

Stockholm During the Second World War

- 1 See, for instance, Stephanie Barron, ed., *Exiles + Emigrés. The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997), and Elana Shapira and Alison J. Clarke, eds., *Émigré Cultures in Design and Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).
- 2 Gunnar Asplund et al., *acceptera* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1931).
- 3 This section is partly based on: Espen Johnsen, "Korsmo and Utzon in Stockholm," in *PAGON: Scandinavian Avant-Garde Architecture, 1945–1956* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2023), 26–38.
- 4 Lisa Gjessing, "Planlegging" [Planning], in *Boliger og samfunnsbygg* [Housing and community buildings], ed. Harald Hals (Oslo: Johan Grundt Forlag, 1946), 17.
- 5 Eva Rudberg, "Uno Åhrén: en föregångsman inom 1900-talets arkitektur och samhällsplanering" [Uno Åhrén: a pioneer of 20th century architecture and civic planning] (PhD diss., KTH, Stockholm, 1981), 154.

The architects, artists, and designers who fled from Nazi Germany and fascist Europe, particularly to the United States, and the ways in which they used their experiences and networks, have been the subject of much scholarship.¹ The situation in Scandinavia remains less scrutinized. As a neutral country, Sweden was affected relatively little by the Second World War, leaving Stockholm in a special position in the postwar period. Certain architects from Germany, Italy, and the Czech Republic had, before the war, emigrated to countries like Norway and Sweden. Sweden attracted both established and radical, young, and talented architects in the period 1942–45, including architects and urban planners from Norway who had held public positions and felt threatened, or were deposed by the German authorities, of which some were part of Nordic avant-garde architectural culture networks during the 1920s and 1930s. Besides the Swedish architects responsible for *acceptera*,² Edvard Heiberg and Poul Henningsen from the Danish journal *Kritisk Revy* and Johs. Borchsenius from the Norwegian Sosialistiske Arkitekters Forening (SAF, the Socialist architects association), which was associated with the PLAN Group, plus architects like Arne Korsmo and Jørn Utzon, were all working in Stockholm toward the end of the war.³ Examination of the formal and informal networks and associations that were established in this period help to explain similarities and differences in the various ideals that informed Nordic postwar architecture. Some of these architects had been involved in resistance struggles in their home countries and several were active in left-wing politics; some with a Jewish background also fled to Stockholm, while others, like a group of young Danish architects, came for work.

Architects from at least nine different nations—Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Hungary, and the Netherlands, alongside the other Scandinavian countries—worked and lived in Stockholm during the war.⁴ Many Swedish architects, it is important to note, were positive about hiring Nordic and international colleagues. In Stockholm, these foreign architects experienced buildings from the interwar period by Ragnar Östberg, Gunnar Asplund, and Sven Markelius, and visited exhibitions, museums, and libraries, as well as new development schemes. Uno Åhrén emerged as the most important network agent during the war, helping refugees and Jews escape Nazism, and helping Danish and Norwegian architects, for example Edvard Heiberg, flee.⁵ Among the architects in Heiberg's circle in Stockholm was his friend from *Kritisk Revy*, Poul Henningsen, as well as the Dane Arne Jacobsen and the Norwegian Harald Hals. Some of these groupings gathered not only architects but also politicians, engineers, and artists, and other intellectuals engaged in discussing current societal issues.

Between 1935 and 1950, the search for new ideals within urban planning and architecture seems to have led to both a consolidation

- 6 Eva Rudberg, *Sven Markelius, Architect* (Stockholm: Arkitektur Förlag, 1989), 156. See also Peter Carolin, "Sense, Sensibility and Tower Blocks," *Twentieth Century Architecture*, no. 9 (2008), 102.
- 7 Nils Ahrbom, "Notes on the Planning of Dwellings," in *Swedish Housing of the Forties*, ed. Sven Backström and Stig Ålund (Stockholm: Tidskriften Byggmästaren, 1950), 33–42.
- 8 Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 195–97. This is also in accordance with contemporary Nordic publications, for example the introduction of Gustav Lettström, *Nordisk Arkitektur 1946–1949* (Stockholm: Byggmästarens förlag, 1950).

of various actors and networks and the formation of new groupings in Scandinavia. The history of Nordic, and especially Norwegian architecture during the Second World War has large gaps, which include the planning work that was done by Norwegian architects in England and Sweden during the war. Following the Nazi occupation of Norway in 1940, Norwegian architects operated as "agents," working through hidden and personal networks; in this text, I address the role of one such architect: Harald Hals. By considering how Hals operated in Stockholm (1944–45), partly via his correspondence with Erik Rolfsen in London, I consider how information flows within the Scandinavian architectural culture during the Second World War contributed to the development, differentiation, and physical manifestation of Scandinavian welfare architecture.

In Stockholm, Danish and Norwegian architects soon became well-informed about developments in Swedish urban planning and domestic architecture; after the war, this gave them an advantage. In practice, all private building activity stopped completely in Norway during the war, and architects had neither assignments nor access to architectural developments in other countries. In 1943, the war took a new turn, in that the Allies began to believe in victory, developing as a result a series of new plans. In Stockholm, architects became aware of Patrick Abercrombie and John Henry Forshaw's *County of London Plan* (1944); Lewis Mumford's *Culture of Cities* (1938) was published in Swedish in 1942. Émigré Norwegian architects may have played a role in linking Swedish planning to what was happening in Britain: Harald Hals, who was working for Sven Markelius in 1944–45, served as a connection to London via his fellow Norwegian, Erik Rolfsen. One of Markelius' first acts in 1944 as Stockholm's Chief City Planner, was in fact to ask for updated information about British planning.⁶ The idea of dividing city suburbs into neighborhood units with community centers was promoted in a simple and convincing manner and quickly made an impact in Sweden. Foreign architects in Stockholm also became familiar with the development of various Swedish housing typologies: *smalhus* (shallow houses), *punkthus* (point houses), *stjärnhus* (star houses), *kollektivhus* (collective houses), and *radhus* (terrace houses).⁷ Institutions such as the Swedish Society of Architects (SAR) and the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts (SSF) had great faith in the value of housing research, and their opinions informed the work of the Building Section of the Swedish Standard Association.

AGREEMENT, FRICTIONS, AND TURNS IN NORDIC ARCHITECTURE

International surveys like Alan Colquhoun's *Modern Architecture* often very superficially link the Modern Movement's breakthrough in Scandinavia (1930) to the development of social reforms in Sweden beginning in 1932 with the Social Democrats' assumption of power under the banner of *folkhemmet* (the people's home).⁸ Furthermore, the ideas behind the 1940s housing estates in Sweden, often described under the umbrella of New Empiricism, is also often highlighted, and illustrated with examples of buildings in Stockholm that were planned and built during the war, for instance

9 Original quote in Danish: "Den er ikke pretentios og prangende som i de latinske lande, monumentaliteten er ikke maalet i seg selv, vi stræber efter en bygningskunst, der tjener livet og menneske, som indordner sig naturen, som ikke trænger paa, men tvertimod ønsker at være anonym." Quoted in: Nils-Ole Lund, *Nordisk Arkitektur* (Copenhagen: Arkitektens forlag, 1991), 109. See Kay Fisker, "Svensk Bygningskunst," *Arkitektens Ugehæfte* (1945): 30–32.

