THE NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD UNIT

by LEWIS MUMFORD

DURING the last two decades the idea of planning by neighborhoods has been widely accepted. But this has taken place more in principle than in actual practice, except in the British New Towns. At the same time, a counter-movement has come into existence; the critics of neighborhood planning identify it with many practices that have nothing whatever to do with the neighborhood principle, such as segregation by race or caste or income; and they would treat the city as a whole as the only unit for effective planning. This drawing up for battle is somewhat premature, for there has been little opportunity to experiment with neighborhood units and less time to observe results. Strangely, the arguments for and against neighborhood planning have drawn together the most unlike kinds of people. Thus Mr. F. J. Osborn, a staunch advocate of garden cities of limited size, does not favor the physical definition of neighborhoods; while the planners of Amsterdam, though committed to increase the size of their city up to the million mark, have carried out their new developments on the same basic lines as those of an earlier generation: namely, neighborhood by neighborhood, and up to a point they have equipt these neighborhoods as social units.

Much of the argument on this subject has served only to confuse the issues that should be defined; and my purpose in this paper is to clarify some of those issues and make it possible to take a more rational position on one or the other side. By accident, I began this paper in Paris and revised it in Venice. Within these two urban environments the recently posed question of whether neighborhoods actually exist, particularly within great cities, seems a singularly academic one, indeed downright absurd in their suggestion that neighborhoods are the wilful mental creations of romantic sociologists. Paris, for all its formal Cartesian unity, is a city of neighborhoods, often with a well-defined architectural character as well as an identifiable social face. The Parisian neighborhood is not just a postal district or a political unit, but an historic growth; and the sense of belonging to a particular *arrondissement* or *quartier* is just as strong in the shopkeeper, the bistro customer, or the petty craftsman as the sense of being a Parisian. Indeed, in Paris the neighborhood attachment is so close, so intense, so narrow that it would have satisfied the soul of Adam Wayne, Chesterton's Napoleon of Notting Hill.

This is not a subjective judgment or a hasty tourist's generalisation; M. Chambert de Lauwe and his associates have just begun to publish the results of a careful survey of the movements of Parisians about their city, and have

discovered that whereas professional people may move over a good part of it from one day's end to the other, the working people keep close to their own districts, where most of the facilities for life, the café, the dance hall, the church, the school, and not least the workshop or factory are found.[1] What is exceptional about Paris, I suspect, is not the facts themselves but the way in which the builders of the city, despite their efforts to achieve an overall unity, have nevertheless consolidated most of the daily activities of no small part of the population within a limited local area. As for Venice, it is a city of neighborhoods, established as parishes in relation to a dominant church or square; and by its very constitution it reminds us that the medieval city was composed on the neighborhood principle, with the Church serving as community center and the market place adjacent to it as ' shopping center,' both within easy walking distance of all the inhabitants. The very word ' quarter ' reminds us that, typically, the medieval city, up to the sixteenth century, though it usually contained fewer than 25,000 inhabitants, was divided into quarters: each quarter had its own section of the walls to defend, along with its own churches, workshops and minor markets.[2] In Florence, for example, each of the six ' quarters ' elected two consuls; so under a democratic regime the neighborhood even had a political aspect. These facts did not prevent the city from functioning as a whole, when some great feast or celebration sent the inhabitants into the central area, to worship at the Cathedral or to perform plays from its porch. The common size of these quarters must have been from about 1,500 to 6,000 persons, except in cities of abnormal growth, like Florence, Milan, or Paris.

1. *The Neighborhood as a Fact of Nature*

Whether it is possible for a city, be it planned or not, to escape some sort of definition or at least local coloring by neighborhoods is problematic. Even in the undifferentiated rectangular plan of Manhattan, a plan contrived as if for the purpose of preventing neighborhoods from coming into existence, distinctive entities, like Yorkville, Chelsea, and Greenwich Village, nevertheless have developed, though they lack any architectural character, except that conditioned by the successive dates of their building. In a rudimentary form neighborhoods exist, as a fact of nature, whether or not we recognise them or provide for their particular functions. For neighbors are simply people who live near one another. To share the same place is perhaps the most primitive of social bonds, and to be within view of one's neighbors is the simplest form of association. Neighborhoods are composed of people who enter by the very fact of birth or chosen residence into a common life. Neighbors are people united primarily not by common origins or common purposes but by the proximity of their dwellings in space. This closeness makes them conscious of

