

Body – Soul – Unity.

Hans Prinzhorn's precept of life and modern architecture

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Abstract: Technological advancements in the building industry and the standardisation of building parts, units and houses and a year-round mass-production were pursued as a solution for the pervasive urban housing shortage during the 1920s in Germany. Based on the widespread belief that changes in the environment foster changes in behaviour, uniform types of housing units were perceived as tools with which to actively remediate 'vices of living'.

Opponents of such notions proposed flexible alternatives to the standardised types to support what was perceived as the new way of life. A thesis that focused on this way of life and on changes in the perception of the human being was put forward in Hans Prinzhorn's 1927 *Body – Soul – Unity*. It foresaw a cultural and societal development not driven by 'the will' but one united in body and soul. The ways in which the book was perceived by architects of the Neues Bauen can be surmised with the help of a book that Mies van der Rohe was invited to write for Prinzhorn, as well as with a review by Ernst Kállai for the *Bauhaus* magazine, which saw Prinzhorn as providing support for the newly developing architecture and a framework for opponents of the belief that housing must shape the life of inhabitants.

Keywords: Fritz Block, Ernst Kállai, Friedrich Nietzsche, Adolf Rading, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Hans Prinzhorn, Housing, Mass-Production, Modernism, Neues Bauen, Standardisation,

'And people', he [Georg] asked Wolff, 'what are the use of changed facilities if people remain unchanged?' 'But I beg your pardon – we surely agree about the fact that human beings are a product of their circumstances. Now, if those are improved, so human beings will obviously change with them.' ... Dr Wolff picked a small thread off his trousers; as if he was embarrassed that one even mentions something as obvious as the human being. Human beings were accessories to the fixtures and fittings. 'I still don't believe', Georg started again, 'that people are mere furniture, which can be created by the architect like cupboards and tables ... people have to create themselves'.¹

The protagonist in Siegfried Kracauer's (1889-1966) 1928 novel *Georg*² challenged the widespread belief in the changing, renewing and altering powers of housing. Such notions usually related to the working class, whose living conditions were affected by a shortage in housing that had, after World War I, led to appallingly unhygienic living conditions in urban areas. Discussions on the 'housing problem' addressed technical questions of, for example, how to improve hygiene conditions and how to foster technological modernisation of the building process and industry, and the proposed solutions asked about how to satisfy the needs and requirements of workers who were perceived as a part of society whose lifestyle did not fit traditional patterns. Part of the solution was also sought in designs that would, as Dr Wolff asserts in Kracauer's novel, produce and alter their inhabitants.

'How do we want to live?'

In tackling the housing problem, the building industry focussed on the development of technologies towards prefabricated building parts, housing-factories, and the standardisation of houses and units. The industrial production of houses based on principles of rationalisation and standardisation was deemed exemplary because it accelerated the building process and made construction possible throughout the year. In Berlin and in Frankfurt am Main, for example, the Reichsforschungsgesellschaft (Imperial Society for Research) was engaged in industrial prefabrication and used Henry Ford's (1863-1947) and Frederick Winslow Taylor's (1856 - 1915) principles for assembly-line production as guidelines.³

Among the best-known results of such efforts are the so-called *Frankfurter Kleinwohnungstypen* (*Frankfurt Standard Ground Plans*) – standardised floor plans that enabled Ernst May (1886-1970) to realise approximately 15,000 housing units between 1925 and 1930 (**Fig. 1**). These plans were widely publicised in the touring exhibition *Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum* (*The Dwelling for the Margin of Subsistence*) and were a topic of discussion at the 1929 *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in Frankfurt.⁴

The embracing of industrialisation of the building process and of standardisation of floor plans in Frankfurt was based on the belief that rational planning and low-cost construction methods would satisfy a universal right to appropriate, affordable housing. Resulting from deliberations on which requirements each standardised unit would have to fulfil to be considered appropriate for mass consumption was the widely considered question which Walter Gropius' (1883-

1969) formulated as 'How do we want to live?' It was based on the premise that the majority of dwellers have a general set of requirements that needed to be determined prior to the standardisation of units into types.⁵

In a conceptual leap such considerations gave rise to notions that standardised floor plans should be planned to influence life styles and sparked the hope that they might not only bring relief to the housing shortage but also bring solutions to broader social problems. Members of the influential hygiene movement, as well as of the municipal health care system, connected the design of living space to the hope that it would alter behaviour. Wilhelm von Drigalski (1871-1950), for example, medical officer of health in Berlin between 1925 and 1933, considered overcrowding and squalid hygienic urban living conditions responsible for moral waywardness in children and argued that if hygienic living units of sufficient size and with beds for each inhabitant were present, the family father would be kept from going to the public house, which would add to the peace at home and would help children to become morally firm members of society.⁶ This way of thinking made it possible to perceive housing as a tool with which to educate the working class towards moral behaviour. The concept arose that an environment, planned for an ethical human being, will generate just such a person.

To accommodate such ideals floor plans were developed by architects of the Neues Bauen as well as by those who pursued traditionalism.⁷ In 1927 a publication by the Fritz Block (1889 - 1955) of Block & Hochfeld in Hamburg, a largely unknown architect today, sparked a particularly chagrined response. His article *Wohnform und Wandlungsfähigkeit (Forms of dwellings and capability to transform)*⁸ in *Die Form*, the magazine published by the *Deutsche Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen)* Block strongly supported the organisation of floor plans with the purpose of changing behaviour. Starting with the premise that 'the majority of the working population must intensely be educated and influenced'⁹ Block considered the floor plan a means with which to prevent habits that are considered unhealthy, morally objectionable, or simply not practical. To demonstrate the viability of such plans Block developed a *Standard Type (Normaltype)* (**Fig. 2**) for the needs of families with one, two and three children, for couples, and for singles. Living, dining, and a kitchen are combined in one large room whereby the kitchen is separated by a curtain. The bedrooms are deliberately small in order to discourage residents from spending time here other than for sleeping and learning. The 'vices of living'¹⁰ (Wohnuntugenden) which Block aimed to remediate related to the custom of keeping a 'state parlour' in pristine condition which was only to be used to receive guests and on holidays, plus the letting of beds to night-lodgers. Essential for Block's concept was also that the living quarters were designed as inalterable units: 'Here, no part of the home can be assigned to a different function. Coercion of form should be executed generally wherever possible in all rooms of the small unit'.¹¹ Block's perception of the dweller was that of a person in the need of coercion towards morals and correct habits and therefore an example of the belief that inhabitants are the products of the environment which can, if correctly designed and laid-out alter habits and behaviour towards an ideal lifestyle.

