

The Third
Leisure

The End of Urbanity



Why do JOA propose 'painted' ceilings?

One reason was our experiences, between 1988 and 1990, in designing an early version of a 'green building'.

JO had taught, from 1969-1972, in the Alternative Technology Unit of the Architectural Association School. This was the first 'green revolution' period. It was architecturally sterile and was followed by the Reagan-Thatcher backlash.

In 1990, JOA were given an EEC 'thermie' grant of £350,000 for a design that featured narrow, daylit, space, exposed waffle-slab concrete ceilings, night cooling under propped service-floors and a heat-exchange extract.

But we did find that a glass roof over the Atrium entailed a refrigeration plant for midsummer solar gain.

The temperature and daylight studies showed 65,000 lux in sunshine and 12,000 in shade. Office background lighting can vary from 500-150 lux. Who needs all this 'natural energy' - and a totally black ceiling during the evening?

-and why should anyone who had lived under a painted ceiling ever want to look up at dusty steel tubes and dirty glass?

So much for glass.
(preferred material of the aniconics)

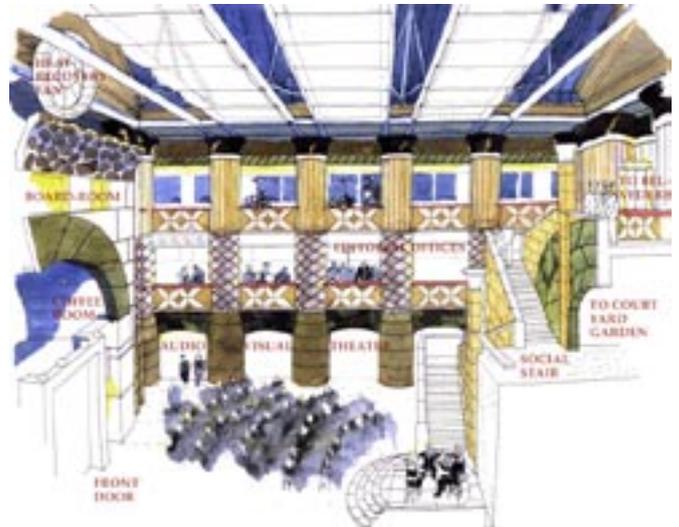
The solution was to roof a large social space, like an atrium, in a solid cover and use sidelighting according to what JOA term the 'Solar Spiral'.

This has maximum glass facing East, to warm the Atrium in the morning, and mostly none facing West, when the low rays of the setting sun can overheat an already warm building. This was how JOA designed the Judge Institute in Cambridge.

But could JOA re-invent the 'painted' ceiling?



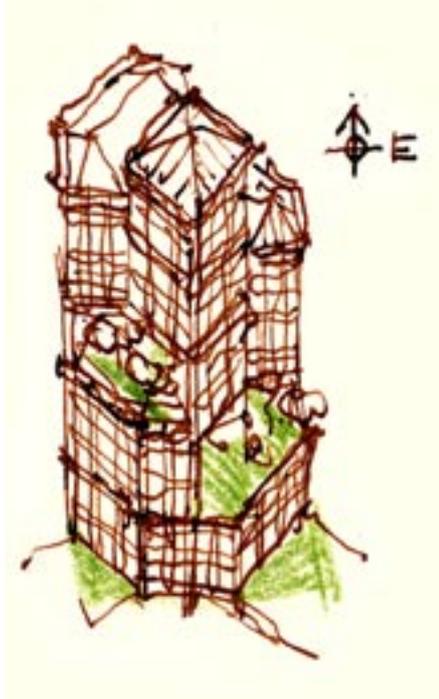
The New Headquarters of the Consumers' Association, publishers of 'Which?' magazine, was to be built in Milton Keynes. It combined the testing laboratories with space for the editorial staff.



CA were one of our best Clients. Their staff wanted a civilised building and so did their Board.. But they were funding it on the sale and leaseback of their West End H.Q. The market in 1999 let them down.



The CA have many visitors and public profile. They wanted some 'theatre' to their building, while also suiting a lively work ethic.



The central 'social space' should be most glazed to the East, and least to the West. This warms it before noon and slows overheating after noon. Roof gardens are best low down, where they are overlooked, as well as easily accessed, from the interior, as well as seen from the street.

Sunlight is shaped by 'Massing-geometry'.

New buildings are cluttered with unsightly, tiresomely 'techie', dust-begrimed, **hard-to-maintain**, fixed aluminium louvres.

Only moveable external shades of the sort used at Harp Heating can preserve a clear view through a window while excluding the low sun of the morning that overheats an office in spring and autumn and drives the temperature over the top on any afternoon.

Atria, with a far larger thermal mass of material as well as air, should accept the low morning sun but exclude it in the afternoon. This can be simply done by lowering the building mass to the East while raising it to the West.



To save energy Galleries should act as lanterns that rise slightly above the building mass allowing natural stack effect ventilation by aerodynamic suction at the top. The enveloping mass of the building should be mostly on the West, with slightly less to the North and South and much less to the East. A solid roof and light shelves to the South will prevent overheating at noon and bounce light into the social interior.



The solid roof of the Judge Gallery blocks the ferocious, high, summer sun. The high, southern, glass wall is easily shaded by small metal light-shelves which 'bounce' light upwards onto the ceiling. High circular windows open to ventilate the Gallery. It has no refrigeration and is cool in a heatwave.

The column is 26M (85'0") high with a skin of brick 10cm thick. It recirculates warm air from the roof down to each of the eight floors. All the windows to the Castle Block, on the right, have 'light-shelves' and deep white window sills. Both of these bounce daylight back into the interior of the room..

There is another reason for pursuing a solid roof.

Only a romantic imagines that key decisions are taken in a flowery field.

DECISIONS OCCUR IN BUILDINGS

Yet the energy-saving, resource-husbanding, ecologically-aware culture that more and more are working to achieve will not come into being unless those critical decisions are taken by minds in a state of 'ecological awareness'.

This need for an awareness, at the deepest levels of decision-making, is best achieved by situating the 'decisioning act' in a context that brings the main ecological realities, as defined by Science, to mind.

These are, in detail, very complex. So a medium is needed, that exists in parallel with the 'meeting room-space', which can both carry a load of detail as well as appeal powerfully to the emotions, while being capable of being completely ignored by a mind that wishes to focus elsewhere.

I have always believed that this could be achieved by enlarging the sociable, 'public', areas of buildings and then inscribing them with the facts of science.

But we were never allowed to prove, especially in new buildings that this could be done. The walls and ceilings had to be white..

JOA's project was thwarted, time after time, in Britain, being brought down at the last fence, (after we had done all the complex technical groundwork needed to build), by clients who were afraid of 'what the Bankers/papers/neighbours might say'.

In the end we had to leave Britain behind to achieve this 'proof' that public space could be employed to enhance public values. Part of our struggle, inside JOA, has been to understand why this was so.



Screen-printed galvanised steel. The metal background will oxidise, go grey and lose its sheen. Clear-lacquer will slow this down, but not for ever.



Stencilling using 1 M-long masks and spray paint. Stencilling is like printing, more colours more cost and all hand done unless an 1/10 scale original is enlarged by 'VideoSecco'.



Coloured plaster marquetry. A surface depression, made by a mould is filled with plaster of another colour. Plaster 'terrazzo' and a pattern suggested by 'potato stamps'



The 'clouds' pattern is stencilled on the background with an inlaid plaster panel placed over its centre.

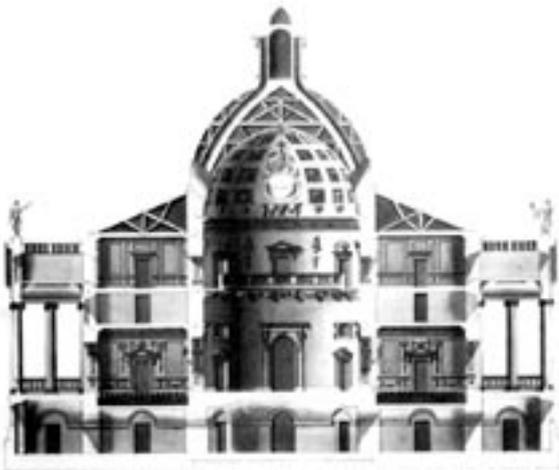
FOUR PATTERNS FROM JOA'S RESEARCHES



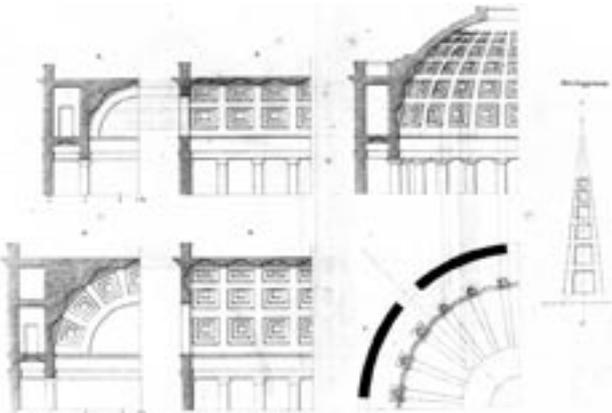
"VIDEO-SECCO" - JOA's name for computer-controlled, light-fast, acrylic spray paint onto fire-resistant, acoustically-transparent, canvas.



