

The Need for Space as a Global Problem: a Manifesto

Ernest Mandel

Of all elementary necessities, the protection of the smallest relevant social group against the elements of nature, and its isolation with respect to other human groups, is the one which leads to durable products: houses, homes. The most elementary need that this home has to answer to is that of *security against dangers*. Dangers are to a large extent, but not completely, socially and historically determined. Wolves or tigers no longer prowl around the big cities of today. Human dangers no longer refer to periodic attacks by enemy tribes. Technological dangers, on the other hand, are relatively recent. Fire hazard always existed, but not the danger of broken water, gas or electricity supplies, or of damage to drains. In order to provide for their sustenance, people continue to produce in a certain social relation that implies certain forms of communication with other people. The location and type of home depends on where and how production takes place.



Sao Paulo



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There is also an interaction between living space, organisation and extent of production on the one side, and production in relation to the scale of the inhabited area, on the other. Villagers do not need horses, carts, trams, buses or metros to move about within the village. City dwellers do have that need. These means of transport have to be produced, a process that radically alters the city: think of the construction of railways.

Housing is always living space. It satisfies more than just the need for security. Within the home people eat, drink and sleep, children are born and raised, people become sick and die. Size, partition and articulation of the domicile will facilitate or hinder all these forms of fulfilling needs.

Consumption and production were originally spatially integrated. Chickens and goats, if not the ox, the donkey and the pig, slept together with people in the same hut. The bed stood in the living room. The smithy was an annex of the home. Then came the separation. The stall, the studio, the factory meant a genuine architectural revolution. Nowadays a reversal is becoming apparent. Mainly because of the personal computer, a number of small producers are able to work at home, although, with the present state of technology, production still remains predominantly large-scale.

Living space is nonetheless never exclusively habitation. It always expands partly beyond the home.

The size and form of village and city influence living space and its content. Talking and shopping take place outside the home; meals are enjoyed, religious services are held. Originally all this happened within the cave dwelling. Children acquire more play and learning space outside the home. These collective forms of consumption were later institutionalised in particular buildings. Temples, schools, hospitals, shops, bars, libraries, museums and concert halls were built. Class divisions and the rise of the state led to the emergence of fossilised forms of wealth and power: palaces, barracks, prisons, gallows. All this grew together to become a city. Since then, cities were always polarised and therefore disintegrated or at least contain an element of disintegrating social coherence. Cities only surrender to total freedom of building after capitalistic society has become full-grown, resulting in total anarchy and deregulation. Man's most valuable and scarce resource is time for living. Time for living always stands in relation to living space. Too restricted a living space leads to a loss of time. Gadgets have an emancipatory effect to the extent that they are really time-saving. In order for these gadgets to be used, the living space has to expand. If you're only allowed six square metres per person there is no room for your own stove, refrigerator, washing machine.

Why your own? The quantitative growth and diversification of needs is accompanied by a growing need for privacy, which can only be satisfied by larger homes. Once again, those who see the rebellion against lack of privacy as merely an expression of 'bourgeois individualism' lack any understanding of the misery that comes from a single stove having to be used by five families, or a WC that has to be shared by ten families. But, outside of socialism, living space as a means of satisfying the need for privacy is always in conflict with the need for sociability and harmony. Loneliness and insecurity are just as alienating as lack of privacy. The single-family dwelling survives as a space for consumption in order to prevent the total social isolation of the individual. But in the long term it cannot prevent the disintegrating influence of late-bourgeois society on human fellowship. Inevitably, the individual's attempt at pure self-realisation is most likely an initial reaction to sexism, patriarchy and authoritarianism, but it cannot hold back increasing isolation and thus alienation. That is why the reintegration of housing and

Man's most valuable and scarce resource is time for living.

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a greater space for living are the conditions for achieving a greater degree of well-being.

Small forms of group consumption demand other spaces than larger groups. This integration should not be purely economic or functional, i.e. cost-cutting in the short or medium to long term. It must allow an optimum satisfaction of a maximum of needs. People are not machines of consumption. Because of the way it was planned, Le Corbusier's technocratic idea of building 'living machines' was a reactionary Utopia. The loneliness of the inhabitants of the *grands ensembles* and the satellite cities is even greater than that of slum-dwellers. Many of the *grands ensembles* are in any case turning swiftly into slums.

Through the way it looks, greater space for living should also prolong and enrich time for living. Boring, straight, colourless streets and cold senseless rows of houses do not permit this. Cities without centres, such as certain 'car cities', increase frustration, boredom, loneliness. The street, the neighbourhood, the city should stimulate colour, fantasy, emotion, communication and harmony.

