

preface

The birth of modern town-planning did not coincide with the technical and economic movements which created and transformed the industrial town; it emerged later, when these changes began to be felt to their full extent and when they began to conflict, making some kind of corrective intervention inevitable.

Even today town-planning technique invariably lags behind the events it is supposedly controlling, and it retains a strictly remedial character. It is therefore important to examine the first attempts at town-planning that were applied to an industrial society in order to discover the reasons for the original time-lag.

The aim of this book is, primarily, to emphasize the two-fold origin, technical and ideological, of these experiments, and to provide a reconstruction of the two factors which inspired the first reformers: the economic and social changes which produced the inequalities of the first decades of the nineteenth century, and the changes in political theory and public opinion which meant that these disparities were no longer accepted as inevitable but were regarded as obstacles that could and should be removed.

The first attempts to right the evils of the industrial town found expression in two antithetical schools of thought. One adhered to the view that planning must start again from scratch (and in this case new and purely theoretical types of community were planned, quite distinct from the existing towns); the other that each problem must be dealt with, and each defect remedied, separately, without taking into account their inter-relationship and without having any over-all vision of the town as a single organism.

The so-called Utopians—Owen, St.-Simon, Fourier, Cabet, Godin—belonged to the first group, though they did not merely write about their ideal cities, like More, Campanella or Bacon, but agitated for their realization in practical terms. The second group included the specialists and officials who introduced the new health regulations and services into the towns and who, because they had to find the technical and legalistic means to implement these improvements, laid the real foundations of modern town-planning legislation.

Most of these achievements, even the most purely technical, had their roots firmly planted in matters of ideology, which in turn corresponded largely with the beginnings of modern socialism, so much so that the history of these early stages is to be sought in works on the history of economics and socialism, rather than in specialized technical studies.

But this connection lasted only until 1848, the moment when the working-class movement began to be organized in opposition to the parties of the *bourgeoisie*; indeed, planning experiments of the time were influenced by a wide range of ideological trends, from the egalitarian communism of Cabet to French neo-Catholicism.

The working-class movement reached its decisive turning-point with the advent of Marx and Engels, and Marxist Socialism, intent on explaining the 1848 Revolution and its failure in strictly political terms, stressed the contradictions of the earlier movements but completely lost sight of the link between tendencies in

politics and in town-planning which, even if formulated in oversimplified terms, had previously been firmly maintained.

From that time onwards political theory almost always tended to disparage specialist research and experiment, and attempted to assimilate proposals for partial reform within the reform of society generally. Town-planning, on the other hand, cut adrift from political discussion, tended to become increasingly a purely technical matter at the service of the established powers. This did not mean, however, that it became politically neutral; on the contrary, it fell within the sphere of influence of the new conservative ideology which was evolving during these years, of Bonapartism in France, of the reforming Tory groups in England and of Bismarckian imperialism in Germany.

This was the explanation for the uncommitted and dependent nature of the main experiments in town-planning after 1848, behind which loomed the political paternalism of the new right.

This is the book's main thesis which is not without relevance to present-day problems. For progressive tendencies of modern planning can be practically realized only if they make contact once more with those political forces which tend towards a similar general transformation of society.

The last thirty years have taught people to recognize the essentially political nature of all decisions taken in town-planning, but this recognition remains purely theoretical as long as town-planning is thought of as an isolated set of interests which must then be brought into contact with politics—a view which grew directly out of the gulf which opened up between the two in 1848.

Although their ideas of planning were somewhat rudimentary, Owen and Chadwick did demonstrate the simple truth that town-planning, though it is a part of politics, and thus necessary to the realization of any effective programme, cannot be identified simply with planning in general.

To achieve a more satisfactory distribution of human activity throughout the country, there must be an improvement in the economic and social relationships on which such activities depend;

on the other hand, improved economic and social relationships do not automatically bring with them a satisfactory utilization of space—on the contrary, a planned use of space is rather one method, inseparable from any other, of creating the over-all balance which is the aim of all political action.

The phases and methods of this action are infinitely more complex than Owen supposed, but the objective of his Utopia is still valid for town-planning today: 'to come to an arrangement which is advantageous to everyone, within a system which will permit continued and unlimited technical improvement.'

I have already attempted to trace these events briefly in the *Storia dell'architettura Moderna* published three years ago by Laterza. I have been drawn back to the same subject not by dialectical necessity, which might possibly be premature, but by several recent developments which have revealed the urgent need for the definition of a new relationship between town-planning and politics, hence between town-planning and social and economic planning. I now believe that I have identified the weak point in my earlier work, i.e. the failure to correlate developments in the fields of architecture and town-planning, to the basic changes in the political scene between 1830 and 1850, and particularly to the crisis of 1848. The present work will also, I hope, correct the earlier account of the events of the turn of the century, and make for a better understanding of the *avant-garde* movements from Morris onwards. In fact the whole of the *Storia dell'Architettura moderna* could be revised in this way without contradicting the spirit in which it was written, since it is obvious that the accuracy of a historical work which takes into account the practical affairs of the present, is by nature short-lived; this merely indicates that the assumptions upon which such a work is based are continually changing, and that the recent past must be constantly reassessed.