

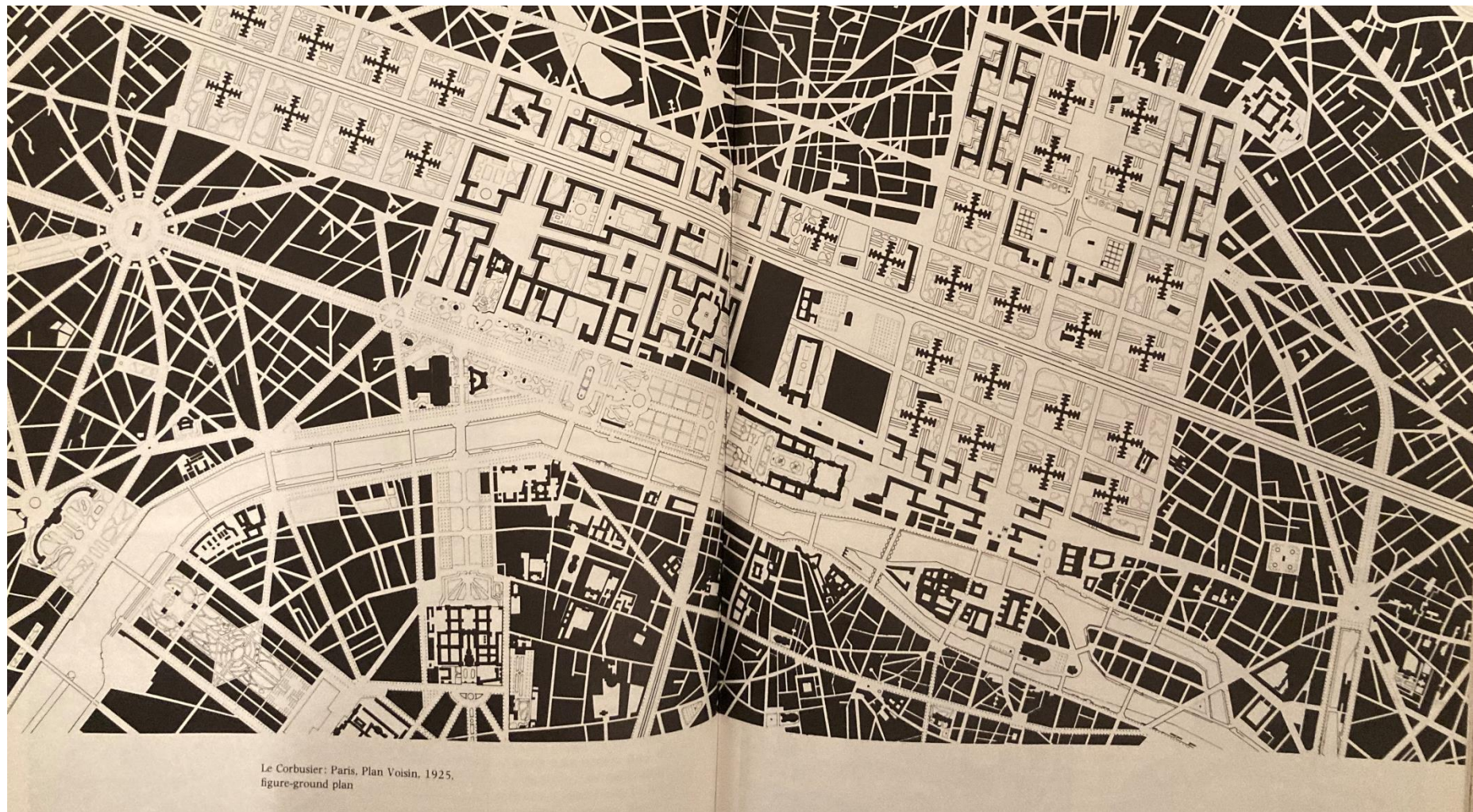
Studio 3A

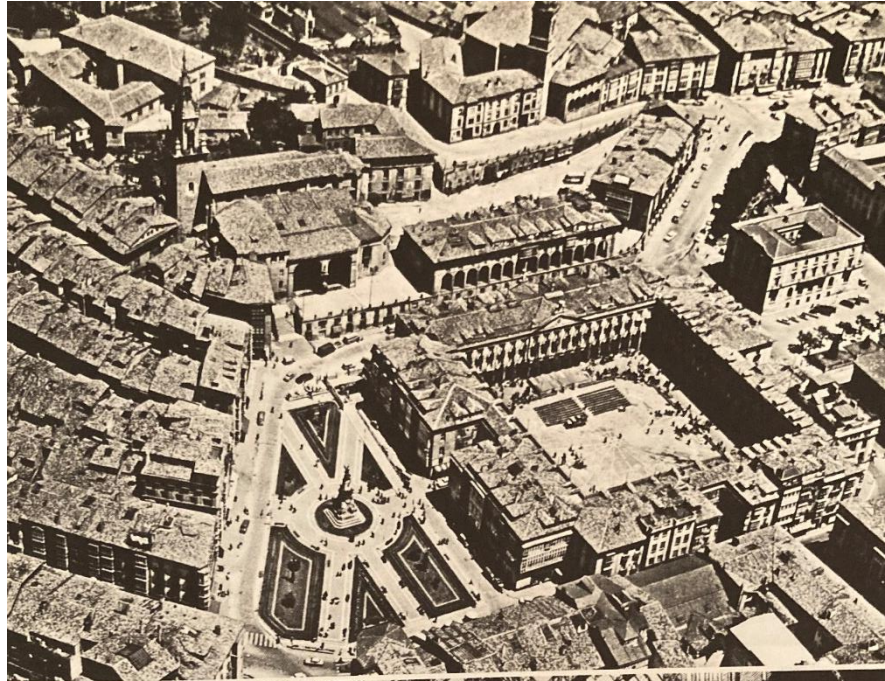
Collage City

COLLAGE CITY

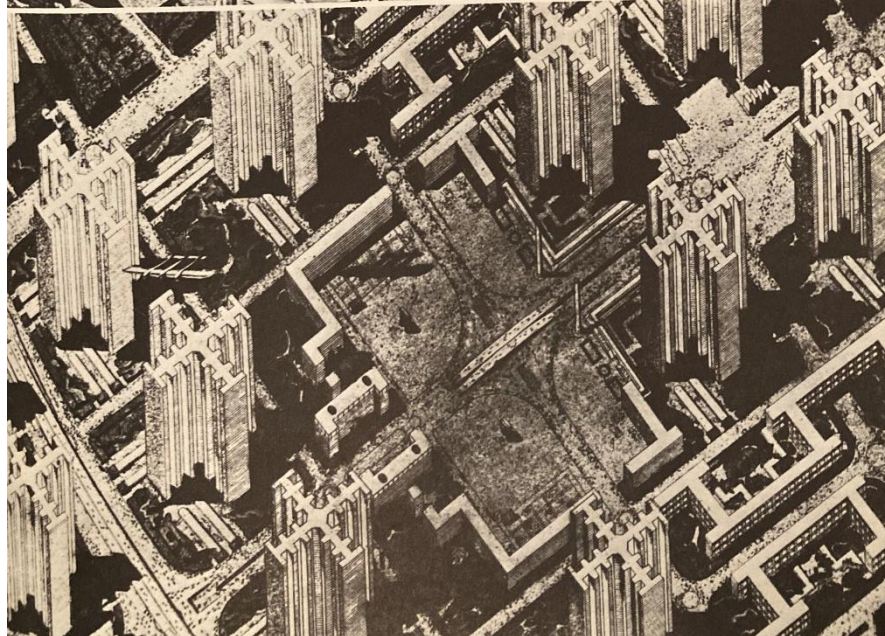


Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter

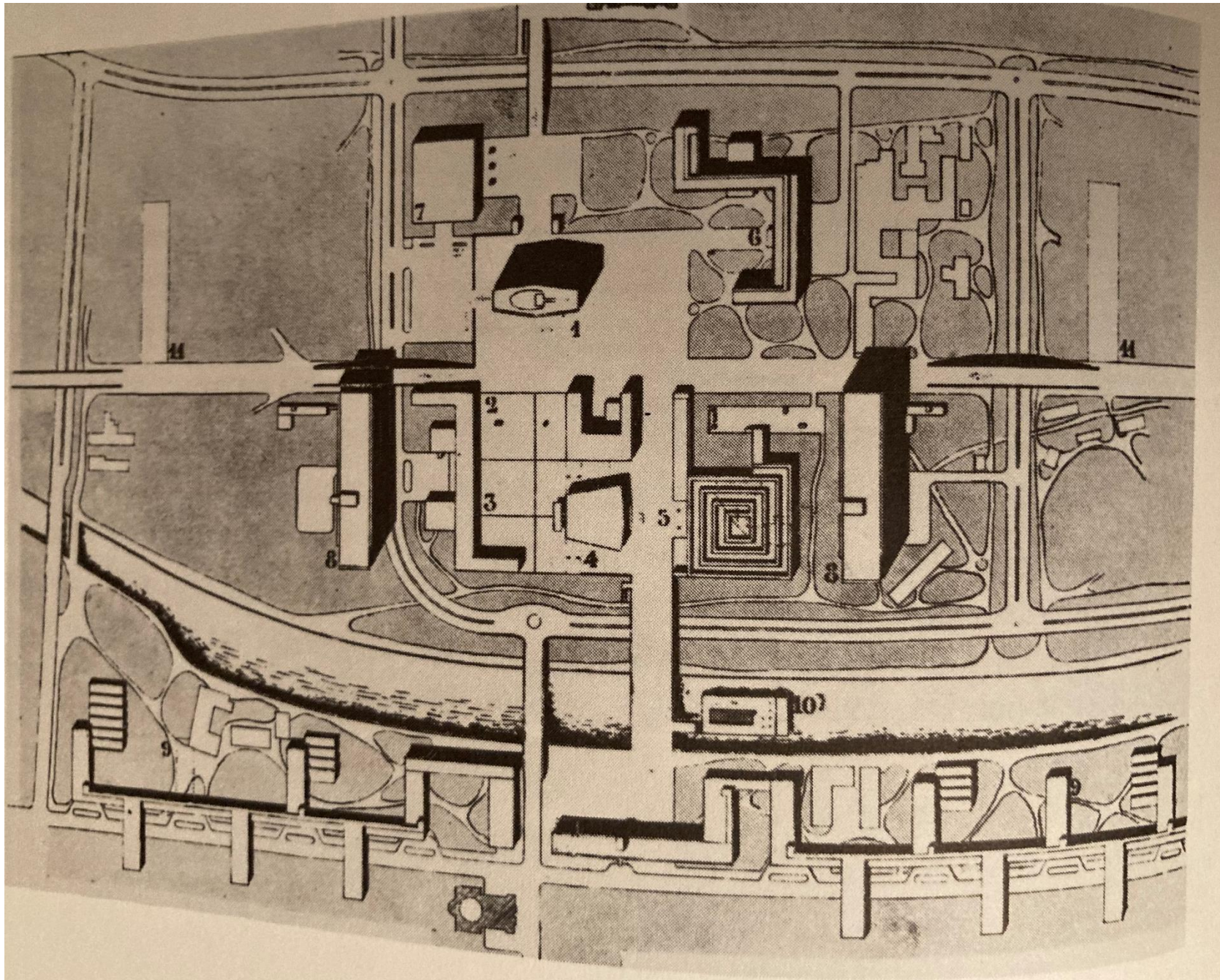




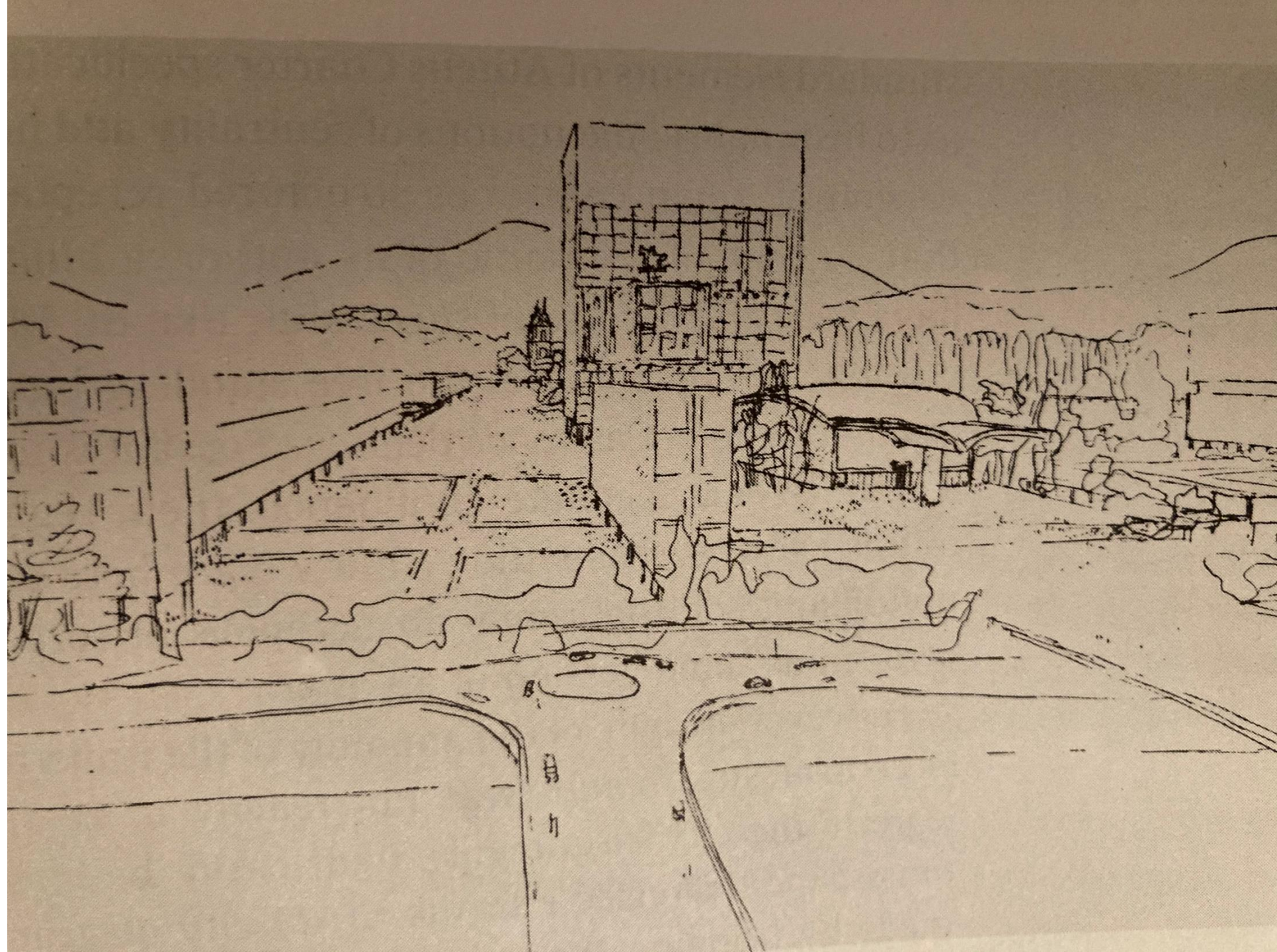
Vittoria – Spain
Plaza Mayor



Plan Voisin 1925
Le Corbusier



Le Corbusier
Plan for Saint
Die



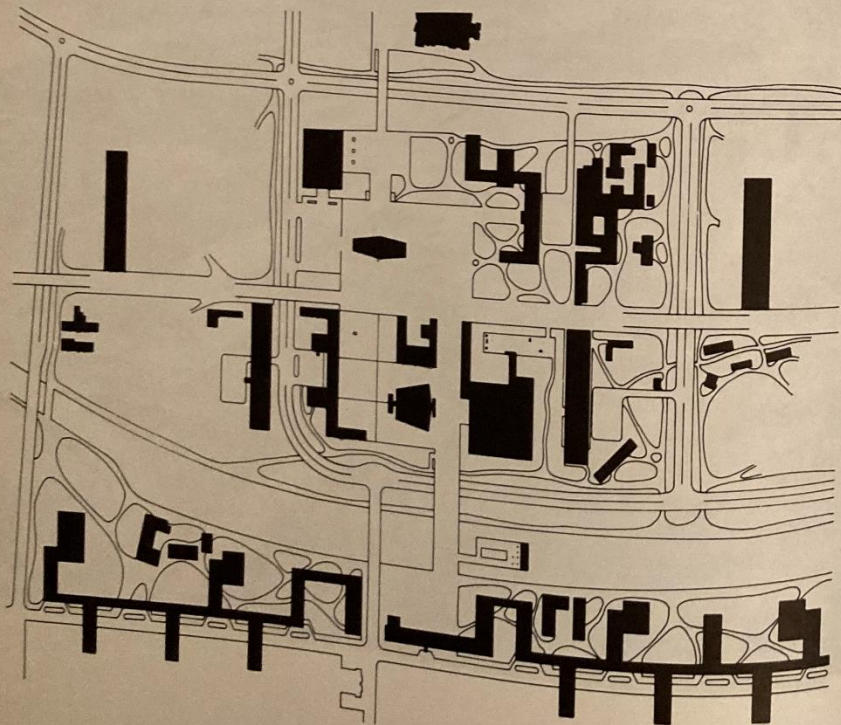


that, whatever its merits as architecture, the Harlow town square provides a closer approximation to the imagined condition than ever St. Dié might have done. Which is neither to endorse Harlow nor condemn St. Dié; but is rather to allow them both, as attempts to simulate the qualities of 'solid' city with the elements of 'void,' to emerge as comparable gestures of interrogation.

Now, as to the relevance of the questions which they propound, this might be best examined by once more directing attention to the typical format of the traditional city which, in every way, is so much the inverse of the city of modern architecture that the two of them together might, sometimes, almost present themselves as the alternative reading of some Gestalt diagram illustrating the fluctuations of the figure-ground phenomenon. Thus, the one is almost all white, the other almost all black; the one an accumulation of solids in largely unmanipulated void, the other an accumulation of voids in largely unmanipulated solid; and, in both cases, the fundamental ground promotes an entirely different category of figure—in the one *object*, in the other *space*.

