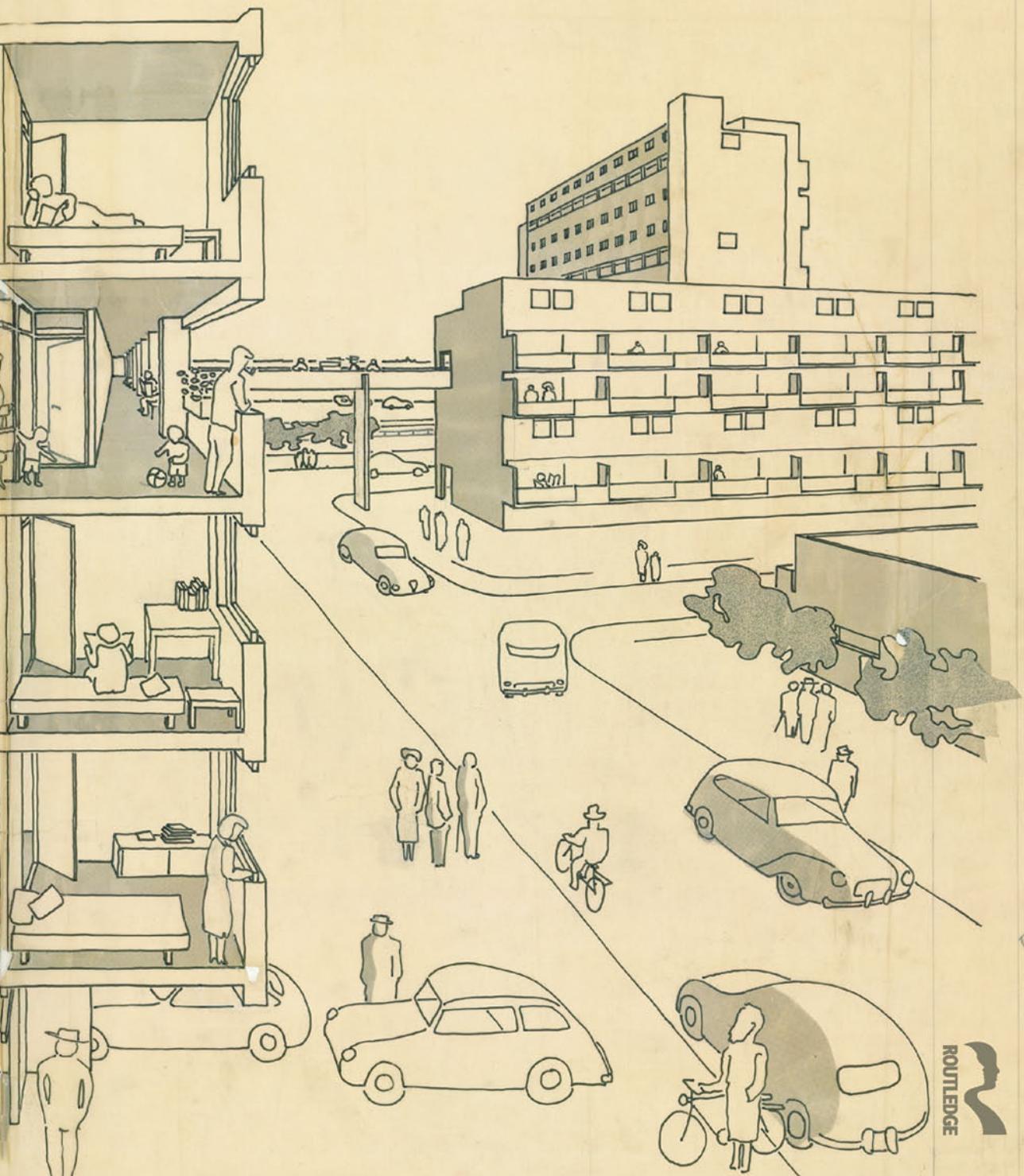


# ARCHITECTURE AND THE WELFARE STATE

EDITED BY MARK SWENARTON, TOM AVERMAETE AND DIRK VAN DEN HEUVEL



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In the decades following the Second World War, and partly in response to the Cold War, governments across western Europe set out ambitious programmes for social welfare and the redistribution of wealth that aimed to improve the everyday lives of their citizens. Many of these welfare state programmes – housing, schools, new towns, cultural and leisure centres – involved not just construction but a new approach to architectural design, in which the welfare objectives of these state-funded programmes were delineated and debated. The impact on architects and architectural design was profound and far-reaching, with welfare state projects moving centre-stage in architectural discourse, not just in Europe but worldwide.

This is the first book to explore the architecture of the welfare state in western Europe from an international perspective. With chapters covering Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, the book explores the complex role played by architecture in the formation and development of the welfare state in both theory and practice.

Themes include:

- the role of the built environment in the welfare state as a political project
- the colonial dimension of European welfare state architecture and its ‘export’ to Africa and Asia
- the role of welfare state projects in promoting consumer culture and economic growth
- the picture of the collective produced by welfare state architecture
- the role of architectural innovation in the welfare state
- the role of the architect, as opposed to construction companies and others, in determining what was built
- the relationship between architectural and social theory
- the role of internal institutional critique and the counterculture

**Mark Swenarton** is James Stirling Professor of Architecture at the University of Liverpool, UK, and author of *Homes fit for Heroes* (1981) and *Building the New Jerusalem* (2008).

**Tom Avermaete** is Professor of Architecture at TU Delft and author of *Another Modern: The Post-War Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods* (2005).

**Dirk van den Heuvel** is Head of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, Associate Professor at TU Delft and co-author of *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present* (2005).

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*Edited by Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete and  
Dirk van den Heuvel*

First edition published 2015  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN  
and by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