The purely quantitative growth in satisfying needs is necessary for a wider development of the human personality. But more is required. And the result of this hiatus is that of a growing demand for more quality of life.

To begin with, there are concrete material causes for this. Unbearable noise, the daily air pollution in cities like Los Angeles, Mexico City and Tokyo, with the periodic advice not to appear on the streets today, and catastrophes like Chernobyl, are forcing everyone to consider ecological issues. But the need for more quality of life is not just a question of physical survival. It is also emancipatory in a broader sense of the word. The gradual erosion of the so-called 'work ethic', particularly in the richest countries, makes this clear.

More quality of life demands more space. This space for life is being undermined by the mega-cities with their highways and concrete and glass canyons, even though some of these can sometimes be aesthetically attractive. The struggle for pedestrian zones, for large areas of green, for alternative energy supplies, for easily accessible and well-equipped schools and hospitals is also a struggle for participation, grass-roots democracy, self-control and the self-realisation of all. At the same time, the attempt to

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escape alienating space by returning to nature, in other words to small primitive village communes, is a romantic Utopia. In such a limited space the development of the full potential of rich inter-human relations is impossible. Marx's formula concerning the 'village idiot' remains more topical than ever.

The life-threatening results of contemporary technology and of the demographic explosion have to be solved in a different way than through regression to primitive forms of work, consumption and life: through the development of new techniques friendly to both man and nature. It is still possible, but it is becoming urgent.?

The quality of life is partly determined by the space for life. A humane society demands space for living, as well as architecture, housing and environmental planning that promote the optimum and as harmonious as possible development of all human possibilities. To quote Marx and Engels, 'It is a society in which the free development of all depends on the free development of each individual.'

Alienating space

Of all forms of art, architecture is the most directly dependent on property relations, that is to say, on control over land, construction materials and building commission. The architect is an intermediary between client, contractor and user. He or she is dependent on various social forces. The law of supply and demand also applies here in every way. A few famous architects enjoy an exceptional freedom of choice and initiative, but they are indeed exceptions. That does not mean, of course, that the large majority of architects simply function as passive instruments of anonymous social forces or individual property owners and rulers. Cities long gone and those still existing would not be what they were and what they are today without the specific personality of a series of known and unknown architects. This only counts, however, to a limited degree. Housing and urban space are chiefly a function of socio-economic power relations.

The idea that cities in antiquity or in the middle ages formed organic communities, in which class divisions played no role, or only a marginal one, is founded on ignorance or self-deception. It is true that in

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the medieval city there was no radical segregation between poor and wealthy neighbourhoods. But then the rich protected themselves from the periodic uprisings of the poor by giving their own houses the form of fortresses.

Since its inception, however, the capitalistic city was characterised by spatial segregation. The capitalists and the middle class did not want to live in the dirty, stinking districts of the poor. Nature itself determined the boundary between 'good' and 'bad' neighbourhoods: the direction of the wind, which blew factory fumes and the smoke from the trains away from the one towards the other. This was the origin of the classic division into 'West end' and 'East end' in London, Paris, Berlin and elsewhere. Later, in the USA people talked about the 'right' or 'wrong' side of the tracks.

But nature avenged itself on the greed of the ruling classes. Regardless of the direction of the wind, pathogenic organisms travelled from the poor to the rich neighbourhoods. Cholera and tuberculosis convinced the rich that a minimum in sanitary infrastructure for the whole city was in their own interests. The need to reduce the costs of moving, and the rise of electricity as the most important energy source, worked in the same way. The construction, improvement and maintenance of the urban infrastructure led to increasing environmental planning. Social segregation continued to exist. But poor and rich neighbourhoods were partially connected to each other through a common infrastructure. On the basis of this a new process of capital accumulation developed in the building sector. The building industry developed itself as an independent branch, although characterised by a much lower degree of mechanisation than other central industrial branches. It is a characteristic which has remained until after the Second World War. In Marxist jargon one speaks of a lower organic composition of capital, i.e. less machinery and more hand labour. Wages too are generally lower than in the large industries. Surplus and profit are thus above average. When landowner and building contractor coincide, the surplus profit will remain in that sector. Because of monopolies determined by the historical structural shortage of available land for building, the capital invested in land ownership and the construction industry

? There appears to be a remarkable incongruity between the good old 'five minutes to twelve' rhetoric of terminal cultural philosophy on the one hand, and the complete discrediting of comprehensive solutions which could put an end to need, on the other. Although a vision of the future is implicitly announced in your analysis, you are forced almost necessarily to revert to vague expressions concerning 'the development of new techniques'. The proposals for improvement remain vague. Besides, what value does your urgency still have now that thought has passed beyond redemption?