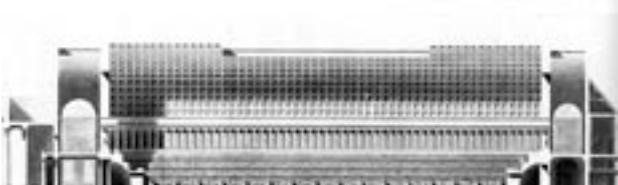
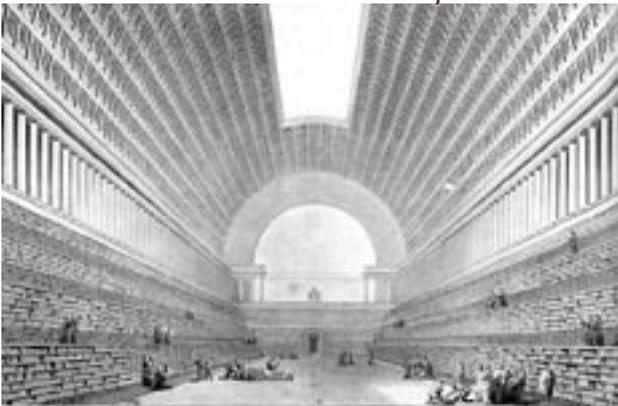
A beautiful, cheap, technology, scorned by 'fogey' snobs who knew nothing of Modernity.



Mereworth Castle, Colen Campbell's bi-axially symmetrical domed country house, was an intellectually pointless structure without the scripted interior whose invention was beyond the iconic powers of English litespace-culture.



Coffered vaults from the instructional textbooks of J.N.L.Durand (1760-1834). They lack the perspective distortions used by Hadrian in the Pantheon. Post-revolutionary Neo-Classicism aimed to mass-produce a civic Architecture, but it lacked the iconic tools needed to seed the novelties required.



A sublime solecism. The design for the Royal Library by E.L. Boullée. An Architecture on the point of ballooning into Naturalistic, glass-roofed vacuity - inflated by a sublime confidence in a Reason that ignored everything that anyone knew, at the time, of the iconic culture of Classical Architecture.

John Harris, in "The Palladians", 1981, Trefoil Books, reports that: "no drawings remain, which specifically describe interiors, in the collection of Colen Campbell, editor of 'Vitruvius Britannicus'.

Yet Campbell was a literary man, a publisher and a main intellectual and technical collaborator of Lord Burlington - the aristocratic initiator of early 18C English Neo-Classicism. Harris explains that Campbell, along with the others in this movement, "found it more difficult to achieve a Palladian manner for interiors than they did for exteriors... often bringing the elements of exterior architecture indoors".

To my more cosmopolitan eye, I would judge this English version of Classicism congenitally incapable of an intellectually sophisticated interior design.

As I will later explain in more detail - IT IS A SIGN OF AN ICONICALLY IMPOVERISHED DESIGN-CULTURE TO COFFER A DOME OR A VAULT.

A coffered ceiling is a 'trabica', which is a rafted interweaving of beams. It carries the 'cargo of the entablature'. To curve it upwards is to destroy the integrity of this powerfully 'conceived' structure.

But this excision of the screen of the 'rafted 'fereculum', or 'bearer', is, to an iconically capable culture, an advantage.

For it permits a view upwards into the 'coffer', or 'vault' (same meaning) wherein this precious 'cargo' can be displayed on the billowing screen of the ceiling.

One finds the same act of iconic destruction in the rational architecture of the post-revolutionary Durand, 100 years later. This 'muteness', common to the Classicism of English aristocrats and French Revolutionaries, was a main reason for the failure of Neo-Hellenism and the emergence of the Neo-Gothic.

But was this inability to 'publish' the common culture in a public place, in its most explicit form, an inscribed decoration of sculpture and painting with a known iconography, a mere cultural blindspot?

Or was it something less creditable, a desire for secrecy? Is not this 'iconic deficiency' only explicable, in Western cultures with huge intellectual achievements, as a reluctance to make explicit a public philosophy of which a culture feels such anxiety, or even shame, that its Establishments prefer to refrain from advertising it, even to themselves?

To find cultures more accustomed to the trials and tribulations of representing themselves and their governing public philosophy within their lifespan, so that it would be known to themselves, their neighbours, (and-should they be looking and listening) even the whole Cosmos,

ONE MUST MOVE SOUTH OF THE ALPS.

Here there still exists, even to this day, though much decayed, that original civic culture of the 'Polis'.

This is a 'polity' that extended the idea of the 'interior', as a tool to 'project' its occupants with no breaks in a chain of being from the bedchamber, via the 'domus', or house, to the 'agora' or public square. A city whose larger public places are built for its citizens to be projected into being, rather than for the mere circulation of vehicles, finds its 'great chain of being' completed at the final scale of 'all citizens -altogether'.

This final, totalising, civic scale of 'room' usually seems agoraphobically vast to Nordics, who seem to think of them (extending their own social paranoias) as filled with warring factions.

This is because Nordics, lacking the tradition of the Polis, have no conception of the amiable meaning of these public plazas. For those who know their function, they serve to unite, in spite of all differences, (which are never thereby eradicated - but rather exposed and demonstrated), in a single embrace, the lowliest with the highest citizen.

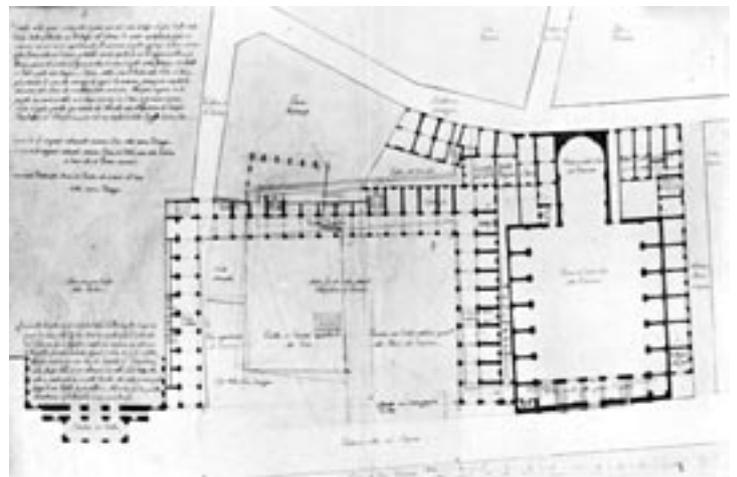
Such 'interiors' for such they are, can be found projected, and even built, all over the more southerly European states and their overseas extensions.

Some of the most socially inclusive were projected for Milan, a city that has, throughout its long history, always thought of itself as a State - and still does.

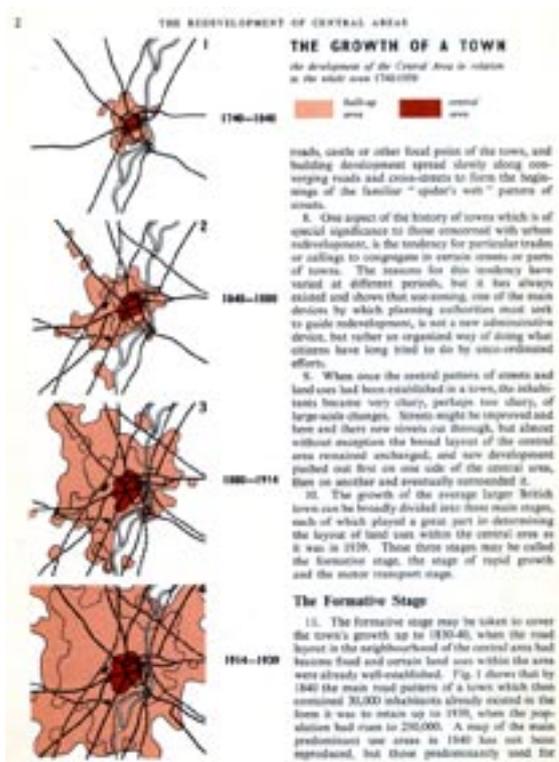
These urban spaces were to be conceived as public 'rooms', and 'illuminismo' Milan, a city that mixed the Nordic and Mediterranean cultures, used its necessary institutions, such as Customs Houses and Law Courts, to project what it was to appear together as 'Milanese' within such new 'rooms' that could be carved out of her inherited Mediaeval shambles.



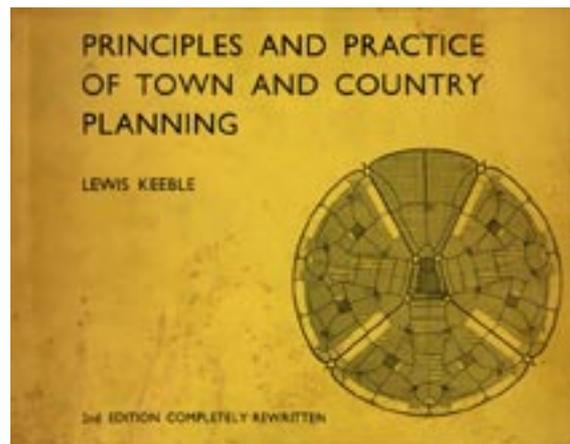
Human beings are naturally divided between diverse loyalties - to the self, parents, children, family, friends, firms, cities and nations - even vaster abstractions, of the nature of Sartrean 'projects', can possess our affections - such as ideologies which encompass Humanity, Nature, God, or the current one of 'All-Life'. Extreme metaphysical extension is empowering, but like all such intoxicants, must be articulated via sophisticated means if the user is not to perish at his own hand. The city, being physically, the largest artefact of man, has, in the more sophisticated cultures, always been used to partially mediate the 'metaphysical appetites' and render them both socially acceptable and practically useful.



A Nordic city would use the project for a Courthouse and a Customs House as a pretext for the erection of two separate monuments. A southern city, even one as Nordic as Milan, uses it to create, in the space between them, a 'room' for the Polis-City aimed at the epiphany, or 'enfleshment', of the 'Polis-tical' Citizens who are the chief reasons for the City to be built. The Architecture may be rudimentary, and somewhat inadequate to the purpose, but that is only a spur to invention and progress in this department of culture.



Urbanisation as a 'natural' phenomenon. The Urbanist as a pseudo-scientist. Planning as the amelioration of the 'inevitable' urban ills.



The major textbook on the new Town Planning was published, in 1952, by the Estates Gazette, the imprimatur not of the Architects, or the new Town Planners, but of the Land Agents.



