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AR's and AD's post-war editorial policies: the making of modern architecture in Britain

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This paper discusses the magazine in which Townscape was conceived and disseminated, *The Architectural Review* (*AR*), in the context of its closest rival, the more avant-garde *Architectural Design* (*AD*), by comparing how each operated in terms of their contributors, economics and editorial policies.

The period from immediately after the Second World War up to the early 1970s demonstrated unprecedented stability and prosperity in the Western world. After the initial austerity measures, the UK bloomed economically, culturally and socially, leading this period to be commonly called the 'golden age' of capitalism. Politically, it is also known as the 'age of consensus' due to the general agreement between the two main political parties that a left-of-centre welfare state based on Keynesian economics was best for Britain. The British architectural press echoed this with a coincidental period of stability (in editorship) and growth (in circulation) of its own. James Richards was on the *AR*'s editorial committee from 1937 to 1971 (with a brief period away during the war) and Monica Pidgeon edited *AD* from 1946 to 1975.[1] The resulting 25-year overlap (1946–1971) of these editorships forms a unique opportunity for comparing these two magazines and the architectural discourse they carried. This period witnesses the rise, growing disillusionment and ultimate demise of modern architecture in the UK, which is reflected in an analysis of the respective editorial policies and operations of these leading British architectural magazines. The rare announcements of their editorial policies within a month of each other at the beginning of this period renders the comparison even more remarkable.

January, 1947, marked *AR*'s fiftieth anniversary. Its committee of directing editors, consisting of James Richards, Nikolaus Pevsner, Osbert Lancaster and the proprietor Hubert de Cronin Hastings, stated that the magazine's purpose was to provide primarily 'the raw material of architectural history'[2] and secondly a 'space for literary discussion of the visual arts'.[3] But the overall objective of the magazine's policy was to instigate a 'visual re-education' in order to 're-establish the supremacy of the eye'.[4] Townscape was a product of this policy.

The editorial committee changed only slightly over the next quarter century.[5] Under this trio's editorial direction the content of the magazine remained faithful to the core policy outlined in the 1947 editorial statement. While Hastings's 'Socially Paternal' Toryism,[6] Richards's Socialism and Pevsner's art historicism underwrote the magazine's ideology, as owner of the Architectural Press,[7] the reclusive moneyed gentleman Hastings set the magazine's agenda. His all-pervasive interest and belief in the Picturesque resulted in a series of Townscape campaigns culminating in its swansong, Civilia, in 1971.

The constitution of *AD* was completely different to that of its rival. In the December, 1946, editorial entitled 'About Ourselves', the joint editors Monica Pidgeon and Barbara Randell issued what they considered to be a policy for the future of the

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magazine based on the original one of 'trying to serve, within reason, the whole nature of the architect—cultural as well as constructional, poetic as well as practical'.[8] They continued:

First, there is news; news in paragraph and comment, and news in the way of the detailed descriptions, photographs and drawings of the latest buildings and industrial design. Second, there is technical information: for instance, articles on new methods of construction and general articles on contemporary building technique and new developments in materials and components, equipment and installations. Third [...] are the articles on some general matter of interest to architects and designers, such as the history of art or architecture, or contemporary design and planning in foreign countries.[9]

However, this is less a policy than a typology of content. Pidgeon later revealed that her unwritten policies in reality were a) to publish what she considered to be good architecture, simply ignoring the bad (never making enemies in print) and b) always to be forward-looking.[10] Whereas Hastings wanted the AR to be a cultural magazine keen on history and aimed at policy makers, AD was very much a trade rag aimed at professional architects and promoting the avant-garde.

The staff composition of each magazine highlights the difference in each magazine's available resource. In March, 1953, the AR's masthead lists Richards, Pevsner and Hastings, as well as the executive editor Ian McCallum, art editor Gordon Cullen, two assistant editors and Reyner Banham as assistant literary editor. By the end of the 1950s, Sir Hugh Casson had joined the directing editors,

Lance Wright had been added as a Technical Editor, Kenneth Browne as Features Editor and Ian Nairn as Counter-Attack Editor, and they also counted two staff photographers in their midst.[11] These were not all full-time positions; but in contrast, AD's masthead in October, 1953, comprised only Pidgeon and Theo Crosby, first as joint editor and subsequently as Technical Editor a year later. Pidgeon and her Technical Editor worked only during the afternoons and by the end of the 1950s were joined by a full-time Editorial Assistant and Editorial Secretary. Until the late 1960s, when they could afford to hire independent architectural photographers, photographs were provided by the architects, or Pidgeon would take them herself using her maiden name of Lehmann. An Art Director was not employed until May, 1968. Besides the back-office staff, such as the advertisement manager employed by AD's owner The Standard Catalogue Company (SCC), this was the full contingent of staff that AD utilised during this period.