! My thinking is not past redemption, in so far as you mean by this a category of thought, but it is in so far as it refers to a concrete historical moment. The 'Post-Modern knowledge' which you are probably referring to is in any case, despite the notion of 'being after something', not at all new. It is a return to superstition, the pre-scientific (anti-scientific) superstition of the period before the Enlightenment, if not of the twelfth century. It is a non-religious version of the postulate of original sin. Irrespective of its scientific components, Marxism is also based on a moral choice. Marx expressed this concisely in the formula of the 'categorical imperative of abolishing all social situations in which man is an oppressed, exploited, alienated, humiliated being'. This means, among other things, that evil means can never lead to a sacred aim, as Marx said. Because of this, Marxism is free from all totalitarian temptation. Consistent Marxists can never condone degrading, inhumane practices, let alone apply them. This is ultimately a practical question. Practice shows whether people who call themselves Marxists really are Marxists.

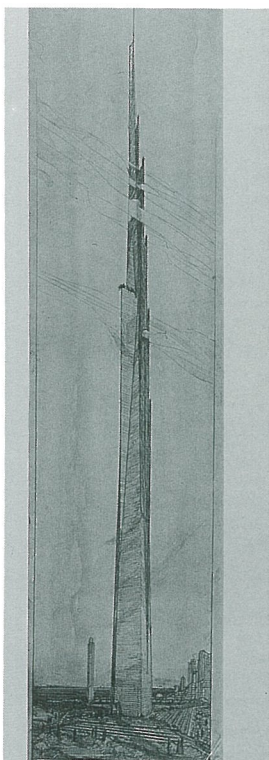
? Harmonious? Can you indicate what part criticism should play in such a humane society, when, in the nature of things, it harbours a moment of conflict?

! 'As harmonious as possible' does not mean without conflict. It has to do with a society in which conflicts do not lead to wars, civil wars, mass repression, hunger and exploitation. It is no 'paradise on earth'. But it is a qualitatively better society than the one that exists today, a society worth fighting for. The question is hypothetical. Let's first see what the role of criticism can be in the present.

?! The class nature of society was and still is a structural element of the city. Is this not essential, to the degree that a city without class systems would have to be called a spectre of amorphous agglutination and monotonous suburbanisation?

Socialist housing districts in cities like Amsterdam, Hamburg and Vienna were the accomplishments of architects and city councils which on the one hand represented an established (segregated) minority, and on the other hand embodied to a large degree the ethos of an idealistic 'avant-garde' (Utopia). In this stage of capitalist production (the twenties and thirties) the reality of political and urban developments gave the lie to that same Marxism that the Socialists were still appealing to at that time; in Marx's model of development such housing districts would not even have been able to exist. What may we expect of socialism now, in our own historical age? Also in the light of the differences with 60 years ago:

- *In Western countries a large part of the principles of urban development have become standard government policy.*
- *The proletariat, the sustaining power of socialist politics, has changed into a heavily stratified body of 'employees', functionaries, and voters, and crumbled as well into a mass of consumers and television viewers.*
- *In Europe, zoning schemes, government monopolies and state and municipal regulations restrict the power that speculators and property developers wield through the production factor of land.*



Frank Lloyd Wright, Mile High Skyscraper, 1956

?! You emphasise here the difference between supply and demand as the most important reason for high-rise buildings in the twentieth century. Do you mean that there is a shortage of land? This seems contrary to the facts. If you look at New York, the high-rise city par excellence, you see that the downtown and midtown high buildings all stand next to each other, while a few avenues further there are vacant lots. So there must be another reason for the vertical explosion, one that must also lie in the psyche of the speculator or client, an upward trend of thought as it were. This is especially true of office buildings. As far as housing goes, the high-rise solution seems to be mainly inspired by private property and the capitalistic need to maximise return, rather than a difference between supply and demand.

increases faster than in the industrial or financial sectors. This process is further stimulated through the development of the urban infrastructure, which is financed by taxation and loans. Thanks to personal relations, corruption and pure fraud, the plundering of city finances by local landowners and construction industries fulfilled a role comparable with the plundering of the state treasury by army and navy suppliers during the original accumulation of mining and manufacturing capital.