The central space was a crack just wide enough for the Queen's Subjects not to lose touch with the shops on each side by which they could relieve themselves of their wages.

The project of a city designed to bring into being the 'modern citizen' might well have emerged as a British ethic, as this developed during the ascendance of Parliament, along with the rights of the individual and his property.

But when seen through the lens of city-planning, and the sort of Architecture a citizen needs to become 'enfleshed', it is arguable that the French Revolution, and then Napoleon's attempt to unify the monarchical absolutisms of Western Europe under his own, closed-down this avenue of culture in Britain - perhaps for ever.

Britain was the first Western state to be unified under a central government strong enough to take down the walls of her castles and cities. From that time, under the 16C Tudors, settlements strung out unconstrainedly. A visiting Frenchman, described British towns as "like pipes, stretching out into the countryside", and British row-house domesticity as "living like birds, always running up and down ladders".

Even so, a rigorous control of land-use was instituted in mid-20C Britain. Its official, quasi-legal technique was published, in the 'summer of 1947', in an HMSO document, that deserves to be better known, called "The Redevelopment of Central Areas" (the word 'city' was tabooed). Town-planners were mostly geographers by academic patrimony. The British town was understood as a 'natural' event formed by physical advantages and constraints upon diverse economic forces. The political aspect of urbanism was relegated to a 'history', which was always detached from present realities and presented as just one more of the 'objective forces' shaping the human lifespaces as if this was the outcome of a mainly inscrutable geophysical operation like the movements of mud and lava.

20C town planning in Britain was first theorised by the ancient profession of Surveyors who, as Andro Linklater so clearly demonstrates in "Measuring America", 2002 (Walker Publishing Co), agencied the enclosing of the communal lifespaces into the novelty of its ownership "in fee simple" - an idea of such attraction to humanity that it was amongst the main reasons for the spread of the English over the globe, the Englishing of the USA and of the victory of English as the contemporary global 'lingua Franca'.

Even when a theoretically-designed English town of 60,000 citizens was delineated, its centre was shown as artificially (or should one say 'naturally') irregularised into a picturesque confusion that projected a mere maze whose patent purpose was to avoid 'enfleshing' any constitutional, institutional and political structure by which the citizen understands, identifies, and participates in the government of his city, his lifespaces, and by so doing, his civil and civilised life.

The ambulance and fire stations were solicitously removed from the centre to the industrial area so as to be near the main source of their clients.

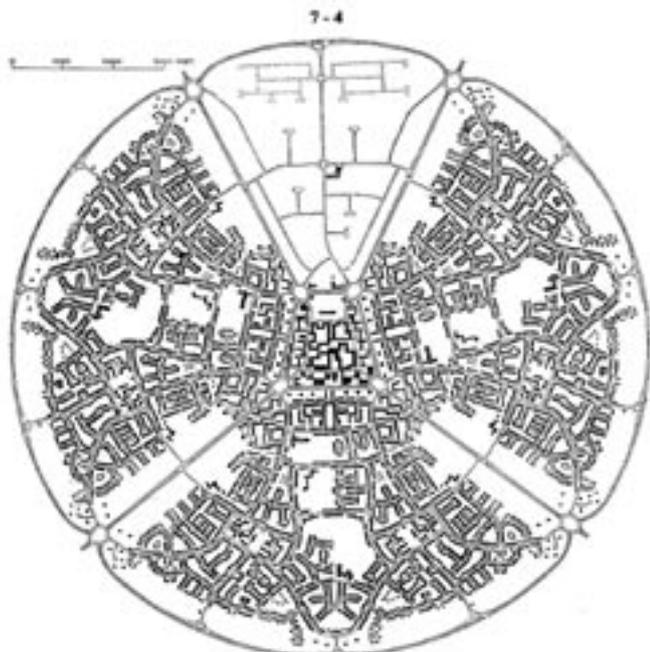


FIG. 15. The same town showing simply buildings and roads. Imaginary buildings have not been shown in the Industrial Area because of the impossibility of forecasting their number, size and disposition.

More urbanistically illiterate even than the abysmal works of Ludwig Hilberseimer, chief assistant to Mies van der Rohe, Keeble's Blobton is a Welfare State labour camp, focussed on the shops by which the workers are drained of their pennies. It sits like a cell of potentially dangerous 'workers' which might achieve critical mass and, infectiously, erupt outwards into the lifespaces of the gentry. This is prevented by ensuring that Blobton lacks the sequence of spaces by which the 'Republic of the Valley' enfleshes and projects the 'life of the city' as the fully explicated and self-conscious 'life of its citizens'.

Keeble's 'Blob-Town' of 60,000 was as artificially disordered in its areas of 'housing' as was its miserable 'centre'.

THE FORMALITY, WHICH EVERY 'LANDED GENTLEMAN' EMPLOYED TO PROJECT HIS PRESENCE FROM HIS 'COUNTRY HOUSE', WAS ABSOLUTELY DENIED TO THE INHERITORS OF THE 'PEOPLE'S CENTURY' AND ITS TWO ALL-CONSUMING, MASS-CONSCRIPTION, WARS.

A major social project of the 1950's, on which both right and left of the political spectrum agreed, was the destruction of Britain's 19c metropolitan inheritance and the dispersal of their embryonic citizens, inheritors of a gruelling 19c struggle for civic status, back into the Saxon slave-camps of rustic employment. To this end, certain minor, rustic, towns were induced, by the provision of a new sewage system, to adopt the title of 'New or Expanded Town' and to receive metropolitan 'overflow'.

Citizens of cities who had never owned cars, always lived in apartments, walked or cycled miles to work, and were accustomed to city life, instead of being raised to a proper level of urbane culture, were deliberately reduced to the lifestyle of a rustic peasant, from which their only escape was the suburban consumerdom of the bungaloid autopolis that has resulted from this flaccid politics.

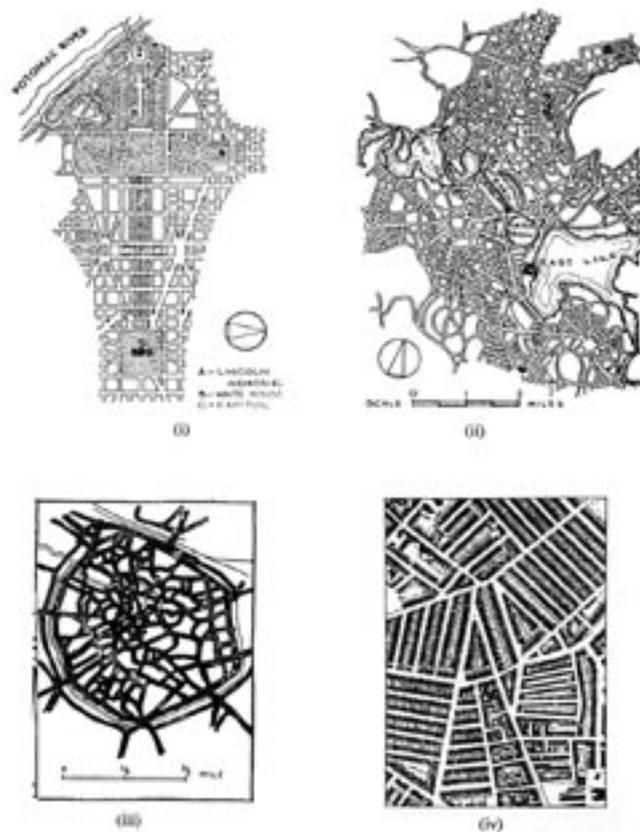


FIG. 16 STREET PATTERNS

- (i) The central part of Washington, an artificially created capital.
- (ii) Canberra. Another artificially created capital.
- (iii) Soest. Extreme formlessness of road system.
- (iv) Where gridiron street patterns oriented to converging main roads meet the result is chaotic.

One may note the despairing cry of the English 'urban naturalist' in Keeble's dismissal of the plan of Canberra as "yet another artificially-conceived" city. Neither Beaux Arts plan is a blueprint for a city of citizens. But that is a criticism of its function, rather than its formal 'artifices'. Canberra was designed by an Englishman, Thomas Mawson, who worked with his sons, John and Edward. Compared to the 20C plan of Thessaloniki by Ernest Hebrard, who understood how a Mediterranean city (Lecture 32: 'Lost World of Progress'), functioned from the economic to the metaphysical, via the political. Mawson's competing designs for the same city, burnt down in 1917, were carriage-drives through a cemetery.

PART ONE
THE ENGLISH VILLAGE

By *Thomas Sharp*

In this essay* I shall attempt to define some of the characteristics of the English village and to suggest some principles that should be considered in building new villages or in extending old ones.

It has sometimes been claimed that the village is a peculiarly English invention. Whether that is so or not, the English village is, I believe, among the pleasantest and most warmly human places that men have ever built to live in.

country. The Scott Report (1942)† was full of sound suggestions about it. And there is room for many changes. But this book is concerned solely with physical design, so I need only refer here to the broad social considerations which have determined the physical form and appearance of the village in the past, and which may do so in the future.

THE VILLAGE AS A SOCIAL ORGANISM

Yet Britain was a country which, by the 1930s, had fewer than 10% of its citizens employed in agriculture - the lowest fraction of any country on the globe. The urbanisation of Britain had progressed further than anywhere else.

It is true that the **Neo-Feudal ethical miasma** that descended on Britain AN (apres Napoleon) had ensured that her **huge 19C urban growth** had occurred with **maximum squalor and chaos**. But, seen from the 20C, her 19C cities were still **major infrastructural investments**.

The **British cultural and political Establishment, whose Victorian carelessness and ignorance concerning urbanity** had caused the 19C **lifespace shambles**, now turned its back on urbanity altogether and, from the 1940s onwards, promoted the 'English Village' as the **model of the Englishman's ideal and future lifespace**.

