

New Urbanism

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1. A growing discrepancy can be observed between the standards applied in allocating urban space and the real needs of the community. Town-planners and architects still tend to think in terms of the four functions of the city as defined by Le Corbusier in 1933: living, working, traffic and recreation. This oversimplification reflects opportunism rather than insight into and appreciation of what people actually want today, with the result that the city is rapidly becoming obsolete. At a time when automation and other technological advances are reducing the demand for manual labor, plans go forward to build working-class [housing] districts suitable only for passing the night. While privately owned cars are multiplying so swiftly that their very numbers render them practically useless, more and more living space is given up to provide parking facilities. The Buchanan Report, *Traffic in Towns*, shows that "full car ownership" in a small city like Leeds (513,800 inhabitants in 1963) would require so much space that the problem of overcrowding would be solvable. Although air pollution threatens the very existence of plants, animals, and even human beings, people still talk optimistically about "garden cities." And while Jeremiahs bemoan the problem of increasing "leisure time," the restrictions laid upon the space available for public recreation deprive young people of all opportunity to use the leisure they have.
2. A logical consequence of the growing amount of leisure time is the idea [that] recreation is becoming meaningless. Recreation is the recouping of energy lost during the working process. As soon as there is a surplus of energy available for activities other than work, recreation becomes pointless and makes way for the possibility of true creativity -- the creation of a new way of life, of a new environment. That is the reason why the youth of today no longer turn to hobbies and clubs for relaxation but seek excitement in communal initiatives.
3. These collective endeavors can never take place in the country but only in the city, for it is not silence and solitude that the young are after, but encounters with others in a social environment. The phenomenon of bumper-to-bumper roadside picnics proves that the country outing is more a flight from the functional city than an excursion to enjoy the beauties of nature. Amsterdam's Forest Park becomes a social environment on hot Sundays in August. If urban space were planned to meet the needs of a leisured society, these flights from the city would become unnecessary. Paradoxically enough, when townspeople trek en masse to the great outdoors, the difference between town and country disappears. A camping area is a form, however primitive, of a city.
4. The social environment of the city is being threatened by a chaotic traffic explosion, which is itself the result of carrying proprietary rights to ridiculous extremes. The

number of parked cars at any given moment far exceeds the number on the move. Use of a car therefore loses its major advantage: rapid transport from one place to another. The storage of private property on public ground -- which is what parking [really] is -- gobbles up not only space required for the flow of traffic but increasingly larger chunks of living space as well. Efficient use of the automobile can be achieved only by collective utilization of the *total* number of cars, and this total must be limited to the number actually needed. It is a scandal that countless people have to walk, even in bad weather, when more than enough cars to transport them are standing idly parked at the side of the road, obstructing traffic and being effectively worse than useless.

5. Traffic's wholesale invasion of social space has led, almost imperceptibly, to violation of the most fundamental human rights. The traffic code has degraded the individual who proceeds by the only natural means of locomotion to the rank of "pedestrian," and has curtailed his [sic] freedom of movement to such an extent that it now amounts to less than that of a vehicle. So much public space is forbidden ground to the pedestrian that he is forced to seek his social contacts either in private areas (houses) or in commercially exploited ones (cafes or rented halls), where he is more or less imprisoned. In this way, the city is losing its most important function: that of a meeting place. It is highly significant that the police try to justify their measures against "against" happenings on the public thoroughfares by arguing that such manifestations impede traffic. This is an implicit acknowledge that high-speed traffic is king of the road.
6. The acculturation process takes place within the social environment; if this environment does not exist, no culture can form. The more numerous and varied the contacts, the more intensely does acculturation flourish. Chambert de Lauwe was the first to point out this function of certain urban areas (especially old districts), which he termed "acculturation zones." He noted in particular that the culture-forming process is strongest in those districts where the population is looked upon as anti-social, and that the contact between different groups -- a contact that gives rise to new culture-forming elements -- is most intense in districts where there is evidence of social dislocation.
7. The fact that all bureaucrats are enamored of order, of a regulated society, leads them to destroy acculturation zones. Baron Haussmann slashed his broad boulevards through such zones in Paris in order to facilitate the rapid movement of troops. In Marseilles, the Nazis tore down the old harbor quarter to break the resistance of the citizens. The present redevelopment of city centers and the deportation of inhabitants to the suburbs has a similar effect.
8. The so-called "garden-city movement," propagated around 1900 by the English townplanner Ebenezer Howard, was based on the assumption that industrial production could be raised if workers were given improved housing and living

conditions. The prerequisites for the movement's success -- the wish to be near to nature, a love of work, the closeness of family ties -- are no longer valid today. Garden cities are therefore obsolete before they are even finished. Instead of the rural idyll that Howard had in mind, suburbs built on this plan are mere dormitories - - places to sleep in and to escape from at the first opportunity, that is, at the first stroke of leisure time. Isolated housing units marooned in a sea of traffic become ghettos for a population whose sole contact with the rest of the world is through the controlled "communications" media of press, radio and television.

9. A person's living quarters become less important to him [sic] as his radius of action expands and his amount of leisure time increases. When productive labor was introduced in the New Stone Age, man was transformed into a sedentary creature, but now that the need for manual work is disappearing, there is little reason to be tied down to one place for long periods. At the same time, however, there is growing demand for temporary accommodation -- hotels, and even caravans and tents. The proportion of dwelling space to total social space requires immediate reassessment in favor of the latter, for the needs of an emerging race of nomads must be satisfied.
10. The nature of the social environment will depend on the way in which the newly released energy is put to use. In any event, this space will be the setting for play, invention, and the creation of a new way of life. Utilitarian norms such as those that apply in the functional city must yield to the norm of creativity. In the future, man's way of life will be determined not by profit but by play.
11. The above points explain why the teenage revolt against the fossilized standards and conditions of the past is aimed chiefly at the recovery of social space -- the street - - so that the contacts essential for play may be established. Idealists who think that these contacts can be arranged by organizing youth clubs, publications, or hiking groups are seeking to substitute prescribed norms of behavior for spontaneous initiatives. They are opposed to the most important characteristic of the new generation, creativity -- the desire to create a behavioral pattern of their own, and ultimately to create a new way of life.

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