

Roberto Brambilla:

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MORE STREETS FOR PEOPLE focuses on the urgent need to establish pedestrian precincts within the most congested areas of the world's cities.

As compared to the many crucial problems which afflict our society today, the pedestrianization need and the mobility crisis which engendered it could initially be regarded as secondary issues, which might divert public attention from more essential matters.

But in 1980, over 90% of all Americans will live in urban areas, as compared with 51% in 1920. And it is the city's crippled movement system, more than other urban problems, which affects in different degrees the totality of the urban body. As a growing majority of the world's population concentrates in metropolitan areas, mobility is no longer an attribute of how well the urban society will function, but crucial to whether it will be able to function at all.

Pedestrianization is here proposed as a single but important change necessary to ease the present congestion of central urban areas, and is viewed as part of a comprehensive policy for rebalancing the city's movement system and improving the human environment. Moreover, pedestrianization is intended as the first stage of a process which would re-establish an integrated living-working relationship in our cities.

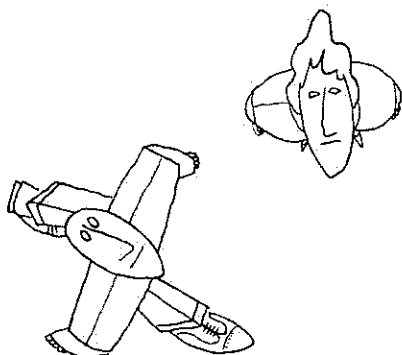
The deterioration of life in cities today is a result of the fundamental change brought about by the Industrial Revolution; that is to say, as cities evolved from living places

to places of work, they have primarily responded to functional and economic requirements. City dwellers have supplied the necessary manpower to make the system work, and their needs and aspirations have systematically been sacrificed to the technological society's ideal of efficiency and productivity.

This trend became dramatically evident in the early phase of the industrialization process. As Lewis Mumford records it: "With appropriate variations, this condition held throughout Europe and in more prosperous seaports of North America. From the standpoint of the working classes, this period was one of increasing exploitation, and with regard to their living quarters, one of increasing dilapidation and constriction." (8)

Some of the most serious problems affecting our cities today result from the increasing disaffection of human beings who do not share the rules and values of an urban society whose main concern is the exploitation of human and natural resources.

With the help of technology and heightened social concern, we have succeeded in improving the conditions of the working environment, but we still have not stopped to question the basic direction of urban living which emerged from the Industrial Revolution. We must now ask: are cities to serve the basic need for life or are they battlefields for the "mythic struggle for existence?" Is the quality in urban living improved by the surplus in production that the city provides? And is the individual citizen benefiting from the increased overall city wealth, or is the production system a



“closed circle” mechanism which concentrates wealth instead of distributing it, stimulating consumerism and false needs?

Any attempt to approach the underlying nature of city problems and to advocate significant changes in both policy-making and public attitude necessarily acquires a political meaning. Concern for the city's future and alarm at the distressing conditions in urban areas today compel us to re-evaluate the values and priorities on which our society is based. Ultimately, city planning as a democratic, participatory task, cannot succeed unless the people become directly and deeply involved in all aspects and problems of the urban environment. And their involvement demands that they be aware of primary urban issues and of the available alternative options.

This program attempts to provide a conceptual approach to the improvement of the human environment in cities.

At present, we look to technology to provide solutions to the chief problems of an industrializing society, and, money, of course, is the means of achieving it. As Jane Jacobs has remarked, there is a wistful myth that goes: “If we had enough money to spend, we could wipe out our slums in ten years, reverse decay in the great dull belts that were yesterday's suburbs, anchor the wandering middle class and its elusive tax money, and perhaps, even solve the traffic problem.” (9)

We do not believe that myth.

Instead, we are convinced that only a significant change in the values which motivate our behavior, and a re-arrangement

More Streets For People

of the priorities which determine our choices, can enable us to overcome the present state of acute imbalances and contradictions in our society.

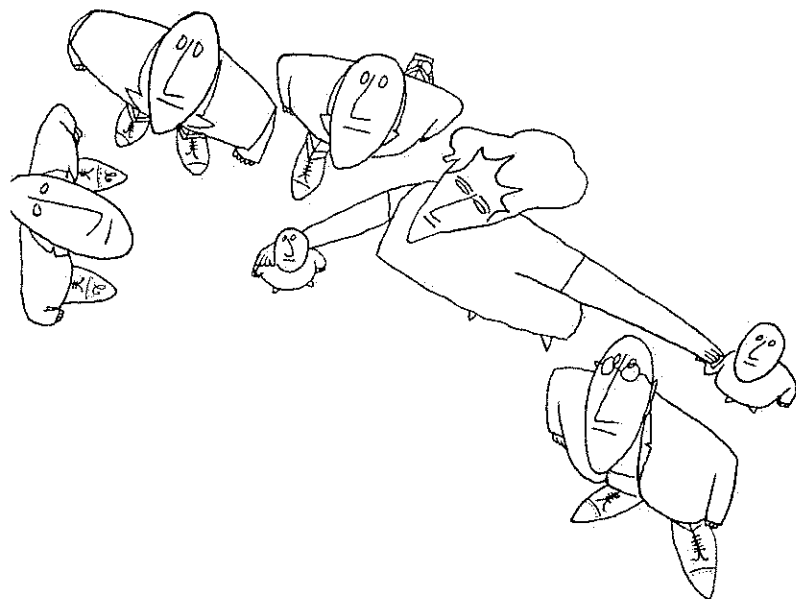
The problems which undermine the urban society are not helped by the technocratic attitude which characterizes most city decision-making. In dealing with urban problems, the trend has been to segregate one issue from another, in hopes of facilitating the identification and solution of each individual problem. This approach ignores the complex inter-relationships of the various urban issues, and results in short-range therapies which deal with symptoms, without even attempting to grapple with basic causes.

For example, if the crime rate in cities increases, the solution cannot be found merely in police reinforcement and the improvement of street lighting. If respiratory diseases are on the rise, the solution does not lie in the provision of a number of advanced, new health facilities. By the same token, we are nowhere near the roots of the traffic crisis when we rely on new urban highways to eliminate congestion.

These superficial attempts to combat city problems may temporarily relieve public concern and community tension, but they also permit us to lose sight of the crucial socio-economic issues.

