

NA2108

.A72

ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION USA: ISSUES, IDEAS AND PEOPLE

A CONFERENCE TO EXPLORE CURRENT ALTERNATIVES

- I. Ambasz, Emilio. A.The University of Design. B.Appendices: I.Design as System of Thought. II.Fragments: Notes on Structure. III.The Design of Freedom.
- II. Anderson, Stanford. The Ineffectiveness of Architectural Education; the Inverted Gestalt Effects of the Recognition that Architecture Cannot Fulfill(Wrongly Conceived) Programs.
- III.Barnett, Jonathan. Architectural Education Should be Professional Education.
- IV. Brown, Denise Scott. On Analysis and Design.
- V. Brown, Denise Scott. Discourse for Social Planners on Architectural Formalism and Social Concern.
- VI. Eisenman, Peter D. The Education of Reality.
- VII.Frampton, Kenneth. Polemical Notes on Architectural Education.
- VIII.Gans, Herbert J. Some Observations and Proposals on the Role of Architecture in Today's America.
- IX. Gutman, Robert. The Architectural Educator -- Ostrich or Phoenix?
- X. Rowe, Colin. [Paper]
- XI. Ungers, O. Matthias. [Paper]
- XII.Vidler, Anthony. News from Nowhere: a Report.
- XIII.Vidler, Anthony. The Tale of a Tub: a Satirical Postscript on the Subject of this Conference.

ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION USA: ISSUES, IDEAS AND PEOPLE  
A CONFERENCE TO EXPLORE CURRENT ALTERNATIVES

---

A. THE UNIVERSITY OF DESIGN

B. APPENDICES:

- I. Design as System of Thought
- II. Fragments: Notes on Structure
- III. The Design of Freedom

by Emilio Ambasz, M.F.A., Princeton  
University, Curator of Design, Museum  
of Modern Art.

(Note: the material herein is expressly  
reserved to the author).

INTRODUCTION

The organizers of this conference have asked for thoughts on the subject of Architectural Education. However, I don't feel I am capable today of dealing with them in the abstract. There was a time when my ideas and I were two distinct entities, but it is no longer possible for me to recover them from the memory I may have of their original state -- nor is it desirable. Having given up the distance that thought needs in exchange for the passion of embodying them, they are now all around me and no longer in front. Thus, to make these ideas accessible, I can only attempt to describe the configuration that they have adopted in one project I have undertaken to implement them.

The project is entitled "Institutions for a Post-Technological Society, The Universitas Project." It is a project of the Museum of Modern Art and the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies, aimed specifically at developing in the United States a new type of institution centered around the task of evaluating and designing the man-made environment.

The purposes of the Universitas Project are, first, to attempt a definition of the objectives to be met in the evaluation, design, and management of the man-made environment; second, to question whether our current modes of thought and present institutions, especially universities, satisfy those objectives; and, third, to advance a view on the modes of thought and the new or restructured types of institutions which will have to be developed to satisfy these objectives.

The schedule for accomplishing this Project's objectives has been organized into two distinct, but interrelated stages:

The first stage, postulative, is concerned with problem-definitions and the development of alternative solutions.

The second stage, implementative, is concerned with the practical implementation of those solutions which have been postulated in the first phase. The intention of this stage will be to develop the strategies leading to the creation in the U.S.A. of a new type of education-research-development institution concerned with the evaluation and design of our man-made environment.

The enclosed Paper reflects some of the ideas developed in one of the phases of the postulative stage and is intended to describe the Project's subject and define the scope of its proposals.

Hoping that the enclosed material in some way serves the conference's purposes, I remain very much obliged to the directors of the conference and the participating critics who will read it.

Emilio Ambasz

October 12, 1971

New York, New York

ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION USA: ISSUES, IDEAS AND PEOPLE

A CONFERENCE TO EXPLORE CURRENT ALTERNATIVES

---

THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

The Inverted Gestalt Effects of the Recognition  
That Architecture Cannot Fulfil (Wrongly Con-  
ceived) Programs.

---

by Stanford Anderson

(Note: this material is expressly reserved to  
the author).

POLITICAL PREAMBLE:  
November 13 - Phase 2

If what I write now is discussed at all, it will be discussed on November 13, the beginning of Phase 2 of Nixonomics - the beginning of the last ditch stand to salvage an old political-economic situation thought to be advantageous to the U.S.

It is dangerous to predict the near future. It would be reassuring to communicate only some notes about the timeless issues of architecture, thus rising above the accident of this New York exhibition and conference which happens to coincide with the initiation of Phase 2. Still there are times when the timeless issues must be tempered by the fires of immediate problem situations. I think this time (and therefore this conference) is one of these times.

Architecture and Society: Cooper Union Exhibit as proxy for any  
other school exhibit

Contemplating the preliminary information on these upcoming events at the Museum of Modern Art, I cannot escape the foreboding that we are gathering for a wake. In an adjoining room will be the body of Cooper Union student work, laid out to receive the respects of those who honor such devotion to a cause.

In better times, it would be important to examine exactly what exemplary models had been given to us by Cooper Union. Under current circumstances, it will be a mistake to dwell too much on the particularities of the Cooper Union work. This work will surely reveal a keen sense of responsibility on the part of students and faculty - the responsibility of serious explorers to provide both the example of personal and professional diligence and the intellectual gain of those efforts. This seriousness, perhaps even the accomplishments, will deserve recognition and honor. The tragedy is that the social condition is currently such as to cause despair of the efficacy of even the best explorations into the problems of man and environment. Within our society, what resources are being directed to the fundamental needs of individuals and of humane societies? How are the meagre resources for health, education and housing channeled? Or to come closer to the professional concerns of this conference, what school has recently seen many able students go willingly and with a heightened sense of opportunity into today's government, business or office practice? If this conference had been juxtaposed to an exhibition of the work of other schools, the exhibition would have been different; the wake the same.

Current Societal Change: need for a new societal base for architecture

This conference must face the question: How can we move toward a society that uses its resources for the betterment of the human condition rather than for destruction and waste? How can we move toward a society in which intellectually inventive devotion to one's task, rather than appearing an almost anachronistic example, is common because it is fruitful? Only then can we convincingly pass beyond mere appreciation of good efforts to serious consideration and comparison of the proliferating alternatives set forth by contributors in many fields.

I want to thrust these questions back into a brief consideration of our present social situation.

Since World War II, with a twenty year boom economy fueled by colonial trade and wars, we have been unable to improve even the material condition of life. New appliances, yes, but not a better and more well-distributed housing stock, let alone a more humane urban - or rural - life. Now, reaching the point of exhaustion of our preferred position in colonial trade and in our current war, we are even faced with a threatened home market. Phase 2 will attempt to buy some protection for our faltering economy by means of a stabilized high rate of unemployment and tariff and monetary policies that endanger international relations. Phase 2 will buy time.

By November 13, Kissinger will have returned with news that China will accept limited trade initiatives, but that China, though wishing to avoid direct conflict with the U.S., will continue to back North Korea, North Vietnam, Pakistan and other nations receptive to her colonial needs.

By November 13, Indira Gandhi will have returned to Delhi from the U.S., assured that we do not want a third World War, but should it be necessary to war in the Indian peninsula, her country will receive the same unswerving colonialist aid we have given to South Vietnam.

Will China offer itself as a new colonial market to re-establish our economy? Will the other countries of the world heed our demand that they adjust in order to save our economy? When Phase 2 has received the time it bought - and little else - what then?

The rapid exhaustion of Phase 2 will necessitate some distinctive initiative on the part of the U.S. - externally or internally, new wars, or more governmental control, or new internal government and policy. That new government and policy may be a distinct shift to the right or to the left, to the suppression of rights and opportunities or to a new politics and economics building on the real and peaceful needs of mankind.



