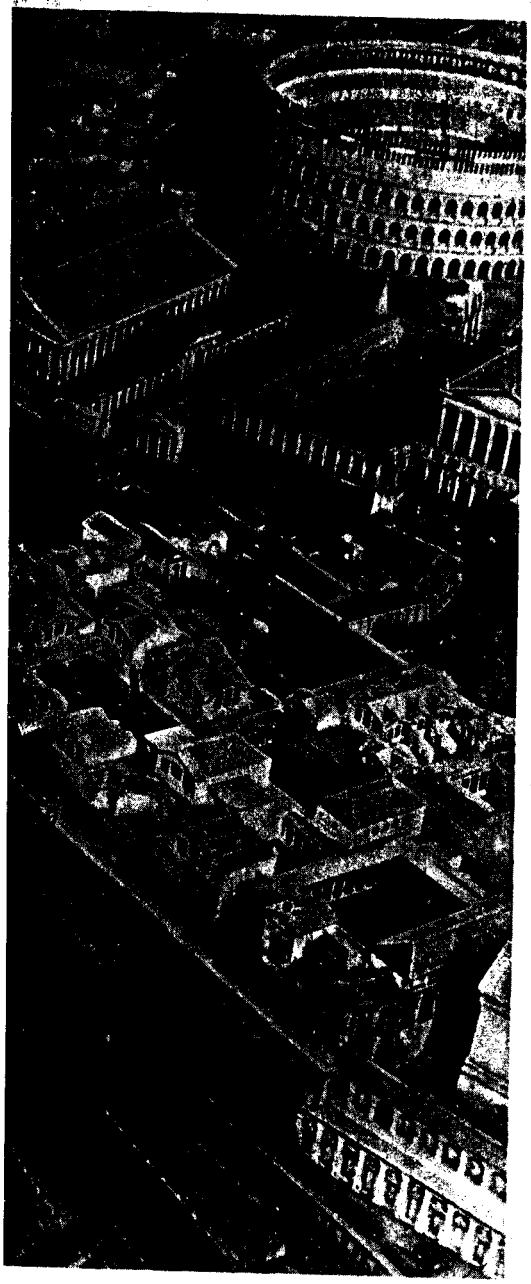
COLLAGE CITY

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter



Contents

Colin Rowe & Fred Koetter:
Collage City (The MIT Press, 1978)

Collision City and the Politics of 'Bricolage'

. . . if I have succeeded . . . my last wish is that a higher and indestructible bond of the beautiful and the true may have been tied which will keep us forever firmly united. GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL

. . . there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel–a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which all that they are and say has significance–and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these last lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects, for what they are in themselves, without consciously or unconsciously seeking to fit them into or exclude them from any one unchanging . . . at times fanatical, unitary inner vision. ISAIAH BERLIN

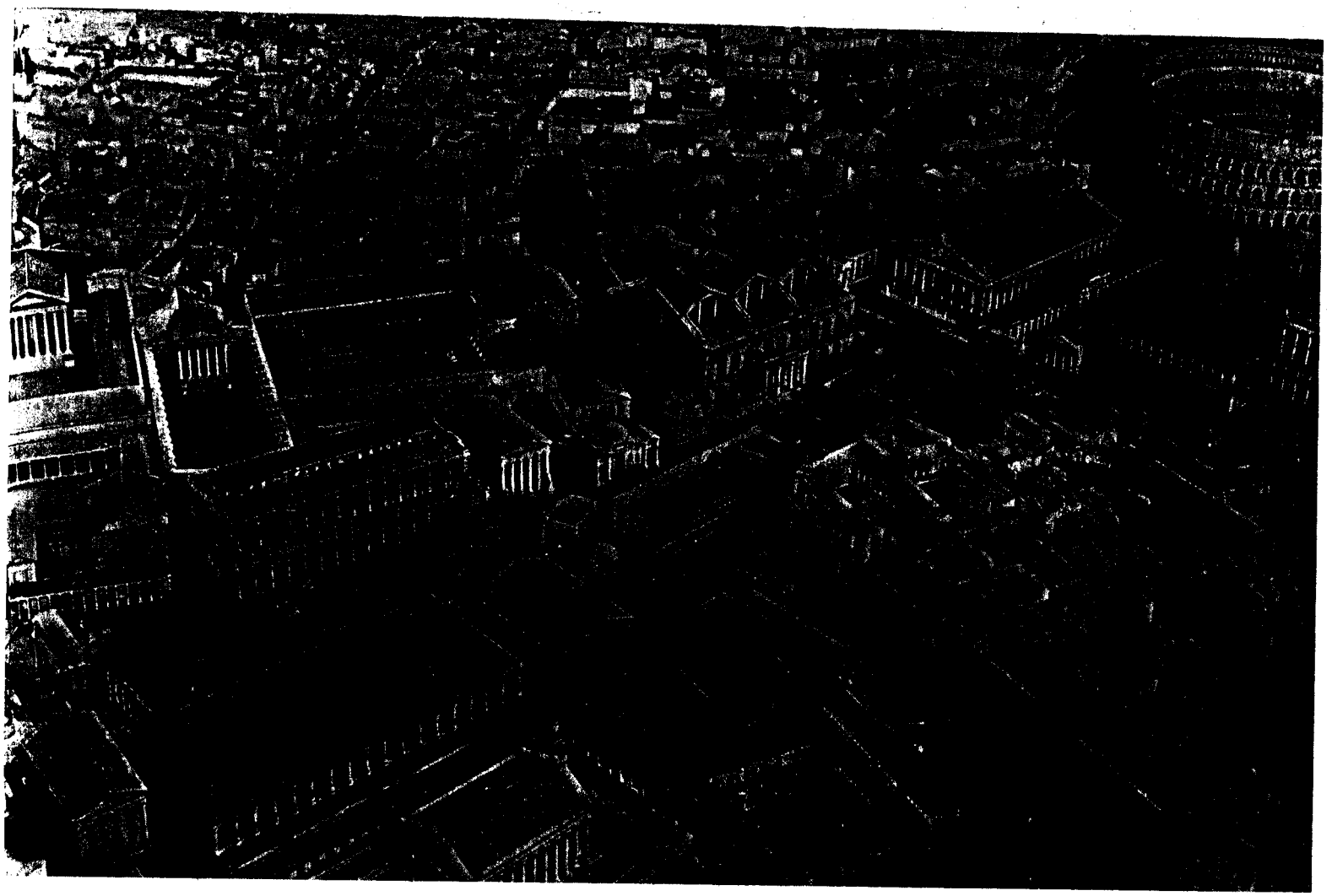
Scope of Total Architecture: such was the title which Walter Gropius affixed to a highly miscellaneous collection of, mostly, insubstantial essays. It was published in 1955; and, apparently, at that date, insistence on 'total architecture'–an obvious version of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* with all its promises of cultural integration–did not appear either unjustified or bizarre. Presumably, in 1955, a 'total architecture', an all controlling system which is yet not a system because it is a growth–'a new growth coming right from the roots up'[1]–a combination, probably, of both Hegelian freedom and Hegelian necessity, in any case an

emanation from fundamentals, was still considered not merely a plausible but also a desirable possibility; and, no doubt, it is here, when such notions become expressed in the gentle voice of 'concerned' liberalism, that we may be encouraged to discern something of the still shining afterglow of a unitary and holistic utopian faith.

We have earlier attempted to specify two versions of the utopian idea: utopia as an, implicit, object of contemplation and utopia as an, explicit, instrument of social change; and it is, at this stage, that we must re-affirm how much the conceptions of 'total architecture' and 'total design' are present, of necessity, in all utopian projections. Utopia has never offered options. The citizens of Thomas More's Utopia 'could not fail to be happy because they could not choose but be good'[2] and the idea of dwelling in 'goodness', without capacity for moral choice, has been prone to attend most fantasies, whether metaphorical or literal, of the ideal society.

For the architect, of course, the ethical content of the good society has, maybe, always been something which building was to make evident. Indeed it has, probably, always been his primary reference; for, whatever other controlling fantasies have emerged–antiquity, tradition, technology–these have invariably been conceived of as aiding and abetting an in some way benign or decorous social order.

Thus, not to retreat backwards all the way to Plato and, instead, to find a much more recent *quattrocento* springboard, Filarete's Sforzinda



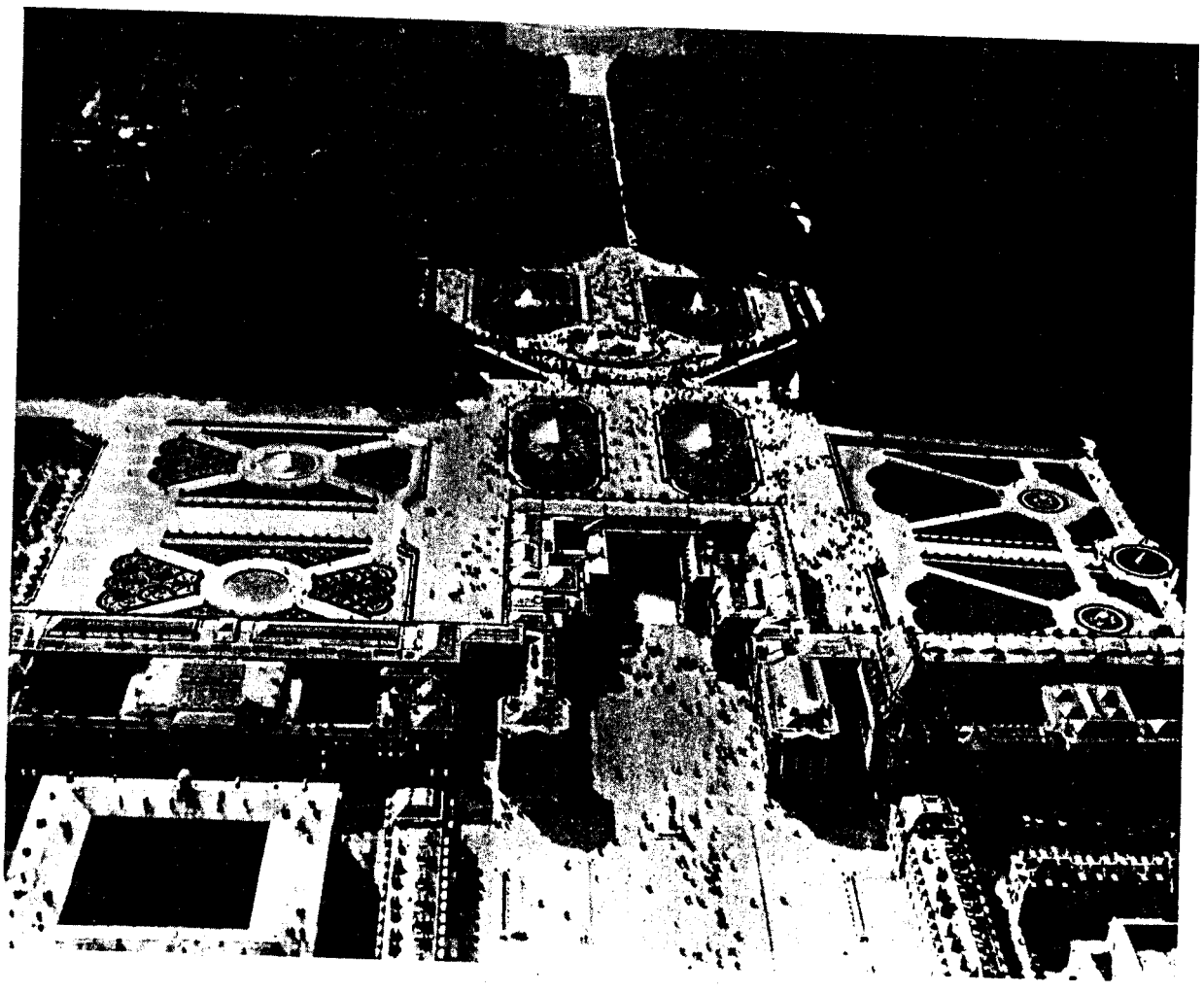
Imperial Rome, model at the Museo della Civiltà Romana

contains all the premonitions of a situation assumed to be entirely susceptible to rule. There is a hierarchy of religious edifices, the princely *regia*, the aristocratic palace, the mercantile establishment, the private residence; and it is in terms of such a gradation–an ordering of status and function–that the well-conducted city became conceivable.

But it still remained an idea and there was to be no question of its literal and immediate application. For the medieval city represented an intractable nucleus of habit and interest which could, in no way, be directly breached; and, accordingly, the problem of the new became one of subversive interjection (Palazzo Massimo, Campidoglio, etc.) or of polemical demonstrations outside the city–the garden which discloses what the city ought to be.

