

Norwegian Marxist-Leninism and Postwar Architecture

- 1 This chapter builds on parts of my PhD dissertation: Martin Braathen, "The Magician and the Shoemaker," (PhD diss., NTNU, 2019).
- 2 Francis Sejersted, "Norsk historie fra 1970 til 1990" [Norwegian history from 1970 to 1990], in *Store norske leksikon*, updated October 10, 2017, https://snl.no/Norsk_historie_fra_1970_til_1990.
- 3 Rune Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger* [The national strategists] (Oslo: Pax, 2001), 431.
- 4 Slagstad, *De nasjonale strateger*.
- 5 In 1973, SF became a part of the parliamentary basis for the new government in a new constellation, Sosialistisk Valgforbund [Socialist electoral association], together with other leftist fractions, and in 1975, Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV, the Socialist Party), was founded. See Sejersted, "Norsk historie fra 1970 til 1990."
- 6 Four years later, in 1973, this organization would develop into a full-blown Maoist party, Arbeidernes Kommunistparti (marxist-leninistene) [The workers' communist party (Marxist-Leninists)], or just AKP (m-l).

In 1970, Norwegian architectural discourse was shaken by the introduction of a radical ideological movement: Marxist-Leninism (ML). The Norwegian Marxist-Leninist movement developed out of 1960s counterculture, becoming an oppositional force in the cultural-political landscape of the 1970s. In general, it sent shockwaves through the political and cultural discourse in Norway, due to the movement's revolutionary agenda and its uncompromising analysis of Norwegian society and its entanglement with capitalist development. Its effects on architectural discourse were no exception, and the idea of the welfare state architect as an agent of positive change was in particular attacked as naïve and outdated. The architectural schools became important arenas for such analyses, and this chapter describes the formation of this movement in and around the Oslo School of Architecture.¹

The late 1960s in Norway were politically turbulent, with Arbeiderpartiet (the Labor Party) losing power to a center-right coalition in the 1965 election, their first defeat since the Second World War. The first two decades after the war had been dominated by the construction and consolidation of the welfare state by Arbeiderpartiet and were broadly characterized by strong economic growth. From the late 1960s, political challenges sparked by globalization and unstable economy, as well as new generations of citizens and politicians with new political agendas, ushered in a new phase in Norwegian social politics.² The following years were a transitional phase in all parts of Norwegian society, accommodating a shift from the social democratic welfare state of the postwar years to the new political reality of neoliberalism and deregulation that arose in the 1980s.

The ideology of Arbeiderpartiet came under attack, not only from the political right, but also from the political left. Arbeiderpartiet had been promoting an industrialist society that would secure a predictable welfare system and continuous growth in the purchasing power of its citizens.³ From the late 1960s, their political narrative of an ever-growing, empowered working class started to appear increasingly unrealistic to many, and the political left started to search for new ideological models—sparking the rise of the new left in Norway.⁴ As early as 1961, a breakaway faction from Arbeiderpartiet had constituted a new and more radical socialist party, Sosialistisk Folkeparti (SF, the Socialist Popular Party). In the coming decade, SF represented a reformist, nonrevolutionary socialism which became an important political alternative for disillusioned Arbeiderpartiet members and oppositional 1968-ers alike.⁵

The Norwegian Marxist-Leninist movement had its roots in SF, beginning as a breakaway faction from SF's youth party, SUF, which named itself "SUF (m-l)" in 1969.⁶ Adding the acronym "m-l" (Marxist-Leninist), SUF (m-l) signaled a turn toward Maoism, and Mao Tse-Tung's reading of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Inspired by the

7 See, for instance, the use of Stalin as source in “Studies in Planning under Capitalism,” later in this chapter. Also, the first issue of the ML newsletter (and later daily) *Klassekampen* stated in 1970: “Marxist-Leninists have always and will always defend Stalin as one of the communist movement’s great leaders and as a great proletarian class fighter.” Quoted in: Hans Petter Sjøli, *Mao, min Mao: historien om AKPs vekst og fall* [Mao, my Mao: The story of AKP’s rise and fall] (Oslo: Cappelen, 2005), 19.

8 Sjøli, *Mao, min Mao*.

9 Sjøli, *Mao, min Mao*.

10 A similar architectural critique was performed by Italian theorist Manfredo Tafuri, who, in his studies of the decline of the architectural profession, likened architectural ideologies to illusory tricks performed by a magician. In his allegory, the critic who wants to expose those tricks, must watch the magician from backstage, not from the front row. See Manfredo Tafuri, “L’Architecture dans le boudoir,” in *Oppositions Reader: Selected Readings from a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture, 1973–1984*, ed. K. Michael Hays (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 292–316.

11 Kalle Grude, Jan Wilhelm Løchstøer, and Knut Østby, “Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen,” student project, Oslo School of Architecture (1970). One of the authors, Kalle Grude, describes how they printed and distributed the project widely. Kalle Grude, interview by author, Oslo, May 16, 2014.

12 Karl Otto Ellefsen, interview by the author, Oslo, December 12, 2012.

13 Grude et al., “Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen,” vol. 1, 50. Grude et al explains it as such: “The power is hidden behind a parliamentary democratic form of governance with formal freedom (free elections, free speech, freedom to congregate, etc.). This system is the best hiding place of the bourgeois.” Original quote in Norwegian: “Makta skjules bak en parlamentarisk demokratisk styreform med formelle friheter (frie valg, meningsfrihet, forsamlingsfrihet, osv). Dette systemet er borgerskapets beste skjul.”

Chinese Cultural Revolution, the ongoing student protests were radically transformed into a campaign for building a revolutionary party, working toward the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” The ML movement also reinstated Stalin as an important political thinker, and hence chose sides in the ongoing battle between China and the Soviet Union, attacking the current Soviet regime as rightist revisionists.⁷ Within the uprisings around 1968, where the US had been the main enemy, now the Soviet Union, with its “social imperialism,” also became a primary enemy.⁸ Whereas the more short-lived Marxist-Leninist initiatives in neighboring Sweden and Denmark developed out of the Soviet-loyal communist parties, the Norwegian Maoists hence developed out of the New Left.⁹

SUF (m-l) gained a foothold among students and made its way into different parts of academia, including the architecture schools, from 1969. Over the next years, the movement efficiently spread its message and organizational tentacles in the architecture schools, magazines, and civic action groups. At the same time, the revolutionary rhetoric and political dogmatism gradually hardened, and a central issue of debate for the architectural branch of the movement was the role of architecture as discipline, as well as the architect as contributor to society, under capitalism.

The movement presented a strong critique of the fundamental self-understanding of the discipline, and especially the naïveté in the idea of architecture as a positive, transformative act. Rather, by understanding architecture as a professional field that had developed hand-in-hand with capitalism, actors of the movement posited that all acts of architecture—including optimistic ideologies such as techno-optimism and socially engaged welfare state architecture—contained false promises. It was only through proper analysis, including the methods of dialectics and historical materialism, that one could clearly understand the role played by architecture in society and the limitations of its actions. In order to understand how society was shaped by capitalism, and architecture’s role within those changes, one needed to look at how architecture was actually produced, and not only how ideologies rhetorically framed it.¹⁰ Performing such a turn, the image of the welfare state as a relevant framework for producing socialist architecture was shattered.

