

Summary

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Résumés

Les principes de l'habitation (Blomstedt, pages 107—109).

Notre conception de l'habitation a changé, certes, mais nos habitudes de construction sont restées pour ainsi dire les mêmes; à tel point que l'immeuble actuel ne diffère guère, en principe, de la hutte de nos ancêtres. Cet état de chose ne nous incite-t-il pas à réfléchir et peut-être même à réviser nos principes? Il est évident que nous manquons de sévérité à l'égard de nos immeubles d'habitation. Nous confondons par trop souvent les facteurs essentiels des facteurs secondaires, nous n'approfondissons pas toujours suffisamment le «pourquoi» et le «comment» du problème.

La trilogie homme, nature et habitat se présente à nous dans toute sa complexité dès que nous l'analysons soigneusement. Les plus petites erreurs d'architecture peuvent avoir de graves conséquences, soit physiques, soit psychologiques (p. ex. les conséquences d'une mauvaise isolation acoustique). Les conséquences sont d'autant plus graves lorsqu'il s'agit de l'ensemble d'une agglomération urbaine: milieu qui dans la plupart des cas (bruits, poussière, circulation, etc.) ne convient aucunement à l'épanouissement de l'homme. Il faudra donc à tout prix essayer de remplacer cet espace malsain par un entourage plus favorable. La création de ce milieu adéquat peut être considérée d'ailleurs comme le problème No 1 de l'urbanisme.

L'habitat occupe dans ce milieu «biologique» de l'avenir une place absolument prépondérante puisqu'il est la cellule même de l'espace souhaité. Les buts de l'habitat sont multiples et aucunement simples. Les «bagatelles» les plus infimes du rythme de la vie quotidienne contribuent essentiellement à la formation de la structure habitée. L'habitat est un centre sensitif qui stimule et calme l'habitant, en un mot qui contribue considérablement à l'harmonie de la vie humaine.

Nouveau climat

Nous savons tous que l'habitat est finalement un produit technique de notre civilisation. Le climat qui y règne n'est pas le même que celui de la nature, et cependant il s'en inspire. Grâce à Jean-Jacques Rousseau nous avons retrouvé le contact avec le concept «nature». Tous les architectes sont aujourd'hui certains du fait que la nature est une partie intégrante de l'habitation. Et pourtant, nos villes tentaculaires sont-elles vraiment conçues sur ce principe? Les règlements de construction ne sont-ils pas la pitoyable preuve du contraire?

Psychologie

En étudiant la multitude des critères psychologiques qui influencent notre vie quotidienne, nous nous convainquons facilement de l'importance spirituelle et psychologique de l'habitation. Un appartement mal conçu peut détruire l'harmonie d'une famille; au lieu d'être un stimulant, un catalyseur de la vie.

L'homme et l'architecte

Les éléments qui forment la vie d'une famille sont multiples. Il est d'autant plus indispensable que l'architecte soit versé sur ces questions. Les connaissances psychologiques de l'architecte se reflètent dans ses œuvres. Une porte qui s'ouvre du mauvais côté peut cacher à jamais la jolie vue à travers la fenêtre du living-room! Au véritable architecte de s'en apercevoir à temps! Les erreurs psychologiques les plus infimes peuvent provoquer des dissonances irréparables dans l'harmonie de l'espace habité.

Lumière

De très longues études ont été publiées à propos lumière; aucune pourtant ne traite les relations psycho-physiologiques habitat-lumière. Tous les règlements de construction rencontrés jusqu'à présent sont absolument barbares pour tout ce qui concerne les questions de l'éclairage. Nous sommes persuadés qu'une étude scientifique approfondie de ce problème suffirait pour métamorphoser entièrement nos conceptions de l'architecture; de même pour le problème du bruit. En effet l'habitation doit pouvoir disposer de toute une échelle d'éclairage: de la pénombre discrète jusqu'au plein jour. La répartition «rythmique» de la lumière est une des questions physiques et psychiques les plus importantes de l'habitation. Nous autres Finlandais sommes particulièrement sensibles aux questions de la lumière du jour, car il y a peu de soleil chez nous. Une loi nous interdit en Finlande l'exposition unique au nord des habitations; mais elle n'existe que depuis dix ans seulement!

