PLACES - experiencing and making
A place in Athens

by
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
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MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
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Rotch

To my beloved parents, Tassos and Sofia

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Abstract

PLACE is a concept that addresses fundamental aspects of human existence; the external bonds of man with the world. It rests upon shared ways of life and knowledge which enable its physical expression into coherent and live environments.

In our time, when the common languages and the processes that support them have broken down, it has become increasingly difficult for architects to set the ground for new PLACES. The lost order of organic evolution has been replaced by a new order based on control.

Through the present study I intend to draw from my understanding of the physical environment and its transformations over time, in order to formulate a conceptual basis that can help me form a complete picture of the complex issue of PLACE.

The use of a specific place - the immigrants' neighborhood in Kessariani, Athens, - which will shortly undergo a process of demolition and rebuilding, will serve as a background for testing the previous concepts through the experience of its space and through an attempt to design the physical conditions for its reemergence as a new place -an alternative to the design of control, reintroducing change.

The study is also an exploration of the link between conceptual and formal expression, as processes that reinforce, perfect and are tested against each other.

Thesis supervisor: N. John Habraken
Title: Professor of Architecture

Acknowledgements

To Professor and friend N. John Habraken, for his invaluable support and inspiration throughout this thesis; for making me see Architecture, beyond personal achievement and intentions to transcend time, as a contribution to a robust, live, and ever-changing environment that embraces the ordinary as well as the special.

To Prof. Nabeel Hamdi, for his encouragement and assistance.

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A literary introduction

the reflective and passionless age - looking through opacity: objects, light in their absence of meaning... objects moving, lighter than the air, "the movements being free as they are insignificant" [1]... missing the weight of the overall picture where everything regains meaning and purpose and place, where everyone carries the burden of responsibility hiding in itself life's most intense fulfilment... without this weight, life is leveled, "leaving everything standing, but cunningly emptying it from significance"[2].. it becomes an outline without a picture, a sketch for nothing...

placelessness - following the age of lightness and insignificance, "the richly varied places of the world... are rapidly obliterated under a meaningless pattern of buildings, monotonous and chaotic." [3] "Man is deprived of the memory of a lost home and the hope of a promised land...; [4] "expelled from the small, friendlier world in which previous centuries of men moved with a confidence born of familiarity, he is compelled to cope with an expanded scale of events in a big, alien world... he has not yet found his place in this redefined world." [5]

the significance of place - "Place, person, time and act form an indivisible unity. To be oneself, one has to be somewhere definite..." [6], self is not distinct from one's place; it is that place. Place is the focus where one experiences the meaningful events of his existence...,"a 'here' from which the world discloses itself, a 'there' to which one can go." [7]

a point of departure and reference - "For a brief generation in Athens, the way of

gods, the ways of nature and the ways of men came close to a common point. For a while, city and citizens were one, and no part of life seemed to be outside their self-molding activities." [8]

Past, short moments of enlightenment seem to keep together and warm the deprived city today. The city is following the times blindly, but it still has some future for places.

building up new places - Open eyes, open to impression and sympathetically inclined, can make a place reveal its true essence.

Then, how far can architecture go to mold this essence with the spirit of times and bring together city and man once more?
How much sensitivity is needed to create the "primitive" substance on which can be inscribed the meanings of human intentions and experiences?
How much competence is needed to grasp the being of a place and then put it together, real and concrete?

"... a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of lights in the fog, the dialogue of two passersby meeting in the crowd... I think that, setting out of there, I will put together, piece by piece... the city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them..."(Marco Polo) [9]

Chapter one
PLACE - concept

A conceptual analysis of the physical experience of "place"

Place as a concept seems to have been with us through ages, evolving and modifying its meaning as it followed the spirit of the times. Its original latin form - *platea*- initially signified an open space or broad street, a "piazza" or "plaza". Its urban usage persisted into the Middle Ages, indicating a collection of houses, or even a town, and, later, during the Renaissance, referring to the "square"- an open space whose boundaries are defined by an orderly arrangement of houses, and which is not a street.

But except from the latin origin, there still survives an older english word of german origin -*stead*-, meaning place in territorial terms, with references to rural concepts of space. This second word is still used today in "homestead", "steady", "instead" (in place of), with connotations of security and permanence.

At some point, the two meanings merged under "place", as the location of a permanent arrangement of spaces and a container of social and economic values, having no specific form or aesthetic identity. Under Romanticism, a newer and more specific definition appeared; place was valued as a way of expressing oneself and developing one's personality- an individual space, a secluded and natural environment. Finally, in the 19th century, this "natural" place yielded to a view that its good impact on the individual could be extended, so that its benefits could be

available to social groups.

Completing and extending the above concepts, we could name **"place" the indistinguishable unity of physical space, activities taking place in it and the meanings or symbols that it carries**; the three are interrelated in such a way that they engage the individual to relate positively, directly or indirectly, to the rest of the world. That means that the physical space, by offering an identifiable image of what people share, becomes an extension and complement of their personal space, sharpening their perception of the world and of its structure, supportive and inclusive of their actions, facilitating and enhancing their contact with the world -tangible or abstract. Then, place has to do with the quality of the relation of the individual to the physical space, and that among individuals, enacted through and within the physical space. That does not mean that space by itself creates behavior, but that it helps it appear; it only activates what already exists and is shared by people.

By observing the intensity and richness of interactions between people and environments and among people inside environments, we could draw some assumptions about what qualifies a space to become a place.

Cognition and competence could be defined as the more general qualities ascribed and looked for in a "place". A cognitive environment is legible, allowing to be read, understood and known. A competent environment, on the other hand, can engender active interaction and further identification by people - a feeling of being **inside** and free to act.

According to E. Relph[10], to be inside is the main intention behind the concept of place - to belong and identify with it. The idea of insideness, though, can be considered as:

behavioral insideness - being in a place and seeing it as a set of objects, views and activities, arranged in certain ways and having some observable qualities. This kind of insideness refers and corresponds to a first level of cognition and competence, that of an outsider, a passerby.

empathetic insideness - where one is open to the significances and symbols of a place, not just looking at it, but seeing into it, and appreciating the essential elements of its identity.

existential insideness - being committed and part of a place.

Getting down to more explicit levels of translation, we could refer to properties of physical space that allow and enable the existence of the qualities already discussed, not claiming, by any way, all these to be more than subjective and incomplete criteria.

a. **on the behavioral level:**

sensory stimulation

variety	: physical stimuli into a continuous transformation
complexity	: the ability to offer a gradual reading on many layers
contrast	: contrasting stimuli and images - dark/light, open/closed, move/rest...
surprisingness	: known patterns made up of new forms, known forms combined into new patterns...

b. on the empathetic and existential level:

human scale

dimensional references to human activities

continuity

consistency to a larger, cultural and physical context in which the place belongs

continuity of the specific life patterns in space and time

flexibility

that allows intervention and dialogue between people and environment, and, thus, multiplicity of interpretations of space

c. on all three levels:

consistency to an underlying order and structure that organizes elements into a coherent whole-the existence of a theme reflecting the above properties

These properties of physical space contributing to its legibility and competence could offer a first vocabulary allowing us to read and, consequently, trace places. Establishing a vocabulary, though, does not mean an explicit, immediate reading, but a step further towards the definition of the concept of place. The elements of the vocabulary are neither obvious in their structure nor objective in their meaning, unless their actual relation to the physical space is shown.

Chapter two
PLACE - experiencing

Introduction of a site and a context

In an effort of defining and building abstract terms and ideas in architecture, the use of a specific case can serve as a basis for discussion, argumentation, feedback and testing, where the intellectual exploration is directly linked to a study of physical space.

The case chosen for the study is in Athens, Greece, and has to do with rebuilding a residential area with references to tradition- a part of a contemporary greek urban fabric. The reason for this choice is based on the necessity of the architect's understanding of the culture she addresses. International architecture, on the one hand, and, on the other, the reductive regionalism acting mostly on the behavioral level as defined above, and confusing the accumulation of visual experiences with the essence of place, have increased the difficulty of creating and supporting places by disorienting architects; it is necessary for them to get again involved in the symbolic essence of a place and then, later, to suggest which physical properties support and contribute to its existence. This can most successfully happen against a shared cultural background that enables and facilitates empathy by the architect, an insideness closely linked to that of the place's inhabitants.

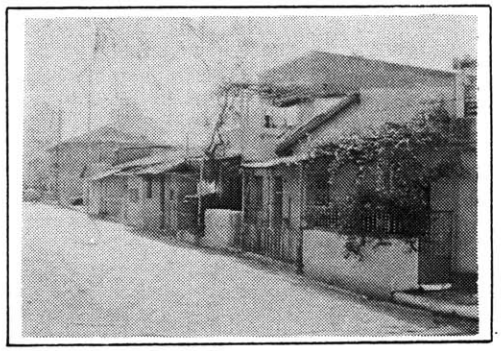


fig. 1 KESSARIANI

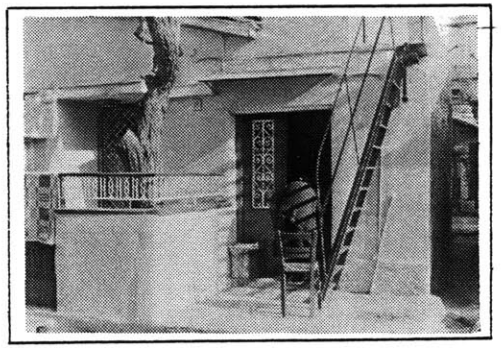


fig. 2 KESSARIANI

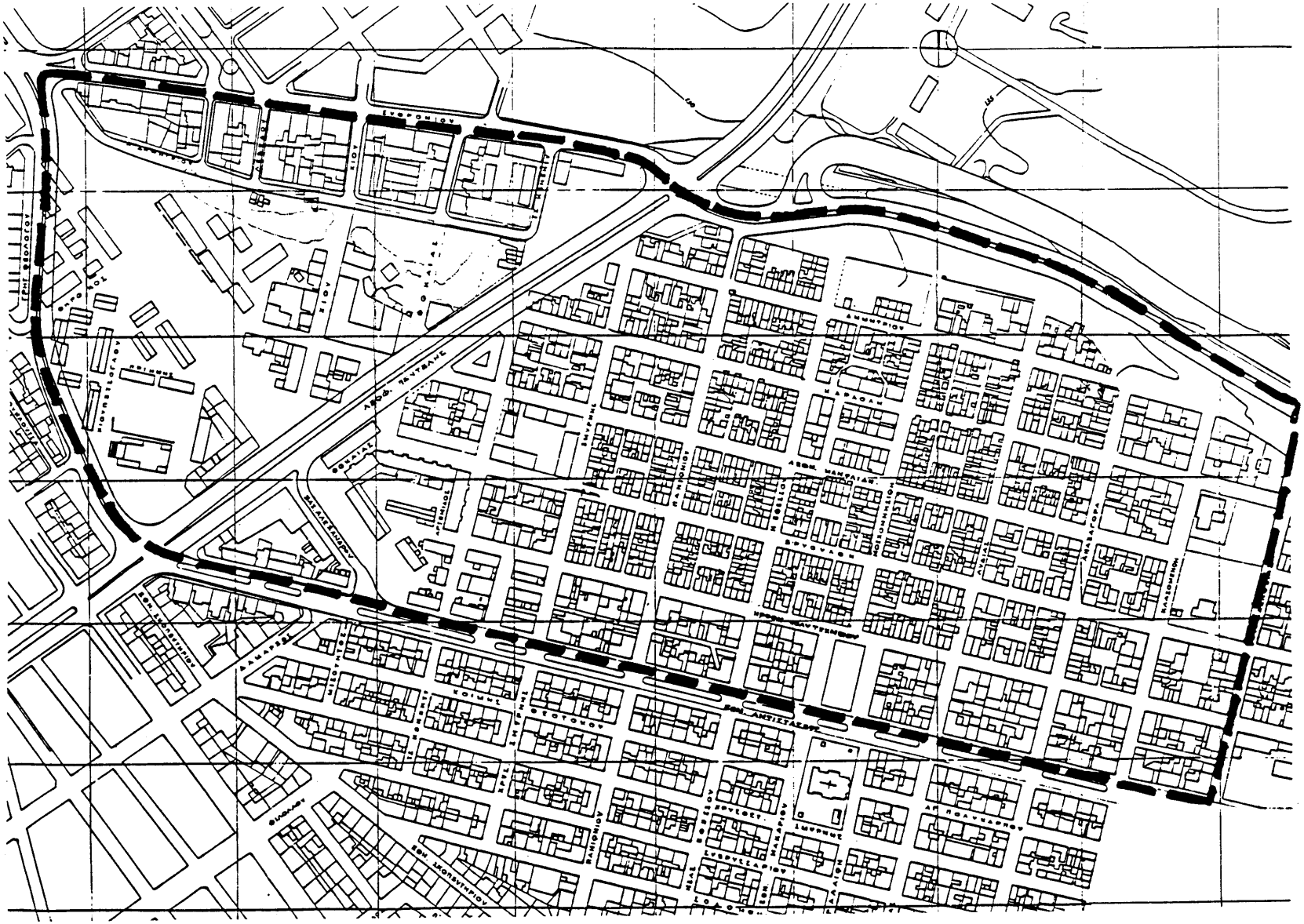


fig. 3 THE REFUGEES' NEIGHBORHOOD

m 0 25 50 75 100 125

Brief documentation of the case-study in all its aspects

1. General

The place of study, Kessariani, is a central residential area in Athens, originally housing the greek refugees from Asia Minor who came to Greece in 1922-23. It still remains a refugee community today, as far as both the environment and the inhabitants are concerned, since no systematic effort has ever been done for its improvement.

Its position is advantageous, close to the central core of the city, with green spaces surrounding its three sides [fig. 4]. It still remains a low-rise and densely populated area, scarcely developed, due to the limitations imposed by the small size of lots and the extremely complicated land-ownership conditions; reasons that, at the same time, protected the neighborhood from speculative contractors and allow today a systematized development.

The housing stock was built in stages, with self-built houses in the beginning or one-story houses built by contractors (1922), followed then by two-story buildings (1922-30) provided by the State and finally, with three and four-story ones, which replaced part of the first. Lately, mainly on the boundaries of the site where the price of land is high, one can see speculative efforts beginning to change the character and use of land and disturb the social structure of the place as well, by implanting the middle-class way of life [fig. 5].

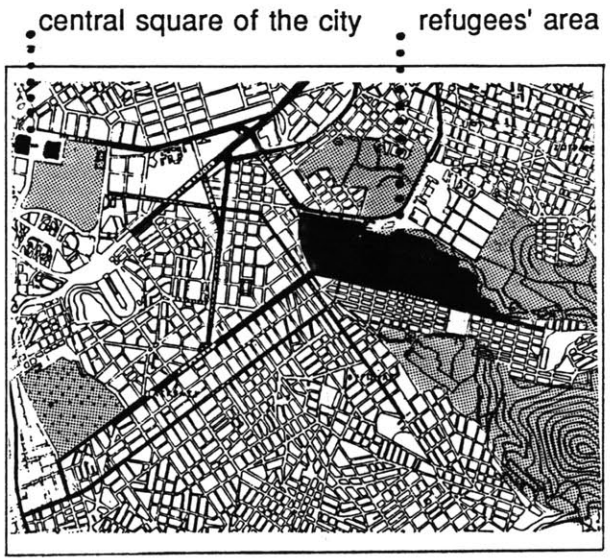


fig. 4 Open green spaces

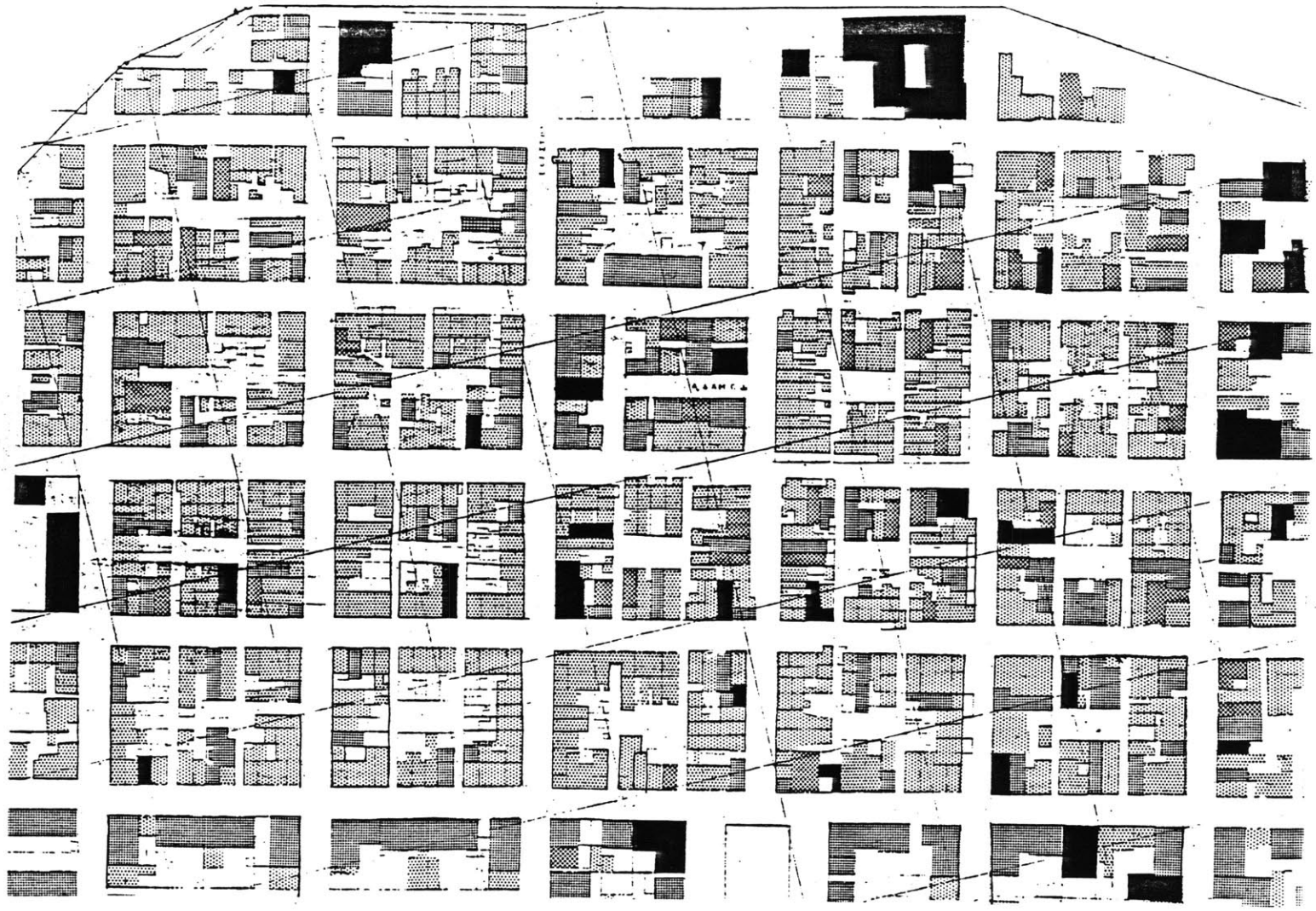


fig. 5 BUILDING HEIGHTS one-story two-story three-story four-story

The socio-economic conditions show a homogeneous population sharing life attitudes, but aging (many households of one person), with a large percentage of retired people and a much smaller one "active" and fully employed members. The first immigrants having occupied the neighborhood were open to non-immigrants, so there has been an assimilation of the former's culture by the latter. Greek immigrants from the mainland were attracted as well to the area, because of its location and ecological condition.

The educational level is very low, most of the residents are unskilled workers working in neighboring areas, without any perspective to substantially improve their economic and social status, or their problematic housing conditions.

The housing units are generally small, with inadequate or lacking amenities and services, many times not even connected to water and electricity networks. Public services, as well as public spaces, are inadequate and malfunctioning.

Commerce and trade reflect the low-income population of the area; the necessary small shops and workshops are local. The vicinity of the city's center does not leave much space for further development of commercial activities. Despite the high value of the land, investments do not yield profits, because of economic externalities affecting the prices. As a result, the area becomes attractive to the poorest of the citizens, who move in and contribute to its stagnation and further decay.

2. The physical space

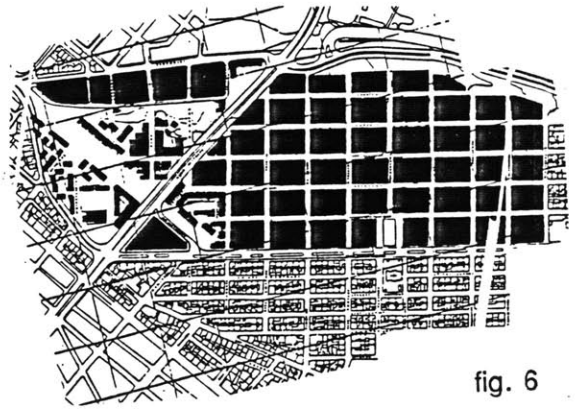
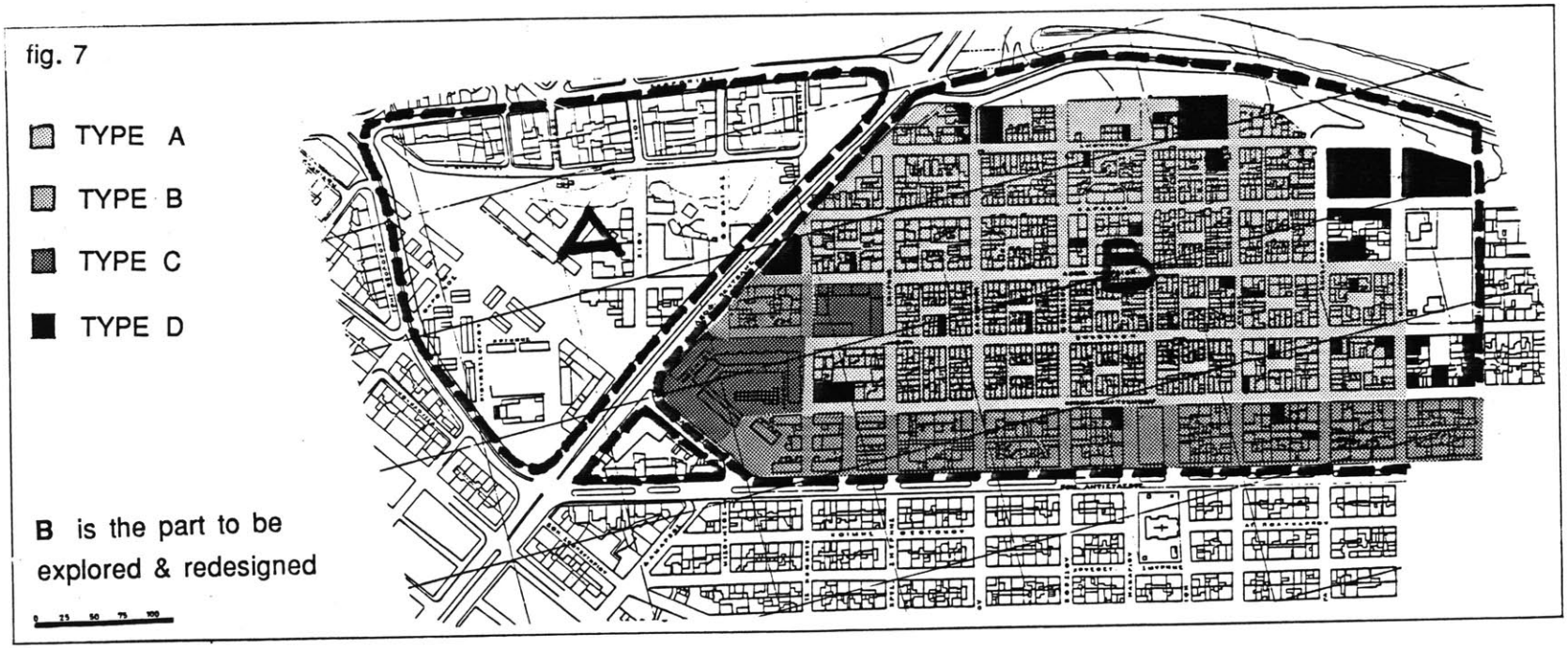


fig. 6

The larger spatial organization of the neighborhood consists mainly of identical blocks, defined by a non-hierarchical street network which follows a rigid rectilinear grid [fig. 6]. The quality of the tissue and its meaning as a life-vessel can only be traced at lower levels, starting from the subdivision of the block unit. It is these lower levels which give to the larger, impersonal structure definition and identity.

Within the blocks, no consistent "theme" can be identified throughout the whole tissue, but rather imprints of different periods with quite distinct characteristics, expressed in four basic types of space organization [fig. 7]; these types reveal transformations of life values, architectural attitudes and development processes.



TYPE A, the most dominant one in the area, represents the early phase of development, just after the immigrants' arrival to Athens from Asia Minor (1922) - one-story houses, self-built or provided by contractors . The ownership of land, with minimum or no definition of the built space in each lot, allowed a flexibility of individual interventions and negotiations among the inhabitants, and, therefore, easier identification. It is this type that offers the richest form vocabulary and variations in its structure.

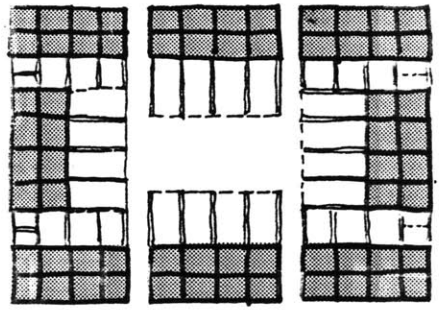


fig. 8
TYPE A before inhabitation

fig. 10

fig. 11

fig. 9 TYPE A after inhabitation

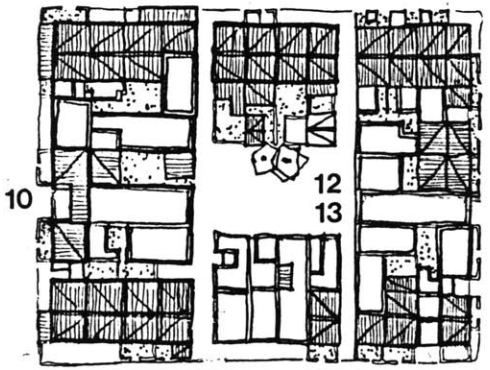


fig. 12

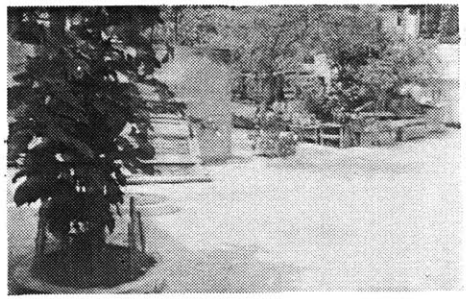
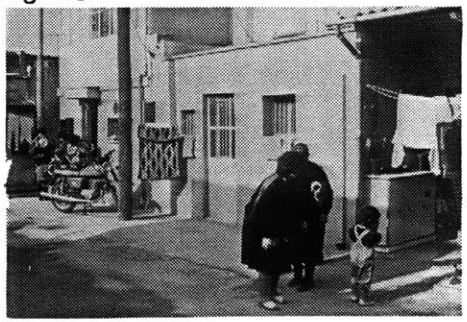


fig. 13



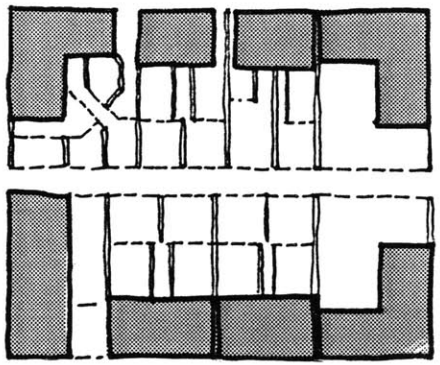


fig. 16
TYPE B before inhabitation

In **TYPE B** (1922-30), provided by the State and found along the south boundary of the area, the individual intervention is replaced by an imposed design of the block, where, nevertheless, because of the small scale of the buildings(two floors) and the subdivision of the open space of each lot among the inhabitants of the building occupying it, we can still see, in a more limited sense, multiple interventions, and a looser, but still existing connection and transition from closed to open, from public to private-one of the most essential characteristics in the definition of greek space.

