

The idea of economics too, is oversimple. Even such obvious issues as the cost of maintenance and depreciation have only recently been made the subject of architectural consideration.¹³³ As for the cost of social overheads--the milkman's rounds; the laundries and TB sanatoria which have to cope with the effects of smoke from open fireplaces--even the economists are only just beginning to consider these.¹³⁴ Yet the cost of the form is found in all these things. The true cost of a form is much more complicated than the word 'economy' at first suggests.

Early and Unpublished Writings of
CHRISTOPHER ALEXANDER
Thinking, Building, Writing

'Function' too, as it is usually understood, expresses none of the subtlety it should. The so-called functional efficiency of form does not stand alone, but depends entirely on the context within which the form is found. (The lack of a bath is a functional failure in the United States, but not yet in peasant Mexico). Yet the variety of minor variations caused by shifts in context are missed in the crudity of the concept 'function'.

In this fashion the selfconscious individual's understanding is constantly misapprehended. The idea that in order to

Edited by
HOWARD DAVIS

1500-1700", Penguin 1954, pp. 234, 237. John Summerson, "Architecture in Britain, 1530-1830", Penguin 1954, pp. 258-60.

¹³³J. C. Weston, "Economics of building", RIBA Journal, April 1955, pp. 256-7; May 1956, pp. 268-78; June 1956, pp. 316-29.

¹³⁴Ben Higgins, "Economic development", New York 1959, pp. 254-6, 660-1.