La terre

Le contact entre homme et terre doit être intensifié par l'aménagement adéquat de l'habitat. Seul ce contact peut redonner à l'homme le sens profond de la nature et de ses origines.

L'homme finlandais et la nature

Les forêts et les lacs finlandais sont merveilleux, et grâce à eux le sens de la nature est resté très vif chez nous. Les ouvriers et employés des grandes villes qui possèdent un petit bateau et même une maison de week-end ne sont pas rares. Nul part ailleurs nous retrouvons une liaison aussi intense entre nature et culture. L'habitation bien conçue doit participer à intensifier les rapports homme et nature. Nos grandes villes surtout ont besoin d'une renaissance naturelle qui d'ailleurs n'a rien de commun avec l'esprit romantique.

Economie et habitation

Aucun argument ne saurait protéger les défauts de nos habitations modernes sans être de mauvaise foi. Aucun homme d'état ou de science n'a le droit de mener l'humanité urbaine à sa perte pour des raisons «économiques». L'industrie de l'automobile augmente sans cesse le confort et la sécurité au bénéfice de sa clientèle. A la base de cette production se trouve un programme bien défini et bien étudié. La production en série ne commence que par la suite. Un peu de bonne volonté suffirait pour déclencher la production en série d'habitations presque parfaites. L'habitation est le miroir du cycle biologique de la vie familiale: condition indispensable d'une véritable architecture.

Le cycle biologique

Le «cycle» biologique de la vie humaine n'a rien de commun avec la conception géométrique du «cercle». Le chemin de l'enfance à l'adolescence, de l'adolescence à l'état d'adulte, la naissance de la famille et le grand âge sont soumis sans cesse à des variations dynamiques. Cela n'empêche cependant pas, au cours des générations, certaines règles bien définies de se former: Ces règles sont très importantes pour l'architecture: conception de l'habitation des parents, des grands parents, conception de l'habitation à fonder. Si nous voulons construire juste, nous devons prendre ce dynamisme en considération. L'étude unique d'appartements existants ne peut mener au résultat attendu. Il faut pour construire juste étudier toutes les valeurs humaines qui créent le concept d'habitation, il faut surtout consulter les jeunes.

Technique de construction

La technique doit rester en contact avec la vie. Elle ne remplit véritablement sa tâche que si elle tient compte de l'avenir: Construire, c'est prévoir.

Connaissances professionnelles

Les conditions de la natation sont en premier lieu: savoir nager. La même chose en architecture: la moindre lacune est très grave. Une connaissance professionnelle sans aucun manque est donc la condition indispensable de tout exercice d'architecte. Le talent y joue un rôle prédominant.

Equilibre et rapports

Partout où il y a un planisme et construction on retrouve certaines «tensions». Ainsi

par exemple tension entre automobiles et piétons. Seule la hiérarchie des modulations possibles de circulation peut rendre l'équilibre à cette tension. N'est-il pas ridicule de parler de colonie d'habitation où piétons (à 5 km/h) et automobiles (à 70 km/h) empruntent le même chemin? he

Maisons-tours d'habitation de la Commonwealth Promenade à Chicago (pages 86—93)

Les quatre blocs de 28 étages en question contiennent 750 appartements. Le rez-de-chaussée offre de la place pour 650 automobiles.

Ces immeubles ont été longtemps l'objet d'études fort poussées. Le confort des appartements y est unique: parois acoustiques, vitres colorées anti-soleil, climatisation, etc. Le confort communautaire n'est pas moindre: magasins, salles de réception, machines à laver automatiques, salle de jeu pour les enfants, etc. L'étude de cette urbanisation de Mies van der Rohe ne peut que nous étonner en bien: les différents plans d'appartement sont d'une qualité absolument surprenante.

