

exclusion of any other approach to urban environments. It is rather, through a classification of the differences between the artistic tradition and the social usage approaches, to provide a basis for discussion and to indicate how, in recent design theories and their potential for practice, the two approaches can be seen to draw into a closer, more positive relationship.

The review begins with a consideration of the essentials and standpoints of the artistic tradition with its visual emphasis as represented in the exemplary writing of leading authors and practising designers. It is a historical review, beginning with the influential ideas of Camillo Sitte at the end of the nineteenth century and Le Corbusier in the early decades of this century. It then considers the basis of early design advice from central government to local planning authorities after the Second World War as expressed by Thomas Sharp, Frederick Gibberd and William Holford in *Design in Town and Village*. The distinctive personal contribution of Gordon Cullen and his view of *Townscape* are then explored along with developments suggested by Roy Worskett.

The artistic tradition in urban design

Camillo Sitte

Camillo Sitte's *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*³ acknowledged and discussed both approaches, but his aim to establish the principles for laying out a pattern of streets, plazas, monuments and buildings that would re-establish urban design as an artistic enterprise of the highest order laid emphasis on the visual experience of urban spaces. Sitte saw nineteenth century city planning as a rigid set of street systems without artistic merit. The achievement of all the beauties of art and attainments of the past, he claimed, would be attained through the careful organisation of urban spaces following certain principles derived from sensitive observation of ancient, mediaeval, renaissance and baroque examples.

The chapter headings in his book—'That the centre of plazas be kept free'; 'That public squares should be enclosed entities'; 'The size and shape of plazas'—indicated both comprehensive content and, at the same time, the limited viewpoint of these artistic principles. Although Sitte was aware of practical considerations of terrain and social custom, his writing stressed sensual, and overwhelmingly visual,

impressions; as when he described (p. 61) the mediaeval street—'the ideal street must form a completely enclosed unit. The more one's impressions are confined within it, the more perfect will be its tableau. One feels at ease in a space where the gaze cannot be lost in infinity.'

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that Sitte was unaware of the functional problems of day-to-day experiences. Nonetheless it was the deterministic view of city planning as artistic education for the masses, albeit in changed social conditions, that emerged from Sitte's work. Social change is observed in relation to urban space and activity. 'We cannot prevent the public fountains from being reduced to a merely ornamental role', he wrote 'the colourful, lively crowd stays away from them because modern plumbing carries water ... into house and kitchen ...'⁴ But instead of examining the new locations that old activities occupy, or new uses for these plazas and porticoes, Sitte ultimately turned to edification to justify his principles in modern conditions: 'the forever edifying impression of artistic perfection cannot be dispensed with in our busy everyday life. One must keep in mind that city planning in particular must allow full and complete participation to art, because it is this type of artistic endeavour, above all, that affects formatively, every day and every hour the great mass of the population, whereas theatre and concerts are available only to the wealthier classes' (p. 111).

Le Corbusier

Le Corbusier was the aesthetic antithesis of Sitte, but the 'never departed from' principles that underlay his urban design were equally founded on visual and formal qualities. A complete volte-face from the humanistic principles sketched in *Vers une Architecture*⁵ marked the superficial symbolism of *Urbanisme*⁶ where civilisations and cities were described *en masse*, frequently in an affirmative and declamative style.

Sections of the early paragraphs of *Urbanisme* are characteristic—'A town is a tool ... the lack of order to be found everywhere in them offends us; ... A City! It is the grip of man upon nature ... Geometry is the means, created by ourselves, whereby we perceive the external world and express the world within us ... Geometry is the foundation ... Machinery is the result of geometry. The age in which we live is therefore essentially a geometric one' (p. 1). But this is the geometry of regular lines, surfaces and solids deriving from the school exercise book.