TYPE B after inhabitation

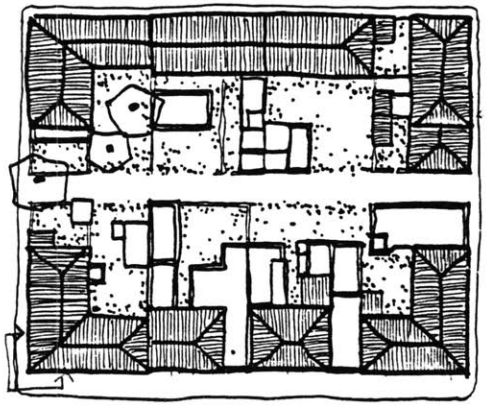


fig. 14

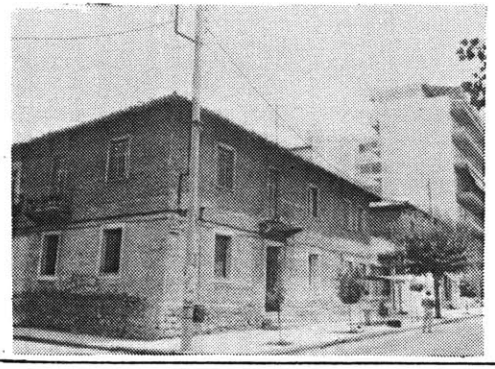
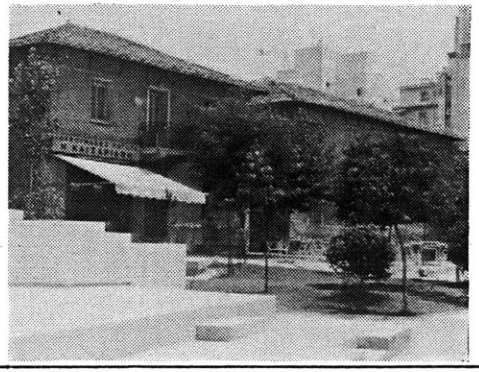


fig. 15



TYPE C, which replaced a lot of TYPE A units, shows, not a transformation and evolution of the previous types, but a complete shift of attitude in terms of intervention process and architectural expression, imposing, at the same time, a different kind of life. "Modern Architecture" principles fail to enhance the identification we meet in TYPE A and to a lesser degree in TYPE B, by ignoring the scale and definition of open space in its relation to the unit as well as to whole, and its importance and meaning for the life of the specific people it addressed.

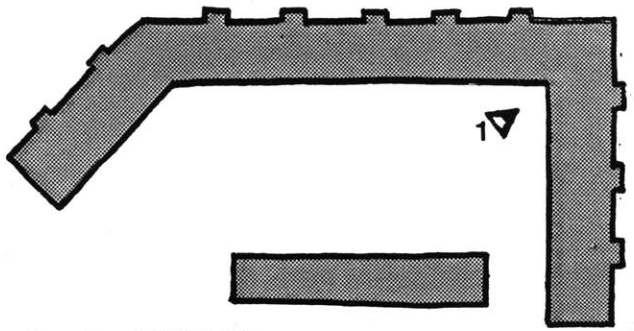
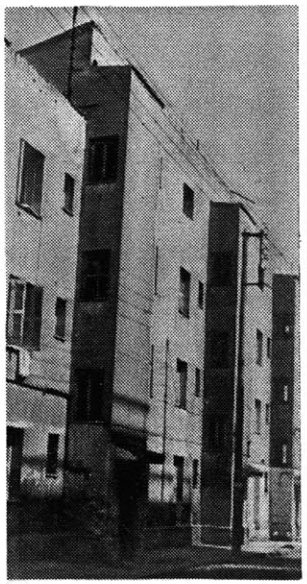


fig. 19 TYPE C1

fig. 20
VIEW 1

fig. 21
VIEW 2



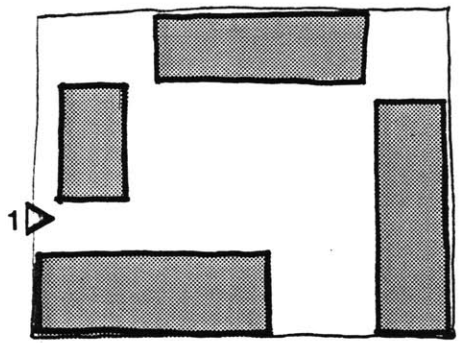
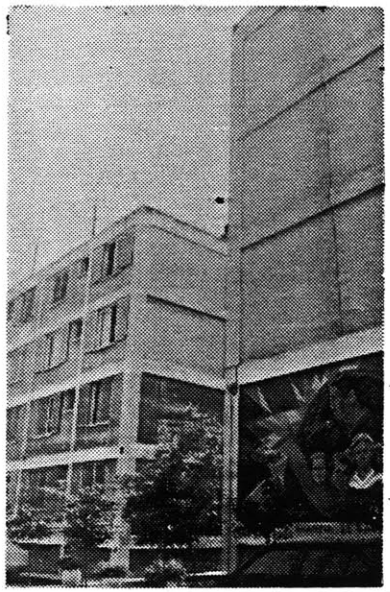


fig. 22 TYPE C2

fig. 23 VIEW 1



TYPE D [fig. 24] is the most recent one, starting to replace the older type and following the urban contemporary prototype [fig. 25] which dominates the dense center of the city. In the form of an isolated unit, as it still appears in the area, it radically transforms the image of the residential building and becomes a caricature of the urban typology (because of the very small size of lots and the one-floor height of the rest of the area). When it multiplies, however, to cover blocks forming a whole urban fabric, it creates a negative environment, depriving people of any aesthetic experience enhancing identification in the city, and, thus, becomes a non-place.

fig. 24 TYPE D

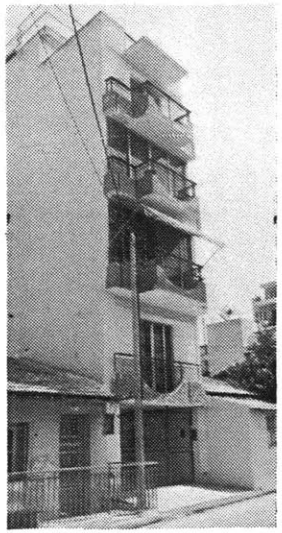
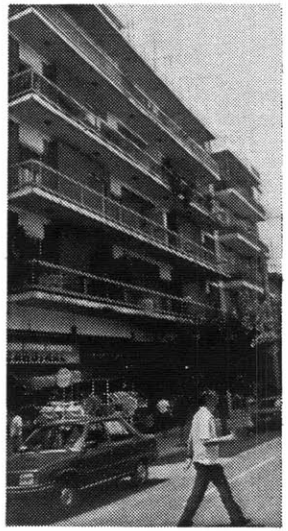


fig. 25 URBAN PROTOTYPE



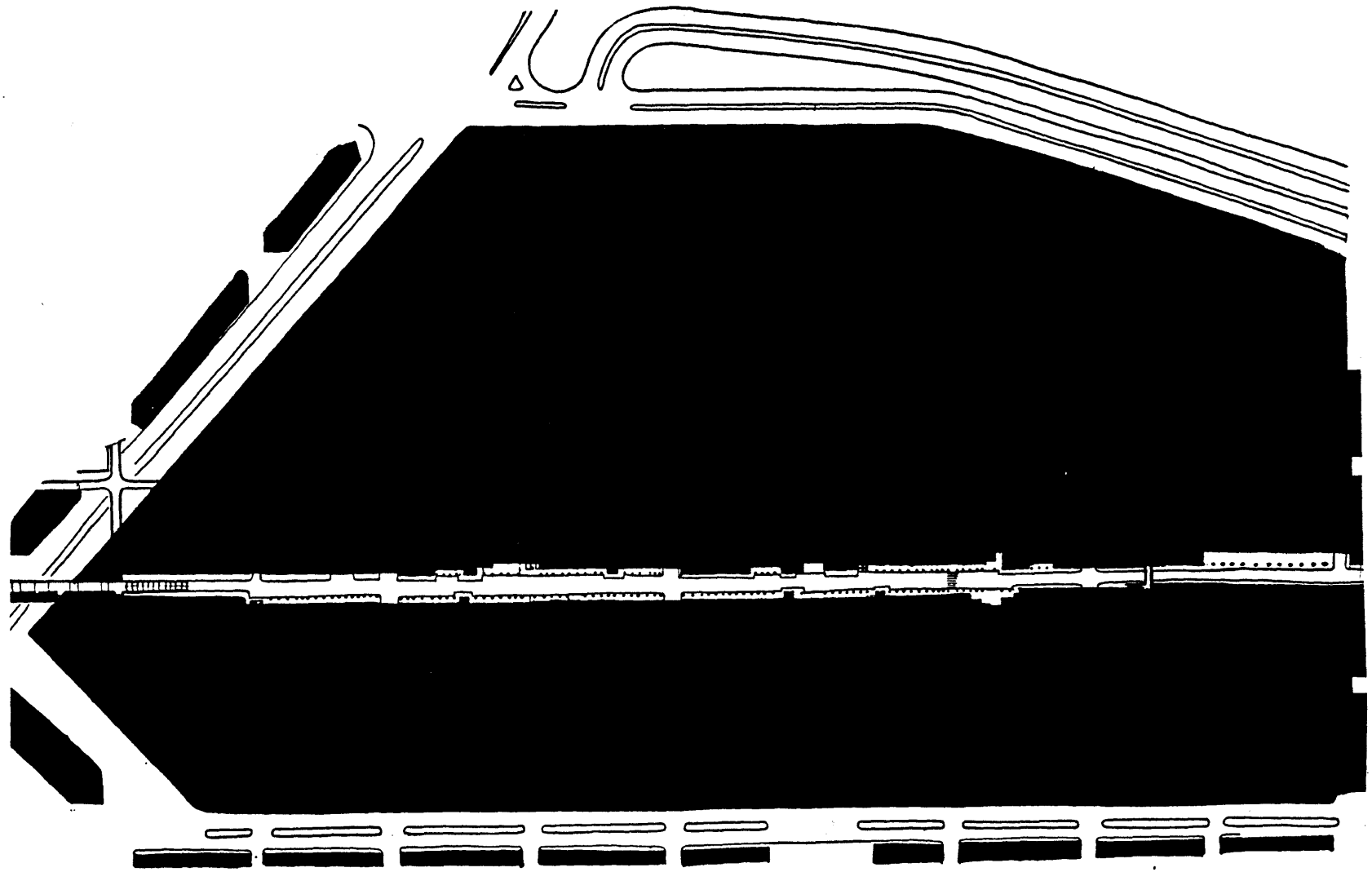
The philosophy underlying the development of this type is that of exploitation and draining up the concept of the "house" of essence and meaning, that means treating it as a marketing good, which offers utilities and a conventional plan, according to the static, passive and inflexible middle-class standards. The result is a pile of housing units inside a strict enclosure that shouts and shows off, so that, at first sight, nobody looks behind the surface to discover the lack of basic life quality; in access and circulation paths, and in public and private open space. The interrelation of the units and the well-being of the inhabitants are ignored, as being of no economic interest Therefore, one could say that TYPE D has gone too far, in comparison to the other types, in the sense that it does not represent another architectural trend, but the lack of architecture itself; it represents a contemporary society of such a low morale that it feels neither insulted nor worried any more having to live in socially and physically depriving isolated cells.

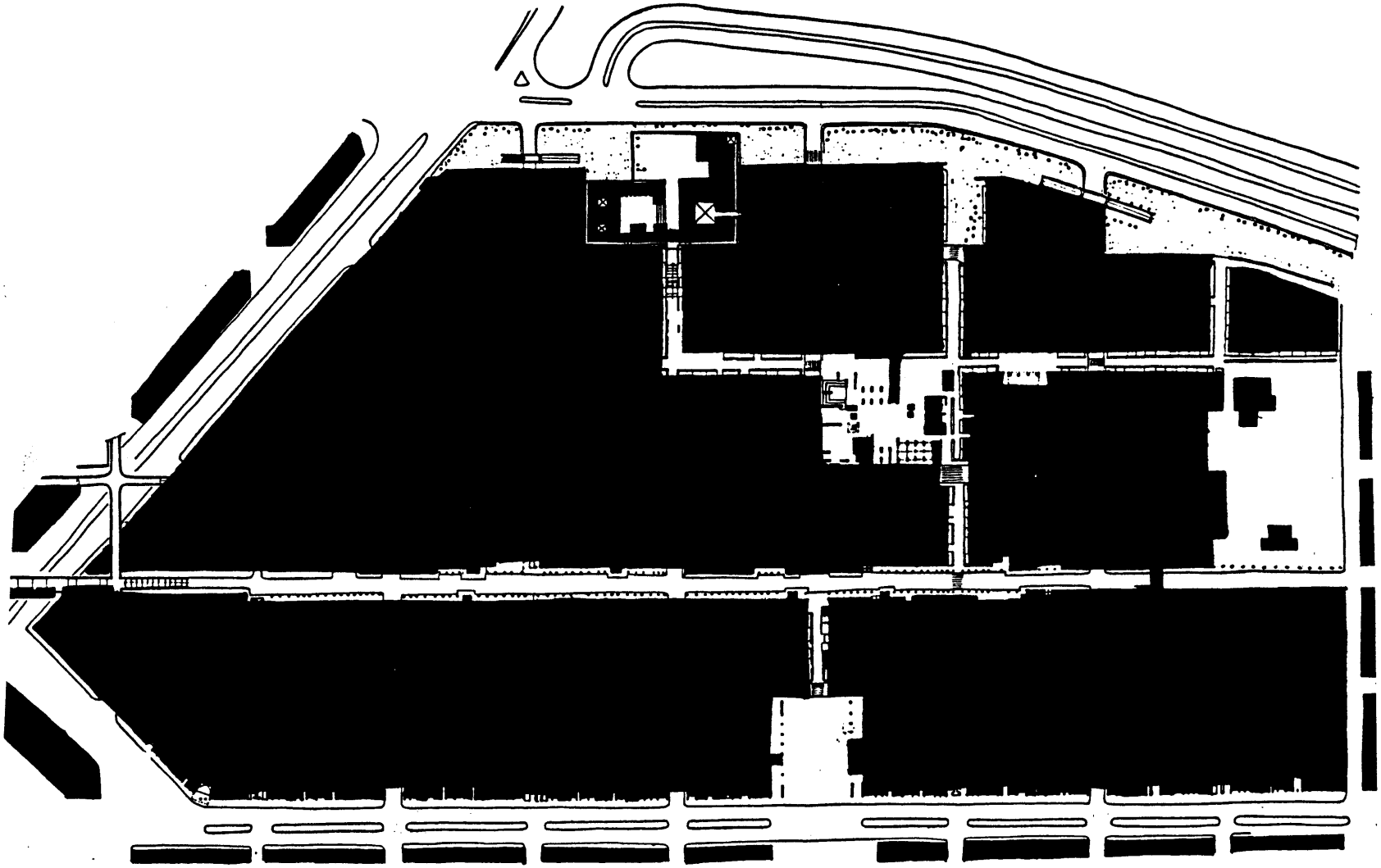
Chapter three
PLACE - making

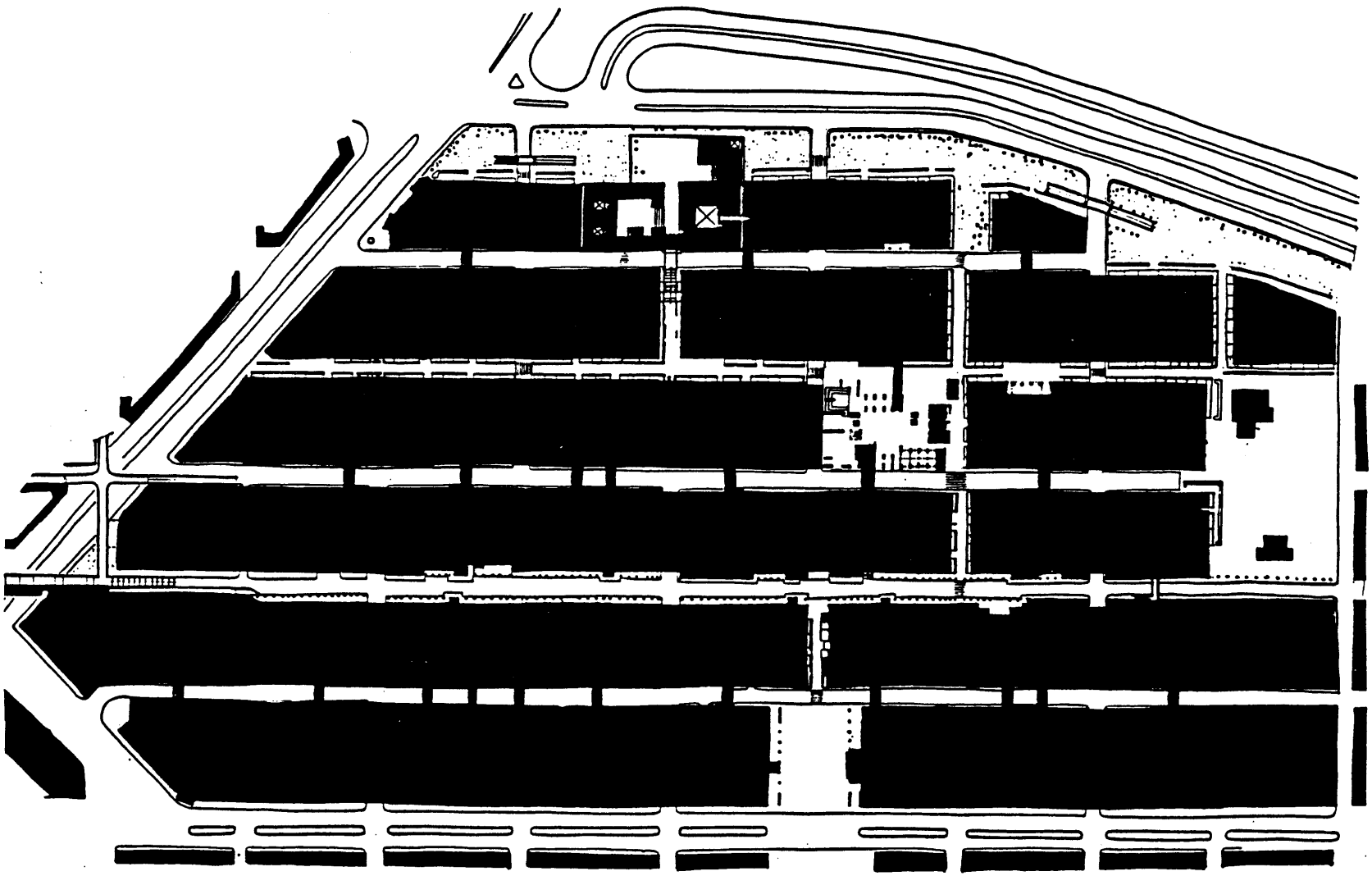
The conceptual basis at the beginning of the study was established by making conscious and bringing into light my personal value-system and my understanding of the environment, followed by the subsequent formulation of intentions in the design. This basis allows a grounded and systematic decision-making in complex design problems and a more acute pursuit of goals. However, I do not mean that it can ***generate*** *a design (which would lose, in this way, the intuitive leap that mediates between ideas and forms), but that it helps to develop a coherent and complete image of a complex problem with all its parameters, against which a design can be tested to confirm its capacity and rigour; an image which the design, in its turn, alters and adds to. In this way, conceptual and formal expression are counterparts-processes which are different in their means, but which reinforce and perfect each other.*

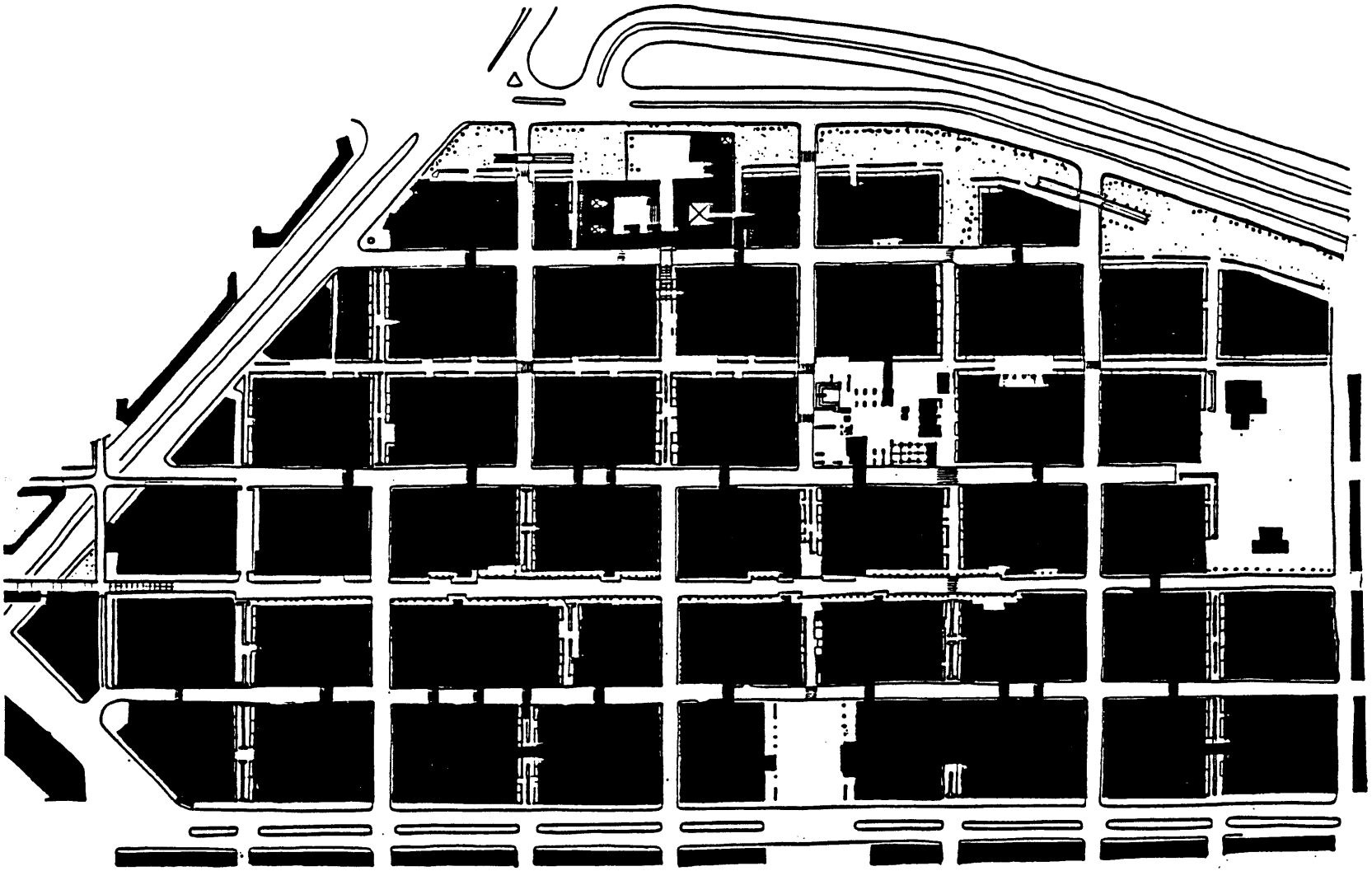
1. The design

1.1 LEVELS OF SPACE ORGANIZATION









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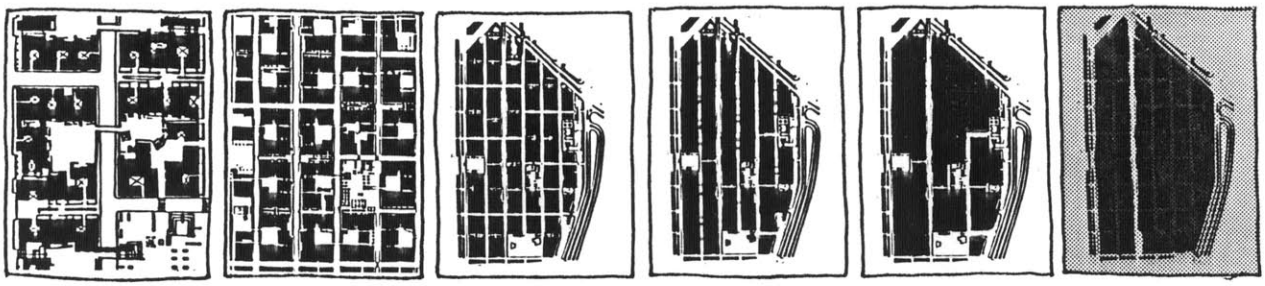
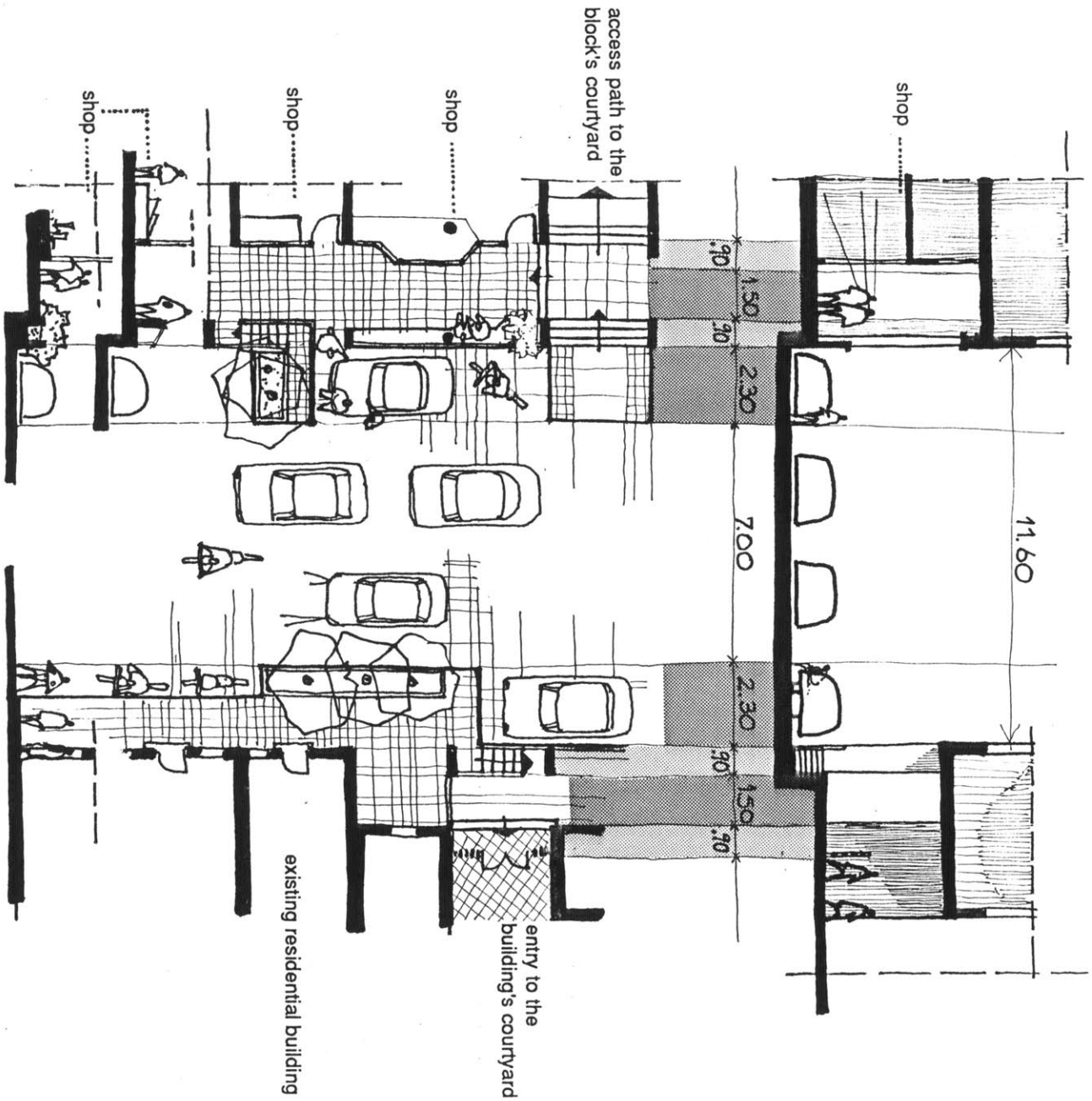
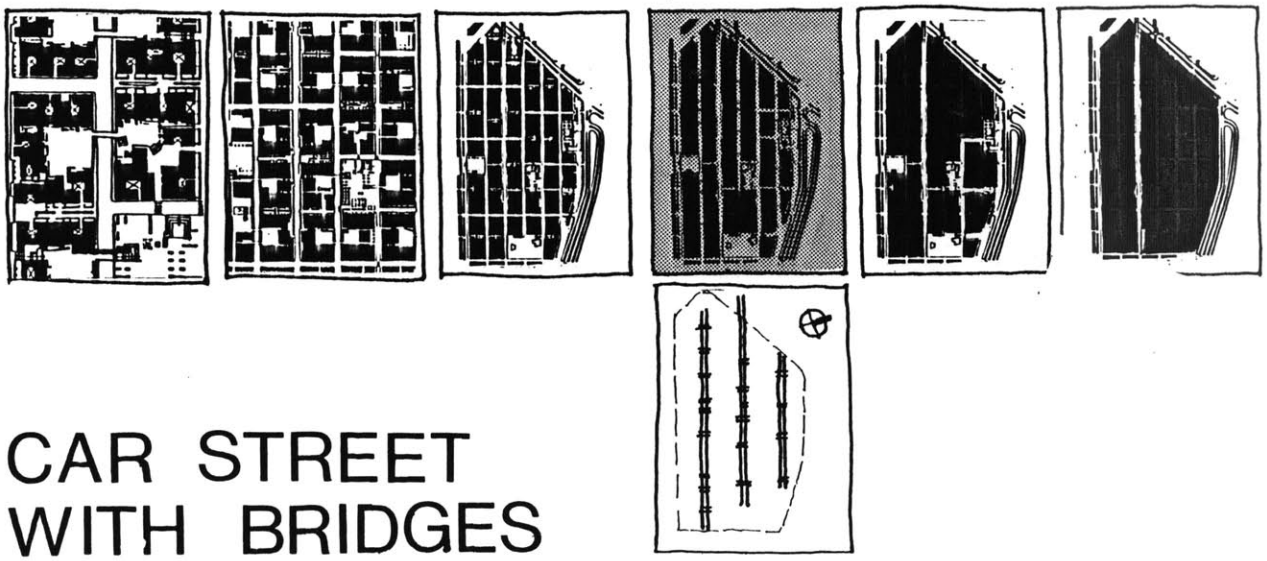


