

THE CHANGING ENFRANCHISEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN BRUTALIST ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of Brutalist architecture in post-war housing, taking Le Corbusier's premise that 'tomorrow belongs to nobody'. It tests the notion from the call for papers that 'contemporary needs are more important than remote futures' and explores 'the relationship of the present and the future in planning and urbanism'. Rather than considering 'contemporary' as referring to 'today', it takes a longer-term perspective, based upon the thinking of Brutalist architects, which interprets 'contemporary needs' as relating to the developing needs of communities and stakeholders over time, from their building's inception up to today. Starting by placing Brutalism within the development of twentieth-century architecture and housing, the paper considers the ongoing reappraisal of the buildings of the period as heritage, the different agents involved, and the diverse challenges presented for the care of the buildings and communities who live and work in them. The notions of 'contemporariness' and 'context' demonstrated by the principle of 'as found' in Brutalism are investigated, focusing on how they reintroduced 'community' as a primary consideration. This approach is manifested in the Low Rise High Density (LRHD) projects of the late 1960s and in the longer term, many of the principles underpinning sustainability today. Review of current heritage practice takes a suggestion from architectural historian Alan Powers, proposing that we refocus on the 'essence' of buildings rather than on their materiality, which can also be seen in today's practice, and considers how this 'essence' should be extended to include community. The article concludes by considering how an integrated approach, drawing together the different themes of heritage, planning, and housing policy, might improve current practice to the benefit of both buildings and communities.

KEYWORDS

Brutalism, valorization, stakeholders, use strategies and futures, social housing, modernism, home ownership

INTRODUCTION

Rather than considering ‘contemporary’ as referring to ‘today’, this article takes a broader perspective, interpreting the term as temporally relative to the developing needs of communities and stakeholders at any given point in time since their building’s inception. It presents the narrative of twentieth-century architecture, planning, and heritage as a means of exploring the Brutalist ‘ethic’, which sought to enfranchise communities and connect new design to historical continuity and the morphology of sites, as a basis for developing long-term strategies for buildings and users today.¹

The historical narrative supporting this claim begins with the Garden City ideology (Phase 1) and revisionism of interwar modernism (Phase 2), and then looks at how architects in the 1950s and 1960s sought to redress the perceived failures of interwar design. This user-focused agenda of Brutalism revised the existing model and in time resulted in Low Rise High Density (LRHD) housing models and reconciliation with pre-modernist architecture (Phase 3). These later residential projects combined the ‘memorability as an image’ of earlier Brutalism with the terraced forms and complex arrangements of private–



Figure 1. View west along Rowley Way, Alexandra Road. Photo: Tom Davies, 2012

public space to produce hierarchies of design which support the social interaction for good community. Many of the Brutalist architects stated intentions that their projects were not complete and should develop in response to user requirements over time, presenting a notion of temporal contemporaneity by progressively responding to their ‘contemporary needs’ as time progresses.²

The architect and historian Alan Powers suggests that protection of modernist buildings should examine the ‘essence’ of the building rather than its ‘substance’ through dynamic relationships, spaces, and interplay of light.³ Whilst this realignment is a developing characteristic of heritage practice, community and stakeholders play only a minor role in the process, and Powers’s assertion that conservation alone cannot sufficiently represent community interests remains problematic.⁴

In the conclusion, it will be considered how this ‘essence’ might extend to stakeholders, community, and social heritage, and how a composite approach, combining the themes explored—architecture and planning, heritage and housing policy—might provide for ‘contemporary needs’ and in so doing secure a vitality of use which sustains the building, user, and community.

The sections of the article explore the following themes which might form the basis for a combined approach:

- Historic Monument – Historic Environment (Heritage)
- Tabula Rasa (Clean Slate) – Sustainable Development (Architecture and Planning)
- Welfare Provision – Empowerment of the Individual (Housing Policy)

PHASE 1: THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

According to Floor Wibaut, the Dutch welfare planner who promoted much of the suburban expansion of Amsterdam in the early twentieth century, ‘[t]he point of departure for raising the culture of the working classes . . . must lie in the improvement of housing conditions’. Wibaut, whose name is close to the Dutch *wie bouwt*, meaning ‘who builds’, oversaw the construction of some 30,000 dwellings, comprising social-housing apartments and private houses, in the years 1915–21. Wibaut’s interpretation establishes social housing as the vanguard for twentieth-century welfare and improvement, introducing it as a medium for study, which is indicative of the broader advancements and factors behind societal development.⁵

ners to prescribe standards for construction and design as exemplified by the Addison Act of 1919 in the UK, drawing on the Tudor-Walters Report of 1917 and Raymond Unwin's publication *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding!*. Examples of prescribed standards include:

We regard it essential that each house should contain a minimum of three rooms on the ground floor (living room, parlour, scullery) and three bedrooms above, two of these capable of containing two beds. A larder and a bathroom are essential.⁹

Stakeholders in Phase 1 (Rise of State Provision)

Phase 1 shows that the state, its architects and planners were gaining confidence in their mandate of provision for society, which was manifested in an entirely top-down approach. Whilst the state-funded building programmes and architecture of the 1930s were yet to arrive, there were clear signs in the Tudor-Walters Report and prescriptions of the period of the conditions which made such schemes possible.