1 De Lauwe, Chombart, P.—H. Paris et l'Agglomération Parisienne. 2 vols. Paris: 1952.

2 Up to 1450, according to one estimate, not more than twelve cities had more than 50,000 population; London still had 40,000 and the great majority of cities, including Lübeck and Cologne, had 25,000 or less.

each other by sight, and known to each other by direct communication, by intermediate links of association, or by rumor. In times of crisis, a fire, a funeral, a festival, neighbors may even become vividly conscious of each other and capable of greater cooperation; but in origin, neighborliness rests solely on the fact of local cohabitation. There is nothing forced in this relationship and to be real it need not be deep: a nod, a friendly word, a recognised face, an uttered name—this is all that is needed to establish and preserve in some fashion the sense of belonging together. Neither friendship nor occupational affiliation is implied in the give and take of neighborhood life, though in time such relationships may take form, along with intermarriage. Long-established residence, or the ownership of real property, cements this elementary bond.

At all events, neighborhoods, in some primitive, inchoate fashion exist wherever human beings congregate, in permanent family dwellings; and many of the functions of the city tend to be distributed naturally—that is, without any theoretical preoccupation or political direction—into neighborhoods. Marked topographic divisions, as in Pittsburgh, or old historic divisions, as in London, with characteristic modes of building, buttress this neighborhood consciousness. Neighborhood grouping, around certain common domestic and civic facilities, is complementary to another form of grouping, likewise ancient, in occupational association or zones, by means of which professions or industries of the same sort tend to form well-defined precincts, sometimes grouped along a single street, like Harley Street, sometimes forming an ' island,' like the Inns of Court in London. In defining the neighborhood unit, it is important to distinguish it from the occupational precinct or the caste quarter. In the latter, all the members of a trade or corporation are grouped together. In Indian cities, the quarter is composed of people of the same caste and occupation, and in American cities, during the last generation, caste quarters, based on race and income, have been created by zoning or deed restrictions, which equally narrow the basis of human association. In his well-founded distrust of this manner of organisation, so hostile to the principles of democracy, Mr. Reginald Isaacs, one of the chief American critics of neighborhood planning, has attributed to the neighborhood principle the very vice of specialisation and segregation that the modern concept of the ' neighborhood unit ' in fact attempts to break down. But the selective nature of these specialised zones should prevent a trained observer from characterizing them as ' neighborhood units ' even though the fact of cohabitation engenders neighborly relations.

How was it that spontaneous neighborhood grouping, so well-defined before the seventeenth century, tended to disappear in systematic new Plans, like those of 17th century Amsterdam and 19th century New York, though never entirely disrupted in the more organic growth of a great city like London? One of the answers to this is the segregation of income groups under capitalism, with a sharp spatial separation of the quarters of the rich and the poor; the other was a technical factor, the increase of wheeled vehicles and the domination of the avenue in planning.

The development of transportation caused the traffic avenue to become the dominant component in nineteenth century design: the emphasis changed from facilities for settlement to facilities for movement. By means of the traffic avenue, often ruthlessly cutting through urban tissue that had once been organically related to neighborhood life, the city as a whole became more united perhaps; but at the cost of destroying, or at least of seriously undermining, neighborhood life. Where, as in the big American metropolises, the gridiron plan forestalled or over-rode neighborhood development, the subordinate parts of the city came more and more to lack any character of their own. Though the successive times of building and the diversity of human purposes might still give a certain residual color to the growing urban extensions, in general the traffic avenue, abetted by other means of mechanical transportation, tended to break up, not just the rituals of local attachment, but the very sense, conveyed by street plans and architecture, of being part of an identifiable and often lovable whole. Even when the neighborhoods of the nineteenth century city were identifiable, they were usually not lovable; so that, in a sense, it was only in the older quarters of the city or in the better suburbs that the neighborhood, as a cluster of visible and conscious domestic relationships, survived. Otherwise, the long uniform avenue, the random placing of public buildings, created a nightmare of the indefinable. It was easier to lose oneself in the city as a whole than to find oneself in the neighborhood.