The staff at AD were not paid particularly well,[12] but the Standard Catalogue Company was a commercial operation and did make money from AD. According to David Dottridge, grandson of the SCC's founder Samuel Dottridge and listed as Publications Manager from June, 1967, to December, 1968, 'In its heyday it was making between £60 and £70,000 [a year] which were good numbers in those days.'[13] This heyday is ambiguous, but considering that 'Revenue from advertising far exceeded sub revenue',[14] by examining the number of advertisements published in AD, it can safely be assumed to be the early- to mid-1960s (Fig. 1).
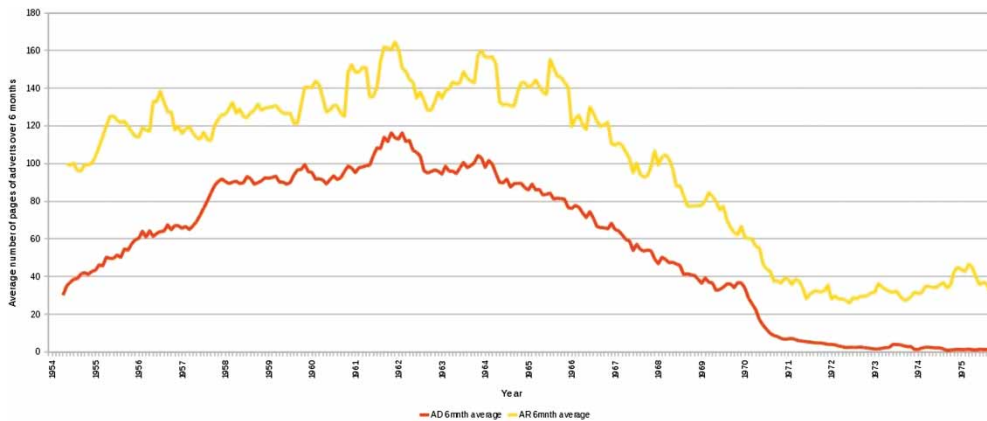
Figure 1. Number of
advertisements (mean
over 6 months) in *AR*
(top line) and *AD*
(bottom line) between
1954 and 1975.

Although Pidgeon didn't understand most of the architectural arguments going on in her magazine,[15] she was the embodiment of the spirit in which it was produced. She also had a real ability to network and recognise young talent. In particular, between 1953 and 1972, she employed the three technical editors who would take *AD* from an obscure technical trade rag to leading avant-garde architectural 'little' magazine: Theo Crosby (October, 1953 to June, 1962), Kenneth Frampton (June, 1962 to December, 1964) and Robin Middleton (December, 1964 to July, 1972). Each of these had a profound impact on the magazine's form and content, a result of Pidgeon's spirit meeting the technical editors' interests and contacts.

By 1954, the first generation of inter-war modernists dominated architecture. Many of this first generation of architectural modernists were Pidgeon's peers from her student days at University College London, with whom she mingled at the MARS group and the post-war CIAM meetings. This generation were the architectural elite, having established modern architecture as mainstream thanks to their influential positions in architectural institutions and government.[16] Banham has since pointed out that 'the student generation were without much means of public expression (until Theo Crosby joined Architectural Design in October 1953) and little of the polemic is visible in print.'[17] Banham himself was a member of the same younger milieu but as one of Pevsner's most promising doctoral students from the Courtauld, had joined the *AR* earlier that year.[18] By disposition and temperament, he would have sat more comfortably with *AD*, but although an anomaly at the *AR*, he gave it a balance of editorial opinion through the younger generation's outlook.[19]

