

## ARCHITECTURE THE USEFUL AND UNIVERSAL ART

Earlier reflections, recent thoughts and references to the Swedish debate on architecture today

Introduction:

### 1. ARCHITECTURE – EXTRAVAGANT GESTURES OR USEFUL ART?

#### The Nature of Art

Architecture arises as human beings change the landscape, erect buildings and towns with streets, squares, gardens and furniture and other tools for satisfying their many needs and when they link these with the potent threads of their lines of communication.

It is everywhere with us, is a vital influence on our lives and a major expression of our culture, the most extensive and universal of the arts. It is experienced and used by all

It is the art of building communities, and this is true whether or not architects are involved in its creation.

Likewise we must never forget that architecture differs from all other arts in that it is "brukskonst", the art of that which is useful. It is the usefulness, the functional aspect, - that rich and all embracing weave of practical and spiritual satisfactions, - which is the very special characteristic of this exceptional art that both protects our puny bodies and expresses our most inspired dreams.

There are therefore exceptional responsibilities for all who partake in building our environment, and they should consider with the utmost seriousness what their most important objectives should be.

#### The Expression of a Culture and of its objectives

The great Art and Architecture of antique cultures, of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, was involved in glorifying the persons and institutions of a powerful elite, and largely ignored the fate of the underprivileged majority of humanity. It was believed that this was a natural order ordained by man and God, and the great monuments were therefore a true expression of this belief. Meanwhile "people" themselves built for their own needs with understanding, economy and charm.

We must with equal sincerity express the important beliefs of our own time.

This being so, it should be a matter of great concern to observe now – in an age which professes profound belief in equal human rights and democracy, and when scientists, authors and the media inform us of deprivation and the pressing needs of a majority of the inhabitants of most countries of the world – that such great resources of endeavour and finance are spent on a few offices, civic buildings, churches, museums and other exceptional monuments, and so little of exceptional and humane quality can be discovered on the numberless dwellings, work places and other buildings for the very real needs of the vast majority of people.

Despite the unparalleled resources and the new techniques, materials and aesthetics of our present day architecture we see as in earlier ages, a few exotic monuments, but as never before we see widespread inferior environment in our towns and villages.

In view of this fact it would seem surprising that often architects, clients, critics and the architectural press show great interest in the form and philosophies of the exotic buildings, I question therefore whether we are more involved in architecture which betrays the humane and democratic beliefs and dreams of our culture; or if alternatively such architecture – of all arts – is belief in inequality and exclusive privilege?

Are we seduced by the proficient beauty of modern or post-modern aesthetics and is our capacity for critical evaluation thereby dulled? Are we naively unconscious of the important messages that architecture so precisely communicates or is dishonesty a basic characteristic of our culture?

Architecture, like the shaft of an axe, must beautifully and precisely symbolise its own good reasons for its necessary existence, and insight and sincerity will tell us which reasons are good.

For what good reason then should we architects spend the invaluable resources of time and intellectual and emotional energy in involving ourselves in battles over what may well prove to be the cults and fashions of a disoriented age. Why should we interest ourselves in the present-day masters of monumentalism – those great "dinosaurs" who have not realised that for satisfying the real needs of the real world they are ill-adapted, but who may regrettably survive since the powers of an age so often ignore its true needs?

## The Academic Tradition

The academic tradition has often been an important factor in isolating artists and architects from the users of the built environment. Deeply involved in labyrinths of abstruse dialogue within a limited circle of true believers, architects and critics become members of a cult that has its own high priests and proselytes and uses its own secret language, a language that arouses the admiration of the initiates but excludes outsiders. Such cults and languages usually express concern for the common good but in fact give rise to an isolated and exclusive society for mutual admiration.

## An alternative

Since humanity in the eighteenth century discarded the medieval realm of mysticism and developed a science and system for studying the physical world the results have been sensational. Humanity has more recently commenced the careful and systematic study of us, the human beings. This continues and careful search into the realms of anthropology, sociology and psychology and the painstaking checking of results will with time lead to equally sensational realisations. The results of these will be of vital importance for architecture and community planning but can also be used for manipulating citizens.

In the meanwhile we architects must seek such knowledge wherever it is to be found, use it and, foremost, use our training, intuition, sensibilities and sympathy for people to imbue our fulfilment of very real and often prosaic needs with a poetry which illuminates those important realities with which we work, which tells of the dreams of justice and equality of which we so often speak. Also as citizens we must work for the better political, economic and administrative instruments that can ease our task in making reality of these dreams.

In this we must clearly realise that our hope is for relevant change, and our allegiance therefore with radical rather than conservative philosophies, with the very real needs of the needy and underprivileged rather than with the profitable commissions and luxurious needs of those who are powerful and rich.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF MODERNISM

This can be defined as the development of modern thought which commenced in antique Greece, or as that which followed the birth of modernism in art in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or, for architects with the fifty years of functionalism, both true and bastardised.

