

RE-READING OF THE PRUITT-IGOE HOUSING PROJECT
(ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, U.S.) IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNISM

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF NATURAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE
IN
ARCHITECTURE

DECEMBER 2016

Approval of the thesis:

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ABSTRACT

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December 2016, 122 pages

This study examines one of the first examples of massive public housing projects in the 1950s, which was originally designed and built for middle and low income groups in North America. The Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project was selected as a significant sample in terms of the defined built environment. It came into existence as a social tool with its underlying discourse, architectural style and construction technique in the post-World War II U.S. However, due to a public decision, within twenty years, it was razed on the grounds of increasing vandalism, sexual assaults and muggings. This research mainly focuses on this ironic gap between the beginning and end points of the project in order to inquire into twentieth-century modernist urbanism as the underlying social project. In this manner, it proposes to place post-war modernist urbanism and architecture in the re-reading of Modernism and to deconstruct the meaning, represented in the ideas and underlying discourses of Pruitt-Igoe in Modernism. This inquiry is mainly conducted through the content of modernist urbanism, modernist architecture of the twentieth century and its social and spatial implications in the U.S.

Keywords: Pruitt-Igoe, social engineering, (public) housing, Modernism, post-war U.S., twentieth-century American Modernism, modernist urbanism, modernist architecture

ÖZ

PRUITT-IGOE SOSYAL KONUTUNUN MODERNİSM BAĞLAMINDA TEKRAR ELE ALINMASI

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Aralık 2016, 122 sayfa

Bu çalışma 1950'lilerin Kuzey Amerika'sında orta ve alt gelirli insanlar için tasarlanıp inşa edilen ilk yüksek yoğunluklu sosyal konut projelerinden birini inceler. Bu minvalde, bulunduğu yapılı çevrenin en çarpıcı örneklerinden biri olan Pruitt-Igoe sosyal konutunu ele alır. Pruitt-Igoe, alt söylemleri, mimari stili ve yapım tekniği ile birlikte İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası Amerika Birleşik Devletleri' nin en önemli sosyal araçlarından biri olarak kurgulanmıştır. Fakat proje yaklaşık yirmi yıl içinde artan vandalizm, cinsel-fiziksel saldırı ve soygunlar sebep gösterilerek devlet eliyle yıkılmıştır. Bu inceleme projenin başlangıç ve bitiş noktaları arasında oluşan bu ironik boşluğu yirminci yüzyıl Amerikan Modernizmini ve altında yatan sosyal projeyi sorgulamak üzere mercek altına alır. Bu bağlamda savaş sonrası modernist şehircilik ve modernist mimarlığın, Modernizm okuması içerisindeki yerini keşfetmeyi ve Pruitt-Igoe' nun anlamının, temsil ettiği fikirlerin ve temelini oluşturan bağlamların çözümlemelerini yapmayı amaçlar. Bu okuma genel olarak savaş sonrası Amerikan modernist şehirciliği, modernist mimarlığı ve bunun sosyal-mekansal çıkarımları üzerinden yapılır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pruitt-Igoe, sosyal mhendislik, Modernizm, savař sonrası Amerika, yirminci yzyıl American Modernismi, modernist řehircilik, modernist mimarlık.

To My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciations to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargin for his tremendous support, incredible tolerance, valuable comments, suggestions and guidance throughout this study. It has been an exclusive privilege for me to study under his supervision.

I also would like to thank to Prof. Dr. Adnan Barlas, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erdem Erten, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ela Alanyalı Aral, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Namık Erkal Günay and Assist. Prof. Dr. Hatice Senem Doyduk for their inspiring critics and contributions which helped very much to finalize my study.

I owe my deepest appreciation and thanks to my family for their help, patience and belief in me. Knowing that their support is always with me deserves special thanks.

I am also grateful to Aykut Baran, Gamze Kahya and Alper Erem for their tireless support and motivation to write my thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project was one of the most striking massive public housing projects which was originally designed and built for middle and low income groups in North America. It was also one of the most postulated icons of post-World War II U.S. modernist urbanism and architecture due to its alleged underlying discourse, architectural style and construction techniques. However, it was demolished within approximately twenty years due to a public decree on grounds of increasing vandalism, sexual assaults and muggings. At the dawn of this destruction, it was announced as an appeal to “the end of Modernism” with Anti-Modernism starting to occupy a significant place in an academic world.

This thesis re-reads the remarkable gap between the beginning points and end points of Pruitt-Igoe in the context of Modernism. It therefore reads Pruitt-Igoe in order to grasp the translation of the context of Modernism in post-war modernist urbanism and architecture. Then, it observes the project until its destruction in order to comprehend the evolution of U.S. Modernism within this period. The goal of this tracing is not to make any comparison between these periods. Instead, it aims to determine whether or not a theoretical basis and the virtual practice of the twentieth-century U.S. Modernism is germane to the origin of this period, early twentieth century European Modernism, as claimed, and consequently whether or not Pruitt-Igoe represented Modernism and Modern Architecture of the twentieth century.

Due to the aforementioned setting of Pruitt-Igoe, the general performance of the project has been widely accepted as the incarnation of the fiasco or triumph of

Modernism and Modern Architecture of the twentieth century. Much academic research has approached Pruitt-Igoe within this framework. The first remarkable use of it in the corpus of Modernism was in *Collage City* (1976)¹ by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter. Even though the name of Pruitt-Igoe is not mentioned in the book directly, a demolition photograph regarding it is used in the argument for Modern Architecture. Rowe and Koetter criticize New Architecture and the City of Modern Architecture by referring to determinist roles of planners and architects, and interpretation of urbanism and architecture as mere instruments of this scenario. They structure their arguments on this modernization process by externalizing other “world-historical” — political, economic and social — processes which have affected the continuum. As a consequence, the investigation into the failure of Modern Architecture, which is also supposed to include Pruitt-Igoe, deficiently handles its cause and effect relation. In the end, it gives an impression of the fact that the basic reasons for the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe are based on the role of planners and architects, and it created the perception that there is no need for further readings on this case.

One of the leaders of this approach is Charles Jencks's, who regards the content of Modernism and Modern Architecture as the cause of this failure. Then, he announces “the end of Modernism” through the photographic drama of the explosive demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe blocks in 1972.

Happily, we can date the death of Modern Architecture to a precise moment in time. Unlike the legal death of a person, which is becoming a complex affair of brain waves versus heartbeats, Modern Architecture went out with a bang. That many people didn't notice, and no one was seen to mourn, does not make the sudden extinction any less of a fact, and that many designers are still trying to administer the kiss of life does not mean that it has been miraculously resurrected. No, it expired finally and completely in 1972, after having been flogged to death remorselessly for ten years by critics

¹ See Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *College City* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976).

such as Jane Jacobs; and the fact that many so-called Modern architects still go around practising a trade as if it were alive can be taken as one of the great curiosities of our age (like the British monarchy giving life-prolonging drugs to “The Royal Company of Archers” of “The Extra Women of the Bedchamber”).

Modern Architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 pm (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt-Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final *coup de grace* by dynamite. Previously it had been vandalised, mutilated and defeated by its black inhabitants, and although millions of dollars were pumped back, trying to keep it alive (fixing the broken elevators, repairing smashed windows, repainting), it was finally put out of its misery. Boom, boom, boom.²

Although it falls out of our scope to re-examine the position of Jencks in the argument of Modernism and Anti-Modernism, it is useful to see the grounds used by Jencks on this claim in order to estimate the story of the stigmatization of Pruitt-Igoe. In his book *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*³, Jencks also refers to a review of Malcolm MacEwen on the subject of the “English view of what was wrong with the Modern Movement” in order to support his readings on Pruitt-Igoe and Modern Architecture.

He represents two main problems as a consequence, one of which is “the way the Modern Movement has an impoverished architectural language on the level of form” and the other is the “impoverishment on the level of content, the social goals for which it was actually built.”⁴ He primarily criticizes this reductive posture of the Modern Movement and remarks on its immediate threats. However, he ignores the dynamics of the discourse of Modernism and uses the same grounds — that he criticizes it in the first place — to demonstrate its failure. He also reads the Modern Architecture through the various examples — by considering equal the approaches

² Charles Jencks, “The Death of Modern Architecture,” in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 6th ed. (London: Academy Editions, 1991), 23.

³ *Ibid.*, 23-27.

⁴ *Ibid.*

and ground statements of these varied names in the corpus of Modernism — on the basis of the same apprehension to which he objects. There is no doubt that the temptation of the staggering story of Pruitt-Igoe paves the way for the evolution of this self-contradictory treatment.

Similarly, Tom Wolfe also regards Pruitt-Igoe as the evidence of the failure of Modern Architecture. In *From Bauhaus to Our House*⁵, he attacks post-war U.S. Modernism by means of a style-based measuring system. In this manner, he accuses the International Style, which is submitted as a type of utopia, and its “German-inspired” architectural language.

In addition to the arguments in the context of Modernism, there are also a number of other driven discussions related to the subject of Pruitt-Igoe and its dramatic end. One of these is based on the design features of safe and good housing. Oscar Newman reads Pruitt-Igoe by highlighting the lack of the defensibility of space. In *Creating Defensible Space*⁶, he investigates the physical design features and types of building as a respond to social violence at Pruitt-Igoe as well as other high-rise public housing projects. Additionally, he emphasizes the role of the economic and social conditions of the inhabitants in the emergence of their behavior patterns. Along these lines, William L. Yancey mentions the lack of defensible space early in its destruction. According to him, it afflicted the scripted relations of Pruitt-Igoe with the remaining community.⁷

Other vantage points to the enigma of Pruitt-Igoe concern the surveys of the public housing policy, racial and social inequalities, segregation, urban renewal and

⁵ See Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981).

⁶ See Oscar Newman, *Creating Defensible Space* (U.S. Department of Housing and Development Office of Policy Development and Research, 1966).

⁷ See William L. Yancey, “Architecture, Interaction and Social Control: The Case of a Large-scale Housing Project,” *Environmental and Behavior* 3, no. 1 (March 1971): 3-21.

economic restructuring. While Eugene J. Meehan⁸ focuses on the federal public housing policy for an explanation, Mary C. Comerio⁹ emphasizes that political, economic and social structures of society played a significant role in this scenario. For this reason, she states that it is too misleading to judge Pruitt-Igoe and the other public housing projects without these structures.

In a similar vein, Lee Rainwater centers upon the socio-economic inequality due to the racial discrimination in *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Family Life in a Federal Slum*.¹⁰ He believes that most of the problems of Pruitt-Igoe originated from this segregation, so he aimed to access adequate information from the personal lives of the residents of Pruitt-Igoe in order to eliminate these problems in the future. Finally but no less importantly, Katherine G. Bristol¹¹ stresses the point that the presented myth of Pruitt-Igoe over the fiasco of Modern Architecture is merely a mystification. The political and economic inputs of institutions and structures of the U.S. Government directed every stage of Pruitt-Igoe, rather than the social role of architects or the determinist force of architecture.

Beyond these widespread research areas, this thesis also aims to discover the place of Pruitt-Igoe in the concept of Modernism, rather than handling Pruitt-Igoe with its acceptances uncomprehendingly made in the corpus of Modernism or staying focused on any detailed factor which impinged on the process. It mainly centers upon the gap between the beginning and end points of the project to reveal the political, economic and social factors that guided it in the phases of its conception, construction, operation and destruction. Thus, it forms an opinion about the

⁸ See Eugene J. Meehan, *Public Housing Policy: Convention Versus Reality* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University, 1975). See also Eugene J. Meehan, *The Quality of Federal Policymaking: Programmed Failure in Public Housing* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1979).

⁹ See Mary C. Comerio, "Pruitt-Igoe and Other Stories," *JAE* 34, no. 4 (Summer, 1981): 26-31.

¹⁰ Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Family Life in a Federal Slum* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970).

¹¹ Katharine G. Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 44, no. 3 (May 1991): 163-171.

underlying discourses and impulses that shaped the modernist urbanism and architecture of the post-war U.S.

To that end, it begins from the construction of American Modernism, the modernist urbanism and modernist architecture of the post-war U.S. Then, it addresses the context of social engineering with its political, economic and social footings in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. By these means, it finds out the context of social engineering with its primary object, manner of action and its main tools. Thus, it explores its place in the notion of modernity. Finally, it queries Pruitt-Igoe's place in the context of Modernism, and deciphers the modernist urbanism and architecture of the U.S.

This inquiry is therefore mainly conducted through the content of modernist urbanism, the modernist architecture of the twentieth century and its social and spatial implications in the U.S. The discussion is accounted for through the approach of Marshall Berman to the context of Modernism — on the basis of modernity, Modernism and modernization — as a guide. Based on the fact that Pruitt-Igoe was a public housing project, the argument conducted is put in the center of the context of (public) housing arguments — as a part of habiting.

To make the position of the project in the contexts of Modernism and public housing clear, it is useful to summarize briefly the story of Pruitt-Igoe. The housing project was carried out under a housing program on the basis of social engineering in the post-war U.S. It formerly consisted of two separate projects: the Captain Wendell Oliver Pruitt Homes and the William Leo Igoe Apartments. Both names stemmed from the figures who took important places in the history of St. Louis and the post-war U.S.

Captain Wendell Oliver Pruitt was an African-American military pilot and one of the Tuskegee Airmen. The Airmen were constituted in the then racially segregated

American army. Pruitt took a determining role in World War II, insomuch that St. Louis announced a memorial day on December 12, 1944 in his honor referring to his extraordinary success in the war.¹² William Leo Igoe was also a significant political persona in St. Louis and throughout the country. His parents migrated to the U.S. from Ireland before he was born. The Igoe family was one of the groups who experienced the famous American dream. The little boy of the Igoe family — William Leo Igoe — sprung from being a penurious immigrant to a venerable character of the U.S. He affected many political and economic issues of the period at local, governmental and national levels.¹³ In addition to the historical significance of these names, their selection was also considered to be provocative due to the imputed meanings of these characters in the post-war U.S. The honored names also embodied and propagandized the values acquired by American Modernism in its foundational phases.

Based upon racial segregation in housing, the housing complex for African-American tenants was named the Captain Wendell Oliver Pruitt Homes, while the those for white tenants was named as the William Leo Igoe Apartments.¹⁴ However, both projects had identical schemes due to the “separate but equal” doctrine confirmed by the decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court*¹⁵ in 1896. As a consequence, they became the fourth and the fifth housing projects carried out in St. Louis on the back of the Carr Square Village (1942), the Clinton Peabody Terrace (1942) and the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments (1953). Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments were placed side by side in the same slum area known as Kerry Patch. Pruitt Homes was in the middle of Jefferson Avenue, Dickson Street, 21st Street and

¹² Adrienne Warrts, *Pruitt, Wendell Oliver (1920-1945)*, An Online Reference Guide to African American History. On-line, available from the Internet, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/pruitt-wendell-oliver-1920-1945>, accessed 4 June 2016.

¹³ A. A. Thompson, “The Life and Career of William L. Igoe, the Reluctant Boss, 1879-1953” (Order No. 8101277, Saint Louis University, 1980), iv-9.

¹⁴ Mary Ann McGivern, “Whatever Happened to Pruitt-Igoe?” (St. Louis: Western Historical Collections).

¹⁵ *Plessey v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537. On-line, available from the Internet, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/163/537/>, accessed 31 May 2016.

the alley south of Biddle Street. Nevertheless, Igoe Apartments was in the middle of Jefferson Avenue, Cass Avenue, Dickson Street, and 21st Street.

Both projects were conceptualized by Minoru Yamasaki, George F. Hellmuth and Joseph W. Leinweber after a commission decision of the St. Louis Housing Authority in 1950.¹⁶ However, final forms for the projects were not put into practice only by the decisions of the design team. The processes of design and materialization had many sequences backstage. Even the reputation of Pruitt-Igoe for being one massive high-rise public housing project was not, in fact, the root idea; it was only a final result.

They were subject to many revision requests from the very outset. Many of these restrictions were relevant to the economy-based concerns of the post-war U.S. The concept of public housing by holding on to the Lockean tradition in the mean time created an intense conflict in the housing policy of the Government. In addition, the ongoing Korean War (1950-1953) created an imbalance between stockpile and currency. This status resulted in a more fragile pecuniary relationship between the liberal society of the post-war U.S. and the Government.¹⁷ Therefore, maintaining the capital budget played a significant role in all phases of post-war public housing.

These economic apprehensions also led to the mission of stabilizing the economy in order to maintain the achieved hegemony — in favor of economic enlargement, less-materialized post-war traumas and influxes of qualified people who were thinkers, intellectuals, architects and scientists — of the post-war U.S. over other warring countries. As a result, the driven economic strategies conceived the apparatus of modernization by formulating the indicators of post-war civilization. Modern

¹⁶ As stated in Bristol, *op. cit.*, 164.

¹⁷ For more information see “Can You Afford to Pay Somebody Else's Rent?” *St. Joseph News-Press*, 7 August 1951.

technology — as a *tour de force* having originated from economic hegemony — predefined post-war (public) housing.

In this manner, Pruitt-Igoe was portrayed by the *modus vivendi* set forth within the bounds of possibility of this steered technology. Although the notion of housing was not always the center of these arguments, the state of affairs conducted a scripted habitat of the projects presented to their user groups under the scope of social engineering. The roles of other ruling makers, who were acting in this manner and including the Government, the City and the Authority of Housing, were some of the significant determinants of the progression.

As a consequence of these factors, the design process was brought under control by the St. Louis Housing Authority at the very outset. There were a number of non-negotiable decisions and restrictions related to the locations and sizes of the project sites, the sizes of habitat units and stipulated densities of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments. As a final outcome, the first proposals of both projects made by Yamasaki and his team — a combination of high-rise, mid-rise and garden buildings with 30 people per acre — were transformed into the high-rise complexes with 55 people per acre.¹⁸

The union of the projects, which were originally separated according to race differentiations under one massive housing complex, was another unsung addition to the scenario of the projects. Based upon *Brown v. Board Education*¹⁹ in 1954, legal racial segregation started to be abolished in sections. After the series of Supreme Court decisions, the praxis of “separate but equal facilities” was annulled and two separate housing projects were transformed into a mixed-race housing project²⁰ in St.

¹⁸ As stated in Bristol, *op. cit.*, 164.

¹⁹ *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* 347 U.S. 483. On-line, available from the Internet, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/347/483/case.html>, accessed 14 August 2016.

²⁰ Henry J. Schmandt and George D. Wendel, “The Pruitt-Igoe Housing Complex, 1954-1976” (St. Louis: Saint Louis University: Center for Urban Programs, 1976).

Louis where race struggles were experienced historically²¹ even though whites and African Americans have been acquainted with each other since the foundation of the city.

In summary, Pruitt Homes, with 1670 housing units in twenty 11-storey buildings on 31.8 acres, and Igoe Apartments, with 1094 housing units in thirteen 11-storey buildings and one 2-storey community building which serves both projects on 25.48 acres, turned into a huge mass housing complex. Approximately \$36 million — \$21,689,412.14 for Pruitt Homes and \$14,438,145.58 for Igoe Apartments — were spent on the construction of the approved design project with some cutbacks due to fiscal constraints.²²

The official completion date of Pruitt Homes was September, 1955 and May, 1956 for Igoe Apartments.²³ Due to challenges such as vacation of the whole site and sheltering of the people who had lived there, it was determined to raise the entire project block by block. Thus, it became possible to accept the first tenants before the opening ceremony of the project in 1954.²⁴ After the mergence of the project, the first mixed-race tenants were selected according to a voluntary basis after several interviews. Later, it was decided also to employ multiracial staff for the whole project.²⁵

However, this celebrated and socially loaded post-war social engineering project did not last in peace time for a long time. Late in the 1950s, Pruitt-Igoe started to be

²¹ One of the rooted discussions on this struggle was on the residential housing. The amendment on the segregated housing was accepted by an overwhelming majority in a referendum in 1916. As stated in Charm Adams, "A Paper Concerning The Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project" (paper presented to the Faculty of San Jose State University in partial fulfillment of requirements in Urban Planning 145, 14 April 1986), 1-2. For more information see Hollis R. Lynch, *The Black Urban Condition* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1973).

²² "Metropolitan Church Federation" (The State Historical Society of Missouri, University of Missouri, St. Louis) Box 19, no. 104262.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "First Pruitt Homes Unit to be Occupied," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 25 September 1954.

²⁵ "Prospects for Voluntary Integration at Igoe," Martin Quigley to John J. O'Toole, 7 June 1955.

conspicuously named for cases of ordinary crimes such as vandalism, sexual assault and mugging²⁶ and therefore, various rehabilitation and renovation projects were proposed and implemented in order to cure the social ills of the project.

