

Foreword

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It requires an effort to imagine the commitment of Le Corbusier and his contemporaries when they presented their concepts for town-building during CIAM 1928. Les Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne were a first international attempt by architects to co-operate on guiding lines for architectural renewal. For the first time in the history of building they really took account of technical and economical as well as social aspects. Those thoughts of the first hour have had a long-lasting influence on the forms of later post-war urban development. Free-standing blocks oriented towards east and west had to ensure optimal entry of sunlight. The urban functions had to take account of living, working, traffic and recreation. One needs to realize that at the time most large urban agglomerations had to cope with over-population resulting from the great move from countryside to town and with traffic congestion as a result of new means of transport. Obviously the solutions contemplated by the modernists needed to be large-scale as well as economically feasible to cure the shortage quickly. New building methods moreover made the construction of tower blocks possible.

After nearly a hundred years of renewal in architecture and urban building it may be a cause for wonder that the unacceptable inner-city forms which were then rejected have become an inspiration for urban planners in their search for new diversity and shapes in the compact city. It illustrates the temporary blindness that invariably accompanies revolutionary ideas. While innovation sometimes leads to improvement it is nearly always also coupled with rejection of what was essentially valuable and needed to be cherished.

The present study into the functioning of post-war urban building in a number of prominent European cities is of particular interest because the playful inventivity in the conception of the first models in the 'twenties and before had been replaced worldwide by a more pragmatic approach known for obvious reasons as the international style or *neue Sachlichkeit*. Not primarily because, as some people now think, the spirit had fled from the bottle after five war years but simply because the standardization which had made building spectacularly cheaper was experienced as a blessing. In perfect accordance with the social commitment of CIAM 'good' housing could now be built at acceptable cost. In the case of the Bijlmermeer this even led to exceptionally spacious apartments with views of air, greenery and water in all directions. The problems there originated not inside the flats but in the way they connected with the urban space, which is traditionally decisive in giving communities their significance. The covered street as an allegory for a meeting-place, the square (the agora) etc. proved only in the eyes of architectural experts to be plausible replacements for "the street" which for centuries had been the heart of

villages and towns. Human conduct proved harder to influence than had been expected and the longing for streets as we used to know them not easy to overcome. The new urban dweller came in a great many types with divergent characteristics -- not as an obedient follower of the dictates of good taste. With the breakdown of nineteenth-century conventions a variety of new ways of living had been liberated, and this still continues. While for that reason it may be easy to understand that the shaping of a new community in the singular is no longer feasible, the fact remains that what we need more than ever is the shaping of communities in the plural. This report is a first proof that there are several plausible models for such communities. The conclusions are by no means always of limited applicability; they may well lead to recommendations to other cities with similar problems. This exchange of knowledge will prove fertile in the attempt to escape from a generalized view of the world of our time. In the couple of hours that I spent on a bicycle tour with a number of contributors to this study round the renewed Bijlmermeer it soon became clear to me how different reactions were to the problems and how divergent the solutions.

The Crime Prevention Caroussel is an attempt to survey the problems of postwar urban building. A specific analysis of where threats to security are experienced allows the creation of a clear picture of the improvements needed in residential living and in the management of buildings. It is tempting to reject ideas about architecture and city-building which have led to the present-day problems and to seek salvation in trends such as the compact city and neo-traditionalism. It will make more sense to search for the causes of criminality in the increasing differences between rich and poor, and the decay of old moral rules. It is striking how little attention designers pay to those aspects and how rarely they notice the consequences.

This study is all the more intriguing because, in the five urban districts analysed here with Berlin as a starting point, we have come to look quite differently at the gallery-flat from the point of cultural history but also when dealing with the management of buildings and the prevention of crime in public spaces. In spite of some people's opinions, there are no universal solutions to the problems posed.