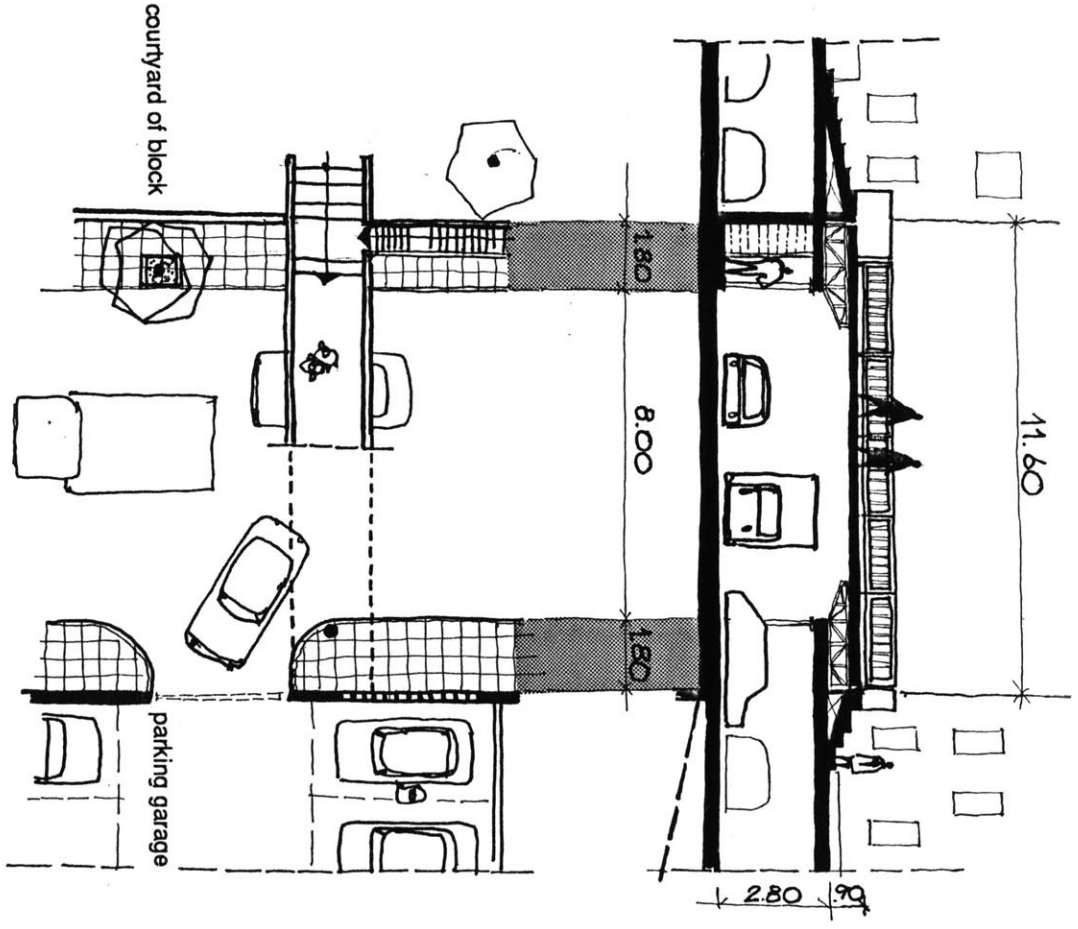
MAIN STREET OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

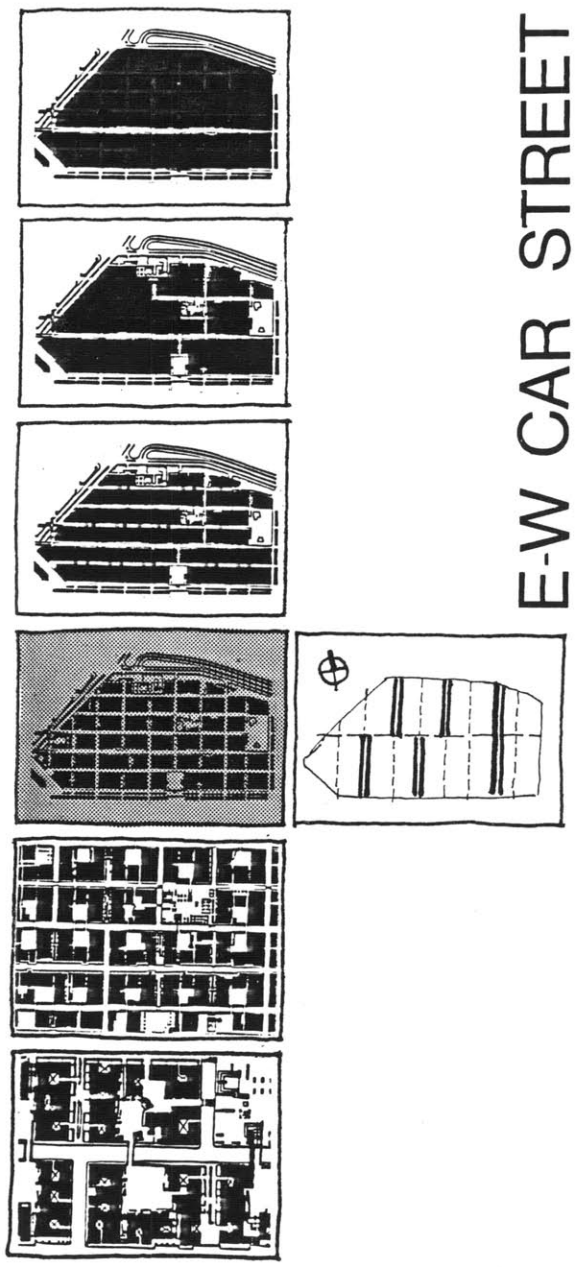


MAIN PEDESTRIAN PATH

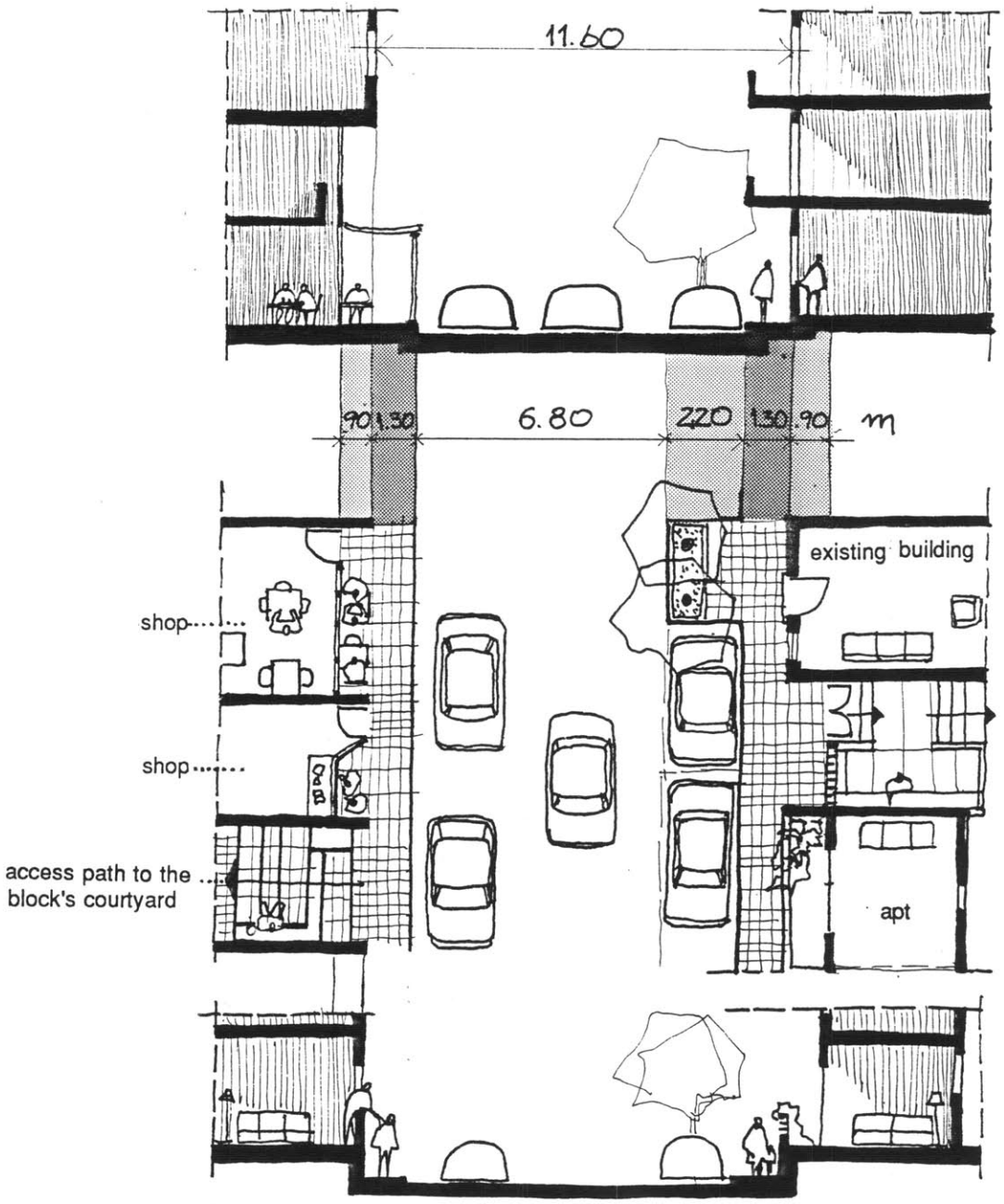


CAR STREET WITH BRIDGES

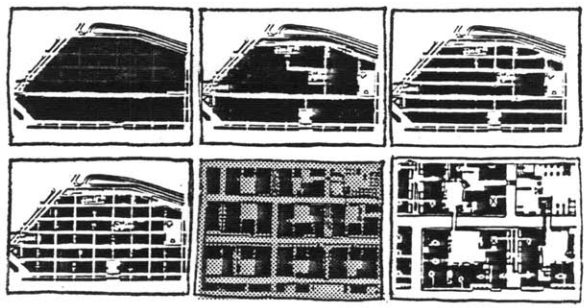


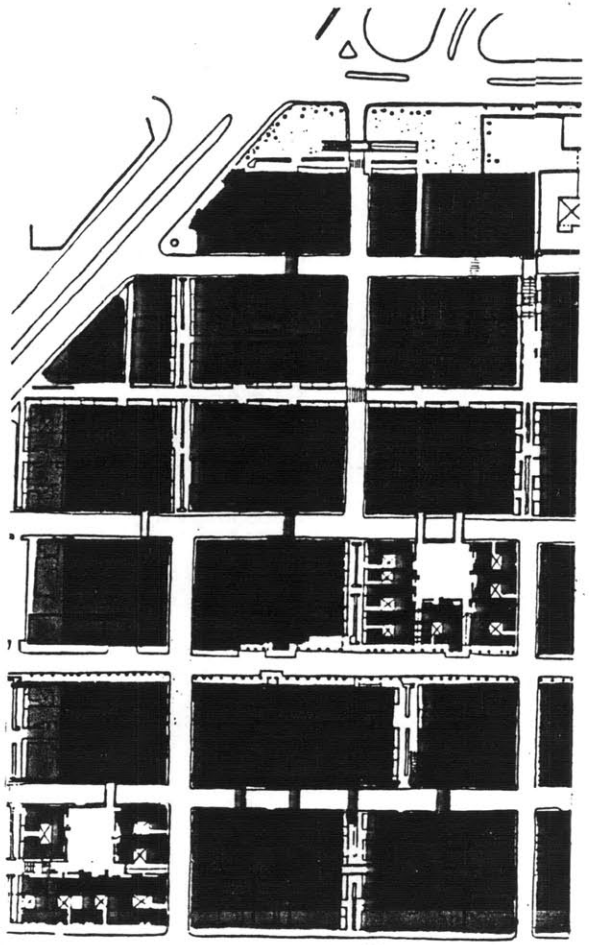


E-W CAR STREET

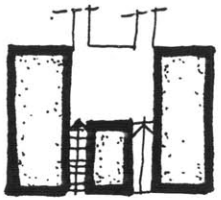


SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN PATH





BLOCK TYPES



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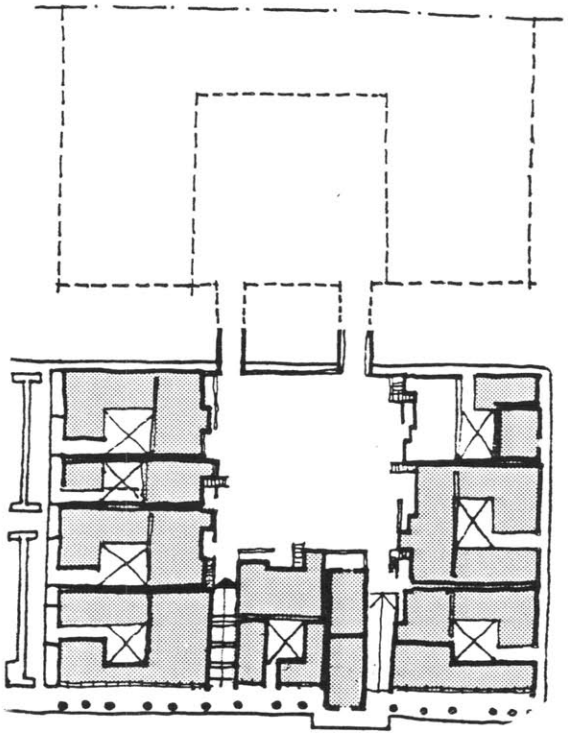
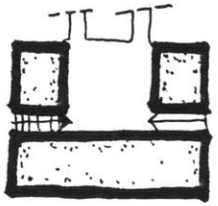
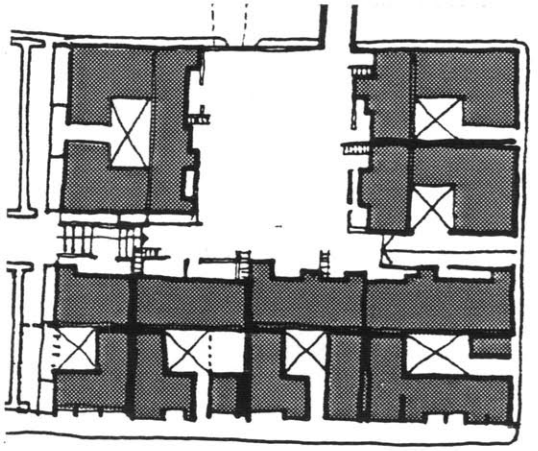
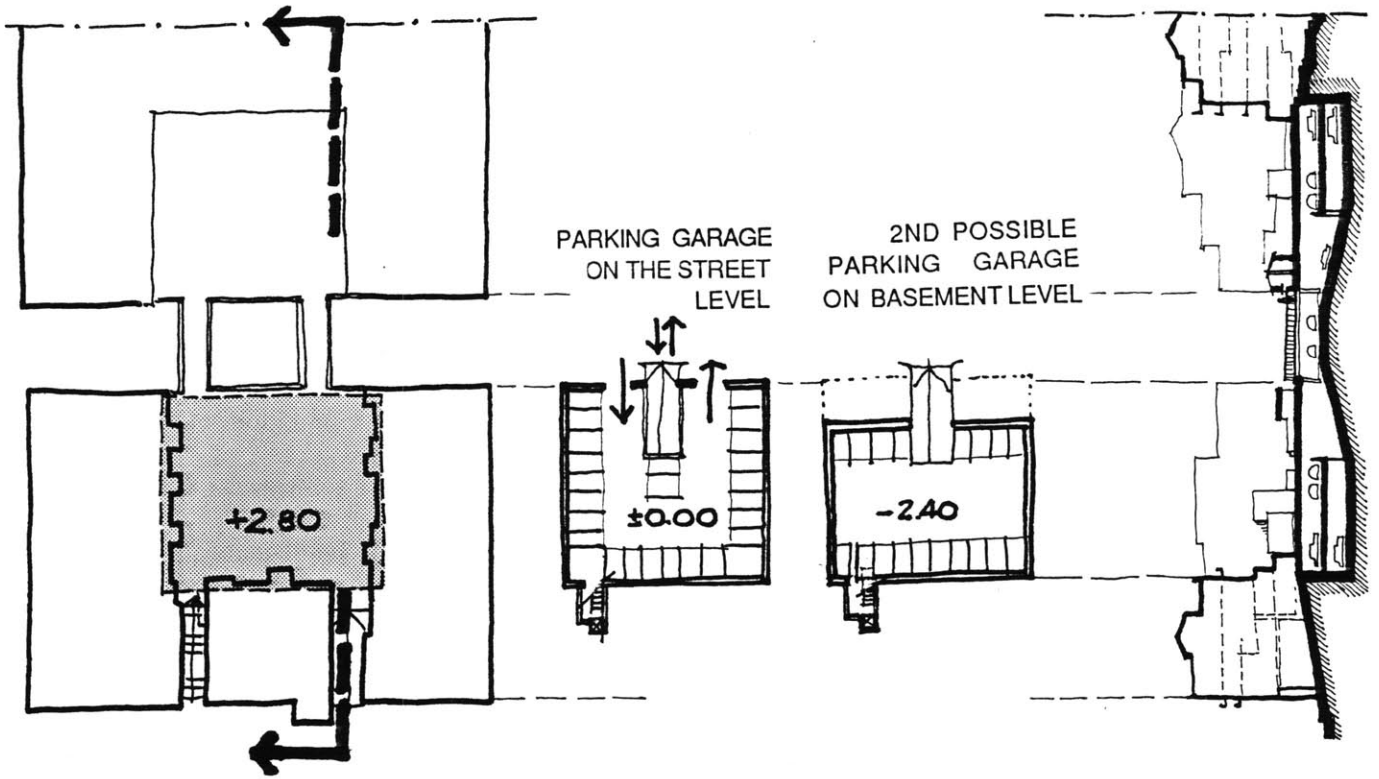
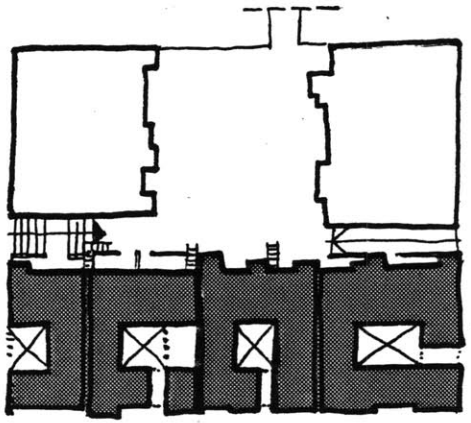




TYPE B1

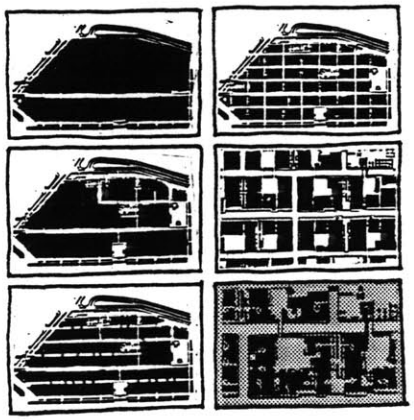




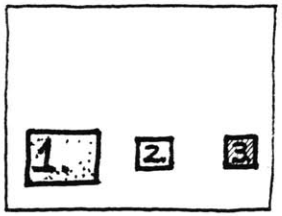


BUILDING TYPE

The built part of the block indicated with the grey tone will be presented in detail in the following pages to explain the building type

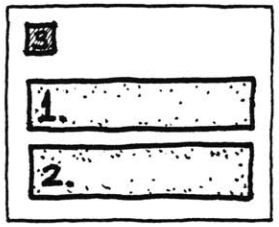


a. CROSS-SECTIONS



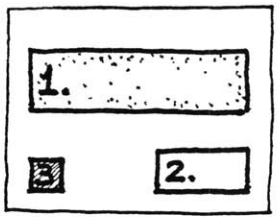
1. section - tone differentiation of territories
2. diagram of section - apartment types
3. key diagram

b. ELEVATIONS & LONGITUDINAL SECTIONS



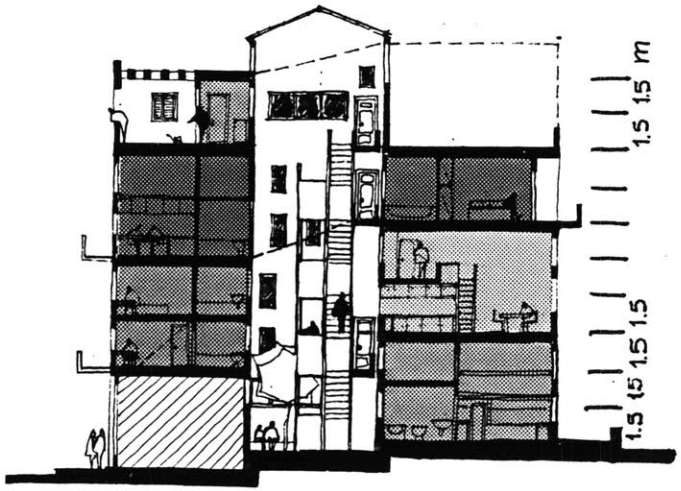
1. elevation
2. section - tone differentation of the two heights used (3 & 4.5m)
3. key diagram

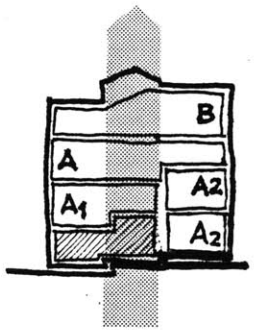
c. PLANS

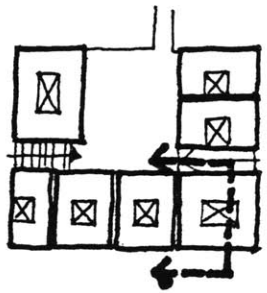


1. plan - tone differentiation of the different buildings
2. diagram of plan - territories and apartment types
3. key diagram - the number indicates the height at which the horizontal section is made

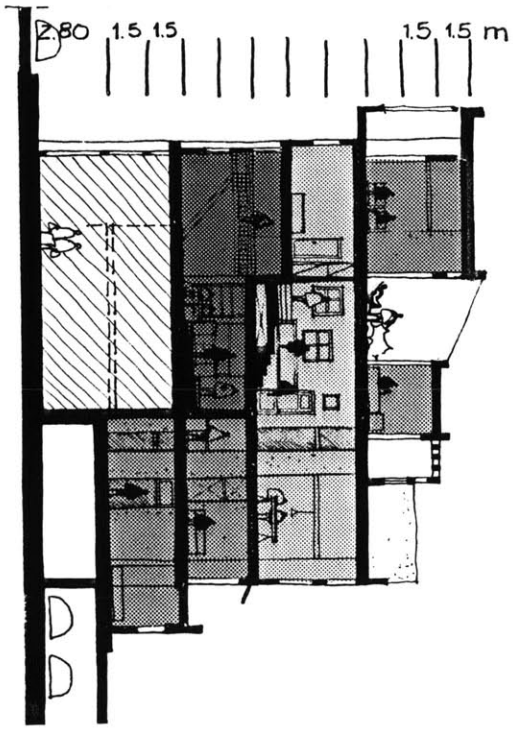
CROSS - SECTIONS

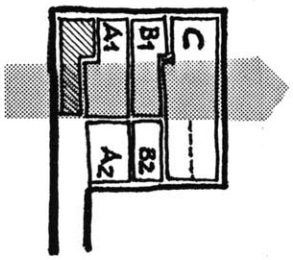






2.80 1.5 1.5
1.5 1.5 m


2.80 1.5 1.5
1.5 1.5 m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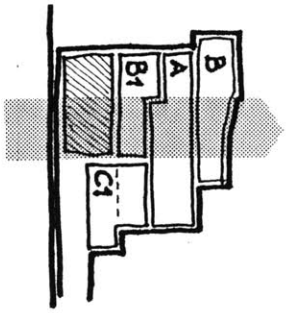
B1
C
A2
B2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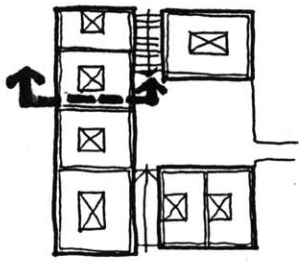
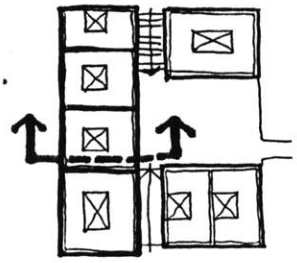
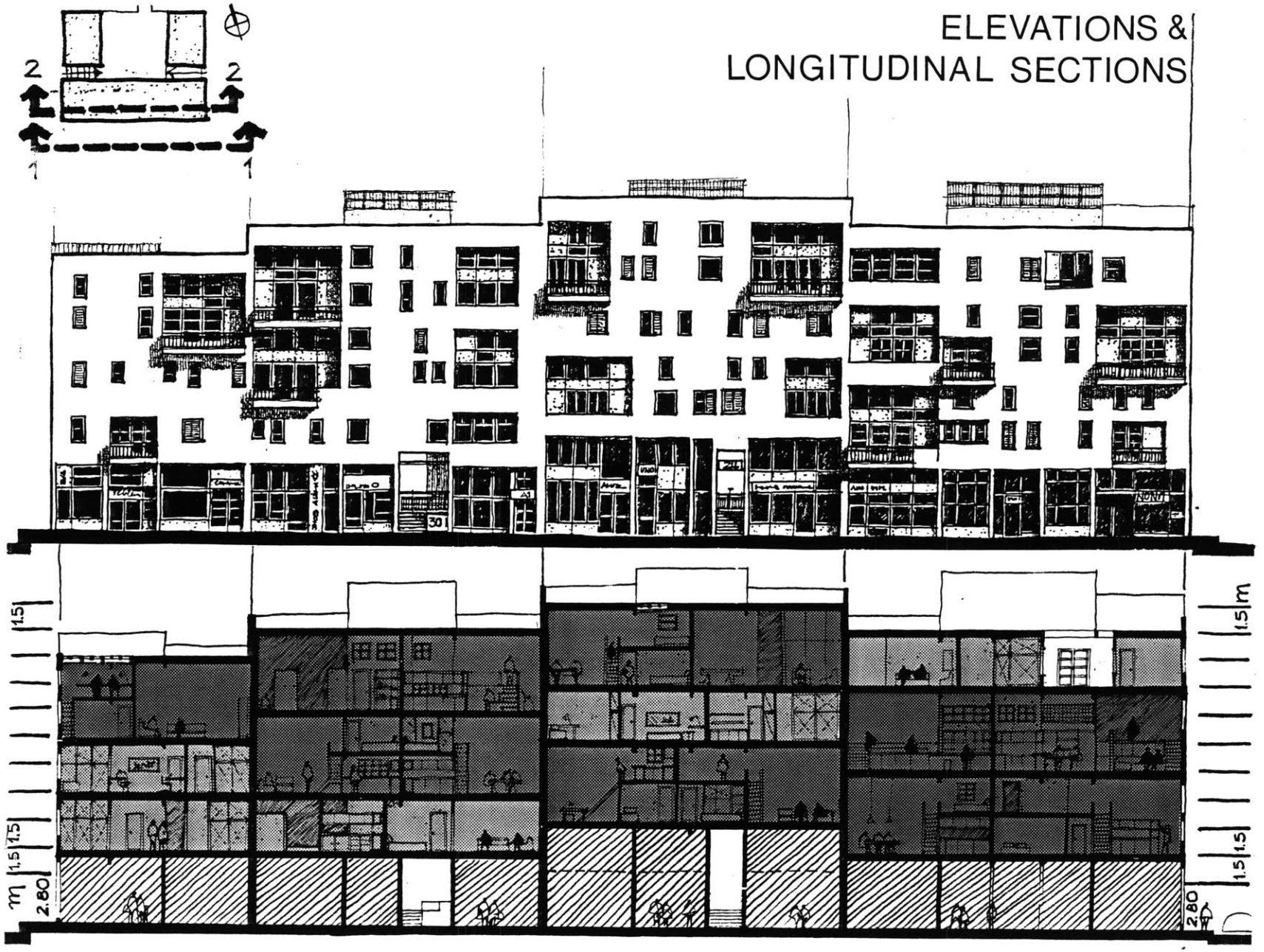
A
B1
C1



