

Space standards for the Adaptable House (1960s, Britain)

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In 1968, Research and Development Group of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government published *Design Bulletin 6: Space in the Home*; a manual that included a detailed catalogue of measured space and furniture for the British council house, as well as a series of daily schedules seemingly organising the everyday life of ‘typical’ and ‘standard’ family with children. Paradoxically, the bulletin was following up an extensive report on space standards published in 1961, *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* (otherwise known as the Parker Morris Report) that promoted the ‘Adaptable House’, as a response to longevity, diversity, and the rapid changes in a broader socio-economic framework. Whereas the initial report dismissed the use of technical drawings and typical standardised plans to include only six ‘simple diagrams of a lively sketchy nature’ by Gordon Cullen to encourage flexibility to the architect, the user, and the housing provider, the *Design Bulletin* was a clear indication of measured and ordered space in the form of discursive space.

The debate of space standards as regulations or recommendations intensified during that time unveiling the contradictory nature of ‘adaptability’ which was not solely part of the design process or functionality within the home, but also part of policymaking. This paper aims to explore the notion of ‘transgression’ through the conceptualisation of these two documents—Bulletin 6 and the Parker Morris Report—as mechanisms of a regulated versus flexible order that are not to be perceived as binary contrasts. Within a contemporary context of a ‘free’ housing market that neglects lifestyle diversity and bespoke housing design as luxury, however, continues to exclude a minority that is yet to satisfy basic needs within housing, were Cullen’s sketchy diagrams for an official report on space standards suggesting, for a moment, an alternative, perhaps disobedient domestic?

Fig. 1. The younger family
(Parents and three children: a boy of school age (7) and girls of 3 and 1)

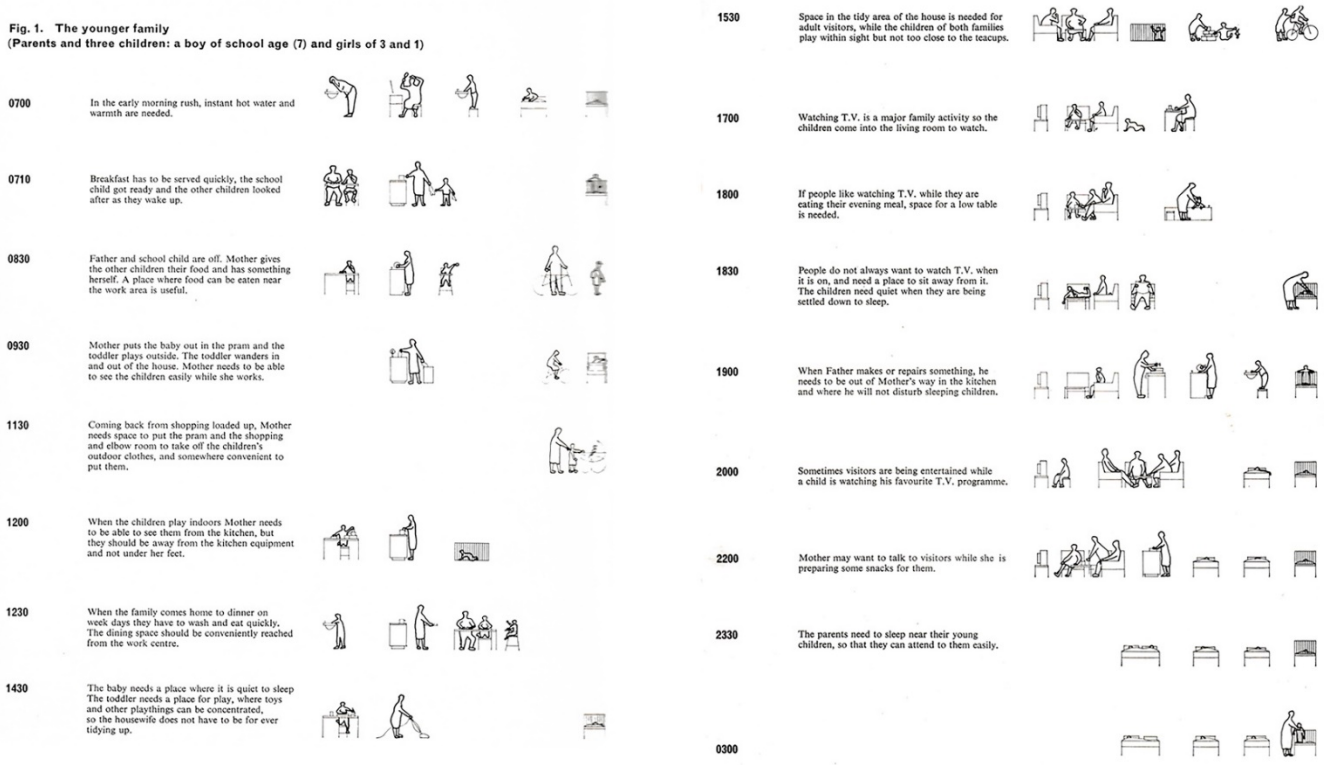


Fig. 1 Schedule in *Design Bulletin 6*, HMSO (1968).

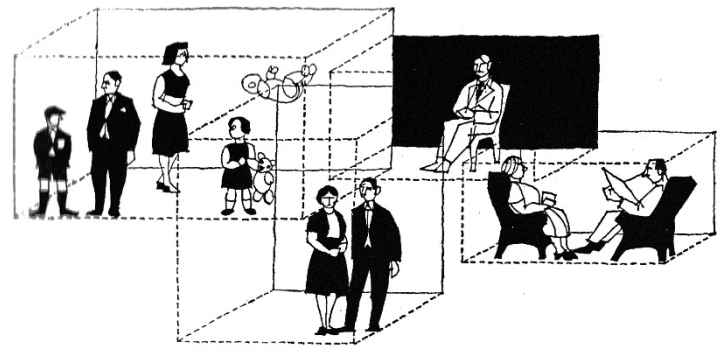


Fig. 2 Gordon Cullen's diagram for *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* [Parker Morris Report], HMSO (1961).