Between Modernity and the Everyday: Team 10

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introduction

I think that the organisers of this conference are right to situate the work of Team 10 between the terms 'modernity' and 'everyday life', and I think that although we will need to investigate these terms it might be worth first noting the importance of this word 'between'. 'Between' immediately begins to problematise these terms, treating them less as packaged contents and more as relational tendencies, attitudes and proclivities, and crucially, as questions. My job then, as I see it, is to start to sketch out what this between might mean in the context of Team 10 and to fill out some of the content for such a vague and amorphous term as 'everyday life'.

I don't think it is necessarily much of a claim to suggest that everyday life, or some such cognate term, is in evidence in some of the crucial moments of the formation of Team 10. After all the polemic thrust of the Smithsons' 1953 Urban Re-identification grille, for instance, necessarily reads as a critique of the abstractions of CIAM's Athens charter, a critique that might well be précised by the judgement that CIAM's four functions (dwelling, work, recreation, and transport) is inadequate for registering the particularity of everyday life. For the Smithsons the lived-ness of urbanism falls through the net of functionalism. As the signatories of Team 10's 1954 Doorn Manifesto suggested: 'Urbanism considered and developed in the terms of the *Charte d'Athènes* tends to produce "towns" in which vital human associations are inadequately expressed. To comprehend these human associations we must consider every community as a particular *total* complex'.[1] 'Vital human associations' and the 'particular total complex of a community'; these are the cognate terms that are in play here for that fluid and contested category 'everyday life'. Team 10 then, as well as many other post-CIAM architectural groupings (Archigram, for instance), might be seen as attempting to fashion a practice ethically responsive to the everydayness of the experience of modernity.

What I want to do in this paper is to follow two lines of inquiry (while keeping in mind this photograph of children playing in the street):

The first (and the one I'll be spending most time on) involves a schematic and partial survey of what I want to call (somewhat inelegantly) *'everyday life as part of a European social imaginary'* in the postwar years. I should point out that for this I don't want to make any particular claims about the influence on Team 10 of any of the materials I'm putting on the table. Rather, in as much as I want to impressionistically sketch this social imaginary, I want to simply place Team 10 within this constellation. So the particular determinisms impacting on Team 10 is not the issue: instead Team 10 becomes one symptom among many. But through this approach we might begin to assess the particularity of Team 10 by the way they continue and conflict with other elements within this constellation. I should also point out that I'll be using some aspects of US culture for this sketch for a variety of reasons, not least for the way that aspects of US culture are at this point territorializing Europe in fairly fulsome ways.

The second line of inquiry is constituted by a question that I see as fundamental to avant-gardism throughout the twentieth century. It is the question of how to be modern when modernity itself is deeply problematic. In other words, how can a practice, an avant-garde practice, maintain its crucial dynamism of being 'ahead', 'in-the-forefront' etc. at precisely the moment when the dynamism of culture in general (and commercial culture in particular) seems to be ahead of the art game and open to all forms of critique? Or to put it somewhat differently again, how can you stave off the constant pull of the past, of nostalgia, as you refute the myth of linear progression, and as you try to assemble a modern practice that is linked to the longue durée (or at least longer durations) of social life? This is a question that many avant-gardes faced, not least of course, surrealism - but here could also be placed any number of postwar formations. And the way that this gets articulated around notions of everyday life is very much to the point of this paper.

Everyday life as a European Social Imaginary

So let me begin with something of a schematic gesture for laying out some of the terms for everyday life in the immediate postwar years - I'm going to sketch out three areas where 'everyday life' and 'modernity' might coalesce in dynamic ways: war, family, and technological commodification.

The War

First we need to insist on the importance of the cataclysmic events of 1933-45 (and beyond). In other words we need to foreground: war, the rise of Fascism/Nazism, death camps, genocide, blanket bombing/blitz bombing, and so on. And we need to insist on what comes after it: rationing, austerity, rebuilding, reconstruction, and so on.

Now the kind of *reshaping of everyday life* and, importantly to *ideas about everyday life*, that this effects or performs should on what level be obvious. If one of the *a priori* assumptions of much sociology (Ethnomethodology, Social Interactionism, etc. - or more generally sociological phenomenology) is that everyday life is the realm of the taken-for-granted, the world of continuity and invisibility, then we can say that international and industrial ary project, a call to revolution.

