

The Discovery of the Everyday: Team 10's Re-Visioning of C.I.A.M.'s Modern Project

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"...there are today a few who are across the brink of another sensibility—a sensibility about cities, a sensibility about human patterns and collective built forms.

Looking back to the fifties it was then that brink was crossed, it was then that architectural theory convulsed, then that the social sciences suddenly seemed important. A change of sensibility is what I now think Team 10 was all about."

— Peter Smithson, 1974¹

This paper investigates how in the 1950s sociological and anthropological approaches play a crucial role in re-defining the modern project in architecture. It demonstrates how Team 10 re-conceptualizes one of the key instances of the modern movement in architecture, C.I.A.M. (*Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*), by introducing a particular perspective on the built environment. Team 10 is an association of 'C.I.A.M. dissidents' that was active within C.I.A.M. since the late 1940s. It was centred around architects such as Aldo Van Eyck and Jaap Bakema from the Netherlands, Alison and Peter Smithson from the United Kingdom, Giancarlo de Carlo and Nathan Ernesto Rogers from Italy and the partners Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods from France. This paper argues that Team 10 evokes an epistemological shift within C.I.A.M. This shift alters the way that architectural knowledge is acquired, elaborated and applied.

FC.I.A.M. IX: ENFRAMING THE EVERYDAY

The actual infill of Team 10's epistemological shift comes to the fore in two presentations for C.I.A.M. IX meeting (Aix-en-Provence, 1953): the *Urban Re-identification Grid* of Alison and Peter Smithson (fig.1) and the

Habitat du plus grand nombre Grid by the GAMMA group of Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods (fig.2).² The two Grids evoked a lot of upheaval amongst the participants to C.I.A.M. IX. Both contributions held on to the presentation principle of the C.I.A.M. Grid that was elaborated at previous meetings, while radically altering its infill. The *Habitat du plus grand nombre Grid* is a matrix that starts off with photographs of the everyday conditions in North African *bidonvilles* or shantytowns and descriptions of the demographic forces that gave rise to them. The dwelling conditions within the *bidonvilles* are compared to photographic investigations of the indigenous dwelling conditions in villages and towns. Further on in the Grid there are panels with new housing projects for settlements in Morocco and a set of three new slab blocks designed by Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods and Victor Bodiansky for the *Carrières Centrales* settlement in Casablanca (Morocco). In a similar way the *Urban Re-identification Grid* of Alison and Peter Smithson maintains the form of the C.I.A.M. *Grille*, while simultaneously making two important adjustments to it: a change of categories and the introduction of everyday reality. In the left part of the Grid new categories as 'House', 'Street', 'Relationship' are heading images of everyday scenes of playing children in the worker and immigrant London neighborhood of Bethnal Green by photographer Nigel Henderson. For the material in the right part of the *Grid* the Smithsons rely mainly on their submission for the *Golden Lane housing Competition* in the previous year. This project for the Centre of Coventry consisted of a network of 10-story housing blocks, which consider the specific topography of the bombed competition site as structuring context.

These two grids presented at C.I.A.M. IX in Aix-en-Provence (1953) were informed by the methodologies and perspectives of contemporary anthropological and

sociological research. The viewpoint of Nigel Henderson's photographs in the Smithson Grid were highly informed by the anthropological approach of his wife; Judith Henderson. She was the anthropologist in charge of the sociologist J.L. Peterson's research project *Discover Your Neighbour*.³ In contrast to the statistical *Mass Observation* project begun in 1937, this research used case studies to explore the sociological effects of historical influences on the working class.⁴ Judith Henderson observed and recorded the lives of neighbouring families. This ordinary and participatory perspective was of decisive influence for the work of Nigel Henderson. In his photographs, streets figure as sites of everyday practices; as places of meeting, communication, anonymity and equality. It was especially this aspect that fascinated the Smithsons a largely formed their approach of the built environment.⁵