Blues Point Maison-tour d'habitation à Sydney (pages 101—103)

Les problèmes principaux à résoudre sont: orientation (pluie, vent, soleil). L'immeuble en question compte 132 appartements. Chaque appartement possède une place de parking; 40% de ces places sont sous toit. Chaque appartement possède un balcon. Les façades sont faites en éléments de béton préfabriqués. La cuisine occupe une position-clé dans le plan: elle est combinée avec un économat et une buanderie. Le rez-de-chaussée de l'immeuble est conçu pour quelques magasins et le parking des automobiles.

Bâtiment d'Agence d'Assurance à Rio de Janeiro (pages 104—106)

Si nous montrons cet immeuble administratif dans ce cahier réservé spécialement aux problèmes de l'habitation, c'est du fait que la disposition technique de ses façades présente pour nous des possibilités d'application très intéressantes dans le domaine de l'habitation. Il s'agit en quelque sorte d'un complément des immeubles de Mies van der Rohe et Seidler publiés ici.

M125 Placards-parois (pages 110—113)

Les meubles de Marcel Breuer, Le Corbusier et Mies van der Rohe des années 1930 comptent aujourd'hui encore parmi les meilleurs: ils ont fait école.

La petitesse des appartements modernes et le style de vie ont changé entièrement le meuble de nos jours. Le concept «luxe» s'est, lui aussi, métamorphosé: le plus grand luxe n'est plus le meuble même. C'est l'espace vide autour des meubles qui est devenu le plus coûteux. Par conséquent un des rôles principaux du meuble moderne sera: gagner de la place!

Faculté de Droit de l'Université de Barcelone (pages 114—120)

Il est important d'insister sur le fait que l'Espagne n'est pas — comme on pourrait croire — aux confins de notre civilisation moderne, c'est-à-dire incapable de créer quoi que ce soit de valable. La faculté de droit de l'université de Barcelone en est la meilleure preuve.

Summary

Principles of Dwelling (Blomstedt, pages 107—109).

I believe that we have by now arrived at a new conception of the home and of housing in general. However, we have to consider whether we have really taken into account all aspects once we have come to our new point of view, for it is conceivable that we are carrying along with us a great deal of useless baggage. Naturally we all know how important housing is for the individual, the family and society at large, but we have not come to grips with basic underlying causes. "The houses we live in are outmoded huts in comparison with our inner conception of what a dwelling should be." This statement appears in the notebook of the prominent Finnish poet, Edith Södergran. It expresses an intimation of something new that compels us to think out afresh the principles underlying housing and the pre-conditions of every project or new plan.

Pre-conditions

It seems to me, in particular, that we impose insufficiently severe standards on our housing. Far too often do we permit purely secondary factors to limit the horizons of our architectural thinking.

Housing has evolved in gradual stages. It has also at certain times come to a complete standstill, as, for example, among nomads or peasants, living in conditions where there is always sufficient space and light. In such an environment the problem of housing as such was merely subsidiary, for men lived at all times in close contact with nature and subject to all the vicissitudes of the weather. As man's relationship to the natural environment becomes more problematical, housing becomes fraught with special difficulties. The relationship between man and nature—be it ever so intimate—is more or less elastic, and we never know when we are disturbing it.

Heikki von Hertzen, the founder of the garden city of Tapiola, has given unequivocal expression to this fact in the following: "The great cities of our time are great destroyers of human beings. They act like magnets that attract the most vigorous elements of the population to themselves—in order to destroy them in the shortest possible time. As is proven by statistics, 75% of the population of a great city dies out after four generations. Families simply fail to perpetuate themselves. They are unable to survive the relentless pressures exerted by big city life.