Flexibility

Adolf Rading (1888 – 1957) refuted Block's essay in the article *Wohngewohnheiten*¹² (*Habits of living*) placed in *Die Form* directly following Block's text. Rading perceived the problems faced by architects in the development of new floor plans as based upon the lethargy of the dweller whose interests is directed towards being able to fit furniture inside the new living spaces rather than on reflecting on how to live. He acknowledged standardisation as an inescapable necessity but conceded that it cannot be the task of the architect to find a solution. Instead, Rading aimed to provide individually designed floor plans for a dweller whose way of life might change over time and concludes:

That despite of the same needs for living spaces no dry scheme has to be the result, which a number of floor plans shall prove. A complete standardisation of the construction of the of structurally engineered part leads to complete elasticity of the floor plan and enables [...] individual ways of dwelling again.¹³

To support his point of view Rading also illustrated the text with a floor plan based on a construction-scheme of five by five metres between load-bearing beams that would create one large space within which walls may be inserted according to the requirements of the dweller (**Fig. 3**). Since no details are provided that would indicate if walls are, once installed, permanent, or moveable by either the dweller or with the help of a builder Rading's counter-proposal

appears to have been prepared with the aim of developing a counter-argument to Block rather than a novel design-proposal.

The year when these publications were released was also the year when Rading presented a house at the exhibition and settlement *Die Wohnung (The House)* what had been organised by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) on behalf of the *Deutsche Werkbund* in Stuttgart-Weißenhof. One of the main goals of the event had been to address the 'housing problem' in that the exhibition and development of the latest examples of mass-producible building techniques and floor plan solutions was fostered. Standardisation had been at the core of the association's interest since its foundation in 1907 and since questions on how to further mass-production, standardisation and the development of floor plans were intrinsically linked, the latter was at the centre of the program in Weißenhof.¹⁴

In the short description of his single family dwelling Rading pointed out again that it is not the task of the architect to force the dweller into a preconceived mode of living as such attempts would be an overestimation of the architect's competencies:

Human beings are neither miscreants nor children. Only arrogance or inconvincible stupidity can try to place them under custodianship. Let us be humble, let us realise: the attempt to predict destiny has collapsed miserably, sin toward man, inconsequentially good will, helpfulness.¹⁵

While Rading contributed with a single-family house,¹⁶ Mies van der Rohe's housing block offered a solution comparable to the one published by Rading in *Die Form*. The construction made it possible to forgo almost all supporting walls and columns and integrated flexible wall units, moveable by the tenant (**Fig. 4-6**); only staircases, bathrooms and kitchens were fixed and, according to Walter Riezler: 'Internal partitions can be drawn at random, so that various possibilities for floor plans for the same living-unit arise'.¹⁷ To demonstrate, 29 architects and interior designers furnished the block for the exhibition in 1927. No two floor plans of the 24 apartments were identical so that a 'great freedom of usage' was achieved.¹⁸

As with Rading, Mies van der Rohe had also voiced concerns towards standardisation. On several occasions after 1924 as well as in his opening speech for the exhibition, he had explained that he considered the current efforts of standardisation of types as wrong, stated that merely parts of houses should be standardised into types but not whole houses¹⁹, and maintained that standardisation and mechanisation 'can never be the goal [and] must remain the means'.²⁰

Similarly to Rading, who described a lifestyle in flux in which neither dweller nor architect can predict future usage, Mies van der Rohe's rejection of standardised floor plans was based upon the conviction that a new lifestyle was developing which hindered the conception of a static plan:

The problem of the New Living Space is basically an intellectual problem and the fight for the New Living Space only an element in the great fight for new ways of life.²¹

By providing walls that could be moved by the tenant, Mies van der Rohe avoided answering Gropius' question 'how do we want to live' and deferred it into the hands of the dweller. Such an attitude seemed to have arisen out of the conviction that what Mies had called the 'intellectual problem' was still in the need of discussion, and the 'fight for new ways of life' still ongoing, so that the subordinate 'fight for the New Living Space' could not be fought first. The flexible housing unit would allow for many future developments. Mies van der Rohe's floor plans were a result of and a reaction to the changes of lifestyle but speak also of the realisation that there was a lack of knowledge about the requirements and the new life-style of the dweller. While architects such as Block viewed their design as a mould, from which a new type of human being could emerge, a number of critics reinforced the idea that standardisation was a tool only; and that the discussion should not centre around how to standardise life into types but how to understand life so that standardisation could be used as a tool with which to support life.

Body – Soul – Unity

A book that aimed to provide a theoretical framework for those who sought an understanding of the changes in life and perceptions of man was *Body – Soul – Unity (Leib – Seele – Einheit)* ²² by the psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn (1886-1933). Prinzhorn was best known for his 1922 book *Artistry of the mentally ill: A contribution to the psychology and psychopathology of configuration (Bildneri der Geisteskranken: ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopathologie*

der Gestaltung);²³ a study based on a collection of artwork by patients in the psychiatric clinic of the University of Heidelberg. It was among the first that regarded the creative work of mentally ill patients not merely as a diagnostic tool but as genuine creative expression.