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Banham at the *AR* and Crosby at *AD* sat either side of the Smithsons, 'the bell-wethers [*sic*] of the young throughout the middle fifties.'[20] In 1950, at the ages of only 21 and 26 respectively, Alison and Peter Smithson won the competition to build Hunstanton school. This generated an early reputation upon which they would capitalise with their professional and personal relationships. They were well known to Banham through the small, subversive Independent Group at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in which they were both involved in the early 1950s. Although Crosby was an ICA regular, he was not directly involved with this group,[21] even though he was best friends with Peter Smithson, having met him in Florence in 1948. They subsequently shared a ground-floor flat in London[22] while Smithson attended the Royal Academy School that autumn.[23] Crosby and Smithson shared an intense friendship that continued for many years and when the Smithsons married in 1949, they remained in the ground-floor flat and Crosby moved upstairs. The Smithsons effectively became Crosby's surrogate family in Britain: 'Theirs to dominate, theirs to command, something like your family's attitude to you, which makes them almost kin.'[24] Although the Smithsons had previously been published in *AD*,[25] it was Crosby who offered them *AD* as a platform for broadcasting their ideas.

The Smithsons were particularly disappointed at not being invited to contribute to the 1951 Festival of Britain, acclaimed by the *AR* as the most complete implementation of Townscape principles and whose director, Hugh Casson, was added to *AR*'s editorial committee in 1954. Perhaps embittered by their unsuccessful competition entries (in association

with Crosby),[26] Peter Smithson remembered it as 'dowdy', 'provincial' and 'disappointing', and claimed that they avoided it by going on holiday to Greece.[27] Their response was to translate the themes of low, mass-culture and everyday taste they had been cultivating within the Independent Group, into a fresh architectural movement: the New Brutalism. The first mention in the press of the term was in December, 1953's *AD*—the first issue of the magazine that Crosby oversaw— where the Smithsons wrote of a house design with no internal finishes: 'had this been built it would have been the first exponent of the "new brutalism" in England.'[28] If the Smithsons were the architects of the New Brutalism, Banham was its historian and Hunstanton School became the first building in its canon, as defined by his *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?*[29] 1955 is a particularly profitable early year for comparing the two magazines' agendas. In January, Crosby published the Smithsons' New Brutalism manifesto as the *AD* editorial[30] and in December, Banham wrote his early apologia of the movement in the *AR*.[31] In June, the *AR* published Ian Nairn's Outrage issue, a continuation of the Townscape campaign in the form of pointed criticism of the 'subtopia' that Nairn felt was consuming the country (Fig. 2; and see also Figure 2 on p. 736 in Gillian Darley's article in this Issue).[32] That same month, *AD* published the Smithsons' 'Urban Reidentification' (Fig. 3), which questioned the acceptance of the old order of CIAM and laid a claim to the new. The Smithsons were heavily involved in the formation of Team 10, a group responsible for CIAM's dissolution in 1959.

Figure 2. The cover of
Nairn's Counter Attack,
*The Architectural
Review* (December,
1956): the follow-up to
his Outrage of June,
1955 (reproduced
courtesy of EMAP Ltd).