The only thing that maintains cities in existence is continuous migration from the countryside. All this demonstrates that the present-day city by no means offers human beings a tolerable biological environment—characterized as it is by frightful traffic conditions, unending nervous tension and a smothering pall of harmful gases, soot and smoke, and dust. It therefore has to be replaced by something better. The construction of housing occupies a key position in the creation of this new human environment. It is my belief that the creation of this environment that, both from a biological and a social point of view, is tolerable to human beings constitutes the main objective of present-day city-planning as well as of that of the future (III. 2). All other interests will have to be subordinated to this consideration." In the everyday life of human beings there is such a great number of periodic, organic phenomena that it would be rash to assume that the architecture of human dwelling places has now reached its definitive stage. We have first to consider how far everyday rhythms are dependent on the structure of the universe as a whole.

Dwelling places ought to bring people into contact with the living cosmic process of the universe; otherwise man and his dwelling will resemble a closed piano, whose strings after a time become incapable of vibrating. It should always be borne in mind that I regard man and his dwelling place as an integral whole. The dwelling can be regarded as an extension of the human body with its sense organs (III. 3). The house where he lives is a man's sensory focus, the function of which is to capture the stimulating and soothing impulses necessary to a full and harmonious life.

A properly designed house therefore calls for "musical" relationships between man and external nature (III. 4). In his everyday life man follows the basic rhythm of day and night; his house reflects the rhythmic variations of the weather and the orderly march of the seasons.

New Climate

Technical civilisation and everything it puts at our disposal entail a radically new conception of housing and produce a new "climate" in dwelling places. This new climate, however, is not only a product of technology. Technology in this case is merely a means to an end, in so far as it can be of any use at all in this connection. We have Rousseau to thank for the fact that man has again found his roots in nature. We are caught up at the present time in the midst of the architectural revolution, which in some respects was first heralded by Rousseau. I do not know of any well known contemporary architect who is not an ardent advocate of Rousseau's ideas on Nature. We all know that our houses are a part of nature, that in fact they ought to be merely a specialized part of the natural environment (III. 5). Nevertheless, we go on building our cities in accordance with long outmoded notions of town-planning, whereby contact between man and nature is the more neglected the farther cities spread over the landscape. Our wretched building ordinances are leading slowly but surely to the most pernicious results.

Psychology

When we examine closely all the many factors that go to make up the manifold variety of our everyday life, we soon come to a realisation of the psychological and spiritual significance of the dwelling place. A badly planned house can all too easily disrupt the smooth flow of everyday life. The dwelling place, however, ought to be a stimulating positive factor in life. At home, in the bosom of his family, a person ought to be able to relax after the nervous tension of his job.

The human individual and the Architect

Once we realise how many elements go to make up our everyday lives we understand how pernicious the results can be when architects are people who have only a limited knowledge of human psychology. An architect's psychological grasp is clearly expressed in his projects. The plan for a house when in the paper stage always seems to be crystal-clear in conception—as it very well should be—but the finished building must not produce an effect of lifeless coldness. The real expert will see at a glance whether the project in question is an organically conceived natural crystallisation of ideas or just routine architectural hack work. For example, I look, let us say, at a plan by one of my assistants and see that a door opens in what I think is the wrong direction. This perhaps has no practical importance, but it does have a psychological significance. I notice that if it opened on the other side it would make possible a fine view through the window out on to the beautiful landscape. A few badly placed hinges would therefore have been the cause of a slight psychological discord throughout the lifespan of the house.

Light

Light is a prime necessity for human existence. Extended studies have been devoted to the effect of light on plants, but, to the best of my knowledge, there is available no single work treating the psychophysiological effect of light in the human dwelling place. All the building regulations known to me are, with regard to the lighting problem, positively barbaric. I am convinced that a thorough-going scientific investigation of this problem would suffice to condemn all the principles underlying our building codes. (The same thing applies to acoustics. Just think of the nervous afflictions brought on by the

various kinds of din that surround us! A motorcycle crossing Paris at night is capable of waking no fewer than 200000 people.)