A symbiosis was thus created between the rich, who control building land and public works, the local banks, the local political potentates and their representatives in the regional and national centres of power. These local power structures form the social basis and departure-point for the eventual power of big business.

The extent and the most pernicious consequences of corruption, fraud and criminalisation, to which the practices of some contractors in the building sector led, unleashed a reaction of local reform movements, usually through the agency of municipal elections, but with only modest results. This changed, however, with the conquest of the city administrations by the modern workers movement. Thus arose so-called 'municipal socialism', first in Vienna, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Amsterdam, and then in Liege, the 'red belts' around Paris, London, Bologna and various West German cities.

'Socialism in one city' is just as utopian, however, as 'socialism in one country'. The decades of economic expansion after the Second World War resulted in a radical migration to the cities and a permanent increase in the demand for cheap urban housing, which communal incomes and public subsidies are unable to keep pace with. A chronic housing shortage arose all over the world, even in the fortresses of municipal socialism.?!'

Housing and its offshoots such as the production of electric household equipment was actually one of the two most important driving forces of this long expansion; the car industry was the other. Timid attempts to respond to the housing shortage by stimulating the construction of cheap houses by means of higher taxes led to a massive exodus of the middle classes and the rich from the city, which meant less income for the city. Suburbia, with its single-family dwellings, expanded on a large scale. It became a vicious circle.

But the city of the twentieth century is not only exploding horizontally, but also vertically. City centres are more and more dominated by skyscrapers. The reason for this is chiefly speculative. When land at certain sites becomes expensive because of the imbalance between supply and demand, then it is obviously worthwhile, according to the criterium of maximum profit, to build ten times as many houses, offices, or both on the same area. High-rise architecture is the product of this. There have always been certain architects who seem to have been seized with a fever for height. Even the great Frank Lloyd Wright designed an absurd city in which 100.000 people would have had to live and work in a single tower 1.600 metres high. Fortunately it was never built.?!'

The construction industry and the city planners are trapped in equations with many variable, if not unknown, factors: the price of land, building costs, rent levels, maintenance of houses and the urban infrastructure, municipal taxes, average interest rates determining mortgage credits, public subsidies, condition of public transport, removal costs and the time needed for travel between home and place of employment, the spread of shopping and recreation centres, and so on. The result goes without saying: irrational and inhuman cities are consciously being built, in the grip of short- and medium-term profit calculations. The evidence that most springs to mind is the systematic under-development of public transport in favour of the car and petrol cartels, with disastrous consequences as regards air pollution. It is irrational in a macro-economic sense as well. Private cars use proportionally much more energy than public transport. What's more, although only riding a few hours per day, these private cars clog the streets, and increase both the time and cost of movement. Just as bad are the consequences of the general spending restriction since the turnabout of the economic climate in the seventies. Savings are made on social housing, infrastructure, education and health care. Marginal poverty increases, and with it, a three-tier society. The permanent crisis of today's city is growing in proportion to poverty.

The numerous variables determining the profits of landowners and contractors endow the contemporary capitalistic city with a permanently instable and cyclical character.

A district, or a housing block even, can lose its status as a good neighbourhood from one month to the next. Prices of land, rents and property are falling. It is in the interests of property owners and speculators to encourage dilapidation and put a stop to maintenance work, sometimes with the complicity of

the public administrations. As soon as the dilapidation exceeds a certain limit, the price for the land falls so that it becomes worthwhile to renovate and once again entice the middle class, despite the high selling price and/or rent. For the city centre offers advantages in terms of culture, health care, education and a diversity of consumer goods that are not to be found in suburbia.

Horizontal development of residential areas goes hand in hand with a new form of spatial segregation, just like that between luxury high-rise buildings and decaying *grands ensembles*. Between city and suburbia there are emerging satellite cities and new slum zones. This is particularly the case in the Third World, but also in the poorer metropolises. Whole districts are being created without any infrastructure, without a minimum of hygiene, with degrading conditions worse than those of nineteenth-century slums.

The symbol of this is the slums of Calcutta. The absolute bottom is reached when the homeless are forced by local *mafiosi* to pay 'rent' for a place to sleep on the street. The ultimate origin of 'rent' thus becomes crystal clear: instead of providing a 'service' for a tenant, money is extorted through monopolised control on access to land.

