



2

THE LIVING CITY

POP URBANISM CIRCA 1963

INFORMALITY

The six core members of Archigram began to work as a collective in the summer of 1963,¹ trading not eponymously as the publishers of the *Archigram* newsletter (the third issue of which was about to appear),² nor as employees of Taylor Woodrow Construction (which they all were), but as the creators of a major installation at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London (figures 2.1, 2.2).³

Aslant as it was from the governing institutions of British architecture, such as the Royal Institute of British Architects, the ICA offered Archigram space in which to reflect upon the conditions of modernity and the role of the modern architect. If 1964 would see Archigram emerge as hugely confident—with Plug-In City, Walking City, Computer City, Underwater City, and so on—a year earlier their ideas appeared more hesitant, formative, and poetic. Avant-garde nonetheless, this collaboration with furniture designer Ben Fether and graphic designer Peter Taylor⁴ was “a vision of the city as an environment conditioning our emotions,”⁵ and it was called “Living City.” A sense of living: This was the quintessential quality sought by the “new generation.” Through image, text, sound, and light, this “assault on the senses”⁶ that physically enveloped visitors attempted to convey the essential property of the city as being in a state of continual becoming, and to enshrine physical and cultural pluralism as an indispensable quality of urbanism. “Living City” proposed an “existentialist” approach to design: the problem of being had to take precedence over that of knowledge, with the architect no longer able to “stand outside” his (or more problematically her) subject.

“Living City” straightaway made Archigram the subject of partisanship: “half the world gasped in horror,” critic-historian Charles Jencks later joked.⁷ Constantin Doxiadis, an architect himself engaged in radicalizing the public’s concept of settlement, found “Living City” beyond the pale, recalling “a London 1963 exhibition” that sowed the seeds of “an inhuman conception of the city of the future by a small group of



people,” all the more “appalling . . . because it received wide publicity without, as far as I know, any corresponding protest.”⁸

“Living City” was certain about its importance as an avant-garde intervention. Like Alison and Peter Smithson pitching their “Parallel of Life and Art” show to the ICA a decade earlier (figure 2.3),⁹ “Living City” introduced itself as the latest installment in the history of modernist exhibitions, from the “demonstrations” of “the 1910’s in Germany, 1920’s in France and Italy, 1930’s in Sweden and so on” to the “reviews” more typical of England—the 1938 MARS group exhibition and the Festival of Britain.¹⁰

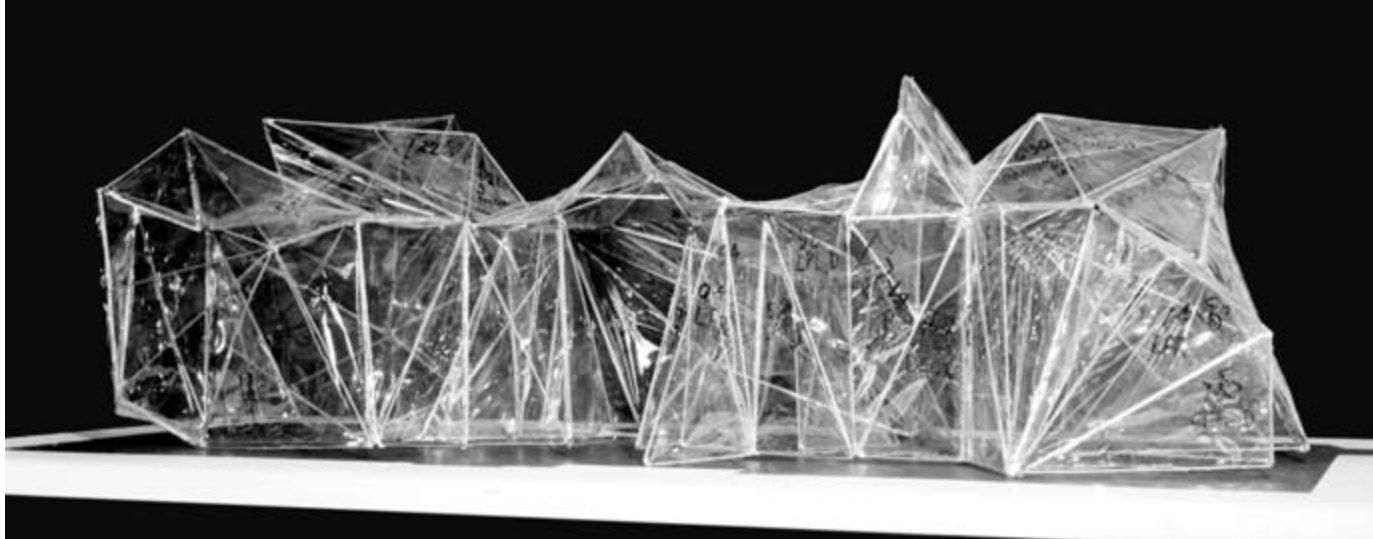
Yet “Parallel of Life and Art” and “Living City” were not programmatic in the manner of these forebears. They stood in place of manifestos as improvised, visual antimanifestos. “Parallel of Life and Art” had displayed iconic images culled from anthropology, biology, and technology as prearchitectural raw material.¹¹ “Living City” curator Ron Herron described his appreciation of “Parallel of Art and Life”:

*It was most extraordinary because it was primarily photographic and with apparently no sequence; it jumped around like anything. But it had just amazing images; things that one had never thought of looking at in that sort of way, in exhibition terms. And the juxtaposition of all those images! I was just knocked out by it.*¹²

As the Smithsons’ Independent Group colleague John Voelcker explained the shift in the mood of the avant-garde after the 1939–1945 war: “1930. The frame building and the multilevel high-rise city, images which contained a complete urban system. 1950. Random images drawn from many sources containing single ideas which, one by one, contribute to, change, and extend the experience of space.”¹³ And so it would be at “Living City.”

Visitors hoping to see in “Living City” the buildings of tomorrow had to look hard, studying the catalogue, peering into the dazzling collages, or standing back to ponder the crumpled walk-in environment display structure improvised by the group (figure 2.4). The very clutter of the presentation seemed unarchitectural. The geodesic triangulation of the display structure was chosen for its amenability to free form and ease of fabrication and “nothing more was intended”¹⁴ (the structure was

2.1 Peter Taylor, “Living City” logo, 1963. The logo of Archigram’s first group exhibition signified the core, periphery, and communication route of the city. **2.2** Team preparing the “Living City” exhibition, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1963. From left: Harry Powley (a friend of Peter and Hazel Cook, and resident of Aberdare Gardens); Peter Cook; Warren Chalk; Ron Herron; Dennis Crompton; Brian Harvey. **2.3** Installation view of “Parallel of Life and Art,” Institute of Contemporary Arts, September–October 1953. Juxtaposing fragments of the modern condition a decade earlier, Alison and Peter Smithson’s “Parallel of Life and Art” was an inspiration to the organizers of “Living City.”



originally intended to be made from still more amorphous spray plastic). “Living City” and its catalogue were not about traditional architectural form, but its opposite: the formlessness of space, behavior, life.¹⁵

In the 1950s and 1960s, avant-gardes widely abandoned the intellectual and artistic certainties of historical materialism so as to acknowledge the diversity and untidiness of the material world, and of social and psychological experience. In painting, the avant-garde had preferred the *informe* to the modernist grid. And now in architecture, “Living City” was a statement of faith that built form was only one half, possibly the lesser half, of the architectural experience. “When it is raining in Oxford Street the architecture is no more important than the rain, in fact the weather has probably more to do with the pulsation of the Living City at that given moment.”¹⁶ The “Living City” exhibition tried to account for an urban experience unregistered in the purviews of maps, plans, elevations, and statistical analyses. Hurriedly raiding shop displays and ripping up magazines, Archigram’s own drawings, modernist texts, comics, catalogues, and film posters,¹⁷ the organizers of “Living City” zoomed in on space and experience at a micro scale, and delved into the secret daydreams and desires of the city dweller. “Living City” abandoned architecture’s pretense to account for the urban condition, preferring to condense a sense of *being*, of joyful survival in an urban landscape without clear meaning and undergoing rapid change.

London, the emergent swinging city,¹⁸ was the venue and effectively the subject of “Living City,” exemplifying the architectural and cultural modernization of British cities from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties. There was, the commentator Christopher Booker remarked, “the same visual violence everywhere; in the ubiquitous neon-lighting, on shop-fronts, on advertisements, in the more garishly decorated restaurants.”¹⁹ Booker found the scene barbarous, and at the time of “Living City,” few urban planners would have admitted a fondness for London’s newly found raciness. The ICA circuit—first the Independent Group, then Archigram—set about affecting a perceptual shift, inspired by the bright lights of Piccadilly Circus, Times Square, and photographs of Weimar Berlin.²⁰

Archigram welcomed the vastly expanded range of visual effects and cultural references available to architects willing to embrace the illuminated pop city. “Living City” was lit by a Flicker Machine,²¹ a rotating slotted lampshade that, when looked at with closed eyes, was “a crazy but effective way of stimulating interest in the possibilities of moving light” (figures 2.5, 2.6).²² Sensorially, it summoned not immobile structure but what Bauhaus veteran László Moholy-Nagy called *Vision in Motion* (the title of a 1947 book that had a sizeable impact upon the postwar British avant-garde).²³ Architects were fussing over the detailing of their buildings when the reception of the city by those down on the street was generally fractured, immaterial,

2.4 *Model of the Total Exhibition Structure, “Living City,” 1963. Unable to realize the ideal solution of a plastic bubble, the designers of “Living City” opted for a lightweight, transportable triangulated metal frame with panels, familiar in geodesics. A paradox became well known to Archigram architects: the disavowal of form (the subject of the exhibition was urban mood) created dynamic forms.*



and kinetic: the Flicker Machine was juxtaposed at “Living City” with a long-exposure photograph of traffic moving at night.²⁴

Urban managers continued to withstand the slurring of spatial and verbal grammar; the motorists of 1963, for instance, saw the introduction to the highways of the unitary system of traffic signs by Jock Kinneir and Margaret Calvert.²⁵ But “Living City” wanted to make jumbled-movement communication into a medium workable by the architect, without robbing it of its natural, unkempt charm. Such was the kinetic city’s vibrancy that the most civilized act of the architect was a “tuning,” perhaps even an “amplification,” of the city’s (non)communications.

“Living City” attempted to identify and classify “movement-cycles,” “the point of origin or destination, direction, route and speed of individuals or crowds.”²⁶ Archigram borrowed the new theory of communicative “feedback” intending to make the communicative cycle more symphonic, even while originators of communications theory were trying to remove “noise” from the communicative system. (Colin Cherry, a professor at London’s Imperial College and the most immediate authority on communication theory for ICA circles, eliminated the communicative pollution of cereal packets from his breakfast table.)²⁷ “Watch it happen + listen to the sound + see it flow,” “Living City’s”

2.5, 2.6 Anon., *Flicker, montage and view of the “Living City” installation at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1963*. Coincident with broader op-art trends, the flickering light in “Living City” alluded to the escalating energy of sixties London, a notoriously drab city in the previous decade.





2.8 Anon., Situation, montage for "Living City," 1963. The word "Situation" referenced the existentialism and cultural radicalism of continental Europe, but the diorama was more urban jumble than urban jungle: this was Swinging London Picturesque.

degrees, according to our perceptiveness, find Living City in *Situation*."³⁵ Originally a term borrowed from the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre, it referred to the complex of living conditions which, moment to moment, the individual must negotiate. The notion of *situation* had been appropriated by situationists in the mid-1950s to denote moments and places where potentially revolutionary environmental conditions prevail. A situation had clearly existed in the declaration of the Paris Commune, situationists argued, and situations still existed beneath the surface organization of latter-day Paris. Outright social revolution was not Archigram's bag, but the group did revel in London's social frisson, seeing in the notion of situation a forceful informality. "In this second half of the twentieth century, the old idols are crumbling, the old precepts strangely irrelevant, the old dogmas no longer valid," Archigram's assessment of "Situation" claimed. Much beyond this, Archigram was reluctant to comment too much about situation's antiestablishment qualities. Situation was simply a source of street-level pleasure for architects to study firsthand, the raw material of a new architecture of events. Archigram conceived of situation in a more architectural, more plastic way than the situationists. Situation was

*an ideas generator in creating Living City. Cities should generate, reflect, and activate life, their environment organized to precipitate life and movement. Situation, the happenings within spaces in the city, the transient throw-away objects, the passing presence of cars and people are as important, possibly more important, than the built demarcation of space. Situation can be caused by a single individual, by groups or a crowd, their particular purpose, occupation, movement, or direction. Situation can be traffic, its speed, direction, classification. Situation may occur with change of weather, time of day or night.*³⁶

A likely source of "Living City's" adaptation of situation was Reyner Banham's article of 1959, "The City as Scrambled Egg."³⁷ It was published in the Independent Group-influenced journal *Cambridge Opinion*, which read almost as a primer for the themes of "Living City," with issues dedicated to "Race," "Predictions,"



2.9 View inside the “Living City” installation, showing Guy Debord and Asger Jorn’s situationist Psychogeographic Guide to Paris (1956). In drawing the visitor’s attention to the psychic qualities of metropolitan social space, London’s avant-garde references the work of Parisian revolutionaries. **2.10** Anon., The Passing Presence, montage for “Living City,” 1963. In common with nineteenth-century observers of “modernity,” “Living City” identified momentary encounters in the street as life-enhancing, though no acknowledgment was made of the sexual frisson between model and presumed male observer (compare with the mannequin legs and high heels of figure 2.12).

and latterly “Living with the 60s”—“in this issue we look at certain aspects of our cultural SITUATION in terms of COMMUNICATION.”³⁸ Writing in *Cambridge Opinion*, Banham felt that the situationists had cracked the problem of reading the “scrambled,” living city with their technique of “psychogeographical drift” (“the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals”).³⁹ The creators of “Living City” agreed: “The overall configuration of mass movement is also significant in predicting the behavior patterns of man in motion. These patterns have the effect of splitting and isolating known city environments in loosely defined but distinct areas or locations of psycho-geographical drift.”⁴⁰ To demonstrate the technique, “Living City” included Guy Debord and Asger Jorn’s situationist *Psychogeographic Guide to Paris*, 1956,⁴¹ its chunks of markedly atmospheric city floating in a sea of movement (figure 2.9). Significantly, though, the Gallic subtleties of psychogeography and the neo-Marxist politics that underwrote it were lost in translation into Archigram’s own British pop tongue.

Psychogeography reinvented the old technique of *flânerie*, of strolling around the city in order to better understand its cultural and geographical dynamics; “Living City” was redolent of the transient, erotic urban experience of such *flâneurs* as Charles Baudelaire and the surrealists. Fundamental Baudelairean preoccupations were at “Living City,” right down to the defensive celebration of “Fashion,” which, along with the words “Temporary” and “Flashy,” Cook felt had been wrongly castigated as “a dirty word.”⁴² “Living City” appreciated that the commotion of crowds slipping through the streets was one of “come-go,” “the key to the vitality of the city.”⁴³ “Living City” was an invitation to the roving male eye of the voyeur and fetishist: “two periscopes arranged in bright metal ducting gave fleeting glimpses of girls in Dover Street or faces at the bar” (figure 2.15).⁴⁴ Archigram illustrated the idea of “Situation” with a photograph of a glamorous young woman straightening her stocking in the rain-swept metropolis, throwing a backward glance at the photographer-*flâneur*: “the passing presence,” the picture was titled, an embodiment of the *éphémère*, of men fantasizing flirtatious encounters with women (figure 2.10).

