

## Visualizing the Core of an Ideal Democratic Community: Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and Post-war Planning Exhibitions

*Ellen Shoshkes*

This chapter examines four important and interrelated planning exhibitions in the late 1940s and early 1950s: Plans of the Cities of Europe (1946); CIAM 8: The Core (1951); the Town-planning Pavilion at the Festival of Britain (1951); and The Village Centre at the Indian Government's International Exhibition of Low Cost Housing (1954). Each promoted an approach to planning for post-war reconstruction based on a synthesis of the ideas of the visionary Scottish biologist Patrick Geddes and European modernist ideals as formulated by the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM). Each exhibition told a different story, used different techniques and targeted different audiences. But taken together with the larger narrative of events which they interconnect, they shed light on the evolution of this blend of Geddesian and CIAM ideas – an image of the ideal community based on cooperation – and how it came to influence post-war academic and professional trends in urban planning and design, and United Nations community development policy. The narrative highlights the role of Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, British town planner, editor and educator, in the articulation and promotion of this synthesis through this linked series of exhibitions.

### TYRWHITT, GEDDES AND CIAM: A MODERNIST CONCEPT OF PLANNING

Trained in horticulture at the Architecture Association (AA) in London to prepare for a career in garden design, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt became interested in town planning in 1936 after reading Patrick Geddes's *Cities in Evolution* (1915). It was in this book that Geddes (1915: vii) spelled out his utopian realism: 'Eutopia ... lies in the city around us; and it must be planned and realised, here or nowhere, by us as its citizens – each a citizen of both the actual and the ideal city seen increasingly as one.'

Tyrwhitt studied at the School of Planning and Research for National Development (SPRND) – an AA offshoot – where the curriculum was grounded in Geddesian ideas, particularly the notion that a statutory plan must be preceded

by comprehensive regional and civic surveys. In her capacity as Director of the Association for Planning and Regional Reconstruction (APRR) – established to carry on the work of SPRND, which closed when World War Two began – Tyrwhitt spent the war years developing multi-disciplinary survey techniques to apply Geddes's ideas to planning for post-war reconstruction. She systematized those techniques as Director of APRR's sister organization, the School of Planning and Research for Regional Development (SPRRD), through which she ran a correspondence course in town planning for the British War Office. Following Geddes, the course focused on 'the need to be interdisciplinary, the use of the region as a planning unit, the necessity of a holistic approach, and the importance of economic and social factors' (Meller 1990: 323).

Concurrently, Tyrwhitt became active in the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS), the British branch of CIAM. By 1945 she had combined Geddes's ideas and the tenets of CIAM modernism as adapted by the MARS group and presented this synthesis in her article 'Town Planning' for the inaugural issue of *The Architect's Yearbook*. For Tyrwhitt, the discipline encompassed: the region, the neighbourhood, work, food, health, education, transport, leisure and holidays – not simply the four 'urban functions' of dwelling, work, recreation and transportation stipulated in CIAM's 1933 Athens Charter. In this expanded concept of planning, 'towns of many sizes can be countenanced, provided ... that, at one level, they fit into the general framework of the region and, at the other level, they are suitably differentiated into coherent neighbourhood units' (Tyrwhitt 1945: 11). In making her case, Tyrwhitt (1945: 13–16) invoked 'the space-time scale of our generation [that] has been grandly set forth by Giedion and needs interpretation in all forms of physical planning' – a reference to the already canonical *Space Time and Architecture* by CIAM Secretary Sigfried Giedion. Humanistic mastery of technologies that had been advanced by the war depended on 'intimate neighbourhood life ... [that] breeds social consciousness and civic responsibility'. Civil defence measures, which demonstrated the value of 'some form of common meeting-place' for neighbours, had brought this lesson home.

In the years ahead, Tyrwhitt elaborated on this notion of a physical and social open space where people practiced democracy as *the core* of the ideal politically-decentralized community, constructing a quasi-myth of the core and its transformative potential. For example, Tyrwhitt celebrated the Peckham Health Centre – an experimental social and medical club founded in 1938 in South London – as a model neighbourhood environment where 'positive health can ... be encouraged by the full and free development of the varied potentialities of each individual ... within the pattern of the community'. The realization of this ideal was based on *voluntary cooperation*: 'Healthy people do not want to be organized, but they do want opportunities to do things together. It is on these lines that we can imagine our neighbourhood environments of the future' (Tyrwhitt 1945: 23).

Tyrwhitt's synthesis of Geddesian and CIAM ideals evolved after meeting Giedion and former Bauhaus teacher László Moholy-Nagy in the spring of 1945. She also gained a greater appreciation for aesthetics. In addition to seeing 'the social life of a town and its physical pattern as one related whole', Tyrwhitt (1946: 210–11) stated: 'a plan is a design and the planner must be a designer ... the creative artist who not only sees what is in terms of what could be, but has the power to set this down in such a manner that his vision is shared and understood by others.'