As well as making the everyday vivid, war offers an implicit critique of modernity. Images of hopscotch of coronation celebrations, of the vagaries of community life in London's East End, need to be juxtaposed with bomb damage, with the image of technology directed to truly terrible destructive ends - (Dresden, Nagasaki, Hiroshima, Belsen, Auschwitz, Dachau, and so on).

As philosophers of the postwar era will insist (I'm thinking of Adorno and later Lyotard) such atrocious acts puncture the dreams of technological progress. Everyday life as figured by an image of children playing in the street signals continuity, locality, of making do with makeshift arrangements and motley resources - a rejoinder against a vision of technological progress that for some equals modernity.

While this image of children playing in the street comes from the early 1950s - the image of children playing in impoverished urban surroundings should remind us of the pre-war Mass-Observation photography of Humphrey Spender - so while war makes this critical rejoinder to a certain technological modernity vivid, it is already there as part of the culture and found in Surrealism (think of the graffiti images of Brassaï) and in the surrealist inspired work of Mass-Observation). I should point out in passing that the ghost of Mass-Observation continues in these photographs in the Urban Reidentification grille: they were taken while Nigel Henderson's wife, Judith Henderson, is working on a post-war Mass-Observation project called 'Discover Your Neighbour'.

I want to claim that such images work in a number of ways:
1. They signal the pre-modern. The one time founder (along with Bataille and Leiris) of the college of sociology (that bastion of dissident surrealism) would, in his *Man, Play and Games* of 1958, offer the following information about hopscotch:
'In antiquity, hopscotch was a labyrinth in which one pushed a stone - i.e. the soul - toward the exit. With Christianity, the design became elongated and simplified, reproducing the layout of a basilica. The problem of moving the stone became to help the soul attain heaven, paradise, halo, or glory, coinciding with the high altar of the church, and schematically represented on the ground by a series of rectangles.'[2]
2. In this then they also signal primitivism
3. They signal a tenacious resilience to impoverished environments. As Henderson puts it - 'a savage humility begotten of limited means' (Henderson in Walsh 2001: 49).
4. They also signal a conservatism with a small c - they do not side with rational technological expansion…

Incidentally I think that this side of twentieth century avant-gardism, what I think could be called radical conservatism, or radical salvage operations, is absolutely crucial and very much under acknowledged in debates about avant-gardism.

Reconstruction in its various European guises is partly framed as a return to order, to the continuities of life, to family, to traditional roles. Reconstruction may be an opportunity to implement progressive policies to some degree - but it is also a call to stability.
So looking at this image of children playing in the street or to consider the playground building of Aldo van Eyck should make visible a double sense of the everyday as a historically embedded category:
On the one hand the difficulty of taking the everyday for granted: this street, these children, this skipping rope, these roller-skates, are here precariously. They might not have been. How could we stop them being in so much jeopardy again? …
Which is coupled with a re-valuation of the everyday. What had been insignificant, devalued, is given a new significance a new value. Children, family life, the locality, habitat, take on a new vividness…

The Family

The family is the second cluster I want to look at. The family becomes an arena for a whole host of ideas and struggle - on the one hand it is used as the bedrock for a return to order, on the other it is used to confirm and contest not just the sense of the 'nuclear family' but also ideas about nation and about the world.
Alison Smithson's first line in the preface to her collection of Team 10 materials, reads: 'Team 10 know one another well enough not to get involved in our different person strengths and weaknesses - i.e. [we] are a 'family' (Team 10 Primer, 1968: 4). Peter Smithson refers to his and Alison Smithson's collegiate relationship with Nigel and Judith Henderson, and with Eduardo and Freda Paolozzi, as a *family* relationship. For the Smithsons, the second half of the 1950s sees one family (Group 6) replaced (not acrimoniously) with another family (Team 10).

