

## CHAPTER 1

# The Garden City Movement in Norway

Ebenezer Howard is widely acclaimed as the inventor of the garden city. His vision of a decentralized utopia was not entirely of his own making, however. “In general terms”, writes Stephen V. Ward, “none of the individual elements that made up Howard’s ideas were particularly new.”<sup>23</sup> Howard’s garden city was a synthesis of elements from all sorts of utopian currents in the 19th century.<sup>24</sup> He was an excellent compiler of trends and observer of problems through systematic studies of the 19th century city and its societal conditions. This approach enabled him to capture exciting ideas and blend them with a pragmatic take on social reform.

There was a *tension* in Howard’s utopian vision. He set out to challenge conventional values, but also to consolidate and reinforce them.<sup>25</sup> This meant that the garden city could appeal to both ends of the political spectrum in England at the time, the radicals and the conservatives. Furthermore, he was a gifted writer, an ability that led to something as unexpected as a best-selling book on town planning, which was republished numerous times and translated into several other languages. The formation of the Garden City Association in 1899 quickly spread the word in England and elsewhere and, subsequently, turned theory into practice.<sup>26</sup> Through these steps—the studies, the writings and the organizational framework—he instigated a particular form of planning that would make a distinct mark on the Western World: decentralized planning.<sup>27</sup>

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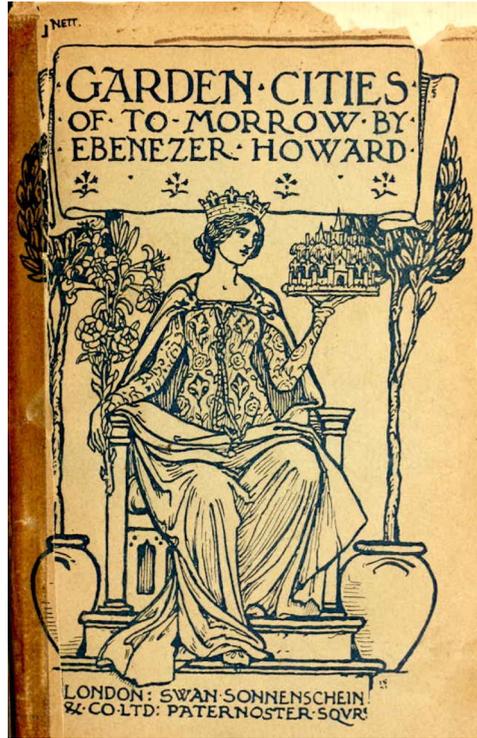
23 Stephen V. Ward, “The Garden City Introduced,” in *Garden City: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Stephen V. Ward (London: Spon, 1992), 2.

24 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, *Paradise Planned*, 208–209.

