

The Cooper-Hewitt Museum has organized a series of four computer-run urban games or exercises which probe various decision-making processes involved in urban development. In the first game, *Metropolis*, which was held in November at the IBM headquarters on Madison Avenue, a moderate-sized city was divided into three wards with fairly homogeneous populations in each. Twenty-seven participants were divided into three teams and the teams into three groups—politicians, administrators, and speculators. Each of the three groups was allowed to experiment with different strategies and then was forced to live with the consequences of its decisions in the next rounds. A one-hour long decision cycle represented one year of the community's life.

Five cycles of the game were played, and the participants could see the city shaped according to their decisions. The motives of each group determined construction, location of sewage lines and parks, tax rate. Outside events—national inflation, important quotas—were introduced by means of a newspaper and had a direct influence on the decisions.

The computer was used as an accounting device and to calculate such things as population growth, changes in per capita assessed value and public revenue, and the rewards and penalties for each of the roles.

An effort was made to assign the participants roles other than those played in actual life. The gaming experience was so complete that the reversal took place immediately.

Games have been used for more than a thousand years—Chess, Go, Shogi. They have been used by the military to analyze air and ground combat and new weapon systems and by corporations to study profit, new products, the performance of executives. Only recently has gaming been applied to urban problems. Now there are hundreds of games available which deal with urban finance, housing, transportation, waste disposal. Certain groups have games especially prepared for them.

The Museum has several reasons for organizing this series. When it re-opens in 1974 as the National Museum of Design, it will concern itself with design problems. Gaming is one effective way to examine design problems in that it forces one to think for the future. The Museum wants to introduce people to this technique. The Museum also believes that gaming and computer-run games can be adapted so that they can be used in establishing a dialogue between the Museum visitors and the museum exhibition.

John Dobkins



Speculator



Politician



Administrator

ON GAMING

" URBAN COMPUTER GAMING "
 A 50 min. video-tape by Juan Downey
 Frank Gillette, Andy Mann shot at
 IBM headquarters in New York City,
 commissioned by the Cooper-Hewitt
 Museum. Audio-visual engineering:
 Juanfi Lamadrid