STUDIES IN PLANNING UNDER CAPITALISM

The seminal student project to be based on ML theory in Norway was “Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen” (Studies in planning under capitalism) from 1970.¹¹ Produced by students at the Oslo School of Architecture and Design (AHO), it was a comprehensive theorizing of Marxist-Leninism within architecture and planning. It became an important reference, both as an introduction to ML theory for architecture students, as well as an example of how that theory could be applied in an academic study.¹² The project clearly shows the disbelief in the political system in Norway, which despite its social democratic roots were understood as completely overtaken by capitalist, bourgeois interests.¹³

“Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen” was handed in as a theoretical work in four volumes before the summer of 1970, having

STUDIER I PLANLEGGING UNDER KAPITALISMEN



1 MOTIVASJON

STUDIER I PLANLEGGING UNDER KAPITALISMEN



2 UTARBEIDELSE AV BEGREPER/METODER

STUDIER I PLANLEGGING UNDER KAPITALISMEN



3 ANVENDELSE AV BEGREPER/METODER

KOMPENDIUM



UTDRAG FRA SEMINARET UNDER PLANLEGGING KAPITALISMEN MED TILLEGG OG KOMMENTARER OG TEGNINGER OG

Kalle Grude, Jan Wilhelm Løchstøer,
and Knut Østby, *Studier i Planlegging under
kapitalismen* (Studies in Planning under
Capitalism), student project, Oslo: Oslo School
of Architecture, 1970. All four volumes.

- 14 Grude et al., vol. 2, n.p.
- 15 Original quote in Norwegian: "Vår politiske holdning da vi startet denne oppgaven var udefinert sosialistisk, en litt rotete sosialisme uten indre sammenheng og konsekvens. Dette har i løpet av oppgaven utvikla seg mot en mer bevisst og sammenhengende historisk-materialistisk samfunnsoppfatning. En slik betraktning-måte står for oss i dag som det eneste fruktbare utgangspunkt for å kunne gripe og forklare det samfunnet vi lever i." Grude et al., vol. 2, 78.
- 16 Original quotes in Norwegian: "utdype samfunnets irrasjonalitet og manipulasjonsevne (Marcuse)," and "vurdere hvordan kapitalismens irrasjonalitet og manipulasjon avløses av sosialistisk rasjonalitet og folkemakt (Marx)." Grude et al., vol. 3, 208.
- 17 Original quote in Norwegian: "beskrivelse av sykdomssymptomene ved kapitalismen uten å få tak i sammenhengen mellom dem eller årsaken bak dem." Grude et al., vol. 3, 208.
- 18 The company was Aall-Ulefos Brug, and the ad was for their door series "Drage."
- 19 Original quotes in Norwegian: "Planlegging må ... sees som en økonomisk, politisk, sosial og kulturell handling." and "D.v.s. at at den ikke kan betraktes som nøytral og objektiv, men som et uttrykk for de herskende interessene i samfunnet." Grude et al., vol. 1, 1–2.

been developed through three semesters as a planning course for the town of Kongsberg by third-year students Kalle Grude, Jan Løchstøer, and Knut Østby.¹⁴ The project spans the crucial years of 1969 and 1970 and hence tracks the transition of the movement into a more consistent, dialectical Marxist-Leninism. A passage in the work describes how political awareness was raised in this period, from a third way socialism into full-blown Maoism with the introduction of historical materialism:

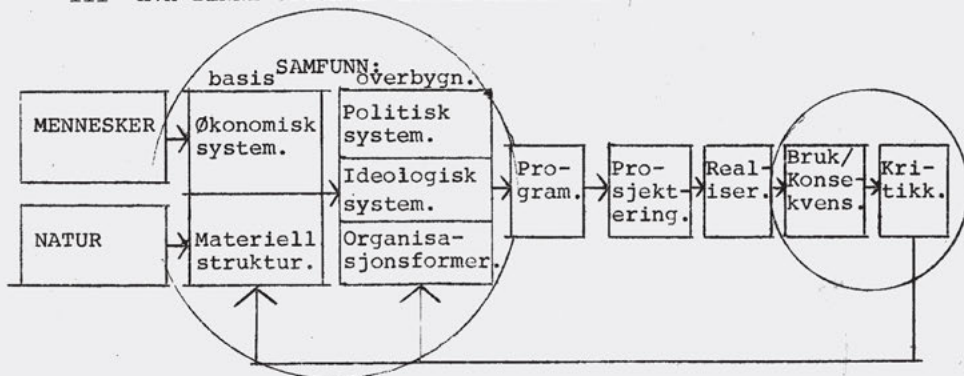
Our political stance when we started this project was undefined socialist, a slightly messy socialism without inner coherence and consequence. Through the work this has developed toward a more conscious and coherent historical-materialist view of society. This way of seeing represents for us today the only fruitful starting point for grasping and explaining the present society we are living in.¹⁵

This transitional character is present in several places in the work, and the authors write that it is necessary to go from merely pointing to a problem to analyzing it. One must not only "make clear the irrationality and manipulative qualities of society (Marcuse)," one must also "evaluate how this irrationality of capitalism and manipulation is being replaced by socialist rationality and the power of the people (Marx)."¹⁶ Attacking the position of the third-way socialist, they write that it is no longer enough only to "describe the symptoms of illness without grasping their internal relations or their causes."¹⁷ To grasp such relations, the whole creation of the architect in school must change radically. The authors blame their school's curriculum for not sufficiently training future planners to read their environment as it was actually produced, and look behind the veil of bourgeois ideology. Hence, in opposition to this, the students' primary work was to explore and elaborate a Maoist critique of architectural training.

"Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen" was developed as four thick volumes, each printed as a book of its own. The cover of each volume contains a visual pun, or subversive comment, on the commercial underpinnings of the architectural discourse in Norway. The cover photo appears as a documentation of a real "master planner" in action, a man with a moustache and a cigarette, with his hands leaning over a housing development model. But this particular image was well known to Norwegian architects, as it was taken from an advertisement for a producer of doors, which ran in every issue of the biweekly architecture magazine *Arkitektnytt*.¹⁸ Hence, commercial interests, architectural discourse, and the idea of the autonomous professional, was mixed up in these collages.

In the introduction to Volume 1, the authors state that planning must be "totalized" ("Planning must ... be seen as an economic, political, social, and cultural act") and politicized ("This means that it cannot be seen as neutral and objective, but as an expression of the ruling interests in society").¹⁹ In the introduction, we find concerns about large-scale economic changes in society, from the downsizing of primary industries to international poverty. So far, their agenda does yet stand out as particularly radical, or incompatible with the Norwegian welfare state. The proof of a more rigorous Marxist-Leninist application of theories comes on the next page: "The main topic is to what degree the premises of planning cause

III HVA DENNE OPPGAVEN KONSENTRERER SEG OM.