PHASE 2: CIAM AND INTERWAR MODERNISM

The Continental and Scandinavian projects which influenced UK planners in the 1930s resulted from the work of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (1928–59). CIAM was the international forum for early to mid-twentieth century architectural discourse, with members from across Europe, Scandinavia, and the United States, including Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Ernst May, and Alvar Aalto. By applying itself to planning, transport, and connectivity, CIAM reconceptualized city and society as a machine, providing models of modern provision for modern living. The possibly most dominant scheme envisaged a radial arrangement of housing in blocks to take advantage of daylight, et cetera.¹⁰ In this Functional City, perceived social problems were resolved through segregation of function and the distribution of the population into tall apartment blocks at widely spaced intervals.¹¹

CIAM's 1929 exhibition *The Minimum Dwelling Unit* demonstrates this rational thinking using repetitive plans of existing dwellings to show that use of space could form the starting point for architectural design. This marks a clear departure from previous notions of perfect classical form and decoration, providing the revisionist approach which came to define CIAM's work.¹²

Other models also included Gropius's Bauhaus or Ernst May's more organic approach to the expansion of Frankfurt in the late 1920s through which he sought to preserve 'urban unity' in the diversity of the city, using a discontinuous approach to the new suburbs, including a variety of parks, market gardens, and public parks. Historicity formed an important focus in this respect, and the various *Siedlungen*, or settlements, created by May have individual contexts relating to their earlier history. One example in Frankfurt is the Siedlung Römerstadt which draws on the Roman fortifications of the old city.¹³ Both Gropius and May employed low linear block forms, including terraces, which often have a degree of interplay at ground level between internal and external space through private and communal gardens, providing a modernist antecedent for Brutalism.¹⁴

CIAM's development comprises three paradigm shifts (1928–33, 1933–47, and 1947–68) which progressed from the problems of minimum living standards to a second phase which advocated the zoning of city plans and a single type of housing comprising widely spaced apartment blocks. The third and concluding phase shifted to a kind of liberal idealism, seeking to achieve CIAM's original objective of transcending the functional city through the 'creation of



Figure 3. The 'Housing for All' trip to Rabenhof: Red Vienna's first project, 1925–28. Photo: Tom Davies, 2012

a physical environment that will satisfy man's emotional and physical needs' and creating the conditions for Brutalism to emerge in the early 1950s.¹⁵

In its third phase, CIAM began using grid forms made of coloured panels to represent different categories. The grid, which was based upon Patrick Geddes's Valley Section (a conceptual sketch of living unit sizes from hamlet to city), can be demonstrated by the ASCORAL grid from Bergamo (CIAM VII, 1949). It uses the following system: 1) dwelling (green), 2) working (red), 3) cultivating the body and the mind (yellow), 4) circulation (blue).¹⁶ The intention was to develop the Athens Charter chapter on habitation, which addressed social concerns.¹⁷ This, however, rapidly degenerated into a debate over the relevant classifications.¹⁸ The issues addressed by the charter are:

1. An inadequacy of habitable space per person;
2. A mediocrity of openings to the outside;
3. An absence of sunlight (because of northern orientation or as the result of shadows cast across the street or into the courtyard);
4. Decay and a permanent breeding ground for deadly germs (tuberculosis);
5. An absence or inadequacy of sanitary facilities;
6. Promiscuity, arising from the interior layout of the dwelling, from the poor arrangement of the building, and from the presence of troublesome neighbourhoods.¹⁹

Isolation and the Street

The approach to creating the segregated, functional city employed a repetition of units to produce residences and compartmentalized buildings with both residences and amenities internalized. Buildings were often elevated by pilotis, a row of piers, creating open space, which removed the whole structure from street level.²⁰

The intention to remove residences from the morass of industrial city life brought about evident problems in removing them from the street and in the city's principal forum for social interaction. Despite efforts to resolve this in the 1930s through elevated walkways, its isolating nature emerged as a clear issue, as demonstrated at CIAM Conference VII at Bergamo, Italy, in 1949.²¹ The challenge that CIAM faced in its final phase is characterized by the following quote from the architect Giancarlo de Carlo:

On this point we should be very clear, and therefore it is indispensable first of all to clarify the basic differences between planning ‘for’ the users and planning ‘with’ the users.²²

