

UIA XVI CONGRESS 1987:

THE BRIGHTON DECLARATION OF ARCHITECTS

The UIA XVI Congress reaffirms the Declarations made at Warsaw in 1981 and Cairo in 1984.

The problems of cities and the problems of homelessness are diverse, but characterised by population explosion, migration into cities, urban decay and division through political and religious conflict.

Many of the cities of tomorrow are being built today by the poor.

As the 21st century approaches, the present generation will pass on

a legacy of tremendous scientific advances that contrast in

increasingly stark relief with a polluted planet, countless millions

of people without the most basic requirements of human existence, an

escalating arms race and a great deal of insecurity and suspicion.

The confidence of design professionals from earlier decades in the

solutions they prescribed has in many cases proved unjustified. The

well-intentioned policy documents of the '60s dismembered

communities and widened the divide between haves and have-nots;

while the revised economic and social assumptions of the '70s and early '80s showed the project approach to be ineffective in meeting the scale of the problem. There is a widespread acceptance in 1987 that the creation of the built environment must be regarded much more as a process than a project and that the mobilisation of communities and householders to participate in the construction of their own shelter is the principal way in which the necessary scale of shelter can be provided.

That is not to suggest that the 'formal' building sector will not continue to be important in many countries of the world, nor that governments have no role to play - far from it. The world's natural resources are finite and need careful management, especially by governments of developing nations. Countries whose economies often depend on a few primary commodities for which demand is rising slowly or not at all often find themselves unable to provide their people with infrastructure and services whether new or upgraded. Over-centralised structures allocating insufficient investment on the basis of misconceptions as to how communities do or should operate are offset by people's extraordinary ingenuity in easing their collective and individual problems. Governments would do much better to recognise and support communities' own efforts and initiatives to improve their environment.

There are some signs, too, that concern in developed countries at the erosion of family and community life is stimulating greater interest in the way developing countries set about tackling their shelter problems. We see a growing appreciation of the fact that when people and their own community-based organisations have access to primary resources and the self-confidence to use them, they do far more with much less than either market-based or state-based systems. This has far-reaching implications for the architectural profession and implementation will depend on central and local governments in developed countries also coming to understand that to achieve human satisfaction and economic stability local self-managed initiatives need support from the centre.

2. However, despite the glimmer of improvement the size of the task is enormous, growing, and still largely ignored. The 'silent catastrophe' that is the one billion homeless people in the world today will be nearer two billion by the year 2000 unless drastic steps are taken. Disease, infestation and accidents produce a high rate of mortality and the illegality of many settlements exposes their inhabitants to exploitation. Orphaned children and women bringing up families alone are among those who suffer most.

The planning methods, building design and production techniques and administrative procedures of the 1960s and '70s have demonstrably failed. A new approach is needed whereby the poor are looked on not as a burden that has to be tolerated, but as a cost-effective resource : they must be given more positive support in designing and

building their own shelter, using locally available and affordable materials. Distance learning initiatives that will prevent the repetition of past mistakes and internationally communicated technical information of genuine application and applicability to the problems of developing countries should be made readily available.

It follows that people must be trained to help themselves, that they must be afforded space in which to build and given moral and physical encouragement to do so; and that all such activity should take place within a policy and planning framework, agreed by all, which is sufficiently flexible to accommodate changing circumstances.

3. This Congress believes that every human being has a fundamental right to shelter. How is this to be achieved?

We must persuade governments and nations to take responsibility for the right of every family to have its own shelter and to provide:

- security of land tenure and an amnesty for illegal settlements
- basic infrastructure and a supportive planning framework
- affordable credit
- appropriate changes to building legislation
- technical advice and education
- a sympathetic and encouraging system of urban management.
- a means of livelihood.

Architects do not have all the answers and must be able and willing to seek advice in areas in which they are not expert. They can help:

- by meeting the challenge with new attitudes and approaches and a renewed commitment to the goal of shelter and services for the poor
- by joining in the global campaign to raise the level of political awareness and strength of will, through the harnessing of public opinion
- by applying the lessons of developing countries to the problem of decaying cities in the industrial world
- by offering developing countries the benefits of technical knowledge in ways relevant to solving their shelter problems
- as members of multi-skilled teams of enablers providing advice and design guidance
- as teachers by training young architects and non-architects in a new approach to these problems
- as government officials by advising and persuading their administrative and political masters to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem and the need for new solutions
- by continually questioning whether the solutions they are proposing are appropriate to each situation and that they take into account the indigenous artistic and cultural traditions of peoples and their environments.

4. These precepts in turn hold implications for architectural education and practice. Architectural schools currently place too much emphasis on building design and too little on those other aspects of professional practice that give architecture its context: 'buildability', research, management and the educational continuum. A review of the content of architectural courses is overdue.

5. The problem of shelter - and the even more important one of survival - can also be seen in the context of arms production. All wars lead to homelessness. The resources in finance, skills and materials that the arms race represents would be more beneficially used if diverted towards the more creative goal of satisfying basic human needs. Moreover, if any lasting benefit is to accrue, this shift of resources that has to start with individuals the world over being given a legal right to space upon which to provide shelter for themselves, must be accompanied by a delegation of control and a genuine involvement of people in local decision-making.

It is vital that the spirit and principles underlying the designation by the United Nations of 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless are vigorously pursued until the objective of 'Homes For All' is no longer a far-off dream but the reality.