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Figure 3. Alison and
Peter Smithson's 'Urban
Reidentification',
Architectural Design
(June, 1955), p.185
(reproduced courtesy of
John Wiley & Sons Ltd).
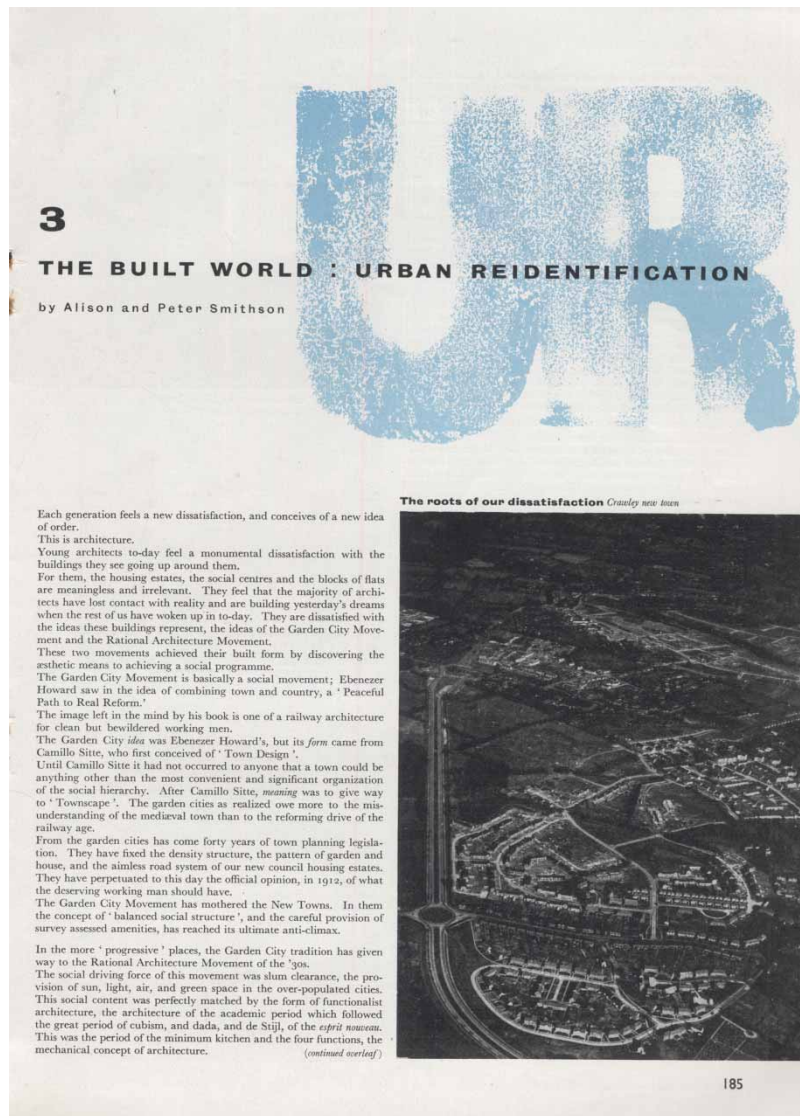
While the two magazines were both promoting the New Brutalism from the start, the contrast between Nairn's Outrage and the Smithsons' 'Urban Reidentification' highlights the difference of the contribution of each to architectural discourse: the *AR* through Townscape[33] and *AD* through the neo-avant-garde. Until the end of 1964, when Banham left the *AR* and Frampton left *AD*, superficially there would appear to be more similarities than differences between the magazines—a kind of architectural magazine consensus in format and content, if not approach or ambition. They each carried criticism of buildings (often even the same buildings), news and technical information. The differences appeared in, to borrow Pidgeon's words from her 1946 editorial, 'the articles on some general matter of interest to architects and designers.'[34] For the *AR*, these articles tended to emanate from the Townscape campaign, whereas for *AD*, they originated from the technical editors' interests and contacts.

From 1965, however, the situation changed. At the *AR*, Banham was replaced by a pair of editorial assistants while Ian Nairn and Kenneth Browne were consolidated specifically as 'Townscape Editors'. On Crosby's advice, Robin Middleton (like Banham, a doctoral student of Pevsner, but at Cambridge) took over as Technical Editor at *AD*. Middleton had previously worked for Crosby at Taylor Woodrow contractors, alongside the members of the Archigram group, who had started their protest sheet in 1961 in disgust at the state of architecture going up at the time in Britain and had produced Archigrams 3 to 6 while at Taylor Woodrow.[35]

AD published the first mention of Archigram in the British press with a brief review of Archigram 4, the 'Zoom' issue, in June, 1964,[36] also briefly reviewed in the *AR* two months' later.[37] Coincidentally, Banham lived opposite Peter Cook[38] and it was he who, having bumped into Cook in the street, took this 'Zoom' issue to America where Philip Johnson and Peter Blake received it enthusiastically. The next generation of the architectural neo-avant-garde was once more supported by Banham and Crosby (and Crosby's chosen successor, Middleton). Despite a good review, no doubt by Banham,[39] the *AR* left the Archigram group well alone until it had passed as a phenomenon, only returning to the group in January, 1973, after it won the Monte Carlo Competition. Without Banham's avant-garde tendencies, the *AR* returned to Townscape. Through Middleton, *AD* was also the first British mainstream architectural periodical to publish Archigram's work, alongside Banham's first contribution to *AD*, 'A Clip-on Architecture',[40] a contextualisation of the group's work in November, 1965. Archigram would feature regularly in *AD* until January, 1970, when they set up an office on the back of their Monte Carlo competition win.

