Picking Up Stones: Design Research and Urban Settlement
Malcolm Miles

Introduction

What is the relationship of design research to the methodology of urban design? This paper analyses the methodologies of city planning and design, and their assumptions about power and value and the place of urban dwellers; it introduces the critical framework of French cultural theorist Henri Lefebvre[1] and refers to a Cartesian subjectivity taken as definitive of modernity. Secondly, four cases of design research—two concerning the UK, Williamson[2] and Robbins,[3] one from the Netherlands, ter Heide and Wijnbelt,[4] and one from the USA, Loukaitou-Sideris[5]—are examined. The paper asks whether research replicates or challenges assumptions derived from the conventional methodologies of disciplines such as urban planning and architectural design. Thirdly, alternative models of urban settlement are noted and alternative possibilities sketched.

It is helpful to investigate this today because a majority of the human inhabitants of the earth will soon dwell in large urban concentrations, many in the "informal settlements" which surround the cities of the southern hemisphere,[6] and because the history of the Western (white, modern) city exhibits an increasing dysfunctionality; its replication throughout the world is a form of economic colonialism. Although the literature of urbanism has equivalents of war stories for a masculine sensibility, [7] the violence on which they are based is neither a fantasy nor an anomaly in the post-war history of urban development, as demonstrated by Marshall Berman's [8] account of road building in New York in the 1950s. This institutionalized brutality is more than the marginalization of publics by enclaved urban development. It begins in a methodology which splits dwellers' experiences of urban living from the conceptualization of "the city" in the minds and graphic representations of planners, architects, and designers—which allows a disparity between representation and reality.

While the representation may be Utopian, the experience can be chaotic. Berman writes of Robert Moses, who as City and Parks Commissioner redefined New York as a network of fast roads, that he "seemed to glory in the devastation" [9] but that he "genuinely loved New York." [10] This contradiction requires explanation. Do the methodologies of urban planning and architectural design facilitate it?

1   Henri Lefebvre, *The Production Of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

2   C. Williamson, "Urban Design in Central Milton Keynes: 25 Years on from the Masterplan," *Urban Design International* 1:4 (December, 1996): 335–356.

3   E. Robbins, "Thinking Space/Seeing Space: Thamesmead Revisited," *Urban Design International* 1:3 (September 1996): 283–91.

4   H. ter Heide and D. Wijnbelt, "To Know and to Make: The Link Between Research and Urban Design," *Journal of Urban Design* 1:1 (February, 1996): 75–90.

5   A. Loukatia-Sideris, "Cracks in the City: Addressing the Constraints and Potentials of Urban Design," *Journal of Urban Design* 1:1 (February, 1996): 91–102.

6   E. Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 128; and T. Angotti, *Metropolis 2000* (London: Routledge, 1993), 28; A. Goldberg, "The Birds Have Nested: Design Direction for Informal Settlements," *Urban Design International* 1:1 (March, 1996): 3–15. Also J. Beall, *A City for All* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 39.

7   M. Davis, *City of Quartz* (London: Verso, 1990); L. Woods, "Everyday War" in P. Lang, ed., *Mortal City* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), 46–53.

8   M. Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (London: Verso, 1983).

9   Ibid., 293.

10 Ibid., 307.
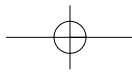
The Dominant Methodology—Drawing a Line

Architects design the facades of buildings by drawing lines on sheets of paper, just as planners design cities by drawing lines on maps. At the simplest level, these acts both use the medium of an abstract space. That medium (and its graphic articulation) is retained whatever complexity is added by reference to various kinds of information. But the act of drawing a line also is a metaphor and stands for a reduction of the world to its representation. As representation, the world can be controlled absolutely, a figment of imagination the reality of which is in the mental life of its conceiver. Reductive representation is radically different from expressions of urban experience or the appropriation by dwellers of urban spaces. It is through representation in an abstract medium that the Cartesian division of subject—the "I" of the designer—and object—that which is designed in space—is enabled. This separation is produced in a disintegrated subjectivity, and replicated as urban fragmentation. It is not so surprising, then, that Moses could conceptualize New York as a network of freeways and seem oblivious to the destructive impact of his plans on some urban publics.
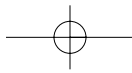
Moses and New York

Moses, in his old age, was driven up and down Long Island in his limousine, fantasizing a hundred-mile ocean drive, or a bridge to join Long Island with Rhode Island. Berman grants Moses historical stature in his ability to persuade people "that he was the vehicle of impersonal world-historical forces, the moving spirit of modernity,…" [11] and sees in him a grandeur which stands for the heroic but hollow aspect of modernity. Yet he likens him or his works—it is not quite clear—to Moloch, the destructive force of the modernist city in Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl." Berman argues that resistance to Moloch requires a "modernist vocabulary of opposition" through which to show "that this was not the only possible modern world" [12] and recalls his own participation in protest against some of the urban development for which Moses was responsible.

Earlier, Berman cites edifices such as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, and the Rockefeller Center as symbolic expressions of modernity. Each, it could be argued, states a kind of freedom. The same progressive spirit informs Moses' work; except that Moses had a dynamic model of the future featuring fast-moving automobiles, and that he inscribed his schemes on an extant urban fabric. Moses, who was able to read the federal agenda and bring into New York's development vast federal funds, had a singular approach to this: "When you operate in an over built metropolis, you have to hack your way with a meat ax." When asked if there might be human problems, he responded: "There's very little hardship in the thing. There's a little discomfort and even that is exaggerated." Berman remembers seeing his neighborhood destroyed for ten years from 1953 by the making of the South Bronx Express-

11   Ibid., 294.
12   Ibid., 313.
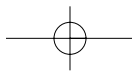
way, and his particular grief at the destruction in its path of one of the loveliest art deco apartment buildings on Grand Concourse. He writes of the dismay of Jews that a fellow-Jew could do this to them, of disillusionment when the government which made the New Deal failed to stop the blasting through of a road which displaced 60,000 working- and lower-middle-class Jews, Italians, Irish, and African Americans from their homes. Further destruction followed the expressway's completion, when the noise and dirt generated by the road caused the desolation of adjoining spaces and a second outflow of population. The commercial fabric of the area was destroyed as office blocks were demolished, the market burnt down, and business outlets isolated from their customers went broke.

What emerges from Berman's text is a contrast between grand schemes and the experiences of those who found themselves in the way. The former deal in broad gestures, the latter in specific memories. But this is a historically specific kind of urban development in which the American dream is translated as the freedom to build for money and the freedom to drive; it involves the binding together of the city and its environs as a unified entity. Residual landscape and residual settlement are welded into a new, Utopian vision of a clean city which, no doubt, looked terrific in plans. Those who rejected it were invited to leave.