But to understand recent developments, a more relevant perspective would commence in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of the modern community and culture and of what has been called "western civilisation-project". Capitalism was its economic and industrialisation its technical principles, and the belief that it had become possible to achieve democracy and every persons happiness was its progressive myth.

It is these, the credos of modernism, which are now in doubt. Has the "civilisation project" failed or is it only incomplete. Opinions vary. But few deny that the West, and with it humanity, is in a state of crisis, a crisis which applies more to the cultural, social and political, than to the economic spheres.

## 3. FORMATIVE FORCES

Clearly it is not only architects who give form to architecture. They themselves are formed by the culture they live in and unconsciously or with intent they hold a mirror to the societies' culture and values and to the forces, which tend to steer these. Especially in this age of transition it can be of value to consider what such forces might be.

## Culture and The New Patrons

Rather than speaking of capitalism crisis many consider this economic system to be functioning more effectively and uncompromisingly than ever before. Capital moves freely over national boundaries and customs barriers in the age of computer transfer, multinational corporations and consortiums. In this condition of freedom and intensive activity the corporations are by commissions, sponsoring and other methods established an ever-growing influence over art and culture. As all patrons in all times, their patronage is far from disinterested, and the creations of the artists must, consciously or not, further the aims of the patrons be they churches or kings or public and private corporations. This applies not least to architecture, which is that art which stands nearest to capital and its needs and methods.

In architecture as in other arts, the major part must unfortunately be considered as "low" or "trivial art" but it is hardly this that interests the economic power centres and for this reason the above questions are of import for the "best" creators of "good" architecture and for our understanding of their work.

(Tage Wiklund)

### Architects and the New Patrons

That which unites Habermans and Lyotard is that both regard post modernism from a political perspective and consider it to have a much wider import than only the artistic. The aesthetic revolt can either be a threat to basic values or give hope for a radical social process.

A factor which will probably influence Scandinavian attitude to post-modernism is without doubt the innocent belief in social good sense as a tool for the development of that which is good, true and beautiful.

Are we interested now – and not long afterwards as with functionalism – to know which forces in society we serve? Then it is vital that we realise that all juggling with internal “isms” and architect-jargon is less than fruitful.

### The Transformation of Philosophies

Modernism first fastened in the web of a cubistic style dogma and later sold itself progressively to the production apparatus. This selected those technical aspects of functionalism which served its purposes and rejected the social cultural and aesthetic elements that were so important in the early years of the movement, and most architects became “believers” or just implemented the programme they received.

Observing this we must realise the imminent risk that post-modernism may lose the same battle and rapidly become the servant of the sales and PR apparatus – a more modern and sophisticated branch of the same powers structure as before. The facade – dressing and scenographic aesthetic observable today will be most sympathetic to the superficial but intensive interest in “image”, packing-art and marketing-psychology which inspires Commerce irrespective of any unique quality or lack of it in the product.

### The Post Modern Condition

Perhaps this should be our concern rather than the forms of post Modernism in its search for an identity.

The simultaneous uncertainties of the change from Industrial to Information Society and the loss of faith in the benefits of an ever more complex technology, in the rule of reason and in a better future, is combined with the disturbing exploration of the new relationships between man and woman, old and young, employer and employee as well as between ethnic groups in the increasingly mixed societies of International Mobility. These are a few of the important aspects of the post modern condition. Can it be such that have lead to loss of faith in old utopias, absence of new ones and the tendency to disintegration of societies?

Clearly architecture and planning will and must change in such a world and the new freedom to explore new ways is both most positive, exciting and natural to the condition.

It remains for practitioner of the art to choose his path in this labyrinth when he stands at his drawing board.

Be it by understanding, faith or the conservatism of age I am still convinced that with an intimate combination of reason, intuition and sensibility humanity has the potential of solving much of its great problems.

Whilst, unfortunately, I am not convinced that it will have the maturity and therefore the will to do so (and much in modern society conspires against the development of such maturity) I will in my work endeavour to maintain my faith and rather than increase the chaos with chaotic communities and an over-emphasis of the desirable quality of pluralism, I will strive for permanence, a comprehensible “harmony with variations” with occasional but not frequent eccentricities, and with an architecture which expresses hope for the future.

During the 1930s to the 1970s, many architects and planners were deeply involved in social problems. When now these seem so much more complex than we realised, many architects have retreated to the aesthetic barriers and thereby their resistance to manipulation can become weakened.

Also aesthetics are important and post-modernism is a challenge to us to question our dogmas, to seek new knowledge and deeper understanding.

## Style Debate, an Alibi for Second Rate Architecture?

(Björn Linn)

We all know that the major part of contemporary urban environments is depressingly dull; can we enliven them by borrowing forms from the past and playing with them? It could be a genial, simple and cheap way of improving environments which we all experience as unsatisfactory. Columns and arches can be produced industrially.

The forms exist and only need to be manufactured in the new materials such as concrete. Thereby relieved of their original so important and dignified role as momentous inventions in the art of supporting the imposing weights of buildings they can be deployed in a light-hearted and irresponsible (and unfortunately often incompetent) scenographic game. Similar use can be made of the forms of Art Nouveau or Art Deco or of Folk-Architecture.