The book led to an interest in Prinzhorn's work by avant-garde artists and architects and fostered Prinzhorn's contributions to *G: Material for elementary form-creation (G: Material zur elementaren Gestaltung)*,²⁴ *The New Frankfurt (Das Neue Frankfurt)*,²⁵ and to guest lectures at the Bauhaus by all three directors.²⁶

Body – Soul – Unity was the third of a hundred planned volumes in the series: *The world-view: Books of the living knowledge*²⁷ planned to provide 'a complete overview of the current world-view in its structure, without all ornamentation and detail.'²⁸ Among the volumes announced on the book-jacket of *Body – Soul – Unity* was Mies van der Rohe's *Art of building. From cave to the high-rise*,²⁹ which never eventuated.

Prinzhorn's project developed from a vantage point that sought objectivity, clarity and explanation on the changes in contemporary life and was an example for the then common search for an overview, direction, and clarity while the present was perceived as fractured, lacking in orientation and direction.

Body – Soul – Unity mainly aimed to offer clarification about the sources on the 'deep change of our entire perception of the human being'³⁰, reassessed traditional psychology, and explicated Prinzhorn's 'precept of life based on a practical knowledge of man. Prinzhorn firstly criticised that in the technology-driven worldview of psychology around 1900 the soul had been studied separately from the body and the hypothesis had been upheld that the natural sciences would be able to quantify and measure the essence of life and soul; the operations of which could be analysed with scientific methods and independently from the individual.³¹ To then develop and describe the new precept of life Prinzhorn relied heavily on Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), Carl Gustav Carus (1789-1869), and Ludwig Klages (1872-1956)³² but the basis of the argument mostly derived from Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) philosophy, which Prinzhorn introduced as pivotal in changing the 19th century image of the world:

... the purification of our image of man, the deliverance from pressure of European obsessive brooding, the production of the natural feeling of the body-soul-unity, the differentiation of real values of life from faulty ones, in short, the rehabilitation of the dignity of the human as a nature-bound being – thereto his [Nietzsches] call arouses.³³

The distinguishing elements between Nietzsche and 'all psychologists' were seen in his aim to expose the 'self-deception' that

... a creation can inform about a creator, an offence can give explanations about the offender, an ideal can provide conclusion about those who need it, and that conclusions can be traced back from all ways of thinking and modes of evaluation to the underlying need that commands them.³⁴

The removal of this self-deception, which is described as the main aim and achievement of Nietzsche's philosophy, consists of the insight that instincts and drives override and determine conscious decisions and self-determination.³⁵ This argument is further developed in the chapter *Outline of the newly emerging precept of life*³⁶ where Prinzhorn stressed the importance of studying the unconscious processes of life in order to gain an understanding about the soul, since the human mind is thought to be ruled by unconscious drives rather than by conscious ones. As described above, the mechanical thinking around 1900 didn't take into consideration the unconscious processes of life so that '...the "facts of the consciousness", have been revealed as dubious facade in front of a not quite corresponding untidy building full of bleak rooms'.³⁷ Prinzhorn harks back to Carus' theories in *Psyche, on the history of the development of the soul*³⁸ in order to assert that the key to an understanding of the conscious inner life lies in the region of the unconscious,³⁹ before introducing Klages who explained that all processes of life express themselves in polarised relationships. These are outlined with the aphorism: 'the soul the sense of body, the body expression of the soul'.⁴⁰ The 'mind' (Geist), finally, is defined as the opponent of the soul. Within it 'the will' is situated which replaces 'drives and instincts' and which fosters a cultural situation that is responsible for decadence and many defects of the current age.⁴¹ Changes in history – political as well as cultural – are thus symptoms of the emergence of Prinzhorn's concept of a unity in body and soul. The fight of the new world view with its opponent 'the will' caused a deep-rooted cultural crisis apparent since the French Revolution and was put forward as symptom of a greater crisis of man that reached deeper than political agendas, economical, governmental, or religious ideals. Prinzhorn therefore asserted that his precept of life could not serve any such demands or support such interests. Instead, it would produce human

beings who would defy Nietzsche's self-deception and would not be subordinate to the will. Prinzhorn's new precept of life:

... is certainly not aligned to the needs and desires of the from itself suffering and about the world despairing individual, but instead to the rare human being confident about the world, who would have found itself in unison with the great rhythms of nature and all living entities.⁴²

This new man would, according to Prinzhorn's prediction, view the values of civilisation sceptically and as illusions but would respect these values albeit 'not adoringly as absolutes but with critical objectivity'.⁴³

Modern Architecture

Prinzhorn's statement 'Our view of the world as a whole will probably be similar to some good room-designs which here and there succeed in our new architecture'⁴⁴ was drawn upon in Ernst Kállai's 1929 review of *Body – Soul – Unity* for the Magazine *Bauhaus*⁴⁵. Kállai drew a direct connection between the book and the new objective architecture of the late 1920s:

... only the image of the rational-objective architecture can be compared with Prinzhorn's image of the new man, who 'without fostering positive illusions about himself or the world, carried by the whole depth of world affairs – knows how to find and to carry out the commandment of time.'⁴⁶

Kállai equated the objectivity with which Prinzhorn's new man would regard the world, with the rational-objective new architecture of recent years. By adopting Prinzhorn's metaphors to reinforce the comparisons, Kállai described the Neues Bauen as an architecture without false facades, one that shows its core without resentment for bygone glory, and where the internal construction is visible externally. Kállai nevertheless asked if this new architecture isn't still the result of the workings of the mind and 'the will' and therefore would not belong with Prinzhorn's new tenets of life.

