



**FIGURE 28.3**

(a) Black and White illustration of the public open space of the City of London as it is today; (b) Close-up of the one and two dimensional space structure of the area between Cornhill and Lombard Street in 1677; (c) Axial map of the City of London as it is today.

is simple. The space structure is admittedly highly broken up into 'convex' spaces – but there are always lines which link the convex spaces together, usually several at a time. Sometimes the line 'just about' gets through the spaces formed by the buildings, sometimes more easily. But because people move in lines, and need to understand lines in order to know where they can go, this means that the space structure is easily intelligible from the point of view of movement.

In fact, the pattern is slightly subtler. There is for the most part a 'two-line logic' in that if you pass down a line that you can see from the main grid, the next line will take you either out of the back area again, or to some significant spatial event – say a larger piece of space or a significant building – within the

back area. This means that wherever you go, there is usually a point from which you can see where you have come from and where your next point of aim might be. This is the opposite of labyrinthian. As observation will confirm, the effect of this spatial technique is that the back areas become normally and naturally used for movement as part of the urban space pattern. There is no inhibition or sense of territorial intrusion in these areas.

This two-line logic is not the only constant property of these small-scale complexes. We also find that nearly every convex element, including the narrow ones that enter the back areas, as well as the fatter ones we find within the areas, has building entrances opening onto it. In the city, a fascinating cultural practice has augmented this: even in inclement weather, doors to buildings tend to be left open, often showing to the outside world one-way up stairs or down and another into the ground-level premises.

The effect of these apparent rules about how buildings relate to open space is to create two 'inter-faces'. First, there is a close relation between those within the building, and those outside. Second, there is a natural mingling between those who are using the space outside the buildings, and those who are passing through. There is no sense of lack of privacy or intrusion. Nor is there any pressure to interact, though this is available if required. All we have is a relation of copresence between groups doing different things. Such copresence seems unforced, even relaxed. It is the product of a two-way relation from the convex spatial element: one into the building, the other to the larger scale through the line structure. The larger and smaller scales of space are held together by this spatial technique.

Now let us zoom out to the larger scale. Figure 28.3c is an 'axial map' of the city as a whole, that is, the least set of straight lines that pass through all the open space in Fig. 28.3a. The first thing we see when looking at the larger scale – that is at the longer lines – is that the tendency of lines 'just about' to pass through convex space is still there. It is just possible, in spite of the sinuous curves of the buildings, to see down Lombard Street from one end to the other, and it is just about possible to see from the Bank interchange through the whole of Cornhill into Leadenhall Street as far as Billiter Street. In both cases the line ends by striking the facade of a building at a very open angle, and from this it seems natural to infer continuation of potential movement in that general direction.

These improbably extended 'just about' lines create another effect which one must search a little to find, and perhaps go back to the old map to verify.