ORDINARINESS and LIGHT

The Victorians had to invent new types of building and they were bored with Georgian London. The jump in space-scale must have required superhuman effort, and the invention of a new style at the same time is too much to have expected of them.

The spate of building immediately prior to 1927 was an even more violent disruptive change.

The prestige and cash went to the mammoth stores in Oxford Street; the original West-end became virtually a dirty crack between two cities.

London was cracked open. The first suburbs were abandoned for later and later ones as people jockeyed for position next to the fields.

There now awaits a belt of tired property which should be entirely stripped away, for the re-identified city to be created on its vast acreage.

These new homes and work places would form the renewed city walls, a vantage point from which to watch the suburbs of semi-detached houses shrivel and die.

We have to try to re-identify man with his environment – to arrive at an idea of city in which every building, every lamppost and street sign will seem part of a predestined harmony of which man is part.
All else is futile.

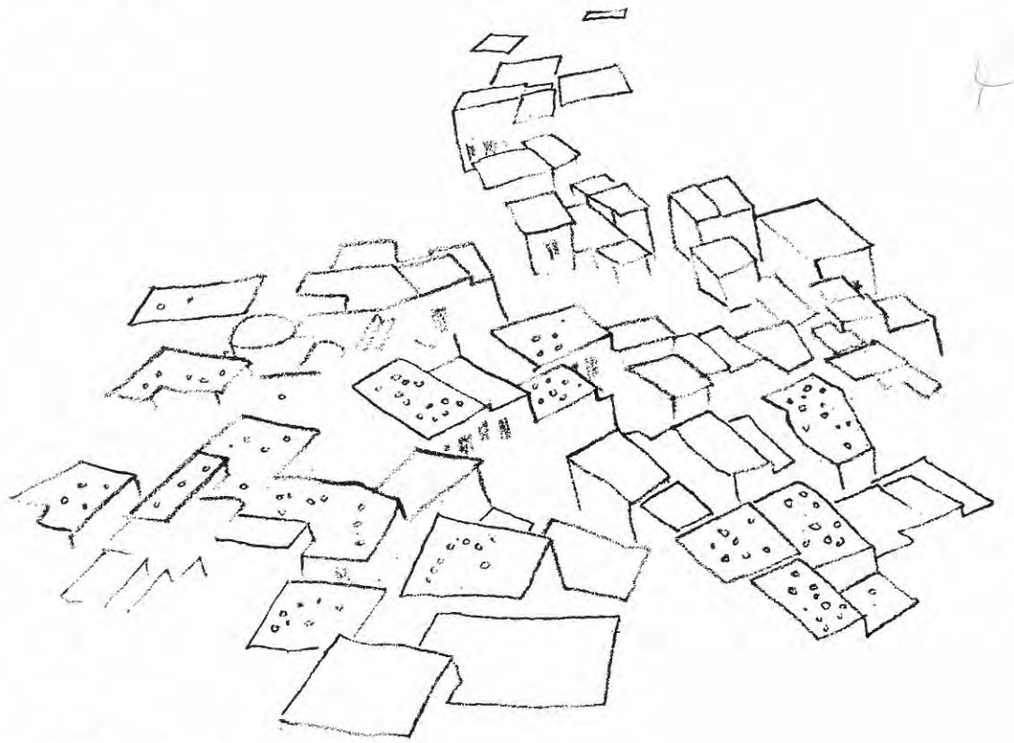
3 Human associations

What are we looking for?

Can we assume there is any ideal pattern of association?

In the vacuum – not knowing what to do – is it right to continue to build to an ossified living pattern?

Thoughts on providing housing are in the awful mess the Poor Laws once were.



23. Skyros, Greece

24. Village in the Peloponnese

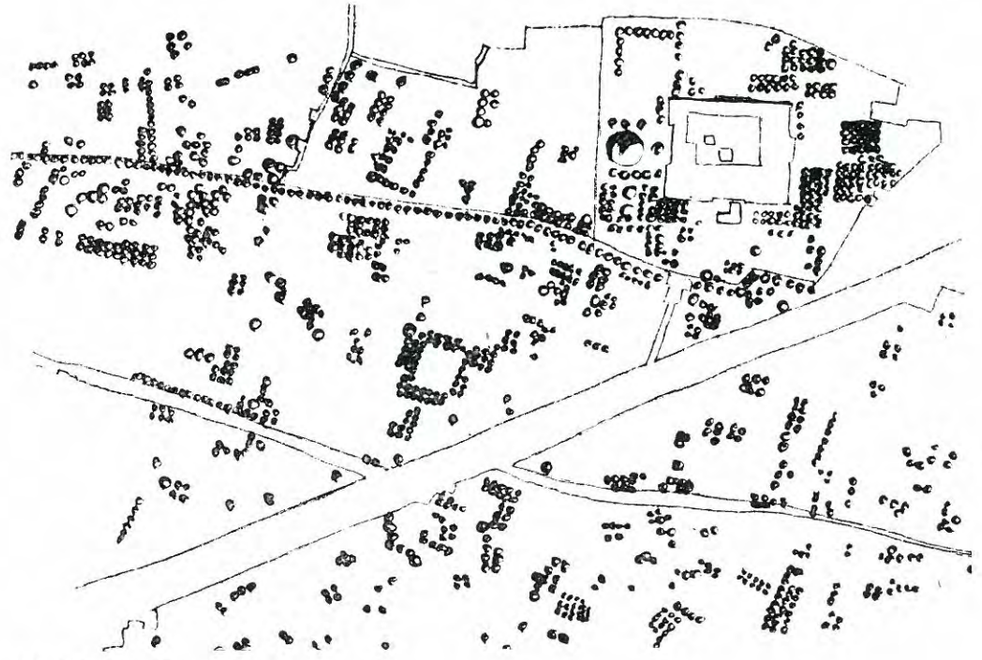
Things should not be different without reason.

Things of the same order should be as alike as leaves.

To construct an 'estate' where each house is different is not to identify but to destroy the possibility of them making greater sense together.

Houses are cells of districts, as districts are of towns, and without sameness houses will add up to nothing. A change of style or size in a house must be a symbol of a reality of social organisation, not a whim of 'town design'.

25. El Oued in the Sahara



26. Isfahan, Iran

27. Matmata, Tunisia. Courtyards of subterranean dwellings

28. Honan, China. Subterranean settlement 30–45 feet down in the loess

'To the social psychologist society presents primarily a picture of a network of human relations. The strength and direction of those relationships not only determine the coherence and effectiveness of society – they also are the primary source of individual satisfaction. The function of social planning is primarily to strengthen and direct these relationships. . . . Town-planning theory, however, has tended to construct groups on a functional basis, round an infant school, a community centre or a group of shops. Such theories overlook the fact that the inhabitants may prefer a different school (for religious reasons, for instance), may prefer to shop in the centre of the town, or may prefer to make their social contacts at the swimming pool, chess club, or dance hall.'[7]

Thus social theory defines what we all know, that social groups are not created by location alone but by community of interest and physical and psychological interdependence. The family can still be tight-knit and possessive when its members are thousands of miles apart; the 'extended family' can be scattered through many districts and classes of a town; and the 'assessment group' of the intellectual or artist may be international and non-collingual, yet with more in common than with many neighbours.

The assumption that a community can be 'created' by geographic isolation is invalid.

Real social groups cut across geographical barriers, and the principal

[7] Rattray Taylor, *Architects' Year Book 4* 1952; p. 28, 29

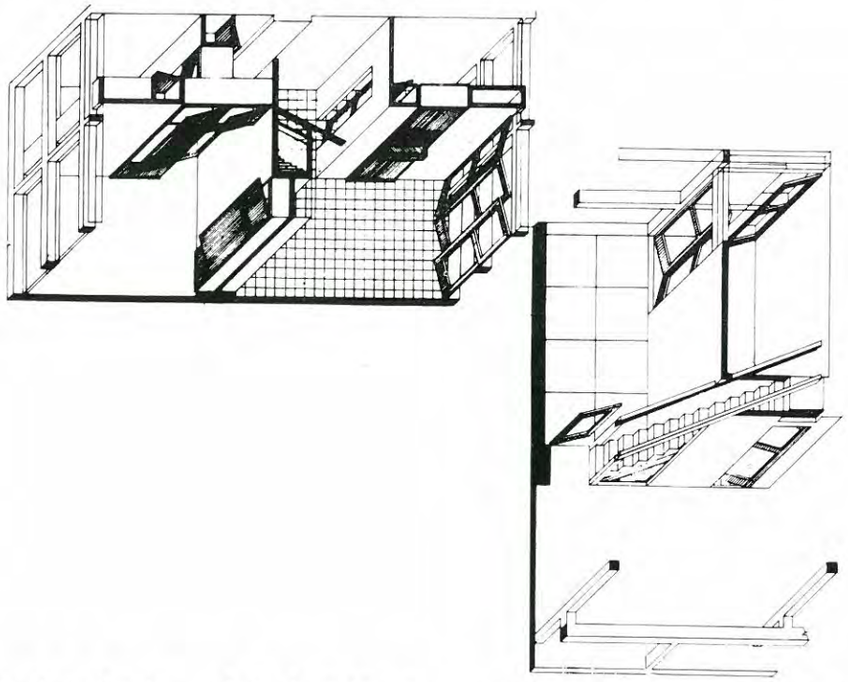
aid to social cohesion is looseness of grouping and ease of communication rather than the isolation of arbitrary sections of the total community with impossibly difficult communications, which characterise both English neighbourhood planning and the Unité concept of Le Corbusier.