In response to his question, Kállai rejected contemporary attempts which sought to protect traditional regional architecture (Heimatschutz) or which applied expressive or romanticised forms, as these still adhered to traditional values. The only approach left to conform to Prinzhorn's ideal was the modern building industry which, however, was dominated by 'mechanistic models and purely civilising ideals'⁴⁷. Houses produced by this strand of architecture could only count as 'false values of a hyper-bred intellectualistic activity'⁴⁸ and would therefore not conform with the world view described in Prinzhorn's book; nevertheless, 'only as exceptions we encounter the insight, that houses must not only be technical and economical but also a psychological organisation'.⁴⁹ Kállai recognised that the central point of Prinzhorn's thesis is that in the then current image of man the human body was regarded separately from the soul and he saw this manifested in the building industry, which housed a body only and described the modern condition as 'mechanistic industriousness plus spiritual deracination'.⁵⁰ Kállai also criticised the belief that with the help of technology and industry exact, rational, and objective purpose-built structures for living and working all requirements of living could be satisfied and regulated. At the same time the political, social, and economic climate was characterised by contradictions and abysses, spiritual confusion, and disorientation of the mind so that life is '... despite all fantastic accomplishments of the mind and technology, not an equation that will be satisfied, but one that retains absurdity, gruesome lack of self-control and dreary obscurity'.⁵¹ The new objective architecture was nevertheless still situated within a narrow area of rationality outside of the areas of political and social complications. But this small measure of success still does not provide many reasons to be satisfied. Essentially, Kállai asked his readers for humility in view of the achievements of the building industry, which are fictions of order and clarity, while life remains unpredictable.

On one hand Kállai affirmed that the technology-driven new architecture was the only solution to come closer to Prinzhorn's worldview but he criticised on the other hand 'purely civilising ideals' and ideas that wished to 'regulate life'. In doing so, he also disapproved of aspirations that wished to educate the dweller, regulate lives, and create a greater level of civilisation and regretted the absence of those designs that aimed at integrating the body and soul as a unity.

Prinzhorn's book and his explanations about the emergence of a new precept of live was symptomatic of the schism present in the complex attitudes towards the working class tenant for whom the mass producible houses were developed. For architects uncomfortable with attempts to prescribe a life-style, Prinzhorn provided an outlook and

theoretical framework for the development of a utopian human being of the near future who would be confident about the world, not corruptible by economics, religion, or politics, and who would develop naturally. It provided also an argument to rethink purely rational considerations that aimed to solve the housing problem by providing for the body itself but not for the whole individual. Prinzhorn's book and his planned series was an attempt to create a prognosis about the ways in which humanity would evolve.

Kállai's reading of Prinzhorn's book focused on the brief description of a new man and the remark on modern architecture but Prinzhorn provided little further definition of either topic as he was mainly interested in the explanation of his new precept of life, as well as in his image of the world in general. His concern was to highlight a general shift from a mechanical and technology-driven world view, that compartmentalises and studies parts of the human being, to a holistic one which affirms that the body needs to be understood as part of the soul and vice versa and in which unconscious forces are the basis of an understanding of the workings of the soul.

In order to convince of the validity of this thesis Prinzhorn placed great importance on the book *Art of building* that he had invited Mies van der Rohe to write for the series. Kállai's statement that the newly developing 'view of the world as a whole will probably be similar to some good room-designs which here and there succeed in our new architecture'⁵² was related to Prinzhorn's belief that the newly developing architecture could provide tangible proof for the developments described in his book. In a letter to Mies van der Rohe Prinzhorn explains:

Weightiness and momentum of the endeavour depends on truly meeting the structure of the new image of the world in its main tenets. This, however, floats half-born, not yet viable, between the times and can lean its authority and dignity neither on a cultural tradition nor a dogma. The first group of authors especially must – as substitute for this absence of elemental validity – be absolutely representative for the ethos and must – from the outset – provide confidence.⁵³

Mies van der Rohe did not deliver the manuscript for the book but seemed to still have embarked on developing a draft, as a lecture delivered in 1926 seemed to have been written in relation to the planned content of the book.⁵⁴

The nature of building defined as 'the spatial execution of spiritual decisions', and must serve the spirit and the means of the time.⁵⁵ To adhere to traditional forms on the other hand is a mistake as the spiritual material conditions of the present determine the work of the architect not those of the past. He pointed towards a lack of historic understanding and misconceptions concerning the interdependencies between the changing of 'things' and of life which can be explained with the help of a process described by Plato: changes of forms are brought about because of changes in the soul of a populace, which forms state and society. Forms of life on the other hand influence the soul.

Mies van der Rohe regarded the interdependencies between landscapes, economic conditions and society as quintessential for an understanding of culture; one influences the other so that transformations and changes in formal expressions are fostered.⁵⁶ Ideological changes, however, follow much later and at a slower pace than societal ones so that formal expressions of bygone times remain and continue to have an impact even after their meaning has been forgotten.⁵⁷ This mechanism is described as being at work presently, which is why official forces impede 'new things'. In a call for resistance against such obstruction he explains:

Those who assume the right to interfere in the lives of individuals and the community in a regulatory way should first of all acquire adequate knowledge of things and their interconnections. Only superior abilities and real mastery entitles one to authority.⁵⁸

Only a masterly understanding of the interconnections that drive the emergence of form can lead to the ability to create things that 'serve the spirit and the means of the time'. Only if knowledge of these mechanisms is present, form can be created that is in sync with the spirit of the time. Mies van der Rohe deems it ignorant to place ones will above this system in an attempt to regulate life:

Nothing is more stupid than to assume that our will is adequate to change the situation under which we live, in this or that direction [...] Only what lies in the direction of our life's goals can find fulfilment.⁵⁹

The power of the will of those who wish to regulate life can never be effective enough to supersede the overarching system of interconnections that ultimately directs all development. Mies van der Rohe offered an understanding of how life forms 'things', explained the mechanisms and drives of cultural developments, and gave indications that the

creator of these mechanisms must acquire knowledge on how 'building is intertwined with living'. He stressed that building must be on the basis of knowledge of the interconnections that drive 'the transformation of [...] building forms', not on the basis of the will only.⁶⁰

Prinzhorn, as well as Mies van der Rohe, perceived 'the will' as the power that hinders superseding forces. Mies van der Rohe was, similarly to Prinzhorn, familiar with Nietzsche's philosophy and had knowledge of his understanding of 'the will' as a force that fosters decay.⁶¹ Changes in Mies van der Rohe's thinking are not brought about through an intellectually devised model of the will but by underlying forces. These forces express themselves in polar-opposite relationships that Prinzhorn expresses in the aphorism 'the soul the sense of body, the body expression of the soul'⁶² while Mies van der Rohe explains that changes of forms are fostered by changes in the soul of a populace and that forms of life influence the soul.