(A) PLANLEGGINGAS FORUTSETTINGER:

(B) PLANLEG-
PROSESS:

(C) PLANLEG.-
KONSE-
KVENSER.

- Vi vil i denne oppgaven beskjeftige oss med den rådende planleggingas konsekvens (C) og planleggingas forutsetninger (A). Hovedtemaet vil være å drøfte i hvilken grad planleggingas forutsetninger er årsak til planleggingas konkrete konsekvenser. Eller m.a.o. i hvilken grad planlegginga i dag står overfor strukturelle problemer som krever strukturelle endringer i samfunnets rådende økonomiske og politiske system.
- Det er flere grunner til at vi har valgt en slik problemstilling:

For det første måtte vi né for vår egen del få en avklaring på de spørsmåla som problemstillingen reiser. Vi folte det personlig svært utilfredsstillende å drive planlegging og projektering, uten å ha et reflektert forhold til grunnlaget for vår virksomhet.

For det andre er dette arbeidsområdet så godt som totalt forsømt både ved utdannelsesinstitusjoner som ved forskningsinstitusjonene, og ved planleggingskontorene. Mener vi at planleggingsutdannelsen skal gjøre oss i stand til å an- vise virkelige løsninger på de problemene vi i dag står overfor, må vi nå også konsentrere oss om planleggingas konsekvenser og forutsetninger.

Vi har store hull å tette før vi har oppretta den helheten som en fullstendig planleggingsteori krever.

- 20 Original quote in Norwegian: "Hovedtemaet vil være å drøfte i hvilken grad planleggingas forutsetninger er årsak til planleggingas konkrete konsekvenser. Eller m.a.o. i hvilken grad planlegginga i dag står overfor strukturelle problemer som krever strukturelle endringer i samfunnets rådende økonomiske og politiske system." Grude et al., vol. 1, 3.
- 21 Grude et al., vol. 1, 3.
- 22 Original quote in Norwegian: "En planlegger, arkitekt eller annen fagmann som ikke har avgjørende innsikt i de økonomiske forholds avgjørende betydning for andre samfunnsforhold, men konsentrerer all sin innsats på å snevre faglige problemer omkring f.eks. form og funksjon eller sosial-kulturelle fenomener, vil vanskelig komme utenfor det borgerlige samfunns rammer for tanke og handling." Grude et al., vol. 2, 46.
- 23 Grude et al., vol. 2, 48, 50.
- 24 See the sections "En oversikt over den dialektiske- og historiske materialisme" [Dialectical and historical materialism: An overview] and "Noen teser om den norske kapitalismen" [Theses on Norwegian capitalism]. Grude et al., "Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen," vol. 2. Sources quoted: Josef Stalin, *Den dialektiske og historiske materialismen* [Dialectic and historical materialism] (Trondheim: Offsettrykk/SUF, 1970); Bo Gustavson, *Etter tretti år* [After thirty years] (Trondheim: Offsettrykk/SUF, 1970); Mao Tse-Tung, *Om motsigelsen* [On Contradiction] (Oslo: SUF-trykk, 1969); Mao Tse Tung, *Om praksis* [On Practice] (Oslo: Futura, 1968).
- 25 Grude et al., "Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen," vol. 2, 78.
- 26 Original quote in Norwegian: "Oppgjøret. Jeg forbereder meg på revolusjonen. Byen skal tilhøre folket, byen skal bli stor nok til å romme folket. Den er stor nok – hvis vi sprenger dørene og fyller bygningene med mening. Og meningen er: at byen skal si sannheten. Oslo er en løgn og vi må avsløre løgnerne... alt som ikke tjener flertallet skal falle, alle bygninger som ikke frigjør menneskene skal jevnes med jorda eller bygges om, gi rom for nye handlinger." This passage, taken from Jan Carlsen's *Byen som medium* [The city as medium], is quoted on all final, unnumbered pages in each of the four volumes. Carlsen had been central in the socialist group Kanal, which was central as a proto ML group, and contained both later ML devotees but also third third-way socialist actors. See Braathen, "The Magician and the Shoemaker."

the concrete consequences of planning. Or, in other words, to what degree planning today faces structural problems that demand structural changes in the governing economic and political system of society."²⁰ The key is *structural changes*, opening the possibility that change cannot happen by intervening in the superstructure alone, but rather by going to the roots of the problem: exchanging the whole political-economic system of the welfare state.²¹

Due to the connection between capitalist relations of production and social relations, this view has important consequences for the architect: "A planner, architect, or other professional who doesn't have a basic understanding of the decisive meaning of economic relations for other social relations, but concentrates all his efforts on narrow professional problems such as form and function or sociocultural phenomena, can hardly reach outside the frames of thinking and action of bourgeois society."²² Pure professionalism is definitely futile for making change, since architecture is deeply intertwined in bourgeois society and its capitalist relations. Rather, correct Marxist training is what is needed to come to such insights, and from there to be able to develop relevant strategies for architecture. It was exactly such training that the students were trying to achieve through this project, and by disseminating it, the architecture school could become a place where the illusions of the welfare state could be revealed.

In "Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen," the authors put up two main ideological enemies: the "social imperialism" of the Soviet Union on the one hand, and "the Western apparatus of exploitation" of American imperialism, NATO, and the EEC, on the other—the latter was not an external enemy, but had already infiltrated the Norwegian welfare state.²³ This position aligned with the view of the SUF (m-l) organization at large, as did the theoretical sources for the project, which were presented in Volume 2: namely, Stalin's *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, Bo Gustavson's comments on Stalin's article, and Mao Tse-Tung's *On Contradiction* and *On Practice*.²⁴ The study of these sources stretches over twenty pages and includes a long introduction to historical Marxism, dialectics, and materialism. It ends in a set of "theses" and an index of terms taken from Stalin, Gustavson, and Mao.²⁵ All volumes contain the same concluding quote by architect and AHO teacher Jan Carlsen:

The reckoning. I prepare for the revolution. The city will belong to the people, the city will become large enough to facilitate the people. It is large enough—if we break open the doors and fill the buildings with meaning. And the meaning is that the city will tell the truth. Oslo is a lie and we have to expose the liars ... everything that does not serve the majority shall fall, all buildings that don't liberate the people will be levelled or rebuilt, to make room for new actions.²⁶

The city, according to this quote, is not only a site of intense contradictions—it is also the site of a future transformation into a different society, even a revolution.