Better educational and research institutions for architecture and physical planning will be still-born until they stand in responsible relation to a more enlightened social program than we now possess. Rational discussion and practice of architecture, of man's relation to his physical environment, can always be undertaken, but those activities can only become improving, contributive research programs when they are linked to numerous and widely distributed programs of physical and social improvement.

Admittedly war and colonialism provide a massive base on which to build an economy.

But the societal support of a truly human life (adequate material resources, good health and education, an operationally and psychologically reinforcing environment, generous opportunities for self-development and self-realization, etc.) must also be a massive base for the construction of an operative world economy.

I say "must also be" because I have obviously gone beyond my political and economic competence. My first point is to ask the organizers of this conference to seek out further participants who can address the question:

How can the necessary large changes in the political and economic structure of the U.S. be affected in such a way as to prosper on the enterprise of providing "the societal support of a truly human life?"

Only when we have moved decisively in that direction will society need, and thus be willing to support the many devoted and careful inquiries that are needed to answer the numerous issues of method, physical design and professional education posed by the organizers of this conference. Only then will we really be free to examine such work as that of Cooper Union both for its own internal logic and in relation to many competing formulations.

Despite The Call For A New Societal Base, Architecture (read, any human enterprise) Must Be A Simultaneous Activity

I now wish to emphasize: I have been setting out why I think there must be a priority given to certain discussions at this time and, more specifically, at this conference. I do not, however, want this to imply that concerted studies of architecture, of man and his physical environment, past and present, are irrelevant to some envisioned new order. Whatever changes of politics or technology, many of the pieces of information and much of the methodology relating to the design, use and understanding of the environment will not change.



Although at any given moment we must direct our emphasis, I believe that both as individuals and as institutions we must maintain two related enterprises:

- 1) development and exploration of new understandings of architecture -- of alternative forms of the environment;
- 2) development and exploration of alternative societal policies - how these support or constrain the various needs and interests of individuals and communities and in turn support or constrain the potential contribution of those concerned with the form, use and meaning of the physical environment.

The relationship between 1) and 2) are part of both studies - past relationship as well as those that might pertain; and also the recognition that this is a two-way relationship, that new forms can be the latent environment and thus the stimulus for possible new social structures.

Consequently, under minimally reasonable societal conditions, devotion to the study of architecture is not intellectually unfruitful; but there are preconditions for both the cultivation of these studies and for the intelligent and humane employment of that knowledge. These are preconditions which for now claim priority in our deliberations.

How can architects contribute to a united action for a humane society in which the demands upon them would be more socially acceptable, more rational, and finally more contributive both in immediate environmental terms and in more long-range theoretical terms?

THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION:

The Inverted Gestalt Effects of the Recognition  
That Architecture Cannot Fulfill (Wrongly  
Conceived) Programs

Today's school of architecture: an institution composed of an interdisciplinary faculty and a student body achieving less than they would as individuals. An inverted gestalt effect -- the whole is less than the sum of the parts.

Perhaps this assessment is too pessimistic; perhaps it is not true of all schools; perhaps all schools rise above it on occasion. Still, the assessment is too appropriate to recent experience to be easily thrust aside.

What marks any experience of architectural education today is an enormous sense of lost energy. Available time and resources are not employed at all, or are squandered, because of a failure to advance on two vast questions: What is architecture? What is the relationship of architecture to society?

These questions were last answered with enthusiasm and some degree of consensus in the propagandized modernism of the first half of the twentieth century. Many of the ills of society, it was claimed, were caused by the filth and the confining quality of the existing physical environment. Modern architecture could give new form to the environment. It could achieve an openness and lightness which would result in a new life style and a new society. This criticism of the existing environment and this advocacy for the new environment shared a belief in architectural determinism. In a society attuned to simple, positivistic explanations, this propaganda that proposed causal links among observed evils and then promised causally linked improvements made strong claims on both architects and their public. (Survival through Design, Neutra) This was an enthusiasm on which to build institutions. Schools could adumbrate the rules internal to the movement. These rule systems could be intellectually examined for their own sake, but there was also the conviction that they would benefit society and thus be ever more widely accepted and employed.

During the 1950's and '60's critics both within the profession and without amply demonstrated that the asserted causal relationship could not be maintained. Especially prominent were the numerous new housing developments that now harbored worse social conditions than had the earlier environments.

In a society still committed both to social betterment and to a cosmology of cause-effect relationships, the failure of architectural deter-

minism discredited architecture. Within the profession and the schools, a vicious cycle of degeneration began. If architecture does not cause a better society, then one can take little interest in its internal workings. As architecture is understood ever less well it performs ever more poorly, justifying ever less concern with its claims for our attention. Architecture is irrelevant. The physical environment, it is said, has "little impact on the behavior patterns and values of people." (Gans)

Again reflecting the extant values of society, the most concerted attempts to reexamine the situation of man and the environment tend not toward a reexamination of architecture but toward a reconstruction of determinism.

On the one hand, it is suggested that the claims of architectural determinism were too global; if we adopt a very precise behaviorist analysis, we will detect the small scale relations of cause and effect and then be able to assemble larger deterministic environments.

As a complement to this behaviorism, the proper analysis of all cause-effect relationships, including architectural determinism, is sought by setting the physical environment into an analysis of the entire environmental system. From industrial dynamics to urban dynamics, and then: "Attention is now moving toward the ethical, moral and value systems which will be needed by society as it reaches an equilibrium with its environment." (Jorgen Randers of MIT "World Dynamics" Program)

That is, the controls of systems dynamics should permit a perfect

coordination of information and resources that will cause all desired effects and no undesired effects.

The methods of architecture are even more irrelevant to such a view of the world than is architecture itself. One might now abandon architecture on the assumption it has been superseded. Alternatively, architecture might be reexamined to see if it is either a model for, or an element of some other epistemology and praxis.

The defeat of architectural determinism owed much to the realization that even those architectural environments created under a determinist intent and with specific programs have supported human activities and organizations unpredicted by the designers. Although this is negative evidence that refutes architectural determinism, it may be part of the sea upon which much more interesting theories can be floated.

For example, the claim that R.D. Laing reasserts for architecture is perfectly consonant with those observations that refute architectural determinism:

The physical environment unremittingly offers possibilities of experiences, or curtails them. The fundamental human significance of architecture stems from this. The glory of Athens, as Pericles so lucidly stated, and the horror of so many features of the modern megalopolis is that the former enhances and the latter constricts man's consciousness.

We need an inquiry into "What is architecture?" This is not a barren and repetitive task. Such a task raises epistemological questions as

to how the entire inquiry will be conducted. It opens vast areas of study concerning the plasticity, the suggestiveness, and yet the limits of the relationship of man with his environment. These studies must include both analytic investigations and speculative experiments in the sense of the invention of new environmental conditions.

The work of people as different as Peter Eisenman, Charles Moore, Cedric Price, Maurice Smith and the Venturis are contributions to this investigation. Each of these positions and others deserve further development. We also need rigorous comparative studies of these proliferating interpretations of architecture. Finally, the comparison of these approaches to emerging theories and methods in the sciences may reveal that the defeat of architectural determinism was part of the defeat of determinism not the defeat of architecture or of the possibility of the unity of knowledge.

When the question of "What is architecture?" is pursued on such a broad front, it both permits and demands a simultaneous critique of society. Given new interpretations of the relationship of man with his environment, is society demanding what is destructive of the well-being of individuals or of society generally? In what ways? How can those demands be changed?