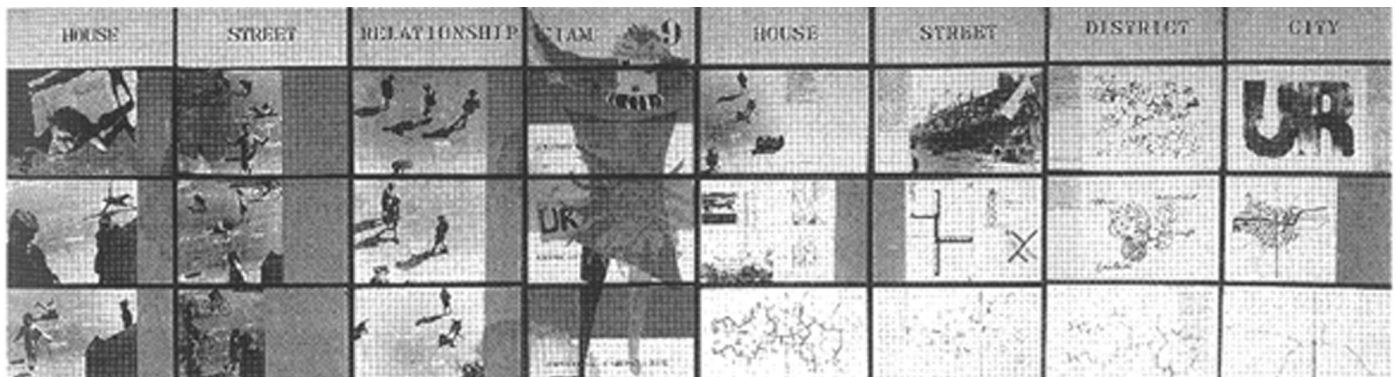
Likewise, the GAMMA Grid of Candilis and Woods was highly informed by the anthropological research that was going on at the *Services d'Urbanisme* in Casablanca, Morocco. Within these urban services of the French protectorate there was a large program for the investigation of indigenous dwelling patterns in towns and villages. As from 1947 the *Services d'urbanisme* had been setting up a research methodology that focused mainly on rural dwelling conditions. This methodology consisted primarily of an *atelier ambulant*—entailing an engineer, an urbanist, a topographer and two draftsmen—that travelled through rural areas to investigate in a true ethnologist manner dwelling culture.⁶ In texts, charts and drawings detailed knowledge was registered about as well the practices as the forms of dwelling. The understanding of the architectural environment in these specific instances of sociological and anthropological research would colour strongly the understanding of the built environment within Team 10 in general and within the work of Candilis-Josic-Woods in particular.

ARCHITECTURE AS FRAME, SUBSTANCE AND GOAL OF EVERYDAY PRACTICES

The most obvious and essential aspect of this new approach of the built environment, that both grids embody, is the central role and place of the everyday. The street life in a London worker neighbourhood and everyday dwelling conditions in Moroccan shantytowns figure here as valuable fields of study for modern architecture. The approach of the *Urban Re-identification Grid* and the *Habitat du Plus Grand Nombre Grid* reaches however further than the recognition the everyday as a significant realm for architecture. It also encompasses a distinct understanding of the everyday. This can be most clearly demonstrated by looking at the left part of the *Urban Re-identification Grid*. In this left part of the Smithsons' Grid it becomes clear that the everyday categories of "house" and "street" are approached as activities of gathering on the pavement, playing on the street and meeting at the doorstep. In short, the categories of "house" and "street" are approached as social practices. In a similar way the *Habitat du Plus Grand Nombre Grid* illustrates an approach of architecture that is based on a particular understanding of the practice of dwelling. One of the panels mentions:

"Hiding themselves from exterior looks is a traditional obligation in Muslim housing. This obligation is decreasing, but so slowly that, at the present time, the greatest consideration must be taken of it."