Tyrwhitt and her staff of artists at APRR regularly employed a variety of visualization techniques to share their synoptic vision of planning for post-war Britain and graphically display complex survey information. These included maps with transparent overlays, visual statistics, statistical graphics, diagrams, drawings, aerial photography, illustrated broadsheets and pamphlets, and exhibitions.

#### **EXHIBITION ONE. APRR: PLANS OF THE CITIES OF EUROPE (HASTINGS, UK, OCTOBER 1946)**

The first major exhibit Tyrwhitt organized for APRR took place in Hastings, England, in October 1946, parallel with the first post-war congress of the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP). The theme of APRR's exhibit, 'Plans of the Cities of Europe', tacitly referred to Geddes's 'Cities and Town Planning Exhibition' – displayed at the 1913 International Exhibition in Ghent – and thus linked APRR's work with Geddes's pioneering principles and visualization methods. Targeting IFHTP congress-goers – more than 1,000 delegates from 20 countries – APRR's exhibition sought to influence international discourse about post-war reconstruction. In addressing whether and how European nations might take advantage of the opportunity provided by war damage to rebuild urban centres, the IFHTP congress focused attention on Britain's policy of planned decentralization via New Towns. APRR's exhibition, and an associated conference, provided a critical historical perspective on this strategy.

Tyrwhitt updated Geddes's methods, incorporating aerial survey techniques to enhance the display of conventional maps, plans and renderings. Likewise, APRR's exhibition catalogue cover replaced the bird's-eye rendering that Geddes used to portray a town in its regional setting, with a view from space overlooking the cities of Europe from the northwest – a global regional perspective (Figure 13.1).

Just as Geddes's exhibit illustrated the evolution of settlements, Tyrwhitt organized APRR's exhibit in a chronological sequence of five 'main town building periods': the Middle Ages, the Early Renaissance, Grand Renaissance, 'Black Cities of the 19th Century', and 'Green Cities of the 20th Century'. The catalogue paired a typical plan from each of those eras with a 'contemporary description of the ideal town written by an observer of those times' and 'a short comment from a modern authority' on the actual conditions (APRR 1946: 1).



13.1 Cover of the plans for the Cities of Europe exhibition catalogue: it presented a global perspective of Europe from the northwest

Source: APRR (1946).

Tyrwhitt concluded the sequence by pairing Welwyn Garden City as a typical plan for 'Green Cities of the 20th Century', with a quotation from Ebenezer Howard's 'Garden Cities of Tomorrow' (1898). She gave the last word to Lewis Mumford, who cautioned that aside from the 'all-important national need for a balanced population comes a social need ... for organizing cities in such a way as to make neighbours and active citizens' [sic] and to enable 'the constant practice of democracy in small units' (APRR 1946: 10). The Garden City model embodied by Welwyn – which many advocated as the template for the New Towns – was not organized around physically defined neighbourhoods intended to encourage democratic participation; Tyrwhitt argued that the New Towns should be.

APRR's exhibit reflected the mood of utopian optimism during the immediate post-war years, when idealistic architects, planners, artists, scientists and others believed they might actually realize the visions of a better world they had imagined during the war. So inspired, IFHTP delegates resolved to 'urge the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations to establish promptly a unit to deal specifically with the international problems of housing and planned reconstruction' (Ihlder 1946: 13). At its first General Session in December 1946, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also resolved to set up a section on home and community planning (UNESCO 1947).

Over the next five years Tyrwhitt expanded her thinking about the *core* of the ideal politically decentralized community as she became more active in the MARS group and helped articulate this theme in debates about the post-war direction of CIAM activities. Tyrwhitt's contribution to those debates played out in part through her involvement in planning the eighth CIAM congress, which the MARS group proposed to host in England in the summer of 1951, concurrent with the Festival of Britain for which many MARS members were designing exhibits. When Tyrwhitt was hired to write the script for the festival's Town Planning Pavilion she used this opportunity to inextricably link this exhibition with CIAM 8 through a shared focus on the *core*.

Tyrwhitt's contribution to CIAM 8 began before and strongly influenced her approach to the Town Planning Pavilion. Her role had its origins at CIAM 6, which the MARS group hosted in 1947. At CIAM 6, members agreed that it was necessary to revitalize the organization but disagreed over the direction of future work. One group, including Tyrwhitt, wanted to study town planning; another urged attending to aesthetics, particularly the integration of art and architecture (Mumford 2000). A compromise was reached; CIAM leaders commissioned Swiss architect Le Corbusier to devise a 'Town Planning Grid' – a standardized presentation format and a kind of generic methodology – to integrate the study of aesthetics and planning in the projects that were to be discussed at the next congress.