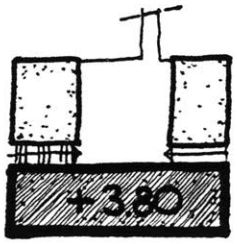


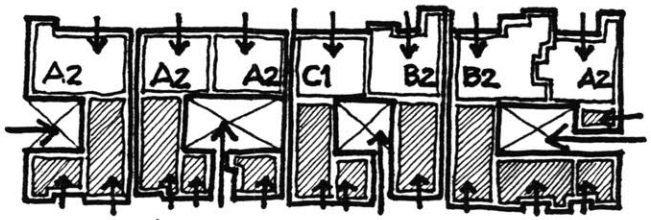
ELEVATIONS & LONGITUDINAL SECTIONS

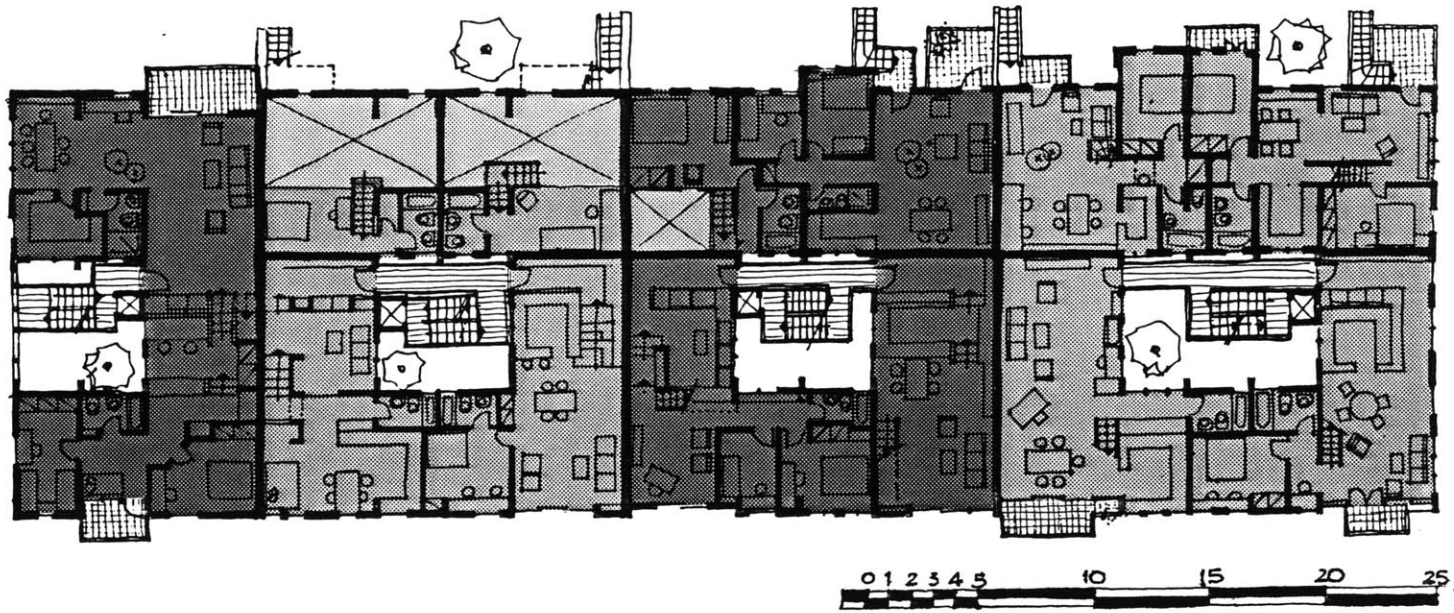


3
3
4
1.5 1.5 m
1.5 1.5 m
1.5

PLANS



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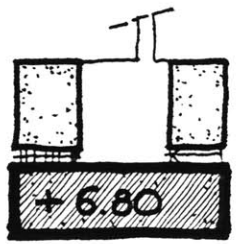
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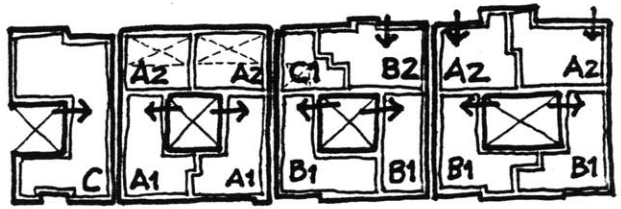
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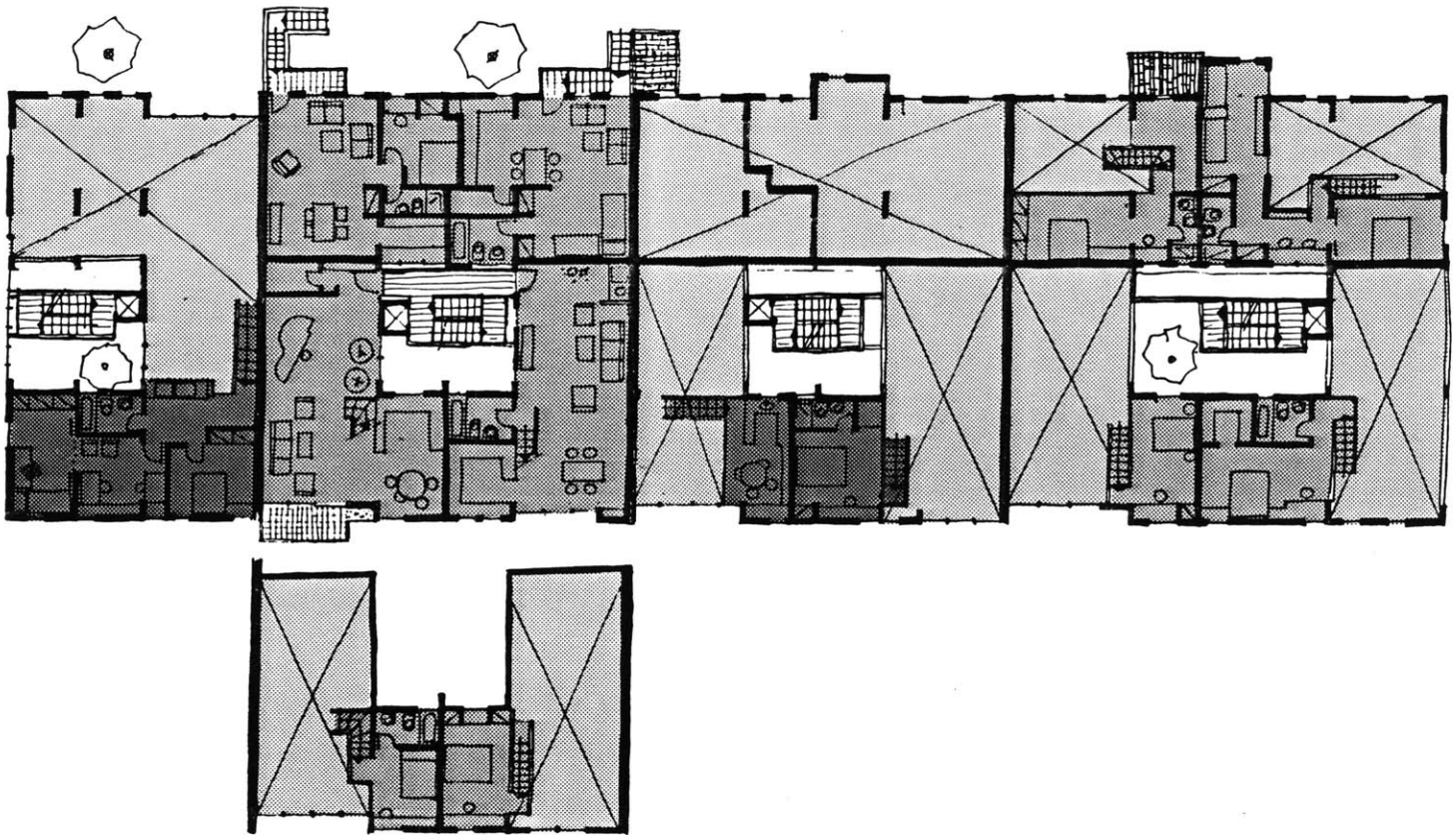
A2
C1
B2
A2
A2
C
A1
A1
B1
B1
B1
B1



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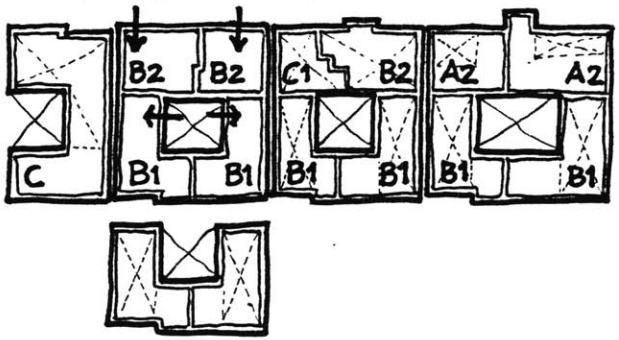
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B2
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A2
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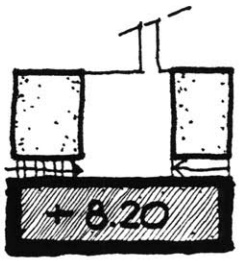
B1
B1
B1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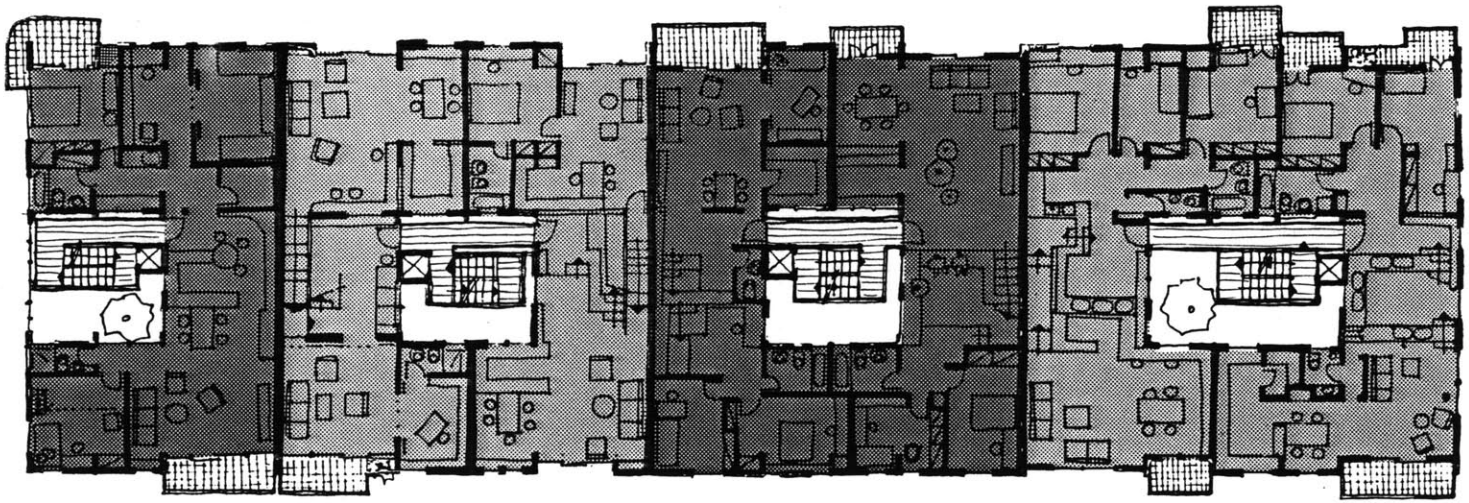

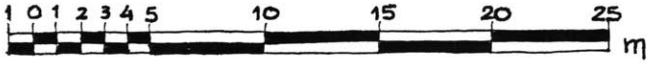
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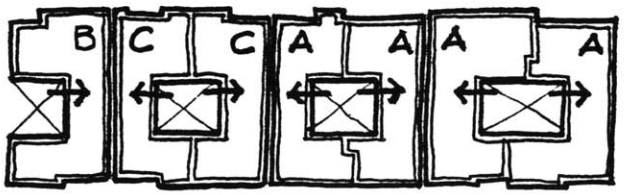
15
20
25
m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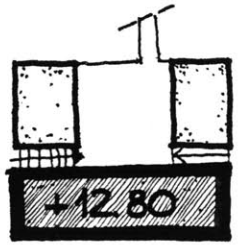
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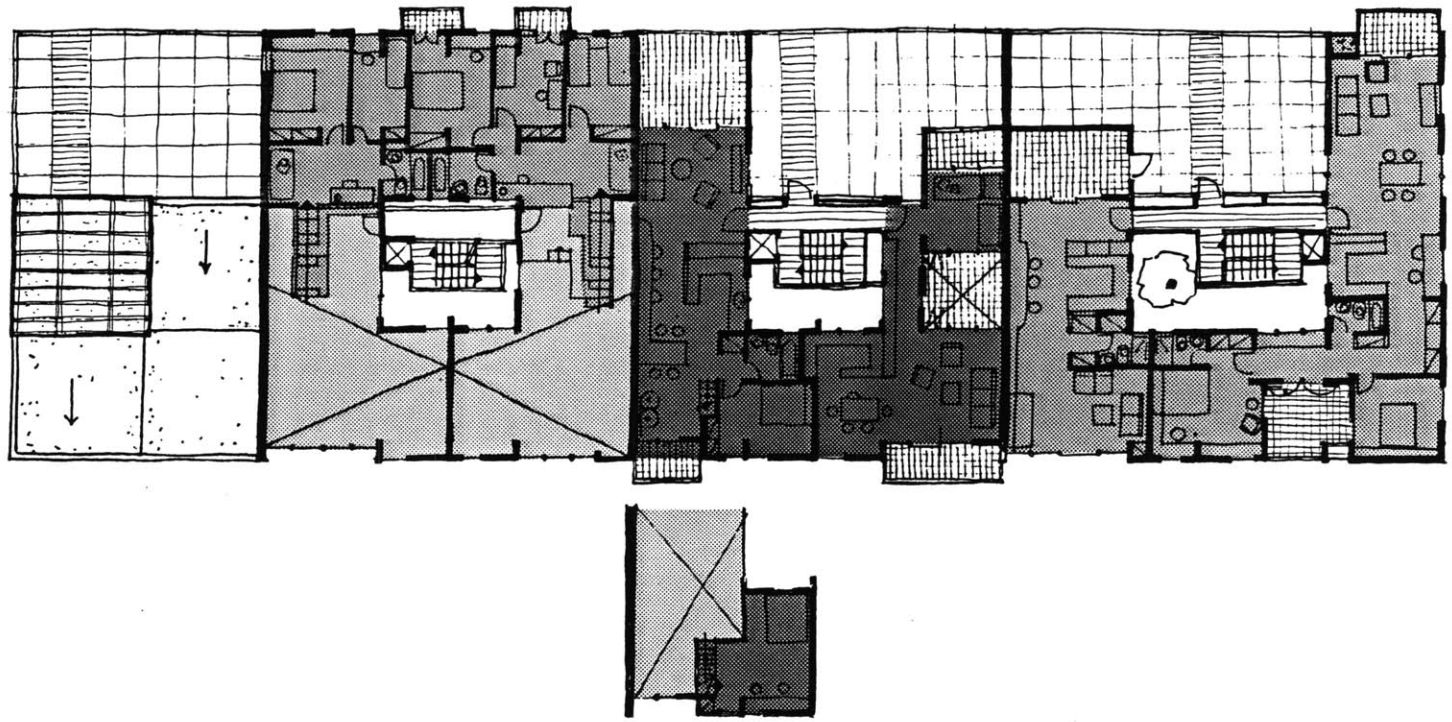

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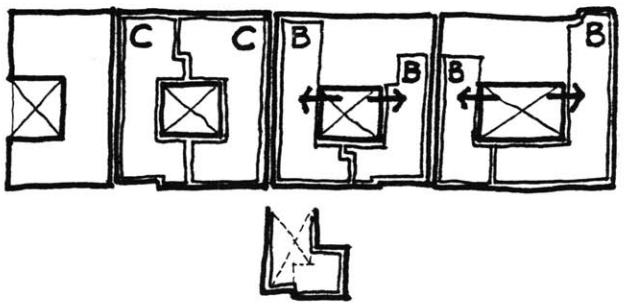
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B
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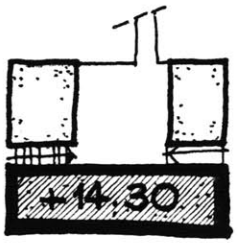
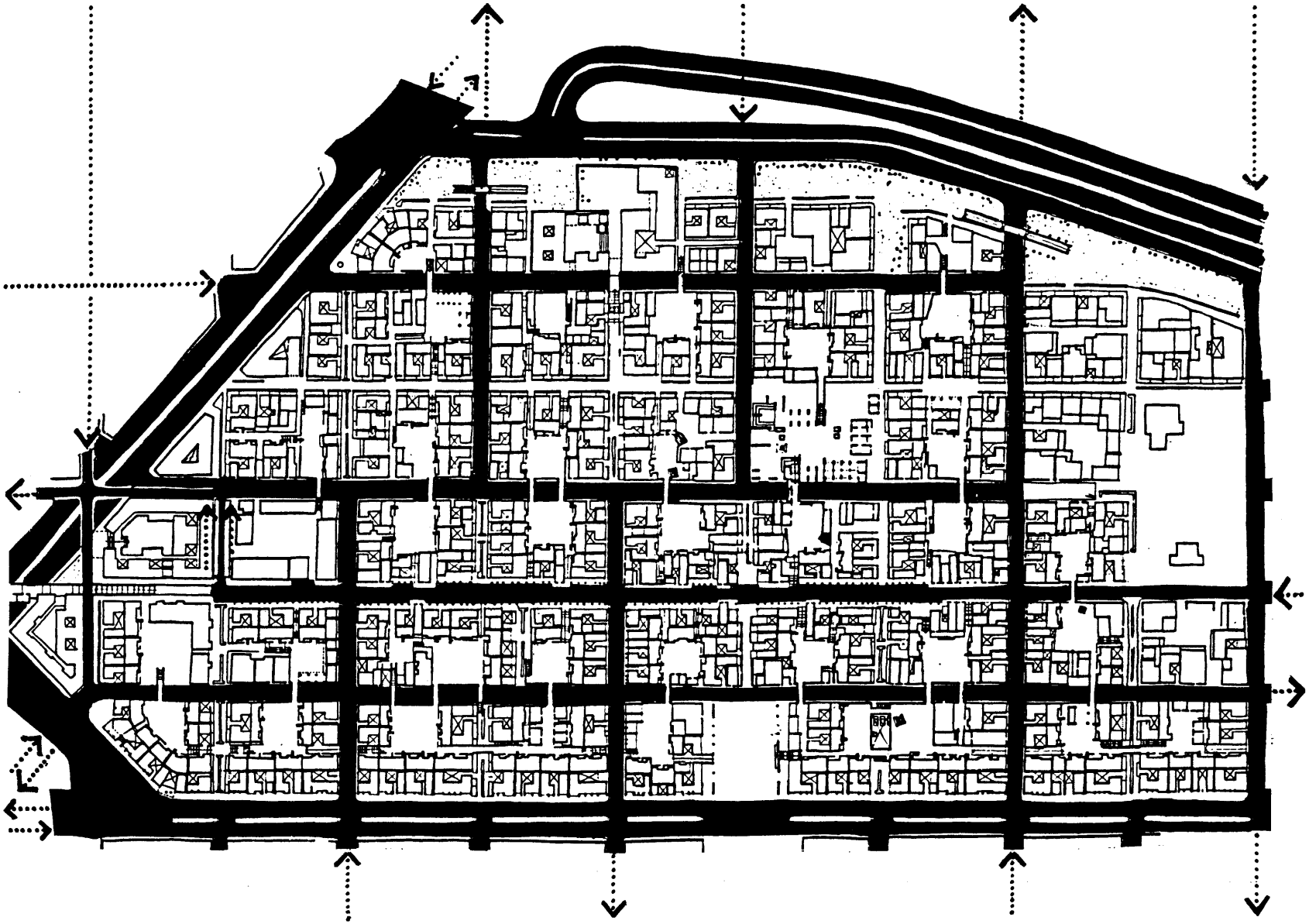
B

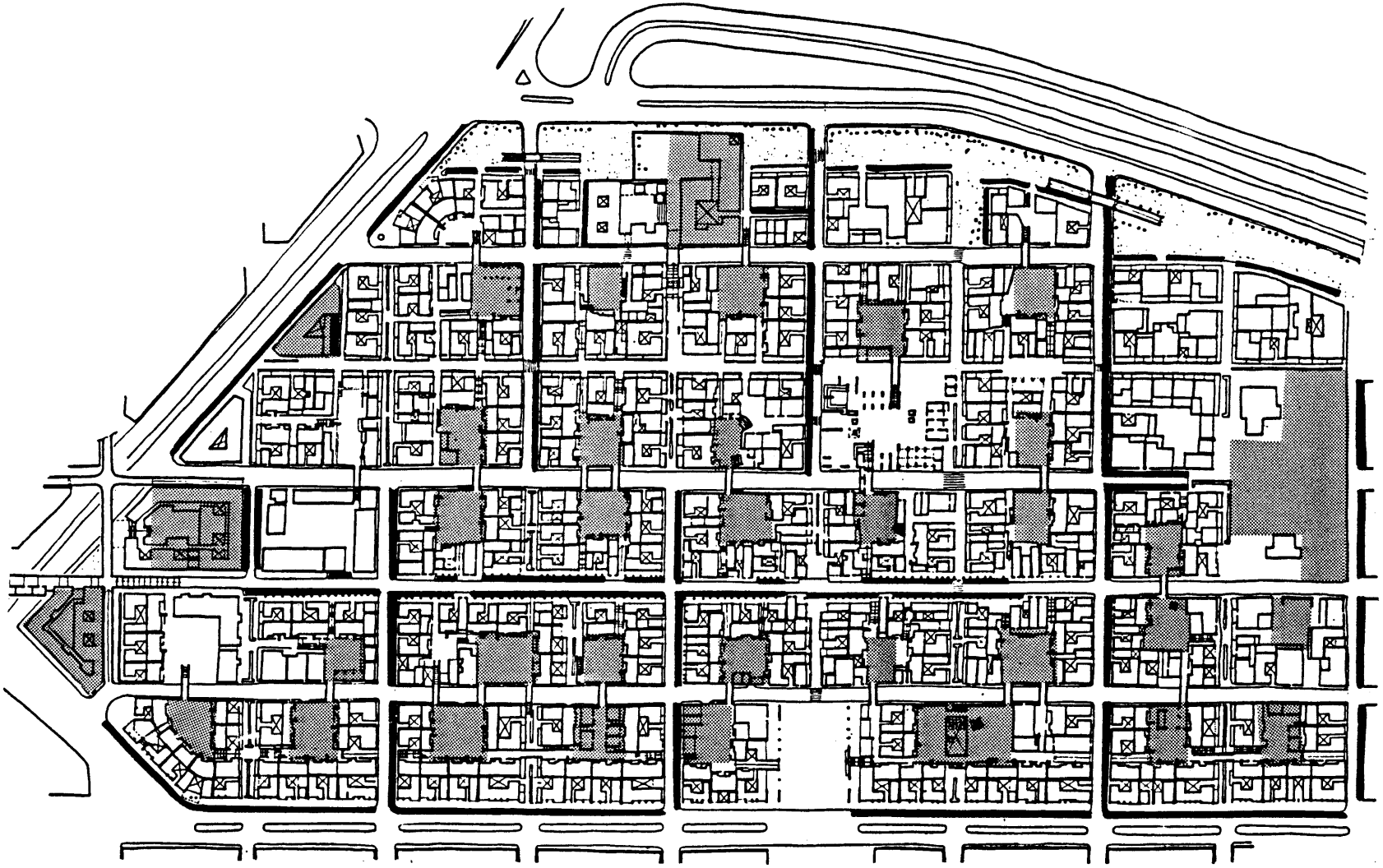

+14.30

1.3 FUNCTIONS

CIRCULATION NETWORK FOR PEDESTRIANS



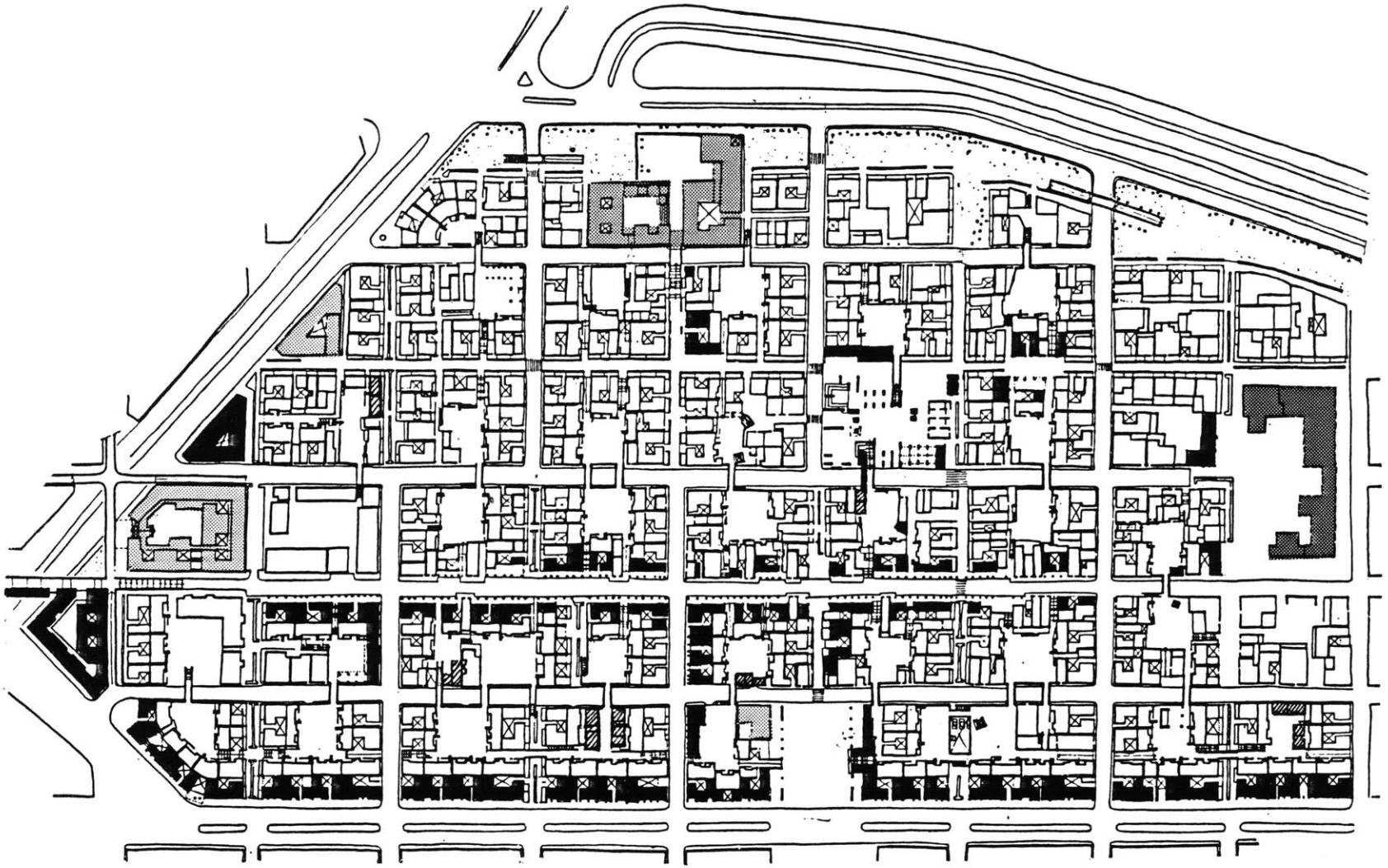
CAR CIRCULATION NETWORK



PARKING GARAGE under the courtyards, on street and basement level

PARKING ON THE STREET

PARKING SPACE



USES OTHER THAN RESIDENTIAL

2. The ideas

2.1 Building type

2.1.1 Existing type used in urban Greece

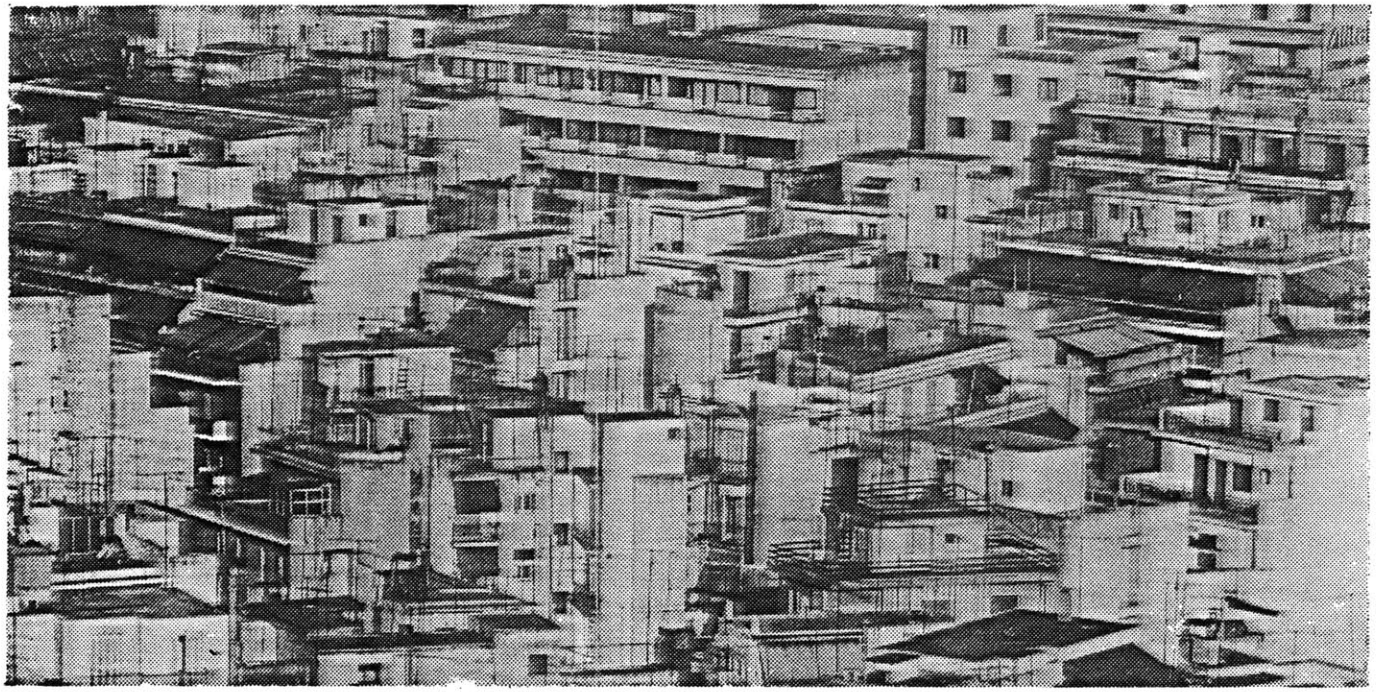


fig. 26

A VIEW OF THE CENTER OF ATHENS

At the time of the immigrants' coming to Athens from Asia Minor (1922) and the mainland (starting in the 20's), a new urban type started to develop in response to the housing demand. The lack of space available and the urge for quick action pushed professionals to build with maximum exploitation of space and minimum quality standards (air, light, spatial relations). Since then, the resulting multi-story (six to seven floors) apartment building type has gradually dominated all urban areas in Greece, not only as an emergency response, but as an response to the market as well; its production lies basically in the hands of contractors, leaving no control to architects, and even less to the people to be housed.