In 1968, Pruitt-Igoe and its adjacent public housing projects, Carr Central, Mont-Hyde Park, Murphy-Blair, Yeatman and Jeff Vander Lou, were formed under the aegis of a program of Model Cities, which was a new federal program under the presidency of Lyndon Johnson and officially authorized by the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966. This new act was fictionalized as a type of new social engineering project, targeting to reach the Great Society, in reply to the increasing urban violence and frustrating war on poverty. It adopted comprehensive working areas — housing renovation, urban services, neighborhood facilities and job creation activities — and participation of the tenants in the process in order to surpass and reform the problematical approach of the ongoing urban renewal act and war on poverty.

Nevertheless, two blocks of the project which were placed exactly in the middle of the site were demolished due to a public decision in 1972. Although this move was connected to a possible renovation project, neither the aforementioned project nor the other renovation or rehabilitation proposals were perpetrated. The image of the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe was presented to the media as an abolition of Pruitt-Igoe. As a matter of fact, any negative or positive physical contribution to the existing condition of the project was not permitted for a period of time. Ultimately, a decision was made to annihilate the entire project following the final environmental impact statement in 1974. However, the physical destruction of entire apartment blocks was extended until 1976.

²⁶ As stated in Clarence R. Bechtel, “Pruitt-Igoe's Legacy: Garden to Jungle ... and the Federal Government Gives Up,” *the Building Official and Code Administrator* (March 1974): 57.

As stated at the very beginning, this concerted razing had broad repercussions throughout the fields of urban planning, architecture and social sciences. As a result, it has opened a door to great debates on post-war U.S. Modernism, modernist urbanism and modernist architecture since its stated assertions on political, economic and social contexts had been based upon social engineering. Those that degrade Modern Architecture to style-based canons, and declare its failure in this regard, lead the way.

There are actually two fundamental reasons for shining light on the criticisms — of Charles Jencks and many others — on the style and physical design features of Pruitt-Igoe. One reason is the changed architectural approach of Yamasaki — the chief architect of the project — following his trip around the world in 1954. In the interview with Virginia Harriman (1959), he criticizes how the mainstream makes architecture by laying emphasis on the fact that he had also formerly ranked in this group. According to him, architecture has to correlate with “the experience of man” in a manner in order to touch “the mundane way of life” rather than being merely a fantasy world on formal experiments. As he states, up-to-date architecture is quite ineffective on this issue being created as overpriced expressions lacking in any relevant bases to the contrary.²⁷

²⁷ Minoru Yamasaki, interview by Virginia Harriman, August 1959, Detroit, tape recording. On-line, available from the Internet, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/yamasa59.htm>, accessed 29 February 2016. Some of his later projects are Lambert-St. Louis Airport Terminal (1955), McGregor Memorial Conference Center (1958), One Woodward Avenue — formerly known as the Michigan Consolidated Gas Company Building — (1962), Oberlin Conservatory of Music (1963) and World Trade Center (1962-1976). First four buildings are selected based upon Yamasaki's own choice in the interview with Virginia Harriman in 1959 in order to introduce his new attitude toward architecture after the period of 1955. Even if World Trade Center (1962-1976) is not seen as the best example which represents Yamasaki's symbolism, it is selected owing to its imputed monumental significance. On the other hand, Yamasaki's son, Taro, asserts that this reading has so many misunderstandings in it with these words: “what hits me in the gut is that my father didn't intend the World Trade Center to be a monument to capitalism. He believed that it was a symbol of man's limitless potential.” See *The Yamasaki Collection Archives of Michigan Needs Assessment Analysis Report*, 2010, pg. 11; Patricia Beach Smith. “Yamasaki — Nature's Advocate,” *Troy, Michigan Observer and Eccentric* (November, 1994).

This condemned period also covers the construction of Pruitt-Igoe. Despite the fact that Yamasaki and Leinweber withdrew from the project of Pruitt-Igoe and Hellmuth and then took the lead by entering into a new partnership with Gyo Obata and George Kassabaum (HOK),²⁸ in addition to Pruitt-Igoe obviously not only arising from the results of the performance of any of these design teams, it is a straightforward logical argument to stress the contributions of Yamasaki to the project. At this stage, it is not surprising that a project not accepted even by its chief architect has left itself vulnerable to these arguments. The results obtained have legitimized all of these discussions with the help of Yamasaki and they have pushed aside any possible further readings of Pruitt-Igoe in other frameworks.

The second one of them — also the main rhetorical question of this thesis — is the manner of transformation, interpretation and imposition of the context of Modernism on twentieth century American Modernism. Our inquiry focuses on the gap between the beginning and end points of Pruitt-Igoe in order to probe twentieth-century American Modernism as well as modernist urbanism as the underlying social project. Moreover, it examines Pruitt-Igoe closely by following the traces of the alleged claims of the revolutionary approach of early twentieth-century European Modernism in this social engineering project with its political, economic and social supports.

Thus, its purpose is to read the twentieth century American modernist urbanism and architecture to deconstruct the meaning, represented ideas and underlying discourses of Pruitt-Igoe in terms of Modernism. It serves to unmask how post-war American modernist urbanism and architecture was developed through the emulation and

²⁸ As stated in Lynn Josse and Michael Allen, *Architectural and Historical Documentation: Cochran Tower 1228 N. 9th Street St. Louis (Independent City)* (Missouri: St. Louis: Preservation Research Office, 2011), 4. On-line, available from the Internet, <https://tr.scribd.com/doc/270237893/Cochran-Tower>, accessed 31 May 2016 and *The Yamasaki Collection Archives of Michigan Needs Assessment Analysis Report*, 2010, 7.

absorption of early twentieth-century European Modernism, and how the social engineering projects of these periods had taken form in the wake of modernization.

It reawakens the following questions: is it still possible to claim that Pruitt-Igoe is a failure of Modernism (or Modern Architecture)? If this assertion is not true, why did Pruitt-Igoe not function as anticipated? What were the asserted goals of Pruitt-Igoe? Was the project initially constructed and conducted through its active years as intended? Under these circumstances, can the social engineering projects of the twentieth-century U.S. be counted as a process of modernization? Was Pruitt-Igoe able to keep the “advantages of new technical facilities and mechanical functions,” and “social purposes and new psychological insights” together, as Lewis Mumford identified the constituents of Modern Architecture?²⁹ In the light of these inquiries, what are the main reasons for the destruction of Pruitt-Igoe and what is the role of the translation of the context of Modernism in this sample case?

The answers to these questions can be traced back to the evolution of twentieth-century American Modernism. Consequently, it would be a direct start to examine the broadcasts and architectural products of early twentieth-century European Modernism as a starting point. Unfortunately, as Goldhagen states in *the Modern Functional Building*,³⁰ many key sources of this subject have not been translated into English or they are not accessible to the public at present. Therefore, it is hard to claim that the core of post-war American Modernism had a direct relation to this intellectual oeuvre.

The one general acceptance on the introduction of European Modernism into American territory is a photographic exhibition of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson — *the International Style*, 1932 — at the Museum of Modern Art

²⁹ As it is stated in Adolf Behne, “Introduction” by Rosemarie Haag Bletter, in *The Modern Functional Building*, trans. by Michael Robinson (Santa Monica: Getty Pub., 1996).

³⁰ *Ibid*, 12.

(MoMA). The exhibition was arranged at the end of a trip on the track of Modern Architecture, so it consisted of selected modernist buildings of the period. Without doubt, the image-based presentations of the buildings contributed greatly to the style-based inferences of post-war modernist urbanism and architecture. On the other side, it would be a reductive approach to claim that the all of post-war modernist urbanism and architecture is fed from this relation. There are also other actors and occasions in the translation of European Modernism to post-war modernist urbanism and architecture, which point to a new research question by itself.

Under these circumstances, it is clear to say that to read modernist urbanism and architecture of the twentieth-century U.S. in terms of style-based canons would not be an appropriate way to criticize the corpus of Modernism. On the contrary, it would legitimate denial of its discursive base, its relationship of it with humankind and its ongoing pursuit in the world. Therefore, this thesis takes the approach of Marshall Berman as the model of the notion of Modernism and it aims to read Pruitt-Igoe within this framework.

Berman expounds Modernism through the correlation between modernity, modernization and Modernism in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*.³¹ He states that the idea of modernity is rooted in the conscious state of human beings and with its promises and perils. Modernization signifies its experience by the way of “world-historical” (political, economic and social) processes. Modernism is, then, a self-perpetuating pursuit in the ever-experiencing world by being in search of new aspirations and new possibilities to make the world a home again. As a consequence, he deduces that Modernism and modernization have a dialectical relationship in the framework of these definitions. It is a fact that Modernism uses modernization as an instrument that enables the creation of new dynamics for Modernism on an ongoing basis to interpret society and its environment.

³¹ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (USA & Canada: Penguin Books, 1988).

Berman dates back the birth of the idea of modernity between the beginning of the sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, the period which culminates in the ascendance of philosophy and science versus religion. It represents the ascent of individual revivals, awareness and seeking in this free-spirited world. Then, he heralds the next phase with the French Revolution and the following upheavals which indicate the public awakening beyond individual awakenings. Finally, he points to the twentieth century as the final phase of modernity. However, he puts this stage in a different place due to the disengagement between the experienced world until that moment and the current daily living of the period. In this scenario, people lose their common ground, which is a centerpiece in the idea of modernity. He alleges that even though modern art has made some moves to recapture this spirit, ongoing fragmentations and alienations have prevented the establishment of a dialectical relationship between it and other slices of life. As a result of this, the dialectics of modernization and Modernism have been severed, and this has given rise to the reduction of the underlying discourses of Modernism.

Pruitt-Igoe is one of the prominent examples of this period. This study therefore aims to read the project through this theoretical framework. Based on the fact that Pruitt-Igoe is a generated public housing project, this survey is conducted through (public) housing by centering upon the notion of habiting. Thus, it scrutinizes the created habitat of Pruitt-Igoe in the scope of social engineering in reference to the idea of making the world a home.

At this stage, it consults the perusal of Lefebvre to define habiting. Accordingly, it broadens the definition of dwelling to include habit, daily living and the generated social relations depending on them. He refers to the meta-philosophical readings of Heidegger and Nietzsche which also allow for re-examination of the theoretical boundaries and potentials of philosophy versus the reductive housing approach of the current understanding of planning and architecture. In this manner, he criticizes the

fictionalized “lived experience” of “dwelling machines.” Instead, he proposes to make a return to the concept of habiting.³² Thus, to read Pruitt-Igoe only through the production of (public) housing is not sufficient to determine its place in the idea of modernity. On the other hand, habiting enables to observe the social and spatial implications of the post-war U.S. and also to find clues to reconstruct the dialectics between Modernism and modernization.

This discussion is presented in three chapters, in addition to the introduction and conclusion, totaling five chapters. The first part of the discussion — the second chapter — focuses on the outline of the construction of American Modernism, modernist urbanism and modernist architecture. It aims to create a base to grasp the intellectual perception and contributory ideological trajectories of the post-war U.S. To this end, it mentions briefly the Early American Enlightenment and the social engineering of the post-war U.S.

The second part of the discussion — the third chapter — discusses Pruitt-Igoe as a social engineering project of modernist urbanism and modernist architecture of the post-war U.S. As the first step, it introduces slum clearance over physical improvement and the production of public housing projects in post-war St. Louis. Then, it focuses on the conception period of Pruitt-Igoe in order to grasp the roots of the main decisions that steered the continuum. Finally, it aims to determine other contributing factors in the implementation of this public housing project and to find clues for the gap between the beginning and end points of the project.

The final part of the discussion — the fourth chapter — focuses on the Pruitt-Igoe of Model Cities. Initially, it examines the theoretical basis of the Program by referring to the substantial problems of Pruitt-Igoe. Thus, it objects to the discovery of its possible influence on Pruitt-Igoe. Then, it focuses on the details of the Program and a

³² Henri Lefebvre, “4. Düzeyler ve Boyutlar,” in *Kentsel Devrim*, trans. by Selim Sezer (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2013), 78-83.

number of fragmentations of Pruitt-Igoe in order to detect the relationship between the Program and Pruitt-Igoe. As a final point, it follows the Model Cities Program, the understanding of (public) housing of the period and the problems of Pruitt-Igoe. Thus, it objects to the discovery of the main reasons for the path to the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN MODERNISM, MODERNIST URBANISM AND MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE

2.1. Early American Enlightenment and Conception of Modernism in the U.S.

The first part of this chapter aims to skim over the background of the modernist urbanism and modernist architecture of the post-war U.S. Based upon the ideas that nothing is able to be formed independently from its history and that there is always a type of bind(s) that is or is not easily perceived, this reading allows to detect the carried potentials, influences and tendencies of the U.S. for the post-war period. This inquiry basically aims to reveal the moral and political philosophy that steered the embodiment of the post-war U.S. There are two main focal points in this quest, one of which includes the usage of a utopian approach with meanings denoted to them. The second of these is the roots of the hegemony of the post-war U.S. through the political and economic superiorities over the other “world-historical” processes of the era and the remainder of the world. Accordingly, it briefly focuses on the early American Enlightenment, following intellectual perception and contributory ideological trajectories.

The American Revolution points the lines of visions of the intellectuals of the eighteenth century in British North America and the early United States.³³ It draws its strength from shining out of philosophy and science versus religious faith as did

³³ For information see Shane J. Ralston, *American Enlightenment Thought*, The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. On-line, available from the Internet, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>, accessed 15 September 2016.

its influencers — the British and French Revolutions.³⁴ This radical shift and the inherited philosophy of American culture have thrown out the first seeds of the understanding of the notion of American Modernism. Many ideas, ways of thinking and doctrines have shaped this progress. This work refers to only the sharpest of these in order to create a base for the introduction of the main argument of the thesis.

The first to be mentioned is tolerant pluralism and deism, both of which converted the vision of the people for the notion of religion and the impression of the religion in the political, economic and social management of the country. Tolerant pluralism indicates freedom of religion. According to policy, each person in the nation is capable of worshipping any kind of religious form as well as having faith in none. On the other hand, deism represents a type of national religion instead of traditional theologies that follow miracles and prophecies. It places reliance on science, and accordingly, scientific revolution is the only possible way to demonstrate the existence of God. These two approaches disqualified the religious prejudices and opened the way for a rational attitude in every phase of ongoing life. It has also secured American society in rapid scientific progress and further justification for an increasing trust in science.

On the other hand, this progress does not mean the extinguishment of religion from the decision making mechanism of American society to the last. In the nineteenth century, a religious revival appeared which rejected the religious abstraction and superseding rational mind of the revolution. This countermovement manifested itself in the utopian experiments that fictionalized moral and political positions for the people. Once again, religion started to be seen as the inspiration of the world by

³⁴ For more information see Allan G. Johnson, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology* (USA, UK & Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 104-105.

various groups of people. However, these experiments ended in 1932 by the disbandment of the communal lifestyle of the Amana Society.³⁵

It would be wrong to read these experiments from the same perspectives on the European socialist utopias. As Francesco Dal Co states in *American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal*, these utopian experiments did not arise under the same circumstances as those in Europe. One of these differences was the libertarian tradition of the U.S. It already made radical changes to the traditional environment of European culture and removed its static perennial borders in this new geography. The second one of these was the borderless environment of the country for any kind of abstraction or implementation of them into real life. The U.S. already produced its own interpretations through the conceptions of “the socialist-derived utopias” of Europe. The last one was the lack of precipitating challenge for the U.S. It did not have to fight with its past in order to start with a clean slate. Rather, it was in search of rational forms of the native tradition so as to discover new inspirations to follow.³⁶

Under these circumstances, it would not be so wrong to claim that the U.S. passed through the phase of producing new ones for the modernization of its culture, even though it had been born from incarnation of the related utopian approaches. The religious utopias of the U.S. did not comprise any kind of revolutionary spirit except for scripted scenarios for the frozen ends and absolute rights. Those that were born from the revolutionary spirit of the Early American Enlightenment were already put into practice in the real world. At this stage, it made important the ideas, ways of thinking and doctrines that had shaped their materialization. The two main ones were liberalism and republicanism.

³⁵ As stated in Dal Co, Francesco, “From Parks to the Region: Progressive Ideology and the Reform of the American City,” in *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal*, trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (London, Toronto, Sydney and New York: Granada, 1980), 149.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 150.

The founder of the notion of liberalism was John Locke, an English moral, political and natural philosopher. Thomas Jefferson contributed greatly to its interpretation in the U.S. It basically stresses the natural rights of humans such as property, life, liberty and freedom to seek their own understanding of good. In this scenario, a government is not an authoritarian device to control the citizens but a form comprised of consensual rules and constitutions. As Jefferson states in Panel 4 of the Jefferson Memorial,³⁷ none of the determined rules and constitutions should be frozen and be treated as if they had the final forms. According to him, they have to follow the “progress of the human mind” and be revised at every turn.

Republicanism rejects the regime on patrimony, and by default, it adopts public selection and appointment. In the mean time, it re-builds the social structure by employing a new value system on “civic patriotism, virtuous citizenship and property-based personality,”³⁸ instead of the dominance of inherited elites and aristocracies. Thus, it assures a political freedom by dint of the rules and constitutions. To sum up, republicanism and liberalism became the most significant lodestars in the determination of the relationship between society and government. Moreover, they knitted the bearing walls of the urbanization mode and the understanding of the notion of (public) housing for the post-war U.S.

In other respects, the philosophical movement of pragmatism led the 1870s of the U.S. It was established on the basis of the pragmatist maxim that refers to explaining a hypothesis due to their “practical consequences.”³⁹ In this scenario, a fact that cannot be proved by any empirical method is regarded as worthless in real life. In other words, ideas or concepts should be able to be materialized in the real world and an eye looks for that which should be able to confirm the validity of this

³⁷ *Quotations on the Jefferson Memorial*, Monticello, Home of Thomas Jefferson. On-line, available from the Internet, <https://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/quotations-jefferson-memorial>, accessed 15 September 2016.

³⁸ As it is stated Ralston, *op. cit.*.

³⁹ Christopher Hookway, *Pragmatism*, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. On-line, available from the Internet, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism/>, accessed 15 September 2016.

implementation. Otherwise, it is pointless to pursue the presented ideas or concepts if there is no way to benefit from them clearly. This dominant mode of thinking played a prominent role in the materialization of the U.S., which was created by dint of liberating the rational mind and conscious state of the early American Enlightenment.

However, it is difficult to claim that this newly adapted approach had affected the idea of modernity positively. On the contrary, it degraded its potential to the acuity of the mind and eye at that moment. In this way, the main goals of the modernization process became types of closed formulas in pursuit of a kind of truth. The importance of its philosophical aspect, which is supposed to re-examine the bond between a common man and a changing world has been ignored. Instead, complete attention has been given to the phase of the materialization and its protection in an ever-changing world.

When the reading of Mario Manieri-Elia is followed on the emergence of the American metropolis, it is clear to see the implementation of this way of thinking to the politics of American life. As Manieri-Elia states, the American metropolis started taking shape in the 1870s and 1880s, following the triumph of the North in the American Civil War. Thus, the modernization tool of the North, industry, gained dominance over the whole country. This gained political and economic power made the citizens of the country, deprived of the American rural population and foreign immigrants, adopt this new system.

Under these circumstances, the laissez-faire U.S. aimed at conducting the process over two newly emerged groups: the 'boss' and the reformer. The boss had political power in the city government which was supposed to arrange the immigrant masses by supplying the minimum conditions for life and their standard conditions. In the end, it was able to maintain the continuity of the labor market in the city and is seen as a place of production and exchange. The reformer was the native citizens of the

U.S. It undertook a progressive role for the public. However, this progressivism targeted stabilization of the merged system, just as the boss, rather than pursuing any revolutionary movement. In this scenario, while the boss and the reformer were responsible for the operability of the system, the fates of the city and architecture were in the hands of the construction bosses possessing sufficient financial power. As a result, the city took form in the pursuance of customers and consumption, and the architecture was driven according to the progressive construction techniques and the available budget for it.⁴⁰

Even though the economy-based production of cities and architecture and erupted economic crises had posed many problems, including social unrest, violence and increasing numbers of tenements, the general approach of the U.S. was to 'smooth over the cracks'. During this period, there were shifts in the management of the city and construction, along with technology swiftly advancing. However, the instinct to protect the produced balance of power of the economy and economy-based political position did not change radically. It only accommodated itself with the tools of modernization — city and architecture — driven by the boss, reformer and construction boss or companies who had the capital.

Throughout this experience, the only point of change was the attitude of the U.S. toward the rest of the world. Starting from the 1890s, the U.S. decided to be more connected to the world rather than remaining isolated. This shift was the very first step toward its future hegemony in the world during the post-war period. This tendency also strengthened the idea that the dominance of the notion of political economy was the only valid source of inspiration for cities and for architecture. Consequently, progressivism, modern technology, style and the accordingly produced social engineering projects drove the vision of post-war American

⁴⁰ Manieri-Elia, Mario, "Toward an "Imperial City": Daniel H. Burnham and the City Beautiful Movement," in *The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal*, trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (London, Toronto, Sydney and New York: Granada, 1980), 1-8.

