

STATE OF THE PROFESSION

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At our Council in Dublin, I have been asked to say something about the 'State of the Profession'. I will try to do so, though those among you who know me rather well, will be prepared to expect rather suggestions and questions than pertinent statements.

This certainly is an appropriate moment for a general survey of the situation. The world is full of discontent, and our profession is in the midst of it. This should not astonish us at all: all things are in rapid motion; urbanisation is progressing irresistibly. Towns swell into monstrosities, new towns are founded. The remnants of the gradually devoured open space are denatured by scattered urban fragments and the degradation of the landscape is spreading to the countryside. There are the pollution of air and water, the abolition of silence and solitude. Before long the last sea-shore will be liquidated.

All this makes demands for planning and building. Building is going on feverishly. But how about planning, planning that should proceed building? Undoubtedly here things are most confused and confusing, flatly in contradiction with the notion of planning itself. People are very well aware of all that. In their discontent, worded by representatives of disciplines not unfamiliar to us, modern urban surroundings are judged 'inhospitable', 'sterile' or even 'unhabitable', they are accused to lead at the same time to 'loneliness' and to 'loss of identity'. But there is more than only verbal criticism: the factual massive, continuous and irresistible exodus from the town speaks its own language.

Should *this* then be the final result of all our efforts?

And what do we planners do, what do we ourselves think of all this? Time has come to draw up the balance-sheet, objectively and inexorably. Of course here in this circle of physical planners who, when founding this Society, deliberately decided in favour of personal membership, I myself will give only my own, personal opinions as a physical planner, very well conscious of the limitations imposed by the incompleteness of my personal experience. A collegial interchange of views may help us afterwards to broaden our common insight.

Now, before coming to our profession proper I want to discuss the organisation and shaping of space. I first have to indicate a fundamental change in our working-methods, a change that has already been going on for quite a period. I mean the transition from a static to a dynamic attitude towards our subject-matter. If it is really true that our time is marked by change, then our work has to accept the consequences: we find ourselves before the paradox that we have to design immovables for the housing of movable, ultramovable matter. We have long recognized that here lies a turning point for our profession: planning no

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longer should aim at a final, static situation, but rather at the preparation of a continuous process and a process without a predictable course.

Our planning-methods must be adapted to this mobility, changeability and uncertainty. Programming, design and materialisation are *one* indivisible process.

- Programming should not pretend to prophecy, but only to indicate possibilities and probabilities.
- In the *phase of design* our plans should remain 'open' as long as possible
- The time-table for the realisation of the respective components of the planned urbanistic totality will often be decisive for final success (public transport should precede the building of a new settlement; social and cultural amenities should be present already at the same time at least as the dwellings and certainly never later). This asks i.a. for a coherent and coordinated, well-timed *system of financing*.
We must be prepared to accept the fact that during realisation - especially in the case of long-term projects - some of our basic hypotheses will change or be omitted. As the design will have to change, the team of planners should remain permanently present.
- *After* realisation not only the basic infrastructure, but also the material constructions and building should prove adaptable as much as possible to uses not foreseen (and often unforeseeable).

All this provides ample themes for further discussions in our circle.

This is not meant as a festive speech, for this occasion.

Therefore, when examining this results of our endeavours I want to point out mainly the weaknesses: let us be stimulated by Holy Discontent.

In the first place I have to make some preliminary remarks on quite a series of indispensable basic conditions for our work, conditions that may be considered as absolutely indispensable, but which nevertheless are lacking in very many cases.

- Satisfactory planning is unthinkable without an appropriate, up to date legislation, reflecting a general sense of justice.
- In this connection we should be well aware of the momentary aggravation of the conflicts between private interests and common welfare.
In those respects, however, the situation appears to vary strongly from country to country; each of us should draw up the balance-sheet on circumstances at home.
- Good planning, decent urbanism asks for serious restraints on private property, especially of the soil, and for an appropriate legislation on landed property.
Acceptable plans are hardly thinkable if destined upon only as instruments for private commercial operations. Again: everyone of us may ask himself how things are in his own country.