The broader context for this type is an urban tissue organized in blocks divided into lots - the same system as in the case-study. The lots cover the whole block leaving no public space in it, while each lot is either completely built with some interior, small lightwells [fig. 27] or partially built (70-80%), leaving an open back space [fig. 28]. This back space inside the block, not treated as an open usable space, but as a minimum required by law open surface, is narrow and dark; in addition, it is not owned by individuals, but belongs to the group of the residents of the building occupying the lot, while not easily accessible to them. The result is a clear differentiation of a neat, lively facade on the main street and a dead one at the back.

Furthermore, the inside of the building is organized in two zones of apartments- one looking on the street and the other looking at the back- with a circulation zone in the middle- a dark, double-loaded corridor and the circulation core with a stairwell and an elevator [fig. 29].

Thus, the communal spaces of this type - those for movement and access, as well as

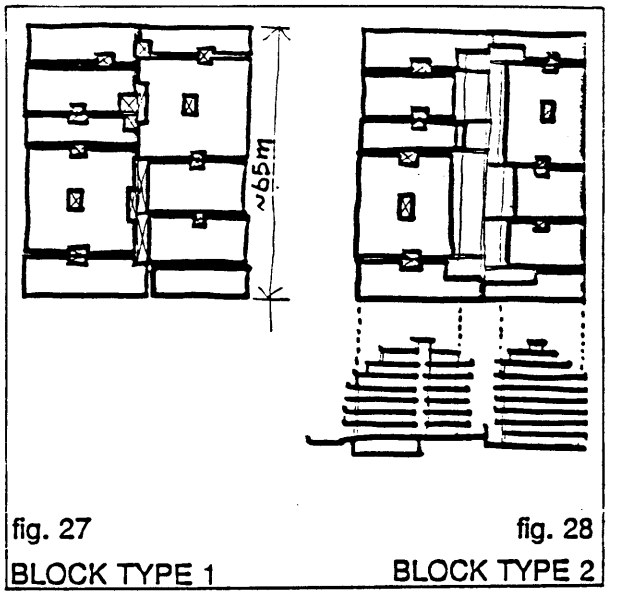


fig. 27
BLOCK TYPE 1

fig. 28
BLOCK TYPE 2

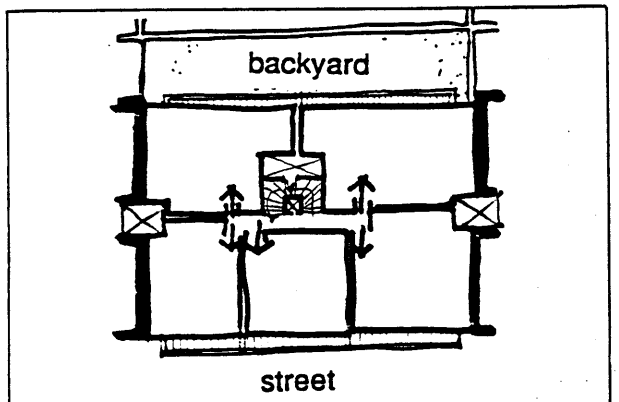
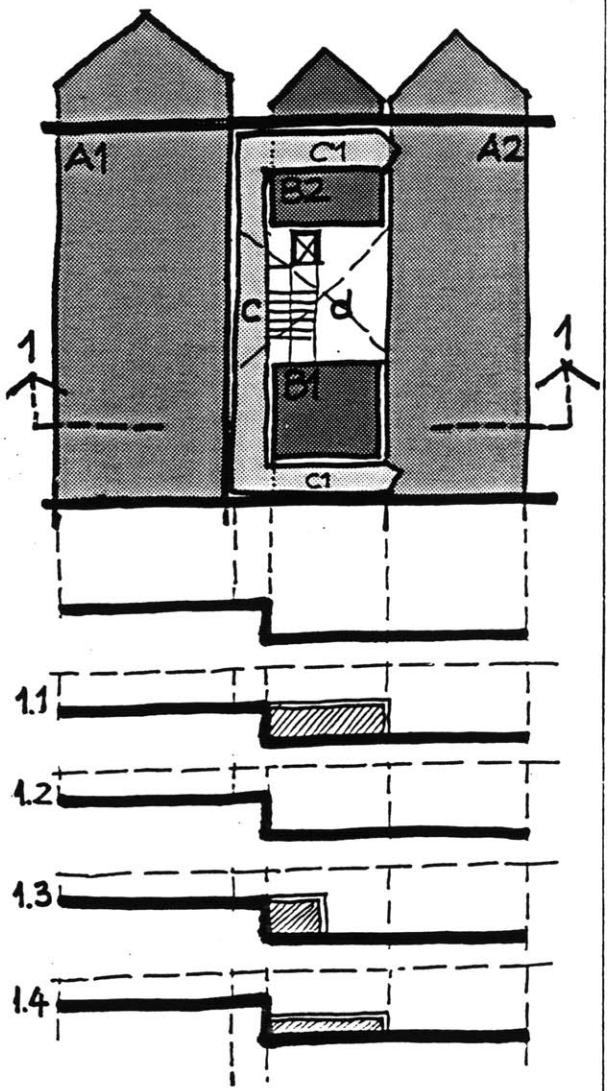


fig. 29
BUILDING TYPE

fig. 30 BASIC ZONES & RELATIONS IN THE TYPE



the yards- have shrunk in terms of importance and meaning, as well as in terms of actual space. The same reduction occurs in the realm of the house unit, where the formal living spaces are disconnected from the informal private ones by the minimized, unavoidable corridor.

This brief description gives a picture of the urban context in which the neighborhood under study exists. After demolition, however, the reality of the densified city will force this urban context upon the neighborhood that has rejected it until now by keeping its own autonomy. Therefore, first, the existing typology of the surroundings needs to be studied and transformed, in order to become a life-container; this transformation will then introduce a new type that assures continuity in time, by forming a part of the spatial continuity of the general urban context, while preserving what had been crucial and valued in the neighborhood up till now.

2.1.2 Guidelines for a new type

a. Space organization

The new building type is basically organized in zones determined by their position [fig. 30]:

(a) zones for spaces getting direct natural light from the street or the back space

(c) zone for circulation on each floor. Except from horizontal circulation, (c1) parts can also receive staircases.

The relation between the level of (a1)-(c) and that of (a2) gets fixed in the beginning of the design process.

(d) functions as a small courtyard for getting light and receives the main vertical circulation, while enveloped by the horizontal circulation and access zone (c); in this

way, it brings back the importance of movement in living and experiencing a space. A light structure for the stair could enhance the intended transparency and lightness.

(b) zone gets light and air from the central courtyard and its level varies between (a1) and (a2); it can be fixed or changed according to the size and arrangement of space needed by the users.

(b) and (c1) spaces serve to establish a connecting area, a kind of semi-private or semi-public space relating the different spaces of the house.

The zones established above are further divided into function zones [fig. 31] which can extend into their adjacent margins depending on the spatial arrangement. The margins are organized in a symmetrical way; however, their dimensions are different on the street and at the back to allow different plan arrangements, as well as different apartment sizes. This dimensional differentiation, which also occurs in the other direction, allows the whole building to shrink or expand in width and length to adjust to site-specific needs [fig. 35].

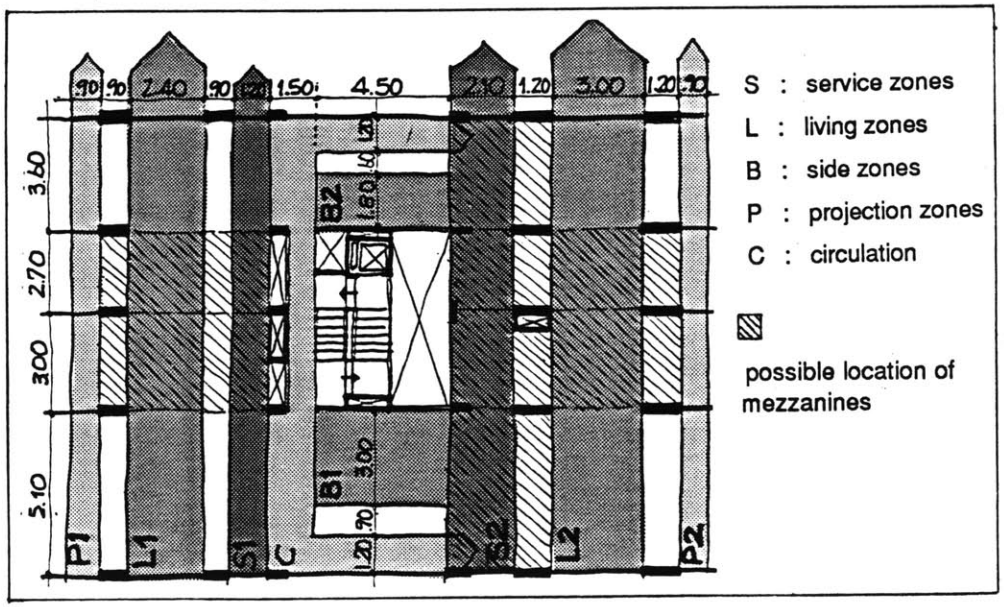


fig.32 CAPACITY EXPLORATION OF ZONES

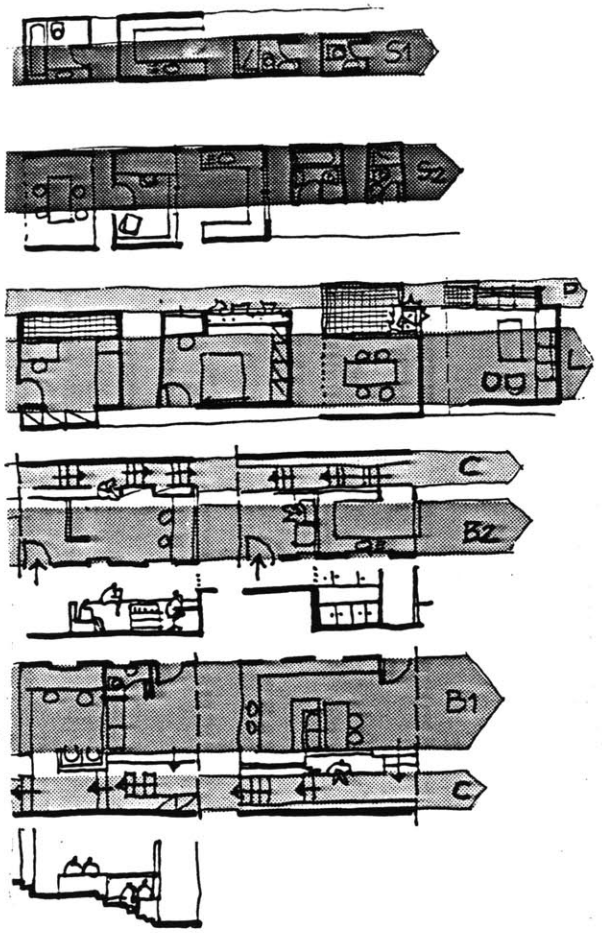


fig. 33

APARTMENT TYPES

S-S is the basic direction of territorial boundaries

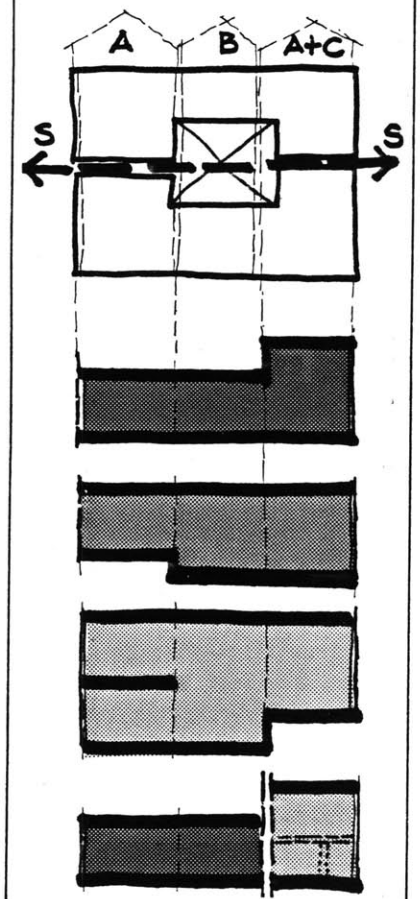
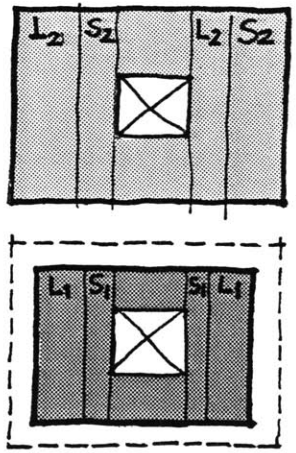


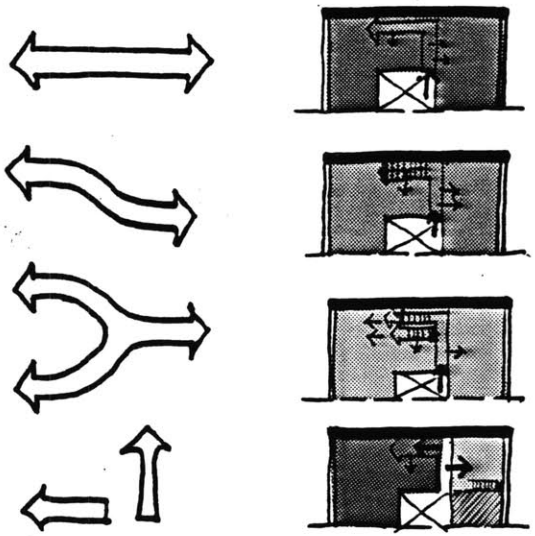
fig. 35

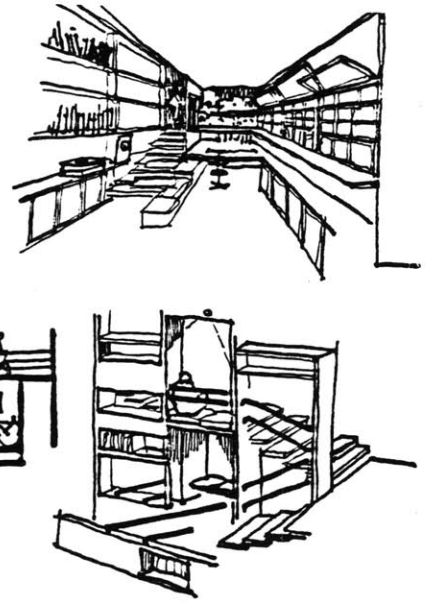
max. surface of type: 21.00 x 16.2



min. surface of type: 16.80 x 13.2

fig. 34 CIRCULATION PATTERNS





b. Type and sub-type

I decided to engage myself in a deeper study of the general type proposed, because of the specific circumstances, and particularly, the way of financing adopted by the public authorities. Contractors will build higher on the existing lots (four to five floors) and will offer to the owners of the land space to live in the new buildings, proportionate to the space they had before (with a minimum surface of $40m^{2)}$. Then, they will sell the rest so that they make enough profit to keep going on with further construction. The original high value of the land and the advantageous position of the area, together with the contractors' intention to attract more affluent buyers, will unavoidably introduce the middle-class on the scene to be housed in the same area with the low-income immigrants and workers who have so far inhabited the neighborhood. The problem of the coexistence of the two social groups I do not consider on an ideological basis, but on the ground of the physical expression of the way of life each group represents.

The urban apartment buildings of the middle-class have an introvert nature. Their exterior hides the life inside, minimizing the relation with the public realm; the inhabitants become spectators of the outside world behind glass surfaces [fig. 36]. In contrast, in **Kessariani,** the facades that separate the private from the public are perforated to reveal and expose the private life they enclose, which heavily relies on direct contact with the public [fig. 37]. The consequences of the above difference are visible in the extension of the buildings, as well as in their spatial organization.

In the first case, **the boundary** of the building **is hard,** a continuous wall that defines the public street. On higher levels, it permits some extension of the inside space by

fig. 36
URBAN APARTMENT BUILDING

fig. 37 FRONT DOOR ON THE STREET Kessariani

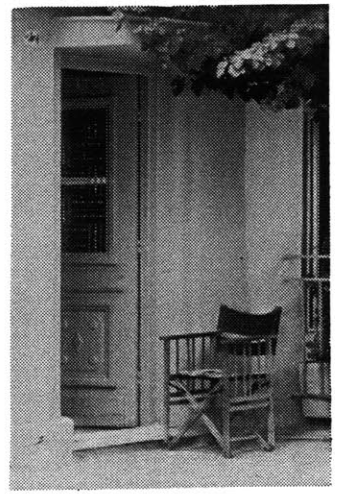


fig. 38
RECESSION

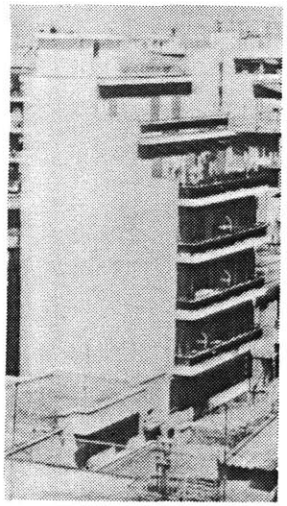


fig. 39
EXPANSION

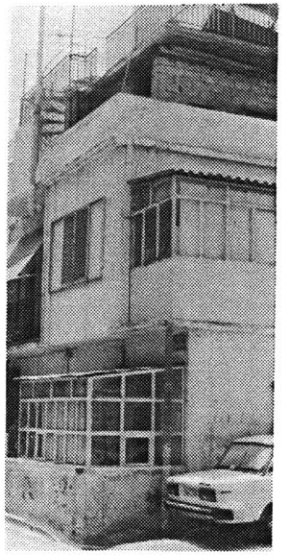
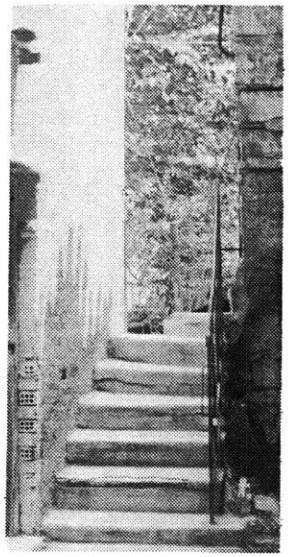


fig. 40 EXPOSED
CIRCULATION



way of balconies attempting to substitute the lost contact with the ground and the feeling of the transition from an inside to an outside. The architecture suggested by the inflexible boundary of the wall is one of **recessions** [fig. 38], subtraction from a volume with well-defined edges, which is eaten up from its inside to smoothen the transition between open and closed. Furthermore, **the circulation and movement** through the building is invisible, **situated inside its mass** [fig. 29], thus creating a secluded private microcosm.

In the second case, the building type is one of **expansion** -horizontal and vertical [fig. 39]. It is transformed by additions to an initial volume in response to needs over time. The additive nature of the type, the importance of its **direct contact with the ground,** along with a sequence of **transitional spaces** between open and closed- public and private, define more irregular and **soft edges** that allow the public life flow into the domain of the house and vice versa [fig. 41-42]. Moreover, the aggregation of individual interventions results in a morphology of variety and complexity, characterized by small size openings on a heavy enveloping structure, and accentuated by many **individual accesses exposing circulation** and articulating the facades [fig. 40].

If a PLACE is to reflect what is shared by people, so that it makes identification possible, then, the buildings proposed should be able to support the physical expression of the two different ways of life as described above [fig. 43].

In the existing neighborhood, the limits of the lot lie outside the building and define the boundaries between public and private, giving, in this way, the opportunity for horizontal expansion. The same principle could be introduced in the sub-type of the

new scheme, by giving to the old inhabitants ownership of lots that contain a built space on the ground (the min surface of 40m^2 that has been already decided by the authorities) and an additional open space with permission of extension in it.

The diagrammatic scheme proposed here invites interpretations on two levels: it can be seen as an attempt to bring together two different groups of people, and, at the same time, as a representation of the conflict intrinsic in their coexistence - the new urban fabric enveloping the old one, at first disturbing it, and eventually, under the pressure of reality, eating it up, leaving only a shell, which, void of meaning, echoes the past with a blind nostalgia [fig. 43 - reverse process 2-3-1].

TRANSITIONAL SPACES - SOFT EDGES

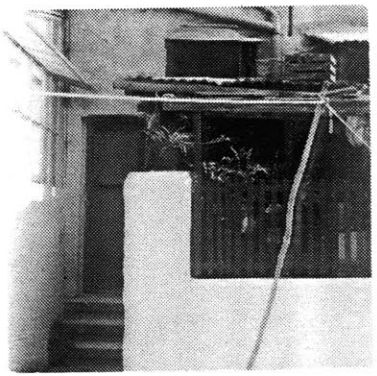


fig.41

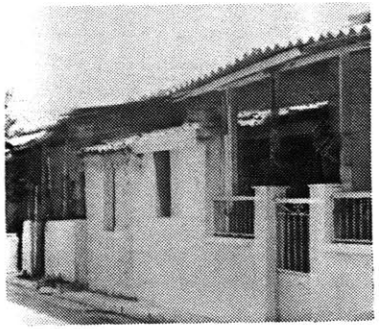
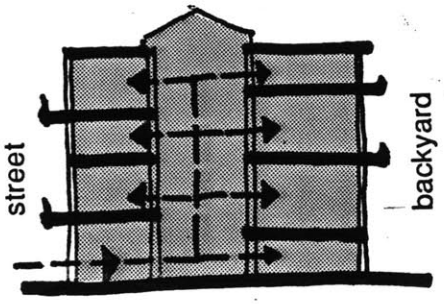
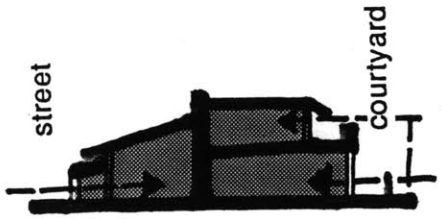


fig. 42

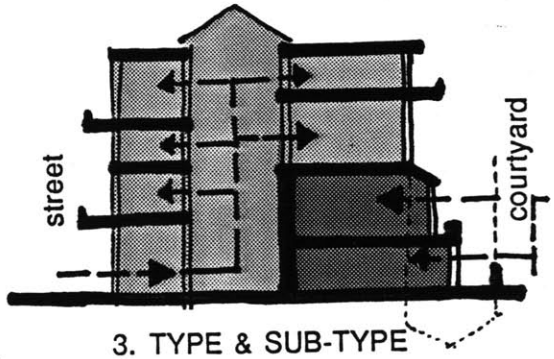
fig. 43



1. THE NEW TYPE



2. TYPE A IN KESSARIANI



3. TYPE & SUB-TYPE

2.2 The block

2.2.1 Understanding the existing

In the analysis of the block as it exists today, I will only consider TYPE A. It is the most representative in the area, and, by being more flexible and open to intervention, it bears the marks of the expression of the inhabitants' life style. It is these marks that are the most important for us to read, understand and preserve.

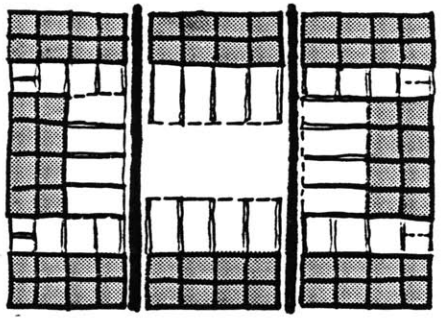


fig. 44 TYPE A before inhabitation

The typical block is organized by **lots** of approximately the same size, **distributed on its perimeter** and leaving **a courtyard in the middle,** which is accessible by two narrow, parallel paths. In this arrangement, the dwelling units sitting on each lot face either the street or the courtyard. In both cases, the medium of the contact with the public domain is a **margin with transitional spaces**-open, covered, closed.

The inhabitation brought **transformations of the basic pattern** described above; transformations, that is, of the territory distribution, the definition of back and front and the degree of privacy in the margin [fig. 46].

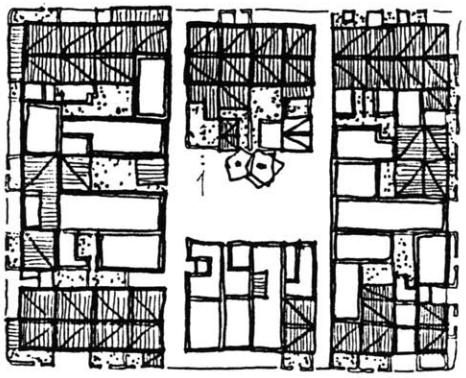


fig. 45 TYPE A after inhabitation

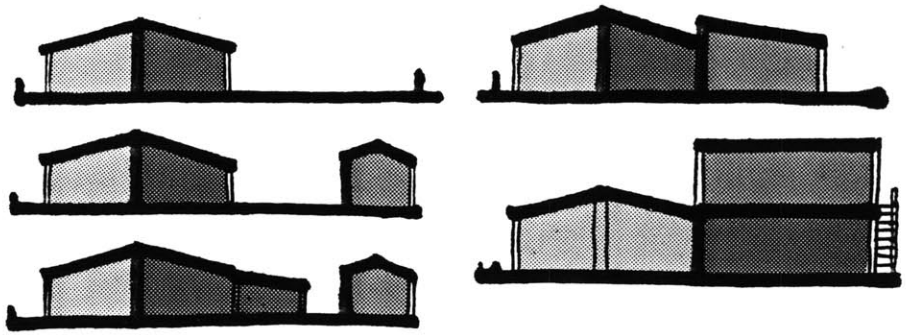


fig. 46 TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE LOT

Combinations of the above transformations in the block allow a variety of interpretations of its edges. The street edge is always made of fronts of units, but, depending on the units' back, it can be interpreted differently.

In fig. 47, the extension of unit 1 in the margin is vital and essential, because of the need for open living space (or just *more* space) and, at the same time, for contact with the public.

The extension of unit 2 need not occur, because it has open space at the back. The communication between private and public with unit 2 happens directly through the boundary of the facade, or, in the case that the extension occurs, it will have a less private character than that in unit 1.

For unit 3, the open space in the front margin is more necessary for the contact with the public, because the open space at the back is contained within the privacy of the house; however, the capacity, in terms of use, of this back space may be more limited than that of the space added to unit 1.

Differentiations like these are clearly expressed in the **variety of boundaries** between the house and the public space.

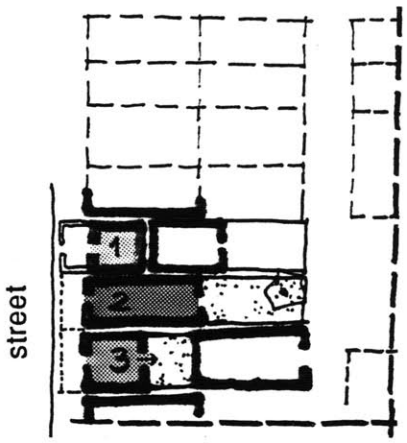


fig. 47
SECTION OF A BLOCK

TRANSFORMATION OF BOUNDARIES: from semi-private to semi-public.

