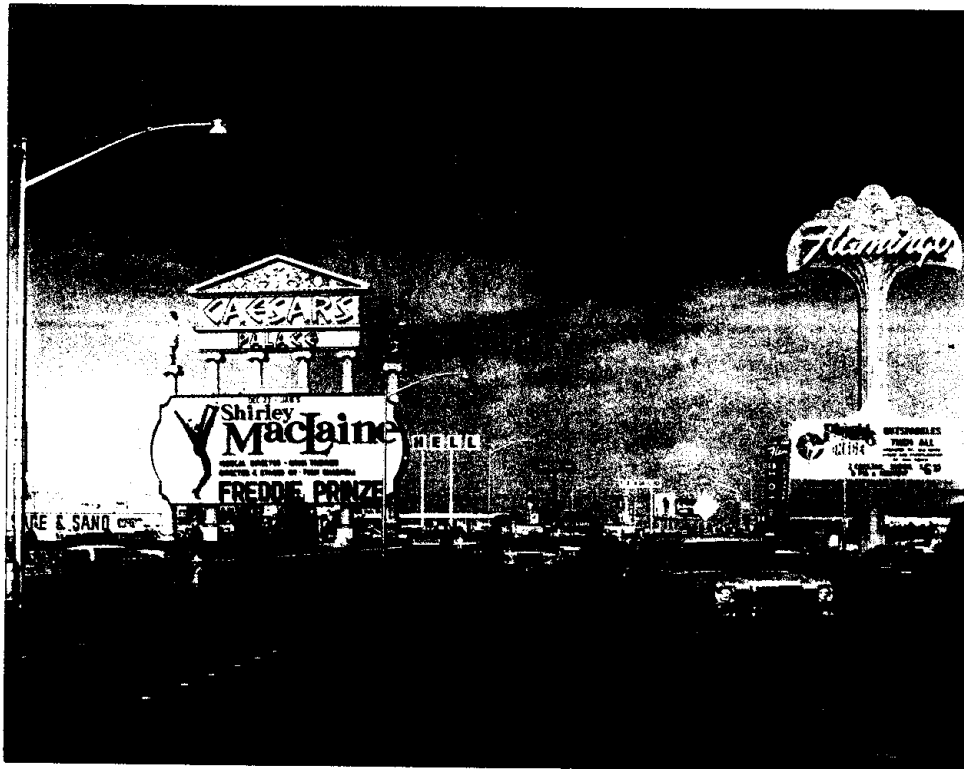


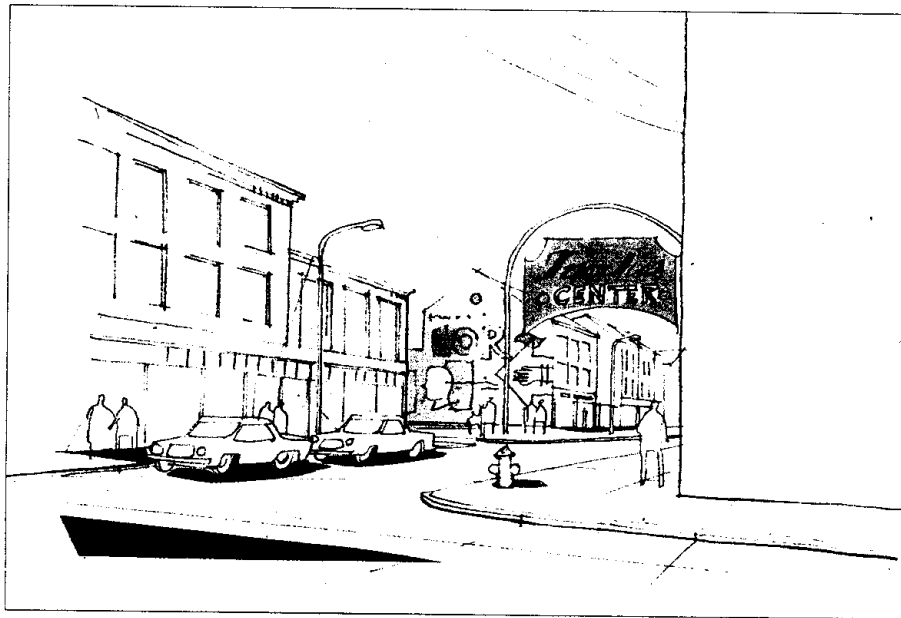
An Architectural Design Profile

Urban Concepts Denise Scott Brown



LAS VEGAS STRIP BY DAY

THE RISE AND FALL OF COMMUNITY ARCHITECTURE



SKETCH FOR IMPROVEMENT OF SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

This article is an edited version of a lecture given at the Tate Gallery Symposium, The Rise and Fall of Community Architecture, organised by The Academy Group. Denise Scott Brown's lecture was followed by a discussion chaired by Robert Thorne, involving a number of invited participants including Martin Pawley and Simon Jenkins, and concluding with contributions from the audience.

Community architecture is the most recent expression of ideas and ideals that have, in one form or another, accompanied the modern development of the profession. The history of social concern in architecture predates the Modern Movement. Arts and Crafts architects and designers, for example, saw socialism as central to their artistic philosophy. But it was the Modern Movement that defined the social tasks of architecture for our century, placing the social component in uneasy competition with the aesthetic and translating the urge to do good into a focus on housing, with particular stress on social housing. Social concern, we are told, did not cross the Atlantic with the Modern movement, thanks to Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson who ignored this aspect of the new architecture when they introduced it to America in 1932 through their book, *The International Style*. This is half the truth. The planner, Catherine Bauer, made an exhaustive survey of housing in Europe and, in 1934, published *Modern Housing*. This excellent book did introduce Modern architectural social philosophy to America, but architects didn't read it. Actually, I suspect that socially concerned architects in America did read it; the problem was, and is, that if you become interested in social housing in America you soon realise housing the poor isn't primarily a design, or even a technical, problem; it is first an economic and political problem. Therefore architects who become involved in housing have, since the New Deal, stopped being architects and turned

economists and administrators.

In England, World War II and its aftermath brought stark austerity and a great rebuilding task. During the late 1940s and early 1950s there were two architectural reactions to the war: a turning away from austerity, which resulted in the frou-frou architecture of the Festival of Britain, and a burst of social idealism particularly among students. The ex-service students, who exerted an enormous influence on English architecture schools in the early 1950s, saw social housing as their first concern. When I entered the AA as a fourth-year student in 1952, I found there an invigorating air of high endeavour and a major focus on social concern. At that time the Smithsons were part of the Independent Group at the Institute of Contemporary Art. Some AA students sought out this exciting couple, who were not then teaching at the AA; before they became gurus to the profession, the Smithsons became architectural comrades-in-arms to a small band of AA rebels.

As a child in Africa, I was continually aware of the differences between what I saw around me and what I read in books. Our books in the 1940s came largely from England. Those in Africa who applied English norms to the African visual environment pointed out strong schisms between what was and what they felt should be. The same difference between 'is' and 'ought' fascinated the New Brutalists who rediscovered what early Modern architects had discovered before them – the beauties of the ugly

architecture of industrial areas. But in the milieu of the Independent Group, Brutalist interest spread beyond factories to commercial architecture, popular culture and more basically, to how people really live, as opposed to how architects, planners or society say they ought to live. As I understood the Smithson phrase 'active socioplastics', it meant that architects should design for the real life of the street and for the way communities actually work, even if the results are not conventionally pleasing. There was, I think, an unspoken desire to derive, from a community life that is not immediately beautiful, a deeper beauty, and an intention not to abandon architecture but to make it socially relevant. Also, there was the obstinate hope that socially responsible architecture could be beautiful, even if the beauty was an agonised one. This is, in a way, a functionalist approach. It says 'Look around you with eyes which see'. (Le Corbusier talked of 'eyes which do not see'.) 'Look at grain elevators, smoke stacks, the tops of ships, street architecture, commercial architecture and popular art, and learn from these. If you do, you will become more useful to your society, yet freshen your aesthetic eye and be a better artist as well.' That's maybe a romantic notion but I still hold to it. The Smithsons dropped socioplastics. They said sociology had to develop before architecture could use it. I disagree. My theory is that urban sociologists will never know about things physical. They have hang-ups about art. They think it is elitist. So architects will have to learn sociology, not the other way round. We at least get a verbal education in school. They don't get a visual one. If there's going to be any meeting of the disciplines, it will have to be achieved by us.

In Philadelphia, in 1958, I discovered that the vision of the future proposed for many American cities was the CIAM vision that the Smithsons had found too rigid. Urban renewal American-style called for demolition of vast areas of 'blight' and their rebuilding in approximations of Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*. Downtown was to be encircled by a ring of expressways to bring people from the suburbs to the high-rise towers at the centre. However, by 1958, criticism of this form of renewal was starting in America. My professors at Penn complained that American re-development projects might look like European social housing, but housed the rich not the poor. This was because the urban renewal programme, although it had its origins in New Deal policies sponsored by Roosevelt to help America through the Depression, was drafted to benefit many interests in the city, in order to get their support. This meant that the programme did not, in the end, house the poor. I think you will find in England, too, that people in council housing were not the poorest of the population, they were those Shaw called the deserving poor. But in America, re-development housing was for the upper-middle classes.

At the same time Levittown was being built. This was social

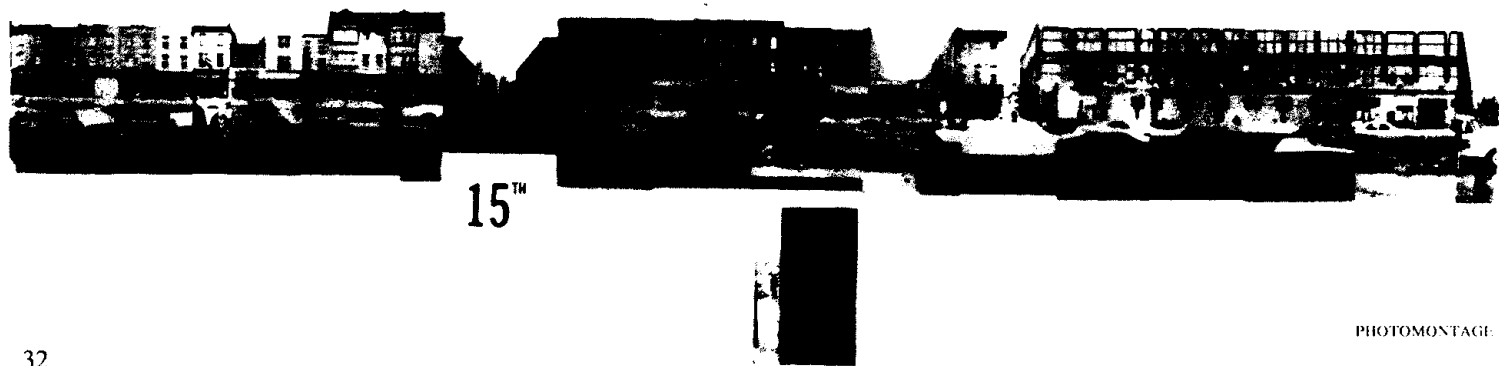
housing the American way. In America, government induced the private sector, through economic measures, to build the equivalent of English council housing. Although technological innovation was involved, merchant builders such as Levitt and Sons, who built the Levittowns, realised that only 30 per cent of the cost of a suburban house lies in construction, therefore advanced construction technology could save on only 30 per cent of the price. In the technology of organization of the building industry lay the real opportunity for saving. The Levitts integrated the building industry vertically, becoming their own suppliers and warehouse. This meant they could design products to their own specification and more important, control delivery dates and streamline on-site construction processes. This aspect of construction technology should be better understood by architects who hope to solve housing problems through industrialised housing.

Herbert Gans, who was my professor of urban sociology in my first semester at Penn, moved to Levittown in that same year, to observe how the new community organised itself. Earlier he had studied poor families in the west end of Boston as they were being removed through urban renewal. In the late 1940s and early 1950s Michael Young and Peter Wilmott studied the London poor to learn what happened to people who were moved away from their homes and families to the new towns. I think Gans was influenced by their work.

So I went from the New Brutalists to Gans. What they shared was the idea I had found intriguing as a cultural colonial in Africa: that you should look as open-mindedly as you could at real patterns and try to build from them - for both moral and aesthetic reasons. The Smithsons' belief that physical form should mirror rather than direct social organization was expressed in their Greenlanes housing project, which greatly interested us at the time. Ironically, streets in the air caused their own social problems; you need streets on the ground to generate the multiple and intense activities that bring safety. But these were important ideas in the development of architecture and the philosophy and approach that underlay them was correct.