10 Anne-Kristine Kronborg, "Å reise noe nytt og bedre. Om arkitektur og politikk 1935–1940" [To raise something new and better: On architecture and politics, 1935–1940] (PhD diss., AHO, 2022).

the nine "point houses" at Danviksklippan by the architects Backström & Reinius (1940–45) or their "star houses" and residential units at Kv. Akterspegeln in Gröndal (1944–46). A few years after the war, the new ideas from Sweden within urban developments and welfare architecture were spread internationally through journals and G. E. Kidder Smith's well-illustrated book *Sweden Builds* (1950, and second revised edition 1957). This type of publication probably contributed to the strong position Swedish architecture gained early on in the history of postwar architecture.

However, one can ask whether the historical narrative of the Nordic welfare architecture demands further investigation in order to reveal the various factions, frictions, and turns that characterized these very interesting years. Considering the exchanges between architects of different nationalities during the war might contribute to a more nuanced understanding.

Giving a precise overall description of Nordic architecture in the 1940s quickly appears to be an impossible task. Kay Fisker probably succeeds best when he, in 1945, claimed that a common characteristic of Nordic architecture was:

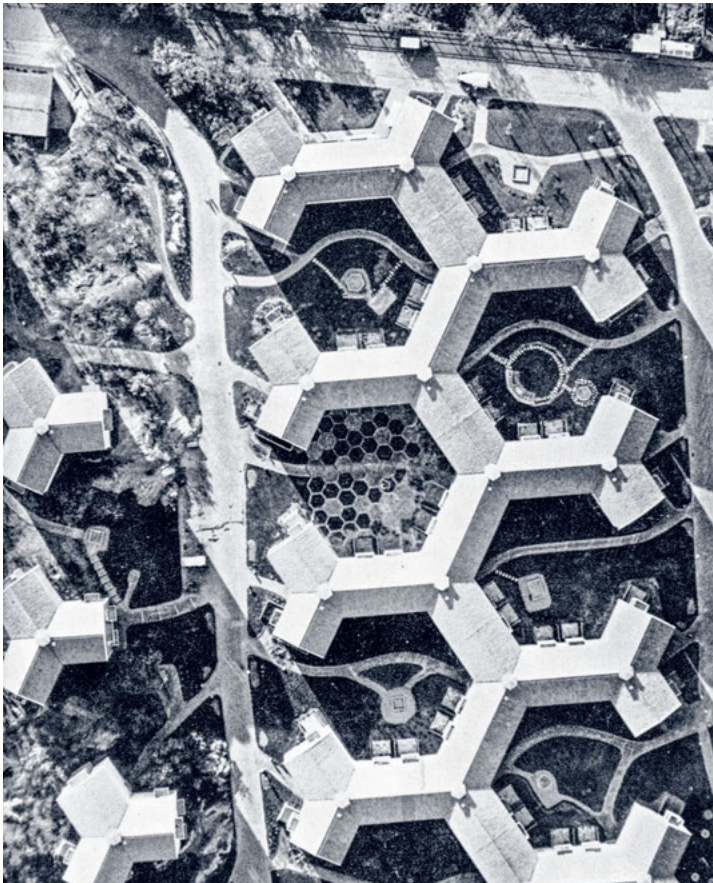
not pretentious and extravagant as in the Latin countries; monumentality is not the goal in itself; we strive for an art of building that serves life and man, that submits to nature, that does not intrude, but on the contrary, wants to be anonymous.⁹

Fisker's quote synthesizes an overall presentation of Nordic architecture but does not bring out the nuances, contradictions, parallels, intersecting directions, and—most important—the significant differences present within Nordic architectural culture. Most obviously, it ignores the fact that Sweden maintained a close connection between politics and architecture, while this in Norway was more hidden.¹⁰

Architecture and social housing in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway between 1935 and 1940 can partly be read as being led by an internal self-criticism against modernism. This is relevant to understanding both the background and the significance of the Norwegian and Danish architects' stay in Stockholm. Some Norwegian architects, like Hals and Rolfsen, began to pay more attention to creating continuity with regional and local traditions. Others, like Arne Korsmo and Knut Knutsen, began to move modernism in other directions, concerned with the landscape, natural materials, and non-geometric, partly figurative forms. Within residential architecture, an overarching idea of a green city inspired by Le Corbusier's book *Ville Radieuse* (1935), was in the mid-1930s highlighted in Oslo in the avant-garde environment around Ove Bang. But Bang and members of the Norwegian CIAM group like Blakstad and Munthe-Kaas were not allocated assignments in the country's social housing and the housing cooperative OBOS. The radical SAF milieu (which included Rolfsen) joined Arbeiderpartiet (the Labour Party) in 1936, no longer promoting a progressive architecture. So, in general, there was little experimentation within Norwegian housing in the years leading up to 1940.



Sven Backström and Leif Reinius, "Star houses" and residential units (1944–46) at Kv. Akterspegeln in Gröndal, Södermalm, Stockholm.



Backström & Reinius: "Star Houses,"
Gröndal Apartments (1944-46), Stockholm.
Photo from Kidder Smith *Sweden Builds*, 33.

- 11 "Harald Hals: Obituary," *Morgenbladet*, February 23, 1959, 2.
- 12 Espen Johnsen, "Arkitektur, kultur og kollektivhus. Sovjetiske impulser på norsk funksjonalisme" [Architecture, culture and collective housing: Soviet impulses within Norwegian functionalism], in *Norge-Russland. Naboer gjennom 1000 år* [Norway-Russia: Neighbors for 1,000 years], ed. Daniela Büchten, Tatjana Dzakson, and Jens Petter Nielsen (Oslo: Spartacus Academic Press, 2004), 691.
- 13 Original quote in Norwegian: "Det er en drabelig kulturell oppgave i den tiden som kommer å føre byggekunsten inn i et riktig spor og opp til det nivå, hvor den etter våre tradisjoner hører hjemme. I denne mørke tiden må vi se det som et stort lyspunkt, at vi får høve til å gjøre det. Og – arkitektene har ansvaret for at det skjer." Harald Hals, "Gjenoppbyggingen" [The reconstruction], *Byggekunst* 3 (1940): 33.
- 14 Erik Rolfsen, "En ny by – En bedre by. Småprat foran en stor oppgave" [A new city—A better city. Small talk before a big task], *Byggekunst* 3 (1940): 60–63.

HALS AND ROLFSEN'S RESPONSE TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

The Norwegian architects Harald Hals and Erik Rolfsen represented very different urban planning ideals, and were even in conflict occasionally, but with the outbreak of the war, both showed an immediate willingness to cooperate with each other. Harald Hals (1876–1959), who was educated in Berlin and Stockholm and had studied and practiced in the US, had since 1926 served as Oslo's *reguleringssjef* (Chief planning officer). Recognized for his role as *boligdirektør* (Housing director) in the early 1920s, the plans and housing developments he had worked on in Oslo, including Ullevål Hageby (Ullevål Garden City) 1916–22, combined the formal ideals of Nordic neoclassicism with a modern urban planning approach. After his death, he was both referred to as "the creator of Modern Oslo" and criticized for acting as a dictator.¹¹ In "Fra Christiania til Stor-Oslo. Forslag til generalplan for Oslo" (From Christiania to Greater Oslo: Proposal for a general plan for Oslo) from 1929, he began to develop plans outside the city core, with green connections and corridors between the city center toward the landscapes of the periphery.