The creation of non-arbitrary groupings and effective communications are the primary functions of the planner. The basic group is obviously the family, traditionally the next grouping is the street (or square or green, any word that by definition implies enclosure or belonging; thus 'in our street' but 'on the road'), the next the district, and finally the city. It is the job of the architect and planner to make these groupings apparent as tangible realities.

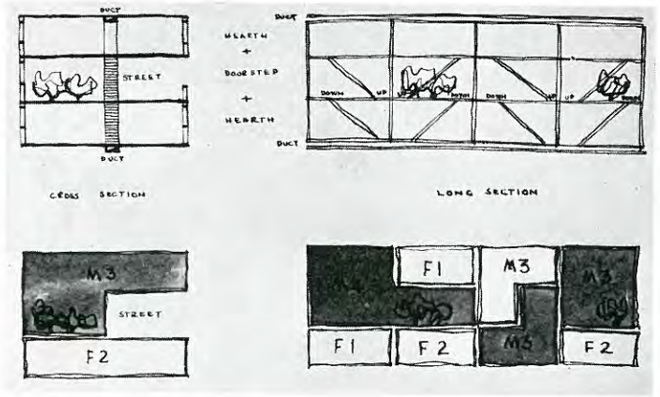
In the suburbs and slums the vital relationship between the house and the street survives, children run about (the street is comparatively quiet), people stop and talk, dismantled vehicles are parked. In the back gardens are pigeons and so on, and the shops are round the corner: you know the milkman,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

29. The shell that fits man's back. Slovak peasant cottage

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



30. The shell that fits man's back. Golden Lane. Axonometric drawing of house cell

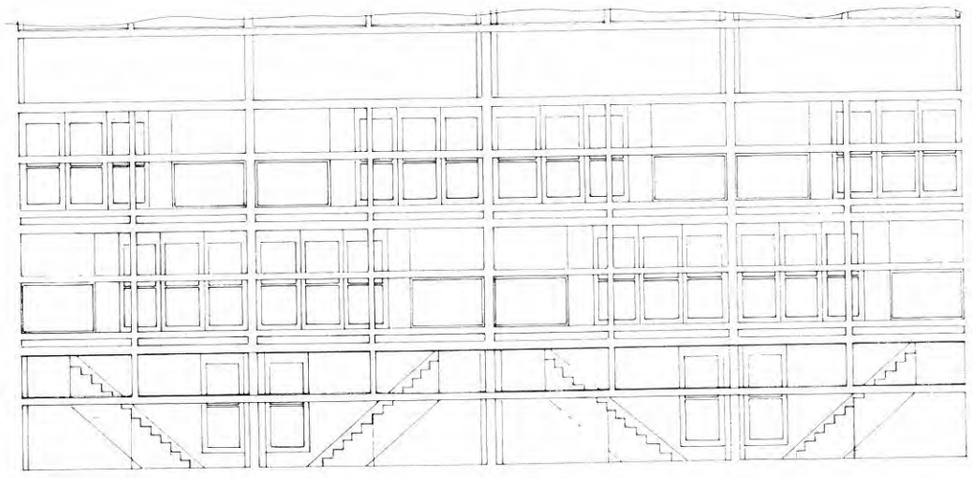


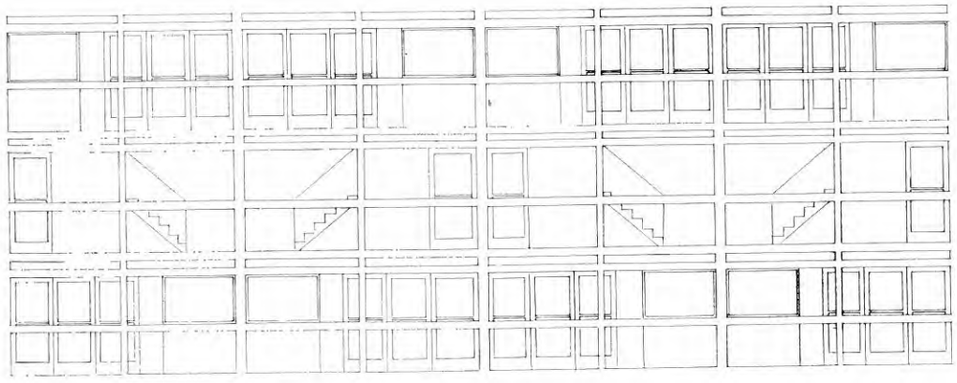
31. Golden Lane. House cell, diagrams

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

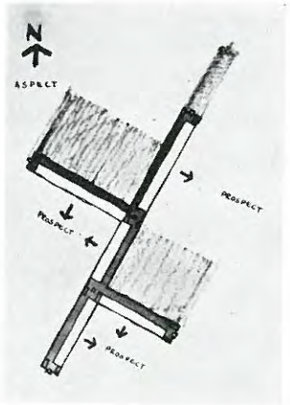
The 'street' is our second definable city element.

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





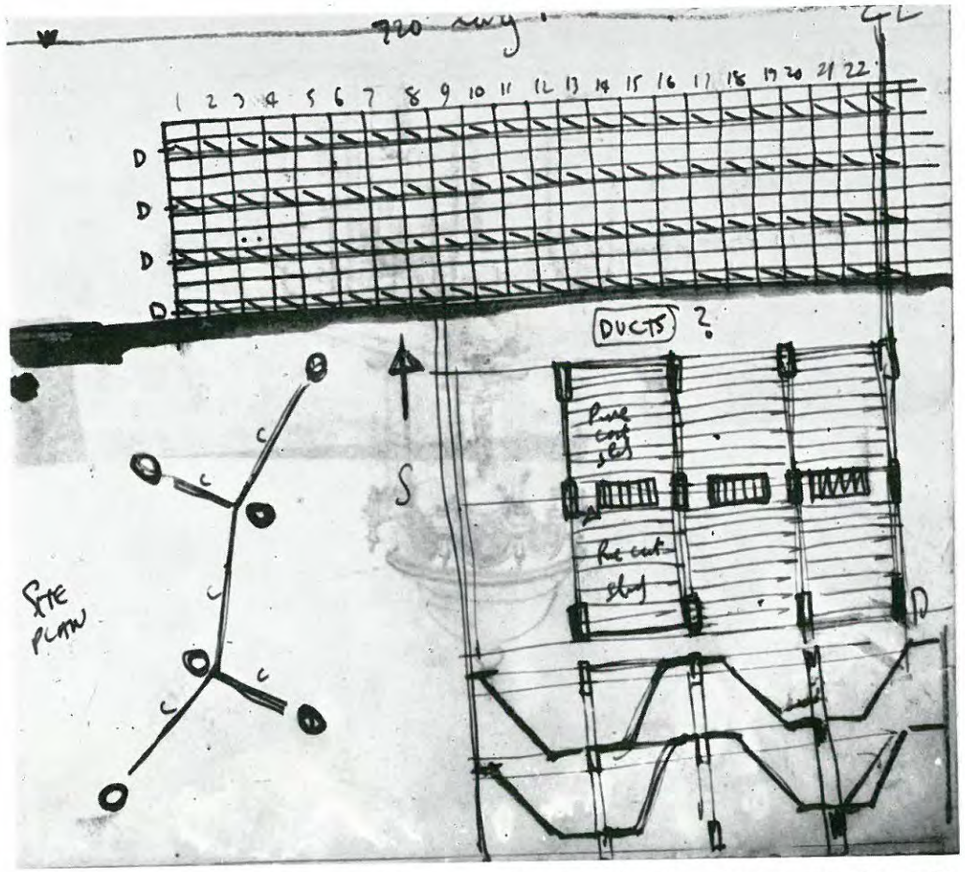
32. Elevations of part of the Golden Lane façade