These difficulties in reconciling the human agenda with that of ‘machines for living’ were brought to a head by Team 10, which included early Brutalists Peter and Alison Smithson and Structuralists Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods, at CIAM 10.²³ They criticized the segregation of housing, work, leisure, and transport, presenting two alternative grids: the Gamma Grid by Candilis’s team, which addressed dwellings in an integral way by focusing on qualitative aspects, and the Smithsons’ Urban Re-Identification Grid which took a similarly qualitative approach through its analysis of everyday built environments. Alongside the new qualitative focus, the UR Grid redefined the role of the street, removing the internal corridor of Le Corbusier’s design and placing it externally on the building to create their ‘streets in the sky’ concept.²⁴



Figure 4. Infilled pilotis at Denys Lasdun’s Hallfield Estate, 1951–58. Photo: Tom Davies, 2012

Stakeholders in Phase 2 (Rise of State Provision)

Phase 2 sees the development of the state's mandate, continuing a top-down approach, and in particular sees architects and planners exploring their own roles and potential in the delivery of state provision. This is particularly present on the scale of ambition of the state-led programmes and architects' visions, revising and remodelling cities, and creating new towns and suburbs, which were developed in the 1930s.

PHASE 3: THE NEW BRUTALISM AND POST-WAR DEVELOPMENT

The Ethic of Brutalism

Reyner Banham's *The New Brutalism* (1955) reviews the collaborative efforts of the early Brutalist architects Alison and Peter Smithson, the photographer Nigel Henderson, and the artist Eduardo Paolozzi as part of London's Independent Group (1952–55).²⁵ It considers the projects Golden Lane (1952), Hunstanton School (1954), Sheffield University, and the exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art* (1953). Banham characterizes the New Brutalists as being at the forefront of what he describes variously as an ethic, a movement, and a slogan, setting out the following three-point criteria for considering Brutalism and the projects which followed.²⁶

Banham's criteria in *The New Brutalism* defines the Brutalist ethic as

1. Memorability as an Image;
2. Clear exhibition of Structure; and
3. Valuation of Material 'as found'.²⁷

Points 1) and 2) place strong emphasis on the Brutalism's statement aesthetic and honesty of presentation, whereby the makeup of the building is clearly displayed, and the presentation of materials is without artifice.²⁸ These points represent a revision of the aesthetic of interwar modernism, advancing honest presentation and truth to structure. Point 3) addresses the admittance of the shortcomings of CIAM and at a superficial level belongs with Points 1) and 2), but when considered together with the Smithsons' writing it reveals itself as a broader refocusing on the existing values of a site, drawing on material, morphology, and community.²⁹

Peter Smithson reflects on the notion of 'as found' as relating to both the urban environment and the evidence within that environment which tells us how it came to be. This draws on the Smithsons' site work with Nigel and

Judith Henderson through social studies and photography of bombed out working-class East End neighbourhoods in London.³⁰ There, they saw what they define ‘as found’ as the objects and debris at bomb sites and the fittings and patina of buildings. This was later described as

1. Integration into a wider system of being,
2. Social cohesion
3. Reconciliation of all opposites and the transcendence of unity over diversity
4. Elegance³¹

Their focus on ‘as found’ therefore signifies that good architecture and design need to read and relate back to the existing environment, and that this had been largely absent in interwar development.³²

Brutalism and the Street

The Smithsons defined the street as the central place for community, where the resident meets the world, and sought to make it central to their scheme for Golden Lane (1952) through the inclusion of street decks later referred to as ‘streets in the sky’. The wide space for interaction and recreation established at each level along the front of the block by the ‘street deck’ sought to update the traditional role of ‘the street’, providing communication and a point of contact, which had been marginalized by much of CIAM’s work.

Their belief was that the idea of the street is more important than the reality of the street, which Peter Smithson describes as follows: ‘Where a street is purely residential, the individual house and garden will provide the same lively pattern as a true street or square—nothing is lost and elevation is gained . . .’ and ‘Thoroughfares can house small shops, post-boxes, telephone kiosks, etc—the flat block disappears and vertical living becomes a reality. The refuse chute takes the place of the village pump.’³³

Recognizing the value of ‘the street’ in maintaining community and providing points of interaction, they sought to safeguard a notion of value in elevated living as inherited from interwar modernism.³⁴ In this, they hoped to achieve what the elevated, axial walkways of Le Corbusier’s *Ville Contemporaine* (1922) and other earlier projects were unable to, and reconcile ‘the street’ with modernism.

The Rise of Low Rise High Density and Community

Beyond the immediate circle of the Independent Group, young architects in the 1950s, including Neave Brown and Patrick Hodgkinson, worked with 'as found' values through site and community. They took a down-to-earth approach which went to the root of materials and form to provide qualities and spaces for interaction and relationships.³⁵ They achieved this by adopting the devices of pre-modernist architecture, such as squares, terraces, and direct access to street level, continuing the reconciliation with earlier architecture begun with the revival of the street in the Smithsons' work. Central to this was the Low Rise High Density (LRHD) terraced block which effectively turned the tall modernist point block on its side, picking up on May's work in Frankfurt and realizing its quality through terraces across the landscape.