Moses acknowledged the planned city of the Enlightenment and Haussmann's approach to urban design. The inevitability he claimed for the production of a city symbolic of middle-class desires for purity is still claimed by developers, though today schemes are more likely to be driven by private than public sector interests, as in the gentrification of SoHo.[13] Mayor Koch, in the 1980s, updated Moses' call for the disaffected to leave, stating, "If you can't afford to live here, move out."[14]

The perfectionism of Moses' plans is evident from the beginning of his career in the 1920s and can be seen in his project for Jones Beach Park. Berman notes the clean sweep of the landscape design, punctuated only by a water tower at its center and two art deco bathhouses, and asks what a Jones Beach of the mind would be like in its "Apollonian clarity."[15] That clarity, which is the Utopian aspect of modernist design, privileges the visual over other kinds of sensation. Similarly, the bridges and expressways "created a series of spectacular new visual approaches to the city, displaying the grandeur of Manhattan from many new angles."[16] Geographer Doreen Massey links a privileging of the visual to a kind of masculinity which involves mastery and detachment.[17] Perhaps this helps to explain the contradiction between Moses' love of New York and his relegation of specific publics to irrelevance.

The approach to urban development exemplified by Moses' work depends on the medium of visual representation according to certain rules, such as those of linear perspective, which, in themselves, unify the design. The conventional urban plan assumes a
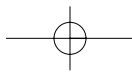
13   S. Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989).
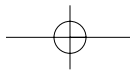
14   M. Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint" in *If You Lived Here,* B. Wallis, ed. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 15–44.

15   Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air,* 297.

16   Ibid., 301.

17   D. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1994), 223–4.

viewpoint above the city, that is, in the site of God's eye in traditional iconology, the position of omniscience and omnipotence. Some popular images of cities, such as the tourist postcard, take a distant viewpoint, producing a seemingly coherent, even characteristic, skyline. Seeing the city from afar or above, as Michel de Certeau experiences from the top of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, turns it into an abstraction "immobilized before the eyes." [18] In the remoteness of the view, the exclusion of sounds, smells, and tactile qualities, is a distancing which allows a perception of unity; the same distancing, at a conceptual level, enables the suppression of individual experiences of dwelling and the recognition of their diversity as conditions of city development.

Spatial Practices—Lefebvre and Descartes

The God's eye viewpoint of the city plan is, then, a metaphor for a position of power, and is in its utilization by urban planners a position of real power to conceptualize the city and implement their concept through civic institutions, a process in which the dominance of professionals over non-professional "users" is affirmed through the opacity of the planning process, the exclusivity of technical language, and the unavailability of information to those who might object. Urban dysfunctionality follows from this separation of concept and everyday life, and, in an increasingly institutionalized society, from the replication of this model even when it has evidently failed. Jürgen Habermas argues that bureaucratization increases the autonomy of professional experts,[19] and Ivan Illich holds that the redress for failure is a reapplication of the failed approach, so that "the cure for bad management is more management" and that the failure of research to produce solutions leads to "more costly interdisciplinary research." [20] This raises the question: does design research escalate the problems caused by design?

In order to answer this, it is necessary to formulate a critique of conventional practices in planning and design. Lefebvre offers a theoretical framework through which to do this, and links dominant spatial practices to Cartesian dualism. This affinity is extended in Wolfgang Welsch's comments on modernity and Claudia Brodsky Lacour's critique of Descartes's use of architectural metaphors.[21]

Lefebvre weaves his arabesque-like text around two complementary kinds of spatial practice. The implication is that much can be known of a society's values and structures of power by interpretation of how it orders and attaches meaning to space, particularly built space. Spatial practices under capitalism also include the relationship of local to global, the everyday to the symbolic, and the visible to the metaphorically invisible, so that: "Operating-procedures attributable to the action of a power which in fact has its own location in space appear to result from a simple logic of space." [22] This leads to benefit for some and exclusion for others, and often to a naturalization of negative impacts, enabled through what Lefebvre

18 de Certeau. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91.
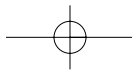
19 J. Habermas *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 233.

20 Ivan Illich, *Tools for Conviviality* (London: Marion Boyars, 1990), 8–9.

21 C.B. Lacour, *Lines of Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

22 Lefebvre, *The Production Of Space*, 289.
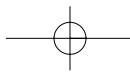
terms the violence intrinsic to abstraction which "manifests itself from the moment any action introduces the rational into the real, from the outside, by means of tools which strike, slice and cut." Whilst Lefebvre writes theoretically, accounts of gentrification linked to the symbolic economy of New York—by artist Martha Rosler,[23] art historian Rosalyn Deutsche[24] and sociologist Sharon Zukin[25]—might serve here as cases.

Lefebvre distinguishes two forms of spatial practices, the "representations of space," or conceived space, and the "representational spaces" of living.[26] Representations of space are conceptualized, as used by planners and social engineers; they constitute the dominant space in any society or mode of production, and tend towards verbal and intellectual signs. Representational spaces, on the other hand, are experienced through memory and association; they are the spaces given meaning by habitation, and are the dominated spaces "which imagination seeks to change and appropriate," and tend towards nonverbal expression. Representational spaces overlay physical spaces, and lend them a certain feeling. Lefebvre does not see the two kinds of spatial practice as in opposition, and points out that, when a new economic order in Tuscany in the thirteenth century produced a new spatial ordering through linear perspective, a device soon translated into art and architectural practice, townspeople and villagers did not abandon "the traditional emotional and religious manner" of experiencing space—"by means of an interplay between good and evil forces at war throughout the world" as in spaces of special import such as the body, the house, and the graveyard.[27] But modern, capitalist society does set the two kinds of space in competitive opposition. The spaces of memory, appropriation, and desire of urban dwellers are devalued. The institutions of capitalist society enforce this hegemony, and professional expertise relegates those who have expertise of dwelling, that is of representational spaces, to the margin.