- Physical planning is part of comprehensive planning; its proposals for the organisation and shaping in space should be based on the conclusions of economic, sociological, hygienic and cultural planning-programs.
- On the other hand, physical planning itself should be comprehensive: in its turn integrating land-use planning, and planning for traffic (local and interlocal, on the road, on the rail and on the water), for energy and industry, for agriculture and landscaping.
And again: everybody here present may ask himself how in those respects the situation is at home.
- The possibilities for good planning depend on the system of administration. Planning is doomed to failure everywhere where authorities and governments behave as representatives of autonomous political units, involved in a mutual competitive struggle, considering their neighbours as potential rivals; this holds true equally for municipalities, provinces, department and national states. Planning is doomed to failure as long as the laws of the jungle prevail.
Again: think of the situation in your own country.

There are just a few examples of the outward obstacles that we, as professionals, find on our way. And I could go on like this for a long time: the number of material and organizational preconditions indispensable for real planning, and very often lacking, are practically inexhaustible.

I now come to the visible shape, that is to the final result of our own specific professional contribution to the combined planning effort.

Here I will confine myself mainly to the citizen's everyday environments, that is to the visible surroundings of his home. I do this partly for time's sake, but mainly because it is especially on this visible shape that most of the prevailing general criticism is concentrating.

In passing it should be noted that the general public is apt to consider the author of this shape as the prototype for all planners, thus burdening them with the blame for all failures. Though I would provisionally propose to speak of 'cause' rather than of 'blame', I think we should be glad that apparently the visible form of things is still universally considered to be representative of their essence, their shape of their contents, and consequently the author of that shape as representative of the planner in general.

When we try to find out the *causes* of those deficiencies we find little help from criticism from outside.

The *population's detailed* complaints deal mainly with the poor quality of their own dwelling, and with the lacking of concrete elements in the neighbourhood: trees, playgrounds, public transport, car-parks, schools and Kindergarten, shops and social amenities.

Part of these deficiencies are due to inevitable circumstances, i.e. the fact that the new living-quarters are still incomplete (which may account for the fact that some indispensable social and cultural institutions are provisionally missing, just as well as

grown-up trees, so essential however for satisfactory town-scape), but for another part they are caused by political decisions, which - a fact that often is forgotten afterwards - too many times simply reflect the populations; real opinions about priorities at the moment where those decisions were taken. We should keep in mind that most planning and urban design operations generally take up so much time (in particular their political and administrative preparation) that the results, once they become visible, are the spatial consequences of political decisions from possibly twenty years ago.

Fundamentally much more important for us are the population's *non-detailed* criticisms, the complaints about a general vague feeling of discontent.

Part of this may be explained by sociological causes (again due to newness: a young population brought together in new quarters, causing an unbalanced composition of ages, immaturity of social contacts, etc.)

We should however be ready to admit that at least part of such lack of quality will undoubtedly have to be explained as deficiencies in our own work, I will have to come back to that later on.

This work of ours on the scale of the neighbourhood is closely related to that of the architects and also to that of the manufacturers of houses. Now undoubtedly the housing-industry at this moment is still in its infancy, which means that the factory techniques impose strong restraints on all kinds of legitimate demands and exigences of the future inhabitants and of the town planners.

In most cases, however, those inhabitants do not look so deeply into the matter, they simply complain of 'monotony', 'lack of fantasy', or perhaps they go so far as to speak of the lack of 'urbanity', the quality which urbanizing man is learning to appreciate again, after three quarter of a century of Garden city movement.

The criticism of the *experts*, which certainly is lacking, the judgement of sociologists and social psychologists, does not, alas, help us much more. They indicate long recognized deficiencies, but hardly make any concrete suggestions for better solutions.