While teaching at Penn, I spent my spare moments photographing in Philadelphia, adding to a collection of pop photography Robert Scott Brown and I started in Europe. I learned to analyse the words in ads; some are wonderful. For example, 'O.R. Lumpkin auto refinishing. Wrecks our specialty. We take the dent out of accident'. Someone should write a dissertation on billboard words. At the edge of town I found another pop urban environment scorned and hated by architects, the commercial strip. I set out to discover how to take good photographs of it.

In my course work in the social sciences at Penn, I began to understand that things don't happen in cities by whim or by architectural fiat, but that urban order derives, at least in part, from the fact that many people in cities make similar decisions.



From these decisions, and in relation to topography and geometry, patterns evolve. Urban designers had better understand these patterns. They were first documented in the 19th and 20th centuries by European economists – Von Thunen, Christaller, Loesch and Weber – and later expanded by American economists and regional scientists – Haig, Hoyt, Isard, Perloff, Harris, Lowry, Alonso and others. Their analyses started with documenting how crops were cultivated in concentric circles in relation to markets and ended with complex computer studies of urban regions. The geometric patterns that emerge from the analyses are curiously evocative. The cusps in the tent diagrams of urban rent theory look like the skylines of cities. From the air, the towns of the American plains seem to form the hierarchic patterns documented by Christaller in relation to market journeys. 'Social physics', translated on to the land, has always been fascinating to me. I feel urban architects, if they are to be successful, must realise that land settlement is, at least in part, an orderly system, to be understood. They should see the patterns that derive from social and economic forces as part of their muse, part of their inspiration and should, where possible, use rather than negate these patterns. Architects must at times work against the patterns. For example, site a university on Main street and, if there is demand for land, the pattern of shops, offices and housing will distort but re-form around this foreign body in the system.

You must understand urban economics if you are an urban designer and you must understand it particularly well if you intend to work against economic pressures, because strength and power are required to do so. Nevertheless you can't work against all the forces all the time and why would you do so if you didn't have to, if you could use the pressures to take you where you want to go? This idea was an important addendum to my thinking – that one should not merely understand the way a society operates but should try to work with its forces, to the extent that one can without too far compromising goals. I think it's called American pragmatism. It is also an effort to develop a green thumb for cities.

During this time some aspects of the social critique of American planning heard at Penn and Berkeley were introduced to a wider circle by the writer Jane Jacobs. There was mounting public criticism that urban renewal, as then practiced, did not achieve social aims, that it looked ugly, that its architecture was dead and that the public voted with their feet by not using the places architects designed. This criticism was made part of the exegesis of the New Left. In 1962, James Baldwin published an article on poverty in the *New Yorker*. In it, page after page of diatribe against American society sat surrounded by *New Yorker*-style advertisements for luxuries and the good life. The article went like wild-fire through our planning school. As the New Left developed, social scientists became social activists; students

chose projects in low-income, inner-city areas that we used to call 'the ghetto'. We stopped saying 'negro' and started saying 'black', because black leaders told us we should, pushing blacks and whites to accept that 'black is beautiful'.

The theoretical underpinnings for social planning were provided by social thinkers such as Gans, Webber, Davidoff and Reiner who taught that important planning decisions should be made by people not by planners. They warned that planners and architects had upper middle-class values and asked that they respect other people's views too. How do you find out about people's values? Gans said that people elect politicians who represent their values, therefore planners must heed what politicians say. Planning, Gans felt, should be part of politics. Social activists such as Davidoff and Reiner pointed out that the poor, and particularly the black poor, were unrepresented or under-represented politically in the 1960s. Planners, they felt, should become advocates for those unrepresented people, as lawyers are advocates for their clients.

So the 'advocacy planning' movement was born. It was a creature of the New Left and it appealed particularly to students but its influence changed procedures in planning agencies, giving greater power to local communities to plan for themselves. Eventually 'advocacy architecture' followed and, with help from the AIA, architecture workshops were set up in many communities to give free architectural help to low-income groups. In 1961 Planners for Equal Opportunity, a social planning group, was formed. Ten years later they held a meeting in Washington at which a couple of British journalists were present. They returned and reported the proceedings in England. Since then the English have led the world in community planning. If you think I am being sarcastic, I am!

In 1963 I made a survey of a group called the Neighbourhood Garden Association who were working in low-income areas, helping people fix up vacant lots and turn them into flower gardens. It was a strange group that puzzled and outraged the social planners, who saw upper-class ladies from the suburbs working with the black matriarchy and succeeding better than the planners did. Yet they did so because both groups believed that flowers were good for people and would give them good character and that reading Bible stories to children was good for their souls. The upper middle-class professionals did not share, and were indeed horrified by, this value system but it seemed to work. My job was to show how it worked.

In 1965 I moved to California. I once read in an English architectural journal that 'It was Cedric Price who first discovered Los Angeles. He discovered it in 1961.' That architectural jingoism angers both the African and the American in me. If you want to be flippant, it was Esther McCoy who first discovered Los Angeles and she discovered it in 1932. In fact the School of City Planning at Penn taught that architects and urbanists can't



ROAD

STREET, PHILADELPHIA

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afford to scorn or ignore the urbanism of Los Angeles. It's not chaos but a new order that's emerging; we should try to understand it.

Learning from Las Vegas

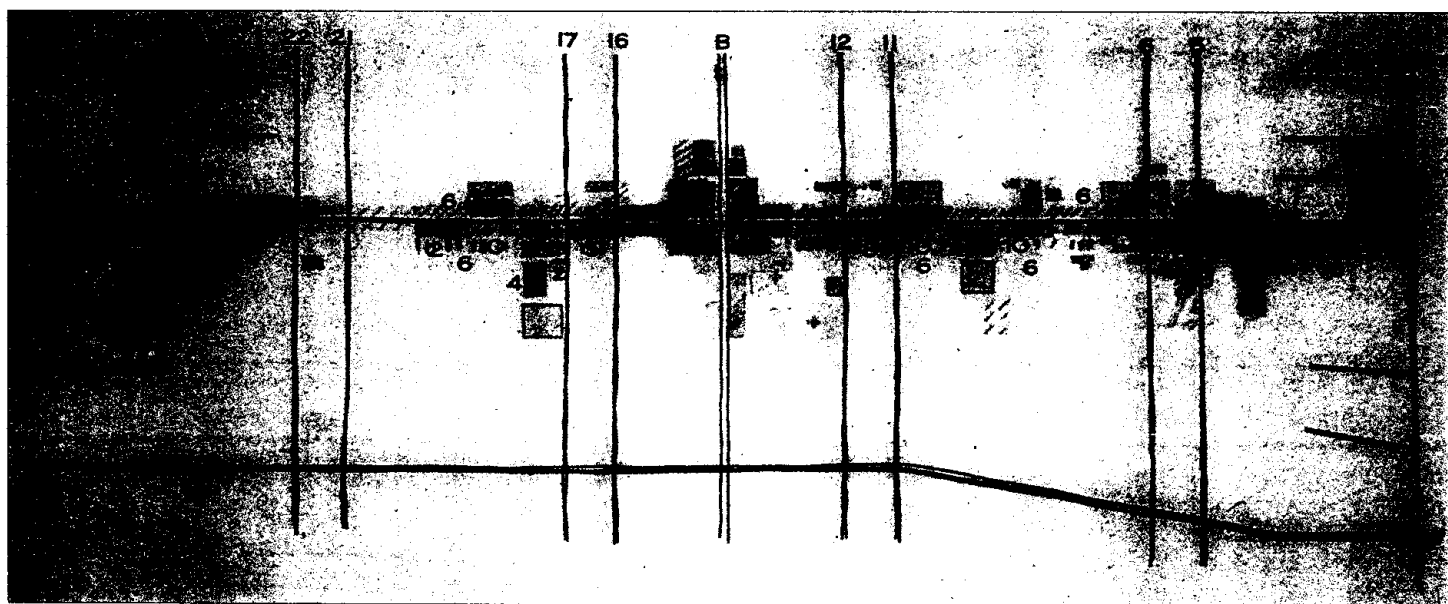
It was in this spirit that I first visited Las Vegas in 1965. Unlike the dead spaces of architect-designed urban renewal, the Las Vegas Strip was somewhere that people actually went. They seemed to enjoy it. I didn't see frowns on their faces as if they were being coerced into going there. They voted with their feet for what they liked. Hate it though you may, people use it and like it. They don't live on the Strip. They go there to spend an evening or a few days. Critics who say 'You wouldn't want to live there yourself' are distorting the Las Vegas reality. Las Vegas don't live on the Strip. They are proud of their residential and recreational areas, set well away from the Strip. The Las Vegas environments gave me a shiver. Was it hate or love? I couldn't tell, but it was profoundly jolting. The jolt gets you out of an aesthetic rut. That is why I felt Bob and I could learn from it and invited him to visit it with me in 1966.

In 1968 we started analysing the Strip, with our students we

relevant; hoping through study of the 'messy vitality' of Las Vegas to learn how to design in a way that would not cause social harm through applying unnecessarily rigid aesthetic criteria. Yet, in the end, the main answer to the question 'Well, what do you learn from Las Vegas?' is that we learned to reassess the role of symbolism in architecture and that this helped guide our search for an appropriate architecture for a 'Post-Modern' period. That our ideas led to a new formal order as rigid as the Modern and to a set of architectural preoccupations far from the social and aesthetic concerns that drove us was not what we intended and has more to do with the nature of our profession than with us. As Venturi said 'Plus ça change'.

South Street, Philadelphia

While we were analysing Las Vegas, we were also prescribing for South Street in Philadelphia. This was an old commercial strip threatened by an expressway. It was a long street that stretched between Philadelphia's two rivers. It had seen even an immigrant group come up it. Along its length communities were subtended like beads on a string. There were Irish in the west, blacks in the east, Italians and Jews in the middle. Precursors



ACTIVITIES MAP, SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

took cross-cuts through it to see what kind of space it was. We tried to relate Strip space to traditional spaces that we all knew such as the Eastern bazaar, the Medieval street and the landscape of Versailles. We began to see that urban space does not need to be defined as it has been historically, by walls, it can be defined in other ways. The Strip is defined by movement and by the signs that communicate with you as you drive down it at 30 miles an hour – great signs that you can see from the air before you land. Symbol in space before form in space; that is the order in this landscape. We also analysed the words of the signs and the juxtapositions of symbols or of signs and architecture. On one level the combinations are violent but on another they form a new whole, related to the automobile, to a mass society, if you like, and to mass use – although a good eye is kept on individuals as well. The whole mixed media environment tells you something of the orgy you will have if you come to Las Vegas. People go to Las Vegas feeling (to quote Alan Lapidus) 'afraid something wonderful might happen'.

Of course our study was of much more than signs and people who consider Las Vegas at night only don't understand what we were after. We were trying, *inter alia*, to make ourselves socially

the yuppies were approaching from both ends and the centre was a thriving shopping street in the 1920s, a market for the residents around it and famous for its jazz clubs. When people started to leave for the suburbs, it lost its 'carriage trade' and began to decline. By the time our work started the expressway had been threatened for ten years. Lacking expectations, South Street had grown seedy. Neither its economic methods nor its architecture had changed in twenty years and on it lived some of the poorest people of Philadelphia. The social planner who invited me to join the planning team said that although she did not believe in architecture and thought that we should be tackling social and economic problems of cities first, people were going to be pushed out of their houses onto the streets before we could ever deal with jobs or education. She added 'If you can like Las Vegas, we trust you not to neat up South Street at the expense of its people.'