Both theories have in common a suspicion of the will as the demiurge of change and while Mies van der Rohe upheld the belief that changes in life bring about changes in form, Prinzhorn sought to explain these changes in life. His precept of life aimed to provide knowledge about the changes in the perception of man and interconnections between polar relationships responsible for this change. For an architect who sought to understand the source of the changes in lifestyle in order to be able to react to them, it was necessary to acquire 'superior abilities' and 'real mastery' of these forces. Prinzhorn's precept of life offered the knowledge to achieve mastery so that solutions in the 'fight for new ways of life' could be developed.

For Prinzhorn, who sought to convince about the viability of his precept of life, the new architecture developed out of requirements of life and not 'the will'. This provided examples as to how the new precept of life took shape.

Mies van der Rohe, in the search for theories that could answer questions on the present condition of life, could with *Body – Soul – Unity* acquire knowledge of what the structure and essence of the current worldview might develop towards. Prinzhorn's framework provided an overview and knowledge of the changes in life and was a means with which Prinzhorn aimed to foster his worldview. It offered a tool which would provide material to answer the question which had been at the core of the project for Prinzhorn as well as Mies van der Rohe – to gain a better understanding of the changes at hand and the ways these might transform life.

After visiting Mies van der Rohe's apartment house Stuttgart-Weißenhof, artist Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) doubted nevertheless whether future tenants would be able to stand up to what the apartments aim for:

Tall, noble beings stride through the doors, full of new spirit. Hopefully at least. It also might happen like in the settlements of Frankfurt, where people arrived with their green plush-couches. It might occur, that the residents afterwards turn out to be not as mature and free as their own doors. But let us hope, that the house will ennoble them.⁶³

Despite all claims for flexibility, freedom and choice, Schwitters still saw in the architecture the will expressed that sought to change the life of the residents and perceived Mies van der Rohe's attempt to provide flexible walls, as means with which to alter the inhabitant.

Figure Captions:

Fig. 1: Frankfurt Standard Ground Plans

Fig. 2: Fritz Block, *Standard Type* presented in his article *Wohnform und Wandlungsfähigkeit*

Fig. 3: Adolf Rading, 'Main Type' (*Haupttyp*) presented in his article *Wohngewohnheiten*

Fig. 4+5: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Block for Stuttgart-Weißenhof, Stuttgart, 1927. Façade and floor plans.*

Fig. 6: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *Tenement for Stuttgart-Weißenhof, Stuttgart, 1927. Interior designed by the Schweizer Werkbundkollektiv*

¹'Und die Menschen', fragte er [Georg] Wolff, 'was nützen die veränderten Einrichtungen, wenn die Menschen dieselben bleiben?' 'Aber gestatten Sie – wir werden uns doch einig darüber sein, daß die Menschen ein Produkt ihrer Verhältnisse sind. Nun, wenn diese gebessert werden, so wandeln sich mit ihnen selbstverständlich die Menschen.' [...] Dr. Wolff wischte ein Fädchen von seiner Hose; als sei er peinlich davon berührt, daß man so etwas Selbstverständliches wie die Menschen überhaupt erwähnte. Die Menschen waren ein Zubehör zu den Einrichtungen. 'Ich glaube eben nicht', begann Georg von neuem, 'daß die Menschen bloße Einrichtungsgegenstände sind, die von den Architekten mit entworfen werden wie Schränke und Tische ... die Menschen müssen sich selber entwerfen.' S. Kracauer, *Georg* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1995 [1928]), p. 120.

Quotations are given in the German original in footnotes only where the author has provided the translation. Where no date was specified in the publication and where a reprint was consulted, the dates of first issuing are given in [brackets].

² Ibid.

³ Similar developments were pursued by Walter Gropius in Dessau-Törten and by Martin Wagner and Bruno Taut in Berlin-Britz. Only between 1939-1941 Ernst Neufert developed by order of Albert Speer a mobile 'house factory'. W. Voigt 'Triumph der Gleichform und des Zusammenpassens'. Ernst Neufert und die Normung in der Architektur' in W. Nerdinger, ed., *Bauhaus-Moderne im Nationalsozialismus. Zwischen Anbiederung und Verfolgung* (München, Prestel, 1993), p. 188.

⁴ C. Mohr, 'The New Frankfurt – Housing construction and the city 1925-1930' in C. Quiring et. al. *Ernst May 1886-1970* (München, Prestel, 2011), pp. 51-68 and H. Risse, *Frühe Moderne in Frankfurt am Main 1920-1933. Architektur der zwanziger Jahre in Frankfurt a. M.* (Frankfurt am Main, Societäts-Verlag, 1984), p. 20.

⁵ Gropius was a major contributor of this argument and pursued it in lectures and publications throughout the late 1920s. See, for example, W. Gropius, 'Wohnhaus-Industrie' in W. Gropius und L. Moholy-Nagy eds., *Ein Versuchshaus des Bauhauses in Weimar* (München, Albert Langen Verlag, 1925), pp. 5-14. Eugen Kaufmann (1892 -1984) government building officer in Frankfurt justified standardisation of units with a similar argument than Gropius. E. Kaufmann, 'Neues Bauen'. *Die Umschau*, 31. (1927), p. 917.

⁶ W. von Drigalski, 'Über Wohnungsbau und Hygiene'. *Wohnungswirtschaft*, 6. (1929), pp. 281-282, Wagner, 'Wohnung und Siedlung'. *Technisches Gemeindeblatt*, 31:12 (1928), p. 155. R. Neubert, *Der Mensch und die Wohnung* (Dresden [1926]), pp. 24-26.