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*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Architecture and the welfare state / edited by Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete and Dirk van den Heuvel. -- First edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Architecture and state--Europe, Western--History--20th century. 2. Architecture and society--Europe, Western--History--20th century. 3. Welfare state--Europe, Western--History--20th century.

I. Swenarton, Mark, editor of compilation. II. Avermaete, Tom, editor of compilation. III. Heuvel, Dirk van den, 1968- editor of compilation. IV. Blau, Eve, author. From red superblock to green megastructure.

NA100.A72 2014

720.1'03094--dc23

2014000473

ISBN: 978-0-415-72539-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-415-72540-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-76692-8 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo by Fakenham Prepress Solutions, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 8NN

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

**Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete and  
Dirk van den Heuvel**

In recent years the architecture of the second half of the twentieth century has become a prime area of interest for architectural historians. Most of their studies adopt the classic format of the monograph, devoted to individual architects (for example, Ernst May, James Stirling), to groups (Archigram, Team 10) or to offices (Candilis-Josic-Woods, Atelier Montrouge, Van den Broek and Bakema),<sup>1</sup> while others have tried to theorize the field as part of a revisionary, historiographical critique of the period.<sup>2</sup> The list of publications is extensive and proof of a most fruitful practice in mining the (recent) history of modern architecture. At the same time, within political sociology there has emerged an enormous literature on the welfare state, with Gøspa Esping-Andersen's *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990) triggering a plethora of studies examining the post-war welfare state as an international phenomenon from an economic, social and political viewpoint.<sup>3</sup>

Strangely, however, these twin developments have taken place virtually in complete ignorance of each other. Little attention has been given to the varied ways in which architecture and urban planning interacted with the different regimes of welfare provision.<sup>4</sup> The forementioned architectural histories have tended to analyze post-war buildings and neighbourhoods as expressions of individual oeuvres or cultural currents, rather than as exponents of complex welfare state arrangements. Only in Belgium and Sweden has there been an emerging interest in the architectural production of the welfare state *per se*, but largely from a national perspective.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, to the extent that the sociological studies have investigated welfare state intervention in the built environment, they have done so as an abstract matter of decrees, programmes and strategies, without reference to the physical realization of the welfare state in architecture and the built environment.