Nor can it be ignored that the new residential districts of the past have become a daily background for the residents' life and work and leisure. For many countries a large-scale replacement of high-rise flats such as was undertaken in the Bijlmermeer in the 'nineties is impracticable and they are looking for other solutions than demolition when they are not simply resigned to leave things as they are, as was done in Krakov (Poland). Bristol's approach is striking for its combination of camera's and neighbourhood watch. The attempt here appears to be to compensate for frigid high tech with personal attention. In the Bijlmermeer, now that the replacement of the old housing supply by new more differentiated accommodation is virtually complete, it is becoming apparent that the demolition of the flats has made many residents move elsewhere, leaving what social cohesion

there was badly reduced. One of the conclusions of the report is that physical changes in an urban district by demolition, renovation and improvement of the infrastructure and public space should be preceded by analysis of the social consequences and the management problems. In Holland policy-makers are now discovering that when social cohesion is disrupted it cannot be restored at the drop of a hat. The mixture of cheap social housing and expensive property in particular is now more carefully thought out than ten years ago. It is not necessarily the case that mixture will lead to improvement. In Marzahn, an urban district of Berlin with a mostly low-income German population, what strikes one is that as long as the income differences are not too big an economic community can be created, able to deal with its problems without outside assistance. Another success story is that of Gropiusstadt where people mostly with a Turkish background have proved perfectly capable of building a coherent community. These Berlin suburbs function smoothly with a one-sided population and they deserve further research. Their sort of success story does not apply at all in the case of an equally homogeneous, all-British and low income district of Bristol. A striking feature is that comparable groups will in the Netherlands and Britain almost invariably be found in high-rise accommodation, which in Eastern Europe houses mostly the better educated. For the latter group there is no alternative -- so they resign themselves to tower-blocks in the suburbs.

When all this has been said a general impression remains that the renovation of the Bijlmermeer in the Netherlands could be further improved if attention is transferred to the quality of public space rather than the differentiation in housing. That this can sometimes give spectacular results with minimal means is shown in the H-quarter where flats have been built on the ground floors which used to be storage-space. This has proved very beneficial for the use of public space, which could be further improved by garden areas to provide a sense of safety and security. Interaction between residents and the world outside is indispensable to prevent a sense of desolation. Public control has become essential nearly everywhere in urban planning now that the solidity of modern construction has proved limited while durability is required for the creation and continuity of social networks. In the Netherlands and Germany a new architecture is seen as the answer to the problems of the lower income groups. Those who are prepared to allow the postwar building industry a place in history should ignore this fashionable illusion. New architecture should not turn its back on history but embrace it: it should challenge and modify and where possible improve it.

Lasting urban renewal can be achieved by large scale rebuilding. Lasting social renewal is a more complex matter. The modification of social coherence through detailed changes in the existing structure has in the past century proved more effective than demolition and replacement. The results of this report moreover show that where regulations are less stringent the quality of life may benefit considerably, as it did in Budapest. At a time when the government tends to reduce

its commitment new forms of organization and liberalization are inevitable. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the original insistence of CIAM on separation and zoning of urban functions leads to excessive car use and reduced physical activity. That the best place to put shops is where the demand exists will after years of urban planning shamefacedly have to be admitted. Politicians, developers and architects can gain insight from Amsterdam projects for renewal in the Jordaan, the Dapper district and the Pijp. Previously despised by economists and planners, those districts were brought to new life by the civic disobedience of the locals and their outside supporters. Their stubbornness ensured postponement and finally abandonment of demolition, and this brought about a more open-minded view of urban renewal. Nowadays politicians and architects have to prove that solutions are also possible to the problems of postwar urban extensions. The present-day architect will contribute to urban renewal by the creation of coherence and harmony, rather than in the spirit of his training which demanded contrast and variation. He will have to go further into the consequences of his selection of building materials and the intrinsic detailing that they demand. Like the Arts and Craft Movement which has produced a number of exemplary buildings in England and America he needs to train his eye to the ways in which postwar building can be confirmed and improved in its original character by renovation. Only by operating carefully will the surgeon be able effectively to prolong the patients life.

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