The British architectural historian Mark Swenarton describes this development of 'the street' by LRHD projects in Camden as

projects [that] recognise the 'street' as the basis for urban housing, we are designing not only the form of buildings and spaces but also the physical setting for social relationships, relationships between public and private, between members of a household, particularly adults and children, between households, between groups of residents and between residents and those who live elsewhere. Finally they worked together to pioneer.³⁶

Miles Glendinning and Stefan Methusius describe the reaction against high blocks resulting in the rise of the LRHD. They record dissatisfaction with efforts to integrate all ages in high blocks which were too self-contained and eliminated the need for the external 'service areas' in which interaction took place, producing a strong focus on outdoor space starting in the mid-1950s. The early LRHD projects designed in this period resolved this by introducing 'enclosed private gardens or yards adjacent to each dwelling'. Central to this were children's play areas which should 'not be too close to old peoples flats but not too far from children's homes', which produced a freer kind of playground and suggestions that the whole layout of LRHD estates be designed 'as a [robust] play structure . . . [including] ramps, screens . . .'.³⁷ This also forms the backdrop for the *Parker Morris Report* (1961), which set provisions for good design:

The human problem for the future in the design of flats and maisonettes is to provide for people who live in them an environment which is as workable, and as satisfactory, as for people who live in houses.³⁸

Several architects working in London at the time cite Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Alexander's *Community and Privacy: Toward a New Architecture of Humanism* as an influence:

Privacy is most urgently needed and most critical in the place where people live, be it house, apartment, or any other dwelling. . . . to develop both privacy and the true advantages of living in a community, an entirely new anatomy of urbanism is needed, built of many hierarchies of clearly articulated domains. Such an urban anatomy must provide special domains for all degrees of privacy and all degrees of community living, ranging from the most intimately private to the most intensely communal. . . . Only when the habitat of urbanizing man is given such an order shall we perhaps restore to urban life a fruitful balance between community and privacy.³⁹

Early examples of the LRHD include a 1953 scheme for housing by Patrick Hodgkinson, designs by Neave Brown, and Atelier 5's Siedlung Halen in Switzerland (1961). It is possible to regard these architects as taking their cue from late 1950s planning and guidance of Chermayeff and Alexander, and bringing the Smithsons' notions of 'as found' and 'the street' as a social hub to a logical conclusion, which reconciled Brutalism with pre-modernist architecture. Notably, the Smithsons concluded their 1960s work with the Garden Building in Oxford, which exhibits similar pre-modernist reconciliation. In the longer term, these projects exhibit many of the principles of sustainability that underpin today's planning.⁴⁰

Whilst clearly distinct from earlier schemes like the Golden Lane (1952) and Park Hill (1961), these projects adhere to Banham's criteria in their use of untreated materials such as concrete and brick for providing a 'clear exhibition of structure', and they employ form which often achieves 'memorability as an image', as found at Alexandra Road. Interpreting 'as found' as utilizing the site, its context, and community in a wider sense, it seems reasonable that these projects belong to the legacy of Brutalism and its thinking. The architect Peter Eisenman describes something equally significant in the 1950s thinking of the Smithsons, namely that

[the] buildings [at Golden Lane] are themselves fragments of a larger scheme; they are to be linked in some future state. Their form thus embodies a respect for the empirical process; i.e., one builds in increments, on as much of a site as one is given. The future city is no longer contingent upon being built at one time, but rather upon a process, accumulating development on scattered and random sites over time. The link-like forms of Golden Lane accept the reality of this process. They suggest both vertical and horizontal connection to the existing context.⁴¹

The importance of context, belonging, and historicity is underlined by Chermayeff and Alexander:

Most people today find pleasure and satisfaction in an ancient city which possesses visible physical evidence of its origin, growth and purpose. It is a unique and personal expression of the activity and life within. An urban environment of this kind is deeply felt; the inhabitants subconsciously respond to specific visual experiences with a sense of belonging [historicity], identification and affection.⁴²

This 'continuous and evolving building' with its apparently random or scattered planning approach rejects the segregated CIAM concepts of housing, work, recreation, and traffic, underpinning their idea of 'patterns of association'.⁴³ This presents a notion of 'temporal contemporaneity' and indicates that the management of projects should be determined by the developing and (thereby contemporary) needs of community. This extended beyond the Smithsons' idea to become a broader aim, reflected in Neave Brown's view that the listing of Alexandra Road should raise the bar for future improvement rather than serve as a hindrance.⁴⁴

Stakeholders in Phase 3 (Emergence Individual/Community: Increasing Focus on Community)