Lefebvre sees architecture as depending on visual representation, an abstraction which is implicitly if passively violent. He writes of the architect that he is, within the spatial practice of modernity, ensconced "in his own space…bound to graphic elements—to sheets of paper, plans, elevations, sections, perspective views of facades, modules…" which, as a medium for objectification, supposes a "fixed observer, an immobile perceptual field, a stable visual world." The architect sees this conceived space as "true." [28] From this viewpoint, "users" are marginalized even in language, associated, as Lefebvre points out, with the realm of things, of utility, and exchange. Yet the use of space by dwellers is not confined to its utility, and includes its permeation with meaning. Lefebvre writes: "…the space of the everyday activities of users is a concrete one, which is to say, subjective. As a space of 'subjects' rather than of calculations, as a representational space, it has an origin, and that origin is childhood, with its hardships, its achievements, and its lacks."
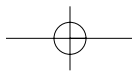
23 Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint."
24 R. Deutsche, "Alternative Space" in Wallis, B., ed., *If You Lived Here* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 45–66.
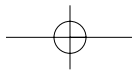25 S. Zukin, *Loft Living,* and *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
26 Lefebvre, *The Production Of Space,* 38–39.
27 Ibid., 79.
28 Ibid., 361–2.

But, it could also be argued, the spatial practice of childhood is play, which entails an imaginative appropriation of things so that a table, for instance, upturned becomes a boat, and a chair a castle. For grownups, this symbolic appropriation is transferred to images, such as when a still life of apples becomes a memory of the breast,[29] as cited by Fuller.[30] Fantasy is no less involved in the conceptualization of a city as a series of spaces for the display of power, or a system of zones for specific uses, but the force which directs these acts is no longer playful. If, as Freud argues, civilization depends on a subsuming of individual desires in the collective, it does not necessarily follow that the collective desire should be redefined as that of the dominant class of planners or entrepreneurs, nor that urban design should be a means of producing disciplined publics. Play, after all, has an element of spontaneity.

Lefebvre is dismissive of Freud, saying he falls too easily into mechanistic thinking and that his distinctions between Eros and Thanatos, and between pleasure and reality (or productivity), lose their dialectical character.[31] He draws on the history of Western philosophy, and posits a relationship between the dominance of representations of space and the rational subjectivity of Cartesian dualism. The rational practice of the sixteenth century is "usually associated with Cartesian philosophy," though differing "in the way a social practice does differ from an ideology." [32] Earlier in his argument, Lefebvre states that the space of modernity, which can be taken as that of representations of space, "has an analogical affinity" with the space of Cartesian philosophy. He adds that "unfortunately it is also the space of blank sheets of paper." [33] This is a space articulated by lines and mathematical laws, in which everything can be calculated. It is inert, a site in which people and things "take up their abode," a model of "conceiving things in their extension as the 'object' of thought." [34] Cartesianism separates the subjectivity in which representations of space are conceived, that of the philosopher in a study, or the planner and architect in their professional office or studio, from the objectivity thereby assigned to whatever occupies space.

This objectivity is more or less the same applied to inventions in a plan or a drawing of a facade, and is a key element in urban dysfunctionality. Dwellers, re-coded as "users" become objectified. Value is then reattached to the plan produced in a privileged subjectivity. For many planners and architects of modernity, such as Moses, the conceptualization of the city is (as if) real while the urban fabric, in which spaces are given meaning through the lives of dwellers, is (as if) unreal. The ground of the city plan or the architect's drawing is, then, a space constructed without value. At the same time, outside the still air of the studio, the spaces of the street are filled with the contending values of people who live in and pass through them.

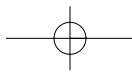29   C. Bell, "Dr. Freud on Art," *The Dial* (April, 1925): 282.
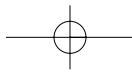30   P. Fuller, *Art & Psychoanalysis* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 157-8.
31   Lefebvre, *The Production Of Space,*177.
32   Ibid., 277.
33   Ibid., 200.
34   Ibid., 297.

Modernity—the Drawing of a Line

Several writers see Descartes as the founder of modernity. Lacour writes of "a commonplace in histories of Western philosophy and culture that the *Discours de la Méthode* marks the beginning of modern thought." [35] Stephen Toulmin states that the "chief girder in this framework of modernity…was the Cartesian dichotomy" [36]; and Welsch that "modern architecture is actually Cartesianism in built form." [37] Descartes uses the metaphor of architecture to articulate his idea of a world of mathematical certainty. His philosophy "draws a line" under the past as under the impressions of the senses and knowledge gained from either travel or book-learning. Only mathematics and geometry exist in the purity of an internally-regulated system. He states, in a passage of the *Discourse* which begins with a reminiscence of his sitting in a stove-heated room:

> Thus one sees that buildings which a single architect has undertaken and completed are usually more beautiful and better ordered than those which several architects have attempted to rework…Thus these ancient cities, which having been only large villages, became great cities with the passage of time, are normally so poorly proportioned, compared with the well-ordered towns and public squares that an engineer traces on a vacant plain according to his free imaginings. [38]

The image of the engineer (or architect) drawing freely is a metaphor for the process of thinking, just as the space of the stove-heated room might act as a metaphor for the enclosure which enables and, in turn, characterizes Cartesian subjectivity. In that enclosed space, free imagining in the form, for example, of a logical discourse, is possible without reference to sense impressions or the actualities they denote. Lacour writes:

> The act of architectural drawing that Descartes describes is the outlining of a form that was not one before. That form would combine reason…with imaginative freedom…It is not only new to the world, but intervenes in a space where nothing was, on a surface…where nothing else is. [39]

In the twentieth century, technology and the alliance of capital with planning regulation allow the fantasy of a "new city" to be realized, though generally as an enclave within the old city. An example is Canary Wharf, where histories of work and sociation generated by the industries of the London docks were obliterated. A tower designed by Cesar Pelli now rises above a site reduced to a blank space on a map—Utopia in the abolition of history.

The Utopian vision of shining towers, affirmed by symbolic urban economies through which development is lent the universality assigned to cultural values, involves a total transformation of the world according to new principles, as exemplified by Le Corbusier's proposal for the demolition of the centers of old cities. [40] Welsch
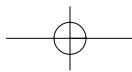
35 Lacour, *Lines of Thought*, 18.
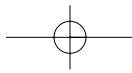36 S. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 108.
37 W. Welsch, *Undoing Aesthetics* (London: Sage, 1997), 109.
38 Lacour, *Lines of Thought*, 33.
39 Ibid., 37.
40 Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning* (New York: Dover, 1929 and 1987), 96.

argues that, for Descartes, the new city stands for the new science, and that to merely improve things from the past makes no sense: "One had to begin from the start according to one's own order and create everything anew." [41] Descartes argues that the course of human history, as a process towards civilization, consists of faltering steps which are insignificant compared to the "ordinances made by God alone," and prefers the "simple reasonings which a man of good sense can make naturally concerning things that present themselves" above the accumulated works of the natural sciences, as cited by Lacour.[42] Allied to such reasonings, and by implication the perfection of God's ordering of the universe, are the inscribed fancies of the engineer who draws "regular places" on a blank ground. Lacour summarizes:

> The proportional "places régulieres" drawn by an architect acting in complete autonomy are the manifestations of a rapid, mental continuity discontinuous with autobiographical or any human history. They are forms produced on an empty plain whose use is uninhibited by the remains of years and millennia that are historical memory.[43]

So, regularly proportioned forms, in drawings or extended into plasticity, have a reality of their own. Architecture and town planning are thus fields of autonomy like modernist art.