Like Baudelaire, the architects of “Living City” regarded the relative permanence of the city’s built form as the glorious life support machine for a culture in perpetual flux. As Baudelaire succinctly explained in 1863, “By ‘modernity’ I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.”⁴⁵ “What have cities been doing over the few thousand years in which they have existed?” Peter Cook asked.

*They have provided society with a physical centre—a place where so much is happening that one activity is stimulated by all the rest. It is the collection of everything and everyone into a tight space that has enabled the cross stimulus to continue. Trends originated in cities. The mood of cities is frantic. It is all happening—all the time. However decadent society may be, it is reflected most clearly and demonstratively in the metropolitan way of life.*⁴⁶

In its designs, Archigram often allowed for permanence, as in its provision of an underlying urban infrastructure (Plug-In City was a good example), or through its retention of certain historic monuments (as when its linear city threaded its way through old London in the “Living City” catalogue) (figure 2.11). And yet, in his pursuit for the truly “living city,” Cook was prepared to loosen even these ties to “the eternal and the immutable.” “In old cities,” Cook wrote,

*there comes a time when the cycle of interaction and regeneration has become so established as a pattern that the true reason for their existence is clouded over. There is the obvious aggregate of a metropolis: palaces, places of government or control, monuments, symbols of an established centre; but these are not the vital part of cities. . . . The thread connecting the city state of Athens with present-day New York is not that they both possess such monuments, but that they share the coming together of many minds, and they are vital.*⁴⁷

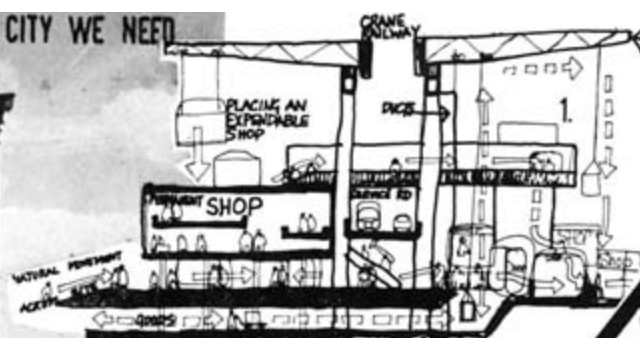
This lack of sentimentality for the monument—for the structural and symbolic permanence of architecture—was the radical strand in Archigram’s thinking. Even the sponsor of Archigram

2.11 (following pages) Anon. [Peter Cook?], Come-Go, montage for “Living City,” 1963. As they rove London, Cook’s Car Body Housing, City Within Existing Technology, and Craneway (produced with Greene) doff hats to Westminster, Trafalgar Square, and Piccadilly Circus, and claim ancestry from London’s existing “kinetic” architecture—Tower Bridge, the riverfront, and the markets.

TO CREATE THE TECHNOLOGY WHICH CAN REVITALISE A CITY WE NEED
ONLY REFLECT THAT
MANIPULATION
AND
ARE ALREADY VIABLE

MOVEMENT.

THE CRANES
HANDLE ANY-
THING FROM
GRAND PUMPS, CRATES,
GENERAL GOODS TO
SHOPS



At last... even in your spare time... you
can start a business that makes money fast
... so fast it can put you in a 1962 car of
your choice in one short month! Here's how:
At our expense, we'll set you up in a profit-
able Mason "Shoe Store" business. You need
no previous experience... don't invest a
dime! James Kelly tried our offer and made
\$93.55 in just one evening's friendly work!
Yes, everyone wants exciting.

THE KEY TO THE
FORMAL
PROBLEM?

IS IT MOVING
THINGS FROM
PLACE TO PLACE?

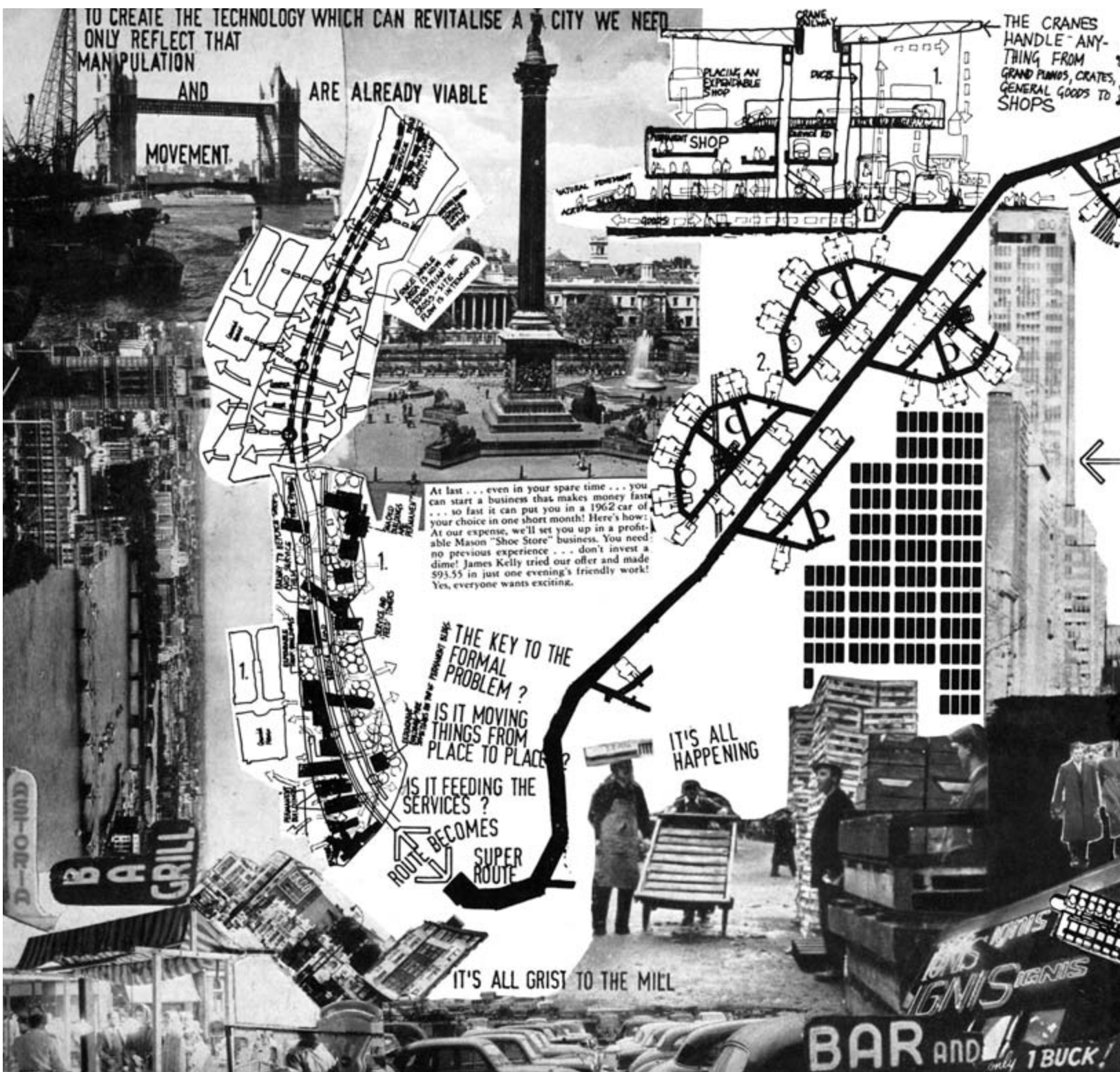
IS IT FEEDING THE
SERVICES?

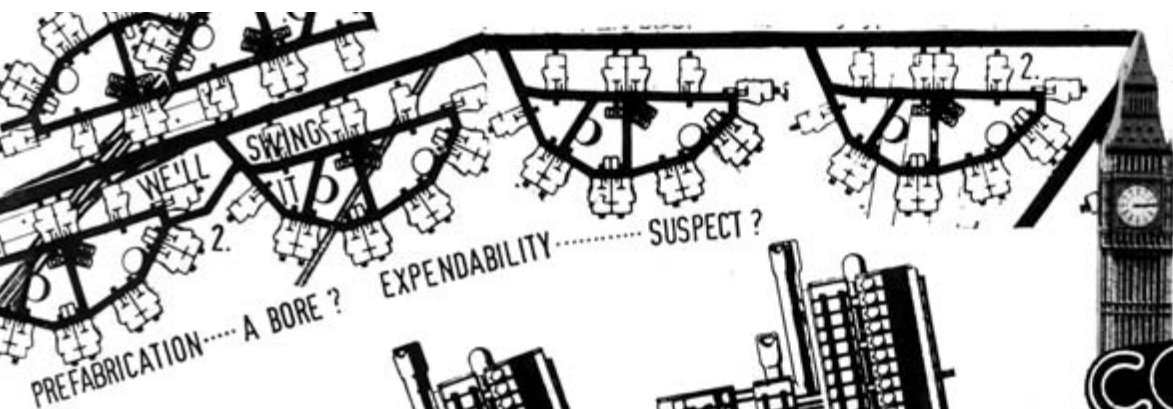
ROUTE BECOMES
SUPER
ROUTE

IT'S ALL
HAPPENING

IT'S ALL GRIST TO THE MILL

BAR AND 1 BUCK!





IN MANY WAYS THE ESSENCE OF
THE CITY IS THE SUPREME
COMING TOGETHER OF EVERYTHING
OF IT ALL
PEOPLE COME AND GO
IT'S ALL MOVING
THE BITS AND PIECES THAT FORM
THE CITY — THEY'RE EXPENDABLE
IT'S ALL

COME GO



[SOME HARD-CULTURE
OBJECTS WILL
NEVERTHELESS
HAVE A
PLACE]

KEY:
1. NOTTINGHAM CRANEWAY
SHOPS 1962
2. EXPENDABLE CAR BODY
HOUSING 1962
3(BELOW) 'CITY
WITHIN EXISTING
TECHNOLOGY' 1963

THIS SORT OF
ENVIRONMENT
CAN NEVER
BE THE
ANSWER

AND IT ISN'T
EVEN GOOD
TECHNOLOGY

THE
CITY
IS
TIGHT
AND
FREE

AND ALL
THE CITY
IS THE
CENTRE

BECAUSE
THE CENTRE
IS
EVERYWHERE

EVERYTHING COMES TOGETHER
ALL CULTURES



IT'S ALL
HAPPENING

LIVING CITY

**A
GRILL**

BAR AND GRILL



and the “Living City” show, Theo Crosby, eventually felt compelled to capitulate to the “necessity” of the monument.⁴⁸

Six years before “Living City,” Crosby had curated “This Is Tomorrow.” Those sections of the show devised by Independent Group members had very publicly demonstrated the shift toward informality and pop in British modernism. “The architects of ‘This Is Tomorrow,’” Cook reverently acknowledged, “have had great influence on the generation of organizers of ‘Living City.’”⁴⁹ A pop formlessness was evident in the “bubble” sculpture of Richard Matthews, Michael Pine, and James Stirling (“Group Eight”),⁵⁰ and in the loose assemblage of visual information pinned to a “tackboard” by Group Twelve (Lawrence Alloway, Geoffrey Holroyd, and Toni del Renzio).⁵¹ Two more sections of “This Is Tomorrow,” by Group Two and Group Six, were of special significance to the creators of “Living City.” Group Two’s disarming, hedonistic structure—assembled by Richard Hamilton, John McHale, and John Voelcker as the opening salvo for pop art in Britain—threw out cultural distinctions with abandon, licensing pop culture as a resource for artists, designers, and intellectuals. Without this precedent, “Living City” was almost inconceivable.⁵² “Living City” paid homage by including a picture of Group Two’s mascot Robbie the Robot (figure 2.12), and a giant bottle of Skol stood in for Group Two’s huge bottle of Guinness; Archigram threw in an extra display-scale bottle of Heinz Tomato Ketchup for good measure.

Was it possible, then, to confuse Archigram’s work for Group Two’s? Group Two’s stand was packed full of visual gimmicks, Duchamp rotoreliefs and Bauhaus optical illusions to stimulate the viewer. If it had a deeper purpose, it was to force the viewer to question the boundary between the fine and the popular arts. It remained closer to pop art than pop architecture. There was little point in Archigram retracing Group Two’s footsteps; by 1963, the legitimacy of pop art was a *fait accompli*. Archigram was now interested in how commercial imagery described the urban scene as a whole, and what implications this material had for actual architectural practice. These issues had been raised repeatedly by the Independent Group but never properly resolved, hence the pertinence of the question about the relationship between pop and building, implied by the headline of



Archigram no. 4, “‘Zoom’ and Real Architecture.” If the status of pop art was undisputed in 1963, the status of pop architecture was uncertain.

Meanwhile, “This Is Tomorrow’s” Group Six (Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson) had ventured far into formlessness with their “Patio and Pavilion,” a scattering of *art brut* and folksy *objets trouvés* across a casually constructed enclosure. This peculiar compositional aspect signaled the quite exceptional informality now possible in the arts, though it was perhaps the *symbolic* allusions of the piece that were more relevant to the making of “Living City.” If, as intimated, this was a vision of tomorrow, it was prescient. Rather than being completely remade from modern forms and materials, the future would probably be cobbled together from bits of the old and bits of the new, the crude slats of the pavilion and

2.12 View inside the “Living City” installation, showing Robbie the Robot, 1963. Six years before “Living City,” its patron Theo Crosby had curated the sensational Whitechapel Gallery show “This Is Tomorrow,” which was opened by science fiction “star” Robbie the Robot. Robbie reappeared at “Living City” amidst other pop paraphernalia, as though discovered in an attic.



battered cog- and bike wheel remnants of the First Machine Age reflected in the rippling, mirror-finished, aerospace-style sheet aluminum of the Second Machine Age enclosure. And the future would not be the architect's total design, but a *collaboration* between architect and inhabitant (a process simulated when the Smithsons departed for Dubrovnik,⁵³ leaving behind them at the Whitechapel Gallery an environment for Paolozzi and Henderson to fill with signs of habitation).⁵⁴

Such *tinkering* with the environment would be a key interest of the Archigram group, bolting high-tech additions onto traditional English towns and buildings. Noncommittal, piecemeal architecture was the way to go: "There is no comfort from the dusts of Brasilia or Chandigarh, the two opportunities in recent years for a city to be created *in toto*," Cook claimed at "Living City." "Whether we have a liking for their aesthetics or not,

neither is a Living City. Perhaps in fifty years, or a hundred? But it will be almost despite the architecture rather than because of it."⁵⁵ Cook expanded:

*When we try to continue a city in physical terms, we tend to start from the assumption that there are certain basics of living, and that there is a single way of providing for these at any one time. Our cities extend and regenerate spaces by way of bricks and mortar and roads and sewers; and people are inside somewhere. . . . If we build into this brief "qualities" or provision for things beyond, it becomes a forced or deliberate environment.*⁵⁶

If language and situation were to be the models for the city's built form, architecture would have to be perpetually provisional. Peter Taylor explained that "we should resist the temptation to evolve an 'ideal' form of lettering for the Living City. . . . The form and function of the alphabet changes continually, just as language changes. Yesterday's slang becomes today's common speech, and tomorrow's archaism. . . . Buildings are permanent, and lettering is transient, so goes the thinking; but in the Living City everything will be subject to constant change."⁵⁷ Over the next few years, Archigram would design indeterminate architectures, but few of the blueprints were ready in time for "Living City." That exhibition was the occasion for Archigram members to curb any differences and agree upon a general *philosophical* framework. "Living City's" credo of informality would approximate—it transpired—to social, political, and economic liberalism.