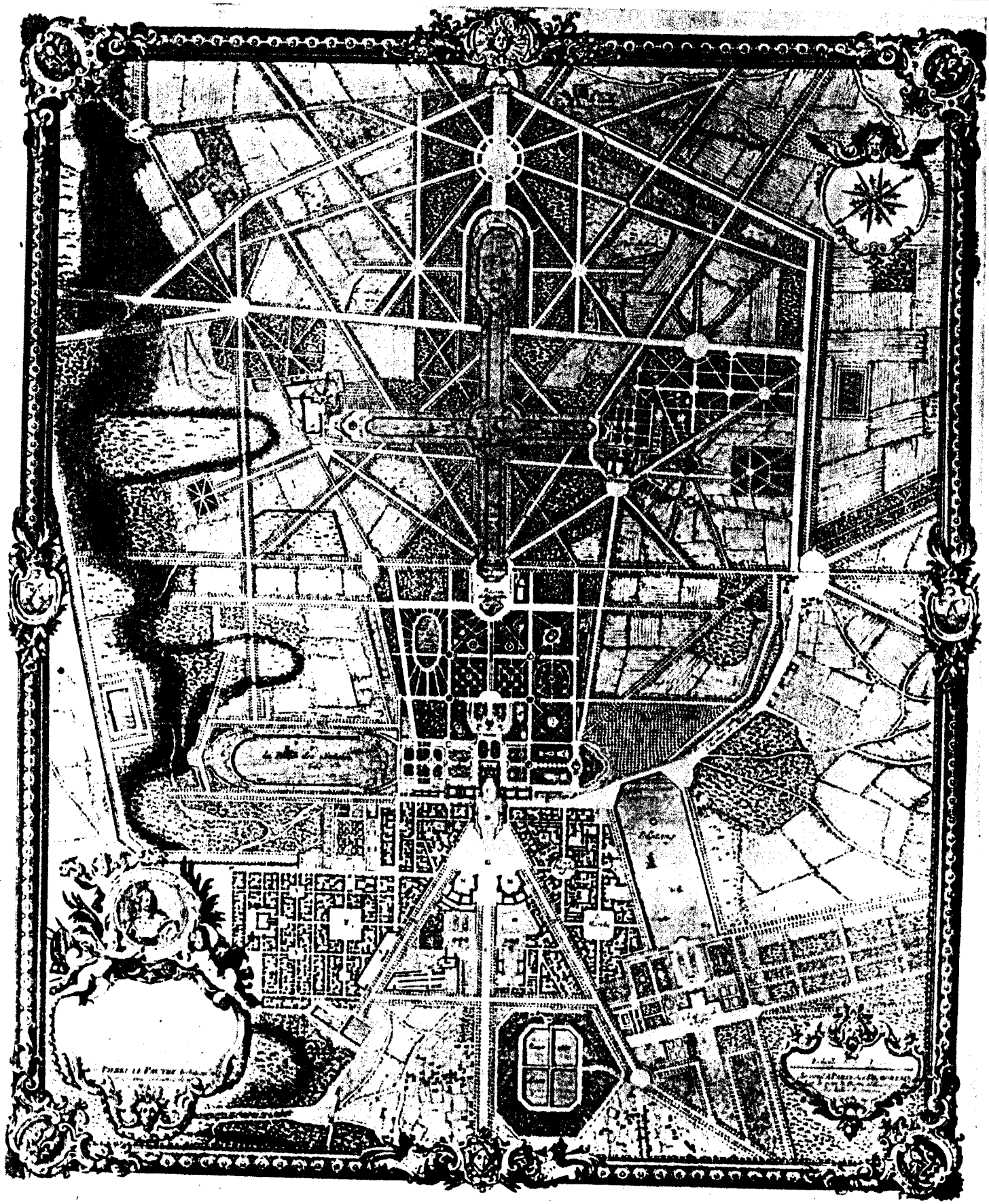
The garden as criticism of the city–a criticism which the city later abundantly acknowledged–has not, as yet, received sufficient attention; but if, outside Florence, for instance, this theme is profusely represented, its most extreme affirmation can only be at Versailles, that seventeenth century criticism of medieval Paris which Haussmann and Napoleon III later so elaborately took to heart.

Clearly the gardens of Versailles, an aristocratic Disney World though they may have been, must, in the end, be construed as a Baroque attempt to put over *quattrocento* ideas; and it is when presented with this



Versailles, air view

Ve



Versailles, plan

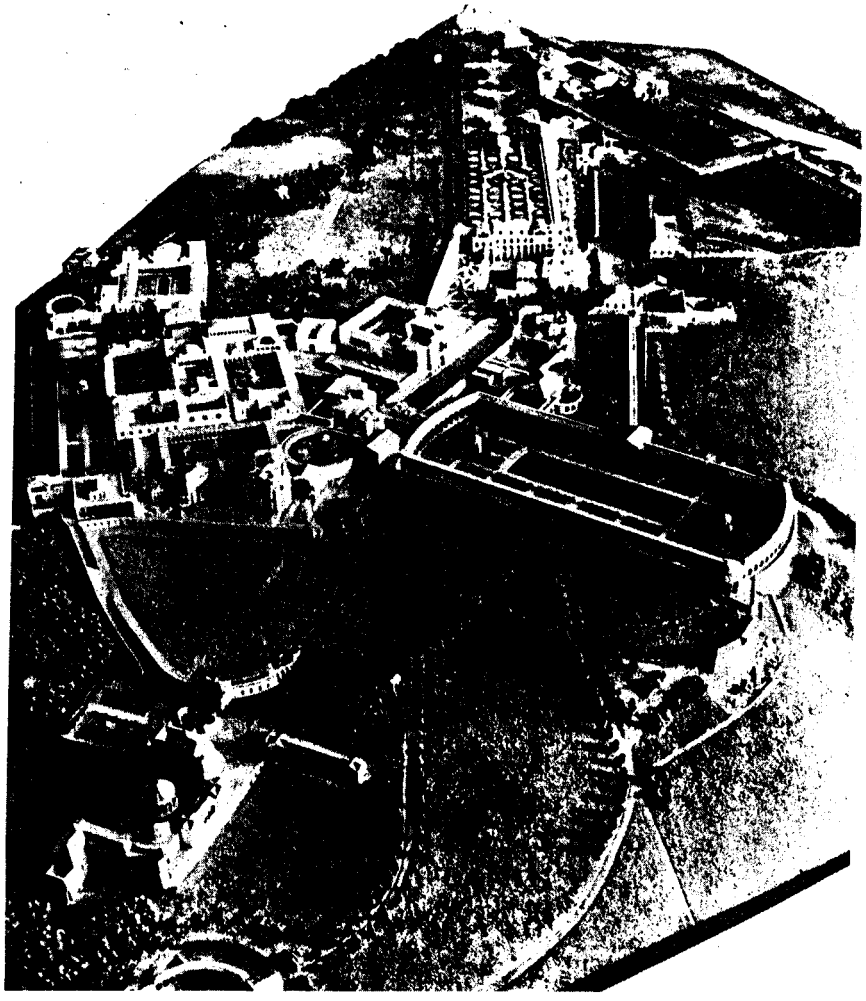
scene–still, occasionally, magnificent–that we are obliged to recognize how completely the lineaments of a Filarete style utopia could be replicated with trees. But, if Versailles might be interpreted as a utopia of reaction, we may still be amazed that the platonic, metaphorical utopia–generally regarded in Italy as such–could here be taken to such literal extremes.

Now, for present purposes, the obvious construct to mount alongside Versailles is the Villa Adriana at Tivoli. For, if the one is certainly an exhibition of total architecture and total design, the other attempts to dissimulate all reference to any controlling idea; and, if here there is absolute power under two impersonations, then one might even feel constrained to digress and to ask which is the more useful model–for us.

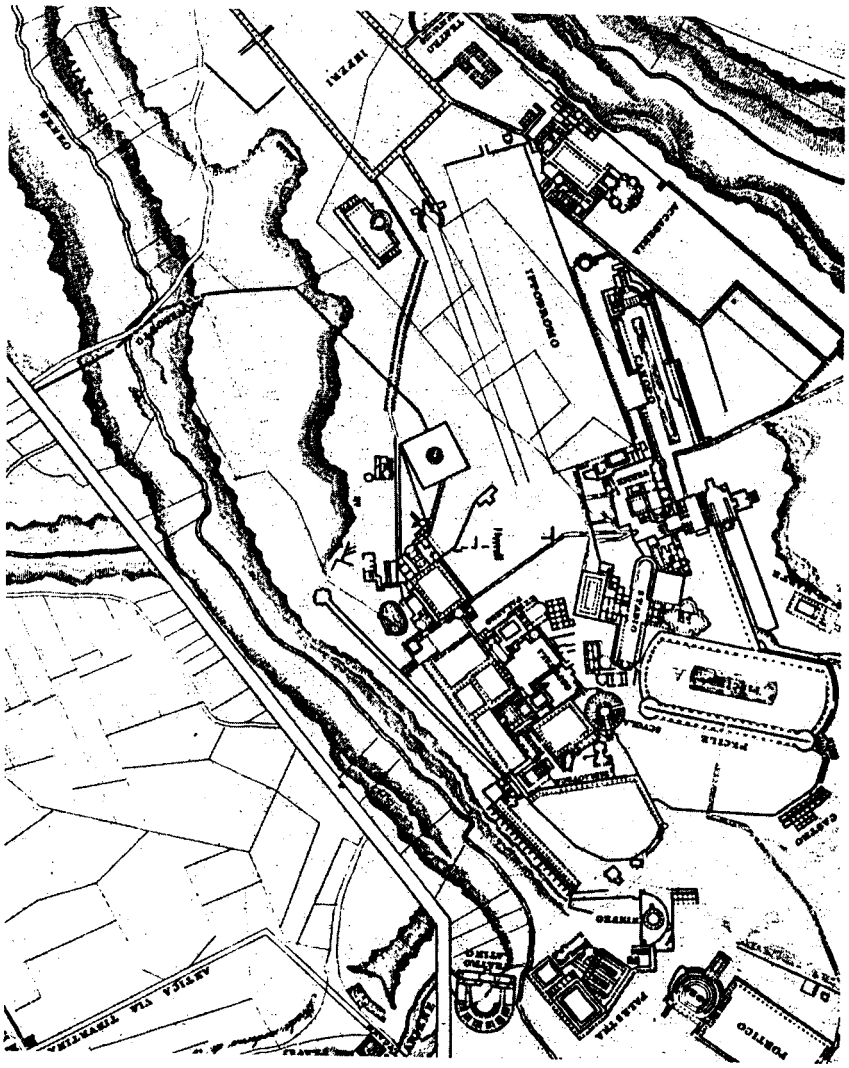
There is unambiguous, unabashed Versailles. The moral is declared to the world and the advertisement, like so many things French, can scarcely be refused. This is total control and the glaring illumination of it. It is the triumph of generality, the prevalence of the overwhelming idea and the refusal of the exception. And then, compared with this single-minded performance of Louis XIV, we have the curiosity of Hadrian–of Hadrian who is, apparently, so disorganized and casual, who proposes the reverse of any 'totality', who seems to need only an accumulation of disparate ideal fragments and whose criticism of Imperial Rome (configurationally much like his own house) is rather an endorsement than any protest.

But, if Versailles is the complete unitary model and the Villa Adriana

Tivoli, Hadrian's villa, view of model



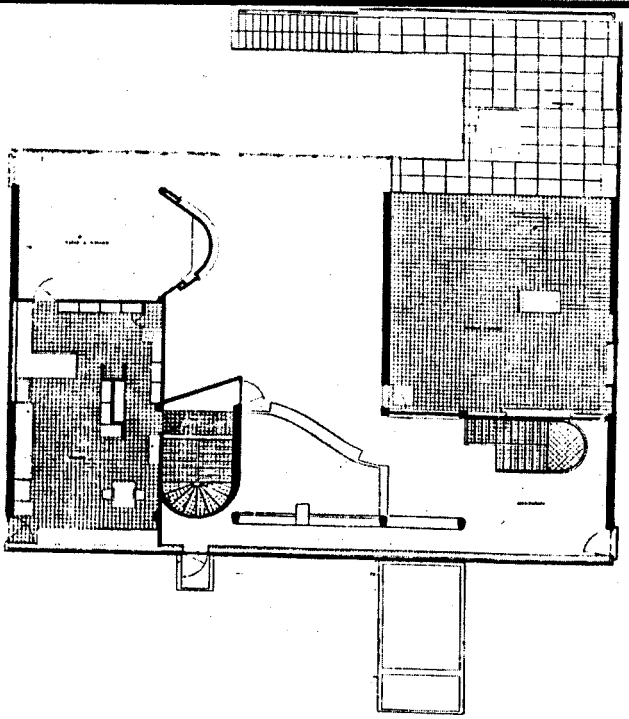
H

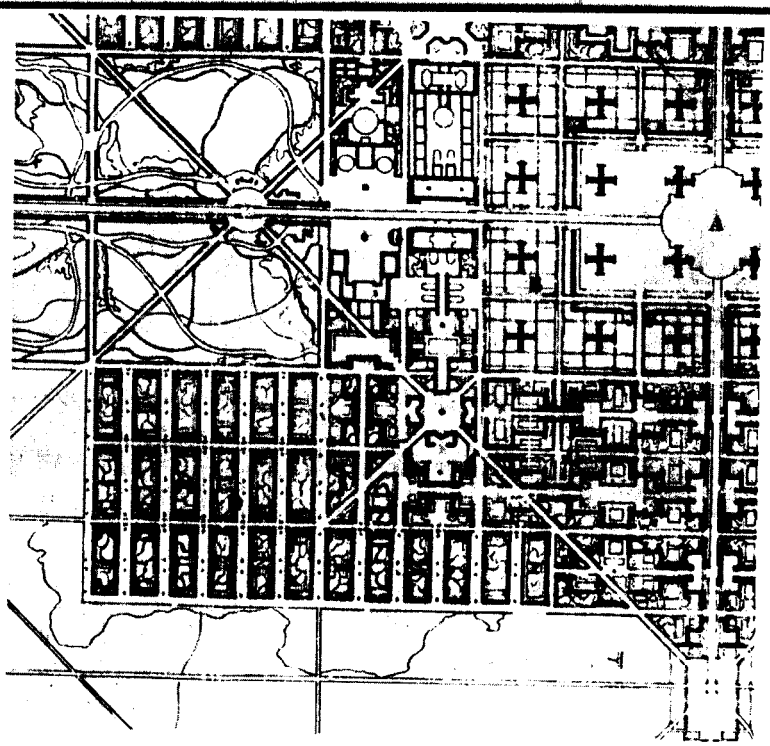


Hadrian's villa, plan after Luigi Canina

the apparently uncoordinated amalgam of discrete enthusiasms and, if the shattering ideality of Versailles is to be compared with the relativistically produced 'bits' of Tivoli, then what opportune interpretations can be placed upon this comparison? The obvious ones no doubt: that Versailles is the ultimate paradigm of autocracy; that it assumes a complete political power, undeviating in its objectives and long sustained; that, fundamentally, Hadrian was no less autocratic than Louis XIV but that, perhaps, he was not under the same compulsion to make so consistent a display of his autocracy.... But, if there is no doubt that all this might be said and if it is, after all, not very illuminating, it is at this stage that we feel obliged to call to our assistance Isaiah Berlin.