Modernism. This tendency also strengthened the perception of the fact that the dominant political and economic power was the constant inspirations of the cities and architecture of the post-war U.S.

2.2. Social Engineering in the Post-War U.S.

The state of being in the middle of global wars was a turning point in the pursuit of the idea of modernity for the twentieth century. Even though World War I had been more traumatic by being the very first example of a mass war, World War II, resulting in millions of deaths and mutilations, was also a remarkable milestone in world history. It was reborn from the ashes of the first war and gave its place to the Cold War afterwards.

As Goldhagen alleges in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, the paranoia arising from the threat of total disposal between super powers, and the apprehension about the continuity of world peace have made the world's countries plunge into a quest for new spirits of the era.⁴¹ On the other hand, it is difficult to say whether this process was conducted through the dialectical relation between modernization and Modernism as it was at that time. On the contrary, this re-conceptualization of the status quo was shaped by the bureaucratic positions of countries rather than the experience of the common man. Furthermore, the loss of faith in the utopian approach of early Modernism gave way to abandoning the historical precedent of nineteenth-century civilization and architectural culture that is possessed.⁴²

⁴¹ Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault ed., "Introduction: Critical Themes of Postwar Modernism," in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press, 2000), 17.

⁴² Eric Hobsbawm, "Part I: The Age of Catastrophe: 1. The Age of Total War," in *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1994), 22.

Instead, the post-war economic boom, scientific developments and inventions gave hope to the post-war world. Thus, post-war modernist urbanism and modernist architecture were reformulated under the leadership of economy and technology. This newly emerged faith pushed aside philosophy, which had been one of the trigger forces in the idea of modernity. Nonetheless, it provided places for social engineering projects, instead of any utopian or revolutionary approach in the construction of post-war U.S. society. This shift signified the legitimization of the rejection of the discursive potential of Modernism and an acceptance of overhead guidance to the modernization of the post-war U.S.

On the other hand, the post-war U.S. accommodated itself to this new setting far more easily than other countries, at least in the first stage of this process. There are actually two main reasons in this story, one which is related to the idiosyncratic dynamics of the U.S. Turning over a new leaf in a new geography and radical metamorphosis from archaic culture for the purpose of a new-born society inhered in the historical concepts of the U.S., such as the New World and American exceptionalism. The second reason pertains to the advantages of the post-war U.S., when compared to other countries which had become involved in the Second World War. The geographical and political positions of the U.S., with its unique cultural heritage, culminated in the undamaged terrains upon less-materialized post-war traumas and the influxes of qualified people who were thinkers, intellectuals, architects and scientists. Having escaped from the Nazi regime and other warring countries, they created the new advantages by placing the U.S. in the new world.

These aforementioned subjects gave a head start to the post-war U.S., and consequently, it created hegemony all over the world, which was promoted by the political, economic and social standing of the country. The betaken bureaucratic-oriented prescription of it, which objects to ensuring the continuity of this acquired hegemony, steered the way for modernization of the post-war U.S. at home and abroad. Economic growth and trust in the blessings of technology — under the

guarantee of science — turned into the principal tools for this purpose. Thus, the stabilization policies on economy and technology as an indication of civilization started to symbolize the targeted modes of living. The primary purpose of the idea of modernity, namely to make the world a home to humankind with modernization tools that had been steered by the gained experience was everted; the tools of modernization started to dominate the whole process.

Meanwhile, the overseas economic aid known as the Marshall Plan legitimized the sovereignty of the economy-based strategies through the embodiment of the modernization processes of the post-war U.S. In addition, social engineering projects were the most important precursors of this approach within the borders of the country. In the fields of urban planning and architecture, buildings and cities were degraded to products in the service of social engineering. Television and (inter)national journals turned into the main means of a mass-consumerist society.⁴³ They were utilized for propaganda of these upper interventions throughout the presented images and fictionalized contextualisms over the usage of technology.

Accordingly, modern technology was manipulated as the signifier of the modernization of men and women. However, the relationship between modernization and Modernism could not have contact with each other dialectically because of the exclusion of the common man from the processes of modernization. In other words, the dialectical relationship between modernization and Modernism was cut off by disqualification of the controller and revolutionary powers of the continuum. As a result, the creation of the *modus vivendi* of the post-war U.S. appeared merely as a strategy in the maintainability of the hegemony of it all over the world rather than being the fruit of experience of modernity.

⁴³ Andrew M. Shanken, *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Home Front* (Minneapolis, MN, USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

The consolidation of this hegemony proceeded over the existing conditions and imperatives of the country. A prominent imperative was the radically changed demographic structure due to the unplanned baby boom resulting from the return home of American soldiers as well as immigrant flows in search of a promising, fresh start in the U.S. The growing need for health care, business centers, and tenements led to the mass production of cities and buildings. Technology and other science-based methods and tools granted to the mass production of the cities and buildings in line with the growing needs of housing, recreation centers, child care facilities, playgrounds, schools, health care clinics, and other amenities, would foster a sense of community. Consequently, it became essential to find quick solutions and to regulate the built environment of the country. As a result, this high-speed activity became an opportunity for the instigation of social engineering projects in record time.

The concept of (public) housing was no doubt the most important and most charming subject in this field. It — as a part of habiting — is located at the very center of the dialectics between modernization and Modernism. It is, therefore, the most appropriate way to declare the position of Man. It displays the forms of life by being between the inner and outer worlds of Man. The state of being in the center of everything about Man and life carries habiting in a very important place in the experience of modernity. As a result, it becomes an appealing area for intervention under the scope of social engineering as well as a potential tool for propaganda of the social engineering projects. This disposition can be traced throughout history.

At this stage, it is useful to mention briefly the concept of public housing and its use under the scope of social engineering prior to World War II, and prior to reaching the period of the post-war U.S. The first national concern with regard to public housing was formulated by the United State Housing Act of 1937. It was one of the domestic program series of the New Deal legislations which were passed as a reaction to the Great Depression by referring to relief, recovery and reform. The act constituted the

United States Housing Authority (USHA) and Local Housing Administrations (LHAs) to provide the states and political subdivisions with financial assistance. It objected to the slums and provided decent, safe and clean dwellings in place of the slums. Thus, it aimed to consolidate political, social and economic positions of the Nation through public housing. Moreover, it intended to create compacted citizenship on the groups that were in trouble in the economic and social struggles of the liberal U.S. which was presented as the land of opportunity. It was called for an economic recovery by targeted decrease in prompted business activity and unemployment.⁴⁴ At this point, public housing projects were interpreted as a top-down tool which might take an active role in the process of the modernization of the U.S.

In addition to the process of social engineering in the history of the U.S., the other point that deserves attention is the shift in the implied meaning of housing in this continuum. This reading is useful when finding clues in the notion of housing under the main goals and the contents of the task of the post-war U.S. housing policy. The first occurrence of housing as used in the twentieth century dates back to 1915.⁴⁵ Henceforth, the perception of housing through dwelling started to be abandoned. Between 1915 and 1937, it started to give way to the treatment of housing as designed habitats — standard living units and their regulated neighborhood — with a number of public services with the aim of governing human behavior. In summary, it established a grounding for the practice of housing as the object of good housing in the sphere of community development.

After World War II, the use of public housing as a social tool was proceeded by the United States Housing Act of 1949 once again — in more result-oriented manner. It

⁴⁴ Public Law 75-412.

⁴⁵ As stated in Robert B. Fairbanks, “Part I: The Roots of Federal Housing Policy: 1. From Better Dwellings to Better Neighborhoods: The Rise and Fall of the First National Housing Movement,” in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: in Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (Pennsylvania: University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 21-39.

basically aspired to set ground for the maintenance of the achieved hegemony of the post-war U.S. over the world. In this manner, it focused on three main points. The first was the stabilization of the economy by revitalizing the business areas in the city center. It was a part of the process of the construction of post-war civilization over the substructure and the built environment. It undertook the act of physical improvements by activating the private housing market. The second main point was the generation of post-war American society. The constructed public housing projects were planned for the poor classes having the potential eventually to participate in the economic and social formation of the post-war U.S. This resilience was fictionalized by virtue of the advantages of low-rent housing units and the guidance of technology in the forms of living. The third and final point was to handle the cities and buildings as consumer products and tools of propaganda in this race. In this scenario, the physical, economic and social images of the cities and their built environments started to be perceived as manifestations of modern civilization and opportunities for secure investments. Thus, (public) housing projects were made visible with the help of the main apparatus of the post-war U.S., technology, in order to create this sterile climate in the hearts of the cities.

To that end, the United States Housing Act of 1949 focused on the compounding of slum clearance and the construction of public housing projects under the same roof as a first place. Thus, it aimed to replace substandard housing in the poor and blighted areas with standard living units generated with up-to-date design language and modern production techniques. Moreover, it supplied the broad participation of the Federal Government in the entire continuum. It was authorized as the director and decision-maker in the various phases of the projects, such as preparation of the land and design, construction and maintenance of the public housing projects. Finally, it emphasized the avowed necessity of involvement of private enterprise in

the program. Thus, they were purposed to supply economic activity through the housing industry.⁴⁶

To sum up, the most important point is the dramatically increased authority and force of the economy on housing as a part of habiting. The economic practices started to dominate the relationship between Man and his environment in a more aggressive and authoritative manner. Thus, they aimed at the modernization of Men through their scripted living spaces to the extent permitted by technology. Taking all of these factors into account, it is clear that the dialectics between modernization and Modernism were damaged by the explicit domination of political and economic modernization processes over the others. In this context, Pruitt-Igoe was one of the iconic products of this period and the following chapter aims to uncover these relationships through the example of Pruitt-Igoe.

⁴⁶ Public Law 171-81.

CHAPTER 3

PRUITT-IGOE AS A SOCIAL ENGINEERING PROJECT

3.1. Social Engineering in St. Louis

The slum clearance over physical improvement under social engineering in the post-war era was not the first experimented practice for the City of St. Louis. The earliest proposal of it was made in 1907 by a civil group. It resulted from consistent population mobility and the physical repercussions of it throughout the historical downtown due to job seeking and waves of immigration. However, the first concrete step was taken in 1918 by an adopted zoning plan. Even though this plan would have been invalidated five years later, this intervention logic to the blighted areas has, from time to time, come to the fore.⁴⁷

The act in the post-war era was distinctive due to its being a mass clearance at the hand of the Government for the sake of a new hope for a new world. It was an incarnation of the subjugation of economy and modern technology on the notion of housing. St. Louis was one case of a city that had endeavored to base its own social, political and economic dynamics upon this newly emerged system. (Public) Housing, as a part of habiting, became one of the most tempting tools in the operation of the construction of post-war society.

In this scenario, the socio-economic and socio-cultural land-use praxis of the city had become one of the determinants to acquire its position throughout the newly emerged

⁴⁷ "St. Louis Attacks Its Slums," *Business Week*, 19 July 1952.

system of the post-war U.S. It had taken its roots from the establishment of St. Louis. Old North St. Louis was located at the intersection of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. It was founded in 1764 by fur traders thanks to its highly suitable position for the floating trade and its large capacity by having the second largest port in the nation after New York City.⁴⁸ Thus, it was declared a town in 1809 by the Court of Common Pleas, and later declared a city in 1822 by the Missouri Legislature.⁴⁹

This growth (Figure 3.1) arising from the geographic advantages of St. Louis made it a commercial center of the Midwest. Between 1840 and 1870, the city of St. Louis experienced rapid growth accordingly. However, the city could not sustain its economic self-sufficiency with the advantages of the port due to the suspension of river traffic during the Civil War. It therefore had to turn to the railway systems to close this gap. Nevertheless, this mode of transportation and trade had already been conducted under the leadership of Chicago in the Midwest. Therefore, this shift caused the decline of St. Louis' lead by taking a backseat in this race.⁵⁰ The expansion in population and the correspondingly built environment of the city headed towards to the lines of railroad tracks, as a feeder opening of the floating trade, instead of the borders of the river.

In 1876, St. Louis extended its boundaries for the final time when it adopted the home rule charter under the State of Constitutions in 1875 as the first city in the U.S. In this manner, it aimed to bring under control the fiscal and jurisdictional resources of the city by approving the separation of the City and County of St. Louis. Even though it was interpreted as a progressive move, it would have turned back with some unforeseen drawbacks in the long term, one of which was the waned

⁴⁸ As stated in Murray L. Weidenbaum and Charles L. Leven, *Urban Decay in St. Louis*, Working paper no. 10 (St. Louis: Washington University: Institute for Urban and Regional Studies, 1972), 4.

⁴⁹ See *Physical Growth of the City of Saint Louis*, St. Louis City Plan Commission 1969. On-line, available from the Internet, <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/archive/history-physical-growth-stlouis/>, accessed 25 October 2015. See also Frances Hurd Stadler, *St. Louis: From Laclede to Land Clearance* (MO: St. Louis: Radio Station KSD and Kriegshauser Mortuaries, 1962), 17.

⁵⁰ Weidenbaum et. al., *op. cit.*, 5-6.

competitive capacity of the city with the adjacent cities due to St. Louis' limited frontiers. This protective policy eliminated the opportunity for the expansion of the city in the later years and it decelerated the re-development of the city with its old infrastructure. The second drawback was that it induced the deformation of the legal lines of St. Louis by the articulated settlements at the perimeters. The third and final drawback was the distinctive gap between the undeveloped land surrounding the city and the land in the city center due to tax-base calculations.⁵¹

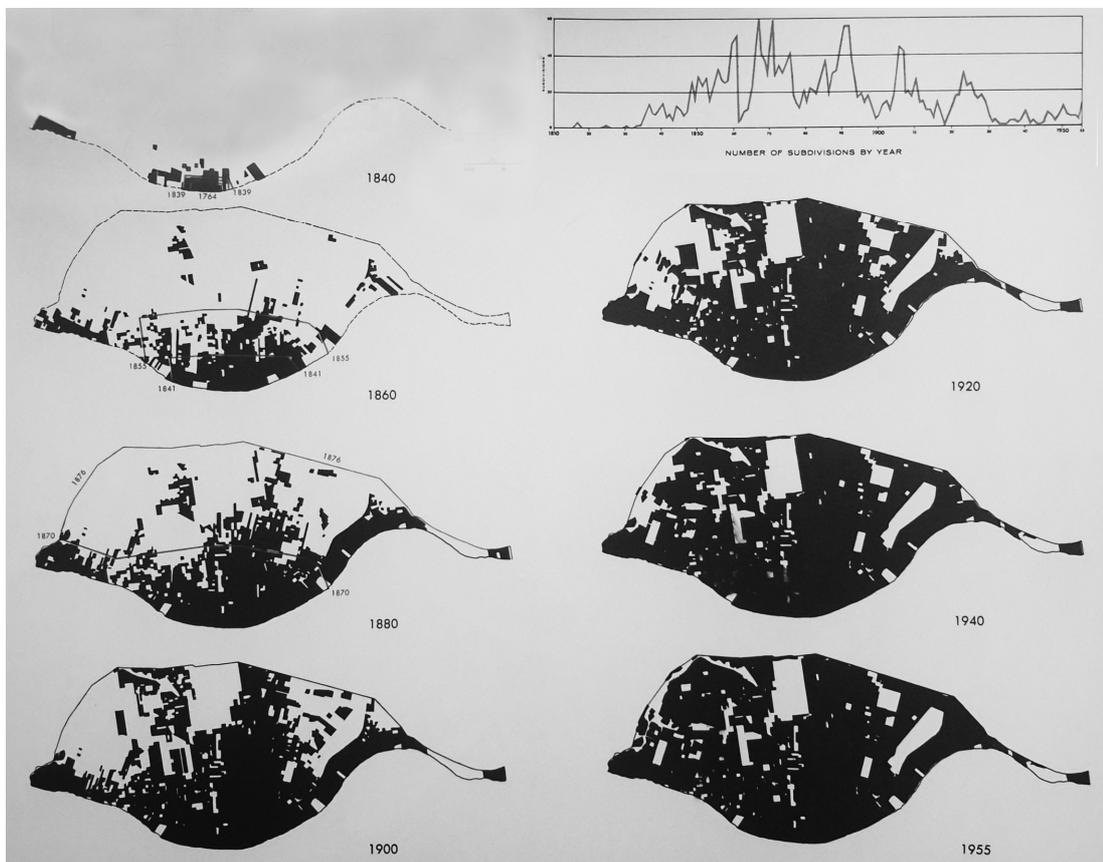


Figure 3.1 Urban Growth by subdivision of land expanding city limits (Source: *Land Use Plan*, Saint Louis Missouri City Plan Commission, 1956)

⁵¹ See Adams, *op. cit.*, 1. See also Weidenbaum et. al., *op. cit.*, 7.

Besides the historical roots of St. Louis, the twentieth century also became involved in the configuration of its socio-economic and socio-cultural land-use praxis with its own driving forces. Between the 1900s and 1950s, it started to change the ways of life in favor of modern technology, even though World War I and the Great Depression slowed down this continuum. Especially dating from the 1940s, constructed highways and crossroads with the proliferation of automobiles alongside mass transit eased the transportation between the city center and the suburbs. Thus, it eliminated the necessity to stay close to the work place. The freedom incidental to the benefits of technology originated new flows between the city center and its surroundings. Furthermore, unskilled, young and poor people migrated to the city center in the search of jobs and the “good life of metropolis.”⁵² Even though this tendency was promoted by the Federal Housing Authority in line with the private housing sector,⁵³ the long term outcomes engendered the squatting of the city center and its ultimate fate.

The site of Pruitt-Igoe and its inner circle were some of the oldest districts in St. Louis. The area was a secure stop for a new influx of immigrants starting in the eighteenth century. It hosted many ethnic groups — Irish, Polish, German and African-American — over the course of time. The first Irish settlement, known as Kerry Patch, dated back to the early 1800s in Old North St. Louis. It eventually expanded its boundaries up to the Pruitt-Igoe site. The area provided a secure environment deterritorialized foreigners in nineteenth-century St. Louis. The Irish, therefore, created their autonomous sphere by dint of the self-enclosed structure of the quarter. Even William L. Igoe — one of the eponyms of Pruitt-Igoe — and his family had also stayed in the area for a period of time, before they rose to a higher socio-economic echelon.⁵⁴

⁵² As stated in Schmandt and George D. Wendel, *op. cit.*, 1-2.

⁵³ As stated in *ibid.*

⁵⁴ As stated in Thompson, *op. cit.*, 10-11.

Polish immigrants had come to the land of Kerry Patch in the 1870s instead of the Irish. Later, the first German immigrants dated back to the 1930s and they had spawned a community known as Little Paderborn (the Patron Saint of Westphalia) in the same territory.⁵⁵ By the end of the Civil War, the prior users of the land mostly yielded to the rural African-American immigrants from the South.⁵⁶ Many of the old and worn housings in the area were rented to them. While very few of them were repaired and used by the landlords, a greater part of them were used as stated due to the economic challenges of the dwellers.⁵⁷ Consequently, the district started to be called the territory of African-American immigrants this time but with a twist. In 1916, the city legalized a policy of apartheid throughout the residential housings almost by consensus — two out of three in the half of the registered voters.⁵⁸ At this stage, beyond being an ethnic quarter with its autonomous structure of the region, racial discrimination based on skin color also became a current issue.

By the period of Great Depression, the increasing numbers of rural immigrants from the South in addition to the chronic joblessness in the country left the poor districts to their fate. It sowed the seeds of an exodus of the middle and high income groups into the suburbs and in the 1940s, it came to a head. Moreover, the ongoing war ruled the economy of the country. Shipping and airplane manufacturing dominated the circle of trade, but of course through racial discrimination. African Americans were generally keeping out of these working areas.⁵⁹ As a result of these factors, the decay of the city center became inevitable and accelerated the escalation of the slum areas.

⁵⁵ As stated in M.D. O'Bryan, "Revitalization of Depressed Communities: A Town Plan for the Greater Pruitt-Igoe Two Community Organization" (M.A. thesis, Washington University, 1990), 8-9.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments Public Housing Complex: Final Environmental Impact Statement* (Missouri: St. Louis Housing Authority, 1974).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ As stated in Adams, *op. cit.*, 1-2.

⁵⁹ Dexter Perkins, *The New age of Franklin Roosevelt 1932-45* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 139.

This situation became a source of irritation for the city of St. Louis in the economy-based dynamics of the post-war U.S. The political leaders and technocrats of the city set their hands to this continuum over any physical improvements even prior to the United States Housing Act of 1949. According to the *Comprehensive City Plan* in 1947, the physical needs of the modern city were prescribed via the principles of urbanism and engineering. Harland Bartholomew, in the city plan commission, emphasized the handicaps of the decentralization through a reading of the ages and conditions of the residential housing. He stated that half of the housing in the city center had been damaged and outmoded due to the lack of a Housing Policy or Housing Program thitherto. He also warned about the potential perils of the desolation of the city center by stating: “We cannot have a city without people.” Later, he implied the collapse of the city in case of a lack of progress in bringing this situation under control. He proposed single-family individual dwellings with public services — including parks, streets, transportation, etc. — for the post-war modern society by referring to the general preference of the people. In this way, he aimed to improve the quality of life in the area and render the old city center habitable and attractive again.

