

THE INDUSTRY
OF
DECONSTRUCTION

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MAJOR CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

Marginality

The more complex the society, the more technical it becomes. The more it becomes concentrated and the more it is specialized, the more it produces marginality.

The only way we can reverse this process of social decomposition is to ensure that the individual - each and every one of us - strengthens his dignity and self-sufficiency.

In the years to come we have to find a way to stop our lack of certain material resources from continuing to serve as an excuse to produce marginality.

MARGINALITY:

through the concentration of

power,

wealth,

production,

technology,

education.

Corruption

In our world, society's concepts, values and goals have become mainly material, dishonesty grows rampant and can scarcely be controlled.

Human society, if it is to work, must demand of all its members honesty and civic-mindedness. Should these deteriorate or be lost, social cohesion will suffer.

The challenge before us is to reaffirm the principles of social coexistence before our very essence is forever tainted by corruption.

CORRUPTION:

- Intellectual
through pride or hidden interests
- Technical
through complacency in mediocrity
- Economic
through greed or waste
- Political
through irresponsibility or vanity.
- Administrative
through incompetence or indifference

Disunity

One of the greatest problems in the 20th century is that as human societies have grown, proliferated and become more complex, the individual has lost the consciousness of common interests. In the past years the societies, countries, and states were small. It was easier then to recognize the historical unity. Now that it is more difficult to recognize, unity is more important than ever. Societies that do not maintain a pluralist unity fall into concentration, and this concentration dehumanizes. In the future we have to make certain of maintaining a well-defined structure of common interests ... clearly and precisely ... so that the society may function within it.

DISUNITY:

- through concepts
of class

- through interests
of social groups

- through objectives
which result in marginality

- through uncoordinated
efforts

Abstention

In a society structured solely upon technocratic or materialistic concepts, the individual, in search of his identity, reacts by dissociating himself from his environment.

A society can only acquire an identity when all its members have an equitable participation in the definition of its values, regulations and objectives.

Concentration dehumanizes: the abstention of many favors concentration in a few.

The challenge in the coming years is to solve our very complex problems in a satisfactory way, so that the individual will not lose his identity and freedom and find himself cut off from participation - forced to the fringes of society.

ABSTENTION:

Intellectual
through indolence

Political
through non-participation

Social
through indifference

Economic
through evasion

Productive
through inactivity

Domination

We are a society built on the principle that we are all fundamentally equal - a society that rejects the notion of domination by an oligarchy.

In practice, however, we maintain a precarious equilibrium among men, because in essence, principle and by right, we are equal. Yet in our complex, specialized and competitive daily lives there exist enormous inequalities. Inequalities in our modern life have been aggravated through its dehumanizing technology.

There is an apparent incongruity: democratic equality and the real inequality encompass the essence of the contemporary social problem - the social injustice of the 20th century.

The challenge which confronts us is to find a way to avoid technologies which aggravate our inequalities - and to find a way that our need to produce, mechanize and administer - does not serve to create or fortify a dominating class.

DOMINATION:

By the many
 over
 the few

By the few
 over
 the many

Dehumanization

It has fallen to our lot to live in a highly technical and materialistic society, whose speech has only one dimension: quantity...

The danger is in using this as an excuse for overlooking the individual.

Concentrations of power, wealth, property, education, housing, transportation, production, information... dehumanize.

The challenge of the next few years is to find the way to fulfill our many material needs while always respecting human dignity.

DEHUMANIZATION:

By
quantitative planning

By
excessive automation

By
linear education

By
biased information

By
manipulated recreation

Technocratization

Social injustice is transformed and developed as time evolves. The mere force, slavery, serfdom and also such apparently ethical concepts as the right of ownership or even free competition, have contributed in their own ways to imbalance human coexistence.

But the 20th century brought a new factor of imbalance... probably the worst of all; technology.

Technology that does not have any scale...that is limitless, that produces more and more without any reason, except to generate the material "richness" of the consumer society.

Technology, elevated to the level of ethics,...of dogma. The dogma of automation, speed; efficiency, consumerism, and, above all the dogma of aggressivity.

The challenge in the next few years is to find a way to create a harmonious relationship between technology ...and man.

A technology with maximums and minimums. A technology which does not exclude, concentrate, or pollute man.

A technology that dignifies, exalts and conserves social and natural equilibrium.

TECHNOCRATIZATION:

Culture
that uniforms

Education
that mechanizes

Planning
that standardizes

Productivity
that dehumanizes

Specialization
that limits

CORRECTIVE ACTION OR ACTION FOR CHANGE

"The definition of a problem and the steps taken to solve it depend mostly on the perceptions that the individuals or groups who discovered the problem, have of the system.