Without greater effort we can create urban environments, which "give us identity and security by recreating architectural forms by which we have been surrounded since the beginning of civilization. Post-Modernism will also recreate for us the enclosed space and symmetrical harmonious elevations" (Brunnberg)

But what is the import of facade architecture and enclosed space?

Ricardo Bofill whose Stockholm project fired the debate in Sweden can be taken as an excellent example. Comparing his "romantic modern" Walden 7 near Barcelona with his "Classical" housing in Paris, we find in both cases massed buildings around cramped courts. In our eyes clear and hard over exploration.

Walden moreover which is unsafe and uninhabitable was in my opinion beautiful as sculpture. I should, - in one tenth of scale on a pedestal - have enriched our life as beautiful sculpture instead of impoverishing it as bad architecture. The Paris housing, in contrast to Walden, being well built and less uninhabitable unfortunately creates an impression of cynicism rather than of great care.

#### 4. THE ARCHITECTURE PROBLEM

The problems of architecture today is not those style problems, which occupy so much of our thoughts, but rather characteristics of the whole process from first briefing and sketch to occupancy - or perhaps photography!

In the initial brief as in the later stages of their project we find too often a production apparatus with enormous production capacity but without a guiding vision, without deep belief in other objectives than sales and profitability and this dilemma is compounded if the architects are more interested in "symbolic people" with "symbolic" needs than in real people with real needs, or if they largely practice architecture as a business.

#### Aesthetic and Style Architecture

Bofill and others mean that they give the environment and inhabitants an identity by returning to classical forms. They also subscribe to a monumental language. But it seems most doubtful whether monumentality is of value for dwelling environments. It is clear that a monumental building makes an impact on the observer at the first confrontation, and surprise can be a very positive experience. For those who work or live there however this experience soon vanishes. Permanent value is the feeling that the environment is positive and accommodating for the life they wish to live, that their environment has been the subject of care and understanding from the designer rather than that they have been placed in a stage set.

The other characteristic of monumentality, that by exaggerated size in the building and its elements the visitor is felt to be belittled, has always been used by powerful individuals or institutions in a society. In offices or housing - as in palaces, it can be used to increase the status of the person or the group, to fortify their ego, and give them a feeling of superiority over their peers. This concept of superficial prestige, of "status", is of doubtful human value but very much part of marketing psychology.

Why and for whom then should the architect be designing?

When research shows that elevations are experienced positively if they are articulated and embellished with bay windows and decoration, then just this is done on any and every occasion. If enclosed courts or squares are in demand, such are built, but often show little understanding of who and how many people might - or might not - use them and what their needs could be.

If architecture is more concerned with forms or empty gesture of life rather than with life itself, it can never be of lasting value.

Society has become ignorant of what environmental values can mean for people's lives, commerce and uninvolved designers peddle nostalgia or false luxury as a packaging of second-rate plans and structures, and the users become uninformed of what they might demand.

## Architectural Philosophies and Cultural Regions

Certain of the current philosophies strongly express the regional culture of the philosopher. Do we desire a universal culture or regional variation?

Robert Venturi, for example, that gifted designer, has also formulated a philosophy. This is further illustrated in the work of Frank Gehry.

It is an architecture and philosophy which would seem to crystallise the fragmented structure of most American cities.

Venturi talks of "Learning from Las Vegas". Clearly his experience of this settlement differs totally from mine. Are we just different people or are we from different cultures? Do we learn very different things?

I came to Las Vegas as should be – over the desert pass in the evening light and there in the sterile desert valley glittered the "Best Nest of Sin in the World", fulfilling all my expectations for intensive enjoyment of visual stimulation and moral indignation.

I should have turned and left, - not to avoid sin but to avoid disillusionment.

Las Vegas and the "five mile strip" was for me only a mess and a dreadful bore of tatty hotels and tatty churches and tatty parking lots, sporadic neon and bored disillusioned people pulling on endless rows of one-armed bandits in tatty hotel foyers. All sadness and no fun.

If there is any point in sin it should surely be entertaining?

Sodom and Gomorra must have fun for Rachel, since she took the risk of turning to look once more. She would not have turned round to look at Las Vegas when she left.

Compared with the Ginza, Shinjukia or Asaksa in Tokyo, it was for me boringly provincial, incompetent and ugly and most townships deserts were poor variations on a similar theme. I have suffered similar disappointments in Florida.

It was NOT my model for architecture or community planning, but since my delight is a world of differing cultures I could hope that Americans are happy with and with greater success can cultivate the American city, but equally I could hope that in Europe we can appreciate and revive many of the undeniable and most specific qualities of cities of the Old World.

Not for me however, are the Baroque town plans of Europe or the Imperial city of ancient Peking – those expressions of might. I would find the mediaeval city more apt for democracy should I seek a model. In these we find individual buildings expressing great power, but the city is the result of and expresses a multitude of decisions and therefore a multitude of varying situations, experiences, usefulness and creates the aesthetic of discovery and surprise.

