

Forms of Metropolitan Living

This year we will investigate the possibility of applying the rich formal vocabularies that have been developed in recent years to the design of new forms of urban living.

London intensifies

The occasion for this investigation is given by the massive increase in housing that is required in London within the coming period. London is the fastest growing city in Europe, with a positive intake of about 70,000 people per year. In recent years London has been able to absorb such numbers by transforming former derelict industrial areas into dense mixed-use quarters - offices and residences - based upon the tertiary sector. Areas such as the Docklands, Hackney, Clerkenwell & Southwark may be cited as examples. Here offices as well as apartments (lofts) have been created via the conversion of warehouses, workshops and small factories. This process of transformation proceeds via the small-scale developer's uncoordinated hunt for opportunities. Large scale developments have been confined to office buildings for the financial sector (Broadgate, Canary Wharf). Public investment in housing has been dormant for 20 years. Now the British government is promoting initiatives which include subsidized housing. It created the "urban task force", a think tank which has been promoting the further development of so called "brown field sites", i.e. utilization of derelict or under-used sites within the cities. This strategy avoids further expansion into the open green fields and favors high density urbanity instead of low density sprawl. (see appendix: Urban Task Force, Towards an Urban Renaissance.) For us this debate serves as an opportunity to explore new concepts of urban living on a scale with urbanist implications.

Articulating the complexity of contemporary demographics

We are proposing to design a large urban complex in London with focus upon residential functions. Our ambition is to make an innovative contribution to the contemporary repertoire of residential typologies and to offer convincing solutions to a number of complex urban sites in London.

The design of a contemporary residential complex should take into account the contemporary diversity of house-hold-types and life-styles.

The age of mass production with its complementary, undifferentiated mass of consumers - posing the problem of the modern standard dwelling (house of minimum existence) - is over. We witnessing a

strong stratification of incomes and differentiation of types of occupation, and a multicultural diversity of ethnic groups. One of the tasks of architecture might be either to specialise in one or another type of housing or indeed to organise and articulate the full demographic spectrum of the modern Metropolis within a complex whole.

We are also witnessing a new diversity of types of house-holds. The classical modern nuclear family no longer dominates the scene.

New household configurations

The private household is our point of departure, only to problematise its supposed self-evidence. But we won't be able to cast aside the radical, self-referential closure of a private realm only because the simple and unitary model of the nuclear family has been fractured. We might have to deal with double lives, first and second wives and ex-husbands, with half-sisters, stepfathers and with both current and ex-partners of teenage or adult children. But the private domestic realm will nevertheless be defined even if its geometry becomes more complex.

Within the private household we might assume differentiation into subsystems like the intimate life of husband and wife distinguished from the further family which also includes the teenage kids and the occasional visits of the grandmother and close family friends etc.

Therefore, the definition and demarcation of the residential unit, i.e. where one dwelling/household stops and another begins, can no longer be taken for granted. In a commune of students this demarcation might not be clear cut. Neither in the case of teenage children still living with their parents or in the case of elderly people living with their adult children. A deliberately ambiguous or multi-valent articulation of what might be read as dwelling unit at various occasions might be called for.

Modern life versus traditional community

Historically the private realm is rigorously established in the process of functional differentiation of modern society. The private life differentiates from the public, professional and social life.

Around the private household we might consider more loosely defined spaces like a shared lobby, courtyard or garden, the immediate neighbourhood with local pubs etc. and the wider urban quarter.

However, we are aware of the improbability of achieving a sense of communal life within the context of a modern metropolis. This low probability of community might be increased if a selection process can be made to operate that prevents the random sampling of people. Therefore the first task might be to devise a demographic matrix that allows a certain ordering of the expected residential population in terms of age, interest, marital status, type of occupation etc. However, we should not be too hopeful in this respect and accept the likelihood of anonymous living.

The Design Task

With respect to the design of a contemporary, metropolitan residential complex we place equal emphasis upon

- the organisation and articulation of spaces and furnishings within the interior of the dwelling and
- the organisation and articulation of the urban space that is created between the dwellings.

In fact, as hinted at above, a strict definition of what is inside vs what is outside the dwelling unit might be neither possible nor desirable. Instead a hierarchy or even network of nesting or overlapping territories might be articulated.

A continuum of aggregation might be posited from individual rooms, to flats, to floors to buildings, to estates etc. However, usually the difference between the composition of rooms that make up a dwelling/household and the composition of dwellings that make up a residential building/complex is the much higher degree of organic/functional integration that establishes the unity (the whole) of the dwelling versus the rather loose and inessential combination of dwellings into a building. This raises the question whether other organic unities below or above the level of the dwelling might be constructed.