Thomas Sharp, author of "Anatomy of a Village", Penguin Books, 1946, was the literary advocate (*he would reject the title of theorist*) of this passion. He was encouraged by the canonic imprimatur of the time, Hubert de Cronin's Architectural Press, to publish 'Oxford Replanned', A.P. 1948. His **'villageyness'**, sadly, **once raised to a larger, civic, scale** than that of picturesque huddles of big-roofed, low-browed, squint-eyed cottages, **developed an infantile elephantiasis**. It can happen that the charm of children becomes boorish illiteracy when extended, without an intervening maturity, into adulthood.

Sharp's urban compositions extrude like rentable sausage-meat around streets trying their best to **wander in an aimlessly picturesque manner**. The effect is grimly compulsive, like a nanny taking a pram for a drive designed to rock her infant to sleep.

Wherever the planner mooned about in his little post-war 'limo' he was sure to find a **'roundabout'**. The ceaseless circulation made sure that the driver's inadequate brakes were never exercised. It also placed pedestrians at the greatest risk - thus freeing the streets of their less well-heeled presence.

Cities for walkers have always had gridded streets with traffic lights. Unwelcome in 'rustic bliss', they need some mental concentration to use.



Sharp's 'Age d'Or', site of the peculiar 'organic' rituals enacted by the uprooted middle classes, the confidential clerks of the imperial industrialisation, by which they might be re-digested into the body of the Island Albion.



Sharp the Sausageer lays-out his limp buildings like wet meat. Why do his street walls cling so compulsively to their grimly 'functional' spaces? What is their metaphor? Is this the architecture of "one of the pleasantest and most warmly human places that men have ever built to live-in"?



Sharp's vision of New Oxford is neither contextual, nor conceptual. It is umbilical. Everything about it is rigorously reasoned and sensibly scaled. The buildings are narrow enough to be daylight. They make public fronts and private backs. Only one dimension is irrational, its gastric leeching onto a traffic of automobiles that had not circulated since 1939 and that hardly anyone yet owned.

There was, after the War, an immense fatigue in the English establishment

The Empire was bankrupt. The Americans had won. The bomb had fallen, and threatened to fall again. Belsen was revealed in the rotten heart of Fascist Europe. The Russians loomed inscrutable and seemingly insane, bent on global empire under the bloodthirsty Stalin. Fascist Socialism had polluted 'high' Architecture and Communist Socialism had appropriated 'low, folk' Architecture.



Oxford looking like 'families day' at an RAF camp. Lots of asphalt and grass with the C/O's car dead centre.

What was left to Welfare Socialism except a quietly desperate, doggedly aniconic, contra-formal pragmatism.

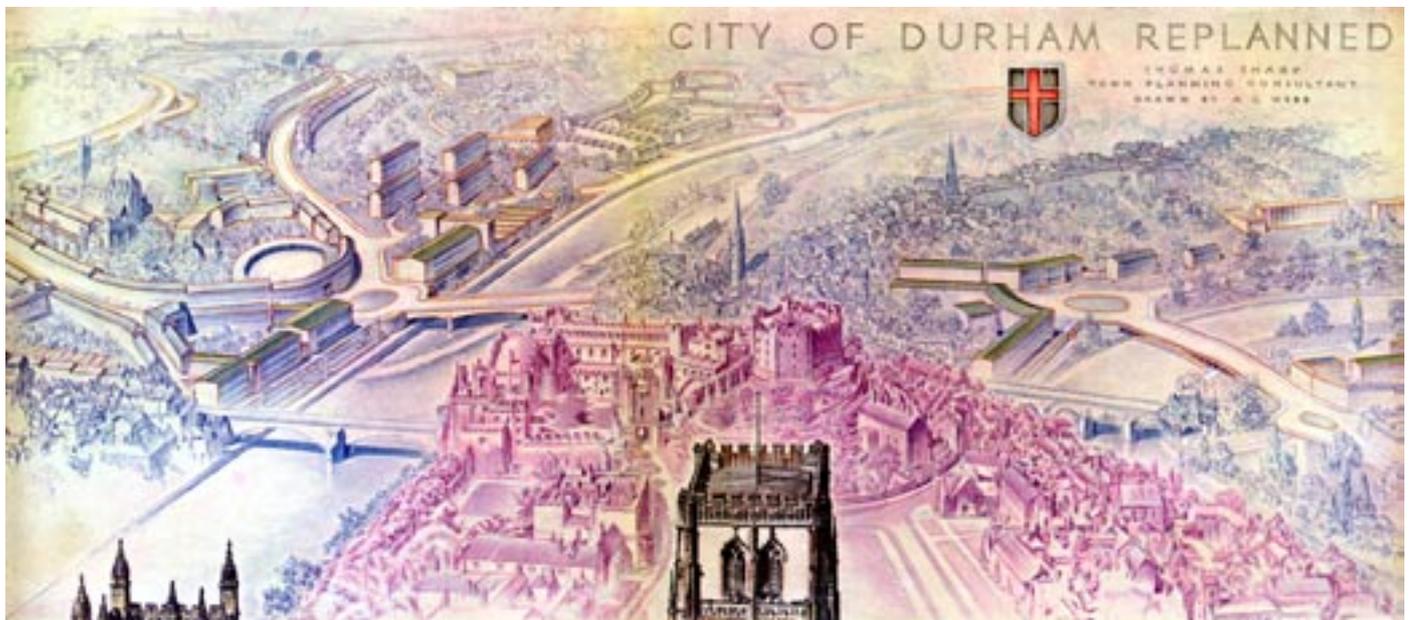
This unprincipled, floppy, topography flowed passively around a variety of carefully-registered 'obstacles'. These would have had to be invented, had not the infinite bounty of the national 'tales of yore' provided an infinite bounty of micro-historical trivia. England's long immunity from invasion provides her with the best archives in Europe. Less well be-scribed places, such as the USA, have to resort (under the guidance of the Deconstructivist Peter Eisenmann) to fictional accidents in order to smash-up any tendency to legible and coherent city-plans.



More sausage-art. Now fashionable again today, in the 'Noughties'. A railway station and autobus harbour doing their best to look artlessly gastric.

Sharp's version of the 'High', Oxford's (picturesquely deviant) main axis is 'terminated' by, yes, the urbanistic killer blow of a nice big 'roundabout'. This 'shrunk head' of a village green, usefully preserved from wandering pedestrians by the unending circulation of limousines, slips Oxford into 'suburban drive'.

From then on it is a purblind burrowing through the 'Picturesque' until the 'city of agriculture' Brits are pleased to call the 'country'.



The indefatigable urban sausage-maker toiled at the 'gratis' plans of many cities. Presented with the centres of cities burnt to the ground by the Blitz, The Architectural Press, competing with Architects like Louis de Soissons, in Plymouth, took what remained of the Beaux-arts, put it into a sack and beat it till all of its bones were broken.

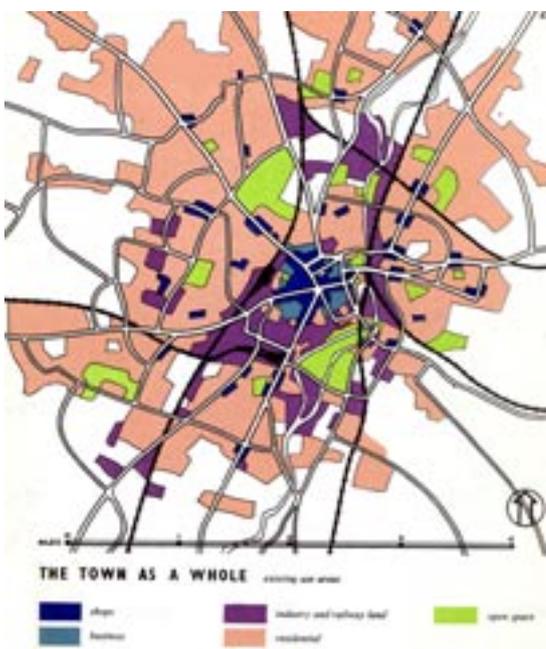
Illustrated below we see, as far back as 1947, the entire history of the 'planned' 20C British livespace. Slipshod Victorian commercial carelessness is on the left, with its remedy to the right. **The towns were to be 'villageated'.**

Housing was to be re-nucleated around local x-y shopping chromosomes which could be reached on foot. These neighbourhood 'cells' were corralled by new, faster, larger, roads with de-pedestrianised grass verges.

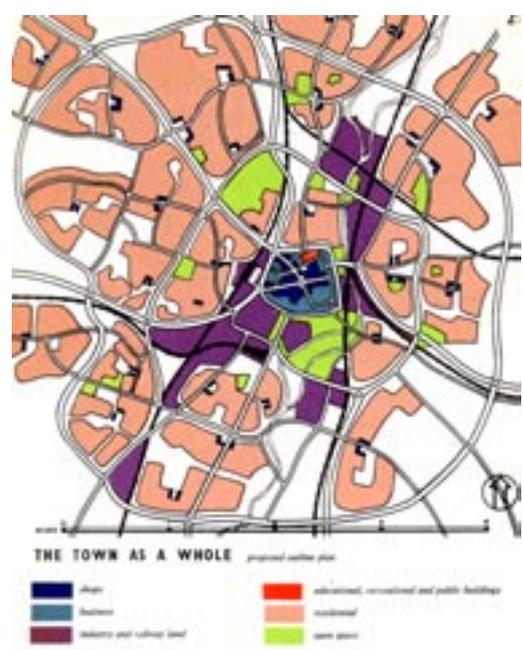
This was an idea first built in 1929, in Radburn, New Jersey. One can have no objection to the attempt to make a 'neighbourhood' safe for walking - especially for the young and the old.

But what of security on winter evenings, on these leafy pedestrian pathways (and the damply-dingy 'Radburn' road-underpasses)?