Design Research—Affirmation or Criticality?

Does design research affirm or interrogate the methodology of design which depends on a Cartesian abstraction of space? Four research papers published in 1996, two from each of two recently established journals for urban design—*The Journal of Urban Design* and *Urban Design International*—are taken as cases through which to consider this. The four articles concern, respectively, urban design in the Netherlands, the master plan for Milton Keynes in the UK, an evaluation of Thamesmead in the UK, and "cracks" in the urban landscape of Los Angeles. The papers represent the range of studies offered in these journals. Both journals are international in scope.
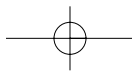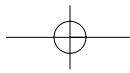
Dutch Urban Design

Henk ter Heide and Danny Wijnbelt at the University of Utrecht ask whether there is any difference between the design approaches of architects and engineers. They see a contest between these professions in the emergence of Dutch urban design in the early twentieth century, with architects interpreting town and country planning as art, and engineers calling for an empirical approach. Both parties are, they claim, influenced by the work of Geddes, Abercrombie and Unwin in England, and Sitte and Baumeister in Germany. Given the post-war development of Dutch town planning as a multidisciplinary field, in which engineers are largely supplanted by geographers, sociologists, economists, and demographers, and later by

41 Welsch, *Undoing Aesthetics*.
42 Lacour, *Lines of Thought,* 90.
43 Ibid., 92.

policy analysts, giving planning a mix of objectives and methods, the study compares the practices of "planologists" (people trained in a social science of spatial ordering) and designers (including graduates from the urban design courses of technical universities).

The following research questions were formulated and investigated through the literature of design methodology and socio-environmental research, and through interviews:

1 To what extent are the supply and demand for knowledge in spatial planning attuned to each other?
2 Is knowledge exchange between researchers and designers hindered by specific obstacles?
3 Can methods be devised to improve attunement of supply and demand for knowledge and to clear away communication obstacles? [44]

The results of the literature survey and interviews were then taken to workshop discussions with professional designers, managers, and researchers.

Ter Heide and Wijnbelt found that the kinds of knowledge used in spatial planning included mainly data (water sources, population figures, etc.), but also social contexts and current policy. Urban designers were more analytical than architects. Among the sources of knowledge mentioned by designers were experience and intuition. But knowledge provided by social researchers was not often used, and the intuition of designers was seen as in competition with knowledge obtained from research.[45] Following from this, they see a role for sociological research in planning and design, noting that Geddes was a cofounder of the British Sociological Society, and that early twentieth-century planning in the United States was influenced by the Chicago sociologists.

Ter Heide and Wijnbelt take the Bijlmermeer high-rise development of the 1960s, which provided overflow housing to the southeast area of Amsterdam, as a case of the negative consequences of ignoring perception-based research. While they see Bijlmermeer as an extreme case where some of the blocks are now being demolished, and grant that other high-rise developments did not have the same degree of failure, they attribute the problem to the isolation of the tightly-knit design team from the realities of users:

> …it is often knowledge regarding the manner in which residents and users of space perceive their surroundings which designers tend to pass by. This would also be understandable, as perception of space is precisely what designers consider themselves preeminently experts on.[46]

They suggest that the gap might be filled by behavioral research, market research, and perception research including psychological

44   ter Heide and Wijnbett, "To Know and to Make," 76.
45   Ibid., 83.
46   Ibid., 79.
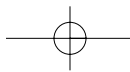
studies. They also cite the activity patterns used by geographers, and the lifestyle theory of Pierre Bourdieu,[47] which compares economic (consumption-related) and cultural (knowledge-related) expressions of status. Ter Heide and Wijnbelt see surveys as the means to indicate a community's "prevalence of economic and of cultural lifestyles." [48] Although studies have been carried out and published in these fields, it seems designers tend to avoid them for fear of being restricted in scope, or because they mistrust them.

This paper also looks at how knowledge is transferred within a design team. A difficulty is the mutual lack of understanding between professionals with a social science background and those with a technical or design orientation. To social researchers, design methodology is enigmatic—perhaps reflecting the element of intuition. Social researchers see the ability of designers to integrate different kinds of knowledge as minimal, while most designers see themselves in such a role, which is that of powerbroker. Other mismatches are the favored style of communication—written or graphic—and perceptions of the importance of this issue. Finally, a short paragraph mentions perception research involving residents of Beverwijk, who were offered alternative designs for a local park.

This study seems helpful in comparing the perceptions, including of each other's roles, of two professional groups to indicate different methodologies, and in foregrounding the variety of research fields which can inform urban design. This clarifies the graphic and intuitive aspects of how architects and designers interpret a brief. Both attributes fit with Lefebvre's characterization of the architect, and while "intuition" often is seen as creativity it may also be a term for the kind of subjectivity possible in a Cartesian space of enclosure. This illuminates the mistrust felt by designers for the findings of social research—which is akin to the kinds of knowledge dismissed by Descartes in favor of the pure order of mathematics and geometry. So, does the article resist the Cartesian basis of design? Not really. It exhibits three difficulties: the initial set of questions defines "knowledge" as something exchanged between professionals; the interviews and workshops involved only professionals. Dwellers are relegated to a subordinate, objectified position—the only study noted in which they are involved is covered in one paragraph at the end of the article; that study concerns only a passive role for dwellers, asked to select one of two plans already prepared by professionals.

While the call for an increased use of social research and perception research might lead to a greater understanding of the needs of dwellers, it does not offer an alternative design methodology through which to achieve it. Neither does the reference to the Chicago School support such an aim. The writings of Chicago sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess were progressive for their time, but are as much part of a reductionist attitude to the city as any text from urban planning or architecture. Indeed, according to

47   P. Bourdieu, *Distinction* (London: Routledge, 1984).

48   ter Heide and Wijnbett, "To Know and to Make," 88.
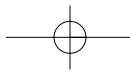
geographer David Sibley, Burgess's representation of the city "attained the status of a universal statement" so that alternative readings, from the perspective of different urban publics, were disregarded "because the idea of a multiplicity of equally valid worldviews was alien to [a] universalizing, scientific perspective on the world." [49] Similarly, the reference to activity patterns, although approaching the lives of dwellers and demonstrating gender differences, remains a reduction to diagrammatic representation. At no point do ter Heide and Wijnbelt seek a direct interaction with urban dwellers through personal narratives of their experiences, nor do they criticize the maintenance by professionals of a boundary to their expertise, outside of which dwellers fall. In the end, the study affirms the hegemony of professional knowledges and abstract representations, while calling for the use of a wider range of these.