His work in the 1930s maintained a social profile, as seen in the "Stor-Oslo: forslag til generalplan" (Greater Oslo: proposal for general plan) of 1934 and his 1934 book and exhibition *Byen lever* (The city is alive), where he pointed out that Oslo risked being closed in as the result of surrounding islands being seized and privatized by a small number of people. In 1935, he visited and studied urban planning and social housing in Russia, including collective housing, and in 1937 participated (together with Edvard Heiberg, Sven Markelius, and Frank Lloyd Wright) in the Congress of the Soviet Architectural Association, publishing *Moskva i går, i dag, i morgen* (Moscow yesterday, today, tomorrow) in 1937.¹² Unlike other foreign colleagues, Hals was not as critical of the Stalinist neoclassicism that now had taken over after constructivism. In 1940, shortly after Germany's invasion of Norway and the bombing of several Norwegian cities, Harald Hals, as president of Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund (NAL, the Norwegian National Association of Architects), published a text on the first page of the periodical *Byggekunst* urging Norwegian architects to take responsibility for and participate in the reconstruction of the bombed cities. Hals wrote:

It is a formidable cultural task to set the future of the art of building on the right track and bring it up to that level where, according to our traditions, it belongs. In these dark times, we must see this chance as a great possibility. Architects are responsible for making this happen.¹³

New plans for cities and countrysides were needed and, as Hals clarified, nothing should be allowed to be built until those plans were ready. Through the article, published at a time when the architectural press in Norway was still free of German censorship, he appealed for the help, skill, and insights of his colleagues in tackling this task.

In the same issue, architect Erik Rolfsen (1905–92) also published the article "En ny by – en bedre by" (A new city—a better city).¹⁴ When the war broke out on April 9, 1940, Rolfsen had been

- 15 Original quote in Norwegian: "Ingen uendelig og trøstløs lengde hverken på leiegård eller rekkehus ... Ingen kolossalblokker som gjør målestokken umenneskelig og de trafikale og hygieniske forhold vanskelige. Hjemmet er *ikke* en maskin til å bo i. Jeg er ikke likeglad om mitt måltid er en saftig rett mat eller en vitaminpastill. Derfor liker vi heller ikke lameller i mekanisk rekkefølge eller opplinjerte villakolonner." Rolfsen, "En ny by – en bedre by," 63.
- 16 Original quote in Norwegian: "Det vi må fram til er de små grupper, leiegårder ved en grønn, åpen plass eller små eneboliger i ordnet samling, avsluttede partier omkring et stortun, slik som vår gamle gårdsbebyggelse, setergrenda rundt vollen eller landsbyen omkring torget. Vi må få en boligform som er innrettet på et overkommelig sosialt samkvem og en fordøyelig målestokk. Ved å plassere slike organiske boliggrupper, naboskap, innenfor et større samfunns ramme, reddes den lille enhets hygge og menneskelighet, mens en unngår dens isolasjon og sneverhet. Småbyen må inn i storbyen." Rolfsen, "En ny by – en bedre by," 63.
- 17 Erik Rolfsen, "Generalreguleringsplanen for Stor Oslo" [The general regulation plan for Greater Oslo], *PLAN* (1936): 42–50.

employed at the Oslo municipality's urban planning office for two years, under Harald Hals' leadership. While the bombing by the Germans was described as a tragedy, Rolfsen argued that the consequences also represented an opportunity for rethinking how future residential areas should be characterized. In this task, he advocated for the importance of openness and proper dimensioning:

No endless and disconsolate length either in tenements or terraced houses ... No colossal blocks that create an inhumane scale and difficult traffic and hygienic conditions. The house is *not* a machine to live in. A vitamin pill is not as satisfying as a plate of well-cooked food. It is for this reason that we don't like mechanically ordered *lameller* (slab blocks) and rows of detached houses.¹⁵

Rolfsen continued:

What we need is small groupings of tenement blocks by green open spaces and orderly gatherings of small detached houses, adjacent to a *stortun* (a large yard) like our old farmstead buildings, or grouped around a grassy plain like a *setergrend* (a cluster of mountain pasture farms), or like a village formed around a square. We must find a form of housing that is geared toward manageable social interactions and digestible scales. By placing organic groups of houses, neighborhoods, within the framework of a larger society, the intimacy and humanity of the small unit is saved, while isolation and narrowmindedness are avoided. The small town must influence the big city.¹⁶

Such ideals differed wildly from his own radical proposal from 1936, which was presented in the journal *PLAN*, which envisaged the reshaping of the whole of Oslo through the construction of a vast residential belt, formed like an amphitheater. One plan consisted of 2,000 high-rise buildings, each twelve floors tall, in a sloping terrain that was oriented toward the city's historical center.¹⁷

By emphasizing that "our tradition" should also be incorporated in contemporary architecture, they both implicitly criticized the Modern Movement, at the same time aligning themselves with ideals popular amongst leading architects in Sweden and England. Hals expressed a clear call for architects to contribute to the community, while Rolfsen signaled that in the future architecture should accept parts of the critique of modernism in order to adjust and renew modern planning. His 1940 essay in *Byggekunst* might be seen as a turning point that both marks the pursuit of a critique of, and a distance from, aspects of modern architecture and urban planning—in particular functionalist housing ideals as they had recently been built and planned in Norway, including in Oslo and other large and small cities in the Nordic region.

These statements from Hals and Rolfsen, both from 1940, are interesting on several levels; they reflect and hint at the complex transition period that preceded Scandinavia's postwar development, especially within the Norwegian architecture and planning discourse. On a general level, Rolfsen's 1940 comments point toward a number of planning and housing ideals that subsequently came to be popularized by the American Lewis Mumford, including

- 18 Sven Backström, "A Swede Looks at Sweden," in "Sweden: Outpost of Peace in War," special issue, *Architectural Review* (September 1943): 80.
- 19 Original quote in Norwegian: "... medlemskap i N.S. eller innstilling overfor Quisling, N.S. og okkupasjonsmyndighetene skulle tillegges avgjørende vekt ved ansettelse, forfremmelser og fortsatt arbeid i det offentlige tjeneste." "Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund 1941–1945," *Byggekunst* 1 (1945): 2.
- 20 "Norske Arkitekters Landsforbund 1941–1945."

the ideas of new towns and neighborhood units, which were highly influential in British and Swedish town planning. In some sense, the text has a lot in common with Sven Backström's article "A Swede Looks at Sweden," which was published in *Architectural Review* in 1943.¹⁸ Here, we see ideals being formulated that would characterize the early phase of postwar Nordic welfare architecture, but which were present in some form even by the end of the 1930s. Hals' and Rolfsen's respective articles in *Byggekunst* (1940) serve as a reminder to the reader that the years during the Second World War remain under-researched and under-communicated in terms of the history of Nordic architecture in the period 1935–50. While this fifteen-year intermezzo has not yet been clearly defined by scholars, it was, I argue, also characterized by a lack of clarity with respect to the aesthetic strategies and architectural approaches being advanced at the time. This can be linked to the political upheaval of the period: not only did social democratic governments in Sweden and Norway come to power with the aim of attending to the housing question and strengthening housing standards, but Germany's occupation of Norway and Denmark during the Second World War completely changed architectural culture, architecture policy, and reduced the possibility to produce experimental designs.