If the built environment was of little significance to the welfare state, this situation might be understandable. But the planning of the built environment – from new towns (Figure 1.1), to social housing, to schools and universities, hospitals and health centres, to leisure and sports complexes, to arts centres – was one of the key areas in which the welfare state sought to achieve its ambitions of economic redistribution and

social welfare. This already vast area of intervention in the everyday environment of the population becomes even greater when we consider that the post-war welfare state also incorporated the reconstruction of national industries and energy production, involving the construction of vast new infrastructures. Given the enormous role that the built environment played in the welfare state, and the role that welfare state ideology and commissions played in the architectural developments of the period, this mutual indifference of the two disciplines appears extraordinary.

This book is a first attempt to connect these two fields with each other from an international perspective and to look at post-war architecture in western Europe in terms of its role within the welfare state. The aim is to investigate the complex kinship between the welfare state and the built environment, looking at the role of plans, neighbourhoods and buildings within welfare programmes, as well as probing the contribution made by planners, urban designers and architects to the implementation, articulation and development of the welfare state in post-war western Europe. What is offered is not a comprehensive account or synoptic overview, but rather an attempt to explore the field through a series of case studies – some thematic, some based on particular architects or projects – written from different points of view by leading architectural historians from Europe and the USA. Likewise, rather than attempting an overview of this vast subject, this introduction aims to elucidate some of the key themes and issues involved: conceptual, methodological and historical.

The book is the outcome of a transnational project extending over a number of years. The first steps were taken by Tom Avermaete and Dirk van den Heuvel of TU Delft when they organized a session on Architecture and the Welfare State at the European Architectural History Network (EAHN) 2010 conference in Guimaraes, Portugal.<sup>6</sup> Mark Swenarton was one of the speakers at that session and together the three collaborated on a follow-up at the EAHN conference in Brussels in 2012.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, Swenarton's move to the University of Liverpool provided the opportunity for a rather different kind of event, again organized by the three editors – an invited international closed-doors symposium, called the Liverpool Workshop – which took place in September 2012. It is the papers presented there, substantially revised in the light of the debates that took place at the symposium, which are published here for the first time.<sup>8</sup>

At the Liverpool Workshop intensive discussions took place on a wide range of issues and these were summarized on behalf of the organizers by Adrian Forty as a list of questions and issues for future research; for the benefit of other scholars these are reproduced in the Appendix.<sup>9</sup> A specific obstacle identified at the symposium was the lack of an international multilingual bibliography on the subject and so, as a step towards this, a list of items for further reading is also provided.

## Why now?

Our project investigating the relationship of architecture and the welfare state has coincided with the period of crisis that seized the economies of the United States and Europe in 2008. While the rationale for the project stems in part from the crisis, the one is not reducible to the other. While the crisis of the neoliberal economic model that had become dominant in the 1990s with the completion of the internal market of



Figure 1.1 Cumbernauld Development Corporation (Hugh Wilson-Dudley Leaker/Geoffrey Copcutt), Cumbernauld New Town, North Lanarkshire, the town centre photographed in 1967 (Architectural Press Archive/RIBA Library Photographs Collection).

the EU gave a particular urgency to our research, the investigations into the post-war discourse of modern architecture created a more sharply defined project than that of the apparently neutral term of ‘the post-war’ so widely adopted: namely that of architecture and the welfare state.<sup>10</sup> It also made re-focusing on western Europe a matter of course, while being aware of the possible criticism of maintaining a eurocentric perspective.