By invoking the United States Housing Act of 1949, a formula for recalling people to the city center was implemented across the country. Thus, the scope of slum clearance was broadened by the construction of low-rent public housing projects. The Mayor of St. Louis, Joseph Darst, was one of its leading promoters. He believed in the necessity of this act, thereby laying his hopes on any prospective economic and social returns. If the aged and battered facade of the city center had been constructed by contemporary architects and engineers, the clearance and reuse of the land in the city center would have increased the value of the city center anew and concomitantly, the source of income of St. Louis would have increased. After all, the economic boon of the city would have been an initial step in the modernization process of the city. Therefore, the renewal of the city in the name of public housing

was a mandatory move to be up to date. Darst highlighted this reading with these statements that were published in *Architectural Forum* (1951):

We must rebuild, open up and clean up the hearts of our cities... The fact that slums were created with all of their intrinsic evils was everybody's fault. Now it is everybody's responsibility to repair the damage.⁶⁰

The firm belief of Darst regarding the physical improvements and the power of the structure had actually been rooted in his preceding career. Initially, he had a real estate firm with his father with whom he had conducted several construction projects in St. Louis.⁶¹ Then, he worked in public welfare as the city's director. He administered many public buildings such as hospitals, the city sanitarium and community centers during his tenure.⁶² Civil works were always at the heart of his business life.

The housing policy of the post-war U.S. impelled this tendency with the purpose of social engineering. Subsequently, written and visual materials were used to convince the liberal society of the post-war U.S. of the good of this act. *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, a major regional newspaper in St. Louis, gave coverage to this issue for thirteen weeks under the title of "Progress or Decay?" The articles basically espoused the idea that the updated public housing policy was crucial for the public welfare of St. Louis.⁶³

The main tool of this constructed civilization was technology. It symbolized the economic potentials, and with it, it was used as an instrument for the propaganda of

⁶⁰ As stated in "Slum Surgery in St Louis; a New Apartment Type," *Architectural Forum* 94 (April 1951): 129.

⁶¹ As stated in *ibid*.

⁶² As stated in John F. Bauman, Roger Biles and Kristin M. Szylvian. ed. *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: in Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (Pennsylvania: University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 188.

⁶³ As stated in *ibid*, 185.

the ascendancy of the country. It was without doubt that New York was the heart of this newly emerged world. New York was in the limelight at the international level and it was selected to host the United Nations with its created image. As a consequence, it was seen as a role model for the modernist built environment as well as a model of (public) housing. The startling and pretentious high-rise public housing buildings also impressed Darst. After an appointment with the then Mayor of New York, William O'Dwyer, he decided to implement the same architectural approach to St. Louis.⁶⁴

This situation took effect in the first public housing project of St. Louis, the John J. Cochran Garden Apartments (1953), after World War II. Darst intervened in the original design proposal due to its being the row-house type. He applied pressure to change the architectural firm of the project and allowed the selection of George F. Hellmuth instead. Hellmuth took on this project with his design team, Joseph W. Leinweber and Minoru Yamasaki. The ten years of experience Yamasaki had had in New York induced his broadened contribution to the project. As a result, Yamasaki and his associates prioritized a revision of the design project of Cochran Garden at Darst's request.⁶⁵

On the back of this public housing for white tenants, the fourth and fifth public housing projects — the Captain Wendell Oliver Pruitt Homes and the William Leo Igoe Apartments — of St. Louis went into operation. While Pruitt Homes was planned for African American tenants, Igoe Apartments was projected for white tenants.⁶⁶ However, both projects had identical schemes due to the “separate but equal” doctrine confirmed by the decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court*⁶⁷ in 1896. Consequently, both processes rose at the same time.

⁶⁴ As stated in *ibid*, 189-190.

⁶⁵ As stated in, *ibid*, 190-191.

⁶⁶ McGivern, *op. cit.*.

⁶⁷ *Plessy v. Ferguson* 163 U.S. 537, *op. cit.*

3.2. Conception of Pruitt-Igoe

The foregone relation between the design team of Cochran Gardens and the Mayor ensured the selection of the same firm — Minoru Yamasaki, George F. Hellmuth and Joseph W. Leinweber — for the next public housing projects of St. Louis, namely the Captain Wendell Oliver Pruitt Homes and the William Leo Igoe Apartments. These were made official by a commission decision of the St. Louis Housing Authority in 1950.⁶⁸

The very first design proposal of the firm for the scheme of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments comprised high-rise, mid-rise and low-rise buildings. Its approximate density was prescribed as being between 30 and 35 dwelling units per acre. The dwelling units were placed in between playgrounds and open public spaces.⁶⁹ (Figure 3.2) The chief architect of the design team, Yamasaki, avoided constructing a project that was replete with multi-storey buildings in the first place. He asserted that the row housing type of low density was closer to the human rather than the living space that was presented by crowded high-rise buildings.⁷⁰

However, this proposal was not approved by the Public Housing Administration (PHA) thereby resulting in a distinctive gap between construction costs and user accounts.⁷¹ This interference occurred due to the limited financial budget of the PHA. While the economic expansion of the post-war U.S. was used as a modernization tool and as a principle means for its announcement, it also came to be known as an era of economic stabilization of the Nation. As a result, every and any instance of expenditure was eagerly examined. In this scenario, the public housing projects were supported well, even though it was used as a social tool in order to

⁶⁸ U.S Public Housing Administration, *Annual Report* (Washington, DC, 1951).

⁶⁹ As stated in Chris Bacon, *Pruitt Igoe Revisited* (The University of Sheffield: Faculty of Architectural Studies: Department of Town and Regional Planning, 1985), 21.

⁷⁰ As stated in *ibid.*

⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 21 and see also Bristol, *op. cit.*, 164.

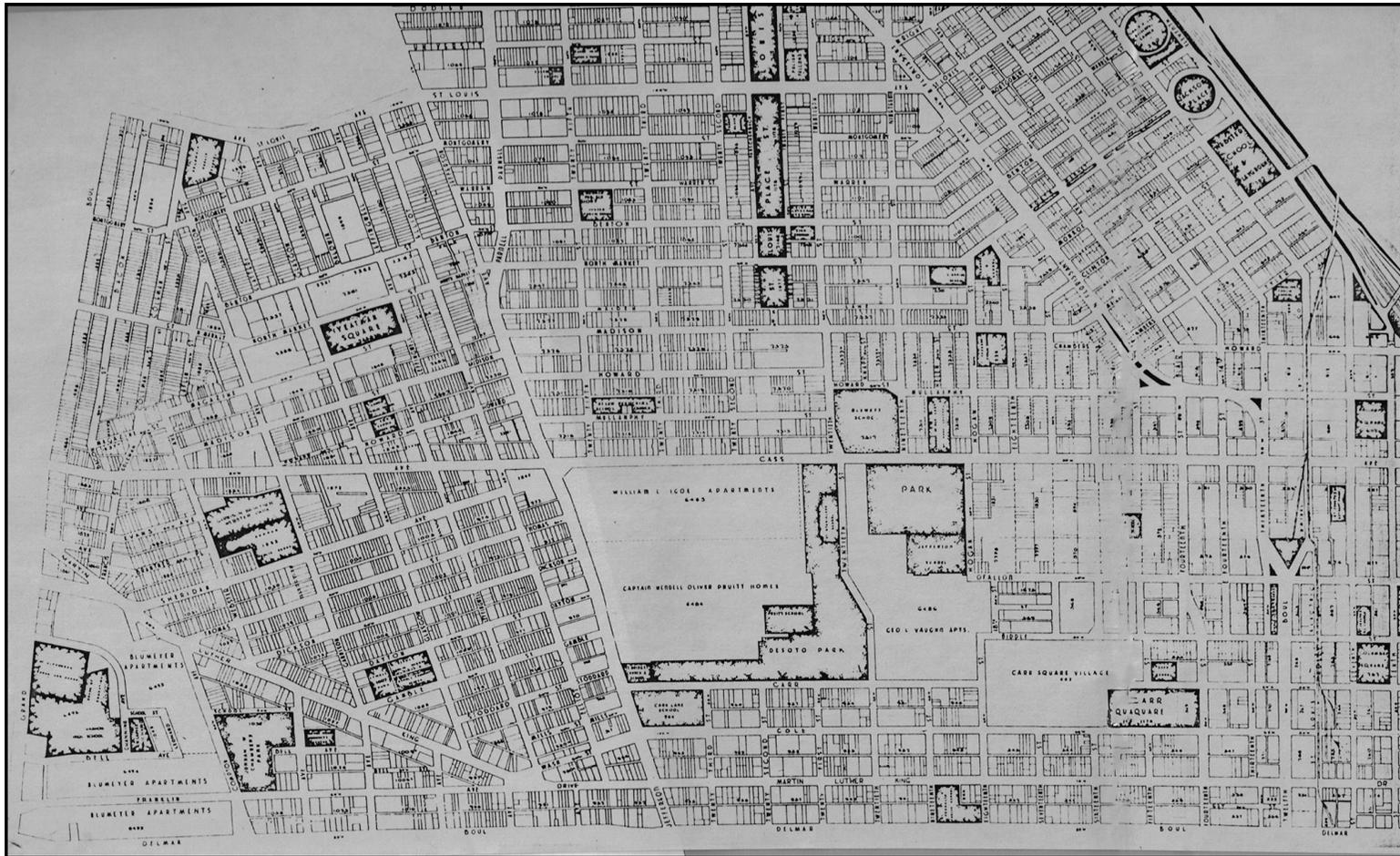


Figure 3.1 “Best Possible Use” of Pruitt-Igoe site (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 0059 0003 0339)

construct a post-war society. The Lockean tradition of the post-war U.S. and ongoing Korean War (1950-1953) sensitized the situation intentionally. As a result, it necessitated a revision due to the stated economic apprehensions. The density of the whole project was expanded to 55 dwelling per acre in order to eliminate this handicap. As a consequence, Yamasaki and his team had to abandon the first conception and develop a new one for these public housing projects.

In addition to the underlying social goals, the newly created approach primarily aimed to increase the density of the project and reduce the total cost. The high-rise apartments boomed up to a 96-acre area. The general layout was generated by dividing it into three main pieces in reference to the concept of Harland Bartholomew, the landscape architect of the project. This segmentation was carried out with a green “river” which was intended to extend itself more or less throughout the business section of the city. (Figure 3.3) Thus, it aspired to overthrow the military order of the huge buildings and make each of their facets gain their own character and individuality. A total of 57 buildings were placed at 200-foot intervals in these created parcels. Apart from this, its southernmost corner was reserved for a shopping center and urban redevelopment for those living on the border of the project site but without sufficient economic opportunities for the program of public housing. The total density of the entire project was reduplicated when compared to the existing density of the land.⁷²

With regard to coping with a high densities strategy, Yamasaki and his team offered a slab-type plan, instead of the cross-plan as demanded by the New York Public Housing Authority. Even though it was not its first application, it had been used by architects such as Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier from the 1930s, but its usage was not yet widespread. This technological solution assisted the rally of the housing projects as a presider of the epoch in terms of housing.

⁷² See "Slum Surgery in St Louis; a New Apartment Type," *op. cit.*, 129-135.

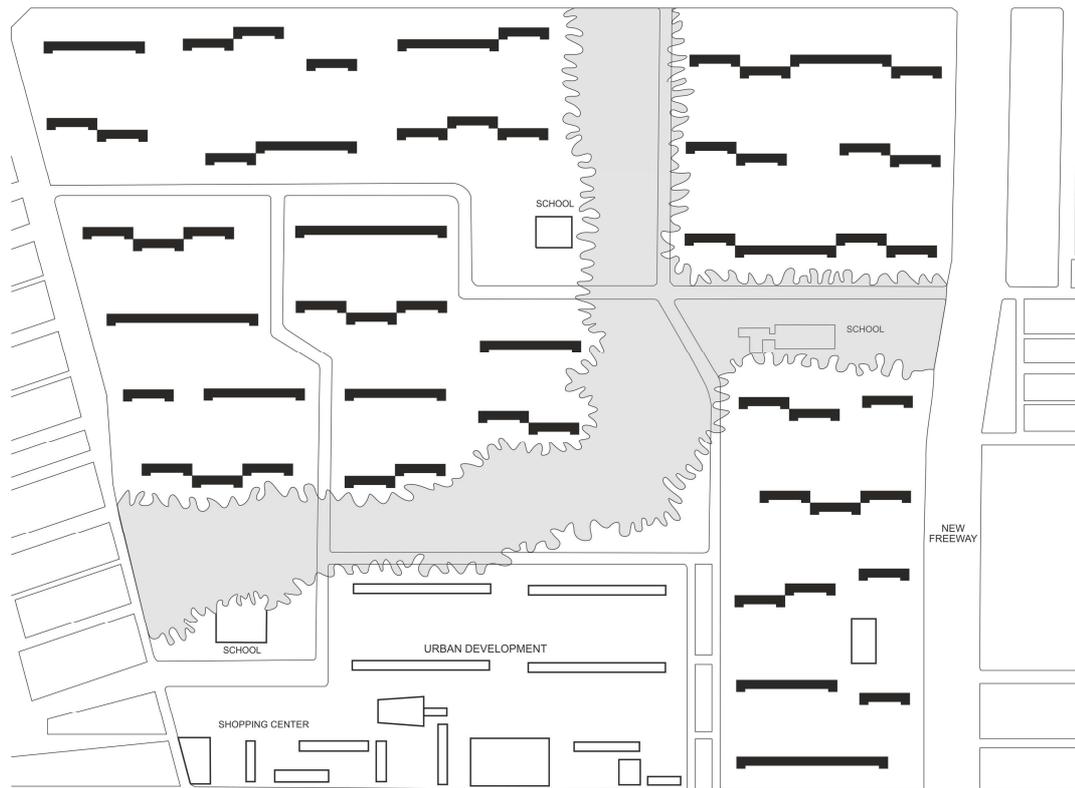


Figure 3.3 Original scheme of Pruitt-Igoe, re-drawn by the author (Source: “Slum Surgery in St Louis; a New Apartment Type,” *Architectural Forum* 94 (April 1951))

Another reason for this appeal was its high rate of earning. When the nine 14-storey cross-plan buildings and fourteen 11-storey slab-type buildings (Figure 3.4), both of which had the same room capacities, were compared to each other, the slab-type buildings drove 16% profit of the total. These calculations were made by considering the following items: excavation, concrete, cement finish, waterproofing, masonry, plastering, sash, glass, roofings and insulation, miscellaneous iron, sheet metal, doors and frames, and elevators.⁷³

⁷³ See *ibid.*



Figure 3.4 Typical floor plans of Pruitt-Igoe, re-drawn by the author (Sources: “Slum Surgery in St Louis; a New Apartment Type.” *Architectural Forum* 94 (April 1951); Chris Bacon, *Pruitt Igoe Revisited* (The University of Sheffield: Faculty of Architectural Studies: Department of Town and Regional Planning, 1985))

Circulation areas, elevator halls and discharge of the basement were the greatest advantages leading to this cost-saving, which constituted 12% of them. While the service areas, such as laundry, storage, etc. occupied nearly 65,000 sq. ft. of the basements, they were eliminated in the St. Louis slab type. The new place for these services was changed with the open galleries on the upper floors; these were combined with the hallways that met the minimum dimension standards. Thus, 6,000 sq. ft. of extra space was gained in the basements of the buildings. Furthermore, thanks to the skip-stop elevators, 99,000 sq. ft. fewer elevator halls and circulation upstairs could be constructed. This meant 92 sq. ft. less construction for each building. The skip-stop elevators and the simpler construction method of the buildings constituted another 4% of the cost-saving. It also needed eighteen elevators with 252 door openings in the cross type buildings. However, it would have needed only fourteen elevators with 56 door openings in the slab type buildings. As a result, the total cost of this proposed project, including land, would be \$58,758,000.⁷⁴

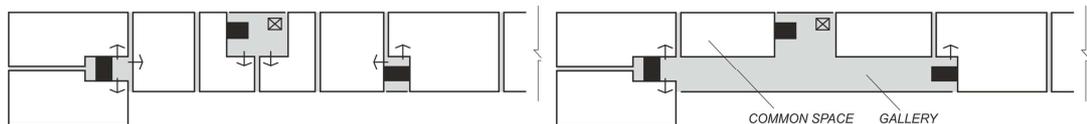


Figure 3.5 Apartment and floor diagrams, re-drawn by the author (Source: Roger Montgomery, “Comment on: “Fear and House-as-Haven in the Lower Class.””*Journal of the American Institute of Planners* (January 1966))

Beyond the economic appeal of this new proposal, it aimed also to touch the *modus vivendi* of users through the physical design. This new plan type enabled the

⁷⁴ See *ibid.*

combination of skip-stop elevators and open galleries once every three floors, that is at the first, fourth, seventh and tenth floors. (Figure 3.5) According to the project, each gallery would have been used by 20 families, except for those on the entrance floor between elevators that are placed in the south facade of the buildings, 11 ft. deep and 85 ft. long.

The proposed functions — play, lounge and clearing — of these galleries were defined under five headings. Firstly, the gallery would have served as a safe playground for young people and children. They would not have had to use the elevators by themselves to go outside the building. Secondly, it would have served as an open air hallway. Thirdly, thanks to its south-oriented destination with movable shutters and the estimated ratio of the gallery to enable the use of the winter sun, it could also have been used as a porch for all four seasons. Moreover, it aimed to minimize the undesirable effects of weather conditions such as summer sun and winter wind. Fourthly, a laundry space was projected on each gallery which contained a coin operated automatic washer and dryer installed by a concessionaire. Moreover, there would have been an extra space for tenants who preferred to use their own washing machines or to wash by hand in addition to there having been two drying yards. Furthermore, this organization would have been eligible for a kitchen laundry tub with approval from Washington. Fifthly and lastly, there would have been a storage space and a bin beside the elevator halls for each family to store their bicycles, washing machines and tools. These planned areas for laundry and drying were foreseen for one-third fewer families; therefore, the defined space for the mentioned facilities was designed so as to be smaller relative to the spaces.⁷⁵

Thus, it was intended to create a “vertical neighborhood” (Figure 3.6) for the people, 90% of whom had resided in single-detached houses and these people would have experienced the practice of living in high-rise apartments for the first time in their

⁷⁵ See *ibid.*

lives.⁷⁶ Hence, new forms of living were formulated for the new society of the post-war U.S. The “deserving poor” of the country would have been modernized thanks to technology and its advances.

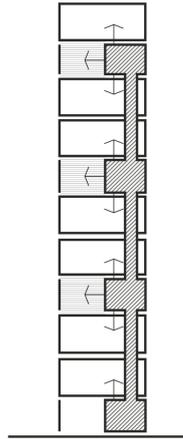


Figure 3.6 Diagrammatic vertical section of gallery floors, re-drawn by the author (Source: Chris Bacon, *Pruitt Igoe Revisited* (The University of Sheffield: Faculty of Architectural Studies: Department of Town and Regional Planning, 1985))

The tempting potential of the up-to-date architecture and modern technology in fictionalism and the supervision of the *modus vivendi* were appreciated since then. While *Architectural Forum* (1951) appreciated the design proposal for its innovative contribution to the existing housing patterns,⁷⁷ *Architectural Record* (1956) aggrandized the project as being a new interpretation of the “romantic contemporary equivalent of the village square” in high rise living.⁷⁸ In addition, the proposed combination of the skip-stop elevators and open galleries influenced the PHA of the

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ As stated in Bechtel, *op. cit.*, 57.

other cities. In the face of so much interest, the architects of the project had applied for a patent of this design.⁷⁹

The aforementioned phases of conception of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments were very important for determining the primary reasons and excuses for the design process in the way of taking their final forms. In this scenario, to make any reading based on any style-based canons falls out of our scope. Instead, it aims to determine the relationship between the decision-making mechanism of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments and the notion of housing as a part of habiting. Thus, it enables us to form an opinion — as a first impression — in the use of a public housing project, as a tool of modernization and its anticipated contribution to the idea of modernity.

At this stage, the points that should be taken into consideration are the grounded arguments of Yamasaki and his associates for the very first design proposal, regardless of their accuracy and validity. They defended their first scheme on the basis of the concepts relevant to the human and to the notion of habiting. In other words, they had wanted to take an intuitive approach— and perhaps a memorized tendency — in harmony with the dialectics between modernization and Modernism by considering the ongoing experience of the decision-making mechanism. However, the politically and economically based priorities invalidated this approach and predominated the whole continuum. In the end, it necessitated the creation of a new relationship network under new circumstances with its renewed social targets. Moreover, it cast key roles to urbanism and architecture in this modernization process. They were positioned as the determinants of new forms of life in post-war American society. In this manner, urbanism and architecture were isolated as the tools of the process of modernization under the name of sublimation.

