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Summary

Roehampton Lane Housing Colony, London (pages 194—202)

In the instance that interests us here London County Council envisaged a housing colony of 1,867 flats to the east of Richmond Park spread over 40 ha (26.7 ha are entirely taken up by a traffic system on the one hand: pathways, roads, etc., and certain public buildings on the other: schools, churches, etc.).

The flats are built up in the following manner:
352 2-room flats
747 3-room flats
615 4-room flats
104 5-room flats and
49 1-room flats for older people.

The 49 1-room flats are sited in the one-storey buildings, the 104 5-room flats in 14 3-storey blocks, 28 4-room flats in 3 3-storey blocks, 28 other 4-room flats in 3 3-storey units and 558 flats also with 4 rooms each in 16 4-storey blocks. 42 maisonnettes with 3 rooms each are sited in a 10-storey block, 375 3-room maisonnettes are in 5 11-storey units and 330 other 3-room maisonnettes are in 15 12-storey blocks (point blocks).

Another 330 2-room flats are sited in these point blocks. Several other 2-room flats (22 in all) are distributed among the 3-storey blocks.

This general arrangement demonstrates that more than half of the flats are maisonnettes and that over half of the flats are also to be found in the point blocks. The planning is extremely skilful: low and high blocks, gardens and the traffic system are sited very well.

The density of habitation is 250 persons per ha, i.e. 10,000 persons for the whole colony.

The "pièce de résistance" of the place is, generally speaking, the point block. The 12-storey blocks are arranged in two groups; the 11-storey blocks in one single group.

All the construction elements of the multi-storey buildings are pre-fabricated:
a) closed elevation elements
b) parapet elements
c) window elements
d) glazing elements (storey high).

The flats are entered from a gallery walk and therefore by way of the living section of the flats with two floors.

The skeleton is made of steel (longitudinal span of 7.32 m). The width of the flats is 3.66 m.

The bedroom section of the flats is set on the upper floor. Nearly all the buildings rest on entirely open porticoes; this is, so to speak, a necessity in the case of multi-storey blocks.

Another detail which is of interest lies in the fact that the proportions of the buildings are based on the Modulor principle of Le Corbusier.

It may be said that the Roehampton Lane colony is a success in every respect.

Colony of individual villas with hotel on the Costa Brava (pages 203—207)

300 individual villas and a hotel as well are envisaged for the magnificent site on the Costa Brava of Torre Valentina, near Palamos, and in addition a garage holding 250 cars. The site is 35,000 m² in extent and extremely expensive for Spain (600 pesetas for one m²). Cars only have access as far as the hotel courtyard. The rest of the road leading to the houses is reserved for pathways for pedestrians.

The villas are entered from the basement and thus the seclusion of the gardens is preserved. The villas are sited on a slope (hence the entrance by way of the basement) and have a splendid view onto the sea. 26 various types of flats are possible according the construction programme. They have up to 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 3 terraces, inner courtyards and other appointments!

The living-rooms are set on the east owing to the very strong sunshine; the bedrooms are on the west.

The premises in question are carried out in brick and concrete. Some pillars are the sole steel elements.

Lichtenbroich Housing Colony (pages 208—211)

The traffic system of this colony is not ensured by means of diverging streets but by a peripheral belt.
In the middle there is a shopping centre, work premises, administrative buildings, police station, welfare centre, a restaurant and several doctors.

The main traffic artery is 7.5 m wide; the streets with houses on them 5.5 m and the pathways 3.5 m. The acoustic problem presented by traffic has been very carefully studied. Demographic differences inevitably lead to variations in construction, and moreover there is the wish of people to possess their own gardens and houses which gives rise to the following principles:

a) Intimacy and a garden for each family (need for separation);
b) Community and spatial junction (social requirements).

A systematic comparison of the principles in force up till now with the new principles possible that have been envisaged by the authors shows that in a large number of sectors grave defects can be eliminated: useless garden pavements, dangerous traffic, arduous stairs, and also with regard to the distance between home and school or home and church, which is generally too great. The separation of road from pedestrian traffic is unusually well demarcated and truly well studied and same holds for the vital and fundamental separation "family—community." B. Pfau's and E. Stelmazyk's study demonstrates the necessity that exists for healthy criticism in the realm of the planning of housing colonies.