The problem can be defined simply as a defective product, as a defective product of a defective production system, as a defective product due to the failure of a system which otherwise would be perfect, or as a good product but undesirable, produced by a perfect system but thus undesirable.

All the definitions, with the exception of the last one, suggest corrective action; but only the latter suggests change."

(Herbert Brün, 1971)

The problems of the consumer society and of the industrial mode of production that we have just mentioned are the perfect result of a perfect system; however they do not have a corrective solution. Consequently, action for change is needed.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN AN INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION SYSTEM

Human settlements are determined:

Substantially by the ways of thought and feeling
of the members of the society that dwell in them; and
Formally, by the tools they use to act with.

IMPEDIMENTS TO THOUGHT AND FEELING

The Programming of our Values

The system of "Industrial Production" begins and ends in the serialized production of concepts, ideas and through them, sensations and values. The concepts become compromised; words acquire rigidity; values are prefabricated; conclusions are "coined".

New.....	is better
Time.....	is money
Obsolescence.....	is progress
Progress.....	is desirable
Agressivity.....	is virtue
More.....	is better
Efficiency.....	is speed
Success.....	is possession
Social position.....	is consumption
Consumption.....	is happiness

Therefore the individual loses his capacity to perceive, associate, analyse and conclude of himself...

This industrial generation of values and sensations occurs by means of two instruments: the language of words and the language of pictures.

So we see that all kinds of tools, machines, clothing, decorations, services, equipment, movements and even abstractions like size and shape acquire a meaning that they never would have had by themselves.

Volkswagen:	Liberal
Chevrolet:	Conservative
Deodorant:	Urban
Overalls:	Rural

A rigid and closed shell is established. Within it are fixed the values of a whole society.

This constitutes a vital and unchangeable necessity of the industrial form of production. The fabrication in series necessarily needs preestablished and uniform values.

It is not a correctable defect of the industrial mode of production...but part of its very nature.

IMPEDIMENTS TO ACTION

Programming the Tools of production

Man acts by means of tools...with these he creates and produces.

But the tool, before it was a tool, was a product.... product in turn of another tool that created it...that manufactured it.

Therefore product and tool, machine and object, build a rigid interdependence.

And man, whose act of using gives that product its tool nature, finds himself determined, quantitatively and qualitatively, by that rigid interdependence, to which he does not belong.

... finds himself impeded from acting freely,

... from individual participation

Because the tool, as the product it was in the beginning, arose from demands and necessities unrelated to its function of tool...and inherent to its nature as product. Use and user become therefore statistical design factors, serving the necessity of being competitive on the market, but subordinate to many prior considerations in the industrial form of production.

Therefore, the tools of the consumer society become ever:

- more alienating
- more exclusive
- more oppressive
- more dehumanizing

And this is not a correctable defect of the industrial mode of production - but part of its very nature.

THE INDUSTRIAL MODE OF CONSTRUCTION

Man dwells - housing is one of the tools he uses.

Man and tool - when the tool is conceived as such - keep a harmonious and natural relationship. One becomes part of the other. And both, via the act of creation (a vital function of man) form a dynamic unit.

Therefore, housing, as a tool for dwelling, is part of man; a vehicle and a reflection of his personality; a process and a result of conjugating the verb to EXIST.

And, above all, a substantial part of man's identity.

Housing, conceived and built as a product - and not as a tool - loses this natural relationship, this integration with the individual. But since housing is concrete, objective and unchangeable, it is man, the dweller, who ultimately loses. Life must adapt to this foreign creation imposed upon it.

What results therefore is a process of alienation ... between man and his created surroundings.

The process of alienation between the house and the dweller begins precisely when housing is conceived within an industrial production system.

The design guidelines need to be:

- adjustable to a large market.
- mortgageable.
- modular and able to be built in sequence for scheduling.
- technically complex to be manufactured.
- costly in order to be financed.

The construction industry therefore has demands in the design and manufacturing of its products - autonomous, foreign and even contrary to the relationship of man and his home.

- If man wants identity...
industry demands uniformity
- If man wants quality...
industry demands quantity
- If man wants substance...
industry demands form

FOUR STEPS IN THE ALIENATION PROCESS

Worth and Value

The consumer society conceives housing as man's asset. It retains a cause and effect relationship with the phenomenon of land speculation and soaring prices of construction. The origin of this skewed concept of housing lies with the financial and mortgage institutions and the banks who have turned construction into one of the greatest volume operations.

The principle requirement for housing, considered as mortgageable, is that it should be a product. In other words, the "ideal" housing for financial institutions is that which best meets the mass-market demand.