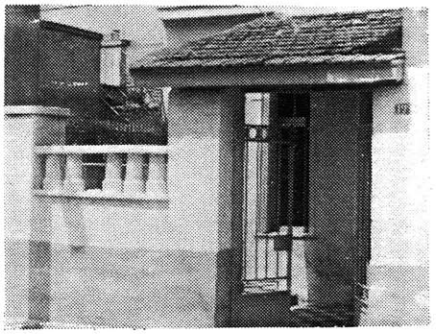


fig. 48 The high enclosure and the entrance at the height of the door make the space look almost like an interior. It can support a greater range of activities because of its privacy, but its contact with the street is limited

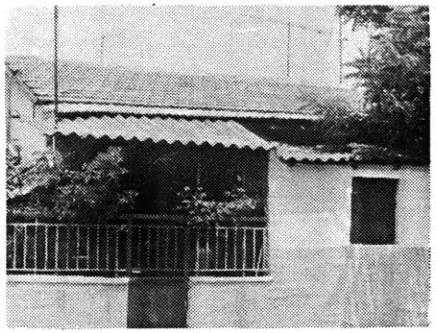


fig. 49 The transitional space has been defined by the cantilever roof and the low wall

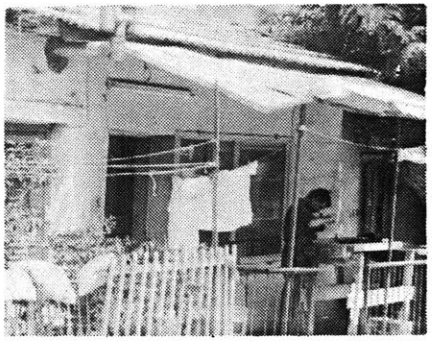


fig. 50 The boundary becomes light, offering no privacy, only control of access

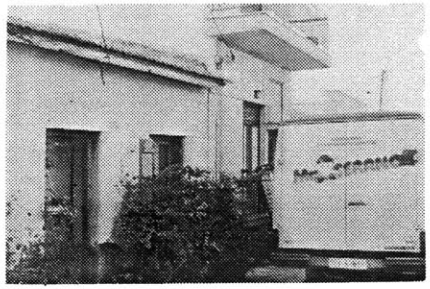


fig. 51 The territory is claimed only by props like plants which define the entrance

fig. 52 The projection of a tent on the ground marks the boundaries of a space - A minimal definition of the transitional space is steps to the entrance

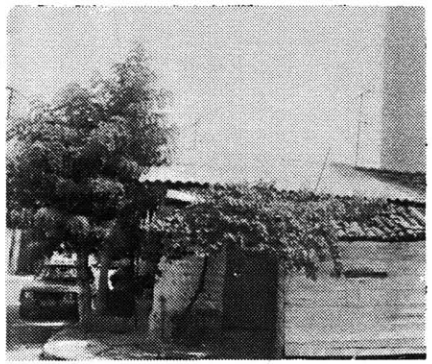


fig. 53 In the same way, the foliage of a tree can serve as a roof defining space

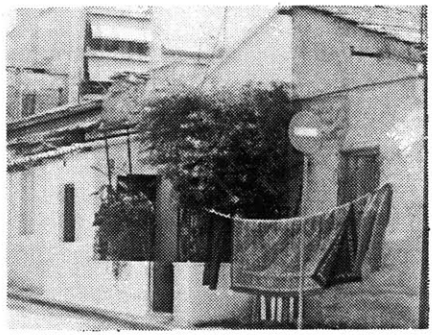


fig. 54 Space claimed by the intimacy of a string with hanging clothes

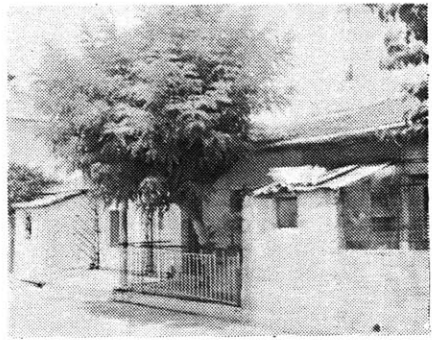


fig. 55 The boundaries of adjacent spaces define the transition area

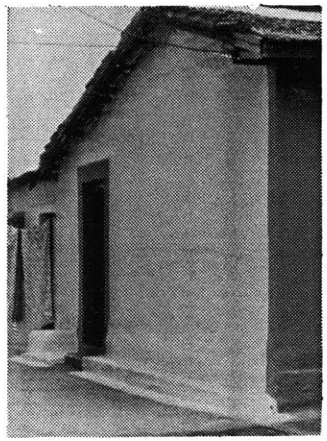


fig. 56 White-washing the street just by the entrance creates a clear transition space

fig. 57 Space claimed by the frequency of use, through direct action.

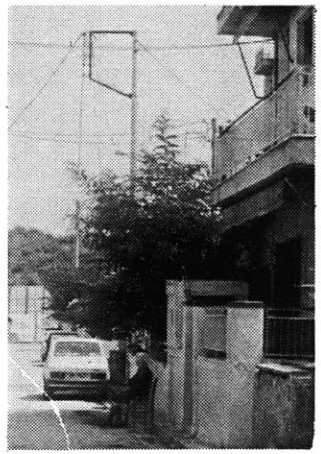
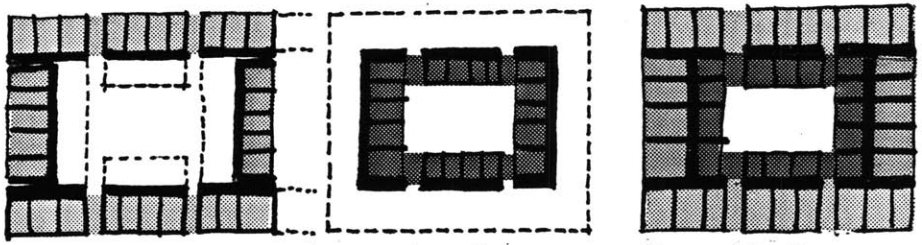


fig. 58 The transitional space can expand to the extent that it occupies part of the public domain

However, things are more complex at the back of the block. The juxtaposition of fronts and backs of units creates a conflict, as they perform different functions, have different meanings, and, therefore, vary in their physical definition. This conflict prevents the courtyard from being a true public space serving access to all buildings around it; on the other hand, it cannot retain the kind of intimacy of a shared space related to backyards, away from the noise of traffic and people.

These observations suggest **two distinct edge conditions** functioning **in the block** unit: the first being deployed along the linear, public street; the second being one of enclosure, with row-houses around a central courtyard [fig. 59].

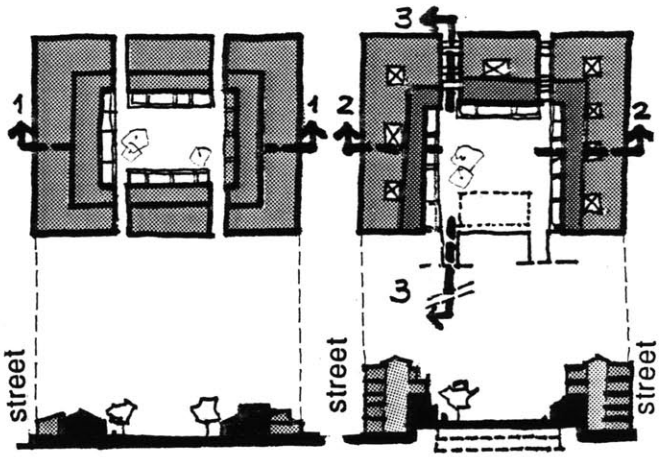
fig. 59 EDGE CONDITIONS



2.2.2 My proposal

a. General layout

The arrangement of built and open space in the existing block and the principle of the two coexisting spatial systems with different edge conditions are adopted in the proposal, where, nevertheless, the conflict of back and front finds its resolution; the systems become two layers, autonomous in their meaning and identity, and still living together within the same structure - the first one expressing the typical urban life standards and inhabited by middle-class, while the second enclosed one expressing the life of the neighborhood and inhabited by its old inhabitants. The increased height (4-5 floors in the place of 1-2) and width of the buildings along the streets, however, force the courtyard inside the block to open up one side, so that it keeps livable in terms of proportions and light; this breaks the privacy of its enclosure, allowing the two different systems to participate directly in the public life.



SECTION 1-1 SECTION 2-2

fig. 6 left: existing block
right: proposed block

The courtyard is raised one level from the street, first to keep the original size of the block intact despite the opening of its one side-which is now defined by the sharp boundary of level differentiation,- and also to allow parking on the level of the street and under the courtyard's surface-the only area which is not restricted structurally by preserved buildings. In addition, the courtyards of every two blocks are connected through the opening of their one side with bridges over the street.

The access paths penetrating the blocks from the street connect the street with the courtyards. In this way, courtyards and street become both public spaces of the same intensity, but of different forms and functions.

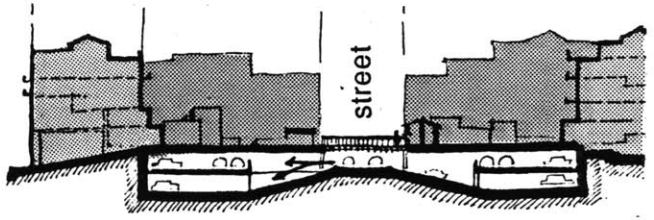


fig. 61 SECTION 3-3

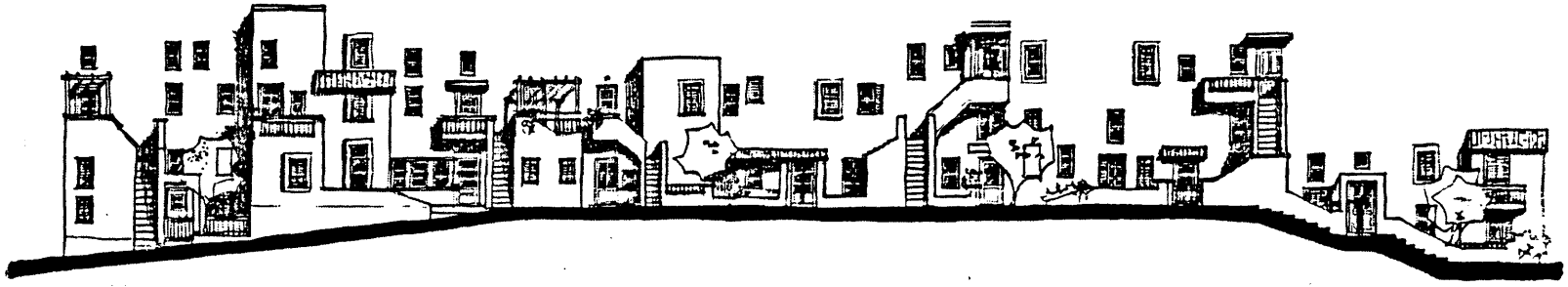


fig. 62A sub-type facing the courtyard & carrying the order of the old

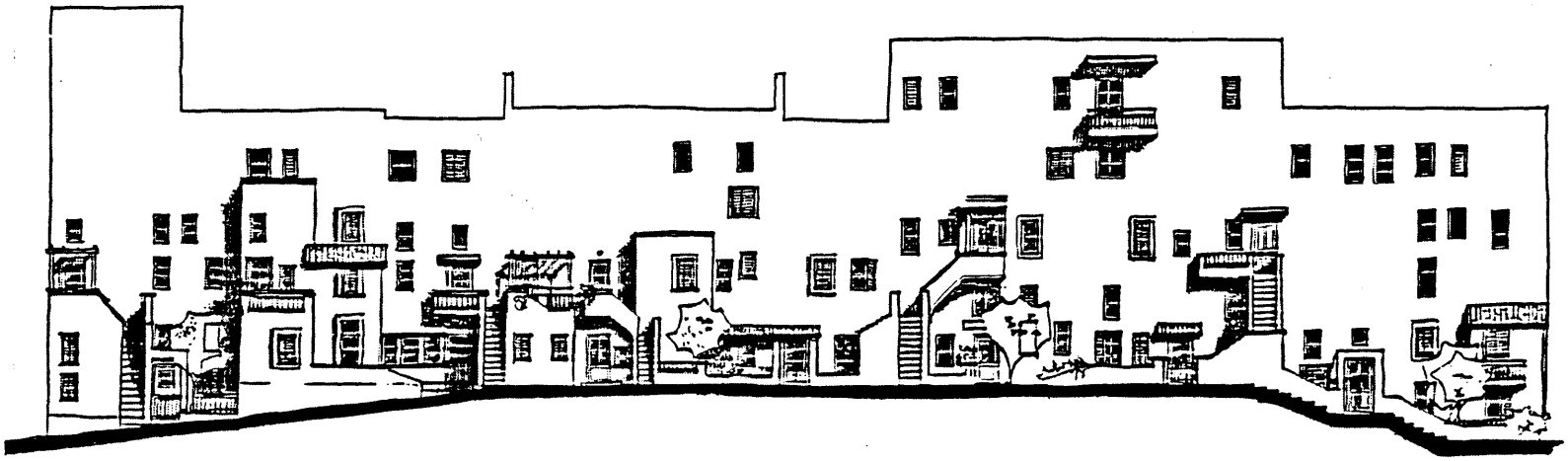


fig. 62B the old order gets diffused within the new structure

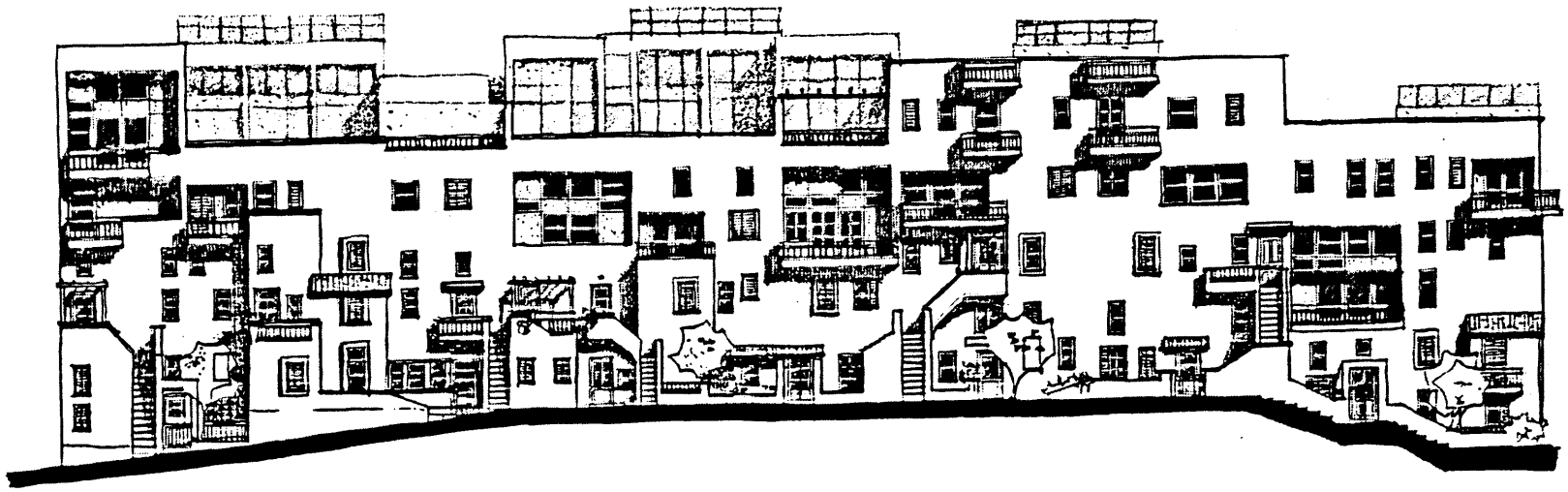
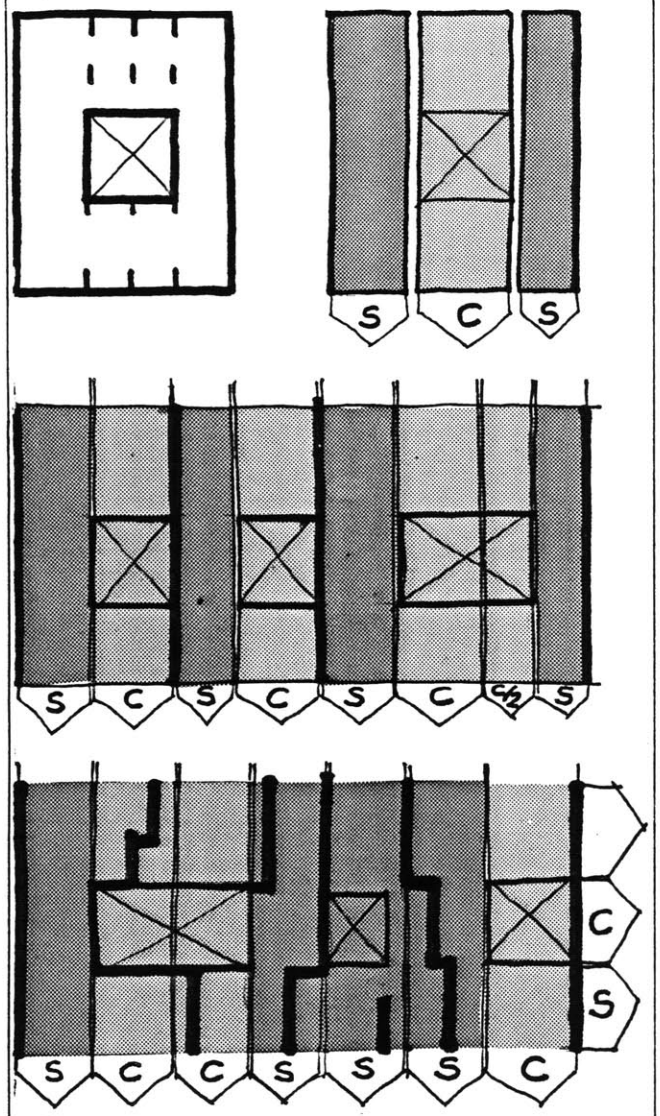


fig. 62C old and new order into the new type

fig. 63 BUILDING TYPE C&S ZONES



DISTRIBUTION OF ZONES & PARTITION WALLS.

b. The built space

The building type used gives a sequence of solid zones S and courtyard zones C, where 3.6m < S < 5.1m and 5.4m < C < 6.0m. This zoning of the type allows and suggests combinations of its parts for its adjustment to different lot sizes, especially in the case where there are preserved buildings in the block.

Two simple rules guide the combination of the zones C and S. First, no more than two and no less than one full C zone can be combined together. In the same way, no more than two S zones can be combined; in case that they do so, the S zones with no adjacency to a C zone take a small courtyard within their mass.

The next move of positioning the partition walls which define the separate buildings follows another set of rules, according to which S zones must always be separated by walls, while, between each two walls, there must be at least one C zone. This distribution is directly dependent upon the kind of intervention at hand - a contractor may have the control of a block and treat the whole like one building, where, then, the partition walls can move freely inside the zones, allowing a variety of territorial interpretations within the same zone system; on the other hand, the development may well be one of many small buildings inside the block, where the position of parallel walls separating buildings becomes the first move.

The other direction of the type can also be seen in terms of S and C zones, where the maxS is usually given to the side of the courtyard to allow more space to the sub-type.

c. The courtyard

fig. 64

COURTYARDS in the existing blocks

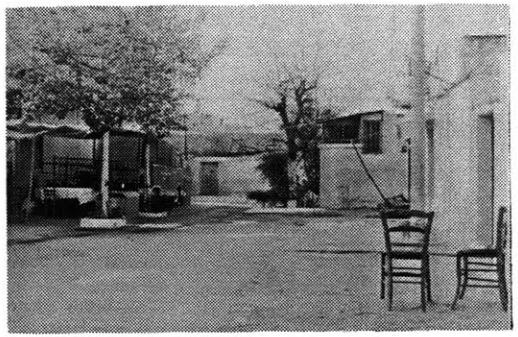


fig. 65

fig. 66

The courtyard as a wide, public, open space represents an interpretation of the original connotation of "place" as a broadened street, a street opening up; it is a potential "place", where, because of its open form and its public character, space, people and activities mix. Nevertheless, the unpredictability and variety of behavior of the people temporarily or more permanently inhabiting it make it one of the most difficult to design urban spaces. The attitude of approaching the open space as a surface to be filled up by the architect with forms that fully determine and impose functions and activities works, eventually, in a negative way; the filled up open space becomes meaningless and functions in void.

The courtyard as an urban element is still a space with size, dimensions, height and edges - a "house" in the open. Since, however, the activities taking place in it are not that specific as in a house, it should be explored as **a form of high capacity, capable of receiving projections of different scenarios.** In these terms, **what can be designed is conditions to support various kinds of activity and behavior, to provide a framework for things to happen.**

fig. 67 KESSARIANI

A thorough look into the way of life of the people who will live around the courtyard can help us to understand how it may be used [fig. 67]. Moreover, the **definition of its boundaries,** their scale, their degree of openness and the intensity of contact that they allow and support may help inhabit it.

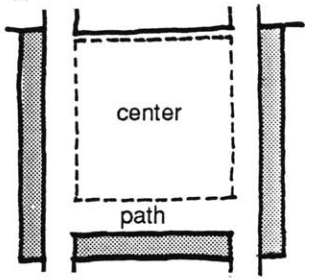
Since the houses facing the courtyard are going to be inhabited by people for whom participation in the public life is an important issue, one could expect an expansion of their private open space into that of the courtyard - something that has already been happening in the interior of the blocks and in the streets. The edges of these

houses define the three sides of the courtyard, while the fourth one, which overlooks the street, is only demarkated by the level differentiation [fig. 61]. This boundary can be designed and elaborated within a margin between the street and the courtyard to strengthen the sense of enclosure, or can be just left as it is; in that case, the courtyard takes on the image of a "terrace".

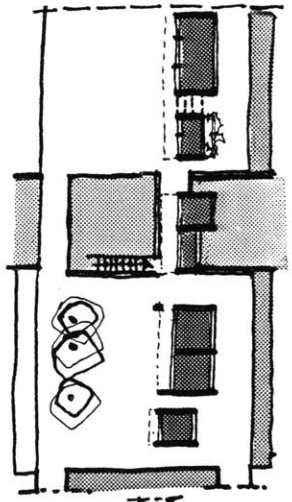
All open urban spaces combine the notions of movement and directionality on the one hand, and that of rest and centrality on the other [fig. 68a]. The patterns of **centers** and **paths** are usually established through use, depending on the specific patterns of behavior. In an extreme case of the distinction of the two, the block can become a built space with an interior path of movement, where the remaining space of the courtyard is occupied by a specific function (in a built, covered, or open enclosure). Between this extreme and the other of leaving the courtyard completely undefined, there is a whole range of possibilities and subtle variations of potential uses and activities, some of which will be displayed here.

fig. 68 ENACTING THE COURTYARD

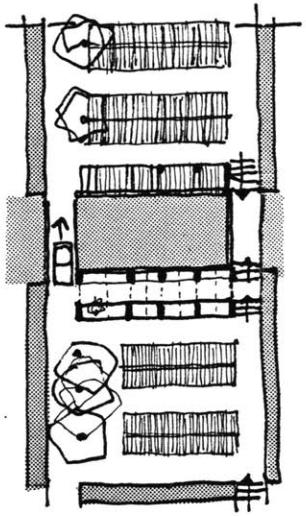
a.



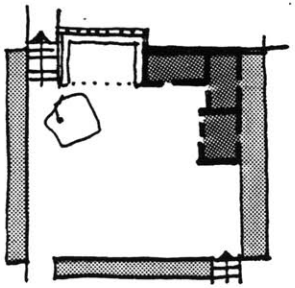
b. shops extending on two adjacent courtyards



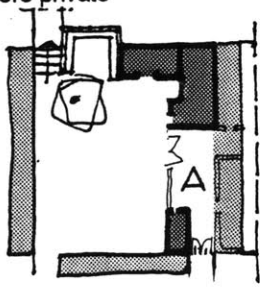
c. open market



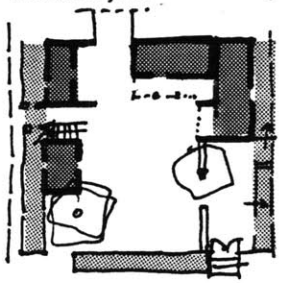
d1. small workshops in relation to the houses



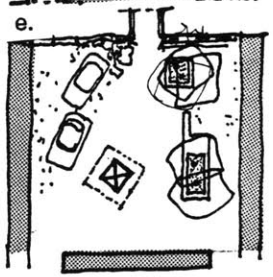
d2. the workshops make space A and access path more private



d3. workshops on all sides change the character of the courtyard



e.



f. a taverna with outdoor space can be a center filling the courtyard

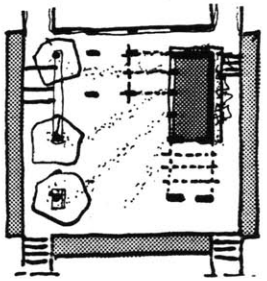


fig. 69
STREET PATTERNS WITHIN THE GRID

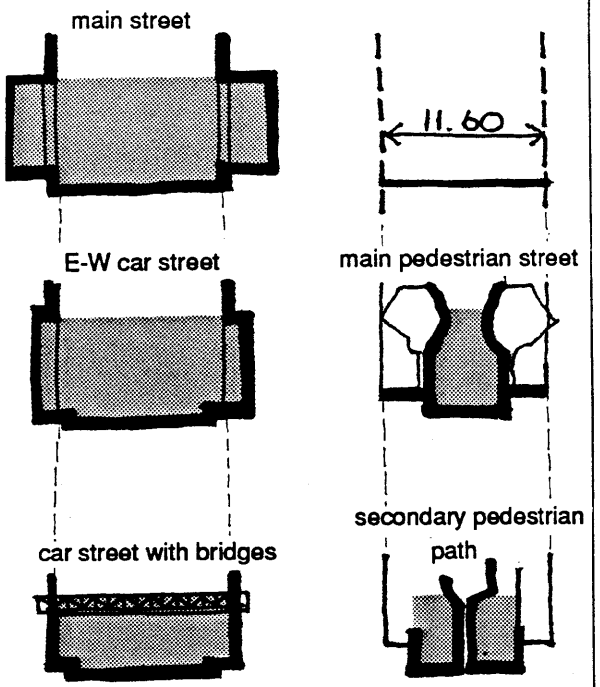
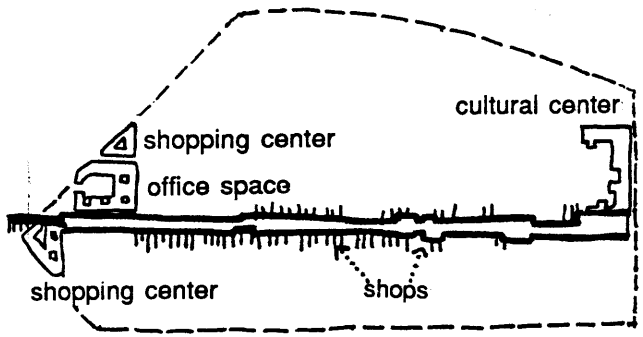


fig. 70 THE MAIN STREET



2.3 The tissue

The site of intervention as it exists now is covered up by a uniform grid of streets of the same size, which define blocks of identical size. The fact that the street network is too costly to change and shift, and that there is a quite large number of buildings recently built, which must be preserved and which demarkate in many locations the streets' boundaries [fig. 71], led to the decision to keep the strict grid as the main circulation network and to explore transformations of the image and the physical boundaries of the street within its standardized width [fig. 69]. Such an exploration could offer a continuously changing experience to the people walking or driving through the place.

The organizing principle of the design on the tissue level is that of a **dependency hierarchy of streets and open spaces.** A **main street** cutting through the whole neighborhood becomes the **"center" of the area** - a counterpart of the parallel avenue on the city level. It supports in its length a condensation of activities-mainly a combination of commercial and residential use, with parking and slow car circulation, and wide covered pedestrian paths on the ground level,which are carved out from the buildings and which open up, from time to time, to small scale urban spaces. At the street's one end, close to the center of the city, there are office buildings and shopping centers; as we go deeper into the neighborhood, though, the shopping centers give place to a concentration of smaller scale shops along the street's edges, which becomes sparse towards the other end, at the boundary between the site and the adjacent neighborhood [fig. 70] To this street connects the **network of non-thematic buildings and urban spaces** -existing and proposed-through a **major pedestrian path** [p. 22].

Fig. 71

THE SITE OF INTERVENTION (with the buildings to be preserved).

The **east-west grid** is finally filled up by **car streets** spanned **with bridges** for faster driving through the neighborhood and access to the parking garages under the block's courtyards, and **a residential pedestrian street** for quiet, slow, unimpeded crossing on foot. These streets are characterized by their linear continuity, which offers uninterrupted movement through the whole area [p. 29-30].

The north-south streets, on the other hand, come later to connect the east-west ones, either as **residential car streets** for slower circulation with parking available on their side, or as more private **alleys** for access to the apartment buildings [p. 31-32].

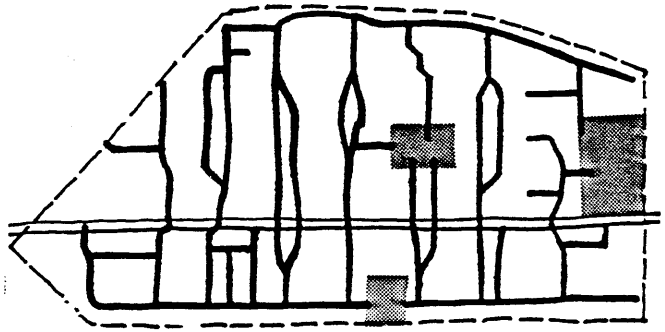


fig. 72 SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Except from the streets filling the grid lines in the site, there also exists **a secondary continuity of pedestrian circulation** through the narrow paths that give access to the courtyards in the interior of the blocks [fig. 72]. The pattern of these paths, that deploy a directional field in the area, has been adopted in the new scheme, where the paths at some point become bridges to connect the raised courtyards of adjacent blocks. They offer an intimate scale of movement, and lead towards the green space at the northern part of the area.