25 Buder, *Visionaries and Planners*, viii.

26 See Buder, 116–132.

27 Buder, 73.

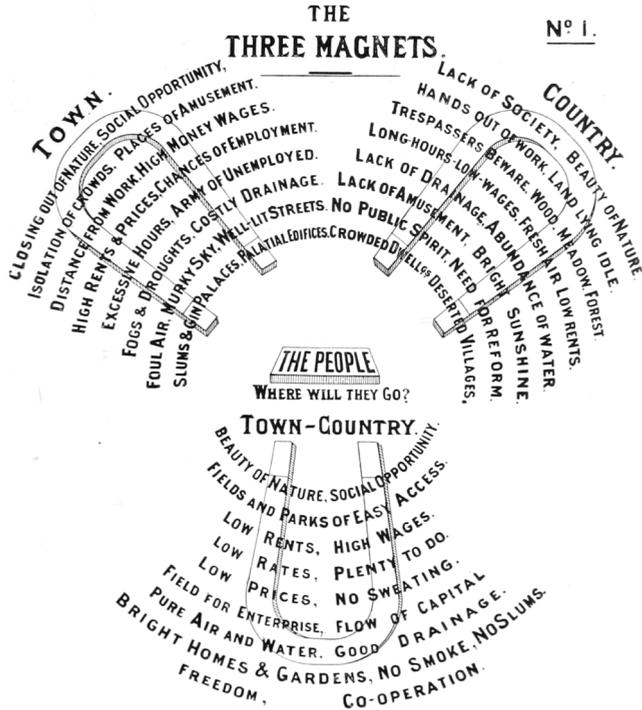


**Figure 3.** The book cover of *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* as it looked when it was published in 1902 by Swan Sonnenschein & Co. Photo: Project Gutenberg, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/46134/46134-h/46134-h.htm>

The essence of this planning approach is Howard’s conceptualization of a *town–country magnet*: a third form of settlement which is not a city, nor the countryside, but a collection of the advantages of both and a rejection of the disadvantages (Fig. 4). *Paradise planned*, in other words. The smog-filled, dirty and narrow streets of London were the backdrop as Howard tried to envision a better life for the poor and underprivileged.<sup>28</sup> He was deeply concerned by “the rent problem”—that increases in working-class salaries were often surpassed by increases in rents in the bigger cities.<sup>29</sup> Howard pointed out that there were no adequate tools to manage the situation after decades of explosive population growth, which had led to an

28 Frederick H.A. Aalen, “English Origins,” in *Garden City: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Stephen V. Ward (London: Spon, 1992), 28–29.

29 Buder, *Visionaries and Planners*, 17.



**Figure 4.** The Three Magnets (town, country and town-country) as visualized by Howard in *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, 1902. Photo: Wikimedia Commons, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Howard-three-magnets.png>

unhealthy aggregation of people in the city and a drainage of resources from the countryside.<sup>30</sup> Howard saw the town–country magnet as a stepping stone towards a land policy that could reconcile town and country again. The garden city was to become a place where people could work and reside in sound environments.

Howard’s amalgamation of green beauty and public health is probably the most well-known element of the garden city scheme. But the majority of *Garden Cities of To-morrow* is devoted to “dry” issues like administration, organization, operations and finances—the ingredients that make the garden city tick. A noteworthy ingredient is “pro-municipal operation”—new forms of cooperation between the public sector and

30 Howard, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Social Reform*, 20–22.



## The Garden City in Practice

If the timing had been right for the book, it was perhaps even better for the intended practical impact. At the beginning of the 20th century, cities across Europe were moving into the metropolitan phase. The enormous population growth continued at an even greater pace than before. Miles Glendinning has called it “The Age of Emergencies”.<sup>33</sup> Working-class areas became slum areas, too many people were crammed together in tiny flats and neighborhoods with dense physical structures, and there were fundamental problems with water supplies, sewerage systems and so on. Urgent action was needed, and this eased the transition of Howard’s principles from social reform to physical reform.

New forms of state-funded mass housing were one way of dealing with the dire situation. In Oslo, or Kristiania as the city was then called, the municipality started to take an active role in the planning and construction of housing. From 1911, the municipality ran its own projects through an office for housing. In 1918, the architect Harald Hals became the director of this office, which immediately proceeded to design and build a number of residential areas around the city. During the time span from 1911 to 1931, the municipality gradually became the biggest owner of residential buildings in Oslo.<sup>34</sup> Another influential organization was the Norwegian Association of Housing Reform [*Norsk Forening for Boligreform*]. Formed in 1913, the association quickly established a close relation to the international garden city movement.<sup>35</sup>

In Britain, the garden city movement was institutionalized, first as the Garden City Association in 1899, then as the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, which secured the formation of the Royal Town Planning Institute in 1914. The movement exerted its influence through a number of channels and media, including specially produced films that were distributed to countries like Norway, where the film “English

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33 Miles Glendinning, *Mass Housing. Modern Architecture and State Power – A Global History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 31–78.