In any case it is useful to distinguish and, initially, to separately pursue two key aspects of architectural design:

- the definition of territory by means of boundaries, i.e. the system of various spatial demarcations that operates across the whole spectrum of boundary definition from establishment of private versus public zones on the site, to the definition of the residential units as well as their subdivisions into territorial subunits.
- the facilitation of specific activities by means of appropriate furnishings. While the design of furnishings might initially be indifferent to the task of boundary management it nevertheless might depend on spatial demarcation for the definition of a situation/activity as "public", "social" or "private".

The distinction is a distinction of system perspective rather than type of artefact. The initially ergonomic artifact (furniture) might be enlisted to articulate boundaries (boundaries are not necessarily walls nor even necessarily spatial concepts) and initially territorialising devices might be enlisted to facilitate various activities (e.g wall as pin up board). The characterization of an architectural element always depends upon the chosen design perspective.

Case-studies

We propose to start the semester with an exercise in case-study analysis in order to historically contextualize our work and to share a set of useful references and potential points of departure. Each

student should choose one of the residential projects listed below and conduct an analysis in two parts: First a general, prestructured part that is organised according to the distinctions introduced above, and secondly a specific part that derives its own specific concepts and focus of analysis from the work analysed.

The general part of the analysis should proceed as follows:

1. Analyse, i.e. decompose the composite dwelling unit in terms of its (functional) components and characterise its organisation or internal pattern of zoning. Is this based upon a functional organisation or a mere tight packing?
2. Give account of the architectural means employed with respect to the articulation of the territorial boundaries against the external social environment as well as the articulation of the internal boundaries.
3. Analyse the pattern of aggregation of the dwellings into a larger complex. (Or is it a matter of dividing a preconceived volume, given by an even larger urban figure?) Does the aggregated unity achieve a higher totality or is it a mere juxtaposition of parallel lives?
4. And further consider the aggregation of buildings into an urban field. Again an analysis of boundaries is required and an account of their material/architectural realisation.
5. For the sake of this boundary analysis you need to devise an appropriate graphic code for the graphic analysis of types of territorialisation. Furthermore, a 3D computermodel is required to explore vistas and walkthroughs that demonstrate the legibility of supposed territories.
6. Give graphic (& 3D) account of the system of furnishings that defines and facilitates the the various activities within the residential complex.

List of projects:

Adolph Loos, Haus Möller 1928, Haus Müller 1930

Mies van der Rohe, Grouping of patio-houses, concept 1938

Ludwig Hilbersheimer, The New City, Research 1940, & The New Regional Pattern, Research 1945

Alberto Libera, Unita di abitazione orizzontale, Tuscolano III, Rome 1950-54

Le Corbusier, Unite D'habitation, Marseilles 1946-52

Case Study Houses

Alison & Peter Smithson, Robin Hood Lane, London

Candelis Josic Woods, Frankfurt Römerberg, Project 1963

Piet Blom, Kasbah Hengelo 1966 - 1973

Piet Blom, Pole Dwellings, Rotterdam

The Barbican Centre, London

Patrick Hodgkinson & Sir Leslie Martin, Brunswick Centre, London 1970

Rem Koolhaas, Nexus Housing, Fukuoka

Winy Maas, Berlin Housing, European Competition

Kazuo Sejima

Steven Holl, MIT student residences

Peter Eisenman, Rebstockpark Master Plan, Frankfurt 1990

Greg Lynn, Embryologic Houses, Research Project 1999

Kolantan/Mac Donald, Housings, Research Project 1999

Nox, pre-fab housing, A58 Eindhoven, 2000

Appendix:

Urban Task Force - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Towards an Urban Renaissance

MISSION STATEMENT

The Urban Task Force will identify causes of urban decline in England and recommend practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns and urban neighbourhoods. It will establish a new vision for urban regeneration founded on the principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility within a viable economic and legislative framework.

INTRODUCTION

How can we improve the quality of both our towns and countryside while at the same time providing homes for almost 4 million additional households in England over a 25 year period?

We calculate that, on current policy assumptions, the Government is unlikely to meet its own target that 60% of new dwellings should be built on previously developed land. Achieving this target is fundamental to the health of society. Failure to do so will lead to fragmentation of the city and erosion of the countryside. It will also increase traffic congestion and air pollution, accelerate the depletion of natural resources, damage biodiversity and increase social deprivation.

Achieving an urban renaissance is not only about numbers and percentages. It is about creating the quality of life and vitality that makes urban living desirable. We must bring about a change in urban attitudes so that towns and cities once again become attractive places to live, work and socialise. Since the industrial revolution we have lost ownership of our towns and cities, allowing them to become spoilt by poor design, economic dispersal and social polarisation. The beginning of the 21st century is a moment of change. There are three main drivers which offer us the opportunity for an urban renaissance:

- * the technical revolution - centred on information technology and exchange;
- * the ecological threat - based on greater understanding of the implications of our rapid consumption of natural resources and the importance of sustainable development;
- * the social transformation - flowing from increased life-expectancy and new lifestyle choices.