However not to comment upon this somewhat ironical condition; and simply, in spite of its obvious defects, to notice very briefly the apparent virtues of the traditional city: the solid and continuous matrix or texture giving energy to its reciprocal condition, the specific space; the

Le Corbusier: project for Saint-Dié,
figure-ground plan



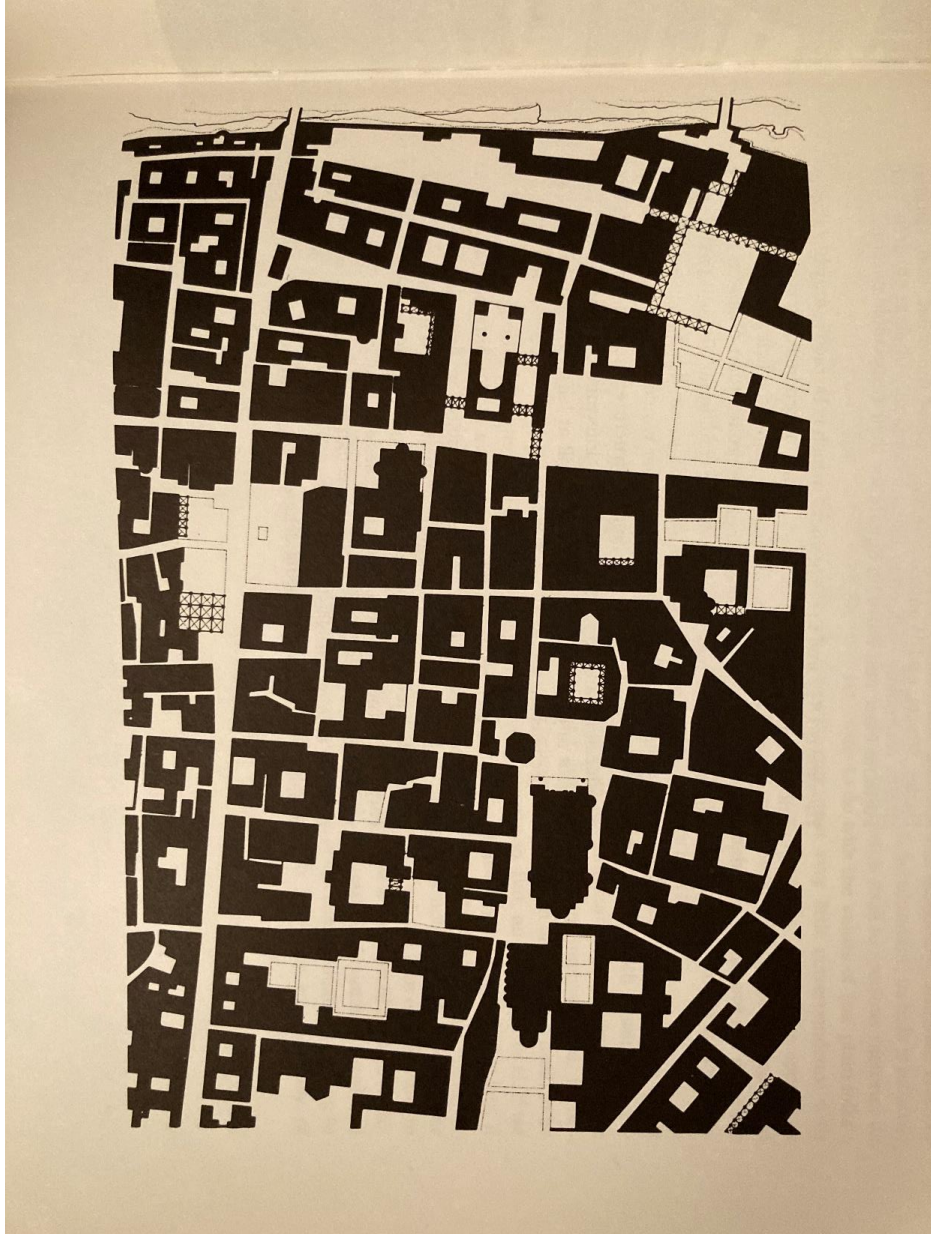
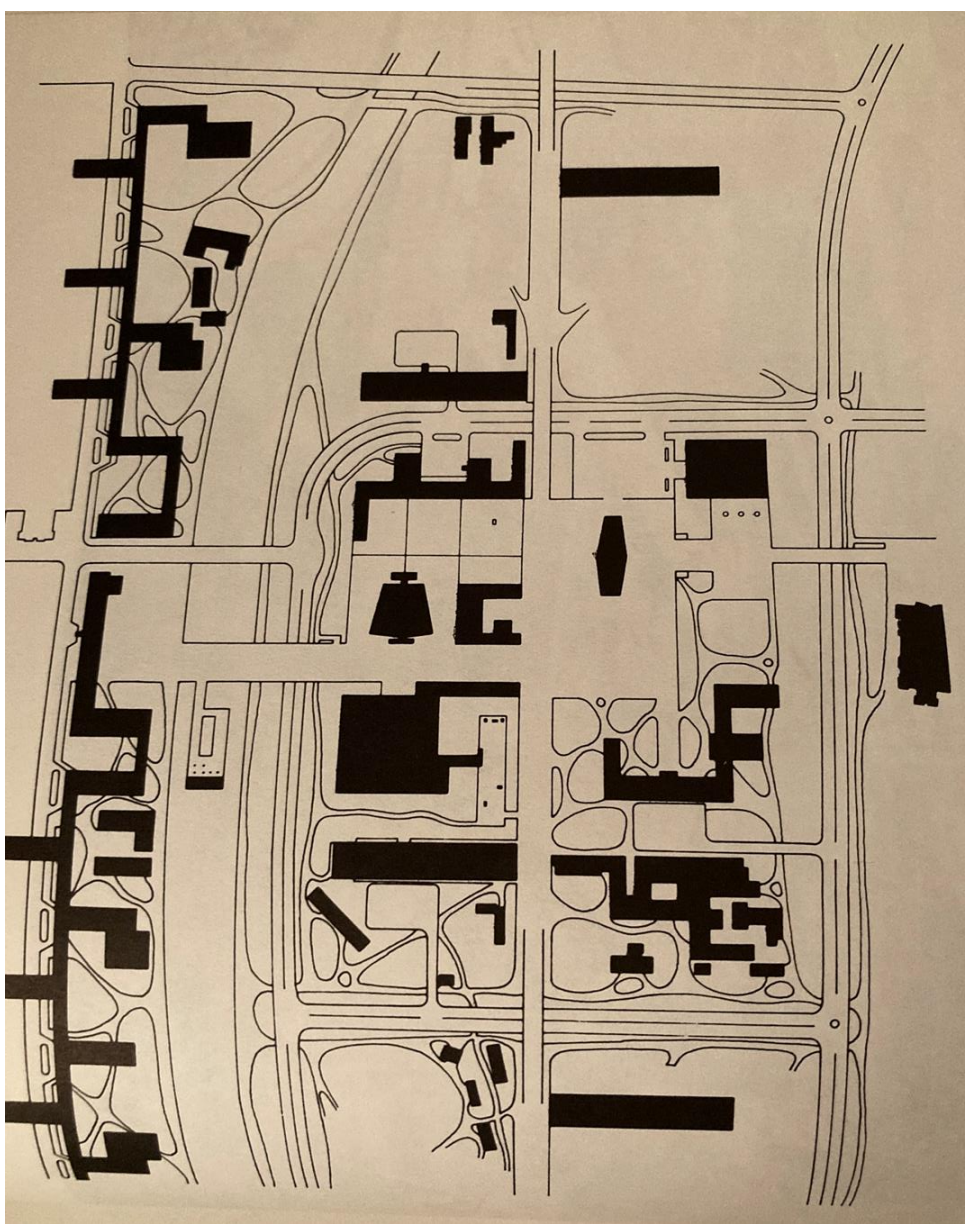
ensuing square and street acting as some kind of public relief valve and providing some condition of legible structure; and, just as important, the very great versatility of the supporting texture or ground. For, as a condition of virtually continuous building of incidental make up and assignment, this is not under any great pressure for self-completion or overt expression of function; and, given the stabilizing effects of public façade, it remains relatively free to act according to local impulse or the requirements of immediate necessity.

