

Centripetal Pedestrian Paths

Streets should be for staying in, and not just for moving through the way they are today.



For centuries, the street provided city dwellers with usable public space, right outside their houses. Now, in a number of subtle ways, the modern city has made streets which are for "going through", not for "staying in". This is reinforced by new regulations which make it a crime to loiter, by the greater attractions inside the house itself, and by streets which are so unattractive to stay in, that they almost force people into their houses.

All this contributes to the fact that people in cities feel isolated, insecure, detached from society. Two recent studies have shown that mental illness, and acute feelings of isolation, are more common among people who cannot reach the street from their dwellings, than among those who can. (D.M. Fanning, "Families in Flats", *British Medical Journal*, 18 November

1967; and Joan Ash, "Families Living at High Density", *Official Architecture and Planning*, London, January, 1966, pp. 68-81; also *Sociological Research Section*, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, n.d., 87 pp.) The fact that the street drives people away from it must surely have the same effect.

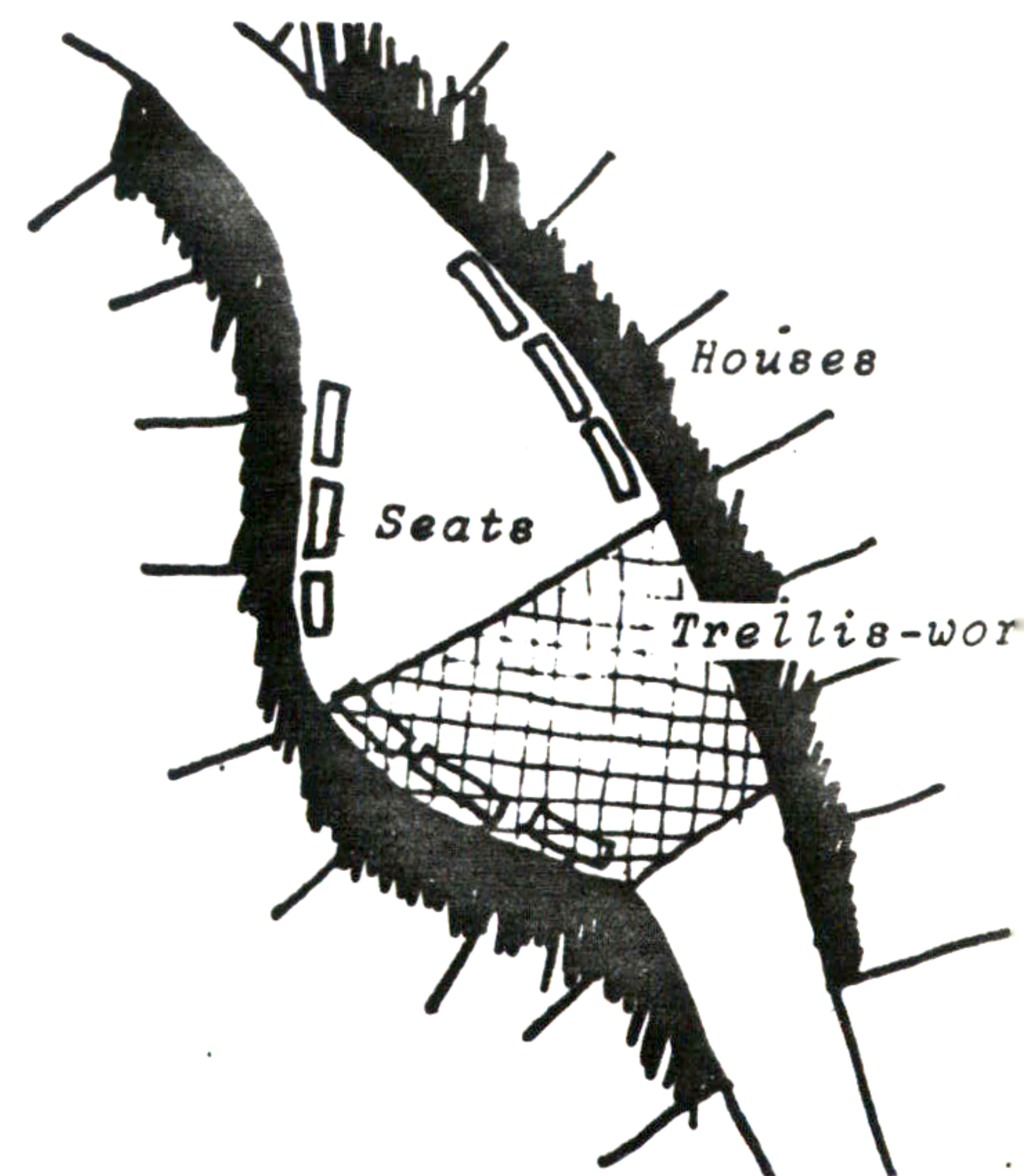


From an environmental standpoint, the essence of the problem is this: Streets are "centrifugal" not "centripetal": they drive people out, instead of attracting them in. In order to combat this effect, the pedestrian world outside houses must be made into the kind of place where you "stay", rather than the kind of place you "move through". It must, in short, be made like a kind of outside public room, with a greater sense of enclosure than a street.

Therefore:

Make residential pedestrian streets subtly convex in plan with seats and galleries around the edges. When you can, roof the streets perhaps with beams or trellis-work.

Pedestrian Street



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This pattern is tentative. If you have any evidence to support or refute its current formulation, please send it to the Center for Environmental Structure, P.O. Box 5156, Berkeley, California 94705; we will add your comments to the next edition.