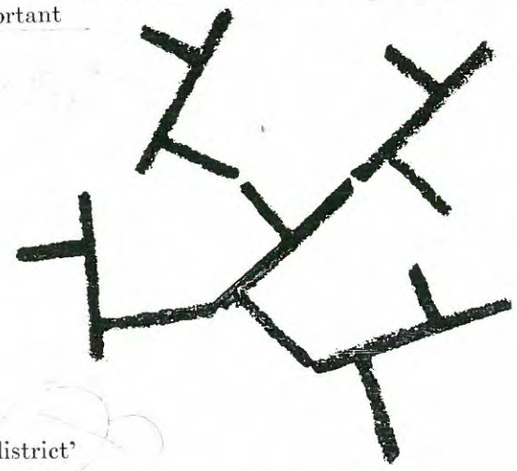
33. Golden Lane deck

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

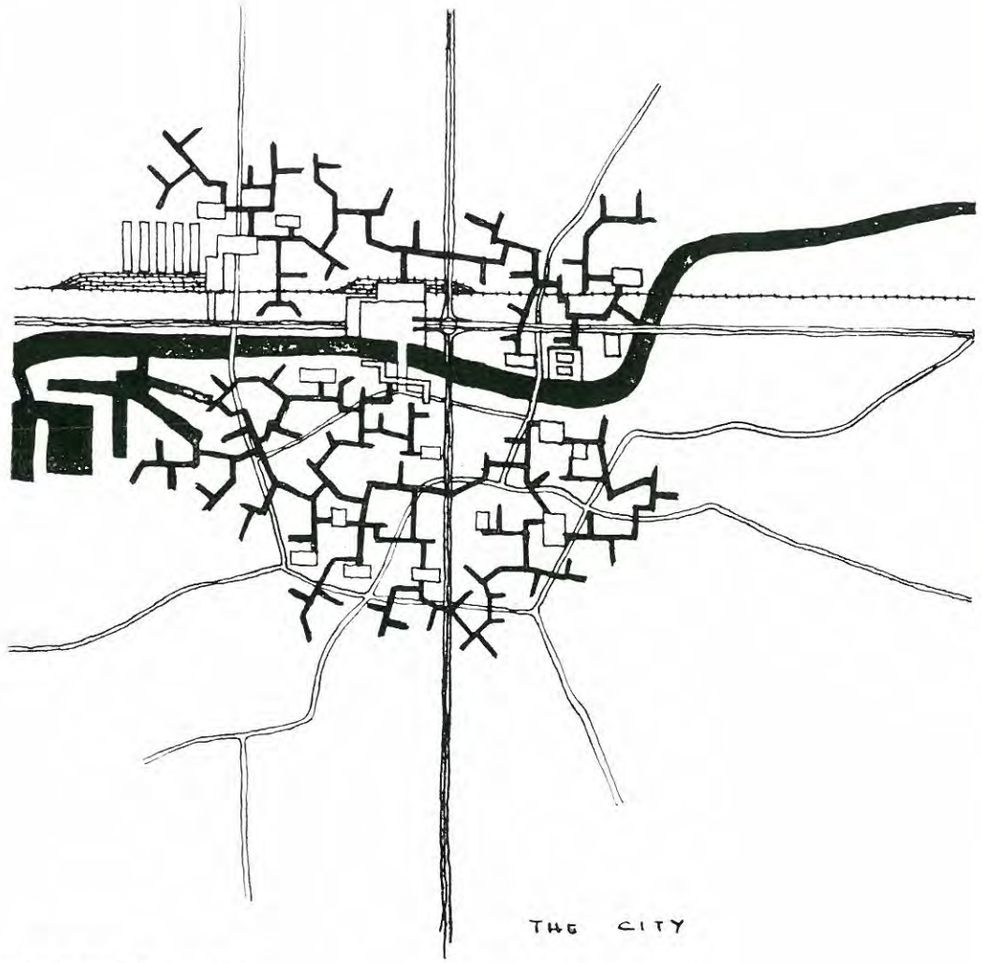
34. Air view of industrial houses in Burnley, taken in 1950



35. The original sketch of the Golden Lane idea. It is the idea of street, not the reality of street that is important



36. Golden Lane 'district'



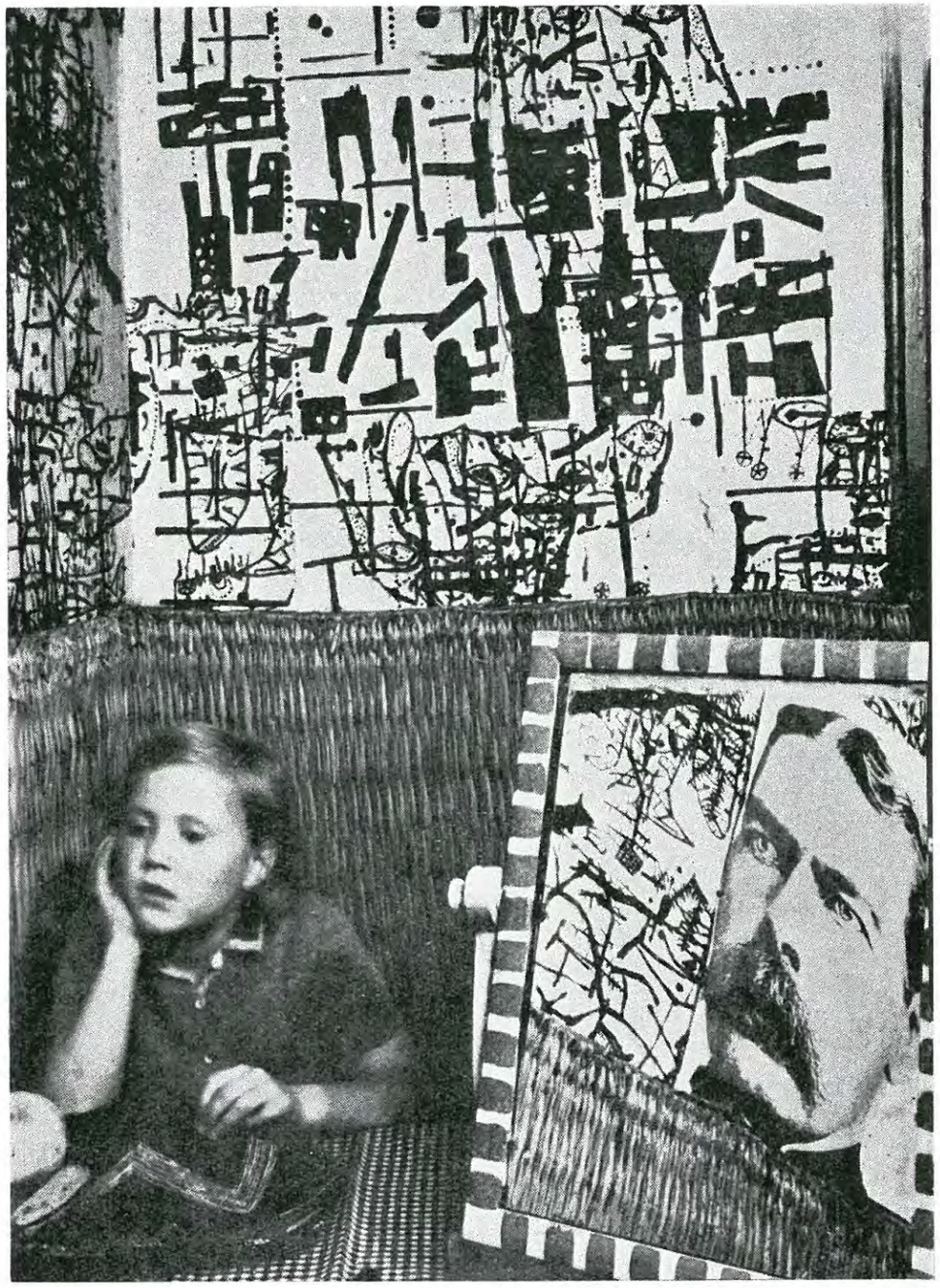
37. Golden Lane city

The difference between towns and cities is only one of size, for both are arrangements of districts.