Perhaps these are virtues which scarcely require to be proclaimed; but, if they are, everyday, more loudly asserted, the situation so described is still not quite tolerable. If it offers a debate between solid and void, public stability and private unpredictability, public figure and private ground which has not failed to stimulate, and if the object building, the soap bubble of sincere internal expression, when taken as a universal proposition, represents nothing short of a demolition of public life and decorum, if it reduces the public realm, the traditional world of visible civics to an amorphous remainder, one is still largely impelled to say: so what? And it is the logical, defensible presuppositions of modern architecture—light, air, hygiene, aspect, prospect, recreation, movement, openness—which inspire this reply.

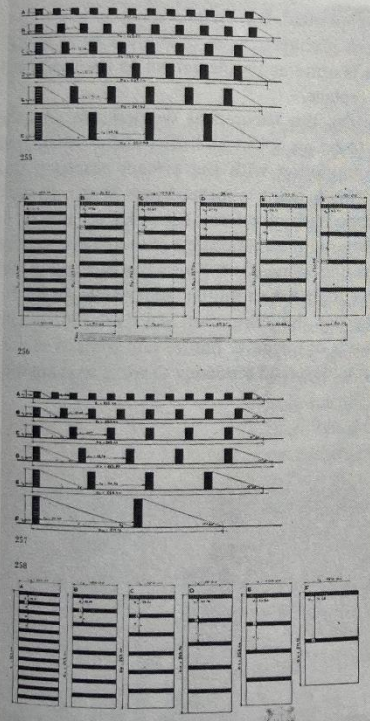
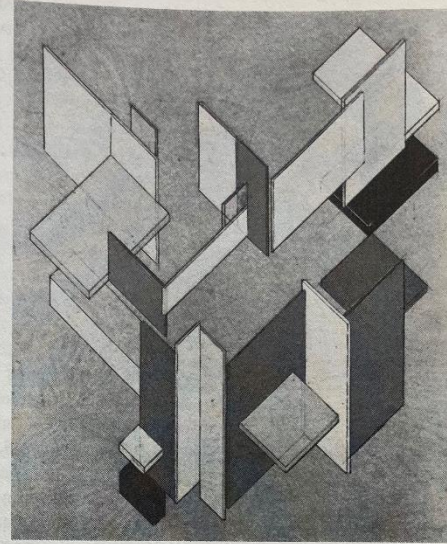
So, if the sparse, anticipatory city of isolated objects and continuous