An enlightened speculation on the nature of architecture (such as the work of any of the individuals mentioned above), together with the internal developmental studies and the comparative, epistemological



and social inquires, is the program for a challenging education. However, learning through such research programs requires a sustained relationship that is difficult within the current structure of architectural schools. It is not just coincidence that all of the individuals named above have increasingly removed themselves from schools in order to explore alternative research and learning situations. The logic of this phenomenon strongly suggests that schools of architecture must innovate in who teaches how. A first suggestion would be that schools should be built around internal institutes or seminars, each of which would be devoted to a comprehensive research program (not just building materials, for example, but a theory of architecture that claims a close relationship between architecture and pragmatic conditions including materials; not just history of architecture, but a developed position that links historical and design inquiries; within the first of these examples one would have historians examining that program, while within the second example one would have technical experts contributing to its position).

Obviously, any school could support at most a limited number of such institutes. However, a student who has grasped the broad and complex relations of such a program can discover how to work contributively with others and, more importantly, is in an enhanced position to formulate his own comprehensive inquiry.

Finally, I append two more specific and thus more personal contributions that relate to what has just been advocated.

Under an initiating grant from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, I have been developing an epistemological and comparative study described as follows.

#### 1.1 RESEARCH PROGRAMS FOR DESIGN DISCIPLINES

**DESCRIPTION:** A theoretical study concerning the growth of knowledge in the design disciplines.

---

**BACKGROUND:** Architecture and other design disciplines commonly receive criticism for their failure to develop research programs and methodologies. Although this criticism is partially correct, the present study questions whether the apparent failing is not largely a phenomenon of misplaced expectations. There are two intellectual reasons for such misunderstandings. The first is that the principal record of architectural thought is invested in the physical world rather than in words. Even among architects -- not to mention society at large -- we have not developed a facility for comprehending and comparing alternative physical models. Secondly, the physical world of architecture is in no way a stable base against which to test alternative verbal theoretical formulations. There is not only the complexity of human perception and activity familiar to the social sciences, but also the fact that the architect is intent on the plasticity -- the future potential -- of the changing physical environment.

---

**OBJECTIVES:** This study seeks to clarify the problem of knowledge in architecture -- not through a diagrammatic reductionism but rather by a demonstration that within a complex situation, problem structures and research programs can be recognized and advanced.

---

**METHOD:** The study pursues an iterative course between epistemological and historical investigations. A theory of scientific research programs will be adapted to expand the awareness of -- and to more fully account for -- design enterprises. Selected design enterprises (e.g. the architecture of de Stijl, Le Corbusier's work with the concrete frame) will be examined as a heuristic for further revising the theories of design research programs.

---

**EXPECTED RESULTS:** Epistemological studies that propose a theory of how thought and physical formulations interact in design research programs. Historical studies developed as material for this type of theoretical inquiry. Suggestions as to how this work illuminates the practice and teaching of architecture.

## GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS FOR A SPECIFIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

At the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, we are engaged in a general analytic and design study of Streets as Elements of Urban Structure. As with any analysis or design, there is at least an implicit general understanding of architecture and man. An attempt to make that understanding more explicit and criticizable resulted in the following GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS.

## 1.2 GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS: MAN AND THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

### 1.2.0 Introduction

We cannot here resolve the perplexing questions of the relationship between the physical environment and human thought and behavior. Nevertheless, we cannot proceed without making certain assumptions about man and his environment.

### 1.2.1 Cultural Context, Societal Norms, and the Potential (Physical) Environment: Affective and Latent Environments

#### 1.2.1.0 Assumption: Cultural Context of the Environment

The form and use of the environment occur within a cultural context.

Physical form inevitably has both behavioral and cultural implications. Man's environment must necessarily be rich in meaning and association. Consequently, we stress the relation between the ideas and processes of a given culture as a whole and the formulation of its built artifacts (such as streets) as an element of this whole. Our fundamental orientation is contextual rather than reductivist.

Architects have not been wrong--too uncritical, no doubt, but not wrong--in asserting that the structure of the physical environment affects human development and social structure. Highly sensitized social critics such as R. D. Laing continue in the assertion of the basic argument:

The physical environment unremittingly offers possibilities of experiences, or curtails them. The fundamental human significance of architecture stems from this. The glory of Athens, as Pericles so lucidly stated, and the horror of so many features of the modern megalopolis is that the former enhances and the latter constricts man's consciousness.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, the sociologist Herbert Gans has been among those who have argued that the physical environment has "little impact on the behavior patterns and values of people."<sup>6</sup> Gans' basic argument addresses itself to priorities. His primary attack devolves upon economic, social, and political planners who deploy scarce resources for such questionable goals as new middle-class housing situated in urban areas where it must displace those with smaller resources and fewer opportunities.

Gans also questions, but only at a secondary level, whether the physical planning of such projects is advantageous even for those privileged to receive the new units.

There is little doubt that public planning must be reassessed. Yet, irrespective of that reassessment, current inadequacies and maldistributions, together with changing demands, will require that the physical environment be restructured. One can quickly demonstrate that even Gans would agree that it does matter what is restructured and how it is done.

Gans' program was to make planning more responsive to people's needs by adjusting a perceived imbalance among the many types of planners. He saw physical planners as powerful and elitist; consequently, he is tendentious about physical planning. Emphasizing his own differences with physical planners, Gans relates:

...when I studied people and committees, it turned out that their notion of the good life also had little to do with land uses, public facilities, and expressways; they were concerned about work, income, health, family, neighbors, friends, church, and, if they were homeowners, space, comfort, status, and property values.<sup>7</sup>

Gans' distinction between the concerns of planners and those of people relies heavily on the distinction between denotative words such as "work," "family," and "church," and an abstract term such as "land use." If "land use" is, for example, translated back to "schools" or "food shops," and thence to "education" and "food acquisition," we have items which are also of major concern to people. Conversely, within Gans' list of people's concerns, at least "space" is a central concern of physical planners. Finally, Gans would have to agree that people are not indifferent to the existence and location of expressways.<sup>8</sup> In sum, Gans insinuates a generic conflict between people and physical planners when, at most, his evidence suggests only that some planners are not sufficiently aware of the relationship of their abstract terms to the specific needs of people.<sup>9</sup>

Almost in spite of himself, Gans recurrently acknowledges the importance of physical planning. In an attack on those physical planners who support, and thereby extend, suburbia on the grounds that such arrangements constitute the societal norm, Gans asserts that some people prefer high-density urbanism. Clearly our society does not have a single norm, and one cannot allow for or realize such social choices without the development of physical alternatives.



operations described by Melvin Webber:

Rather than the design of physical layouts of cities, the city planning task is turning to the design of the fiscal and institutional arrangements that might then control the city-building process and to the designs for social services. The detailed decisions can be left to the consumer.<sup>12</sup>

#### 1.2.1.3

Assumption: Potential and Affective Environments

The physical environment is an arena for potential actions and interpretations. This "potential environment" is reinterpreted by each user, thus yielding his subjective environment--the environment that is affective for him. Among the many members of a society, the patterns of use and meaning interdependent with the physical environment yield an intersubjective "affective environment" (Diagram 1).

Returning to his example of the park, Gans argues

that it is not the park alone but the functions and meanings which the park has for the people who are exposed to it that affect the achievement or non-achievement of the planner's aims. The park proposed by the planner is only a potential environment; the social system and culture of the people who will use it determine to what extent the park becomes an effective environment. Without the park, the emotional and aesthetic benefits predicated by the planner cannot be made available, but without use of the park by the people for whom it is planned, these benefits cannot be achieved either.<sup>13</sup>

The present study adopts Gans' two terms, but uses "affective" rather than "effective" since the latter term suggests that the users' needs have been satisfied--a condition that may or may not have been achieved.