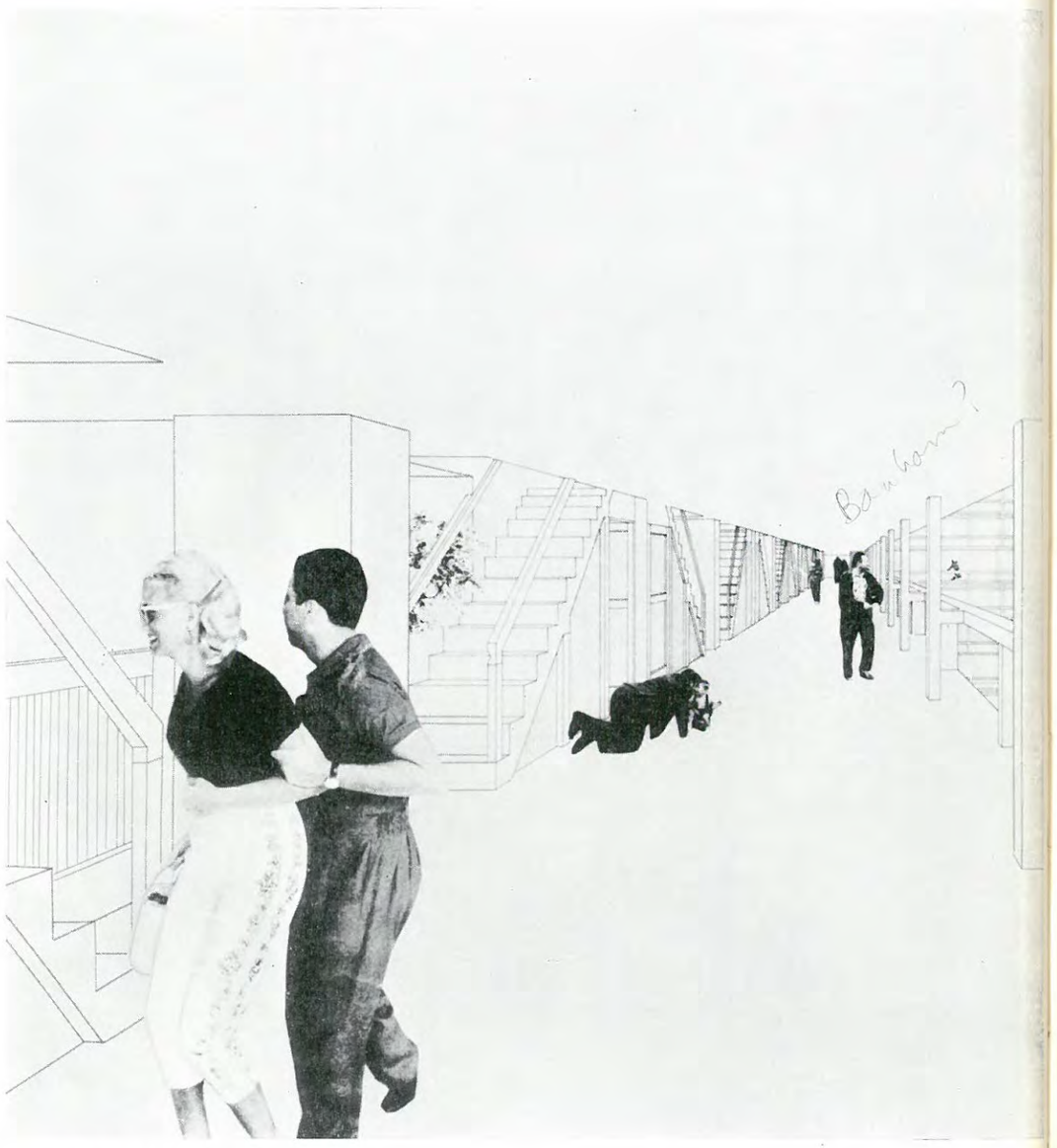
The city is the ultimate community, 'the tangible expression of an economic region'.

It is extremely difficult to define the higher levels of association, but the street implies a physical contact community; the district an acquaintance community; and the city an intellectual contact community.

To maintain looseness of grouping and ease of communication, the density must increase as the population increases; and with high densities, if we are to retain the essential joys of sun, space and verdure, we must build high.

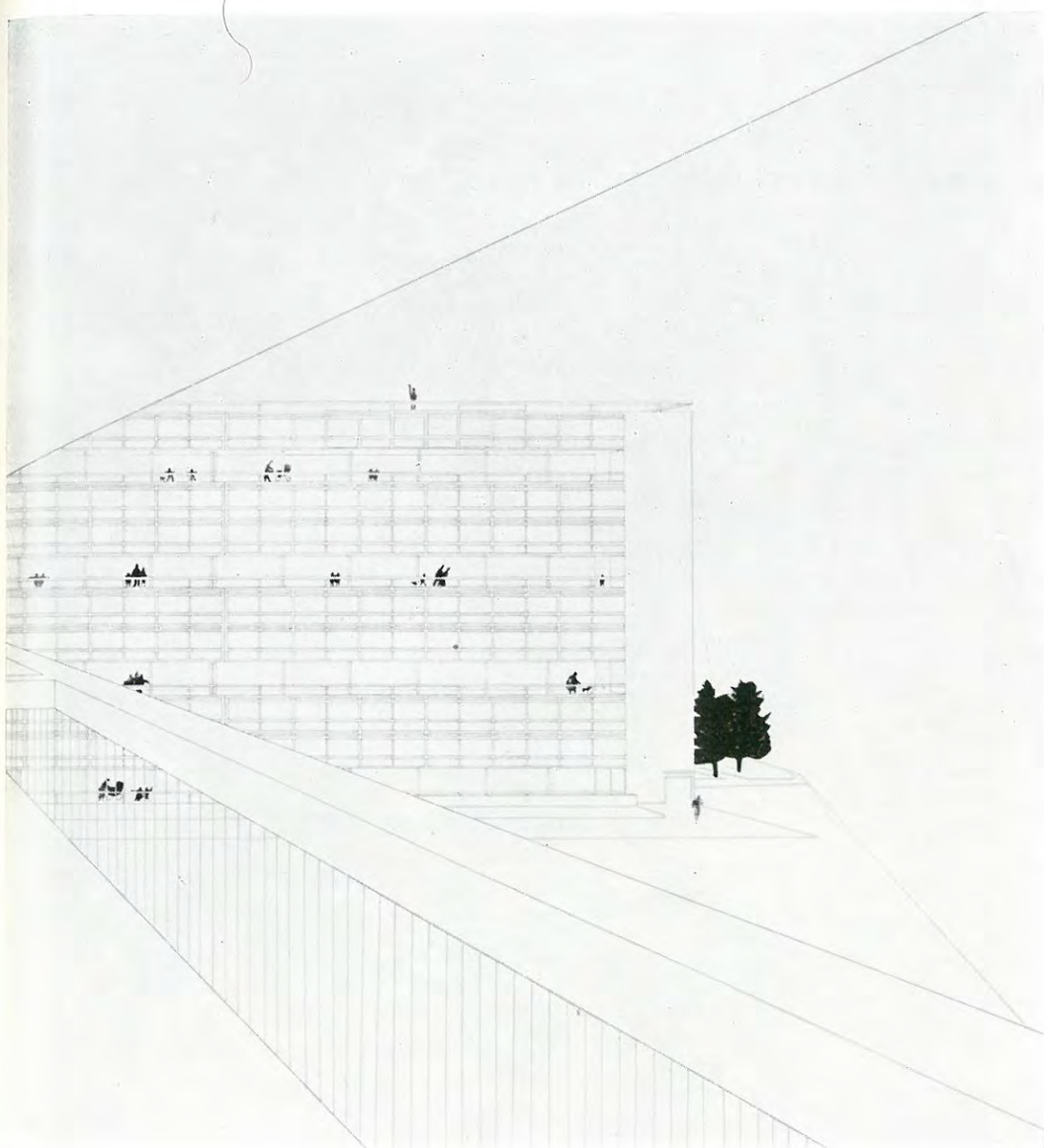


38. Nigel Henderson's drawing room, Bethnal Green, east London, 1952. Silk screen elements by Eduardo Paolozzi, used as wallpaper



39. Golden Lane street perspective

In the past the acceptance of the latter part of this thesis has led to a form of vertical living in which the family is deprived of its essential outdoor life, and contact with other families is difficult if not impossible on the narrow balconies and landings that are their sole means of com-