But the economic crisis is not the only reason that the relationship of architecture to the welfare state is relevant today. The built production of the welfare state constitutes a sizable portion of the cities of Europe that we inhabit today; if we are to make the best use of this inheritance we need to understand both its objectives and its historical formation. Moreover, the question of what parts of this inheritance to retain and conserve, and what parts can be demolished and redeveloped, is one that arises regularly in public debate in most European countries, with newspaper articles and exhibitions regularly devoted to the question of the conservation (or otherwise) of post-war buildings.<sup>11</sup> The ultimately unsuccessful campaign to save Robin Hood Gardens in London, the only major housing scheme built by Alison and Peter Smithson (Figure 1.2), was one of the most high-profile of these. For many years the Docomomo International conferences have provided an international professional platform for these debates.<sup>12</sup> Decisions about retention or demolition need to be informed not just by an understanding of the individual building or buildings, which can be provided by conservation bodies and listing agencies, but by an understanding of the broader context within which they stood. If we are to assess their historical importance, we need to understand that history.

To investigate the shifting role, or roles, of the architect in society and in the process of planning and building constitutes a second motivation for revisiting the architecture of the welfare state. For a number of years the claim of the architect to be the leader of the building team has been under attack.<sup>13</sup> Architects, it is said, may be useful at the early stage of a project for gaining planning consents, but after that have little to offer, with contractors taking over their role in the specification of constructional methods and materials and project managers taking over their role in directing the project. This contrasts with the picture of the architect widely held in the heyday of the welfare state. In those times, we are told, the architect was the heroic figure, building the future, the form-giver who devised new forms of homes, of schools, of hospitals, and of entire cities: the person at the forefront of innovation, tasked by government to devise new ways of living for the population and with the authority to drive through his or her (mostly his) vision. Recently, this historical role of the architect has been subjected to reappraisal, notably at OMA’s installation at the 2012 Venice Biennale, *Public Works: Architecture by Civil Servants*. But was the architect really as powerful as it appeared? The claim is double-edged, because if so then the architect also has to take responsibility for those things that went wrong. Perhaps the architect was only the figurehead, and in reality, others – politicians, managers, planners, the building industry – had more influence. If so, it may be that the post-war golden age of the architect is a myth and then, as now, it was the development process that dictated the outcome. We need to know what the real roles of the various actors were, what the space that they had for decision-making was, and what coalitions were built between the parties involved in the planning processes.