INDIVIDUALISM AND LIBERALISM

The true subject of architecture, the avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s concluded, was the individual, the "bare and naked man,"⁵⁸ with his complex of personal beliefs and motives. Excavated by existentialism, "Man" stumbled into the limelight of modernist discourse at CIAM's Hoddesdon meeting in July 1951,⁵⁹ blinked out from his shelter at Group Six's Patio and Pavilion, and earned his own display at "Living City" (figure 2.13).⁶⁰ The dogmas of collectivism that had once dominated modernism were demonstrably abandoned. The very preparation of "Living

2.13 Peter Taylor, *Man*, montage for "Living City," 1963: the catalogue banner for one of the exhibition's themed sections introduced "Man"—not the wall, column, or street—as the central subject of architecture. "Man" was meant in a generic, humanist sense, though males were also depicted, adding to the likelihood that the exhibition described a predominantly masculine perception of the city.

City” by individuals working in concert represented “personal interests and the angle from which we have individually approached the problem of the Living City.”⁶¹ For Archigram, it was high time that the avant-garde permitted individuality of thought, emotion, action, and space—even of property and consumption.

Existentialism had been a select mode of thought in continental Europe between the world wars, and became more widespread among the postwar intelligentsia. It was slower to take root in a Britain dominated by homegrown empiricism (which was visible, not least, through translation into matter-of-fact welfare state architecture). “Living City” showed existentialism’s belated, impressionistic assimilation by the British avant-garde, the exhibition’s themed sections (“gloops”) amorphously and uncertainly combining into a psychic exploration of urban life (figures 2.14, 2.15).⁶² “Living City” took the visitor on a sort of existential trip through the city. Our lives in the city are not merely a mass of unconnected chance occurrences, a stroll around the seven gloops of “Living City” implied. They are instead journeys, series of seemingly shapeless and chaotic “situations” that we willfully negotiate and mold to our own requirements in the effort to define ourselves.

Starting at the gloop on “Man,” visitors would be reminded of the relationship between themselves as individuals and the apparently alien world of objects and people in the city around them. “Play the socio-psycho game,” the “Living City” catalogue implored,

*The chips are down
The stakes are low
Man in the city the ultimate goal
Throw the dice and
learn about yourself and how
you fit in the pattern
that is “Living City.”*⁶³

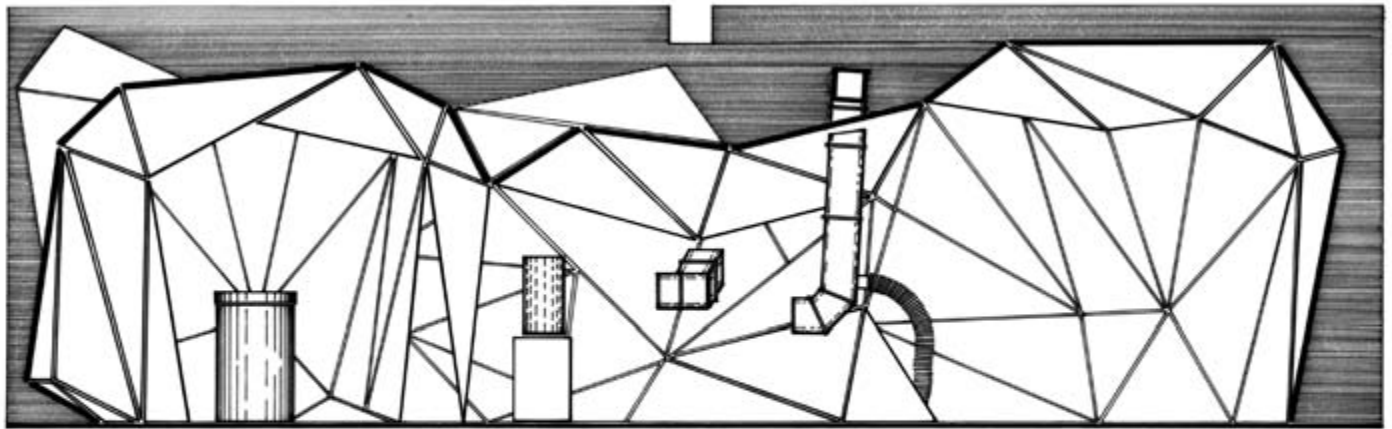
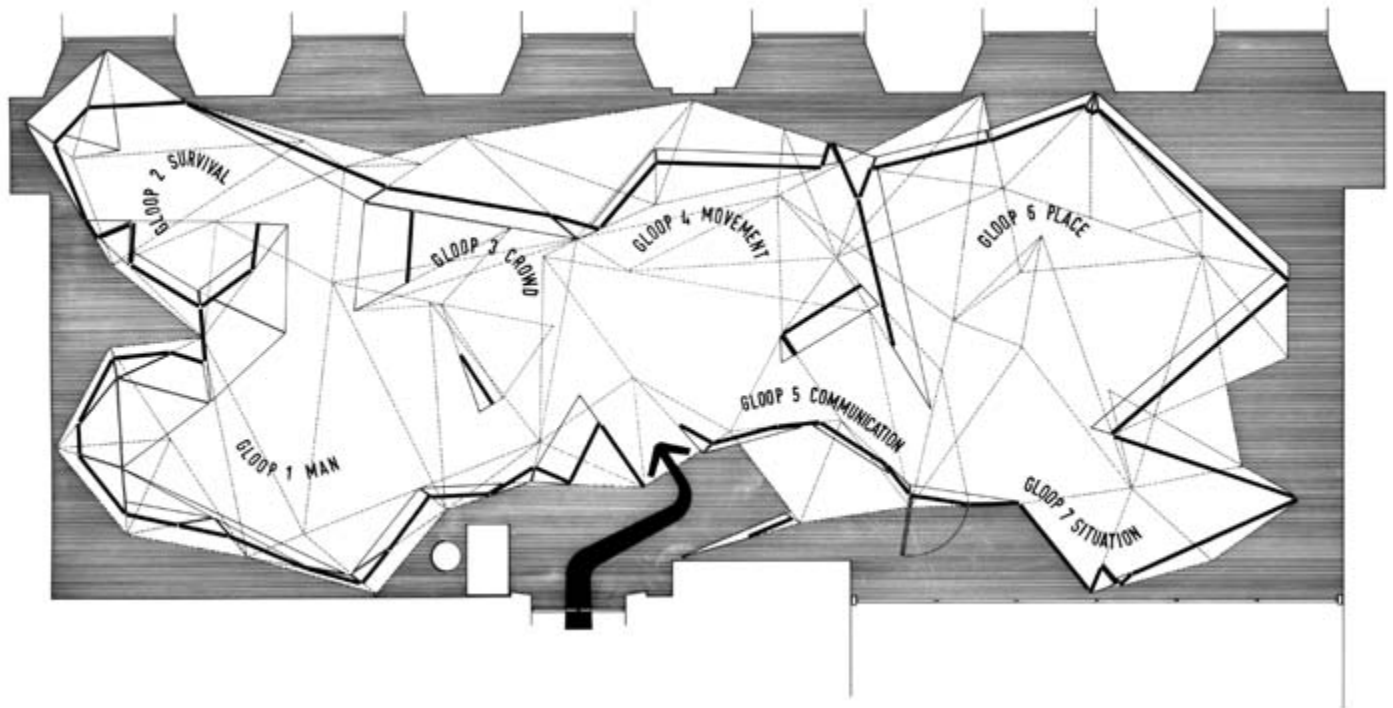
There was a distinctly Nietzschean feel to the invitation, the “socio-psycho game” of our lives envisaged as a contest between a choice of alter egos, Superman, Adam Strange, and Alanna of

the Planet Rann (figure 2.16). “Survival,” the second gloop, was apparently a matter of negotiating one’s “physical defects” and taking advantages of one’s “muscles,” “intelligence,” “physique,” and “personality,”⁶⁴ and, judging from the magnificent display of consumer items, one’s access to goods and services. Even if these personal attributes proved insufficient, there was the promise of prosthetic extension. “The robot figure [Group Two’s Robbie the Robot] that opened ‘This is Tomorrow’ has been superseded by today’s spaceman, the nearest man has yet come to realizing the ideal SUPERMAN dream, the ultimate in physical and mental development,” explained the exhibition catalogue.⁶⁵

The citizen’s individuality was put to its greatest test when it merged with the “Crowd,” the third gloop. Contrary to the assurance that “the stakes are low” in the socio-psycho game, just two places short of its “Jackpot” was a square marked “Go Bonkers.” This was pretty much the fate predicted for the city dweller by the many critics, from Friedrich Nietzsche to Ebenezer Howard, who believed that the modern metropolis would swallow the individual whole. Reinventing Howard’s ideas for mid-twentieth-century America in messianic tones, Frank Lloyd Wright had contrasted his own spacious vision of Broadacre City with Manhattan’s gridiron compression of vehicular and human traffic: “Incongruous mantrap of monstrous dimensions! Enormity devouring manhood, confusing personality by frustration of individuality? Is this not Anti-Christ? The Moloch that knows no God but *more*?”⁶⁶ This in a book called *The Living City*, and published as recently as 1958.⁶⁷

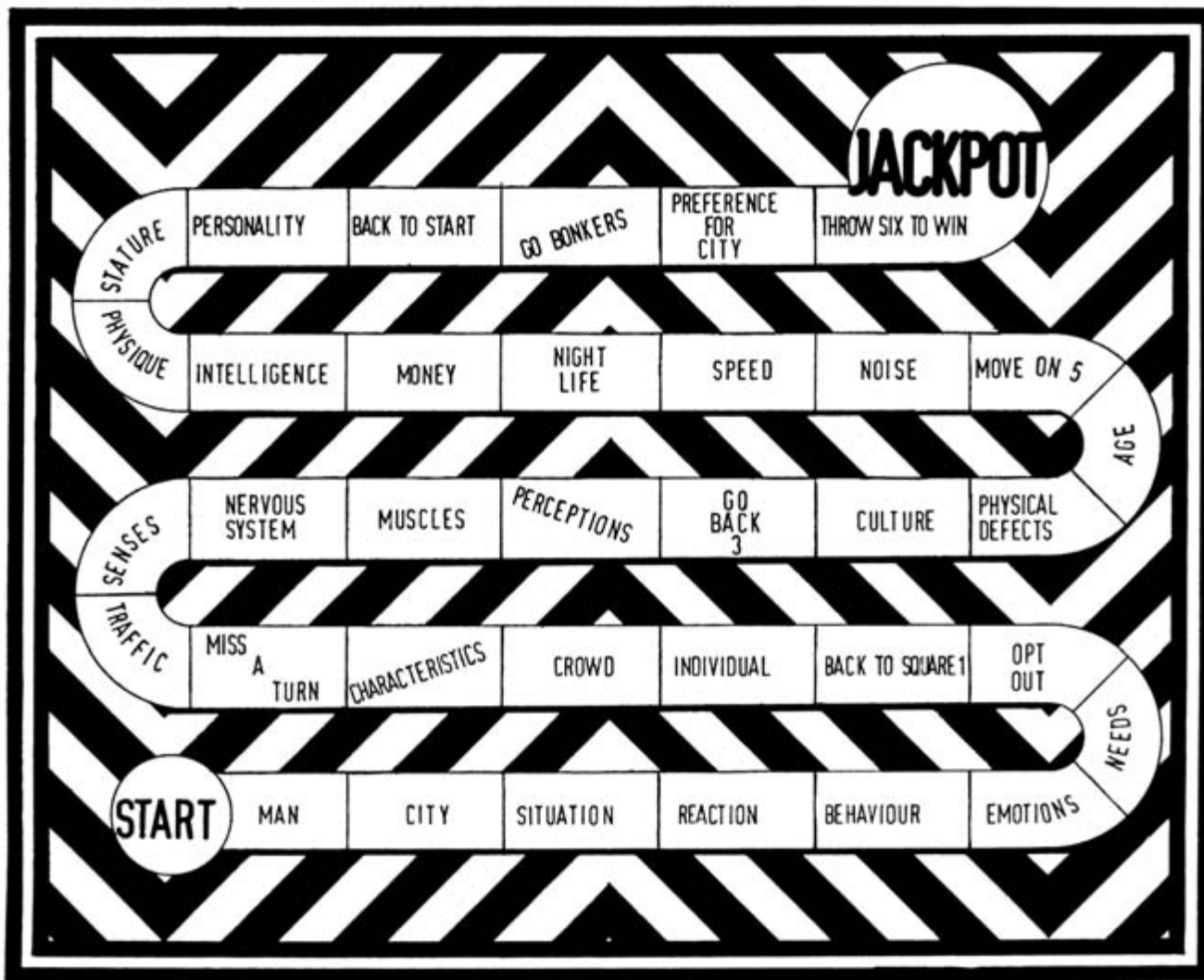
In their “Living City,” however, Archigram perceived the crowd as supremely positive evidence of the resilience of individuality. Georg Simmel expressed the sentiment best in his turn-of-the-century essay on “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” where he reassessed the findings of urban critics. Threatened by the onslaught of the crowd and mass urban culture, Simmel argued, the individual in fact summons

the utmost in uniqueness and particularization, in order to preserve his most personal core. He has to exaggerate this personal element in order to remain audible even to himself. The atrophy of individual culture through the hypertrophy of objective culture

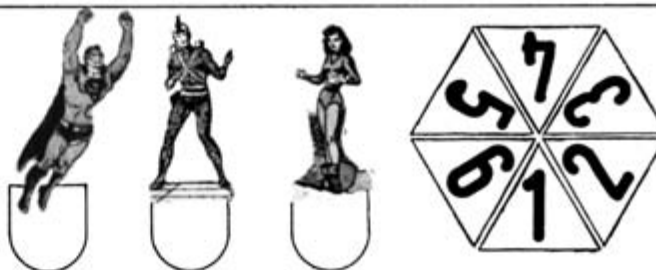


LIVING CITY exhibition SECTION.

2.14, 2.15 Archigram group, plan and section of the "Living City" installation, 1963, showing its arrangement into "gloops." The themes elide, like the moods of the city dweller wandering the street. The installation was linked to Dover Street and the ICA bar by the two periscopes shown in the sectional drawing.



Trace on a postcard Adam Strange, Superman and Alanna of the planet Rann. (If you do this you will not spoil the magazine.) Colour with your paints or crayons and insert the base of each figure in a slit made in the top of three small corks. Push a pin through the centre of the 'dice' for spinning. The one to spin a six first starts the game.



2.16 Ben Fether, game from "Man" gloop, "Living City," 1963. A natural existentialist, the Living Citizen progresses through the city move by move, matching her or his inner powers to the game of life.

is one reason for the bitter hatred which the preachers of the most extreme individualism, above all Nietzsche, harbor against the metropolis. But it is, indeed, also a reason why these preachers are so passionately loved in the metropolis and why they appear to the metropolitan man as the prophets and saviors of his most unsatisfied yearnings.⁶⁸

In Archigram's "Living City," a giant kaleidoscope symbolized "the coming together of all manner and types of man and the way in which they interact upon one another in the shared experience of living city" (figure 2.17).⁶⁹ "The masses" were in fact aggregates of *individuals*, freed from the yoke of collectivism by their own, personal agendas for the city. There could be as many Living Cities as there were subjectivities. This was how Archigram attempted to explain its rather woolly sense of "Situation":

*This thing we call Living City contains many associative ideas and emotions and can mean many things to many people: liking it or not liking it, understanding it or not understanding it, depends on these personal associations. There is no desire to communicate with everybody, only with those whose thoughts and feelings are related to our own.*⁷⁰

Archigram made a stuttering acknowledgment of the fluidity of individual perception: "*Situation Change*, as spectator changes—the moving eye—sees, an environment and situation related to individual perception, mood, purpose, direction, and the place of the individual in the environment."⁷¹

"Living City's" reverie upon "Situation" aspired toward an architectural methodology. Just as the situationists in Paris had come to believe that their insights into the character of the city were pointers toward a revolutionary program, Archigram drew practical conclusions from their meditations. "What we think and feel about city is not new in the sense that it was unthought of before," the group admitted, "but only in that the idea of Living City has not been acted upon before by our generation. . . . This time/movement/situation thing is important in determining our whole future attitude to the visualization and realization of city; it can give a clue, a key, in our effort to escape



the brittle ingratiating world of the architect/aesthete, to break away into the real world and take in the scene."⁷² The flux of the "Living City" would not be arrested by fixed buildings dropped from the drawing board into the human pool.