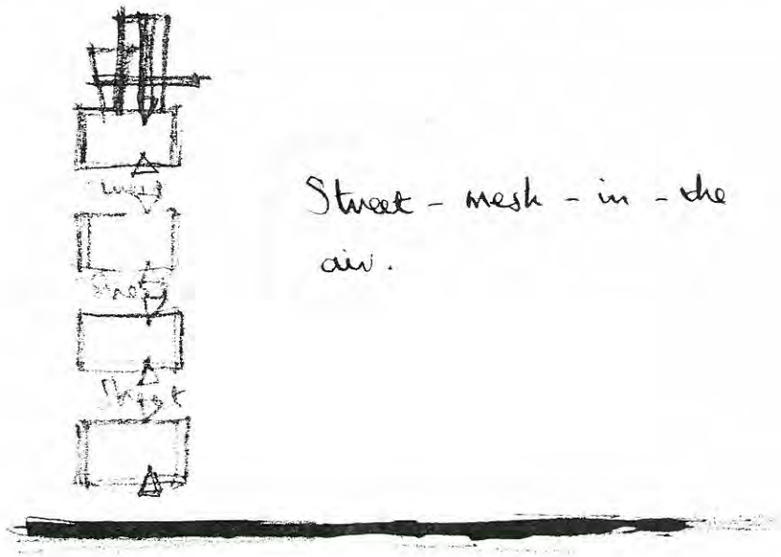


munion and communication. Furthermore, outside one's immediate neighbours (often limited to three in Point Blocks) the possibilities of forming the friendships which constitute the 'extended family' are made difficult by the complete absence of horizontal communication at the

same level, and the ineffectiveness of vertical communication.

The *idea* of 'street' has been forgotten.

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



40. Street-mesh-in-the-air

At all densities such 'streets' are made possible, by the creation of a true street-deck in the air, each deck having a large number of people dependent on it for access, and some decks being thoroughfares – leading to places – so that they will each acquire special characteristics.

Be identified in fact.

Each part of each deck should have sufficient people accessed from it to become a social entity and be within reach of a much larger number at the same level.

Decks would be places, not corridors or balconies: thoroughfares where there are 'shops', post boxes, telephone kiosks.

Where a deck is purely residential the individual house and yard-garden will provide an equivalent life pattern to a true street or square; nothing is lost and elevation is gained.

The flat block disappears and vertical living becomes a reality.

The refuse chute takes the place of the village pump.

It is the custom of planners to adopt architecturally fashionable housing solutions as the basis for theoretical residential densities.

The classic case is the twelve houses to the acre, a density of rigorous social merit, giving the amount of land that an industrious artisan could work for profit in his spare time in 1912. Such a density (30–40 persons to the acre) is still the basis for the so-called 'open development' (magnificent views of next door's back garden).

Current planning theory assumes the pyramidal density structure of the Victorian town to be based on a social reality worth perpetuating. 1944 Housing Manual: 'In general, the nearer the centre the higher the density:

Open development	*30–40*	*persons*	*per*	*acre*
Outer ring of a town	*50–60*	,,	,,	,,
Inner ring of a town	*75*	,,	,,	,,
Central areas	*100*	,,	,,	,,
Central areas/large towns	*120*	,,	,,	,,

As we have all seen, the results of such densities have been disastrous.

On the smallest scale, miners housed at 30 to the acre have two gardens (front and back) which only one in ten is prepared even to pretend to cultivate (after a shift labouring how many want to dig potatoes with £30 in their back trousers pocket?). In the larger towns the increase in travelling distance materially affects the poorer worker.

High buildings are only tolerated 'to enable as large a number of two and three storey houses as possible to be built in such areas'. (Housing Manual again.)

In the County of London Plan, 1943, three degrees of density were adopted, 100, 136 and 200 persons to the acre, the smallest area in the centre having 200 to the acre, then a larger area of 136, and finally the outer areas at 100. These areas were adjusted to give an overall density of 136 to the acre, producing the maximum estimated absorbable overspill of 600,000 persons. This overspill was to be absorbed in satellite towns whose existence, as the name implies, depended on the city itself and whose realisation is at variance with the principle of maximum convenience and minimum locomotion which were the objects of the plan.

In 1952 we produced a competition project for rehousing an area of Central London in accordance with the principles of Urban Re-Identification.

This Golden Lane project was rejected.

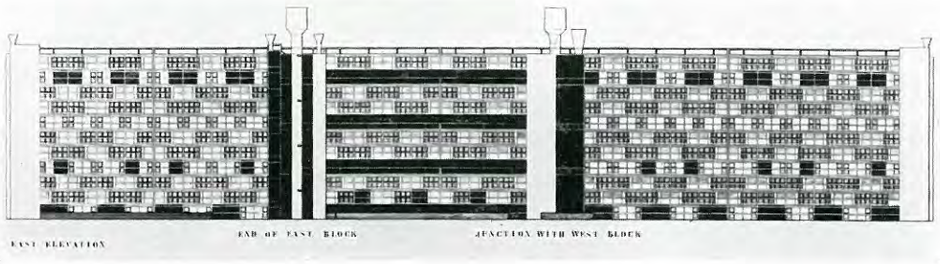
The Golden Lane site is part of an area known as Bunhill Fields, which was scheduled for Comprehensive Development by London County Council. It had been almost completely razed by bombing and had been used as a tip for blitz rubble. The ground level prospect at the time of the competition was a dismal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

The gross area of the competition site, including portions of surrounding street, was 4·7 acres. The population density approved for the site was 200 persons per acre. The population was to be calculated on the basis of 1·1 persons per habitable room and as many dwellings as possible (of various given types) had to be provided.

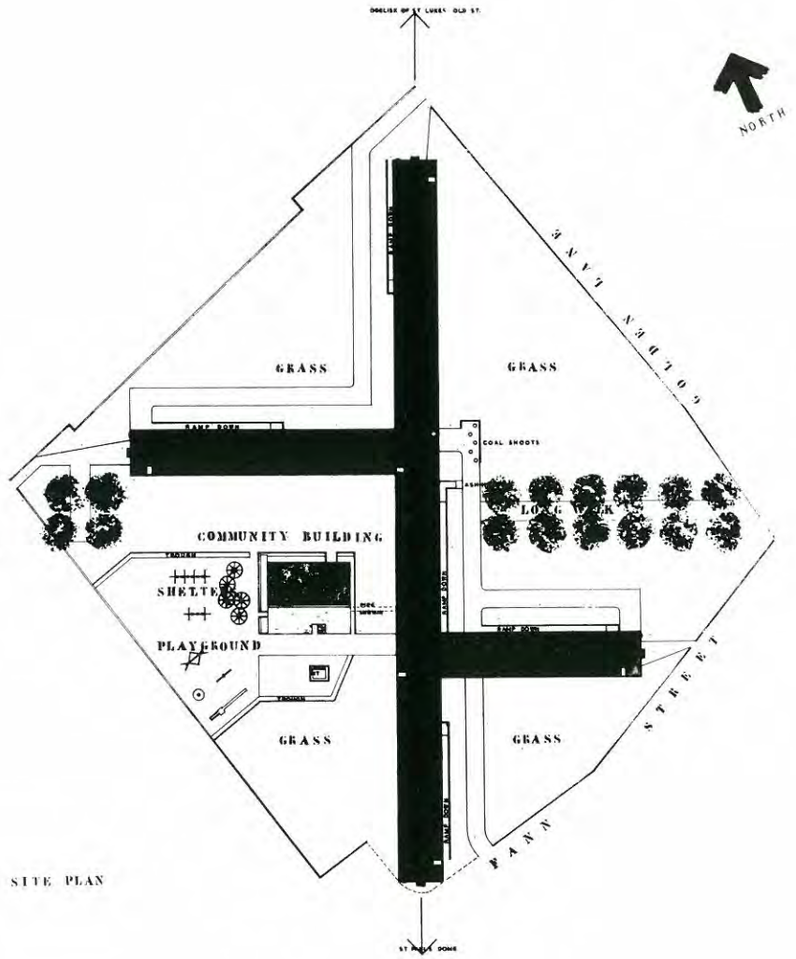
Within this framework and with strict regard to economy we tried to prove that living at high densities does not necessarily mean low standards; that an infinitely richer and more satisfactory way of living in cities is possible here and now; and that this did not need the demolition of whole areas but could be built on individual sites as they became available.