'The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing.' This, in the area of our concern, is the statement, otherwise uninteresting, which, in *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, Isaiah Berlin chose to gloss and to elaborate.[3] Taken figuratively but not pressed too far, what one is sup-





left
Le Corbusier: Villa Stein at Garches, 1927, plan

right
Le Corbusier: city for three million inhabitants, 1922. Quadrant of plan

posed to have here are the types of two psychological orientations and temperaments, the one, the hedgehog, concerned with the primacy of the single idea and the other, the fox, preoccupied with multiplicity of stimulus; and the great ones of the earth divide fairly equally: Plato, Dante, Dostoevsky, Proust, are, needless to say, hedgehogs; Aristotle, Shakespeare, Pushkin, Joyce are foxes. This is the rough discrimination; but, if it is the representatives of literature and philosophy who are Berlin's critical concern, the game may be played in other areas also. Picasso, a fox, Mondrian, a hedgehog, the figures begin to leap into place; and, as we turn to architecture, the answers are almost entirely predictable. Palladio is a hedgehog, Giulio Romano a fox; Hawksmoor, Soane, Philip Webb are probably hedgehogs, Wren, Nash, Norman Shaw almost certainly foxes; and, closer to the present day, while Wright is unequivocally a hedgehog, Lutyens is just as obviously a fox.

But, to elaborate the results of, temporarily, thinking in such categories, it is as we approach the area of modern architecture that we begin to recognize the impossibility of arriving at any so symmetrical a balance. For, if Gropius, Mies, Hannes Meyer, Buckminster Fuller are clearly eminent hedgehogs, then where are the foxes whom we can enter into the same league? The preference is obviously one way. The 'single central vision' prevails. One notices a predominance of hedgehogs; but, if one might sometimes feel that fox propensities are less than moral and, therefore, not to be disclosed, of course there still remains the job of assigning to Le Corbusier his own particular slot, 'whether he is a monist or a pluralist, whether his vision is of one or of many, whether he is of a single substance or compounded of heterogeneous elements'.[4]

These are the questions which Berlin asks with reference to Tolstoy—questions which (he says) may not be wholly relevant; and then, very tentatively, he produces his hypothesis:

that Tolstoy was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog; that his gifts and achievements are one thing, and his beliefs, and consequently his interpretation of his own achievement, another; and that consequently his ideals have led him, and those whom his genius for persuasion has taken in, into a systematic misinterpretation of what he and others were doing or should be doing.[5]

Like so much other literary criticism shifted into a context of architectural focus, the formula seems to fit; and, if it should not be pushed too far, it can still offer partial explanation. There is Le Corbusier the architect with what William Jordy has called 'his witty and collisive intelligence'.[6] This is the person who sets up elaborately pretended platonic structures only to riddle them with an equally elaborate pretence of empirical detail, the Le Corbusier of multiple asides, cerebral references and complicated *scherzi*; and then there is Le Corbusier the urbanist, the deadpan protagonist of completely different strategies who, on a large and public scale, has the minimum of use for all the dialectical tricks and spatial involutions which, invariably, he considered the appropriate adornment of a more private situation. The public world is simple, the private world is elaborate; and, if the private world affects a concern for contingency, the would be public personality long maintained an almost too heroic disdain for any taint of the specific.

But, if the situation of *complex house–simple city* seems strange (when one might have thought that the reverse was applicable) and if to explain the discrepancy between Le Corbusier's architecture and his urbanism one might propose that he was, yet again, another case of a fox assuming hedgehog disguise for the purposes of public appearance, this is to build a digression into a digression. So we have noticed a relative absence of foxes at the present day; and, though this second digression may later, it is hoped, be put to use, the whole fox-hedgehog diversion was initiated for ostensibly other purposes–to establish Hadrian and Louis XIV as, more or less, free acting representatives of these two psychological types who were autocratically equipped to indulge their inherent propensities; and then to ask which of their two products might be felt to offer the more useful example for today–the accumulation of set-pieces in collision or the total co-ordinated display.

Which is in no way to doubt the pathological aspects of both Tivoli and Versailles but which is simply to assert their usefulness as exaggerations of any everyday norm. For, if these are laboratory specimens–surely no more, it is as two instances of the normal written very large that they might still address themselves to us to propound two questions: the one of taste, the other of politics.

Taste is, of course, no longer–and was, perhaps, never–a serious or substantial matter; but, this being said, it is almost certain that the uninhibited aesthetic preference of the present (given two conditions of almost equal size and endlessness) is for the structural discontinuities and the multiplicity of syncopated excitements which Tivoli presents. And, in the same way, whatever may be the contemporary and conscientious concern for 'the single central vision', it should be apparent that the

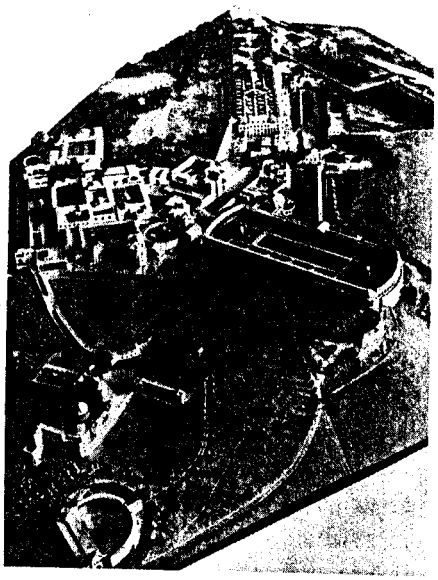
manifold disjunctions of Hadrian's villa, the sustained inference that it was built by several people at different times, its seeming combination of the schizoid and the inevitable, might recommend it to the attention of political societies in which political power frequently–and mercifully –changes hands. For Hadrian's villa, as the simulated product of different régimes, all 'adds up'; and it adds up in so convincing and useful a fashion than one can only believe in its promotion.

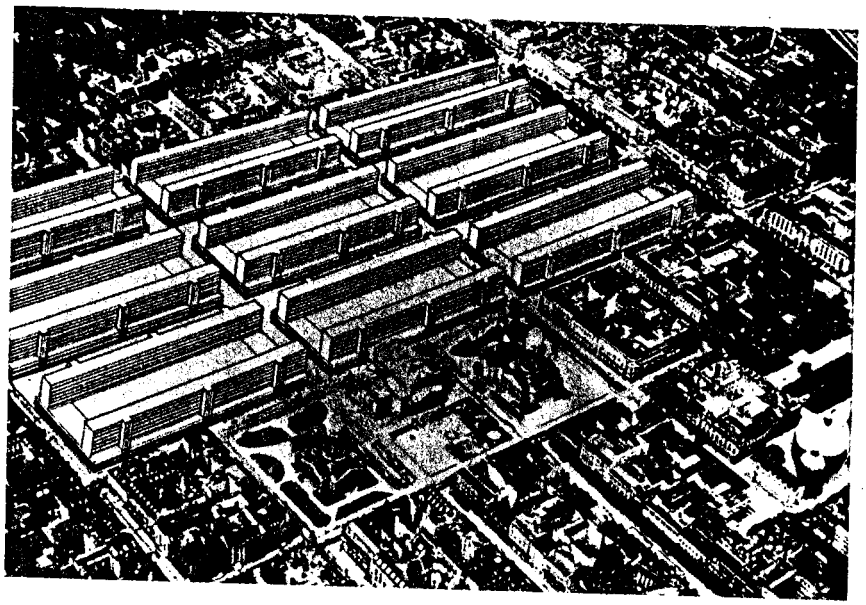
However, this is to anticipate the argument, Hadrian here became inserted as a qualification and as a criticism of Louis XIV; and our initial surprise only concerned the fact that, at Versailles, even in the days of the platonic, metaphorical utopia, a genuinely determined hedgehog could come up with so literal a representation. Indeed one can only admire the will. Louis XIV was working against heavy odds; and, as soon as the classical utopia became superseded, there was patently involved a great liberation for people of his own particular personality type. Hadrian, with his reminiscences of famous buildings and places, provided, in his miniature 'Rome', a nostalgic and ecumenical illustration of the hybrid mix which the Empire presented. He was one of Françoise Choay's 'culturalists'; but, for Louis XIV, the 'progressivist' (assisted by Colbert), it is the rationalizable present and the future which exhibit themselves as the exacting idea; and, it is when the rationalizations of Colbert become handed down via Turgot to Saint-Simon and Comte that one begins to see something of Versailles's prophetic enormity.

For certainly, there was here anticipated all the myth of the rationally ordered and 'scientific' society; and, if we might find here–in more ways than one–a cause of the revolution of 1789, then we have only to imagine a later, post-revolutionary version of Louis XIV becoming supremely responsive to the message of Hegel. For in the history of despotism, as in the history of utopia, almost the same arguments seem to apply; and, as we are defeated in the area of the mechanically rational, so we move to the logic of organism.

But the combination of a mechanical model of rationality with an organic one could only be left to the later nineteenth century and to modern architecture; and it is, again, when we find these two hedgehog requirements conflated with the threat of damnation that we return to the activist utopian myth as it was received between the two world wars. The litany of the myth is by now familiar: a condition of violent and rapid change, unprecedented in the history of mankind, has produced a state of disorientation, of suffering, of exploitation so profound, a moral and political crisis of such dimension that catastrophe is surely imminent, perhaps inevitable; and, therefore, in order to ensure the orderly progression of human affairs, in order to guarantee universal mental and physical health, in order to avert the economic spoliations of working society, in order to avoid impending doom, the enterprises of mankind must be brought into a closer alignment with the, equally inevitable, forces of blissful destiny.

Such was the cult of crisis in the inter-war period. Before it is too late society must rid itself of outmoded sentiment, thought, technique; and,





left
Tivoli, Hadrian's villa

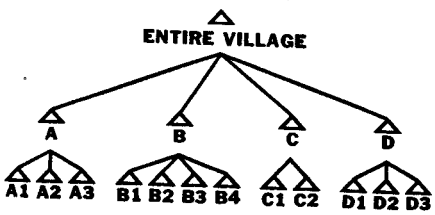
right
Hilberseimer: project for Central Berlin, 1927

if in order to prepare for its impending deliverance, it must be ready to make *tabula rasa*, the architect, as key figure in this transformation, must be prepared to assume the historical lead. For the built world of human habitation and venture is the very cradle of the new order and, in order properly to rock it, the architect must be willing to come forward, purged of prejudice, as a front-line combatant in the battle for humanity.

Perhaps, while claiming to be scientific, the architect had never previously operated within quite so fantastic a psycho-'political' milieu; but, if this is to parenthesize, it was for such reasons–Pascalian reasons of the heart–that the city became hypothesized as a condition of complete holistic and novel continuity, the result of scientific findings and a completely glad, 'human', collaboration. Such became the activist utopian total design. Perhaps an impossible vision (the future to approximate to the condition of Wagnerian music?) and certainly an improbable thought; but the alternative, the disappearance of humanity, was obviously far worse. And it is against such a psycho-cultural backdrop that the message of modern architecture was marketed and sold.