THE CHALLENGING YEARS 1940–42

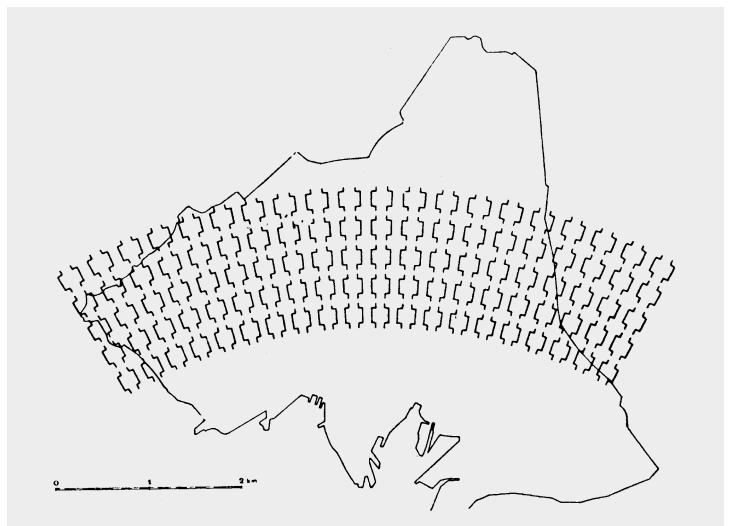
For both Hals and Rolfsen, the early phase of the war was professionally very challenging. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, Rolfsen was given responsibility for the reconstruction of the small town of Kristiansund, under the Brente Steders Regulering (Burned places regulation, BSR), which was established under the leadership of Professor Sverre Pedersen, an internationally well-known urban planner and architect, mostly practicing neoclassicism. Pedersen was criticized in the 1930s by a younger generation, including those involved in Sosialistiske Arkitekters Forening (SAF)—of which Erik Rolfsen was a member—for not being more updated on modern urban planning. A small avant-garde architectural team was, in 1940, assembled in Kristiansund, including Rolfsen, Øivind Grimsgaard, and Arne Korsmo. A perspective by Rolfsen (1941) shows his now far more traditional attitude.

However, if one was not willing to cooperate with the Germans, it was difficult for Norwegian architects interested in renewing modern urban planning to practice. The German *Reichskommissariat* was early on given responsibility for much of the planning and building activity in Norway. In the spring and summer of 1941, German interference increased. NAL, with Hals as president, was among the organizations that reacted against the memorandum that was circulated, informing that "membership in NS [Nasjonal Samling (National unification)], and attitudes toward Vidkun Quisling of the NS and the occupation authorities are to be given decisive weight in hiring, promotions, and continued work in the public service."¹⁹ On June 18, 1941, the Nazi Reichskommissar Josef Terboven forced NAL to close, and Hals resigned as president.²⁰ Later in 1941, Hals asked Pedersen to resign from his leadership in BSR. Hals' role as *reguleringssjef* for Oslo was taken over by the Nazi sympathizer F. W. Rode, who also became head of the newly formed Norges Arkitektforbund



Harald Hals, Generalplan for Oslo (General plan for Oslo), model, (1930, revised 1940).

Erik Rolfsen, sketch for an ideal plan of Oslo, with 2,000 high-rise buildings. *Plan* (1936).



- 21 Den Kgl. Norske Legasjons Flyktningskontor, RA/S-6753/V/Va/L0022; 733. Riksarkivet.
- 22 Original quote in Norwegian: "byutvikling, regionplaner, grønne belter, nye byer, lokalsentra, enklaver og desentralisert service." Erik Rolfsen, *Underveis i Oslo* [En route in Oslo] (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1975), 126.
- 23 Den Kgl. Norske Legasjons Flyktningskontor, RA/S-6753/V/Va/L0022; 255. Riksarkivet.
- 24 Harald Hals, letter to Arne Korsmo, Hals' private archive, PA-0311, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 25 Original quote in Norwegian: "studier og forarbeider til beste for gjenreisningen hjemme." Erik Rolfsen, unpublished letter from London to Harald Hals, Stockholm, April 3, 1944, Harald Hals' private archive, PA-0311, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 26 Harald Hals, unpublished letter to Erik Rolfsen in London, April 22, 1944. Hals' private archive, PA-0311, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 27 Arne Korsmo, letter to Harald Hals, April 23, 1944. Hals' private archive, PA-0311, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 28 The committee was in Stockholm also affiliated with *Den norske legasjons forsyningskontor* [The Norwegian Legation's supply office].

(the Norwegian Architect's Association). Rolfsen left Kristiansund and BSR and fled first to Sweden (in January 1943)²¹ and then to England. In London, he worked for the in-exile Norwegian Government's Forsynings og Gjenreisningsdepartementet (Supply and reconstruction department), acting as an important consultant in regional and urban planning, and planning for reconstruction. In the winter of 1944–45, Rolfsen came in contact with London town planner Patrick Abercrombie, an encounter that may have informed Rolfsen's later reference to the discussions of "urban development, regional plans, green belts, new towns, local centers, enclaves and decentralized services" in the London environment.²² Sources suggest that Hals did not flee to Sweden until February 1944.²³

HALS ESTABLISHES A COMMITTEE IN STOCKHOLM

One of Hals' first initiatives was to map and create a network of Norwegian architects working in Stockholm. In his mapping, he included not only those who came as refugees, but also Norwegian architects already living in Stockholm. According to Hals, there were, in the spring of 1944, twenty Norwegian architects in the Swedish capital,²⁴ including Johs. Borchsenius from the SAF Group, and others like Fredrik Winsnes, Helge Thiis, Arne Korsmo, and the Danish-Norwegian Edvard Heiberg. In a letter to Hals in April 1944, Rolfsen observed that some of the Norwegian architects working in Sweden had jointly expressed a desire to carry out "studies and preparations for the reconstruction at home."²⁵ Hals informed Rolfsen a few weeks later that an architectural committee with a council had already been formed in Stockholm, with himself as a chairman and secretary. He hoped the committee could assist the Department in London and that they could be of mutual benefit to one another, enclosing a short bibliography on Norwegian urban planning, which Rolfsen had requested.²⁶ A meeting in May was to take place at Hakon Ahlberg's office.²⁷ In Stockholm, Hals became a focal point for Norwegian architects, forming a Norwegian architectural committee to prepare for reconstruction after the war. While in London Rolfsen was formulating plans for the reconstruction and rebuilding of Norway through the exiled national government, Hals' agency in Stockholm specifically targeted particular "architectural arenas," work that saw Stockholm attain importance for Danish and Norwegian architects in the postwar years. In the summer of 1944, Den Norske Bygningstekniske Komite (D. B. K., the Norwegian Building Technology Committee) was formally established in Stockholm, under the leadership of Harald Hals.²⁸ Other members were Lisa Gjessing, Edvard Heiberg, Ole Rolfsen, and Fredrik Størmer. Both Hals' preserved correspondence, which is archived in Riksarkivet in Oslo and his account which is published in *Byggekunst* show a commitment to current topics. The Committee's first objective was to gather information and write reports that could contribute to the reconstruction. This included obtaining information about: (1) ready-to-assemble wooden houses; (2) the economic and technical advantages of standardized house types and building parts; (3) new building materials; (4) community facilities such as kindergartens and kitchens; (5) city and community centers; (6) Swedish housing and housing policy; (7) the interior design and furnishing

- 29 Harald Hals, "Den Norske Bygnings-tekniske Komite i Stockholm 1944–1945," *Byggekunst* no. 2 (1945): 36.
- 30 Erik Rolfsen, unpublished letter to Harald Hals, August 21, 1944, Harald Hals' private archive, PA-0311, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 31 With Lisa Gjessing, Edvard Heiberg, Ole Rolfsen, Fredrik Størmer, and Harald Hals.
- 32 Harald Hals, ed., *Boliger og Samfunnsbygg. Erfaringer fra Sverige* [Housing and community buildings: Experiences from Sweden] (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1946).
- 33 Original quote in Norwegian: "den eneste virkelig effektive og logiske løsning er at samfunnet overtar all jord – at jorden nasjonaliseres." Hals, *Boliger og Samfunnsbygg*, 21.
- 34 Yngve Larsson and Erland von Hafsten were also mentioned. Harald Hals, "Foreword," *Hefte F. Plan og Planlegging* [Booklet F: The plan and planning], *Den Bygningstekniske Komit s hefter* [Booklets of the Building Engineering Committee] (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1946).