In this, "Living City" reacted against the pretense to rational objectivity assumed by architectural planners. In 1961, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the book by New York journalist and urban activist Jane Jacobs, began to rock the assumptions of city planning.⁷³ Jacobs accused the planning profession of undermining the acculturation of city streets in favor of vacuous, zoned spaces. Jacobs's angry attack on this decline in the sense of place within cities fell into Archigram's hands, joining another closely argued account that had just arrived from America, William H. Whyte's *Exploding Metropolis* (1958). Whyte was already famous as a critic of bureaucratic modernity's subsumption of the individual into *The Organization Man*, the title of his book of 1956, and now he turned his attention to the homogenizing effects of the modern city.⁷⁴

2.17 Peter Taylor, kaleidoscope collage, "Living City," 1963. Pop liberalism: male and female, black and white, Eastern and Western, the everyman and the celebrity, the uniformed and the fetishized, eternally converge and diverge in the cosmopolitan Living City.



the places in London – they could only exist in the city

place within place

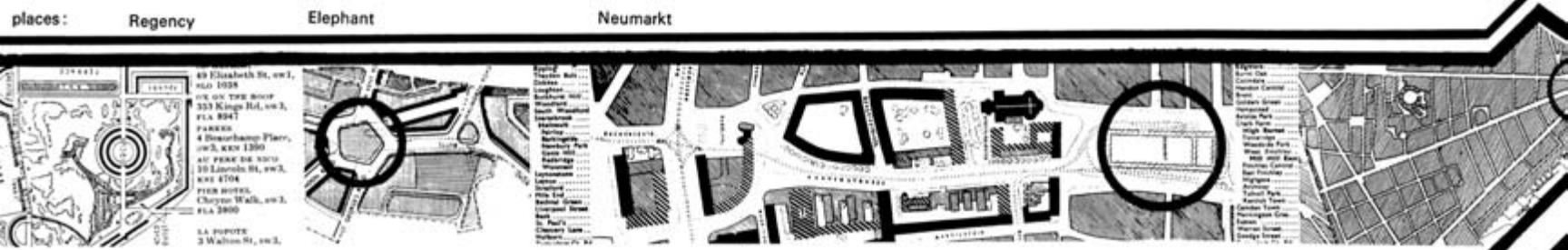
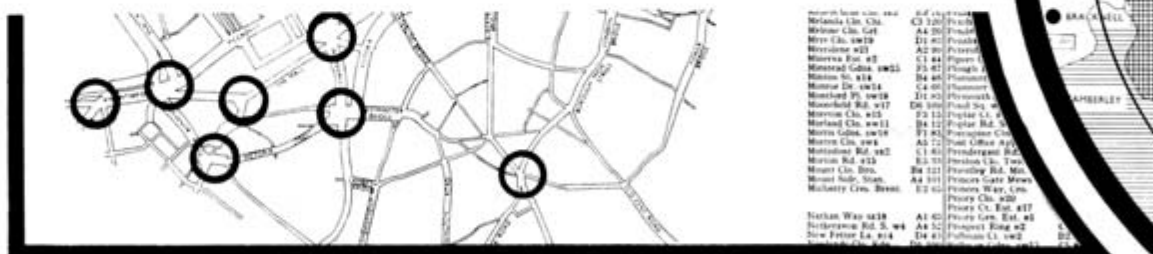
stops at a place



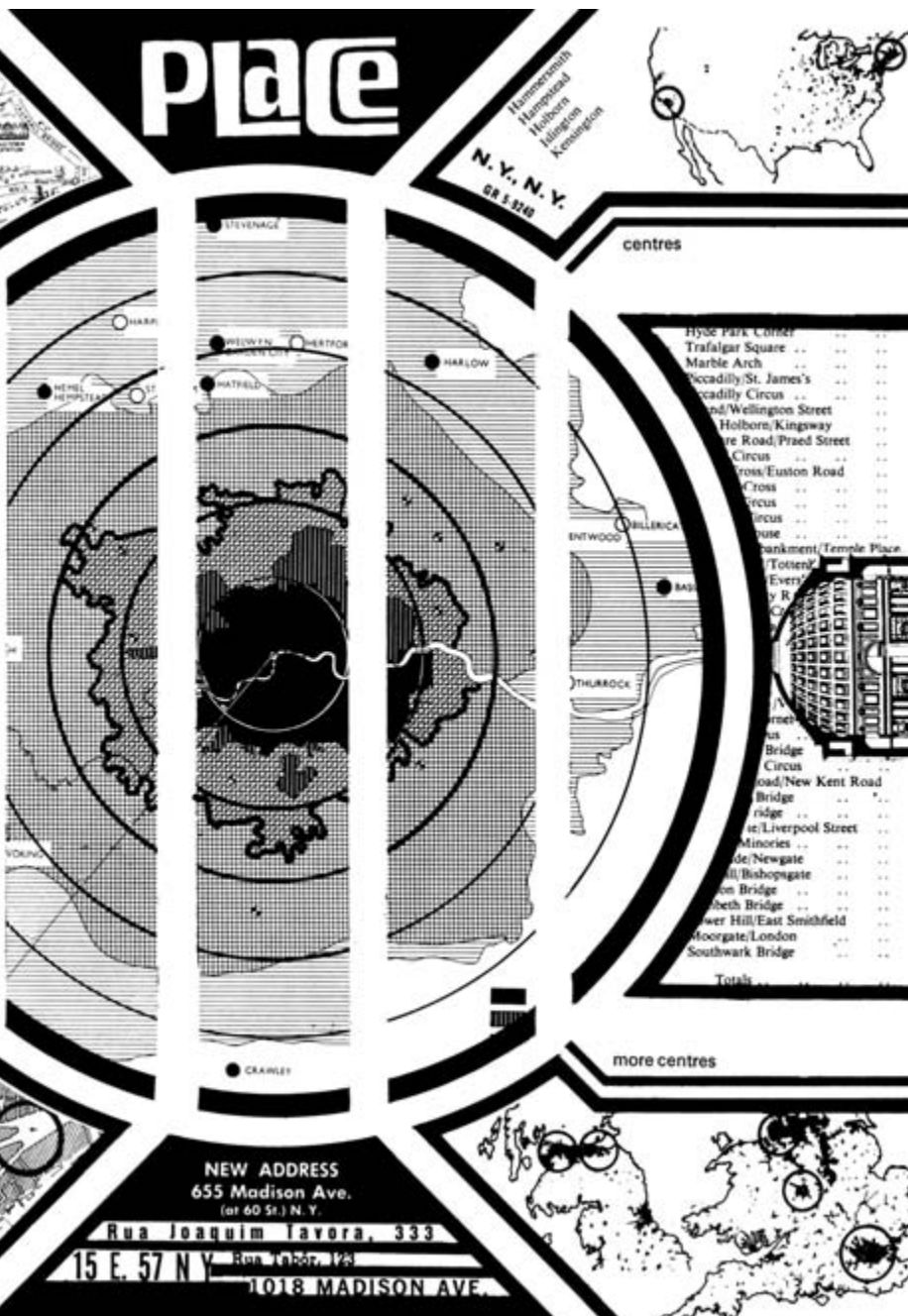
places in Boston



London is the whole containing many centres



2.18 Warren Chalk and Ron Herron, Place, "Living City," 1963. The bull's-eyes guided visitors into the epicenters of "place": the USA's northeastern and western seaboards; Rome's Piazza del Popolo and Pantheon; Glasgow and Edinburgh, Liverpool, Birmingham, and above all London. This homage was remarkable coming from architects who would presently propose the dissolution of permanent place.



In his foreword to "Living City," Peter Cook described how these books by Jacobs and Whyte

*treat the threat of the dénouement of city centres with a concern that is at the same time intelligent and frightening. They search hard for any signs of a reverse of the general trend, or a way out, or some path back to the situation when "City" meant something vibrating with life. The Atlantic time-lag is about to catch up with us. The problem facing our cities is not just that of their regeneration, but of their right to an existence.*⁷⁵

Championing the existential liberation facilitated by cities, "Living City" was attempting nothing less than the reversal of an antiurbanism that had characterized British planning since at least the Barlow Report of 1940.⁷⁶ This architectural exhibition without architecture, this celebration of nonarchitecture—of the serendipitous orders that come about without planning, and the personal experiences that lay beyond the nib of the architect's pen—remained, after all, an architectural excursion. "Living City" was trying to find an overall vision of the plural, of designs within chaos. In so doing, it contributed to an ongoing paradigm shift in modern architecture from idealism to realism. Brutalism's rugged back-to-basics treatment of the city and its built form had espoused feeling over rationality, community before zoning, everyday life rather than the grand plan, texture beyond the planar. Rather than tell scare stories about metropolitan growth, "Living City" celebrated the city's cultivation of habitat.

So it was that the exhibition's curators expounded the virtues of "Place," sounding more like Team 10 than the harbingers of a radical mobility that they actually were (figure 2.18).⁷⁷ "Living City's" relatively sophisticated recognition that the particular spaces of a city are *meaningful* to their occupants permitted the exhibition to oppose the procedures of urban homogenization still fashionable among architect-planners. Locating multiple loci within London, Boston, and Amsterdam, "Living City's" survey of "Place" suggested that cities are like Russian dolls, with centers within centers, places within places, from the conurbation to the local café, and it argued that this pluralism was at risk.

"As the city centres tend to become more and more like one another, so their success and identity will be lost,"⁷⁸ the catalogue noted, taking up the challenge of "urban reidentification" that the Smithsons had laid at the feet of CIAM ten years earlier.⁷⁹

"Urban reidentification" was one plank of the Smithsons' architectural brutalism, but the creators of "Living City" avoided prescribing a purely architectural course of treatment for the city. "Architecture alone cannot achieve this feeling of 'place.' It alone is not enough to give identity. It is the content and use that are important."⁸⁰ "Living City" was people-centered, a point underscored as if anticipating the charges of antihumanism that would be leveled at Archigram during the coming years. "The image of the city may well be the image of people themselves," Peter Cook reflected, "and we have devoted much of the exhibition to the life-cycle, and survival kit of people within cities"—hence that sense of "Living City" as an existential journey. "Man is the ultimate subject around which we are exhibiting, and he conditions any space into which he comes."⁸¹

Even CIAM in its last years had recognized this, calling for "the humanization of urban life."⁸² The modest suggestion made by "Living City" was that an enjoyment of urban crowds should be the first qualification obtained by an urban designer. The kaleidoscope device at "Living City" represented a plea for liberalism, a convergence of race, sex, and occupation, from Frank Sinatra and Anna Karina⁸³ on the outer orbit to Sartre⁸⁴ and Louis Armstrong on the middle and civil servants on the inner—black, yellow, and white people cheek by jowl.⁸⁵ "Who likes it straight?," "Living City" asked (figure 2.23).

*Who will buy what?
who believes which?
who lives or dies?
thought, action
chain response
life forces balanced
in tension
the urban community
the city
CROWD*⁸⁶

"Living City" rejected the planning profession's architectural, social, economic, moral, and racial purge of city center neighborhoods. The ICA's home turf of Soho had a dim glow compared to red light districts in some other European capitals, but as if to celebrate its risqué, bohemian mélange, "Living City's" kaleidoscope was held together by women's legs, shoes, eyes, and lips. While it maintained masculine domination (substituting voyeurs for patriarchs), "Living City" rejected the prudishness customary to urban planning.

By renegotiating the contract between the city, the citizen and the forces of modernization, "Living City" encouraged socioeconomic liberalism. "Living City" was open to accelerated cultural diversity and economic exchange. Jane Jacobs figured the inner city as a locale of familial neighborly bonhomie, but Archigram intended to retain the inner city as a place of *adventure*, importing into "Living City" some of the seedy glamour of beat, of the hard-boiled detective novel, of film noir; London was an escape for most Archigram members (only Ron Herron was metropolitan by upbringing). For the situationists, the deep living of "situation" would realize nothing short of the destruction of capitalism; for the organizers of "Living City," "situation" primarily fed the pedestrian with novel consumer experiences. While the situationists prepared for the return of the Paris Commune, "Living City" heralded swinging London. "What does a positive view of mass culture have to offer us?" Robert Freeman asked in his editorial to *Cambridge Opinion* no. 17. "Primarily the availability of goods and entertainment to more people than ever before . . . even Henry VIII would be faced with an embarrassment of choice after a short walk down [Soho's] Curzon Street. . . . In all," he summarized, making reference to Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's famous phrase of two years before, "we've never had it so good."⁸⁷

PORTRAIT OF THE ARCHITECT AS A YOUNG MAN

The *Living City Survival Kit*, an image published as a page in the "Living City" catalogue (figure 2.19),⁸⁸ looked like one of the product anthologies to be found in the Sunday newspaper supplements and glossy magazines of 1963.⁸⁹ It was not selling any particular product, however, and while it consciously imitated

the magazine page in the manner of pop art, it was not quite pop art either. It was in fact an image of architecture, which said a good deal about the reordered perceptions of the city and of architectural practice in the decades after the Second World War. Irony, never more apparent than in its *Survival Kit*, helped “Living City” to address such architectural taboos as gender and desire. The *Survival Kit* was a wry, confessional image, produced by Warren Chalk,⁹⁰ and it promised survival not just to the citizen, but to the city—and to the modern architect.

It was made up of predominantly lowbrow, everyday, pocket-sized, throwaway, illicit, mass-produced consumer goods, carrying the viewer into the microexperience of space. These were the accoutrements (cigarettes, hankies, snacks, drinks, sunglasses) of a latter-day *flânerie*, of strolling around the city, doing very little except observing its cultural and geographical dynamics. The *Survival Kit* was an invitation to the voyeur, eyes concealed behind the kit’s dark glasses, the *éphémère* of a backward glance caught on the kit’s roll of film. Although the *Survival Kit* was redolent of the spreads in women’s magazines, it was predominantly a survival kit for urban man. The main anomaly in this reading was the inclusion of makeup—although that only figured women as an object of male vision, and was closely aligned with a provocatively unfurled stick of lipstick with the word “sex” Letrasetted along its shaft. To be more specific, the *Survival Kit* staked out the city as the domain of a young, reasonably affluent male, apparently free from family responsibility, and still washing his own shirts with Daz.