It must, then, set up two standards: one concerned with man's housing requirements, and the other with satisfying those requirements.

A relationship is established between housing and the market: the Greatest Common Multiple and the Least Common Denominator.

Manufactured Materials and Created Materials

Man creates his construction materials, and has done so for thousands of years using elements which nature has given him. In this way stone, mud, wood, leaves, fibre have served, when wrought by a craftsman, for the creation of true dwelling tools.

The manufacture of materials, indispensable to industrial construction methods, has completely different requirements.

Meanwhile, the created material must be:
 able to be concentrated, for volume processing
 artificially made so it can be "processed"
 technically complex in order to be saleable
 expensive in order to be marketable.

The determining factor in the standardization and dehumanization of human habitation has perhaps been the industrial manufacture of materials.

More than anything else it is their size, power and specialization which keeps most people from participating in the creation of their own housing.

The Divergence of Operation and the Convergence of Participation

The materials industry generates great volume. It requires a wide market.

Hence arise the construction company and construction professionals.

They are the big consumers, the main lines of distribution for materials.

It could not be otherwise.

Construction companies, professionals and industrially-produced materials are indispensable to each other.

Production and participation are inversely proportional.

The greater the amount of production, the fewer the participants.

The first to be shut out is the customer...the ultimate user...the dweller.

But the process also narrows the operational sectors. Architects, town-planners, sociologists, engineers...the greater the volume of industrial production, the less participation per unit.

The industrial mode of building is not, then, only qualitatively inefficient--in so far as it produces inhuman dwellings--but is also exclusive, "marginating"... which makes it harder and harder to develop new concepts, or new ways and means of doing things.

The Language of Plans, Photographs and Statistics

Man, dwelling, environment: these three form a structure whose balance largely determines quality of the habitat. When the natural process of coexistence generates the structure, a dynamic balance is achieved. On the other hand, when the achievement of such a balance is claimed by means of plans, photographs and statistics as in the industrial mode of planning the result will be, at best, a static equilibrium.

Dynamic balance--when is achieved through natural coexistence--tends to perpetuate itself. When factors of imbalance change it (as, time, immigration, depressions, etc.) its momentum is toward recovery.

In that way, we see how ancient cities...whose history records endless vicissitudes...continue to offer man a worthy environment.

When the balance is static, though, any disturbing factor sets in motion an irreversible decay.

Industrial construction cannot develop a surrounding otherwise than with plans, photographs, and statistics.

A natural, coexistential development is alien to it and unattainable.

For one is technical...

The other organic...

One is linear...

The other elliptical...

IMPEDIMENT TO BEING

The essence of being is creative action. Creation, in the broadest meaning. Creation, as opposed to work, is the greatest act of fulfillment. It is the union of feeling, thought and action, in total balance and harmony.

Man, the creator, cannot be measured. There are neither rich, nor poor, neither winners nor losers. There is just the act of being. A is better, when B is better.

To live is to act. I am alive only so long as I act: biologically, spiritually, intellectually, in unified motion.

This is the only conjugation of the verb "to live".

The qualitative criterion then, is one's intimate satisfaction of creating, to be useful, capable, genuine.

This has nothing to do with aggression or competition. Reward and applause are lacking.

It is the strict, infinitely intimate act of being.

It is man, in equilibrium with himself.

It is the man who has found his identity.

It is I.

There is no other way of conceiving man...without deprecating him.

When we look at things this way, we find the real problem lies in the constant aggression of technological society upon man's self-sufficiency. The beginning and the end of his balance, the *raison d'être* of his existence.

The scale of human dignity bears no relation to the individual's capacity to consume. And the consumer society comprehends and programs man...to consume.

Let's over-simplify: if we want a parameter to measure the quality of our "social relationships", take this: Every act that helps to corrupt the self-sufficiency of a third person...is an act of aggression. And if a reciprocal element should be needed, we might add: Planned "help" invariably results in aggression.

To End With A Denunciation

Technocratic, industrial society has discovered in the marginal world, a new, enormous and irresistible "market" for its "help".

Universities, institutes, industries, professionals: architects, engineers, city planners, sociologists; all are vitally interested in this new kind of "help". It is fashion now, at every level, whether national or international.

"Self-help building" has been discovered, and now we have experts on what other people know how to do and have done always. Self help programs are of autonomous help and not of help which depends upon experts.

Sites and services projects have been invented. They avoid social relationships, encapsulate people on a lot and exclude the inhabitants from participation in decisions about their lives.