But what does family in this sense mean; what were the connotations of family in the postwar period. One immediate thing to point out is that 'family' registered in a number of ways; it was a word that, to use Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology, was (and still is) - multi-accentuated. For Bakhtin this in itself is enough to register the importance of the word. We might also note that 'family' in both its specific sense of parents-children, and in its more perhaps metaphoric sense is etymologically about what is closest to hand: the everyday - the familiar. The family takes us into the intimate spaces of the everyday…
Let me just jot down a few uses of the 'family':
Of course and perhaps most dominantly is the ideological notion of 'family' as hetero-sexual, non-divorcing, child-rearing, mum-not-working, home-cooking unit. And alongside this (and for some in opposition to this) is the notion of family planning. And we should not ignore examples where 'family', 'health', and 'play' have come together within the frame of progressive modern architecture. So the Peckham Health Centre (or the Peckham Experiment, or the Pioneer Health Centre, as it was also called) would make an interesting element of the back-story to this sense of architecture as an aid to a new understanding of family and health.
But, and this is crucial, all this exists alongside a whole host of other notions of family:
1. Referring to the most *local groupings and networks*, for instance, is the way that 'family' gets used in the immensely influential book of 1957 *Family and Kinship in East London*. So here in the streets of the East End (the very same streets, at the very same time, that Henderson is taking his photographs, and when Judith Henderson is carrying out her own anthropology of East End life) 'family' is brothers, sisters, mums, dads, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and so on - in other words family is extended working class family. But it is also all those 'aunts' and 'uncles' with whom there are reciprocal child caring arrangements, social ties and friendships. *Family and Kinship*, like the Urban Re-identification grille, and like parts of the Casablanca grille, and like Jacobs' *The Death and Life of*

Great American Cities, privilege locality, immediate human associations, and spontaneous forms of sociability. This is Willmott and Young:
'On the warm summer evening of the interview, children were playing hop-scotch or 'he' ['it' or 'tag'] in the roadway while their parents, when not watching the television, were at their open windows. Some of the older people were sitting in upright chairs on the pavement, just in front of their doors, or in the passages leading through to the sculleries, chatting with each other and watching the children at play.'[3]

You could find exactly the same sentiments (and the exact same wording to some extent) in Jacobs' book (and for that matter in a host of writing about the city, about children at this time).
This is the family of the street, of informal yet stable forms of care and community, of safety and monitoring, but not policing. It is an image that in the l950s was in danger of fading - a concentration on this aspect of 'family' everyday life, signalled a warning that new forms of habitat and environment (and Willmott and Young, and Jacob's book is intended to do just that) would wipe out something absolutely fundamental to human sociability: a space of care, communication, and community.

2. But 'family' could also signal *national groupings* (the examples for these are exclusively British though I'm sure that examples could easily be found for mainland Europe). George Orwell writing during the war (in 1940) in a long essay called 'The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the British Genius', wanted Britain to seize the opportunity of this conflict to bring about a peculiarly English (he swaps from Britain to England throughout) version of socialism. Part of his argument is that Britain is a family, but that this entails lots of conflict, bickering, mixing and so on. Family is not a sign of absolute similarity but of a unit that can accommodate difference. He can write from the position of a socialist saying that 'England is a family with the wrong members [the rich] in control' (Orwell 1940: 105). The idea of a family as a mark of unity within difference is of course exactly the kind of association that Alison Smithson is suggesting in the preface to the Team 10 Primer, or that the image of the 'street' offers to numerous commentators.
Crucially though this is a notion of 'family' that is metaphoric, but it is metaphoric in a very particular way. After all one aspect of 'family' as a metaphor might well be a sense of biological/genetic sameness, a notion of family that could be (and has been) mobilised for specifically racist arguments. This is more like the idea of 'family resemblance' that Wittgenstein puts forward in his later philosophy.
We might also note in passing that the 1951 Festival of Britain, that paean to a version of new town-ist, garden-city modernisation, commissioned an official festival film about Britain. The film was by Humphrey Jennings, one time founder of the Mass-Observation movement (which has a number of direct links forward to these photographs by Nigel Henderson) and it was called simply 'Family Portrait'.

3. Family though could also signal a more general, *global sense of humanness* as it did for that international photography exhibition *The Family of Man*. *The Family of Man* was the exhibition of the 1950s, curated by Edward Steichen, director of the department of photography at the Museum of Modern Art New York. It toured the world for eight years, was shown in 37 different countries over six continents. It was shown in most European countries. It is perhaps the best example of the cultural and social ambitions of the US at the time. The ideological and economic conditions of it have been subject to much criticism (funded in part by Coca-Cola, and the international program at MOMA) it made its way around the world offering a neo-liberal image of a world of difference united by a common humanity.