34 For further details, see Oslo Kommunale Boligråd, *Boligarbeidet Gjennem Tyve År. En Beretning om Oslo Kommunale Boligråds Virksomhet og Kommunens Arbeide med Boligsaken 1911–1931. Med en Oversikt over Beboelses- og Befolkningsforhold 1814–1914* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1931).

35 Nielsen, “Med Hjem Skal Landet Bygges.”

Garden Cities” [*Engelske Havebyer*] was shown around the entire country between 1919 and 1921.<sup>36</sup> This featured a lecture by the English politician Richard Reiss, director of the Hampstead Garden Suburb and a leading figure within the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association. The lecture had been translated into Norwegian by the planner and social economist Christian Gierløff, who also lectured in the film. Gierløff was an influential force in Norwegian planning at the time, as editor of the journal *Housing in the City and the Countryside* [*Boligsak i by og bygd*]<sup>37</sup> and general secretary of the Norwegian Association for Housing Reform.<sup>38</sup> The association’s secretary, Willy Norvej, toured extensively with the movie to introduce it to the local audience ahead of each screening. These film and lecture events were normally covered by the newspapers and linked to local and regional housing debates.<sup>39</sup> This form of professional exchange and promotional work across nations, with Britain at the center of attention, was crucial in terms of spreading the garden city idea outside its place of origin.

Three people were of particular importance in terms of inventing a garden city practice in Britain: the Scottish planner Patrick Geddes, who wrote the influential book *Cities in Evolution* (1915),<sup>40</sup> and the English architects Raymond Unwin and Richard Barry Parker. The partnership of Unwin and Parker formed a bridge between the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th century and the garden city movement of the 20th century, through their desire to introduce handcrafts and durable materials into mass housing.<sup>41</sup> In Creese’s words, “William Morris and Ebenezer

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36 The film ended its long journey in the counties of Finnmark and Nordland: See “Filmen fra de engelske havebyer”, *Folkets Frihet*, December 18, 1920, 2, and “Engelske havebyer”, *Nordlandsposten*, February 11, 1921, 3.

37 Michael Hopstock, “Holtet Hageby – En Rød Bydel?” in *Nye hjem. Bomiljøer i Mellomkrigstiden*, eds. Morten Bing and Espen Johnsen (Oslo: Norsk Folkemuseums Arbok, 1998), 130.

38 Helga Stave Tvinnerheim, “Internasjonale Byplankongressar og Norsk Byplanlegging 1920–1940,” in *Til og fra Norden. Tyve Artikler om Nordisk Billedkunst og Arkitektur*, eds. Marianne Marcussen and Gertrud With (Copenhagen: Department of Arts and Social Studies, University of Copenhagen, 1999), 232.

39 Here are two examples: “Engelske havebyer”, *Finmarken*, December 29, 1920, 2, and “Lillestrøm – Engelske Havebyer paa film”, *Romerike*, March 30, 1920, 2.

40 Patrick Geddes, *Cities in Evolution* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1915).

41 See Richard Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, *The Art of Building a Home* (Manchester: Chorlton & Knowles, Mayfield Press).

Howard had the dreams—Parker and Unwin in the next generation helped them come true.<sup>42</sup> Unwin and Parker soon got involved in several projects, including the creation of Letchworth, the first settlement in England based entirely on the garden city scheme. The end result has been described as a disappointing compromise for the architects, largely due to the fact that the principle of communal land ownership was difficult to implement.<sup>43</sup> Letchworth was, nevertheless, a major achievement that all the following garden city projects could benefit from.<sup>44</sup> “Letchworth legitimized a Garden City movement no longer dismissed as utopian”,<sup>45</sup> as Buder puts it. Many of the lessons from Letchworth appear in Unwin’s book *Town Planning in Practice: An Introduction to the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs* (1909), which stands as the ultimate adoption of Howard’s ideas into practice.<sup>46</sup>