At CIAM 7, held in Bergamo, Italy, in July 1949, Le Corbusier (1952: 174) explained that the Town Planning Grid (*Grille CIAM d'Urbanisme*), which he and his colleagues developed, provided 'both a tool for thinking and a tool for transmitting thought. Instead of reading one sees [the essentials of a plan]'. The grid was meant to serve as both a presentation format and a visual thinking tool. It took the form of a descriptive–evaluative matrix with four main horizontal headings: living, working, development of mind and body, and circulation; and 12 main vertical divisions, including environment, land use, legal, aesthetic and social considerations. Le Corbusier also proposed that, at CIAM 8, members use the grid to develop *L'Charte de L'Habitat* to complement the pre-war Athens Charter and articulate CIAM town planning principles.

The Bergamo congress accepted both Le Corbusier's grid and proposal for CIAM 8, but disagreements over how to study town planning continued. Tyrwhitt reported a semantic problem with *L'Charte de L'Habitat*: 'It should not be transformed [literally] into a "Charter for the Habitation"'. The MARS group has accepted a wide interpretation of the words and is working on "civic centres" (quoted in Gold 1997: 209). Tyrwhitt also published a critique of the format of the CIAM Grid, which, 'with its architectural emphasis on building construction', was an inadequate presentation tool 'for town plans, as we [British] understand them' (1949: 1). For most British professionals, she explained, planning was a continuous – Geddessian – process with 'recurrent interpretations of survey material' more or less replacing the 'static "master plan"'.

## EXHIBITION TWO. CIAM 8, THE CORE (HODDESTON, UK, JULY 1951)

In the fall of 1949 Tyrwhitt helped develop the MARS proposal to base CIAM 8 on a comparative historical study of urban centres, now referred to as 'the Core'. In December Tyrwhitt co-authored the first draft of the MARS definition of the Core: 'the element which makes a community of people whether large or small, a real community (and not an aggregate of people) and the type of physical centre which could best express and be the expression of, its nature in village, town, or city' (Sert 1952: 6). CIAM President José Luis Sert supported MARS' bid to organize the congress around civic centres, but insisted the group link its proposal to *L'Charte de L'Habitat*.

In May 1950 Sert asked Tyrwhitt – with whom he was preparing a book on CIAM town planning – to integrate the two themes. Her solution was to modify the CIAM Grid to examine the Core at five 'scale levels' of community: housing group, neighbourhood, town or city sector, city and metropolis. The new format was approved by the CIAM Council in June 1950 and by MARS in July, and labelled the MARS Grid. Sert and Tyrwhitt also decided to switch the topic of their book on CIAM town planning to 'the Core' and a summary of CIAM 8. Tyrwhitt proceeded to play a key role in organizing CIAM 8 while she developed the contents of the companion book: *CIAM 8: The Heart of the City* (1952).

The MARS Grid provided an encompassing framework for the exhibition of work at CIAM 8, making it possible to find relationships between the examples of various kinds of cores, highlighting their similarities and differences, rather than subsuming each under an overarching criterion or ideology (such as a charter). For example, while the image of the ideal core had its origins in the West in the *Agora* of fifth-century Athens, architect Kunio Mayekawa observed: 'When one thinks of the Core in Japan one tends to think of a closed guild or society. Yet today the Core must be built for the open community' (Conversation 1952: 39–40). The MARS Grid also facilitated comparison across scale levels, fostering a holistic awareness of the different types of core as part of a complex ecosystem. Tyrwhitt underscored this in her opening remarks as chair of the session on the Social and Historical Background of the Core by introducing her concept of the urban constellation as the organizing principle for a large metropolis or conurbation: 'This urban relationship ... only functions when there is a vital city centre to which all parts of the constellation have access.'<sup>1</sup>

Selected projects from the CIAM 8 exhibition were published in *The Heart of the City*. In her introduction to the relevant section, Tyrwhitt reiterated (1952: 103–4) that the Core wasn't 'a group of civic buildings together with their related open spaces' but rather 'the gathering place of the people. ... whether planned or not ... a physical setting for the expression of collective emotion'. The 'cure for our ... amorphous modern cities' was not to be found in urban decentralization along garden city lines (reinforcing urban decline) but 'by the creation of new Cores – new concentrations of activity – by a visual emphasis upon centres of integration rather than upon bands of separation'. Here the 'task of the architect and planner is to appreciate the attributes of each Core and enable these to be developed so that the people of that community can derive the greatest benefit from coming together'.

As principal editor and translator, Tyrwhitt could arbitrate the contents of *CIAM 8: The Heart of the City*, and thereby shape the legacy of the congress. For example, Sert sent Tyrwhitt his concerns about the resolutions that had been passed, notably, insufficient stress on the *social* importance of the Core. 'It will be difficult to translate the resolutions from French to English and I hope the translation will give us the opportunity to clarify some of these statements.'<sup>2</sup> Tyrwhitt's translation and summary formed a conclusion to the book as well as to this era of CIAM. She wrote that the Core, as a means for the 'animation of spontaneous nature ... seems a heritage that our group, after twenty years' work, can now hand on to the next generation. Our task has been to resolve the first cycle of the work of CIAM by finding a means to *transform the passive individual in society into an active participant of social life*' (Short 1952: 168) [emphasis in original].