⁷ Ludwig Hilberseimer (1885-1967) developed floor plan types in 1929 alongside such concepts. L. Hilberseimer, 'Großstädtische Kleinwohnungen' *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, 49 (1929), p. 509 and L. Hilberseimer, 'Kleinstwohnungen. Größe, Grundriß und städtebauliche Anordnung' *Bauhaus*, 3:2 (1929), pp. 1-4. The journal *Gesundheits-Ingenieur* published contributions to this topic by the councillor of building and construction in Lüdenscheid Wilhelm Finkbeiner whose floor plans resemble those proposed by Gropius and Hilberseimer. The facades are of traditional appearance. W. Finkbeiner, 'Beschränkung der Wohnungsgröße'. *Gesundheits-Ingenieur*, 50 (1927), pp. 793-794.

⁸ F. Block, 'Wohnform und Wandlungsfähigkeit'. *Die Form*, 2 (1927), pp. 40-46.

⁹ '... die Masse der werktätigen Bevölkerung noch stark erzogen und beeinflusst werden muß'. Ibid. p. 41.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 46.

¹¹ 'Hier kann der Wohnteil keiner anderen Bestimmung zugeführt werden. Zwangsformung sollte man überhaupt, wo eben möglich, bei allen Räumen der Kleinwohnung durchführen'. Ibid. p. 46.

¹² A. Rading, 'Wohngewohnheiten'. *Die Form*, 2 (1927), pp. 47-49.

¹³ 'Daß trotz gleicher Wohnbedürfnisse kein trockenes Schema das Ergebnis zu sein braucht, mögen einige Grundrisse beweisen. Eine vollkommene Uniformierung der Konstruktion, des bautechnischen Teiles führt zu vollkommener Elastizität des Grundrisses und macht [...] ein individuelles Wohnen wieder möglich'. Ibid. p. 48.

¹⁴ On the changes of the programme between 1926 and 1927 and on the critique that the majority of buildings targeted middle class instead of working class dwellers see: Stadtschultheißenamt Stuttgart, 'Letter to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe 29. Dezember 1926' in *Museum of Modern Art New York, Mies-van-der-Rohe-Archiv*, New York, Weissenhof Folder #6.11. See also: Deutscher Werkbund, ed., *Bau und Wohnung. Die Bauten der Weißenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart* (Stuttgart, F. Wedekind, 1927), K. Kirsch, *Die Weißenhofsiedlung. Werkbund-Ausstellung 'Die Wohnung' – Stuttgart 1927* (Stuttgart, DVA Verlag, 1987). F. Neumeyer, *The Artless Word: Mies van der Rohe and the Building Art* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1991).

¹⁵ 'Die Menschen sind weder Bösewichter noch Kinder. Nur Arroganz und unbelehrbare Dummheit können versuchen, sie unter Kuratel zu stellen. Seien wir bescheiden, sehen wir ein: der Versuch, Vorsehung zu spielen, ist kläglich gescheitert, Versündigung am Menschen, belanglos guter Wille, Hilfsbereitschaft'. A. Rading, 'Zeitlupe' in Deutscher Werkbund, ed., *Bau und Wohnung*, 1927, p. 103.

¹⁶ In Stuttgart, as Mies van der Rohe explained in 1926, only the houses by J.J.P Oud, Mart Stam, Peter Behrens and by himself displayed the possibility for standardisation into types of units. He was satisfied with this number since it was the goal to tackle the housing problem on a broad and inclusive scale. L. Mies van der Rohe, 'Letter to Richard Döcker dated 13. December 1926' in *Mies-van-der-Rohe-Archiv, New York, Weissenhof Folder #12.3*.

¹⁷ 'Die Zwischenwände können beliebig gezogen werden, so daß sich verschiedenste Grundrißmöglichkeiten für die gleiche Wohneinheit ergeben'. W. Riezler, 'Die Arbeiten in der Werkbund-Ausstellung. Die Wohnung Stuttgart, 23. Juli – 9. Oktober 1927', *Die Form* 2 (1927), p. 213. Mies van der Rohe described his idea in detail also in a letter to the interior designer Erna Meyer in January 1927. L. Mies van der Rohe, 'Letter to Erna Meyer dated 6. January 1927' in *Mies-van-der-Rohe-Archiv, New York, Weissenhof Folder #6.1*. See also Kirsch, *Die Weißenhofsiedlung*, p. 77ff.

¹⁸ '... größte Freiheit in der Benützungart.' L. Mies van der Rohe, 'Zu meinem Block' in *Bau und Wohnung*, 1927, p. 77. Mies van der Rohe was of course not the first who envisioned and developed moveable wall units or flexibility of space. Le Corbusier's 1914 Dom-ino system visualised how a ferro concrete construction would enable flexibility and Gerrit T. Rietveld's 1923 Schröder-house in Utrecht incorporated moveable walls. Gropius also had grappled with the problem of how to allow for flexible floor plans and the possibility to grow the houses together with the income and size of the family. He had proposed a *Baukasten im Großen [large-scale building set]* – a system to consist of

pre-fabricated modules that could be added to a core module. Gropius' publications emphasised, that only building parts should be standardised into types so that a repetitive scheme has not to be feared. But in Dessau-Törten, where a scheme of three different units was executed, standardisation of building parts was only practicable together with a standardisation of floor plans. Flexibility was now replaced with the argument that the majority has similar needs.

W. Gropius, *Ein Versuchshaus*, p. 14. See also: A. Jaeggi, *Adolf Meyer. Der zweite Mann. Ein Architekt im Schatten von Walter Gropius* (Berlin, Argon-Verlag, 1994), F. Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, pp. 230-231.

¹⁹ L. Mies van der Rohe, 'Letter to Richard Döcker dated 13. December 1926' in *Mies-van-der-Rohe-Archiv, New York, Weissenhof Folder #12.3*.