The left hand side of the *Urban Re-identification Grid* and the panels of the *Habitat du Plus Grand Nombre Grid* epitomize the essence of the epistemological shift that Team 10 installs within the architecture of the modern movement. As well the Smithsons, as the GAMMA architects suggest an understanding of the architectural environment through a theory of social *praxis*, through a theory of collectively held signifying practices.⁷ As Shadrach Woods claims:





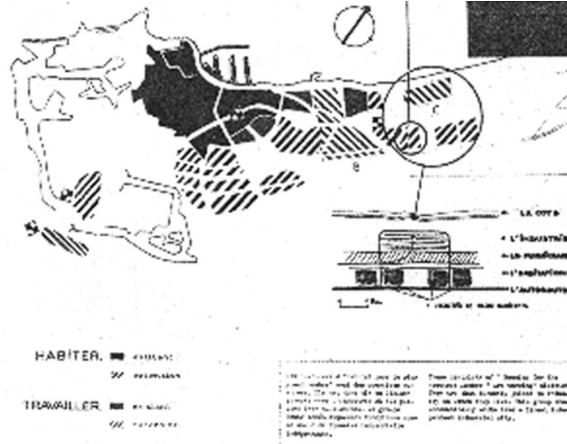
Thème géométrique
de l'habitat dans la ville.

Maîtrise de l'habitat et
de l'habitat de l'habitat
en général et dans
la ville.

Principales zones
et de services urbains
de la ville.

Développement de la ville
et de la ville.

1960 - 1965



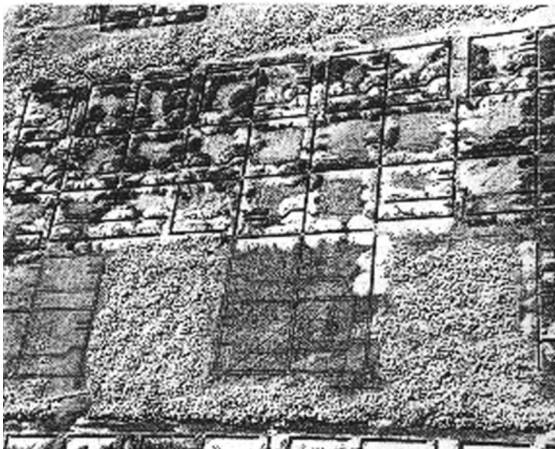
Maîtrise de l'habitat
et de l'habitat de l'habitat
en général et dans
la ville.

1960 - 1965



Maîtrise de l'habitat
et de l'habitat de l'habitat
en général et dans
la ville.

1960 - 1965



Maîtrise de l'habitat
et de l'habitat de l'habitat
en général et dans
la ville.

1960 - 1965



Maîtrise de l'habitat
et de l'habitat de l'habitat
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1960 - 1965

*"the structure of the city lies not in its geometry but in the human activities within it"*⁸

The quintessence of the Smithsons and of the GAMMA presentations at C.I.A.M. IX resides in their suggestion of an approach of the built environment that locates meaning within actual practices.⁹ More precisely, Candilis-Josic-Woods' perspective focuses on social practices

and more particular on their spatial characteristics and thus on spatial practices. Shadrach Woods phrases this shift as follows:

"We are at the point now of realizing that the city is not simply a tool and manifestation of capitalism, but also an environment, an ecological entity. (...) The citizen begins to appropriate to himself the space of the

city, and to realize that he and his activities and aspirations form the built environment."¹⁰

In the *Urban Re-identification Grid* of Alison and Peter Smithson and the *Habitat du plus grand nombre Grid* by Candilis and Woods it becomes apparent that the epistemological switch to everyday reality is understood, by the future Team 10 members, as a re-situating of architectural meaning in the cultural reality of everyday spatial practices of dwelling and building.

THE EVERYDAY AS MEDIATING REALM

The insistence of the *Urban Re-identification Grid* and the *Habitat du plus grand nombre Grid* on the practices of dwelling and building should in the first place be considered as an attempt to think architecture from the relation between objects and subjects; between built space and human beings. It is an effort to counter the one-sided rational approach that was propagated at the early C.I.A.M. meetings and to include an extra set of dimensions within architectural knowledge. The categories of "house", "street", "district" in the *Urban Re-identification Grid* of the Smithsons can be seen as an attempt to overcome a duality that exists within the investigation of the built environment according to Shadrach Woods:

"Architecture, urbanism are governed by two great families of determinants: the ponderables and imponderables, the quantifiable and which defies quantification. (...) architectural thinking seems to oscillate between these two poles, in monotonous flights of fashion and fancy. At the moment the imponderable, the butterfly, seems to be incompatible, not being apt for service in the informatic world, where safety lies in numbers. (...) I would say then that our European values as professed so piously, and which include as well the butterflies as the cash-register, must be accepted in their entirety..."¹¹

The entities of "house", "street", "district", "city" figure in our everyday life as such an entirety. They refer as well to a quantifiable physical form as to imponderables that are related to it. Our experience and practice of everyday reality is informed by these entities. Moreover, Candilis-Josic-Woods turn to these everyday entities because they are believed to possess the ambivalent capacity to overcome a binary thinking that according to the partnership informs architectural knowledge too often. In other words the everyday is assigned a mediating capacity. In the work of Candilis-Josic-Woods everyday life is considered as a mediator between categories as the modern and the traditional,

the particular and the universal. Everyday life allows according to the partnership for ambivalence. It relates in synthetic, dialectical or contradictory ways what conventional knowledge often separates. In a Team 10 report published in 1954, Bakema and Candilis underline the quality of everyday life to:

"...reflect and stimulate the primary contact between man and man, between man and thing — what we call "The greater Reality of the doorstep". We should manifest in architectural terms our desire to overcome the curbing polarities from which we are still suffering:

individual	— collective
physical	— spiritual
internal	— external
part	— whole
permanence	— change"

This ambivalent quality of the everyday is one of the main points of interest in the work of Candilis-Josic-Woods. The partnership regards the everyday as a field of mediation between what is traditional and what is new. In the work of Candilis-Josic-Woods everyday life is valued because of its capacity to encompass simultaneous realities. Not at least the simultaneity of the *quotidian*; the timeless, humble, repetitive natural rhythms of life and the *modern* the always new and constantly changing habits that are shaped by technology and worldliness. The partnership's analysis of everyday life is structured around this duality as the panels of the ATBAT grid already illustrate. The juxtaposition of the image of the shantytown (bidonville) of Casablanca with the combined image of traditional and modern urban environments, suggests that the everyday reality of the bidonville mediates between the *quotidian* and the *modern*. The bidonville is recognised as a mediating figure that relates some of the old dwelling patterns of the towns in the Atlas Mountains to a modern way of living. While most urbanists would have looked solely to the negative effects of the bidonvilles, Candilis and Woods optimistically try to focus on the other side of the equation — reclaiming the qualitative elements of the everyday that have been hidden in the margins, vacancies and nooks of the bidonville.

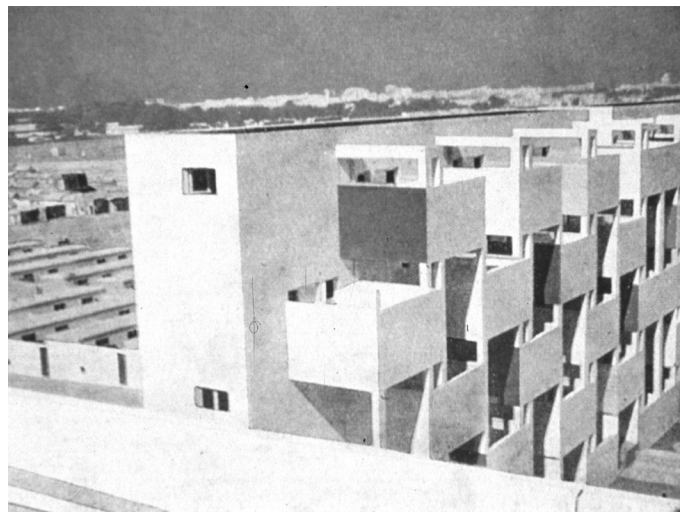
CARRIÈRES CENTRALES, CASABLANCA (MOROCCO) 1953

That this new understanding of the built environment results in a different architectural approach, is illus-

trated by Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods in 1953 in a project for 100 Muslim dwellings in Casablanca. This project, named *Carrières Centrales* after the *bidonville* in which vicinity they were constructed, is based on an elaborate investigation of the spatial practices within the private and public spaces of the *bidonville*. Within the ordinary environments of the *bidonville*, populated by rural people that moved to the city for economic reasons, Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods recognize practices of dwelling and building that mediate between tradition and modernity. It is this mediating capacity that the partners attempt to introduce within their project.