The expressway threatened 6,000 mainly poor people whom there was no public housing. The social planners felt that the community needed to present its own plan and image for what South Street could be without an expressway. Would we become advocates planners and architects for this community? We had

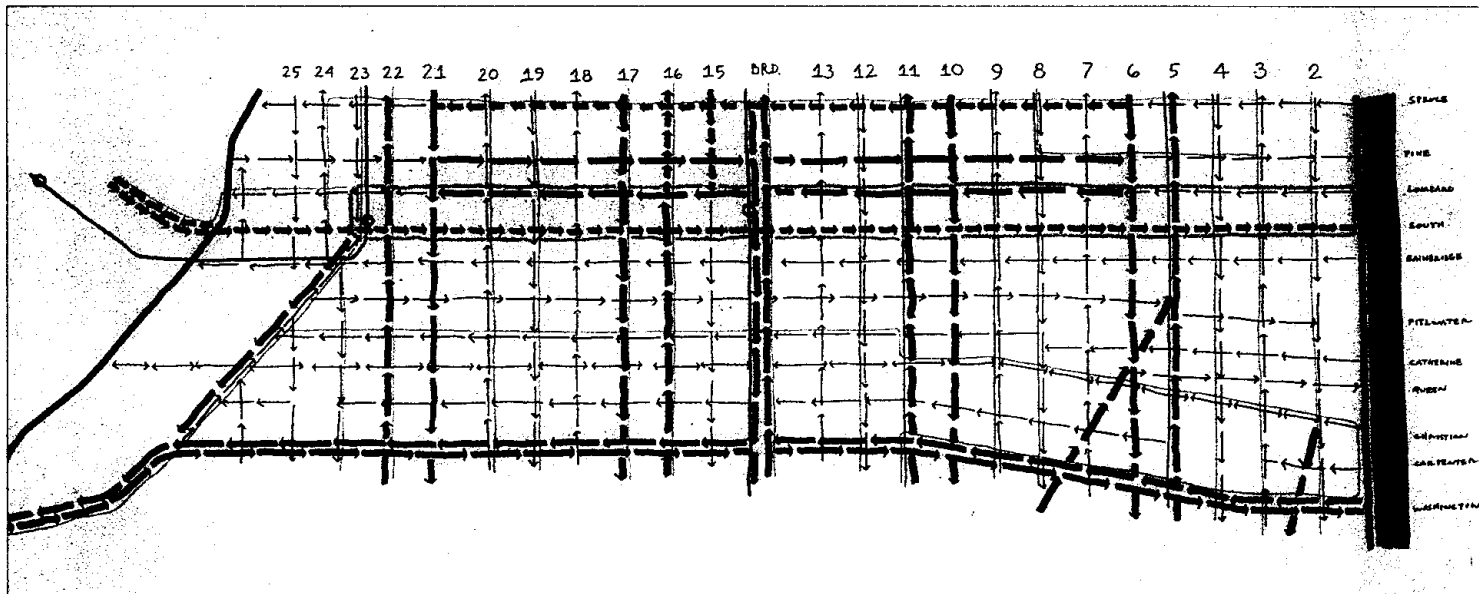
go before the community board to see if we would be acceptable as volunteer workers and advocates for them. One of the reasons they accepted us was that we had a concern in common. Bob Venturi, apart from being an architect, was a fruit merchant. He had inherited his father's business on South Street so we were all threatened by the expressway. He (and later, he and I) supervised the running of the business, which supported the architect, until finally the roles reversed and the architect was supporting the fruit merchant. Then we went out of business. If you know the terms 'succession' and 'invasion' you will understand that the Italian and Jewish merchants on South Street were slowly moving out. Some of the new merchants were black, but most were young intellectuals running art galleries and 'collectables' shops.

South Street was our first 'Main Street' project and the first community project we undertook as practitioners not academics. We set about studying its many facets. We learned that South Street retailers could never again depend solely on a local market for their goods and services and that, to save an old main street in a low-income city area, it is necessary to find new uses for its buildings, based on their location and the quality of their

suggested, should be to erect a banner over the street, paint one sign and rehabilitate one building, to show someone cares. This would be a quick beginning.

Our land-use maps for South Street looked quite unclear because we gave separate attention to individual sites and to different floor levels. We didn't show the whole block in the colour of its dominant use. If you try to represent land use in all its complexity in low-income, inner-city communities, your land use plan looks like a bruise, with small patches of blue and yellow, red and purple. Our transportation proposal argued that in the rich areas of Philadelphia planners would not dream of replacing existing roads with an expressway. Instead they recommend coupled one-way streets. Do the same thing here, we said, make South and Bainbridge Streets a one-way couple and Washington Street an on-grade arterial. Make a plaid out of the Philadelphia street grid. In that way, all streets will be used to best advantage and we won't need an expressway.

As a planner I had been taught that land use and transportation are 'inextricably intertwined' as Robert Mitchell, my professor at Penn, used to put it. So I was surprised when I learned the community did not wish my transportation plan to be shown.



CROSTOWN CORRIDOR TRAFFIC PATTERN, SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

architecture. These uses should attract people to the area but should not induce revolutionary change that will displace residents and demolish neighbourhoods. We discovered that South Street already had a series of overlapping markets, drawing people for a variety of purposes from New Jersey and the outskirts of Philadelphia as well as from the central city. We found that effective planning for old inner-city communities involves regional economics, local economics, architecture, historic preservation, knowledge of transportation and construction, understanding of urban community structure, dynamics and familiarity with methods for achieving democratic consensus.

We worked for the 'Crosstown Community' as architects and planners for four years. Our plan recommended starting renewal of the Crosstown community by introducing one-stop shopping for social services for low-income people in two existing buildings, one on either side of Broad Street. Community renewal started through public investment at these sites would generate private renewal nearby, but on a small scale to suit the needs of those immediately around it. This meant local community members could get in first and establish a hold in certain areas before larger scale renewal overtook the street. The very first act, we

They felt its provisions would set other communities against them, making them vulnerable to manipulation between communities by the Department of Transportation. The community vetoed one other scheme: some architects recommended getting donations of paint and painting all the side walls of houses where buildings had been demolished on the street. The community said 'If we had enough people with the ability to organise doing that, why would we waste their time on something so futile? We need them for other things such as banging on the mayor's door'. They also believed we should not waste community time on, for example, land use surveys because political activities were more important. So I began to learn interesting and important lessons in planning from the members of this low-income, black community - helped by their brilliant leader Alice Lipscomb and their brilliant and merry lawyer, Robert Sugarman.

The social planners liked our plans. They were glad that we hadn't designed buildings because it was too early to do so. They approved of our designating by number the kinds of buildings and types of programmes that should be sponsored in different locations. On our maps government actions were depicted in one way and the type of reaction that might be expected from the

private sector, in another. This followed Robert Mitchell's dictum that planners should be careful to distinguish between what they recommend and what they expect will happen. It is also important to differentiate between intentions, projections, predictions and predelictions. Architects should understand these differences too.

East Poplar, Philadelphia

Our next community project was for East Poplar in Philadelphia. This was a Ukranian neighbourhood for which an early urban renewal plan was made in 1948. It was a 'state of the art' plan at the time, full of good hope. It expressed high aspirations for a 'balanced community' but it ended in a law suit when blacks moved into East Poplar and the redevelopment authority changed the plan, erecting low-income housing but not the middle or moderate income housing that would make for a balanced community. A black city planning student, Maurice Shannon, sued the redevelopment authority for abrogating the plan and won. As part of the settlement we were hired as court appointed planners and architects to help decide what redress the community should have. I found myself in the middle, in a conflict between middle-class blacks who wanted the plan as originally proposed and low-income black matriarchs who wanted their subsidised housing. I found I could get along very well with the matriarchy; perhaps we recognised a common link. In the end it was decided that more housing of different kinds would be built: we recommended that the city should also sponsor a project area committee where community people could be represented in planning for the area. Thanks to the civil rights movement and the social planners, Philadelphia communities could at that time do their own planning through their own elected representatives and their own paid staff planners. In setting up a democratic participatory process we recommended that the project area committee represent all neighbourhood interests and also all groups who could exercise a veto vote, be they low-income people, storekeepers, artists or others. There should be two kinds of democracy at work, a direct democracy of public meetings, where a vote is taken, and a representational democracy of the project area committee that gave the planners direction. I also invited people to write me letters to tell me what they wanted, and many of them did.

Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania

Jim Thorpe is the little town in Pennsylvania where coal was first discovered. Its old town consists basically of one main street that slopes up a river valley between steep, wooded mountains. It was once one of the richest towns in the United States. With the coal barons came sumptuous mansions and proud street architecture; on West Broadway, the town's main street, it was as if Philadelphia's Broad Street had been wedged between two mountains. The street was lined by a hierarchy of monumental public buildings, the station, county hall, the navigation building, the library, the opera house - even a jail. They seemed meant for a larger city.

We carefully analysed the old town, building by building, following in spirit Patrick Geddes' analyses of Indian villages. We also studied the economy of the surrounding region which was becoming a white water rafting, canoeing and skiing area. We investigated other competing and complementary resort areas. We recommended that the historical link between Jim Thorpe and its river and canal be re-established. Then we suggested ways in which the townspeople could use their heritage of river, canal, rail, and buildings to attract some of the growing tourist trade but not so much that it would overwhelm them. Design guidelines for the area were all on a quite small scale involving mainly painting and fixing up. We proposed one

street re-routing and the addition of a parking structure and made suggestions for rebuilding a vacant lot. They are still using the plan years later.

Princeton

At Princeton the problem was to maintain the character and image of a small university town when it was being overrun by yuppies and the elderly rich. I am not showing you the plan but another aspect of participatory planning: the offering of alternatives. The social planners warned us not to say to people 'I, the expert, here is your plan' but instead: 'Here are several alternatives based on your goals. Alternative A stresses the goal for low-income housing, alternative B the goal for rehabilitation of the commercial area...' and so on. The impact of each alternative on various facets of town life must be described. There are usually three or four alternatives - if there are more than three we planners lose our shirts! At Princeton fertile mirage demanded the generation of alternatives without end. They argued, mainly among themselves and interminably. Evening meetings lasted until midnight. The planning process was drawn out far beyond the schedule and in the end, not much happened. No one ever said community participation was easy. But the theory you start with very broad alternatives and narrow them until you find the range of feasibility. In order to give the community a way to decide, you produce a matrix that describes the impact of each alternative, by a series of categories. Then you say 'You decide' and leave town for six weeks. As they debate the alternatives, they build themselves a planning function that can be in place and tested when the project is completed. I tell them (using Bob Mitchell's ideas and words) that I am an itinerant hand-and-run city planner and when I am gone my plan will be shelved unless I leave behind people who can carry on.

Washington Avenue, Miami Beach

Washington Avenue, in South Beach, Miami Beach, is the heart of what's now called the Deco District. We named it, we were the first to suggest that Miami Deco architecture was a wonderful resource. But South Beach was also filled with the old and the poor. Washington Avenue, the main shopping street, is a wonderful Deco environment, but very rundown. People here stop you and ask what you are doing and where you're from. They are mainly old Jewish people retired from New York, many of them are garment workers' union members; Miami is a last resting place of this historic Eastern European immigrant group. He again you can see succession-invasion at work. Cuban restaurants jostle kosher delis on the Avenue. Some of the Cubans are Jewish. There are Ashkenazy and Sephardic synagogues among the storefronts on Washington Avenue. Because many old people live on government payments and on medicaid, storefronts house 'medicaid mills' and advertise that you can get your blood pressure taken for a dollar. Now the rich are moving in.

Our planning efforts should do three things for a community: help set up a democratic planning process; produce a fine-grained analysis of community characteristics, from demographics to parking meter locations; and make urban design and planning recommendations that use our best imagination to make up for the lack of money for community development. Few communities can afford to pay for more than two of these three activities, so, if I must choose between them, I will skimp on the analysis because after some years of working on Main Street I know much of what the analysis will show. It will show *inter alia* that the most convenient parking for customers is pre-empted by storekeepers who park in front of their own stores. Nevertheless, I made a careful analysis of Washington Avenue stores and the owners. The smallest storekeeper was also one of the most verbal. He had a store about 14 feet wide called Kid's Stuff. I

rented cribs and high chairs to grandparents when their grandchildren came to visit. We considered the economic role of Washington Avenue in the region, pressures for change and growth, and the future of Miami Beach in the world economy.

In proper social-planning fashion, we produced several alternative broad-scale policy recommendations. Within these, our physical proposals for the Avenue were those we felt storekeepers could afford. We recommended mending and repainting the signs, restoring the Deco decorations when there were enough of them left, and replacing store awnings. Striped awnings and the painted signs and decorations on the stucco fascias above them should, we said, be the theme of storefronts. We made public sector recommendations for sidewalk and street improvements. We were forced into including trees. I don't believe in trees in front of small stores because they hide the signs and the store windows, and storekeepers cannot afford that. But we recommended a species of palm with a high trunk so the fronds would be above the signs. We recommended a more extravagant landscape (a Hollywood interpretation of a Miami landscape) for the traffic medians at the centre of the street.

Washington Avenue is a long street with fractionated ownership. The detail this required in our studies and plans was difficult to read on our maps; and the people who came to the meetings were old and couldn't see or hear well. We heard them say too loudly 'I can't tell what they are saying'. No one seemed happy with our proposals. I began looking around me in search of what pleased this community, then I realised it was the same Deco architecture that pleased us. The old people had come to Miami Beach when it epitomised glamour in the Hollywood of the 1940s. The 1940s picture postcards of South Beach Hotels, still on sale on Washington Avenue, were the elderly community's vision of Miami. I liked it pretty much myself. So I decided all our drawings should have palm trees and blue skies.

Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis

Hennepin Avenue was a great white way in the hey-day of downtowns when cities still had money. With its rows of cinema marquees, it had been the entertainment district of Minneapolis and, indeed, of the mid-West between New York and Chicago. It was tawdry and seedy, a venue of prostitutes. Yet new office buildings were developing nearby it along Hennepin's trendy sister, Nicolet Mall. It was clear that Hennepin Avenue could go from great white way to 'grey flannel' corridor, although the honky-tonk would remain. Minneapolis had arrived at a principle they called 'hooker hydraulics'. This meant that if you push them off one street, they will come back on another, so it would be better to keep them where they are. Therefore we had red silk petticoats and grey flannel to deal with on the same street, as well as pleasantly solid masonry buildings from the turn of the century, honky-tonk, and the cinema marquee remains of the great white way. A further complication were the Minneapolis skyways that take shoppers and office workers between buildings above street level. These private corridors cross the public streets and are linked to form a public route that runs through stores and office buildings - one more variant on the theme of public-private relations.

We recommended that the white way now be produced in the public realm. We evolved a 'sparkle tree' to line Hennepin Avenue as it ran through the entertainment district. These tree-shaped, metal torches would beam big lights from their bases on to reflectors in their branches. Being public, they would be white and grey, not coloured; they would light the area but also provide a festive design framework, within which the neon of the private sector could go its own way. The skyways, being private, would continue the neon theme of the private buildings, yet have a more flamboyant, more public character. At night the sparkle

trees would read as white against the skyway neon. The grey flannel entrances of the corporate office buildings we kept discreetly on side streets.

We made separate sets of design guidelines for grey flannel old masonry buildings, honky-tonk and skyways: four sets of parallel guidelines for one street. If you don't do that your urban design will be of limited use.

Republic Square District, Austin.

In Austin, Texas, we were hired by a developer to make a plan for part of an old warehouse district where he owned land. Our work as planners included proposing a site for the Laguna Gloria Art Museum for which we were to be architects. The Republic Square District was the site of the original town, platted on the river in 1839. The grid plans of small western towns are marvellous things. It's over simple to say that grids are simple. They give all kinds of options through their dimensions and rhythms, their orientation, and how they relate to the landscape. The Austin downtown was moving south and west toward the warehouse district. It was an area suited to large-scale change as it contained no housing and provided few jobs. The warehouses were mostly nondescript, single-storey buildings of the 1930s and 1940s.

Austin loves its natural environment and its lake. Unlike the rest of Texas, Austin has a smallness ethic. The trouble is that Texans love the smallness so much that they flock to Austin. How to remain a small town was a big problem. I won't describe our plans for Austin but will show you some of their symbols. Some are Texan, for example the lone star or the cowboy; some are southern, to do with the Civil War; and some are particularly of Austin, the Capitol or the live oak. We enjoyed, too, the combinations: the Capitol and the Long Horn, the Lone Star with the Statue of Liberty. Victorian buildings in Austin look unusual to a Philadelphian (or a Londoner). They are not the russet and plum colours we know, but are of a beautiful cream-coloured stone that glows in the evening sun. Austin public landscaping intrigued us too; it was a Texan adaptation of an English Romantic landscape, using live oaks.

These are some of the unique qualities of the city that we tried to address in our plans. We discussed Austin's symbols and the special character of the city's architecture and landscape with the steering committee and at public meetings. We find that people are often fascinated by our outsider's view of their city and grow enthusiastic about the heritage they have to build on and what it could become. When designing the Laguna Gloria Art Museum we turned for inspiration to the local cream-coloured buildings. We discovered that Cass Gilbert and Paul Cret, outsider-architects before us at the University of Austin, had melded Mediterranean and local influences to produce a lovely, cosmopolitan, Austin institutional style.

Centre City, Memphis

Memphis is set high on the bluffs above the Mississippi at one of the few locations where the river doesn't flood. Settlement is on the east bank only. On the west is a flood plain. Memphis is one of the few cities I know where you can look out from your office building window and see farm land. Where we in Philadelphia see Camden, they see green fields. Cotton used to land at the Memphis riverfront. Especially wide streets were included in the grid so the mule wagons could heave the cotton bales on a diagonal up and down the hill to and from the warehouses.

The imagery of Memphis includes not only the Mississippi and steam boats but also the parallel with Memphis on the Nile. The pyramid is perhaps an over-used symbol. Then there is Beale Street, the black main street famous for the blues and the blues musician W C Handy. Elvis Presley, too, grew up (in public housing) in Memphis and, some say, learned his trade watching

black musicians from the backs of the black nightclubs on segregated Beale Street. There is also the imagery of cotton and the cotton warehouses. Guess who's moving into the cotton warehouses? Architects of course. Then there is the famous Peabody Hotel with its fountains and ducks. The ducks waddle in and out from their rooftop home every day, while trumpets play and tourists applaud.

Yet all is not well downtown. The decline had already started with post World War II suburbanisation. In the 1950s and 1960s efforts were made to redress the decline through urban renewal and the introduction of expressways. Expressways and clearance for renewal destroyed traditional urban patterns and decimated the downtown. When Martin Luther King was killed downtown, rebuilding stopped for ten years; the city went through paroxysms of guilt and self-questioning.

In the late 1970s interest in downtown was re-kindled. A local family acquired the Peabody and regenerated it, making an elegant, sophisticated hotel. That was the beginning of something new. In the Peabody atrium civic events were held beside the duck fountain. People who hadn't been downtown in years came for the new chic. Soon after, gentrification started. A Deco cinema was converted to a civic auditorium, cotton warehouses became loft apartments and studios, new riverside housing was built, artists then architects then lawyers moved in town, and there was the beginning of a resurgence in office and hotel growth on sites near the river.

With the developers came financial organization and political support and a public-private Centre City Commission was instituted with powers to plan and finance. Their organization hired us. I set up a team of economists, transportation planners, cultural planners, social planners, landscape architects, preservation planners and local architects – we were eight consulting entities. We hired a minority consultant when a black Commissioner refused to vote for the planning study unless we did so. I was happy to do this and we found an excellent one to help us gauge the social and economic impact of our plans on the minority community and to build minority recommendations and requirements into the plan. To have such a consultant is necessary but unusual in downtown planning. Work was divided into eleven subject areas and seven major tasks. Over the three years of the project we gathered and analysed data and made recommendations, studying all subject areas in parallel and co-ordinating our work with each other, our steering committees and the public as we went. We left time for the steering committee and the public to consider our reports and debate the alternatives before getting back to us with their choices. As prime consultant, I was responsible for the overall planning strategy, the organization and co-ordination of the project, the urban design plan, one sub-area plan and portions of the housing, preservation and implementation plans. I edited all reports and wrote about half of the study's 21 volumes.

The map of the Memphis region shows that by the time our study was initiated major growth had taken place to the east, making downtown on the Mississippi the western boundary of the city. Within downtown, the original plat of the 1819 river town still existed, much eroded by the expressway and demolition. Beale Street, to the south, stood high and dry in a sea of clearance, as if it had survived a bombing. Although the publicity photos showed it alive with lights, Beale Street had been gentrified and prettified out of its former vitality and its new tenants still awaited an economic upswing. Main Street had been converted to a pedestrian mall, which probably accelerated rather than prevented its decline. The historic Cobblestones, where the cotton landed on the Mississippi, served as a parking lot; it had about it a strange air of abandonment, as if it, too, was about to be demolished.

When our study was initiated growth was starting along the river. There was new and rehabilitated housing, several high-rise buildings were in erection, and more were planned. The change in scale the new towers imposed was the immediate cause of our study. People felt the beauty of the location on the Mississippi could be lost, and with it, the economic advantages of downtown. They wanted a strategy plan to guide growth in good directions over the next 25 years.

We began by documenting the many facets of downtown's social, economic and physical development. We diagrammed the growth of Memphis from cotton port, to railroad town, to expressway city, showing how the bluffs had impeded industrial development on the river, leaving a soft river edge at the centre of town. We analysed uses and users of downtown. Our cultural planner made fascinating studies of the locations of jazz clubs and their users. Two of our three economists were former architects – in the planning we do it helps to have economists who understand and like old buildings. We made urban design analyses of the architectural character of centre city and its sub-areas and documented the connections – 'linkages' – between activities and districts in centre city. We showed problematic lack of connection, between downtown and the Mississippi, the north and south ends of downtown, the various renewal projects and Beale Street and the rest of downtown. We recommended desirable linkages between the elements of downtown and, putting these together, suggested the vitality the city should have. We sketched the directions in which centre city would be likely to grow and showed how these related to historic areas. We caused concern by placing on one map all existing centre city expressways and all those for which funding had been committed. This left one small link of an expressway ring still to be built, the portion that ran along the riverfront between downtown and the Mississippi. Seeing that plan, people were not convinced by the reassurance that no expressway was contemplated.

From the analysis we evolved a set of alternative development strategies based on three different views of the economy. Each encouraged and attracted growth but channelled physical change away from vulnerable historic districts and toward areas already cleared for growth. Each contained sub-alternatives for the riverfront, the mall and Beale Street, and there were also several transportation alternatives, including our recommended 'darning and mending' alternative. In transportation planning there is the 'macho' approach, which rams expressways through the city, and the 'feminist' approach, which employs many small-scale ameliorations to make maximum use of existing roads and avoid, as far as possible, the destruction caused by freeways. We usually recommend the latter. (The terminology is personal.)

We discussed the atmosphere and character of the civil rights museum, which will be a memorial to Martin Luther King at the Lorraine Motel, where he was killed. We made indicative plans for the shopping complex that will join the Peabody Hotel to Beale Street. This plan was intended primarily as a description of what the city should require of the new development to ensure it connects with and supports the surrounding activities of the city. We suggested that new housing built off-shore on Mud Island have a suburban, not an urban, image to make it competitive with suburban east Memphis. We worked with the minority consultant to establish community requirements to be met at the same time as support was given to downtown's plans for commercial and high-income housing expansion.

Finding something in the plan for everyone and dealing with all aspects of growth, not just architecture, have been the great challenges of this project. I wish I could tell you it was going to succeed. If you want to ask me during the discussion why I think things are not going well with community architecture I would be happy to tell you.

DISCUSSION

Martin Pawley, Simon Jenkins, Robert Thorne, Jake Brown, Ken Powell, Charles Jencks, John Thompson

RT: Denise has taken us a long way from the Hesketh Street Cop and Lea View and Black Road, Macclesfield, and made us think about community participation in other ways – in so doing she told us a bit about herself and about the way she works with different communities in America – and introduced me to a number of words which I had never heard before – ‘socioplastics’, ‘hooker hydraulics’ – I will be using that at work tomorrow. I am going to ask Martin Pawley to start off in response to Denise’s talk. Martin will be known to all of you as the architectural correspondent of the *Guardian* and the King of Technology Transfer.

MP: Thank you. I did think that my image as a kind of flame-thrower of community architecture could be applied this evening. I now realise after Denise’s fascinating presentation that it is completely inapplicable. We are talking in terms which are quite different from one country to another. When Denise shows us plans of the re-development of the central area of a major city, I don’t think it really can have the same name of ‘community architecture’ as the renovation of small houses in a small town in a very small country in a corner of Europe. I always used to think myself that the most distressing thing about community architecture in the last few years is that it was ironic that 20 years ago, we used to build 500,000 houses a year and think nothing of it, now if three people take five years to renovate a house in, shall we say, Macclesfield, several films are made about it.

Now, this is really, I think, the difference between these two things: between working with communities in the United States of America and self-help building boot-strap operations. Of course, I admit that that is an American term but self-help building is on a very small scale in Britain. My view of it is of course that bad design goes with community architecture, bad technology also and finally bad faith, in that community architecture simply doesn’t do the job it’s supposed to do. It is not a substitute for the construction of half a million new houses a year, any more than repairing old MGBs is a substitute for selling a million Ford Coronas. These are different problems which are still going to be approached through magnitudes. I don’t frankly understand how the dealings with minorities, the dealings with poor communities in American cities which are described in a loving way by Denise can actually be compared with what we regard as community architecture and to what community architecture in this country thought of as its task. This seemed to me to be utterly different. There seems to be in America a confidence in the planning system, beyond that, a confidence in the legal system, beyond that, a confidence in the goodwill of everyone concerned, you can’t say is present in this country. That is not the way we carry out our business. We are suspicious of our planners and don’t trust our lawyers, there is a lot of trouble with the private sector, we don’t like that either. It is very difficult to compare the two.

DSB: That’s a romanticised view of America.

MP: Well, I was going to use the term ‘romanticised’ and to say that what I propose about community architecture myself was that we should go ‘cap-in-hand’ to the Mitsubishi corporation or Honda and say ‘How can you do this and sell it for a reasonable price?’ That of course, doesn’t refer to what you have talked

about tonight, which is not, I think, an equivalent to taking three years to repair a house and then making a film about it. Four years to stop an expressway, a master plan of 25 years – these are statements of confidence, these speak of a realm where community architecture as conceived in Britain does not rate. Things have already gone beyond the point, all that stuff has failed before community architecture, as I understand it, is brought into play. With the best will in the world, I cannot regard this work as the same as the kind of work that Ron Hackney and the other people who followed him have done in this country because, as you know, I regard that as totally unsuccessful and based on a fundamentally wrong premise. So, that much being said, Denise, I thought it was terrific.