The other major change that Middleton introduced to the magazine was the section Cosmorama, which replaced the News section in July, 1965. It was introduced as 'a commentary on buildings or on events throughout the world that impinge upon architecture.'[41] Cosmorama quickly evolved into a scrapbook of ideas and processes that were relevant to architectural production, rather than of buildings. The magazines from which it reported on technologies and products from outside the

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world of architecture that might be transferable, gradually changed from global architectural periodicals to magazines like *New Scientist* and even the *Financial Times*. Like Archigram, Middleton had become disillusioned with the architecture of the time and Pidgeon's general principle of only publishing the good did not leave him many buildings to choose from. So instead, he redefined the architecture in *Architectural Design* to be more concerned with ideas and visions.

AD was looking to the future, to space architecture, floating architecture, submarine architecture, inflatable architecture, foam architecture, mobile architecture, personal architecture, paper architecture, flexible architecture, cybernetics, communication technologies, domes, transport, sex, drugs and rock-and-roll. Whereas the New Brutalism's mandate was architecture as building, Middleton took Hans Hollein's 'Alles ist architektur' quite literally. Cosmorama became a magazine within a magazine and took over completely in 1970, the same year *AD* became a 'little magazine' supported entirely by subscriptions and eschewing advertising. This was also the year that Archigram published its last issue and 'little' *AD* effectively became its replacement as the architectural magazine of choice for the young architect and architectural student. By the end of 1973, when Cosmorama was discontinued, *AD* had moved almost entirely away from buildings towards a wider and more conceptual definition of architecture's role in society.

While *AD* was becoming 'little', Hastings was publishing his celebrated Manplan issues in the *AR* in a pique of exasperated frustration that became the culmination of the Townscape campaign.

Manplan was a series of eight themed issues published between September, 1969 and September, 1970 (Fig. 4) that pessimistically reviewed the state of the nation (in contrast, *AD's* first 'little' issue appeared the very next month; Fig. 5). Manplan was a direct response to Banham *et al*'s Non-Plan idea published earlier in 1969[42] and took the form of a series of progressive visual essays with photographs focussing on people and activity, taken with grainy 35mm cameras by leading photojournalists rather than the usual high-contrast, personless large-format photography on which the *AR* had built its reputation.[43] They were then printed with a specially developed matt black ink that generated an air of dystopia. As objects of design, the Manplan issues were ahead of their time, but as a commercial venture, a disaster, as advertisers instead shifted to the *Architects' Journal*.[44] According to Peter Davey, there was panic in the *AR*'s offices that Manplan was losing readers.[45] However, the figures for *AD*, *AR* and the *Architects' Journal* show that they all lost a similar proportion of readers during 1969 and 1970. In terms of circulation, Middleton's influence on the magazine was initially very successful and *AD* eventually overtook the *AR* for one year only, 1968 (Fig. 6), the year it discovered its will to autonomy and employed as Art Director Dave Chaston, who redesigned the magazine.

By examining the content and context of these two rival magazines during the quarter century from their policy statements in 1946/47, it is possible to offer an explanation of how and why they ended up so distinct.

Established in 1896, not only had the *AR* become the magazine of the establishment, but its editors

Figure 4. The cover of
the last Manplan issue,
*The Architectural
Review* (September,
1970) (reproduced
courtesy of EMAP Ltd).

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Figure 5. The cover of
the first 'little' issue of
Architectural Design
(October, 1970),
featuring Cedric Price
inflating himself
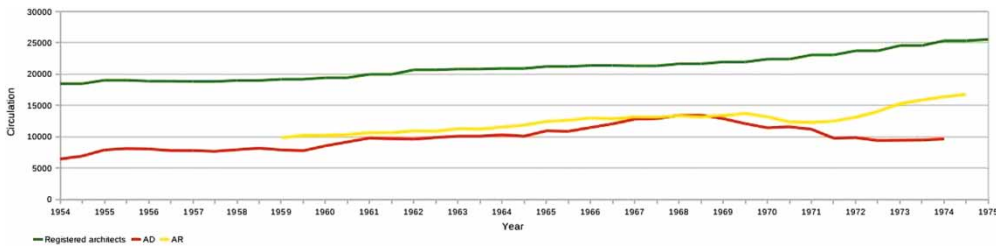(reproduced courtesy of
John Wiley & Sons Ltd).