By its conclusion in the late 1960s, the role of the stakeholder was dramatically different from that of the ones in the earlier phases. The work of the Smithsons and others in the 1950s identifies and begins to address the community and the individual, but it sets about this in a largely observational capacity, as can be seen not least in the ethnographic studies of Bethnal Green in East London. Critically though, the focus on context and continuity, introduced by 'as found', is a broadly positive development enfranchising stakeholders and community in preserving aspects of their existing environment. The 1960s

projects often crossed this divide, working with communities to determine their needs for a site. Two examples include Neave Brown's design taking a dinner-party approach at Winscombe Street (1965) and the community-built approach pioneered by Walter Segal.⁴⁵

HOUSING POLICY: QUALITY VERSUS PRODUCTION – HOUSING MODELS POST-WORLD WAR II

From 1945 onward, new pressures for housing and provision emerged, which needed to address bomb damage and to implement a rapidly developing welfare agenda, which saw the interwar efforts to replace substandard housing taken up again with renewed vigour.⁴⁶ Whilst each country has its own particular version of this story, sufficient commonalities are found throughout international discourse and sociopolitical climate to demonstrate general trends from models of public loans, ranging from state provision to private finance.⁴⁷ The Slovakian engineer and academic Ivanicka Martin Polak



Figure 5. Community through the public-private interface at Alexandra Road, 1967–78. Photo: Tom Davies, 2012

divides the period into three phases. The first of these, 'recovery' (1945–60), aimed at repairing war damage and alleviating housing shortages through subsidized housing construction, resulting in mass housing. The second phase, 'growing diversity' (1960–75), developed the welfare agenda through a focus on housing quality and urban renewal. Polak suggests that during this second phase important divergences began to occur as some governments adjusted their housing policies to refine their housing models. Whilst still in the favourable economic conditions of the 1960s, Germany and Denmark began rent deregulation and the retargeting of housing assistance.

By contrast, the government in Great Britain made only small adjustments to housing policy in the 1970s, which were eclipsed by the (Labour) Callaghan Government's Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977.⁴⁸ The 1977 Act readjusted priorities for housing, making councils responsible for providing accommodation for homeless people in their area and prioritizing those in greatest need, effectively laying down the conditions required to run estates down. Over time, this redefined agenda of social housing produced a serious decline in living standards on its council estates, which was compounded by the (Conservative) Thatcher government's promotion of home ownership and sell-off of council housing stocks under 'Right to Buy' (introduced in 1980). It seems possible that public housing models of countries which acted early on to realign regulatory systems have proven to be more robust, whilst in other countries home ownership became the dominant item on the political agenda, as was the case in the UK.⁴⁹

Polak argues that the third phase of the 'new realities for housing' (1975–90), through the emerging neoliberal agenda and reduction in public housing expenditure, made provision 'more market-oriented, competitive and opened up to economic pressures'.⁵⁰ Countries which realigned their housing models in the 1960s or constructed for private ownership were better prepared for this.⁵¹

The early models of Vienna, Frankfurt, and Amsterdam share common aspects, such as expropriation or the exchange of land for public building and the implementation of controls to prevent value speculation, as well as the use of agency of municipal and private cooperatives and low-cost housing societies. This includes public loans to districts with large populations to support development, land policies to reduce costs, and the municipal production of buildings.⁵² The realignment of the 1960s addressed the needs of diverse populations which, despite private home ownership, are present

in the UK's housing associations today, demonstrating a need for diverse models of housing provision. The Vienna model stands alone in that, following remodelling in the late twentieth century, it today provides for a diversity of tenants with working- and middle-class income living together in low-cost rental housing totalling some 60 per cent of the city's population.⁵³

The Demise of the Tall Tower and Post-War Welfare Provision

The demise of tall building construction in the UK in the late 1960s and the subsequent loss of support for the Low High Rise Density forms details a schism between councils and their architects, which together demonstrate the weakness and reasons for the downfall of public housing in the UK. In *Cook's Camden*, Mark Swenarton describes the cooperative spirit of the early post-war period as follows:

Since 1945, across Britain, architects and local politicians had collaborated to deliver the fruits of the welfare state: housing, schools, libraries, swimming pools etc.⁵⁴

The pressure this placed on planning and construction became increasingly evident in the 1960s as councils sought to achieve housing targets through prefabricated tall buildings. This eventually became untenable, following the collapse of Ronan Point in 1967 and the removal of housing subsidies for buildings over four storeys. In contrast to mass prefabrication building programmes, the architects working on the LRHD projects were working in council or in private teams, supported economically by the state in the spirit of post-war reconstruction. Swenarton details the spiralling costs of Camden projects in the 1970s, owing to excessive inflation and bureaucratic revisions of requirements. This changed the scope, adding and removing amenities, which culminated in the Alexandra Road Public Enquiry, following its completion in 1978, and sought to apportion blame for huge overspend. This forms part of the wider context of trying to cope with the increasing budget of realizing post-war building and the new conservative government, which was preparing for the sell-off of council housing through 'Right to Buy' and for reductions in public funding.⁵⁵