⁷⁹ See “Slum Surgery in St Louis; a New Apartment Type,” *op. cit.*, 129-135.

In practice, had it been possible to create a new form of life and legitimize it merely with the tools of urbanism and architecture? The next subchapter focuses on these questions. However, it is essential to state that this decomposed and simplified attitude stays out of aforementioned dialectics of modernization and Modernism. According to the idea of modernity, all social, political and economic processes should be activated dialectically in order to witness this change. Thus, it becomes achievable to find new ways to make the ever-changing world a home again and to contribute to the experience of modernity.

3.3. Distorted Utopia: Construction and the First Years of Pruitt-Igoe

The previous chapter brought light on the conception period of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments in order to grasp the roots of the main decisions that had steered the continuum. However, this part focused on their construction processes. Thus, it aims to determine other contributing factors in the implementation of these public housing projects and to find any clues regarding the gap between the beginning and end points of the project.

The first change that occurred in face of the reality was the reduction of the 96-acre site to 57-acres which was the northeast part of the first approved design area. The remainder of the land was set aside for future urban redevelopment projects so as to use a limited economic budget more efficiently. Along with a decrease in the total construction and the number of total dwelling units, it was decided to erect the buildings block by block. Each constructed building would have been rented to their future users. Thus, it aimed to minimize the injuries to families because of the relocation.

In the re-revised design project (Figures 3.7 and 3.8), radical amendments were not made to the density, the number of high-rise housing blocks and their general settlement in the area. There were only minor alterations made. On the other hand,

some of the amenities, such as toilets and play areas in the ground floors of the buildings, were eliminated in the projects. Even though, these deficiencies seem to be non-critical at first sight, it should not be forgotten that they had a direct impact on the public life of this crowded square. They were expected to make contributions to the targeted experience just as the United States Housing Act of 1954⁸⁰ had aimed for the operation and creation of living spaces instead of mere dwelling units. Moreover, it was made under other fiscal constraints during the construction. Many technical details were missing, including landscaping, painting the concrete walls of the galleries and stairwells, insulation of steam pipes and screening on the gallery windows.

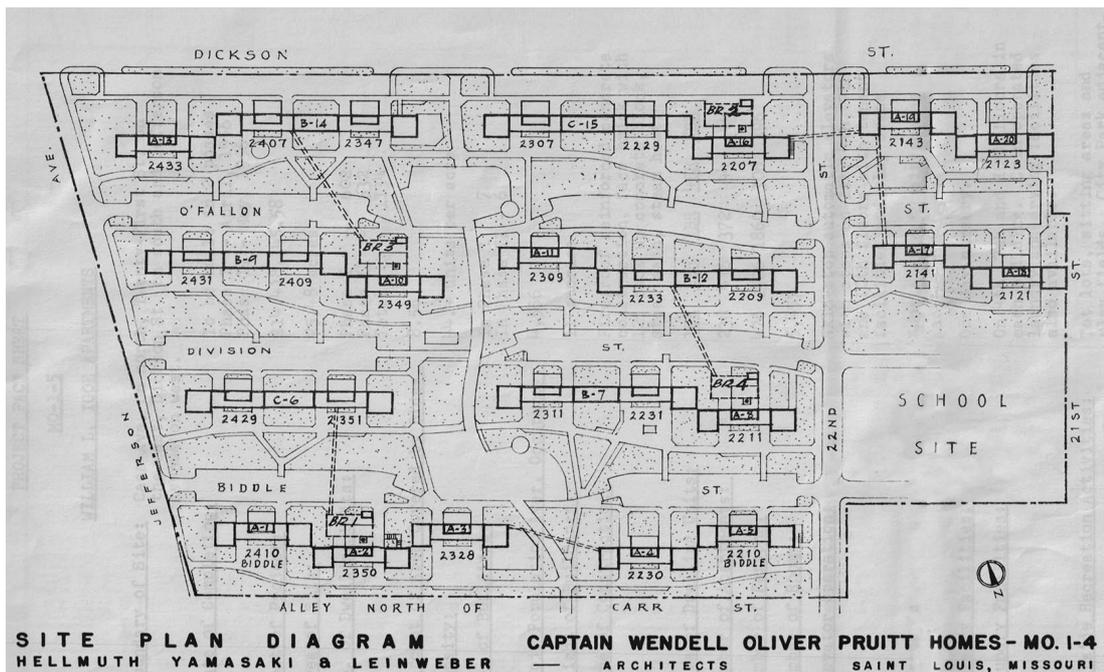


Figure 3.7 Site plan diagram of the Captain Wendell Oliver Pruitt Homes (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 0059 0003 0346a)

⁸⁰ Public Law 83-560.

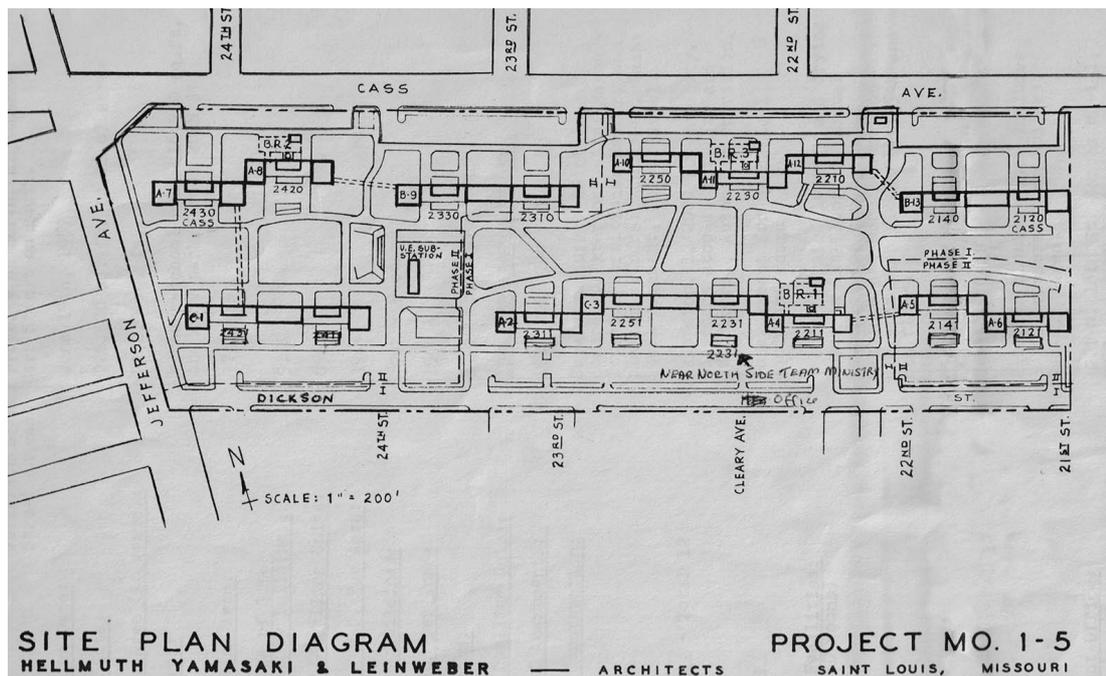


Figure 3.8 Site plan diagram of the William Leo Igoe Apartments (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 0059 0003 0346a)

Beyond the readings on the construction details of the project, the management process in terms of the political and economic relation between public and private sectors is also important to detect the manner of action of this modernization process. The operation commenced with the St. Louis Land Clearance and Redevelopment Authority, which was in charge of purchasing the selected slum area. Then, it enabled the discharge of the dwellings on the land. Finally, the land was sold to the private building trade. Meanwhile, the St. Louis Housing Authority was responsible for the clearance of the land in order to prepare it for construction.⁸¹ The land was purchased by a local Urban Redevelopment Corporation; in 1953, it changed its

⁸¹ Bristol, *op. cit.*, 164.

name to Civic Progress Inc., and later to Downtown St. Louis Inc.⁸² It was constituted by 20 St. Louis businessmen being motivated by Darst. They collected \$2 million capital as a beginning for these public housing projects in addition to future projects in the city center — due its charming capacity for economic profit on the real estate in the near future.

Next, the continuum was controlled by arrangements between the Government and the City, and between the public and private sectors. There were a number of economic encouragements for both the Federal Government and the Urban Redevelopment Corporation in this case. First of all, the amount of \$55,000 was donated to St. Louis' Land Clearance Corporation for the very first phases. At the end of the process of readying the land for construction, two-thirds of the loss stemmed from the sale price of the land that would have been compensated for by the Government. Moreover, one-third of it would have been covered by the City. This repayment could have been on money exchanged or any public services such as substructure, utilities or public improvements. Lastly, the public housing projects were exempted from the tax for 10 years by the state of Missouri. Later on, it was taxed at a 50 percent rate for the next 15 years. The committee was also able to send the projects to another private investor in exchange for \$2 million.⁸³ The public housing projects were carried out by the local public agency and the charges for their general overall upkeep were afforded by monthly collected rents.⁸⁴

As a consequence of the housing policy handled for the purpose of the economic expenditures of each side, Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments were constructed at a cost of approximately \$36 million — \$21,689,412.14 for Pruitt Homes and \$14,438,145.58 for Igoe Apartments⁸⁵ — with some inevitable cutbacks, as stated above. Even though these racially segregated projects had the same plan schemes,

⁸² As stated in Bacon. *op. cit.*, 7.

⁸³ As stated in "Slum Surgery in St Louis; a New Apartment Type," *op. cit.*, 135-136.

⁸⁴ As stated in Schmandt et. al., *op. cit.*, 3.

⁸⁵ "Metropolitan Church Federation," *op. cit.*

there were a number of discrepancies with respect to the capacities of the dwellings and the average densities of the projects. Pruitt Homes had 1736 dwelling units — 364 one-bedroom, 672 two-bedroom, 568 three-bedroom, 88 four-bedroom and 44 five-bedroom — in twenty 11-storey buildings. Its average density was 54.6 units per acre. On the other hand, Igoe Apartments had 1134 dwellings — 238 one-bedroom, 436 two-bedroom, 372 three-bedroom, 44 four-bedroom and 44 five-bedroom and one 2-story community building — planned to serve for both projects in 13 11-storey buildings. Its average density was 44.4 per acre.⁸⁶ However, the projects turned into one massive public housing project in 1954 after the vested case of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People based upon *Brown v. Board Education*; therefore, the aforementioned differences lost their significance in the end.⁸⁷ (Figure 3.9)

After the latest news, the mixed — Whites' and African Americans' — usage of a public housing project was planned as experiment through the voluntary integration with Igoe Apartments. It basically aimed to collect data on this issue in order to discover the eventual problems of this enforcement. In addition, there was no eligible public housing project for only Whites in the mean time in order to provide White People with an opportunity for this option. However, one of the most determinant points of this test— except for racial prejudice — was the departure of many white families from the land as soon as the land was cleared. Their return did not seem possible in the near future. In the wake of these drawbacks and the distorted histories and images of this experience via the wire service of the city, this practice was not growing in perfect conditions. The first outcome can be followed through correspondence from John J. O'Toole, Executive Director of the St. Louis Housing Authority, to Martin Quigley on July 7, 1955. The volunteer rate of White People

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ As stated in “The Dan Smoot Report on Government Housing,” *The Review of the NEWS*, (March 1971): 1.

had decreased relative to that of African American people.⁸⁸ This disposition can be seen also in the occupancy rates of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments. While the rate of Pruitt was 95.4% — with a 100 percent African American population —, Igoe’s was 69.5% — with 88.6% African American population — in 1956.⁸⁹

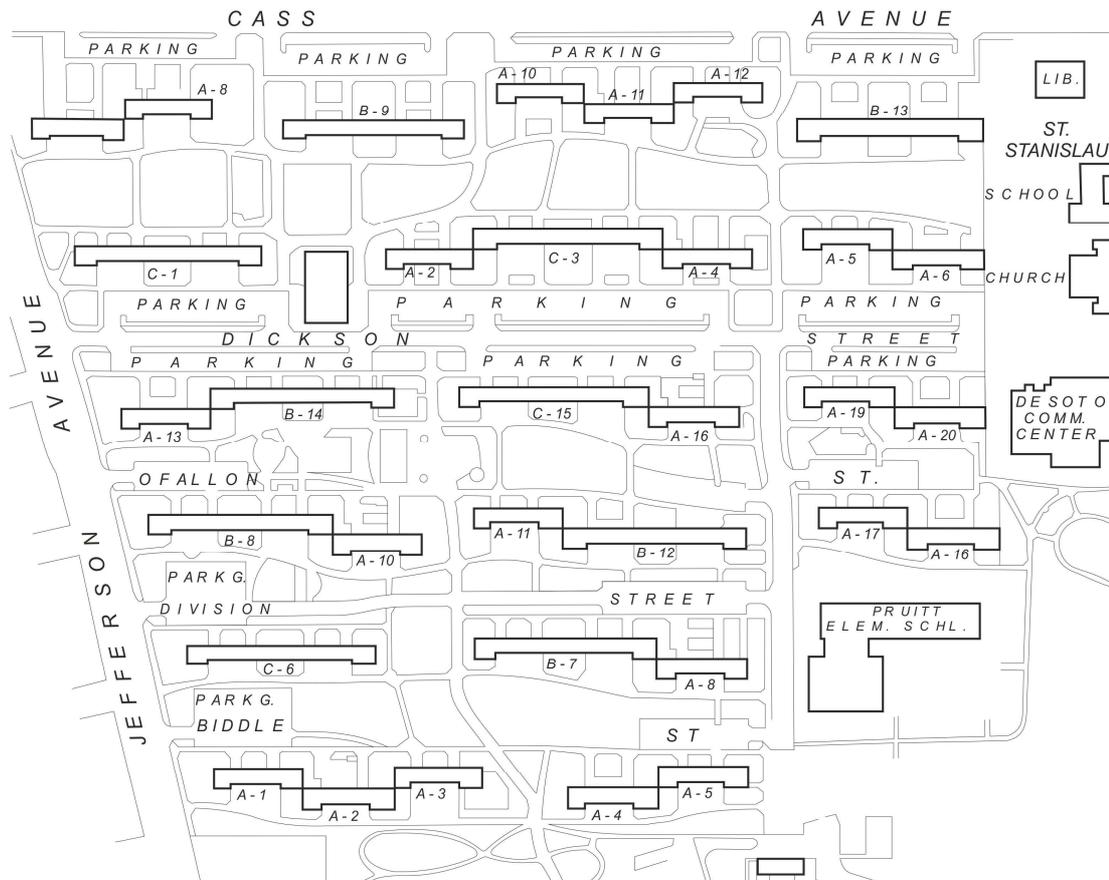


Figure 3.9 Site plan of Pruitt-Igoe, re-drawn by the author (Source: “Special Collections,” John M. Olin Library, Washington St. Louis University, St. Louis. Pruitt-Igoe Housing 1972 Folder 1.)

⁸⁸ “Prospects for Voluntary Integration at Igoe,” Martin Quigley to John J. O’Toole, 7 June 1955.

⁸⁹ “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection” (Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis) Doc Mss 0059 0003 0334.

After the latest news, the mixed — Whites' and African Americans' — usage of a public housing project was planned as experiment through the voluntary integration with Igoe Apartments. It basically aimed to collect data on this issue in order to discover the eventual problems of this enforcement. In addition, there was no eligible public housing project for only Whites in the mean time in order to provide White People with an opportunity for this option. However, one of the most determinant points of this test— except for racial prejudice — was the departure of many white families from the land as soon as the land was cleared. Their return did not seem possible in the near future. In the wake of these drawbacks and the distorted histories and images of this experience via the wire service of the city, this practice was not growing in perfect conditions. The first outcome can be followed through correspondence from John J. O'Toole, Executive Director of the St. Louis Housing Authority, to Martin Quigley on July 7, 1955. The volunteer rate of White People had decreased relative to that of African American people.⁹⁰ This disposition can be seen also in the occupancy rates of Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments. While the rate of Pruitt was 95.4% — with a 100 percent African American population —, Igoe's was 69.5% — with 88.6% African American population — in 1956.⁹¹

Late in the 1950s, Pruitt-Igoe conspicuously started to be called in cases of ordinary crimes.⁹² Various scenarios were put forward to explain this situation. The most popular were the physical design failures and troubled tenant characteristics of the public housing project. As a matter of fact, the high crime rate was a problem of not only Pruitt-Igoe but also the entire city.⁹³ There were, in fact, two leading causes for the prominence of Pruitt-Igoe. One of these was the high density of Pruitt-Igoe in

⁹⁰ "Prospects for Voluntary Integration at Igoe," Martin Quigley to John J. O'Toole, 7 June 1955.

⁹¹ "George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection" (Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis) Doc Mss 0059 0003 0334.

⁹² As stated in Bechtel, *op. cit.*, 57.

⁹³ Raymond R. Tucker, *Comparison of Index Crimes for First Six Months of 1959, 1960, 1961 & 1962 in Pruitt-Igoe-Vaughn, City Wide and Fourth District* (St. Louis Housing Authority: Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority).

comparison with the remainder of the city (Figure 3.10). The second was the image generated of it as a post-war (public) housing utopia in the U.S. (Figure 3.11)



Figure 3.10 Pruitt-Igoe with its adjacent environment, 1965 (Source: “Cervantes Series 01” (John M. Olin Library, Washington University, St. Louis) Box 39, Housing - Pruitt-Igoe Division of, 1965-1969)



Figure 3.11 One of the first families to move into Pruitt Homes in October 1954 (Source: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture/enlarge.asp?image=30696120&event=1045829&CategoryID=23105> accessed 03 December 2016)

As stated in Sections 3.1 and 3.2, the re-arrangement of the land-use praxis of the city had taken its roots from the danger of the decay of the city center. In the post-war period, two-thirds of the city population was dwelling in the suburbs.⁹⁴ The clearance of the city center and construction of technologically supported public housing projects would have resulted in the revitalization of the city center, provided the economic encouragements and a constructed image of the city through up-to-date

⁹⁴ *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*, directed by Chad Freidrichs. New York: First Run Features, 2011.

and charming living spaces had enabled the involvement of the “deserving poor” to in this newly emerged system. Moreover, the middle-income groups would have returned to the city center. As a result, the historical downtown would have been rescued from being a poor landscape and the city would have purported to be one of the leading modernist cities of the post-war U.S.

Contrary to expectations, this operating modernization process did not produce an economic recovery for the “deserving poor.” It had, in fact, shifted the major working areas. Technologically-advanced industry started to dominate the whole sector. It also induced the elimination of approximately 11,800 manufacturing jobs in the city between 1954 and 1958.⁹⁵ The rapidly dwindling employment opportunities for blue collar workers had not provided any opportunity for economic reform for the selected poor. Moreover, the continuum did not provide any spark for the economic revival of the whole city. The outcome of Pruitt-Igoe in this urban renewal act was long term concentrated poverty for the tenants, rather than ascending the social ladder.

This economic hardship can also be traced by some statistical information of incoming tenants between 1955 and 1958. While the percentage of employed incoming tenants decreased from 73% to 58% in Pruitt Homes, it decreased from 73% to 57% in Igoe Apartments.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the percentage of incoming tenants with incomes below the poverty level increased from 62% to 74% at Pruitt Homes and from 57% to 70% at Igoe Apartments.⁹⁷ In the meantime, rents of the living units increased in contradiction of the low income profile of the projects.⁹⁸ One reason for this contradiction pertained to the administration policy of the public housing projects. The maintenance expenses and other utilities would have been paid from

⁹⁵ As stated in Weidenbaum et. al., *op. cit.*, 27.

⁹⁶ “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” *op. cit.*, Doc Mss 0059 0003 0334.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ For more information see Susan Pendergrass, “Pruitt-Igoe: The Beginning” (unpublished paper, 19 December 1973), 8-9 .

the collected rents. However, neither Pruitt Homes nor Igoe Apartments operated at full capacity during this period.⁹⁹ Therefore, enough money was never collected to make them self-sustained public housing projects. As a consequence, the housing units, which already had many cutbacks in the construction phase, were not be able to receive care service promptly. (Figures 3.12 and 3.13) The resultant malfunctions and growing neglects made lessees feel ignored in the heart of the city. There is no doubt that some part of these acts of violence rose from this emotion as a reaction to the final situation.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the poor economic report card of the process, the self-enclosed structure of the land could never be broken. The identity switch operation of the land (which had been called as Kerry Patch at one time) failed. In the nineteenth century, there was also a type of verge which had served as an autonomous sphere of a racially gathered community of the quarter. However, in time, this conscious and preferred volition turned into the isolation and segregation of the square. This new situation developed out of mostly exterior forces and biases. Even when the tenants of Pruitt-Igoe were pleasant enough to stay at the project, thick walls of the prejudice and conservatism of outsiders prevailed in the reading of Pruitt-Igoe. Therefore, for most people, the name Pruitt-Igoe signified more than only the name of a public housing project; it signified a marked community.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” *op. cit.*, Doc Mss 0059 0003 0334.