2. *The Community Centre as Neighborhood Core*

Thus things stood with the neighborhood at the beginning of the twentieth century; and so completely had the concept of the neighborhood disappeared that in the first attempt to design a complete, self-contained city, at Letchworth, Messrs. Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, the town planners, made no effort to define or even suggest the neighborhood. The emphasis still lay on the city as a whole, treated as a single unit. But about this time a movement appeared in America that was to challenge this whole order of planning; and it came from two directions. On the scientific side, it stemmed from Charles Horton Cooley, who was to describe, in a series of books on social organisation and social process, the part played by the intimate, face-to-face community, one based on the family, the common place, and general shared interests, rather than on specialised vocations and conscious affiliations. What the German sociologists called *Gemeinschaft*, as opposed to *Gesellschaft*, had its basis, Cooley pointed out, in this primary group, with its spontaneous, instinctual, largely 'given' relationships. No matter how differentiated and directed the life of a great metropolis finally became there remained, at the core of its activities, the same processes and loyalties one discovers in the village.

But the discovery of the neighborhood as an important organ of urban life had two other points of origin. One was due to social impoverishment; the other to an attempt at social integration. In the East End of London, Canon

Barnett and his associates discovered, there was a vast urban wilderness that lacked even the bare elements of social life and had sunk into a state of barbarism. In creating the social settlement, at Toynbee Hall, he provided a common building and meeting place where the residents of the neighborhood could come together for the purposes of play, education, or sociability. This social settlement (sometimes called Neighborhood House in America) answered so many of the needs of the great city, particularly those that grew out of its anonymity and loneliness, that it is hardly surprising that a parallel middle class movement started in Rochester, New York, about two decades after Toynbee Hall, and became known as the Community Center movement. The advocates of the community center sought to animate civic life by providing a common local meeting place to provide a forum for discussion and to serve as basis for community activities that otherwise had no local habitation. One of the leaders of this movement, Clarence Perry, was led by his analysis of the local community's needs to give back to the neighborhood the functions that had been allowed to lapse, or had become unduly centralised, since the decay of the medieval city. That path led him from the neighborhood to the neighborhood unit: from a mere cohabitation to the creation of a new form and new institutions for a modern urban community. In planning the result of this was to change the basic unit of planning from the city-block or the avenue, to the more complex unit of the neighborhood, a change that demanded a reapportionment of space for avenues and access streets, for public buildings and open areas and domestic dwellings: in short, a new generalized urban pattern.

The other movement that stimulated the consciousness of the neighborhood was the growth of the suburb, especially the suburb planned in a unified way by a development company. In the better suburbs, like Bedford Park and Hampstead Garden Suburb in London, Roland Park and Guilford in Baltimore, Riverside, Chicago, or Kew Gardens, New York, the flowing street plan, the fuller use of tree-lined streets and public open spaces, and the new romantic architecture, made people conscious of the neighborhood as an esthetic unit. Did not the first experiments in concentrated and planned shopping centres, usually adjacent to the railroad, take place in the suburb? Few suburbs were indeed mixed neighborhoods: segregation by income and social class characterised all of them, except perhaps those that had grown slowly out of an original country village; but in creating domestic quarters of a more ample nature than the city afforded, the suburb also prompted the beginnings of a civic consciousness, on a neighborhood scale. Though E. L. Thorndyke's rating for cities is not perhaps an infallible guide, the fact that suburbs stand high in the list is not altogether the result of accident or class bias. At least as identifiable neighborhoods they often have facilities that the disorganised and blighted metropolis, whatever its financial and cultural resources, lacks. (When the history of Town Planning comes to be written, it will be clear that most of the fresh initiatives in urban design—the open plan, the superblock, the differentiation of pedestrian and wheeled traffic, the parkway, the shopping center, and finally the neighborhood unit

were first tried out in the suburb). From the suburb, as well as from historic quarters of the city, came the notion that the neighborhood should have a certain coherence of architectural expression, both through the general plan and through the individual design of buildings.

The community center movement seemed to collapse around 1920, along with another more ambitious effort, the Social Unit movement in Cincinnati, which likewise sought to rehabilitate democratic institutions at the neighborhood level. Yet both movements left their mark; for they brought forth a few simple concepts, long neglected, that have had, at least in America, a wide effect upon the minds of planners. The first is the recognition of the need for a definite building to serve as a meeting place for the local community; and the second, following from this, is the simple practical suggestion that the elementary school, the most ubiquitous of local institutions, need only be provided with suitable halls, offices, and committee rooms to serve both children and adults, and to function both by day and by night. As a result, the minimum requirements for a community center have now become a standard basis for school design in almost every part of the United States; and in such buildings, even in cities otherwise as backward in civic design as New York, an endless round of neighborhood activities goes on. As an historic fact, then, the core of the neighborhood unit, its central nucleus, was projected and actually embodied before the idea of the neighborhood unit as such was defined, or a rational means of determining its boundaries suggested. That final act of clarification took place when Clarence Perry published his work on the subject, as a contribution to the Russell Sage Foundation's Regional Survey of New York and Its Environs.