The population explosion which has led to the growth of mega-cities in the Third World is primarily of social-economic, rather than biological, origin. The surplus population shifts from the countryside to the city in the hope of improving its living conditions. This does not mean that its marginalisation is



Carel Weeber, social housing, The Hague, 1985

abolished. But the global consequences are catastrophic.

Cities like Mexico City, Cairo, Bombay and Jakarta will have up to 20 million inhabitants in the year 2000. They are literally in danger of suffocating in air and water pollution, noise and explosive violence, including mass murder of children.

The crisis of the contemporary city is as obvious as the crisis of bourgeois society. The building industry and city planning are determined not by fulfilling human needs but by the demands of capital accumulation. Alienated space becomes alienating space. Catastrophic socio-economic irrationality and catastrophic human frustration are the inevitable product of this.?

The liberation of space

In the nineteenth century, the housing shortage was discovered at the same time as the 'social issue'. Solutions were proposed and were also put into practice. The difference between advocates of moderate reforms and those who advocated radical projects is not one between realists (supporters of *Realpolitik*) and utopists. It is a question of the difference between improving the lot of a minority or that of the large majority. The advocates of radical changes take the view that, without humanly acceptable living

? Apart from the glaring discrepancy between rich and poor, the negative moral implications of class distinctions were based on such analytical concepts as surplus value, exploitation, abjection, alienation. In the West, only alienation is left over. Your observations repeatedly deal with this alienation, with which, apart from the ideological meaning of the term, you seem to testify to philosophical essentialism. It is precisely this essentialism that is regarded by many contemporary philosophers as outdated, since it intrinsically attests to a totalising conception of knowledge that ultimately brings about the opposite of the emancipation that the idea of alienation had in mind. What you are envisaging, becoming master of one's own fate, is exactly that which your philosophic opponents dispute; not only because one's own fate does not have a nature that can be positively formulated, but also especially because the movement of thought necessary for this already bears within itself the seeds of its opposite. It is this epistemological doubt that seems to be lacking in your argument. Can you find terms with which you can parry the philosophical incommensurability between you and your critics.

! It is the fashion today to deny the validity of Marxist economic theory. 'Marx is dead, look at the Eastern bloc'. But one cannot falsify a scientific theory in terms of the practice of certain political groupings that improperly appeal to it. It would be the same as condemning the scientific and medical discoveries that led to



Aldo Rossi, social housing, The Hague, 1992

inoculations against epidemic diseases because those inoculations were massively misused in the Nazi camps for torture and murder. In numerous writings we have attempted to prove that the notions of 'surplus labour', 'surplus value', 'exploitation', 'concentration and centralisation of capital', 'overproduction', 'crisis' and 'social polarisation' (decrease of the 'self-employed' in the total working population) are even more relevant today than in the nineteenth century. That is a judgement confirmed by empirical facts, not a dogmatic preconceived idea. One can only (attempt to) falsify that judgement with other empirical facts, not with pseudo-philosophical arguments. In all respects our thesis implies that these notions are accepted as objective facts and not as subjective states of awareness. Marxism is based on a combination of two elements, each of which possess their own autonomous, internal logic. Like every science, scientific socialism relies on constructive doubt. All knowledge is provisional and subject to revision. But this revision must be based on concrete facts. Whoever makes an absolute of doubt, or questions the scientific nature of particular labour hypotheses, without basing himself on such facts, is himself dogmatic, not a 'Post-Modernist critic of science'. The difference between the thesis that the sun revolves around the earth and the thesis that the earth revolves around the sun, does not correspond to an 'ideological choice'. With the facts that are

available to us today, the first thesis is unprovable, the second proved. The Marxist idea of alienation is indeed sometimes reproached for being based on 'philosophical essentialism', and for carrying itself to the point of absurdity. The abolition of alienation through people determining their own fate would assume a positive definition of that 'fate', which would be impossible. The process of thought which would be required in order to make this fate possible would itself undermine such (total) emancipation, if not make it impossible. This critique is not inherent to the Marxist vision, so it cannot reveal any supposed internal discrepancy that vision might contain. It stems from an imaginary, apologetic interpretation of history and society in the guise of a certain philosophical discourse. In the first place it is static. It presupposes that the objective of 'abolishing alienation' from the beginning can only be seen as total. On the contrary, Marxists regard the dynamic nature of this self-emancipation as a process. It is a matter of successively abolishing concrete forms of alienation. It is not necessary to know exactly how labour will ultimately be organised in a classless society in order to understand that producers-consumers – whose activity is no longer determined by market laws, and therefore not by advertising either, nor by the pressure of money, nor state despotism, bureaucratic decrees, the dictate of experts – are people who to a large degree determine their own fate and are therefore involved in an encompassing process of emancipation. Producers who themselves decide what is to be produced and how, are qualitatively less alienated than producers for whom decisions are taken by others. Secondly, the 'Post-Modernist' critique of