Another important achievement for Unwin was Hampstead Garden Suburb. Even if it was suburban, it was planned with a center that gave it an urban character. Unlike Letchworth, which had its fair share of critics both within and beyond the Garden City Association, Hampstead Garden Suburb was applauded by contemporary experts like the American historian Lewis Mumford and the English architect Frederick Gibberd.<sup>47</sup> It served as a source of inspiration for Sverre Pedersen,<sup>48</sup> who was a propagator of garden city principles in Norway, which means that it had a direct influence on Norwegian practice. This may explain why a center, or at least a service hub of some kind, has been a trademark of many Norwegian garden cities. At Ullevål Garden City in Oslo, the main square of Damplassen served as a business center with several shops, a bank, a post office, a police station and a telecommunication building.<sup>49</sup>

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42 Creese, *The Search for the Environment: The Garden City – Before and After*, 158.

43 Ward, “The Garden City Introduced,” 4.

44 The Letchworth scheme was troubled by economic miscalculations, disagreements on land use, rapid changes in the building industry, and World War I. See Creese, *The Search for the Environment: The Garden City – Before and After*, 203–218.

45 Buder, *Visionaries and Planners*, 95.

46 Raymond Unwin, *Town Planning in Practice: An Introduction to the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909).

47 Creese, *The Search for the Environment: The Garden City – Before and After*, 219.

48 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, *Paradise Planned*, 560.

49 “Et forretningssentrum,” in Einar Li, *Oslo Havebyselskap Gjennom 30 År* (Oslo: Kirstes Boktrykkeri, 1942), 34.

Clearly, this was more than a monofunctional residential area—it had the features of a tiny city.

The 1910s brought critical acclaim for Howard and further progress for the garden city movement in the form of Welwyn Garden City. This time the movement assumed more direct control of the scheme. They hired the Canadian-born architect Louis de Soissons as master planner and inspected every step of the process carefully, especially the economic expenses. In 1920, the first residents moved in and the scheme gradually unfolded during the 1920s. It was not fully complete when Howard passed away in 1928, but at least he had gained an impression of what Welwyn became in the end: a highly perfected version of the garden city in planning terms, a slightly disappointing affair in social terms. The difficulty of achieving lower-cost housing turned the working class into a minority in Welwyn. Similar problems would occur in Norway as the concept began to gain a foothold there.

## The Garden City Arrives in Norway

Stern, Fishman and Tilove suggest that “Garden city planning took hold in Norway just before the outbreak of World War I, when the need to improve working-class housing became an issue of national importance.”<sup>50</sup> This is fairly accurate from a planning point of view but as a housing trend it kicked off around 1900, with the formation of the *Egne Hjem* [A home of one’s own] movement.<sup>51</sup> *Egne Hjem* ran a magazine and a construction company, which carried out a series of building projects in Bærum, west of Oslo, between 1900 and 1910.<sup>52</sup> The *Egne Hjem* magazine was one of the first Norwegian media that explicitly addressed the garden city movement, in 1904, and other media soon picked up the trail.

It did not take long until the garden city label was used for the first time in a Norwegian architectural project. In 1907, the mayor of Kristiania,

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50 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, *Paradise Planned*, 558.

51 For a thorough account of this movement, see Øystein Bergkvam, “Egne Hjem-bevegelsen i Norge 1900–1920: Tradisjon eller Nye Strømninger?” (master’s thesis, University of Oslo, 1999).

52 Ole H. Tokerud, *Typografenes Byggeselskap (Egne Hjem) Gjennem 25 År* (Oslo: Arbeidernes Aktietrykkeri, 1925).

Sofus Arctander, announced an architectural competition to erect a series of affordable houses at the foot of the Ekeberg hill. The competition was won by the architects Christian Morgenstjerne and Anders Eide, and the project was built between 1910 and 1911, named after the mayor who initiated it.<sup>53</sup> The Arctander Garden City (Fig. 6) is directly tied to the *Egne Hjem* movement, which lobbied to get it constructed.<sup>54</sup> Morgenstjerne and Eide's winning entry, titled "*Egne Hjem*", soon formed the basis of a similar garden city project elsewhere in the town, Hasle Garden City, financed by the chocolate company Freia and built in 1914.<sup>55</sup>



**Figure 6.** A photo of the Arctander Garden City, Oslo, date unknown. Photo: O. Væring, archives of the Norsk Teknisk Museum.