Publication of *CIAM 8: The Heart of the City* in the US, UK, France, Spain and Italy magnified the impact of the congress by disseminating an elaborated version of the proceedings to a much broader audience of people interested in urban planning and design.

### **EXHIBITION THREE. FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN, TOWN PLANNING PAVILION (LONDON, UK, SUMMER 1951)**

It was probably thanks to Tyrwhitt's MARS connections that she was hired in January 1950 to write the script and select and organize the presentation of visual material for the Festival of Britain Town Planning Pavilion, which was to be at the entrance to the Live Architecture Exhibition in Poplar [see Chapter 12]. Conceived as an adjunct to the main festival, the Live Architecture Exhibition was in a typical, heavily bomb-damaged East End area, one being reconstructed as a model 'neighbourhood unit' with its own schools, public buildings, shops and open spaces. Planners of the first generation of New Towns, which were to house the population displaced from rebuilt areas such as Poplar, also adopted the neighbourhood unit idea.<sup>3</sup> For Tyrwhitt, this application of the neighbourhood unit ideal exemplified the creation of new cores: new centres of decentralized community and democratic participation.

The overall objective for the exhibit, Tyrwhitt explained, was to represent 'the way town planning can contribute to a better life for more people'. The goal was to interest the general public who, after being 'concerned for so long with programs for a better future ... have naturally become somewhat sceptical of "plans"'.<sup>4</sup> Tyrwhitt wanted to 'show actual achievement and not vague hopes ... If one can see real things then one can demand more and better examples of them!'<sup>5</sup> This was crucial since it was doubtful that much of the Live Architecture Exhibit would be ready by festival time.

The benefits of scientific planning based on an understanding of human needs throughout the life span were on display. Visitors proceeded through a series of bays that depicted the activities of 'eight typical inhabitants: a baby, a schoolchild, an industrial trainee, a young married woman, a factory worker, an

office worker, and an elderly couple'. Displays showed 'their Working Life, their Home Life, their Social Life, their Private and Personal Life as individuals ... their Civic Life ... and some form of Outdoor Life'. After seeing 'how pleasant life could be in a well-planned town', visitors examined work underway in Britain. They could then enter a technical display or proceed to the exit, where a diorama (Figure 13.2) depicted the reconstruction of an urban centre known as 'The Heart of the Town' – a CIAM Core – and was 'the focus of social activities, an essential part of a healthy community'(Tyrwhitt 1951b: n.p.).

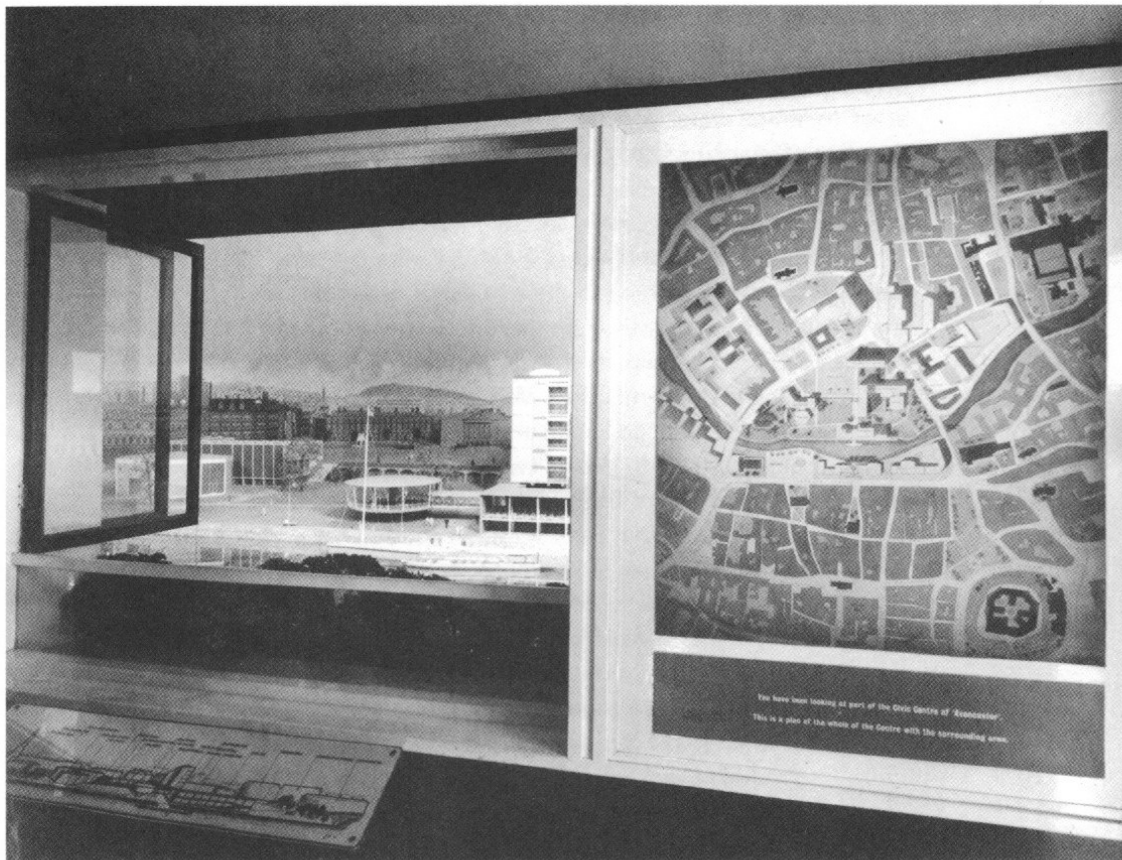
While the main audience for the Town Planning Pavilion was the general public, Tyrwhitt clearly intended the experience – featuring the *social* aspects of planning and the Core as a site of *social interaction* – to resonate with CIAM members, who visited the festival on one of the few excursions during the congress. Her exhibit narrated a popular version of the myth of the Core as the wellspring of civic life in post-war Britain.

