8.1

8.2

Figure 8.1 Town Hall, Saynatsalo
Figure 8.2 Flats, Lenton, Nottingham

cared for urban design: their commitment was to the individual building. Even the humanist among the Modern masters, Alvar Aalto rarely managed to create rewarding urban spaces. The Town Hall in Saynatsalo is a delightful exception where an intimate urban space is created with simple modern elements decorated by fine brickwork (Figure 8.1).

Many of the architects associated with the Modern Movement expressed their interpretation of socialism more in designs for cities than in their architecture. This understanding of socialism led to a puritanical zeal which defined the basic needs of the masses as adequate housing, work, etc. In addition, the masses would be protected from the decadence of the late nineteenth century urban environment that epitomized the taste and dominance of the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, it was argued that the construction of pre-fabricated buildings with the streamlined elegance of the machine would bring great architecture to all. The individually designed, crafted and embellished building was to be a thing of the past. Unfortunately the result was not the brave new world of the utopian architect. The masses were allocated a shoe box in the sky, which was all the state could provide (Figure 8.2). The brave new world was closer to the chiding of Betjemin:

> Remove those cottages, a huddled throng!
> Too many babies have been born in there,
> Too many coffins, bumping down the stair . . .
>
> I have a Vision of the Future, chum,
> The workers' flats in fields of soya beans
> Tower up like silver pencils, score on score.
> And surging Millions hear the challenge come
> From microphones in communal canteens
> 'No right! No wrong! All's perfect evermore'.

In Britain the full development of Modern Architecture never quite materialized, or rather was fully realized only by a small number of practices on a few occasions. Many of the ideas and ideals of the 'Modern Movement' were compromised and diluted in the conservative social climate of this country. Planners in Britain followed quite a different educational path from their architectural colleagues. The values planners held were influenced by Geddes, Howard, Abercrombie and Mumford and their aesthetic sensibilities formed by the ideas of Sitte and Unwin (Geddes, 1949; Howard, 1965; Abercrombie, 1944; Mumford, 1938; Sitte, 1901; Unwin, 1909). As a group, the planning profession were part of the establishment and tended to follow a 'middle of the road' political stance. The architect/planners, those responsible for the New Towns and major public developments in the 1950s and 1960s, sat rather uneasily between the two philosophies. Zoning, the need for roads and an efficient transport network, a multi-storey solution to density problems and modern structures were largely accepted by the New Town designers and the city architects in charge of redevelopment. A number of architect/planners, such as Gibberd and Holford, accepted the writings of Sitte and tried the impossible task of integrating them with the more revolutionary architectural ideas originating in Europe. In many instances the results were not successful. In Britain these ideas helped to shape the new towns and large scale redevelopment required after the war. Two such examples are the rebuilt town centre at Coventry by Gibson and the completely New Town centre in Harlow by Gibberd (Figure 8.3). Both schemes attempted to build urban spaces based on the ideas of Sitte. They failed for a number of reasons: the urban spaces formed in the development were surrounded by a single use or by uses which died at night; the precincts were isolated from the rest of the urban area by heavily trafficked roads and car parks; the architecture was faceless and without distinction; the idea of the multi-function, crowded and busy street was rejected. The

8.3

8.4

Figure 8.3 Town centre, Stevenage
Figure 8.4 Paternoster Square, London