#### 1.2.1.4

Assumption: Multiple Affective Environments Deny Physical Determinism

Within the same physical place, different individuals have different affective environments. Similarly, the intersubjective affective environment of society changes over time without necessarily changing the physical form.

The concept of multiple affective environments implies both



operations described by Melvin Webber:

Rather than the design of physical layouts of cities, the city planning task is turning to the design of the fiscal and institutional arrangements that might then control the city-building process and to the designs for social services. The detailed decisions can be left to the consumer.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.2.1.3

Assumption: Potential and Affective Environments

The physical environment is an arena for potential actions and interpretations. This "potential environment" is reinterpreted by each user, thus yielding his subjective environment--the environment that is affective for him. Among the many members of a society, the patterns of use and meaning interdependent with the physical environment yield an intersubjective "affective environment" (Diagram 1).

Returning to his example of the park, Gans argues

that it is not the park alone but the functions and meanings which the park has for the people who are exposed to it that affect the achievement or non-achievement of the planner's aims. The park proposed by the planner is only a potential environment; the social system and culture of the people who will use it determine to what extent the park becomes an effective environment. Without the park, the emotional and aesthetic benefits predicated by the planner cannot be made available, but without use of the park by the people for whom it is planned, these benefits cannot be achieved either.<sup>13</sup>

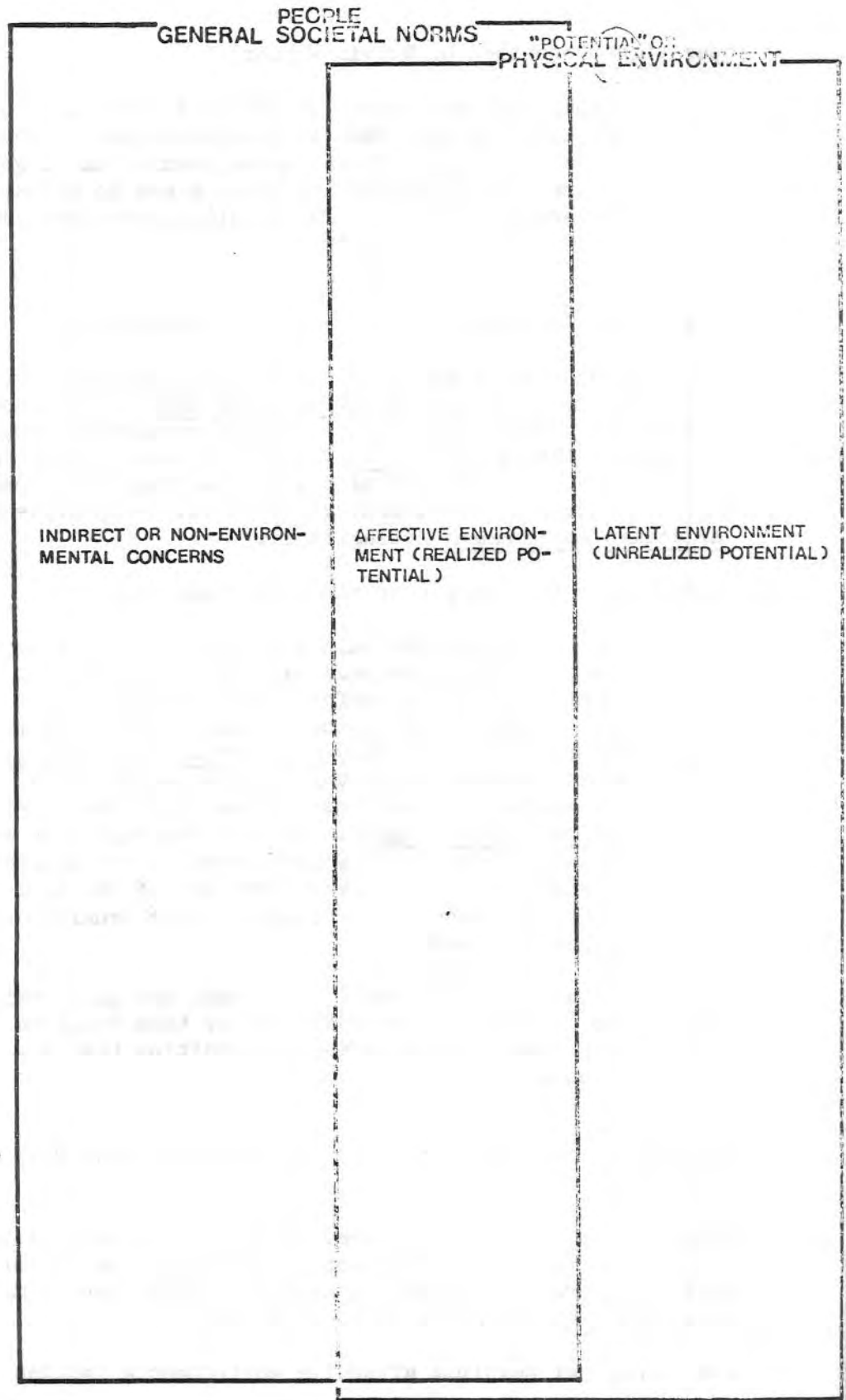
The present study adopts Gans' two terms, but uses "affective" rather than "effective" since the latter term suggests that the users' needs have been satisfied--a condition that may or may not have been achieved.

### 1.2.1.4

Assumption: Multiple Affective Environments Deny Physical Determinism

Within the same physical place, different individuals have different affective environments. Similarly, the intersubjective affective environment of society changes over time without necessarily changing the physical form.

The concept of multiple affective environments implies both



that human use and meaning are interdependent with the physical environment and that this is not a deterministic relation.

#### 1.2.1.5

Assumption: Implications for the Physical Environment: "Loose Fit" and the Unrealized Potential of the "Latent Environment"

Extending the implications of the last paragraph, multiple affective environments imply no strict relationship, but rather a "loose fit" among physical form (potential environment), use, and meaning. Within this loose fit, whatever is not realized in the affective environment is an "unrealized potential" of the environment in relation to society. This unrealized potential may be termed the latent environment (Diagram 1).

#### 1.2.1.6

Definitions

"Potential Environment." Physical environment, but holding in attention that the physical environment is an arena for possible human associations.

"Affective Environment." That version of the potential environment that is manifestly or implicitly adopted by users<sup>14</sup>; the societal conception of the man-made environment. (In this report, dealing with the communally shared space of the street, we will use "affective environment" in this intersubjective sense unless the context clearly indicates that we are referring to an individual's subjective affective environment.)

"Latent Environment." Those aspects of the potential environment that are not assimilated by society. "Latency" in the environment allows for societal change without physical change. Latency can be increased (or decreased) by physical change. Its availability and potential significance for society can be researched and communicated to society.

#### 1.2.1.7

Assumption: Environmental Interventions

1.2.2

1.2.3

The potential environment is altered only by physical change. Both the affective and latent environments can be altered by either societal or physical change.

#### 1.2.2

Non-Physical Intervention in Affective Environments

(Socio-cultural intervention in the affective environment leading to no physical change.)

### 1.2.2.0

#### Characteristics of the Intervention

The affective environment is "that version of the potential environment that is manifestly or implicitly adopted by users." As such, the affective environment can change with nothing more than a change in the attitude a user brings to the environment. Larger social interventions--e.g., the imposition or removal of martial law--may have dramatic effects upon how people perceive their environment. As users "manifestly or implicitly adopt" a different version of the potential environment, they may draw upon what was formerly latent in the environment or allow a previously realized aspect of the environment to lapse into latency. In this sense, the latent environment (the physical potential unrealized by society) shifts--increases or decreases without change in the physical environment (Diagram 2).