Meanwhile, however, the notion of re-defining and re-planning the city on the basis of neighborhoods, had been broached in two other quarters. Perry himself was perhaps aided in his inquiry by the publication of the results of a now almost forgotten competition, held by the Chicago City Club, for the planning of a quarter section—640 acres—of Chicago.[1] This is a much larger area than most students to-day would take as a neighborhood; but it brought forth, none the less, a remarkable group of designs; remarkable, at least for their time, and not without occasional hints and suggestions even to designers today. Published in the midst of the First World War, it has long been a forgotten item; but it focussed attention on the process of integrating the domestic areas of the city and relating their housing to markets, schools, churches, and other institutions that serve the local area rather than the city as a whole.

Shortly after the publication of this report, Raymond Unwin, surely the most fertile urban innovator in his generation, published a paper on Distribution in the Town Planning Institute *Journal* (1920-1921) in which he asked: ' How far is it possible for the growing city to secure an end so desirable as the greater localisation of life? ' And he answered: ' I believe that the proper distribution of the parts of the city and the clear definition of its various areas would do

[1] See Bibliography: Yeomans.

much to secure this. Each area in which it is intended to develop a localised life must of course be provided with every facility for all the different branches of life that it is practicable to localise. There should be local work and occupation for as many as possible of the people living there; there should be local markets and shopping centres to provide for their daily needs; there should be educational and recreational facilities. It will not be practicable to have a university in every such locality but at least there should be high schools. You cannot expect to have your Albert Hall for great concerts or your Kennington Oval for international matches in each locality, but at least there should be the Hall of Music, the theatre, and such ample provision of playing fields that no one need journey from the locality in order to enjoy the ordinary recreations.' In this article, Unwin even anticipated the new uses of the greenbelt, which he had already foreshadowed in his Hampstead Garden Suburb, for he observed: "It will be found that the proposed distribution will largely depend on the proper apportionment of open space around each area, and that this open space will serve two main purposes. It will provide all the opportunities for recreation, gardening, and so forth, and it will give a degree of definition to the area and separation from other areas which will emphasise the locality as a defined unit. Referring to the importance of defining areas, I may perhaps quote what I wrote in 1919 that ' these belts might well define our parishes or our wards and by doing so might help to foster the feeling of local unity in the area." '

3. *Experiments with Neighborhood Units*

When one is describing a movement as complex as this one, one is perhaps tempted to ascribe to one or two leading figures what was really the outcome of many minds, converging from different directions. But though Perry no more discovered the neighborhood principle alone than Le Corbusier discovered modern architecture, the work of each of them has had a dramatic value in crystallising many diffuse efforts. In his thinking Perry certainly went no further than Unwin, except in so far as he filled in the sketch with concrete details and proposals. What Perry did was to take the fact of the neighborhood; and show how, through deliberate design, it could be transformed into what he called a neighborhood unit, the modern equivalent of the medieval quarter or parish: a unit that would now exist, not merely on a spontaneous or instinctual basis, but through the deliberate decentralisation of institutions that had, in their over-centralisation, ceased to serve efficiently the city as a whole. He sought to determine what facilities and institutions were necessary for domestic life as such; how many people were needed to support an elementary school, a shopping center, a church, or other institutions; and by what re-arrangement of the street pattern a coherent neighborhood could be created with every necesary local function within walking distance of the dwelling. With the aid of plans and elevations, Perry pushed beyond the work of the Chicago competition and attempted to describe an ideal unit, a fully equipt neighborhood.

Some of the features of this ideal plan could not, perhaps, stand up under careful examination; but in the establishment of the proper distance from the remotest home to playground, park, or school, and in his suggestion that major traffic routes must be routed around, not through, a neighborhood unit, not least by dedicating ten per cent. of the area to local parks and playgrounds, Perry made no small contribution to the reorganisation of the modern city.