A first characteristic that the partnership focuses on, are the tensions between the general and the particular, and between the collective and the individual that are proper to the disruptive experience of modern dwelling. In the *Carrières Centrales* project Candilis and Woods attempt to reconcile the generalizing character of modern building practices (prefabrication, mass-production) with the need for identification. Candilis and Woods try to obtain this reconciliation by shifting the different patio's half a level in height (*Semiramis*, fig.3), or one bay in plan (*Nid d'abeilles*, fig.4). Hereby the patios gain not only extra height, but they also contribute to the very particular and dynamic expression of the facades of the buildings. By stacking the patio's in an alternating way they are literally suspended in the air. In contradiction to the prevailing monotonous facade of a post-war apartment block, this results in characteristic and diversified facade that consists of solids and voids. The alternation of solids and voids is emphasized by the introduction of a colour scheme on the walls that are perpendicular to the main facade. The result is an extremely dynamic facade that, though it complies with generalizing rationality of mass production, grants a clear character to the single dwelling. Every dwelling becomes recognisable, because it possesses its particular expression and identity.

Moreover the *Carières-Centralles* project exemplifies how an understanding of architecture in terms of spatial practices of dwelling, results in a specific and multi-faceted approach of the relationship between the private and the public domain. It is well-known that the concepts of the public domain and its relation to the private realm as forward on the early C.I.A.M. meetings were outstandingly rudimentary. Le Corbusier's 1929 castigation of the street as "no more than a trench, a deep cleft, a narrow passage"¹² illustrates the modern movements campaign against the traditional figures of the public realm. Remarkably the modern movement, as embodied by C.I.A.M. and Le Corbusier, offers few and rather weak alternatives. Between 1928 and 1947 the



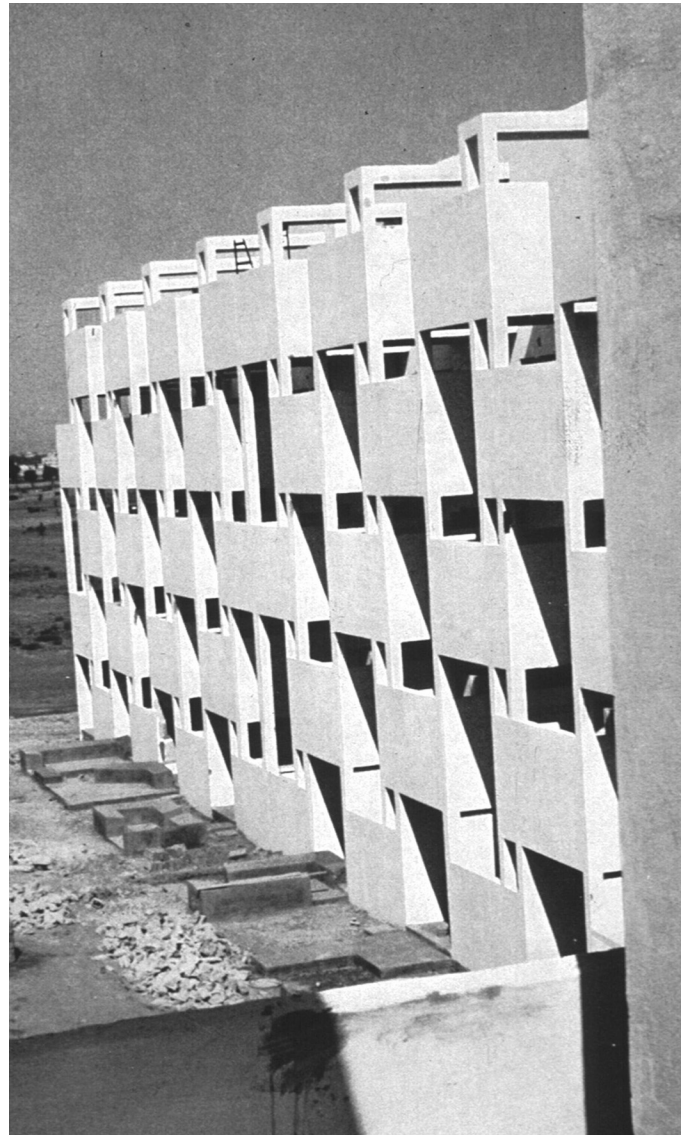
C.I.A.M. meetings pay nearly no attention to the issue of public space. As several scholars have argued, in much of the proposals presented the meeting of private and public realm is reduced to the confrontation of architectural volume and a site. In the 1960s this undeveloped approach of the relation between private and public will become one of the focal points of the critique of the modern movement.