For those who, during the past fifty or sixty years (and many of them must be dead), have been anxiously awaiting the establishment of this new city, it must have become increasingly clear that the promise–such as it is–cannot be kept. Or so one might have thought; but, although the total design message has had a somewhat spotted career and has often elicited scepticism, it has remained, and possibly to this day, as the psychological substratum of urban theory and its practical application. Such a combination of scientism and moral enthusiasm was, of course, long ago criticized by Karl Popper–perhaps most potently in his *Logic of Scientific Discovery* and his *Poverty of Historicism*;[7] and in our own interpretation of the activist utopia our indebtedness to Popper's position should be evident. But if Popper, way back, was concerned with what he maybe felt to be a situation of potentially dangerous rhetoric, in spite

Candilis, Josic and Woods: Free University of Berlin, 1964, plan



A1 contains requirements 7, 53, 57, 59, 60, 72, 125, 126, 128.
A2 contains requirements 31, 34, 36, 52, 54, 80, 94, 106, 136.
A3 contains requirements 37, 38, 50, 55, 77, 91, 103.
B1 contains requirements 39, 40, 41, 44, 51, 118, 127, 131, 138.
B2 contains requirements 30, 35, 46, 47, 61, 97, 98.

Christopher Alexander: diagram of a village, 1964

of his easily available reservations, the total design message was not to be repressed. Indeed it was so little to be repressed that, in the last few years, a newly inspired and wholly literal version of the message was enabled to appear as renditions of the 'systems' approach and a variety of other methodological finds.

Now in these areas, where the 'science' of early modern architecture is presumed to be painfully deficient, it goes without saying that the methods involved are laborious and often extended. One has only to contemplate the scrupulousness of the operation in a text such as *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*[8] to get the picture. Obviously a 'clean' process dealing with 'clean' information, atomized, cleaned and then cleaned again, everything is ostensibly wholesome and hygienic; but, resulting from the inhibiting characteristics of commitment, especially physical commitment, the product seems never to be quite so prominent as the process. And something comparable might be said about the related production of stems, webs, grids and honeycombs which, in the later sixties, became so conspicuous an industry. Both are attempts to avoid any imputation of prejudice; and if, in the first case, empirical facts are presumed to be value-free and finally ascertainable, in the second, the co-ordinates of a grid are awarded an equal impartiality. For, like the lines of longitude and latitude, it seems to be hoped that these will, in some way, eliminate any bias–even responsibility–in a specification of the infilling detail.

But, if the ideally neutral observer is surely a critical fiction, if among the multiplicity of phenomena with which we are surrounded we observe what we wish to observe, if our judgements are inherently selective because the quantity of factual information is finally indigestible, any literal usage of a 'neutral' grid labours under approximate problems. The grid is to be either all-encompassing–a practical impossibility, or it is to be delimited–and hence not neutral; and, therefore, what results from both 'methodology' and 'systems' (relative to the contexts of facts and space) can only be the reverse of what was intended–in the one case, process elevated to the level of icon and, in the other, the covert statement of a tendentious idea.

Which is not to deny the usefulness of well-concerted information nor the heuristic utility which fantasies of highly organized reality may often supply; but which is to notice that, by now, the literal extension of total design into total management and total print out, has, as much among its proponents as its critics, begun, for some time, to appear as a rather dubious and fruitless enterprise. And it is perhaps as a result that there have emerged a series of counter-productions, a barrage of imperfectly defined reactions, not only to the monolithic offensiveness of would-be systemics but also to its related lack of responsiveness to fine grain association, immediate circumstance, vitality.

Loosely arranged and somehow attached to this reaction are notions

of Ad Hocism, Decentralised Socialism (on the model of the Swiss canton?), the Pop version of townscape and, rather more removed from the architect, versions of advocacy planning, with a whole body of affiliated and allegedly populist strategies–all of them identifiable by a common thread along which they seem to be strung together. That is (and relative to the various 'methodologies' which they would supplant or modify), they, all of them, in one way or another, deal directly with a far more intensive attachment to the elusive predilections of the people. And (again relative to the situation which they have come to find inadequate) these attitudes, by and large, would substitute occasion for space, action for artifact, mobility for fixed meaning and self-generated choice for imposition.

But to maintain this simplification. While much has been done through these attitudes to break down an unmanageable monolith, as a result, there has also been introduced an equally untenable dilemma. For there is surely some question as to the ultimate viability of any wholly popular imperative. *Give 'em what they want*, whether sociologically endorsed or otherwise, has never been a, completely, tenable political dogma; and, to the degree in which they leave this issue unconsidered, these often genuinely modest and disarming revisionist propositions are likely to be found implicated with either or both of two very unpleasant doctrines: *Whatever is is right*–an evidently nauseous idea–and *Vox populi vox dei*–a supposition upon which one might have thought that twentieth century history had already cast a sufficient penumbra of doubt.

The architectural proponents of populism are all for democracy and all for freedom; but they are characteristically unwilling to speculate as to the necessary conflicts of democracy with law, of the necessary collisions of freedom with justice. They address themselves to what they believe to be (and to a large extent are) concrete evils–economic evils, stylistic evils, cultural and ethnic abuse; but they are so much (and often so properly) concerned with specifics as to be typically unable to place libertarian detail in what, for the want of a better world, must be its complementary context of legal and legalistic abstraction. In other words, the populists (like some of the devotees of townscape) are apt to vitiate an entirely plausible argument by their unwillingness to consider the matter of ideal reference; and, because they are likely to be preoccupied with the problem of present minorities, the predicament of the future under-privileged is liable to evade their attention. Suffused with generosity, they surrender to an abstract entity called 'the people'; and, while talking of pluralism (another abstract entity which is usually honoured in the absence of any specific tolerance), they are unwilling to recognize how manifold 'the people' happens to be, and consequently, whatever 'its' will, how much in need of protection from each other its components happen to stand. To date, *Vox populi* takes care of no

minorities; and, as for *Whatever is is right* (and isn't just untutored choice splendid!), one can sometimes feel this to be no more than a sociological heat sink, an entirely monstrous conservative plot intended to draw off any possible ebullition of revolutionary steam.

And so, while we have no wish to promote recurrent dualities, versions of the science fiction–townscape confrontation, we find ourselves confronted yet again with the extremes of two positions. There is an abstract, would-be scientific idealism and a concrete, would-be populist empiricism. One discovers one attitude of mind which, whatever it might profess, can scarcely deal with specifics; and one discovers another which, whatever it might need, is radically disinclined to cope with generalities. But, though one must be disposed to wonder why these divisions of humanity should be so, it is also hard not to recognize that the populist revisionists, who are foxes attacking a hedgehog doctrine, precisely because they are attacking this doctrine tend to become hedgehogs themselves. For it is an unfortunate fact that, in proclaiming the primacy of 'the people', there is likely to be constructed a monolith quite as intolerable as any which might result from an insistence upon *the* method and *the* idea.

But, if thus far we seem to have discriminated two alternative prisons for the human spirit and, if one of them is a fortress with electronic controls while the other is an open gaol conducted on compassionate principles (and if we would emphatically prefer to be interned in the second), there are still certain details of imprisonment posturing as liberty which would seem to be common to both of these proposed régimes. And, primarily, these are to be found in an estimation of the future which is roughly shared by both parties alike.

Apparently, and without much divergency of opinion, the future is typically envisaged as some exceptionally delicate embryo enclosed in the womb of the present; and, apparently, and unless we are all very careful, there is far worse than miscarriage which may impend. Indeed to ensure the natural delivery of the future, the present must be rid of all psychological and physiological blockages; and, if this might, frivolously, be called The Doctor Spock Theory of the Future, it is perhaps according to the prescriptions of this theory that the architect confers upon the sociologist the role of cultural obstetrician.

This common myth is patently crisis-ridden; but, if it is the feminine inverse of a more virile stipulation of the same idea (the architect as an athlete in a race with time and technology, beloved of Hannes Meyer and Reyner Banham), in each case the future enters, whether a feeble possibility or a tough growth, as an element to coerce the present. In other words, the future reigns as a, presumably, absolute value; and, because its emergence either must or cannot be impeded, a serious and 'responsible' behaviour becomes enjoined upon us.

Now such fantasies, it should not be necessary to demonstrate, are among the cruder outcroppings of a theory of historical determinism, a

sort of *Reader's Digest* version of Hegel which was abundantly taken in by the architectural and planning professions in the earlier years of this century. For certainly at no other time than the present could so many architectural quasi-academics have devoted so much *Sitzfleisch* to the completely extraordinary question: *What shall we do so as to prevent the future from not coming about?*

But, if in previous ages this question can seldom have raised its head (the future being recognized as something which was going to take care of itself anyway), today it is evidently closely involved with even more ingrained presuppositions, with a notion of society as a not-to-be-interrupted vegetable continuum, as a biological or botanical entity, as an animal or plant requiring the most careful and assiduous nurturing. And, if the idea of society as organism is ultimately of classical derivation, and if its nineteenth century refurbishings have already been discussed, and if it may, sometimes, constitute a convenient metaphor, its literal interpretations still evidently involve *we* and *they*. For the animal is presumably to be fed and the plant is to be watered (or else why worry?); and, accordingly, society as a natural organism becomes, in practice, a somewhat domesticated and paternalistic scene. Buildings will proliferate illustrations of growth (rather like specimens in some exotic arboretum); and 'people', just by being 'people', expressing themselves simply in action and, it is hoped, avoiding cerebration, will also help to highlight the spectacle of prosperous vegetation; but it is a well-constructed garden (or zoo) which ensues and it contains no surprises.

It is, sometimes, a little astonishing that the Hegelian conception of progressive dialectic could have reduced itself to anything so disastrously tame, to a situation where growth becomes simply growth in kind, and mere change in size is interpreted as real and intrinsic change. For growth and change, so often confused as one and the same, represent very different aspects of mobility; and the notion of society and culture as simply growth (and therefore change) is a distortion of their essential status as the products of ritual and debate. For ideas and those future ideas which will make the future different from the present (and will, hence, ensure change) simply do not 'grow'. Their mode of existence is neither biological nor botanical. The condition of their being is that of conflict and argument, of consciousness; but, if they emerge through the heat–or the chill–of controversy and through the clash of minds, the residue of historical determinism which we inherit is unwilling to concede anything so obvious.

And, of course, correctly so. For, if one assumes that all ideas are implicit from the beginning of time (like buds awaiting a favourable moment to unfold as flowers) and if one, simultaneously, assumes that all knowledge is accessible (an apparent axiom of 'methodology'), then the irritant and the problem of future ideas will logically vanish away. Simply, since we can now more than intuit them, there will be none; and thus, equipped as we are with the 'laws' of societal and cultural mobility,

we shall be enabled smoothly to extrapolate from the *status quo*. Or such is half the story. But, though 'history' and the future are dictatorial, paradoxically and as already noticed, they are usually envisaged as requiring attention; and hence, clearly, the need for the nurture of nature for a species of total design gently but unintermittently applied.

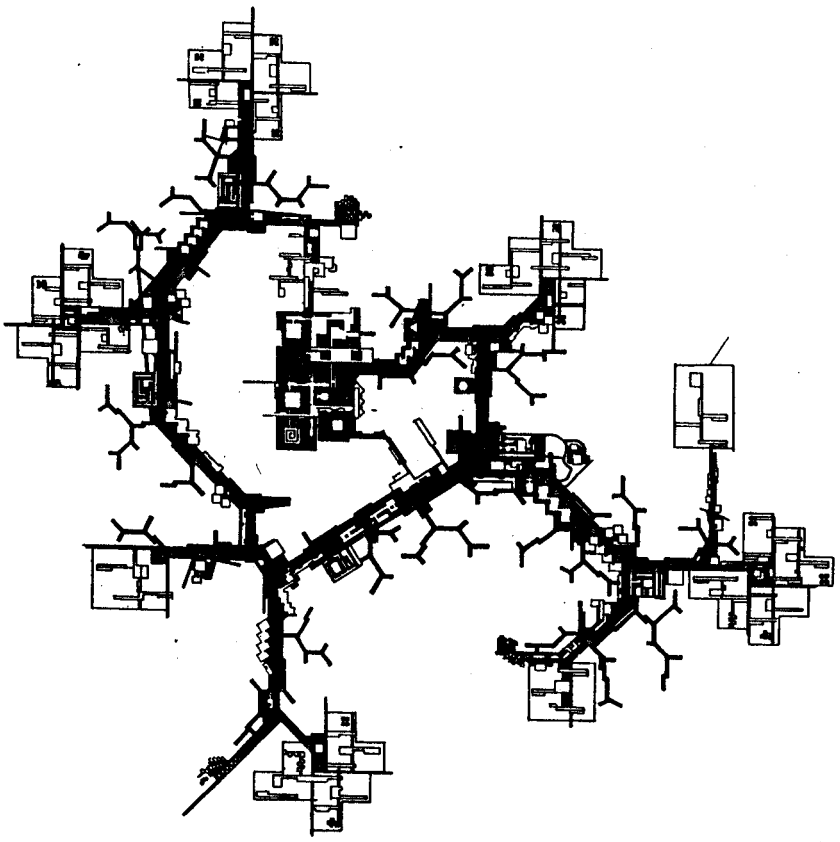
So, perhaps at this stage it is that we reach the final but logical degradation of utopian and millennarian dogma. The new order is to be insidiously and gradually introduced. The technique is to be cultivation and not imposition. The path towards ultimate fulfilment is already disclosed; and, as all cultural markers become increasingly declared oppressive and obsolete so, while we surrender any illusion of free will we may yet retain, we may still be consoled by the faith that such is the way to the rational coherence of libertarian perfection.