The point here is simply to acknowledge how the exhibition promoted global humanity in terms of everyday life. The photographs (which were from 68 countries) presented 'man' as an everyday creature. The photographs were categorised under themes such as children, work, love and so on. The images often by well-known photographers such as Robert Doisneu, Dorothea Lange, and so on, were of ordinary, everyday people engaged in the business of conducting their lives. Even those moments that puncture the everyday (birth, death, war, for instance) are framed in terms of their everydayness (through anonymity, repetition and so on). Here then the everyday has an ideological role, massaging contradiction and conflict and veiling the systematic production of inequality. It is I think crucial to remember that while 'everyday life' might function as a critical and problematising term within certain philosophical and sociological traditions at this time (I'm thinking of Henri Lefebvre and the Frankfurt School primarily) it's more usual function in cultural life is politically and theoretically conservative. *The Family of Man* is, I think, one of the most vivid examples of this: it attempts to construct a common everydayness that while evidencing local differences and the specificity of particular environments and habitats, erases how these differences are dominated by economic and ideological interests.

It is pertinent that at the very moment that this exhibition is declaring a common kinship across the globe is also a moment of intensifying race hatred in the US, and a moment of intensive decolonisation struggles in European, particularly French North African Colonies [Morocco achieved independence in 1956, and the Algerian war for liberation was from 1954-62, ending of course in independence].

Commodities - Technologies

The third element of everydayness is one that is much more commonly addressed in discussions of everyday life and modernity, namely the way everyday life is transformed by domestic and social technologies (everything from washing machines to transportation systems) and that these technologies are the shape that the commodity has taken. Lefebvre gives one of the best descriptions of this when he writes that since the Second World War the commodity has successfully colonised the everyday, with capitalism penetrating the most intimate of spaces.

So we are talking about on the one hand the speed by which domestic technologies became widely available at this time and what this meant. And we are also talking about a very particular American 'styling' of commodities (including cultural commodities -namely films, music, and so on). And across Europe this was particularly 'felt' (in the form of neo-colonialism for some, or in the form of a 'brave new world' for others) especially for countries that were beneficiaries of Marshal Aid (France, Germany, Italy, etc.).
This process has been well documented in a number of books - including Kristin Ross' *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, and by Richard Kuisel in *Seducing the French* - so I will only briefly mention it here. All the best histories of modernity, though, have posed the question of technological change not simply in terms of things like 'time space compression' (the shrinking of the world due to transport and communication technologies) but also in terms of what it has done to the experiential potential of humans, the human sensorium. And I think the idea that technology has allowed for some sort of 'species' alteration has been something that both theorists and avant-garde cultural practitioners have been particularly interested in (for instance Banham and Archigram in the 1960s). For the moment I want to point to some of the ways this notion of commodification, technological expansiveness, and Americanization were taken up and inflected. Mainly I think that the words 'ambivalence and ambiguity' have to be central to such an account.
Take for instance the way that US mass-culture is picked up by the Independent Group - particularly in the work of Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi - this sense of potential (primarily I think the sensual expansion that might result from a streamlined, plug-in world) is met consistently with some sort of ironic detachment - a sort of critical distance that would stop it from being seen as merely a celebration of American capitalism.

Summary

So here we have a number of features, a constellation in a way, that figure the everyday in particular ways. When I was writing about the way that everyday life gets used in a range of cultural theory, I noticed that it only really comes into specific focus as a problematic term in the shadow of war (the threat to everyday life) and it receives its most systematic elaboration in the years immediately following the war. Now it strikes me that some sort of everydayness emerges at this point in other fields besides cultural theory. Clearly film is an easy example - from neo realism to the nouvelle vague - everydayness becomes a problematic and productive term. It is also evident in the emergence of Team 10
Now the point of this impressionistic sketch is, I repeat, not to draw maps of influence, but simply to sketch out a cultural context for measuring the particularity of Team 10. We might usefully ask, for instance, how the juxtaposition of Alison and Peter Smithson's well-known collage for the Golden Lane project alongside a photograph of a long house in Borneo, differs from similar kinds of juxtapositioning in *The Family of Man*.
Is this open to the same kind of critique as the *Family of Man* (naïve humanism, masking domination, etc.) or is Team 10's mode of continually addressing these connections/dis-

