

Figure 5.9 Duomo, S. Maria del Fiore, Florence.



5.9

Figure 5.10 Rialto Bridge, Venice.

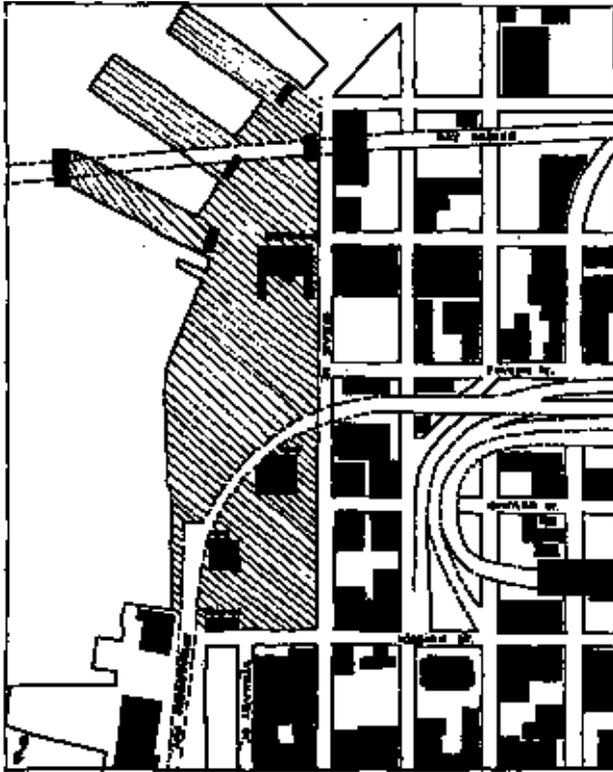


5.10

to determine the precise state of each structure and the stage of development of the social unit or family occupying that particular structure. Each unit or home was described as a cell. A soft cell, one ripe for immediate renewal, was one which was in poor physical condition and where the family was in great need of rehousing. A hard cell, one which could take low priority for redevelopment or rehabilitation, was a property in reasonable condition and was perhaps occupied by an elderly person owning the property and unwilling to move. Such a property could be left until the owner died or moved willingly to sheltered accommodation. This organic concept of the neighbourhood proposed a

slow renewal process refurbishing some properties, replacing others, but carried out in a piecemeal fashion which did not disturb the community and which was in tune with the natural growth and decay of families (Figure 5.8).

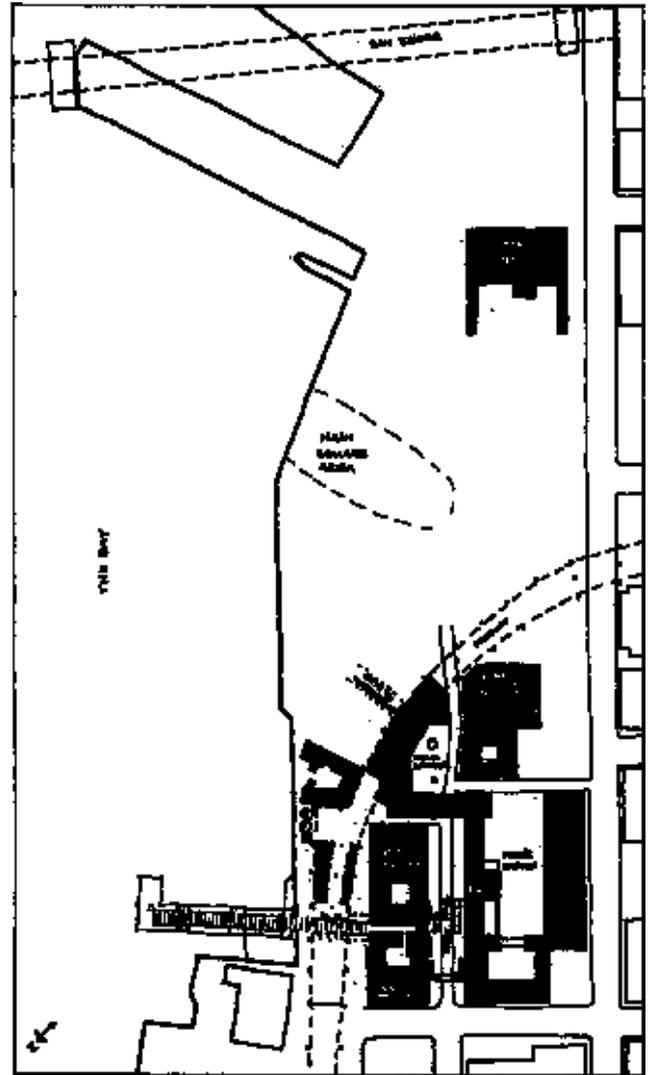
Alexander, in *The Oregon Experiment*, developed a technique aimed at reproducing the organic order of the much admired, traditional European city¹⁸ (Figures 5.9 and 5.10). Cities such as Florence or Venice seem to owe their great qualities to natural growth without recourse to formal planning. In the organic theory of urban design developed by Alexander *et al.*, process and form are one.¹⁹ While the process of city structuring results in the form,



5.11

the form is apparent from the beginning: the pattern is in the seed, that is, at the point of origin. For example, while the growth of any acorn results in an oak tree, no two trees are identical even though each tree is composed of similar elements. So, too, with the organic or sustainable city, its pattern is established by the principles used for the design and linkage of the parts.

Alexander developed a number of key principles for the design of organic cities. One of these principles of organic development states that growth should be piecemeal with a guaranteed mixed flow of various size projects. In detail he specifies that no single increment should be too large and that



5.12

Figure 5.11 Alexander: organic design process, the site.

Figure 5.12 Alexander: organic design process, early stage in the process.