By invoking the *flâneur*, the *Survival Kit* portrayed a rather traditional, heterosexual masculinity, compromising what at first appeared to be a genderless, open invitation to urban adventure. But if more innovative configurations of gender and identity were to be found as close by as contemporary British pop painting,⁹¹ they were not to be found elsewhere in architecture. The *Survival Kit* was a frank confession to the role of male subjectivity in architecture, startling for its time. Though the architectural profession at the beginning of the sixties remained overwhelmingly patriarchal in its constituency and outlook, it had brought to perfection an image of itself and its practice as disinterested.⁹² If the *Survival Kit* contained the real

tools by which knowledge of the city was obtained, then all the statistical surveys routinely employed by urban designers were at best remote, and at worst a decoy from the urban designer’s fallible (male) subjectivity; that the *Survival Kit*’s masculinity was so thinly disguised only confirmed that a gentleman’s club atmosphere still pervaded architectural practice. Moreover, the ennobled masculinity of the gentleman’s club was in turn being degraded in the image by subscription to a men’s club with less exclusive membership: the *Survival Kit* included a copy of *Playboy* magazine. Historian-critic Reyner Banham (a visitor to “Living City”) had relayed to the *Architects’ Journal* in 1960 how the world of *Playboy* was typically open to a man of “28.3 years,” living in one of “168 important metropolitan areas,” “for whom a dinner date is a regular and important event.”⁹³

This particular copy of *Playboy*, from January 1963, featured Norman Mailer, whose 1955 novel *The Deer Park* was placed alongside. Mailer’s hard-boiled literature portrayed a cosmopolitan, sexual, political, and drugged subculture. The Soho melee in which “Living City” was staged was a place where someone might submerge into such a jazz-listening, marijuana-smoking urban underbelly, purchasing the more marginal and hedonistic of the goods depicted: a bottle of whiskey, a packet of cigarettes, some hard-bop jazz records, a gun, and “drugs.” Yet no harder drug than Alka Seltzer (the corrective for indulgence in the Bell’s whiskey) was put on display. To this extent the *Survival Kit* parodied the aggressive masculinity of the likes of Mailer⁹⁴ and the fantasy of the metropolis promoted by *Playboy*. The gun looked like a replica in its cowboy-style tasseled holster; the food featured in the image was barely more adult (the slogan of Quaker Puffed Wheat in the 1950s was “shot from guns”); the sports car was no more than a toy. Through its absurd selections and juxtapositions, the *Survival Kit* was depicting an imaginary inner-city living, just as readers of *Playboy* magazine lived out promiscuity and hedonism vicariously. One aerosol product featured was called “Top Secret,” hailing the influence of cinematic thrillers (the movie *Dr. No*, the first in the James Bond series, had filled cinemas the previous year), while the assemblage as a whole recalled those made famous by the covers of Len Deighton’s paperback thrillers.⁹⁵ The aura of sexual deviancy that hung

about Mailer's work at the time was "straightened" in the *Survival Kit* into the bathroom paraphernalia promoted by teenage magazines to young men and women on the dating game—lipstick, makeup, razors, deodorant, detergent, toothpaste.

Survival, the adventure of city life, was being represented here as a narrative played out by the citizen with a few basic props—a cigarette to light, a match to flick out, makeup to assist in the creation of a new role (Mailer's *The Deer Park* was set in Hollywood). The notion that the self is a collection of performances that take place across different locations was reminiscent of the findings in Erving Goffman's popular study of the time, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959,⁹⁶ and of existentialism. The city was a mere backdrop for the citizen starring in the "movie" of his (or her) life, and the "living city," with its diversity of urban actors and varied urban décors, was the ideal film lot. It updated urban critic Lewis Mumford's old dream of the city as a multistaged "theatre of social action,"⁹⁷ refuting the "survival kit" of rationalization that had characterized urban design from the Renaissance to modernism. Mumford declined an invitation to endorse the rationalist planning principles of CIAM when they were written up by CIAM architect José Luis Sert.⁹⁸ *Can Our Cities Survive?* asked the title of Sert's 1942 book; two decades later the *Living City Survival Kit* reported that the city could survive, but only provided its rationalization was curtailed.

Chalk's *Survival Kit* obviously toyed with the pop aesthetic, and sharing the copy of *Living Arts* magazine that served as "Living City's" catalogue was work by the pop pioneer artist Richard Hamilton, who created the mise-en-scène for the cover (figure 2.20). Photographed by Robert Freeman at a Taylor Woodrow building site (presumably accessed by Theo Crosby), Hamilton's cover featured an American footballer and *Playboy* Playmate-style model (the former perched and the latter draped upon a 1963 Ford Thunderbird), a Frigidaire stuffed to capacity, a luxurious white telephone, a Wondergram mini record player and mini typewriter, a chromium-plate toaster, a long-hose vacuum cleaner (of the sort enshrined by Hamilton's famous 1956 "This Is Tomorrow" collage, *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*), and, particularly impressive, a Mercury space pod.⁹⁹

In comparison, there was something "artless" and formless about the *Living City Survival Kit*. The *Survival Kit* was more literal, didactic, an inventory, declining the smooth compositional qualities of Hamilton's hot-pink shop window of Pax Americana. The *Survival Kit*'s American consumer products (such as the bottles of Coca-Cola) were no more sacred than any other, arrayed upon a level plane. No longer exotic, their significance was as the sort of throwaway artifacts praised in *Archigram* no. 3. They represented packaged and popular taste. American-led mass market ("popular") taste had deeply perturbed modernism: in 1948, Sigfried Giedion had shown his readers a packet of wrapped and sliced Wonder Bread from the United States as an appalling reminder of the impact upon taste when mechanization takes command.¹⁰⁰ Fifteen years later, the *Living City Survival Kit* presented the British variant, the Wonderloaf (which had helped revolutionize UK tastes from about 1953), as an environmental convenience to be consumed without fear of righteous anger.

The Wonderloaf was perhaps an object lesson as well, the forerunner of the modernist construction of the future, stacks of buildings as interchangeable as slices of bread, as expendable as paper wrappers. Messy foodstuffs came packaged and capsuled; could messy life be contained by architectural packets of equal neatness and desirability? Packet cereal and instant coffee had reassembled the postwar British breakfast. Could architecture lose its dependence on mortar and hard labor in the same way that the breakfast table had been unburdened from lard and pans? Raw materials of food could be frozen so that



2.20 Robert Freeman and Richard Hamilton, cover of *Living Arts* no. 2, 1963. The "artlessness" of the *Living City Survival Kit* (figure 2.19) was confirmed simply by checking it against the cover of the journal in which it was reproduced, which was slickly printed with an image "directed" by the British pop art pioneer Richard Hamilton and the Beatles' photographer Robert Freeman. To borrow car enthusiast terminology (fitting for an arts scene absorbed by Detroit), pop was Hamilton's "Sunday driver," while Warren Chalk and his colleagues from "Living City" used pop as their "daily driver."

they were available on demand, regardless of the seasons: when would construction sites be this efficient? Heaped up in the *Survival Kit* was a selection of commercial, disposable goods, popular, as found, which the viewer was being asked to regard as a solution to the survival of the city. It did indeed suggest a sort of order in disorder, feeding the crowd yet catering to individuals accepting and rejecting various components of the kit, achieving consistent standards and customer satisfaction.

The danger in this ordering and reordering by supply and demand was that it left the architect redundant. In his “City Notes” of 1959, an essay that anticipated several of the central themes of “Living City,” former Independent Group convener Lawrence Alloway reckoned that “architects can never get and keep control of all the factors in a city which exist in the dimensions of patched-up, expendable, and developing forms. The city as an environment has room for a multiplicity of roles, among which the architect’s may not be that of unifier.”¹⁰¹ And yet the architect was not yet willing to surrender; the very energy of the “Living City” exhibition showed that architects still saw themselves as active agents in the world. Architect-entrepreneurs would be needed precisely to resist the homogenizing tendencies that monopoly capitalism shared with its supposed opposite, positivist planning. Architects would make sure that everyone got a share of the “living city.” And in any case “Living City” implied a richness of urban experience that encompassed a great deal more than the market economy alone. “Living City’s” statement of faith in high-density living, to take one example, ran counter to the market-driven urban trends evident in America, its cities spread out thin and far, centers eroded to facilitate the flow of goods and people along superhighways.

Perhaps, then, the architect’s role was to be that of facilitator, counseling people on the idea of an architecture of impermanence and exchange. In the interim, “Living City” architects would themselves be the exemplars of the new living, pioneers conveying optimism in the face of the “crisis” of the city. The *Living City Survival Kit* was fun at a time when, less than ten months after the Cuban missile crisis had prompted the assembly of real survival kits, “survival” was no joke. The exhibition was inconclusive—“I’m not quite sure where they have got with it so far,”

admitted Banham in 1963¹⁰²—but determinedly optimistic and proactive. The Living Citizen was neither the American consumer, standing impassive amidst the supermarket shelves now arriving in Britain, nor the resident of the British new town or housing estate, docile under the town planner’s command. “Living City” taught its visitors to have *confidence* in their choices—consumer choices and existential choices—and to take joy in multiple identities and lifestyles. Angst—prompted, existentialists argued, by the pressure to make life choices out of the manifold possibilities of which the only certainty was an eventual return to nothingness—was reconfigured as a consumer adventure. Existence and participation in a changing and potentially dangerous world was made safe.

Anticipating the breakup of the single, positivist modernism represented by CIAM, Le Corbusier in 1956 acknowledged the arrival of a younger generation of architects who found themselves “in the heart of the present period . . . feeling actual problems, personally, profoundly, the goals to follow, the means to reach them, the pathetic urgency of the present situation. They are in the know. Their predecessors no longer are, they are out, they are no longer subject to the direct impact of the situation.”¹⁰³ The *Survival Kit* offered very little in the way of protective gear from the situation of 1963 but warned, in its starkly humorous references to sex, drugs, and hard sounds, that modernity in the 1960s was accelerating well beyond that foreseen even by the Independent Group in the 1950s. Programs to impose order upon chaos would have to be preceded by testimonies of lived experience, of situation. The assumption of the new urbanists—Banham talked in 1959 of “the cool jazz connection, action painters, documentary camera crews, advertising copy-writers”¹⁰⁴—was that the city would henceforth be created from the street up, not from the drawing office down.

In counterpoint to the role of unifier and good designer—in defiance, that is, of the education of postwar British architects—the architects of “Living City” were teaching an appreciation of the noise and improvisation that filled the spaces of the city with life. The relationship between form and noise could be compared to the method of theme and improvisation found in jazz. The *Survival Kit* featured two groundbreaking jazz albums

of 1959, Ornette Coleman's *Tomorrow Is the Question* and John Coltrane's *Giant Steps*. Coltrane and Coleman were building repertoires of brilliant discordance, visually echoed by the fracture and kinesis of "Living City's" displays.

Despite its presentation as a standard-issue kit (its gun, detergent, toothpaste, and razor blades not unfamiliar to someone who had done National Service, abolished the previous year),¹⁰⁵ there was something idiosyncratic about the *Survival Kit*. Symbolically, the jazz albums announced the imperative of greeting the future—tomorrow was the question, Ornette Coleman said, and another of Coltrane's albums of 1960 was entitled *The Avant-Garde*¹⁰⁶—but they also gave a peak into someone's record collection, and thus into their private life. In the year of ubiquitous Beatlemania, were the esoteric, transatlantic Coltrane and Coleman really essential listening,¹⁰⁷ as central to survival as bread? Such that several copies of one album alone were needed? Juxtaposed against general consumer tat, the presence of these records in the *Survival Kit* spoke of the passion of a connoisseur like Warren Chalk. It was the survival kit of a late night jazz fan, defrosting the peas, lighting up, pouring a whiskey. The *Survival Kit* was, at some level, the self-portrait of a young man (and at thirty-six, Chalk was the oldest of the exhibition organizers by between three and ten years). Richard Hamilton would later decide that his cover for *Living Arts* was a self-portrait, too;¹⁰⁸ both it and the *Survival Kit* could be compared to those dadaist and constructivist portraits of the 1920s and 1930s in which the artist is to be found within a collage of attributes and memorabilia. Chalk had found in his antiheroic self-image an illustration of the new architect: the architect of the streets, the hedonist, the Living Citizen.

TRAFFIC AND DEMOCRACY

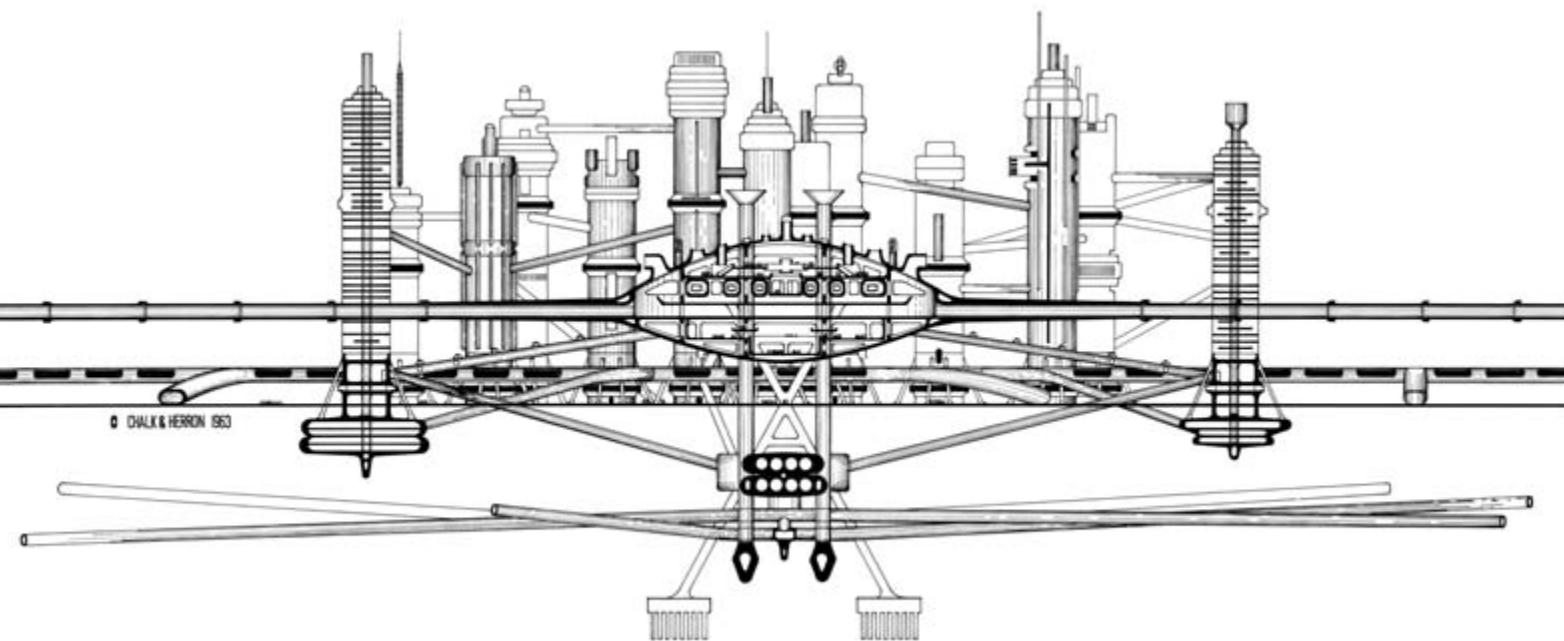
A close look at "Living City's" maps of "Places"—places commonly acknowledged as historic centers of national and global culture—delivered a surprise: a dozen or so of London's busiest road junctions had been circled and declared worthy of "place" status. Traffic encroachment, one might have speculated, threatened rather than complemented the pedestrian crowd essential to the living city. And some of the intersections dis-

creetly endorsed by the show—Hyde Park Corner (its generous surface traffic space achieved by lopping off a chunk of Regency architecture),¹⁰⁹ Elephant and Castle—were already controversial as redevelopment schemes.