Even before Perry had published his work on the neighborhood unit, Messrs. Stein and Wright, in their plans for Sunnyside Gardens, Long Island, though confined by the existing gridiron street pattern, had created a neighborhood in which the playgrounds and open spaces and small meeting halls were treated as an integral part of the housing development; and in Radburn they carried this mode of planning, not without consultation with Perry and various school authorities, into their designs for the whole community.

Radburn, conceived in 1928 and largely built during the next three years, embodied in its planning the new concept of the neighborhood as a complete unit. The main traffic roads of the town went around, not through, the units: the movement of pedestrians was mainly along a spinal green that formed the inner core of the town, and, by its very constitution, furthered face-to-face acquaintance; at the center of each neighborhood was an elementary school, with its recreation field and its swimming pool; and the shops and services were gathered in a shopping center, with a parking place for cars, instead of being dispersed along a traffic avenue. The population of the neighborhood unit was calculated in terms of the number of families needed to support an elementary school. Because New York authorities consulted then favored big schools, elaborately equipped, from 7,500 to 10,000 was accepted as the normal population of a neighborhood; and this has led to a certain imitative rigidity as to the proper size of a neighborhood unit. Except where the density is unreasonably high, five thousand would seem to me to be an upper limit, beyond which one should seek to create a new neighborhood; but there is no lower limit, except in terms of the facilities a smaller group can afford. As with the city itself, the main thing to recognise in neighborhood units is that there is an upper limit of growth and extension; and that, to define the unit and keep it in form, there must be both a civic nucleus to draw people together and an outer boundary to give them the sense of belonging together.

Perry's concept of the neighborhood unit carried a step further the earlier notion, first introduced in Germany, of dividing a city into specialised zones. Treating the domestic quarters of the city as a functional zone, to be differentiated in plan, because of its different needs, from the industrial or commercial zones, he established likewise the need for a nuclear treatment of the domestic zone, since the acceptable dimensions of a neighborhood depended upon such relationships as a quarter-mile walk to a local playground or a half-mile walk to the local school, to say nothing of such indeterminate though limited distances as those a housewife will willingly walk to do her marketing or shopping. All this seems like such elementary common sense that one wonders that anyone

should seriously challenge it. Where such spatial relations are flouted—as they so often are in the spotty, inconsecutive, irrational ' planning ' of our time—the members of the community pay for it in extra time and expense and inconvenience, in putting further burdens on the transportation system, in paying extra assessments for otherwise extravagant streets and traffic avenues, or in simply doing without facilities that properly belong within a residential quarter. The neighborhood is based, essentially, on the needs of families; particularly on the needs of mothers and children from the latters' infancy up to adolescence; as well as upon the needs of all age groups for having access to certain common cultural facilities; the school, the library, the meeting hall, the cinema, the church. To have all these institutions within easy reach of the home is a guarantee of their being steadily used by all the members of the family, while to have them scattered and unrelated, especially in distant parts of the city, is to discourage their constant use and often, when children must be cared for, to prevent their use entirely—except at the price of family neglect.

4. *The Extent of Self-containment*

In one of his attacks on the neighborhood unit principle (cited in the bibliography) Mr. Reginald Isaacs maps an area in Chicago covered by a typical family's activities: the map shows a theoretical self-contained neighborhood center devoid of any social facilities, apparently, except a school and a food shop, while most of the actual activities of the family (if the diagram has been drawn to scale) take place from two miles to twenty miles away from this area. On the basis of this diagram, he asks: Can any one neighborhood contain all the activities of a typical family? That is a naively specious question. As soon as one breaks down these activities one sees that they fall into two divisions. One consists of occasional activities, like a visit to a distant friend, or to a distant forest preserve on a holiday, or specialised shopping or daily work in an industrial plant necessarily outside the neighborhood—all activities which no one in his senses would propose to concentrate within a single neighborhood. But the other activities, the use of the health clinic, the library, the movies, a church, a park, a playground, a variety of shops, now found in every case outside the neighborhood, demonstrate how much of the time and energy of an urban denizen is wasted in unnecessary transportation, since there is not one of these activities that could not, with benefit, be relocated in a neighborhood unit. Even if no further advantages of face-to-face association and friendly intercourse and political cohesion followed from neighborhood planning, one could easily justify it on economic terms alone.

If the problem of urban transportation is ever to be solved, it will be on the basis of bringing a larger number of institutions and facilities within walking distance of the home; since the efficiency of even the private motor car varies inversely with the density of population and the amount of wheeled traffic it generates.

