different subject areas: anthropology offered the possibility of discovering micro-level 'qualitative' data,

filling in the gaps left by that brand of sociology which was oriented towards quantitative research tasks; political science and economics became increasingly important in dealing with the questions and relationships between power, wealth and underlying national goals; behaviourism and psychology, whether quantitatively 'biased' or not, greatly increased our understanding of the interaction between human and environmental systems.

City planning offices began to employ community planners, social workers, and systems analysts. And architects not only began to concern themselves with



Accessibility to the centre: different transportation modes and settlement patterns.



Above: Etching showing the Marienplatz in 1840.

Below: The same in 1972,

with more land.

Ernest Erber in his contribution to the present volume takes this argument one step further. He holds that it is not only ample space but *also* the shorter journey-to-work which attracts the rich to the suburbs since business establishments, industry and large corporations have moved in the same direction. This further draws middle and upper income groups away from inner city locations. The inner city becomes the territory of the poorest social groups and an eroding tax-base aggravates the difficult struggle of the centre to offer a viable living environment. In Europe, where for historical reasons towns and cities were dense and living space in them costly and tight, the 'concentric zones hypothesis' has never been quite as simply applicable as in North America. Although some outward movement of the rich has undoubtedly taken place, several factors have contributed to the maintenance of the inner city as an urban and regional centre:

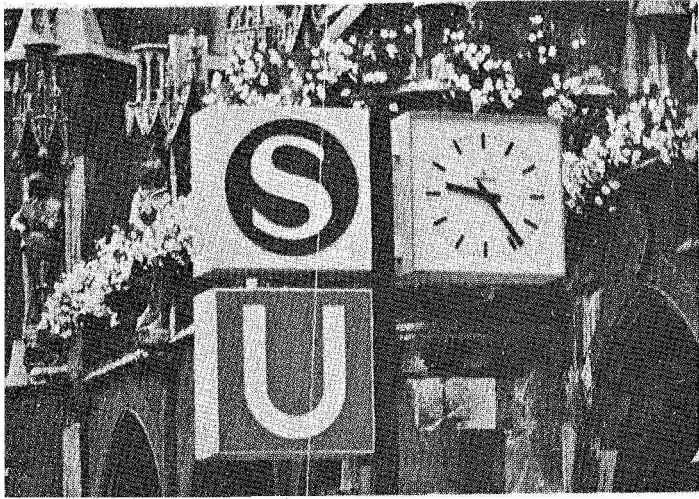
- first and foremost there is a cultural and historical attitude quite unlike the American, namely that cities are the place of civilization, of urbaneness;
- European cities have, in general, more status and political power and resources;
- land has been a limited resource all through history, and land-use regulations were adopted early to restrict outward growth as much as possible;
- lastly there are two factors that seem to mutually reinforce each other: (a) the relatively greater expense of owning and operating a car, and (b) the existence of relatively efficient inter-urban and intra-urban public transport. These have meant fewer highways cutting through inner-city land, fewer parking spaces taken up by private automobiles, and a higher degree of accessibility to the inner city for all income groups.

As a result of the increasing concern with rehabilitation rather than building new communities, and the widespread provision of pedestrian precincts linked to mass transit systems, life in the city centre has become more attractive in recent years. In Munich the completion of underground and mass transit lines allowed the conversion of two main traffic arteries in the inner city to pedestrian malls. They are not only shopping areas but major focal points for recreation and cultural life in the metropolitan area. Historical monuments, fountains, restaurants, cafes, cinemas, theatres and museums form a continuous chain of attraction, beauty and enjoyment. At night