space for all, even the favoured minority cannot free itself from the alienating results of alienated space for living and working. You cannot build harmonious districts within irrational and inhuman cities. The bourgeoisie and the well-to-do middle classes have nevertheless periodically attempted to do this, naturally without success. A succession of American architects have designed the 'house of the future'. Nothing of this has really influenced the day-to-day building industry. Even the Bauhaus can in part be judged accordingly. It will always be the case that the problem of liberated living space can only be solved in its totality.?

This presumes in the first place the abolition of private appropriation of land and a building industry dominated by the pursuit of profit. These areas should be put in charge of the community. This is what we call the socialist solution. A different wording essentially changes nothing as long as the given content remains the same. The formula of 'power of decision in the hands of the community' has by no means sufficient concrete contents. Which community decides and in what way? Each district? Each village and each town? Each region? Each country. Each federation or each continent? The answer points to an articulation of the power of decision between these various domains of space. In what relationship? Experience, that is to say the people themselves, will determine that. There is no ready-made answer to this question.

But the decisions ought in any case to be really democratic, including the possibility of choice between various projects. That presumes genuine pluralism. Trotsky predicted that competing parties of architects would arise, which the people could choose between after lengthy public debates.

That this power of decision by the majority must safeguard the rights of the minority as well as the freedom of choice of the individual (within the framework of the possible), and that it presupposes the ability of the majority to review its decisions on the grounds of experience, goes without saying.

For a long period, various generations at least, the issue of living and working space will revolve around the application of scarce resources. It is essential then to establish priorities. Socialists reject the despo-

The life-threatening results of contemporary technology and of the demographic explosion have to be solved in a different way than through regression to primitive forms of work, consumption and life: through the development of new techniques friendly to both man and nature. It is still possible, but it is becoming urgent.

Marxism is ideological (idealising) and thus itself subject to 'essentialism'. It assumes that thought processes are ultimately decisive for the content of processes of emancipation, if not for history. Marx states, on the other hand, that emancipation is an actual movement of people who are attempting to abolish actual abuses. The abolition of slavery, the elimination of the Inquisition and of absolute monarchy, are actual historical moves, an actual historical advancement. In every way, what came afterwards was not perfect, but anyone who assumes that such an assessment is sufficient to question the progressive nature of these changes is being inconsistent, if not hypocritical. Is it really a matter of indifference to him that he no longer ends up being burnt at the stake because of his ideas, that his children are no longer captured with a rope when they leave their home and sold as slaves? The real progress embodied in the above-mentioned stages of emancipation can be questioned even less. The actual process of emancipation does not depend on the people themselves determining their 'ultimate' fate in advance. It includes a growing determination of one's fate. That's exactly why it can be neutralised by no 'movement of thought' whatsoever. People who to an increasing degree decide their fate themselves can also be less and less ideologically manipulated and limited in their self-activity. What this self-emancipation will 'ultimately' lead to can only be partially predicted today. In other words, we reject any vision of an 'end of history'. Emancipation and determination of one's fate are processes of 'permanent creative revolution' which will never be fulfilled, a permanent revolution of thought included.

tism of the state, of experts, of the market and fortunes, in determining priorities. The power of decision must come from the people themselves. That does not mean, however, that government co-ordination, experts or the market can be totally and immediately excluded. In the long-term this would be unrealistic. But it does mean that the final decisions can be consciously taken by the masses themselves. It means that, in the final analysis, these same masses themselves choose between the major versions of long-term development. The progressive liberation of housing and living space for all people should be viewed in two successive phases. It is a lengthy process, with no immediate goal to be achieved. The first phase envisages achieving a minimum of humane housing for all inhabitants of the earth, while protecting the natural living environment. No one has the right to deny a minimum of welfare to hundreds of millions, if not billions of people, under the pretext of safeguarding the chances of survival of future generations. Anyhow, no one can predict what these chances of survival will be.?

Radical ecological despotism seems to be absurd, particularly when it concerns housing. It is an echo of the myth of original sin. Every form of building is always an intervention in nature. Every building alters the natural surroundings. If one wishes to avoid that then one has to return to the cave dwelling. And even there people altered nature, if only by means of their wall drawings. It is not a question of leaving nature unchanged. It is a question of implementing inevitable changes in such a way that the ecological balance is not disturbed. Changes that are scientifically sound and that respect nature should be sought after, not a subjection of mankind to dubious 'irrefutable laws of nature'.