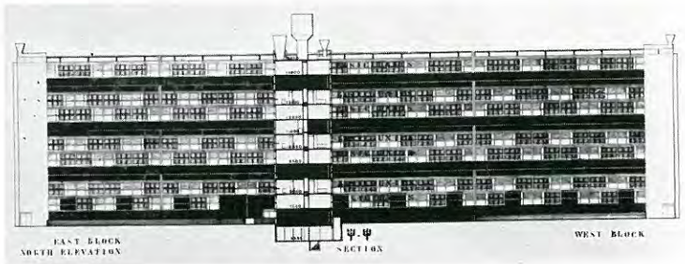
To do this we proposed three levels of 'streets-in-the-air', each level we called a 'deck'. Off each 'deck' would live 90 families, with their group activity concentrated in two square crossings at the street intersections. These crossings are triple height, contrasting with the single height decks, inviting one to linger and pass the time of day. There are stairs and lifts at these crossings and deck ends (which are similarly triple height).

All dwellings have their front doors on deck level and their main accommodation above or below deck.



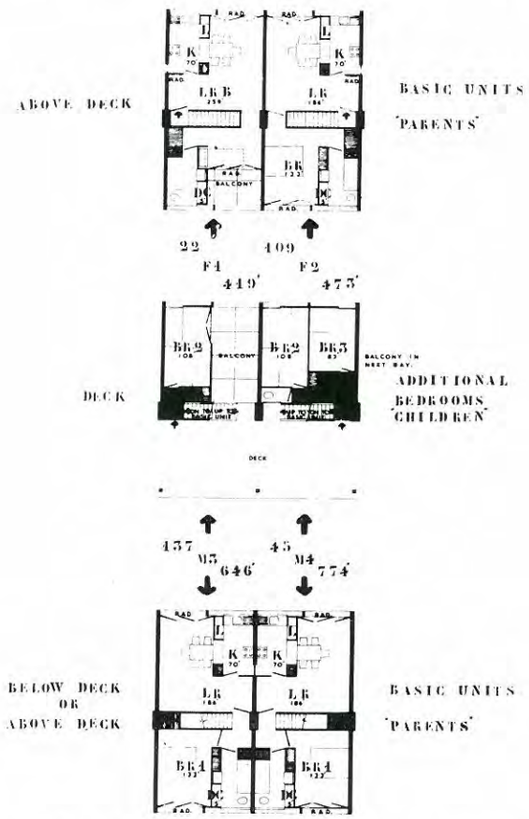
41. Golden Lane elevation





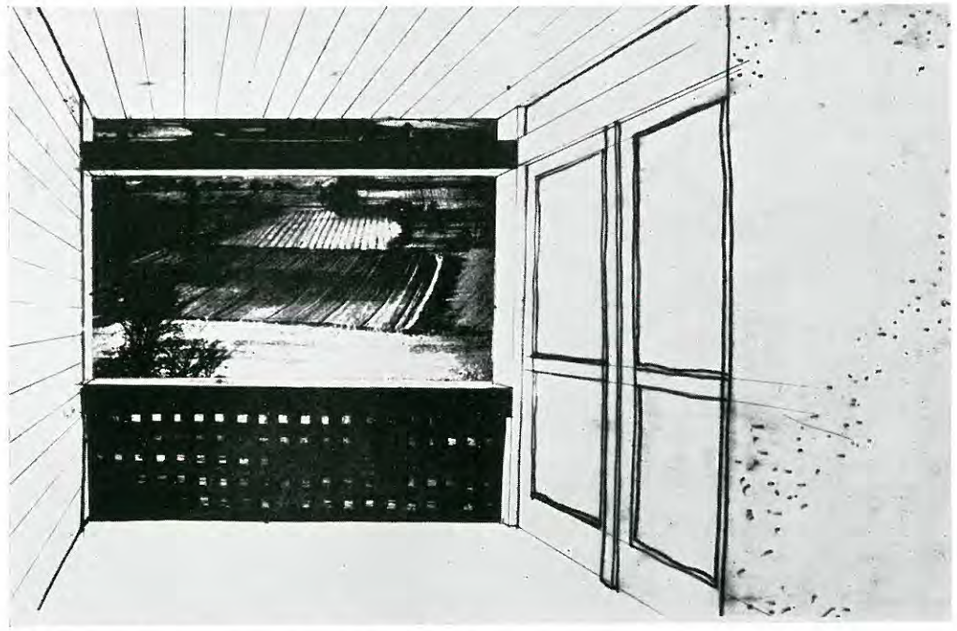
42. Golden Lane elevation, section and site layout

The BASIC UNIT (parents' apartment) is standard in all dwellings in the scheme, and varying sizes of families can be accommodated in ADDITIONAL BEDROOMS (children's) at deck level. With these additional bedrooms are the yard-gardens – 16′ 0″ × 8′ 0″ when there are two additional bedrooms (type M4). The majority, but not all, dwellings have yard-gardens.



43. Golden Lane house plans. Note: all dwellings consist of a standard basic unit, with additional bedrooms at deck level as required

These yard-gardens, which can be seen from the deck, bring the out-of-doors life of a normal house – gardening, bicycle cleaning, joinery, pigeons, children's play, etc., on to the deck, identifying the families with their 'house' on their deck. The arrangements at deck level are 'detached', 'semi-detached' or 'terraced' (each deck differs). The piece of the dwelling at deck level is small and unintimidating to the playing child, and the passing stranger's view is enriched by glimpses, through the open yard-gardens, of the city and river.



44. Golden Lane yard garden, 16 by 8 feet

These pedestrian decks are no mere access balconies. Two women with prams can stop and talk without blocking the flow, and they are safe for small children, as the only wheeled vehicles allowed are the tradesmen's hand- and electrically-propelled trolleys.

The decks in the competition project have the following pattern:

GROUND	4 and 1	person	dwellings
FIRST DECK	4 and 2	,,	,,
SECOND DECK	3	,,	,,
THIRD DECK	3 and 2	,,	,,

This arrangement is such that any vertical section of the complex contains dwellings in the same proportion as in the whole, but as the same standard units occur throughout it can be varied to suit local needs.

The use of the houses as house-shops and house-workshops will not interfere with the normal working of the plan, as there is always the possibility of two 'front doors'. The yard-garden can be used as an alternative means of access, or for a market-stall.[8]

[8] 1966. Alternative use only works if the servicing and deliveries are at a primitive level.

As far as the appearance of the complex is concerned it would be enhanced rather than destroyed by such changes. The patterns of the façade are the result of logical disposition of the parts in accordance with a consistent social attitude – the order is based on living patterns not architectural ones.

To reflect the continuity of the street deck the blocks flow into one another with an uninterrupted articulation, which the expansion joints punctuate according to their own laws. The total penetration of the yard-gardens dissolves the dead-wall effect of the conventional slab block, and produces ever-changing vignettes of life and sky; the individual dwelling clearly being the measure and reason for the whole.

People are its predestined ornament.

45. Golden Lane, vignette patterns of life and sky

The setting-up of such a deck system would be like establishing the lines of the main sewers. A 'deck-law' would make provision for pedestrian streets at specified levels.

No building would have its major pedestrian entry point on the ground.

Going to the ground would be a small event, like going to the cinema, to school, to the office, or to play tennis, a special journey for a special purpose.

Access to roads would be through multi-level garages and parking ramps.

The public entrances of some shops and offices could be directly off pedestrian decks.

Ways-in-the-air could be a framework, like drains, to which everyone connects up. They would be a fixed fact no more cramping than other public services, but sufficiently revolutionary to make urban re-organisation a fact, to make re-identification a fact, and the organisation of the fact possible. It would be almost like passing a law against the construction of out-of-date buildings, for the 'aesthetic' of this school and that would be subdued, and their stock answers no longer applicable.

46. Sea dayaks' long house. Some houses are a quarter of a mile long and hold ninety families

Whether or not the optimum density of such residential development is 200 to the acre is difficult to decide.[9] With a completely developed district, London planning legislation daylight standards can be maintained at twice the height of the Golden Lane project, and certainly with fully

[9] 1966. On density: we now think that 150 persons to the acre is sufficient, by the 'feel' and 'smell' of such densities. Probably in most cases 100 to the acre would 'feel normal' at present levels of car ownership and servicing.

