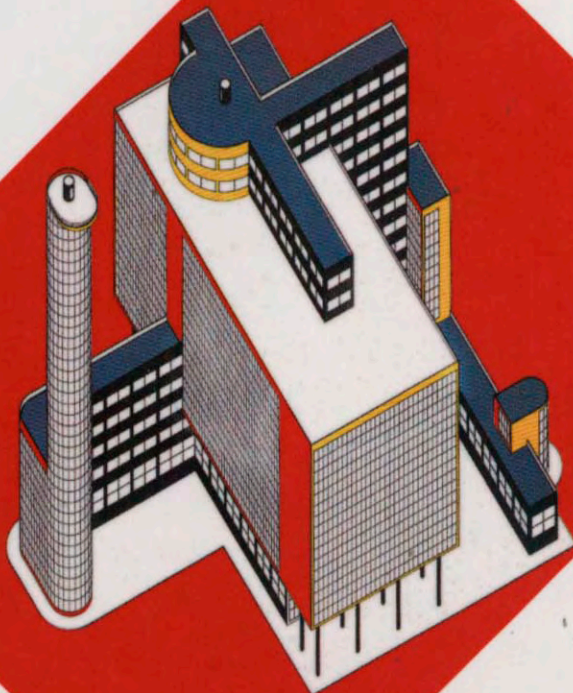


Kenneth Frampton

Fourth edition

Revised, expanded
and updated

modern architecture



A CRITICAL HISTORY

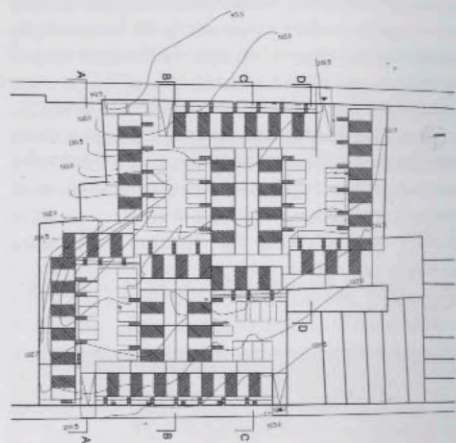
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Puchenau settlement built in stages along the Danube near Linz to the designs of the Austrian architect Roland Rainer, the first phase of which was completed between 1964 and 1967. What is remarkable about this carpet housing model is the way in which it may be brought to serve the housing needs of different classes, from the urban poor of the Third World, who continue to construct low-rise 'squatter' settlements, to the urbanized middle classes of the developed world, who are served by the car and occasionally by public transport. It is perhaps indicative of certain cultural differences that while this mode of settlement may be found fairly frequently throughout Continental Europe, it has generally been resisted as a residential pattern in Anglo-American society. As the transportation specialist Brian Richards noted in his first study, *New Movement in Cities* of 1966, it is economically impossible for public transport to complement car use without the residential land-settlement pattern having a much higher density than the average suburban subdivision.

One of the most refined examples of low-rise, high-density housing of recent date is the 26-house, 3-storey-high development completed in 2005 on the Borneo Peninsula in Amsterdam to the designs of the Catalan architect Josep Lluís Mateo. What is remarkable about this complex, aside from its density and the ingenuity of its

section, are the sympathetic material finishes employed on its exterior. To the south and east the façades are rendered in Canadian red cedar, while to the north and west the building is clad in red engineering brick. Where the latter emulates the Dutch brick tradition, the narrow horizontal boarding of the former provides a partially louvered façade, punctuated by sliding picture windows on the ground floor and first floors. One of the most surprising features of this development is the natural illumination of the subterranean car park through roof-top patios lined with glass lenses.

While considering the genre of low-rise, high-density housing as designed for low-income



402, 403 Aravena, Elemental housing project, Iquique, Tarapacá, 2004. Site plan and elevation.



urban populations, we should acknowledge two separate experimental housing estates, built in Latin America some forty years apart, that now appear as mirror images of one another: the Previ estate outside Lima, Peru, built in 1974 during the government of Fernando Belaunde Terry, under the direction of the British architect Peter Land; and the recent realization of a prototypical settlement, known as Elemental, designed by the Chilean architect Alejandro Aravena and built under the auspices of the Chilean Ministry of Housing in Iquique, Tarapacá, in 2004. The Previ estate entailed the construction of twenty-three different types of low-rise units designed by various teams of Peruvian and international architects, while the Elemental project represented a collective effort to provide affordable dwellings without overloading the occupants with debt. The first phase at Iquique comprises one hundred 'starter' units, each 30 square metres (323 square feet) in area and built at the cost of \$7,500 per unit. These three-storey narrow-fronted megara, built of concrete block, provide for a living room/kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom and an access stair. In order to allow for enlargements by the occupants themselves, the units are spaced apart at intervals equal to their width, so that additional rooms may be constructed easily between the party walls. The block layout also yields a series of small squares capable of functioning as communal spaces.

The most crucial change that has occurred during the past two decades is the engineered eclipse of subsidized rental housing, which had been central to welfare state policy between 1945 and 1975. This has now been replaced, more or less universally, by the 'housing market', which has done little to alleviate either the perennial housing crisis or the proliferation of suburban sprawl. A one-off exception is the medium-rise Quartier McNair, completed in the Zehlendorf district of Berlin in 2003 to the designs of Baumschlager and Eberle together with the Swiss architect Anatole du Fresne, who was formerly a member of Atelier 5. The settlement consists of an orthogonal permutation of 263 dwellings of two to three storeys, of varying plan type and size, arranged in an alternating block pattern reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Pessac housing of 1926 (see p. 154). Despite the green roofs and the



404 Baumschlager, Eberle and du Fresne, Quartier McNair, Zehlendorf, Berlin, 2003.

deployment of solar panels, it is regrettable from the viewpoint of sustainability that the parking areas were not finished with permeable perforated-concrete paving rather than asphalt. In Switzerland this method, facilitating the absorption of storm water and the seeding of parking areas with grass, is virtually a standard technique; it is only marginally more expensive and is capable of offsetting the 'urban heat-island effect' that is exacerbated by the use of asphalt. In the final analysis, it is the overall form rather than the detail that allows the Quartier McNair to function as a potential alternative 'market' model for inner-city housing. Not least among its virtues is the fact that it is but twenty minutes by public transport from the centre of Berlin.

In terms of providing for the housing needs of the middle classes, Baumschlager and Eberle have designed some of the most viable medium-rise housing settlements of any practice in