Where was the understanding of Jane Jacobs' "eyes on the street", or the microclimatic effects of abolishing the sheltering walls of terraced row-houses?



Rusticating 'Radburn'-planning only encouraged car ownership after which, under the gravitational tractor-beam of some huge 1980's out-of-town 'centre', first the local shop died, and then the 'old' town-centre itself.





Patrick Abercrombie, the intellectual force behind the foundation for the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (CPRE) was given the job of inventing the County of London Plan. In it he proposes that the Metropolis should be treated as a collection of villages - a puerile fantasy which continues through to the present day with the 'Urban Villages' movement. As a result of this foolishness, London's late 20C modernisation compares adversely to almost any Continental city. Only North American cities are more 'urbanistically challenged'.

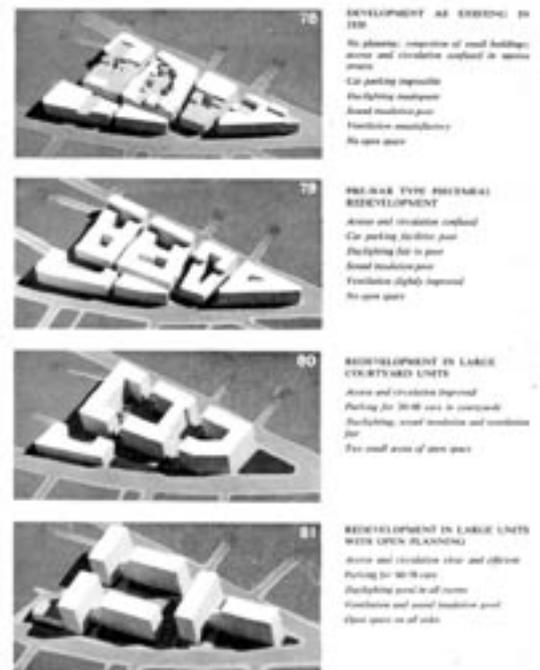
Undismayed by the unappetising output of Sharp's Sausage-factory, the British litespace-planning Establishment essayed a Plan for London. The Metropolis, also, was to be regressed to a state of village-ness. Abercrombie's design for London reduces it to a pebble-garden.

The most powerful city on earth, which had towed the inhabitants of this soft little island to world domination, was to be broken into putative townlets, ready for further de-metropolisation and re-rustification.

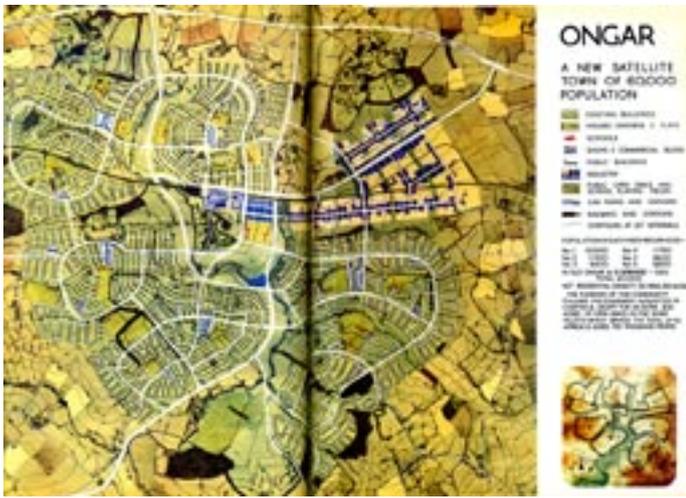
The architectural detail of this dismal purpose was, as with Sharp, strangely disconnected to its supposedly benign ambition. Whatever charm there was, in the Victorian city, of what Dickens called the "old and inconveniently-planned", was swept away and replaced with an architecture of elephantine dumbness.

15 car-parking spaces is a ludicrous 'planning gain'. Tall buildings are noisier than courtyarded ones as they are no longer shielded from the roar of traffic. No one talked of microclimatic windspeeds. The walker's world was ignored as were off-street mechanical movement systems.

CONTROL OF THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF BUILDINGS
ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF REDEVELOPING AN OFFICE AREA



But again something horrible happened to the vision of the villagey 'picturesque'. It developed a Beaux-Arts regularity (but without any of its 'Art-ificial' advantages!).



From the air, at a 'geographer's scale, the 'New Town' seems to vegetate happily into the green fields, threading its aimless circulation along the ancient hedgerows. It both 'grows naturally', and because of its consistent curvatures (taking a bend at 100 mph?) seems 'planned'.

Nearer the bone, the 'housing' has all of the appeal of a progressive Prussian 'Stalag'. Note the compulsive jiggling of the extruded 'blocks'. This is to both animate their formal inertia and prevent it assuming any congruent shape. For to recognise is to 'know'.

To show he was no mere geographer, doodling a map, Abercrombie added a **New Town** to his **Plan for London**.

People used to come from all over the World, during the 1950s, to visit the British New Towns. The administration of their construction was usually given to **retired general staff officers**. Not that one should blame the Army for Harlow and Stevenage. **One of the more effective handbooks on the rational production of Architecture was made, and used, by the Royal Engineers to build Architecturally civilised cantonments in India. They should have knapsacked them back to the 'old country'. It is the Architects who are to blame.**



Finally, face to face with the concrete reality of a human lifespaces, all is revealed. One may draw on maps and disguise one's purpose, and even lay-out toothpaste squeezes of housing, but elevating one's purposes into a 'view', using icons known to everyday experience, should be avoided by Planners who are not entirely sure of their deepest intentions. All of the dramatis personae are young women. One is suitably maternal, equipped with child and a version of the domestic animal so dear to the natives of the island. The other 'pet' is leashed to a single girl with a large bag. The single girl with dog was, in the 1940's (days of the comic strip 'Jane'), the sign of a 'pick-up'. Centre stage is the Ritz - a cinema paradoxically dedicated to the copious admission of sunlight (and murrilled with a 'tropical paradise'. The solitary shop-sign says 'Chemist'. The message is that the 'central area' is a cemetery, walled by bungaloid shops and floored in exposed concrete flags whose space is rendered unusable by large graves marked by soldierly ranks of tulips. The only reliefs are a possible pick-up, a few hours of escape at the 'flicks', or a trip to the 'pill-mill'. Not a Pub, or a cafe, or an autobus (let alone a flying monorail) is in sight. Not even alcohol is offered to dull the pain of New Ongar. All this was 3 years after WWII, at the threshold of the 'Modernists' greatest opportunity to build anew.



The early 20C revived all of the terrors of the early 19C. The masses were seen to be out of control once more, led by demagogues of the right and left.

Politics had to be reduced to the simple provision of welfare to an effectively de-politicised population whose impulse to 'foreground' themselves had to be diffused and thwarted by subtlety and subterfuge rather than the outright, imperial, violence that had rebounded upon their employers in two terrible wars.

These four plans show the early 20C town and its planned remedy. The left shows the 'old' town and the right the 'new'.

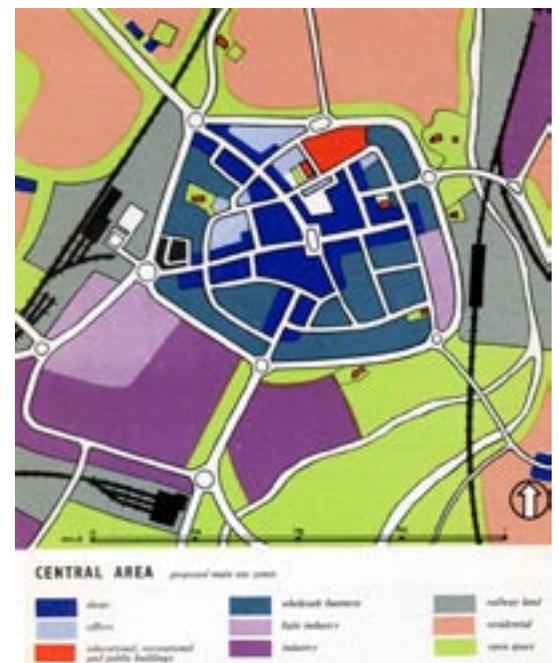
The basic socio-political strategy was to destroy any pretence that the 'city' was an instrument which was created to project the 'citizen'. The 'planned' 20C English town would have neither productive work, nor any 'workers' living within its new wall of a 'ring road' boundary.

The town was to be reduced to a 'service-centre' for the projected suburban 'village-isation' of the Kingdom.



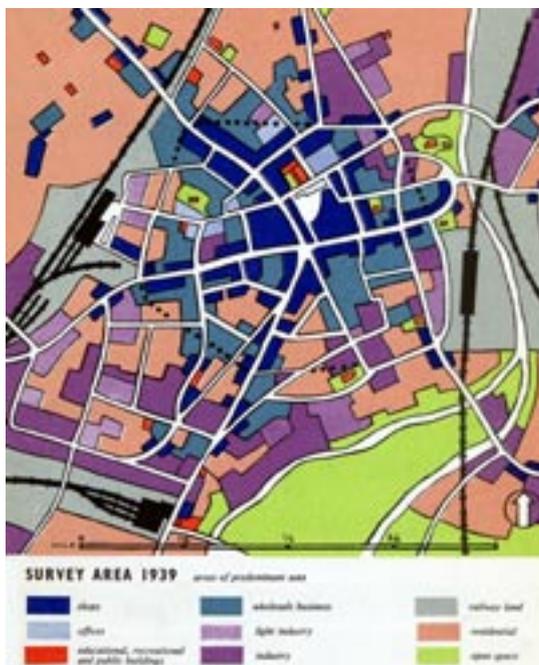
The late 20C, post war, Town-Planned, English 'Central Area'.