Although the project serves as an introduction to ML thinking in general, it also contains a section where the theories are applied to planning. The authors analyze the General Plan for Kongsberg,

- 27 Grude et al., "Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen," vol. 3, 166.
- 28 Original quote in Norwegian: "En ekspansjon og produksjonsøkning betraktes blindt som en positiv utvikling..." and "... baserer seg på hjørnesteinsbedriftens prognoser." Grude et al., vol. 3, 166.
- 29 Original quote in Norwegian: "Generalutkastet viser hvordan en stor-bedrift kontrollerer og øver avgjørende innflytelse på hele planleggingsapparatet." Grude et al., vol. 3, 166.
- 30 Original quote in Norwegian: "Det er viktig at dette ikke utvikler seg til aksjonisme, til aksjoner for aksjonens egen skyld." Grude et al., vol. 3, 206.
- 31 Original quote in Norwegian: "Forutsettinga for dette er at man erkjenner den utopiske karakter de fleste slike prosjekter har under kapitalismen." Grude et al., vol. 3, 207.
- 32 Original quote in Norwegian: "slagkraftige eksempler som stiller kapitalismens irrasjonalitet og mangel på menneskelighet i grell kontrast." Grude et al., vol. 3, 207.
- 33 Norberg-Schulz curiously plays a supporting role in Volume 3 of "Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen." By 1970, Norberg-Schulz was a main target of the architectural ML movement. Therefore, it seems peculiar that Grude et al. included quotes from Norberg-Schulz, taken from *Intentions in Architecture*, as epigraphs to each of the volumes. The first one reads: "The architect works in 'situations.' ... These situations consist of among other things economic, political, and social relations, of cultural traditions, of physical premises," and the subsequent one reads: "If a task is only partly defined, meaning: If only a part of the necessary poles are intended, we have to reject the solution, even if it is otherwise cleverly accomplished. This is often ignored today." Here, Norberg-Schulz's comments are taken out of context and taken hostage for a materialist understanding of the architectural task. This is probably pure mockery of the school's theoretical champion, ironically adopting him as an accomplice for a case he certainly despised. After all, only two years earlier he had urged the same students to "stick to their lasts" (stick to their own area of expertise), and not confuse architecture with politics. See Braathen, "The Magician and the Shoemaker," 7–8.

which "shows the general features of a centralistic, technocratic planning."²⁷ The main industry of Kongsberg was Kongsberg Våpenfabrikk, Norway's largest weapons factory. The students remark that the general plan is based solely on the expansion of the factory, and that "expansion and higher productivity is seen blindly as a positive development," being "based on the cornerstone business's own prognosis."²⁸ They criticize the lack of concern for the living conditions of people in the town, as well as the region, and understand the development as directed only by industry's interests: "The general plan draft shows how a large business controls and influences the whole planning apparatus."²⁹

In showing how planning was a tool for privileging capital and creating a greater divide, the students claimed that architect-planners were stuck in a system from which they could not escape. Until a new social system is in place, the most important (and least destructive) tasks of the architect would be to make such analyses and to pursue critique.

Not dismissing the power of architecture entirely, the authors also allow for a certain space for "concrete operations," such as demonstrations and interventions. But they remark that these must be built on thoughtful analysis to avoid what they call "actionism," described as "actions for the sake of actions," demonstrating a cynical suspicion of non-ML agendas, and the urge of the ML movement consequently to get behind layers of political representation, to something that is real and rooted in material conditions.³⁰ They are suspicious about speculative student projects, warning that those pursuing "alternative projects" must be careful to "grasp the utopian character that most of these projects necessarily will have under capitalism."³¹ But, given the right level of political consciousness, such projects could develop "powerful examples that grimly contrast with the irrationality and lack of humanity in capitalism."³²

"Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen" marks an important shift in Marxist thinking, from New Left to Marxist-Leninism, and demonstrates how the Maoists' curriculum also could be applied to architecture, giving a theoretical toolbox for political-architectural analysis and a broad terminology that could be applied to discourse. The outline of a larger project of critique is drawn, one that pushes the vantage point of the critic further and further away from the idea of a neutral professional. This development would soon culminate in a manifesto of almost complete negation, which brought the ML theories out of the confines of academia and into the world of practicing architects and their magazines—even drawing out the theorist and editor Christian Norberg-Schulz to discuss the pros and cons of Marxism.³³

A MANIFESTO FOR ML CRITIQUE

Although it was active in the architecture schools and in certain working and reading groups, explicit Marxist-Leninism emerged in the public discourse of Norwegian architecture in October 1970 when second-year architecture student Karl Otto Ellefsen delivered a fiery speech at the Oslo Association of Architects. Under the title "Omprioritering av arkitektyrket" (Reprioritizing the architectural



BORGERLIG DEMOKRATISME.

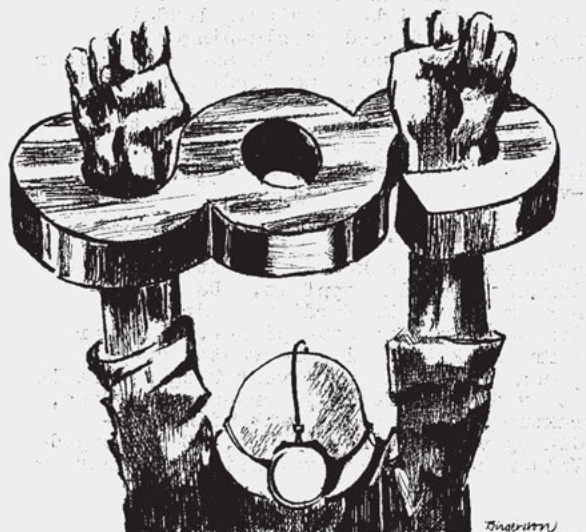
Demokrati for et forsvinnende mindretall, demokrati for de rike - det er demokratismen i det kapitalistiske samfunn.

Staten og revolusjonen Lenin.

POLKETS DEMOKRATISKE DIKTATUR.

Demokrati for det overveldende flertall av folket og undertrykkelse med vold, dvs. utelukkelse fra demokratiet, av folkets utbyttere og undertrykkere - det er den forandring demokratiet gjennomgår ved overgangen fra kapitalismen til kommunismen.

Staten og revolusjonen Lenin.



Grude et al., "Planlegning under kapitalismen." Facsimile. The captions read: "Bourgeois democracy" and "The democratic dictatorship of the people," and they contain excerpts from Lenin's *The State and Revolution*.