## 5. THE POETRY OF ARCHITECTURE

Beauty and art are essential experiences for all people be they "sophisticated" or "primitive" who are not merely struggling to survive and a fundamental characteristic of all art is that, whether we realise it or not, it communicates concepts and beliefs, it comments on our present and future life.

Architecture is in no way an exception to this rule. It is therefore pleasurable to observe that there are architects and others with a genuine interest in all the human and social qualities of architecture and in the special poetry which can arise out of these. Architecture becomes involved in basic human needs partly out of intrinsic interest, and partly prodded by the increasingly sophisticated requirements of government's statutory and funding institutions. This can be observed in furnishable rooms, useful kitchens and improved work-environments in factories and offices; in better places for the creative indoor and outdoor activities of adults and small children; in sociable public furniture in the shade or sun; in the rights of the under-privileged and minorities an in economy in the use of energy and other resources.

It is very "different" architecture that arises from such considerations. I find here the important dividing line between the smooth beauty or sterility of "production-line" and "international" architecture or the eclecticism of the "baroque-modern", "organic", or "nostalgic" trends on the one hand, and on the other hand a truly modern architecture for the troublesome realities of the troubling worlds in which we live. Usually it is the role of Public Institutions together with sociologists, architects and others – not of Commerce, - to establish such values.

Great is the need for inspired artistic invention which stems from a deep feeling for such modern insights and humanistic hopes, of humble, masterly and compassionate creations which are as moving as those which sprang from inspired faiths and dreams of other times, as moving as the utility building created by anonymous peasants or master-builders in previous ages.

There are many historic masterpieces erected for the glorification of the proud and opulent institutions of religious or temporal power, and the most gifted architecture of modern times, works of the great and lesser masters of the modern movement, have largely glorified the powerful and wealthy institutions of this corporate age.

When will we recognise the inspired expression of our dreams of true liberty, equality and fraternity?

## Aesthetics and the Creation of Architecture

Knowledge of the principles of aesthetics in architecture must be sought in history, in our own experiences and in the humanistic sciences, and each method is a necessary complement to the others. The value of meaning and of each must be well understood. For example, the lessons of history: memories indeed are part of our heritage, but memories must be complete. We see the beauty of the posts and beams of Greece, of the arches vaults and domes of the Arabs and of Europe. Consciously or not, we realise that they spring from limitations and genial inventions in the art of building; we feel the completeness and the dignity of their role. Deprived of their vital purpose of most aptly and economically supporting the imposing weight of a building they become partial memories. Impoverished, they falsify the reality of architecture, the most concrete of arts, and imitate the very different purposes, the revealing magic and pregnant illusions of sculpture and painting or theatre - or those arts which deepen our understanding of realities by evoking that which they are not.

In architecture such illusions may become "style", or can be enjoyed as the gaiety of occasional "follies", as a rare spice but never the daily bread of our cultural diet.

In music the careful study of harmony and of rhythm has expanded, not limited, the scope for intuition. We must, like musicians, attain a greater understanding of the experiences of our art; the principles of composition, of the different realms of harmony and contrast (and when and why they should be used); the formation and experience of indoor and outdoor "rooms", the impact of light and shade, of form and materials, of texture and tactility, our experience and structure, of real or subjective lightness and weight, and of rhythms and how they lead to stimulation or tranquillity in the human soul. We must learn of sounds and acoustics and how they change a room, of how the presence of people will transform the abstraction of "space" and out of it create the warm presence of "place", transform "house" into "home", and as in a "ballet of life" we must understand the movement of people through the spaces we create.

## The Concept of Functionalism

Since I would consider myself a letter-day Functionalist, I must define my understanding of the concept. It must be clearly understood that for me Functionalism is not a style but a method of thought, a work-process which can increase our understanding of the activity in which we are involved. By no means should it be identified with the limitations of understanding or with the plans and styles of its earlier years.

Those were the early attempts systematically to apply planning and architecture ideals which included social, aesthetic, political and scientific elements. The limitations of the Charter of Athens and other concepts, as well as the impossibility at that time foreseeing the fundamental changes of the following epoch and their consequences are but one aspect – though typical – of the diverse processes which have led to the great problems which beset our age.

Functionalism, as I understand it, may not be discarded in favour of the uncertainties of mysticism or dogma. It must ever be widened and deepened. Hypothesis and invention, experiment and careful checking of results must follow one another, and knowledge be sought from all disciplines.

## Five unacknowledged and Powerful Generators of Form

With some justifications it could be said that it is not architectural philosophy which is today the important instrument of the change which affects my architecture but the insights of scientists, economists, philosophers, authors and institutions of political and economical power. The special dynamic for architectural change has come when such insights have been formalised in rules and building laws and supported by cheap finance.

For the present purpose I will select five factors as typical agents of this architectural change in Sweden.