Parma, figure-ground plan

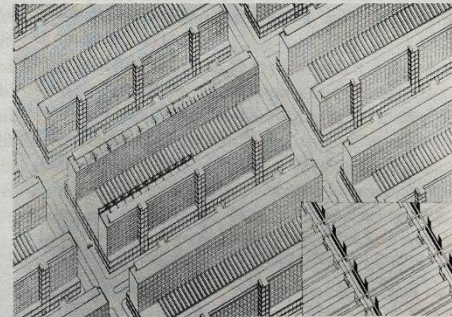




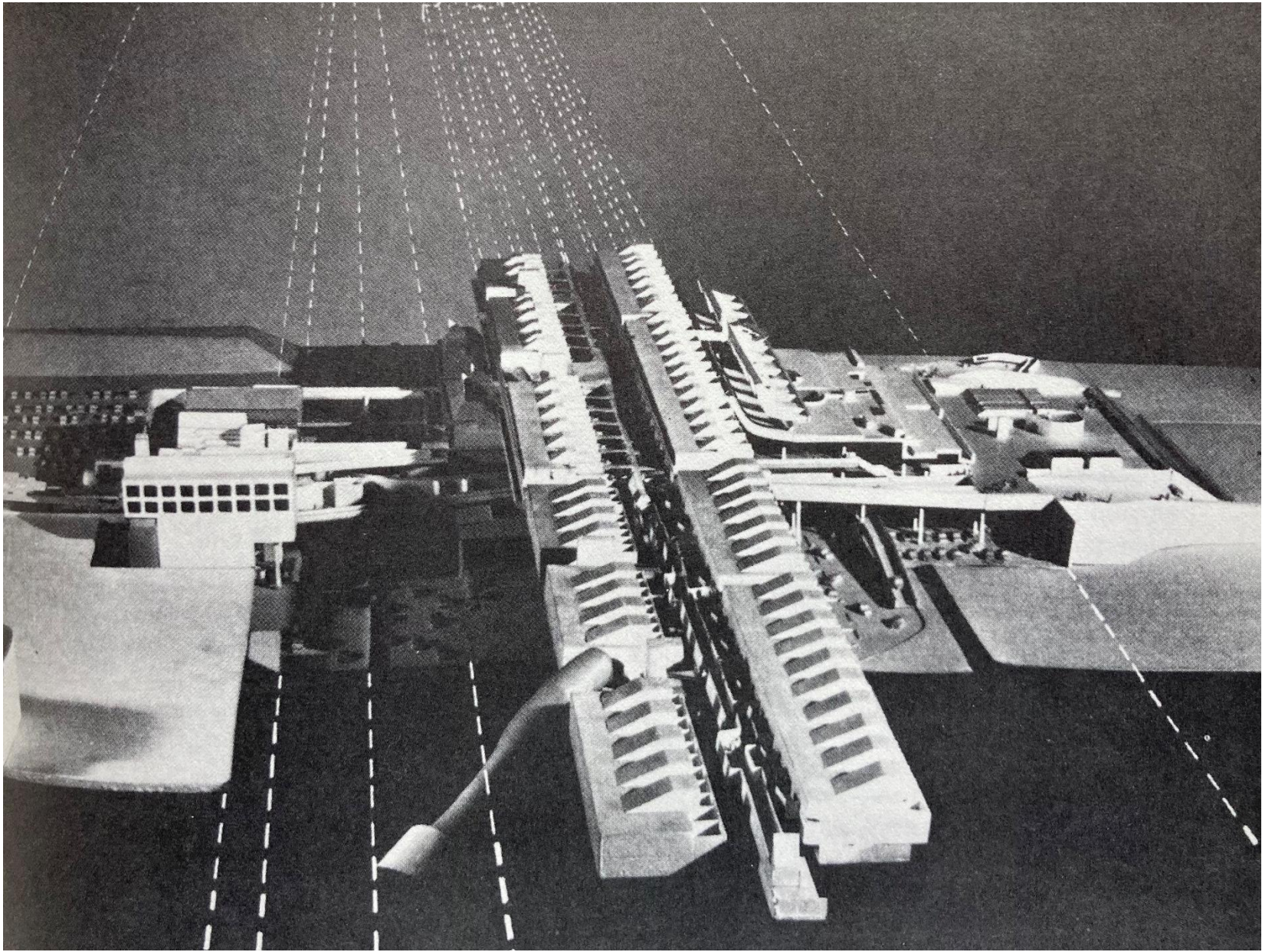
Theo Van Doesburg: Counter-
construction, maison particulière, 1923