All this does not mean that the neighborhood actually is or ideally should be a self-contained unit. The fact is that no social organisation, from the family to the state, is wholly self-contained or self-enclosed. The biggest metropolis, in fact, is no more self-sufficient than the neighborhood; for not merely is it dependent upon distant sources of energy, food, raw materials, and products, but, in the case of certain surgical operations, for example, even the biggest of cities may not provide the skill that has been developed in some smaller center. The only functions with respect to which the neighborhood unit is relatively self-contained are the domestic functions or those activities that spring from them. For neighborhood units are built around the home and they should be so designed as to give the fullest advantages of housewifely and parental cooperation and result in the greatest measure of freedom, pleasure, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of family life at every stage of growth.

In short the notion that the existence of a neighborhood unit presents an obstacle to the wider use of the city does not bear examination: rather it is only by the decentralisation of as many activities as possible into local units that the centralised facilities can be kept from becoming congested and ultimately unusable. Sometimes this decentralisation may be effected through a bit of mechanical apparatus, as when millions, with the aid of television, are present at a football match that could not possibly be watched by more than fifty thousand people; but at other times, the decentralisation must take the form of creating and siting within the local area the appropriate organ of the common life.

From the nature of the case, neighborhood planning can be more easily achieved in new areas, where the whole site must be laid out, than in old quarters, where the very existence of established streets and property lines makes fresh planning difficult. Likewise, it is easier to achieve when the land is held by an urban authority or a development corporation than where it has already been broken into small individual parcels. But even in old neighborhoods, not yet sufficiently blighted or bombed to become ' re-development areas ' it is possible to take the first step toward neighborhood integration through the re-design of the central nucleus, partly through pulling together on a more adequate site plan institutions that had been set down more or less at random, partly by abetting the deliberate recentralisation of institutions now available to the residents of a neighborhood only by going to a distant part of the city. The efficacy of many central institutions lapses, so far as the inhabitants of distant areas are concerned, because of the long journey their use demands: even when people are willing to make that journey—as they so long remained loyal to the big department stores—the very heaping up of facilities in the central organisation often leads to inefficiency, if only because of the need for selling bulkier goods by sample and warehousing the product in a distant part of the city. In America, and first of all in the big cities, department stores have begun since the early 1930's, to distribute their activities in branch shops in the suburbs, though when I suggested this necessity to the President of Macy's in 1929, he dismissed it as an absurd dream, since the very basis of success, he believed,

lay in having ' everything under one roof.' But what has begun to take place with department stores applies almost to every other important metropolitan activity: the same principle, of decentralisation into communal and neighborhood units, applies to museum, libraries, hospitals—above all to hospitals and medical clinics. Except for highly specialised needs, all of these institutions should seek to multiply facilities scaled to neighborhood use. In the case of childbirth, for example, the neighborhood maternity unit would be preferable both to delivery within the dwelling house, already too cramped for space and often too insistent in the demands made on the mother, and the distant hospital, which, except in cases that promise surgical difficulty, provides nothing that a local institution could not give, and, on the contrary, presents many disadvantages for both the patient and the family. In all of these departments Perry's thinking, excellent as it was in the twenties, has now to be carried beyond the bounds of current practice. Neighborhood unit organisation seems the only practical answer to the giantism and inefficiency of the over-centralised metropolis. To preserve specialised institutions for their unique and specific services, which should be available to the whole region, they must be relieved of the heavy burden of performing, in addition, purely parochial functions. There would be no place for the scholar in the Central Library in New York, if there were not local libraries, united into a metropolitan system, in every district in the city. This theorem has a wide application; and it justifies from the standpoint of the greater unit the principle of neighborhood decentralisation.