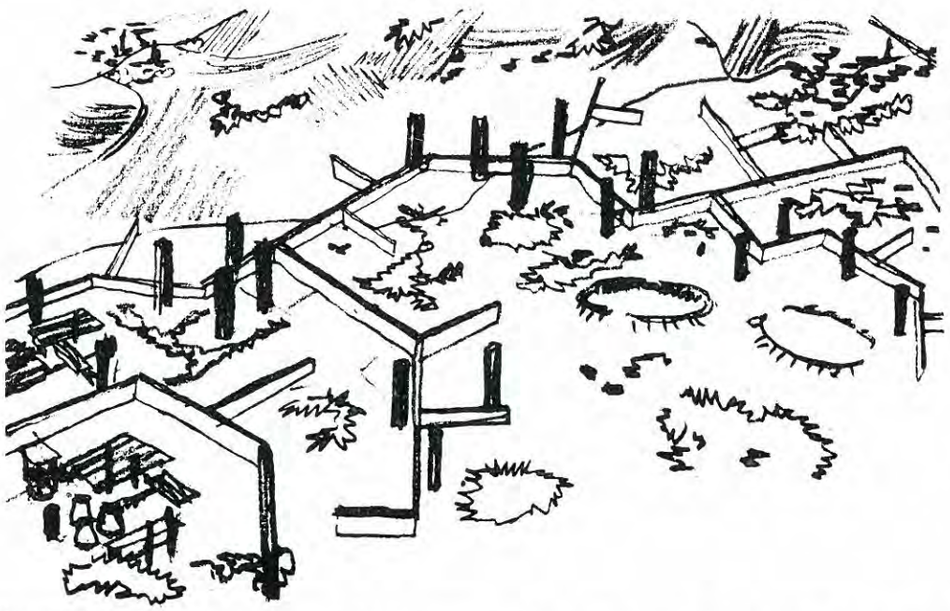
developed shopping thoroughfares, multi-level garages and other district facilities, and the clearing of ground completely, heights of up to 150 feet will be necessary. But commonsense suggests a top limit of about 200 feet in residential areas, for winds at these heights are already formidable.[10]

The leaves on the trees should still be recognisable from our topmost dwellings.

In offices, shops, hotels, etc., where the deck is no longer necessary as a social space, American experience suggests that there is *no* height limit structurally or psychologically.

The deck system would slot into the vertical circulation of such complexes.

This could be the pattern of our large cities.

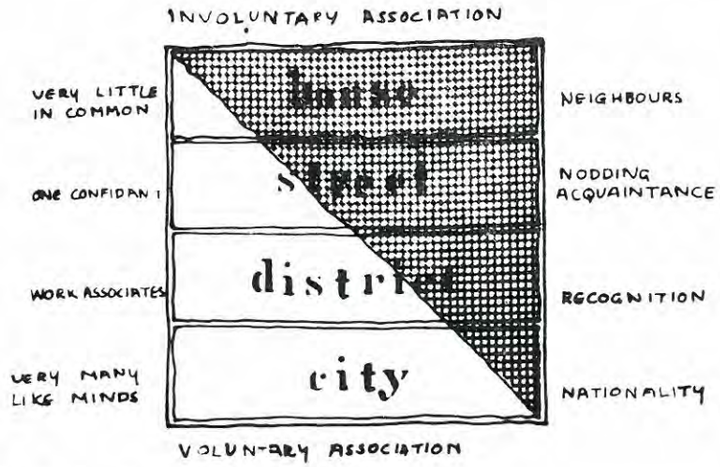


47. Golden Lane study, street deck complex. The street mesh slots into the vertical circulation of such complexes

But in villages and small towns the law of density and size will operate against high building. For what can be the possible merit of a multi-level development when the community has a small population? Height would hinder ease of circulation, and to lose contact with the gardens and fields

[10] 1966. These heights for open-deck systems are probably excessive. It is likely that only below 100 feet are they practicable for normal locations.

without gaining the advantage of intense human association (which is city) is fatuous. Perhaps one would in such cases only live high in special circumstances of land value and location. But certainly the quite arbitrary and mutually compromising close mixture of flats and houses in our New Towns should be anathema.



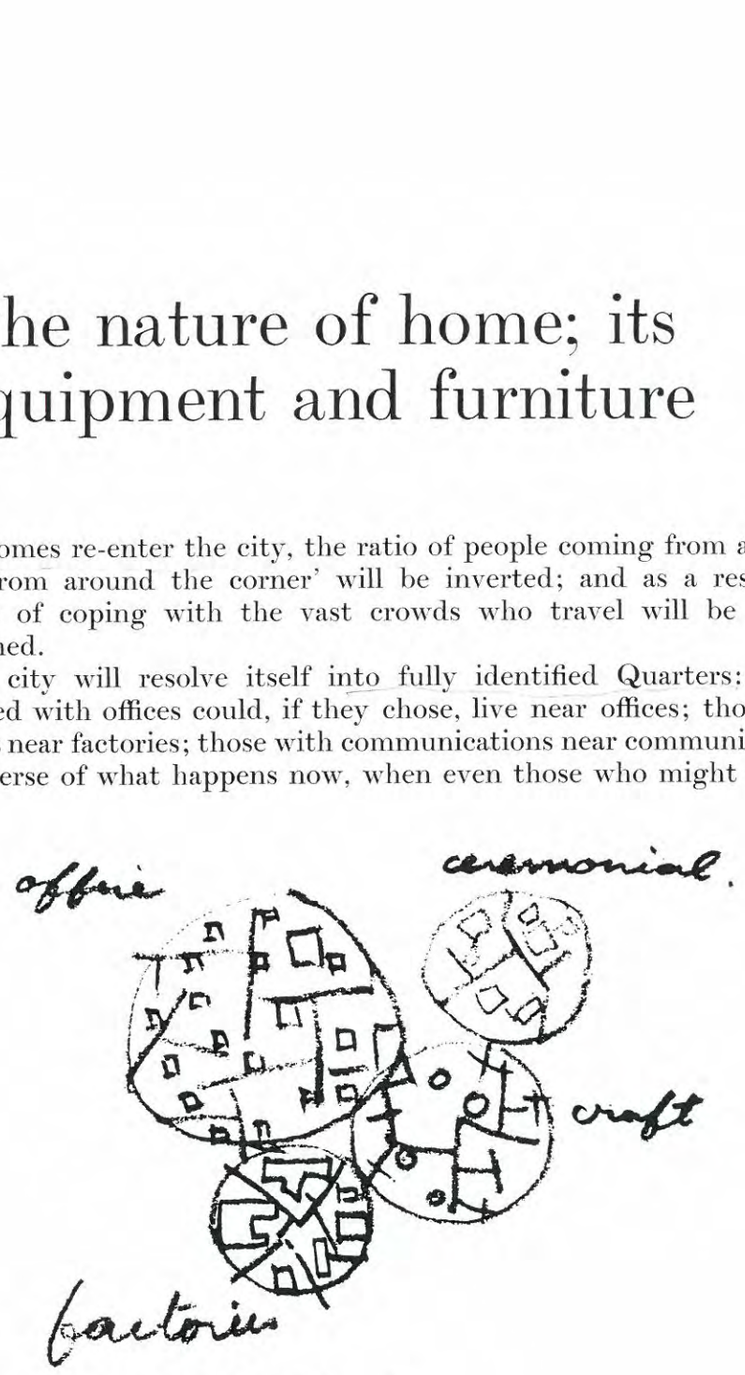
48. Hierarchy of association

In villages and towns the important problem is to find solutions to 'street' and 'district' which fit more closely our real living patterns. The village green, the square, and the terraced street are historic forms of association, answers to problems quite different from our own, and it is at just this level – defining the patterns of association in a mechanised and non-demonstrative society – that we have failed most significantly. But this document is concerned with the *urbs* proper – where the problem of re-identification is most urgent, and to this we must return.

5 The nature of home; its equipment and furniture

When homes re-enter the city, the ratio of people coming from afar and those 'from around the corner' will be inverted; and as a result the problem of coping with the vast crowds who travel will be greatly diminished.

The city will resolve itself into fully identified Quarters: people associated with offices could, if they chose, live near offices; those with factories near factories; those with communications near communications. The reverse of what happens now, when even those who might wish to



61. Golden Lane study. Fully identified quarters

live near their work are forced into a commuting pattern, finding a place to lay their heads where they may. Our aim is to provide free choice. The opportunity for living and working in proximity, in harmony. (That for some such a harmony may require physical separation of home and work does not affect the basic idea; for even a dormitory suburb is in fact 'a fully identified Quarter'.) The hope is that the advantages of close physical association will draw people to the clearly different districts of the city – cause an urban revival – a new city in which the home will be very much the centre of all activities.