- 34 Original quotes in Norwegian: "...hvorfor det han gjør har ubehagelige konsekvenser for folk" and: "Hvordan utviklinga av den kapitalistiske økonomien gjør det jævlig." Printed a week later as: Karl Otto Ellefsen, "15-10-70: Omprioritering av arkitekturket" [15-10-70: Reprioritizing the architectural profession], *Arkitektnytt*, annual volume (1970): 447.
- 35 In 1970, the Norwegian parliament decided to apply for EEC membership, and this kick-started a strong mobilization on the political left (as well as among populist centrists). For some years up until the vote in 1972, they battled side by side in what they called the United Front. When the vote was over, and the negative voices had won, over 120,000 Norwegians had joined the organized fight in Folkebevegelsen mot EEC [The people's movement against the EEC], and 25,000 had been part of the AKMED, Arbeiderkomiteen mot EEC og dyrtid [The worker's committee against EEC and high costs of living], which was the ML movement's own campaign. See Braathen, "The Magician and the Shoemaker," 64–66, and http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arbeiderkomiteen_mot_EEC_og_dyrtid, read 23.05.14.
- 36 Original quote in Norwegian: "Det er ikke snakk om en omprioritering fra prosjektering til programmering. Fra en form for ullen kreativ virksomhet, til utredningsarbeid og samfunnsvitenskap." Ellefsen, "Omprioritering av arkitekturket."
- 37 Ellefsen, "Omprioritering av arkitekturket," 449. See the development of Norplan, which was happening at the same time. Original quote in Norwegian: "Tendensen til større enheter fører for arkitektstudenter med seg ei framtid som vanlig lønnsarbeider – uten særlig innflytelse i annet enn detaljsspørsmål i arbeidet han gjør. Idealiet som det ensomt, kreative individet som kan lage syntese av spesialistenes betraktninger og føre objektiv kritikk tilbake på ekspertenes premisser, dette idealet står frem som absurd. Det er ikke slik. Dette er ikke situasjonen som venter en. Eldre, sosialt aksepterte ark. med godt innarbeidet kontor, kan komme til å merke det samme. Firma av typen 'A/S Totalprosjekt' har stor konkurransevne. Med stor kapasitet, avansert datautstyr og store evne til å knytte til seg eksperter, så er det prinsipielt ingenting i veien for at slike firma – på premissene til det kapitalistiske systemet – kan løse oppgaver bedre enn andre. EEC vil også gi mulighet for kontinentale mammutkontorer."

profession), he urged the architects to understand the limitations that capitalist development put on the profession, understanding "why what they do [has] unpleasant consequences for people," and "how the development of the capitalist economy makes things hellish."³⁴

The lecture, transcribed over four pages in the news and debate magazine *Arkitektnytt*, is the most consistent analysis among the ML documents in print in Norwegian publications of the period, and is here understood as a manifesto with a program of Marxist architectural critique. The objective of the speech was to give a wake-up call to slumbering architects, providing a grave prognosis for the state and future of architecture, and urging them to realize the foundational reprioritization of the discipline that was happening before their eyes.

The background for Ellefsen's lecture was that architecture was perceived as being in a deep crisis as the Norwegian welfare state was entering a new phase of capitalism, with a fast-expanding building industry and the country facing a possible integration with the European markets through EEC.³⁵ Large-scale changes was necessary, according to Ellefsen, and "it is not about a reprioritization from design to programming ... from a kind of ambiguous creative endeavor to research work and social sciences," Ellefsen wrote.³⁶ No, in order "to solve the current problems facing architects," they cannot be naïve and think that they can only be good "technicians" or purely be socially engaged. Taking the future of the architecture student as an example, he predicted that the possibilities of working as a traditional design-based architect were close to zero. Now, "it is much harder than before to establish your own office," and it is hard "even for the architecturally highly skilled, younger people to get building commissions." Large-scale, interdisciplinary (and international) offices were on the rise and would change the very idea of how architecture was produced.

The tendency of larger units will, for the architecture students, lead to a future as a normal wage earner—without specific influence on anything other than details in their work. The ideal of the lonely, creative individual making a synthesis of the considerations of specialists and conveying objective critique on the conditions to the expert, that ideal comes forth as absurd. It is not like that. This is not the situation that awaits you. Older, socially accepted architects, with a well-established office, can in the future experience the same.

Companies such as Totalprosjekt A/S (Total Project Inc) have great competitive power. With great capacity, advanced computer equipment, and great ability to attract experts, it is in principle nothing for such companies—on the conditions of the capitalist system—to solve tasks better than anyone else. EEC will also open the way for mammoth continental offices.³⁷

Here, Ellefsen's comments aligned with Tafuri's observations of how various tasks and responsibilities are taken away from architecture, and taken over by other actors in the market, as capitalist development proceeds. With the European market expansion as both symptom and force, the architect will be more and more like any industrial worker with a specialized and limited responsibility.

- 38 Original quote in Norwegian: "Når karriereforventningene blir absurde og en ikke lenger føler at en hører til en sosial elite, vil en ha lettere for å solidarisere seg med andre lønnsarbeidere. I Marxistiske termer: EN vil ha lettere for å solidarisere seg med arbeidsfolk – mot utbytting." Ellefsen, 449.
- 39 Original quote in Norwegian: "Noen er arkitekter – 'upartiske, objektive, fagfolk' høgt hvet [sic] over politikk – i formens verden. De som vet bedre." Ellefsen, 447.
- 40 Original quote in Norwegian: "De svakt sosialt engasjerte," "De som harmes over at Philip Johnson plasserer vaktmesterleiligheten i kjelleren ... Folkevennlig torg i Vika varehus, og Haukeland utenfor Storebrandbygningen." Ellefsen, 447.
- 41 See Martin Braathen, *Alt er arkitektur: neoavantgarde og institusjonskritikk i Norge 1965–1970* (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag, 2010). Referring to the young rebels at NTH, Ellefsen even implicitly includes his older architect brother Eilert Ellefsen among these; he was part of a neo-avant-gardist environment with ties to the British group Archigram and Reyner Banham through their teacher Per Kartvedt. Original quote in Norwegian: "En tredje gruppe – designerne: Buckminster Fuller, Victor Papanek, AD, Archigram (gruppen har hatt en sterk liten fløy rundt NTH også). Folk som til de grader understreker og overvurderer designerens rolle ... Overproduksjonen, kjøp og kast kulturen, ..., energikløften mellom rike og fattige land ... Alt kan løses med forholdsvis enkle håndgrep fra designeren side. Maktforholdet eksisterer ikke."
- 42 Original quote in Norwegian: "Den fjerde gruppen vil jeg dvele litt ved: De som er så jævlig sosialt engasjerte og bekymrede for menneskehetens ve og vel. Å slutte seg til denne gruppen er på mote blant arkitekter i dag. Snakket om sosiale underdogs, det nye proletariet, klassekampen i verdenssammenheng ... den norske arbeider som utbytter den indiske bonde ... en voldsom politisk innsats ved å tegne 'gode' drabantbyer." Ellefsen, "Omrioritering av arkitekturtykket," 447.