The creation of a neighborhood involves something more than the planning on a different pattern than that which has hitherto characterised the undifferentiated big city; for it also demands the orderly provision and relationship in both space and time of a group of neighborhood institutions, such as schools, meeting halls, shops, pubs, restaurants, and local theatres. This calls for the continued activity of a public authority. It is the existence of a full complement of these latter facilities that transforms a spontaneous neighborhood into what one may properly call a neighborhood unit. Ideally, the neighborhood unit, then, would take an old form of association, never entirely suppressed even in the inorganic type of city, and reorganise it on a pattern that both amplifies and enriches daily activity. In doing this, so far from disrupting the functioning of the city as a whole, it rather makes more effective that larger association, since the bigger unit need no longer try to combine the functions of the local community and the larger community, in one muddled, undifferentiated pattern. The fact —let me emphasise again—that many of the significant activities of the city are occasional ones, and lie outside the neighborhood, or that a large part of an adult's life may be spent far beyond his own domestic precincts, does not lessen the importance of neighborhood functions. Nor does the coming and going of the population of a big city lessen the formative result of good neighborhood design. Where in the city does the population come and go more rapidly than in the university, which turns over most of its population completely every four years? Yet who would deny that the orderly grouping of buildings and the

concentration of student interests within the university precinct is itself a part of the educational process, and powerfully molds the lives that submit to it, even for a brief period? Universities whose separate departments were strewn over a great metropolitan area would lack both the economy and the *esprit de corps* a compact precinct gives.

5. *The New Problems of Neighborhood Planning*

Needless to say, the acceptance of the neighborhood principle does not by itself solve the problems of design: on the contrary, it raises many interesting new problems. Perhaps the first question of importance is what degree of isolation should be accorded the neighborhood, apart from the inevitable separation made by major traffic arteries. In cities like Pittsburgh, whose strong topographical features have broken it up into well-marked neighborhoods, so unrelated that even the high school student finds his high school within his own neighborhood, one notes the danger of a spirit of ' isolationism,' and the more satisfactory the neighborhood, the greater the danger of the self-complacency and the psychological self-enclosure. (In Philadelphia this has even stood in the way of the multiple bridging Schuylkill, in order to join by direct highways the ' Main Line ' suburbs and Germantown and Chestnut Hill; each rather prefers to ' keep itself to itself.') Messrs. Stein and Wright, in Radburn, designed their neighborhoods so as to overlap, with the shopping center serving as the point of fusion and intermixture, and by means of underpasses they bound together their neighborhoods by a continuous green core, which served as both park and pedestrian promenade. Both these devices seem preferable to the absolute isolation imposed by wide wedges of greenbelt in some of the British New Towns. When a greenbelt is employed to define a neighborhood, should it not be treated more economically and formally, so as to bring the neighborhoods, at the same time, into closer relationship?

The second problem is how far the tendency toward status and class affiliation should be permitted—abetted as they have been in recent years in the United States by zoning ordinance and deed restrictions—and how far should the neighborhood, as well as the city, be planned as a mixed community with housing for both upper and lower income groups? My own experience of living in a non-segregated community, at Sunnyside Gardens, with a wide range of income groups (from $1200 to $12,000 a year) living side by side, has led me to believe that this is the best kind of community. In terms of educating the young and of making the institutions of democracy work, the arguments are entirely in favor of a mixed community. Here another principle may be invoked, which applies, it seems to me, to other parts of the design: the principle that the neighborhood should, as far as possible, be an adequate and representative sample of the whole. I would apply this notion so far as to question the soundness of creating residential quarters on such a scale that local shops and markets and public restaurants and taverns were more than a

quarter mile distant from the center. In other words, most of the activities that, in more specialised form, enter into the adult's world should be represented, in simpler modes, in the local community. This would give a variety to the neighborhood unit that is too often absent in new housing developments. The mixture of social and economic classes within a neighborhood should have its correlate in a mixture of housing types and densities of occupation. One of the best examples of the architectural advantages of such mixture is in the Lansbury Neighborhood in London, which has a charm and variety, despite its 136 inhabitants per residential acre, that much more open schemes, at a flat 48 to the acre, often lack.

At the beginning, not every neighborhood can be fully equipped with all the social apparatus necessary for a full domestic and communal life. It would seem, accordingly, a matter of prudence to allow, in the areas set aside for local institutions, a certain amount of undetermined space, for later occupancy. Thus an occasional ' island,' in a local street plan, might allow space for a church, a cinema, or a group of shops, whose existence could not be provided for in the original layout. Until occupied such free space might serve for allotment gardens. Still another matter that should be a subject of experiment in neighborhood planning is the degree in which the interests of children and adults can and should be combined. The modern community, particularly in England and America, has drifted into the acceptance of age segregation: the young and the old, in their hours of recreation, have little to do with each other. But in France and Italy, on the boulevards or in the open squares, young and old co-exist together. In the Piazza Navona at Rome, for example, the adults meet and gossip and eat together, while within sight of them, the young play their games and go about their own affairs, occasionally coming back to ' home base ' for comfort or reassurance or a bite to eat. In the Peckham Health Centre the custom that the families should share the same recreation center and be within sight of each other was established, as a step forward toward family integration; and this would seem to lead a much healthier relation, morally speaking, than one which either divorces the young from any kind of supervision, or gives the function of the family to a paid supervisor. There is room for fresh urban invention here: a new kind of urban open space, more completely liberated from wheeled traffic than the Italian piazza or the market place of Harlow, more intimate than the Parisian boulevard or the market place at Hemel Hempstead; but surrounded with the kind of facilities and institutions that would bring parents and children within sight and call of each other during their leisure hours, so that the parents need not be too strictly confined to the home, nor the children permitted to be completely on the loose. The re-integration of the family, in this fashion, should be one of the serious concerns in planning for the new neighborhood unit.