But the greatest danger lies in the intense search being conducted by these new "missionaries" from highly industrialized countries, as well as from developing countries, to find new technologies for the poor. They come under the guise of adequate, appropriate, or intermediate technologies.

Why not study how to change the type of technologies of the highly industrialized countries that are causing so much damage to themselves and to everybody else. They are one of the main impediments to the evolution of developing countries.

This invasion of new technologies designed by a few, for the many, is worse than the invasion of urban land by the so-called poor. Here is a new area of activity ... to teach man to build his own home ... to locate settlements in an orderly fashion ... to create methods and tools with which to build in a world of poverty.

A new aggression is beginning to show up; the industrial way of producing "help".

Neither is all this a correctible defect in a faulty system, rather, it is the perfect result of a perfect system, which cries out for change.

EPILOGUE

The future will not be like the past

The most serious feature of the problems affecting society is their desensitizing effect on man to the point where he no longer appreciates the very problem itself.

It is an historically proved phenomenon that during periods of socio-cultural changes very few members of the community are aware of the change. However, never before had "truisms" and "dogmas" created by a system succeeded as much as those of technocratic industrial society in preventing man from thinking and feeling for himself.

Today, more than ever, we must not continue to hold the exclusive point of view.....Technology is Dogma.

Today, more than ever, it is necessary to find the structure of a new perspective that allows a more contemporary perception of the world. The way to the future is neither in charts, statistics nor in projections. The way to the future is walking to it.

The future will not be like the past.

Tasks for Thought

The Ruralization of the Urban

Two considerations and one conclusion;

First: Considering rural and urban not as places but as ways of feeling, thinking and evaluating - in a word, as a mode of being. For more than a century the concept of rural has been under attack by technocratic, industrial society, the very idea of it has been converted into something very undesirable. This aggression is the inevitable result of the industrial mode of production that must - by definition - concentrate. Urban therefore, is the life style of the consumer society.

But this style, this society, this conception of man is already showing signs of breaking-up.

Second: Considering the efficiency of the industrial mode of production to satisfy man has already passed its peak to enter the stage of "decreasing utility".

...planet Earth cannot resist forever the onslaught of contamination from "Industrial Development".

...the human being is already showing clear signs of rejecting the way of life created by the consumer society;

...an infinitely developing economy cannot exist in an environment of finite resources;

One can conclude that:

Man no longer "needs":

- work
- education
- shelter
- transportation
- information

...but only to be allowed to:

- work
- learn
- build
- move
- perceive

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION OF SATISFACTIONS GENERATES REJECTION. MAN EXISTS THROUGH CREATIVE ACTIVITY, WITHOUT NEEDING ANYTHING BUT FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR HIS EXISTENCE -

INDUSTRIAL URBAN PRODUCTION

- ...CONCENTRATES
- ...CONTAMINATES
- ..."MARGINATES"
- ...TECHNOCRATIZES
- ...DEHUMANISES

RURAL METHODS OF PRODUCTION

- ...PLURALISE
- ...DISTRIBUTE
- ...SIMPLIFY
- ...DIGNIFY
- ...HARMONISE

One concrete task is to ponder over the concepts of wealth and poverty. Together we must revise and re-evaluate the value and meaning of being rich and that of being poor.

Establishing Upper Limits

One of the official Habitat documents reads: "The first objective of human settlement policies in every country must be to guarantee minimum living standards."

Couldn't it be that - due to the way the problem is presented - we are caught in a vicious circle?

Why should it be minimums that man establishes for man?

Is the marginal class the factor of imbalance in human society?

Are we not seeing the problem backwards ... PROGRAMMING POVERTY?

...instead of pursuing the real goal, which is LIMITING WEALTH?

WHAT HUMAN SOCIETY NEEDS ARE UPPER LIMITS...BECAUSE THE FACTORS OF IMBALANCE ARE...THE CONCENTRATION OF POWER...OF WEALTH...OF OWNERSHIP...OF PRODUCTION...OF TECHNOLOGY...OF EDUCATION...AND OF INFORMATION!

If we are to analyse the problem objectively, we must outline the basic considerations:

i) To isolate one or several factors of the imbalance is to give a fragmentary solution. The solution calls for upper limits in everything. We have to find a Maximum Common Denominator. This common denominator is THE TOOL.

Neither taxation, expropriation, nor the nationalization of production are conclusive solutions, if we see the situation in this manner.

ONLY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UPPER LIMITS TO THE TOOLS CAN REESTABLISH SOCIAL EQUILIBRIUM.

UPPER LIMITS IN:

ENERGY USE

TECHNICAL COMPLEXITY

DEGREE OF AUTOMATION

LEVEL OF CONTAMINATION