¹⁰⁰ As stated in Freidrichs, *op. cit.*

¹⁰¹ As stated in Valerie Sills, *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth*, directed by Chad Freidrichs. New York: First Run Features, 2011.



Figure 3.12 Flood in Pruitt-Igoe (Source: “Pruitt-Igoe Building Flooded, Maintenance Man 3 Hours Late,” *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 27 January 1969)



Figure 3.13 Overflowing garbage chutes in the corners of the common hallways (Source: “Pictures,” *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 31 October, 1965)

Besides the externalization of these different socio-economic and socio-cultural groups, the relationship of Pruitt-Igoe with its immediate surroundings was also not healthy. The elimination of the clearance of the 96-acre slum area and the abatement of the re-construction at a significant rate had also provoked the isolation of Pruitt-Igoe in this environment. The gulf between the living quarters (from the squatter houses to technologically advanced high-rise apartments) (Figures 3.14 and 3.15) of the people who had closed income states had an effect on both groups. The epiphany of it on Pruitt-Igoe certainly had been more striking. The cases of robbery and vandalism had occurred in the project at the very outset.¹⁰² Without doubt, a significant part of these ordinary crimes had also originated from this problematical connection.

In summary, it is clear to say that there were many differences and inconsistencies between the targeted image and the experienced image. The agenda for post-war St. Louis, as was the case for other American cities, centered on slum clearance and the construction of public housing projects in the name of social engineering by way of modernization. In this manner, slum clearance started to be conducted with the construction of public housing projects. The dwellings that did not conform to the standardizations of the post-war U.S. were included in the process of change. These living quarters were demolished, and in their place, living quarters were constructed by scripted habitats with the help of up to-date construction techniques and architectural languages. Thus, the aim was the modernization of post-war American society through the scripted *modus vivendi* and its presented image. At the end of this progress, St. Louis would also have been one of the leading modernist cities of the post-war U.S.

¹⁰² See "Police Recover Safe and \$5179 After Burglary," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 5 July 1955. See also "Security Proposals for Pruitt-Igoe," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 29 September 1968.



Figure 3.14 A closer view of Pruitt-Igoe shortly after opening for occupancy in 1955 (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 59.4.1-2)



Figure 3.15 A look to the Pruitt-Igoe site from a squatter house (Source: http://urizenic.blogspot.com.tr/2011_02_01_archive.html, accessed 19.01.2017)

However, no significant change to socio-economic and socio-cultural land use praxis of the city was observed after these proposed actions. The post-war modernization process basically failed. The point arrived at was a disappointment for many. The foremost among them was the Government with its subsidiaries. As stated previously, the applied housing acts had objected to revitalizing the slum areas near-by business districts for the sake of the city and the city center. However, neither the revitalization of the historical centre nor the involvement of the “deserving poor” in the newly emerged system of the post-war U.S. was actualized. This washout put pressure on the administration and its housing policies.

The other group affected from this end was those with connections with Pruitt-Igoe as tenants or attendants in various fields of activity. The lessees of Pruitt-Igoe were left to live in this marked community. As a result, the primary reasons for the problems being experienced were eclipsed under the brand of perception of it. This situation also applied to any determinant role that was supposed to bring Pruitt-Igoe in line, such as social workers, public officials and security agents. (Figure 3.16) They were exposed to the tension stemming from the detached relationship between the problems of Pruitt-Igoe and their proffered solutions. This circumstance provoked an increase of diseases at Pruitt-Igoe by medications being given with no inspection required.

Lastly, it painted a bad picture to those who had monitored Pruitt-Igoe in order to position it in the world histories. It contributed to the forthcoming disappointment of practiced urbanism and architecture in the name of Modernism. While these designed habitats — as Pruitt-Igoe — were sublimated and presented as the tools for the utopias of the era at the very outset, it witnessed a promised future falling out at the end of the experience. This disillusionment paved the way for the charges of Modernism, Modern Urbanism and Modern Architecture afterwards. However, the points that were ignored in this scenario can be summarized in the following questions: Could post-war social engineering be able to represent the discursive core of Modernism? If

not, would it be correct to blame Modernism for this failure? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to reread the primary reason, the manner of action and the main tools of post-war social engineering within the idea of modernity.



Figure 3.16 Police officer Larry Disbennett takes cover behind the door of his vehicle while he plays a floodlight onto one of the buildings at Pruitt-Igoe, 1967 (Source: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture/enlarge.asp?image=30696140&event=1045829&CategoryID=23105>, accessed 03 December 2016)

Pruitt-Igoe was one of the supreme examples of social engineering in the post-war U.S. Furthermore, being a (public) housing project increased its significance due to

the direct relationship of it with the common man — the inhabitant — who sits at the center of the idea of modernity. However, it is clear to see that the post-war social engineering project refused to use the experience of the common man or any related issues on its form of life in the production of this modernized habitat — Pruitt-Igoe. Instead, it constituted the preconceived ends due to the bureaucratic and economic positions of the post-war U.S. (Public) Housing was intended to be used as a tool for the operation of the internalization of this attitude, and the maintainability of the advantages of the Nation.

The post-war modernist urbanism and architecture operated as if they had been the creators of this scenario. With the assistance of modern technology, they were used to produce the requested manmade habitat and govern the *modus vivendi* of its users. The approach of “nothing left to do” was adopted and it was found unnecessary to establish a dialogue, or communication, with the subject. In other words, the common man was excluded from the emergence, production and sustenance of this designed habitat. This moved role between the post-war modernist urbanism and architecture caused the rupture of the dialectical relationship between housing and man, and converted it into an overhead praxis that aimed to control the experience of the common man. Although this loaned so-called power made an impression as if it had sublimated the post-war modernist urbanism and architecture, the truths were far from it. In the end, post-war modernist urbanism and architecture were degraded to regular tools and to nothing.

In these circumstances, to admit the predestinarianism of the degraded modernist urbanism and architecture on *modus vivendi* would be so preposterous as much as to blame the same urbanism and architecture for this end. According to the idea of modernity, the connection between Man and the world cannot be controlled by a sole factor. Even though buildings are a kind of manifestation of the ideas and desires of people in the living world, it is not possible to produce any forms of life merely with physical design tools. There are many processes that shape this relation and all of

these processes also have dialectical relationships in themselves. None of them is more important or more determinant than the others in the experience of modernity. To drive forward one of them does not give it the power of control over the other processes; in fact, it opens a door to the collapse of the basis of pursuit of these experiences: to explore new aspirations and new possibilities to make the world home again.

Taking all of these into account, the post-war Pruitt-Igoe should not be a renowned paragon for the failure of Modernism or Modern Architecture; it should be a paragon for the post-war determinist social engineering project that presents itself as if it were a revolutionary utopia of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, any designed building deprived of social, political and economic grounds cannot represent the bond between man and the world. Similarly, any social engineering project that adopts this reduced approach cannot ensure the modernization of people.

CHAPTER 4

RE-AWAKENING OF THE UTOPIAN APPROACH: PRUITT-IGOE OF MODEL CITIES

4.1. Theoretical Basis of Model Cities

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore ---
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat
Or crust and sugar over ---
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

*A Dream Deferred: the Story of Pruitt-Igoe's Conditions*¹⁰³ (1968) begins with these lines of poetry by the American poet Langston Hughes. It is a report written by the Pruitt-Igoe Neighborhood Corporation under the directorship of John Miller of the Urban League. It basically expounds the story of the residents of Pruitt-Igoe from their own perspectives. It narrates the substantial circumstances to which they were exposed and the feelings that they had accumulated. The principal aim of this research is to refer to the fading dream of Pruitt-Igoe.

¹⁰³ *A Dream Deferred: the Story of Pruitt-Igoe's Conditions* (MO: St. Louis: Urban League of St. Louis, 1968).



Figure 4.1 St. Louis Police Officer Dennis Blackman patrols a Hallway of Pruitt-Igoe on December 15, 1965. (Source: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture/folder.asp?event=1045829&CategoryID=23105>, accessed 03 December 2016)

According to the report, the despair and resignation on the project had been fed from two major points, the first of which was the previously distorted utopia of Pruitt-Igoe, the aim of which was to construct a new society between the destructiveness of the demolition ball and the bulldozer. It promised good, safe, healthy dwellings for those ignored and left by themselves until that moment. However, in the end it

reached a point that had never been imagined: “a concrete jungle.” (Figure 4.1) The second point from the despair and resignation on the project had been fed was the “devil-may-care” attitude of some residents of Pruitt-Igoe. It pointed to those who gave up dreaming and chose to make a shift by turning a blind eye to the general problems of the other habitants and the public housing project in general. Even though these reactions could be labeled as reflexes to the final outcome of the public housing project and its community in order to avoid possible damage, it also precluded a solution to the existing troubles in pursuit of a better environment in which to live.

The report also highlighted that Pruitt-Igoe certainly has a number of problems that could be collected under a number of major headings such as security, health-wealth, recreation and housing-general. However, manner in which these problems were dealt were neither by ignoring them nor by giving up hope from Pruitt-Igoe due to them. Even though main stream researchers and newsmen embraced the problems of Pruitt-Igoe by focusing on the tenants contributing to the problems of the project, there were always many people who had opted to fight for this community from its very first days. (Figures 4.2 and 4.3) This report is the rallying call of these experts and the declaration of dissatisfaction with the existing circumstances and of their “dream of a better tomorrow.”

This outcry was in the spirit of the 1960s U.S. It was the decade of rising social revolutions such as the struggle for civil rights, anti-war protests and free speech movements. This thesis reads the period as a conscious state created by the experience of the modernization processes and a struggle for re-connection of these processes with Modernism. Thus, it aims to revive the desire to be in search of new ways to make the world home, rather than merely to accept the driven physical ends. The voiced seeking of Pruitt-Igoe is a type of reflection of this spirit in this notion.



Figure 4.2 Residents celebrate Pruitt-Igoe Day (Source: “Residents Celebrate Pruitt-Igoe Day with Big Parade, Fest,” *The St. Louis American Newspaper*, 19 October 1967)



Figure 4.3 The children of Pruitt-Igoe, led by adult residents of each of 33 high-rise buildings, join forces in a cleanup campaign (Source: “Practical Idealist on Public Housing,” *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 06 August 1967)

Before canalizing our reading on this newly emerged manner of understanding in the case of (public) housing, it is useful to briefly summarize the periods between the late 1950s, when the name of Pruitt-Igoe started to be associated with increasing vandalism, sexual assaults and muggings, and 1968, when the report of *A Dream Deferred: the Story of Pruitt-Igoe's Conditions* was written. This summary aims to reveal the differences between the experience of public housing and the preferred experience with a number of slices of it. It is important to grasp the underlying meanings and pointed issues of this failure.

As stated in the previous chapter, the first conspicuousness of the problems at Pruitt-Igoe dated back to the late 1950s. This made an overwhelming impression throughout the country. The unfolding of this unpleasant experience on public housing also started to damage the image of St. Louis which was one of the targeted outputs of post-war social engineering. Due to the growing issues, a grand jury was constituted in 1959 in order to determine the situation of Pruitt-Igoe. The jury documented an investigation report in which interventions supported a number of pro-arguments for the failure of Pruitt-Igoe.¹⁰⁴ In 1960, then Mayor of the City of St. Louis, Raymond Tucker, formed a Committee on Public Housing and Social Services to research these problems. Two years later, the Committee submitted a report according to which the basic reasons for the problems of Pruitt-Igoe included “ignorance, poverty, lack of labor skills and racial discrimination.” It listed a number of suggestions in order to avoid these problems, namely several implementations related mostly to management or state policy on the subject of public housing.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the studies on possible scenarios started formally to be discussed.

Until 1968, various studies had been produced for the physical and emotional rehabilitation and renovation of Pruitt-Igoe. The first step was born from a contribution between theory and practice under the management of the Federal

¹⁰⁴ “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” *op. cit.*, Doc Mss 0059 0003 0369.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* As it is stated in Bacon, *op. cit.*, 31-33.

Government. In 1962, it was decided to create three government agencies relating to Welfare, Housing and Education which would be working in a coordinated manner. Their aim was to determine the necessities of public housing project tenants and to discover probable new ways to make the existing system more effective. One year later, Pruitt-Igoe became the first Demonstration Project of this study.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, Lee Rainwater, from the Social Institute of Washington University, was charged with, and budgeted for, an investigation into Pruitt-Igoe. Even though his first task was to examine and grade the effectiveness of these aforementioned departments and their activities, the focus of the research was later changed. He was tasked to embrace the problems of public housing in terms of the pathological behavior of the tenants. This research continued until 1969.¹⁰⁷ As stated in *Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments Public Housing Complex: Final Environmental Impact Statement* (1974), it did not reach any concrete results or any pathfinder to follow, except for the increasing suggestion on the number of social workers at Pruitt-Igoe.¹⁰⁸

By 1965, approximately \$7 million was spent on these projects. However, none of these projects was able to fill the gap between theory and practice in reading or eliminating the problems of Pruitt-Igoe. Incidentally, nearly all of them underlined the necessity of the support for the management to the tenants in the case of public housing. Only the physical gains in this continuum were some of the activities that repaired the damage or constructed some of the elements eliminated in the construction of Pruitt-Igoe. Some of them were exterior lighter, window and protective screening, interior public area lighting, elevator reconditioning, recreation areas, a loop street and landscaping. In addition to all of these, some social projects were created such as Everybody's Club, the sub-community center and the Youth

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁷ As stated in Bacon, *op. cit.*, 31-33.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *op. cit.*

Center. In the end, none of them resulted in long-termed solutions for the problems of Pruitt-Igoe.

In 1968, the Pruitt-Igoe Neighborhood Corporation stated the continuation of the critical problems of Pruitt-Igoe. Some were inadequacies of the precautions taken for security, tenants being ignored and abused by the welfare office, absence of recreation facilities, open spaces filled with organic and artificial residuals and trash, poor maintenance and apathy to requests and complaints of tenants. (Figures 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6) Furthermore, the connection between theory and practice was not perceived positively by the inhabitants of Pruitt-Igoe. Rather, it was interpreted as a type of tool to demonstrate the claims that the tenants of public housing projects “do not know how to live” and “low-income families are immoral, criminal and apathetic.”¹⁰⁹ Taking all of these into account, it appears that both the treatment of the problems and the proposed measures for them in the conducted studies and the projects for the rehabilitation and renovation of Pruitt-Igoe deepened the social traumas of the community, instead of producing solutions.

The program of Model Cities was produced as an answer to the deadlocked (public) housing policies of post-war social engineering. It was one of the domestic programs under the agenda of President Lyndon B. Johnson’s “Great Society.” The “Great Society” was a type of continuation of Kennedy’s “New Frontier” the aim of which was the end of injustice and inequality. After the death of Kennedy, Johnson approached this goal by focusing on poverty and racial discrimination. Public housing was one of the most important and efficient policy areas of this goal.

¹⁰⁹ *A Dream Deferred: the Story of Pruitt-Igoe's Conditions, op. cit.*



Figure 4.4 A vacant space between the Pruitt-Igoe blocks (Source: "Pictures," *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 31 October, 1965)



Figure 4.5 Typical conditions at Pruitt-Igoe (Source: Carey K. Jenkins and Charles E. Fleming, Inc. *Pruitt-Igoe: A New Architectural and Environmental Concept in an Urban Community in Solution of Today's Problems* (MO: St. Louis: Jenkins-Fleming, 1971)



Figure 4.6 Garbage filled playground of Pruitt-Igoe (Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2329379/The-hopeful-rise-perilous-decline-American-dream-How-promising-Pruitt-Igoe-housing-projects-St-Louis-quickly-countrys-biggest-urban-nightmare.html>, accessed 20.01.2017)

The first study of the program of Model Cities started with the assignment of Robert Wood, the Head of the Political Science Department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with a new Task Force. He was charged with focusing on urban problems and conducting the first efficient and productive experiments on the “war on poverty.” Its main goal was to “attack the problem of rebuilding the slums.”¹¹⁰ The final report of the proposed Task Force recommended running a national competition on this issue. Some determined criteria to judge the performance of the proposals included physical and social improvements, efficiencies on the problems of the poor and minorities, the contribution of the citizens at the various stages of the programs and influences on the fiscal resources of the public and private sectors. After submission of this final report to Congress in 1966, the report was amended

¹¹⁰ As it is stated in Andrew T. Carswell, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Housing*, (Thousands Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2012), 458-461.

regarding some issues; however, the main subjects on local priorities, participation and mobilization remained unchanged. Finally in early 1967, the initial program guides of the Model Cities under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) were declared and called for the contribution of the cities in the final settings of the program. Later in October 1967, other guidelines for measuring the performances of the cities were added. Finally, it created a framework driven under the “federal-local-community partnership” to supply the coordinated workings of various programs for the same end. Each neighborhood was free to constitute a study plan under this framework and primary guidelines of the program.¹¹¹

Thus, the spirit of the 1960s brought a new type of attitude to the notion of (public) housing. This form of social engineering made political, economic and social support to (public) housing possible, as opposed to being mired in the tactics of physical construction. This thesis reads this step as an experimental stage in the re-configuration of the bond between the modernization processes and the involvement of the common man. It represents the inhabitants of public housing projects in this case in the dialectics between modernization and Modernism *de novo*.

4.2. Pruitt-Igoe of Model Cities

In early 1968, the Model City Program was brought to the agenda of the City of St. Louis. Five adjacent sub-areas were selected for the demonstration of the project. The areas selected were the Carr Central Area, the Montgomery-Hyde Park Area, the Murphy-Blair Area, the Pruitt-Igoe Area and the Yeatman Area near the business center of the old city. (Figures 4.7 and 4.8) These areas did not represent only the people living in public housing but also those who had individual houses within the boundaries of the districts. (Figure 4.9) However, it was clear enough to say that the priority of the Model Cities Program was the problems of the residents in the public

¹¹¹ As stated in *ibid*.

housing projects, and later the problems of those who had private dwellings and workplaces in the area.

In March, 1968, the Model City Agency printed a neighborhood newspaper, *Model City Voice*,¹¹² for a descriptive publication on the program and related topics on this issue. As set out in the newspaper, the program was planned for a period of 5 years in St. Louis and the details would be studied and proposed to the Federal Agencies within at least six months. In the end, the program would be activated at the beginning of 1969 at the latest.

The Model City Program was introduced as a new Federal Program administered by a federal agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It declared to create a new system by the “federal-local-community partnership” and made a budget for this mission. Its main goals were to support the physical conditions of (public) housing and the economic and social conditions of the inhabitants in the selected old neighborhoods. Thus, it was targeted to improve the image of the neighborhood and to enhance the quality of life of the residents.

The Model City Program was presented as an answer to a great variety of troubles and requirements in the cases of poverty. Even though there were ongoing poverty programs in St. Louis serving cross purposes, the Model City Program objected to approaching this in the long term. It addressed the income of families as the key to the solution for poverty. It aimed to put forward new proposals for the various fields related to major issues such as education, health services, racial segregation on-the-job opportunities, etc. In this scenario, it embarked on a quest to present proposals in order to associate different processes with each other and/or to produce proposals subservient to more than one field.

¹¹² For more information see *the St. Louis Model City Voice: News of the Model City Neighborhood*, March 1968.