The idea behind the connection of streets and urban spaces goes back again to the original "place" image of a broadened street; the open spaces, then, are broadenings of the movement path in its flow or peaks to which the path ends, changes direction or starts. In this way, the movement through the space carries all the weight of the communication and the involvement of the public life.

The non-thematic buildings and open spaces have not been solved through a specific design in the study. The general approach and intentions that could guide the design are made clear, while a schematic design gives an idea of the approach adopted.

On the one hand, the non-thematic buildings proposed, - school, office building, shopping center - follow the spatial relations and elements of the "theme" of the established typology, which are differentiated by means of the buildings' scale and use [fig. 73].

The urban spaces, on the other hand, offer a variety of images : the existing city square opposite to the church and opening to the avenue (a), the green space defining the northern boundary of the area (b), the existing square with the cultural center (c) the small squares-broadenings of the streets (d), and, finally, the open space of one block size in the center of the area (e), functioning as an active symbolic center, a collective memory of the neighborhood's past with fragments of the built and open space order and image [fig. 74].

Built, enclosed spaces are found on the one side of this square. They retain the dimensions, structure and morphology of the first houses of the immigrants, with load-bearing, parallel walls, perpendicular to the street and at intervals of the size of the original lots (4.1 - 4.9m). The walls are penetrated by small openings that allow the spaces in-between to connect and offer an adequate area for commercial use or exhibition, that can expand to the outdoor space. The side of the square adjacent to this first one is defined by the same structure, which, this time, is uncovered and revealed to the public. The load-bearing walls with the small openings and a height of

fig. 73 NON-THEMATIC BUILDINGS

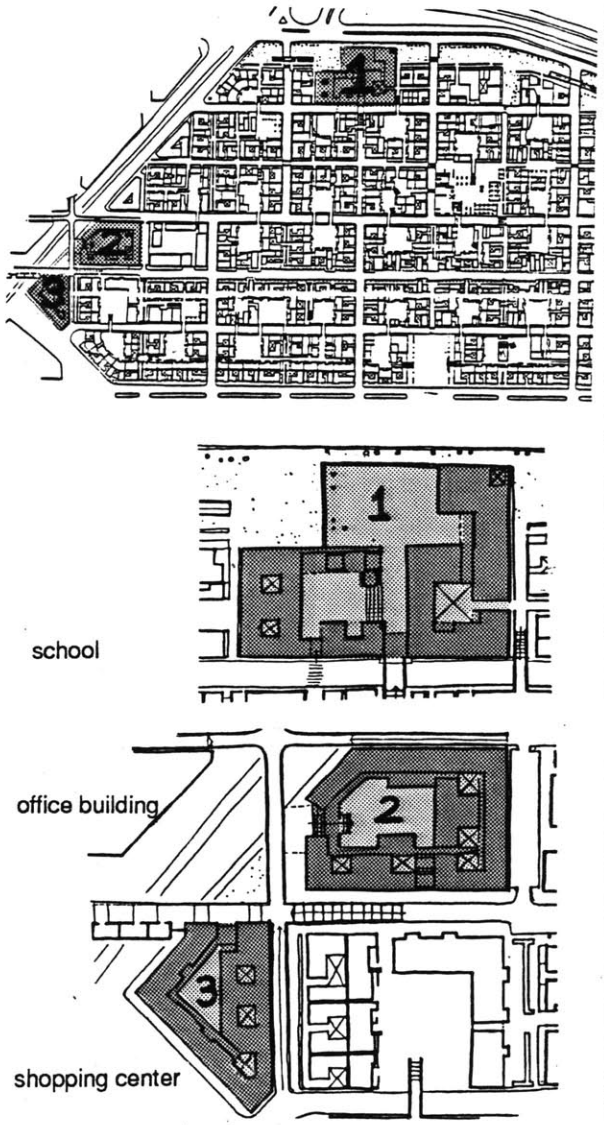
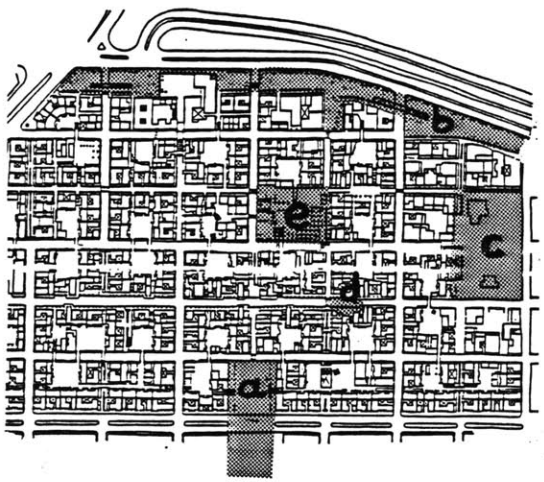
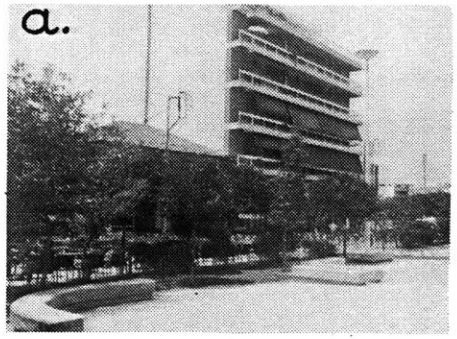
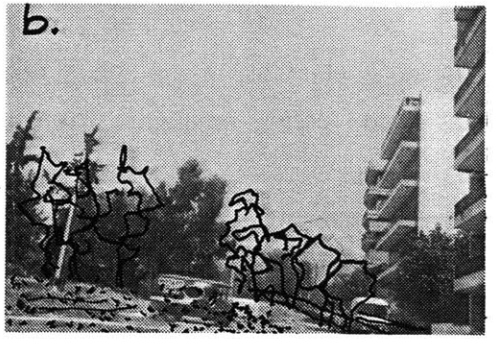
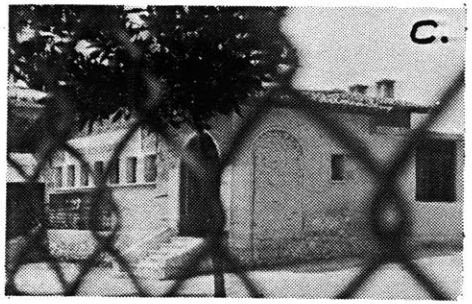


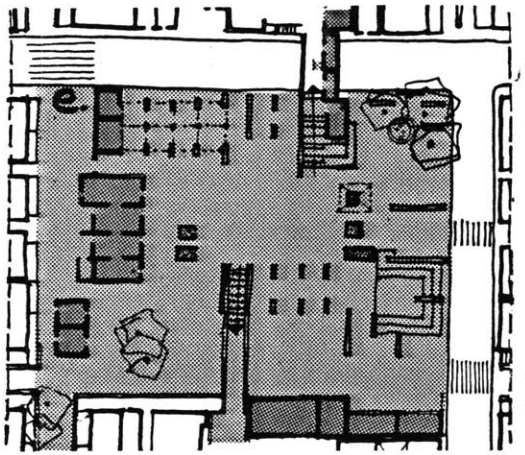
fig. 74 URBAN SPACES

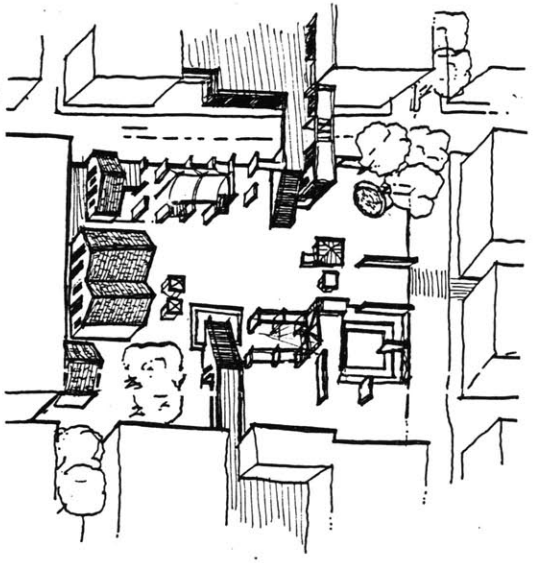












one or two floors are partially covered with a light structure and are occasionally supporting mezzanines that function like platforms overlooking the square. The space created in this way has a transitional form, in-between indoors and outdoors. Finally, the two remaining sides of the square just carry fragments of the walls, which define paths through its space or screens to the street. In the middle of this perimetric arrangement of built elements, there is a "courtyard", flexible and open to uses, towards which the access paths and bridges of the surrounding blocks are directed. Small kiosks - typical elements in greek cities - are scattered around the place, creating small centers of activity.

The whole composition of the square can be seen as a familiar scenery of fragments for daily scerarios, or even real plays.

"Fragmentary reminders may be used to enhance the complexity and significance of the new scene, a landscape with depth which makes visible the process of change. These fragments must be indicative of the old ambience..- what users **wish** to remember or can connect to themselves." [11]

All these different places, circulation paths and squares, as well as the preserved buildings engender a variety of conditions and limitations to which the blocks adjust through transformations of their theme, shaping, in this way, their own identity.

The principles describing the urban design above are not random, in the sense that the decisions about them have been made according to a thorough exploration of the existing neighborhood on all levels and reflect personal, formal or other, values

and qualities desired in a good environment- a "place". But, at the same time, **this proposal is not meant as final** either; **definite decisions can result only from a dialogue** and negotiation among the actors involved in the rebuilding of the area - authorities, architects, old and new inhabitants, contractors..- **with a full understanding of the physical, social, political and economic context.** Then, the design on this level is just an illustration and **one of the possible interpretations** of what can be done with the conditions and the system set up in the lower levels. It is also a representation of the concepts that make a PLACE -

the continuity of life patterns in the neighborhood, through transformation and transferral of the appropriate space patterns

the variety and complexity on all levels, and, at the same time, the sense of order in a whole, resulting from the deployment and variations of a theme and from the flexibility and the subsequent multiple interventions that a systemic organization allows.

Chapter four
Notes on the study of PLACE

The study of Kessariani neighborhood - analysis and design - raised important issues, that clarified and modified to a certain extent the theoretical basis which I attempted to establish in the second chapter, in order to understand and decode the concept of PLACE; on the other hand, it brought up questions and doubts at the design stage, having to do with the appropriate method for dealing with complex problems like that of an urban tissue, as well as with the kind of implementation that allows and sets the ground for potential PLACES and its necessary link to the design.

1. On the concepts

1.1 **PLACE in abstract does not exist;** each one is specific, a unique reality of space and human aspirations and activities. Therefore, specific images and not generalizations should help reveal its meaning.

1.2 The suggested properties that allow and enable the existence of PLACES are not all of equal importance, but follow an asymmetric dependency. Moreover, it is important to make **a distinction between the ones that enable a space to become a place** (continuity, flexibility...), **and those that make a place more interesting and stimulating** (sensory stimulation...)
A place is not necessarily visually appealing or gracious; on the other hand, an architecturally interesting space may never be a place. But the fact that most of the known places offer a rich aesthetic experience misleads architects to a formal exploration of their space emptied of significance, the unfortunate results of which are then used for the creation of new environments.

"The sense of place is through the experiences of everyday life that is created and revealed. It is not the image captured in photographs or celebrated a few times a year; it is an ongoing experience. This is not to deny an aesthetic view of environmental quality, but rather to broaden it. From the eyes of the dweller, the aesthetic includes the beauty of the relationships that are being constantly acted out."[12]

1.3 The most important characteristic of existing places is a sense of community among the people inhabiting them, an **implicit shared knowledge and way of life,** which is expressed in powerful themes organizing and giving coherence to the environment.

The sense of community is almost lost nowadays. Nevertheless, all people carry within themselves a virtual place by the mere fact of sharing and belonging to a culture. This reality makes possible for the architect to design a new place which can still embody in its theme meaningful patterns. The theme, however, should be expressed in the form of an open-ended system allowing intervention and transformation, so as to reflect and follow in time the changing human intentions.

1.4 Before establishing a theme and setting up a system to work with, it is necessary to decide **what is meaningful to be preserved from the past,** through a thorough observation and understanding of the place of intervention-its systems of relationships and typical elements which express patterns of life.

"Patterns of life are the solid substance, underneath the surface, out of which a building or a town is always made"[13]

Patterns of life and patterns of space, known and familiar, which together make the character of the place, **could ensure the presence of the past in a continuity of space and time.** It is them, and not all the physical things, that people want to retain. In addition, fragments of a physical environment preserved could serve as relics of time gone by.

2. On the design

2.1 Patterns preserved

Looking into the specific case-study of Kessariani neighborhood in Athens, the problem of identification of those patterns that are still alive in their expression, and, thus, should be preserved has to do, on the one hand, with the very specific and confined context of the neighborhood, and, on the other, with the broader cultural context within which the community functions-a deeper layer of expression of fundamental life and space qualities.

2.1.1 From the broader context

a. Public and private

One of the most important issues which identify and differentiate a culture in its architectural expression is the **interface between public and private.**

In Greece, **life in the open** responds to a deep cultural-physical need that implies a whole life attitude. It enhances communication and **social contact,** which becomes basic in all activities-work, rest, entertainment, movement. The urge for communication and active involvement in the public domain is mainly expressed through a sequence of **transitional** open , covered and closed **spaces**, acting as an extension of the privacy of the house into the public life. This margin between the two domains is densely inhabited and overloaded with activities, and extends the concepts of private and public in the conventional, modern sense, by introducing a

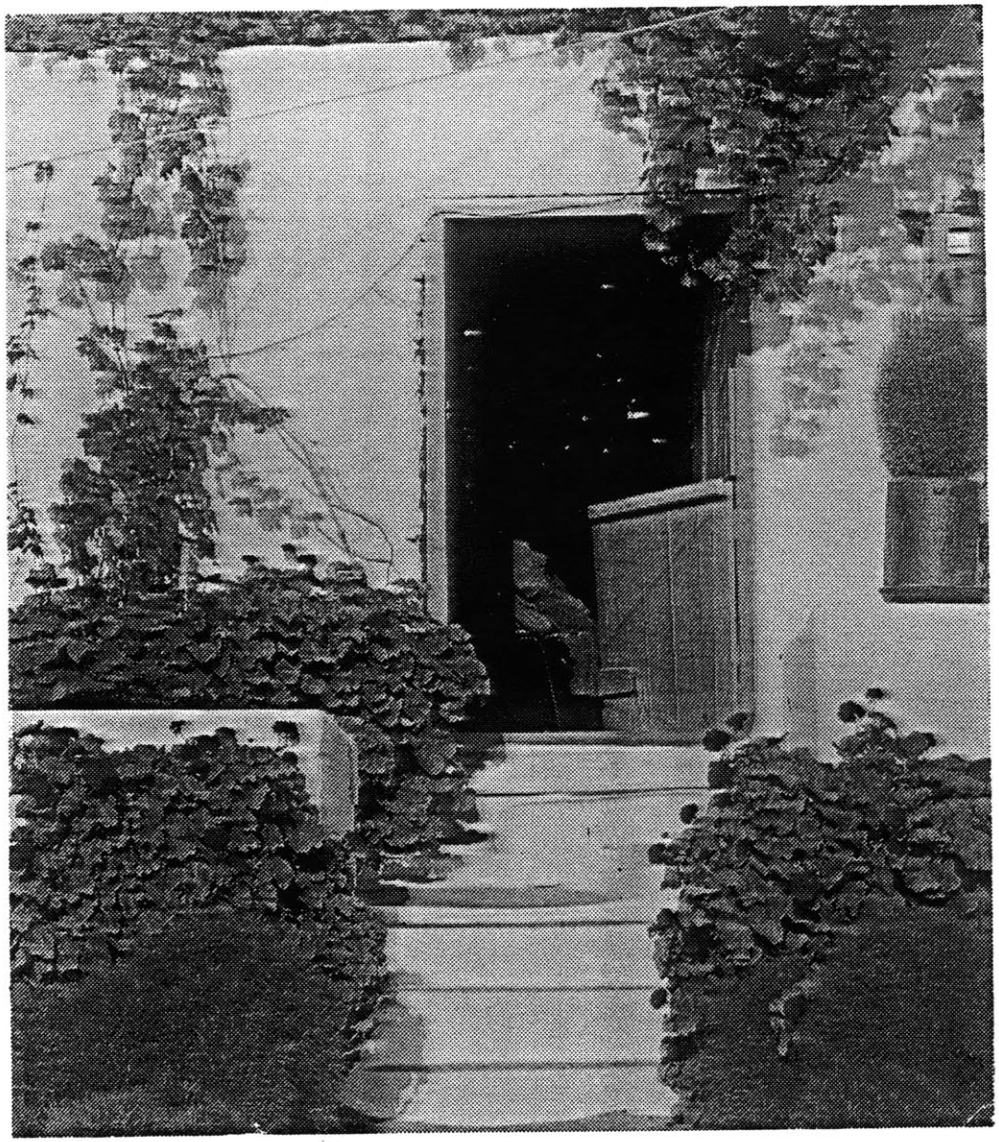


fig. 75 SYROS, Greece

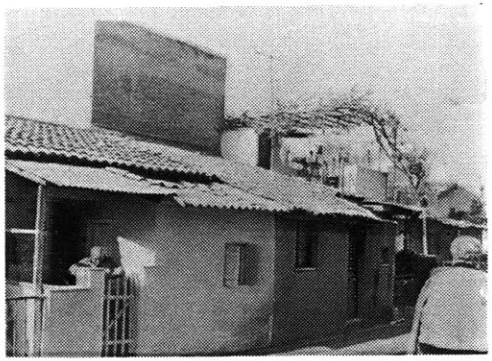


fig. 76 KESSARIANI

fig. 77 KESSARIANI

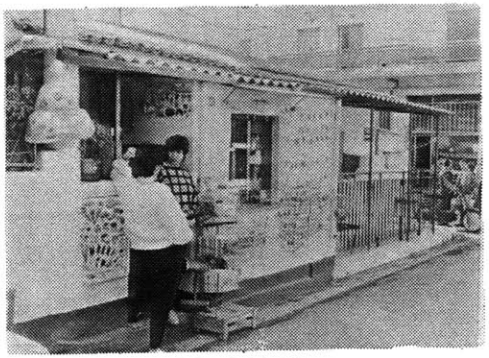


fig. 78 KESSARIANI

fig. 79 AGIOS MARKOS, Kerkira, Greece

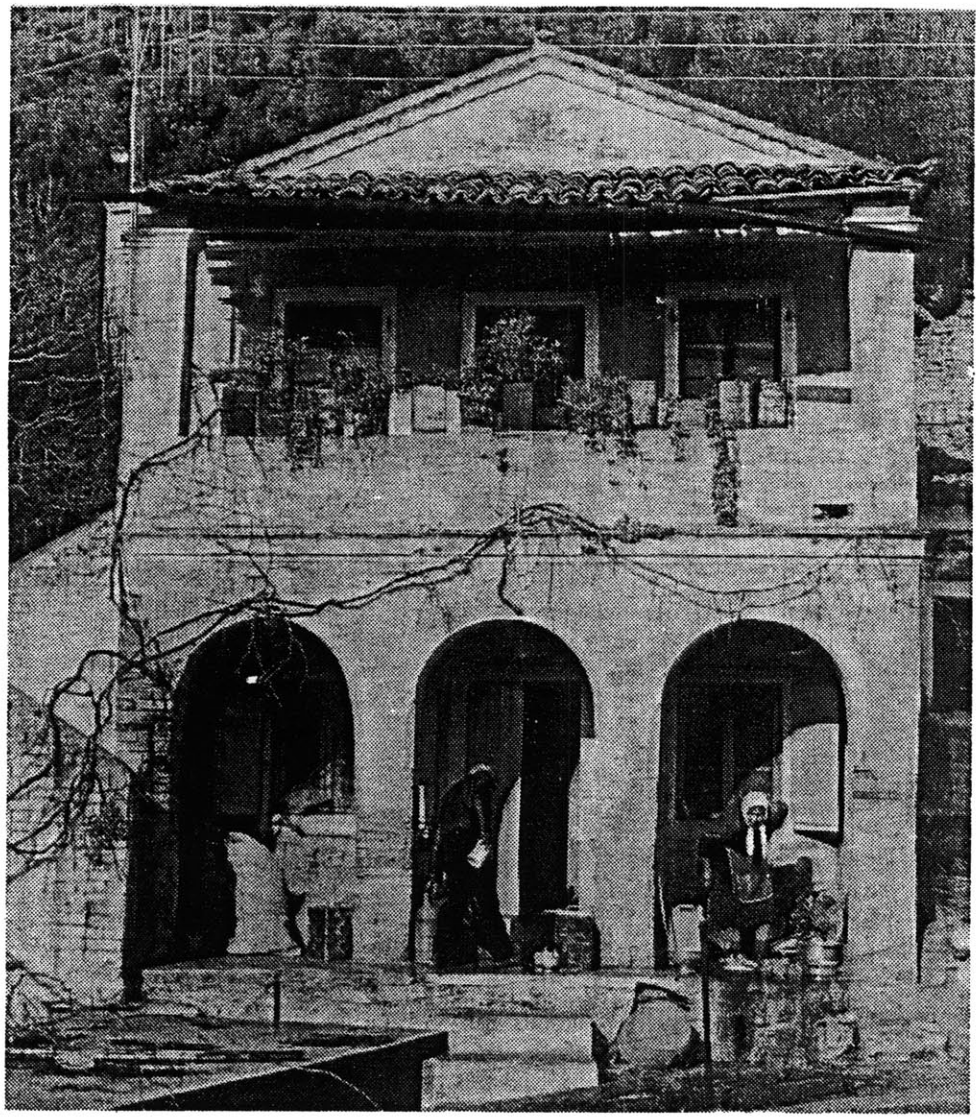
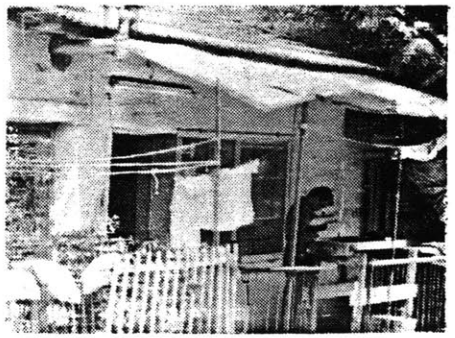


fig. 80 KESSARIANI

fig. 81 KESSARIANI



smooth and subtle transition from the one to the other. The boundary lines are not formal and sharply demarkated, but easy and blurred, offering varying degrees of privacy.

The street forms the structure of traditional settlements, keeping always the scale appropriate to the activities taking place in it - narrow for movement and opening up to form squares and terraces for meeting. It functions as an "agora" and a link, through the margin between private and public, of all different activities happening in the inside spaces-churches, shops, houses,- all of them being equally important.

MARGINS
ON THE STREET

fig. 82 MYKONOS, Greece

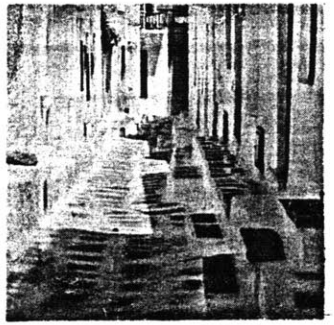


fig. 86 MYKONOS, Greece

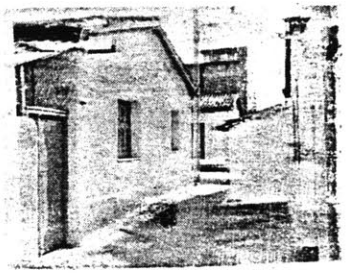


fig. 83 KESSARIANI

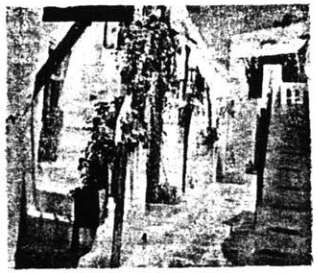


fig. 84 MYKONOS, Greece

fig. 85 SAMOS, Greece

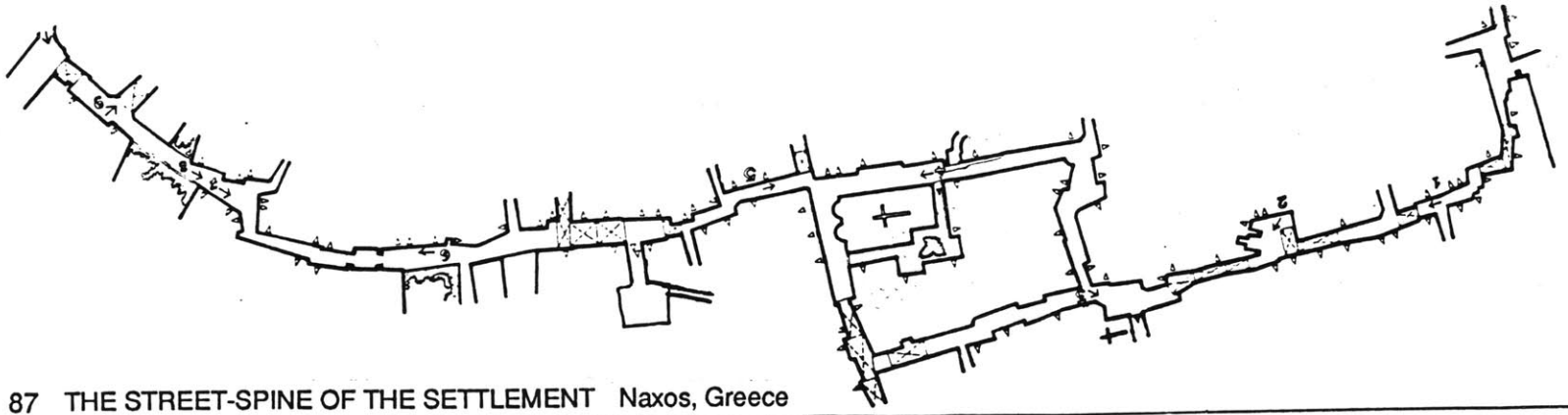


fig. 87 THE STREET-SPINE OF THE SETTLEMENT Naxos, Greece

House porters of Athenian apartments

fig. 88 fig. 89

fig. 90 KESSARIANI

In the urban environments nowadays, the priority of the car has broken down the scale of the street, while the dwellings have turned towards their center. Semi-public and semi-private spaces function, in a narrow sense, only inside the building. However, one can still see the attempt of people to break the isolation that the buildings suggest and participate into the public life of the street [fig. 88, 89].

Kessariani is one of the few areas in an urban center where the above cultural patterns are expressed, in spite of the cars using the grid street system.