facades, fountains, and monuments are illuminated, on sunny days people will sleep, relax, and loiter amidst the colourful landscaping. The average width (20 metres) of the Neuhauser / Kaufingerstrasse, in the beginning, gave reason to believe that it would be hard to fill this space with life and make it attractive. Just the opposite turned out to be true. Statistics before and after the completion of the pedestrian precinct show that the number of passers-by had nearly doubled. (From 7200 per day in 1966 to 120,000 per day in 1972.)⁸ However, not everybody in Munich was in favour of the one-directional support of the inner city. Many professionals and citizens publicly criticized the city planning office for its pre-occupation with an 'outmoded centre-ideology', and its neglect of planning for the city as a whole. At its present stage of growth, it seemed to them, the city should be directed toward decentralization rather than centralization. To create more attractions like the pedestrian precinct, according to Peter Bode, would finally 'choke' the city in its own dynamic.⁹ The intricacies of different traffic modes, and the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, have to be viewed in the wider context of the urban area. Long range and short term measures are necessary to renew existing communication systems which no longer function properly.

Nowhere is the breakdown of these systems more evident than in the heart of the wealthiest city in the world — Midtown Manhattan. The van Ginkel plan — revolutionary, given the traditional American aversion to walking — separates pedestrian and vehicular traffic and deals with some solutions which can be realized immediately, but which are compatible with the larger framework of long-term plans. World Fairs, Expos, or Olympic Games may present a chance for frustrated planners to tackle inner-city traffic problems. Seattle, Montreal, Mexico City, Tokyo, and Munich are showpieces for the use of technical and organizational knowledge. The critical question however is whether these accomplishments will serve to make the city as a whole more habitable and humane.

Urbanization, mainly in the developing countries, will reach unprecedented dimensions during the next decades. The question therefore arises: can any lesson be learned from what happened in the more developed countries during the last hundred years? Can the fate of the cities, now medium-sized, or small, which will become the inner cities of tomorrow, be a happier one than their European, North American or Japanese



counterparts? The answer seems to depend more on the political wisdom and courage of those in power than on technical know-how.

In most developing countries the enormous migration from rural to urban centres has created the most formidable problems in form of unplanned squatter settlement along the urban fringe. In South America squatter settlements mostly occupy marginal land.¹⁰ They spread along river valleys, mountain tops or unused grounds in concentric rings, linear strips or any other development form. Outmigration of wealthier parts of the population is prevalent in some but not in all South American cities. Where it happens, similar consequences as in North American inner cities can be observed.

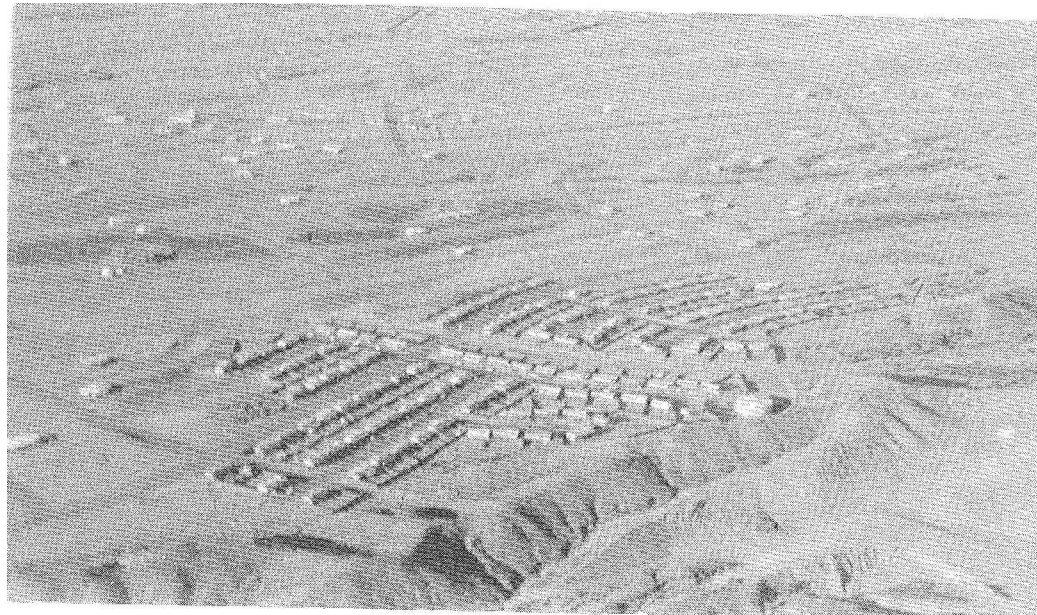
In 'New Influences on Persian Cities', Frieden and Mann show how the intimate and functioning human scale now existing in urban centres there may be preserved in the face of contradicting demands for modernization. Their conclusions, mainly to ban all incompatible uses - private traffic, large-scale developments - from the core; to provide for development areas outside the inner city; and connect the new and old centres by an efficient public transportation network, are similar to those advocated for European and American cities with a functioning historic core."