Let us confess that this sometimes makes us a bit impatient, and this even more when we ourselves get more and more convinced that it is Man and his behaviour which should stand in the very centre of all our endeavours. For that reason we are badly in need of, and would have been happy with, information from especially those specialists who deal with the behaviour of Man. However, let us not judge to rashly. We have to consider in the first place that those social sciences are just as young, or maybe even younger, than our own discipline, and in the second place that their activities might be defined as human research and human explanations of human behaviour as human reactions. We might speak of the search for collective knowledge about the collective self, or of a collective endeavour to collective self-knowledge.

Now self-knowledge and especially *collective* self-knowledge is a very special kind of knowledge, with on the one hand indeed very special possibilities, but on the other hand also with very special, and fundamentally insuperable, limitations. Notwithstanding that however, if we are really serious when we say that we want to place Man in the centre of our field of interest, we should try to cooperate with the social sciences and got *together* with their representatives. Here again lies a task for our Society.

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I hope you will not have the impression that, until now, I have been trying to build up an alibi for us planners. There is nothing special in the fact that the matter we have to handle proves itself to be refractory, nor that the circumstances under which we have to work and to work together, are seldom favourable; any other creative worker will in most cases meet the same difficulties.

Even the most ideal systems and regulations, even the most perfect materials and ideal circumstances would remain without effect without the right man, with the right conceptions, in the right place.

During our common excursions we have witnessed - much too seldom, alas! - most enjoyable performances, even under circumstances far from ideal, apparently due in the first place to the personal endeavours of only one brilliant magistrate, who apparently has succeeded in attracting the right men to stand by his side, and who has known how to inspire them and to procure them with sufficient elbow-room. This at the same time has convinced us that the *client* comes in the first place in the team indispensable for any good results. No planners, however gifted, will ever be able to reach any really important result when working with an, unwilling or uninterested client, either an individual person or a collectivity. On our excursion we have also seen, alas, how even with the help of good legislation and notwithstanding very competent planners it has proved to be impossible to master spatial chaos, apparently through lack of interest (or even worse: through an excess of 'interests') from the officials. Whether in such cases there should be a collective obligation for our Society to take action will be discussed later on.

Of course it is simply not always true that everything that become visible today and is inhabited now, should be exclusively the spatial rendering of earlier political decisions, that is of views and insights of the community of some decades ago. Undoubtedly the personal ideals and personal intentions (and abilities) of the planners of that moment have influenced the results just as well, and even to a very high degree (personal ideals and personal ideas which were of course closely connected with the political ideologies of that time).

Saying this I think in the first place of the 'heroic' twenties, with their 'cosmic consciousness', with their perhaps somewhat naive optimism, with their joyous faith in industrialisation, with their pious cult of machine. 'Cosmic consciousness': everything should be *open* not only for the sake of sun and air; but in the first place because the continuity of cosmic space should pervade everything, should be felt everywhere and should bring a feeling of *liberation*. The open building-block and the 'Zeilenbau' were the typical motifs of those days.

'Joyous industry-mindedness and pious cult of the machine' industry and normalised mass-production were not only the possible answers to the demands of massive social housing, the uniformity of its production could be considered at the same time to be the expression of social equality.

'Industrial housing, with all your heart or if need be?': that was the home question at a meeting of architects at that time. The answer was decisive for one's

classification as 'progressive' or 'reactionary'.

Not only the uniformity of the industrial production was positively appreciated by the planners of that time, but the regular repetition of the same uniform architectural accent was a favourite motif.

I only need to refer to the publications of the great leaders of that time to illustrate what I mean. I must remark at the same time however, that in reality what people have wanted to *read* out of them, has been of more importance than what they have really said or *written*.

Please, do not misunderstand me: in my opinion from those great days, works have come to us which will always remain classics.

However, I have warned that this was not intended to be an official festival speech, that I would speak mainly about deficiencies, and that I will be mainly in search of the causes of those weaknesses.