The dwelling place must be active and positive with regard to light conditions. Every home must have available a whole range of lighting possibilities, from semi-darkness to moderately bright daylight. And what is more, this range of possibilities must be flexible as circumstances and needs change.

Light is such an important element that every home ought to be so planned that adjustments can easily be made to the rhythm of day and night and to seasonal changes as well as to the changing needs of the family. In our far-northern country, Finland, we feel an imperious need to let what little sunlight we have in our winter penetrate the most remote corners of our interiors (III. 6). However, only a few buildings actually permit this. The rhythmic distribution of light is one of the most important physical and psychological problems in all countries. Solutions to this problem naturally vary widely, depending on latitude, and sometimes even appear to be contradictory. It goes without saying that too much light too can be deleterious to the human organism.

As Heikki von Hertzen has said, the city is not a favourable environment, partly owing to bad distribution of light. I have no doubt that coming generations, basing themselves on the experimental sciences, will strike out in radically new directions when it comes to the light problem.

The residents of inadequate housing are forced to seek elsewhere the light and the bodily relaxation that are vital necessities; this explains the curious fact that on week-ends all available transportation facilities are mobilized to liberate people from their everyday surroundings.

There will be a sharp decrease in the pressure on overcrowded trains and highways when our homes and neighbourhoods become "centres of light therapy." As a matter of fact, it is only in the last ten years that a Finnish building law has existed that prohibits the erection of buildings with north light only. Still more lamentable conditions prevail in many other countries.

The Earth

A human being, whether young or old, has his ultimate roots in the soil and experiences a real need to be in intimate touch with the earth. Only through the earth is human existence brought into contact with the rhythm of the cosmic pulse.

The Finns and Nature

In our forested country, which is also covered with lakes, men have remained in close contact with living nature (III. 7). City-dwellers, whether middle class or workers, get out of the city as frequently as possible during the summer months. The physical conditions of the country, far more than social conditions, have contributed to our remarkable fusion of primeval nature and civilisation. We are very fortunate that nature and urban civilization are still closely integrated in our country. Naturally enough, contact between man and nature takes different forms in a built-up urban region but in a garden city it is sufficient to have available a few square meters of ground where residents can plant gardens.

These concrete personal contacts between man and nature should nowadays no longer be dismissed as holiday romanticism. They are a permanent component of our everyday lives.

The moment we think clearly about the future we realize that a city that disregards these contacts, which are so vital to harmonious living, cannot fulfil its function and purpose as the educator of mankind.

The Economy and Home Building

There are surely no economists that would advocate the view that a gradual degeneration of the human species as a consequence of faulty housing could be defended on economic grounds. Also we would find no statesman, sociologist, medical man or architect that would champion such a point of view. All large-scale modern production is based on careful preliminary experiment and planning that takes all conceivable human factors into consideration. The same should apply to home building. The well-planned home is the fundamental unit in any healthy society. Decent homes in sufficient numbers could almost lead to the disappearance of hospitals. If only a tiny

fraction of the sums spent on building (under present circumstances) were devoted to building in line with the above-mentioned principles, it would be possible, within a very short time, to proceed to the mass production of first-class housing units (III. 9-12).

A good dwelling place is in the last analysis a modest affair that should not be impossible to realize. The demands made on a well-designed home are clear and generally valid. Purely personal requirements call for only slight expenditures. They are really trifling.

Society will have to become aware of the fact that home construction must reflect the biological cycle of the family. Only then will building become true architecture.