Whether this solution can work depends to a great extent on how it is sold to the public, and whether people want to buy it in any guise. In this respect Persia may not be greatly different from England, Germany or North America. The report 'Living with Traffic' explains some of the old Greater London Council's proposals for new parking patterns, commuting behaviour, and transit efficiency. It followed a paper called 'Traffic and the Environment', which was a request for feed-back from the public. Traffic solution's as a matter of vital importance for London's well-being, would have to be financed and used by every citizen. The GLC therefore decided that public comment on it would not only help the Council to

Opposite: Foliage and water fountains in the Marienplatz, the Richard-Strauss-Brunnen, and Karlsplatz, Munich.

Above: Lake Havasu City, a new city in the desert of Arizona, built and sold by private enterprise.

Below: Shopping area in Ibadan, Nigeria.



determine which actions to take, but also influence other public authorities combined under its jurisdiction. Often it is after the critical downfall of attempts to involve the user, or solicit user comment, that information is made available to the lay person. However good a design or a conclusion from years of research may be, it will have little avail, if the message does not penetrate to those whom it is meant to serve. Reams of research documents are useless to those who have neither the time, the formal education nor the inclination to grapple with them. Richard Ridley and his 'Octoberman' group tried to overcome the communication gap between the professional and the interested citizen by using comic book techniques to convey the message: as mediators between the concerned neighbourhoods and the city council they achieved the relocation of several metro stations in Washington, DC and a change in parking requirements, according to community standards. The question of accessibility to information is closely linked with the question of choice. Before people can enjoy the diversity of the inner city and use the choices open to them they have to be aware of them. There are many ways to increase public awareness of options open to each individual. John Wiebenson suggests the use of street signs and urban spaces in a more effective communicative way. John Kinard, Director of the Anacostia Neighbourhood Museum, has dispersed and readjusted the functions of the museum to deal with the needs of minority groups and the educationally disadvantaged. In their 'Collection of Patterns which Generate MultiService Centers' Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein prove that the social and design aspects of information dissemination and self-help concepts can be systematically combined. Their set of generic principles can be related to any similar task in inner city poverty areas.

Just as the very concentration of options in the inner city creates more than the sum of the parts so does the very concentration of poverty or ills become an ill in itself or an additional evil. The two 'synergisms' of glamour and decay side-by-side, without the softening effects of a transitional zone, certainly have contributed to the 'image of brutality' in connection with the inner city. This may be the reason why poverty in the suburbs or rural areas has received far less attention. The ultimate goal in our preoccupation with inner city poverty is to eliminate it. However, even at this level of analysis things are not as simple as they seem. John Seely who lived in one of the Chicago Slums said about it:

... no society I have lived in before or since, seemed to me to present to so many of its members so many possibilities and actualities of fulfilment of a number at least of basic human demands: for an outlet for aggressiveness, for adventure, for a sense of effectiveness, for deep feelings of belonging without undue sacrifice of uniqueness or identity, for sexual satisfaction, for strong if not fierce loyalties, for a sense of independence from the pervasive, omniscient authority-in-general . . . These things had their prices of course — not all values can be simultaneously maximized. But few of the inhabitants whom I reciprocally took 'slumming' into middle class life understood it, or, where they did, were at all envious of it. And, be it asserted, this was not a matter of 'ignorance' or incapacity to 'appreciate "finer things"'. It was merely an inability to see one moderately coherent and sense-making satisfaction system which they didn't know, as preferable to the quite coherent and sense-making satisfaction-system they did know . . .¹²