These problems have exasperated the rising costs of speculative development today and are highlighted by the work of groups such as London's Just Space, describing itself as 'a community-led network of voluntary and action groups influencing plan-making and planning policy to ensure public debate on

crucial issues of social justice and economic and environmental sustainability.⁵⁶ Its draft plan for London, *Towards a Community-Led Plan for London: Policy Directions and Proposals*, provides a policy for long-term sustainability of communities.⁵⁷ Using terms such as ‘life-time suburbs’, it outlines models for public participation and community involvement in planning, sustaining diverse economies, demographics, and housing models such as not-for-profit rented homes. The European Network for Housing Research (ENHR) and the European Federation for Living (EFL) are similar groups in Europe looking for alternative models to the current market-led approach.

Stakeholders in Housing

Stakeholders in housing unsurprisingly follow a similar path to that of architecture and planning. It is worth noting, however, that the adjustments to existing models, which occurred on the continent, and the shift to private home ownership represent a movement from the focus of society as a whole to responding to individual needs, in different ways.

HERITAGE AND THE HUMAN AGENDA

The 1931 *Athens Charter for First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments*, which formed the inaugural moment for ICOMOS (The International Council on Sites and Monuments), formulates a useful starting point for the progression from historic monument to historic environment. It established key tenets of conservation such as knowledge-based restoration, the need for protective legislation, and the custodial care of important sites.⁵⁸ The evidence-based approach defined in 1931 describes the aim of restoration as follows:

In the case of ruins, scrupulous conservation is necessary and steps should be taken to reinstate any original fragments that may be recovered (anastylosis), whenever this is possible; the new materials used for this purpose should in all cases be recognisable.⁵⁹

Current practice originated in the Venice Charter of 1964, which introduced notions about context and setting in the care of heritage, introducing the notion of historic environment, and is reflected by the development of legislation for conservation areas in the late 1960s.⁶⁰

Early heritage protection focused on individual monuments or buildings, reflected in the use of the singular term ‘monument’. Conservation areas

recognizing the value of groups of buildings and forming the historic environment were not legislated in the UK until the Civic Amenities Act of 1967. The development of holistic designation in Europe and Scandinavia is roughly contemporary.⁶¹ This progression from historic monument designation to historic environment parallels the progression of architecture and planning from a singular focus to an integrated approach and sustainable development, which emerged in the 1950s. The phrase ‘managed change of the historic environment’ is common currency in the UK, describing an approach to development which seeks to sustain heritage values.⁶²

Despite the shift to a notion of a ‘historic environment’ and a more holistic approach, issues remain that are related to reconciling ideas of being ‘fit for purpose,’ referring to the viability of a building and its management being economically sustainable. Listing has traditionally taken the view that economic factors or physical conditions should not affect a decision to designate and that listing should not expect buildings to respond to future constraints or pressures at build. This was easier to manage in the earlier individualist approach to designation, but when considering the challenges of finding funding to maintain a growing number of designated sites and buildings, self-sufficient viability through secure revenue becomes vital. It also presents problems in consideration of the Smithsons’ evolving building, in allowing it to develop over time.⁶³

As a result, a new approach emerged in the 1990s, the origins of which are discernible in an essay by Alan Powers, which compares the traditional approach to listing to Thomas Aquinas’s notion of ‘substance’ in its focus on physical structure.⁶⁴ He suggests that the values of modernist buildings lie instead in their qualities, or ‘essence,’ to use the Aquinas analogy, through the interplay of light, gaps, and spaces forming the rooms for social discourse. He recommends refocusing on this as the means of preserving modernist heritage. This suggestion finds a predecessor in the Smithsons’ discussion of the ‘space between’ as a focus in their design as well as the wider focus on facilitating relationships.⁶⁵

Powers demonstrates his point with reference to the Bankside Power Station in London where architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron were able to make radical alterations to the unlisted structure to create Tate Modern and the potential loss of amenity through the removal of public space at a school in the Pimlico neighbourhood of South London. In the former, the lack of protection allowed positive intervention, whilst at Pimlico, the physi-

cal focus on protection failed to protect amenity value. Powers concludes that whilst conservation can provide a vehicle for protecting community interests, it is often unable to, and he recommends instead a 'more general culture which balances essence and substance' to protect form and amenity through use.⁶⁶ This might also be termed a composite approach.