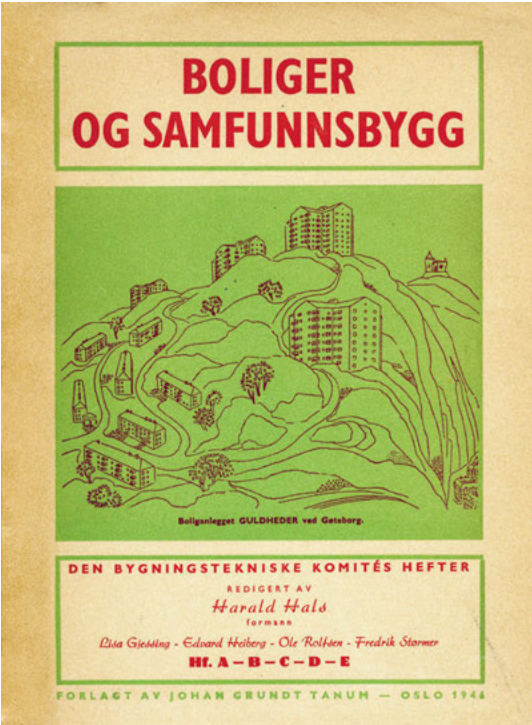
of ordinary homes and small apartments.²⁹ All these seven themes were worked on in Sweden and were all highly topical in rebuilding efforts in the early postwar years. Hals described the correspondence with Rolfsen in London as "fairly secure, but terribly slow" and a possible explanation for the lack of information flow with London could be the role reversal witnessed between Hals and Rolfsen during the war: Rolfsen, who was previously Hals' junior, now represented the future, and the 68-year-old Hals, previously Rolfsen's boss, the past. However, communications indicate that a functioning collaboration nonetheless continued, in which Hals also received manuscripts by Rolfsen about the postwar development of Norway.

EXPERIENCES FROM STOCKHOLM COLLECTED AND PUBLISHED

Early in his correspondence with Rolfsen, Hals saw the need to publish on certain topics. In August 1944, Rolfsen argued that it was in Stockholm that people had the time and opportunity to produce professional studies with sketches and illustrations. Preparing publications would be of great value for professionals, administrative institutions, and the public.³⁰ Rolfsen singled out community centers, neighborhood units, and industrial planning as important areas to focus on. An editorial committee was established by Hals, and some members of the network, including Rolfsen, were asked to contribute.³¹

In 1946, the D. B. K., with Harald Hals as editor, published *Boliger og samfunnsbygg. Erfaringer fra Sverige* (Housing and community buildings: Experiences from Sweden).³² As it appeared in the editorial committee's introduction, the composition of refugees was relatively random and the book featured forays by its contributors into a variety of themes, more than solid and targeted presentations. The book was divided into five booklets (A–E). In Booklet A, Lisa Gjessing's article "Planlegging" briefly explained terms like "regional plan," "general plan," and "city plan," highlighting the value of regular discussion evenings with foreign colleagues, for example on building laws, and shared solutions from England, Denmark, and Hungary. In "Retten til jorden" (The right to the land), Edvard Heiberg argued that "the only truly effective and logical solution is for society to take over all land—that the land is nationalized," referring to the fact that the Labour Party in England was in favor of such a solution. Erik Rolfsen wrote about regional planning. In Booklet B, Christian. Fr. Størmer explained economic aspects of housing in Sweden, and E. Heiberg wrote about Swedish kitchens. In Booklet C, Thekla Bruff discussed collective houses in Stockholm, and in Booklet D, E. Heiberg contributed with (another) article about community centers in England and Sweden, while Harald Hals II (Hals' son) wrote about Swedish public parks.³³

Hals himself published the book *Plan og Planlegging* (Booklet F). In the introduction, he clarified that the text was written in 1944–45 in connection with the preparation of a new general plan for Stockholm City, and thanked *stadsplanchefene* (the chief urban planners) Albert Lilienberg and Sven Markelius and his free access to the library of the *stadsplanekontoret* (the city planning office).³⁴ The first part of the book explained concepts such as "regional plan," "city plan," "general



The front cover of the book *Boliger og samfunnsbygg. Erfaringer fra Sverige* (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1946), edited by Harald Hals.



The front cover of Harald Hals' *Plan og Planlegging* (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1946). The illustration shows a Swedish community center, by the architect Nils Einar Eriksson.

- 35 Harald Hals, *Plan og planlegging* [Plan and planning] (Oslo: Johan Grundt Tanum, 1946), 32–34.
- 36 Hals, “Den Norske Bygningstekniske Komite,” 36.
- 37 Harald Hals, unpublished notes, Harald Hals’ private archive, PA-0311, L0008, Riksarkivet, Oslo.

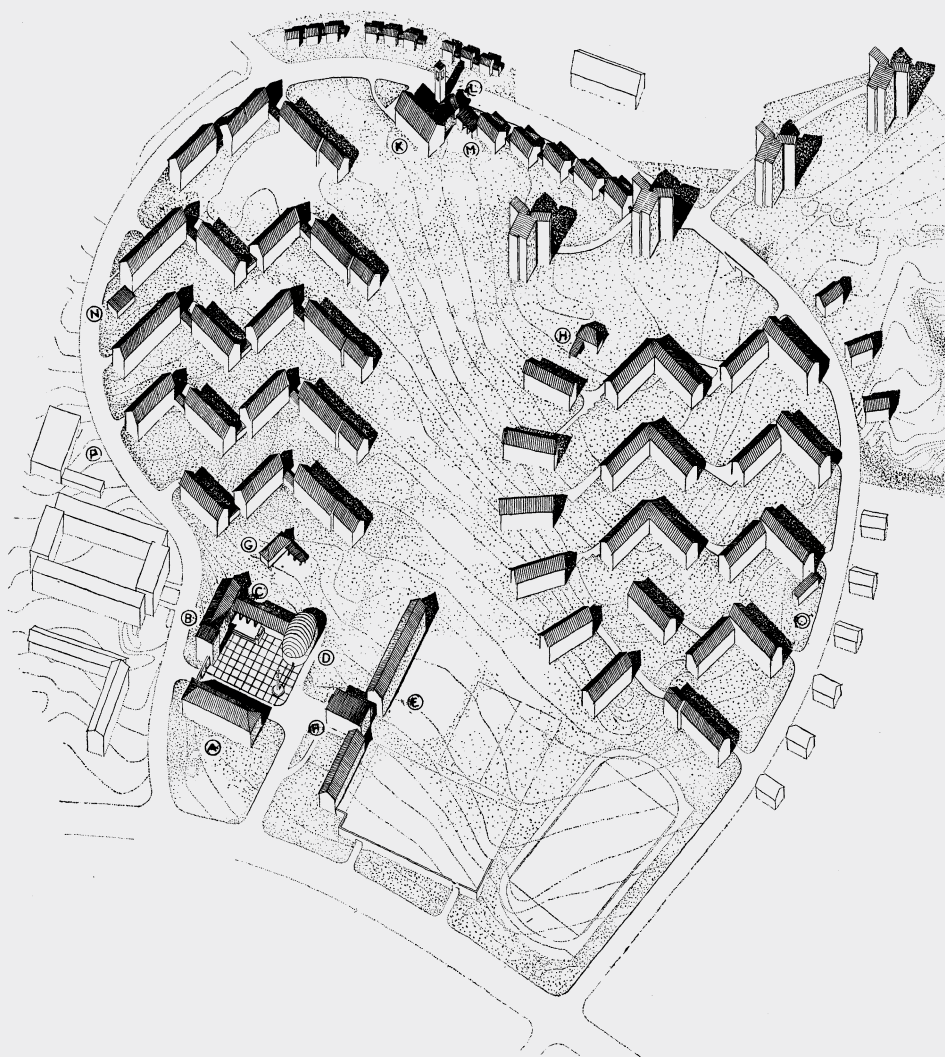
plan,” and “zone plan,” with the main body of the text addressing modern planning as it was practiced in western countries (including the Soviet Union, which were given more space than the US). Most attention was given to England, referring to regional reports and Abercrombie’s systematic work with London’s green belt.³⁵ In the Nordic section, Sweden was, not surprisingly, addressed at length. Current themes such as neighborhoods, *medborgersentrer* (civic centers) and collective housing forms were discussed. Except for the cover, which featured a perspective drawing of a *svensk borger-sentrum* (Swedish community center) by Hans Einar Eriksson, Hals’ “Prosjekt for Etterstad ved Oslo” (Project for Etterstad in Oslo) was the book’s only illustration. The latter was presented as a *moderne boligkoloni* (modern residential community) within a park, with different housing typologies and a *folkesentrum* (neighborhood center) for approximately 4,000 inhabitants. While all modern planning increasingly involved sociological and scientific findings, Hals concluded that aesthetics still had a substantial impact on design.