All these matters in turn raise further problems of architectural treatment: the height and scale of buildings, the relation of open spaces to occupied spaces, of exposure and enclosure. Here there is much fresh thinking to be done, as

a basis for design; for in reaction against the congestion of the great city, our architects and planners now tend to sacrifice sociability and concentration to mere openness. In the effort to achieve roominess they have forgotten how, in urban terms, to create rooms, that is, public enclosures adapted to particular urban functions. In the neighborhood, if anywhere, it is necessary to recover the sense of intimacy and innerness that has been disrupted by the increased scale of the city and the speed of transportation.[1] Here the *cul-de-sac*, the court, even the cloister, have to be re-thought by the modern architect in new terms, and recaptured in original designs, adapted to our present needs. No mere sighs of admiration, however voluminous, for the Piazza San Marco, will produce the kind of public space the modern city and the modern neighborhood need.

Let me sum up. The neighborhood is a social fact; it exists in an inchoate form even when it is not articulated on a plan or provided with the institutions needed by a domestic community. By conscious design and provision the neighborhood may become an essential organ of an integrated city; and the discussion of the problems raised by neighborhood design will lead to solutions that will carry further the movement begun theoretically in Perry's studies, carried out concretely at Radburn, and applied on a large scale in the British New Towns. Has not the time come for a much more comprehensive canvass of the social functions of the neighborhood, for a more subtle and sympathetic interpretation of the needs of urban families at every stage in the cycle of human growth, and a more adventurous exploration of alternative solutions?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anything like a thorough bibliography of the idea of the neighborhood unit would take one far afield, beginning, possibly, with Thomas More's description in his Utopia, going on through schemes like those of Owen and Godin, to say nothing of Fourier, into such practical achievements as those in Amana, Iowa, a group of communities, self-contained but related villages, that successfully embodied all the principles of neighborhood association. Under Professor Franklin Giddings at Columbia there was an early Ph.D. study of the neighborhood as a social unit but we are still lacking in positive studies of well-integrated neighborhoods, though the Chicago school has justly made a name for itself by reason of its ecological studies of blighted and disintegrated neighborhoods. We need a whole series of fresh studies that will do justice both to the social pattern and the civic design one thousand beginning with historic examples of the

[1] See the analysis of the relation of speed to urban form in Hamlin, Talbot: Forms and Functions of 20th Century Architecture. Vol. IV. P. 775 ff.

neighborhood plan. The following citations deal solely with the modern concept of the neighborhood.

American Public Health Association, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing. *Planning the Neighborhood*. Public Administration Service. Chicago, 1948.

Cooley, Charles Horton. *Social Organisation*. New York: 1909.

Dahir, James. *The Neighborhood Unit Plan: Its Spread and Acceptance; A Selective Bibliography*. New York (Russell Sage Foundation. 1947).

Isaacs, Reginald R. *Are Urban Neighborhoods Possible?* In the *Journal of Housing*, July-August, 1948.

Perry, Clarence. *The Neighborhood Unit: A scheme of arrangement for the Family Life Community*. In A Regional Plan for New York and Environs; Vol. vii. New York: 1929.

Stephenson, Flora and Gordon. *Community Centres*. London (The Housing Centre), 1946.

Tyler, W. Russell. *The Neighborhood Unit Principle in Town Planning*. *Town Planning Review*, July, 1939.

Unwin, Raymond. Distribution. In the *Town Planning Institute Journal, 1920-21*.

Yeomans, Alfred (Editor). *City Residential Land Development*. Chicago, 1916.