What followed in the 2000s has achieved this to a degree through the highlighting of 'communal value' and notions of 'managed change'. Whilst heritage planners often combine forces with those working in other disciplines to achieve a more effective approach, no formal combined or holistic approach has yet been defined. This demonstrates an over-reliance on best practice and cooperation, and it indicates that the community aspect remains weakest in this informal arrangement.

Stakeholders in Heritage

There is a clear dichotomy in heritage between the prescriptive conservation of the interwar period and the historic environment and human agenda, which emerged in the late 1960s. It seems reasonable to infer that Powers's notion of 'essence' should extend to community in this, but we have meanwhile begun to recognize that 'essence' through the new approach to buildings' appropriate means of safeguarding community in this remains lacking.

Applying This to Estates

The earliest modernist listing is Alexandra Road, which was Grade II* Listed in 1993.⁶⁷ Park Hill in Sheffield followed in 1998 and the Brunswick Centre in Bloomsbury, London, in 2000.⁶⁸ Withdrawal of public funding in the 1980s produced challenges for these buildings, erected to be serviceable in a welfare state economy, which was compounded by the rejection of the ideals of the 1950s and the 1960s, opting for a return to earlier dwelling forms and the preservation of older buildings.⁶⁹ The human agenda is present today in heritage work through communal value, meaning the value for communities and individuals.⁷⁰ It has been developed since the 1972 Stockholm conference and Burra Charter (1999)⁷¹ but does still not necessarily ensure the interests of stakeholders and users. There are examples of community and resident groups being involved in the designation process in the 1990s, such as the Alexandra Road, where the involvement of English Heritage was instigated by the efforts of tenants in improving living conditions. At Park Hill in Sheffield, the agenda has shifted from social housing to affordable and at-market-value housing, resulting in little consideration of residents' needs

for continuity of community.⁷² In best practice, heritage practitioners state an aim of shifting ‘from the aim of cure to the strategy of care’, refocusing on long-term strategies for sites and buildings, which might offer a vehicle for carrying forward stakeholder interests within that process.⁷³

Avanti Architects’ work at Wynford House in Islington, London, as described in the submission for the Housing Design Awards, was ‘chosen by the residents’ in an open competition. Their proposals involve a balanced mix of physical and management intervention. A change of ownership (to a housing association), diversification of tenure (with private penthouses), and bringing families down to the ground (in new maisonettes on the bottom two floors) were combined with sympathetic restoration of Berthold Romanovich Lubetkin’s original fabric and landscaping, internal upgrading, security measures, and new community facilities.⁷⁴

Resident-driven regeneration has also taken place at the Elgin Estate in Westminster, London, where residents were consulted at an early stage and throughout the project, through meetings, exhibitions, and surveys.⁷⁵ This resulted in a focus on renewal and improvement of the existing rather than extensive alteration, which finds parallels at Alexandra Road and the physically far more extensive work undertaken by Druot, Lacaton & Vassal in the Ville Nouvelles (comprising post-war suburbs) in Paris.⁷⁶

Druot, Lacaton & Vassal’s resident-led approach at Ville Nouvelles sought to address the interests of residents in the large housing schemes, working with existing structures through alteration, improved circulation, the use of space (a key focus of CIAM), and an increasing capacity. Typical alterations included extending floor space by merging and adding rooms, replacing walls with sliding-glass doors, and developing workable communal spaces, winter gardens, and terraces. They enlarged key areas such as main entrances and the foot of stairwells to create transparency and a connection to the outside world. These changes sought to increase daylight and provide new views and spatial richness through different climatic and sensory zones based upon regular dialogue with residents through meetings and workshops. Druot, Lacaton & Vassal’s approach demonstrates a high capacity for improvement of large-scale housing complexes and big apartment blocks when interventions allow for significant impacts to the physical composition of the buildings. The group claims to have drawn inspiration from social housing projects from the 1920s, the 1930s, and the early 1960s, but paying little regard to maintain-

ing the external appearance of the buildings which they significantly altered. Through this expansion into external space, there were no internal alterations to the apartments. This unintentionally reverses the traditional focus of heritage protection, whereby protecting the exterior usually comes first.⁷⁷

In discussing Wynford House, John Allan of Avanti Architects concludes that such lower profile cases, below the threshold for listing/designation, were successfully regenerated through economic and logical solutions rather than the intervention of heritage authorities. He recommends exploring this avenue as a viable alternative to traditional designation as a means of securing a long-term future.⁷⁸ In view of the above cases, it may be that this approach, when successful and limited to moderate alterations and repair, can satisfy both heritage and stakeholder. The substantial alteration of the external appearance of Villes Nouvelles would fall short of approval from heritage authorities in a similar manner to English Heritage's engagement at Alexandra Road at the point that residents had appointed Avanti to undertake works deemed unsympathetic in heritage terms.⁷⁹

DISCUSSION – STAKEHOLDERS: USER AND COMMUNITY

The central role of stakeholders in the design of Brutalist projects and the logical conclusion of Powers's notion of 'essence' indicate that we should not only conserve the spaces for interaction but support the communities that occupy those spaces. This provides a clear argument for strengthening the role of the stakeholders and the community, which is achievable through a combined approach. Good stakeholder engagement needs to be retrospective in understanding notions of value as held by different groups through their community history and prospective in managing those values to produce benefit in the future.