Figure 6. Circulation of
AR (middle line) and *AD*
(bottom line), and the
registered number of
architects in the UK (top
line). (Circulation
figures courtesy of the
Audit Bureau of
Circulations; registered
number of architects
courtesy of the
Architects Registration
Board; ARB).

were establishment figures themselves. It was
owned by a rich, educated gentleman amateur
who believed in connoisseurship as the basis for
taste. Members of its pre- and post-war editorial
board, James Richards, John Betjeman, Hugh
Casson, and Osbert Lancaster were all educated at
public school and Oxbridge, and all knighted.
Pevsner was educated in Germany but also
knighted. The exception is Ian McCallum who,
although educated at Gordonstoun and the AA,
left architecture and was never knighted. Pevsner
received the Royal Gold Medal in 1967 and Hastings
in 1971. Pevsner and Richards both broadcast with
the BBC and Richards was also *The Times*' architec-
ture correspondent. In contrast, none of the *AD*
editors were ever honoured by the RIBA or the
Queen or involved with other established mass-
media broadcasters.

Hastings had money to pursue his own objectives
and policies: the *AR* always had considerably more
pages of advertising and, with the exception of
1968, a greater circulation. It could afford to
employ more staff pro-actively to find buildings to
review, and to campaign. *AD,* on the other hand,
was owned by the SCC who considered it a com-

mercial operation rather than cultural: until Middle-
ton arrived, it was a vehicle for connecting product
manufacturers with specifiers, reminiscent of its
origins in 1930 as a freely distributed entertainment
magazine for the *Architects' Standard Catalogue*.
Although it did make money, the profits were not
for architecture's benefit and the magazine was
run parsimoniously, relying largely on architects
sending in their material for publication.

While both magazines were attempting to move
modern architecture forwards, the *AR*'s contents
were driven by the editors under the aegis of Town-
scape while *AD*'s were driven by their contributors,
specifically the Smithsons and then the Archigram
group, each of which were extremely conscious of
writing themselves into history and leaving behind
substantial archives to ensure that this happened.
The Smithsons never received recognition (more
than likely due to their persistent snubbing of the
RIBA), but Archigram received the Royal Gold
Medal in 2002 and Peter Cook was knighted in 2007.

So the rivalry between *AR* and *AD* during the
Townscape years can unsurprisingly be explained
by the respective magazines' constitutions: the
ideologies of the editors and the financial resources

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available to implement them. It was the establishment versus the avant-garde, history versus the future, Townscape versus Brutalism and Archigram, and finally, a professional trade rag versus a little magazine. By 1975, both magazines had new editors and new directions, the political pendulum swung towards the right, and the world irrevocably changed.