At the same period it has been recognized that a fundamental analysis should be the basis for careful programming of all planning. It must be stated, however, that in many cases the result has been a direct translation of these analyses into landuse plans with carefully isolated 'pure' living quarters, equally 'pure' and isolated industrial areas and zones for recreation and traffic systems. And this kind of planning has mainly caused sterility, killing liveliness, variety and simultaneousness, in short all urbanity.

It should be admitted that it is easier to indicate the causes of this sterility than to cure them. We are speaking very much now of 'integration of functions', but in practice this is meeting quite a range of difficulties.

It should be observed here that in the days we are speaking of now, warnings have not been lacking of dehumanisation, 'massificaton', loneliness, alienation, loss of identity; in short of all those phenomena that have since in fact revealed themselves. But (apart from the short-lived, but then wide-spread, romantic reaction of the decorative Amsterdam School of Architecture) those warnings were coming mainly from real conservatives, who had no other alternative to propose than a return to eclectic historicism, but had no real answer for the needs and necessities of mass housing.

But there are still other facts to be stated.

The inhabitant usually evaluated his surroundings in the first place according to what he can immediately see and touch, after the quality of this own dwelling, after the quality of the zone of transition between his dwelling and the street, and of this street itself.

In many of the first settlements, created by idealistic corporations and their equally idealistic architects, who at the same time acted as planners, all those visible details were looked after with love and care and in most cases with exemplary results. But later on the field of our activities has been immensely enlarged, from town planning to regional planning and to national planning and even beyond.

Of course in those larger fields Man remains fundamentally just as important for us as in planning a simple living-quarter (housing estate): the organisation of these wide

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structures must be consciously prepared in such a way as to provide for the basic conditions for those detailed plans, worthy of human living.

The ordinary inhabitant, however, will hardly be able to recognize the qualities of those large background-plans, he will concentrate, as I said already, mainly on his 'micro-environment'. We must admit, however, that as a consequence of the broadening of our field of activities the centre of our own personal interest has been more or less displaced, and this alas not without harm to our attention for that 'micro-environment'. This shifting of the centre of our interest has caused a gap, exactly at the place where on the contrary there should be an overlap: between town planning and architecture.

Architecture not understood only as the shaping of buildings, but also as the care for everything belonging to the environment for daily living, including the street furniture and the pavement, and in particular, the zone between the dwelling and street, between the private and the public world, a zone that is so very important but which in our days is so very often and much neglected.

Everybody who has tried for himself to look seriously after those details, knows how much trouble it takes, how much strenuous exertion, and how much stubbornness to obtain even humble results.

This means that many of us should turn at least part of their attention again specifically to this domain of small-scale work, and we should also orient planning-education more towards this group of subjects.

At the same time we should accept the fact that the total field that one man is able to encompass is per force always limited, invite the architects to take part in our work at the earliest possible stage.

This requires not only a high degree of mental conformity among the people involved, but also much good will from both sides, much discipline and much self control (and all this not only between us and the architects, but also among us and the officials who have to join the planning work too).

I know that in this respect much progress has been made already in many places, but I also know that in many other places there remains undoubtedly still very much to be done by our Society to improve the climate for this kind of cooperation.

There are endeavours to tackle the whole problem still from a more fundamental, less historically inspired side. Our students and also our colleagues, the sociologists and socio-psychologists ask for a more fundamental approach, they ask for a concrete definition and, if possible, even for the quantification, of immediately demonstrable causal relations between the shaping of the spatial environments and the psychological effects of those shapes upon the spirit of the inhabitants. Until now but apparently little research has been done in this direction, and with only very scarce results.

I venture to doubt whether such results, ever be obtained in the future, will lend themselves to be summed up in simple formulations, or could lead to right-away prescriptions for direction application. For that to happen the reactions of the human spirit are too arbitrary, too dynamic, and too paradoxical on the one hand and on the other hand, the language of spatial shape is far too equivocal, too open to many different interpretations.

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This latter quality of spatial language, its 'poli-interpretability', in relation to our just-mentioned mental mobility, may account for the fact that the appreciation of spatial and plastic forms and shapes is often only so temporary.