### 1. The Impact of Climate.

#### Architecture the Protector, Modifier and Mediator in the Cold Regions.

When considering the problems of building in the north, to talk of an architecture of climate would be to tell only half the story. It is people in the climate, the cities and the landscape, people alone or in families or crowds that count. Ordinary people, not architects, people who sometimes are born in the north and know it and love it (or criticise it), other people who are moving from more populous areas, - sometimes to small isolated communities in the wilderness, - and who must be given the amenities they previously enjoyed.

I try to base my work on that rhythm of seasons and life in the north which I find so enthralling, and form communities which encompass all its richness of contrasting experiences.

I shape my buildings with a completely protected winter part surrounded by separated sheltering outdoor places for spring and for autumn. Beyond these places is free summer life in the natural landscape with which the north is so richly endowed.

## 2. Democratic Participation in Decision-making Processes

The "user-client" brings new insights and evaluations which can fundamentally differ from those of the traditional architect and "sponsor-client", and architecture and the architect must change. New qualities must be discerned, given form and defended.

## 3. Minority rights (at the moment especially of the handicapped)

The aesthetic stimulation which arises with the manipulation of varied floor levels and stairways becomes impossible, and there arises a different aesthetic of extensive horizontal floors, with ramps and lifts at any unavoidable changes of level. Serious consideration of the needs of children, the aged, immigrants and other subcultures and minorities would introduce further new form elements in architecture and planning.

## 4. Economy in the Use of Energy

It is realised that energy is valuable, expensive and polluting resource. Building volumes must therefore become simple and heavily insulated in both cold and hot climates, thermal bridges must be minimised and windows severely restricted in size. The architecture of glass buildings, however beautiful, is recognised as symbolic of a naïve, wasteful and irresponsible culture, and laws (in Sweden) on energy conservation have made such architecture impossible. A new, wise, and beautiful architecture must be invented.

## 5. Economy in the Use of All Resources

The first four factors have to a considerable degree been ignored by architects in the past. The fifth, always operative for most utility buildings, can also be considered as a fundamental condition of human rights in the worlds where the limited resources are so inequitably distributed between classes, races and nations. With the spread of media communication the tragic effects of such inequalities may, as well as being an intolerable injustice, become a threat not only to the under-privileged, but also to those of us who waste resources in the wealthy and privileged parts of the worlds, for those privileges can be violently challenged by the deprived majority of humanity.

A subtle and inspired architecture and aesthetics of economy such as "Architecture without Architects" should therefore become the overriding interest of architects in their professional role and the wise use of the saved resources their concern as citizens.

We must realise the impact of our heritage and how the continuum of time can be acknowledged without impairing our duty to project the history of our own time and of the future.

We must cultivate a mature judgement of where to be modest and subservient to an existing landscape or urban environment and when to enrich them with new accents.

We must be able to understand the differing roles of romantic complexity and warmth such as are to be found in the cities and buildings of the Middle Ages, as well as the very different purposes and disciplines of "formal" composition.

We must always expand these understandings into new spheres and train our sensibilities in their use. Principally we must learn all these as the essential skills of our trade and remain open ended and without predetermined links to "style". We should use these developed skills for spiritual enrichment in the fulfilment of our fundamental role, as servants of the needs of humanity.

I make a plea for "brukskonst"

Merely to discuss style can lead to an irrelevant debate, since nothing removes the responsibility to understand and foresee the true situation, needs and experiences of those who will use the environment and practically to satisfy and artistically express these needs.

#### Democratic Participation in Decision-making processes

The "user-client" brings new insights and evaluations which can fundamentally differ from those of the traditional architect and "sponsor-client", and architecture and the architect must change. New qualities must be discerned, given form and defended.

The best way to understand the users is to be interested in, talk to, and like all sorts of people in all sorts of situations in all ones life as well as to discuss with them wherever possible in the specific planning situation.

Important as it is to talk, it is also invaluable to observe people, their expressions and behaviour and their activities for these at times can be more illuminating than their expressed opinions.

It must be clearly understood that in participation with the users the architect can play many different roles varying in many ways between the extremes of on one hand being friend-and-adviser to those who actively to design their own house, workshop or community group, and on the other traditional role of architect-designer for an interested client.

It must be equally clearly understood that in the latter case responsibilities in no way differ in the architect works for the sponsor-client, be he director of a corporation or public institution, or if he is commissioned by a user group. In both cases it is the just right of the client to have a major influence on the character and function of the project. With this follows the duty that he strives to become reasonably well-informed of the principles and disciplines of architecture, and formulates his programme and feelings as intelligently and clearly as possible. Upon the architect devolves the duty that he should, with great sympathy, understanding and artistry interpret the desires and needs of the client be he sponsor or user.

The resulting building will, equally in both cases, bear the print of both the client's character and desires and the design personality of the architect they have chosen to work with. Excellence in the design is a sure indication of mutual respect between architect and client.