53 For a comprehensive historical account, see Jan Erik Heier, Sidsel Wester and Per Olav Reinton, *Arctanderbyen 1911–2011* (Oslo: Ekeberg Egnehjem Velforening, 2011).

54 Lars Emil Hansen, "Kampen mot Bolignøden," *Fremtid for Fortiden*, no. 3 (2015): 26.

55 Knut Langeland, "Hage for Hvermann," *Fremtid for Fortiden*, no. 3 (2015): 55.



**Figure 7.** Lille Tøyen Garden City in June 2022. Photo: Even Smith Wergeland.  
© Even Smith Wergeland.

## Generation I: England in Norway

The early Norwegian garden cities were mostly modeled on the English template: vertically divided, semi-detached houses with plastered brick walls, front and back gardens, dispersed at low densities. The inspiration came from vernacular cottage and village architecture, Arts and Crafts ideals and Revivalist architectural styles like Neo-Georgian and Neo-Tudor. The roof shapes could vary a lot, from intricate mansard shapes to plain gable solutions, and each project would normally have an element of individuality – a deviance from the norm.<sup>56</sup> The layout could be described as informal and systematic at the same time. Unlike strictly classical layouts, the English garden cities were not symmetrical and did not have fixed axes. But the houses were nevertheless grouped and located according to recognizable patterns, for instance, a mixture of open lamellas and semi-closed quarters. There would sometimes be radial areas too, resembling Howard’s circular master layout. The ideal was to carefully relate the layout to the local topography—another departure from the classical

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56 Mervyn Miller, *English Garden Cities: An Introduction* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2010), 37–57.



**Figure 8.** Ullevål Garden City in 1926. Photo: photographer unknown/Oslo Museum. Reproduced with the permission of the Oslo Museum; this image cannot be reused without permission.

planning tradition.<sup>57</sup> In summary, the template was both recognizable and flexible.

In *Paradise Planned*, Ullevål Garden City (Fig. 8) is listed as the most prominent example of the English model in Norway, alongside Lindern Garden City (1919) by Harald Hals and Adolf Jensen and Ekeberg Garden City (1924) by Oscar Hoff.<sup>58</sup> Stern, Fishman and Tilove refer to Ullevål as “Norway’s most significant garden village – and a worthy example of the type by international standards.”<sup>59</sup> The English model continued to spread across the country and remains to this day the dominant image of what a Norwegian garden city looks like.

A hugely influential figure in regard to the implementation of garden city thinking in Norway is the aforementioned Sverre Pedersen, who worked in almost every region of the country. Pedersen took garden

<sup>57</sup> Miller, 17–36.

<sup>58</sup> Stern, Fishman and Tilove, *Paradise Planned*, 558–560.

<sup>59</sup> Stern, Fishman and Tilove, 558.

city planning to a large-scale level, in accordance with Howard's vision. He also had a huge impact on the planning profession, after he became Norway's first professor of planning in 1920.<sup>60</sup> His diverse approach demonstrated that garden city principles could appear in many guises; they could be rearranged in light of local characteristics.<sup>61</sup> There was clearly an element of variation and adaptive thinking within Norwegian garden city practice right from the beginning.<sup>62</sup> The examples that followed in Oslo after the Arctander Garden City were not mere copies. Lille Tøyen Garden City (Fig. 7), designed by the architect Magnus Poulsson, had a rectangular plan and two-and-a-half or three-and-a-half story houses.