This is to exaggerate; but not very greatly. For anyone who chooses to scrutinize the accumulation of inference which contemporary architecture and urbanism fairly readily supplies will, surely, be almost obliged to render some version of the picture we have here painted. 'Growth' assumed to be uninterrupted by politics; total design and total non-design, both equally 'total'; the grid of freedom, assumed to be neutral and natural; the unchecked spontaneity of 'the people', supposed to be equally healthy and independent; the strange collusions between 'science' and 'destiny', between fantasies of authority and fantasies of independence; the choice of skipping around, preferably naked, among the Cartesian co-ordinates or getting gut reactions from the ghetto: the inferences, for the most part, are rather few and very grotesque.

But again, and at the risk of repetition, to proceed from diagnosis to

The fantasy of organic growth–

Candilis, Josic and Woods: project for Toulouse-le-Mirail, 1961



prognosis. The argument which follows involves the surrender or at least, the temporary suspension of a prevalent monocular vision, the willingness to recognize certain fantasies about history and scientific method for the totems which they are, the concession that political process is likely to be neither very smooth nor very predictable and, perhaps above all, the dissolution of a cherished prejudice that all buildings can be, and must become, works of architecture–a prejudice which is, in no way, exactly modified when its resultant proposition is, effectively, turned inside out, i.e. all works of architecture should vanish away.

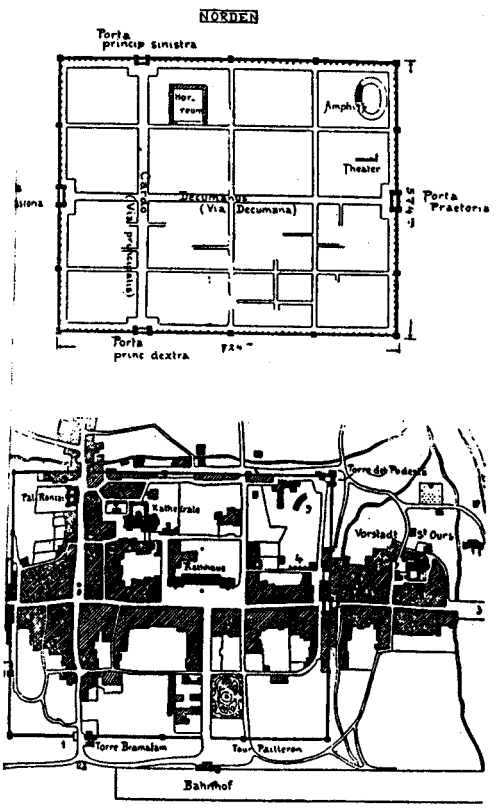
For, the requirements of professional empire building apart, the demand that all buildings should become works of architecture (or the reverse) is strictly offensive to common sense, If it is possible to define the existential predicament of the art–or whatever–of architecture (and there can be no simple formula implicating bicycle sheds and Lincoln Cathedral), one might possibly stipulate that architecture is a social institution related to building in much the same way that literature is to speech. Its technical medium is public property and, if the notion that all speech should approximate to literature is, *ipso facto*, absurd and would, in practice, be intolerable, much the same may be said about building and architecture. There is no need and no purpose served in insisting that they be identical. Like literature, architecture is a discriminatory concept which can, but need not, enjoy a lively commerce with its vernacular; and, if it should be apparent that nobody is, in any way, seriously the loser by the existence of refined and passionate modes of concatenating words, the value of a parallel activity should scarcely require to be excused.

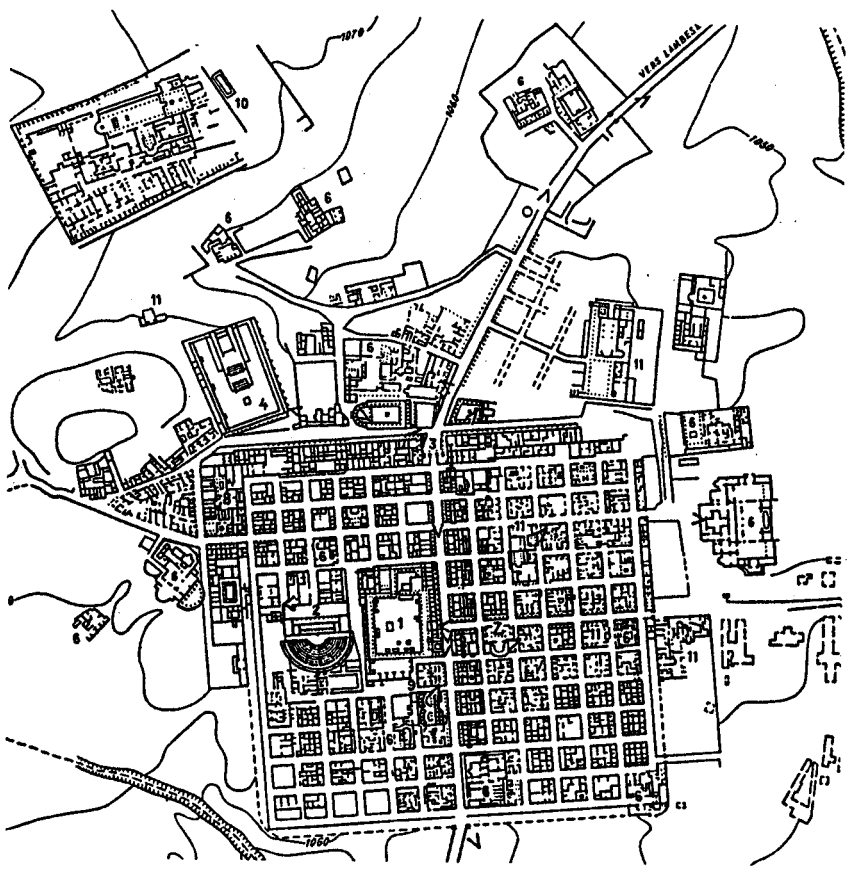
Growth as a product of conflict and argument–

below
Roman settlement of Aosta

far below
Aosta in the early 19th century

right
The Roman settlement of Timgad, Algeria, with later accretions





But the exigencies of 'the single central vision', palpitating with the sense of its own goodness, will not allow for any determination so obvious; and, as the architect became both messiah and scientist, both Moses and Newton, the consequences of this role playing were not be evaded. The proofs of legitimacy were to be brought down from an encounter with 'history' on the mountain and, equally, they were to be educed by an observation of no more, and no less, than 'fact'.

However, the myth of the architect as eighteenth century natural philosopher, with all his little measuring rods, balances and retorts (a myth which became all the more ludicrous after its annexation by the architect's less lustrous and less well-pedigreed cousin: the planner), must now be brought into proximity with *The Savage Mind* and with everything that '*bricolage*' represents.

'There still exists among ourselves,' says Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'an activity which on the technical plane gives us quite a good understanding of what a science we prefer to call "prior" rather than "primitive" could have been on the plane of speculation. This is what is commonly called "bricolage" in French;'[9] and he then proceeds to an extended analysis of the objectives of 'bricolage' and of science, of the respective roles of the 'bricoleur' and the engineer.

In its old sense the verb 'bricoler' applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle. And in our time the 'bricoleur' is still someone who works with his hands and uses devious means compared to those of the craftsman.[10]

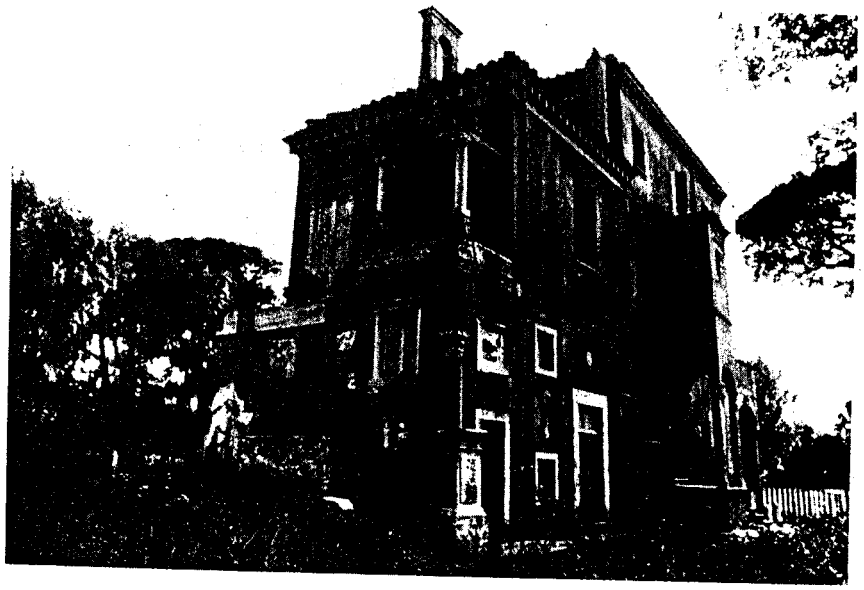
Rome, Villa Doria-Pamphili, garden structure, window detail

Now there is no intention to place the weight of the argument which follows upon Lévi-Strauss's observations. Rather the intention is to promote an identification which may, up to a point, prove useful and, so much so, that if one may be inclined to recognize Le Corbusier as a fox in hedgehog disguise, one may also be willing to envisage a parallel attempt at camouflage: the 'bricoleur' disguised as engineer. 'Engineers fabricate the tools of their time... Our engineers are healthy and virile, active and useful, balanced and happy in their work... our engineers produce architecture for they employ a mathematical calculation which derives from natural law.'[11]

Such is an almost entirely representative statement of early modern architecture's most conspicuous prejudice. But then compare Lévi-Strauss:

The 'bricoleur' is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to

Bricolage–
Rome, Villa Doria-Pamphili, garden structure



maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. The set of the 'bricoleur's' means cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project (which would presuppose besides, that, as in the case of the engineer, there were, at least in theory, as many sets of tools and materials, or 'instrumental sets', as there are different kinds of projects. It is to be defined only by its potential use... because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that 'they may always come in handy'. Such elements are specialized up to a point, sufficiently for the 'bricoleur' not to need the equipment and knowledge of all trades and professions, but not enough for each of them to have only one definite and determinate use. They represent a set of actual and possible relations; they are 'operators', but they can be used for any operations of the same type.[12]

For our purposes it is unfortunate that Lévi-Strauss does not lend himself to reasonably laconic quotation. For the 'bricoleur', who certainly finds a representative in 'the odd job man', is also very much more than this. 'It is common knowledge that the artist is both something of a scientist and of a 'bricoleur';'[13] but, if artistic creation lies mid-way between science and 'bricolage', this is not to imply that the 'bricoleur' is 'backward'. 'It might be said that the engineer questions the universe while the 'bricoleur' addresses himself to a collection of oddments left over from human endeavours;'[14] but it must also be insisted that there is no question of primacy here. Simply, the scientist and the 'bricoleur' are to be distinguished 'by the inverse functions which they assign to event and structures as means and ends, the scientist creating events... by means of structures and the 'bricoleur' creating structures by means of events.'[15]

But we are here, now, very far from the singular notion of an exponential increasingly precise 'science' (a speedboat which architecture

A truly useful dialectic?[16] The idea is simply the conflict of contending powers, the almost fundamental conflict of interest sharply stipulated, the legitimate suspicion about others' interests, from which the democratic process–such as it is–proceeds; and then the corollary to this idea is no more than banal: if such is the case, if democracy is compounded of libertarian enthusiasm and legalistic doubt, and if it is, inherently, a collision of points of view and acceptable as such, then why not allow a theory of contending powers (all of them visible) as likely to establish a more ideally comprehensive city of the mind than any which has, *as yet*, been invented.

And there is no more to it than this. In place of an ideal of universal management based upon what are presented as scientific certainties there is also a private, and a public, emancipatory interest (which, incidentally, includes emancipation from management); and, if this is the situation and, if the only outcome is to be sought in collision of interest, in a permanently maintained debate of opposites, then why should this dialectical predicament be not just as much accepted in theory as it is in practice? The reference is again to Popper and to the ideal of keeping the game straight; and it is because, from such a criticist point of view, collision of interest is to be welcomed, not in terms of cheap ecumenicism which is only too abundantly available, but in terms of clarification (because, in the battlefield engendered by mutual suspicion, it is just possible that–as has been usual–the flowers of freedom may be forced from the blood of conflict) that, if such a condition of collisive motives is recognizable and should be endorsable, we are disposed to say: why not try?