Housing Colony with "Good and Cheap" Flats (pages 212—214)

H. Fischli takes up again the subject handled in the issue of September 1958: "Living in the most human way." Here what is in question is the Gwad colony, which has been "publicized far too much and imitated far too little" according to the author. The balance to be attained in the field of planning housing is an arduous one. Only coordination on the part of the public authorities and those engaged in industry and politics allows for the success so ardently desired and so rarely achieved.

Urban Traffic in the Future.
The Necessity of thinking "appropriately" in the field of planinng (pages 215—220)

It is truly astonishing to note that the greater the choice of transport media, and the more perfect they are, the more alarming are our traffic conditions. One might suppose that transport media and their modes of employment would develop in parallel fashion. Unfortunately, just the contrary appears to be the case: to be sure, our means of transport are improving, but actual applications do not seem to have got anywhere. There seems to be one immediate explanation of this state of affairs: for several decades, in fact, nothing or almost nothing has been undertaken; there have been unceasing studies of detailed traffic problems, but never up to the present time has the problem been grasped as a whole. And in this connection the whole is much more important than any details. We are paying dearly today for this lack of synthesis: no more room for parking, congested streets, pedestrians in constant danger, etc.

The individualistic spirit is not likely to be helpful in this state of affairs. Everyone agrees on the fact that something must be done, when urban traffic is involved, but truly appropriate technical solutions cannot and must not be thrashed out by Mr. John Doe. Very often the experts who are really objective and capable—and they are rare—are obliged to yield in the face of political pressure, which is almost always arbitrary in spirit.

What are the main causes of this chaos in traffic planning?

The works foreman, the State, which is concerned with highway projects, practically never troubles itself with general planning on the urban level as far as traffic is concerned. It is therefore practically ignorant on this point.

Planning and Building are only to a certain extent identical from the standpoint of "common sense." "Good sense" alone is not sufficient to replace the overall plans that are nearly always lacking everywhere. The possession of a stomach is no guarantee that one knows the physiology of the digestive process!

We must therefore appeal particularly to city-planning experts if we wish to resolve the urban traffic problem, and not just to civil engineers.

The so-called "practical" outlook is no longer—as one might believe—the last word in the matter of traffic planning. The theoretical outlook is just as vital here.

Architects and engineers are rarely good planners; they stress either the aesthetic side or the technical side of the problem, forgetting far too often the economic and spatiological aspect of the question.

Moreover, the spirit of coordination is lacking nearly everywhere. The teamwork that is absolutely necessary for all projects on this scale often exceeds our practical and economic capacities. Far too often it is political bodies, private companies, clubs and other organizations that "handle" questions that ought to be taken up by an official planning body.

Traffic Needs, Economic Viability and "Appropriate" Choice of Transport Media

The fact that the absorptive capacity of highway traffic depends on the supply of parking space is absolutely obvious. It is less evident that the most ideal traffic network in the world could not in any case feed more traffic into an urban centre than the latter is capable of absorbing.

We can analyze all the highways in the world, but what is the use if the limit of traffic absorption capacity of urban areas, i.e., streets, houses, groups of houses, public squares, etc. has already been attained?

Therefore, to come to any real conception of the urban traffic problem, it will be necessary to raise the following question: "What buildings and what precise functions of these buildings (principal elements of an urban centre) really 'require' traffic, and what kind of traffic?" Has this question ever been seriously posed? Have not people rather chosen this other question, to follow, which is much less dangerous and apparently much more practical:

"How can we 'redispose' the main streams of traffic flow by concentrating them at certain places in such a way as to 'decongest' secondary urban streams?"

The latter question does not get us anywhere—although raised everywhere—since it neglects the main aspect of the problem: capacity of absorption!

If we allow traffic to develop "as it will," we shall never succeed in attaining this capacity of absorption by means of automotive transport (In fact, for that we would have to double the utility surface of our urban centres!). We shall therefore have to come back to public transport if we want to safeguard the economic viability and the sociological function of our cities.

"Continuous and homogeneous" public transport media for the distribution of traffic in high density urban areas.