It is when the architect has completed his input that the "house" which architects can help to create must become "home", - and only the users can achieve this. Life moves in and has to grow and be maintained and with it the environment. Not least therefore is it so important that inhabitants have partaken in the creation process and have approved and accepted the responsibilities, possibilities and limitations of their situation.

If a sponsor client, either public or private, is involved life remains the role of the inhabitants and it is functionally and democratically just that they be consulted. But responsibility for physical maintenance devolves upon the sponsor, and should limited interest or competence prevail here the usefulness of the earlier project-discussions and carefully worked maintenance-manuals can be nullified, conflict arises within the community and its life-quality suffer.

#### Fragmented Communities

To plan a good community is a demanding task. It is difficult enough with understanding and intelligence, maturity and enthusiasm; without these it becomes almost impossible.

To build a house, a school or a factory is insufficient. Each building is a brick in that complex edifice "a town". Analysis of a community leads to the realisation that it consists of dwellings and shops, of places for work, education, meeting and recreation, of system for communication and for a multitude of other human needs. Such analysis has often been made, but naively or in the interest of "rationalisation" the analysis has actually been built without transforming it into a meaningful whole. Each function has commonly received its special solution but the very rationalisation of the particular task has often isolated it and given it a limited value, disregarding its most vital role - that of contributing to the building of a good community.

Dwelling areas have become places where one merely lives. The transport apparatus can move our goods and us quickly and sometimes in comfort, but has so many negative effects on the surrounding environment that it must be isolated as far as possible from the rest of the community.

Commerce has progressively rationalised the handling of goods but has lost its vital role of giving rise to stimulating human contacts and ceremonies. It has become isolated in large anonymous shopping centres, where the loss of social communication within the buildings has been aggravated by the sterile deserts of our transport requirements. Consequently barriers have been created between the life of our homes and families and the joys of the market place.

Schools and universities have become bigger and bigger ghettos for a single age group, and industrial rationalisation has largely concentrated itself on the production process with a consequential loss in the experience of meaningful work and that direct contact between wife, man, children and neighbours which existed when human beings were active in older communities.



I suggest that the transporting of items of production to people in their local environment could be as rational or more rational than the present transporting of large numbers of people to factories or office parks.

#### Building a Community (an Alternative)

If the stimulating human contacts of pre-industrial communities were one of the important aims of modern business and government, buildings and plans would change; a new stimulating and surprising aesthetic would arise. What consequence would such human-orientated objectives for housing, for the construction of communication lines, for schools and universities, for trade and recreation and for the size of our townships? And for the character and our evaluation of architecture?

It would seem to me that in the intimate interplay and confrontation of different insights, interests, generations, subcultures, activities and situations of varying size there are essential values which are commonly lost in our modern communities. In this, rather than in contrived and romanticised manipulation of form, would arise the complexity we seek and new forms would appear. Instead of housing or working areas, it would be important to create "places for living" which offer varied life styles, parts of towns where dwelling, work, study and recreation take place in as close contact with one another as possible. This is equally important whether we are involved in an individual building or a community plan.

It is important therefore together with intelligent, knowledgeable and interested people to plan complete and proper "places for living": useful, compassionate and poetic places. I suggest that they may be similar in concept, though not in form, to the older villages and towns we know.

It is my experience that much can be learnt from research, discussion and literature, but equally as much from experiencing, observing and analysing the interplay between built form and present-day life in such older townships and villages. Likewise, that whilst it is this interplay which is most relevant, the understanding of it can readily be confused by observation of only the beauty of their style and detail. For these are often the expression of the economies, techniques and beliefs of another culture and age, and imitation will lead to the falsification of nostalgic pastiche.

#### Insufficient Communities.

I must admit that whilst I have been fortunate enough to design small communities or part of communities or parts of communities it has only been possible fully to achieve fully the weave of functions of which I speak in the small industrial communities of Hammarby, Fors and Gyttop in Sweden. In designing these I was greatly inspired by my study of Leuvsta and Forsmark.

All other "housing" projects are largely "dead" during weekdays and become "weekend places" at weekends and the essential richness of life has not arisen. The charm they may have could be the "Aesthetic trap", - an artistic manipulation which gives an impression of intimacy and personal situation and an environment which though improved, is still thin in content. Not community-places but the monofunctional houses areas I decry and a palliative rather than a solution for our living environment.

When moreover public administration, administration, industries, large offices and especially the recent concept of "Office Parks" attempt outside the cities to imitate city characteristics for the employees and provide eating, study, social and recreation facilities within a building or group of buildings of uniform function for a uniform age and interest group. This form of "Corporation - Feudalism" will further create company-ghettos and even more reduce the economic basis for these important facilities in the public realm of city centres and more especially in the suburbs.

Thus we observe further social-manipulation where the conventional structure of modern fragmented townships is unaltered but its different parts are given semblance of a city. As a consequence true multi-function and socially mixed community life becomes progressively impoverished and uncommon for the general public.