SJ: Can I just comment there Martin? Because I knew that you were totally unsympathetic to English community architecture, I thought that, if you could accept the great optimism and confidence of Denise’s talk, you would therefore be extremely sympathetic to the way she was thinking about cities and about the way cities work. Is that the case?

MP: I have in fact lived in the USA for six years and I have been to most of the places she showed. Denise is a wonderful photographer of course, and you could take quite different types of photos in Las Vegas, showing the epitome of misery and despair in a totally heartless economic system. Denise talks in an upbeat, optimistic way of the kinds of co-operation you read about in newspapers in America which are not working at all. She talks about a 25 year plan that in 25 minutes is rendered useless by some change in the law, some political or sociological movement which wasn’t part of her brief.

DSB: Can I say something to that? I did call it ‘the rise and fall’ and I have taken you up, I didn’t have time to take you down. Community planning of our sort is having a very tough time in America. My plan may not be used and I could tell you the reasons in Memphis which would be general for the whole country. It would be romanticising to say that planning is done much better in America. Planning is like a haunted house since we have had Nixon and Reagan. The level of support and funding in many planning agencies is so low that people like me can’t really work with them any more.

MP: But you continue to work with them

DSB: I may not do another plan because I couldn’t afford to lose as much money as I lost on this one.

MP: But Denise, you didn’t have a hard word to say about anyone in your presentation. Everybody was a good guy, they were all terrific and everything was working fine.

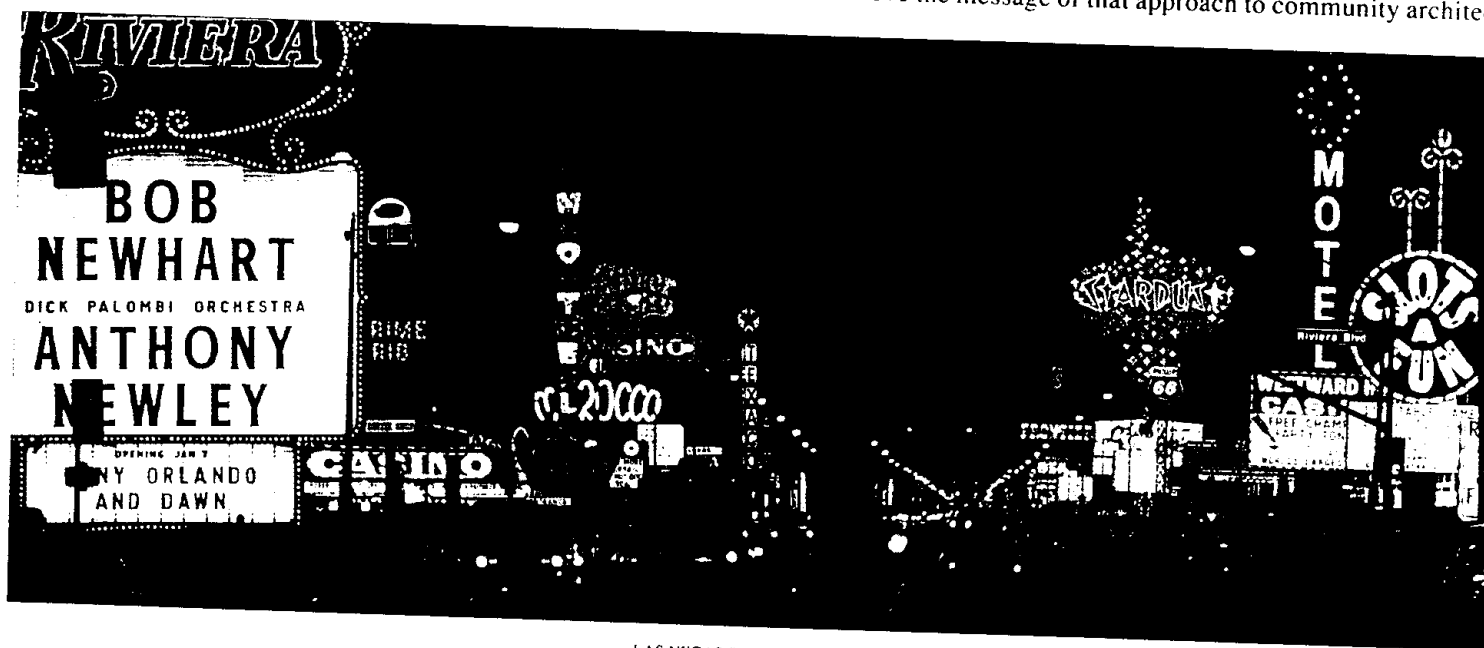
DSB: The point is that I tried to show you the essence of what I think democratic community planning should be. But, as I say, it is very difficult to do this kind of planning any more. Martin is right, the Memphis plan, like most plans, does depend in the short run on the outcome of elections, but its ideas are out in public, and this is only the first of its 25 years. We don’t have time for a discussion of what happened to American planning and planning agencies in the 1970s and 80s but its conclusion would be that planning is no more respected in America than in England. In fact, maybe less.

RT: Well, let’s come on to the fall later on. I am going to ask Simon Jenkins for his response. He is the Vice Chairman of English Heritage and therefore one of our leading conservationists.

SJ: I am in almost as an embarrassing situation as Martin Pawley because I find myself very rarely in agreement with him about something and in fact am surprised to find myself worried about some of the things Denise was saying. The gist of her presentation was political rather than architectural. I am always intrigued as a non-architect whenever I go to architectural presentations to see how absolutely fascinated architects are by politics and how bored they seem by their own profession. Here we have once again a fascinating political talk in which the architectural component was significant by its absence. However, the real question I would like to put to Denise is what I think is a central confusion – if not of community architecture (which I totally agree with Martin Pawley, is such a confused concept that it is better to remove it from the agenda completely and talk about planning and architecture, which is what the real subject is, and not befuddle our minds over definitions) . . . there does seem to me to be a central confusion in what it was that Denise was saying in aid of her approach. It was the attempt to find out what it is that 'People want to see happen to their environment'. Now there is no doubt that the movement that she was describing from the 60s into the 70s and certainly into the 80s to re-define the

showed them how they could use tourism, but not too much tourism for fear that it would alter the character of the old town. Now I don't think that it is terribly difficult, it is quite easy to evolve a system of planning which freezes the city or freezes town. You can simply say that nothing will change here. We know what that means, it means that the town ages.

I was slightly surprised at, dare I call it, Denise's naivety. When she went to these meetings, she was slightly surprised to find that most of these people were elderly. But it is not surprising that that they are elderly, these are areas which have reached the end of a cycle of change, where the occupants have grown old and where those old people do not want any more change. They would rather like public money to come along and restore the fabric of the city in precisely the way in which they want it. Now, I actually like many of the things which were thereby proposed, most of them are conservationist. I on the whole like the architecture they are trying to save and I am very sympathetic to it. But it leaves us totally defenceless against the forces of change. She ended up by saying that she had a much more pessimistic message to give us which she didn't get around to. I believe the message of that approach to community architecture



LAS VEGAS STRIP BY NIGHT

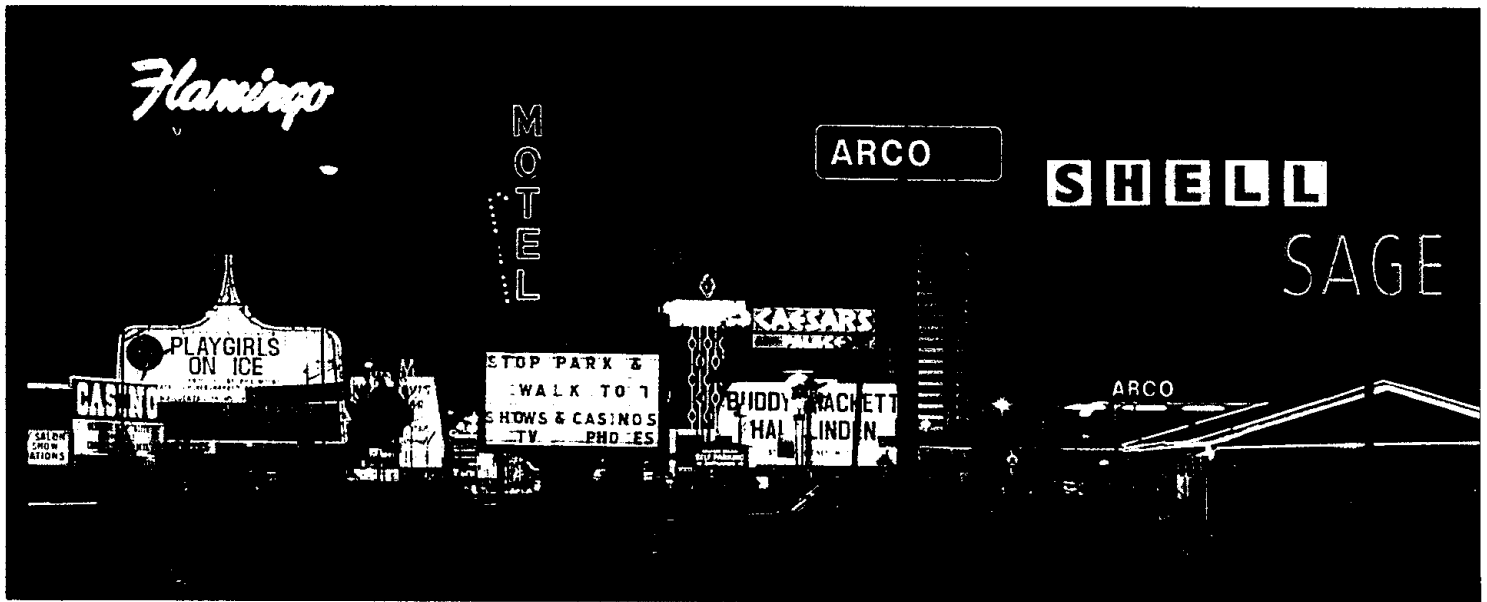
political process of planning has led to a far greater concern with 'what local people really want'. This has been the great strength of the Conservation Movement. It has been able to rely on a new sort of politics in towns to support itself, usually independent of the party political process or formal political process that, as is often said, legitimises planning decisions, usually in the direction of very large scale development. We can at least all agree about the famous traffic and highway engineers who never go by without a term of abuse. I was interested time and again, in her descriptions of the processes she was recommending for the towns. There were meetings at which local people came along and said what they wanted. An immensely complicated and traditionally American professional way of interpreting these decisions was translated into a new way of renewing the town. What these people actually wanted was that nothing should change. They wanted to see existing buildings, but more importantly the existing uses and existing occupants of those buildings continue. They wished to see the renewal to be essentially a cosmetic renewal in which the existing patina of the town was retained. In her recommendations to the people, I think of Jim Thorpe, Pennsylvania, she used a very interesting phrase, she

ture is very pessimistic. Most people want cities to change organically, slowly, if you like, but must accept the fact of change. We have got to find a much more radical way of channelling change and enabling it to take place, enabling new uses to come along without destroying the fabric which, I believe, as a passionate conservationist, is the adaptable element in a city which none the less retains its character. One thing I think slightly made my point: Denise spatters her remarks, as many architects and planners do, with derisory references to yuppies and the rich and new people coming into the area, but most of the slides are of precisely that happening. She shows a warehouse in Memphis into which architects have just moved. She doesn't really like the fact that they have re-done Beale Street, but actually the architecture is quite nice. Underlying it, is the fact that we rather like going round Covent Garden although we ritually deplore the fact that it is no longer occupied by the dear old biddies who used to be there 25 years ago. This naivety, this confusion, is central to urban renewal and I just don't think it has yet been resolved.

RT: Denise, are you instinctively an opponent of change? Are you an ally of the old folk?