Milton Keynes

Architect Christopher Williamson looks at Milton Keynes twenty-five years after its master plan was published and presented to a public inquiry. He begins, running ahead of his research, by describing the town as "a thriving, successful city," claiming that Milton Keynes has "great appeal and attraction to the majority of inhabitants" and is, therefore, a good case for a study of the value of the kind of urban space planning of which the master plan is an example.[50] He roots the concept of the new town in prewar British town and country planning, and mentions the provision of a "green belt" around London from 1935, and Abercrombie's proposal in his Greater London Plan of 1944 for ten satellite towns close to London and ten further afield. But while these were seen as expansions of extant settlements, Milton Keynes has a "center" which is simply the highest point on a ridge running through a hitherto mainly rural site.

Williamson mentions the work of Jane Jacobs and Leon Krier, who advocate a higher density of urban living than is found in Milton Keynes; and suggests that the master plan provided for a more diverse zoning around a central pedestrian mall than that implemented by the architects. He quotes various sections of the master plan, such as:

> It should, for instance, be possible to drive into the center along planted boulevards fronted by office and other uses, and then to pull off and park in a tree-planted square fronted by shops with covered pedestrian arcades leading directly to the bus stops…[51]

Instead, Milton Keynes, today, has, as Williamson acknowledges, a grid road system dividing large, single-use blocks with little movement between zones. The potential for pedestrian use and the informal mixing of publics is further diminished by the fact that many of the roads are two-lane highways with adjacent parking, so that

49 D. Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion* (London: Routledge, 1995), 127.

50 Williamson, "Urban Design in Central Milton Keynes," 335.

51 Milton Keynes Development Corporation, *The Plan for Milton Keynes,* Vol. 2 (Bletchley: UK, MKDC, 1970), 319 and 1308, and Williamson, 336.
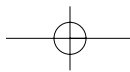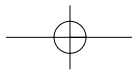
buildings are around eighty meters apart (compared to the typical twenty meters in a provincial city street). Williamson writes that this allows each building to be freestanding and is "a successful interpretation of the way we now prefer to live," [52] although he suggests the situation may change when the cost of private transportation increases. It is motor transportation which governed the interpretation of the masterplan, following predictions of increasing car use to the end of the twentieth century.

The grid is the defining motif of the plan of Central Milton Keynes, taken by Williamson as "a clue to why the city center appears uneventful and lacking in visual interest." [53] He briefly compares it with Cerda's grid for the extension of Barcelona, which has a smaller scale and is relieved by diagonals, with the Roman city of Timgad in Algeria, where the grid changes scale near the central forum, and Grenade-sur-Garonne, France, where the medieval grid varies according to the diagonal of the block preceding it. In Milton Keynes, however, the grid is rigidly applied in the central area, and plot- rather than building-based. In its center is a shopping mall based on the north American model, accepted by the planners in part to avoid its later appearance out of town. Williamson quotes Reyner Banham on the Burbank Mall in Los Angeles as a positive comparison. He also notes the encroachment of privatized space on the public realm, and that the mall is locked at night. While citing an article by Ray Thomas which says, "There is no graffiti and no trouble and who wants to window-shop in the middle of the night anyway?" [54] Williamson introduces surveys which show that people do want access to the shopping center outside of shopping hours, and that it impedes the routes of commuters to bus stops; women and elderly people are anxious at being forced to walk around the building at night,[55] which he describes in detail.[56] The diminution of the public realm is further exacerbated by a lack of open space, and Williamson wonders where residents would go to protest against council taxes—outside the town hall are only the regulation parking spaces.

Williamson conducted an informal survey by face-to-face questionnaire with twenty shoppers on a Saturday afternoon. He writes: "It was soon apparent that the nature of the face-to-face interviews was not a good format" and that responses were "ill-considered" and seldom went beyond a simple "yes" or "no." He continues: "People were too busy and focused on the shopping task in hand to concentrate on a fairly taxing series of questions." [57] Two-hundred revised questionnaires were delivered to flats and houses during August and September 1995. One-hundred and eleven replies were received. One hundred and fifty additional questionnaires were sent to architects and planners in Milton Keynes and London, eliciting eighty-four replies. A higher proportion of professionals than residents (eighty-five percent compared to fifty-two percent) thought the center should have a feeling of excitement,

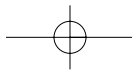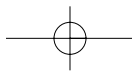52 Williamson, "Urban Design in Central Milton Keynes," 340.

53 Ibid., 342.

54 R. Thomas, "Milton Keynes: City of the Future?" *Built Environment* 9:3,4 (1983), and Williamson, 346.

55 C. Ward, *New Town, Home Town* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993), 99.

56 Williamson, "Urban Design in Central Milton Keynes," 346.

57 Ibid., 351.

although both groups agreed that the shopping center had no such "buzz." A high proportion of both groups thought other cities had facilities lacking in Milton Keynes. To a question on the lack of public space in the traditional form of a town square, thirty percent of residents and fifty-seven percent of the professionals thought this a problem. Contrary to other findings quoted by Williamson, his own survey found only forty-four percent of the residents regretted the closure of the shopping center at night.

Concluding his study, Williamson argues for greater pedestrianization, offering his own plan for this, and sees the new town's weaknesses as a dearth of landmarks, uniformity of scale, monotony of design, lack of civic focus, domination by a traffic system, and a too-rigid zoning of uses [58]—not quite a picture of a "thriving, successful city"! But Williamson is no more helpful than ter Heide and Wijnbelt in addressing the underlying questions of urban design methodology. He gives close attention to what happens, but not much to why it happens. His surveys abandon face-to-face contact for the more distant medium of a questionnaire delivered to a mix of residents and professionals. His conclusion sounds like a prescription for a job for which he could himself tender. What is missing from it is any direct involvement of residents in determining how the master plan can be adapted for changing use, and behind that any questioning of the assumptions on which it was based. Williamson, like ter Heide and Wijnbelt, retains a premium on professional rather than dweller expertise and, although he spent time at the site and attempted to meet local people, this is not followed through into any new methodology which would translate the results of a more sustained form of such contact into design.