²⁰ The idea of flexible floor plans had interested him since the early 1920s as publications for the magazine *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film* showed. These theoretical designs envisioned a skyscraper for Berlin Friedrichstraße (1921), a concrete office building (1923), and concrete country house (1923). Functions and purposes were not stipulated tightly and spaces remained adjustable. D. Mertins, 'Architecture, Worldview, and World Image in G' in D. Mertins and M. W. Jennings, *G. An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film* (Los Angeles, Paul Getty Trust, 2010) pp. 77-78. See also: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 'Lecture', in F. Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, pp. 249-50.

²¹ 'Das Problem der Neuen Wohnung ist im Grunde ein geistiges Problem und der Kampf um die Neue Wohnung nur ein Glied in dem großen Kampf um neue Lebensformen'. L. Mies van der Rohe, 'Vorwort' in *Ausstellungsleitung* (ed.), *Ämtlicher Katalog der Werkbundausststellung. Die Wohnung* (Stuttgart, Tagblatt Buchdruckerei, 1927), p. 5.

²² H. Prinzhorn, *Leib – Seele – Einheit. Ein Kernproblem der neuen Psychologie* (Potsdam and Zürich, Müller & Kiepenheuer Verlag and Orell Füssli Verlag, 1927). Around the year 2000 Prinzhorn as well as the Prinzhorn Collection had been subject to a controversial discussion as some of Prinzhorn's late writings display sympathy with Nazi ideology. For an understanding of the accusations made see: R. Talbot *Hans Prinzhorn - ein Nazi-Ideologe pathologisiert die Kunst*. URL: <http://www.irren-offensive.de/talbotspeech.htm>. Accessed June 10th 2014. A summary of the accusations and a reply can be accessed here: I. Jádi and C. Mundt, 'The Prinzhorn Collection. Museum and Research Centre.' in: *University of Heidelberg Home Page* URL: <http://www.uni-heidelberg.de/press/news/press90e.html> accessed June 10th 2014.

²³ H. Prinzhorn, *Bildneri der Geisteskranken: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopathologie der Gestaltung*, Berlin, Springer, 1922. He had studied Art History in Tübingen – where his interest in architecture led to a PhD-thesis on Gottfried Semper – and Medicine in Freiburg. P. Prange, 'Prinzhorn, Hans, *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 20 (2001), p. 730. URL: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118814125.html>, 'Hans Prinzhorn', *Sammlung Prinzhorn*. URL <http://prinzhorn.ukl-hd.de/index.php?id=79&L=title%3DStation%26re>. Both accessed June 10th 2014.

²⁴ H. Prinzhorn, 'Form-Creation and Health' *G: Materials for Elemental Form-Creation*, 3 (1924) in Mertins and Jennings, G., pp. 154-155. H. Prinzhorn, 'The Magic of Signs' *Ibid.*, p. 231.

²⁵ H. Prinzhorn, 'Das neue Menschenbild der Psychologen bietet den Erziehern neue Richtpunkte', *Das Neue Frankfurt. Monatsschrift für die Probleme moderner Gestaltung*, 2:11-12 (1928), p. 197.

²⁶ P. Bernhard, 'Die Gastvorträge am Bauhaus – Einblicke in den zweiten Lehrkörper' in A. Baumhoff and M. Droste eds., *Mythos Bauhaus: Zwischen Selbsterfindung und Enthistorisierung* (Berlin, Reimer Verlag, 2009), p. 90.

²⁷ *Das Weltbild. Bücher des lebendigen Wissens*

²⁸ '... eine Gesamtdarstellung des heutigen Weltbildes in seiner Struktur, abgesehen von allem Ornamentwerk des Detailwissens'. H. Prinzhorn, 'Undated letter to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe [probably written before February 1925]', in *Library of Congress, Washington D. C., Manuscript Division, estate Mies van der Rohe, Container 1*. A number of letters and postcards exchanged between Mies van der Rohe and Prinzhorn are held at the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress in Washington D. C. The letters are mostly friendly exchanges but also concern Mies van der Rohe's contribution to Prinzhorn's project.

²⁹ *Baukunst. Von der Höhle zum Hochhaus*.

³⁰ '... eine tiefe Wandlung unserer gesamten Auffassung vom Menschen'. Prinzhorn, *Leib – Seele – Einheit*, p. 13.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 35.

³² Klages' 1926 text *The psychological achievements of Nietzsche* was of particular importance to Prinzhorn. He might also have drawn upon *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* published between 1929 and 1932 as the separation between mind, soul, and body is also analysed here. L. Klages, *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches* (Leipzig, J. A. Barth, 1926) and L. Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (Leipzig, München, J. A. Barth, 1929-1932).

³³ '... die Reinigung unseres Bildes vom Menschen, die Befreiung vom Druck europäischer Zwangsgedanken, die Herstellung des natürlichen Gefühls der Leib-Seele-Einheit, die Unterscheidung echter Lebenswerte von menschlich verfälschten, kurzum die Wiederherstellung der Würde des Menschen als eines naturgebundenen Wesens – dazu erweckt sein [Nietzsches] Ruf'. Prinzhorn, *Leib – Seele – Einheit*, p. 42.

³⁴ '... des Rückschlusses vom Werk auf den Urheber, von der Tat auf den Täter, vom Ideal auf den, der es nötig hat, von jeder Denk- und Wertungsweise auf das dahinter kommandierende Bedürfnis'. *Ibid.* p. 43.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 45.

³⁶ 'Umriss der neuentstehenden Lebenslehre', *Ibid.* pp. 52-74.

³⁷ '... die Tatsachen des Bewußtseins, als fragwürdige Fassade vor einem durchaus nicht genau entsprechenden, unordentlichen Gebäude voll düsterer Räume enthüllt wurde?' *Ibid.* p. 53.

³⁸ C. G. Carus, *Psyche, zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Seele*, (Pforzheim, 1846).

³⁹ Prinzhorn, *Leib – Seele – Einheit*, p. 55.