NORWEGIAN ARCHITECTS SCATTERED IN VARIOUS OFFICES.

During the war, as is well known, the Swedish authorities undertook significant research within the fields of planning and architecture, collecting data of a social, statistical, and technical nature and working on related planning projects. Hals has pointed out that Norwegian architects and engineers were involved in these efforts, through their work in private, public, and municipal offices, and larger semi-public institutions, including Kungl. Byggnadsstyrelsen (KBS, the National Board of Public Buildings), Stockholms Stadsplanekontor (the City of Stockholm’s City Planning Office), Statens Byggnadslånebyrå (the state office for building loans), and the housing developers HSB, Svenska Riksbyggen, and Svenska Trähus.³⁶

Hals himself worked in Stockholm at the architectural office of the high-profile modernist and Swedish CIAM delegate Sven Markelius (1889–1972); in 1944, Markelius was appointed Stockholm’s Chief City Planner, which helps to some extent explain Hals’ motivation for writing his own book. *Boliger og Samfunnsbygg*’s contributors and its five different themes (A–E) were related to Hals’ network in Stockholm and were in accordance with the committee’s first objectives of gathering information. While some Norwegian architects worked in offices associated with Stockholm’s general plan, others worked at institutions that worked on the planning of the Swedish postwar period.

According to Hals, the architect Lisa Gjessing (educated at NTH) had practiced both at Stockholms Stadsplanekontor and Kungl. Byggnadsstyrelsen; Christian Fredrik Störmer (educated at KTH) was employed at Statens Byggnadslånebyrå; and Thekla Bruff (educated at SHKS and KTH) worked, in 1944, at Kooperativt Förbundets Arkitektkontor (the architecture office of the cooperative union, KF).³⁷ Some, such as Vilhelm Brodtkorb Reinhardt (1899–1968), had their own small office. Others worked for renowned Swedish architects such as the Norwegian-Danish architect Edvard Heiberg (1897–1958) and the Hungarian and Jewish architect Fred Forbát who were among the foreign architects that worked for



MODERNE BOLIGKOLONI

Gaten som danner adkomsten til kolonien er lagt i sløyfe rundt bebyggelsen, og denne er spredt fritt utover i et åpent parkområde. Fra sløyfen er det stikkveier inn til hvert hus, fra husene igjen slipper beboerne direkte ut i parkområdet uten å krysse noen kjørebane.
(Prosjekt for Etterstad ved Oslo.)

A, B, C, D = Folkesentrum. A = Forretningsgård. B = Møte- og forsamlingslokaler, studie-rom, bibliotek o. l. C = Konditori, kafé. D = Kino. E = Folkeskole. F = Aula. G, H, og M = Barnehage. K = Småkirke. L = Menighetshus. N og O = Fellesvaskeri. P = Fellesgarasje. I nedre hjørne idretts- og øvelsesplasser.

Harald Hals: *Moderne boligkoloni* (A modern residential community), project for Etterstad in Oslo (ca. 1945–46). From the booklet *Plan og Planlegging*, 8.

- 38 Rudberg, "Uno Åhrén," 162.
- 39 Rudberg, "Uno Åhrén," 165–66.
- 40 As chairman of the building council in Porsgrunn, in 1943 Johs. (Johannes Laurentius) Borchsenius refused to accept a regulation plan. He received threats and fled in August 1943 to Stockholm.
- 41 The statements by Edvard Heiberg and Tage William-Olsson were published in: "B.S.R.: Utenlandske fagfolks mening" [B.S.R.: The opinion of foreign professionals], *Byggekunst* no. 1 (1945): 25–29.
- 42 Harald Hals, "Henvendelse til Regjeringen" [Application to the Government], *Byggekunst* 1 (1945): 13.
- 43 Original quote in Swedish: "Den lätthet med vilken professor Pedersen synas bedöma detta betänkliga förhållande står i en tydlig motsats till den vikt han synes lägga vid yttre arkitektoniska effekter, exempelvis platsanläggningar med representationskaraktär." Uno Åhrén, unpublished letter to Harald Hals, February 19, 1945, Harald Hals' private archive, PA-0311, L0009, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 44 Harald Hals, "Henvendelse til regjeringen," *Byggekunst*, no. 1 (1945): 12–13.
- 45 Lisbet Balslev Jørgensen, *Den sidste guldalder. Danmark i 1950'erne* [The last golden age: Denmark in the 1950s] (Copenhagen: Arkitektens Forlag, 2004), 35.
- 46 There are letters from Hals, as well as the as well as from Den Kgl. Norske Legasjon i Stockholm. When he didn't receive a reply from Alvar Aalto, Hals sent him another letter in January 1945. See Harald Hals, unpublished letter to Alvar Aalto, January 20, 1945, Harald Hals' private archive, PA-0311, L0009, Riksarkivet, Oslo.

Uno Åhrén and engaged in Svenska Riksbyggens Arkitekt- och Stadsbyggeavdelning (the architecture and planning division at the developer Svenska Riksbyggen). Åhrén's efforts during the war are significant, both through his texts, his practical urban planning, and his collaboration with researchers from other fields, like the sociologist Alva Myrdal³⁸ In *Arkitektur och Demokrati* (Architecture and democracy, 1942), Åhrén formulated an early internal critique of Swedish functionalism, arguing that it focused too little on peoples' earlier habits and ways of living, and social interaction.³⁹ In 1943, he wrote about society and urban planning and launched his first ideas for a community center. In Stockholm, Hals and Heiberg had contact through the committee.

NETWORKING ON SEVERAL FRONTS

From the end of 1944, Hals, in correspondence with Johs. Borchsenius, engaged several high-profile Nordic urban planners and architects to comment on BSR's urban plans.⁴⁰ Both among architects in Norway and abroad, there was a frustration that in several plans for the city centers, Pedersen had adopted a largely traditional and monumental neoclassical style in accordance with the German occupation authority's ideals. Some of these very critical papers, for instance by Edvard Heiberg and Tage William-Olsson, chief planners in Gothenburg, were published in *Byggekunst* shortly after the peace in 1945.⁴¹ In the introduction, Hals called on the Norwegian Government to revise BSR's city plans, which were created under German supervision, overemphasized architectural aspects, and placed too little emphasis on analysis and the development of plans in other democratic countries.⁴² Statements to Hals from Albert Lilienberg and Uno Åhrén were also received, but not published. The latter was sharp in his criticism and argued for the need for both sociological research and technical solutions: "The ease with which professor Pedersen seems to assess this questionable relationship stands in clear contrast to the importance he seems to attach to external architectural effects, for example site facilities with a representational character."⁴³ For Åhrén, the emphasis on aesthetics (through "external architectural effects") represented an outdated methodology. When peace came, Hals addressed the Norwegian government about the need to reconsider BSR's plans developed during the war, in *Byggekunst*'s first issue.⁴⁴ Shortly after, Rolfsen became the new leader of BSR (1945–47), and Pedersen's plans for the city centers were processed.