Towns and cities should be well designed, be more compact and connected, support a range of diverse uses within a sustainable urban environment which is well integrated with public transport and adaptable to change.

The process of change should combine strengthened democratic local leadership with an increased commitment to public participation. There must be an increase in investment in our urban areas, using public finance to attract the market. All government initiatives which affect towns and cities should demonstrate a shared commitment to an urban renaissance.

The renaissance will require a change of culture - through education, debate, information and participation. It is about skills, beliefs and values, not just policies.

The Task Force's report contains over 100 recommendations for change. They cover design, transport, management, regeneration, skills, planning and investment. This Executive Summary presents our main findings and recommendations.

URBAN FACTFILE

- * **Urban areas in England account for 90% of population, 91% of economic output and 89% of jobs.**
- * **The public sector spends over £200 billion a year in English towns and cities and the people who live there- almost 60% of total UK public expenditure.**

- * **Government projections estimate that 3.8million**
- * **extra households will form between 1996 and 2021 - a 19% increase.**
- * **One in four people living in urban neighbourhoods think their area has got worse in recent years, compared with only one in ten who think it has got better.**
- * **More than 90% of the urban buildings and infrastructure that will exist in 30 years time, has already been built.**
- * **Car traffic is predicted to grow by a third in the next 20 years. Average commuting time is 40% higher than 20 years ago.**
- * **Unemployment in inner cities runs at more than double the rate elsewhere**
- * **Forty per cent of inner-urban housing stock is subsidised 'social' housing**
- * **Around 1.3million residential and commercial buildings are currently empty.**

THE KEY THEMES AND MEASURES

Recycling land and buildings

To enable the Government to meet its 60% target for accommodating new dwellings on previously developed land we must make best use of derelict, vacant and under-used land and buildings before we develop on greenfield sites. To achieve this, we should:

- * limit greenfield land releases and channel development into redeveloping urban brownfield sites
- * require public bodies and utilities to release redundant urban land and buildings for regeneration
- * launch a national campaign to bring all contaminated land back into beneficial use by 2030
- * introduce an empty property strategy in every borough
- * harmonise VAT on new build and residential conversions

Improving the urban environment

Urban neighbourhoods should be attractive places to live. This can be achieved by improving the quality of design and movement, creating compact developments, with a mix of uses, better public transport and a density which supports local services and fosters a strong sense of community and public safety. To achieve this, we should:

- * introduce a national campaign to improve urban design, based on better education and training, area demonstration projects, use of spatial masterplans and competitions, and development of Local Architecture Centres
- * use planning and funding guidance to ensure developments are built at a suitable density
- * target 65% of transport public expenditure on projects that benefit pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users
- * create Home Zones that put the pedestrian first in residential areas.

Achieving excellence in leadership, participation and management

Local authorities will lead the urban renaissance. They should be strengthened in powers, resources and democratic legitimacy to undertake this role in partnership with the citizens and communities they

represent. We have to manage our urban areas more effectively and respond to the special needs of council estates and other deprived neighbourhoods. To achieve this, we should:

- * change the ethos of our planning system to make it more positive in securing urban change, devolving detailed planning to the level of the neighbourhood where local people can get more involved in the decision-making process
- * strengthen the strategic management and enforcement roles of local authorities over the whole of the urban environment
- * create neighbourhoods with a mix of tenures and incomes, including opening up council housing to more of the population
- * introduce Regional Resource Centres for Urban Development to help politician, professional and public to gain the skills needed to lead and manage an urban renaissance.

Delivering regeneration

Local authorities and their partners should be given more freedom to target long term resources on areas in need of regeneration. Public investment should be used to lever larger amounts of institutional investment into the process of regenerating our towns and cities. To achieve this, we should:

- * introduce Urban Priority Areas where regeneration can be undertaken by dedicated companies, assisted by streamlined planning decisions, easier land acquisition, tax incentives and additional resources
- * make the need for an urban renaissance a key objective in allocating public expenditure across government
- * establish a Renaissance Fund for local groups to improve their own neighbourhoods.

DESIGNING THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

The quality of the built environment in our towns and cities has a crucial impact on the way they function. Well-designed buildings, streets, neighbourhoods and districts are essential for successful social, economic and environmental regeneration. Recent experience in Dutch, German and Scandinavian cities show that we have fallen a long way behind in quality of urban life.