The proposition leads us (like Pavlov's dogs) automatically to the condition of seventeenth century Rome, to that collision of palaces, *piazze* and villas, to that inextricable fusion of imposition and accommodation, that highly successful and resilient traffic jam of intentions, an anthology of closed compositions and *ad hoc* stuff in between, which is simultaneously a dialectic of ideal types plus a dialectic of ideal types with empirical context; and the consideration of seventeenth century Rome (the complete city with the assertive identity of its subdivisions: Trastevere, Sant'Eustachio, Borgo, Campo Marzo, Campitelli . . .) leads to the equivalent interpretation of its predecessor where forum and thermae pieces lie around in a condition of inter-dependence, independence and multiple interpretability. And imperial Rome is, of course, far the more dramatic statement. For, certainly with its more abrupt collisions, more acute disjunctions, its more expansive set pieces, its more radically discriminated matrix and general lack of 'sensitive' inhibition, imperial Rome, far more than the city of the High Baroque, illustrates something of the 'bricolage' mentality at its most lavish–an obelisk from here, a column from there, a range of statues from somewhere else, even at the level of detail the mentality is fully exposed; and, in this context, it is amusing to recollect how the influence of a whole

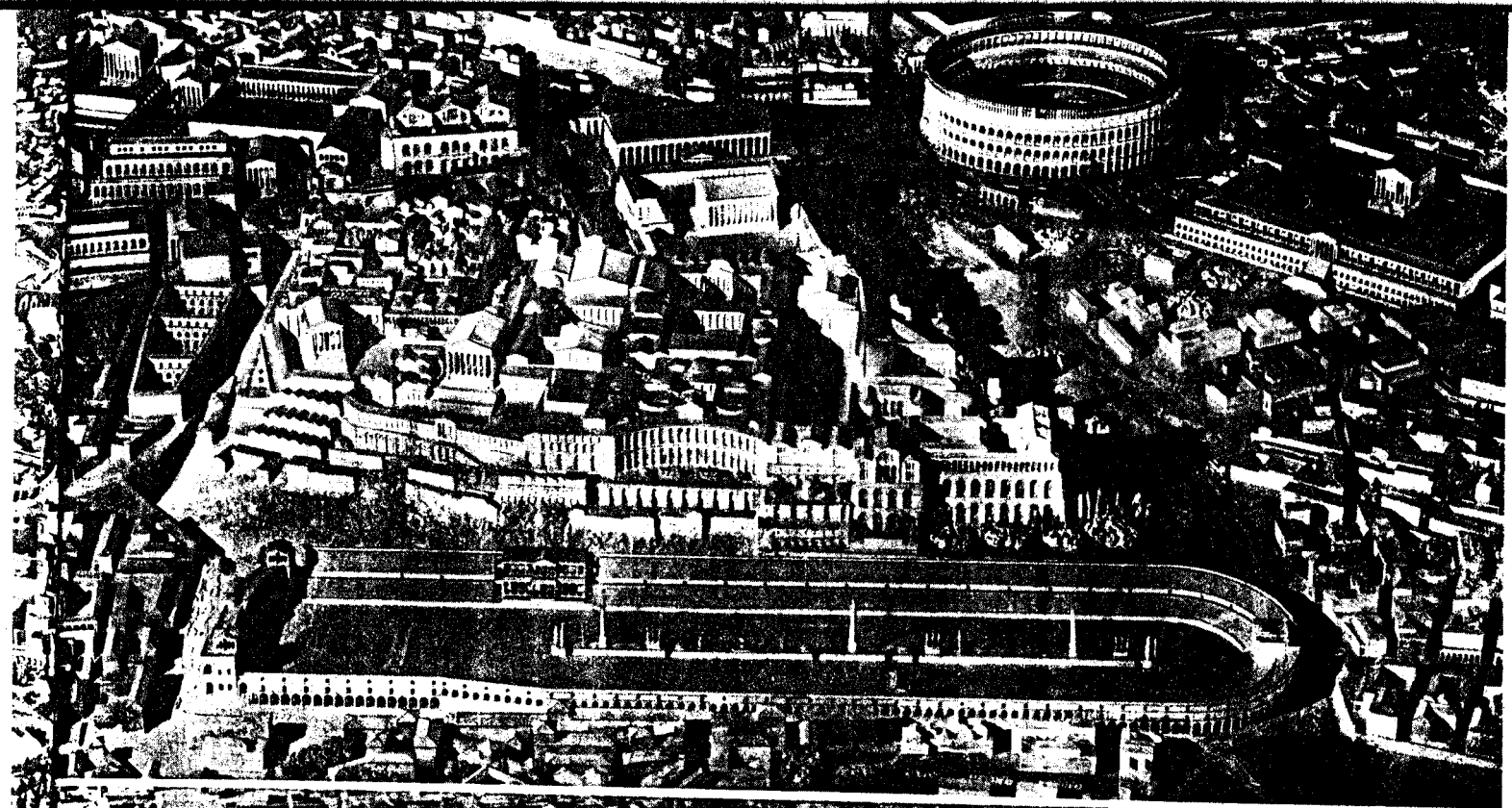
school of historians (Positivists, no doubt!) was, at one time, strenuously dedicated to presenting the ancient Romans as inherently nineteenth century engineers, precursors of Gustave Eiffel, who had somehow, and unfortunately, lost their way.

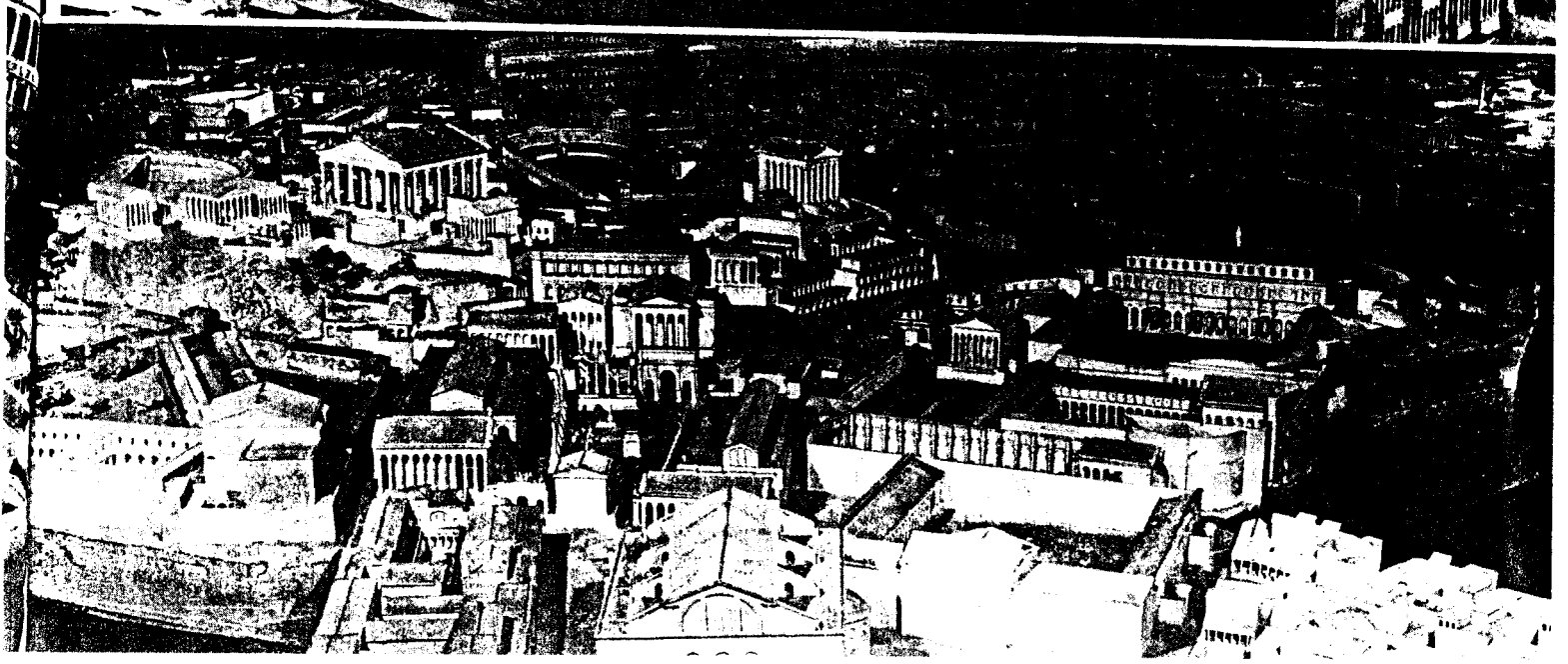
So Rome, whether imperial or papal, hard or soft, is here offered as some sort of model which might be envisaged as alternative to the disastrous urbanism of social engineering and total design. For, while it is recognized that what we have here are the products of a specific topography and two particular, though not wholly separable, cultures, it is also supposed that we are in the presence of a style of argument which is not lacking in universality. That is: while the physique and the politics of Rome provide perhaps the most graphic example of collisive fields and *interstitial debris*, there are calmer versions of equivalent interests which are not hard to find.

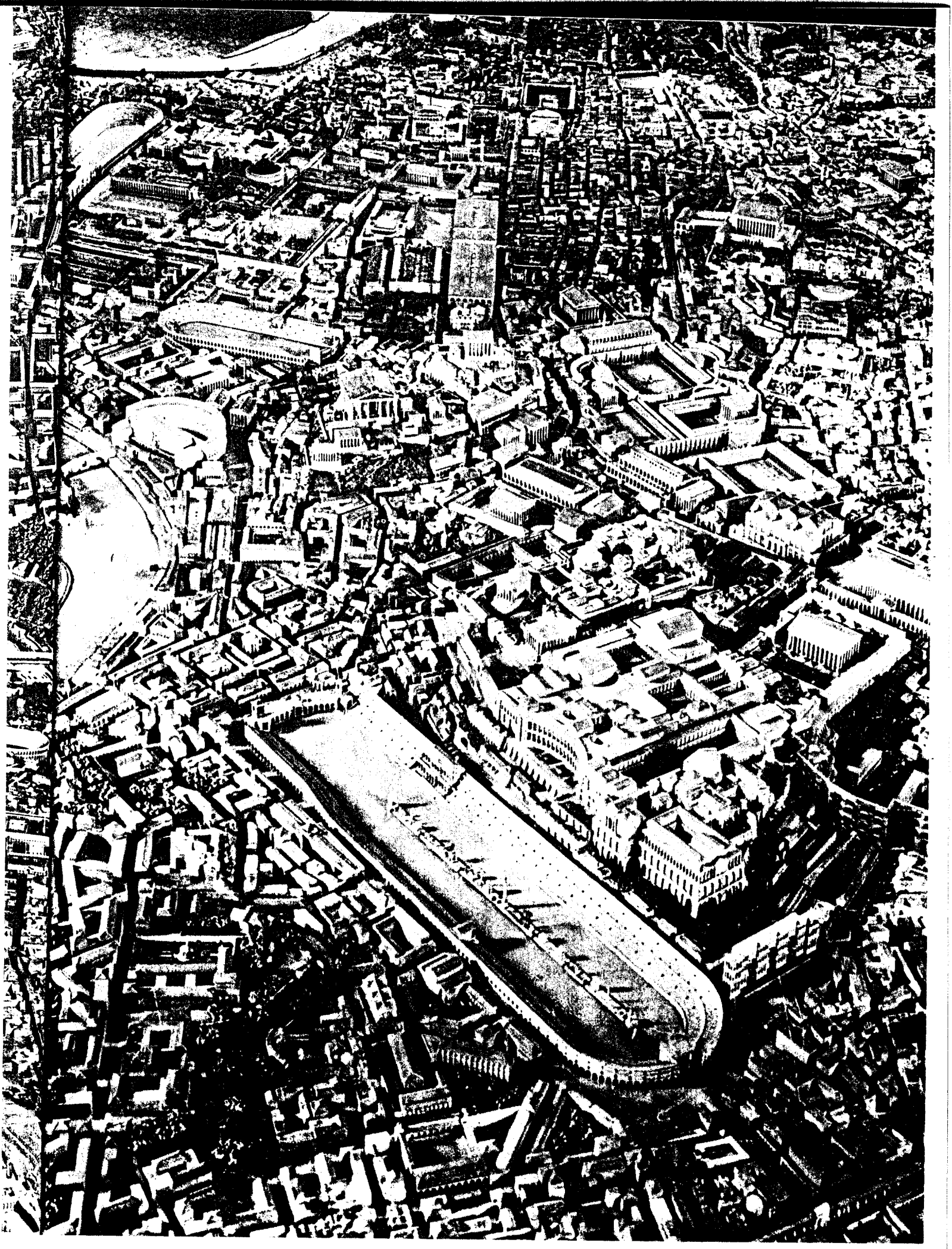
Rome, for instance, is–if one wishes to see it so–an imploded version of London. Provide a more bland topography, enlarge the set-pieces and dilute their impact (call the Forum of Trajan, Belgravia and the Baths of Caracalla, Pimlico, for Villa Albani read Bloomsbury and for Via Giulia, Westbourne Terrace) and the works of imperial and papal 'bricolage' will begin to receive their nineteenth century and, more or less, bourgeois analogue–a compilation of rationally gridded fields, mostly corresponding to estate structure, with conditions of confusion and picturesque happening in between, mostly corresponding to stream beds, cow tracks, etc, and, originally serving as a series of inadvertent D.M.Z.'s which could only help to qualify the virtues of order with the values of chaos.