It is remarkable however how a direct dependency in the reverse direction is generally, and in my opinion justly, accepted as an immediate evidence: we feel ourselves fully entitled to consider the works of town planning and architecture of the past as the immediate and immediately recognizable expression of the mental atmosphere and the social system of their time. At the same time it should be noted that apparently later generations had never felt any 'ideological aversion' from living in the heritage from their ancestors, though coming from a different spiritual and social world.

Apparently, later generations have long felt themselves equally at home in the buildings of oligarchical city republics, in the houses of the newly-founded towns of the enlightened Princes of the 18 century, and even in the medieval burger towns, yes, even in rebuilt and adapted palaces of Roman Caesars.

On the other hand, however, we never heard that they went so far as to prefer these old and antiquated surroundings above those of their own days. On the contrary, apparently the moving into new, then 'modern', surroundings was usually experienced as something enjoyable and festive.

Today, however, this appears not to be so obvious any longer. Maybe, even now, a new *dwelling* may be better appreciated than the old one, but for the new *living-quarter* this is most certainly very often no longer the case.

What we therefore need most urgently is well-orientated research on the evaluation by the inhabitants of the *spatial qualities* not the material and *quantitative ones of their daily* surroundings. For this, we all will have to cooperate with social-psychologists and architects.

As long as the results of such research are not available we will have to work, just as until now, on the basis of hypotheses. We are simply not allowed to interrupt our work; the construction of new buildings is going on feverishly everywhere.

For the foundation of these hypotheses we have but little other choice as to turn to already existing, universally positively evaluated, examples of urban surroundings.

The main quality those surroundings have in common - at least in my opinion - is the settled balance between the Collective and the Individual.

On the one hand the totality as well as its parts have preserved their uniqueness and their individuality, but on the other hand they remain more or less anonymous, as in a landscape. But the difference with the landscape is, that the townscape is always experienced as a work of men, though - and this may be a key to its anonymity - the personality of the authors who once shaped its details is not felt as obtrusive any longer, it has faded away with time.

The human dignity of the inhabitant and the visitor is nowhere affected, and the human scale is respected, at least it is not violated anywhere.

The details are close to man, show a rich variety and give evidence of an ingenuous

ingenuity, and they often also speak of a conscious or unconscious sense of humour. And finally I would mention the autonomous qualities of form of those creations, qualities introduced either consciously or unconsciously.

Today we are simply forced to accept the supremacy of the collective, with all the dangers this implies for the individual. We simply have to accept it, already because of the big numbers we have to handle, which only can be mastered by technology and mass-production. For us, planners, those big numbers have to do in the first place with housing and traffic.

Everywhere in the world, planners are facing those phenomena, those threats, which cannot be eliminated. The first, promising, results of their most recent endeavours are already becoming visible. They bear witness to the effort to do justice to the newly won insights, without however losing the positive values developed in the twenties.

Of course, those new creations will also need the help of time for ripening to their complete development; but even in the shape they show today, in their newness, they look full of promise for the future, and for possibilities of an autonomous further development.

They are of course only the first signs of a new spring. Much has to be done still. Traffic and transport still remain to be mastered. The building-industry will have to learn how to adjust itself further to human requirements and to the demands of town planners, so that their product can be better adapted to planning principles.

Even more than from all that, at this moment, is built and has become visible already (and consequently again is only the materialisation of ideas from several years ago), the future can be guessed from all that is being prepared at this moment on the drawing boards and in the model studios.

I do not think, however, that all the ideal-projects publicized today are to be applauded. There are alas quite a number of obtrusive 'architectures' which will never lay down their self-conceited individuality (even not when they are repeated many times, as uniform units, in regular rows). They impose their own identity on the inhabitants and by their self-centred appearance they seem to subdivide the total population into sharply distinguishable separate units, a subdivision that is flatly in contrast with the real social development tending to greater unity and increasing communication among all. I am speaking now of proposals for inhabited 'sculptures', either of strictly regular or more fantastic shape.