The same patterns I tried to keep, enhance and facilitate through the **design of varying margins between the streets and the buildings within the width of the existing grid.** These margins set the conditions for the smooth transition and contact with the public spaces. Furthermore, I reestablished **the street as the organizing element,** the spine of the neighborhood, which brings together all activities and functions.

fig. 91 KESSARIANI

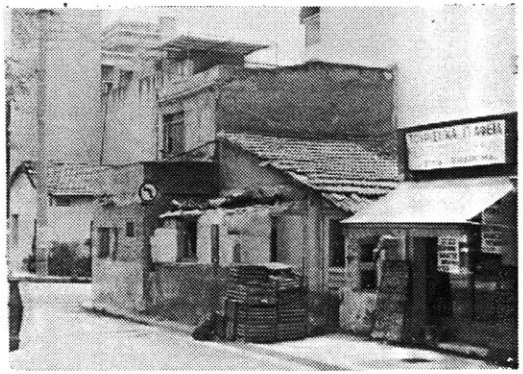


fig. 92 KESSARIANI

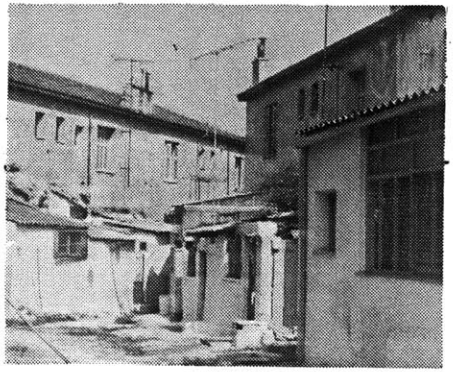


fig. 93 KESSARIANI

fig. 94

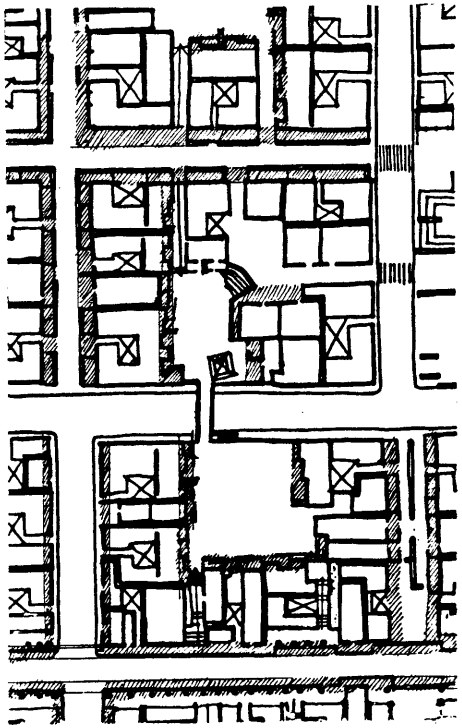


fig. 95

fig. 96

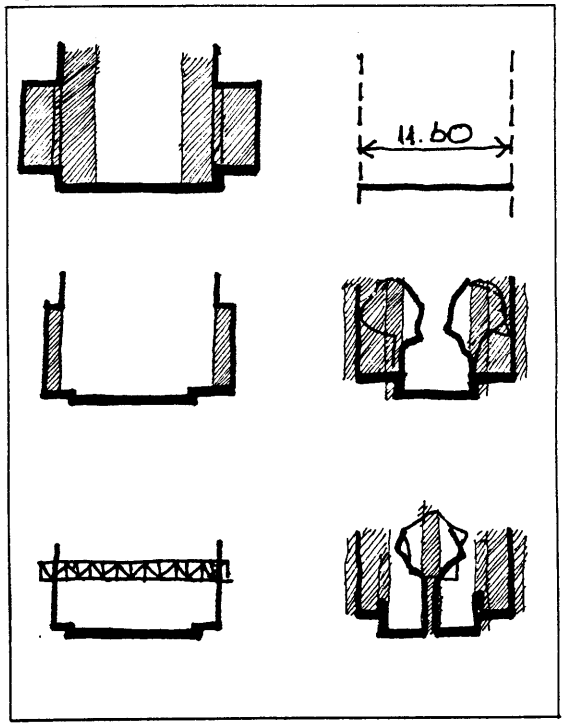
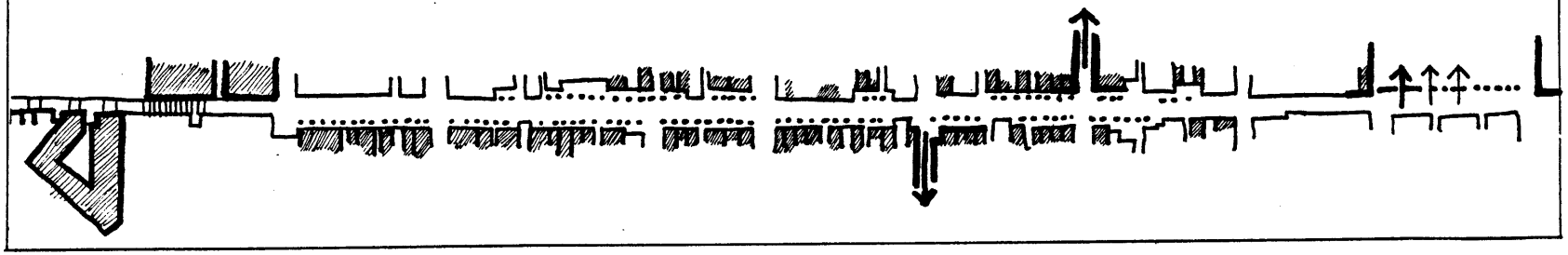
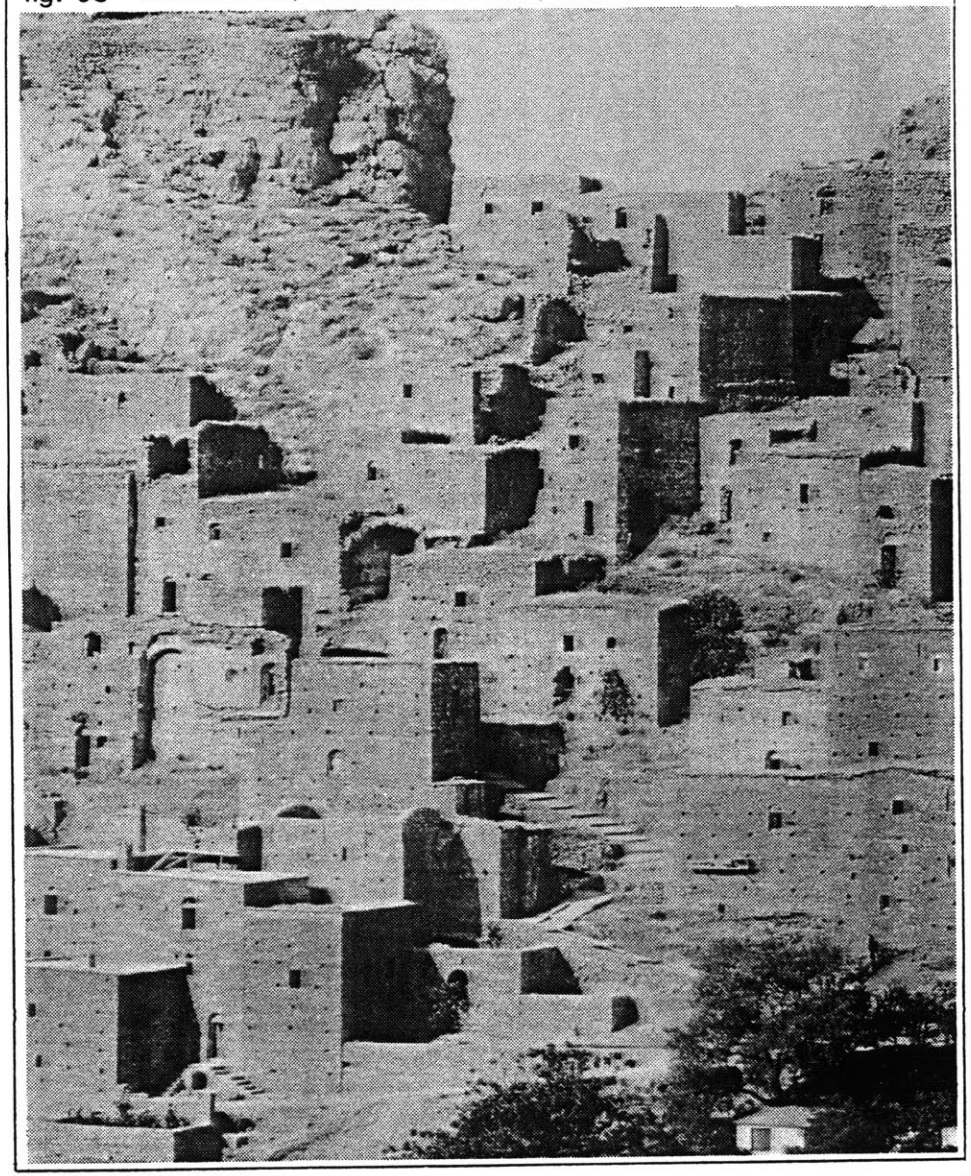


fig. 97 MAIN STREET-SPINE



b. Light

fig. 98 ANAVATOS, settlement in Chios, Greece



The climate, especially the light, defines to a large extent the morphology of buildings.

Le Corbusier's reference: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are made to see forms in light... the image is distinct and tangible, and without ambiguity"[14] finds its most appropriate context in Greece, where light is not abstract, but a material to build with; a material appropriate for architecture of simple volumes, which uses **space**, and not surface, **as the predominant building element**. In this context, even the wall gets thickness and becomes space.

In the urban centers, however, where volume architecture is unattainable due to building regulations and lack of available space, thick boundaries of buildings can introduce a margin, some space for the contrast of the light's games and the shadow's protection.

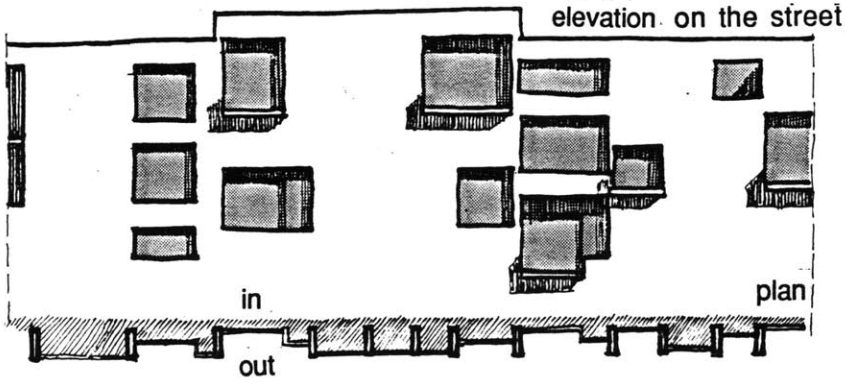


fig. 102 THICK BOUNDARIES of the new type

fig. 99 SHADOW PROTECTION Kessariani

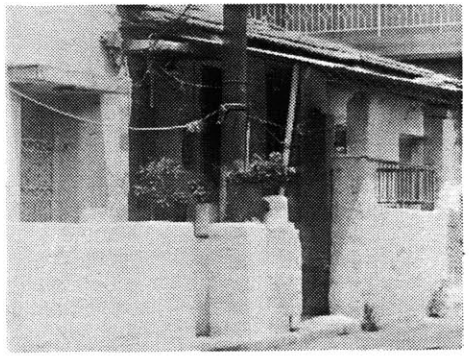


fig. 100 SIMPLE VOLUMES Kessariani

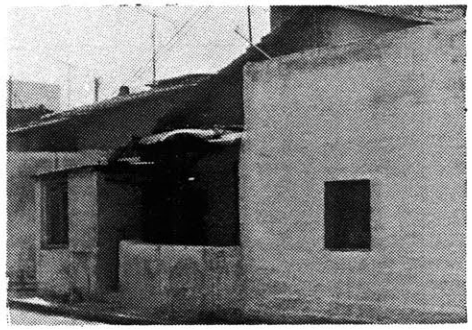


fig. 101

PROPOSED ELEVATION [block's courtyard]

2.1.2 From the context of the neighborhood

a. The grid transformed - a hierarchical structure of urban spaces [fig.103-104]

b. The arrangement of built and open space in the block, with the two edge conditions resolved -one to the street and the other to the block's courtyard [p. 62].

c. The scale and morphology of the neighborhood as it was before the demolition, preserved in the edges facing the courtyard [p.63, 64].

d. Conditions for the accomodation of activities taking place before (small workshops and shops) within the structure of the new buildings and blocks, and scattered all over the neighborhood.

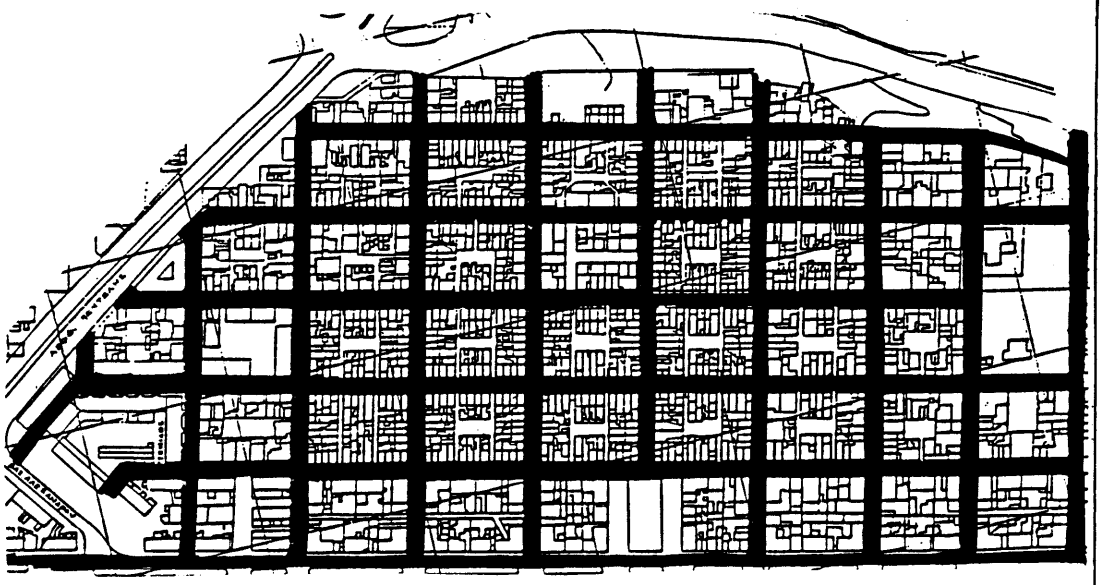


fig. 103 EXISTING GRID

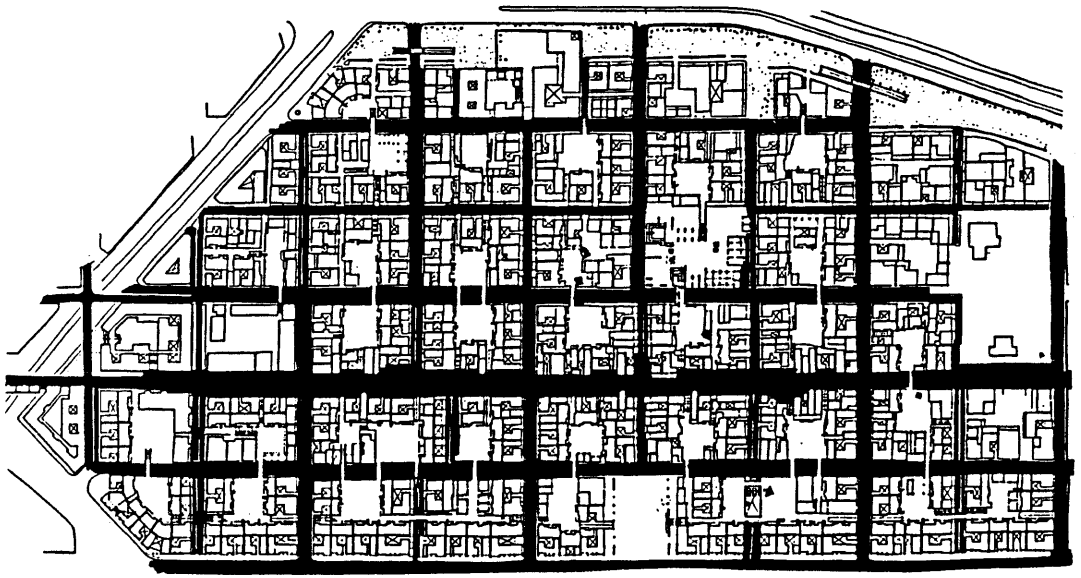


fig. 104 THE GRID TRANSFORMED

2.2 The question of urban design

In the design of a complex environment of many levels, the problem arises about what it is that makes it work. How essential each level is in making it into a PLACE. **Whether a top-down or a bottom-up approach is more appropriate;** that is, whether designers should start with the big decisions on the urban scale, or if it is possible to work up to these decisions through small gestures and explorations of the lower levels. I think it is a matter of position and subjective perception of architecture for one to decide.

However, the move upwards seems more convincing, since it follows the natural process of organic, incremental growth and development of cities, which cannot be created from above; where the definition of the small scale events indicates what is needed on the bigger one and what this latter is made of. It is these human scale events that we are able to observe and appreciate when we experience a place. The urban scale is only observable as a diagram on a map. What we can appreciate in it is how successfully it structures and organizes the events in a whole. Under this view, the urban design comes to bring together the lower levels. Even though it is concerned with big places, it cannot be big architecture.

Therefore, I started designing on the urban scale only when I already had thoroughly understood and had a concrete image of the smaller scale. Doing big moves to provide a framework for the small ones, when the latter are still unexplored, seemed to me like designing a chessboard without knowing about the distinction of black and white pieces and the logic of their moves in the board - like an outline without picture.

2.3 The proposal of the authorities

It seems really difficult to me and tricky to criticize a proposal by seeing drawings on paper and by reading an analysis. And it becomes more difficult when the design to be interpreted reached its present stage through a dialogue in real life, between the actors who are atually participating in the process of rebuilding Kessariani.

Nevertheless, I believe that it is possible to read in drawings basic concepts that indicate the ideological approach followed in a design proposal, if there is any. Whenever these concepts are established according to the limitations imposed by economic or political criteria, the ideology and perception of architecture gets reduced to a calculation problem. The argument of a bad design as the inevitable result of the large number of limitations usually hides behind it either the architects' indifference for the built environment, or a lack of the necessary skills to resolve a complex situation in all its aspects. This argument can only stand if there is made an initial exploration that aimed at making a good environment - a place - and which later follows a process of modification in order to finally become realistic and realizable.

My first impression of the authorities' design was one of a quantitative, functionalistic approach; an example representative of the negative side of my arguments throughout the study.

First, the solution proposed is an attempt for an abstract place, **a generalization of a specific problem**, taking into the consideration only the limitations and not the opportunities that the existing environment offers. In this way, the richness of the place is lost or overlooked.

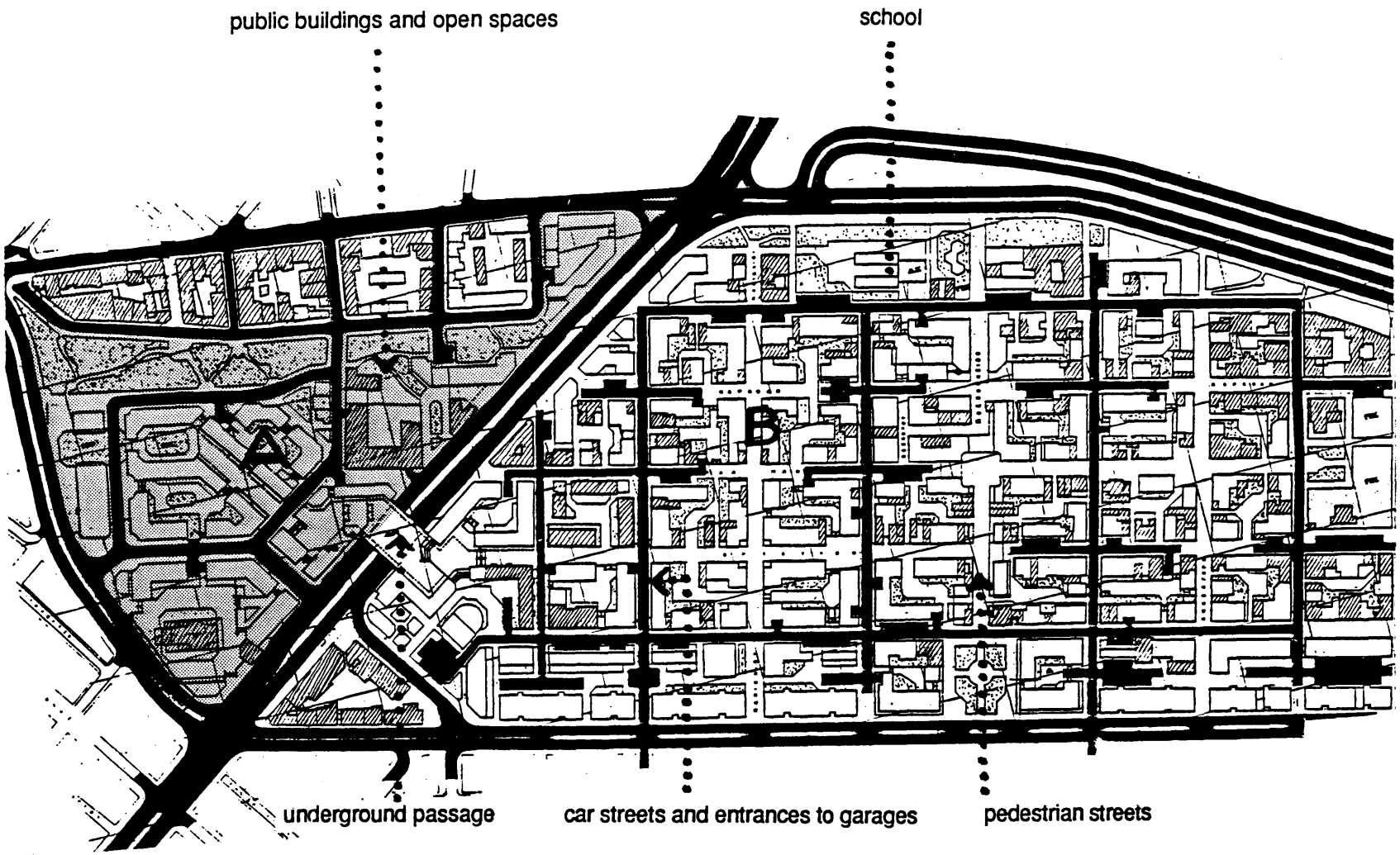


fig. 105 THE AUTHORITIES' PROPOSAL

The basic problem, I believe is the **top-down move** that seems to have been followed on the urban scale; a move that demonstrates the power and control of the authorities over the whole. The design was originated by the accomodation of cars and parking in the area, leaving some streets to the pedestrians. Even with this distinction, however, the circulation remains a non-hierarchical network, like the one it is replacing. In addition, the street does not exist and is not explored in its small scale life.

The public buildings and the open spaces on the tissue level are all accumulated in the part of the neighborhood closest to the center (it is part A, that I did not study in detail, but which follows the same principles as part B), in an effort to make the other part "residential", in the way it was done in the '70s; in this way, part B is deprived from open spaces intended for the whole neighborhood, while it becomes isolated from part A by the complete distinction of land uses.

The physical connection of the two parts proposed by the authorities is a huge underground passage ("enlivened" by shops probably), which does not succeed to break the isolation [fig. 106].

At this point, I should explain the way I thought of the problem of connection of the two parts [fig. 107]. Those parts were once one piece, following the same grid, the traces of which are still present in part A, where, in the 60's, TYPE A buildings (explained in chapter three) were demolished, and most of the streets of the grid disappeared. The area was rebuilt with buildings of TYPE C - built blocks thrown on the site as by accident. Later, a highway literally cut the neighborhood into the two, already to some extent differentiated, parts A and B. A possible way of introducing a

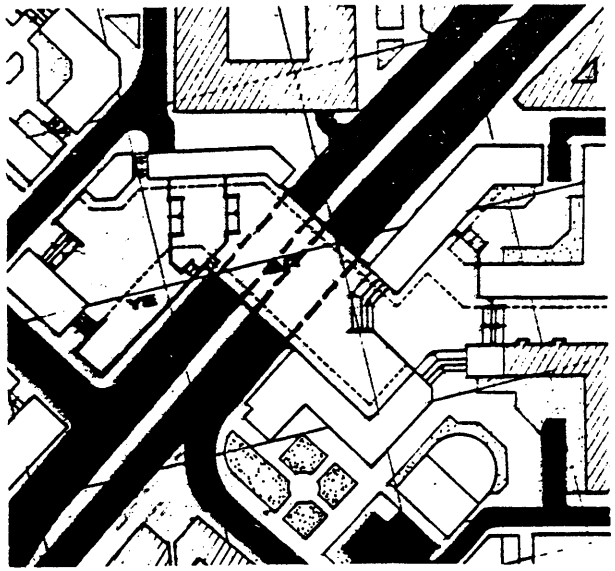


fig. 106

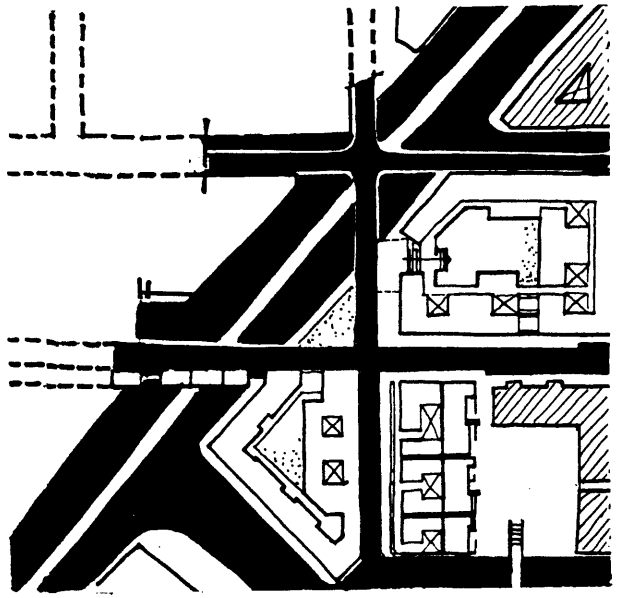


fig. 107

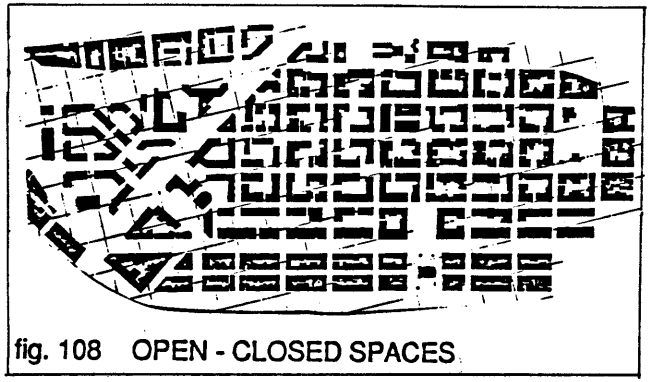


fig. 108 OPEN - CLOSED SPACES

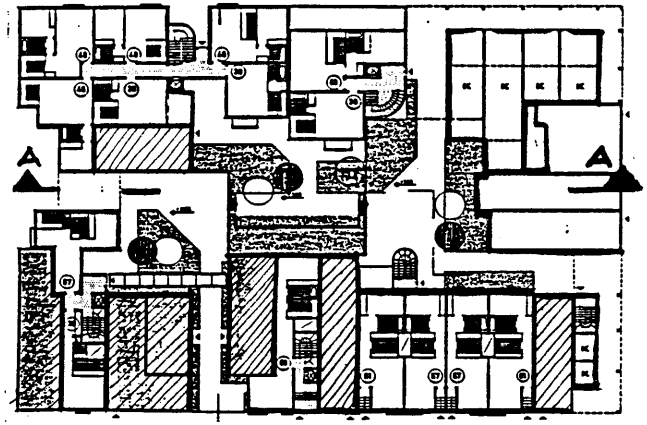


fig. 109 BLOCK PLAN

preserved buildings - K : shops

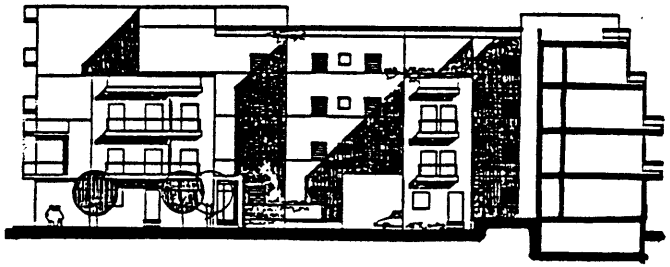


fig. 110 BLOCK SECTION

connection again is by extending the grid of part B into part A. I tried to do this with a continuation of the main street-spine of the neighborhood over the highway in the form of a bridge, where shops go up to make it alive - since it is well known by experience that underground passages connect spaces only on the level of a dotted line in the drawings, while, in reality, they fail to do so, even visually. - Then, two perpendicular car streets from the grid extend to span the distance between the two parts again over the highway. Further than these moves, however, what is more important for a possible connection is a continuation of the structure of part B into part A, of the theme on the small scale, that can give a unifying identity.

Getting down to the **block level,** the arrangement in the authorities' proposal unsuccessfully, or superficially, attempts to preserve the previously existing one, the understanding of which stops on a diagrammatic level - buildings on the perimeter of the block, a courtyard in the middle, and access ways from the street to the courtyard. The result is that the interpretation of the diagram into form fails to convey the meaning that the previous spatial relations and elements had. Buildings with hard boundaries define the "courtyard", which is designed in levels with grass and small paths in-between leading to the entries of existing or new buildings. The reduction of the space to a path deprives it from any flexibility of use, and converts it into a suburban, middle-class landscape. Furthermore, the access pathways from the street are not connected any more into a secondary pedestrian network that could bring into contact the street and the courtyard and, therefore, they confine the "courtyard" to be a private enclosure.

Going further down the levels, the **building type** proposed seems simply I ike an infill of the space in-between the preserved buildings. It is treated like a left-over part

of the design that adjusts to the other, already defined, higher levels, while, in reality, it is going to be the main life-container. This lack of attention for what is really important, not to the designer, but to the people to be housed, is the explicit contradiction of the movement from the urban scale downwards.

...when the top-down movement reached the bottom, and the chessboard was ready, what a surprise! There was not any thought about the pieces to play with! Then, the players looked around to find ***any*** *thing of a size that could fit in the squares. But as soon as such pieces were finally found, it seemed so meaningless and uninteresting to play chess!*

Notes

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Figures

The figures - drawings, diagrams and photographs - are mostly produced by the author, except from the following:

fig. 1, 2, 11, 13, 65, 66, 67, 76, 77, 78, 83, 90, 93 : photographs by Daniilides Nikos, Athens, Greece.

fig. 3, 5, 105, 106, 107, 108 : Documents from the Public Organization of Urban Design and Housing, Athens, Greece.

fig. 36, 64, 88, 89 : Architectonika Themata, vol. #12, Doumanis, O., Athens, Greece, 1978.

fig. 75, 79, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87,98 : Greek Traditional Architecture, Melissa Publications, Athens, 1982.

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