Among the CIAM members who visited the Town Planning Pavilion was Ernest Weissmann, then in charge of the housing, building and planning branch of the UN Bureau of Social Affairs. Weissmann attended CIAM 8 and a simultaneous IFHTP meeting to invite both groups to become involved in the expanded program in housing, community planning and building – focused on the special needs of less developed countries – which was launched by the UN Technical Assistance Board in July 1951. Weissmann had previously commissioned Tyrwhitt to write the lead article for an issue of the UN's new *Housing and Town Planning Bulletin* on community facilities and services in large scale housing projects, signalling the converging interests of CIAM and the UN on community centres as well as housing.

Tyrwhitt had already influenced UN technical assistance policy. In 1950, in preparation for the new technical assistance program, the UN dispatched a Mission of Experts on Low Cost Housing, led by Jacob Crane, to South and South East Asia. Crane's mission lauded a pilot scheme in Uttar Pradesh, India – which followed the 'organic' process of village improvement preached 30 years earlier in India by Patrick Geddes – as a model that 'may show the way for many others'.<sup>6</sup> Because 'this individual, self-help approach corresponds to the Geddes method', the report included an extract from Tyrwhitt's edited collection, *Patrick Geddes in India*, in an appendix.<sup>7</sup>

In 1952 the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted several of the Crane mission's recommendations, including an action program to benefit low income groups in the developing world based on a Geddessian comprehensive approach to housing and community improvement considered in relation to national development objectives. The UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) immediately set up a Working Party on housing and building materials, which recommended greater use of local resources and more extensive housing and community improvement programs. ECAFE also considered helping the Indian government stage its International Exhibition on Low Cost Housing in 1954. Indian officials would have preferred cash but accepted UN assistance in the form that was offered: an expert adviser, a contribution to the exhibition and a regional seminar to stimulate international information exchange.<sup>8</sup>





Weissmann nominated Tyrwhitt for the technical assistance position in India. Tyrwhitt was sure 'the India seminar and exhibition could (and should) feature CIAM work'.<sup>9</sup> Sert was then Dean of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (GSD), and working with Tyrwhitt on a program for CIAM 9, on *L'Charte de L'Habitat*. He hoped she could use materials assembled at CIAM 9 as the basis for her UN exhibit.

#### EXHIBITION FOUR. INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION OF LOW COST HOUSING: VILLAGE CENTRE (NEW DELHI, JANUARY-MARCH 1954)

In May 1953 the Indian government accepted Tyrwhitt's appointment as Project Director for the UN seminar on Housing and Community Improvement in Asia and the Far East – the first of its kind – and as Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Housing on the Exhibition of Low Cost Housing. She immediately went to Geneva to visit the four UN specialized agencies – UNESCO, International Labor Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) – that played significant parts both during the seminar and as sponsors of the UN's exhibit. Those discussions resulted in Tyrwhitt's proposal (perhaps inspired

13.2 Diorama depicting The Heart of the Town. The 1951 Festival of Britain Town Planning Exhibit concluded with this CIAM Core conveying 'the focus of social activities, an essential part of a healthy community'