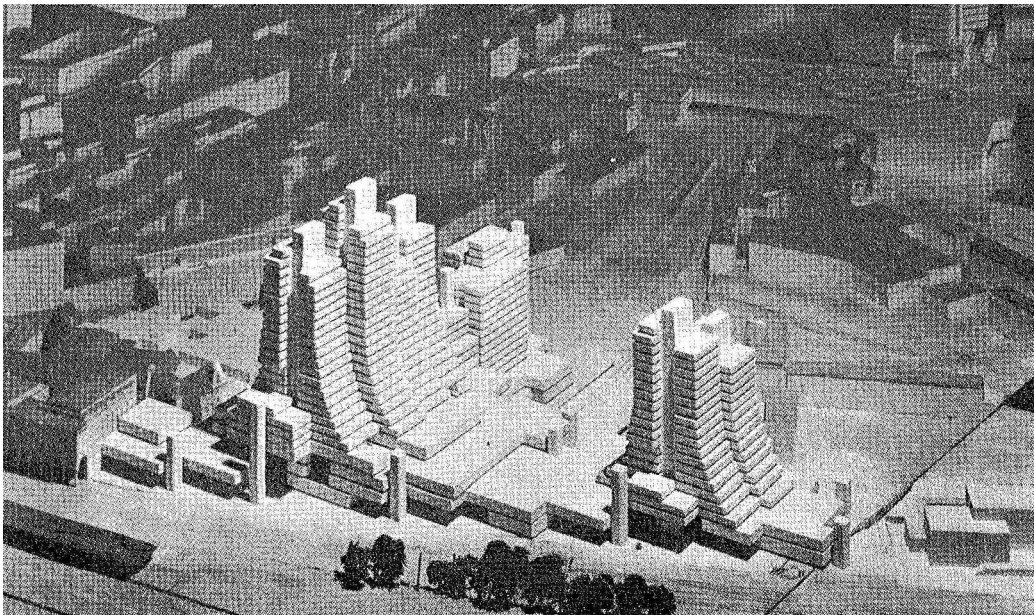
Later studies like Ulf Hannerz' 'Soulside'¹³ offered a similar description of a slum street which is by no means totally negative.

There may be under what we perceive as decay, dirt, and poverty, a way of life which does not exist anywhere but in the inner city. It may be that the attraction and richness of inner cities depends on the contrast of wealth and poverty, beauty and ugliness, and the overlap of the legal and the illegal. All this may in fact far more adequately represent the inherent qualities of human life and growth than the equalizing similarity of suburbia.

To create the kind of richness and potential which we inherited in our inner cities in a new community is far more difficult than to define and separate different functions clearly. Walking through the new towns of Europe or America the lack of choice and spontaneous interaction is blatantly apparent. Aditya Prakash's plea for the legalization of the *rehris* (mobile shops) in Chandigarh, springs from a similar consideration. Looked down upon, as an element of ugliness and disorder, Prakash argues that planners with public authority should rather recognize the *rehris*' vital importance in the development of the city and their potential for increasing choice and adding a sense of urbaneness in an 'artificial' new environment. Life in most new communities could be greatly enriched by allowing, if not sponsoring, the 'Happening of Selling and Buying' to take place in a less organized manner.