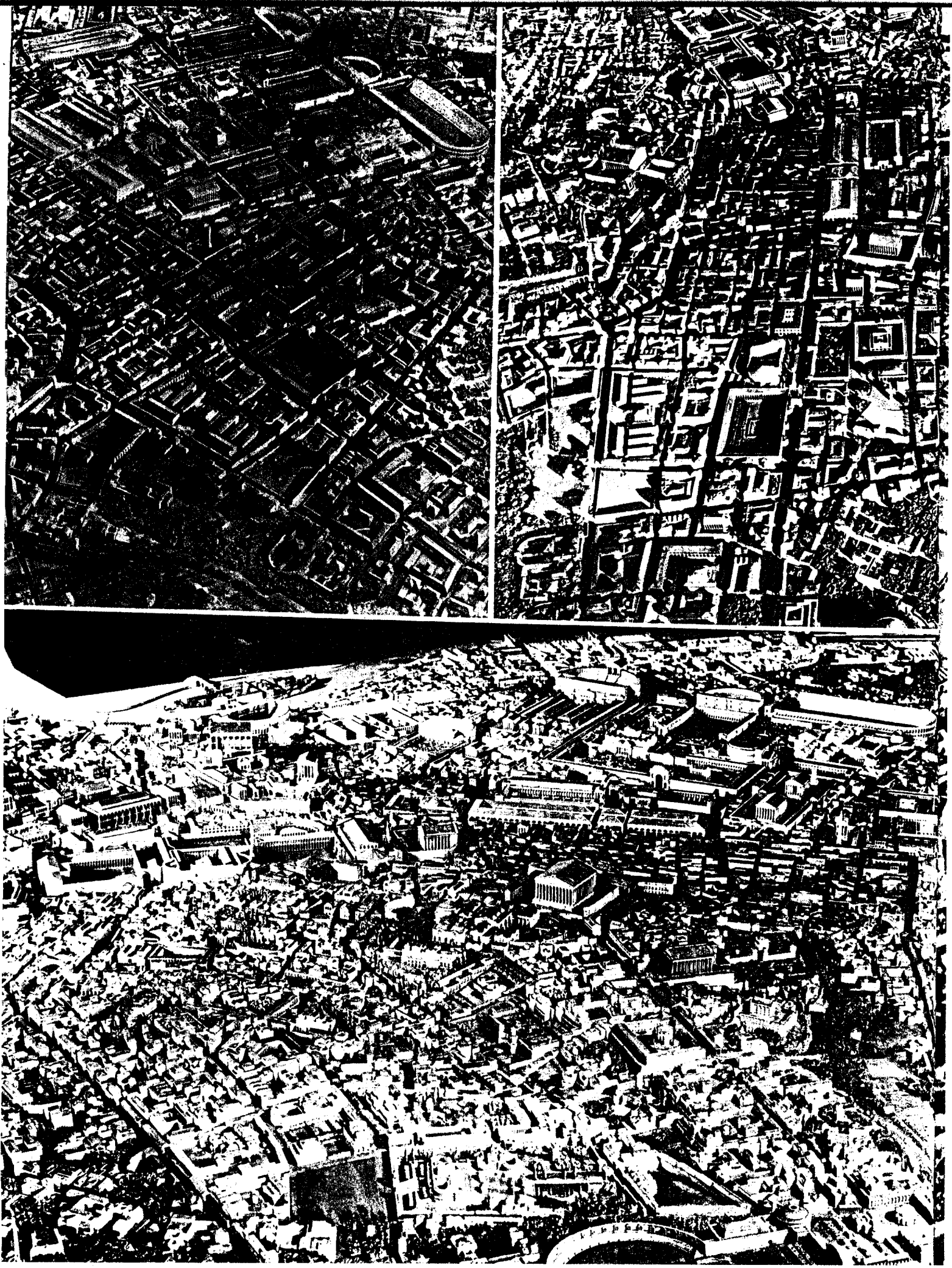
And the Rome–London model may, of course, perfectly well be expanded to provide a comparable interpretation of a Houston or a Los Angeles. It is simply a question of the frame of mind with which one visits a place. That is: if one hopes to find the bizarre it will, perhaps, not elude one's notice and if one hopes to find the way-out future one will, possibly, be equipped to discover it; but, also, if one is looking for the influence of a model, then, within reason, one will probably be enabled to discern its traces. For, in Houston or Los Angeles, if the fields of internal coherence and the areas of interstitial debris are, no doubt, more difficult to identify by explicit name and if their existence we only know by personal exposure, perhaps more important is the tendency in both cities to revert to almost Roman conditions of 'bricolage'. Which is not to assert that simply because a thing is Roman it, just, must be good–we entertain no such fatuous obsession–and which is neither to assert that simply because a thing is Pop-'Roman' it just must be valuable–again we disclaim the intention; but which is, in Houston, to allude to Greenway Plaza, City Post Oak, Plaza del' Ora (hispanicized shades of Tivoli!), Brook Hollow, and, in Los Angeles, to notice their equivalents: local shopping centres, etc., which, if they were not fundamentally apt to be more of the same (more 'modern', more neo-colonial, more dreams of

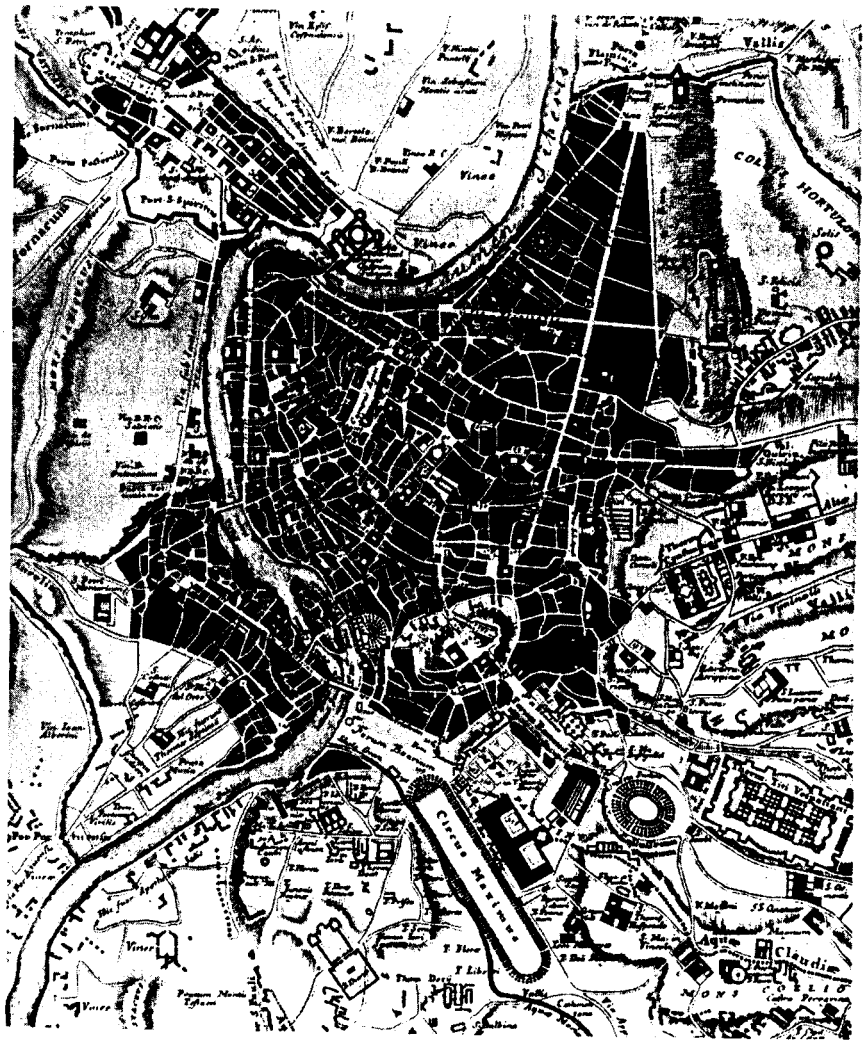
overleaf
Imperial Rome, views of model at the Museo della Civiltà Romana











The matrix of 17th century Rome–plan after Bufalini, 1551

Cordoba) might already be recognized as the equivalent of the great antique set-pieces.

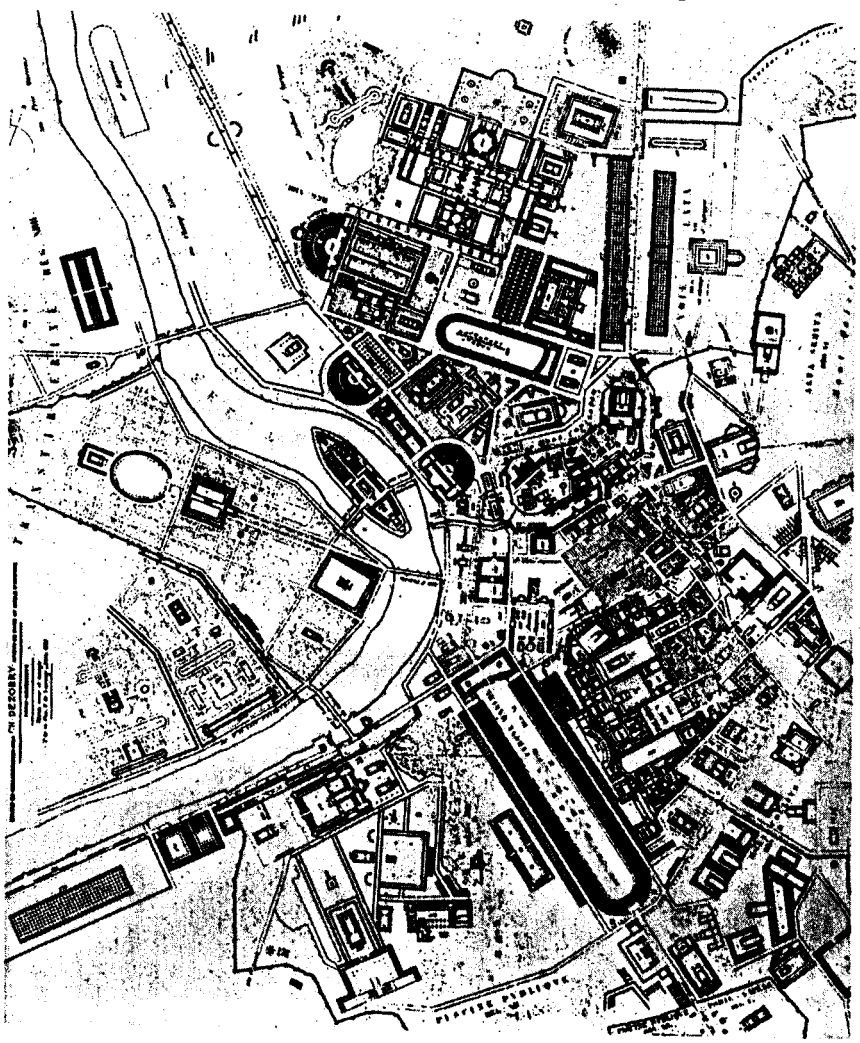
Admittedly, and to our taste, something may be lost by diffusion, by the explosive patterns which the automobile has stimulated–collision is not so clearly explicit as one might wish; but, if we do not believe that the superimposition of rapid transit (after the petroleum is exhausted?) will, significantly, improve the scene, while we still feel disposed to salute it as an instance of ongoing 'bricolage', we are also disposed to imagine that many of the recently enlisted connoisseurs of Pop (the post-Marxist, post-technophile Banham, the post-elitist Venturi) have, unconsciously, experienced the same imperative.

However this is to introduce conjecture; and, rather than dwell upon Rome, London, Houston and Los Angeles as differing versions

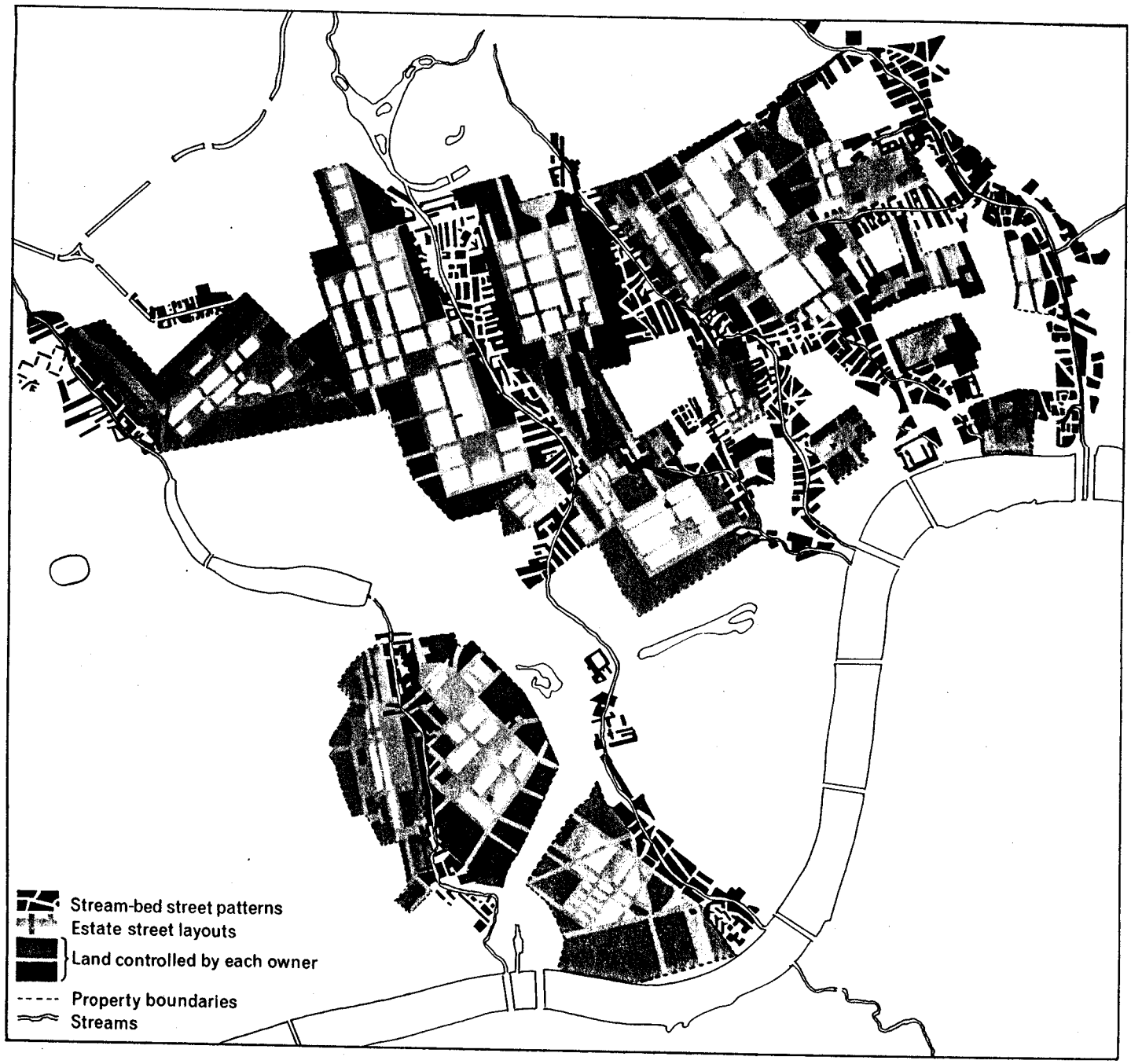
of the same paradigm, it might, once more, be useful to return to the Cartesian co-ordinates of happiness, to the neutral grid of equality and freedom–and the reference must be to Manhattan.