The 1953 project for the *Carières-Centralles* encompasses a correction of C.I.A.M.'s rudimentary approach of the relation between the private and the public realm. This correction is obtained by regarding the relation between the private and the public realm as a function of the everyday spatial practices of dwelling. Within the project for the *Carrières Centralles* this perspective results in a specific attention for the different degrees of privacy and publicity within Muslim dwelling. Though the over-all typology of the different buildings complies with the modernist slab block, at the level of the relation between the private and the public,

the project illustrates an attitude that radically differs for the early C.I.A.M. models. In the *Semiramis* building the patio typology of the dwelling units echoes the stepped relation between public and private of traditional Muslim dwelling environments. A follow-up of entrance door, courtyard and private rooms indicate different degrees of privacy. But it is especially in the relation of this dwelling typology to the public areas that the similarity to the traditional urban environments becomes clear. The access galleries of the *Semiramis* building reverberate the alleys of the vernacular Kasbahs, with their alternating housing and courtyard walls. (fig.5) These galleries can be considered exponents of what Alison and Peter Smithson would call concurrently "streets in the air", most clearly exemplified in their *Golden Lane Housing* project (1952). (fig to be introduced) Just as Alison and Peter Smithson try to incorporate the structural aspects of the traditional English street within a building block, the *Semiramis* type can be understood as the interiorisation of the Kasbah alley. In the English example stair and front garden mediate between the public and the private, consequently in the Moroccan *Semiramis* building the stepped relation between the private and the public domain resonates in the succession of alley, door, patio and dwelling. While in the English example the relation between public and private is rather transparent, in the Moroccan building the transition between the different degrees of privacy and publicity are linked to clear boundaries. The closed character of the walls between alley, patio and dwelling underscore this.

This approach of the 'alleys in the air' in the *Semiramis* building is complemented with a specific elaboration of the 'redents' of the *Nid d'Abeilles* building. The *redents* define another aspect of the public-private dichotomy in the indigenous Moroccan villages. The outer redents define the edges of the public domain, meanwhile the inner ones describe the boundary of the private realm. In between outer and inner redents there is a space of transition. Candilis and Woods give these transitional spaces a clear architectural elaboration. (fig.6) Within the redents they situate simple monolithic concrete elements that can for instance be used as benches or counters. These elements for gathering and selling are modelled on similar elements in the 'souk' of the indigenous villages. They are a minimal definition, a rudimentary sketch, of a commercial street. Here architecture is reduced to its most minimal form. It is merely a base or platform that invites the inhabitants of the project to link their private life to a larger public order.

The particular treatment of alleys and redents in the *Carrières Centrales* project can be understood as a clear expression of Candilis' and Woods' turn to spatial



practices as the focus for architecture. The urban lay-out and the different buildings illustrate that this results in a nuanced and diversified managing of the relation between urban and architectural space, between public and private realms. This does not solely take its offshoot in modern meanings of public and private space, neither in a regressive mimicking of indigenous attitudes. The project is not a clear choice for a complete interiorisation of public functions, as was for instance the case in Le Corbusier's *Unité d'habitation* where Woods and Candilis worked on, nor is there a complete return to the model of the indigenous soukh or alley. The *Carrières Centrales* project consists of a careful weaving of culturally-embedded and modern relations between public and private, of indigenous and modern architectural typologies. This weaving is based on a careful elaboration of the intermediate zones between private and public domains.

