Developing the principle of 'Order' Le Corbusier claimed that, if natural chaos is overcome, then free man can create cities of pure geometry. Once again superficial visual analogies were introduced to reinforce the point: a nomads' desert camp; a mediaeval town tight within its walls ('the sort of small town which so delights the town planner' p. 32) within which nomads take root; a massing of rectangular 30-storey buildings, before which circles a flying boat show that 'we are no longer nomads: we must build towns' (p. 32). Corbusier gave no indication that he appreciated that there may be orders other than pure geometry, orders which might have made either the nomad camp or the mediaeval equally well 'ordered' in relation to their social and physical settings.

Lacking a social dimension itself, visual analysis became determinism. Le Corbusier's discussion of the effect the city has 'with regard to fatigue and well-being, cheerfulness or depression, its capacity to enable or fill us with pride, indifference, disgust or revolt' led him in fact to a reiteration of geometric principles: 'Town Planning demands uniformity in detail and a sense of movement in general layout …' (pp. 61–78). Le Corbusier gave a generation or more of designers a mandate to interpret social needs directly into a symbolic geometry, in his case a geometry that was simple and rectangular, without any reference to social reality.

Design in Town and Village

Early post-war design advice in Britain, prepared for local authorities, differed in politic and aesthetic from Corbusier's modernist autocratic design planning, but visual criteria still predominated. The contributors to *Design in Town and Village*,[7] the first official advice on design, emphasised appearance and layout and gave little consideration to user needs. Thomas Sharp discussed the visually enclosed shapes of village streets and greens and offered suggestions for their extension and development, but gave only the briefest and most general reference to their social structure. Similarly, Frederick Gibberd emphasised the 'street picture' in his essay on residential area design and described the various compositional devices through which it might be built up: the relationship of house to paving; of form or character, of facade patterns and building lines; the organisation of spaces at corners, along roads or at right angles to them, and against more open landscapes.

Apart from some brief references to the untidy and confused scene of back gardens where 'the tenant can behave more or less as he likes … provided he is not a nuisance to his neighbours' (p. 64) there were no explicit references to people's activities in housing areas at all. The result of this approach was exemplified in the treatment of front gardens; instead of consideration of privacy, of trespass, of the individuality of house approaches, of the use of space, problems of pictorial composition predominated: so that 'if all the front walls and fences are swept away and the space between the pavement and the house designed as communal front lawn, the composition will be even more complete' (p. 31).

Gordon Cullen and *Townscape*

The contrast between Gordon Cullen's *Townscape* philosophy and the principles of *Design in Town and Village* too is one of aesthetic, of style rather than a fundamental difference of approach.[8] Conversational style and impressionistic sketches replace formal prose and precise drawings; complexity, contrast and, above all, serial vision, replace the rather sterile aesthetic of official design. But the emphasis is still visual: 'we turn to the faculty of sight for it is almost entirely through vision that the environment is apprehended' (p. 10). Urban design is not only for visual delight, it is also seen as an elite concern: 'although many of his problems may be large ones dealing with such matters as the siting of traffic arteries, their realisation depends on mere nuances of design, which perhaps among visual planners only architects perceive in all its meaning' (p. 123).

The essential value of Cullen's approach lies in its uninhibited, personal and expressive response to space. For instance, Cullen mingles aspects of spatial analysis with poetic evocation: 'the quality of Thereness which is lyrical in the sense that it is perpetually out of our reach, it is always There' (p. 34). But as a result it is Cullen's own values, based on visual composition that predominate. Landscapes are categorised in order to bring clarity of visible pattern without regard to function, and at a smaller scale the idea of *thisness* ('a thing being itself', p. 64) is propounded with carefully selected photographs and evocative captions.

This approach fails when Cullen does not consider other people's reactions to these same environments. Cullen places a sensitive observer at the perceptual centre of the townscape, but uses his own gifted interpretations from that position to stand for the rest of society. Cullen's role is that of an interpreter, going about places with the intention of seeking his own meanings and expressing