Figure 4.7 Location map of the Model Cities Area (Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments Public Housing Complex: Final Environmental Impact Statement* (Missouri: St. Louis Housing Authority, 1974))

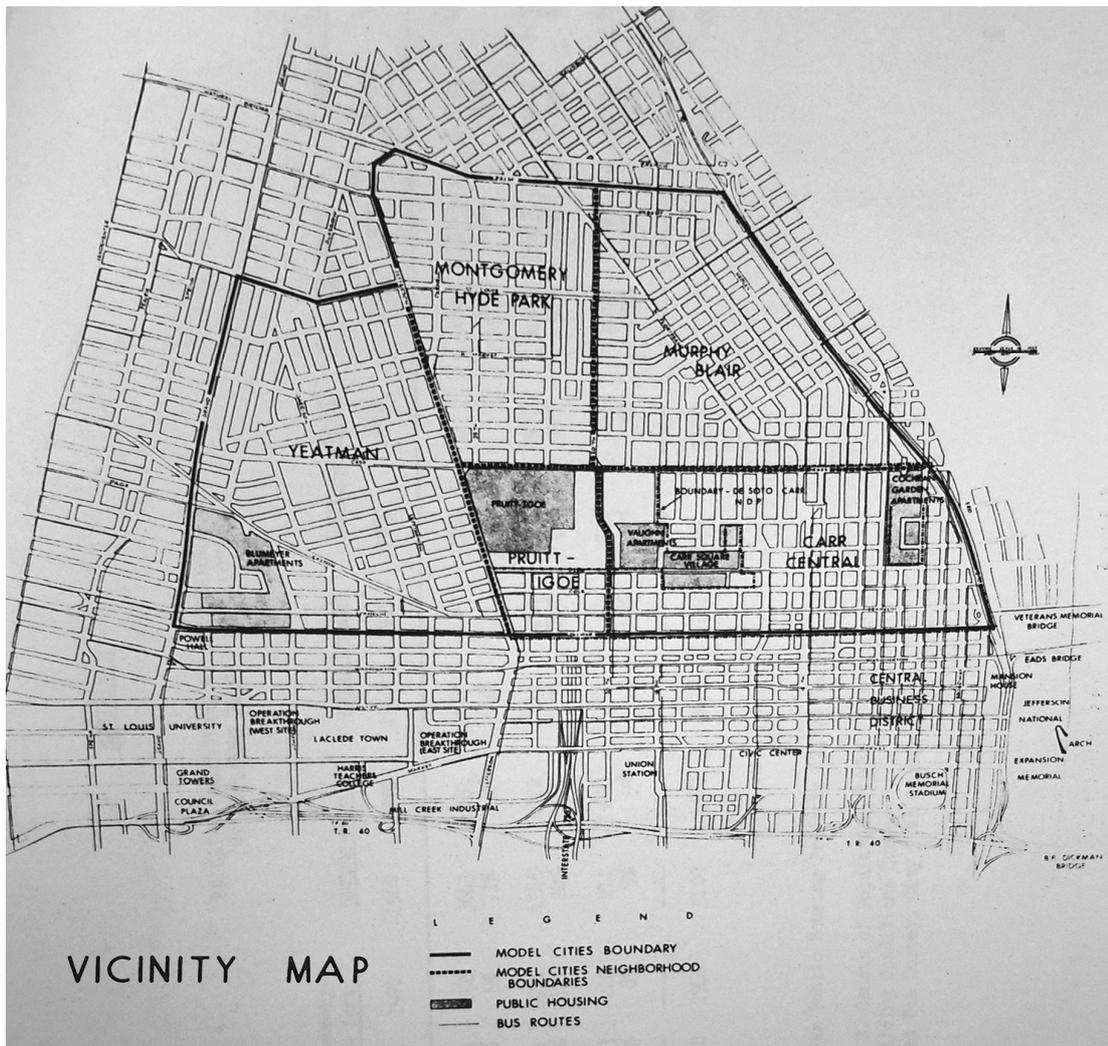


Figure 4.8 Vicinity map of the Model Cities (Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments Public Housing Complex: Final Environmental Impact Statement* (Missouri: St. Louis Housing Authority, 1974))

In this scenario, the systems for intervention and the tools used in this manner are aimed at avoiding the infertility of one-sided approaches such as design construction or social aid for the poor. Instead, it contained planning at various scales that had positive effects on the habitability of the neighborhood and contributed to the elimination of poverty. This included the rehabilitation of buildings such as housing,

The second of these was the type of manufacturing of the planning of the programs. It adopted a different approach from the ongoing urban renewal programs, welfare programs and all other local, state and federal programs. It drew its strength from the active participation of the people who lived or worked in the selected neighborhoods. Through the collaboration of the Joint Committee and the Model City Agency, the one that had experienced the neighborhood would be able to contribute to the generation, development and implementation of the planning. For this purpose, each Model City sub-area was expected to form its own Committee, each of which would have fifteen members. These committee consisted of the chairmen of the five Neighborhood Advisory Committees, one resident from each sub-area (selected by the Human Development Corporation), and one resident from each sub-area (selected by the Model City Agency). According to the ordinance of the Joint Committee, each Committee should have had similar goals and they should have studied in the same defined framework.

The final tweaking of the programs proposed was the evaluation of them according to the qualities of the proposals. It used a "System Approach" for this purpose. It helped to detect the programs that dealt with more than one issue and those that were the most relevant to the main subject of the Model City Program, namely the raising of the incomes of families. Thus, the proposal took its final form in one year. Moreover, the process was repeated annually. The Model City Agency undertook assisting the Committee in the fields of the budgeting system for staff and labor, with the inclusion of experts from Agency staff to the continuum and counselor support in the determination of possible program costs proposed to submit residents' information. At the end of the process, the Model City Agency also aggregated all of the programs planned and tendered the final state of it to the Board of Aldermen and Federal agencies.

In summary, the Model City Program presented a groundbreaking production process for the future of the Model City Target Area. Beyond the foundation of

neighborhood organization, the communication between people who lived or worked in the area and the Joint Committee would be supplied also by the *Model City Voice*. As stated in its first print, the later issues would always have a section for future questions and comments being brought forward.¹¹³ Taking all of these into account, it would be possible to create a new bridge between the users of the neighborhood, experts, technicians and the federal government. Contrary to planning practices of post-war social engineering, it offered a bottom-to-top planning understanding, thereby creating an opportunity to reawaken the revolutionary spirit in the experience of modernity.

In August, 1968, the *Pruitt-Igoe Model City Plan*¹¹⁴ was submitted with its eleven working areas: civil rights, core service, crime prevention, day care, economic development, education, employment, health, housing, recreation and urban renewal. (Figures 4.10 and 4.11) The plan comprised the detailed explanations of the problems and deficiencies of Pruitt-Igoe, proposed solutions and supportive implementations of these issues which requested approximately \$5 million for the budget of the program. Alongside the technical details of the proposed planning, the other point worth noting was an epiphany of the promising potential of this practice for the Committee as well as the residents of the neighborhoods. As stated in the report, the residents participated in the continuum with a passionate desire (Figures 4.12, 4.13 and 4.14) and the Committee interpreted this experience as the transformation of the “Dream Deferred” to a “Dread Deferred.”

¹¹³ For more information see *ibid*.

¹¹⁴ For more information see Pruitt-Igoe Neighborhood Corporation, *Model City Plan* (Missouri: St. Louis, 1968).



Figure 4.10 Day-care activities under the Model Cities Program (Source: *Saint Louis: A Model City* (MO: St. Louis: St. Louis Model City Agency))

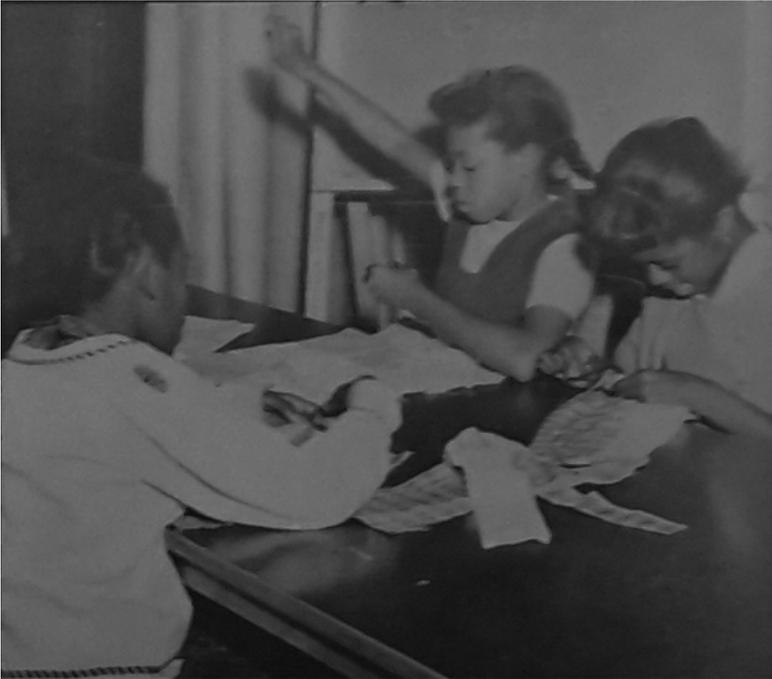


Figure 4.11 Community activity on education (Source: *Saint Louis: A Model City* (MO: St. Louis: St. Louis Model City Agency))



Figure 4.12 Tenant participation on meetings (Source: Carey K. Jenkins and Charles E. Fleming, Inc. *Pruitt-Igoe: A New Architectural and Environmental Concept in an Urban Community in Solution of Today's Problems* (MO: St. Louis: Jenkins-Fleming, 1971))



Figure 4.13 Christmas Play as a community activity (Source: *Saint Louis: A Model City* (MO: St. Louis: St. Louis Model City Agency))



Figure 4.14 Clinton Peabody Mothers' Club as a community activity (Source: *Saint Louis: A Model City* (MO: St. Louis: St. Louis Model City Agency))

Even though it is estimated that the Model Cities Program had a profound effect on Pruitt-Igoe, there are not enough documents on the details of this statement because of deficient record keeping.¹¹⁵ It is therefore not possible to pursue each working area and make pre and post comparisons in order to rate the impacts of them. Therefore, this thesis pays regard to the readings of the inhabitants and interprets the readings as the solid evidence of the breakup of the understanding of post-war (public) housing. This newly built practice provided a place for the impulse of the re-inclusion of the common man in the process in the 1960s U.S.A. Besides, the urban riots and strikes after the Model City Program were put into the place, which helps us to grasp the experience of the Pruitt-Igoe version of Model Cities.

¹¹⁵ As stated also in "Model City Agency's Records on Pruitt-Igoe," Richard Baeyen to Dr. George Wendel. George Dorian Wendel is a key person to get information on Pruitt-Igoe. He had studied in the Faculty of Political Science Department at the Saint Louis University. He had founded the Center for Urban Programs at the University. He had various studies and copies of formal documents about Pruitt-Igoe. He had a manuscript collection at the Saint Louis University Archives on the subject of Pruitt-Igoe.

Another significant point that should be mentioned in the history of Pruitt-Igoe is the St. Louis rent strike of 1969. By being the “first large-scale public housing strike in the nation,”¹¹⁶ (Figure 4.15) it points to not only the facts related to Pruitt-Igoe but also to the facts related to public housing in St. Louis in general. Hence, it allows a reading of the general circumstances of the notion of (public) housing projects in St. Louis before alleging any failure of Pruitt-Igoe. Thus, it enables a deduction of the notion of (public) housing in the practice of the Model Cities.

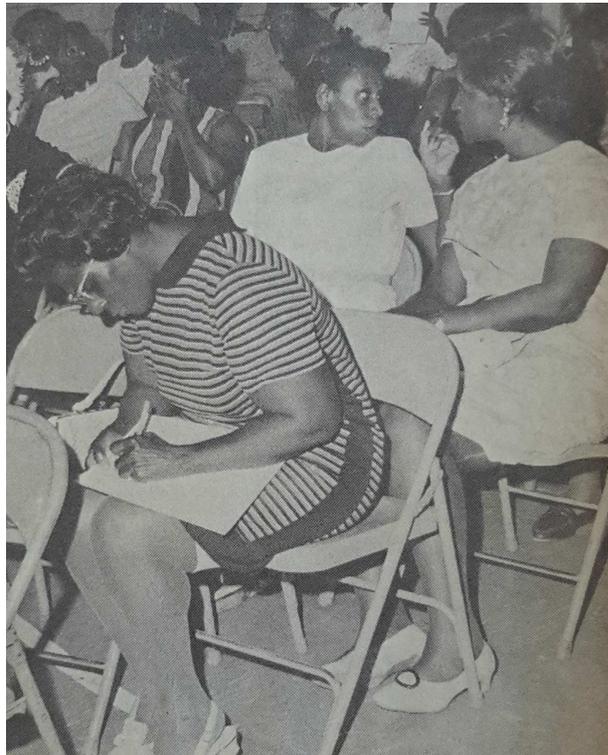


Figure 4.15 One of the supporters for the rent strike sings up to participate (Source: “Clippings,” John M. Olin Library, Washington University, St. Louis. Housing - Pruitt-Igoe Division of, January 1, 1969)

¹¹⁶ As stated in Bacon, *op. cit.*, 33.

The strike was announced on February 1, 1969 and ended on October 10, 1969. As stated in *Pruitt-Igoe Revisited*,¹¹⁷ it went into action similarly to that which had followed the peaceful spirit of the 1960s. It is said to have risen from “reasonable and amply justified” grounds and the whole continuum had been maintained in that vein. Thanks to civil right advocates and public opinion, the Federal Government also attempted to approach the rebellion in a similar manner. By the beginning of the strike, several meetings were arranged that were investigated by the Health and Welfare Council.¹¹⁸ These meetings aimed to discover the principal problems related to the incomes of both the Housing Authority and the lessees of the public housing projects.

The Housing Authority was convened for its first meeting on February 12. From the point of view of the Authority, the cause behind the rise in rents was the imbalance between the assembled rents and the maintenance costs of the public housing project. One of the reasons for this situation was the growing vandalism in the public housing projects, which had always revealed unexpected damages leading to a great amount of spending. With the budget of the Authority, it was possible to conduct only some basic maintenance; however, there were many serious issues on the line. The second reason was the high vacancy rate in the projects. Based upon the fact that the Housing Authority was a non-profit organization, the rents were supposed to cover maintenance expenses. However, insufficient occupancy of the projects had continued resulting in insufficient revenue for the Authority. Furthermore, the Authority claimed that the housing act had already called for a federal subsidy to the Authority for the financial support of maintenance costs. However, this could not be implemented and the Authority was left alone in this dilemma.

¹¹⁷ As stated in *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ For more information see “Public Housing in the City of St. Louis” (St. Louis: Washington University: John M. Olin Library).

The last reason was related to the profile of the tenants. The public housing project hosted many families due to the Aid to Families to Dependent Child (ADC) and many large families at the same time. Both profiles were generally in need of more than two-bedroom apartments. Consequently, most of the vacant flats were had only 1 or 2 bedrooms. The defined user profile had sealed the fate of the project and led the constant vacancies in the projects. As a consequence, the Authority had to increase rents as a single solution to the aforementioned complications. According to the Authority, the rents were not high even though they had recently been increased. However, the income of tenants, obviously, was too low. To settle this dispute, what should have been done was to increase the incomes of tenants.



Figure 4.16 An image from the rent strike (Source: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2329379/The-hopeful-rise-perilous-decline-American-dream-How-promising-Pruitt-Igoe-housing-projects-St-Louis-quickly-countrys-biggest-urban-nightmare.html>, accessed 20.01.2017)

One week later, the striking tenants were called for a meeting. The tenants presented more than one issue requiring solutions. The first issue was the high rent relative to the incomes of the tenants. (Figure 4.16) As it was claimed by the tenants, the rent policy of the Housing Authority was not sufficiently clear and the final situation had mostly worked against the tenants. Some tenants were supposed to pay 70% or more of their income on the apartment they rented. As a solution to this problem, the tenants requested a constant percentage — 25% — to determine their rents. Additionally, if the main point was to be supportive of the moderate and low income groups, it should not have been increased afterwards and it should have furnished any occasion to have them climbed the social ladder.

Secondly, the physical conditions of the public housing projects were not ameliorated. Neither the federal nor state officials appeared to make efforts to resolve the problems or fulfill the demands of the tenants, as promised previously. On the contrary, in fact, it had caused further deterioration of the general conditions of the public housing projects through the withdrawal of security police from some of the projects. (Figures 4.17 and 4.18) Lastly, the attitudes of Housing Authority officials toward tenants was far from respectful; in fact, officials exhibited prejudgment and scorn. In order to improve the conditions, the bearing of the officials needed to change.

These stated issues allow us to make comparisons between the existent situation of public housing projects and the goals of the Model Cities Program. The mentioned arguments of the rent strike were related to the key points of the program, namely to increase the incomes of tenants and to make the neighborhood more inhabitable. However, without looking at the circumstances from a broad perspective, passing judgment on the Model City Program would be misleading.



Figure 4.17 Some of the results of vandalism at Pruitt-Igoe (Source: “Indoor Rain‘ Makes Life Miserable at Pruitt-Igoe,” *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, 29-30 August 1970)



Figure 4.18 Zachary Marsh, 3, uses a vacant apartment as a playroom (Source: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture/enlarge.asp?image=30696146&event=1045829&CategoryID=23105>, accessed 03 December 2016)

The disparity between the income of the tenants and the rentals proposed for the public housing projects was connected with the bureaucratic and economic positions of the 1960s U.S. Even though a new understanding had been targeted for the notion of (public) housing by the Model Cities Program, the dominant role of the economy and the bureaucratic position of the nation that was inherited from the post-war period put up resistance to it. When the housing policy of the Government is examined more closely, it is clear to see that the alleged aims of the Model Cities Program and those who had applied in practice reveal a number of discrepancies. While some of them had resulted from broken promises, as the Housing Authority claimed above, some of them had damaged the Program.

The neo-liberal posture of the Housing Act of 1968 was one of the implementations that had affected the Model Cities Program directly. It declared a shift in the focus of the Government primarily by assisting the private sector rather than federal housing programs. The aid reserved for federal agencies and organizations was used for the revitalization of the housing market for moderate and low income groups.¹¹⁹ This decision had majorly reduced the economic support of the public housing projects and it affected the agenda of the Model Cities Program. In addition, unexecuted repairs due to the limited budget had laid groundwork for more damage in the projects. While some of the further damage was stemmed from disrepair, some of it was the result of vandalism due to the growing anger of the crowd. Similarly, aborted services resulted from the insecure environment of the projects, which had led to the increase of crime. Free from any doubt, the profile of the public housing project had also served their incremental growth. The accumulation of deprivation and destitution incapacitated to efforts to bring under control the created mess. Under these circumstances, the housing approach of the Model Cities Program that was set forth was rendered meaningless. Pruitt-Igoe and other public housing projects were

¹¹⁹ Public Law 90-284, title VIII, § 801.

caught between the faded dream of Model Cities and the cruelty of the experienced public housing program.

4.3. Fading and Loss of Pruitt-Igoe of Model Cities

With the election of Richard Nixon as President of the U.S., the conservatives took power from the liberals. This shift manifested itself also in the housing policies of the Government. Nixon adopted “new-federalism” as an answer to the unsuccessful experiments of the 1960s. In this scenario, the Government stayed out of any kind of management of the public housing projects. Instead, the then President introduced a policy of revenue sharing. Thus, the Government was expected to provide some money to the Federal Governments and from this date on, they were in charge of dividing the money.¹²⁰ Even though most of the Federal Government continued to operate the Model City Program for a period of time, this switch was a first step to predestinate the Program and the public housing projects under it. The emphasized individualism cancelled the obligation of the “federal-local-community partnership” and had city mayors and local elites regain power. It also meant that social-welfare programs were no longer included in the Government’s preferential list.

In addition, the understanding of the notion of (public) housing underwent a radical change. The secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), George Romney, stated that the production of housing was no different a process than the production of automobiles.¹²¹ This approach also made the entity of the Model Cities Program meaningless. In 1970, Nixon charged Edwin Banfield, a professor at Harvard University, with a Task Force aimed at determining the extent to which the Model Cities Program had contributed to the elimination of poverty. Contrary to what was expected, Banfield reached the conclusion that the Program

¹²⁰ As stated in B. A. Lawson, “The Pruitt-Igoe Projects: Modernism, Social Control, and the Failure of Public Housing, 1954-1976,” (M.S. thesis, Oklahoma State University, 2007).

¹²¹ As stated in “Memorandum on Pruitt-Igoe Public Housing Project in St. Louis,” E.E. Smith Company to Dr. George Wendel, 12 August 1999.

had contributed greatly to the issue of poverty¹²² even though it was notorious in popular culture.

In other respects, it was an irrefutable fact that the Program could not be implemented according to the backbone at the very outset. By the period of the Nixon presidency, its efficiency critically dropped and it was not brought new ground to compensate it. In other words, the tenants of the public housing projects of the Model Cities Program were left to their fate and they waited for their bitter end. This position can be clearly monitored by way of some fragments from the general situation of Pruitt-Igoe. As declared in *Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments Public Housing Complex: Final Environmental Impact*, the building conditions of Pruitt-Igoe in 1960 and 1970 had large differences. In 1960, 4% of the dwelling units were dilapidated, 12% were deteriorated and 84% were sound. Ten years later, the dilapidated dwelling units rose to 15% and the deteriorated units rose to 85%. None could be qualified as sound.¹²³ (Figures 4.19, 4.20 and 4.21)

The overall picture was also the same for the other public housing projects under the Model Cities Program. Pruitt-Igoe and the others entered the process of self-destruction. The rapidly worsening living conditions caused the people to escape from Pruitt-Igoe. Only the tenants with no place to go or small groups that endeavored to keep their hopes alive stayed. In 1970, only 15 buildings were occupied, the remainder of Pruitt-Igoe — 28 buildings — were emptied.¹²⁴ The collected rentals had provided a limited budget for the maintenance of the project — amounts insufficient to cope with all the serious problems that Pruitt-Igoe had. On the other hand, the vast number of disused areas had paved the way for the rise of damage and crime. (Figure 4.22)

¹²² As stated in Carswell, ed. *op. cit.*, 458-461.