The FIRST ACT was to remove all 'central area' housing. This was assumed to be lower class because only the poor lived in cities. The SECOND was to carve a ring-road through these demolished houses. The THIRD was to banish 'physical work' (known as 'industry') to the outer regions - along with their population of 'workers'. The FOURTH was to reserve the 'central area' to the post-war Administrative Class - that Meritocracy of clerks who could pass written exams, who would PLAN the 'politics-free' future. The FIFTH was to fill the rest of the central area with car parks and those destinations sought by the consumers rich enough to own such vehicles. These were the shops that could service the 'consumer lifestyle' of the victorious USA. Note the lack of any connection to the railways and the focus of the plan on, yes, a nice little roundabout!



The early 20C, pre-war, 'centre' of an English Town.

The towns of England were undesired and unplanned by the feudal rustics of the Saxon and then Norman landed class. They were scrawny infants born in the Dark Age civic desert created during the 1000 years that followed the departure of the Classical civilisation of the Mediterranean. These disordered huddles of small structures formed as labyrinths within which escaping villeins could hide from their serfdom in the feudal 'countryside'. Once rooted, their anarchic governance lent themselves to the easy and rapid exploitation of the raw commerce brought by industrialisation in the form of the three railway stations that bracket the 'old centre'. The 20C saw such small towns entirely destroyed (as social entities) by bombing, by automobiles, and by 'welfare state', consumerist, anti-'polis-tical', suburbanising 'land-use planning'.





The Festival of Britain 1951 projected the disembodied, emasculated Architecture of the 'central area', mere museum vitrines fore-grounding saleable 'products' like 'trains'.



Any Architecture of a cultured legibility was erased. The new 'central area' was made of glass relieved by ephemeral graphic billboards.



The Haymarket street in Stockholm was the model for avant-garde British 'central area' shopping. The 'architecture' is entirely vacant of any nameable identity save that of a brutally material practicality. What to do, or think, on this bridge surrounded by this deliberate erasure of all narrative legibility in the public lifespaces?

The traditional city had many overlapping foci of activity. A well-planned city, such as those realised outside the British mainland throughout the previous centuries and the early 20C (as I will duly show), brings these foci into a relationship, each to the other, that is designed, amongst other things, to reveal the 'political economy' of his city to the citizen so that he, and she, participates in it as that fully-rounded person which it was always the purpose of the institution of the 'polis' to achieve.

The only ambition of the 'central area' of the new post-1945 British planning system was to induce a sense of confused, and directionless, excitement in the Subject of the State so as persuade him, and especially her, that all of their ontological itches and ills could be assuaged by shopping for that transformation of being which is the sad and futile ambition of the 'mass-consumer'.

The means to this un-civil lifespaces were the 'picturesque' planning of mazy street footprints allied to an architecture that imposed a total prohibition on any symbolic lexicon save that of a

brutally material pragmatism.

The shopper's mind, starved of any alternative, was forced to focus on the vitrines and their alluring contents, whose purchase with his and her wages would then turn the wheels of the economy and keep idle hands in 'full employment'.



The 'architecture' of the 'Edinburgh University' 'shopping precinct' is projected, in 1959, by P. Johnson-Marshall. Denatured of all architectural culture, the shopper floats above the city. Uprooted from reality in a fantasy manipulated only by un-nameable coloured planes, she is guided through the shifting sands of 'personal style' by peremptory slogans. Windspeeds double on roofs - more evidence of a fundamental illiteracy regarding the urbane climate. In Scotland where one even pays cabbies from inside the Taxi!

The Architecture used to build the New Planned lifespaces of the post-'45 world merely extended the tired 19th classes of

'genre and style'

condemned by Aby Warburg at the beginning of the 20C.

The central area was occupied mainly by shops and offices. They would be styled to be in the 'modern' genre.

This version of modernity cheapened every ambition so as to suit the purpose of administering a public lifespaces that was **deliberately prohibited** from its traditional ambition of both raising the spirits or making sense of their public culture to its citizens.

'Offices' would be hard, vacuous crystals where everything could be reduced to numbers and office-politics played behind the impenetrable veils of statistics.

The 'bad faith' of these Welfare Socialist' Planners knew that the automobile was going to overwhelm all public, social and urbane space, for they regarded the USA, and nothing else, as the future. All that they could offer was systems of 'elevated pedestrian movement'.

Automobiles were to take over the human lifespaces but walkers could still moon around in the urban attic looking down on the earth that man had lost to the ethos of 'consumption'.



The physical wasteland of the 'Barbican' Area of the City of London after the blitz of the '39-'46 war. Cripplegate church is to the left. Time for a fresh start.



Cripplegate Church can be seen to the rear of this model of the proposed development, which was largely built. The road running diagonally across the slab-block offices was titled 'Route 11'. The blue-blooded Socialists of the New World of Welfare regarded street-facades as unacceptably 'bourgeois'. But they did accept that the automobile was going to overwhelm the urbane lifespaces. So the best they could do was to preserve the tattered remnant of the 'walker's world' as some concrete 'overhead walkways'.



The original from which descended all of the British, indeed the Global, post-WWII office rent-slabs, was the sub-Mies Lever House of Skidmore Owings & Merrill's Gordon Bunshaft. It hit just the right note of Architecturally illiterate pop-proletarian brutality.



A drawing of an 'elevated walkway' from the hand of the influential Professor Sir Leslie Martin. The rags of the walker's world hanging from a concrete clothes line.

The extreme contrast between high and low buildings destroys the sheltered streets created by a city of uniform building heights. The wind is pushed over the tops of the UNIFORM buildings, so lifting it high-up and away from the street. The slabs work like sails, funnelling the wind down into street-level vortices churning (strangely), at TWICE the rooftop speed.



Like a globalised version of Chinese Whispers, Moor House, the first of the Route 11 rent-slabs, even managed a subtle cheapening of the original Bunshaft worker-silos. (Note the 'elevated walkway' at its base).



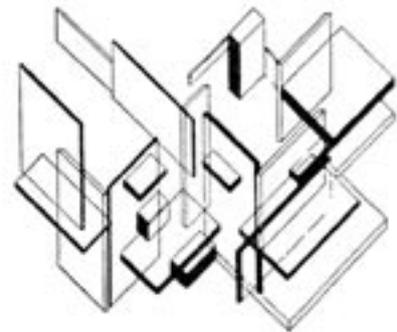
The miracle of the USA is the cultural melting-pot that mingles many cultural strains to produce ideas in a way that is as mechanical as the North but as humane as the South. This illustration was published in a 1913 Scientific American before the 'civic valley' of Sant Elia, arguably inspiring one of the most famous drawings of the Modernist canon.



The compulsive paranoia of Ludwig (existenzminimum) Hilberseimer, longtime acolyte to Mies (also at IIT), reveals the fact that the city, as a 'polis' that projects its citizens onto a metaphysically cosmic stage, is a foreign institution in Nordic culture. Northern Europe badly needs, in this department of lifestyle, whatever cultural miscegenation it can obtain from south of the Alps. One lesson it could learn is about microclimatic design.

REBUILDING CITIES

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EDINBURGH
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Van Doesburg's drawing shows walls, floors and ceilings were being turned, by being blasted apart and whirled in space, into nihilistic 'pure planes' with which a planner could juggle to 'rationalise' anything.

Nothing describes better the architectural bankruptcy of the architects who 'worked' Britain's new 20C City-Planning culture than the use of Van Doesburg's exploded axonometric as the iconic image for Percy Johnson-Marshall's book on post war city-design. The power of Cubist composition gives a synaesthetic satisfaction to its practitioners. But what larger end does it brilliance serve?

By the mid-20C the Architecture of the vertically-stratified city had sunk down to a nadir from which point it could not hope to appeal to any human being with the power to say "No".

Normal humans prefer their lifespaces to have **more narrative content** than these grey granite headstones to a necropolis populated by 'suits' in homburgs.

The effort and collective discipline needed to 'plan comprehensively' was **never going to be inspired by this so-called Modernist Rationalism.**

**IN CONTRAST TO THE 'CENTRAL AREA STYLE' ,
that for houses was to be 'Old Traditional'.**

Housing was to be removed from the rump of the city denoted its 'centre' and corralled into quiet, windswept, 'housing estates'.

This exclusion from work and government, let alone shopping and recreation, prevented 'housing' from fulfilling its previous responsibility for building-up the URBANE BODY of the city with its public and private spaces.

Housing, in the post-war Planning, of the 1950s, was intended to cleave to the real business of the post-war socio-political project. 'Housing' was to provide sufficient space on which to accumulate the millions of fantasy micro-worlds of the ex-urbanised, politically-excluded Consumer.

The empowering myth of this project was the 'golden age' of the Island Albion: a rustic idyll already enfolded in a thousand 19C 'country estates', big and small, which were supported in rural isolation by the dividends that flowed from Britain's global empire.

The rich had already been building their detached villas in the Alpine-Frankenstein style for the hundred years since the inception of 19C Neo-Feudalism.

By-pass Stockbroker Tudor had brought the 'rustic gentry style' down to the mass-housing of the 1930s. Now the WELFARE STATE was to extend the 'house as theatre of shop-borne fantasies' to the monofunctional estates it directly constructed.

Finally, in the late 20C, with the transition of 'housebuilding' from public to private agencies, the separation of 'housing', (the main 'function' of any city), from all others, cemented the final reduction of the city into the sub-urban ghettos of monofunctional land-use so clearly prescribed as the future lifespace of Britain by "The Redevelopment of Central Areas".



The 'picturesque planning' of old towns like Dedham was the genre-model prescribed for 'planned' housing. The wartime streets were pictured free of automobiles - and walkers too.



Yet the most 'anciently picturesque' effect that Architects like S. Colwyn Foulkes, in Beaumaris, North Wales, could achieve was nothing more 'crookedly natural' than a mechanical crescent of white cottages separated by wide asphalt roads and cement paths. The attempt to 'fake' the picturesque has been repeatedly attempted from Camillo Sitte, who failed to invent its theorisation, to Peter Eisenmann, today, who purposely fakes the 'accidents' which Sitte called 'Factor X'.



