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Resource Architecture

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Perspectives and Positions from the viewpoint of International Planning Associations

Minister Bodewig, Undersecretary General Töpfer, Presidents of the UIA and other interested associations, ladies and gentlemen!

I am speaking on behalf of the International Federation of Housing, City Planning and Regional Planning, or to use the English designation, for the International Federation for Housing and Planning, IFHP for short, and at the same time for the UN Habitat Professionals Forum, that I have initiated in collaboration with UNCHS (under the auspices of Prof. Töpfer) to bring together the international associations sponsored by the technical trades in their capacity as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and to gain their interest for an exchange of experience and knowledge, above all for a shared, interdisciplinary and inter-sector mode of approach to the problems of citification. For this, I would like to present 5 positions.

IFHP was founded in 1913 as the Garden City Society. The motivation came at a time when the results of industrialization had led to a degree of citification hitherto unknown, accompanied for the most part by inadequate infrastructure. The situation then is similar to the situation in many parts of the world today. The infrastructure problems were solved at that time with the help of technology and self-obligation, however these problems were also solved with extensive state intervention. Added to this was discernment of the necessity of obtaining and maintaining work forces. By and by housing welfare and housing offerings followed this insight.

The vision of free, self-determined, living in the beauty and health of the Garden Cities in the face of the grey misery of the industrial worker districts broadened at that time throughout the world, and has retained its fascination up to the present day. Today as it did then this vision responds to many human longings. Indeed, situations and circumstances do not repeat themselves, however it is useful to learn from them in case of similar experiences.

In the light of the unbroken human longing for a home of one's own, my 1st position is thus: we need to listen more closely to what people desire (and in no way does this just mean the longing for a free-standing single-family-home) and to help them as builder, or as participant, or even as opposition, along the path from dream to realization so that architecture and composition are also created here, and not the continued preference for

sprawling suburbs in the post-industrial world, and for endless stretches of informal districts in the urbanizing world of Asian, African, or South American countries. NGOs should be partners in such processes and admonitory voices in public discourse.

In the last few days a lot of smart things have been said at this congress about this and about other tasks of architecture, however with the consistent allocation to “developed and undeveloped”, or more gently expressed, “developing world”. I would like you to consider whether these categories are suitable for future use. They imply that only economic development is crucial and that developing countries, emergent countries, and countries of other categories should achieve a comparable economic development from the perspective of 1st world countries.

Consequently my 2nd position is to eliminate these categories for the perspectives of the future. They encumber our free thinking. Change and development are metaphors for any form of co-existence and have an impact on the old world as well as on the new world (or 1st, 2nd and 3rd world, depending on the point of view). Social cohesion is more pronounced in many so-called under-developed countries, or in districts that have fallen behind than it is in developed countries, and the question of divided cities is perhaps not so dramatic in Northern countries as it is in Southern countries. Still, we cannot ignore the fact that there are enough disparities there as well, and that they are on the rise. Recipes for avoiding or controlling disparities for the industrial world of a 100 years ago – which, by the way, have almost required these 100 years to bring together, or to balance workers districts and slums created by industrialization, with middle-class neighbourhoods, so that a social, mixed, used, and non-ghettoized city is a European reality for the most part (at least as a uniform guiding pattern) are only possible recipes for today’s problem solutions if they have been adapted to the change.

Government action, demanded again and again, and state promotion have indeed led to these European cities which are balanced to some extent, on one hand so that the call for continuation is popular not just in the EU. On the other hand, economic relationships are changing in the globalized world - indeed in every aspect, not only related to production and money-flow, but also where customs, religion, ethnic allocations and orientation based on value priorities are concerned – and they are changing the cities so radically that we must see in Europe as well the approaching division known from the ancient world and the middle ages between those “that have”, and those that “have not”, to such a degree that the question of present control possibilities is not raised in the mega-cities alone. Thus the world is (I repeat) one world, and not a developed world, or a world yet to be developed. We should acquire another terminology, even relative to the gross national product where the differences are extreme but the problem constellations are similar. This could help to better comprehend, for example, that the wakening of the cities’ individual powers and autonomous responsibility (even with respect to the large discrepancies in economic conditions under which people live in the cities) is a task uniformly applicable everywhere in the world. Whether cities and their inhabitants rarely develop individual initiative due to constant supply or to insufficient economic power, the attempt to meet them leads to the same solution approach, namely, activating the

endogenous potential. The insight that we should waken endogenous potential is not new, however today as before, practical implementation is lacking.