New urban developments, on brownfield or greenfield land, must be designed to much higher standards if they are to attract people back into our towns and cities. Urban developments should be integrated with their surroundings, optimise access to public transport and maximise their potential by increasing density in appropriate conditions. They should seek diversity; encouraging a mix of

activities, services, incomes and tenures within neighbourhoods. Land must be used efficiently, local traditions respected and negative environmental impacts kept to a minimum. Priority should be given to high architectural standards and to the design of public spaces between buildings where people meet and move about.

Quality of design is not just about creating new developments. It is also about how we make the best of our existing urban environments, from historic urban districts to low density suburbs.

The Government should prepare a national urban design framework, defining the core principles of urban design, and setting out non-prescriptive guidelines showing how good design can support local plans and regeneration strategies. The use of spatial 'masterplans' - a three-dimensional strategy that explores how a new development will work in its wider urban context - is encouraged. This would not only bring greater rigour to the way that public funders and planners assess the likely impact of development, but also create a valuable tool for improving urban design.

Public authorities and regeneration partnerships can help raise the quality of urban design by producing more detailed and comprehensive development briefs. As a further step, we propose that regeneration projects should be made the subject of design competitions. Our site visits to cities in the Netherlands, Spain and Germany have underlined the benefits of well-managed, public competitions in securing better design, as well as value for money.

Public participation is crucial to the design process. We recommend the creation of Local Architecture Centres in our major cities, to encourage stronger public involvement in design issues by sponsoring community projects, exhibitions and seminars.

Main recommendations

- * Introduce a national urban design framework, disseminating key design principles through planning and funding guidance, supported by a new series of best practice guidelines.
- * Undertake a series of Government-sponsored demonstration projects, adopting an integrated approach to design-led regeneration of different types of urban neighbourhood.
- * Require local authorities to prepare a single strategy for their public realm and open space, dealing with provision, design, management, maintenance and funding.
- * Amend planning and funding guidance to improve the use of density standards and to prevent urban development proposals with densities too low to support a sustainable and viable mixed use environment.
- * Introduce a mandatory double performance rating for houses, combining an environmental and a running cost rating, so house-buyers know what level of building performance they are getting for their money.
- * Make public funding and planning permissions for area regeneration schemes conditional upon the production an integrated spatial masterplan.
- * Establish Local Architecture Centres in each of our major cities.

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

Cities, towns and urban neighbourhoods need the right transport and other infrastructure to function as strong economic and social units. But we cannot ignore the environmental and health damage, as well as increasing congestion, caused by growth in car traffic. Our recommendations recognise that one of the best ways to attract and absorb more people into urban areas is to reduce the need for car travel. This requires policies that discriminate in favour of walking, cycling and public transport.

Government must ensure that planners and developers take full account of the types of movement that any new development will generate. Local Transport Plans should be placed on a statutory footing, and required to set specific targets for reducing the length and number of car journeys.

There is no reason why limits of 20mph should not become normal in residential areas and high streets. In addition, we propose legislation enabling residents to have their neighbourhood designated a 'Home Zone' where pedestrians are given priority and cars move at little more than walking pace. We want to see further encouragement for walking by reclaiming space for pedestrians and encouraging street facilities that make walking attractive. Development of comprehensive cycle networks must be another local priority, with clearly defined cycle lanes on busy streets. Local Transport Plans should be required to demonstrate year on year improvement in maximising local access on foot and by bicycle. No urban development or highway project should receive public funding unless it prioritises the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Public transport is currently not good enough to persuade enough people to get out of their cars. Transforming urban transport provision, including better bus services and innovative solutions such as light railways, and trams, will require clear central guidance and a commitment to increasing resources. We may only be able to improve the quality of bus services by moving to well-regulated, franchised services such as those that operate in London.

The Government should commit at least 65% of its transport expenditure over the next ten years to walking, cycling and public transport. Local Transport Plans should set targets for increasing the accessibility and use of public transport. Low income neighbourhoods in particular need access to frequent and affordable bus services.

We can persuade more commuters to leave their cars at home by making public transport routes more accessible, and by prioritising work destinations. We also need to overcome the peak-time congestion caused by growing numbers of school-children being driven to school each day.

Car parking space absorbs vast tracts of urban land that could be better used to improve urban services and the environment. Residential parking in new urban developments should be kept down to one space per dwelling. Where people do wish to drive and park, then the environmental costs of this choice should be reflected in car parking charges.

Main recommendations

- * Introduce Home Zones, using tested street designs, reduced speed limits and traffic-calming measures.
 - * Place Local Transport Plans on a statutory footing, with targets for reducing car journeys, and increasing year on year the proportion of trips made on foot, bicycle and public transport.
 - * Commit a minimum of 65% of transport public expenditure to walking, cycling and public transport over the next ten years.
 - * Extend a well-regulated franchise system for bus services to all English towns and cities if services have not improved substantially within five years.
 - * Set a maximum standard of one car parking space per dwelling for all new urban residential development.
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