Urban problems cannot be dealt with isolatedly. They must be considered holistically—for they are but manifestation of the flaws and imbalances of the overall system.

If we are to insure adequate mobility in urban areas, we





6. Palermo, Italy. Piazza Pretoria. Courtesy of DEL COMUNE.

must focus on the three following objectives:

- 1) the improvement and enhancement of public transportation
- 2) the restriction of private motor traffic
- 3) the re-evaluation of city planning policies, in order to affect the very causes of the movement pattern, that is to say, density and land use.

We must strive to achieve that stage of equilibrium which provides efficient and comfortable mobility, as well as pedestrian safety and environmental quality.

Today, the traffic problem constitutes the weakest point of the entire urban system, and is nowhere more acute than in central business districts. Ironically, modern technology advances long and medium-range mobility through the development of supersonic planes, high speed rail systems and extensive highway networks, while transportation in our cities is neglected and has steadily deteriorated. The absurd discrepancy between these two scales of movement is rooted in the conflict between private and public transportation. This conflict cannot be resolved unless we question the purpose of transportation in relation to the scope and meaning of mobility.

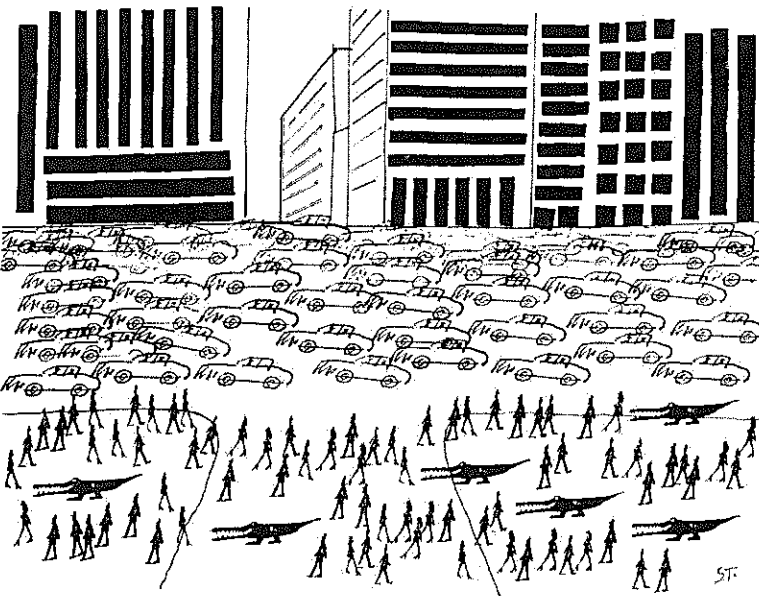
What is transportation for?

As Lewis Mumford defines it: "The purpose of transportation is to bring people or goods to places where they are needed, and to concentrate the greatest variety of goods and people within a limited area, in order to widen the possibility of choice without making it necessary to travel."

(10) Ultimately, transportation is a function of the distribution of people and goods in urban areas, and therefore, of the way cities are structured and organized. For example, a concentration of activities involves a high intensity of uses, wide provision of inter-related services and facilities, higher overall population density and the incompatibility of private transportation modes; a segregation of activities implies specialization of uses, a grouping of homogenous facilities, higher commuter flows and periodical non-use of large city sectors and of related facilities.

The "liveability" of the preindustrial city resulted mainly from the highly concentrated pattern of social, economic and physical activities. With the advent of the industrial era, the city's structure began to show a growing segregation of functions and activities. Working districts were separated from residential ones, shopping from recreation, education from entertainment. This new pattern, especially emphasized in American cities, aimed at differentiating the various movement flows, at separating people from goods, and at providing different movement infrastructures for different types of mobility. In practice, this organization denied the "city's need for a most intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially." (11) In particular, this zoning benefited the distribution of goods more than that of people, and marked the beginning of the commuter's era. As people kept moving from one district to another, traffic grew denser and mobility more difficult.

Today's congestion in urban areas is the consequence of an increasing number of circulating automobiles, despite the



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lack of space and facilities necessary to make this mode of transportation effective. Today, private motor vehicles in central cities are nothing short of irrational: in addition to being inefficient, they are expensive, wasteful and hazardous. And yet, the question that urban planners continue to ask is: can we provide a solution to the traffic crisis within metropolitan areas without limiting the circulation of private cars?

As Jane Jacobs points out, "The simple needs of automobiles are more easily understood and satisfied than the complex needs of cities, and a growing number of planners and designers have come to believe that if they can only solve the problem of traffic, they will thereby have solved the major problem of cities." (12) Such an attitude results from a lack of city sense, and in its name an indiscriminate clearing of central areas of American cities has been undertaken, involving large scale relocations of people and activities.

Ultimately, any effective program for the improvement of urban mobility has to take into account the particular characteristics of the city's structure. Most cities today show three separate and consecutive physical patterns:

- 1) the compact historical or preindustrial structure;
- 2) the disintegrated urban structure developed after the Industrial Revolution;
- 3) the beginning developments of the city of tomorrow.

These three coexistent patterns present sharply divergent problems and requirements which overlap and contradict one another.

The preindustrial city was conceived when present transportation modes and traffic volumes did not exist. It is identified by: (a) an organic physical pattern; (b) an intrinsic cultural value; (c) the integrated relationship between living and working patterns.

In the preindustrial city, the urban structure was primarily conceived for pedestrian use. Hence, walking in the historic districts is comfortable from the physical, the visual and the functional point of view. Streets are shielded from wind, shaded from the sun, and often protected from the rain by arcades and porches. Walking is enhanced by the attractive sequence of streets and squares, and passage simplified by the existence of interior courts and alleys. The historic and artistic value of the preindustrial city is not limited to prestigious landmarks, but includes the whole environment as a living document of the city of the past.

Originally, the historic district responded to the whole spectrum of urban functions and activities. Later, as it became

outdated, it lost population and was used mainly as a business district. Large industrial companies, financial organizations and governmental and municipal agencies—all requiring high accessibility and a large range of services—concentrated in the historic areas. As a consequence, the original urban pattern was significantly altered, and had to accommodate increasing numbers of commuters and the denser traffic they generated.