Hence, he predicted, the future status of architects in society will decline, and architects will (be forced to) understand themselves as proletarians:

When the expectations about one's future career become absurd and one no longer feels that one belongs to a social elite, it will be easier to be in solidarity with other wage earners. In Marxist terms: It will be easier to be in solidarity with workers—against exploitation.³⁸

To visualize the complete dead end architecture was facing, Ellefsen created a rhetorical gallery of Norwegian architect's roles, dismissing their futile ideological positions one by one. Ellefsen's cast of tragic characters consisted of the following: First came the artistic and confident architect with a capital A, seeing their work as autonomous and detached from social consequences: "Some are architects—'impartial, objective, professionals,' elevated above politics in the world of form. Those who know better."³⁹ Second were the "gently socially engaged": "Those who get indignant at Philip Johnson for placing the caretaker's apartment in the basement ... [and want] a friendly square as part of the new warehouse in Vika, or a Haukeland [sculpture] in front of the Storebrand [insurance] building."⁴⁰ This description could fit several sides of the political spectrum (and many of the regular visitors to the Oslo Architecture Association, where the lecture was held), describing a pragmatic and experienced architect with large-scale corporate projects, and with a view of social engagement as a symbolic representation of good intentions. Then came "the designers": "Buckminster Fuller, Victor Papanek, AD, Archigram (the group had a small, strong branch around NTH too). People who very strongly emphasize and overestimate the role of the designer ... [issues such as] over-production, consumption, ... the energy barrier between rich and poor countries. Everything can be solved with relatively easy means by the designer."⁴¹ Here, all the techno-optimistic neo-avant-gardes were attacked for their blind belief in the power of design. The fourth group is the most problematic category, according to Ellefsen: the socialist architect who still believes in the welfare state. "I would like to dwell a bit on the fourth group: those who are so bloody socially engaged and concerned about the welfare of humankind. Joining this group has become the fashion among architects today. The talk about social underdogs, the new proletariat, worldwide class struggle ... the Norwegian worker exploiting the Indian farmer ... [Those who think they] are making a considerable political effort by drawing 'good' satellite towns."⁴² Ellefsen rather cynically mocks the ignorance lurking behind the "arrogance" of these socialist architects, who believe that they can help the proletariat by "extending their living rooms by ten square meters." According to Ellefsen, these architects wrongly believe that "the state is actually good," and that it is just because of "a lack of will and/or over-administration in governmental departments" that things are not being changed for the better. Ellefsen hence paints a bleak picture of all architecture—formalist, mainstream, socially engaged, neo-avant-garde. These figures all represent the current prevailing ideologies of Norwegian architecture, all of them failing to see architecture for what it really is.

- 43 Original quote in Norwegian: "ensidig beskrivelse av hvordan sykdoms-symptomene ved kapitalismen, uten å få tak i sammenheng og årsaker." Ellefsen, "Omprioritering av arkitekturket," 447.
- 44 The Institutional Theory, understanding architecture as an institution within society, among law, medicine, or art, with its own discourse and ideologies, is central for understanding the dynamics of the oppositional ideologies studied in Braathen, *The Magician and the Shoemaker*. In this text, I have removed most references to this theory, as well as its connections to Manfredo Tafuri, but have chosen to keep it in a few places.
- 45 Johan Ditlef-Martens and Ketil Moe, eds., *Plan 1933–1936* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), 21.
- 46 Ditlef-Martens and Moe, *Plan 1933–1936*, 27.
- 47 See the 1983 interview with Eyvind Alnæs, Carsten Boysen, Gunnar Øvergaard Jørgen, Frode Rinnan, and Erik Rolfsen in: Ditlef-Martens and Moe, *Plan 1933–1936*, 21–39. Note that this anthology of *PLAN* was edited by two (former) ML-ers, still preoccupied in 1983 with the history of the group.

The most tragic of all architectural figures are the ones closest to a real political commitment, but who lack the proper Marxist-Leninist training to realize how they are doomed to fail. The (non-ML) socialist architects lack a dialectic approach and still believe in a "one-sided description of the symptoms of the disease of capitalism, without grasping the relations and causes."⁴³ In this analysis, the Norwegian welfare state could be understood as the greatest ideological veil of all, appearing as a socialist project and deceiving architects to believe that its system still worked, that it only needed revisions, and that they as architects could actually make a difference within it. But, there is really no hope for architecture in Ellefsen's program. Even bettering the living conditions of the proletarians was seen as counterproductive, as it was delaying the necessary revolts. If there was no architecture of the present that could solve those current contradictions, no architectural programs containing revolutionary potential, what else could ML architects do?

LEARNING FROM HISTORY: THE PLAN GROUP

The young ML architects, disillusioned with architecture's prospects and its role in changing the future, turned to history for precedents—if not for solutions (to return to another historical moment in that way would be deemed undialectical)—then at least to look for others who had faced similar dilemmas. To return architecture to a distant or not-so-distant past (most often in order to legitimize or reorient contemporary practice) was not only a project of the emerging postmodernist movement but had also been crucial to the neo-avant-gardes of the 1960s, who reconnected to the avant-gardes of the 1920s. Within Norwegian architectural history, there was really only one earlier group of hardcore Marxists: a constellation of socialist architects called *PLAN-gruppen* (the PLAN Group) who operated in the 1930s; they represented the core of the Marxist-Leninists' own dilemma: could a sincere Marxist project be integrated into the institution of architecture (even if PLAN's Marxism was not the same)?⁴⁴

The PLAN Group were members of the Sosialistiske Arkitekters Forening (the Association of Socialist Architects), the architectural branch and one of the front organizations of the communist group Mot Dag (which translates to "Toward Day"). Mot Dag had an eponymous magazine as their official organ, and it was also the mother organization of other front organizations, such as those of medical doctors, teachers, and lawyers, in addition to the architects, mirroring the structure of the national ML movement.⁴⁵ Mot Dag was not, nor was it part of, a political party, but as the SUF (m-l) later, it was an organization whose aim was "recruiting intellectuals for socialism."⁴⁶ The Mot Dag group also gathered a huge number of leading intellectuals in Norway, from authors to leading politicians, many of whom would become influential politicians and bureaucrats in the postwar years—again mirroring the recruitment of intellectuals to the Marxist-Leninists of the 1970s.

The PLAN Group published four issues of the eponymous magazine *PLAN* in the period 1933–36 as an organ for Sosialistiske Arkitekters Forening.⁴⁷ The core of the PLAN Group was Eyvind

- 48 The interview occurred on March 14, the day of Karl Marx's death, something that the three interviewers—Jon Guttu, Johan Ditlef-Martens, and Magnus Nygaard—made a point of in the introduction.
- 49 Jon Guttu, Johan Ditlef-Martens, and Magnus Nygaard, "Rinnan og Rolfsen," *Fagavisa* no. 2 (1974): 20.

Alnæs, Carsten Boysen, Gunnar Øvergaard Jørgen, Frode Rinnan, and Erik Rolfsen, all important figures in postwar architecture in Norway. Rolfsen became the director of city planning in Oslo; Øvergaard would lead OBOS, the largest housing cooperative in Norway; Alnæs became the editor of architecture magazine *Byggkunst*; and Rinnan directed some of the largest postwar housing developments in Norway, became a president of the national architects' association, NAL, and even made a career within Arbeiderpartiet. All of the four founders were educated at NTH in Trondheim and had been active in student politics before embarking on the PLAN project. As young revolutionaries in 1933, they launched an ambitious agenda for their new magazine and an ambitious program for changing the role of the architect.