The green and pub of Biddenden, in Kent. Can the church, shop, duck-pond and bus-stop be far away? The rustic idyll has wonky walls and crooked roofs, mossy pavings, grindingly low ceilings and tiny windows. There is only one automobile with two Gents in Macs and Trilbys. It survived the 20C quite intact. Nothing ever came close to displacing it as the 'native' 'housing' style.



'Kites Close', Harlow, (A.G.S.Fidler, Architect) shows what happens when the walls and roofs are not undersized to deliberately sag (as they were by Clough Williams Ellis in his Italianate holiday village in North Wales). The Municipal Engineer administers regulations governing health and safety which includes access for vehicles of all sorts, from removal vans to fire-engines, making public spaces too large for cottages to be "close".



In the village of Lenham, in Kent, every surface is subtly distorted away from the flat planes of a new construction. As the ideal model for the new 'planned' housing estates, vacant of 'mixed use', it is a foolish fancy at best and a deliberately calculated lie at worst.

The 'old village' pleased the architectural establishment because its purposes were 'honestly hand-to-mouth'. It asked no 'big questions'.

But what is Gibberd doing, being so formal with a public space in a new Town? By physically espousing the politics of rustication, yet employing an Architectural nihilism Gibberd silences thought (and opposition).

These Architects, of the Welfare Establishment, by refusing any 'story-line' to reconstruction, betrayed the Modernist project.

The Planning Officer of Huntingdon, a small, but famous, country town, (now eviscerated - as are they all - by socially destructive 'central area' redevelopment) once said to me, as I was trying to build an estate of three-storey terrace houses ranged around garden squares, as in London, "John there is only one sort of house in 1960's Britain: the Bungalow. Usually it is on the ground. But sometimes we need a vertical feature. Then we stack them up and call it a 'point-block'".

This was not the premature dawn of 'loft living', it was only an occasionally, and supposedly picturesquely, verticalised Bungalowopolis.

THE HOUSE-CULTURE OF THE GREEN-MACHINE CITY WAS YET TO BE INVENTED.



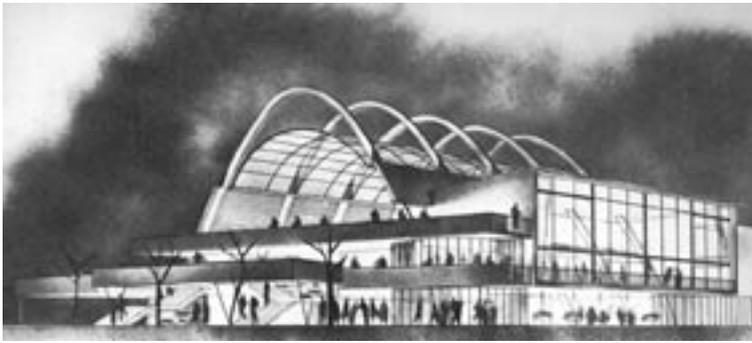
The Lawn, Harlow, by Frederick Gibberd was the reality of post-war 'picturesque' composition - meaningless planes float about in the architects imagination - but their proper intentions have been prohibited. A strict formality reigns - but to what purpose?



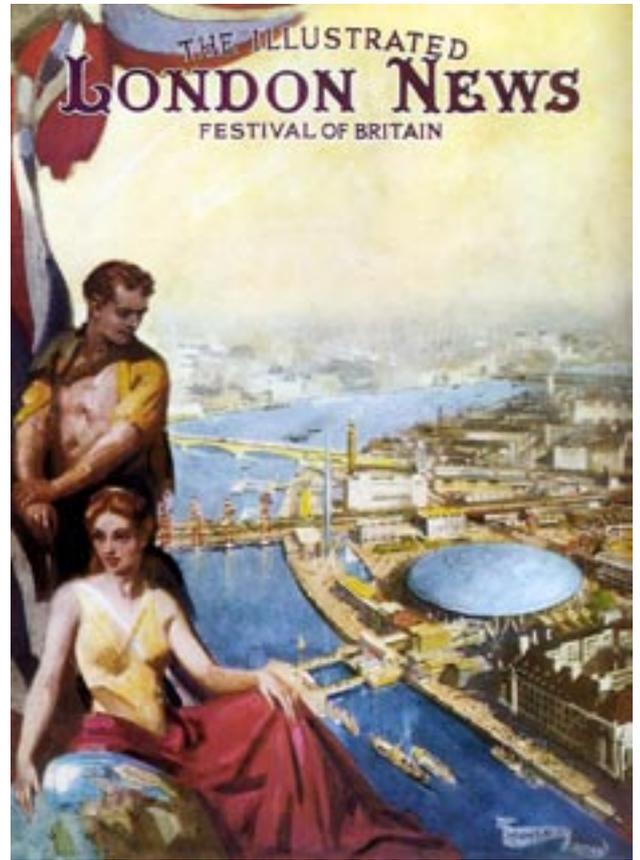
Alive to the possibility of what later became the 'heritage building industry', the didactic 1951 Festival of Britain made fun of the 'antique wonky rustic' model of dwelling. But, faute de mieux, 'wonky' won in the end! City life is alien to Nordics and must be ordered to be specially attractive if it is to persuade them to adopt it. Urbanity depends upon house-culture.



What was this bombed-out Londoner thinking as he looked at his future lifespaces? Failing anything more palatable than a worker-silo, the developers, 40 years later, were dynamiting these point-blocks. Their erstwhile tenants had become owner-occupiers of new rustic-wonky villas in the 'country'.



Gordon Tait's 1951 Pop-Monument 'Rocket' restaurant that became the Waterloo BEA terminal and one of 'the' places to see-and-be-seen. A more urbane composition than the Dome.



The A-Bomb had fallen. Could flying saucers be far away? A husky worker and a puffy-eyed Model part the (Royal) curtain on the luxury of the 'Dome of Discovery', a New-model Welfare-State 'public building' that radically shredded urbane continuity.



The tragedy of post-war Modernism is that it had been rendered paranoid by the War and was determined to neither see, hear or speak no evil. It failed because of nothing more edifying than the purest boredom - an endemic affliction of all mammals, but especially of humans.

Out of this dry, grey, and emasculated Welfare-State 'high culture' came the birth, 'ex- utero,' of the mass-art of 'pop'.

The '51 Festival 'Pattern Group' promoted a view of Nature via an iconography of Science - (molecular crystallography in this case). Instead of being able to use this authentically modern decoration as a means to a decipherable 'surface-scripting', the late 20C taboo on 'ornament' forced architects to inflate this iconography into whole buildings.

(The 'Skylon' was a crysalline 'shard' and the Dome a molecular 'blob'. They copied the Trilon and the Perisphere of the New York World's Fair of 1939). So much for 'originality'

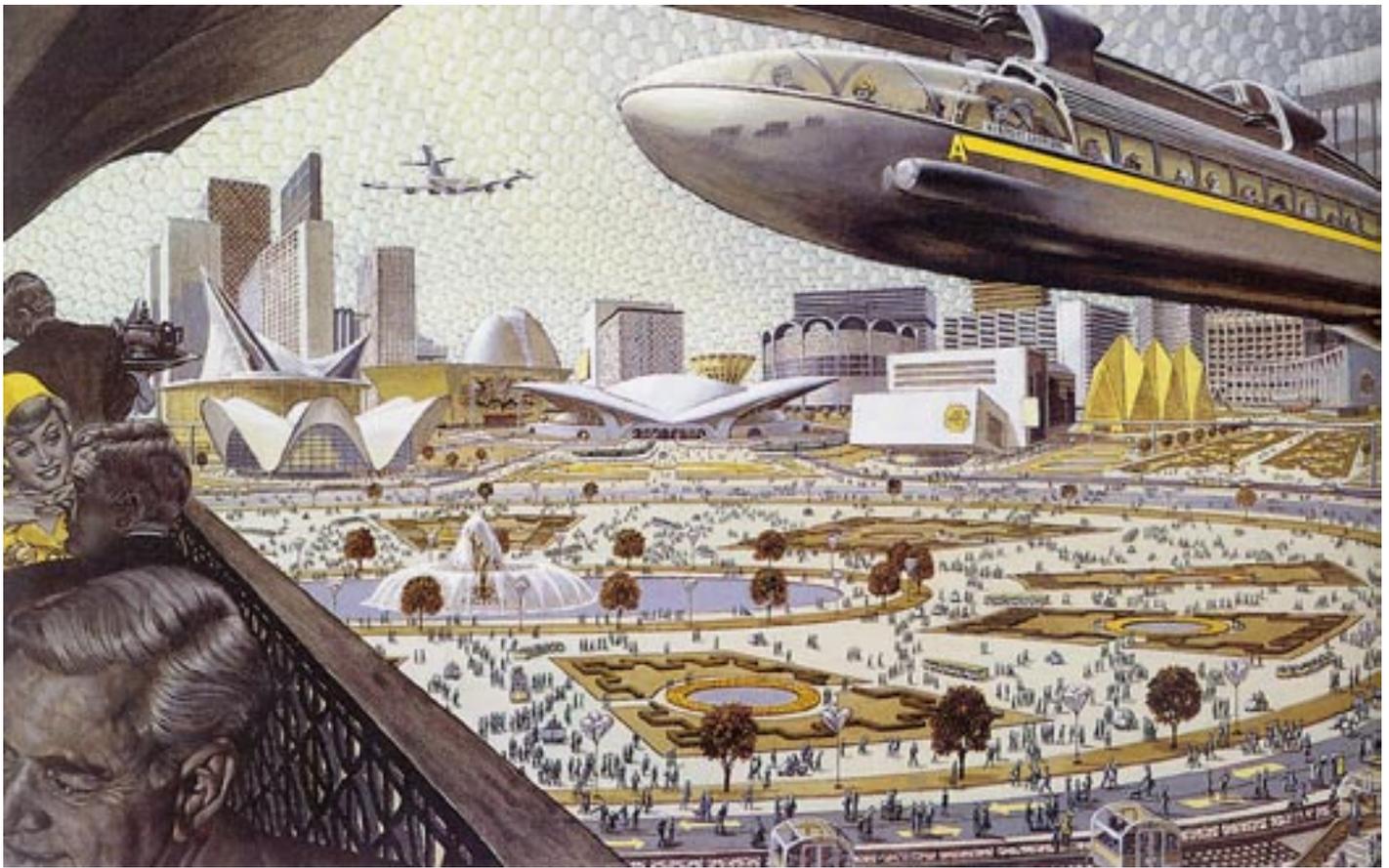
To overcome the stupefying mental inanity of a city made of the coloured plates of 'stuff' that was now the new architectural constitution of the slab-blocks and point-blocks into which the 'ordinary' 99% of the city had been rendered, the Planner turned to the 'other' land-uses, of a mainly 'philanthropic' sort.