More recently, high and middle-income families have begun to move back into the old city's sectors, while major organizations, burdened with administrative and functional problems, are moving out.

Historic areas attract a large flow of visitors, which stimulates commercial and recreational activities. This trend occurs either in limited zones, or in the area as a whole. In the first case, the traffic impact is mainly local and occurs within pedestrian limits, while in the second, an extensive movement flow is generated and affects the entire metropolitan area.

Historic districts are likely to be free of motor traffic. Many European cities of different size, population and character have pedestrianized sectors of their historic areas. Generally, these experiments are carried out within the framework of an overall urban transportation strategy, and their main objectives are the preservation of the original city's physical structure, the enhancement of its cultural resources, and the increase of commercial and recreational appeal.

Historic districts, however, constitute only limited portions of a city. For the most part, today's cities are the end products of two centuries of extensive urbanization. It is here that the most vital functional and economic changes—involving higher densities of population and greater activity—take place. And it is here that we see the distress symptoms which mark the lack of a rational and consistent urban policy. The transformation of the city structure after the Industrial Revolution has been characterized by the two processes: one, the urban development of the natural surroundings, and two, the renewal of the pre-existing fabric.

"The radical transformation of the natural environment," writes Bernard Rudofsky, "affected humanity as no other event since Noah's flood. In the United States, cities grew into non-cities such as the world had never seen." (13) The resulting pattern is a disintegrating collage of frenetic working districts and dormitory quarters, downtown and suburban areas, recreational districts and shopping centers, all strung together by a grid-shaped system undifferentiated, and indifferent to its own characteristics and requirements.

What of urban renewal? It has, in the last 20 years,

fallen far short of its goals, charges Design Quarterly, (14) producing "primarily civic and corporate structures and little housing. The majority of public civic projects . . . have done little to alleviate the profound shortages of low-cost housing, public transportation, pedestrian amenities, public school and recreational facilities so desperately needed in urban America.

The main reason for such an alienating pattern is the speculative nature of modern cities. The urban territory is seldom regarded as a public resource to be developed and enhanced for the public good, but is rather considered on the same level as any other investment.

Since the manufacture and sale of automobiles has been given a top national priority, one outcome has been the indiscriminate dependence on the motor car in cities, and a corresponding decrease in mobility. In the present segregative urban pattern, mobility is crucial; it is the life-blood that permits dynamic exchange and the integration of dismembered activities and services.

"The modern superhighway," discloses a recent M.I.T. study, "may have been the transportation of the 1950's, but today we see evidence that our highway system may become, in a few decades, the modern steel and concrete equivalent of the pyramids, obsolete and non-biodegradable. We need to investigate new systems of small buses, clean transit, community car-pools, all-weather patterns, and better provision for pedestrians, and we should ask when mobility can become excessive and interfere with the personal rights of others." (15)

We cannot afford any longer to blindly proceed until disaster proves that we have done something wrong. The times demand a more tempered wisdom—the caution of ecology—that is, that we do not proceed until we are quite sure that serious side effects will not result.

"Providing more road space only temporarily alleviates the problem," writes Brian Richards, "and this lesson, learned from American experience, has at last been understood. In Europe, the more enlightened municipal authorities are preparing to halt this one-way spiral by placing a high priority on providing excellent public transport systems, and encouraging the motorist back into them." (16)

Today, in the United States, the improvement of urban mobility requires significant changes at the institutional and planning levels, as well as in people's basic attitude toward the automobile. But the institutional problems are just as obstructive as the technological ones. "In metropolitan areas," points out John Olsson of the Department of Transportation, "a multiplicity of jurisdictions are involved in a transportation problem that concerns more than one town or city. But, because of the nature of our government, you need action by each town council to get anything done. And sometimes it is more difficult to get action by a town council than to go to the moon." (17)

Public mass transportation has been deteriorating steadily in the United States. In 1946, there were 24 billion riders; now there are 5.8 billion a year. Operating profit has plummeted from \$60 million in 1960 to a deficit today of about \$400 million annually. "We are in a vicious cycle," observes William Allison of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. "To

try and meet rising operating costs, fares have been increased, and with each increase there has been a drop-off in riders." (18)

About 200 cities have lost their public transportation system in the last decade. And, perhaps in alarm, the public attitude has begun to change. Over the last few years, "homes before highways" and "people before cars" have been the rallying cries of a growing number of concerned citizens throughout the U.S. Today, the old approach to transportation planning is under fire, and its irrationality recognized by more and more people with the ability to institute change.