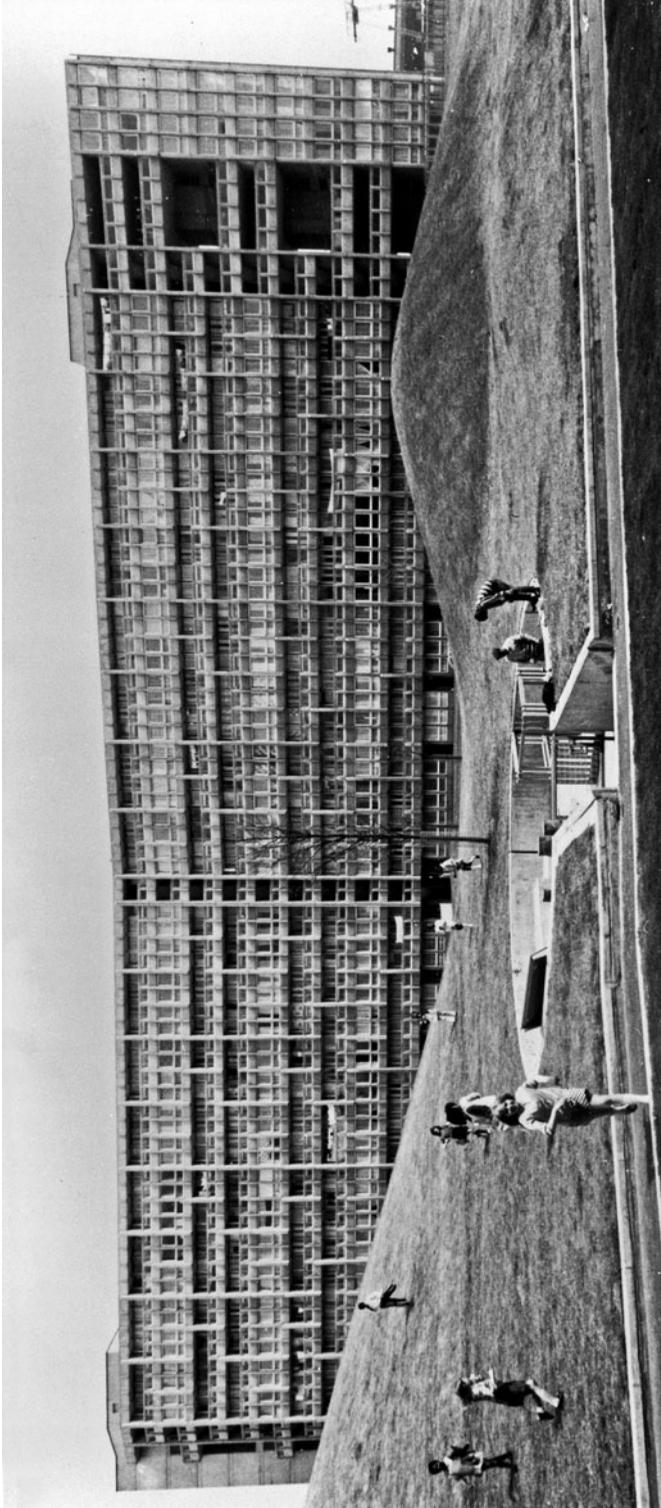


Figure 1.2 Alison and Peter Smithson (Greater London Council), Robin Hood Gardens estate, London, 1965–1972, photographed by Sandra Lousada.

Since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008 it has become apparent that in Europe we have been entering an era in which the large-scale provision of public services by public bodies will be further reduced. To revisit the welfare state era accordingly is not to look back in nostalgia but to learn from the consistent negotiations between capital, labour and the state from which the western European welfare state emerged. The resulting balance of power was not so much a clear-cut model as a precarious hybrid, a balancing act, indeed. Whereas in the past in many countries the state undertook to provide the necessities of life – for example, education, health services, housing – more and more it seems today that these are either left to the market, with the state withdrawing altogether, or are provided by private companies operating on its behalf. In the Netherlands, since 1995, the national government has ceased providing credit to housing corporations, turning them into *de facto* private companies. Likewise, in the UK the ‘academy schools’ programme, first launched in 2000 and much extended since, has devolved the state’s responsibility for secondary education to private companies. The role of architecture and the built environment in the delivery of state policy is becoming more complex and diffused, since a building provided by a private company in this way no longer stands as the emblem or image of the state. What will this mean for our cities and suburbs? It is hard to predict but by looking at the period when almost all publicly funded buildings carried this meaning (whether implicitly or, as with Vienna’s housing of the 1920s, explicitly), we can get a better understanding of the role of buildings in carrying messages about the state and society in western Europe.

As European economies appear to stagnate and welfare provisions are under pressure, it is parts of Asia, South America and Africa that lead the world in economic performance. These countries (for example, China, India, South Korea) are now enjoying the kind of boom that Europe experienced in the decades following the Second World War, and face not dissimilar issues of rapid urbanization and modernization. Sociologists have pointed out that features of the European welfare state, not least construction of new towns and state-funded housing, are now recurring in the sunshine economies of China and south-east Asia.<sup>14</sup> In other parts of the world popular demand for basic welfare provision, especially education and healthcare, is fuelling social unrest, for example, in Brazil in the widespread protests against the staging of the 2014 football World Cup.<sup>15</sup> To what extent is what happened in Europe, whether in the nineteenth or the twentieth century, being repeated elsewhere? To what extent is a model devised for European countries in that period applicable to other parts of the world today?

## Mapping the welfare state

This book focuses on the welfare state as a largely European invention that has known its greatest development and proliferation in north-western Europe.<sup>16</sup> The politics of the Cold War and the rise of a new consumer culture (the so-called ‘western way of life’) form part of this development, together with the concomitant phenomena of decolonization and the emergence of the post-industrial society.