That the design of these intermediate zones and elements was one of the great contributions of the ATBAT project, was also recognised by the English architects Alison and Peter Smithson. The Smithson's themselves were, within a European context, highly interested in the transitions between the private and the public realm, between house and street. Within the London working neighbourhood of Bethnal Green the English architect couple was searching for the meaning and importance of such a rudimentary urban elements as door, stair and pavement. Consequently the praising article that Alison and Peter Smithson wrote about the ATBAT-Afrique projects in *Architectural Design* of 1955 shows at its opening page the juxtaposition of "traditional housing from the beyond the Atlas mountains" with "type A dwellings at Casablanca".¹³ The perspective of the Casablanca project that the English architects focus on is not a general overview of the project, but focuses rather on the specific architectural elaboration of the redents of the *Nid d'abeilles* building. At several



subsequent occasions the Smithsons would emphasize that the careful mediation between modern and vernacular understandings of the public and the private that characterised the *Carrières Centrales* project by Candilis-Josic-Woods, was an essential contribution to the development of the modern movement in architecture.

NOTES

- ¹ Peter Smithson, "The Slow Growth of Another Sensibility: Architecture as Townbuilding," in: James Gowan (ed.), *A Continuing Experiment. Learning and Teaching at the Architectural Association* (London: Architectural Press, 1973): 56.
- ² For an introduction to both grids see: Eric Mumford, *The C.I.A.M. Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000): 225-238. For an introduction to the GAMMA Group (*Groupe d'Architectes Modernes Marocains*) see Jean-Louis Cohen, "The Moroccan Group and the theme of Habitat," *Rassegna* (1992): 58-67.
- ³ See Nigel Henderson, "Autobiographical Sketch," in: Nigel Henderson, *Photographs of Bethnal Green* (Nottingham, 1978): 3-5 and Victoria Walsh, *Nigel Henderson: Parallel of Life and Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001).
- ⁴ For an introduction to the English Mass-observation movement see: Dorothy Sheridan, Brian V Street, David Bloome, *Writing ourselves: Mass-Observation and Literacy Practices* (Hampton Press, 2000)
- ⁵ For the relation between the Smithsons and Nigel Henderson see amongst others: Claude Lichtenstein, Thomas Schregenberger (eds.), *As Found. The Discovery of the Ordinary* (Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2001).
- ⁶ See: E. Mauret, "Problèmes de l'équipement rural dans l'aménagement du territoire," *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 60 (1955): 42-45.
- ⁷ Richard Plunz has pointed out this aspect very briefly. He notes that the work of Candilis-Josic-Woods was an attempt: "...to respond more closely to human activity as form generator." See Richard E. Plunz, "Candilis Josic Woods," in: Adolf K. Placzek, Adolf K. (ed.), *Mac Millan Encyclopedia of Architects*, (1982): 372-373.
- ⁸ Shadrach Woods, "Aesthetics and Technology of Preassembly," in: *Progressive Architecture*, (October 1964): 180.
- ⁹ In the 1950s and 1960 the concepts of praxis and practice (pratique) were key terms within the French intellectual discourses. See: Vincent Descombes, *Le même et l'autre: quarante-cinq ans de philosophie française (1933-1978)* (Paris: Minuit, 1979): 28-30. The concept of praxis as it has been appropriated in a double tradition, i.e. the Aristotelian and Marxist traditions. The works of some modern Marxists-existentialists who deal with praxis (i.e., Jean-Paul Sartre, Louis Althusser and Raymond Williams) and of some contemporary philosophers who retrieve the Aristotelian concept of praxis/phronesis (i.e., Hans-Georg Gadamer and Alisdair MacIntyre) illustrate this.
- ¹⁰ Woods, Shadrach, *The Man in the Street. A Polemic on Urbanism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975): 103.
- ¹¹ Woods, Shadrach, "The Incompatible Butterfly" unpublished text of Gropius Lecture (June 1968): 18.
- ¹² Alison Smithson, Peter Smithson, "Collective Housing in Morocco," *Architectural Design* (January 1955): 2.