The social costs of eliminating traditional behavioural settings in new communities or renewal areas are hard to measure. Of vital importance to Japanese life, for instance, is the concept of *hiroba*, a flexible space-time interface between the public street and private house. A study of Japanese city-planning, and civic legislature, however, shows a lack of reference to this expression of community life. Shun Kanda points out that, in contrast to western cultures, public political and religious ceremonies do not exist in Japan. It is therefore understandable that public squares and plazas which often form the focal points of attention in our inner cities are absent. The street itself is the setting for community life. Festivals and mass gatherings usually take a processional form, which is facilitated by the flexible traditional Japanese architecture with its paper, wood or bamboo screen walls, allowing private spaces to be temporarily converted into a community space. Characteristically the term 'space' does not exist etymologically. Thus *hiroba* signifies an 'experiential place' rather than a physical entity, a public spatial expression which in Japan is possible only through individual and public participation in creating a living environment. As a result of the mild climate in Greece, forms of outdoor living and socializing developed, which are impossible under more extreme conditions. Thakurdesai on these pages analyses this unique European concept of space and its use. In existing public places, a high union of political and social life is made possible by opening buildings, shops, and coffeehouses in a particular angle to the *plateia*. In contrast to the Japanese concept the outdoor space is the most important place for life in Greece and no indoor space is considered in the same way. But similarly the problem is whether these cultural values are sufficiently understood and whether they can be reflected in building ordinances and planning regulations, or whether it will be left to chance how the *plateia* will be maintained, rehabilitated, renewed, or restructured. There is no question that the replacement or change of inner city fabric is physically and socially disruptive. Just how much has to be done to clear the decaying parts and how much can be done to save the coherence of the total system often becomes a matter of critical balance. The contributions on Covent Garden and Piccadilly can be seen as significant not only for London's but any metropolitan core surgery.

In this last decade one new technique which will, hopefully soon, allow planners to take the 'soft' factors into account has entered into the planning



and design professions: this is urban simulation-gaming. Environmental simulation laboratories in America now experiment with different groups of people, in what could best be termed a mixture of on-going education and urban planning and design, to pre-test different planning alternatives and design styles, open decision-making and the interaction and communication of different ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Games have always been a means by which people have built abstract models of their relationships to the natural, supra-natural, social, and man-made environment.¹⁴ Urban simulation-games, in this context, may be seen as representing our way to build a model of the complex and dynamic social systems of today.¹⁵ To fully understand the multiplicity of forces impinging on the inner city or any urban decision-making process, mainly in a democratic arena, our sequential communication forms of / writing, reading, and lecturing are insufficient. Richard Duke¹⁶ therefore describes urban simulation-gaming as a new language, which more adequately than our existing languages conveys a complex or overlapping reality. The explosion of new games in the last few years bears witness to our urgent need for this new communication form. John Taylor and Ervin Bell share some of their experiences in this new field, which indeed may contribute more to solving inner city problems in the future, than our present design and participation methods. If the city as a symbol reflects societies' most fundamental self-images and aspirations, the survival or elimination of the inner city will reflect the diversity of cultural values of different societies. The inner city now exists as a fragment of history in a time of unprecedented change and impatient demands to conform to these changes. Beset by conflicting claims and counterclaims it has become the arena of the most powerful and most powerless. It can be charming and exhilarating, monstrous and depressing. Whether the synergism of inner city life is a relic of the past and can be substituted by new modes of

Above: Prague, Lobkovic Palace below the castle (18th century).

Below: Holle Centre, Essen, Germany. Model of design concept (by Seidensticker and Budde) for multi-use structure in the inner city.



communication and transportation, and whether telephones, picturephones, and cable television will replace face to face contact is unclear. The fact that the enormous increase in telecommunication paralleled an enormous increase in travel via car, rail, and air in recent years may indicate that the traditional forms of human interaction have been stimulated rather than substituted by technological advances in communication and that these amazing new possibilities may indeed reinforce the traditional richness and coherence of our inner cities.

Towers, unfunctional but symbolic expressions of power and centrality in the city as symbol.

Above: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, one of the few rebuilt inner cities in America.

Below: Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, one of the most beautiful inner cities in the world.

Are we indeed building our new centres according to medieval models?