## 8. VALUABLE LESSONS FROM THE PAST

### The Expression of Complete cultures in Swedish Architecture

#### The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries

When Sweden's Kings, with the ambition of improving the quality of iron production in the 17<sup>th</sup> century invited Walloons from Belgium to move to Sweden and gave them land and resources, these brought with them not only techniques and workers but also their culture, and built well functioning and beautiful "ideal townships" in the forest. Parts of many have survived unimpaired and two especially - Forsmark and Leuvsta still in their structure and form explain most beautifully and clearly for us the social, political and economic structure with the Industrial Gentry clearly dominating, with the Church subservient to and supporting them but also with, - for that time - an exceptional concern and organisation for education and social security for the workers. Both artistically and in fact these communities are a true expression of an important dream of their age.

Do our towns express our dreams equally well?

## The early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Swedish National Romantic and neo-classic architecture is rightly admired and the elegant and spiritual buildings of Östberg, Johansson, Westberg, Gunnar Asplund and others are a delight.

Why should we not use their language?

But a return to the past is never possible, we land in another place. The 1920 classicism as also Forsmark and Leuvsta cannot be reconstructed out of contact with the society that created them, a society where a classic education was valued and not only the classic forms that the architects knew and used so well were understood, but also the whole of their language.

An impoverished faith creates impoverished form!

It can also be important to observe that with a few exceptions such as the Stockholm library, the Nordic Neo-classicism was an everyday architecture, - often of low-cost housing and schools of modest scale. The early public housing of the architect Sven Wallander, founder of the world's first housing (XXX?), was modest and beautiful example of this. It was created in a society where good manners and even formality was important, a society that we would consider to be considerably lacking in freedom but which could value aesthetic finesse.

## Architecture and Cultural Change

I have experienced an extraordinary cultural revolution during almost 50 years in Sweden. "Then" and "Now" are two totally different worlds; the 1930 Swede and the 1980 Swede should even be experienced as totally different races. Architecture cannot today avoid reflecting recent change as it earlier reflected the impressive change of the 1930 period when the new industrialised, social and relatively egalitarian Sweden was established and consolidated. Also that was an epoch with a homogenous culture which was well understood by most people. It was the time of the 1930 exhibition and onwards when Asplund, Lewerentz, Markelius and others of the classical architects became the revolutionaries of the new world and used all their well-trained sensibilities and skills in the realm of form and space to create light and shining new architecture, furniture, artefacts and textiles for the new world in which they so fervently believed. If ever there was an architecture of a belief in a new society where humanity would be free from old burdens and ignorance, this was it. It was known and admired over the whole world under the name of Swedish Modern. An architecture and design of greater sensitivity and understanding than much of the "main stream" Modern.

In Sweden I found a wider belief more in accord with the early Functionalism of Central Europe, a faith which included the search for a new, juster and more humane society as well as for satisfaction of the intimate daily needs of families and old people and small children.

I also found a less dogmatic attitude to style. Like Bartók, who drew inspiration from the folk music of Hungary when he created his music of the future, the new, fresh and inspiring architecture and industrial design of the golden age of "Swedish Modern" was, - without taint of nostalgia, - rich with the experience of a long history of form: a history of the practical and beautiful use of the simple materials of a poor country. The best of Swedish Modern was an optimistic culture of the future which without false drama lived in the context of that tradition in a subtle and inventive relationship with the continuity of time and place.

It was also an architecture of democracy, open light and accessible. It was far from the splendid and monumental symbols of power and wealth from the history of Europe or Egypt, symbols whose meaning and potency were correctly discerned and universally used by the mighty Banks and Corporations of my youth, and by the latter-day dictators of Moscow, Rome and Berlin. Not for Scandinavians for example was the Germany of Wagner and Schinkel and Speer, they were drawn to that of Bruno Taut and of the Bauhaus, Käthe Kollwitz and of Brecht and Lurt Weill. Here in Sweden and Scandinavia I found moving and relevant principles of design and aesthetics which are still with me.

Perhaps it can become tempered with some of the work of the Aarhus group and others in Denmark.

Later history has not changed my belief. Swedish economy expanded, and the drive to modernise industry, the movement to the cities and the ambition to eliminate all Sweden's miserable slums (since good dwellings were considered a basic human right), led to an enormous need for buildings. Quantity was achieved, and this country of eight million people built a million dwellings in ten years in the 1960's and the equivalent in the 1930's.

It was that generation of architects and others who with their social compassion laid down the foundation of a state housing policy which had never before existed, and which contributed to banishing the housing misery which was amongst the worst in Europe.

But techniques changed, "conventional wisdom" and short-sighted perspectives prevailed, and the "Henry Ford Method" was used. The early Functionalism's simplistic planning and interest for the techniques and materials of the industrial age were seized upon, but the essential subtleties of the philosophy found no favour with the building industry of clients. Architects battled or - willingly or unwillingly - accepted their allotted role!

Thus developed that which involved architects in despair named "Production-oriented Architecture", or "International Style" - styles which survived until in recent years they have been put in doubt by public outcry and rejection.