Achieving a minimum of housing and living space for all the earth's inhabitants already raises gigantic problems, which will be even more aggravated when the world population soon reaches 10 billion. These problems can still be solved, but their solution demands, among other things, democratic planning and a crucial worldwide redistribution of resources. What is equally required is a combination of changes in the city and in the countryside.

In the Third World in particular, this would presuppose radical land reforms, linked to a radical reform of the city. The homeless must be housed. Those living in slums must have access to the technical, sanitary and cultural infrastructure. The slums must be replaced by liveable housing.

Recreational living space outside the city, in parks and woods, must be secured, restored and enlarged, without endangering the ecological balance. This assumes, among other things, large-scale re-forestation and the radical cleansing of rivers, streams, seas and oceans.

It is enough to sketch such a plan of action and to estimate its costs, if only approximately, to find that this first phase, which is still far removed from a harmoniously ideal solution, would take a very long time.

What does the harmonious solution, which we call the second phase, consist of? Trotsky described it with the phrase 'urban village'. Ultimately it goes back to Friedrich Engels, and refers to living communities that are capable of genuine self-determination. At the same time they must have easy access to a high standard of sanitary and cultural infrastructure, and to recreational space in open nature.

It is a question of 'green urban villages' embracing extensive – but not exhaustive –, small, technologically advanced industry and distribution centres, without undermining the quality of life and with a radically reduced burden of labour and time.



Sao Paulo, 1960

Hesitantly, very hesitantly, what we are aiming at can be defined as an urban village of 20-25.000 inhabitants, in 4 or 5 districts, divided into various 'belts', whether parallel or not. (Soviet urbanisation in the twenties envisaged 60.000 inhabitants.) Institutions such as high schools and optimally equipped hospitals can be shared by various of these urban villages.

Once again, all these figures and descriptions are nothing more than rough estimates and calculations. They will definitely need to be reviewed in the light of experience and of changed consciousness. But even as rough calculations they make the extent of the task clear once more. An expected world population of 10 billion people would involve the building of half a million urban villages.

Of course this cannot occur out of thin air. Many of the existing villages and cities at the beginning of the second phase could serve as a starting-point. The same goes for some of today's existing villages and small cities, as well as districts of larger cities.

Nevertheless, the task of ensuring such free communes for all the earth's inhabitants seems so sizeable that the question arises as to whether formulating such an aim is not just a game; can these ideas really be realised? I do not think so. A target to be aimed at is just what it says. Common sense teaches us that when someone doesn't know where he wants to go to, he won't arrive there either. (The reversal of the

? *A revisionist impulse is foreign to you. Ultimately, despite the extraordinary flexibility of the system, capitalist society will be destroyed through its own contradictions. This macro-economic vision, however, is shared by fewer people than ever. How can a situation become more urgent and the radicalisation of social tensions in a revolutionary moment come closer and closer, while at the same time the number of people supporting this theory steadily declines?*

That the masses themselves want a consensus is proven by numerous striking choices that these same masses make. For example, the recent introduction of the system of saving stamps in a supermarket chain, allowing people to save up for their own shares in the chain instead of the usual stamps. Everyone, even those on welfare, is becoming middle-class. How can you still motivate people in a world in which the problems of this world are no longer reflected in the lives of people who are able to do something about it?

! *Someone who is under the economic pressure to sell his labour power is a wage labourer, even if he feels he belongs to the middle-class. That 'feeling' does not put him in a position to escape being periodically laid-off by the bosses. In the long term only practice will prove whether this experience leads him finally to change his consciousness or not. Thirty years – or even less! – is an insufficient length of time to answer this historical question; just think of the first half-century after the beginning of industrialisation.*

? *The Stichting Milieudefensie [Environmental Protection Foundation] in Holland has published a report in which they introduced the notion of 'environmental usage space per head of the global population'. Inherent in this was of course the big issue of redistribution, which is in line with your emphasis on the right to living space. When you talk about 'a minimum of humane living space for all the earth's inhabitants', you are in fact talking about a world revolution. You think that the chances of survival of future generations should not serve as a pretext to leave the current status quo untouched. But the truth is that global lawlessness has no need at all of such a pretext. The above-mentioned report was simply received with derision by the 'realists'. How do you think you can ever convince these realists of another reality?*