Reconstruction was also clearly a relevant issue for neighboring Finland as a result of the Winter War (1939–40), and with his pavilions in Paris (1937) and New York (1939), Finnish architect Alvar Aalto became an international star-architect. In the period 1941–42, Aalto worked within several arenas, engaging American students at MIT to design an "American Town" which could be realized in Finland, and giving lectures in Copenhagen in 1942, and probably also in Stockholm, about the reconstruction of the Finnish cities.⁴⁵ Hals' archive contains letters to Aalto requesting to send Norwegian specialists to Finland to study the reconstruction work.⁴⁶ In a reply from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Helsinki, Aalto announced that "Norwegian specialists, regardless of the number,

- 47 Harald Hals, unpublished letters addressed to Den Norske Legasjon in Stockholm, November, 1944, Harald Hals' private archive, PA-0311, L0009, Riksarkivet, Oslo. There are also letters from Hals to Aalto in the same period.
- 48 Later, Borchsenius got the job for the reconstruction of Vadsø By. Christine Bredegg Hermansen, "En godhjerta raddis" ["A radical with a good heart"] (Master's thesis in art history, University of Oslo, 2005), 34.
- 49 Herman Munthe-Kaas, unpublished letter to Harald Hals, February 13, 1945, Harald Hals Archive, PA-0311, Riksarkivet, Oslo.
- 50 Original quote in Norwegian: "Gode naboer er godt å ha. Danmark og Sverige har hver på sitt vis gjort hva det stod i deres makt for å hjelpe oss gjennom tunge krigsår... Vi takker også for gjestfri mottagelse av norske arkitekter som måtte ta seg over grensen for å unngå Gestapos klør. Våre svenske yrkesbrødre ga støtte og hjelp, ga arbeid og åpnet dørene til sine organisasjoner, biblioteker og arkiver, slik at det ble mulig å forberede det store gjenreisningsarbeid som nå ligger foran oss." Herman Munthe-Kaas, "TAKK, til våre danske og svenske yrkesbrødre" [THANK YOU to our Danish and Swedish professional brothers], *Byggekunst* 1 (1945): 2.

will be received *con amore* and can count on all desired assistance from the state."⁴⁷ Through correspondence with Rolfsen, Hals also was involved in the immediate reconstruction of Northern Norway, which in part borders Finland, after the war, including preparing, motivating, and selecting key architects in Stockholm to attend to this task, including Johs. Borchsenius and others. Borchsenius had already traveled north in the spring of 1945 at the behest of the exiled Norwegian Government in London, and took on the job as head of regulation in Øst-Finnmark.⁴⁸

In addition to establishing ties with Norwegian architects in Stockholm, Hals also corresponded confidentially and anonymously with architects in Oslo, including Georg Eliassen and Herman Munthe-Kaas. Both sent him letters toward the end of the war, updating him on the situation in Oslo. Hals also engaged in exchanging publications, sending current Swedish architecture-related books both to London and Oslo. Munthe-Kaas thanked him in February 1945 for *Industriens arbetarbostäder* (Industrial worker's housing) which he deemed a thorough study of great importance, "not only in Sweden, but also to a great extent for the reconstruction in Norway."⁴⁹

EXPERIENCES THAT GAINED IMPORTANCE

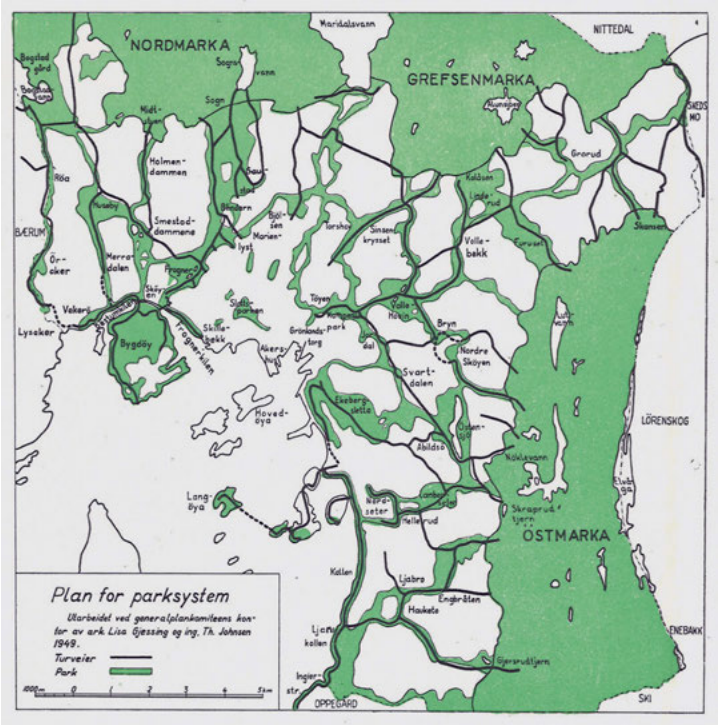
In the first issue of *Byggekunst* after the war, Herman Munthe-Kaas stated the following in his opening article:

Good neighbors are good to have. Denmark and Sweden have each in their way done what was in their power to help us through the difficult war years ... We are also grateful for the hospitable reception of Norwegian architects who had to cross the border to avoid the clutches of Gestapo. Our Swedish professional brothers gave support and help, provided work, and opened the doors of their organizations, libraries, and archives, so that it became possible to prepare for the great reconstruction that now lies before us.⁵⁰

Both Norwegian and Danish architects have expressed a gratitude toward the Swedish architects' hospitality during their stay in Stockholm. In Munthe-Kaas' thanks there is an implicit reference to Hals' network. For both Harald Hals and Erik Rolfsen, their foreign experiences during the war helped them to delve deeper into the projects suggested by the articles that they wrote in 1940. As shown here, Hals operated on several fronts, and had contact with different architects from Norway (Rolfsen, Herman Munthe-Kaas, Arne Korsmo), Sweden (Sven Markelius, Uno Åhrén, Tage William Olsson, Albert Lilienberg), Denmark (Edvard Heiberg), and Finland (Alvar Aalto). His two publications from Stockholm showed both an international and Nordic orientation, which characterized the first years of peace. At the same time, many Norwegian architects were engaged in restoring a connection to Norwegian building traditions. Both Hals and the committee's work seems to have strengthened the new orientation in urban planning, especially in Oslo. Hals was immediately reinstated as president of NAL and as *reguleringssjef* (Chief planning officer) when peace came.

Lisa Gjessing and Th. Johnsen, "Plan for a park system," Oslo (1949), prepared under Rolfsen's Generalplan for Oslo (1950).

Lambertseter, photo of Gråsteinveien (1963) in Blåfjellet borettslag, built 1953–56, with housing blocks by the architect Knut Knutsen.



- 51 Original quote in Norwegian: "Det som skjer i Stockholm kan gi et forbilde, om ikke til direkte efterligning, så til belæring." "Generalplanen for Stor-Oslo trenger revisjon" [The general plan for Greater Oslo needs revising], *Arbeiderbladet*, February 13, 1946, 1.
- 52 Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, "Sigtuna inbetween. Report on the small CIAM congress," unpublished report, 2016.
- 53 Johnsen, *PAGON*, 177.
- 54 *PAGON/Korsmo and Norberg-Schulz, "Bolitig?", Byggekunst*, no. 6–7 (1952): 109.
- 55 Johnsen, *PAGON*, 173–200.