## 8. MY PRESENT WORK

I have somewhat late in life the great good fortune to become involved in major projects in Norway and Sweden where there seems good hope of realising much of the community objectives of which I have so many times thought and spoken.

Each of these projects, with variations, are planned on the same principles.

### Relation to the town

Since each are within the city boundaries and relatively near the town centre they must be planned as secondary central points which enrich the surrounding areas with good facilities for shopping, work, dwelling and recreation. Especially in the case of Gothenburg and Stavanger they must offer easy access to a fascinating shoreline and will provide quays, harbours, restaurants and cafes, boats, ferries and all that belong to a well-equipped and entertaining harbour town. In both certain existing cranes, docks or buildings which remind the cities of earlier history will find new uses.

### Integrated functions, activities and experience.

In all projects we plan for an integrated community with shops, workshops and showrooms at street level, offices above where suitable and dwellings above these. Horizontal "functioning zoning" will not be part of the concept and even important companies will be discouraged from considering building company-dominated properties and "palaces". They should adapt to the mixed-use concept.

### Small scale commerce

Similarly I have proposed that the size of supermarkets and multiple stores should be limited so that the full spectrum of smaller shops and other activities may survive. This has been done in Austria.

### Main, Local Centres and "corner shops" etc

We plan for a greater concentration of commerce, restaurants and cafes, workplaces and dwellings in a central situation but also for local centres as well as for corner shops offices and workshops dispersed in the community. Cultural and recreation facilities as also parks and gardens will be distributed though the community with suitable concentration at key points.

### Transport

We plan for an efficient public transport and in Gothenburg there will be a tramway linked into the city's system. Each of the tram stops will be on the squares of the main and local centres.

Private car movement will be largely on more peripheral routes with cul-de-sacs in to the different parts of the project. Indeed all mechanical transport was planned to under deck level in the Oslo projects. The major part of parking will be below buildings and their courts in each scheme.

Care has been taken to plan for pleasant and convenient traffic free cycle and pedestrian routes for communication or for casual enjoyment.

### Housing

In each project it has been firmly stated by the client, - a private consortium of a building and a property firm and a bank in Norway, and the State Shipping Company in Gothenburg Sweden, - that since these are exceptionally attractive situations they must be available to all sections of the community irrespective of income, and to people of all ages, to minorities, to handicapped people and others. The community should be so designed and financed that each of these can dwell in the most desirable situations, - the Scandinavian dream survives despite all changes!

### Aesthetics of the Townships

### An Extension of the Town

I have endeavoured to plan so that these projects will not function or be experienced as privileged enclaves but as a further extension of the structure and weave of the surrounding town.

### Society, not "status"

Likewise it is considered that all development and housing should essentially have similar though not identical qualities and expression irrespective of whether it be high or low cost accommodation for dwelling, shopping or work.

### Community, Individual groups and People

Slow cultural change and limited choice of techniques and materials have ensured that that common interest, - which is the important reason for the creation of towns, - has been well expressed in old cities. Individual interest has also been expressed within this common aesthetic framework. The small scale and nature of commerce and industry has also led to a rich mixture of different functions in the buildings or the city blocks of older townships.

These are characteristics which, - in contrast to structure and character of the new parts, - we all love as tourists or inhabitants of the historical cities of Europe and the East.

Since I am convinced that this love is not fundamentally based on historical appreciation, nostalgic escapism or even the patina of time, but on humanity's deep understanding of how humanity functions, I have suggested that we intellectually administer for the same result in modern terms.

Such administration is necessary today with the enormous range of materials, techniques and architectural fashions. Firm steering of building heights and the proportioning, materials and colour of facades has been practiced with successful results in Sweden since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is an acceptable characteristic of our tradition

Such firm "State" controls of different types are characteristic of all cultures. The USA, self-named Mecca of Freedom for example has stringent Anti-Trust and other laws and practices to limit the freedom of Free Enterprise and political choice.

Above certain formulated rules and illusions with plan, perspectives and elevations – (a practice in France) I have suggested that while developers can only be selected to a limited degree, architects are always chosen by somebody and have therefore proposed that the principal choice should be made by our enlightened planning sponsors in discussion with us.

My proposal is that we should make a list of such architects who have proved gifted, involved and competent, who have compatible attitudes and philosophies of architecture and its purpose, and who have ease in collaborating with others. From this list and only from this with the exception of fully approved alternatives, must all developers in the project select their consultant.

These could partake in discussion on the whole project but design their own buildings.

My hope is that my attempts to form a philosophy, define objectives and design administrative instruments and environments in accord with these, may help us to avoid the disturbing functional social and aesthetic fragmentation which can be observed in many new communities and to achieve that satisfying balance between community and individualism, between harmony and contrast, which we observe in older townships. Most important of all, my hope is that an aesthetic excellence will spring from our efforts to create a reality which is found to be truly a sympathetic framework for a richer and more satisfying life for people, and that in so doing I may somewhat have furthered the development of our art.