1.2.1.3

We discuss here the notion of social change without overt physical change. By our assumption of physical and social interdependence, any social change must have a concomitant physical change--though perhaps indirect. For example, if a user wearies of a piece of furniture, the user's affective environment will change, perhaps without immediate physical consequences. But over time the piece may not be maintained; it may be relocated, stored, or sold; or at least the user will not participate in the marketing of similar items.

### 1.2.2.1

#### Non-Physical Change and the Scope of This Study

The present study concerns change in the interactive socio-physical environment. Consequently, non-physical change is not the immediate subject of this report. Nevertheless, within this priority of change in the physical environment, it is important to recognize when non-physical, socio-cultural interventions are preferable.

### 1.2.2.2

#### General Notes

Nevertheless it is relevant to give some attention to non-physical change of the affective environment, since physical change will be accompanied by such phenomena.

Very general societal norms influence the perception of the environment: e.g., what are the cultural standards for public/private relationships, for neighboring, for racial integration, for distribution of resources? Different responses to such issues will lead one to perceive a physically sound suburb, for example, in very different ways.

From such general norms, the mediating steps of political, social, and economic policy may appear to have an even more direct influence on the affective environment: personal economic security, for example, may lead one to perceive the entire city as more hospitable.

Ordinarily, it is argued that these cultural norms and values (and their implications for policy and action) channel our attitudes about the environment. However, the argument is also reversed at times: there are those who argue that the increasing fragmentation and discontinuity of our physical environment is properly leading where we should allow our sensibilities to follow. Such an attitude allows the maintenance of a positive attitude (an agreeable sense of affective environment) to the changing potential environment. At the same time, some planners concern themselves with preservation. Historical information and positive analyses of existing physical form are then broadcast in the hope of stimulating a sense of environmental well-being, thereby saving historic districts.

In such ways, without any action upon the potential environment, a single piece of information or a metaphysical theory may lead an individual or a large collective to a radically different conception of their affective environments.

Other considerations of non-physical change in the affective environment appear in 2.2.

### 1.2.3

#### Socio-Physical Interventions with Social Emphasis: Instrumental Environments

##### 1.2.3.0

##### Introduction

This section and the next examine physical change in the environment. This section directs attention to interventions primarily motivated by social concern: either the amelioration of local problems or the structural reform of society. Section 1.2.4 looks at physical planning more abstractly, at the possibility that critically assessed restructurings of the potential environment may serve society and users in a no less fruitful way. Thus, despite the shift in emphasis, both sections examine socio-physical interventions.

The subject matter of these two sections cannot be held in strict separation: both approaches alter the physical elements of the environment and in so doing induce accretions to, and restructurings of, the environment. However, the first approach--the ambition to fit the environment to societal



programs--is instrumental, treating the potential environment like a tool; an analogy for this approach is the adaptation of an artifact--the fitting of a better handle to a tool, for example. The second approach begins from an order (not necessarily a severe order), seeking to invest that order with a structure that is well adapted to a broader range of uses and meanings (Diagram 2).

### 1.2.3.1

#### "User-Orientation" and Instrumental Environments

Only users of environments can report on affective environments. Consequently, the decision to approach the potential environment only as it is known and criticized by reports of affective environments must direct the planners' attention to specific uses.

Gans proposes, for example: "Planning must be user-oriented; the goals which planners work toward must relate to the behavior patterns and values of the people for whom they are planning, and not their own values."<sup>15</sup>

a. Interventions Keyed to "User-Orientation". According to this approach, the values and behavior patterns of users themselves must guide the planning objectives set by planners or by the users themselves.

i. Amelioration of Social Problems: In the analysis of values and behavior patterns, the planner may take a modest, pluralistic position, attempting to be open to all values--seeking at most to ameliorate problems of the social condition. This is the tendency of Gans' statement. Such value-free analysis is, strictly, not possible; but the approach to it is necessary if "user-oriented" means the user as found rather than a transformed user (Diagram 2).

ii. Structural Reform of Society: The socio-political planner may take the attitude that society's (and most individual users') values must be fundamentally reformed before significant studies of behavior patterns and environment can be implemented.

If this attitude is adopted, the planner again begins with non-physical intervention in the affective environment; however, the initial intent or impact may be to increase dissatisfaction with the affective environment and thus require further structural reforms in behavior and in the potential environment (Diagram 2).



b. Instrumental Environments. In either case of user-orientation (whether one accepts or attempts to alter people's values), it is assumed that one can work toward an efficiently geared environment if only one knows the program. Because the potential environment is only physical matter, it is conceived as a mere tool in the service of human needs. The principal ambition is that it be a good tool, serving the users' needs well and efficiently (as those may be defined by the users' values).

i. Adaptation of the Artifact. "User-orientation" joined with an uncritical attitude to values encourages a modest instrumental approach to physical change.

If at all possible the potential environment is simply "tuned up"; the existing artifact is adapted, as locally as possible, to remove any discord between the users' immediate felt needs and their physical setting (Diagram 2 - see a.i. above).

ii. Restructuring or Reformulation of Environment. "User-orientation" joined with a structural change in people's values may disjoint their affective environment and thus be seen to have equally radical (but again instrumental) implications for change of the potential environment (Diagram 2 - see a.ii. above).

Such proposals for radical change of the potential environment may suggest either the restructuring of existing forms or formulation of new physical environments. The obvious exception to the instrumental tendency of this approach is when the advocated value system includes a non-instrumental attitude to the environment--this is the subject of Section 1.2.4.

c. User-Generated Environments. The preceding commentary on "user-oriented" planning for adjustment of the affective environment applies also to "user-generated" interventions.

"User-generated" planning (users acting directly in the change of the physical environment and without a professional planner) also has instrumentalist implications. Such communitarian design works from certain initiating individuals employing i) extant or ii) innovative models and methods.

d. Assumption. Limits of Instrumentalism. There are inherent limitations in the attempt to satisfy problems of users' affective environments through instrumental manipulation of the physical environment (and of values, if that is the case).

i. Limits of Information. Beyond a local "trial and error" adaptation of the artifact, an instrumental approach requires certain information. There may be inherent limitations in gaining this information; there are at least serious problems in the "state of the art:" problems of how to discover, record, communicate, aggregate and compare people's values and behavior patterns; problems of correlating this information with people's affective environments; problems of correlating all the preceding factors with the potential environment; recycling all these problems with reference to proposed changes in values or in the physical environment.

ii. Limitations of the Situation: Conflict and Change. Even very homogeneous societies contain users with conflicting value systems. Heterogeneous societies are more the norm and intensify the co-present differences of values and behavior; the same individual changes over time; the same physical space receives different individuals over time.

iii. Success of Instrumentalism Would Be Coercive of Society. A successful instrumentalist environment must provide perfect operating conditions for its users. If that environment is static, it would have to hold its users in a constant state; alternatively, this new environment could be as adaptive physically as are the users in their thoughts and actions.

Holding people in a constant state in the interest of having a well-tuned instrumentalist affective environment is clearly an unacceptable totalitarian proposition. The goal of a constantly and perfectly adaptive environment can be rejected for two reasons: on a theoretical level, the total subjectivism of an environment that accedes to every whim of the user is socially destructive;<sup>16</sup> on a practical level, it is a goal that cannot be approximated.

However, even would-be instrumentalist designers have not "locked" people into one perfectly fitted artifact; the "loose-fit" characteristic of the potential environment and the "latent environment" prevent such closure.