While the above two studies are typical of a conventional approach, other studies are more radical. Edward Robbins, based at Harvard, questions the standard professional view of high-rise developments such as Thamesmead in southeast London; and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, from the University of California at Los Angeles, examines the interstices, or "cracks" in the urban texture of Los Angeles. Robbins cites both theoretical and empirical sources, including Michel Foucault's proposition that:

> We live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another." [59] This also is cited by Robbins.[60]

Loukaitou-Sideris uses sources mainly from the literature of planning, but questions conventional solutions which homogenize the urban environment.
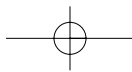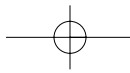
Thamesmead

Robbins argues that sites of habitation "delineate and reveal" the complexities of relations and practices "through which we construct our world." He defines site in social rather than physical or carto-

58 Ibid., 555.
59 M. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" in *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 23.
60 Robbins, "Thinking Space/Seeing Space: Thamesmead Revisited," 283.

graphic terms, and is critical of other studies[61] which prioritize form over social dynamics. His intention is to see how housing policy is embodied in spatial design and how the production of urban space is, in itself, a way of making policy. The vehicle for this is Thamesmead, a social housing development of the late 1960s and early 1970s, built by the Greater London Council, and typical of the kind of high-rise development no longer undertaken. Robbins argues that it is important to revisit such schemes (literally) to see how good intentions, such as the provision of "better" housing for the inhabitants of areas of deprivation, may mask less acceptable ideological premises.

Robbins begins by reflecting on the kind of inner city neighborhoods from which the people rehoused at Thamesmead came. He notes the conventional (pessimistic) characterization by dilapidation, overcrowding, high density, bad plumbing and heating, noise, pollution, and irrational plan. Yet, he points out, another (romantic) view of the same place might focus on the liveliness of street life, the supportive social fabric, and the accommodation of a diversity of uses within an informal sense of place. He writes that the public spaces of such neighborhoods "could become living rooms where people socialized" because "their homes are neither large nor nice enough to entertain indoors," and that, in these spaces, children grew up and adults shared joys and sorrows. He concludes that, whatever else might be said, such localities "are alive, spontaneous, even chaotic if not necessarily disorganized or disorderly."[62]

People from such areas were moved to Thamesmead during a period of social reconstruction, when large sums (£150 million between 1965 and 1969) were spent by the GLC on social housing. Robbins sees the development as a case of large-scale state intervention in the urban environment, and as evidence of an attitude to the poor. A group of towers on the edge of the site—marshland surrounding an old arsenal, a four-mile stretch of Thames shoreline—act as wind- and noise-breakers for low-rise housing; the whole is articulated as a set of residential sections joined by an undulating spine. Regulations on the use of marshland determined that all habitation should be above ground level, leading the designers to provide garages and stores at the base of each block—a practice since abandoned due to the dereliction and lack of safety in such spaces.[63] Pedestrian traffic is separated from car traffic by walkways. The provision of low-rise housing responded to the beginnings of critical attitudes to high-rise blocks. This indicates a degree of social responsibility, affirmed by the plan to mix housing with amenities in the forms of schools, play and leisure areas, cycling paths, shops, and community centers. The scheme constituted a complete environment. It was intended that the provision of a marina and yacht basin would attract middle class residents. Robbins summarizes:

61 P. Rowe, *Modernity and Housing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993); M. Glendinning, and S. Muthesius, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

62 Robbins, "Thinking Space/Seeing Space: Thamesmead Revisited," 285-6.

63 A. Coleman, *Utopia on Trial* (London: Hilary Shipman, 1985), 43.
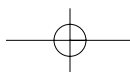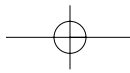
> For the GLC policy-makers and designers, Thamesmead
> offered the latest in housing form and social possibility.
> They were providing a clean, well-ordered, safe, function-
> ally delineated and segregated, and well-defined space into
> which people would come and build meaningful and
> happy lives.[64]

As such, it counteracted conventional notions of working-class
neighborhoods as "slums." But in doing so, it offered a world of
ordering rather than order.

A specific functionality was assigned to each part of the site,
in contrast to the mixed spatial utilization of inner city areas.
Spontaneous social organization is replaced by social engineering
which allows no space for unplanned use. Despite the good inten-
tions of planners and designers who, Robbins suggests, would
mostly have seen themselves as socialists, Thamesmead has come to
stand for urban dystopia, used in the filming of *Clockwork Orange.*
Robbins explains the discrepancy by looking at the assumptions
underpinning the plan for Thamesmead; for instance that the phys-
ical environment, hence design, conditions behavior; and that an
ordered environment produces orderly behavior. He also sees the
segregation of functions as evidence of a "deeply felt anti-urban-
ism," and distrust of people's ability to order their own lives in the
street.[65] He refers to Charles Dickens and William Morris as propo-
nents of a regression to the countryside as an answer to inner city
problems, and argues that "a critique of the lifestyles found in a
space unwittingly became a critique of the space itself." Hence the
poor were not given any opportunity at Thamesmead to recreate the
spatial interactions of their previous habitat, despite the conse-
quence that this also prevented a rebuilding of the social interac-
tions which took place in those spaces. So the spaces of "middle-
class familialism and individualism" replace those of "working-
class solidarity and sociality," and, as Robbins writes, "the operative
word is images." [66] Robbins means that the delineation of space in
plans and designs masked an unstated ideology, and led to an
imposition of an ordering environment on those regarded as unable
to order their own lives. In other words, Thamesmead is an exercise
in disempowerment, a case of design supposed to influence the
behavior of a public, and not of a public influencing the design of
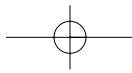their environment.

A study of residents' complaints about the development
foregrounded many practical difficulties: poor heating, leaks, noise,
a lack of jobs in the vicinity, a lack of play and recreation space, the
distance from their previous homes (and friends), and the siting of
a slurry pipe in the middle of the development—all signs of a devel-
opment for those with little choice and unlikely to be found in
middle-class areas, which would also have better views. Robbins
comments that the residents were "being told through the design"
that "their class needed to be moved out of its old environment but

64 Robbins, "Thinking Space/Seeing Space: Thamesmead Revisited," 287.
65 Ibid., 289.
66 Ibid., 290.
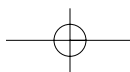
they should not forget their class through the design of the new environment." If the designers saw obstinacy in complaints about a lack of play space, then they overlooked the fact that they had provided it separated from living space and, in the process, prevented any reformation of the previous social pattern of dwelling, playing, and socializing in proximity. Robbins concludes by pointing to the irony of the situation: Thamesmead fails not because its designers were hegemonic, but because they espoused progressive ideological positions, yet translated them in terms of spatial rather than social form. This turned good intentions into a desocializing environment.