The Library, the Hospital, and the Art Gallery, the High School and the University, the City Hall and the Courts once performed the role, every one of them, of canonically 'civic' structures.

The urban function of these 'public monuments' was to project the architectural culture of the whole city in a richer and more powerful way than could be afforded by houses and workplaces. Such buildings were foregrounded by the formal, ex-Beaux-Arts city-planning found, prior to the mid-20C, everywhere on the globe except Britain.



The urbanistic illiteracy of the New Planning caused them to overlook a quality of sloping roofs - that they become invisible at ground level.



'Clean Air Park', drawn by Fred Freeman and published on June 21 1959 for the cover of *This Week* combines several existing 'Signature Architect' buildings, by Eero Saarinen, SOM, Corbusier, etc. all under a Buckminster Fuller dome. Some of the Architects wrote to complain at being corralled into such an illiterate, kitsch, vision. But this was true 'central area' architecture: a temple to suburbia without a vestige of urbanity.



The lesson was still unlearned 50 years later by the Millennium Dome. The compensation was a 'vertical feature' - the 'Skylon'. The 'American Strip', with its skysigns and windowless sheds, was 'Made in Britain'.

The suburbanisation and rustication of the metropolitan fabric left Public buildings with no 'urbanity' to rehearse, recharge and signify.

Tabooed from their millennial role of being 'first amongst equals', they found themselves the **decapitated flowers** of a domestic trunk that no longer needed to bear them in order to grow and prosper into a **thriving suburban jungle**.

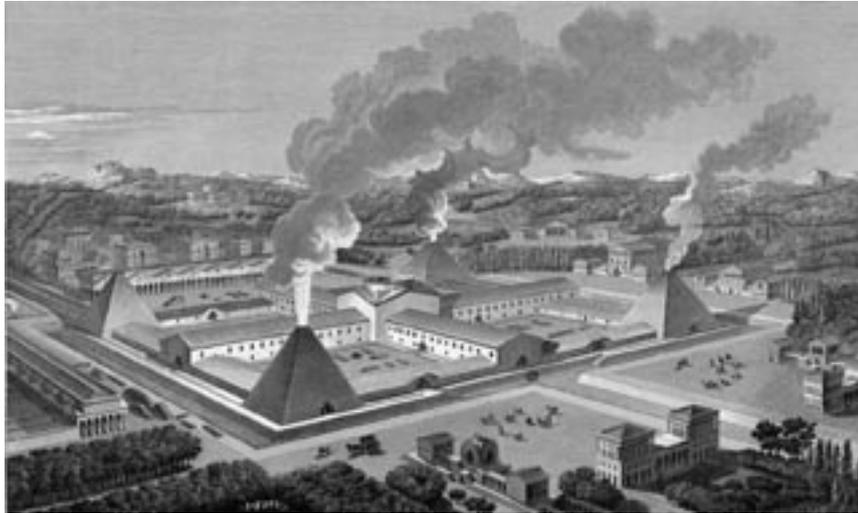
They found themselves '**liberated**' from the constraints, as well as the **empowerments**, of supporting a whole that was greater than its parts. The urban monument found itself 'set free' to follow the **conceptual trivia** of 'artistic' fashion.

For architects this '**severing**' represented a liberation from the constraints of having to participate in a whole that was greater than any of its parts.

Thus were born the '**Signature Architects**' of the late 20C, with their ambition to emulate **Fine Artists**.

A class of undergraduate Architects at Rice University, were asked, at the end of the century: "would you prefer to be an Architect, or an Artist?" **They all replied "an Artist"**. One can hardly blame the Professors. They administer an '**Architectural**' culture that has, for a half-century, had nothing to do with '**Architecture**' at all. **But they should still have committed ritual hara-kiri**.

Post-1945 Architecture had its emasculated 'polite modern' style' for the 'genres' of Shopping and Offices in the Central Area. It had a radically anti-modern 'old rustic village' style for the genre of 'housing'. Its Signature Architect Fine-Art Architecture style gave light relief from the grinding dullness which was felt to be appropriate to the charitable housing of the welfare sector, or the equally compulsive 'economy-style' of real-estate developers careful not to excite their bankers by any resort to a cultured intelligence in their designs.



The 'Foundry' by Claude Ledoux is a rare image in which Neo-Classicism attempted a vision of the 'worker's world'. It is a measure of the altogether wasted and misunderstood qualities of Beaux Arts spatial composition that so infernal a world seems entirely urbane!



Re-inventing the production-line workers into obedient robots ignored the fact that many human beings enjoy making things - especially if they are beautiful and useful.

But there was **one genre** for which the Brave New World of 20C Planning **never invented a style.**

It never managed anything for industry.

'Planning' removed the homes and workshops of the 'Workers' from the city. So feared were this class, at the peak of 20C Communist expansion across Europe and the Far East, that the Labour Party, which ruled Britain from 1946 until 1951, refused to give their own constituency - the locus of the 'industrial hand-workers' - their own canonic image.

Physical work was removed from cities out to disregarded territories termed Industrial Estates. Lewis Keeble, polymath of the New Planning, refrained from even trying to invent one of his jumbled iconic shorthands to describe the lifestpace of Homo Faber: the 'maker'. The 'industrial area' of his model blob-town was a blank.

Then the word 'industry', like the function itself, was retired. It was succeeded by Bristol's aseptic 'Aztec (A-to-'Z'-Tech) Park' (buried in 100,000 daffodils) and London Airport's Stanhope Park (patrolled by ducks). Work, in the newly-minted 'Business Parks', became Business. It lost its cult of 'making'. There was also achieved a tragi-comic elision of meaning between a Country Park and a Car Park that adequately summarises the architectural squalor of a public realm consisting of sitting on a wheeled sofa that one must navigate across a rustic shambles between one be-shrubbed parking-lot and the next.

The late-20C extension of 19C genre-aesthetics, stultifyingly successful everywhere else, failed to provide a ready-made 'style' for the places where 'work' was carried-on. There were neither nostalgic references to a 'smokestack style', nor a 'Brave New World' aesthetic of robots. No iconography for 'industry' emerged during the ten years after WWII.



Distanced by the Painter's art, it is surprising that Lowry's eye did not find a nostalgic mirror in a Socialist neo-smokestack Architecture. Perhaps even this slight reference to reality was too strong for the relentless suburban charm-offensive of the Welfare iconography.

AFTERWORD for the THIRD LECTURE: 'THE END OF URBANITY'.

The 1945 Labour Administration was voted-in by a nation that had been promised Reform in return for the destruction and cruelties of WWII. The mood of the electorate, the blitzed cities and the fractured economy offered the chance for some radical thinking.

This was provided by a slim book, now lost to the memory of all Architects, dated, poetically, "The Summer of 1947". It fixed the pattern of the rebuilding of Britain. So 'radical' was it that it dismissed the whole of 9,000 years of Architectural and Urbanistic precedent. The planning of London, the capital of the bankrupt Empire on which 'the sun never set', was prescribed, in detail, by Patrick Abercrombie, the Chairman of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England. Britain suffered a wartime 'Arts Establishment' who advised, like the philosophers of Brobdignag, that when one 'died for one's country' it meant the literal, sodden, climax-vegetation of the Island. From this stemmed the 'London of Villages' and the 'architecture' of boxy hut-sheds, of all sizes and shapes, from the Festival Hall to the Pelli Tower at Canary Wharf, that has always constituted the 'official version' of the second half of the 20C. What was absolutely tabooed, within this villegiate squalor, was 'Architecture'.

Everything that had supported the industrial economy of Britain and the Empire was systematically destroyed by a 'consensus politics' whose agreement remained uncannily total on the destruction of Urbanity, whether Domestic, Industrial, Public or Private. Nothing was to be left of the great 19C cities except their 'Centres'. The reality of life, that is to say industry and domesticity, instead of being made the foundation for a unitary City of Citizens, was fractured into the 'planned' pseudo-villages of British sub-urbanity. Excised, fortified and bounded by a new 'ring-road', the shrivelled rumps of the great cities that Britain's violent, 200-year, industrialisation had created were to be reduced to 'administrative and shopping complexes'. Fortified by multi-storey car parks, they received the diddy little autos manufactured by the futureless English motor-car industry. With these the 'rusticated' subjects could carry their flimsy shop-trash back to reify the project of a universal Countryside Consumerdom to which the post-'45 'consensus-politics' had condemned them. Finally the 'Administration' went into digital cyberspace and 'Shopping', even, left the 19C city-ruins for 'out of town' Centres. The Banishment to Rusticity became total. Britain became, in the 21C, a Car Park of Shopbound Saxon Serfs.

The Country-House-Socialist Architects and Town-Planners of this pusillanimous post-WWII urban ruination remain only partly known. Whoever they were, they, and their illiterate lifespace-design-culture, deserve the utter infamy into which some industrious historian, if Britain can afford such luxuries in the future, should cast them. Heads should roll.