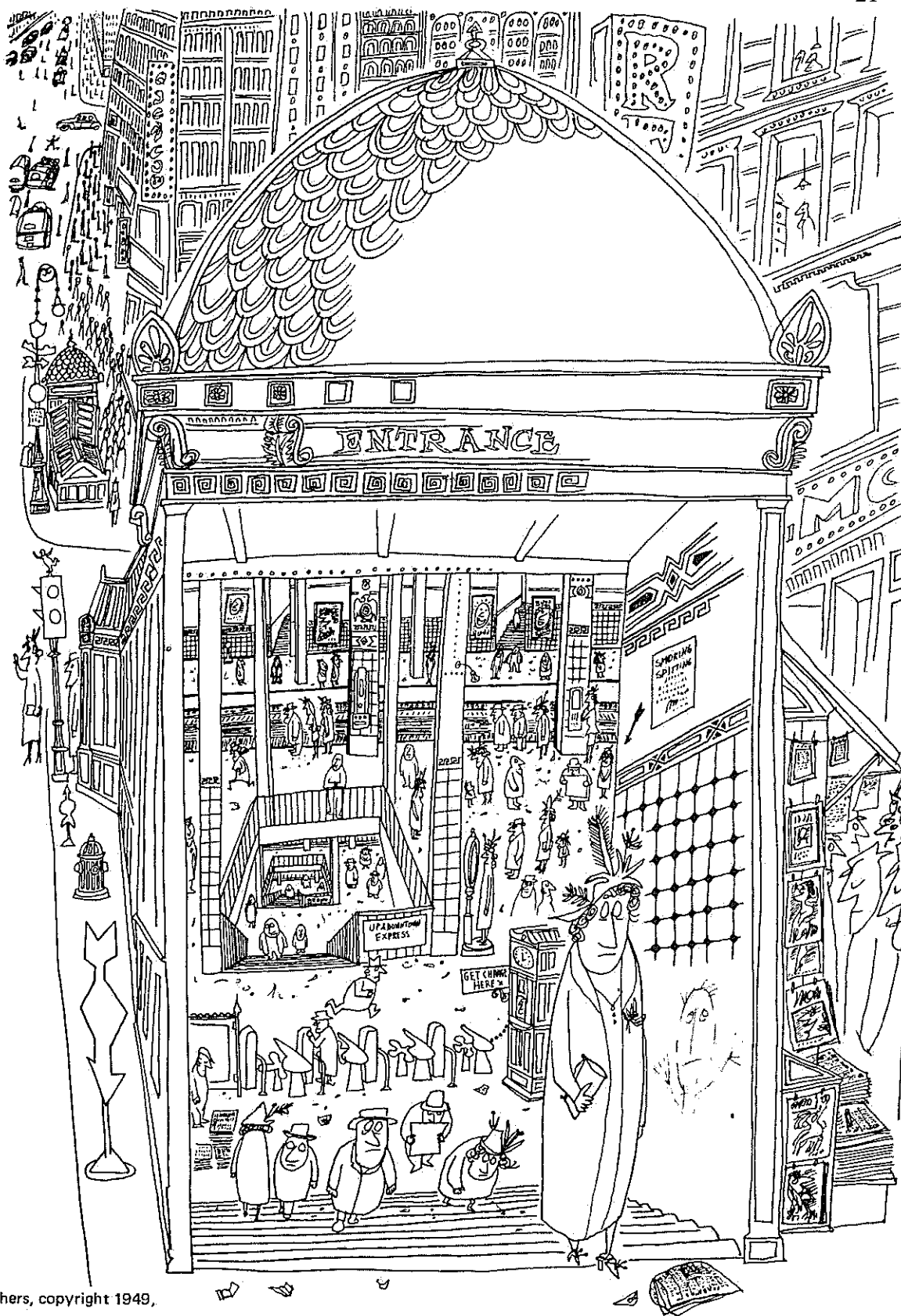
From the last century's Haussmann clearings of Paris, to the recent disastrous American urban renewals, transportation planning has focused on one aspect of the traffic problem: how to penetrate central urban areas. During the last decade, however, with the introduction of tangential arteries and peripheral parking, as well as the elimination of cross-through traffic and the creation of pedestrian districts, the entire approach to the problem of urban mobility has been revolutionized.

Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Stockholm—and a few other European cities—implemented these principles as far back as the early 1950's and still constitute admirable examples of true urban renewal.

In today's cities there are also sophisticated urban developments which provide balanced transportation along with well-integrated activities and a successful physical environment. They offer a pioneering model of the city of tomorrow. Indeed, images of the city of the future have been anticipated and written about through the centuries by several scholars and artists, and include such concepts as Leonardo da Vinci's segregated traffic pattern and Sant'Elia's futuristic visions. Today, Paolo Soleri is advocating highly concentrated, miniaturized urban systems where transportation is provided free, and connects within a few minutes' time all of a city's functions and activities. Despite many fascinating new proposals, few among the most recent urban developments have been conceived so as to provide a balanced relationship between distribution of activities, population and mobility.

One notable exception is Montreal's new city center. Though conceived as a business district without an integrated residential community, it can be considered one of the most successful instances of downtown planning in the world. The project consists of clusters of office towers and other buildings rising from a common base structure composed of piazzas, enclosed shopping areas, underground trucking networks and parking garages. All of these elements are interwoven and interconnected. The separate buildings are linked by common roots, are in turn connected to subway and railway stations, and form a teeming pedestrian environment.

"The purpose of this complex organization was to preserve mobility despite very high density," (19) says Vincent Ponte, a key designer of the project. In downtown Montreal, the three different types of circulation—automobile, truck and pedestrian—are segregated into separate spheres. For trucks, there has been set aside an extensive underground network of tunnels and docking areas, which span several blocks at a time. Pedestrians are provided with an even more elaborate environment of their own—a three-mile, climate-



