

The Diagram

By Henrik Valeur, 2001

Looking at film footage and development schemes documenting the suburbanization around Copenhagen during the late 60's and early 70's, it is striking to see how directly principles of temporal organization were transformed into principles of physical organization. Corresponding to the labor unions demand for eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep and eight hours of leisure the territories of the suburbs were divided into segregated zones of production, living and recreation.

The zoning diagram did not employ a great deal of imagination, but 30 years later, with hockey playing in the parking lot, stables in the basements of the housing block and go-kart racing in the production hall, the openness of the diagram is now being exploited to form a new organizational complexity.

Planners normally make use of the diagram in determining future relations, but with the increasing pace at which living conditions now undergo change, this utilization of the diagram can only become more and more redundant.

The standard suburban dwelling unit is an instructive example. Designed according to the diagram of the nuclear family's living patterns, it was mass-produced in just two basic variants. But already by the late 60's, the concept of the nuclear family was being seriously challenged, and now thousands of dwellings are rapidly becoming outdated if not downright unfit for their purpose.

Rather than making the diagram as open as possible, in order to accommodate future changes, one should perhaps see the diagram as a means by which to initiate change. Since the diagram is an abstraction of reality it is conceivable that it also could be used to provoke new realities, even realities that we are not yet able to imagine.

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