During the 1910s and '20s, as garden city settlements started to appear around the country, the idea of a rural town was redefined. Settlements like Rjukan fit into a category that Stern, Fishman and Tilove call "industrial garden villages."<sup>63</sup> Rjukan (Fig. 9) is one of relatively few examples in Norway of the garden city formula being used to design an entire town from scratch: a "company town" funded and financed by the Norwegian power company Hydro. Sam Eyde, the company director,<sup>64</sup> enlisted a host of prominent architects for the task, including Thorvald Astrup, Harald Aars, Ove Bang and Magnus Poulsson, who in turn won a competition for the second phase in 1912 when there was need for further residential expansion. The scheme was completed around 1920.

Another industrial garden village is Tveitahaugen Garden City (1916–18) in Tyssedal (Fig. 10), planned by the aforementioned Morgenstjerne and Eide, and designed by Oscar Hoff. This was English brick architecture with a baroque twist, built by French craftsmen and nicely adjusted to the local hilly landscape. Unlike Rjukan, this was merely a residential village situated inside a larger settlement.

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60 This book provides a good overview of Pedersen's importance in Norwegian planning: Helga Stave Tvinnereim, *Sverre Pedersen – En Pioner i Norsk Byplanlegging* (Oslo: Kolofon Forlag, 2015).

61 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, *Paradise Planned*, 560–565.

62 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, 558–565.

63 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, 785.

64 Stern, Fishman and Tilove, 785.



**Figure 9a.** Rjukan, a company-town based on garden city principles, in October 1925. Photo: Anders Beer Wilse, archives of the Norsk Folkemuseum.



**Figure 9b.** Aerial photo of Rjukan, taken from the roof of the Sæheim Hydroelectric Power Station in June 2022. Photo: Even Smith Wergeland. © Even Smith Wergeland.



**Figure 10.** Tveitahaugen Garden City, Tyssedal. Aerial photo from 2006. Photo: Harald Hognerud. © Kraftmuseet. Reproduced with the permission of Kraftmuseet; this image cannot be reused without permission.

Høyanger in the Sogn region is another noteworthy example of an industry-driven “company town” with a garden-city flavor. Based on a plan from 1917 by Morgenstjerne and Eide, the model was English, with architectural contributions from various Norwegian architects, including Arnstein Arneberg, who designed the church, and Nicolai Beer.<sup>65</sup> Høyanger’s rise from a tiny village to a small-town garden city took place on the basis of close cooperation between leading architects and leading industrialists.<sup>66</sup> A third example of this kind is the so-called “American” garden city in the industrial town of Sauda, Åbøbyen (1916–40), which was established by the American company Electric Furnace Products.<sup>67</sup>

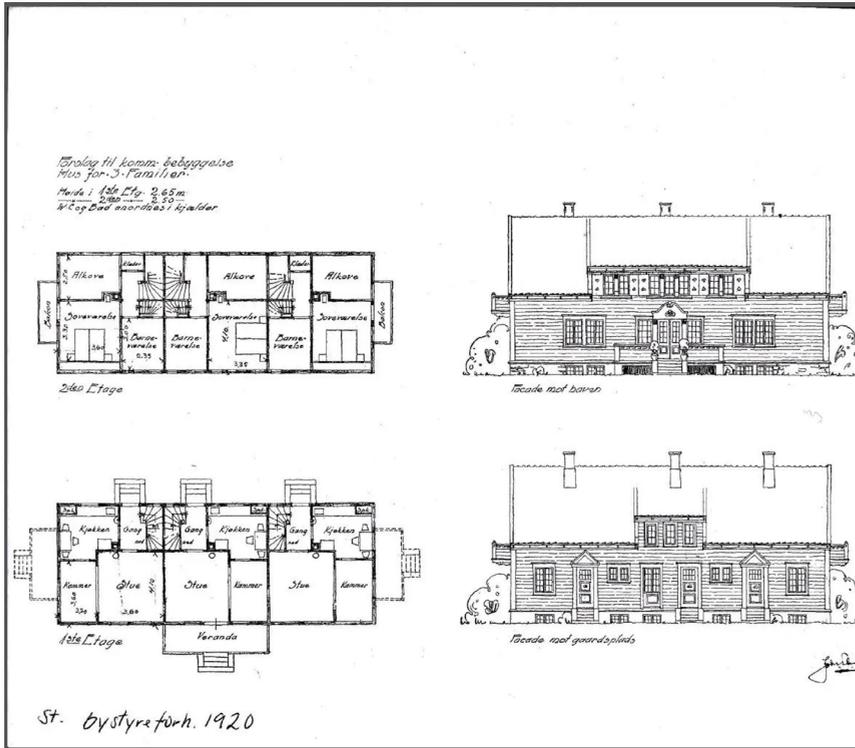
The English impulses also spread to cities other than Oslo. In Stavanger, the newly appointed city architect Johannes Thorvald Westbye devised a number of garden city-oriented schemes between 1916 and 1920. The biggest plan was Egenes Garden City (Fig. 11), which only resulted in three