Stakeholders can be mandatory, voluntary, direct, or indirect in their capacity to influence and can range from authorities to residents.⁸⁰ Their capacity to influence may be through their holding resources, influence, legislative power, or connections to those with power or influence. In discussing stakeholder resolution, Arthur Zimmerman and Claudia Maennling employ the concept that stakeholders should be 'coherent with the change-agenda'.⁸¹ They conclude that without appropriate efforts, stakeholders will often not understand the process or proposal before it is fully communicated but that once done, many will be able to see potential benefits or at least no longer perceive a threat.⁸²

Efforts to better enfranchise under-represented groups are an increasing focus in revising the earlier project of goal-oriented focus, but they often lack a joined-up approach in reconciling different groups through process. This results in a tendency to emphasize demographic, cultural, political, and societal affiliations which ignore the social glue, the bonds of group cohesion, identity, and difference that typically form the basis for their aims, which can provide a real understanding of the stakeholder relationship unique to that project. Andrew Crane and Trish Ruebottom propose a model which integrates economic and contractual relationships with case-specific, socially relevant identification, which can provide an early identification of issues. Appropriately managed, this can be mutually advantageous to both clients and residents in allowing hitherto unknown factors to generate potential for improvement.⁸³

Stakeholder enfranchisement has followed similar trajectories in architecture and planning, heritage and housing policy in the twentieth century, progressing from object of provision to emerging as individuals and communities from the 1960s onward. Whilst this recognition represents a significant development in terms of enfranchisement, efforts to develop appropriate tools for securing stakeholder interests have unfolded slowly and remain ongoing to this day.

There are clear parallel developments in the narratives of the different themes progressing from singularity to pluralism. Architecture and planning progress from the *tabula rasa* revision to working with 'as found', presenting the human agenda, which in turn becomes sustainable development. In heritage, progression moves from monument to historic environment, whilst in housing we see progression from state provision to empowerment of individuals through home ownership and revision of public models with varying results.

Efforts to address stakeholder concerns in the different themes remain disjointed through a lack of cooperative approach. Beyond the shortcomings of heritage in protecting amenity value and stakeholder interests, this also applies to other areas of planning. Housing policy, which establishes the economic conditions needed to sustain communities and the framework for planning, currently faces severe challenges in providing for the diverse needs of society, particularly in home ownership where inflated prices make home buying impossible for many. The examples of estate regeneration and conservation indicate greater ease in attaining the successful outcomes on non-listed estates, so long as their council is attending to duty of care. Whilst overly prescriptive listing can hamper efforts, there is a clear need to revisit our approach to protection given the

benefits it can afford buildings and communities under the threat of redevelopment. This should develop the ongoing shift from substance to essence, so as to support both buildings and community in a way that conserves key values in the buildings whilst sustaining the vitality of the community living in those buildings.

In housing policy, the ambitious building programmes of the 1920s reveal a variety of devices for delivering large low-cost schemes. Whilst some are problematic in today's context, the cooperatives, low-cost housing societies, and measures against speculation form key aspects in current discourse on housing and can usefully support communities and amenity value. It is clear that different economic models are required to address the diverse requirements of society, and this part of the narrative provides a resource for understanding the outcomes of different models.

CONCLUSION

The weaknesses and strengths of the different themes could be resolved by taking a composite approach. This should go beyond cooperation between different areas in planning today in order to realize the benefits of a formalized approach in bridging these gaps. The rise to prevalence of the human agenda in all three themes shows a need to operationalize stakeholder enfranchisement and give it a practical role in the planning process, whereby it can meaningfully influence decisions and outcomes. Applying best practice notions such as 'coherence with the change agenda'⁸⁴ and the attention to structure highlighted by Crane & Ruebottom are key in this and could potentially start with a more nuanced version of a planning tool for mapping stakeholder values, as developed previously.⁸⁵

Whilst there are various aspects in Brutalism which are present in today's approach to sustainable development, its focus on community provides a strong argument for a temporal contemporaneity which addresses changing needs as they develop. These buildings were designed around ideas of community and evolving stakeholder requirements, providing both the incentive for change and improvement while giving us clear guidance on how to safeguard their 'essence' through conservation. Reflecting on Corbusier's claim that 'Tomorrow belongs to Nobody', the temporal contemporaneity seen in community and the 'continuous and evolving building' rather indicate that 'Tomorrow belongs to Nobody' because we should be concerned with addressing our needs day by day.

NOTES

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