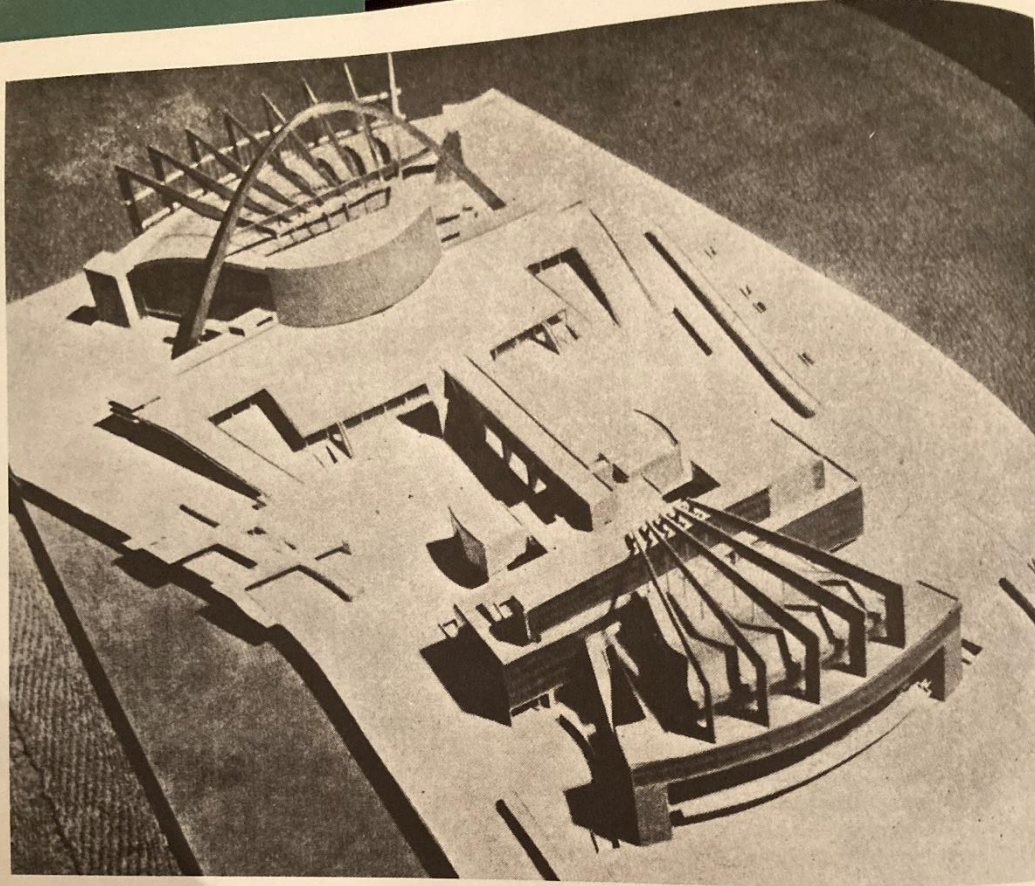


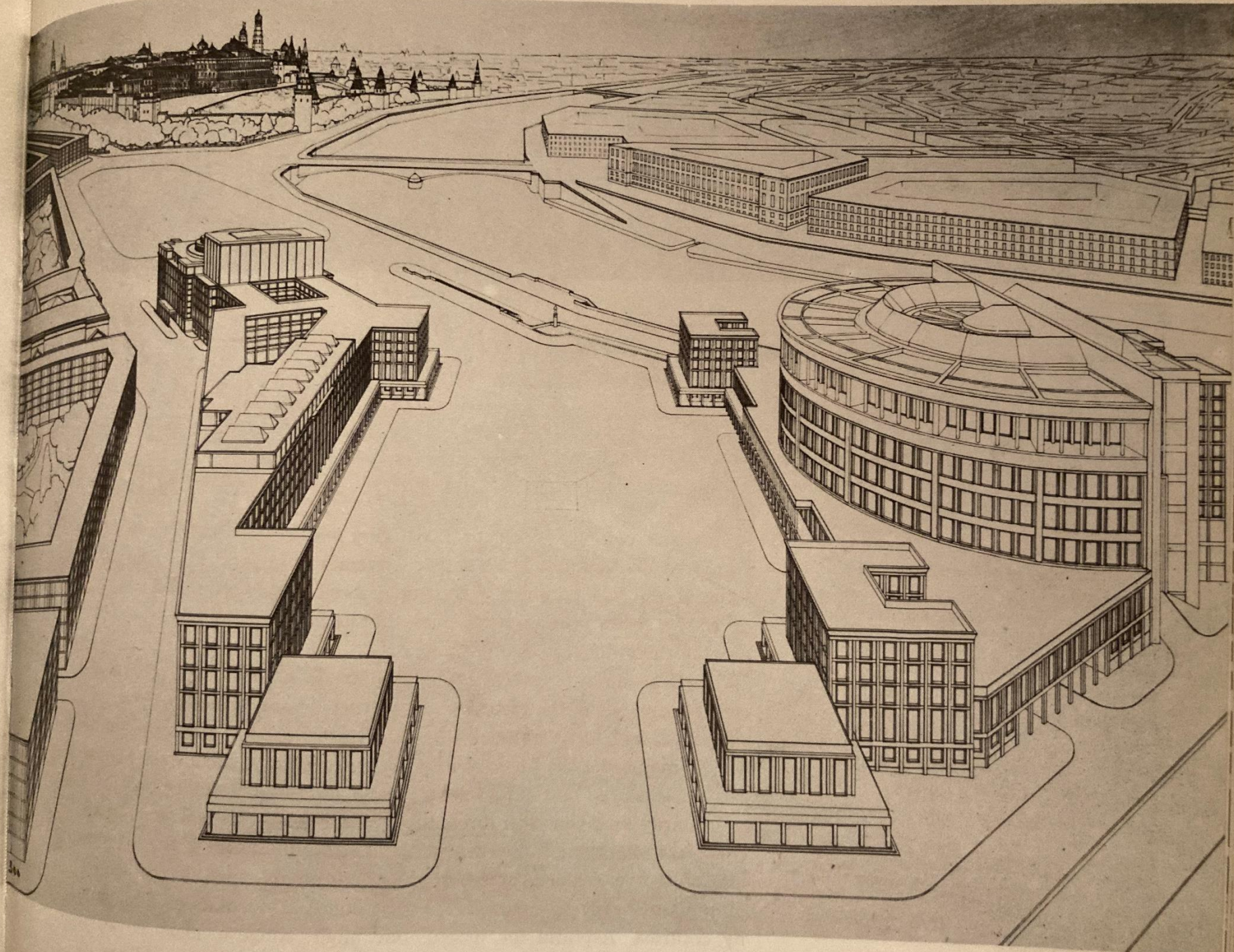
Walter Gropius: diagrams showing the
development of a rectangular site with
parallel rows of apartment blocks of
different heights, 1929

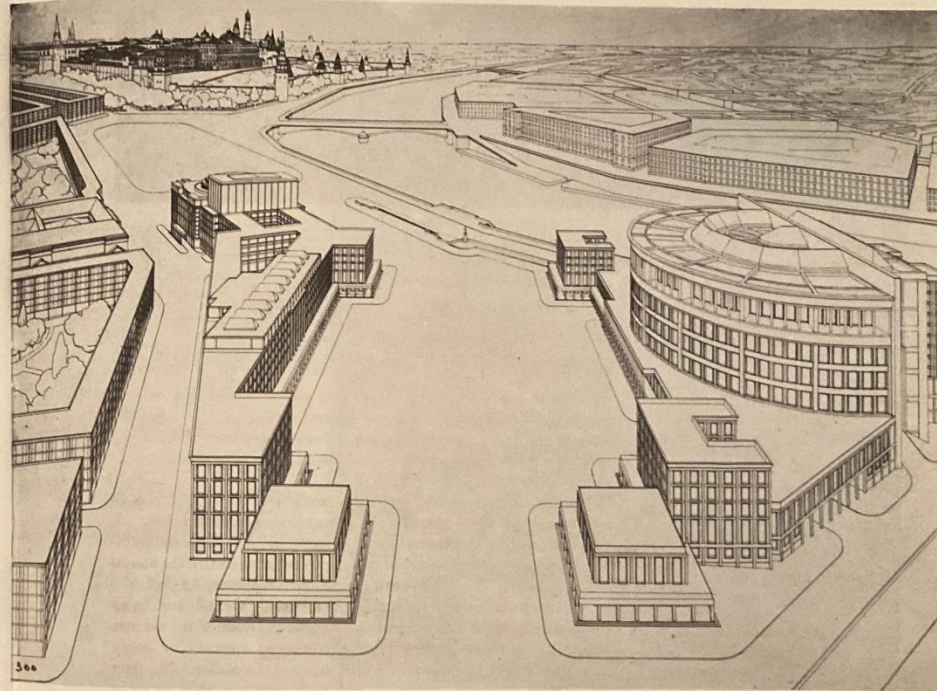
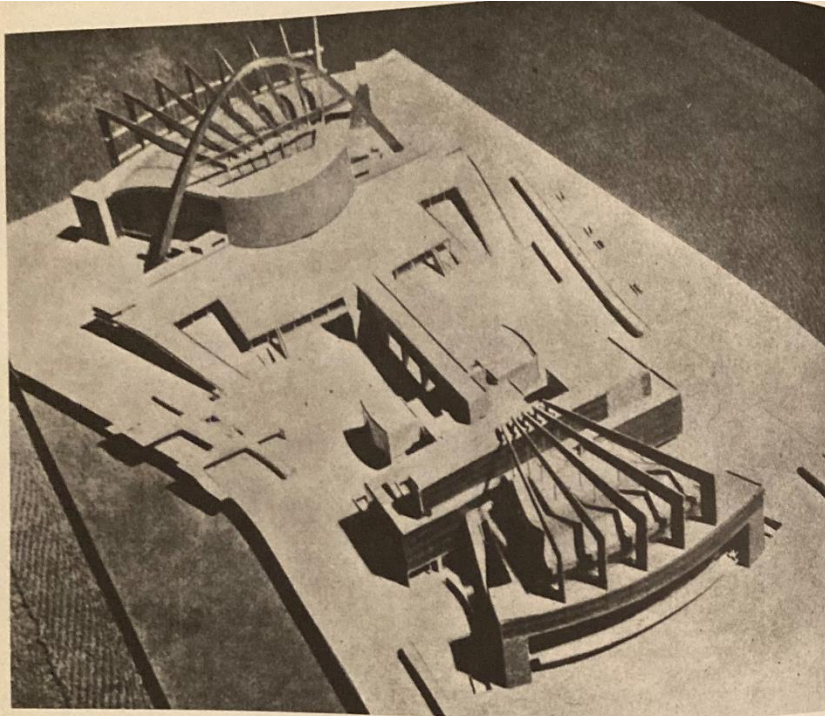