We then propose to examine these phenomena in the next section.

## 1.2.4

Socio-Physical Interventions with Emphasis on Physical Change:  
Socially Interactive Potential Environments

## 1.2.4.0

## Introduction

This section examines physical intervention in the environment. According to our assumption of interdependency of physical and social factors, we refer to "socio-physical interventions" but distinguish approaches quite different from those discussed in the last chapter.

## 1.2.4.1

## Physical Intervention and Non-Instrumental Environments

Approaching the physical or potential environment directly, immediate emphasis accrues to its possible forms and organizations, and to the ways in which these can sustain human activities and values.

The concepts of "potential environment" and "affective environment" assert that environments are used variously and unexpectedly and thus imply both a "loose fit" relationship between the form and use of the environment and the existence of a "latent (unrealized potential) environment." These characteristics of the environment can be purposively explored for their relation both to pragmatic and conceptual concerns.

a. Assumptions. Interventions Keyed to Interactive Physical Form. According to this approach, contributions to the stock of loose-fit environments and to latency in the environment can be socially positive through meeting current needs and opening, rather than foreclosing, alternative uses and meanings.

i. Socio-Cultural Ramifications of Architectural Form. Within this exploration of interactive physical form, the planner may give special attention to socio-cultural relationships and, in this societal sense, be "user-oriented".

Many architects such as Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn have examined societal values, patterns of use, and even specific activities in order to make proposals which attempt to integrate social and physical environmental issues. These architects make user-orientation into a postulative rather than descriptive concept--attempting to anticipate what can serve man better. Such ambitions have great potential; they

also risk outright error and ineffectiveness through societal conservation. Consequently, the contribution of such designers is often a physical environment which initially provides (1) a much-questioned affective environment, (2) a larger contribution to the latent (unrealized potential) environment than the designer had intended, and (3) a smaller impact on social values than expected. Despite these limitations, such proposals do provide innovative forms and societal potential that is a continuous opportunity for societal re-examination and change.

Although such architects have often resisted criticism and the opportunity to advance through that criticism, it is also true that much criticism has been based on the critics' erroneous expectations of instrumental environments rather than mutually adaptive environments with ambiguities of association and meaning.

Such programs for socially adaptive physical form may be directed to either a restructuring of existing environments or to a formulation of new physical environments (Diagram 2).

ii. Latent Environments for Possible Unprogrammed Realization in the Affective Environment. The planner may be primarily concerned with the abstraction of possible physical environments--with development of the latent environment for its possible unprogrammed realization in the affective environment.

In this case, the initial form postulations are various ordering systems devoid of explicit use reference. Use enters by programmatic questions that guide the choice among ordering systems and again when the environment receives the flux of use. This approach fundamentally rests on the notion that there are open structures of form relationships that are more responsive to changing societal needs than is an environment that was geared to a special situation (Diagram 2).

b. Assumptions. Socially Interactive Physical Environments. In either case (whether a socio-cultural or direct physical approach), the environment is seen as a complex interactive entity within the cultural context--not a mere instrument serving a culture that is wholly defined elsewhere.

This approach gives full attention to the affective, nurturing qualities of the physical environment: "Physical and social



structure are embedded in one another and have reciprocal influences upon one another--not a one-way cause and effect relationship."

The latent environment and "loose fit" among form, use, and meaning permit the relatively fixed physical environment to meet the difficulties of inadequate information and of societal change and conflict listed at Section 1.2.3.1d. These relationships permit human innovation without constant re-tooling of the environment.

Development toward a "tight fit" of the environment and behavior is resisted since this would imply the exhaustion of the latent environment and thus no further change or adaptability within the existing physical environment.

On the other hand, the concept of "loose fit" should not be pushed to the point of universal indifference about inter-relationships of form, use, and meaning. The concept of a universally efficient "affective environment"--an environment that would accept any use--is also the concept of an "impotent environment"--an environment that provides no stimulus to use. Creative use may even be inhibited. Surroundings that move toward a sensuous neutrality are not, after all, failing of impact. Such spaces impose sets of physical and psychological constraints and are particularly weak in terms of reinterpretation and adaptation.

c. Assumption. Either design initiative or aberrant use can stimulate innovative revisions. The approach to the affective environment through physical planning encourages consideration of innovative environments suggested by the design initiative of an individual (the planner or others) or by aberrant, unexpected use. Such innovations might not have arisen from sociological "user-oriented" studies, but nevertheless can later come to be generally valued. While descriptive sociology may be indispensable for framing the problem, the exceptional acts mentioned here are critical for any programmatic research that seeks to do more than ameliorate environmental problems. A concomitant responsibility is the monitoring of such experiments.

d. Assumption. From Latent Environment to Artifact. In the end, even a fully planned environment, flooded by many users' "affective environments", transforms into a communitarian artifact: an object that is "a result of human action but not of human design".

At the scale of the city or parts of a city, many users create almost equally many affective environments; over time some of these users participate in shaping the potential environment.

c.4)

1.2.4)

Such a cumulatively shaped environment is an artifact in the stricter sense of that term: "a result of human action but not of human design."<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.2.4.2

##### Summary

This study is primarily concerned with the planning of interventions as set out in this section. Physical interventions instrumentally serving social programs fail to meet our assumption of physical and social interdependence. This is, however, not to say that these other approaches are irrelevant. Both the proposals for non-physical, socio-cultural change and the proposals for reform of society can be powerful heuristics for conceiving new forms. The modest programs of adapting existing artifacts can be appropriate once the socio-physical context has been understood and the tuning of the status quo has been critically adopted.

1.2.3

1.2.2

1.2.3.1

#### 1.2.5

##### Techniques

In this study, attention is concentrated on the relations of man and the physical environment within a cultural context. Especially at this general level, we give only selective attention to physical technology (transport, construction, etc.) and to administrative techniques (codes, regulations, etc.).

This is basically an instrumental decision to allow us to maintain our socio-physical emphasis. However, the decision does also harbor a theoretical position: the rejection of technical means as the determinant of social goals. We acknowledge that the entire physical environment can be viewed as the result of technological actions. Nevertheless, initially we prefer to ask what technology should do for us rather than what technology suggests we should do. The recent rejection of the supersonic transport plane is the most striking instance to date of the reversal of the usual American willingness to accept "technological progress" as preordained. We would allow such questioning to extend to more prosaic technologies such as the automobile.<sup>18</sup> (But see Section 1.4.5.)



.2.4.10

(1.3)

1.3 ASSUMPTIONS FOR FRAMING PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES RELATING TO THE AFFECTIVE AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

1.3.0

Introduction

The affective environment can be changed by action on either the social or the physical environment. This section reviews and diagrams five types of environmental interventions; it then sets out a structure for analysis problems and objectives relating to the environment.

(1.2)

1.3.1

Five Types of Planning Intervention for Change of the Affective Environment (See Diagram 2)

Non Physical intervention

1. Socio-cultural intervention in the affective environment leading to no overt physical change.

(1.2.2)

Socio-Physical intervention with social emphasis

2. Social amelioration leading to adaptation of the artifact.

(1.2.3)

3. Structural reform of society leading to environmental

re-structuring

(1.2.3)

or

re-formulation

Socio-Physical intervention with physical emphasis

4. Physical re-structuring

or

re-formulation

of the environment with socio-cultural orientation.