DSB: I feel that Simon has misunderstood me because of the way I have had to focus my lecture owing to lack of time. In Jim Thorpe, what Simon says is true. Our plan was for the historic district, not the whole town; for about 5,000 people. It needs to be the way it is and the old folk need to live out their lives there, though there are young merchants and artists and middle-aged people in the historic area too. The problem was to suggest re-uses for the existing architecture with a little infill but not too much. Change will happen in the region, and this will change and intensify the uses within buildings in the town. This is, in fact, happening. Ten years ago there were nine functioning business on Jim Thorpe's main street, today there are sixty. The new market has come from regional growth. On South Street, however, there was considerable change. The antique row and restaurants that preserved the store fronts at the eastern end have prospered and so has the Italian market, because there's been an increase of upper-middle income residents in the city. To the west, residential growth has spread across South Street and well beyond. The city should be grateful to the community activists who stopped the expressway, if only for the extra taxes the growth has generated. Thanks to Alice Lipscomb, the low-

at how many people in their 70s and beyond came to meetings and in what fine fettle they seemed. In America, this is unusual and in Miami Beach it is still remarkable, as the numbers of old people are shrinking. This brings up the question of yuppification or gentrification. I agree with Simon that this is a central, unresolved problem of urban renewal, and was so long before the names were coined. I don't believe our proposals were naive on this question. There are degrees and we try for a balance. We search for means (very hard to find) to allow local residents and low-income people and sometimes artists, to reinforce their positions, usually through some form of assisted housing, *before* change takes place. We try to ensure that they will share in the prosperity, through finding jobs, when changes happen. In Miami we tried for a slow rate of change to match the rate of change of the elderly population, which was not renewing itself in South Beach. In Memphis, we got the (watchful) approval of the minority community for yuppification. It was a negotiation. They said 'We realise that this city needs an increased tax base and more employment. We will support your sponsoring housing for the rich and a large new shopping centre if you will support us in the renewal of public housing, and in our minority



LAS VEGAS STRIP BY NIGHT

income community secured some subsidised housing just off South Street, before land values rose too steeply. Community activists and preservationists got less than they wanted, though perhaps more than they expected, from the change.

In Memphis, too, despite the catastrophic earlier change, more large-scale change of a positive nature was welcomed. The need here was, precisely as Simon says, to find ways of accommodating change without destroying precious urban fabric. Our main strategy was to separate areas for growth and areas for preservation. We recommended channelling intense growth toward those already-cleared areas best located to receive it. In the historically and architecturally important areas we recommended infill growth and intensification of activities within existing structures. We had separate design guidelines for the sub-areas of the centre and for parts of sub-areas that would change at different rates. All our strategies were meshed, but particularly our transportation plan was co-ordinated with our preservation plan to provide highest levels of accessibility to areas of greatest change.

No, I was not surprised that there were old people in South Beach – how could I be, they are so famous – but I was surprised

affirmative action and community renewal programmes.' On this basis I gave my backing to the gentrifying elements of the plan. I felt too that they could bring employment. But I pointed out that the community should choose economic re-uses that could bring the types of jobs that gave the prospect of economic improvement for the low income inner city community; and that, with the jobs, should come support for education, so people who are there now will have the skills to get the jobs and to progress with them. I tried to find sponsorship for a branch of the local community college on the mall, where it could give courses in hotel administration, business and health services. These were all ways to help local low-income people benefit from the growth. Then in our indicative designs for new projects we showed where connections between old and new should be made. We tried to ensure that the new would support the use of the old. I am certainly not in favour of only maintaining what exists. Old and new, poor and rich, there should be room for all.

RT: I think we should now invite everyone to pitch in on this extremely interesting topic.

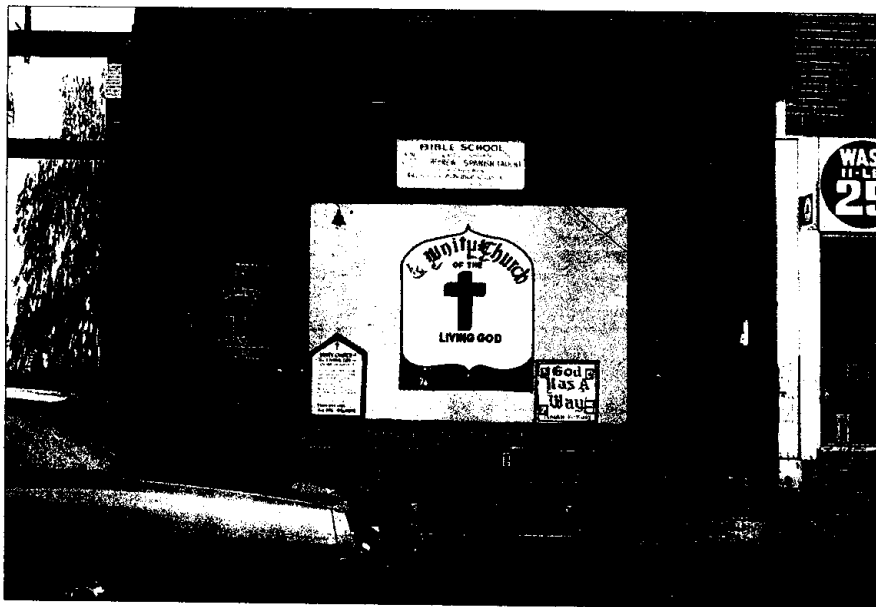
Jake Brown: I would like to say one or two things very quickly. Speaking of the English, when a word starts being used by

politicians, it means that which is being described is finished or in acute crisis. As soon as the word community was used in this country, it was 'on its way out'. Of course in the last ten years there has been this systematic destruction of every sense of the word community because community is an intensely subtle and long developed thing of psychology, a form of interaction between people, of gender, of influx of other races and other cultures. What is marvellous about community is that it does manage to manifest itself against enormous odds. People can live in acute physical discomfort and circumstances if their cultural diversity is allowed to blossom but of course what we are doing in our cities is destroying even that. The cities are in such tremendous crisis that the main connection now, the main physical connection, between America and this country, is that the city of Philadelphia is sending its trash and New York is sending its rubbish to North Wales. This is a measure of the world crises of which the city crisis is a microcosm. Consequently, there must be a profound reappraisal of what happened. What I would like to comment on, and I agree with Martin, is that what we are seeing in this country is a masterly English way of dealing with crisis where a theatre is played out. What we have

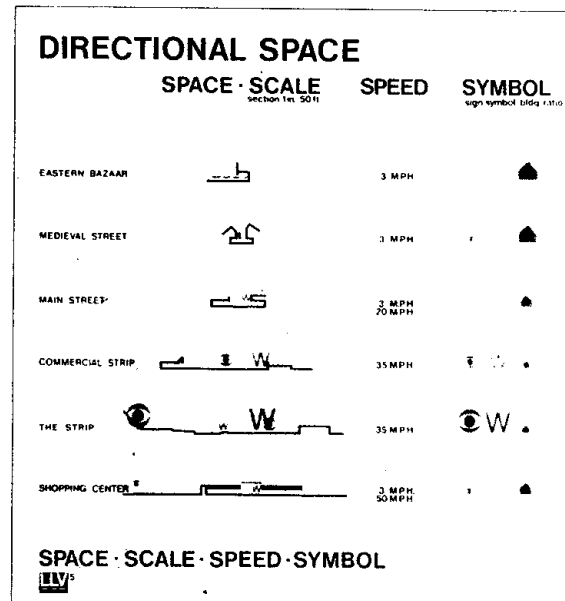
with us. I think that I was cheered by the lecture, if a little bit worried because what one had was definitely a positive message that the cities could live and that hopefully, despite Reagan Bush and Quayle, they presumably aren't about to erupt. The worrying aspect was I suppose qualms about the paternalism of planning and really was this going to work in the end better than the last time?

RT: Charles Jencks?

Charles Jencks: Well I was fascinated by the personal aspect of Denise's past in getting into this subject. I was also impressed by Herbert Gans' theories and writings. These seemed to have played a great role, which I think she underplayed because of shortage of time. This notion, which has been evolved in America is not familiar in Britain, that any urban culture which is large will be made up of many different taste cultures, five or six in a large, ethnically varied American city. What struck me as interesting, if at the same time philosophically strange, about the presentation was that Denise's sensibilities and values seemed to come from the AA, from the 50s, from the Independent Group from Nigel Henderson's photography. More often than not, she favoured a taste culture which, if one puts it in the terms that one



L TOR SHOP FRONT CHURCH, SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA; DIRECTIONAL SPACE DIAGRAM



now is the Theatre of Community Architecture with two Hamlets, Prince Charles and Rod Hackney. People do want things to change, what they want is a certain natural and inevitable and desirable quality to their everyday life with some level of peace, some level of security, some level of reasonable residential scale. They all know very well innately what they want. When they see these things taken away and destroyed, they don't want them taken away and destroyed, they are not resisting change, they are resisting the ruthless, unthinking technological exploitation of themselves.

RT: Thank you, Ken Powell, did you think that anything that Denise was saying struck a sympathetic cord? Kenneth is the architectural correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*.

KP: I just felt at the end that one was seeing just another kind of manipulative planning, happening perhaps in a wonderfully American way, being very progressive and achieving things . . . and I do actually feel that American cities still have something going for them (so do British). Cities are lively and positive places. Really this seemed to be an example of eternal American optimism similar to what we were hearing in Britain many years ago, the garden city ideal of the LCC seemed to be actually still

has to adopt in Gans' terminology, is a kind of lower-middle-class taste culture, in other words, the poor working-class taste culture of the blacks. Now Gans says in his defence of this kind of approach, 'Well basically everybody else has perfectly good representatives, enough money and a proper acknowledgement of their taste'. So therefore it is necessary if you are going to be a socially conscious professional, to represent the under-represented taste culture. The problem with this, as I see it in your presentation and your asides, which I think you would admit are derisive toward the yuppies and towards the rich and towards change, are that of course all of the people in any class system or in any taste culture have a dynamic relationship with other taste cultures. One level of this is to want to be like another taste culture and emulate it. In a sense what your designs show is favouring of Mid-America, the pop graphics, the Henderson social realism. You are favouring a kind of lower-middle-class taste culture. I was interested in one aside where you said 'Well we give them the grey flannel too'. In any good city, you have to have many levels. Now, I would like to hear you talk about your personal feelings towards those other taste cultures. Why put them down? Why not give them an equal validity? Or are you

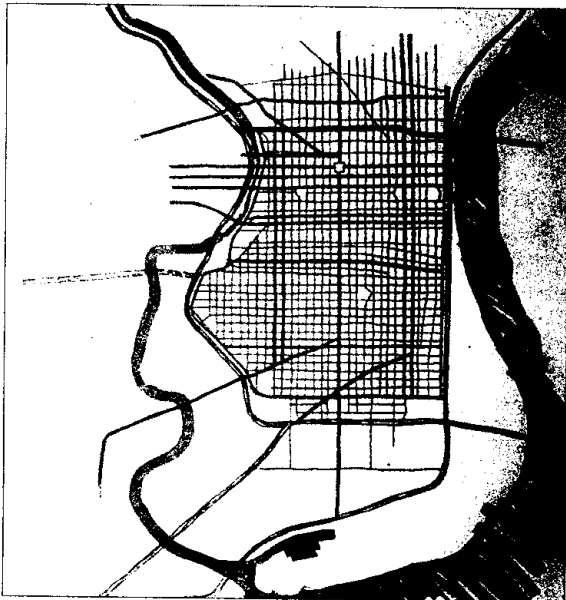
feelings so strong that you think that one is better than the other or more socially valid?

DSB: I love those old warehouses and I think what the architects have done with them in Memphis was often very good. At the same time, I recommended real suburbia for Mud Island because I knew it would draw some people that downtown needs to help revive it economically. Our designs weren't what some architects wanted there. They would have preferred the housing to look like the Thames Embankment. But I tried to do a middle-class suburban environment very well. As an urbanist, my recommendations must combine prediction with design. I can't merely say, 'This is what I want'. I must say, 'This is what I would recommend within what I think you are likely to get, based on who is going to design and develop it'. Representing the interests of my client, the city, I must tell them the implications of the acts of others or of the acts they themselves are contemplating, 'Given that, this is what you are likely to get, and this is what you should ask of them, in aesthetic and social terms'. So, as an urban designer, I try to act responsibly toward all tastes, but I do have personal preferences. When we did our Learning from Levittown study, I loved most the ethnic housing

civic buildings, you have to satisfy several taste cultures. You can't design for only one group. City hall must have something for everyone.

CJ: What I don't understand is how you decide which taste cultures to favour? When you have a conflict, which do you in fact favour?

DSB: Well, in civic architecture, you try not to favour one or the other, you try to find what they share. In British society, in American society, there are vast numbers of shared values, otherwise the mass media and advertising wouldn't work. Messages have meanings, not just for narrowly profiled groups but for large groups. In America, for example, the TV situation comedy 'All in the Family', is one that straddles a great many taste cultures. In it are young and old people, liberals and conservatives, blacks and whites; the whole lot come together. You could say that it is a bland and pallid hodge-podge. Yet we do respect art that appeals to many tastes and classes. We now know that Shakespeare didn't appeal to a broad audience. It was a romanticism to think that he did and Shakespearean scholars are now saying that his plays weren't, in fact, enjoyed by working-class people. But Verdi was. So, there is great art that



L TO R: SOUTH CENTRAL TRAFFIC PATTERN; SHOP FRONT, SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

of South Philadelphia. Although I would never design them as an architect, I found the decorations Italian-American South Philadelphians applied to their houses the most interesting and amusing and, in a strange way, after my own heart. How you accommodate different tastes as an urbanist is not to say 'I like this type of brick, therefore you should use it'. That is not your role.