During the 1970s, the former PLAN members were still active. In the student magazine *Fagavisa* at AHO in 1974, two of them, Frode Rinnan and Erik Rolfsen, were interviewed, probably conscious of how their past was being framed within the current context of ML.⁴⁸ In a long interview over six pages, topics revolved around the relationship between the historical context of the PLAN group, the 1930s, versus the then-present, the early 1970s, comparing issues such as the change in housing policies, planning strategies, and capitalist development. The main challenge, the crux of the interview, was the transition that these architects had gone through: These former radicals were "theoretically trained very well" as Marxists in their younger days, according to the interviewers, but failed in their revolutionary agency and ended up in successful careers within the mainstream institution and even in mainstream politics. One could argue that they were now working for a corrupted welfare state which had become a carrier of bourgeois culture and partook in American imperialism. Hence, to the Maoists, they demonstrated the impossibility of merging political radicalism with professional work as architects.⁴⁹ The interview was supplemented with several original texts from *PLAN* magazine as facsimiles, focusing on the role of architecture in society, socialism as a "real," not utopian project, critique of the role of the architect, and so on. In order to understand PLAN, I will give a short introduction to this magazine and the group's manifesto, called "Vårt program" (Our program), to draw out the similarities of argumentation, a certain pattern of Marxist meta-analysis and critique, with that of the Marxist-Leninists forty years later.

CRITIQUE OF HOUSING AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Traveling back in time to the Norway of 1933, the year of the first issue of *PLAN*, was paradigmatic of the tendency of the 1970s to make historical returns in order to rediscover, learn, and project into the future. What the ML-ers found there was a country very different from the Norway of the early 1970s, especially financially, as Norway was struggling with the consequences of the recession. But it also resonated with their present in several respects. After the first wave of functionalism, which had taken place within a more prosperous economy than that of the mid-1930s, *PLAN* performed a strict critique of modernism and how it had developed, in their eyes, into a style-oriented minimalism without social agendas. The



Cover of Johan Ditlef-Martens and Ketil Moe,
eds., *Plan 1933–1936* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget,
1983), with the cover of *PLAN 3/1935* as
facsimile.



- 50 See the facsimiles of housing issues in *PLAN*, reprinted in: Guttu et al., "Rinnan og Rolfsen," 22, 23, 26.
- 51 See facsimile in: Guttu et al., "Rinnan og Rolfsen," 25.
- 52 Pre-editorial, untitled text. *PLAN* 1, reprinted in Ditlef-Martens et al., *Plan 1933–1936*, 42. Original quote in Norwegian: "Og forresten, hvad skal vi arkitekter oppgi politikken efter? Vi bygger, vi har våre bestemte opgaver i livet, vi står over partiene, vi er fagfolk som yder vår viden og Kunst så vel til arbeideren som til millionæren. La så de andre rote med den skitne politikken." Ditlef-Martens et al., *Plan 1933–1936*, 42. Original quote in Norwegian: "Alt åndsliv, all teoretisk tenkning, er i sin utvikling beting av det materielle og samfundsmessige grunnlag som er til stede. Når der innenfor en enkelt stand foregår en krass meningskamp, når der finnes skarpe teoretiske motsetninger, er det et resultat av at der er i ferd med å skje en dyptgående endring i standens samfundsmessige stilling – i det materielle og økonomiske grunnlag for dens virksomhet."
- 54 Original quote in Norwegian: "Nye sociale krav har trunget arkitekten over i en ny arbeidsmåte som først og fremst hviler på vitenskapelig analyse av de funksjoner som skal fylles og av de konstruktive muligheter som foreligger." Ditlef-Martens et al., *Plan 1933–1936*, 42.

issue of social housing was also an urgent matter, and this was identified as the main challenge of Norwegian architecture by the *PLAN* group.⁵⁰ Their biting critique of architectural discourse in Norway and Europe in general came to the fore in the magazine, most explicitly in their program text "Vårt program."⁵¹ Here, they scrutinized architectural production and architectural publishing from the viewpoint of young radicals to paint a picture of a servile and naïve profession with an uncritical professional press. In their dismissal of their contemporaries, their main criticism was that they lacked a proper analysis of the relations of production, foreshadowing the critique found in both Karl Otto Ellefsen's ML manifesto in "Omstrukturerer" and "Studier i planlegging under kapitalismen."

The very first issue of *PLAN* already delved straight into the core of the professional-political dilemma: Is there a contradiction between political tendency and architecture? The editors orchestrated the question with a fictional monologue, wherein an old architect instructs a younger:

And by the way, why should we architects be concerned with politics? We build, we have our destined duties in life, we are above the political parties, we are professionals employing our knowledge and Art in favor of both the worker and the millionaire. So, let the others mess around with that dirty politics.⁵²

The fear of the unpolitical professional, the one preoccupied with the formalist tasks of the discipline without grasping the larger political context, was already haunting architecture, forty-one years before *Fagavisa*'s return. Against this unpolitical attitude, the *PLAN* Group carved out their own agenda in a historical-materialist manner:

All intellectual life, all theory, is in its development conditioned by the present material and social basis. When a harsh battle of meanings occurs within a discipline, when there are sharp theoretical antagonisms, that is the result of a deep change within the social position of the discipline—in the material and economic basis for its production.⁵³

They describe such changes in the conditions for creating architecture, where international functionalism responded to a strong social tendency, and as a result of that, put the architect (and the institution of architecture) in a privileged role:

New social demands have forced the architect into a new mode of work that first and foremost rests on a scientific analysis of the functions to be filled, and of the constructive possibilities present. The architect has become the organizer of building activity.⁵⁴

From an institutional standpoint, the observation of the architect as being in a fundamentally decisive role is interesting. Amid the anxiety of the 1970s about the future of architecture, ML returned to a point in Norwegian history where architects really understood themselves as having great influence on the material production of the built environment. This resembled Manfredo Tafuri's observation of other actors of the same period of the 1930s, with architects

- 55 Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le boudoir," 312.
- 56 Original quote in Norwegian: "Men samtidig er han gjennom sitt byplanarbeide blitt stilt overfor den oppgave å organisere menneskenes liv. Uøseligheten av boligproblemet, uløseligheten av byplanproblemene innenfor det eksisterende samfunns rammer har ført til at mange arkitekter gjennom sin organiserende virksomhet er drevet bort fra den gamle faglige isolasjon, og over i en stadig mer bevisst sosial aktivitet." PLAN, "Vårt program," 42.
- 57 PLAN, 43.
- 58 PLAN, 43.
- 59 PLAN, 43.
- 60 PLAN, 43.
- 61 Original quote in Norwegian: "Vårt organiserende arbeide vil under fremtidens planøkonomi ha som en nødvendig forutsetning en virkelig forståelse av samfundets utviklingslover, av byenes sociale strukturer, klasseforhold, industrielle betingelser, av deres forbindelse og økonomiske avhengighet av landdistriktene, og så videre. Man vil forlange av oss at vi er istand til å arbeide anonymt, i samarbeide med sosialøkonomer og hygienikere, og at vi aktivt deltar i den sosialistiske omformningsprosess i arbeiderklassens tjeneste." PLAN, 50.