The result of any objective study proves therefore that only public transport is capable of resolving the traffic problem in high density urban areas. The buildings, shops and other urban functions require, in order to subsist, a certain "degree of traffic." Wherever there are tram stations, underground railway and other means of public transport, and parking space, there is a high degree of traffic. Therefore, the greater the number of circulating persons, the more favourable is the degree of traffic.

It is useless to add that transit traffic does not increase in any way the degree of traffic. We must therefore not confuse "intense traffic" and "degree of traffic." Consequently, it will be necessary, in order for our cities to survive, to place at their disposal an optimum degree of traffic. This degree of traffic cannot be concentrated only at a few points; it must be spread out over a whole area, in order to be profitable.

Only "continuous and homogeneous" means of transport can distribute traffic over an area in a continuous and smooth manner: the "speedwalk" and the escalator, for example.

Only "continuous and homogeneous" means of transports permits the planning of stopping places where desired (practically everywhere). Only this means of transport offers the advantages of public service on the one hand and the advantages of private vehicles on the other (Cf. the project "Speedwalk" for the City of Zurich by Debrunner and Blankart, architects, Henauer & Lee, civil engineers, Institut für Markt- und Raumforschung, economic planners, Schindler & Co. SA, railway cars and lifts and Ventilator SA, ventilation installations, under the direction of J. M. Henry, planner).

Administration Building on the outskirts of the old town of Goslar (pages 221—228)

The history of the administration building of the "Unterharzer Berg- & Hüttenwerke" at Goslar goes rather far back. In 1930 even, the architect Paul Bonatz was assigned the job of working out a plan. However, the Second World War intervened and prevented any further work. Fifteen years later a competition was organized among 10 architects, including Bonatz. The same architects were invited to constitute their own jury, each having 9 points to award to his colleagues. The authors of the 5 best plans were invited to participate in a second competition. The architects eliminated in the first competition, including Bonatz, were invited once again to criticize the entries of the winners under the chairmanship of Bonatz himself. F. W. Kraemer's plan received the award.

After lengthy preliminaries with the client and different corrections of the various plans, construction work was finally got under way in 1957 (this is Kraemer's 8th project!).

The innumerable preliminary studies had paid off: the make-up of the execution plan is clearer, more severe and better elaborated in respect of its functions.

The long years of study were especially advantageous from the point of view of the general disposition of the large buildings, located directly on the periphery of the old town. In fact, the harshness of certain administration buildings might have detracted from the skyline of the old town, or on the other hand, the opposite error might have been committed: too slavish an adaptation to period might have led to a "local traditional" style, which would have been utterly anachronistic and dissonant.

The preliminary competitions had already yielded good plans from this point of view. Nevertheless, the client's decision to separate the ground floor entirely by placing the building on a completely open portico will contribute appreciably to making this plan perfect. In this way, the blocks no longer cut off the road and the view to passers-by. Regular traffic can enter the old town. The unity of function and construction of the 6-storey building and of the 1-storey wing is practically ideal.
All the supporting parts of the building (except the last floor) are of reinforced concrete.
The elevations are covered with prefabricated cement elements and window elements. The articulated pillars as well as the frontal strip of plates are likewise prefabricated. These elements have the advantage that they can be laid up "dry," a great advantage for the rather difficult climate of Goslar; moreover, they are very economical and most advantageous from the static point of view (high degree of hardness).

All the partitions of the building that cannot interfere with the flexibility of the plan are supporting, hence very advantageous construction.

The window elements between the articulated pillars are covered with enamelled plates. Radiators placed behind these elements guarantee perfect heating.

The cost of the building comes to 106 DM per cubic meter, including all the built-in furniture.

The exterior appearance of the building—a consequence of the perfectly logical construction—is very well integrated with the surroundings and, in a certain way, heightens the effect of the historic churches, the town hall and other crumbling edifices of the old town.

The plan was also executed by Ernst Sieverts, Heinz Menzel and Jochen Pysallt, architects; landscape architect: Wilhelm Hübotter.

This building, based on the proportions of the square and double square is a success from every point of view and can be considered one of the best buildings created by contemporary architects.