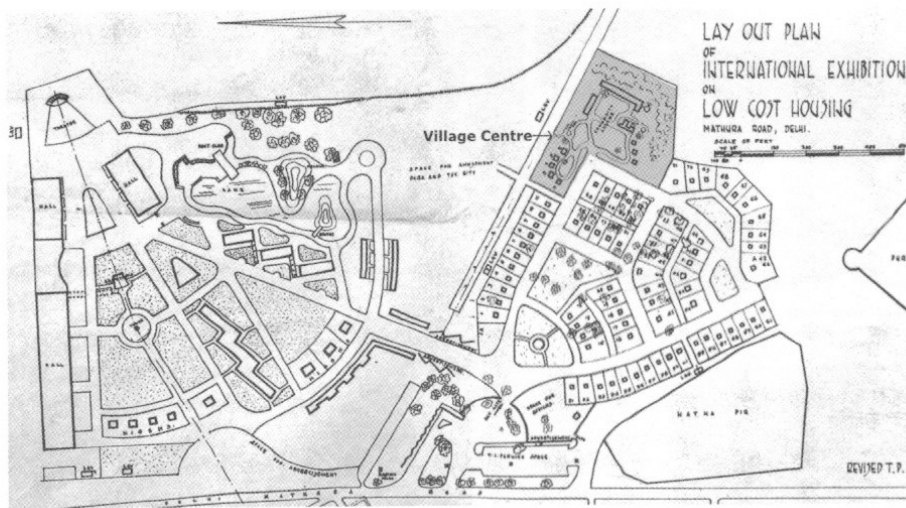
Source: British National Archives Image Library (WORK25-209).

by the Live Architecture Exhibition) to create a model village that dramatized a housing and community improvement program in terms of daily village life. Based on discussions with WHO regarding environmental sanitation, she identified four areas to stress: water supply, latrine construction, ventilation and food storage. Another official suggested a maternity and child welfare centre. ILO proposed training workshops. The Indian government readily approved Tyrwhitt's proposal, which would serve as a centrepiece of their exhibition.

Forty 'grids' were displayed at CIAM 9; Weissmann was to bring to India those deemed suitable to exhibit in the exhibition assembly hall. Tyrwhitt advised that the most interesting ones were large-scale housing projects from Morocco and Algiers as well as Chandigarh, the new Punjab state capital city largely designed by Le Corbusier and MARS members Max Fry and Jane Drew. At the congress Tyrwhitt arranged for B.V. Doshi, an Indian architect working with Le Corbusier in Paris who was returning to India, to design two model houses for the exhibition. Previously she planned for Fry and Drew's Chandigarh team to build three model houses. Tyrwhitt thus ensured that the exhibition spurred the cross-fertilization of design ideas and dissemination of prototypes suitable for Indian conditions that combined a modernist aesthetic with local building materials and methods. She also sought to engage diverse CIAM voices to help shape the discourse at the UN seminar, and recommended that invitations be sent to CIAM members based in Japan, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Vietnam, a country not officially recognized by the UN.

Tyrwhitt focused on the design of the model village, particularly its centre: a CIAM-inspired Core set amid experimental houses showing improvements that could be implemented within the means of an average village (Figure 13.3). Notably, she sought and found a young architect willing and able to create 'buildings similar to those that can actually be erected by the villagers themselves', constructed of sundried bricks or rammed earth, and roofed with thatch or local tiles.<sup>10</sup> More broadly, she explained that the Village Centre demonstrated the benefits of integrating rural housing policy into the political and economic revival of village life, based on 'the restoration of responsibility to the village *panchayat* – a restoration of the self-reliance and pride that made the Indian village of earlier times the real home of thought and culture in India'. Tyrwhitt collaborated with the Delhi offices of the UN specialized agencies and the corresponding departments of Indian government: Education, Labour, Health and Agriculture.

As she brought the Village Centre to life, Tyrwhitt must have reflected on Geddes's work in India, especially his contribution to Rabindranath Tagore's Institute of Rural Reconstruction at Sriniketan. Gandhi, whose Basic Schools adopted Tagore's technique of teaching through crafts, was a direct source of inspiration. Tyrwhitt visited Sevagram – which Gandhi intended as a model village – to select ideas to incorporate. Tyrwhitt replicated Gandhi's hut and adopted several basic schools-related features, for example, setting the window sills in the schools at 18 inches above the ground so light could shine directly onto the children's work. She also included a moveable trench latrine, a design for a cowshed with moveable mangers, a smokeless chulha (stove), a simple way of providing light and ventilation at ground level for washing pots in a kitchen, and a method for collecting methane gas from cow dung to be used as fuel.



13.3 The model village was the focal point for the International Exhibition of Low Cost Housing in New Delhi 1954

Source: Royal Institute of British Architects Library Drawings and Archive Collections (TyJ/38/2).

Tyrwhitt (1985: 431) explained: 'The integration of mind and body, hands and the good earth is shown by the careful siting and design of a multiple purpose basic school building', and classes of adults and children were in full swing there. There was also 'a small health clinic planned in relation to environmental sanitation needs' and attended by a village nurse and 'a crafts centre, where sheds were manned by village craftsmen, and in which production was centred on housing; and a seed store and manure producing plant, linked to the cultivation of a vegetable garden which ... restarts the cycle of life'. The simple buildings enclosed an open space with a low platform, the chabutra, or traditional village festival stage, where village performers told stories, sang songs, danced and performed acrobatics. While rustic, the Village Centre embodied the modernist social imagination that Tyrwhitt championed (Figure 13.4).