In 1946, he advocated for the merger of Oslo and Aker through a general plan revision by arguing that "What is happening in Stockholm can provide a role model, if not for direct imitation, then for learning."⁵¹ Hals urged sending professionals to the Swedish capital, who over time could study the plan within geographically limited districts and in detail. Hals was now 70 years old, and served in the position until his successor was in place. The following year, Erik Rolfsen took over, and Oslo was developed with ideas from both London and Stockholm. Stockholm's ABC plans and the close link between transportation planning and the new towns in the suburbs received attention. The committee member Lisa Gjessing, after working as regulation architect in Finnmark, was given an important role in Oslo's park plan, developed from 1948. Both Hals and Rolfsen's foreign experiences and studies helped them to shape the immediate urban planning after the war, especially in Oslo, to which they brought ideas from the English new towns; Stockholm's suburban development with *medborgersentra* (community centers), the New Empiricism, and various housing typologies; and the American focus on traffic, transport, and park plans.

There is little doubt that the Swedish welfare architecture from the 1940s had a great impact on the social democrats in Norway. Especially Stockholm's new town Årsta, planned by Uno Åhrén (and with E. Heiberg as one of the assistants), resembling one of the models of the new town Lambertseter in Oslo, planned by (former SAF member) Frode Rinnan (1949–51), and built with neighborhood units designed by different architects. But it was also something to be resisted. It was that resistance that pulled Norwegian modernism in other directions, and disagreements about Swedish welfare architecture became apparent at and after CIAM's Sigtuna meeting in 1952,⁵² and the criticism was particularly expressed by Christian Norberg-Schulz and Arne Korsmo in *PAGON*'s manifesto in *Byggekunst* (1952). During his stay in Stockholm (1944–45), Korsmo became well informed about the new tendencies in Swedish architecture, but reacted with skepticism. At the Sigtuna meeting, Norberg-Schulz criticized Nils Ahrbom's lecture on "Housing Research" and felt modern architecture had lost its cause.⁵³ *PAGON*'s article "Bolitig?" (The Dwelling?) can be read as a commentary to Ahrbom's lecture and the Swedish methodological procedures with the use of collected statistical material as the basis of an ideal type of an apartment plan. "To build a residential district with fixed dwellings, as a whole, is in itself fundamentally and glaringly inorganic and thus inhuman," argued *PAGON*.⁵⁴ They believed in empowering the individual to choose the opportunity for interaction and creating their own well-being. Architects should no longer act as "specialists," but more like "agents," offering a flexible framework of choices.⁵⁵ The article was illustrated with Jørn Utzon, Sverre Fehn, and Geir Grung's project *Boliger på Arnebråten* (Housing complex on Arnebråten, 1951), planned as a continuous row of single-story houses, well-adapted to the sloping terrain. At CIAM 10 in Dubrovnik, Grung and Korsmo presented their alternative *Building and Nature. Flexibility of the Habitat* (1956) with four different types of dwellings to satisfy both old and young, single and larger families in a layout of the buildings combining high and low sections.

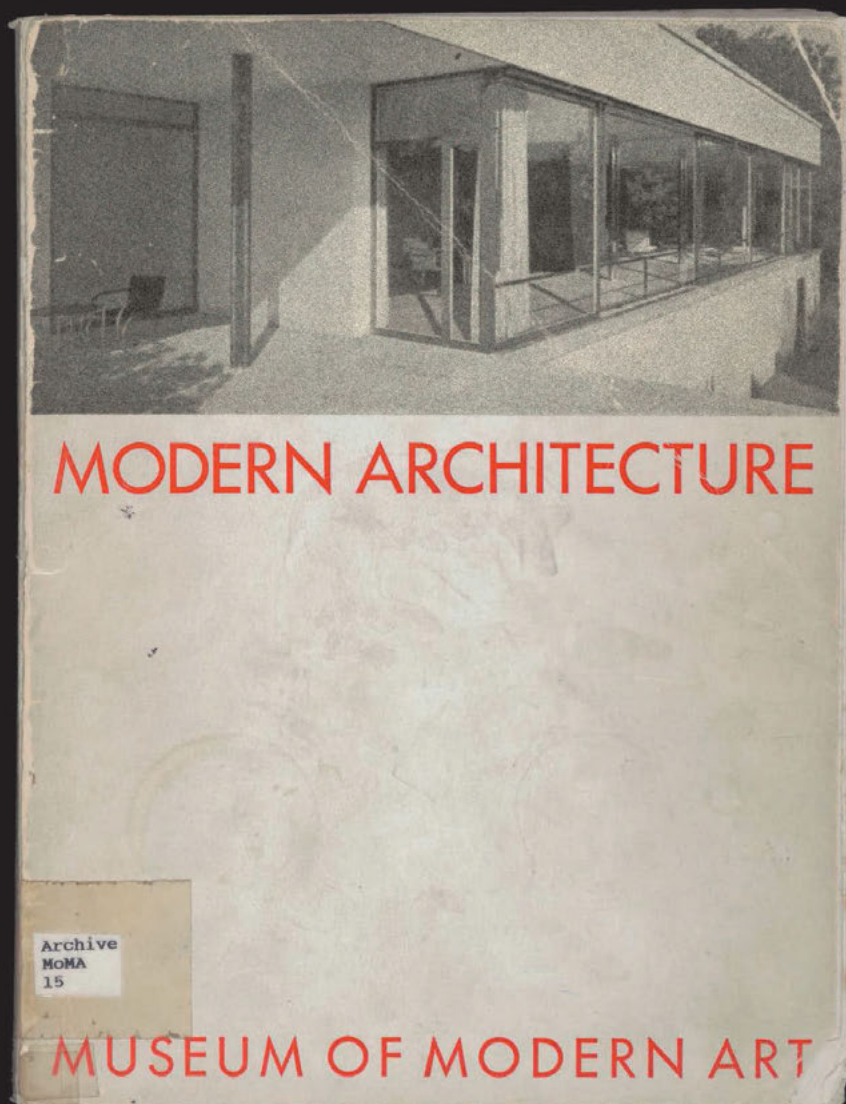
- 56 Jean-Louis Cohen, *Architecture in Uniform: Designing and Building for World War II* (Montréal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2011).
- 57 Despina Stratigakos, *Hitler's Northern Utopia: Building the New Order in Occupied Norway* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020).

Jean-Louis Cohen described, in 2011, the years between 1939 and 1945 as “a blank space in historical accounts” and his study reminds us that the Second World War is too often omitted from the history of architecture.⁵⁶ Related to Norwegian architectural history during the war, Despina Stratigakos book *Hitler's Northern Utopia: Building the New Order in Occupied Norway* (2020) contained some new interesting information.⁵⁷ There is ongoing research into Norwegian architecture during and just after the war, including perspectives on welfare. It will probably take a few years before we get a greater overview. On that occasion, it is worth remembering that parts of this planning also took place outside Norway. Stockholm's greatest value during the war appears, in this brief overview, to have been in its role as an arena for architectural exchange for Scandinavian and international architects, which opened up for impulses from different countries and cultures, and emphasized the importance of transnational cooperation during a world war.

Geir Grung and Arne Korsmo, *Building and Nature. Flexibility of the Habitat* (1956), model.







Catalogue cover of the quintessential exhibition *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, Museum of Modern Art, 1932.