62. Nothing is more ordered than a bachelor's apartment. *S. Jerome in his study*, by Antonello da Messina

It becomes immediately obvious when we try to draw the first perspective of a furnished interior of a new kind of dwelling, that the whole easily attainable world of furniture, objects and equipment is not in the same spirit as the way of life we are trying to project.

Once this doubt is there, the thing you can buy appears obsolete.

A new pattern of association and a new dwelling mean a new way of looking at objects and possessions.

This will require an enormous effort, for we are products of the school system, and our lives reflect the docility of our acceptance. For most people there is no refusing those set pieces on four legs that are as statutory for suburban decency as wedding rings.

With eyes given us by the photographer we see life stopped for us: the second of living that sums us up. Or more slowly, the Victorian plate camera portraits of the breathing, the living, sitter. We must cultivate a sense of awareness, of whereabouts in time; to be of the previous age is to be of the dark ages. No age is so primitive as the one immediately past, none so out of step, so out of consonance with our own.

The supreme monument to the home made possible entirely by availability – increased transportation and manufacturing – is the Victorian interior: fire irons, art works, brasses, vases, table mats, odd tables, more chairs, trophies; all go in.

America still has this kind of goods-economy where sewing machines can be huge cabinets, and refrigerators hold enough for a family and a horse to withstand a lengthy siege; symbols of property, as was the wardrobe in its day. Symbols of property seem unmodern.

More and more fixtures are being included in the house. They spread out from the kitchen till the house is totally cupboarded and shelved, tenants entombed by fitments like Tutankhamun.

As architects it is the act of living that interests us – how we live – and furniture and how we dispose it are only appurtenances of this act of living.

For the calm future even our objects of everyday use should be as unpretentious as possible, the chair chair, the table table, and the cup cup.

The possession of inviolable space is the individual's basic NECESSITY.

As tempo quickens . . . amenities must increase
as territorial assets diminish . . . convenience must replace

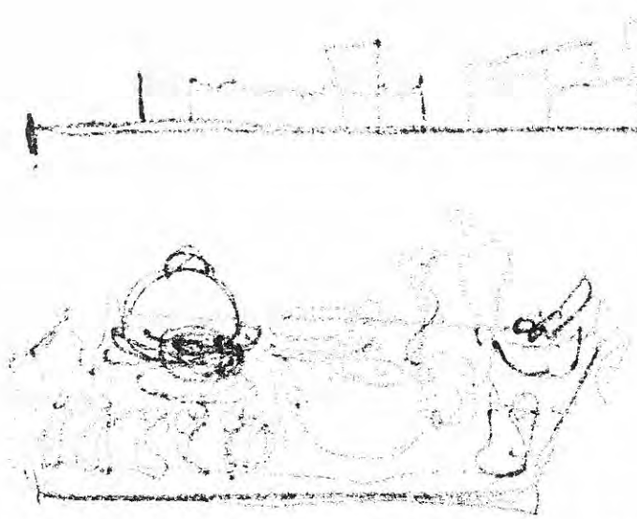
There must be,

insulation	against	noise
air conditioning	,,	dirt
Garché rubbish converter	,,	waste accumulation
w.c. self-digestion system	,,	,,

central heating	against	waste accumulation
refrigerator	,,	lack of space
dryers	,,	,,
washing machines	,,	,,
usable extra space	,,	lack of outdoor space
ease of communication	,,	lack of country
sky – verdure	,,	,,
height (view)	,,	lack of scenic background
smokeless city	,,	lack of country air
district identification	,,	lack of atmosphere

Le Corbusier's Unité is a rack as for wine bottles, topped by a tray of individual 'objects', ventilators, surface activities. As ever with Le Corbusier, this building has in it the seeds of what we want to do.

63. Le Corbusier's wine-rack. 'The world's most ingenious architect has a new idea. Many architects are still groping towards notions le Corbusier had twenty years ago. Now he has a new idea. "Prefab. flats dropped into a steel frame like bottles into a rack." ' – from *Picture Post*, July 2, 1949



64. Tea-tray diagram. The familiar English tea tray on which objects are arranged has a single function in unity; diverse parts serve an end

In readiness for high-density solutions we have explored the small separate house,[15] evolving a four point house:

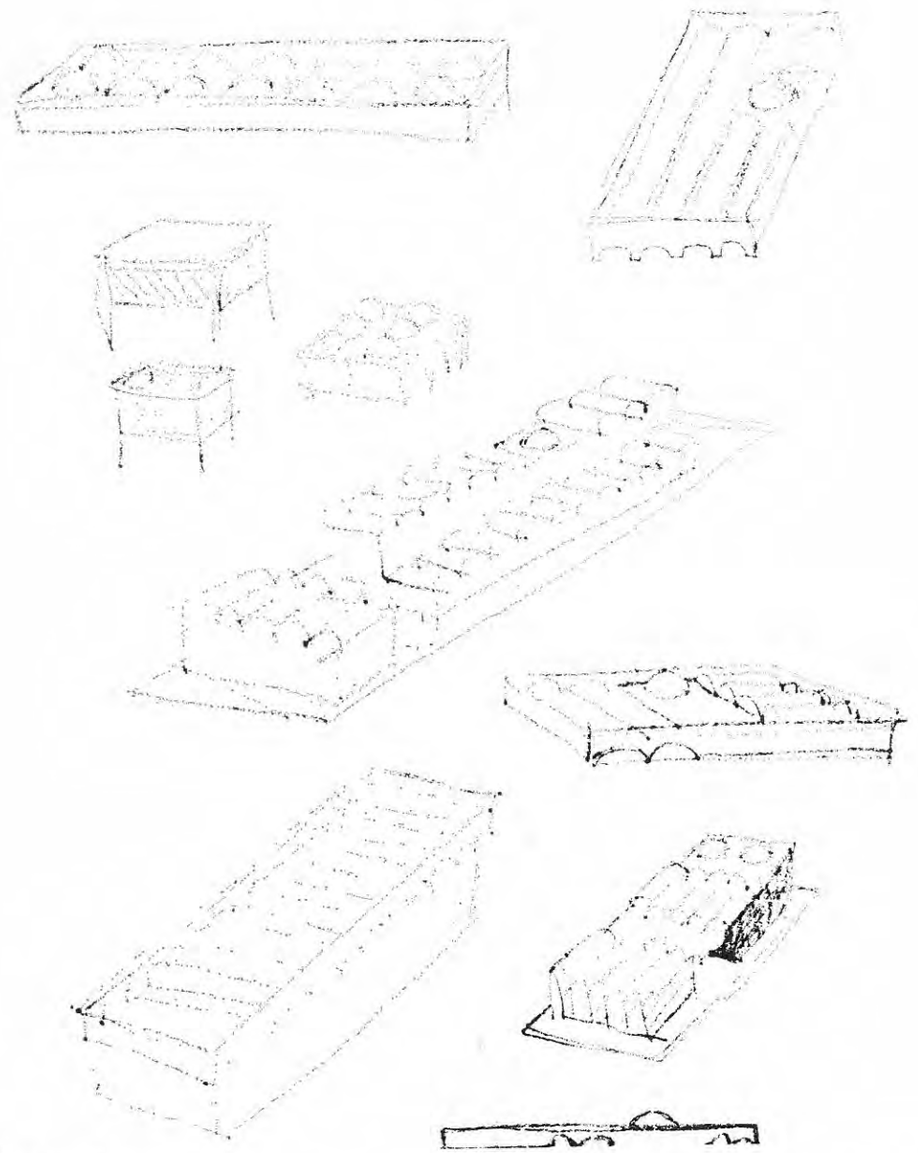
1. parents' unit
2. children's unit
3. eating and preparations
4. family extra, be it pigeon cote, sun parlour or Grandma's bedsit.

With this as our basis we attempt to give volumetric identity to each unit.

The parts of the house, although diverse, add up to 'home' which is:
aedicule
a roof over one's head
shelter.

We instinctively dislike the flat roof because it does not carry out visually this sheltering function. The home of man when primarily shelter, however transitory or mobile, always appears to cover. Nomads prefer the upturned bowl, cup, saucer, cap, hat; encircling as well as covering. Only when certain aspects of exposure are required – sleeping out, drying produce – does man naturally make his roof flat, as an outside room.

[15] 1966. In England in 1953 building licences were given on application for 1000 sq. ft. area houses.



65. Tray houses

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