The sources of this western welfare state date back to the nineteenth century when, as economist Karl Polanyi has argued, a ‘Great Transformation’ took place, characterized by the development of industrial capitalism, rapid urbanization and

economic growth, and intense population increase.<sup>17</sup> These radical transformations not only altered social, cultural, economic and political life. They also destabilized the traditional forms of welfare provided by family networks, charity organizations, feudal ties, guilds, municipalities and religious institutions. The result was a massive pauperization which was strikingly portrayed in the engravings of Gustave Doré, the photography of Thomas Annan, the political analyses of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and the novels of Charles Dickens and Victor Hugo.

Increased productivity resulting from industrialization, however, provided the resources necessary to cope collectively with the emerging 'social question'. Towards the end of the nineteenth century institutional initiatives started to emerge at local, regional and national levels that engaged with these social needs politically and demanded redistribution of some of these resources.<sup>18</sup> Simultaneously the counter-movement to Polanyi's Great Transformation gave rise to a growing Labour Movement which itself became an important driver of the move towards welfare provision by the state.

Wars have often acted as the catalyst for the development of the welfare state and its architecture.<sup>19</sup> With the Second World War, welfare was, for the first time, presented as a goal of national and international policy. Two of the eight war aims in the Atlantic Charter (1941) dealt with social welfare, specifically 'securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security' (aim 5) and 'that all men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want' (aim 6).<sup>20</sup> After the Second World War the need for reconstruction propelled economic growth and provided once again resources for welfare state expansion, while rivalry with the Communist block – the Cold War – provided the ideological imperative for a non-revolutionary route to social improvement.

As noted above, in the past two decades a large and impressive sociological literature has developed on the welfare state. Following Esping-Andersen, much of the focus has been on the way in which the various western European countries – though all affected to greater or lesser degree by the fundamental transformations – differed in response. Investigations have focused on the remarkable diversity experienced with respect to the timing of welfare state consolidation, the variety of goals (whether to provide a safety net for all or for specific groups, etc.), the diversity of financing mechanisms, various forms of public-private collaboration, and the variety of administrative models and programme types (for example, enacted collectively or individually). The magisterial *Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State*, extending to more than 900 pages, with five editors and 70-plus contributors from fifteen countries, gives a good overview of this field.<sup>21</sup>

What is meant by the term 'welfare state' in this literature? A useful starting point is provided by Wil Arts and John Gelissen in a 2002 review article in the *Journal of European Social Policy*. They state:

the general term 'welfare state' is a label for a certain class of democratic industrial capitalist societies, characterized by certain properties (i.e. social citizenship or the fact that more or less extensive welfare provisions are legally provided, or, in still other words, the fact that the state plays a principal part in the welfare mix alongside the market, civil society and the family).<sup>22</sup>

According to Ian Gough (2008), the emergence of welfare states is to be understood in terms of what he calls the Five 'I's. First, industrialization, which creates both the wealth to sustain, and the changes in social organization that create the opening for the state to deliver items of social welfare. Second, interests, or what Marxists would term classes: 'class cleavages, class organizations within civil society, their respective powers, their economic and social mobilization, and later, their parliamentary representation'.<sup>23</sup> One might add that the balance of power between the classes is markedly affected by wars and by the booms and slumps of the economic cycle, which is why these events have played such a prominent role in the history of the welfare state. Third, institutions, i.e. the organization of both civil society (the church, trade unions, voluntary associations, etc.) and the state (central government, municipalities, etc.), which determines the pattern in which welfare is provided, both outside and within the remit of the state. These three 'I's are the primary determinants but the way they operate is shaped by two further factors: ideas, i.e. the prevailing culture and ideology of different countries (for example, Catholic social teaching in Germany and Italy); and internationalism, both the fact that one country looks at and learns from another and that international communities of experts develop who claim special understanding of, and therefore power over, a given area of policy and decision-making.<sup>24</sup>