My role as an urbanist must be different from my role as an architect designing a home for a person, meeting them across a table looking into their eyes. I can have a great fight with my client about taste at that level. Predicting how the big new shopping centre is going to be designed by the developer's architect, then saying to the city: 'Out of this design, here is what you should try to draw' is a very different task. I don't go all the way with Herb Gans in his prescriptions for sub-cultural programming. Herb says that taste cultures should hire architects from their own culture to design for them following the taste of their culture. That doesn't work on two grounds, first, if someone who lives in a Levittown house hires an architect, they probably want to change taste cultures, and may not appreciate hearing the architect say 'I like the house you are living in now.' Second, in

does reach across taste cultures and great art that doesn't. If you are doing large-scale civic work, you should look for the art that does. Of course time enters into the equation. Many people hated the Eifel Tower when it was first built.

John Thompson: It's interesting how annoyed people get about this wonderful term 'community architecture' but I think this proves that it is going to be here a lot longer than a lot of people would like to see. I think a lot of people have had their heads down in a trench in fear of seeing another television programme about community architecture. These programmes actually reach many, many people not here tonight but who are in fact suffering at the hands of people like ourselves, planners and journalists. There are people who, through seeing programmes about community architecture on television, want to support the role of people in all professions who are actually getting to understand their environment. I think people are confused by the difference between community architecture and community enterprise, so much so that they have probably been misled by *The Times'* RIBA award, which is an enterprise scheme that a lot of people think is community architecture. I think that nobody can deny that community enterprises are a good thing; politicians of every

party believe they are a good thing, be it Marxist power-to-the-people or Thatcherite self-help. So I think we ought to forget community enterprise and let's see whether there is such a thing as community architecture. If so, where is it and who is practising it? I was fascinated by your talk this evening because it seemed to me that you were talking as a planner who was taking a holistic approach and whenever you were confronted with a problem you went out to find out what the problem was. You didn't say, 'This is where I stand, this is my theory'; you went out and devised democratic, participatory processes, as far as you were able, to find out the nature of the problem and the nature of people's needs and then you added to that knowledge your own skills as a planner. Now our profession is not generally interested in doing that, our schools of architecture and architectural journalists are much more interested in those architects who are either pursuing their own careers, or who are interested in technological innovation or those who are in pursuit of intellectual ideas (it does not matter what intellectual idea, as long as it's rigorous!) What community architecture and community planning is about is finding an architecture which is always appropriate and meaningful for that particular situation. An architecture which is not palpably removed from people and with which people can find a rapport. It's not a style but it is, I believe, a process which we certainly believe we practice on a very wide scale both in New York and New Hampstead. It doesn't have to be an instituted architecture, it doesn't have to lead to slavish conservation, it doesn't have to patronise the proletariat. But I think it's the architecture that we desperately need and I think that it is the architecture that will one day be realised as the movement that is on-going. It needs definition and I don't think it should be swept under the carpet. I think that there are communities out there that, when they actually get the architecture, can tell the difference.

DSB: It's difficult, without knowing much of British community architecture, to know 'where you are coming from', so of course, I put my own meaning into what you say. I think you're right that communities can tell the difference. I would be wrong, though, to leave anyone with an impression that all this is working in America and that because I've suggested solutions, they are going to happen. I want to leave you with an understanding that I'm optimistic in one sense, but pessimistic in another. I think I've done the best job I could of getting democratic participation and deriving, from the technical skills of my colleagues and myself, something that would make sense for the community, and not doing it manipulatively. But in each of these projects there's been disappointment. On South Street, for example, once there was money to hire staff planners, we volunteers were squeezed out of the process. And of course we couldn't get an ideal democracy and of course the process got awfully drawn out, as it was in Memphis – now the 21 volumes are out, who's going to read them? I included a long list of who should read what; but is anyone going to read my list? And I haven't got the money to call and say 'Please make sure that so-and-so reads that one'. Troubles mount. The Centre City Corporation was funded largely by fees paid by developers. With little development going on, there's little money; so who's going to sponsor the plan? I keep telling myself we'll have to build support for the plan slowly, but at the back of all of this are two words you can't use in America today – Tax and Liberal. Yet if no one will pay higher taxes, we're not going to be able to help the worst problems in cities and this has been going on for years now. On South Street when we worked there, you could still buy an abandoned house for about \$10,000 and you could get a grant, if you were a low-income person for \$3,000. But there was no way that \$3,000 could bring the house up to code, so you could occupy it. So all the self-help in the world, even with that grant,

wasn't going to fix the house up. We were stuck with the fact that, even with the programmes that were available and the equity people were prepared to use, there was still a big gap. Perhaps in Britain too the resources for community architecture still leave too big a gap, and that's the problem Martin talks about, that you need millions of houses to solve the shortage.

MP: Very briefly, I can't let the subject pass without addressing John Thompson. One thing that he forgot to mention, something that was prominent in one of his own press releases, was just the incidence of smoking amongst the people who have lived in the properties which have been done over by community architecture. That's just an aside. I'm sure there's another side to the coin. I feel that, just looking at this, the difference between the American assumption of the term (and what's happening in America has been beautifully illuminated from the floor) was far clearer, certainly, than when I was confronted with the horror of speaking after Denise had finished. But I do think that there is an issue concerning architects here that could finally perhaps glue all of us together and that is that community architecture, in whichever way we view it, is a kind of euphemism for an 80s term for social architecture, which, of course, as Denise said, has a much longer history. And social architecture, as Jake Brown said, when you take it seriously, is ultimately an immense global technical task. And my question, really, about British community architecture falls into two sub-questions: one, is it not really just another way of finding accomplices to go along with the crimes of development; and the other, is it really what people are trained seven years to do, when the task that really confronts us, in the global resource allocation, in the technical sense, is so much more urgent?

SJ: I still find that I'm agreeing with Martin Pawley, which seems to worry me. But listening to Denise and listening to the contributions by other architects, I keep feeling that architects are out of their depth here. This is an area where they've strayed, out of frustration, with the particular planning regulations of this country and they've decided that if they can't best them they'd better join them; and in joining them, they've found themselves endlessly knocked over by huge bulldozers: to wit, urban capitalism, big city government and big central government. I do not share the conventional view of many British architects that everything is glorious in America because they can build the buildings they want. I find American cities, on the whole, less nice places to live than British cities – I emphasise the 'on the whole'. I also think that the triumph of British politics – of British architecture and politics – is our planning system and I think our planning system is, on the whole, better than the American system. And many Americans think that too. Now I wouldn't carry that thesis too far and I wouldn't claim too much for it, but I would go at least as far as that, and therefore question the general assumption that America has this wonderful self-confidence, this crash-ahead approach. I've been to downtown Memphis and I think it's awful and I'd rather live in most equivalent-size British cities, for all the faults that we have in those cities. The advantage we've got is that we've learned how to make rules to govern planning. We have all sorts of problems in trying to make those rules constantly responsive to what, not local people, but the generality of people, want out of their city as it changes. I'm nervous about architects coming forward and saying 'I'm just a link, I'm just a connection, I'm just translating what this particular group of people are up to who turn up to my meeting and say what they want to the people who are going to make it happen'; because the people who are going to make it happen are very sceptical of that approach. I share Charles Jencks' scepticism about style here. I'm reminded of Kenneth Brown's evocation of all British cities, which involved awnings, trees and seats. Awnings, trees and seats are one architectural

solution to urban renewal and I'm sure that it's one that many people at a public meeting would like to see. But, it's not the only one, nor is it necessarily validated by a public meeting. I come back to my original point, which is that I'd like to see architects confine themselves to building nicer buildings. The

architect was trained to enable the building, either an old one being reconditioned or a new one, to respond to a client's wishes. I'd like, occasionally, at sessions like this – where I have to be slightly pompous – to hear more talk of this.

AFTERWORD

I have claimed a lecturer's *droit de seigneur* to comment on the overall of the proceedings at the Tate Gallery. To me, the most fascinating part of the talk was the discussion afterwards. I think we were all, even when the comments sounded contentious, actually comparing notes. The comparisons were between practice in England and America, between architecture and planning, and perhaps between evolutionary change and revolutionary change. The discussion was intense because we all face the dilemma of wanting more than the on-going systems will provide, for people, cities and architecture.

Although I smart at being called naive and confused by Simon Jenkins, I feel he best illuminated our conflicting aims: wanting to preserve beautiful and historic cities yet realizing one cannot turn one's back on large-scale change; wanting to produce housing and environments for all people yet needing the support of the rich and powerful to do it; feeling outrage at 'capitalist bulldozers' (socialist bulldozers too) yet realizing that flower-pots and awnings are not the answer to urbanism; wanting to be an architect and finding oneself drawn into politics in order to be a socially responsible architect. I feel Simon's debate is as much with himself as it is with me. If he becomes an alter ego in what follows it is because his points are so cogent. Pawley gets his turn a little later.

Simon, on occasion, transfers from his experience in England, which is not mine in America. For example, not only old people, nor even mostly old people, come to our public meetings. He makes derogatory remarks about democracy by public meeting. I agree that at public meetings are little old ladies in tennis shoes, kooks, crazies, people with hidden agendas, special pleaders, architecture students and rabble-rousers. But so are true citizens, patriots for the city, and those who want to see things happen. People who attend public meetings are the shock troops of urbanism, the ones to pound on the mayor's door. Granted they are not a representative sample of the residents and workers of an area and that we must make contact with these too, yet I have found that, despite this cast of characters, public meetings can proceed more rationally than one might think. 'Sit down!' will be heard in the hall and, to me, 'You don't have to listen to what she says, she *always* says that'. This is because people who attend public meetings often know each other well or know the system well and police their own crazies.

Nevertheless, because the direct democracy of public meetings is biased through self-selection, we try as well for a representational democracy through interest groups, as I have described earlier. We introduce the appointed or elected citizen steering committee to the members of the city agencies they will be working with, and try to help them form a *modus operandi* that will continue beyond the plan. But there must also be other means of reaching citizens. Perhaps the media are the most important. Community groups that survive and prosper become adept at involving the media, especially television, in their causes. Beyond this, every community has its points of contact; possibly a storefront on Main Street, a newsletter, drop-off

points at important institutions. The implementation report for the Memphis downtown plan suggested many of these.

The forms of democratic participation that I sketched in my talk must increase in complexity with the size and scale of the area planned for. Because our early experience was working with the denizens of one street or of quite small communities, we had a rude awakening in Minneapolis when, despite the acceptance of our plans by the steering committee and an approving vote in City Council, others higher in the urban hierarchy and not part of the planning process debilitated the plan. A visiting architect told a large-scale property owner the plan would be bad for property values. In terms of our instructions from our client, we had no recourse to these people to explain. Also, some ambitious artists decided they would rather do the design. Although they had not been to the earlier public meetings, they accused us of not observing democratic processes and of not showing alternatives. We were, they opined, theorists; they were better designers. I felt this was a good example of people with their own agendas using the mechanisms of democracy for an undemocratic purpose.

As the community increases in size so the face-to-face group grows unwieldy and representation becomes the means of achieving democratic participation. Here the democracy is, of course, not as direct; but representational democracy's strategic grasp on the larger unit suggests that, at the larger scale, it can produce more for communities than can the town meeting. There is a continuum between direct and representational democracy or between centralization and decentralization in government; where along the continuum governmental planning can be most effective is a subject of debate among political scientists. The location of this point must be established for each community at the outset of the plan, usually by trial and error; therefore provision should be made both for co-opting additional members onto the steering committee and for holding extra meetings as the true shape of the community becomes evident in planning.

So this is two cheers for democracy: for our cultures the best but not a perfect system. Yet in the multi-level interaction of community planning I have never felt that I am 'just a link'. If I have won the trust of the community, I am expected to recommend and to say why I recommend and I will be listened to. I may not get everything I want, but I find, perhaps particularly in low-income communities, that there is much more support for the artistic aspects of planning than the social planners thought there was. The only time my drawings were ever called 'masterpieces' was on South Street.