The study is helpful in drawing attention to the conflict of intention with unstated ideology, and a failure of methodology deriving from a disintegration of design and reality. The same critique could be applied to Bijlmermeer or Milton Keynes. Although Robbins does not embark on a philosophical discourse, the frameworks provided by Lefebvre, Welsch, and Lacour could be called on to extend his critique. The disintegration of design and reality is precisely the product of a Cartesian subjectivity. Robbins, then, challenges the basis of modern design. The implication of his study is the development of a new methodology, which not only includes the expertise of dwellers on the social construction of place, but also empowers them to use this knowledge to influence the design of their environment.

Cracks in Los Angeles

A challenging approach is taken towards the responsibilities of urban designers by Loukaitou-Sideris. Her study concerns the sudden discontinuities and small wastelands—"cracks"—found in most cities, although her experience is of Los Angeles. Cracks include built interventions which disrupt pedestrian flows, neglected parks and play areas, fenced off public housing, intrusions of railway lines and waterfronts, the deadness of outer-town malls in the evening, and the car-dominated vacant spaces between city centers and suburbs—in general, the in-between places which can be seen either as waste or as sites awaiting realization.

Loukaitou-Sideris takes the grid plan as the main factor determining the North American city. This emphasizes street frontages and intersections rather than social spaces within built areas, and reflects the division of land into equal-sized plots in contrast to the organic growth of older (European) cities:

> American cites are products of abrupt human actions on the natural landscape. Most American cities were laid out purposefully and quickly to house settlers. Others were drawn on paper almost overnight and then superimposed on the landscape by profit-minded speculators.[67]

67 Loukaitou-Sideris, "Cracks in the City," 93.
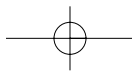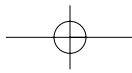
In some cases, several settlements combine to form a modern metropolis, with the result that the original grids do not fit neatly together, but create "breaks" which tend to separate neighborhoods. The grid also is capable, as a geometric form, of indefinite extension. This sense of an idealized, endless horizon is affirmed by the automobile, to meet the needs of which other, newer networks of freeways are cut into the existing grid, creating more breaks. Los Angeles is seen as typical of such a development.

Within such cities, residents live "near their own kind" from fears of violence and sexual relations which transgress categories of class or race.[68] Zoning regulations and the efforts of speculators enforce further single-use and single-class segregation, so that distinctive localities seen as interesting by tourists, like Chinatown and Little Italy, are culturally alien to residents of other neighborhoods. Loukaitou-Sideris sees wealth as the most defining factor of a neighborhood, attributable to the dominance of the private sector in urban development: "The design praxis is shaped by…the power of capital." [69] Another outcome of this dominance is the dereliction of downtown areas redeveloped for commercial use—central business districts (it could be pointed out, translating the Burgess ring model from concept to actuality) in place of town squares and main streets.

What do urban designers do in such a context? Loukaitou-Sideris argues that their social role tends to be left aside when developers offer profitable contracts, and that many are "content" to undertake the design of socially undesirable projects such as "signature urban plazas, theme parks, and invented streets." [70] Her response is to set out an agenda for development using urban cracks as spaces for mending rather than neglect. This agenda requires design to be seen as a process which can empower people to change their environment. But how, it could be asked, is this to be done? Is the power really transferred, or does it stay with the (professional or institutional) empowerer?

She sets out six possibilities: respecting the "substantive" client—the people who live, socialize, or work in the space designed—rather than the nominal client who pays the designer; the use of forms related to social context, rather than the generalized forms favored by developers and modernist architects, and which can be imposed on more or less any site but will be experienced differently in different sites; design to facilitate rather than obstruct social mixing, and mixed-use zoning; design for flexibility to enable future changes of use; the creation of places rather than relegation of open space to a set of margins between signature buildings; and the development of genuinely new models of design rather than replication of versions of early (white) American or European types of streetscape.
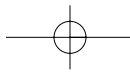
Loukaitou-Sideris concludes by characterizing the conventional role of the urban designer as artist and purveyor of technical

68 K. Lynch, *A Theory of Good City Form* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 266, as quoted by Loukaitou-Sideris, 95.

69 Ibid., 97.

70 Ibid., 97–98.
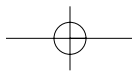
expertise. She argues that this is an artificial separation of the aesthetic/technical from the social/political. A "meaningful" space, in contrast to much urban modernist development, is "culturally bounded," both "informed by the past" and "determined by the present." Because the present always moves into the future, the space cannot be conceived as permanently designed. Her final paragraph states:

> Many communities need the professional, the architect, the planner, the urban designer, not to lead but to listen, not to impose plans but to search and suggest ways by which space can become better bit by bit, piece by piece. It is now, more than ever, that urban designers should get involved in civic and community action …" [71]

and her final line calls for a filling up of the cracks.

All this seems to exhibit the same radical approach as Robbins—the re-empowerment of dwellers, the importance of perceptions, and the diversity of urban experiences and publics. Like Robbins, although without putting it as such, Loukaitou-Sideris reveals a hidden ideology in urban development when she writes of the typical corporate plaza as designed for public use, but discouraging such use by the emphasis on social control in its design.[72] She also advocates design for diversity in patterns of use by people of different ages, genders, and races. But there is still a note of that moral imperative (which Robbins rejects) through which design conditions behavior:

> A whole repertoire of spaces can be reclaimed as part of the public realm by mobilizing the forces of design ... each city has myriad forms "awaiting realization": empty lots, river banks, parking lots…It is the urban designer's role to suggest new possibilities for such spaces and "inject" them with activities patterned according to the revealed preferences of users.[73]

But if "users" are aware of their preferences, can they not themselves be responsible for the injection? And, as Richard Sennett points out, writing on Battery Park City, children often prefer to play in non-play spaces.[74] Such spaces invariably are what Loukaitou-Sideris perceives as cracks, yet wishes to see filled up.

This study is helpful in setting a more dweller-centered agenda; in proposing a redefinition of urban design to enable greater social responsibility on the part of the designer; and in setting out ways in which practice might change. In part, it corresponds with developments in adjacent fields, such as the use of urban design action teams advocated by the Urban Design Group in the UK, and echoes progressive writing on planning by Forester,[75] or Sandercock and Forsyth.[76] Perhaps some aspects of Davidoff's advocacy planning[77] could be reevaluated in light of it. The study also could be linked to some writing on recent art practices, such as Kastner,[78] who coins the phrase "art as a verb" in relation to the

71 Loukaitou-Sideris, "Cracks in the City," 102.

72 Ibid., 98–99.

73 Ibid., 100.

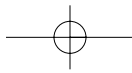74 R. Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York: Norton, 1990), 193.