Notes and references

1. Colin Boyne was also editor of the *Architects' Journal* from 1947 to 1970.
2. James Richards *et al.*, 'The Second Half Century', *The Architectural Review* (January, 1947), p. 21.
3. *Ibid*., p. 22.
4. *Ibid*., p. 23.
5. Mathew Aitchison, 'Visual Planning and Exterior Furnishing: A Critical History of the Early Townscape Movement, 1930 to 1949' (PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2009): see Appendix Three, *The Architectural Review*: A Professional History; Erdem Erten, 'Shaping "The Second Half Century": *The Architectural Review*, 1947–1971' (PhD thesis, MIT, 2004): see Appendix, '*The Architectural Review*'s Editorial Formation 1942–1973'.
6. Of a kind known in the 1930s as 'Social Paternalism' influenced by a liberalism defined by the thought of Ernest Barker: see Erdem Erten, 'Shaping "The Second Half Century" ', *op. cit.*, p. 281.
7. Publisher of the *The Architectural Review*, monthly and the *Architects' Journal,* weekly.
8. Barbara Randall, Monica Pidgeon, 'About Ourselves', *Architectural Design & Construction* (December, 1946), p. 322.
9. *Ibid*.
10. Monica Pidgeon, interview by Steve Parnell, February 25th, 2009.
11. De Burgh Galwey and W.J. Toomey. This list was taken from October, 1959, when Richards had just taken over from McCallum as Executive Editor and Banham made his Assistant. There was also just one Assistant Editor.
12. Robin Middleton, interview by Steve Parnell, March 4th, 2010; Monica Pidgeon, 'NLSC: Architects' Lives. Monica Pidgeon', interview by Charlotte Benton, mp3 from original tape, April 29th 1999; F7493 Side A, British Library Sound Archive.
13. David Dottridge to Steve Parnell, 'Research on Architectural Design—my best', September 15th, 2011.
14. *Ibid*.
15. Peter Smithson, 'NLSC: Architects' Lives. Peter Smithson', interview by Louise Brodie, mp3 from original tape, September 4th, 1997; F5951 Side A, British Library Sound Archive; confirmed by Middleton, interview, *op. cit.*
16. Nicholas Bullock, *Building the Post-War World* (London, Routledge, 2002), xi–xiii, p. 12.
17. Reyner Banham, 'Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965', in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on architectural writers and writing presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, John Summerson, ed. (London, Allen Lane, 1968), p. 266.
18. In an interview with Susie Harries, Richards claimed the introduction of Banham for himself. However, Harries noted that 'although Richards was perfectly compos in the interview, he was quite anxious to establish his own contribution to the AR'; Susie Harries to Steve Parnell, 'Banham', August 19th, 2011.
19. Erdem Erten, 'Shaping "The Second Half Century"', p. 264.
20. R. Banham, 'Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945–1965', p. 270.
21. Although he did publish over forty pieces about or by members of the Independent Group, including Lawrence Alloway, Eduardo Paolozzi, John McHale, James

Stirling, John Voelcker *et al.*, during his tenure as *AD*'s Technical Editor.

22. 32, Doughty Street in Bloomsbury.

23. Peter Smithson, 'NLSC: Architects' Lives. Peter Smithson', *op. cit.*

24. Anne Crosby, *Matthew a memoir* (London, Haus Books, 2009), p. 50.

25. Dargan Bullivant, 'Hunstanton Secondary Modern School', *Architectural Design* (September, 1953), pp. 238–248.

26. Alison Smithson, Peter Smithson, *The Charged Void: Architecture* (New York, The Monacelli Press, 2001), p. 33.

27. 'NLSC: Architects' Lives. Peter Smithson', interview by Louise Brodie, mp3 from original tape, September 17th, 1997; F5952 Side A, British Library Sound Archive.

28. Alison Smithson, Peter Smithson, 'House in Soho, London', *Architectural Design* (December, 1953), p. 342.

29. Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic?* (London, The Architectural Press, 1966).

30. Alison Smithson, Peter Smithson, 'The New Brutalism', *Architectural Design* (January, 1955), p.1.

31. Reyner Banham, 'The New Brutalism', *The Architectural Review* (December, 1955), pp. 354–361.

32. See Gillian Darley's article in this Issue.

33. See Mathew Aitchison's 'Introduction' in this Issue.

34. B. Randall, M. Pidgeon, 'About Ourselves', *op. cit.*, p. 322.

35. Robin Middleton, 'Haunts of Coot and Hern', in *L.A.W.U.N. Project #19* (London, AA Publications, 2008), B22.

36. 'Publications', *Architectural Design* (June, 1964), p. 259.

37. 'Zoom architecture', *The Architectural Review* (August, 1964), p. 83.

38. Banham at 64, Aberdare Gardens and Cook at 59.

39. Reyner Banham, 'A comment from Peter Reyner Banham', in *Archigram*, Peter Cook, ed., revised edition (New York, NY, Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), p. 5.

40. Reyner Banham, 'A clip-on architecture', *Architectural Design* (November, 1965), 534–535; it first appeared in *Design Quarterly*.

41. Robin Middleton, 'Cosmorama', *Architectural Design* (July, 1965), p. 315.

42. Reyner Banham, *et al.*, 'Non-plan: an experiment in freedom', *New Society* (March 20th, 1969), pp. 435–443.

43. Robert Elwall, 'The rise and demise of Manplan in the Architectural Review' (February 26th, 2010); http://www.culture24.org.uk/art/architecture/art76477 [accessed 22/03/12].

44. Peter Davey in, Sutherland Lyall, 'The First 100 Years', *The Architectural Review* (May, 1996), p. 71.

45. Peter Davey, comment during Townscape Conference, 23rd July, 2011.