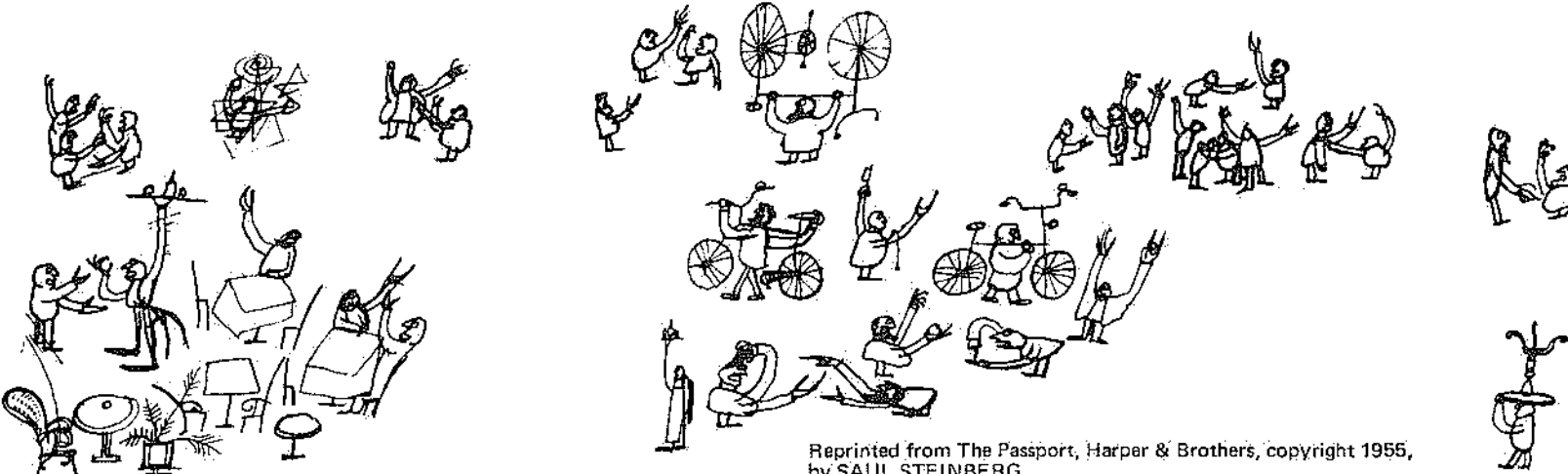
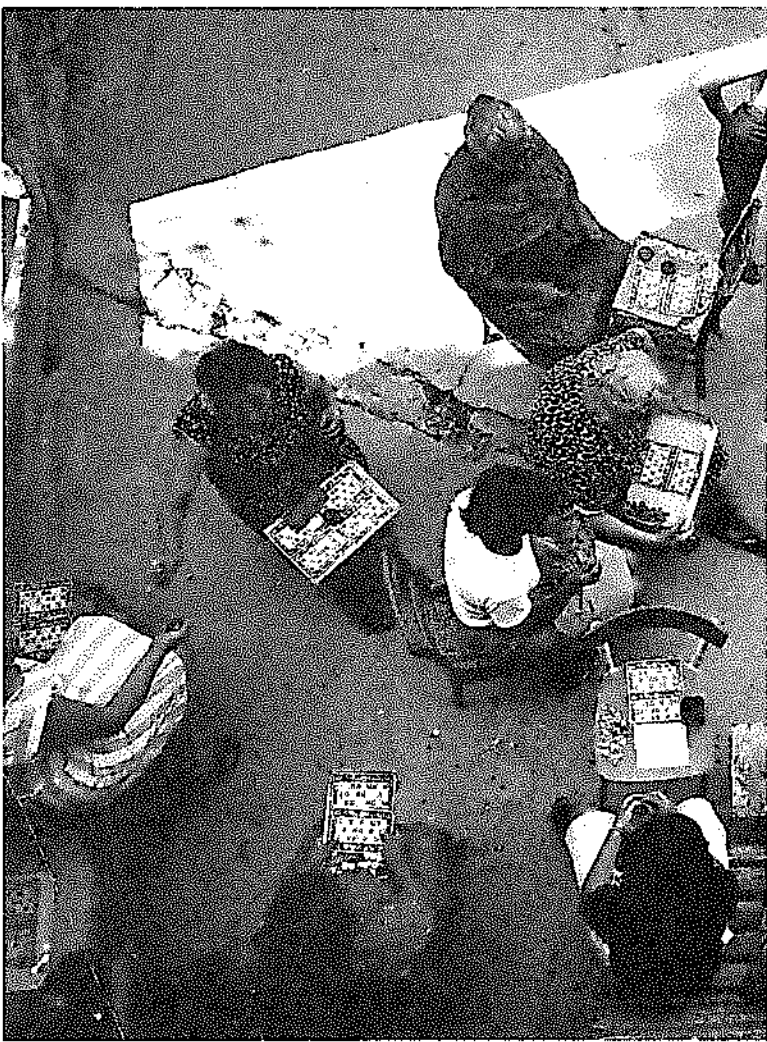
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controlled, sheltered network of shopping malls, concourses, and promenades, which extends through block after block of construction, uniting a major portion of downtown Montreal into a single, functional unit. The streets outdoors remain, with their improvements, the special province of automobiles. Around the multi-level zone there are no trucks nor are there streams of cars cruising in search of parking spaces; they can proceed directly from the major highways to any of several large parking units incorporated in the multilevel structure.

Montreal's achievements are instructive and can be largely attributed to a generous concentration of financial investment, strong and consistent political cooperation, and, or course, intelligent planning and urban design. A particularly favorable element was the availability of land—a 22-acre parcel in downtown Montreal, which once held the tracks of the Canadian National Railway. No relocation was necessary, and consequently no community was hurt. The resulting development is a significant example of how tridimensional zoning and a highly sophisticated system of movement infrastructures can succeed in providing mobility, without imposing direct restriction on the circulation of private cars. But Montreal is also a unique case-study of innovations which most of the world's cities cannot socially and/or economically afford.

Most cities today will have to rethink their approach to urban mobility in terms of software, not hardware. That is to say that large-scale urban re-development can no longer be undertaken without an abiding concern for its social implications. Inner cities should be replanned to accommodate pedestrian circulation, and mass transit services rebuilt and extended so that they actually serve the needs and movement patterns of the people. Historic districts ought to be restored and preserved, and the overall public environment respected and enhanced, if the city is once again to belong to everyone, instead of belonging to no one.

A city for people—this is the city of tomorrow.



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An important innovation in the development of a city for people is the creation of districts where people can walk—unhindered by vehicles.

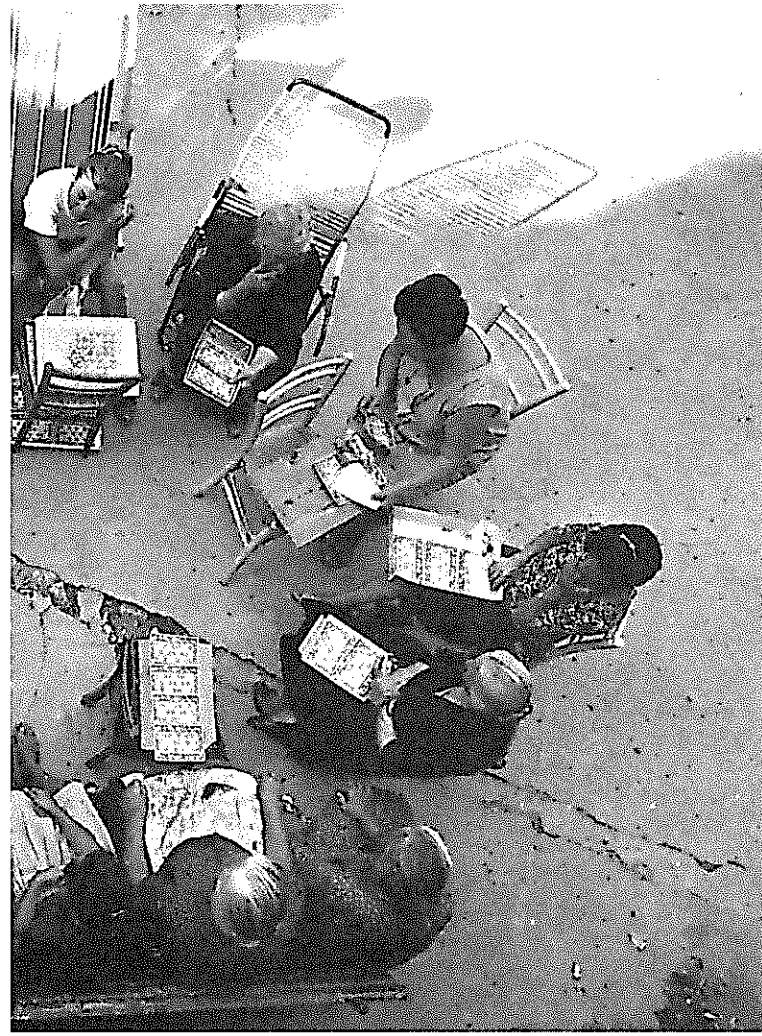
During the last ten years, numerous cities throughout the world have introduced traffic bans on an experimental or permanent basis.