Nevertheless, the "Living City" curators believed for the time being that traffic interchanges of all kinds (pedestrian *and* automotive) acted as valid urban focal points. The urban model suggested by "Living City" was a further revision of the "cluster" ideas circulating through advanced urbanist ideas at the time.¹¹⁰ The cluster was interpolated by the Smithsons, who explained in 1957 that "in the Cluster concept there is not one 'centre' but many. Population pressure-points are related to industry and to commerce and these would be the natural points for the vitality of the community to find expression—the bright lights and the moving crowds."¹¹¹

The cluster concept received further attention in Banham's "City as Scrambled Egg." Juxtaposing an aerial photograph of a drive-in cinema with a portion of Debord and Jorn's *Psychogeographic Guide to Paris*, Banham's best-of-both-worlds ideal cross-fertilized Los Angeles freeway sprawl and Parisian pedestrian compactness. The Living City could have two sorts of "place." On the one hand there would be the more deeply rooted *quartiers* (like Soho), home to specialist and elite interests, services and cultures—"jazz-men, wig-makers, sports-car enthusiasts or sculptors." On the other hand, there would be "the radically new centres of popular aggregation produced by the diffuse, well-mechanised culture of motorised conurbations," such as the drive-in cinema and the shopping center.¹¹² Congestion was to be relieved by its multipolar dispersal. A prime example of this sort of "place" was just reaching completion at the controversial Elephant and Castle development, as gazetted on the "Living City" map of London.

To some extent the organizers of "Living City," three of whom (Herron, Chalk, and Crompton) had only recently departed from the London County Council and had shaped a sister project at the South Bank (figures 1.22–1.26), had little alternative than to offer a gesture of solidarity with the creators of the Elephant and Castle traffic and shopping complex. But sympathies ran deeper than this. The most fundamental of these was



CITY INTERCHANGE

Archigram's passion at this time for grand, neofuturist projects; after all, Peter Cook claimed the 1938 MARS show, with its posterously ambitious scheme for London, as a forerunner of "Living City."¹¹³ With Gordon Sainsbury in 1961, Peter Cook had thrown a traffic interchange project into the fray surrounding the proposed redevelopment of Piccadilly Circus.¹¹⁴ Even Oxford Circus, as Archigram's 1966 film for the BBC demonstrated, was enjoying a traffic flyover (a third level of circulation, above the road surface and Underground underpasses).¹¹⁵

The flow of traffic not only gave the city movement, *Archigram* showed, but it was also a generator of form. Cook filled his new Sant'Elia forum of Piccadilly Circus, published in *Archigram* no. 1 (figure 1.1), with a spaghetti junction, while Warren Chalk and Ron Herron's City Interchange project, a three-dimensional spider's web showcased at "Living City," remodeled the urban core as a multilevel crossover for rail, road, pavement, and air (figure 2.21).¹¹⁶ "The key to the formal problem?" Cook

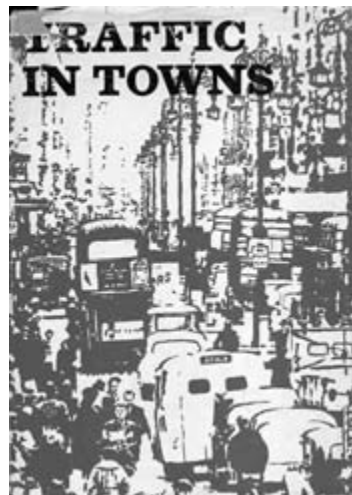
asked in his *Come-Go* collage for "Living City." "Is it moving things from place to place? Is it feeding the services?" Here was a tantalizing paradox: the formless as progenitor of form.¹¹⁷

It would be easy to misconstrue Archigram's work as comic book caprice. This impression changes the moment it is viewed in the light of contemporary official opinion on the future of cities. The recommendation to enlarge London's traffic intersections had been inherited from the Abercrombie Plan in 1945,¹¹⁸ and the publication in 1963 of *Traffic in Towns*—the seminal investigation led by Colin Buchanan on behalf of the Ministry of Transport—brought "together two subjects which have usually been treated separately . . . namely the planning and location of buildings and the management of traffic."¹¹⁹ A comparison of Buchanan and "Living City" is instructive not as evidence of direct correlation but of pervasive trends in architectural and social analysis.¹²⁰ Like "Living City," the Buchanan Report set out to deal with "highly complicated issues," but to be

2.21 Warren Chalk and Ron Herron, *City Interchange* project, section, ink on tracing paper, 1963. A traffic node clustered into architecture, the *City Interchange* revised the same designers' ideas for the South Bank Arts Centre in London, giving the drawing vertical thrust and an extrovertly sci-fi profile. But Archigram would later snub the monumentalization of transport interchanges as a throwback to the nineteenth century, as far as possible incorporating transportation into the abode.

“written in terms that the layman can follow, because public understanding of these problems will be of the greatest importance if successful policies are to be found.”¹²¹ Again like Archigram, the Buchanan group strove to present its findings in ways that would be palatable, even attractive, to younger architects and planners. Almost all the fifteen members of the Working Group for the Buchanan Report were registered architects and town planners, and no less than seven of these were graduates of the Architectural Association, bringing with them the Report’s Archigramesque marginalia of monorails and jet packs.¹²² And at the time of “Living City,” Crosby and the Archigram team at Taylor Woodrow were working on a concomitant urban interchange scheme for another government ministry, discussed below.¹²³

The cover of the Buchanan Report depicted the consumer and traffic chaos of Oxford Street that interested Archigram (figure 2.22).¹²⁴ A large portion of Buchanan’s Report was spent weighing up the same freeway projects then being shoehorned into American city centers, which Cook and Sainsbury were mimicking in their Piccadilly Circus project, whose intersection pattern was a slightly less tidy version of a model illustrated



2.22 Cover of Colin Buchanan et al., *Traffic in Towns*, 1963. The groundbreaking and widely read government report examined traffic and architecture as two sides of the same problem, much as “Living City” did, and featured on its cover the gridlock that was, to the organizers of “Living City,” as much a part of London’s architecture as the buildings lining Oxford Street.

by Buchanan.¹²⁵ Viewed in plan on the *Come-Go* collage (figure 2.11), Cook’s linear cities of expendable buildings could be seen to be based on the same Radburn model considered in passing by the Buchanan team¹²⁶ (with spurs of buildings being fed from a main communications trunk), and on Buchanan’s notion that the “rooms” and “corridors” of the ideal city are separated as cleanly as they are in a hospital.¹²⁷ Sharing Archigram’s impatience with the traditional British city, it was only begrudgingly that Buchanan’s team submitted solutions for “partial” and “minimum” redevelopment as appendices to its preferred model of “complete redevelopment.”¹²⁸ Admittedly, nothing as extraordinary as Archigram’s projects would be included in the Buchanan Report. But the Report concluded by inviting “further research” into the same issues preoccupying Archigram, such as “Urban Form,” “Movement,” “Networks,” and “Movement Systems,”¹²⁹ and it readily considered the viability of the sorts of radical transportation solutions—monorails, hovercraft, and even personal jet propulsion—that Archigram promoted above and beyond the private car.¹³⁰

Buchanan and Archigram were emphatic: one could not begin to think about the future of the city until one had thought about the future of traffic, in all its forms. The facts seemingly spoke for themselves, and by accepting them Archigram architects could announce themselves as realists, not fantasists. Between 1960 and 1965 the number of cars and vans in Britain, already spiraling, increased from 5.6 million to 9.1 million,¹³¹ and the Buchanan Report concluded that even the threat of the complete saturation of British streets with traffic, such that vehicles ground to a halt, would barely limit exponential growth.¹³² Archigram’s urbanism was an extreme response to an extreme problem, permitting the city to keep meeting an apparently insatiable demand for mobility. Archigram investigated ways of spreading the traffic load to other forms of transport, incorporating conventional public transport into their interchange schemes and exploring the use of new and theoretical transport technologies, such as air. (In 1966, Archigram forecast a three or four times increase in air travel over the coming twenty years, and domestic air travel in Britain did indeed double between 1961 and 1971.)¹³³ “Inter-regional rapid

transport using linear induction motor propelled trains”¹³⁴ would be found in Herron and Chalk’s Interchange (figure 2.21) and Cook’s Plug-In City (figure 1.3).

Archigram’s intrigue with alternative transport was significant, because over the next few years “Living City’s” organizers would diverge from the authors of the Buchanan Report on the compatibility of the internal combustion engine and habitation, preferring to integrate mobility *into* architecture as seamlessly and noiselessly as possible (see, for instance, figures 3.7 and 4.3). What remained constant between the traffic architects, Buchanan and Archigram alike, was the assumption that surging mobility was commensurate with good living and with democracy. No attempts were made to slow down the consumption of movement, rather the opposite. This supposition about the value of traffic schemes had been apparent since Baron Haussmann’s Paris and Le Corbusier’s Radiant City. The spaghetti junction at the heart of Cook and Sainsbury’s Piccadilly Circus competition entry (figure 1.1) had words like “movement,” “enjoyment,” “awareness,” and “life” merging like traffic along the model’s elevated roadways—a comforting promise for those trapped in the traffic of central London, its average speed down to ten miles per hour by 1960, and predicted to continue dropping.¹³⁵ “Before very long, a majority of the electors of this country will be car-owners,”¹³⁶ the Steering Group of the Buchanan Report warned the Minister of Transport. “The consumer today is more a participant than a target,” Archigram claimed in 1966.¹³⁷

Bowing to the “democratic” imperative of consumerism became regarded in the late fifties and early sixties as the ethical corrective to wartime and immediate postwar rationing, with its admonishment of “unnecessary journeys.” Toward the end of *The Long Revolution* (1961), left-leaning cultural critic Raymond Williams noted that “the deep revulsion against general planning . . . is itself in part a consequence of one aspect of the democratic revolution—the determination not to be regimented.”¹³⁸ The joy of unregulated private motion was intensified with the 1959 debut of the affordable, innovative, and chic Austin Mini, of the one-hundred-and-fifty-miles-per-hour Jaguar E-type in

1961, and with the opening of the Jaguar’s natural habitat in the first stretch of the M1 motorway two years before.

In practice, Britain’s urban renewal in the sixties did not prove quite the public crusade anticipated, though the Buchanan Report felt confident “that a vigorous programme of modernising our cities, conceived as a whole and carried on in the public eye, would touch a chord of pride in the British people and help to give them that economic and spiritual lift of which they stand in need.”¹³⁹ It was redolent of the sort of “Britain Can Make It” sentiment that had promoted the Festival of Britain, and something of the same gusto was shared by “Living City.” Like the Buchanan Report, Cook threw in an appeal to national identity as a sweetener for traffic architecture, stuffing his *Come-Go* collage with London icons—Tower Bridge, Nelson’s Column, Piccadilly, Big Ben (figure 2.11).¹⁴⁰ As backup, however, traffic architects drew upon an idealization of consumer democracy of an entirely different national provenance: that which had been relentlessly exported by the United States since the Second World War.

MODERNIZATION

The shift from contempt for Americanism to its critical reception was characteristic of a generation shift within British modernism. Richard Hamilton’s dreamscapes of Detroit car styling and meditations upon traffic, which shared space with coverage of the “Living City” show in *Living Arts* magazine, offered an insight into the Archigram/Buchanan subconscious.

*In slots between towering glass slabs writhes a sea of jostling metal, fabulously wrought like rocket and space probe, like lipstick sliding out of a lacquered brass sleeve, like waffle, like Jello. Passing UNO, NYC, NY, USA (point a), Sophia floats urbanely on waves of triple-dipped, infra-red-baked pressed steel. To her rear is left the stain of a prolonged breathy fart, the compounded exhaust of 300 brake horses.*¹⁴¹

The Buchanan team, reflecting upon much the same scene as Hamilton, quelled its excitement to calmly observe “the silence

of the big powerful cars which most Americans favour; and the maturity of the standard of driving. . . . The drivers do not seem to be in a desperate hurry, they seem content to glide along in their big cars in an orderly way.”¹⁴² The Buchanan Report equally checked its rapture when reporting that “the American policy of providing motorways for commuters can succeed, even in American conditions, only if there is disregard for all considerations other than the free flow of traffic which seems sometimes to be almost ruthless. Our British cities are not only packed with buildings, they are also packed with history.”¹⁴³

Hence the preoccupation of Archigram and Buchanan was to *adapt* the American model to British conditions. “British Made,” the “Communication” gloop patriotically flashed (figure 2.7), blurring the distinction between the British and American products on display—Coca-Cola and a shilling coin, a Dictaphone and a Hawker Hunter¹⁴⁴ jet—as if the British economy’s assimilation of the American way was a *fait accompli*. Archigram and the Buchanan team tried to stuff an American standard of living—born, the Buchanan authors assumed, from a fluidity of communication and excess of space (the latter identified by Lawrence Alloway in *Living Arts* as a source of the American sublime)¹⁴⁵—into the small island on the other side of the Atlantic.

Archigram’s New Yorker, mean streets, “Living City” mood later transposed to LA cool: five years after “Living City,” in 1968, the lure of the American West Coast proved as irresistible to Archigram members as it had to Reyner Banham (who was researching *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, published 1971), and Chalk, Herron, and Cook took up teaching positions at the University of California, Los Angeles, recording the experience of endless sun-drenched LA freeways on cine-film.¹⁴⁶ In 1963, however, Archigram’s ingenuity was still being taxed to devise ways of stacking and miniaturizing Los Angeles into Britain using plug-in cities, hovercraft links, coordinated interchanges, and multilevel precincts. “The city is tight and free and all the city is the centre because the centre is everywhere,” Cook claimed of his first sketch for a plug-in city—the City Within Existing Technology, shown at “Living City”—thus importing the phenomenon of decenteredness discovered by the Buchanan team in LA.¹⁴⁷

“Immediately after the [Second World] war a particular fantasy was exported by the United States, along with the gadgets, techniques, and experts of American capitalism: the fantasy of timeless, even, and limitless development,” Kristin Ross has written in her study of postwar France, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (1995).¹⁴⁸ Timeless, even, and limitless development was implied by Peter Cook’s urbanism:

*In many ways the essence of the city is the supreme coming together of evrything [sic] of it all people come and go it's all moving the bits and pieces that form the city—they're expendable it's all come-go.*¹⁴⁹

In Prime Minister Harold Wilson’s Britain, technologically driven economic growth become a vanguard phenomenon thoroughly acceptable to both the right and left of the political mainstream. Political play was generally made of those innovations—the computer, monorail, and hovercraft¹⁵⁰—that were iconographic to Archigram’s plug-in urbanism. Postwar Britain had welcomed the technological dividends of peace. Many domestic applications had been found for the developments of war: atomic power, antibiotics, radar and infrared light; the chemicals industry sought new markets for plastics, artificial fibers, fertilizers, pesticides, and detergents. Two nearly new industries, electronics and optics, had emerged from war, and techniques of engineering, if not all its management and working practices, were in a state of transformation. These were the wonders of untapped architectural potential that would power the pages of *Archigram*. “Scientific knowledge is doubling every nine years,” Archigram announced in its 1966 film for the BBC. “90% of all scientists who ever lived are alive today . . . as many scientists were educated in the last fifteen years as in all previous history.”¹⁵¹ But, as historian Arthur Marwick remarks, “many of the great scientific and technological developments could scarcely be attributed to conscious decision-making. Thus, though there was great enthusiasm for, and much talk about, the importance of science

and technology to Britain's social regeneration, there was a good deal less understanding of how to set about harnessing science and technology in the most effective manner."¹⁵²

The very vagueness of Harold Wilson's "white heat" rhetoric provided a suitable climate for the open-endedness of Archigram's ideas. In 1960, for example, future Labour MP Anthony Crosland wrote in a major article for the (US-funded) magazine *Encounter* that British institutions were in need of across-the-board modernization; typically, he felt, "our deplorable postwar architecture and city planning demonstrate a failure of nerve in the face of contemporary cultural problems."¹⁵³ It is tempting to cast Archigram as budding technocrats, if of a rather avant-garde—and English—kind. While the Archigram image of technocratic solutions was moderated by cheerfulness and boyish enthusiasm, it was quite insistent.