While Esping-Andersen originally identified three variants of welfare capitalism, the general view now is that within Europe four types can be distinguished.<sup>25</sup> First, the liberal type developed by the Anglophone countries (Britain and Ireland), based on individualism, with pronounced social citizenship in some areas (notably the National Health Service) and reliance on the market elsewhere. Second, the continental type pioneered in Germany and prevalent in western European countries (France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria), where the primary focus is on protecting the income of the (male) industrial worker via social insurance schemes delivered through employer/employee partnerships. Third, the social democratic type developed in the Nordic countries (Sweden, followed by Norway, Denmark and Finland), in which the state assumes responsibility for the welfare of all (women as much as men), on a universal basis. Fourth, the southern type followed in Italy after 1945 and in Spain, Portugal and Greece after the overthrow of the dictatorships in the 1970s, which is based on the primacy of the male wage earner and offers only a weak safety net for those outside the official labour market.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of periodization, it is generally considered that the 30-year period from 1945 to the 1970s – what Jean Fourastié called *Les Trente Glorieuses* or the Glorious Thirty – was the 'golden age' of the welfare state.<sup>27</sup> The term 'welfare state' was taken from Britain, where the vision of social support extending 'from the cradle to the grave' was set out in the 1942 Beveridge Report, establishing a 'new European model' of welfare provision.<sup>28</sup> In the immediate post-war years, governments across Europe introduced extensive welfare systems as part of the settlement negotiated between labour and capital at the end of the Second World War, while Keynesian economic policies oiled the growth that made seemingly ever-higher consumer and welfare spending possible. This came to an abrupt end with the economic crisis of the 1970s and the neoliberal counter-revolution that followed.

In geographical terms, while the primary locus was western Europe, the process of industrialization out of which the welfare state emerged had always involved a much



Figure 1.3 Candilis Josic Woods (Commissariat à l'énergie atomique (CEA) and Ministère de la construction), *La Citadelle housing, Bagnols-sur-Cèze, 1958* (Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou).

wider geographical reach. Industrialization in Britain, the pioneer industrial nation, was accompanied by the involuntary de-industrialization of other countries (for example, India, Ireland, Egypt), which were converted from manufacturers of goods to a new role as suppliers of raw materials for, and consumers of the goods manufactured by, British industry.<sup>29</sup> To this extent, the process that spawned the European welfare state had global, and globally destructive, implications from the start. Colonial or quasi-colonial economic relationships with other parts of the world were integral to the process of wealth accumulation in western Europe and provided the resources for the welfare state.

This colonial dimension fed directly into architecture and building programmes. The experience gained in the colonies was re-deployed in the home countries, where the devisers and designers of welfare facilities – housing, or schools, or hospitals – could draw on what had been done overseas in colonies and protectorates, and architects specializing in these typologies could operate equally at home and abroad. The ‘homes fit for heroes’ programme in Britain of 1919–1921 – the first national programme of state housing construction undertaken anywhere in the world – derived parts of its financial and administrative structure from the (far smaller) housing programme that Britain had been carrying out in the preceding years in Ireland.<sup>30</sup> Architects from Weimar Germany, fleeing the Nazi regime in the 1930s, found an outlet for their talents in the colonies (for example, Ernst May in Kenya, Otto Koenigsberger in India) while prominent figures in the 1950s like Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew in Britain or the team of Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic and Shadrach Woods in France could operate equally on the colonial and domestic stage (Figure 1.3). In the same period international development programmes such as those organized by the World Bank and the United Nations provided an infrastructural basis for architects like Constantinos Doxiadis to develop international practices exporting welfare state expertise on a global scale.

### Pre-history of the welfare state

While the thirty years after 1945 is considered the classic period of the welfare state in Europe, this does not mean that story begins in 1945. On the contrary, its origins lie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and what we might term the ‘proto-welfare state’ of the inter-war years.