In Germany alone, 28 cities have established traffic restrictions and pedestrian islands since 1961. Pedestrian precincts have been created in cities in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Ireland, Holland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, and England.

In Milan, in 1968, the City approved the creation of 17 experimental pedestrian districts in the metropolitan areas. But the absence of an overall transportation strategy to handle the traffic load, and the lack of design that would enable these areas to fit pedestrian needs, made this experiment a failure. The test, however, was not totally without benefit. After a five-year interval, the City is now proposing an extensive pedestrian system which would extend over most of its central area.

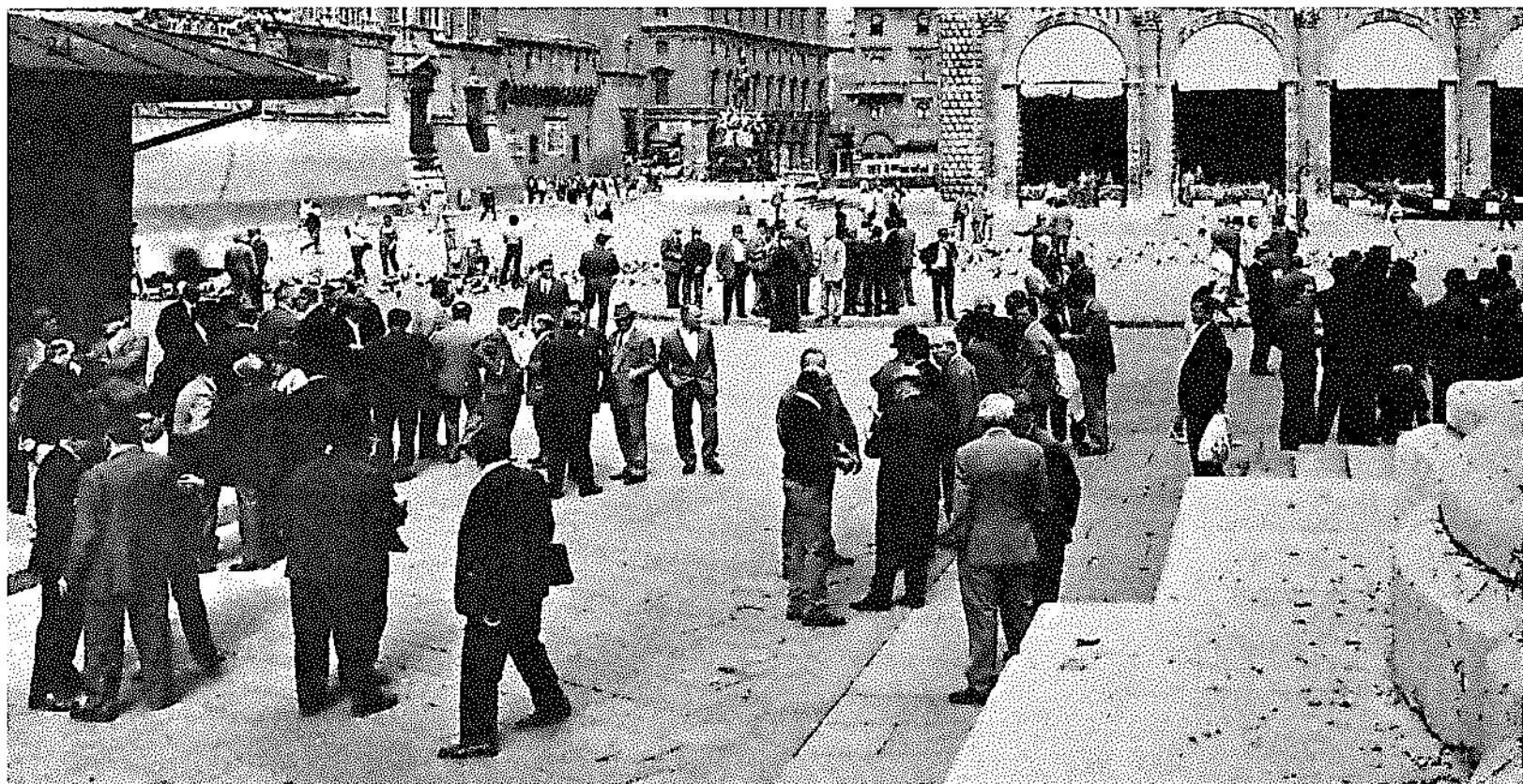
In the United States, the most famous of pedestrian plans was prepared by Victor Gruen in 1962, for the downtown area of Fort Worth, Texas. Because of strong political opposition, in a time when the automobile still represented the highest symbol of socio-economic prestige, the plan was turned down. But it served as a model for pedestrianization projects in more than 90 American cities, and some of them, at least, were implemented.

Today's mounting congestion in central cities, and a growing awareness of the automobile's role in the deterioration of the human environment, are succeeding in convincing the public of the urgent need for limiting the use of private cars in urban areas. This new attitude is motivated by the growing concern about air pollution, the evidence of greater retail potential in traffic-free districts, and the desire for an enhancement of the public environment, especially in the historic neighborhoods.



1. Sulmona, Italy. Courtesy of R. BAZZONI.





9. Bologna, Italy. Piazza Maggiore. Courtesy of G. BERENGO GARDIN

Extensive experimentation has demonstrated the effectiveness of traffic bans as a means of lowering the street-level of air pollutants, and, in particular, of carbon monoxide.