⁴⁰ '... die Seele der Sinn des Leibes, der Leib Ausdruck der Seele'. *Ibid.*, p. 62. The area in which such polar relationships – of unconscious processes of life that are visible in the body – can be examined is that of gestures but also through speech, art, and handwriting. Emotions are

thus defined as 'changes of the organism, which come to consciousness through processes of life within it.' [... Umstimmungen des Organismus, die durch Lebensvorgänge in diesem bewirkt werden und zum Bewußtsein kommen']. Ibid., p. 63.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 68-69. Prinzhorn pointed towards the contradiction between Nietzsche's early writings, in which the 'will to power' was the harbinger of decadence and Nietzsche's late work where 'the will to power' appeared as 'the sense of life' but did not resolve this contradiction but instead referred to Klages' solution of it. Ibid., p. 68.

⁴² '... sie setzt durchaus nicht bei den Bedürfnissen und Sehnsüchten des an sich leidenden und an der Welt verzweifelnden Zeitgenossen ein, sondern vielmehr bei der noch unzeitgemäßen Weltsicherheit von Menschen, die im Einklang mit den großen Rhythmen des Naturlaufs und mit allen lebenden Gebilde sich gefunden hätten'. Ibid., p. 72.

⁴³ '... nicht mehr in schwärmender Verabsolutierung, sondern in kritischer Sachlichkeit'. Ibid. p. 72. While Prinzhorn didn't further describe the nature of this new man here, his 1928 article in *The New Frankfurt* explained that self-assertiveness and independence are achieved once a 'trust to the subconscious creative life' that is stronger than reason has been regained. Prinzhorn, 'Das neue Menschenbild', p. 197.

⁴⁴ 'Wahrscheinlich wird unser Weltbild im Gesamtcharakter manchen guten Raumgestalten ähneln, die unserer neuen Baukunst hier und da glücken'. Prinzhorn, *Leib – Seele – Einheit*, p. 74.

⁴⁵ Ernst Kállai, 'Bauen und leben', *Bauhaus. Vierteljahr-Zeitschrift für Gestaltung*, 3 (1929), p. 12.

⁴⁶ '... nur das bild des vernunftgemäß-sachlichen bauens läßt sich mit dem prinzhornschen bilde des neuen menschen vergleichen, der „ohne über sich selbst und die welt beglückende illusionen zu hegen, von der ganzen tiefe des weltgeschehens getragen, das gebot der stunde zu finden und schlicht auszuführen weiß'. Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁷ '... mechanistischen vorstellungen, von rein zivilisatorischen idealen ... Ibid. p. 12.

⁴⁸ '... scheinwerte einer überzüchteten intellektualistischen nutzbetriebsamkeit ... Ibid. p. 12.

⁴⁹ 'nur ausnahmsweise begegnen wir der erkenntnis, daß bauen nicht nur technische und ökonomische, sondern auch psychische organisation sein müsse'. Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁰ '... mechanistisch betriebsamkeit plus seelische entwurzelung'. Ibid., p. 12.

⁵¹ '... trotz aller unleugbar herrlichen errungenschaften von geist und technik noch immer eine gleichung, die durchaus nicht aufgehen will, sondern einen furchtbaren rest von sinnlosigkeit, von grauenhafter unbeherrschtheit und trüber verdunkelung bewahrt.' Ibid. p. 12.

⁵² 'Wahrscheinlich wird unser Weltbild im Gesamtcharakter manchen guten Raumgestalten ähneln, die unserer neuen Baukunst hier und da glücken'. Ibid. p. 74.

⁵³ 'Gewicht und Stosskraft des Unternehmens hängt davon ab, dass wirklich die Struktur des neuen Weltbildes in den Hauptzügen getroffen wird. Dieses schwebt aber erst halbgeboren, noch nicht lebensfähig, zwischen den Zeiten und kann weder auf eine kulturelle Tradition, noch auf ein Dogma sein Recht und seine Würde stützen. Die erste Gruppe der Autoren vor allem muss als Notersatz für diesen Mangel an natürlicher Geltung unbedingt repräsentativ für die Gesinnung sein und von vornherein Vertrauen erwecken'. H. Prinzhorn, 'Undated letter to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe [probably before February 1925]', in *Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, estate Mies van der Rohe, Container 1*. On May 6th 1925 Prinzhorn wrote: 'In any case it still means a lot to me that your 'Art of building' belongs with the first three volumes, because with it one can show the characteristic of the matter best'. [Jedenfalls aber liegt mir nach wie vor sehr viel daran, dass Deine 'Baukunst' zu den ersten drei Bänden gehört, weil man an ihr das Charakteristische der ganzen Sache am besten zeigen kann.] H. Prinzhorn letter to Mies van der Rohe dated 6. Mai 1925, *Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, estate Mies van der Rohe, Container 1*.

⁵⁴ This is also suspected in Mertins, 'Architecture', p. 90.

⁵⁵ Mies van der Rohe, 'Lecture' in Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, p. 252.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 252.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 252.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 253.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 253.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 253 and p. 555. With the help of 20 illustrations of vernacular historical as well as contemporary examples Mies provides with examples for his thesis and explains, how, for example, farm houses developed out of the requirements of the inhabitants. 13 more illustrations were dedicated to inform on the aspect of how technology has helped in finding timely form. Mies van der Rohe concludes with an outline of which changes in city planning would accommodate the changed structure of life.

⁶¹ On Mies van der Rohe's reading of Nietzsche see F. Neumeyer, *The Artless Word*, pp. 51-61.

⁶² '... die Seele der Sinn des Leibes, der Leib Ausdruck der Seele'. Ibid., p. 62.

⁶³ 'Grosse, edle Gestalten schreiten durch die Türen, voll neuen Geistes. Hoffentlich wenigstens. Es kann ja auch werden wie in den Frankfurter Siedlungen, wo die Leute mit ihren grünen Plüschsofas ankommen. Es kann vorkommen, dass nachher die Einwohner nicht so reif und frei sind wie ihre eigenen Türen. Aber hoffen wir, dass das Haus sie adelt'. K. Schwitters, 'Stuttgart. "Die Wohnung. Werkbundaustellung"', *i10. Internationale Revue*, 1 (1927) p. 348.