Ludwig Hilberseimer: project for
central Berlin, 1927









left top
Le Corbusier: Moscow, project for the
Palace of the Soviets, 1931

above
Auguste Perret: Moscow, project for
the Palace of the Soviets, 1931

far left below
Le Corbusier, plan

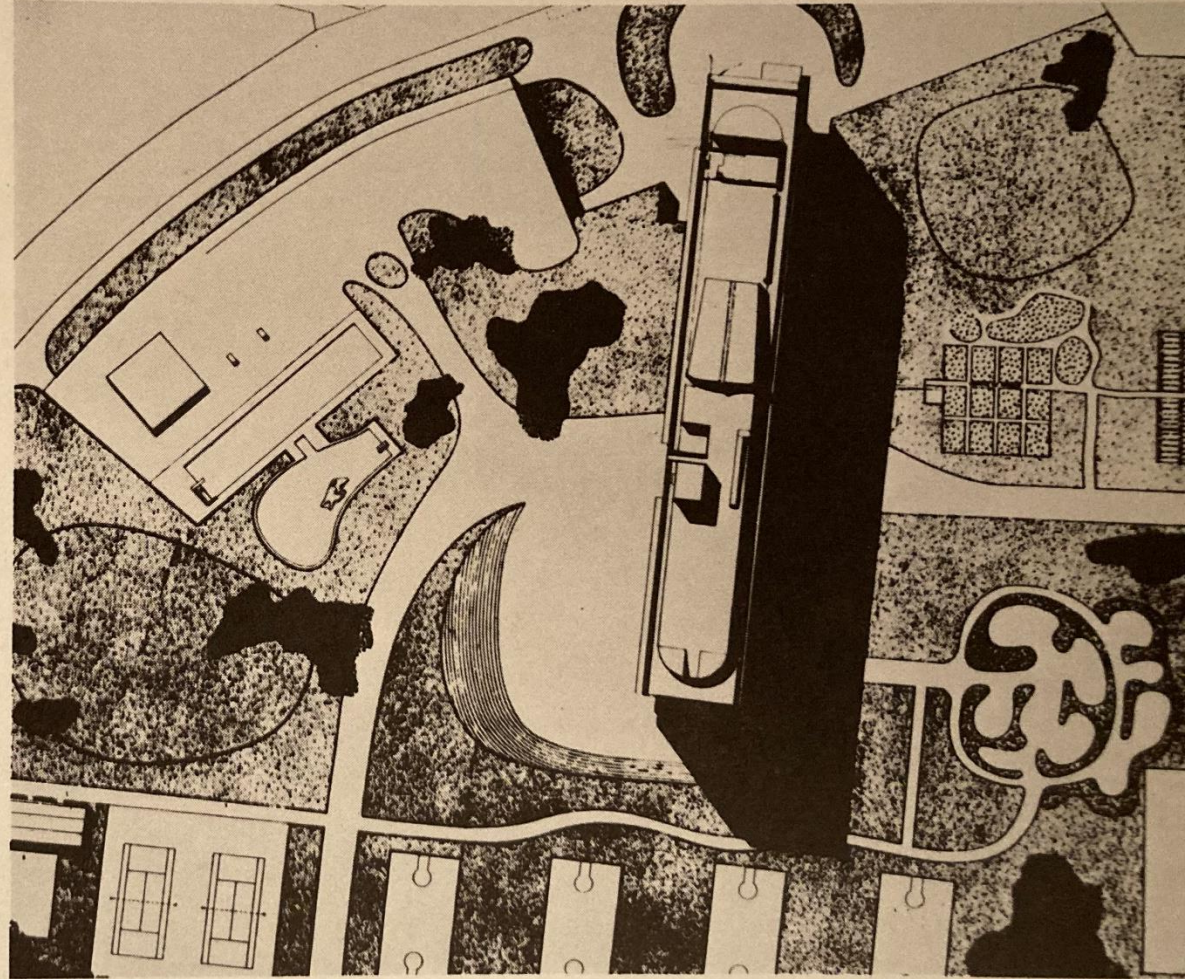
left below
Perret, plan

responsive to an assumed newly liberated cultural milieu. And if in each case, the use of site is iconographically representative of an attitude to tradition, then, in these two evaluations of tradition, it may be entirely fair to read the effects of a twenty year generation gap.

But in one further parallel along these lines there is no such gap that can be interposed. Gunnar Asplund and Le Corbusier were entirely of the same generation; and, if one is here not dealing with comparable programmes or proposals of equivalent size, the dates of Asplund's Royal Chancellery project (1922) and Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin (1925) may still facilitate their joint examination. The Plan Voisin is an outgrowth of Le Corbusier's Ville Contemporaine of 1922. It is the Ville Contemporaine injected into a specific Parisian site; and, however unvisionary it was professed to be—indeed however 'real' it has become—it evidently



Florence, Uffizi, plan



Le Corbusier: Marseilles, Unité
d'Habitation, 1946, site plan

Florence, Uffizi, plan

Le Corbusier: Marseilles, Unité
d'Habitation, 1946, site plan



Unité d'Habitation, view



Uffizi, view



Townscape
Gordon Cullen