! *My argument implies in every respect a redistribution of resources on a global scale, a real 'world revolution', for which the political conditions have to be gradually created, including moral motivation. But not just this motivation. For the large majority of the inhabitants of the Western nations and Japan their own survival depends on helping solve the problem of the inhuman conditions in the Third World, at least on an elementary level, before they lead to the extension of barbarity on a global scale. I don't have to convince anyone with arguments. Reality will do it better.*

? On the other hand an all too explicit fondness for the target to be aimed at has often resulted in disdain for the present; a problem that you have already warned against with respect to the overlooking of the interests of those who are today without rights in favour of so-called future scenarios. How do you think you can avoid your goal being institutionalised into an historicist utopianism?

! For me it is important not to simply abandon reforms that can be realised immediately, or even to disapprove of them, because of objections of this sort. The dialectic between reforms and revolution, between immediate realisation and goal to be aimed at, remains as relevant today as when Rosa Luxemburg engaged in a polemic about this with Bernstein at the turn of the century. But in judging reforms it should never be forgotten what the goal is: the gradual elimination of human misery. Reforms that lead to this misery being consolidated for large masses are questionable, to say the least. Reforms realised with the effect that the self-activity of the masses is restricted, if not repressed (through accepting a permanent consensus with the bourgeois party) are even more questionable.

means-end dialectic, for that matter, lies at the basis of all opportunistic politics. It is one of the keys to explaining the historic failure of Stalinism and reformist social-democracy.) If one really wishes to radically humanise housing and living space, then one has to constantly keep such a concrete aim in mind. Planned and realised projects then have to be tested against the question: have we come closer to our aim? Are we going in the right direction??

Here we can clearly see a distinction between the first and the second phase. During the first phase the aim is to immediately reduce grinding human poverty and then to gradually eliminate it. It is not, therefore, a question of immediately creating ideal conditions. But for this very reason one should not stick false labels on these ad hoc solutions.

It is fashionable nowadays to throw mud at the October revolution and its immediate aftermath. In reality the twenties were high points of free creativity in all areas of science and art in the Soviet Union. These radiated far beyond the borders of Russia, particularly in the case of Soviet architecture, which is to a large degree the mother of all contemporary architecture, even though its projects usually just remained on paper owing to the lack of material means.

Soviet architecture was characterised by a combination of boldly experimental avant-gardism and deep social consciousness. Today, after sixty years of experience, we know that the transitional period and bureaucracy itself throw up specific problems concerning housing and living space. New forms of

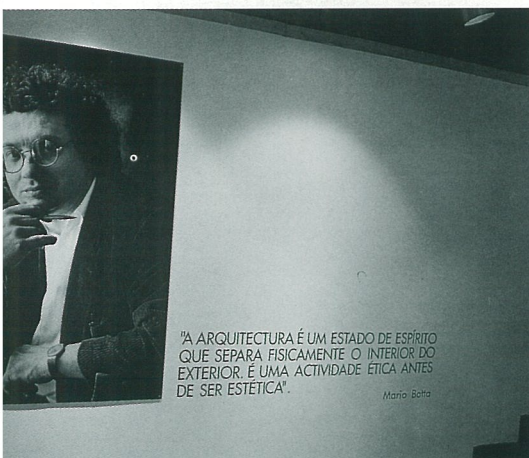
Ernest Mandel



On this map, the size of each country is in proportion to its wealth

alienation spring up, combined with old ones. But tentative forms of real emancipation blossom as well. The culture park is a good example of this. The lengthy process of liberation from alienated and alienating space is thus actually a process of growing emancipation, that is to say, of man's self-determination. Becoming master over one's own living space means to become master over one's own life and one's own destiny.

The Swiss Mario Botta is one of today's most renowned architects. He calls himself a romantic and says that he is socially sensitive. He is inconsistent, in the sense that he mainly builds private houses for wealthy people. But, as he correctly says, 'We as people should be able to control our own environment. Otherwise we will lose our intelligence, our understanding.' (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Magazine*, 24 October 1986). Indeed; but all people should be able to do that, Mario; all people.



'A ARQUITECTURA É UM ESTADO DE ESPÍRITO QUE SEPARA FÍSICAMENTE O INTERIOR DO EXTERIOR. É UMA ACTIVIDADE ÉTICA ANTES DE SER ESTÉTICA.'

Mario Botta

'Architecture is a state of mind which physically separates the inside from the outside. It is an ethical rather than an aesthetic activity.'