Personally, I have far more confidence in the future of continuous 'structures', which are in accordance with the ants of steadily growing coherent connections which men are seeking today.

Those proposals are also open to future changes and ready to evolve together with the general evolution. At the same time those studies will permit us to specify the qualities the building-industry will have to grant to their products, to make them suited for their use as basic material to shape man's surroundings.

Of course, all our needs will best be illustrated by the language of shape spoken by our

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works, our plans. But apart from that, personal action from each of us will remain indispensable. For this we have to prepare ourselves within our Society.

For that, however, our members are still too few; the domain of our activities is growing much faster than the (growing) number of our members.

A sufficient contribution from the side of our International Society will ask for a much more numerous membership, and for an even stronger and more enthusiastic personal endeavour of a much larger part of our members.

I know of course that all of us are overburdened with our own obligations. I also said already, that our own performances might finally prove to be our most important and most convincing arguments.

Nevertheless we will surely never be able to measure up completely to our obligations towards Society, without direct action. There are quite a long range of external obstacles, simply not to be overcome by the convincing qualities of our work: wrong legislations, inadequate structures of administration, unfavourable economic and social powers.

In those fields however, an International Society mainly aiming at providing opportunities for collegial meetings and discussions, should proceed carefully. At least, if we do not want to put at stake the existence of our organisation.

We have simply to count with the fact that our members are coming from many different sides and have very different convictions in many fields, It is exactly, this mansidedness and multifariousness which lend interest and pith to our discussions.

Of course, we should not risk to lose that. But on the other hand we should not be too cautious. For that, the values we have to defend are all far too important.

Personally I think we should stand ready permanently to come to the aid of all justified actions of national groups of members when they ask for it, whenever and wherever the fundamental conditions indispensable for decent planning are lacking or in danger.

For this State of the Profession, I have looked around, and also somewhat in the past; but our real subject remains the *future*. 'Future' means 'successors', and thus: 'education'. This theme of great importance has not been mentioned yet. We are very well conscious of the fact that in this field, we have a very special task; we have started working on it already, but it asks most urgently to be carried on further.

When speaking of Planning-Education we are well aware that modern Planning, and consequently also modern Planning-Education ask not only for new insights and knowledge, but also - and even in the first place - for a new mental disposition.

And here I begin to feel uncertain.; I have to admit that when I prepared this introduction my conscience has been raising an ever stronger warning voice.

I have pointed all the time at gaps in our planning system, gaps to be filled. I have pointed out the necessity to improve and complete that system, to introduce corrections and add extensions.

However, it might be asked (though in reality we have long known the answer) whether the prevailing uncomfortable feeling about planning-results among the general public really originated in the first place from the quality of the plans, or whether there are much deeper roots for this general discussion.

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Is it not so that planning *itself*, omnipresent, inescapable, is resented as an always farther increasing restriction and narrowing of freedom, as a regimentation of life, as the end of all adventure?

And would not the impact of this experience on the mind of men be much stronger than the somewhat poor qualities of their daily environments?

Here we are on the horns of a dilemma, for there is no doubt whatever that we simply cannot stop, or even slow down, planning and organizing without immediately endangering the existence of the three, soon six billion inhabitants of this planet. But the more these planning-systems will extend and tend to organize their lives, the more each separate individual will feel exasperated and the stronger it will scane the restrictions laid upon it in the name of the Community.

The only answer I would know to this dilemma for the moment refers to a renewal of our mental disposition.

In the first place it concerns those who have to accept planning, but also (and from our point of view this is the most important side) of those who are actively involved in the planning-work. For all of them the main objective should be to find out *how to plan freedom*.

In my opinion this means: to learn how to plan as if we were *not* planning. This is more a question of mental attitude than of method, more of wisdom than of knowledge. To this, just as to every other really fundamental problem, there is no real and lasting answer. Each new generation will meet it under another appearance, each generation will have to find its own solution.

We should search for ours.

And its is for that purpose that I put the question here.