65 For more input on the Norwegian mountainside industrial utopias, see Eva Røyane, “Ein Norsk Idealby,” *Bergens Tidende*, June 29, 2012, 2–5.

66 Nielsen, “Med Hjem Skal Landet Bygges,” 150–184.

67 Roar Lund, ed., *Åbøbyen – Hagebyen Under Røyken* (Sauda: Sauda Sogelag, 2020), 10–17.

houses but nevertheless set a new housing standard.<sup>68</sup> In Trondheim, Sverre Pedersen drew up plans for Lillegården Garden City (1916–1922), which was a combination of fairly large tenement buildings in brick and smaller houses in timber. The enterprise was one of the biggest that the municipality had ever carried out.<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 11.** Drawings for Egenes Garden City in Stavanger, 1920. Photo: Stavanger byarkiv.

In the southeastern town of Sarpsborg, the financial muscle of the local industrial giant Borregaard led to the realization of Opsund Garden City (1920–1940), also known as Bytangen Garden City. Oscar Hoff was the architect, and he also carried out a similar project for Borregaard at

68 Rolf Gunnar Torgersen, “Boligpolitikk i Stavanger 1916–1920,” *Stavangeren*, no. 1 (2017): 64–83.

69 Roy Åge Håpnes, *Trondheim Tar Form. Bygningshistoriske Blikk på Bydelene* (Trondheim: Eiendomsmegler 1, 2003), 168.

Grotterødløkka in Sarpsborg.<sup>70</sup> In the neighboring town of Fredrikstad, garden city plans were made as early as 1904 for an area called Kongsten. Some brick houses were erected, in accordance with a competition entry in 1916 by the architect Jacob Holmgren but, due to various unfortunate circumstances, including two world wars, the majority of the scheme was put on hold until the postwar period. By then, the building approach had changed from brick to timber and the overall arrangements were carried out by Sverre Pedersen in collaboration with Tor Narve Ludvigsen.<sup>71</sup>

The garden city influence from England was pretty persistent during the first decades of the 20th century, both as a social vision aimed at welfare for workers, a housing typology for affordable living, and an architectural style associated with specific esthetic qualities. In the midst of this was a widespread belief in green qualities, epitomized by the vision of gardens for all. The model seemed fairly adoptable. The early garden cities were not without their critics, however. The residents of the Arctander Garden City complained about technical faults like cracking wooden panels, the accumulation of smoke in the chimney and rainwater in the basement during the inaugural phase.<sup>72</sup> Some complaints were aimed at the architectural program. As one resident of Ullevål Garden City put it: “With regards to the architecture, the medal clearly has a flipside. It seems like the architect in charge has focused more, if not to say exclusively, on the exterior appearance – on the visual impact in the environment as a whole – than practical arrangements inside.”<sup>73</sup> During the early phase, there were problems with water supplies, electricity and the interior design, which did not meet everyone’s expectations. Although the residents had more space and better facilities compared with previous homes, there were nevertheless many issues to report.<sup>74</sup> Running water and electricity were still fairly new phenomena in Norwegian residential

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70 Lars Ole Klavestad, *Arkitekturen i Fredrikstad. Arkitektur- og Byplanhistorien 1567–2014* (Fredrikstad: Gyldenstjerne Forlag AS, 2014), 50–51.