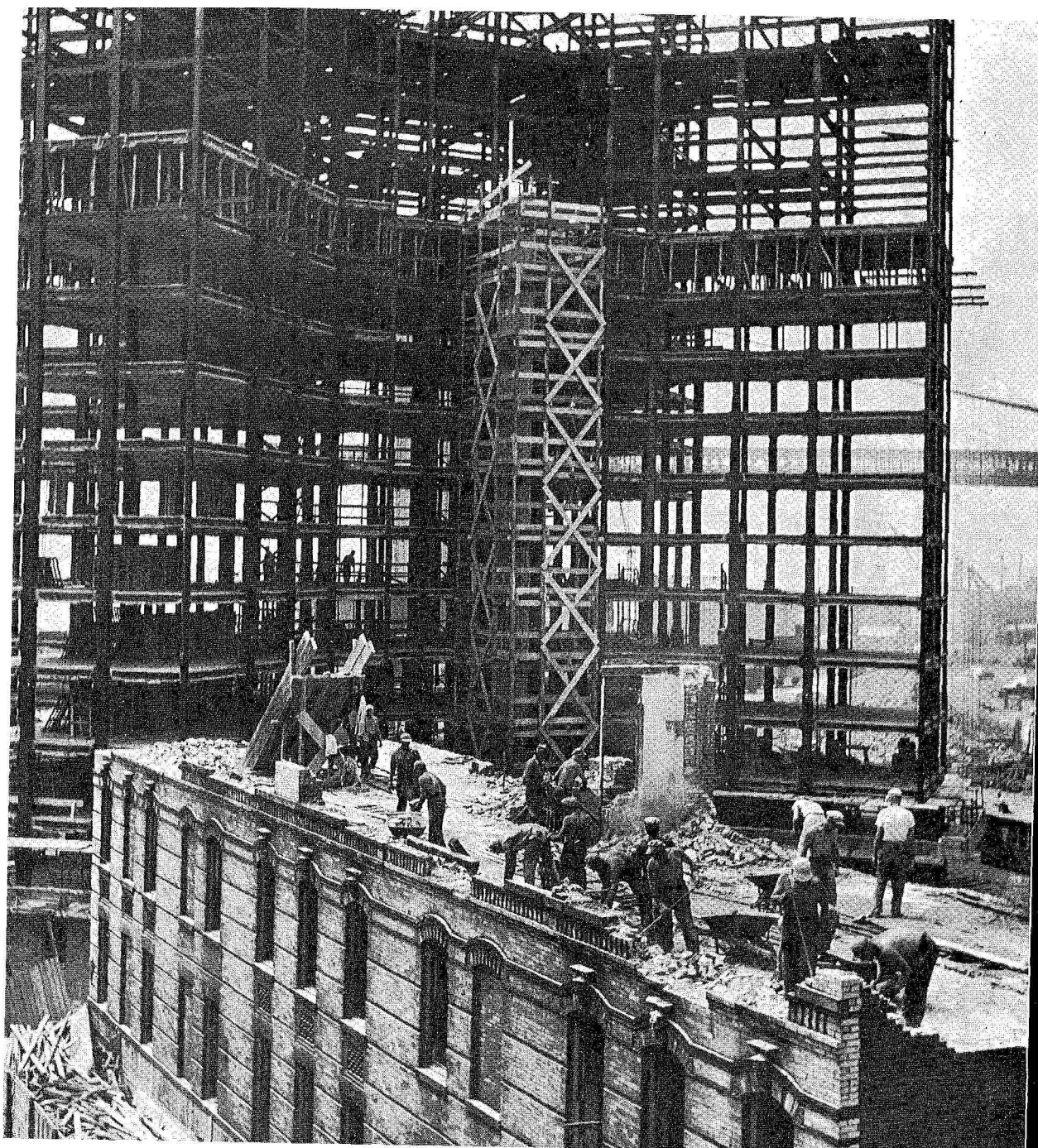
Notes

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