> Some two thousand blocks were provided, each theoretically two hundred feet wide, no more, no less; and ever since, if a building site was wanted, whether with a view to a church or a blast furnace, an opera house or a toy shop, there is, of intention, no better place in one of these blocks than in another.[17]

But, like all despairing observations, Frederick Law Olmsted's was never completely true. For if, in Manhattan, the unrolling of the blanket grid simultaneously extinguished local detail and illustrated the expertise of the land marketeer in action, it was impossible that the operation could ever be complete. For, while the grid remains belligerently 'neutral' and while its major qualifiers are only to be found on the most general and crude levels (continuous waterfront, Central Park, lower Manhattan, the West Village, Broadway...), in spite of circum-

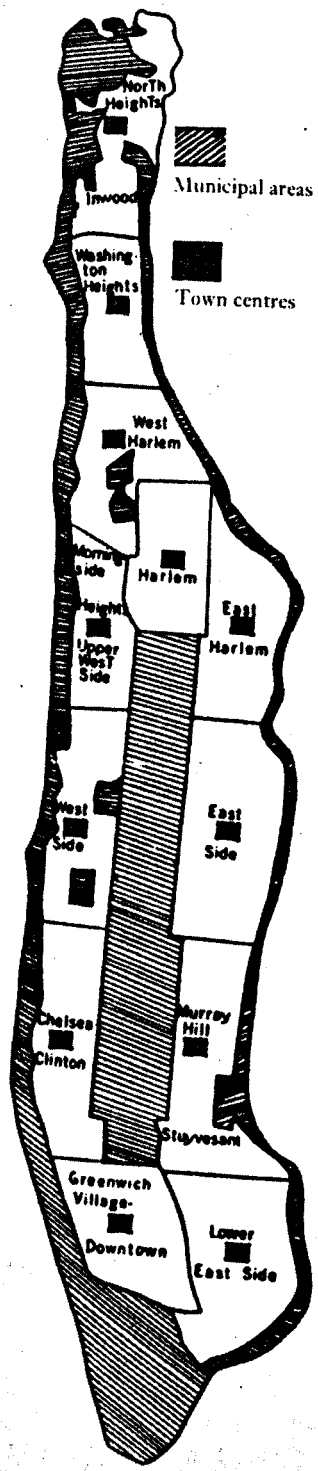


Imperial Rome, plan after Canina, c.1834

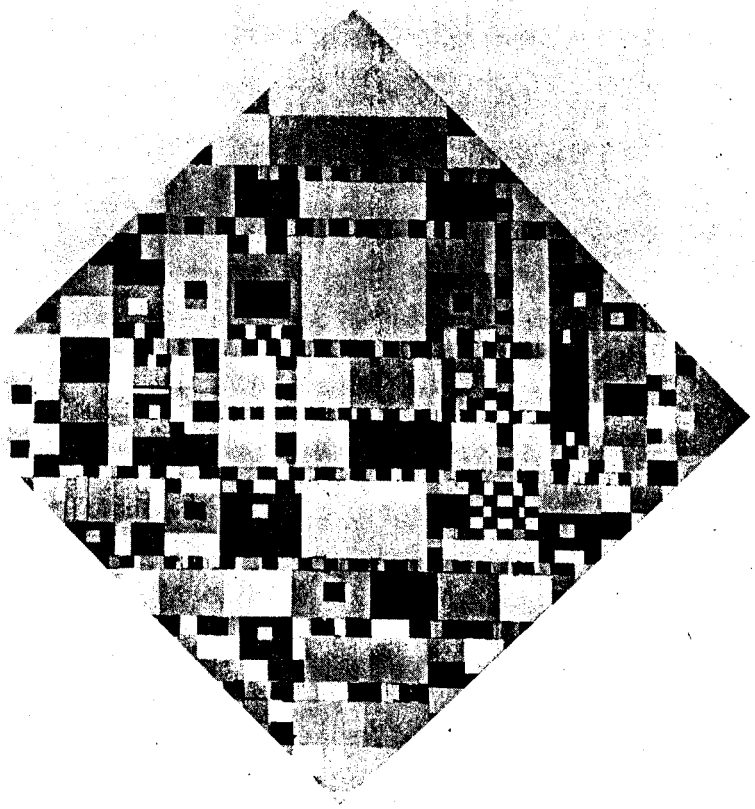


Grahame Shane: field analysis of central London, 1971

stance, the evidences of idiosyncratic coagulation present themselves and demand to be exploited; nor is the situation–which was clearly visible to Mondrian–one of total defeat. But if, in offering a highly energetic scaffold for fluctuating and casual event, New York City might constitute the best of apologias for the all-prevailing grid, the satisfactions which its grid provides are, perhaps, principally of a conceptual and intellectual order. The, apparently, infinitely extended field, just as it tends to defeat politics, tends to defeat perception; and it is presumably in an effort to institutionalize what can only be a felt and a necessary presence that there have emerged such propositions as 'what



What a democratic Manhattan would look like, 1973



Piet Mondrian: Victory Boogie Woogie, 1943–4

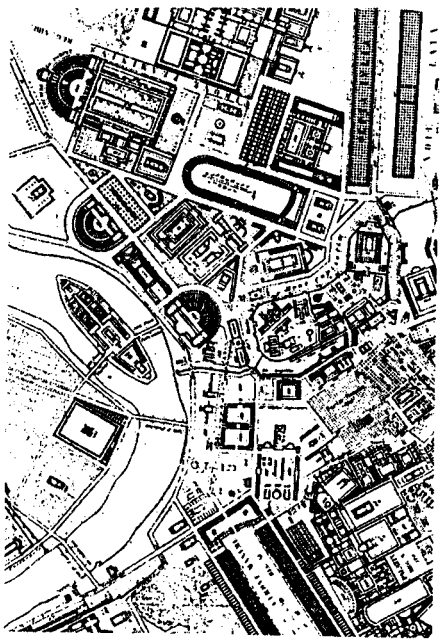
a democratic New York would look like'[18]–demands for the political cantonization of unrealistically centralized government, demands which, interestingly, tend to align themselves with what might be the results of more purely morphological analysis.

Somewhat irrationally the ongoing tradition of modern architecture would now tend to look with favour upon such proposals as these. Somewhat irrationally because, however democratic such cantonization can only appear, the bias which the architect has inherited from long indulgence of total design fantasies tends to make him incapable of following through to where such alternative propositions might lead. For, while there has emerged an awareness of the untenable prospects of total politics, there remains, or so it would seem, a large lack of interest or belief in the analogous prospects of any physical counterpart

to such a conclusion. In other words, while in politics the existence of finite fields (interacting with each other but all protected from ultimate infringement) is once more to be considered profitable and desirable, this message seems not, as yet, to have been fully translated into the language of perception; and thus the production of any spatial or temporal equivalent of the finite field is, characteristically, liable to be received with mistrust–again as a blockage of the future and as a dangerous impediment to the freedoms of open-endedness.

Whatever survives of the present argument is now inconsiderable and will carry no conviction whatever for those who, as a basis of operation, are still obliged to conceive of a totally integrated world society, a combination of innate goodness and scientific *savoir faire*, in which all political structures, major or minor, will have become dissolved. We concede the values of this persuasion; but we are also obliged to suggest that the ideally open and emancipated society is not likely to be made this way, that the open society depends upon the complexity of its parts, upon competing group-centred interests which need not be logical but which, collectively, may not only check each other but may, sometimes, also serve as a protective membrane between the individual and the form of collective authority. For the problem should remain that of a tension between quasi-integrated whole and quasi-segregated parts; and, lacking the segregated parts, one can only imagine that 'open society' where, in despite of the theorems of liberty and equality, all the compulsions of fraternity–elective affinities, team sweatshirts, group dynamics, revolutionary communes providing the joys of pleasurable alienation, the Society of Jesus, Lambda Chi, annual conventions, regimental dinners–would break out yet again.

But the issue may, and without extravagance, be equipped with a far more literal illustration; and such words as integration and segregation (related to both politics and perception) can scarcely lead us elsewhere than to the predicament of the American black community. There was, and is, the ideal of integration and there was, and is, the ideal of segregation; but, if both ideals may be supported by a variety of arguments, proper and improper, there remains the evidence that, when gross injustice begins to be removed, the barriers which were formerly maintainable from the outside are just as reconstructable from within. For, whatever fantasies of the ideally open society are maintainable (and Popper's 'open society' may be just as much a fiction as the ideally 'closed society' which he condemns), in spite of the abstract universal goals demanded by theoretical liberalism, there still remains the problem of identity, with its related problems of absorption and extinction of specific type; and it is yet to be proved that such problems should be considered temporary. For the truly empirical order was never liberty, equality, fraternity; but it was rather the reverse: a question of the fraternal order, a grouping of the equal and like-minded, which, collectively, assumes the power to negotiate its freedoms. Such is the history of Christianity,



Imperial Rome, plan after Canina, c. 1834, detail

continental freemasonry, the academic institution, trades' unionism, women's suffrage, bourgeois privilege and all the rest. It is a history of the open field as an idea, the closed field as a fact; and it is because, in this continuous eruption of closed fields which has contributed so much to genuine emancipation, the recent history of black liberties in the United States is so illuminating (and surely so 'correct' in both its aggressive *and* protective attitudes) that we have felt compelled to cite it as a classical–perhaps *the* classical–illustration of a general predicament.

The argument, such as it is, may now be condensed. It certainly concerns the theological extremes of predestination versus free will; and, just as certainly, it is both conservative and anarchistic in its drive. It supposes that, beyond a point, protracted political continuities should neither be postulated nor hoped for and that, correspondingly, the continuities of hyper-extended 'design' should also be viewed with doubt. But it does not suppose that, in the absence of total design merely random procedures can be expected to flourish. Instead, whatever may be the empirical and whatever may be the ideal (and both positions can be distorted by intellectual passion or self-interest to appear their opposites), the ongoing thesis presumes the possibility and the need for a two-way argument between these polar extremes. To a point it is a formalist argument; but, then, to the degree that it contains formalist characteristics, this is not without intention.

'Men living in democratic ages do not readily comprehend the utility of forms.' The date is the early 1830s and the author of the statement is Alexis de Tocqueville who continues:

> Yet this objection which the men of democracies make to forms is the very thing which renders forms so useful to freedom; for their chief merit is to serve as a barrier between the strong and the weak, the ruler and the people, to retard the one and to give the other time to look about him. Forms become more necessary in proportion as the government becomes more active and powerful, while private persons are becoming more indolent and feeble... This deserves most serious attention.[19]

And, if it still may deserve at least some attention, it is with such a statement as this, a curiously pragmatic base for a theory of forms, that we again propose the analogue of politics and perception.

To terminate: rather than Hegel's 'indestructible bond of the beautiful and the true', rather than ideas of a permanent and future unity, we prefer to consider the complementary possibilities of consciousness and sublimated conflict; and, if there is here urgent need for both the fox and the 'bricoleur,' perhaps it can only be added that the job ahead should be envisaged as no matter of making the world safe for democracy. It is not totally different; but, certainly, it is not this. For, surely, the job is that of making safe the city (and hence democracy) by large infusions of metaphor, analogical thinking, ambiguity; and, in the face of a prevailing scientism and conspicuous *laissez-aller*, it is just possible that these activities could provide the true *Survival Through Design*.