In New York City, the experimental closing of Fifth Avenue traffic in the summer of 1970, resulted in the reduction of the concentration of carbon monoxide from 30 parts-per-million to five. Noise levels during the same experiment dropped from 78 decibels to 58. In the same city, the closure of Madison Avenue to traffic in the spring of 1971 resulted in lowering carbon monoxide from 22 parts-per-million to eight. In both cases there was no significant increase in the carbon monoxide level on adjacent streets. In Tokyo and Marseilles similar traffic bans produced equally impressive results.

Traffic-free precincts, wherever established, have significantly improved the pedestrian environment, making walking more pleasant, thereby attracting an increased number of shoppers and strollers.

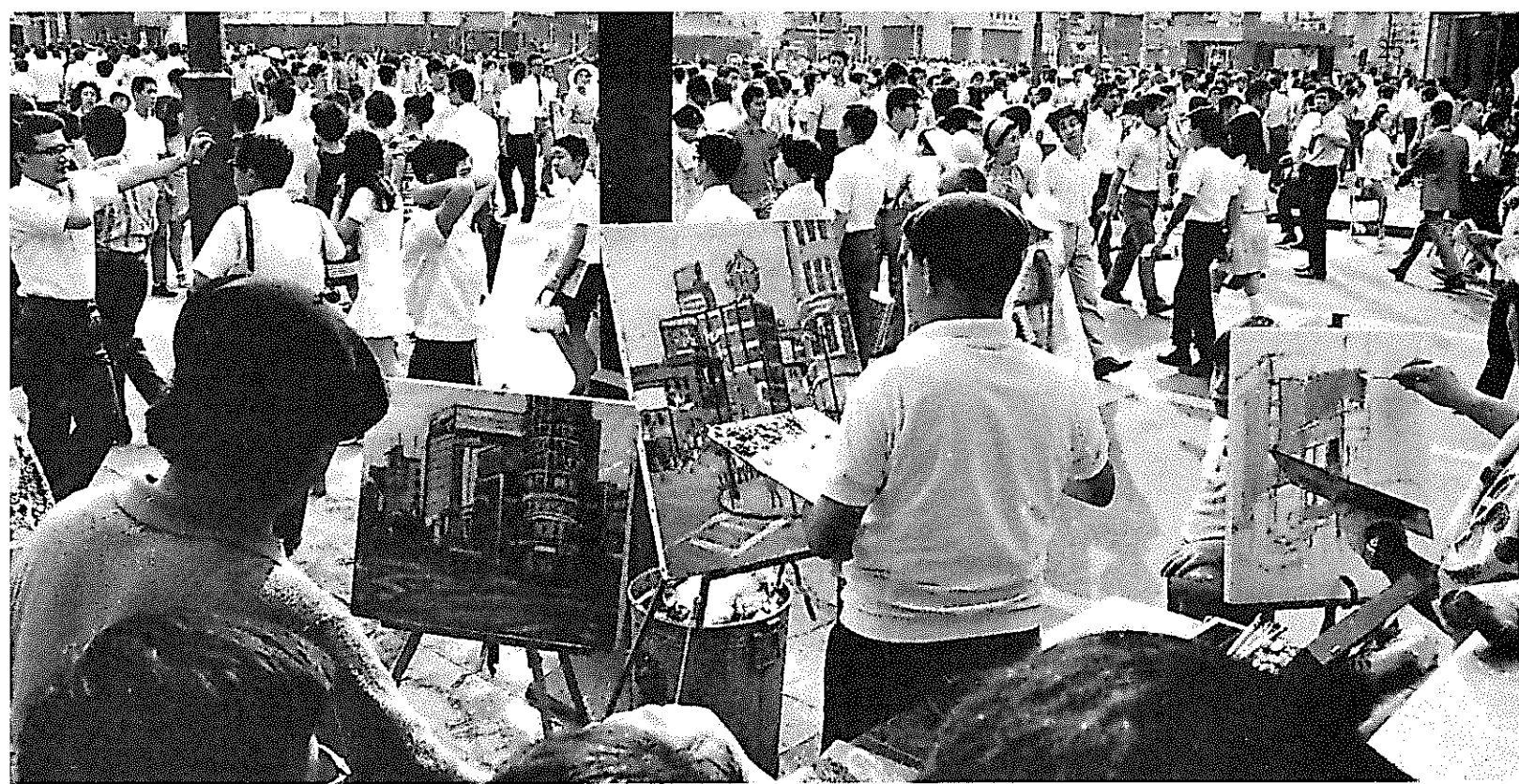
Store owners in various cities in Europe, Japan and the United States, who originally resisted the pedestrianization experiments, are today supporting proposals for extending the traffic-free areas. "In Florence, Italy," reports the New York Times, "some shopkeepers in the first traffic streets south of the pedestrian zone went on strike to press demands that the car ban be expanded to include their streets." (20)

In Essen, Germany, the increase in trade was reported to be between 15% and 35%, depending on the type of shops; in Rouen, France, between 10% and 15%. In Vienna, shop

owners reported a 25% to 50% increase in business in the first week after the traffic ban went into effect. In Norwich, England, all but two shops in the exclusive area enjoyed a greater volume of business, some experiencing an increase in sales of 10% or more. In Tokyo, of 574 merchants interviewed after the traffic ban test, 74% favored the experiment. (21) A survey of store-owners in New York City indicated that on both Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue, a sizeable majority supported the closure.

Traffic-free areas have often been implemented to strengthen the commercial appeal of downtown areas, so as to compete successfully with suburban shopping centers. In particular this has been the case of Coventry, Liverpool, Leeds and Bolton in England; Essen, Stuttgart, Cologne, Hanover, Bremen, Munich and Frankfurt in Germany; The Hague and Eindhoven in Holland; Minneapolis and Columbus in the United States; Klagenfurt, in Austria; Zurich in Switzerland, and many others. Steps for excluding cars from historic squares and streets have been undertaken in Munich, Paris, Brussels, Rouen, and in several Italian cities such as Rome, Milan, Florence, Bologna, Verona, Siena, Perugia and Vicenza.

The argument against pedestrian areas is that limited traffic bans do not totally solve the issue of mobility in cities, nor do they reduce the overall level of air pollution. The critics charge that the banning of automobiles from one street will provoke an increase in the congestion of the surrounding areas, therefore worsening the pollution problem.