The President of India opened the Housing Exhibition the day before the seminar began in the assembly hall, which featured exhibits from 19 countries as well as displays from most of the Indian state governments, and several Indian national government agencies and research institutes. These displays provided a valuable visual background that the seminar committees frequently referred to during their discussions. The main topics of the seminar were the use of local building materials, housing and community improvement programs, and urban land policies. Committees also discussed house design; community services and facilities; housing programs; regional development; and planning education.

The exhibition was open to the public and was attended by professionals and public officials concerned with housing from throughout India and the ECAFE region, many of whom also attended the UN seminar and a subsequent IFHTP Southeast Regional Conference. Tyrwhitt personally guided Prime Minister Nehru through the Village Centre (Figure 13.5).

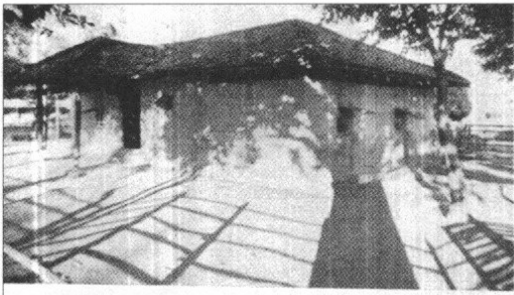


Figure 6. General view  
Delia Tyrwhitt, London



Figure 7. Close-up showing veranda,  
eaves ventilation and window screens  
Delia Tyrwhitt, London