The Archigram men were self-made professionals with few allegiances to traditional social organizations, institutions, or techniques, having ascended the professional ladder by merit alone. Through personal contact and design, Archigram committed itself to networking provincial and outsider creativity and intellect. The meritocracy had risen alongside the anti-establishment Angry Young Men of the 1950s, Christopher Booker claimed, assuming its most potent form in the arts and communications.¹⁵⁴ The publisher of Plug-In City, the *Sunday Times*, was on Booker's list of the magazines fixated with a vaguely defined socialistic "modernization."¹⁵⁵

Attempts were made by Booker and most famously Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) to ascribe a class origin to the cult of modernization, but the conclusions were unclear.¹⁵⁶ In his insightful and irreverent 1963 speech on the class and ideological roots of ICA culture, "The Atavism of the Short-Distance Mini-Cyclist," Reyner Banham attributed fascination with modern American culture to the postwar British working class, and took 1950s and 1960s British avant-gardism as evidence of class mobility.¹⁵⁷ Yet Cedric Price, held by Banham and Archigram in such esteem for his impatience with tradition, was (like the Independent Group's Colin St. John Wilson, in whose office Ron Herron worked in 1967–1968) very much the Cambridge man.

What counted now, Raymond Williams argued in 1961, was not allegiance to political traditions, but the changing political and social consciousness of voters. "Labour gets a higher percentage of the total vote in the [1960s] period of washing-machines and television than in the [1930s] period of high unemployment," he noted.¹⁵⁸ Though an Archigrammer like Ron Herron seemed to fit Booker's profile of the sort of cultural leader hailing from the "Young Urban Lower Class"¹⁵⁹ (aspirations opened up by National Service, art and technical schools, and prosperity), the social origins of the "modernizer" were (to return to a theme) indeterminate; within the Archigram group as a whole was a mixture of working- and middle-class, southern, Midland, and northern, conservative and socialist. Marwick's observation probably summarizes things best: "Technological change, certainly, brought new obfuscations and subtleties . . . alongside the clearly marked traditional three-tier class structure, there also existed 'non-traditionalists' whose mobility through the technocratic sectors of society was such that they could scarcely be placed in any definite class."¹⁶⁰

Archigram's external corporate identity doubtless obscured differing motivations and assumptions among the group's members, and even inside the group the assuaging effect of liberalism appears to have ensured that whatever political differences existed between its participants were left at the studio door. During the "Living City" phase, the unofficial line seemed to be that the group operated simply to discover better ways of living through architecture and present them for public consideration. The vision was of the city's resources mobilized, capitalist bounty made accessible to all; it was both socialist and enterprising, a fizzed-up reformulation of the British mixed economy that would get people moving, physically, socially, and technologically. And Archigram was in fact wary of being perceived as a group of faceless technocratic zealots. Archigram's Warren Chalk soon became aware that the image of technology could overrun humanitarian intent:

One of the most flagrant misconceptions held about us is that we are not ultimately concerned with people. This probably arises directly from the type of imagery we use. A section through, say,

*something like City Interchange [figure 2.21], appears to predict some automated wasteland inhabited only by computers and robots. How much this is justified is difficult to assess, but if our work is studied closely there will be found traces of a very real concern for people and the way in which they might be liberated from the restrictions imposed on them by the existing chaotic situation, in the home, at work and in the total built environment.*¹⁶¹

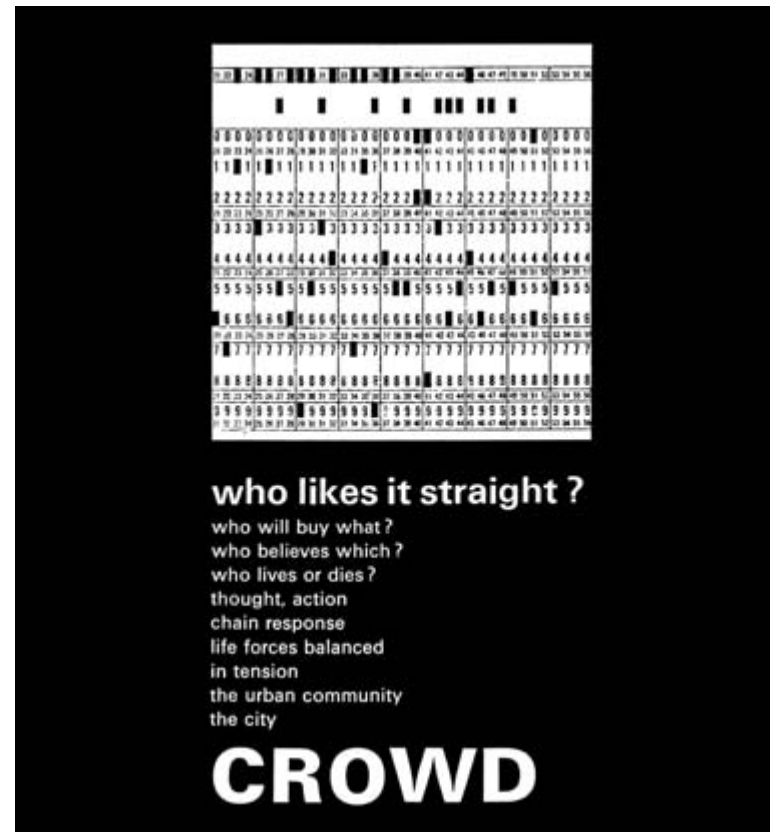
The suggestion that the sympathetic observer would pierce the surface of the pop image, and find within it deeper resonances for how humans desire to be, was reminiscent of the Independent Group. The Smithsons wrote in 1956 that advertisements

*are packed with information—data of a way of life they are simultaneously inventing and documenting. . . . As far as architecture is concerned the influence on mass standards and mass aspirations of advertising is now infinitely stronger than the pace-setting of avant-garde architects, and it is taking over the functions of social reformers and politicians.*¹⁶²

Archigram now elbowed ahead of advertising executives in the belief that the architectural avant-garde could still stake out the cultural frontier, even if social reformers and politicians had slipped to the back of the pack. “Only people filled with respect and enthusiasm for today’s wish-dreams can adequately interpret them into buildings,” Archigram insisted in 1966.¹⁶³ As the Independent Group’s Lawrence Alloway had written in “The Long Front of Culture” in 1959,

*There is no doubt that the humanist acted in the past as taste-giver, opinion-leader, and expected to continue to do so. However, his role is now clearly limited to swaying other humanists and not to steering society. One reason for the failure of the humanists to keep their grip on public values (as they did in the nineteenth century through university and Parliament) is their failure to handle technology, which is both transforming our environment and, through its product the mass media, our ideas about the world and ourselves.*¹⁶⁴

Archigram’s role was to liaise between the astonishing forces of modernization and a “public” that might otherwise be overwhelmed, mediating an industrial-consumer democracy in a state of endless flux. This was not quite anonymous technocracy in the sense in which it had been understood in France, then; it was not a means of organization imposed by civil servants and corporations from above. “Pop puts the ultimate command in the hands, if not of the consumer, then at least of the consumer’s appointed agents,” Banham told his ICA audience in 1963.¹⁶⁵ Unfixed by social status and locale, the citizen of the “living city” would find the city styled in her or his own image, via patterns of consumption and the registry of complex lifestyle choices (symbolized at “Living City” by a computer punch card) (figure 2.23).



2.23 Anon., illustration from “Crowd” gloop, “Living City,” 1963. The computer punch card is a receipt from “the system,” an assurance that individual preferences can be tracked just as faithfully as those of the broad masses.

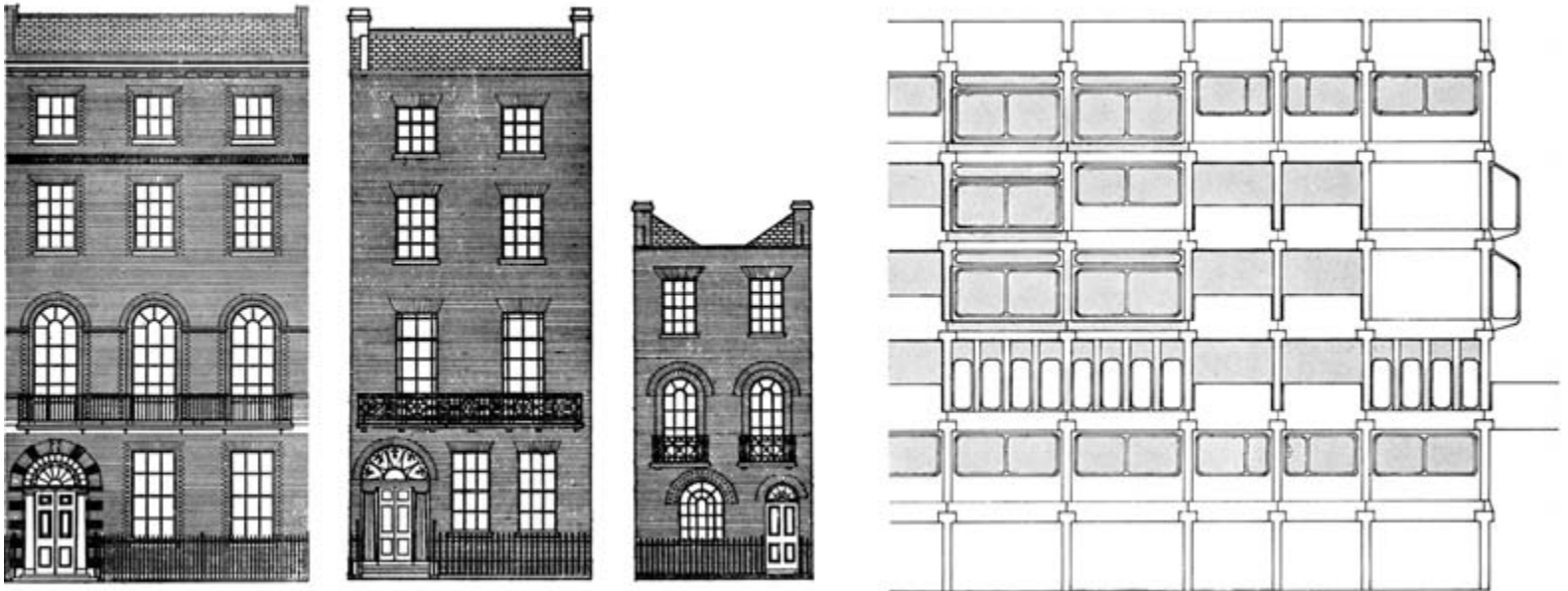
FROM FULHAM TO THE THING

Was the “Living City” more than poetry and image? Was it a trigger for the creation of new architecture? One clue would be found in the publication, again in 1963, of a document by the Taylor Woodrow Group, *Urban Renewal: Fulham Study*, accompanied by an exhibition at the RIBA. The study, which like the Buchanan Report had a semiofficial feel, was for an improbably massive redevelopment of Fulham in west London, and was produced in response to an invitation from the Minister of Housing and Local Government. It was devised by Archigram members working under Theo Crosby.

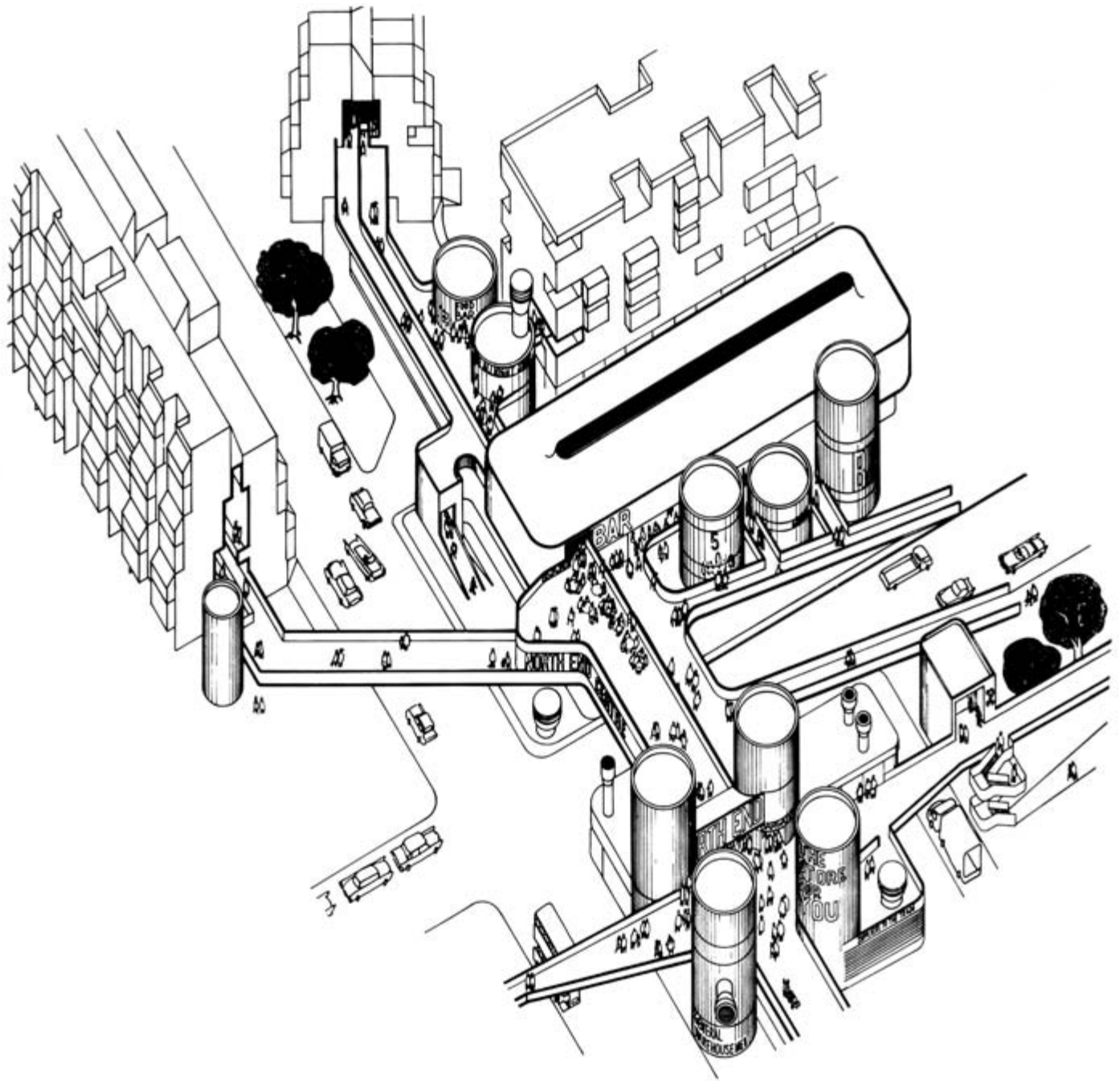
The *Fulham Study* was a perfect summary of the shifting influences of British modernism. Its housing sections were indebted to the thinking of the Smithsons, designed to a “human scale,” derived from precast elements of Georgian proportion (figure 2.24),¹⁶⁶ fed by access decks (in the manner

of the Smithsons’ Golden Lane project) and by the Corbusian *rue intérieure* (figure 2.25). Some housing bays would project forward in the style of Ernö Goldfinger, a veteran much admired at this time for his defiantly heroic modernist idiom, not least at the Elephant and Castle redevelopment. All this skillfully blended with the stylistic devices of the youngsters: round-cornered glazing (reminiscent of the gasket picture windows of the Comet jet aircraft) and a bristling, futurist elevation of round-cornered towers and silos and bridges (a relative of the City Interchange project by Chalk and Herron publicized by “Living City”) (figure 2.21).