The first steps towards general provision of welfare by the state are considered to be the insurance schemes protecting industrial workers against sickness, industrial accidents and old age introduced by Bismarck in Germany in the 1880s. Over the following decade neighbouring countries followed Germany’s lead in whole or part: Austria in the 1880s, then Belgium, Denmark, the UK, Italy, France, Norway, Spain, the Netherlands and Switzerland in the 1890s.<sup>31</sup> The connection between state-subsidised welfare and construction was established in 1869, when Liverpool became the first city in Europe to provide social housing, and over the years that followed other municipalities followed suit, notably the London County Council following its creation in 1889.<sup>32</sup> In the Netherlands the advent of the welfare state is commonly identified with the so-called *Woningwet* (Housing Act), enacted in 1901 and implemented the following year, which was one of the first examples of the integration of spatial planning, house construction and welfare provision. The act compelled local

councils to start developing comprehensive zoning plans, while the state made credit available for low-cost housing construction. The regulation of slum clearance was also included, along with the introduction of building permits for all construction work, whether public or private.<sup>33</sup>

While by 1914 social insurance measures were in place in most advanced European countries, the First World War brought the problem of housing to the forefront. The problem was that while the war brought house construction to a virtual standstill, demand, generated by household formation and demographic movements consequent on the war (and peace), soared. In Berlin, for example, there had been nearly 28,000 vacant dwellings in 1914 but by the end of the war these had all been taken up and after 1918 the authorities stopped recording vacant dwellings and instead started recording households seeking accommodation, which by 1922 had reached 195,000.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, with the general expectation that at some future point conditions would return to normal and construction costs would come down, there was no realistic prospect in the meantime that the market would provide, and hence unless the state intervened in some way, nothing would be built and the housing crisis would simply intensify. This was the conclusion reached in most European countries in the 1920s, with the result that many governments became involved in the large-scale provision of social housing. The proportion of housing production represented by social housing varied widely in different countries but in many cases was substantial: 82 per cent in Austria (1914–1928), 42 per cent in Germany (1927–1929), 36 per cent in Britain (1919–1929) and 29 per cent in the Netherlands (1921–1929).<sup>35</sup> In major cities the figures could be as high or higher: for example, reportedly 76 per cent in the five largest towns in Norway (1914–1928) and 61 per cent in Copenhagen (1910–1929).<sup>36</sup>

These housing programmes of the 1920s had major implications for architects. The Tudor Walters Report of 1918, the ‘bible’ of the new municipal housing in Britain (largely written by Raymond Unwin), recommended that every housing scheme should be designed by an architect.<sup>37</sup> In mainland Europe, modernist architects inspired by the dream of building a new society set about building new *Siedlungen* (housing settlements) in Berlin, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, etc. (Figure 1.4). Some of them came together in 1928 at La Sarraz in Switzerland for the inaugural meeting of the *Congrès Internationaux d’Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) and the following year gathered at the CIAM 2 conference on *existenzminimum* (minimum-income) housing held in the office of Frankfurt city planner Ernst May. But even while the architects were meeting in Frankfurt an event took place across the Atlantic that would bring the housing programmes to a standstill. The Wall Street crash of October 1929 brought chaos to the European economies, prompting the rise of rightwing parties (nowhere more so than in the central European economies dependent on U.S. finance) and major cuts in welfare spending, including housing. As Karel Teige told the delegates at the next CIAM conference, held in Brussels in 1930, ‘the restoration of private house-building and the free market are the dominant tendencies in nearly every country’, and by 1933 the housing programmes in Germany, Austria, Britain and France had been axed.<sup>38</sup>

But the economic catastrophe that brought about the demise of these welfare programmes also had counter-effects. In 1933 in the USA, Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the New Deal to counter the effects of the Great Depression.<sup>39</sup> In Europe, just as the proto-welfare states bequeathed by the post-1918 settlement were being



*Figure 1.4 City of Frankfurt am Main (Ernst May/Carl Rudloff), Bruchfeldstrasse estate ('Zickzackhaus'), Frankfurt, 1927 (Bryan & Norman Westwood/RIBA Library Photographs Collection).*