Biological Cycle

The biological cycle of human life is neither a static circle nor a related figure. The way from childhood to youth, to adulthood, to the starting of a family, with all the many transformations within the family, and finally, to the exit from the cycle, old age, passes through dynamic variations. The conception underlying their parents' house always remains strange somehow to the younger generation, and the household appointments of the grandparents often give rise to ridicule. The younger generation often waits from ten to twenty years; but their views on housing are ultimately realized with the inevitability of the laws of nature, on all important and essential points. This tradition of continuous transformation has a very positive effect on architecture. It constitutes—albeit in various ways—the basis of every kind of home architecture. We must take this dynamic situation into account if we seek to make any forecasts about home building. Exclusive study of present-day housing resembles the study of fossils. This also explains why an investigation of the housing question that proceeds from existing constructions leads inevitably to disappointing results. The problem has to be tackled on a much deeper level, i. e., with an investigation of fundamental life values and the changing needs of organic family life. Young people too must be called upon to express their viewpoint, as in this matter they too are experts. If we base our considerations on current building, even our most strenuous efforts will eventuate in mere "fossil structures," which will only continue the process of degeneration of the human species. It would then be better to make modern man a dweller in tents; then at least—at the cost of civilization—he would be in touch with a certain biological cycle.

Construction Engineering

I have already mentioned the part played by technology in the organization of the home of the future. At this juncture, however, we have to make a sharp distinction between technology and construction. Technology becomes effective owing to the elements and aims of life in progress. It includes construction techniques in a general sense. Technology has to remain in the closest contact with life; it fulfils its purpose when it not only takes into consideration the demands made by life for what is now necessary but also demands for what will in the future be necessary (for the architect's work always involves a certain element of prediction).

Equilibrium and Tension

In the building of a house as in the planning of a housing colony there arise negative tensions. The most serious is the tension existing between the technical and the cosmic-organic realms.

Consider motor traffic in relation to pedestrians and the lack of mutual comprehension between the latter and drivers. We are convinced that only the creation of a hierarchical order will satisfactorily lead to a harmonious solution of this conflict. The pedestrian embodies a vitalistic value, the motor-car a mechanical value. The car is a heavy vehicle producing harmful gases and moving at a speed of 30 to 130 km/h. With this in mind, it is ridiculous to speak of a proper housing colony so long as pedestrians and motor traffic are supposed to circulate at the same level. The tension existing between two such different realms of movement can only lead to fatal accidents. This situation can only be countered by an architectural solution incorporating motion, speed and time. The various kinds of movement must be separated in such a way that every point of possible collision is eliminated and a sufficient number of safe points of intersection are created.

There are other tension factors working against the realization of adequate housing conditions. There are contradictions between legislation and the architect's professional conscience. And finally, life itself creates tensions which men are ever stimulated to resolve.

High-rise apartment houses on Commonwealth Promenade in Chicago (pages 86-93)

These four 28-storey blocks contain 750 apartments. The degree of comfort achieved here is unique: sound-proof partitions, coloured anti-glare window panes, air-conditioning, etc. The public facilities such as shops, reception rooms, laundromats, etc. are up to the same high standard. The various apartment plans by Mies van der Rohe are astonishingly good.

Blues Point, High Rise Apartment House in Sydney (pages 101-103)

This apartment house has 132 flats. Every apartment has a balcony. The elevations are of prefabricated concrete elements. The kitchen, occupying a key position in the plan, is combined with a pantry and a laundry. Ground-floor intended for shops and parking.

Insurance building in Rio de Janeiro (pages 104-106)

Although this is an office building, it is included in this issue reserved for housing problems because the arrangement of its elevations offers interesting possible applications to residential buildings.

M125 "Wohnbedarf" wall cupboards (pages 110-113)

The small size of modern apartments and our style of living have entirely changed the design of modern furniture. "Luxury" nowadays no longer inheres in the furniture itself but in the space surrounding it. Therefore one of the main functions of modern furniture will be: to save space!

Faculty of Law of the University of Barcelona (pages 114-120)

It should always be borne in mind that Spain has not been left behind by the march of civilization: here, in the Faculty of Law of the University of Barcelona, we have the proof of this fact.