connections as problems enough to inoculate them from such readings?
Similarly are the forms of street, district and city associations that are being encouraged in much of Team 10s writing (Shadrach Woods, and so on) experienced as a harking back, a sort of terrified scream at the moment when forms of community are being wiped out? Is this nostalgia dressed up as forward thinking, and even if the look of the imagined solution doesn't address itself to conservative forces, is the analysis of the problem one shared by other constituents of more politically rightist groups? I don't know the answers to this - and I would think it is far from being a matter of condemning and condoning supposed ideological misdemeanours.
The ideas of Family being suggested explicitly in some of the writing around street life in 1950s (Willmott and Young, and Jacobs) and more implicitly in the practices of Team 10 deserve a fresh airing. The idea of the Family has re-hardened into such a fortress unit that any rupturing of this is at present truly radical. The 'associational' fight for the street was I think lost for a whole host of reasons. I think that looking back on aspects of Team 10, the idea of wanting to maintain the 'texture' of everydayness that can be found in some urban working class areas, or in Mediterranean hillside conurbations, or in a village in Rumania or Scotland becomes more and more radical, even if it could be called, on one level at least, conservative. There is an ethics here that underpins (and perhaps undercuts) the aesthetic decisions. The force is first and foremost social, cultural…
[We should also remember that for Marx it is Capitalism that is avant-gardist…]

Team 10 and Avant-Gardist Problematics

Now finally and very briefly I want to look at what I'm calling an avant-garde problematic: namely how to be modern at the very moment when modernity seems to be stymieing you at every turn. I mentioned briefly that 'nostalgia' is a particularly tricky position to take as an avant-gardist, and for the most part I think that the idea of the avant-garde has been (popularly) associated with a forward march rather than a backward one. After all, written into the very term is the idea of the advanced and advancing guard.
Now one influential thesis about avant-gardism proposed in the 1970s by Peter Bürger is that in its historical phase the artists of the avant-garde sought to re-unite the separation of art and life, or more precisely to reintegrate art into life. The project foundered partly because of structural contradictions that couldn't be surmounted by artists alone.
Of course Architecture is in many ways the integration of life and art. But it is not necessarily the integration of 'everyday life' and art. The everyday is a way of signalling a problem that architecture faces, and perhaps more importantly that urban planning faces.
So in conclusion let me first make a rough stab at what everyday life might signal for an architectural group like Team 10 in the 1950s. I should note in this instance 'everyday life' is not always a positive (generative) term - it partly signifies by directing itself against something else. So to say what the everyday is not is often as useful as trying to work out what precisely it is:

1. It should act like a flag that you wave to remind people of the messy actuality of their environment, their desires, and their ordinary practices.
2. It should warn anyone over-enchanted with the progressiveness of modernisation that there is another side to modernity, and another history that modernity can't ignore.
3. It calls into the account the most intimate and the most social, the most immediate and the most general, the very latest and the age-old. It doesn't quite know where to look but it knows how important 'environment, habitat, and practice' are.

The everyday is a problem and a challenge for the post war architectural avant-garde. The problematic nature of is, to my mind, most vivid in the idea of the 'street':
'In the suburbs and slums the vital relationship between house and street survives, children run about, people stop and talk, vehicles are parked and tinkered with: in the back gardens are pigeons and pets and the shops are round the corner: you know the milkman, <u>you</u> are outside <u>your</u> house in <u>your</u> street.' (A + P S, Grille 1953 section House + x = street)'

An interest in forms of association is at the heart of Team 10 and they speak vividly of the bonds that are operative in the everyday. But how to stop this being simply nostalgia - how to make this modern? This is Peter Smithson looking back on this moment of Team 10's emergence in his interview with Beatrice Colomina:
'The street in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century was where the children were, and where people talked and all that, despite the climate being against it. The street was the arena of life. To perceive that the invention of another sort of house was the invention of another kind of street, of another arena, or maybe not an arena, wasn't a question of saying the street must be revived. It is a matter of thinking what the street did, and what is the equivalent of it if it is no longer necessary, if the street is dead.'[4]

To be modern, to engage with modernity, meant for Smithson and I would assume for others in Team 10, a sort of invention, but also a re-invention. Avant-gardism (if that is what it was) was tied to a revival, but a revival not of pre-given aesthetic and architectonic forms but of essential social and cultural forms.

[1] Bakema, van Eyck, van Ginkel, Hovens-Greve, Smithson, and Voelker, 'Doorn Manifesto' (1954) in Joan Ockman, Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A Documentary Anthology, New York, Rizzoli, p183.
[2] Roger Caillois, Man, Play and Games, translated by Meyer Barash, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2001, p.82. Originally published in France in 1958.
[3] Michael Young and Peter Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990, p38. Originally published by Routledge & Kegan Paul in 1957.
[4] Beatriz Colomina, 'Friends of the Future: A Conversation with Peter Smithson', October 94, p9