75 J. Forester, "Planning in the Face of Conflict" (1987) in R. LeGates, and F. Stout, *The City Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 433–446.

76 L. Sandercock and A. Forsyth, "A Gender Agenda: New Directions for Planning Theory" (1992) in R. LeGates and F. Stout, *The City Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996).

77 P. Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" (1965) in R. LeGates and F. Stout, *The City Reader* (London: Routledge, 1996), 421–432.

78 J. Kastner, "Art as a Verb," *Artists Newsletter* (April, 1995): 24–25.
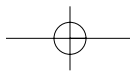
project "Culture in Action" in Chicago in 1993.[79] But there are still pitfalls, and not all projects which have agendas similar to that put forward by Loukaitou-Sideris have empowered communities.

The work of the multidisciplinary *Power of Place* team in Los Angeles seeks to enable minority communities to gain identity by constructing monuments from people's memories of places—for instance, a new streetscape in Little Tokyo—but retains a professional hegemony.[80] Similarly, Sheila Levrant de Bretteville's work in New Haven—putting stars in the pavement on which are inscribed the names of past and present, black and white citizens—recognizes diverse urban publics but does not offer power within the web of city regulation and speculative development. What happens to the names in the pavement is that they are walked over.

Taking the four papers together, two seem to affirm a conventional exclusivity and reductionism of design; and two question assumptions and point to emerging alternative perspectives. Some design research, then, does offer a way towards revisioning the aims and methods of urban design.

An Alternative Framework for an Alternative Model
If there is a need to re-vision design methodology and redraw the parameters of design research to include the criticality of, say, Robbins, there also is a need for practical models for the production of urban settlements. And just as conventional design methodology is intertwined with the Cartesian framework of modernity, so an alternative possibility will be outside it, through its location in a nonindustrialized society or its constitution of a post-industrial social form. The Cartesian model splits subject (designer) and object (thing in space), and favors the designer over the dweller; the alternative will equate the knowledges of designers and dwellers to reintegrate the subject and object which the Cartesian paradigm divides.

Several alternative models for the production of settlement exist. These include the village of New Gourna, Egypt, designed by Hassan Fathy in the 1940s,[81] and the Open City at Ritoque near Valparaiso, Chile[82] constructed by the architecture faculty of the Jesuit University of Valparaiso from 1970. A study of informal settlements in South Africa, in contrast, shows the mapping of Western ideas of town planning onto townships to be unsuccessful, one scheme earning the name "Beirut" for its brutal design.[83] When a model fails when transposed to a new situation, attention is thrown back onto the limitations of the model.

From cases such as New Gourna and Ritoque, it is possible to work towards a reintegrating methodology. In New Gourna, the villagers revived traditional skills of building in mud brick, a practice in which the architect (or "engineer" as Fathy is sometimes termed by Egyptians) plans the site, but the design of houses takes place within traditional parameters through building. Decorative features such as lattices also are functional breeze intakes. Fathy be-

79 M.J. Jacob, M. Brenson, and E. Olson, *Culture in Action* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1995).

80 D. Hayden, *The Power of Place* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

81 H. Fathy, *Gourna: A Tale of Two Villages* (Cairo: Egyptian Ministry of Culture, 1969).

82 A. Pendleton-Jullian, *The Road That Is Not a Road* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

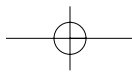83 Goldberg, "The Birds Have Nested," 49.

Figure 1
Hassan Fathy. Courtyard of the mosque,
New Gourna, Egypt. Photo, M. Miles

gan his work by studying the social structure of village life, and planned the spaces of the village accordingly. At Ritoque, a group of professionals seeking an alternative lifestyle devised a city without a plan. Any dweller can propose a change to any building, and all decisions are taken collectively; the site for a new building is founded by a collective poetic act, and it is built in easily available, often recycled, materials using artisan skill instead of heavy machinery. In both cases, the conceptualization of the settlement is not divorced from the experience of making and living in it.

What, then, are the possibilities for a reintegrative design methodology? First, a reevaluation of the role of the designer as facilitator, so that dwellers empower themselves to become co-determiners of what kind of city is built for whom, and co-designers of its form. This can happen at a local level without upheaval—a housing association in Brighton, England, for instance, is collaborating with a designer on a scheme for self-built housing. Second, the value of dwellers' expertise on their lives needs to be given the same status as that of designers on designing and planners on planning. This mix of knowledge can be applied to solutions which take
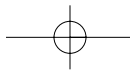
a site as a social and psychological entity—Lefebvre's representational spaces—as well as a physical space. Thirdly, political decisions are required which grant real power, not just a privilege of consultation over alternatives already devised, to groups of dwellers; a corollary of this is the reeducation of professionals in nonspecialist forms of communication. At Coin Street in London, one of the last acts of the GLC before its abolition by the Thatcher government was to implement planning controls on a site of social housing near Waterloo to prevent speculative redesignation; the tenants managed the development themselves, selecting the developer and the businesses which lease space in a mixed-use scheme. These three possibilities imply an engagement with local cultures and with cultural processes in general. This leads to a fourth possibility: the adoption of personal narratives rather than technical specifications as the point of departure for development. The *Power of Place* is one, restricted example of how such narratives can be given form. Some recent writing on urban issues by women consciously uses a first-person style to emphasize the experiential rather than distanced dimension of urban space.[84] Such narratives can inform urban planning and design as well as art, and one way to begin a process of empowerment might be to create the space for such narratives to be heard.

Conclusion

There is a proverb in Burkina Faso: "You can't pick up a stone with one finger." Another proverb, from the Shona people of Zimbabwe, says: "One finger cannot crush the bug that stings you." The speaker continued: "Being organized enables us to give each other ideas. As a group we can do what one person alone could not."[85] The Cartesian approach of modern design is like picking up a stone with one finger; it depends on an isolation in which reality is reduced to representation, the world experienced in the mental life of the observer. The cities produced are disintegrated, and this results from a methodology which some recent research begins to interrogate. Alternative possibilities begin to emerge from such interrogations, in which the spaces of experience are revalued, and the expertise of dwellers as well as designers and planners contributes to more sustainable patterns of human settlement.

84   Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City*; Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*; and P. Weyland, "Gendered Lives in Global Spaces" in A. Oncu and P. Weyland, eds., *Space, Culture and Power* (London: Zed Books, 1997), 82–97.

85   P. Pradervand, *Listening to Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 82.