Consequently, my 3rd position is my challenge to the international professional and trade associations to be serious about the cooperation of governments and Non-Governmental Organizations, in favour of general goals, and not feel obligated for the most part to optimization of their own clientele. On the professional sector of collaboration of city planners, architects, geo-data specialists, garden and landscape planners, as well as housing economic interests, like real estate brokers and developers, with the financing providers, should result in interdisciplinary behaviour to such a combined extent that a de facto increase in efficiency and quality really exists, rather than just as an ornament to our words. We must make the vision of a holistic consideration our own, to the extent that it really determines our actions. This may sound somewhat too pathetic to you, however each of you can strive towards this end in his or her sector. The Professionals Forum attempts to broaden these lines of thought. Such cooperation models appear to me to be decisive perspectives in shaping the change for the future.

My 4th position: The many projects of motivated non-specialized individuals, particularly those from women whose initiative is triggered mainly by the concrete will to a solution for securing the life of their family - whether in Brazil, India, Africa, or for example, from mother initiatives for single mothers in the large settlements of the 60s in German cities, to mention only a few examples – have shown that non-specialized individuals often proceed in an instinctively holistic manner. Above all, it is evident that the community only starts to come to life when there is participation in the community. Participation however still needs to be organized. It organizes itself only for a certain time. Communication as prerequisite of participation and an essential element of the necessary bringing together requires sustained care. Furthermore, the actions of non-specialized individuals are also more efficient if experts support them (not dominate, but rather act along with them at the same eye level – interdisciplinarity here as well!).

This is a field for a professional NGO, and indeed foremost in the area of housing construction and habitat. We need a home to be at home. Even when this semantic connection is not the same in other languages as in the German, certainly in all languages home, shelter, security and identity are associated with the house, the protection, and the roof over one's head. The great UN "secure tenure" campaign is oriented towards the safety and security of the dwelling habitat, and I am always amazed at how rarely this is considered as a topic for architects. This congress has highlighted architecture as a resource for culture, for civilization, and technology, as an exciting challenge for shaping all types of buildings; however, the topic of dwelling has hardly been approached in the same dimension. The exhibit in the new Potsdamer Platz railway station lobby has also presented few apartment construction projects in contrast to an abundance of interesting special constructions. By the way, nowhere did it show anything of infrastructure, although our civic environment is more dominated by streets, bridges, plazas, bicycle paths, lines, trains, and tunnels than by the few nice plazas that we have. However, most importantly, no one talks about how all of this will be cultivated, maintained and how it will have to be removed at some point in time. "Resource Architecture", i.e. the source of

aesthetic and three-dimensional harmony that at the same time is always the banal product of technical ability, functioning one-sidedness, and the individual necessity of survival, must be cultivated and needs continuous re-adaptation to be sustainable.

That is why my 5th position is expressed by the name of the association that I represent, *Housing and Planning*, buildings for living a life of human dignity, as well as planning for the supply of everything that is required for this life of human dignity, must be the perspective as far as I am concerned. The Professionals Forum can offer help as a network of professionals for the interdisciplinarity requisite for this. My perspective for the task of architecture as a resource, in this context, is that it places itself more in the service of useful habitat architecture. Secure habitat creates freedom, self-determined habitat in the international context secures human dignity. To comprehend building huts and houses for the masses of humanity, or to help in their preparation and construction, as one of the most noble tasks does not require less creativity and interdisciplinarity than for example designing a skyscraper for a bank. In this regard, I do not intend to follow the writer Bert Brecht who declared war on the palaces and peace on the huts, but I would like to achieve an increase in the quality of daily life with my clear positioning. I would like to direct more attention to mentoring in a different way the coming and going in our cities, more in the sense of a collaborative thinking already in the planning stages for future necessary changes or removal after frequently a relatively short time span. (When superposing maps of our cities, we see the multiple overlap of areas used again and again. However, would we not be pretty much at a loss if we were given the task of demolishing and recycling this ICC?)

In spite of all the globalization and new media that permit instantaneity for us (or at least lead us to believe in instantaneity), non-instantaneity remains in the world. We should learn from this that we can better shape living conditions with few resources, on one hand, and on the other we can do this only with the implementation of concentrated technology. If we would admit this more to ourselves as architects and city planners, then perhaps society would also follow us; away from the realization and high estimation of spectacular individual projects – as marvelous, as necessary, as admirable as these may be, these 300 meter high buildings, or glass-walled factories, or self-breathing city halls – and to turn to a changing, unspectacular architecture for everyman's happiness and contentment. Then we could succeed in coming a little closer to everyman's need for equality, beauty, and sustainability.

In view of this immense task we would like to jointly help through the cooperation of professional NGOs in association with expert knowledge.