such as Martin Wagner and Ernst May taking up roles as "organizers" of building activity, made possible by "a new attitude toward the role that intellectual work may undertake in its efforts to remove the capitalistic contradictions in building and in the planned utilization of resources."⁵⁵ In Norway in the 1930s, those contradictions were highly present, and even unsolvable, according to the PLAN architects:

But still, he is through his work on city planning confronted with the task of organizing the lives of humans. The unsolvable housing problem, the unsolvable problems of the urban plan within the frames of the existing society, have led many architects through their organizing activity away from the old professional isolation and into a continuously more conscious social activity.⁵⁶

The situation is hence not so different from the picture drawn by Ellefsen, in which the unsolvable contradictions of the time had pushed many architects toward a socialist stance—and in Ellefsen's view, not a constructive one. The key to both is the question of what is understood by "conscious" social activity. The PLAN Group described how early functionalism was not purely a technical cleanup process, but a reaction—an "unconscious" reaction—against "planlessness in capitalistic society."⁵⁷ The problem of functionalism, in its first phase, was its "political neutrality" and the lack of a proper social theory to turn it into the social instrument it had the potential to become. Such a social "clarity" could be achieved only if the planner "sees himself as a link in the social whole," implicitly describing the need for materialist analysis.⁵⁸ Pointing to the rise of socialism in European architecture at large, the road to this second phase of functionalism is, according to PLAN, an "unbiased, professional debate, studies in socialism, and the active participation in the struggle of the working class."⁵⁹ Hence, the architect must become an active political agent, well trained in Marxism, acting in solidarity with the working class.

PLAN architects, although active as socialists with the aim of "standing clearly and without doubt on the ground of the labor movement," were clear that this did not mean an abandonment of the role of the architect, contrary to what we see with the 1970s' ML movement as a result of their deeply dialectical analysis of the role of architecture in society. Rather, "the profession of architecture is in reality in the very center of the transformational process happening in society," as the PLAN Group wrote.⁶⁰ In order to take part in that change, fundamental retraining and reorientation of the profession was necessary, toward achieving new knowledge.

Our organizing work will, during the plan economy of the future, take as its premise a real understanding of the development laws of society, of the social structures of the city, of class relations, industrial conditions, of their relations and financial dependence on the countryside, and so on. One will demand that we be able to work anonymously, in cooperation with social economists and social hygienists, and that we actively take part in the socialist transformation process in the service of the working class.⁶¹

62 Original quote in Norwegian: "Den klassiske striden mellom revolusjonære og revisjonister mistet sin argumentasjonskraft i 30-åra. Grunnen var at vi stod foran en ny verdenskrig, og alle signaler i retning av at venstrekreftene måtte samles i en bredest mulig folkefront." Ditlef-Martens and Moe, *Plan 1933–1936*, 27.

63 Guttu et al., "Rinnan og Rolfsen," 23.

64 Guttu et al., "Rinnan og Rolfsen," 23.

Hence the architect could work toward the new society through architectural work. And they, as editors, could contribute by means of critique, highlighting and possibly heightening the tensions to enhance the coming crisis. As architects, they needed first and foremost to join the battle together with the proletarians—but they did not yet step down and see themselves as proletarians, a point that would be seen as undialectical from the vantage point of the 1970s.

A COMMUNIST AT HEART? PLAN AS A FAILED PROJECT

After the PLAN period, and as the Socialist Architects merged with Arbeiderpartiet, the radicalism of the group was slowly replaced by a new political pragmatism. As recalled by Rinnan in an interview in 1983:

The classic struggle between revolutionaries and revisionists lost its power of argument in the Thirties. The reason was that we stood before a new world war, and all signals pointed to the left joining forces into a Popular Front as broad as possible.⁶²

The dream of a revolution was replaced by the fear of a coming world war, which in turn would shake up the political landscape. When the architects returned to professional work after the war, their positions would change drastically, from the role of critical observers on the fringes to occupying power positions at very center of the institution. Looking from 1974, then, onto the PLAN project must have been both a depressing but perhaps also slightly triumphant sight: it certainly confirmed ML's theory of the impossibility of opposition from within architecture. The two interviewees in *Fagavisa*, Rinnan and Rolfsen, had gone from being critics to being complicit in shaping a social democratic society that had gone completely wrong in the eyes of Maoists. Confronting them with this paradox in 1974, the interviewers referred back to PLAN's original belief, that the housing problems of the working class could not be solved within a capitalist society. Now, as architects in positions directly involved in developing postwar housing policy, they asked, did Rinnan and Rolfsen still consider these claims as valid?

Rinnan answered the question as a man in such a position: According to a recent study that he had produced, the housing problem was not that bad, and larger apartments had become "cheaper and cheaper" over a long period of time. He compared Norway favorably to eastern Europe, claiming that the radical socialist solution of appropriating land had produced a "housing standard far lower than what one would dare to offer to anyone in western Europe."⁶³ Rolfsen agreed with Rinnan, ending in the cynical conclusion that "the housing problem actually cannot be solved, even within a socialist society."⁶⁴

CONCLUSION—NOTHING LEFT BUT CRITIQUE

Such capitulation to capitalism—and even complete denunciation of the most radical solution—must have been shocking, but also deeply confirmative to the Marxist-Leninists. On the one hand,

65 Original quote in Norwegian: "...forholdene lå ikke til rette da, de endte i sosialdemokratiets garn til slutt." Jan Carlsen, "Arkitektene har ikke vinger," [Architects don't have wings] in *Arkitektnytt* no. 5 (1976): 93–97.

the PLAN project demonstrated a comprehensive critical project, based on socialist training and a revolutionary approach that had many similarities to that of the ML movement. On the other, it proved that the very belief in architectural socialism was undialectical: Throughout their careers, the PLAN members brutally demonstrated how they failed in "enhancing a crisis," demonstrating how working from within the system, or from the institution outward, had been futile and even counterproductive to the cause. As architect Jan Carlsen stated two years later, the "conditions [for PLAN's revolutionary project] were not ready yet," and they "ultimately were caught in the net of social democracy."⁶⁵

By historicizing PLAN's project, there was nothing to learn from the history of the political avant-garde except the confirmation of one suspicion that had been there all along: For a Marxist-Leninist project, there was nothing beyond critique, neither in the present nor the past. Historical materialism was an approach that was quite the opposite of historicism; there was no "toolbox" of the past or stylistic catalogue to choose from. As long as the social democratic state in itself had become entangled in capitalism and different forms of suppression, it had become the very fundamental, structural problem in itself. Ideas of making the world better, or of performing class solidarity by designing better social housing, were signs of extreme naïvety, or even cynicism. There were no solutions within the welfare state, no architecture which could fundamentally make changes. The only possibility was to learn to observe and to perform critique. The critique of the architectural establishment was, in the end, *total*.

