



Global Dimensions in Housing

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Approaches
in Design and
Theory from
Europe to the
Pacific Rim

CHAPTER ONE

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STOCKHOLM AND VIENNA'S LARGE
COURTYARD BLOCKS

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to look back on some valuable accomplishments of metropolitan housing districts built at the beginning of the twentieth century in Stockholm (1916–1930) and Vienna (1919–1933). Far from revising the narratives of modern history, those first attempts demonstrate how housing turned into a core-concern from that time, unlike the historians take as a starting point all those examples employing radical and functionalist models. The apt motto “from the block to the bar” marked out this transition.¹ On the occasion of the *IFHTP – International Federation for Housing and Town Planning* in Vienna (1926) and later the first *CIAM – Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (1928) in Switzerland, there emerged a worldwide effort of theory and policy to respond to a serious housing shortage. Two contrasting urban and typological models animated the debate: the large courtyard block and the north–south oriented bars. Nevertheless, leading avant-garde figures mostly shifted their attention away from the densely built-up block of the nineteenth-century city in favour of green settlements and housing estates.

The goal of this contribution is hence to examine in greater detail the large courtyard block through two case studies, one from Stockholm and one from Vienna. This type of building

1 See: Gropius, Walter. “Die Wohnformen: Flach-, Mittel- oder Hochbau?”. *Das Neue Berlin*, 4 (1929), 74–80. May, Ernst. “Fünf Jahre Wohnungsbautätigkeit in Frankfurt am Main”. *Das Neue Frankfurt*, 2–3, Febr-März (1930), 21–55.