(1.2.4)

5. Postulation of latent environments for possible unprogrammed realization in the affective environment.

(1.2.4)

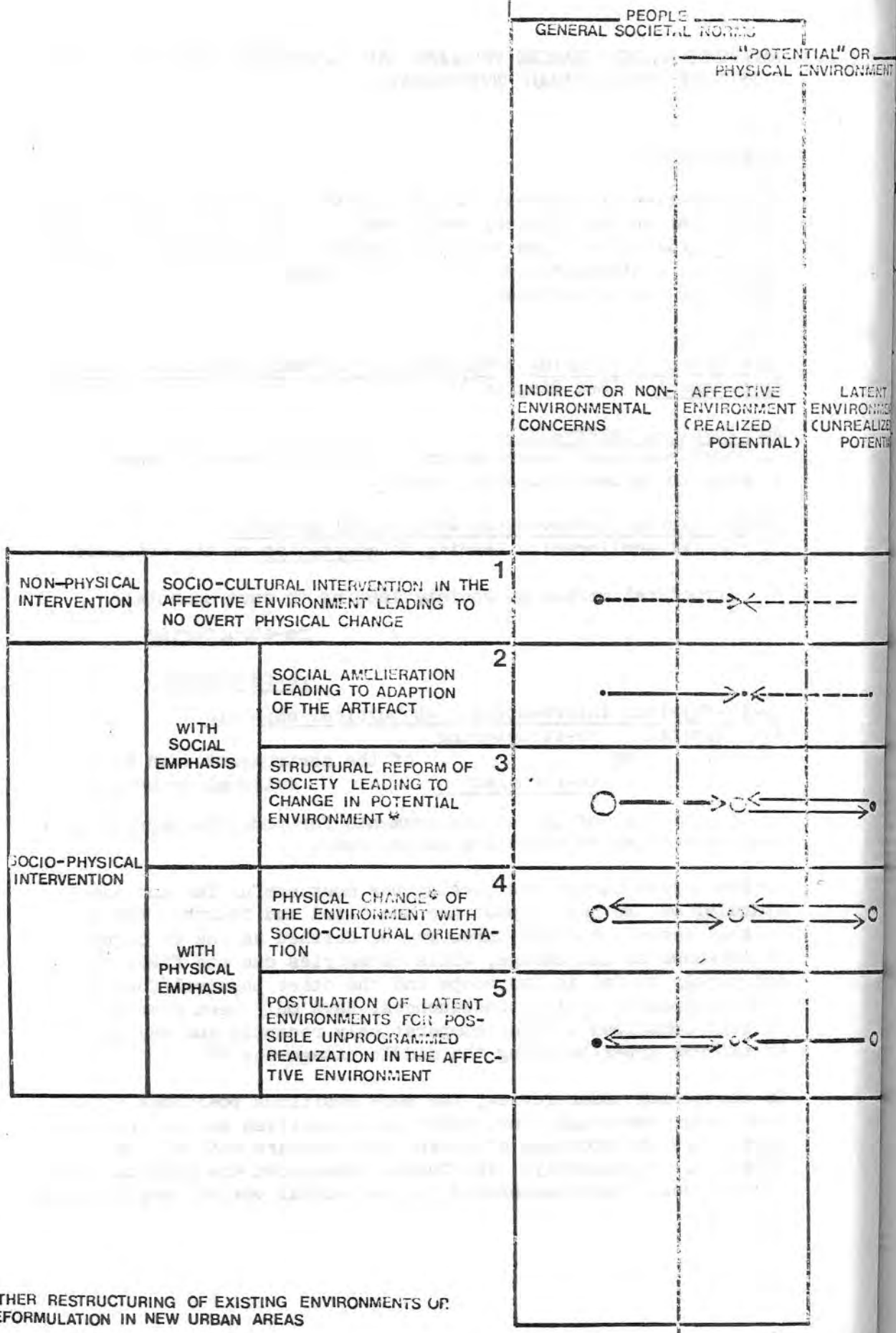
Of these five categories perhaps the most useful for an understanding of the recent past are the third and fourth: the difference between two and three may be defined as one of degree of intended social change, while categories one and five, the one purely social in its scope and the other physical/formal with unexplored social consequences, have only been developed as self-conscious methods comparatively recently and may be seen as extreme types bounding the middle categories.<sup>20</sup>

In the period under review, the more ambitious positions classified under three and four, those sub-classified as re-formulation, were the province of social philosophers and architectural idealists respectively. The former understood the physical and environmental implications of the new social worlds they invented

2.3

2.2

2.3.1



• EITHER RESTRUCTURING OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTS OR REFORMULATION IN NEW URBAN AREAS

or strived to realize, and even went further to say that the physical building of these worlds in architectural and urban form would, through the effects of the new environment on the user tend to generate their desired society. The latter proposed new spatial and formal orders for cities, types of a new environment that of themselves were conceived as social condensers--the agents of social change. The two more moderate positions concerning the re-structuring of society or the physical order were perhaps the most typical modes of intervention, and remain to planners and society alike, the most acceptable procedures.

Diagram 2 gives a graphic representation to these modes of intervention. At the right the two sets of social and physical environments are intersected to yield the common sub-set of the "affective environment" and also the sub-set of the latent environment (as in Diagram 1). These boxes are cross cut by the five interventions. The dots and arrows at the right are interpreted as follows:

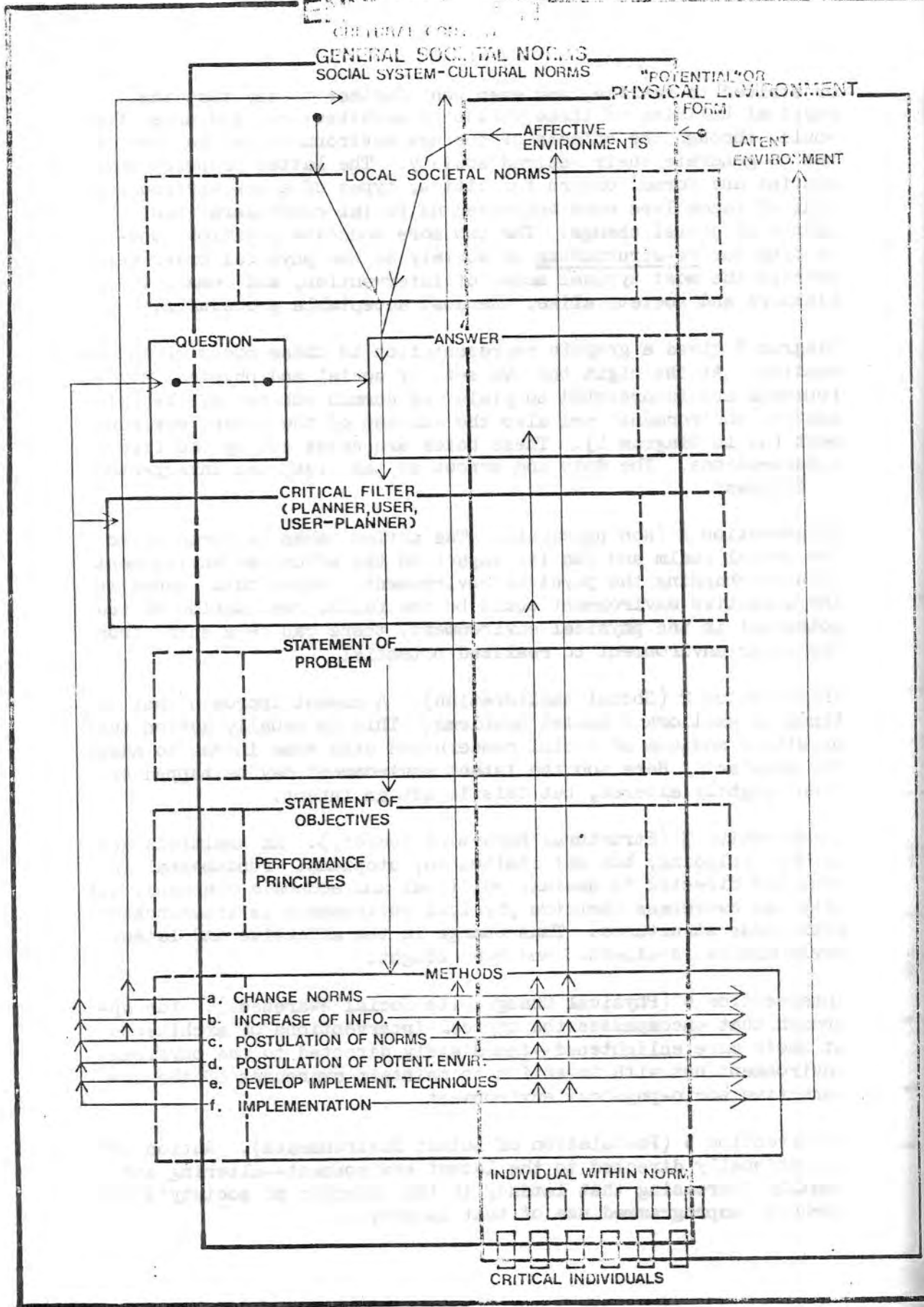
Intervention 1 (Non-physical). The action taken is directed to the social realm and has its impact on the affective environment without changing the physical environment. Since this change in the affective environment could be the fuller realization of the potential in the physical environment, there can be a shift from the later environment to realized potential.