Simon feels architects should stick to architecture and wonders why they turn so easily to politics and ignore design. The social planners, too, felt architects should stick to architecture, but they were criticizing architects' insistence on proposing physical solutions to economic and social problems. Demolishing much of downtown Memphis to make way for *Ville Radiuese* was considered by the social planners to be the fault of architects. Unfortunately the social planners dictum was heard by the

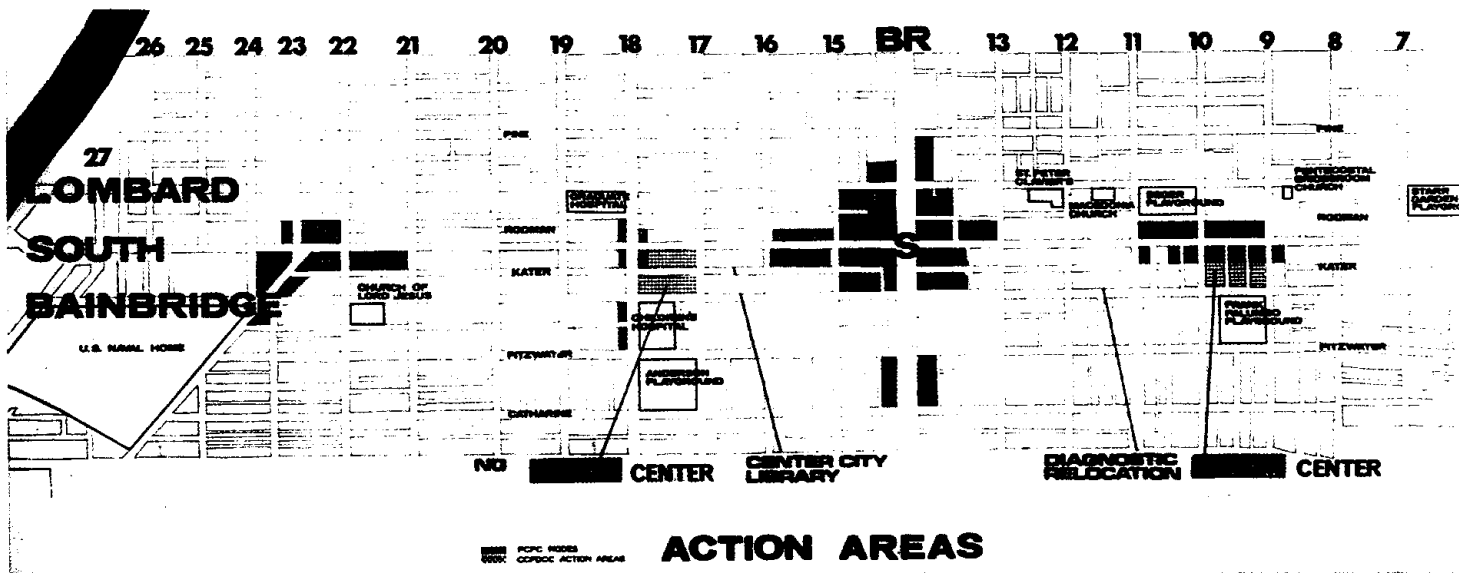
Post-Modernists as good reason for abandoning social concern in architecture, 'Architects can't help so let's not try'. This, it may be gathered, is not what Bob and I intended. It is ironical to find oneself categorized as 'too political' in London where we have also been accused of providing socially irresponsible 'vulgar American pastiche'.

Having first accused me of politics, Simon later seems to lay the demolition of Memphis at my doorstep, despite the fact that the methods I have described were evolved to try to avoid just the architectural bias and social ignorance that led to the spoliation of the city in the first place. In my talk I spoke as a planner *and* as an architect. Presumably as a planner I should be aware of politics and should understand in what sense 'the personal is political'. Certainly my training has prepared me to take care of more than architecture in urban planning. I've talked about architecture on many other occasions and shall again; the evidence suggests that I care quite intensely for the art of architecture. Like the circus horse rider whose horses diverge, I try mightily to draw my two professions in parallel paths; but you *do* change hats when you change from planner to architect, the question is of degree. My complaint with many architect-

complexity that I have been discussing.

Is there no room for design in community architecture and planning? I believe that where there is least money and greatest lack, greatest architectural imagination is required to bring needed beauty out of severe restrictions. This may be a romanticism, yet I feel that most architects who learn to think in this way will become better architects.

And yes, urban design does have to do with politics and it does have to do with 'awnings, trees and seats' and with flowerpots (although I am against flowerpots on Main Street) and with the broad range of urban building that lies in between. Mostly urban design has to do with the linkages between all of these and with the connections between the urban disciplines. It demands the ability to bring appropriate physical conclusions out of complex urban subject matter. Yet once you begin to think in this way you may also design a better doorknob. Yes, architects should build nicer buildings, and they certainly should respond to the needs of their clients (I thought I was talking about that) but when they do urban design they should not treat it as large-scale architecture. And I agree that architects must know their architectural tradition and agree there is a particular problem that urban designers often



ACTIVITIES MAP SHOWING EAST AND WEST CENTRES, SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

urban designers is that they can't make the change. They merely design large-scale architecture.

If architects are not to be politicians should they be sociologists? 'Certainly not' I used to say when I trained architects in urban design, 'we don't want to *be* sociologists, we want to use the material of sociology for an urban design purpose'. Without doubt the sociologist can't do this for the architect. Many sociologists can't think in physical terms. So the architect has two problems: one of communicating with sociologists in language that will allow them to give answers, and the other of translating those answers into their physical correlates. However, Gans has pointed out that on occasion architects must indeed be sociologists as well, simply because there are not enough sociologists to serve all the problems of urbanism and particularly of housing. Yes, of course, architects should do architecture. But some problems cannot be dealt with architecturally and architects must know how to recognise these problems and, when necessary, to respond to them in non-architectural ways. Not all architects need to learn to use sociological imagination; not all architects need work at the scale of urban design, but most architects can benefit from learning some of the

don't: it's no use bringing a rhetoric to a community meeting, if the community has more than enough of that already.

I am not among those Americans Simon mentions who prefer the British planning system. The British respect for the civil service must make life much easier for British planners. However, I agree with my social scientist colleagues who look with awe upon the powers accorded planners in England, and with amazement at the unsophistication with which the powers are used. American planners are more philosophical about their task and more aware of its complexities than are English planners perhaps they have to be because in America planners are given much less leeway for action. An unfortunate recent trend is that urban designers are now being accorded considerable power in American cities, for a complex of reasons too long and macabre to describe here. One's hair stands on end at the decisions these architects-turned-urbanists make.

I agree with Martin Pawley that the problems of housing go beyond the reach of community architecture into areas of national strategy. But I strongly disagree that the issues are primarily technological, or that the solution will lie first in approaching Honda and Mitsubishi or, as we used to say, F

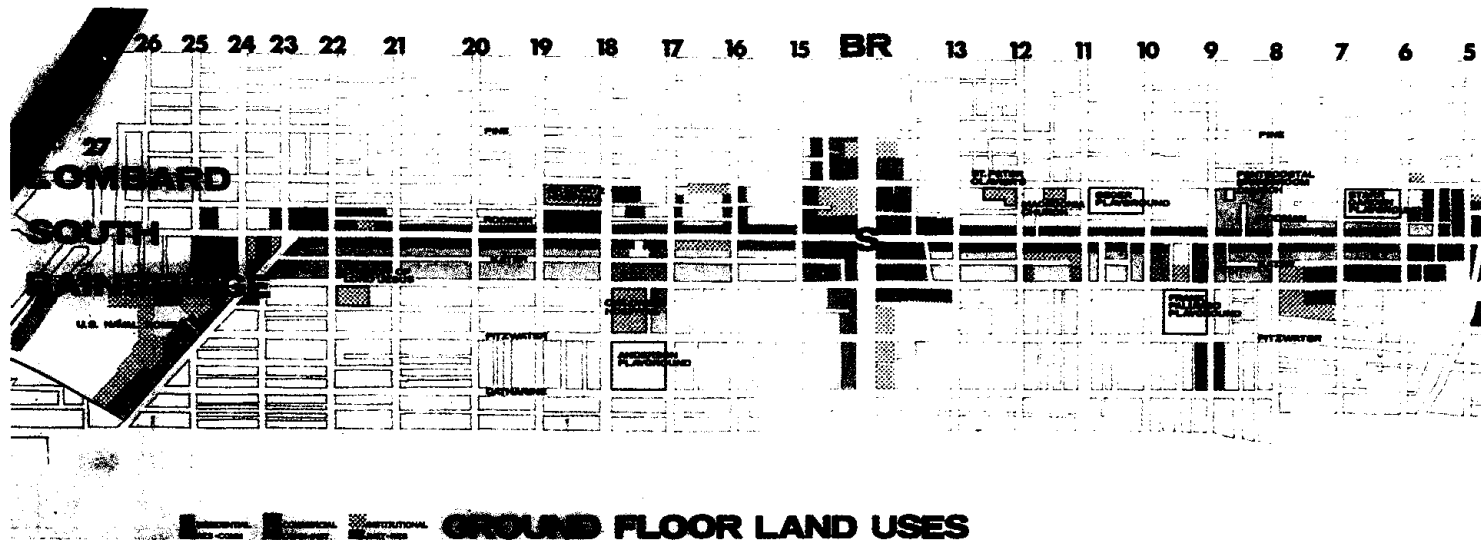
and Taylor. The myth of mass production has haunted the field of housing for more than fifty years. Architects have the fantasy that houses can come off the production line as cars do (or did – the days of the tin lizzy are over on the production line too. Thanks to computers, they all come off different.) The reasons why housing can't benefit from automobile production techniques are multiple. Because construction is not more than one-third of the cost of the delivered house and lot, the industrialization of construction will achieve savings on only part of the cost. The major costs in housing lie in land, codes and regulations, labour organization and project management. The great savings are to be made through rationalizing some of these, to some extent through size, but perhaps more as the Levitts did, by vertical co-ordination of the sectors of the housing industry, to gain control particularly over materials availability and delivery. Perhaps Martin should turn his attention first to the fact that, at least in America, the housing construction industry, unlike the auto industry, is regionally based, atomistic and fractionated. Houses aren't built like cars and the industry today is not set up to compete in this way.

The popularity of mobile homes may seem to refute these

creativity won't lie first in design. Most of the housing measures that have worked have been economic and legal; they range from giving tax incentives to supporting non-profit housing groups. With political and economic support for affordable housing, technological innovation will follow. Unfortunately technology can't lead and, after fifty years of hoping, architects should abandon that pipe dream and (*pace* Simon) deal with the messy here and now of housing policy.

John Thompson pointed out that my talk was more about community planning than community architecture and that therein lay the real difference – more than the difference, say between the United States and the United Kingdom. He's right. However, our discussion covered architecture and planning, and I approach this topic as both architect and planner; therefore, on balance, my title holds.

I agree with John that community architecture is important symbolic activity around the problem of housing. As he points out, it raises the level of awareness in a population that otherwise cares little for housing the poor, and it is therefore a first step toward bridging a gap. Community architecture attracts princes and poor people; and it produces photo opportunities for a good



GROUND FLOOR LAND USE MAP, SOUTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

assertions. (What do you call these in England now? They were called 'caravans' but language has changed so much that I feel like a piece of archaeology when I am in London.) Mobile homes achieve their primary savings through the lower unit cost for land, the higher density levels they are permitted, labour savings and the removal of the requirements of codes – sometimes to the extent of creating firetraps. For such reasons mobile homes can produce important savings and a considerable portion of the American housing market is now served in this way – without the aid of architects. Architects' attempts to co-opt the mobile home industry have again produced no more than fantasy. I feel Pawley's parable of the arcades in giving us CADD is more pertinent to this problem than the work of Cedric Price or Archigram, or than Martin's flinging his cap into the Honda ring.

The real problem that architects' production-line romance skates on top of is the scandal that the majority of Britons and Americans, being adequately housed themselves, care little that some fellow citizens lack the very minimum. The answers to this problem lie, unfortunately, in changes in public opinion that will permit the devising of well-funded, system-wide housing production strategies. Strategy planning needs creativity too, but the

cause. But without further support the gap between housing supply and demand will remain scandalously unbridged. The political will is needed first. Perhaps a prince can help achieve this, but architects can't be more than stagehands in this drama. As it becomes obvious what must change, the limits on what princes, communities or their architects can do will be equally obvious: voters and ministers must turn the problem around. Thereafter technologies will follow; they could even include those Pawley wants, so long as the caveats I have mentioned are understood.

The fact that five houses won't help solve the housing problem is not a reason for doing nothing at all. Unfortunately many architects today have taken Pawley's criticisms as good cause for turning away from the problem altogether. Before that, advocacy architecture served, on occasion, as do all pieties, as the last resort of scoundrels and a haven for the inept. The strident manifesto hid the bad architecture. But this, too, is no reason to abandon. Heave on community architects, social planners, conservationists of broad vision, transfer technologists with horse sense, architects of uneasy conscience and good will; is that the creak of the pendulum I hear, swinging our way?