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Town-planning and Cultural Morphology

by Karl Litz

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If the phenomenon of the town, in the course of history, is partly explicable by politico-military and economic reasons, it is at least equally conditioned by psychological motives: the prestige of the town in so far as it is a unity in multiplicity and a cultural centre. A high level of culture is not to be thought of without the existence of towns. In the past the determining factor with regard to the form of towns has been, in essence, that of religion, whether it be a question of ancient cities (Egypt, Greece, Rome) or, no less strictly, of China, or even of the "radiant" town (monotheism) of the Middle Ages, Christian or Islamic. In each case, the form of the town, to the extent that it projects and reifies the collective unconscious (Jung), obeys what could be called a form of psychological functionalism. Now, since the Renaissance, the religious cohesion of societies has, if it has not vanished, at least given way to that temporal form of faith which Alfred Weber has called "social religion", and up to now it is not apparent that this has created a correlative planning of towns—this is due, perhaps, less to its lack of vigour as a "religion" than to the headlong nature of the industrial revolution. Is this to say that wishing to create (this is what is understood by town-planning) harmonious and healthy towns without first putting our disequilibrated societies in order is a case of putting the cart before the horse? One may think, on the contrary, that treating the symptom is already the beginning of the cure of the trouble and that the "happy transparency" of architecture and town-planning which are thoroughly understood will restore to us that sense of inwardness which we lack.

From Playgrounds to Civic Centres

by Alfred Trachsel

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The problem of the use of leisure is the concern of town-planners in the sense that they have to envisage the provision of playgrounds and leisure centres (for adults also) which, in addition, offer workshops, libraries, etc. In Zurich, for example, the setting-up of 16 centres of this sort is planned (5 are already in existence, 1 is planned and 6 are projected)—these centres will be established and supervised by several organizations working in liaison with Pro Juventute.

Buchegg Civic Centre in Zurich

1958, architect: H. Litz and F. Schwarz, SIA, Zürich

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Leisure centre for an area, with workshops, library, open-air theatre, etc.

"Club 44" at La Chaux-de-Fonds

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Founded in 1944 by 16 industrialists, this club—a real centre for social contact, information and culture, which has no membership conditions as regards status or affluence—has 950 members at the present time. The club is for men, but there are women's days as well. The design of the interior, which was the work of the two Milanese, A. Mangiarotti and B. Morassutti, was carried out by the La Chaux-de-Fonds architect, G. Galli-Ravicini.

Positive Town-planning in Basle

W. Boos, M. H. Burckhardt, E. Egeler, Fl. Vischer, P. Vischer

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Like so many towns of today, the old city-state of Basle is menaced by the banal influences of series of buildings which are intended to shelter an ever-growing population and to drain off—as far as possible—the ever-increasing traffic. In spite of the formation in 1930 of a planning office, this and the competent authorities have not been able to set up an overall scheme, and more often than not have been reduced to playing the part of "firemen" fending off the worst. The problem that exists is to maintain the old town—not as a museum, but as a living entity—and at the same time to create a modern city. To do this, the authors suggest that there should be a reorganization and concentration of powers in order to obtain effective rectification.

Town-planning in the New Rotterdam

by Hendrik Hartsuyker

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Immediately after the destruction (by bombing and fire) of the city in 1940, the municipal authorities, very courageously, prepared for the reconstruction of the town. A planning office, screened from interference from the occupying forces, worked out the first elements of what became the "basic plan" in 1945–46, which became the real basic plan (and of execution) in 1955. Without being able to say that the considerable work thus achieved answers in every way the most pressing ques-

tions of a town-planning which hopes to create a totally humanized "milieu", it is still a fact that the new Rotterdam is a town which is truly of our time, even if the reserves that have to be made show the urgency, from the point of view of the town problem in general, of having recourse henceforth to global solutions of a still greater consistency.

Sculpture on the Public Thoroughfares in the New Rotterdam

by L. J. F. Wijsenbeck

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With the exception of the statue of Erasmus (1621), which was untouched by the bombing but which had to be resited, all the other works of sculpture on the public thoroughfares in Rotterdam date from after the catastrophe. The most important of them is "The Destroyed City" by Zadkine. Others, such as the metal Construction of Naum Gabo, introduce a vertical note in the urban totality. Generally speaking, the problem of the placing of these works has been successfully solved.

Brasilia, Capital under Construction

City-planning: Lucio Costa; architecture: O. Niemeyer

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Brazil is a country with a very unequal population distribution, one half being concentrated in the south-east. In the Brazilian Constitutions of 1889 and 1946 there was envisaged the creation of a capital city more central than Rio. The site chosen for the newly planned capital—Brasilia—is in the central state of Goyaz, at an altitude of 1200 metres; the climate is thus healthy and the region has water resources. Lucio Costa's plan, ranking first in the competition organized in 1956, is, to be sure, somewhat improvised, but it does possess the merit, as was intended, of being a general orientation plan that will permit the future city to develop homogeneously in stages. The completion of the airport now facilitates the transport of construction materials. There are completed at the present time the Presidential Palace, the tourist hotel and a few workers' apartment blocks. On the social planning level, there is envisaged a close integration of residential and industrial districts. Financing is currently being borne by the State and private loans. As for the architecture, Niemeyer, whose buildings always have a plastic quality, was surely predestined to carry out this grandiose assignment, even if it be admitted that in this case the endeavour towards grandeur at times threatens to ignore the human scale and to become an end in itself.