Figure 8.  
Women helpers

Figure 11.  
Tile making  
Delia Tyrwhitt, London

Figure 9.  
Preparing the site



Figure 10. The health  
clinic under construction  
United Nations

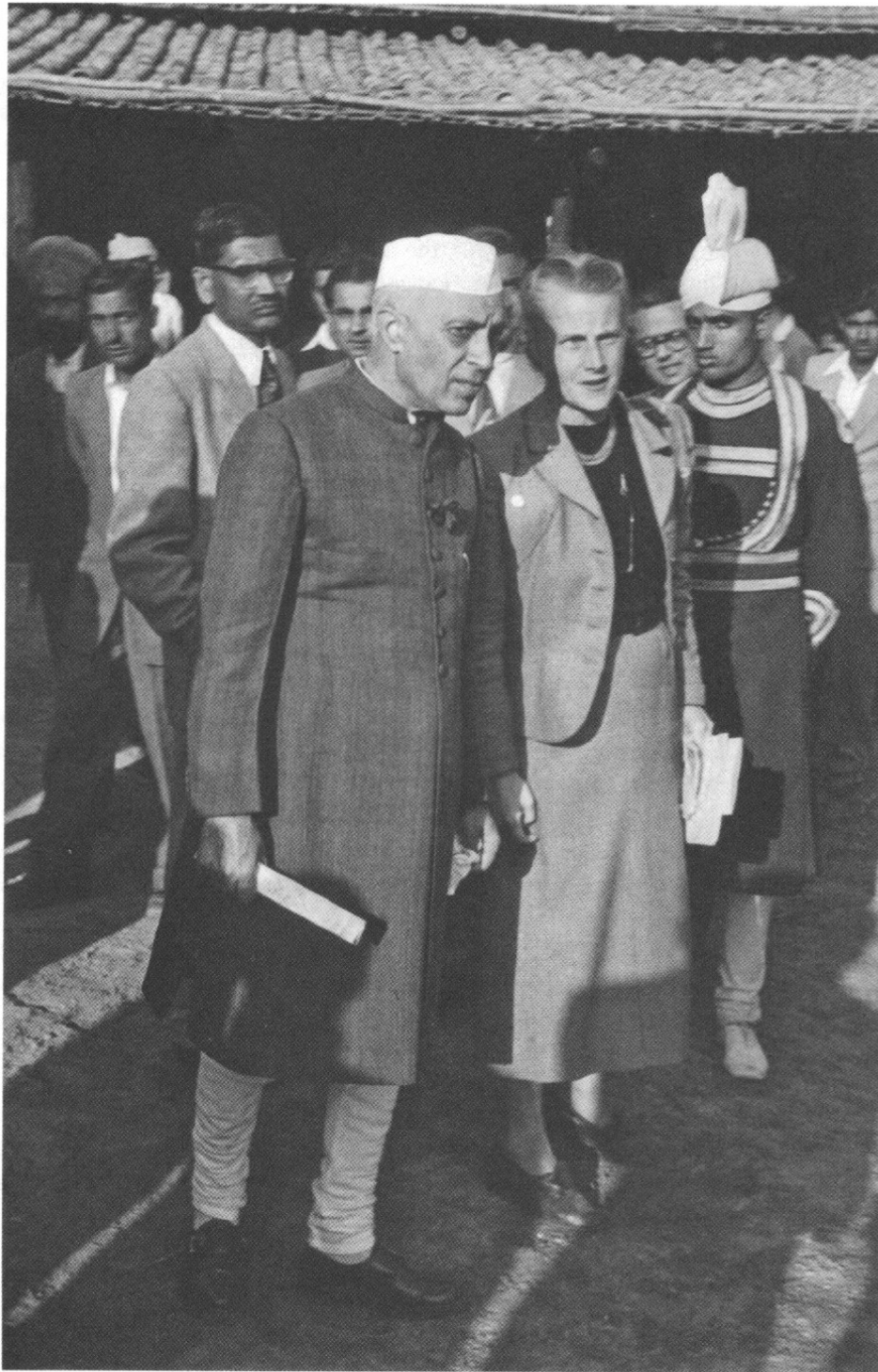


Figure 12.  
Pottery

Figure 13.  
Spinning  
Delia Tyrwhitt,  
London

13.4 Photographs of the Village Centre showing buildings and craftsmen at work:  
these were taken by Delia Tyrwhitt, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt's sister-in-law

Source: The International Exhibition of Low Cost Housing, New Delhi, India. 1955. *Housing, Building and Planning*, 9, 19-25 (22).



13.5 Jaqueline Tyrwhitt guiding Prime Minister Nehru through the Village Centre at the International Exhibition of Low Cost Housing, Delhi 1954

*Source: United Nations Photo Library (NICA 337730).*

Tyrwhitt reported that the Village Centre appeared to capture the imagination of several institutions as a 'practical and creative method of discovering and utilizing the energies already existing in villages to an improvement of the rural standard of living'.<sup>11</sup> The Community Projects Administration committed to reproducing a Village Centre in Mukhmailpur; the Kasturba Memorial Trust intended to build one near their Training College for women in Guzerat; and the Indian Co-operative Union wanted to maintain the Village Centre as a working unit. The exhibition also had a lasting impact. In the early 1960s, the announcement of a Low Income Housing Scheme by the Ministry of Works, Housing and Supply generated great demand for the plans of the model houses constructed at the International Exhibition, which resulted in them being published in a small book (Model Houses 1963).

The exhibition and UN seminar provided a rare opportunity for an international gathering of experts collectively to study innovative projects in the developing world that integrated regional planning, urban design, community development and resource management in the field. Weissmann affirmed in his closing remarks: 'The intensity of the urban housing crisis in Asia, coupled with the growing magnitude of the rural problem, suggests the need for a bolder and more imaginative approach ... The seminar has shown that the less developed countries are evolving new and more rational approaches and methods of their own more suited to their circumstances and needs.'<sup>12</sup>

ECAFE met following the UN seminar to translate its conclusions into recommendations to governments in the region (notably, one policy endorsed was a proposal to establish a planning school in Southeast Asia, which Tyrwhitt later helped establish in Indonesia through a partnership between the UN and Harvard). Tyrwhitt, Weissmann and ECAFE staff crafted recommendations for *comprehensive* housing and community improvement programs within a regional planning framework that reconciled economic and social requirements. Their recommendations were incorporated in the long range program in community development – defined as 'a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities, to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities' – approved by ECOSOC in May 1957 as well as in the UN's Long-Range International Program of Concerted Action in the Field of Housing and Related Facilities, adopted in 1959. Weissmann (1978) credited Tyrwhitt as being among those who shaped this evolving UN policy. The four exhibitions profiled here, culminating in the Village Centre, helped build consensus about the set of planning ideals and methods that formed the basis of this policy.

## CONCLUSION

Tyrwhitt used these four linked exhibitions as venues for the articulation of the concept of 'the Core' – the physical and social open space where people practice democracy – in Geddesian planning terms. Tyrwhitt constructed a modern myth about the core as 'an essential part of a healthy community' through a succession

of initiatives: from the kernel of a 'common meeting place' for neighbours exemplified by the Peckham Health Centre, to the vision of the ideal city and actual city 'seen as one' in 'Plans of the Cities of Europe', to the concept of the core at various 'scale levels' of community within the urban constellation at CIAM 8, to the physical scale model of the Heart of the Town at the Festival of Britain. In New Delhi she dramatized the transformative potential of the Core to tap the energies already existing in villages with access to limited resources. Along the way the Core became emblematic of the synthesis of Geddesian and modernist planning thought which became incorporated in UN community development policy and influenced planning practice and pedagogy worldwide. More generally, these four linked exhibitions cumulatively modelled a way of thinking we now associate with sustainable development, appropriate technology, and post-modern globalism.

## NOTES

- 1 Tyrwhitt, J. 1951. Open Session Background of the Core. CIAM 8. Hoddeston, UK, 9 July. RIBA Library Tyrwhitt Collection [TyJ/45/6].
- 2 Sert, J.L. 1951. Letter to J. Tyrwhitt, 1 August. Harvard University Francis Loeb Library Special Collections CIAM C009.
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