¹²³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *op. cit.*

¹²⁴ As stated in *Pruitt-Igoe District: A Neighborhood Handbook* (The Human Development Corporation of Metropolitan Corporation).



Figure 4.19 An occupied building at Pruitt-Igoe (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection.” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 59.4.1-2)



Figure 4.20 Interior view of an unoccupied apartment (Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *Pruitt Homes and Igoe Apartments Public Housing Complex: Final Environmental Impact Statement*, Missouri: St. Louis Housing Authority, 1974)



Figure 4.21 Common hallway of an unoccupied apartment (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection.” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 59.4.1-2)



Figure 4.22 A rifle in a vacant Pruitt-Igoe apartment (Source: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture/enlarge.asp?image=30696165&event=1045829&CategoryID=23105>, accessed 03 December 2016)

In 1971, Nixon pressed the button for the integration of the Model City Program into the system of “revenue-sharing.” One year later, the transformation of the Program from one of local management to a citywide one under the neighborhood poverty program was finished.¹²⁵ During this period, HUD charged Skidmore, Owings and Merrill of Chicago, Harland Bartholomew and Associates of St. Louis, and other firms and organizations that had majored in social dilemmas with a Task Force focusing on the possibilities of Pruitt-Igoe’s rehabilitation.¹²⁶ Later, the Pruitt-Igoe Action Program was constituted to survey the productive land use possibilities and a Demonstration Plan was formulated to calculate the approximate costs.

After evaluation of the proposals in terms of their respective productivity, it was decided to leave the land as residential area with private housing units at a cost of between \$20 million and \$40 million. The tenant profile would have been mixed-income and the area would have consisted of buildings of various heights, scales and styles. Thanks to their attractive, well-designed and architectural language remaining constant with the rest of the city, it would have been possible to create a new and impressive outlook, as it had been supposed to be initially.

After putting the last touches on the design details of the rehabilitation project, the project was entered in a study focused on its construction approaches and methods. In March 1972, a partial demolition was tested in order to form an opinion about these issues. (Figures 4.23 and 4.24) However, the City and Housing Authority was not able to afford to take further steps due to the fact that too much money had been spent on the previous steps. Similarly, it had not been subsidized by the Federal Government due to the uncertain end of the project. According to the public authority, the proclaimed gains of the project were nothing more than a wish, while it

¹²⁵ As stated in Carswell ed., *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ For more information see “A.J. Wilson Papers (Executive Director of the St. Louis County Municipal League, 1970-1971)” (John M. Olin Library, Washington University, St. Louis) Box 5, Housing - Pruitt-Igoe, Folder 2, 1969-1972.

had not been able to deal with the problems of minorities and low-income groups in the public housing projects.



Figure 4.23 Demolition of Pruitt-Igoe (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 59.4.1-2.)

Meanwhile, there was another proposal for the rehabilitation of Pruitt-Igoe as a public housing project. A number of former residents of Pruitt-Igoe constituted the Jeff-Vander-Lou Community Development Corporation in 1971. They continued a study that relied on their experience in the rehabilitation of old buildings. They

selected four buildings near public utilities and neighborhood facilities, and they configured a general plan comprising physical construction and ideas on the settlement of tenants. However, the proposal of the Community Development Corporation was also rejected. Once again, the tenants' struggle to keep Pruitt-Igoe was ignored. In other words, the struggle of common men — the tenants — to become involved or to contribute to the continuum was rejected.¹²⁷



Figure 4.24 Partial vertical demolition (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 0059 0003 0363)

¹²⁷ As stated in Bacon, *op. cit.*, 34-35.



Figure 4.25 Main gate through the temporary fence erected around Pruitt-Igoe after its final abandonment (Source: “George D. Wendel Manuscript Collection,” Pius XII Memorial Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis. Doc Mss 59.4.1-2.)

In January 1973, the studies and proposals on the rehabilitation of Pruitt-Igoe came to an end. Nixon declared a moratorium and discontinued Government for every type of housing activity. According to Nixon, they were nothing more than attempts of no avail, therefore they needed to cease as soon as possible. In this manner, he brought the Government's connection to their construction and operations.¹²⁸ Following these developments, the St. Louis Housing Authority officially cancelled the Pruitt-Igoe Housing Project in June, 1973¹²⁹ transfers of the last tenants of Pruitt-Igoe to other public housing projects commenced. By May 1974, the project was vacated at a cost

¹²⁸ As stated in Bauman et. al., *op. cit.*, 157-159.

¹²⁹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *op. cit.*

of \$5 million.¹³⁰ (Figure 4.25) After then, a study was conducted, which resulted in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement*¹³¹ focusing on the possible effects of the demolition works and the other possibilities for the fate of the project. The report approved the choice of demolition and every housing apartment was demolished by 1976. (Figure 4.26)



Figure 4.26 An aerial view of the vacant Pruitt-Igoe, 1981 (Source: <http://stltoday.mycapture.com/mycapture/enlarge.asp?image=30696172&event=1045829&CategoryID=23105>, accessed 03 December 2016)

At the end, the burgeoning hope of Pruitt-Igoe with the Model Cities Program fell. It had a great impact than the first failure of Pruitt-Igoe as a distorted utopia. However,

¹³⁰ As stated in Bacon, *op. cit.*, 31-33. See also “Last Families Leave Pruitt-Igoe,” *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 5 May 1974.

¹³¹ For more information see U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development St. Louis Area Office, *op. cit.*.

the brighter moments had been scripted for Pruitt-Igoe of Model Cities. Thanks to the commitments of the Program, such as the bottom-top planning understanding and a “federal-local-community partnership,” the impacted tenants of Pruitt-Igoe were able to stand up again to pursue their dream. They had taken the opportunity to assume an active role in the modernization processes while having been excluded from them during post-war period. Moreover, the newly founded relationship between the notion of (public) housing and the inhabitants would have been supported politically, economically and socially with diverse social engineering. Thus, it would have been able to create a dialectical relationship between modernization processes and Modernism, and it would have been possible to re-discover and hold to the idea of modernity for the U.S. of the twentieth century.

On the other hand, neither the professed aims of the Model City Program nor the aforementioned potential of it could to come to light. The experiment of the Pruitt-Igoe of Model Cities failed in the wake of broken promises and unwavering dominant roles of the bureaucratic and economic positions of the Nation. A bitter experience of Pruitt-Igoe caused to be forgotten the underlying grounds on the notion of (public) housing. This loss of memory has made the eye look on the bitter end of this catastrophe, just as the quotation from a film titled *La Haine* (1995):

It's about a society on its way down. And as it falls, it keeps telling itself: “So far so good... So far so good... So far so good.” It’s not how you fall that matters. It’s how you land.¹³²

¹³² *La Haine*, directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, Cannes: Festival De Cannes, 1995.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Through this research the attempt was to deconstruct the meaning, represented ideas and underlying discourses of Pruitt-Igoe in Modernism. Based on the fact that Pruitt-Igoe is the one prominent example of the post-war U.S. and the fact that the post-war U.S. represents a significant epoch in the embodiment of twentieth century American Modernism, the survey basically provides information on the translation of the context of Modernism to post-war American Modernism and its influence on the embodiment of twentieth century American Modernism. By these means, it re-reads Pruitt-Igoe in the context of Modernism, and it addresses modernist urbanism and modernist architecture of period that is constituted in the wake of the modernization of the U.S.

The approach of Marshall Berman to the context of Modernism is taken as the main reference in the development of this discussion. Accordingly, the idea of modernity originated in the conscious state of the human being with its advantages and dangers. It appeared through termination of Christian living as a constant truth and the ascendance of philosophy and science in its place. Thus, people have lost their defined place in a defined structure under unarguable rules and regulations. This freedom has thrown the rule book at people and devolves the responsibility of people positioning themselves in the world. Modernism undertakes this constant seeking. It aims to find new aspirations and possibilities to make the people at home again. It experiences this desire through modernization projects. These are the “world-historical” processes that lead to the relations between people and the world. Thanks to the dialectics between Modernism and modernization, it precludes the frozen

realities that are turned into normative rules and it takes the opportunity to explore new ways to make the ever-experienced world a home again.

This thesis re-reads Pruitt-Igoe based on the aforementioned theoretical framework. It therefore handles Pruitt-Igoe not only as type of dwelling unit but also as a living creature that experiences modernization processes and produces new forms of Modernism. In this regard, this reading detects three remarkable phases in the story of Pruitt-Igoe. The first reading derived from being a product of post-war U.S. determinist social engineering. The period took shape in the pursuit of a new hope for a new world. However, this new world did not arise from the experience between people and the world, as expected in the idea of modernity. Rather, it was formed as a new structure that produced new fixed forms of relationship to make the country safe and sound in the new world. In this scenario, the priority of modernization processes was to conduct the continuum for the sake of the maintenance of the acquired hegemony. People and the built environment around that hegemony were shaped to that end.

In other respects, this end can be read as some type of avenue of escape from the ambiguity and fearfulness of freedom. In this sense, the post-war U.S. aimed to generate new guards against any risk or danger of changing the power of the idea of modernity. It adopted new courses of action and modernization tools to create its own society with the help of the new inspirations. While these inspirations were supposed to develop major formulas and modes of relationship for the changing vision of the world, the main subject of this operation was not the experience between people and the world. Instead, it was determined by some set forth regulations for the sake of the maintenance of the desired system.

Without doubt, modernist urbanism and modernist architecture of the post-war U.S. were the most fundamental tools of this implementation. They were used to reach the tangible forms of these desired relations and forms of life. This reductive approach

cut off the lifeblood of these implementations and doomed them at the very outset of their births. Under these circumstances, to blame the same modernist urbanism and modernist architecture for the failure of these modernization projects comprises a similar reductive treatment to the idea of modernity. The reason is that this approach requires acknowledgement of the superiority of urbanism and architecture over the other processes. However, the embodiment of a built environment is also related to other “world-historical” processes and their relationship with the spirit of Modernism as well as the ongoing praxis on urbanism and architecture.

In other respects, the distorted approach of the post-war U.S. led to noticing the gap between the promised scenario and that which was experienced. This re-awakening was the substance of the second phase of Pruitt-Igoe. The report of the Pruitt-Igoe Neighborhood Corporation, *A Dream Deferred: the Story of Pruitt-Igoe's Conditions*¹³³ (1968) was the foremost symptom of it. It interrogated the place of the inhabitants in the public housing project and the alleged rehabilitation and renovation projects that were conducted to solve its problems. This outcry braced the spirit of the 1960s in the U.S. and initiated change to the understanding and application of (public) housing projects with the active participation of the inhabitants in the continuum.

The switch on the vision of people made the constitution of the Model Cities Program essential. It focused on the elimination of the problems developing out of the miscommunication between the aforementioned structure of the post-war U.S. and the inhabitants. This study pays attention to the potential of this new position of the people in the midst of modernization processes and the spirit of Modernism. From then on, people had risen from the ashes of the post-war U.S. and once again hurled themselves into the maelstrom of modernity. Finally, they received the

¹³³ *A Dream Deferred: the Story of Pruitt-Igoe's Conditions*, op. cit.

opportunity to be the captain of their own souls in the pursuit of dreams and demands of a better life.

In this case, the competence of the proposed agenda of this newly born program is not the chief point of this experience. However, it is useful to be aware of the fact that the supports of the other political, economic and social processes to the continuum played significant roles in the materialization of this relation. As stated in detail in Chapter 4, even though various problems related to the management and implementation of the Program erupting in practice, the greater part of them originated in the lack of supports from the other modernization processes and broken promises of the government agencies that had key positions in this struggle.

At the end, the final phase of Pruitt-Igoe damaged these promising interactions for the sake of re-construction of the dialectics between modernization and Modernism. It degraded the entire continuum to some attention-grabbing moments. Model Cities and the new position of the people were judged by the final image of the project. The disappointment stemmed from this end result along with the incoming economic and social crises of the country causing the majority of people to become terrified. Both the former structure that was created in the post-war period and the new structure that proposed the active contribution of the common man to the continuum were in crises. In other words, the structure inherited from the post-war U.S. was confronted with the problems that threatened its own entity. In addition to this, the fledgling hopes and dreams also collapsed in real life. This adversity made the majority of people cling to the previous formation that had kept them safe under appropriate conditions at once and dissuaded them from the latter one.

The foremost outcome of the re-reading of the story of Pruitt-Igoe is to detect the significance of crises that fade in various slices of daily life. None of these crises represents a singular event or condition. These outbreaks are workable to gain information on the existing networks of relationships between the common man and

the world. Therefore, they should be interpreted as opportunities to generate new modes of Modernism in the ever-experienced world. This production represents birth of new ways of thinking, understanding and action in the final instance. In this manner, it becomes possible to re-associate processes of modernization and Modernism dialectically in order to make progress in this experience.

The example of Pruitt-Igoe also reveals what happens in the absence of these dialectics. The abandonment of the seeking for the dialectics and conservator reflexes to the crises erupted do not protect us from the maelstrom of modernity. On the contrary, to resist not leaving safe zones of once-proud structures exacerbates the substantial dilemma. The aim turns into looking after the benefits of particular formations with minimal loss. As a result, the aforementioned seeking by a common man and the ongoing process lose their common ground and begin to act separately from one another. Finally, this process declares its autonomy and constitutes a structure which is closed to any kind of questioning or response by the common man. In other words, the structure and its body of rules begin to act as a religion with a single difference. While the incontestability of religion originates in its foundation that gives birth to it, in this scenario, a human-made structure dominates the relationship between the common man and the world under the color of freedom.

When re-examining Pruitt-Igoe through this framework, it is clear to see that the fate of the people was caught between the political and economic benefits that serve some types of power struggles, but nothing on behalf of the relationship between the common man and the world. After the two great world wars, the nation-states of the new world embarked on a quest to create new models. These models aimed to prevent any possible political and economic conflicts that might lead to another possible world war and to create secure interactions between different countries that had different political, economic and social agendas. In other respects, a regulative body of rules in pursuit of a common ground has been evolved into a race to win through the instrument of the adopted political economy in practice. According to

this scenario, countries have started to be ranked according to their performance in this race. Progress and being modern have started to be defined in reference to this end and their sustainability of this action plan in the physical landscape of the countries.

The Bretton Woods System, which coincides with the birth and death of Pruitt-Igoe, was one of the products of this reasoning. It aimed to create suitable conditions for the maintenance of economy-based countries. By virtue of the system, it became possible to legitimate new bases for the new world on an international platform. Ultimately, when the system collapsed due to the economic struggles of the U.S., the first move was to create a new model which aimed to sustain dominance of the political economy over the world. In other words, the crisis that erupted was not interpreted as reading material in pursuit of Modernism. The opportunity to cleave to the dialectics between modernization and Modernism was passed over. Consequently, the objective was degraded to add new rules in the service of the same conception of the world. Modernization processes of this experience were handled as the regulative tools of this experience. Without doubt, urbanism and architecture have been the leaders.

Based on the fact that urbanism and architecture are inherently related to the *modus vivendi* of the common man, their role in the modernization process have been canonized in proportion to the others. In the mean time, they have been convicted to bureaucratic and economic consultancy of the countries due to their mode of production. This double-faced approach has also enabled the system to smooth over the cracks with a whole skin. In cases of need, modes of urbanism and styles of architecture of the period have turned into potential culprits of the undesirable end results. The radical change of the understanding and implementation of (public) housing projects and the official demolition of Pruitt-Igoe due to the economic crisis of the 1970s are an obvious example of this escape.

Even though this thesis does not examine in detail any other period or any other geography other than those related to Pruitt-Igoe, it is not difficult to detect their influence in the embodiment of the world view of the 20th century and even the 21st century. Today, most of the world, including Turkey, still experiences this proceeding and the destructive side effects of these contorted implementations. Moreover, the forms of intervention have been diversified and the tools used in their service have been authorized more than they used to be.

Prominent samples of them are urban renewal projects under the cover of disaster risk that actually aim to change the socio-economic and socio-cultural land-use praxis, gentrification projects as attempts to cure the social ills of a neighborhood, re-arrangement of the usage of public spaces through identity changing operations, the production of style-based architectural projects with intent to give messages on the position of the country in the world, and the destruction of buildings and neighborhoods that belong to certain periods that are perceived as threats to the ongoing dominant ideology regardless of their cultural values.

All these implementations aim to provide a role for the common man by considering the benefits of the ongoing system. In this case, the common man is an object shaped for the sake of the system. The relationship between the common man and the world is degraded and covered under colors of progress. Accordingly, the purpose is to make people useful to the adopted path, or to make them less harmful at least. Consequently, ambiguity between the presented and targeted ends comes into existence at every scale of life. In the darkness of this ambiguity, the only true goal is to produce strategies and tactics in order to keep the structure alive in this global-scaled race.

Another contributing cause of the current issue is the rising pejorative readings on the context of Modernism. The principal foundation of these readings is the failure of the modernization projects based on the gaps between their presented and

experienced scripts. However, the modernization projects have already been decontextualized from the idea of modernity. Instead, they have been put into service of conflict of interest. As a result of this disengagement, almost all the daily struggles and quarrels of the common man have been isolated from the maelstrom of modernity and have turned, in some way, into a struggle to survive. Under these circumstances, to judge the idea of modernity without considering this alienation is another deviation in this experience. At that rate, people are sentenced to the world where the relationship between cause and effect is blurred and it becomes impossible to determine what is done in pursuit of what.

In other respects, disengagement of the dialectics and the denigration of the context of Modernism are not only seen in the fields of urbanism and architecture. Today, the results of this approach dominate almost every single stage of daily life through political, economic and social appeals and their enforcements. Each passing day, the common man is left in the midst of new struggles. On the one hand, these struggles lay emphasis on the significance of certain keywords, such as progress, economic growth, law and order in subsistence of a civilization; on the other hand, they reproduce the definitions of freedom, democracy, fairness and welfare in line with the tactics and strategies adopted so as not to fall behind in this race. Even though this reproduction can be interpreted as a dialectical process at first glance, it is, as a matter of fact, nothing aside from a distorted pathfinder to follow. The process does not at all deal with the challenge of modernity. It exclusively attempts to fit into the presented circumstances of the structure despite the contradictions within it.

The world that we experience is surrendered by this distortion today. It can be observed in all forms of relationship in society. The general run of government policies is the pronounced evidence of this case. The political ideologies advocated by the majority of the world have already been distorted with their foundational bases, agendas and tools. Even though they have different inspirational foundation ranging from post-war political tendencies to religious mentorships, in practice, they

do not suggest different forms of relationship between the common man and the world. They merely produce different bodies of rules to serve the same global roof that feeds on the hegemony of the political economy. The post-war political tendencies conduct the process by blocking any dialectical responses of the common man to their ways of thinking and production, while spiritual doctrines accommodate themselves by blending their pre-produced forms of relations with the interests of the corporeal world.

To sum up, the political climate of today comprises fights that have diverse covers but the same clashes of interests underneath. This disconnection is so powerful that even these covers have lost their meta-language due to disruptive discourses arising from the struggles to gain a share of the profits. In this defined environment, the common man is a servant with his body and soul for the sake of the maintenance of the hegemony of the political economy. Even though it is theoretically possible to set sail to new seeking and dilemmas on the place of the common man in these structures within the processes experienced, the sparks of these attempts are sentenced to burn out in default of the dialectics between Modernism and modernization processes.

Under these circumstances, the challenge is to take a step back and to catch these dialectics again in order to rid ourselves of this captivity and its disingenuous freedom. The only possible way for this is to re-embark on the maelstrom of modernity by learning to read the process rather than to limit it in their certain moments and their evaluations. As seen in the example of Pruitt-Igoe, the crisis that erupted should be our first step to re-arranging this connection. Afterwards, this re-awakening should end with a new humanist approach which avoids the distortions and fractures in society as it is now. Therefore, it should be pursued in order to reconstruct a new holistic socialist view and to find new ways actively to involve the common man in the process. Within this experience, it will also be possible to detect new meanings and approaches of production of urbanism and architecture for

contemporary society. Thus, also the roles of planners and architects will be re-defined due to this dialectical transaction.

Taking all these considerations into account, it is clear that the re-reading of Pruitt-Igoe in the context of Modernism is a small example to emphasize the significance of the aforementioned goals. This reading also leads to further readings on the re-discovery of the idea of modernity. Augmented meta-readings on the fields of urbanism and architecture will provide us with new ways of escape to take the opportunity of being the maelstrom of modernity. It is the only way to make sense of our life as an ongoing experience. Without thinking our place in the world, we will always be sentenced to new captivities and remain embroiled in conflict without knowing for what purpose we spill blood.

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