Intervention 2 (Social amelioration). A modest approach that intends to ameliorate social problems. This is usually action taken with a modicum of social concern and with some intent to adapt the artifact. Here too the latent environment may be tapped or even slightly altered, but this is not an intent.

Intervention 3 (Structural Reform of Society). An ambitious approach including, but not limited to, utopians. Fundamental intentions directed to social, political and economic concerns, but with the awareness that the physical environment is interlocked with these structures. Thus change in the affective and latent environments is expected and even sought.

Intervention 4 (Physical Change with Social Awareness). The approach that encompasses the typical interventions of architects at their more enlightened--immediately directed to the physical environment but with intention to maintain awareness of the interactive socio-physical environment.

Intervention 5 (Postulation of Latent Environments). Action is intentionally directed to the latent environment--altering and usually increasing that latency in the interest of society's uncoerced, unprogrammed use of that latency.





## 1.3.2

Relating To The Physical ("Potential") Environment.

Diagram 3 sets out the terminology and schematic problem structures of this report. The social and physical environment set are now cut across at different stages of problem formulation.

Starting from the dots at the top, we assume there is some information available about both the social and physical environments. Assuming there is some question--and perhaps even a question that breaks out of the societal norms--information, perhaps somewhat distorted by local societal norms, is assembled to permit an answer to the question. The answer will usually be an account of how things are not why, or how they might be different. Such a descriptive answer is the point where social science often chooses to stop in order to avoid the dangers of supporting a program naively. For example, if the question asked about the state or degree of continuity in the affective environment, the answer might be marked by information of an ambiguous kind: different attitudes toward continuity, different reports as to its existence or its character, varying reports as to trends affecting continuity.

All this information may not indicate any action. However, if the questioner has, or develops, his own critical attitude, he will quite probably perceive (according to his values) some problem. From all the preceding information, and in recognition of his value structure, the questioner (be he planner, user, etc.) can formulate certain objectives relative to say, continuity in the environment. If these objectives are employed and found to be effective, they may come to be termed performance principles.

Given background information, a problem, and objectives or performance principles, the questioner can develop or adapt various methods for achieving his objectives. Some notable methods are shown: a) Change norms; e.g., if there is a felt loss of continuity, new values are taught which extol loss of continuity, or b) more information is put into the environment in the belief that current dissatisfaction represents lack of information rather than a challenge to values. Postulation of c) new norms or of d) new potential environment may be attempted as resolutions of the problem. Whether the desired action is innovative or not, there may be a need for e) new techniques of implementation, and finally f) the decision and effort of implementation itself.

The arrows indicate the possible feedback from each of these methods to earlier phases of the question and problem structure. The arrows occur within the realm of the physical environment, the affective environment, or outside the cultural norms in order to indicate that this information may be recycled as socially "unadopted" artifacts, as new realization within the affective

(1.3.2)

environment (relying either on social or physical impetus), or as a challenging proposal working outside the accepted tenets of society.

(1.4)

In the following Section, general assumptions concerning the street environment are set out which objectify the hypotheses and "critical filter" of this report.

Section 1.5 finally programs a series of problems, objectives and methods for the study.



## Footnotes: Part 1

- (1.4)
1. Charles Thomsen of the Department of Housing and Urban Development transmitted information on Louis Kahn's speech during the time of preparation of this report.
  2. The activities and writings of those who are critical of recent political and social developments, often to the point of complete disaffection, embody implicit or explicit dismissals of the designing, planning, managing mentality of contemporary institutions. For a selection of such writings, see Joseph Berke, ed., Counter Cultures (London: Peter Owens, 1969).
  3. See Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave, eds., Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 91 ff.
  4. See S. Anderson, "Environment as Artifact: Methodological Implications," Casabella, in press.
  5. R. D. Laing, The Politics of Experience (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 28.
  6. Herbert Gans, People and Plans (New York: Basic Books, 1968), p. ix.
  7. Ibid., p. 1.
  8. For a notable example in Cambridge, Mass., see Robert Goodman. After the Planners/An Architecture for Liberation, in press.
  9. With some expansion and revision, we can accept a list similar to that which Gans proposes as an accounting of the primary concerns of people. There are anomalies in Gans' list: He names places (church), activities (work), and relations (neighbors). We would accept a list without reference to place not because we want to dismiss physical correlates but because such a list is an encouragement to remain open to new possibilities for the physical environment. Either way, "schools" or "education" seems a glaring omission from the list even if Gans does have an antipathy to public facilities. Finally, Gans' priority for people's concern with status over the community's concern with public facilities (schools, libraries, parks) seems to push an individualist polemic to the point where it no longer corresponds to sociological reality.
  10. Gans, People and Plans, p. 5.

## Footnotes: Part 1

11. Idem.
12. Melvin M. Webber, "Planning in an Environment of Change," Town Planning Review (1969).
13. Gans. People and Places, p. 6.
14. Adapted from Gans, idem.
15. Ibid., p. ix.
16. Robin Fox, in an unpublished paper, "The Cultural Animal," offers one reason for some stability in the environment: "Even if a species sheds its dependence on instincts it still has to get done the same things that instincts were designed to do. To put it into our language, culture has to do the same job as instinct had been doing....Because to get culture to do the same job as instinct had been doing, one had to make cultural behavior in many ways like instinctive behavior. It had to be unconscious so that it did not require thought for its operation; it had to be automatic so that certain stimuli would automatically produce it; it had to be common to all members of the population....the vast majority of our behavior is at the unthinking, automatic response level."
17. F. A. Hayek Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), pp. 96-105. With relation to the physical environment, see S. Anderson, "Environment as Artifact," op. cit.
18. See Philip Slater, The Pursuit of Loneliness (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
19. These comments should not be understood as dismissal of the "purely" social or physical. An overriding concern with a social problem is surely necessary under certain conditions; at most one would encourage that this concern not lose sight of what inadvertent and indirect consequences it may have for the physical environment. The restructuring of the latent environment, the non-instrumental physical environment, is even closer to the interests of this report and is further discussed at 1.2.4 and, with another inflection, at 4.1.
20. Melvin M. Webber, "Planning in an Environment of Change," op. cit.