10. Tokyo, Ginza. Courtesy of SHUNSUKE IWASAKI.

They clearly perceive the urban movement system as a closed system or a static one.

Cities are all but static and closed systems. As Jane Jacobs notes, "For just as there is no absolute, immutable number of public transportation riders in a city, so is there no absolute, immutable number of private automobile riders; rather, the numbers vary in response to current differentials in speed and convenience among ways of getting around." (22)

On the subject of pollution, Kenneth Orski observes, "Car-free precincts are not in themselves a complete answer to the vehicular air pollution problem. Air quality in the city is influenced by two separate phenomena; the street level pollution, higher in concentration but localized in nature; and the less concentrated but more widespread pollution, consisting of a mixture of vehicular exhausts and pollutants from stationary sources. Exclusion of vehicles effectively reduces street-level concentrations of pollutants, but contributes little to improving the overall urban air quality. In most cities, however, the main problem is how to reduce local pollutant concentrations in the street environment, and strategies involving auto-free zones deserve careful attention as an alternative source of control." (23)

The effects of a pedestrian area on the city traffic pattern depend on the characteristics of both the city and the pedestrian districts.

Urban traffic is influenced by (1) city size, (2) density, and (3) distribution of people and activities. Each factor

affects the number and direction of movement trips, modes of transportation, and the degree of desirability for a pedestrian district. The last factor is also a function of a city diversity, vitality and concentration of use.

Correspondingly, areas differ in the way they affect a city's traffic according to their (1) dimension, (2) type of activities, and (3) extent of pedestrianization.

Closing streets to traffic necessitates the careful solution of a series of transportation-related problems such as fringe parking, improved access, goods delivery, traffic re-routing and internal circulation. The larger a pedestrian area is, the more these problems require accurate planning and innovative solutions.

In most cases, pedestrian districts do not exceed 1500 feet in length. This may be the maximum distance that an average shopper is willing to negotiate on foot, but this also depends on habits, age and environmental conditions.

Most traffic ban experiments have been limited to the closure of one street, usually the busiest commercial spine. This has been the case of Copenhagen's Stroget, Amsterdam's Klaverstraat, and Helsinki's Aleksanterinkatu.

Some larger areas for traffic bans have been attempted. Sometimes, a number of commercial streets have been connected to create small pedestrian systems, as in The Hague, Holland, and in Kassel and Dusseldorf, Germany. The Hague and Dusseldorf have both developed a network of pedestrian streets and malls 1.5 and 2.1 miles long,



respectively. Essen, Germany has created a pedestrian precinct 0.62 miles long and 326 yards wide. Stroget in Copenhagen, originally 1,160 yards long, has been extended to include another 300 yards of pedestrian street. Vienna is planning to develop the most ambitious scheme of all—a 0.74 mile-in-diameter traffic-free central district—served by non-polluting taxis and mini-buses running on liquid gas.

The activity occurring in the pedestrian zone affects, in different degrees, the movement pattern. For example, predominantly residential activities with local commercial and recreational facilities (even if situated within prestigious historic districts) stimulate low degrees of circulation; predominantly managerial, commercial and recreational activities attract large numbers of people. Here, obviously, are the places where major problems occur and where a redistribution of traffic among different transportation means is required.

Pedestrianization does not necessarily mean a total ban on motor vehicle movements. Actually, pedestrian areas are differentiated by the type and extent of traffic allowed to penetrate within their limits. The following categories can be established:

- a) areas exclusively reserved for pedestrians
- b) areas where emergency vehicles can occasionally transit
- c) areas crossed by surface public vehicles
- d) areas where only local traffic is allowed
- e) areas where pedestrianization and automobile circulation can occur at different times

These categories can partially or totally overlap, according to the characteristics of each situation. Full segregation of pedestrian and vehicle flows is not necessarily advocated for it can produce “unmanageable city vacuums, by no means preferable to unmanageable city traffic.” (24)

In the last few years, following the very serious problems of distributing people and goods within large pedestrian districts where permanent exclusion of vehicles was envisaged, less drastic schemes have been receiving increased attention. Here, the objective is not to achieve a full segregation of movement patterns, but to succeed in significantly cutting down the number of circulating vehicles.

The city of Goteborg, Sweden, pioneered this approach by dividing the central business district into five zones served by an external ring with a minimum number of entries, and by erecting physical barriers between each zone, so as to eliminate cross-through circulation. Despite the fact that within each local zone traffic is allowed, car circulation has

dropped as much as 50%, the number of accidents was reduced by 5%, the concentration of carbon monoxide in the central area lowered from 30 parts-per-million to less than five, and noise levels decreased from 75 to 72 decibels. (25)

The experience of the last few years in various cities throughout the world has clearly pointed out that traffic bans are not only operationally feasible, but also successful in achieving both environmental and economic improvement. After years of urban “laissez-faire” in which the quality of the city environment has gone steadily downhill, pedestrianization appears to be “the idea whose time has come.”

Repeatedly, in architecture and urban design, theoretical schemes have failed to respond to urban reality. One of the reasons for this failure lies in the lack of adequate investigation into the human implications of urban living and people-response to space, density, mobility and so on. No wonder that urban design, disregarding basic criteria on human behavior, has mostly conceived the city as an abstract mechanism responding solely to functional and economic requirements.

Hopefully, as we understand the necessity of looking at urban problems from the perspective of the community as a whole, and not simply as the itemization of several individual interests, we would be able to develop a more human and democratic city.

To establish a hierarchy of priorities which can better service people’s needs, we must involve the whole urban community in the process of decision-making which affects the city as a place in which to live. A key factor in this process is to provide the citizens with appropriate information which can insure true freedom of choice. Ultimately, only a more active and responsible citizen participation can affect the urban system, to modify objectives and priorities, change policies, promote new legislation and rechannel public investments. The return of public space to pedestrians and the provision of a more balanced transportation system is the first step toward a better city.

This is the message of MORE STREETS FOR PEOPLE.

The dismal thought occurs—what if this message does not reach the public? In that case, I shall have to concur with Jane Jacobs that “We will hardly need to ponder a mystery that has troubled man for millenia: what is the purpose of life? For us, then, the answer will be clear, established and for all practical purposes indisputable: the purpose of life is to produce and consume automobiles.” (26)