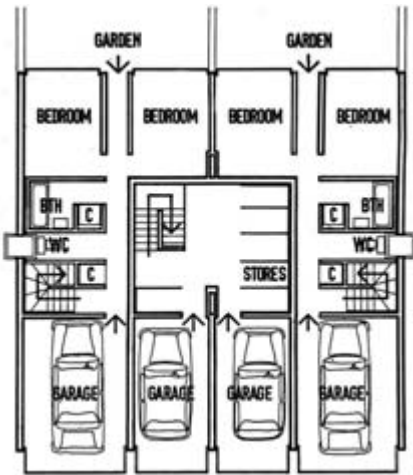
A similar mix of influences could be seen in the plan (figure 2.26), the buildings reaching through their site in “topological” chains in homage to the Smithsons’ Sheffield University project (1953) (figure 1.16) and networking like the Smithsons’ Berlin



2.24 Taylor Woodrow Design Group, comparison of Georgian-scale housing and proposed dwellings for Fulham, in *Urban Renewal: Fulham Study*, 1963. Taylor Woodrow’s Fulham scheme, devised by the team behind “Living City,” compared the scale and proportions generated by prefabricated modules to the proportional relations governing Georgian townhouses. This appeal to Georgian precedent was a trend in British modern architecture in the 1950s and 1960s. The socioeconomic differentiation between the three Georgian models was absorbed and dissolved by the modular system, however.



2.25 Taylor Woodrow Design Group, "A subsidiary shopping centre linked to the upper level pedestrian routes with ramps to street level," axonometric, Urban Renewal: Fulham Study, 1963. With the Fulham scheme, the inventory of techniques used by the emergent Archigram group looked assured and convincing. The multilevel separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic in turn generated a "topological" plan of walkways, fed by elevators styled as silos and acting as cluster points or nodes in a network. Adhering to this substructure are local shopping centers and housing units, which are built from prefabricated parts and articulated by projecting bays.



Hauptstadt (1956), but with the expressionist angularity showcased in *Archigram* no. 1 (figure 1.1) and employed at the South Bank Centre (figures 1.22–1.26). The separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic had also been seen at the South Bank and at the Smithsons' Berlin; but with the *Fulham Study* there was a new Buchananish attention to the practical problem of the car—namely, where it was to be parked. “The 1:1 provision of garages in the study scheme becomes a significant element; in most local authority schemes 1:5 or 6 has been normal.”¹⁶⁷ But consumer choice was paramount, since residents of the scheme would have the option to convert the ground level of their flats into bedrooms or garages (figure 2.27). The Fulham homes anticipated the moment when, in 1964, Michael Webb took to heart George Bernard Shaw's observation that “today's homes are little more than a place to sleep next to one's car,”¹⁶⁸ and devised the Drive-In House. And the cars were for escape rather than commuting: Fulham's clustering of functions would help negate long journeys between work, home, shopping, and leisure.

The *Fulham Study* exploited two structural models of urban renewal simultaneously. Urban planner Peter Hall called them the “P”- and “V”-solutions: precinctual and vertical.¹⁶⁹ “Precinct architecture” had dominated postwar British urban renewal and new towns, passing in the 1940s from schemes like those by Patrick Abercrombie for Westminster and Bloomsbury to the shopping precincts of the 1950s onward.¹⁷⁰ At Fulham, the precinct had acquired the altogether more modish label of “piazza” and, raised on a platform, “plaza” (figure 2.28), catering presumably to Theo Crosby's Italianate taste and the *Archigram* team's predilection for Italian suits.¹⁷¹ More important, the idea of “piazza” shifted the connotation of the precinct from Oxbridge/Inns of Court collegiate to Mediterranean “come-go.”¹⁷²

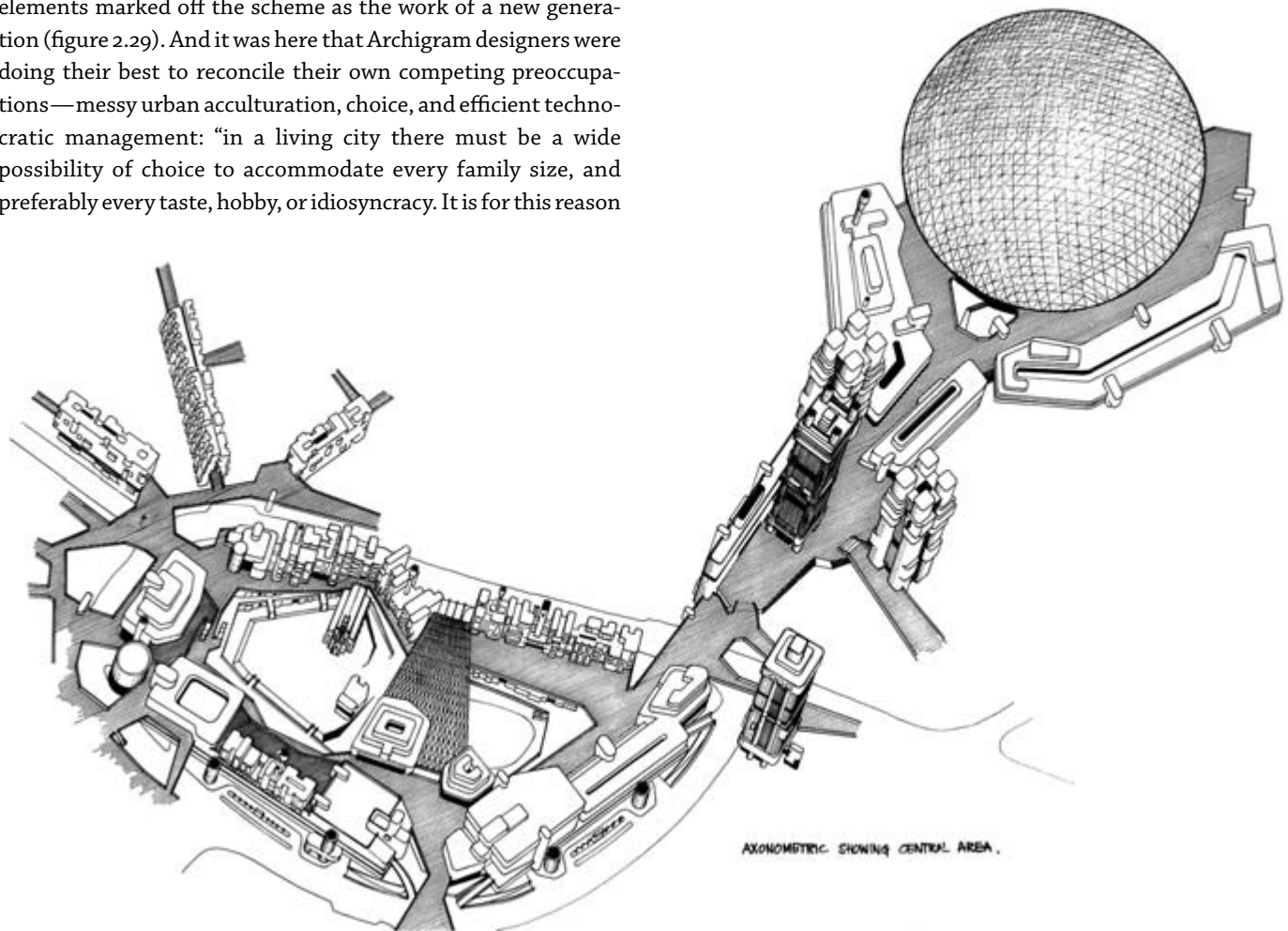
Meanwhile, Fulham's V-planning was flexed to take traffic pressure head on: “Leonardo understood it,” Hall claimed, “in the Adelphi scheme, the brothers Adam used it;¹⁷³ it was incorporated in railway building from the start. But very few city rebuilding schemes, anywhere in the world, have yet had the imaginative grasp to accept it wholeheartedly.”¹⁷⁴ At Fulham, housing, shopping, leisure, and traffic were stacked and interwoven to create an urban core that was multifunctional and

2.26 Taylor Woodrow Design Group, preparatory sketch of the pedestrian network for Urban Renewal: Fulham Study, 1963. *Connectivity is all, a social fabric of roving consumers that is the city prior to any buildings.* **2.27** Taylor Woodrow Design Group, “Ground level plans can be adapted to become extra bedrooms to flats above, or can be given over entirely to garaging,” sample residential plans, Urban Renewal: Fulham Study, 1963. *Choice upon choice: for the first time, high-density, inner-city housing permits universal car ownership, yet also allows the legal and rapid conversion of garages to occupancy.*

manageable. Fulham's light manufacturing and blue-collar sectors disappeared, so that the net effect was one of a post-industrial economy geared around white-collar office work, consumption, and leisure. The plan reached over to embrace Stamford Bridge stadium, home to Chelsea Football club, enshrining and sanitizing it in a vast dome.

The formal effect of the dome, as Archigram resorted to free-hand in order to render the myriad of panels on the axonometric,¹⁷⁵ was to lend the entire scheme the geodesic signature of youthful architects. Fulham's industrialized and prefabricated elements marked off the scheme as the work of a new generation (figure 2.29). And it was here that Archigram designers were doing their best to reconcile their own competing preoccupations—messy urban acculturation, choice, and efficient technocratic management: “in a living city there must be a wide possibility of choice to accommodate every family size, and preferably every taste, hobby, or idiosyncrasy. It is for this reason

that much work has been done on the production of an element or panel system, which can be used in a number of different contexts,” read paragraph 138 of the Report.¹⁷⁶ Mass-produced, standardized components would cater to individuality (thanks to interchangeability), as in post-Fordist car production. A little earlier in the document, system building was presented as though part of the white heat modernization of British architecture and the British economy simultaneously: “the building site needs to be transformed from guild craft trades operating on



2.28 Taylor Woodrow Design Group, axonometric drawing of central area, Urban Renewal: Fulham Study, 1963. Seen at a distance, the scheme transpires as a flow of elevated plazas supporting building clusters with a formal ruggedness similar to Peter Cook's Plug-In City (compare figure 1.3)—with recollections of Frank Lloyd Wright's Johnson Wax Building, 1947–1950—leading to a geodesic dome of astronomical proportions. The effect is of authentic urban agglomeration, yet Fulham's “pollutants,” like manufacturing, have been tidied away.

a ploughed field to production assembly on a ‘factory’ floor.”¹⁷⁷ Even if the prefabrication of the main structure at Fulham proved impossible, services would still be “rigidly standardised, and the bathrooms/w.c./heater unit/cupboards would be prefabricated, containing all the electrical services and switches.”¹⁷⁸ Many things besides—facade elements, panels, balconies, staircases, even tenants’ storage—“would be interchangeable within a vigorous dimensional control.”¹⁷⁹

And yet big urban schemes, Archigram began to suspect, were becoming a thing of the past. Nineteen sixty-three was the year in which the City Centre group of top property developers hit crisis and losses. It was also the year, wrote Christopher Booker, of “the first realization of just how ill-fated were to be Britain’s two largest shopping precinct schemes, those at the Bull Ring, Birmingham, and at the Elephant and Castle, South London, both of which had been announced in the same month in 1959 and were now nearing completion.”¹⁸⁰ The “Living City” catalogue pushed further into the future, beyond traffic intersections and property development, to a moment when the city as we know it has become something else, a “Thing” (figure 2.30):

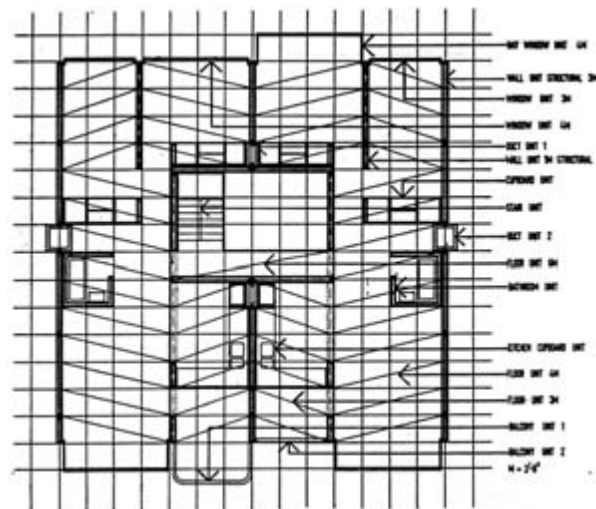
*this thing’s come a long way since we started this exhibition
wasn’t it a great floating city to begin with—a Europe city that
spanned the channel*¹⁸¹
why did we give that idea up?
*perhaps because of the purely visionary nature of the idea
it’ll be years before there’s a political set-up sufficient for this
thing to come into being and anyway with communications,
closed circuit TV we may not want to live in cities any more
yeah, I think that’s where Keisler [sic] and Schulze Feilitz [sic]
with his space frame city fall down
as liberators of ideas they are tremendous but their technology
can only answer today’s problems*¹⁸²

David Greene and Michael Webb were looking forward to a structure more ethereal than the *Fulham Study* or Cook’s Plug-In, something like “a vast net encircling the earth,” hung from Zeppelins, staffed by cosmonauts. “Living City” reprinted Frederick Kiesler’s 1925 description of a “Space City”:

2.29 Taylor Woodrow Design Group, plan of a housing unit assembled from prefabricated components, on a three-foot module, Urban Renewal: Fulham Study, 1963. Seamless standardization and interchangeability of windows, walls, stairs, floors, kitchens, bathrooms, cupboards, balconies, and ducts would make housing into a consumer product. Architecture was becoming indeterminate, pointing the way to the Archigram future.

A SYSTEM OF TENSION IN FREE SPACE
A CHANGE OF SPACE INTO URBANISM
NO FOUNDATIONS
NO WALLS
DETACHMENT FROM THE EARTH
SUPPRESSION OF THE STATIC AXIS
IN CREATING NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR LIVING IT CREATES A
NEW SOCIETY¹⁸³

Archigram’s pursuit of this “indeterminist” prophecy would characterize the main thrust of its design work from then on. And citizens too would be refigured, not as “consumers” but—to borrow Raymond Williams’s critical distinction of the time—as “users.”¹⁸⁴ “Living City,” for all its celebration of ordinary citizens—their tastes, habits, and experiences—had tended to portray them as *subjects* to the fixed forms of urban architecture, flowing through the spaces left in between buildings. “Living City” indicated, finally, a more radical possibility, of buildings themselves yielding, bearing no harder on users than any other item of everyday life (clothes, cars, packaging). By the end of its journey, Archigram would pare down even the weight of urban infrastructure, leaving citizens with just the in-between “situations” of encounter, stimulation, and change.





2.30 David Greene and Michael Webb, *Story of the Thing* (detail), montage for "Living City," 1963. Archigram here is not designing a building but a placeless triangulated space frame, akin to a Buckminster Fuller tensegrity system: a "thing," a floating plasma with an unstated purpose, hopefully benign, arriving in a bleak (fifties science fiction movie) landscape.