71 Klavestad, 50–53, 269–271 and 339–340.

72 Heier, Wester and Reinton, *Arctanderbyen 1911–2011*, 6.

73 Translated from: “Hvad husene angaar, har medaljen ogsaa sin bakside. Det ser ut som angjeldende arkitekt har set mere, for ikke at si utelukkende paa det utvendige utseende – paa virkningen i miljøet – end paa at faa det praktisk indrettet indvendig”. In Einar Lie, *Oslo Havebyselskap Gjennom 30 År*, 23.

74 Li, 17–24.

architecture and there was an element of trying, failing and learning from the initial mistakes.

The initial problems are part of the explanation for why the Norwegian garden city project took a different turn from the mid-1920s onwards. Another explanation is the gradual introduction of modernist impulses in Norwegian architecture and new ideas about what a modern lifestyle means. A third factor is the international discussion on housing in the mid-1920s, which revolved around the fundamental question of apartment blocks versus detached houses. Despite the fact that large-scale modernism was about to have a major breakthrough at that time, the majority of European and Norwegian planners still regarded the detached house as a superior solution.<sup>75</sup>

## Generation II: The Modern Norwegian Vernacular

In the 1920s, there was a belief that the garden city still had room for improvement. The main problem, according to Harald Hals, was that the concept had not yet been fully utilized in Norway:

The meaning of this term has been misinterpreted to a level of parody, and it has been endlessly exploited and misused in the service of advertisement. Once a popular phenomenon, it is now being used by any small enterprise to lure in a tiny garden spot between buildings, in suburbia or whatnot. The deeper significance of this concept as a starting point for a comprehensive planning system seems to have been fairly unknown.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to the commercial exploitation of a social vision and the lack of holistic planning, Hals also worried about what we would call “green washing” in today’s vocabulary – marketing strategies disguised as environmental concerns. It is interesting to note that this topic was addressed at such an early stage.

75 Tvinnereim, “Internasjonale Byplankongressar og Norsk Byplanlegging 1920–1940,” 236.

76 Translated from: “Hvad dette begrep innebærer, har vært misforstått inntil det karikaturmessige, og uttrykket er i det uendelige blitt utnyttet og misbrukt i reklamens tjeneste. Engang populært er det blitt anvendt ved hvert lite anlegg, hvor en haveflekk er lurert inn mellom bebyggelsen, ved forstæder, eller hva det må være. Begrepets dypere innhold og mening som grunnlag for et omfattende system synes å ha vært lite kjent.” In Harald Hals, *Fra Christiania til Stor-Oslo* (Kristiania: H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), 1929), 26.

Those who propagated the garden city formula were fully aware of such objections and tried to anticipate them. A book called *Havebyer og Jordbruksbyer* [Garden Cities and Agricultural Cities], co-written by Ebenezer Howard and medical doctor Halfdan Bryn, was released in 1921. It was a summary of the situation so far and a cue to where Norwegian garden cities ideally could head.<sup>77</sup> A firm piece of advice is that Norway ought to come up with a garden city concept of its own. Howard's section opens with a declaration about the garden city's positive impact in Norway:

Over the past years I have witnessed, with great pleasure, how deeply engaged the Norwegian folk has become with the «garden city movement», and how eager many Norwegians are to employ its main principles in the enhancement of your own country's enormous resources.<sup>78</sup>

Howard proceeds with a homage to the characteristics of the Norwegian landscape, the fjords and the mountains, and the agricultural traditions deeply imbedded in the Norwegian soul. These ingredients have to form the basis of the development ahead, he claims.<sup>79</sup> The importance of protecting and cultivating green values was obviously an interest shared by Hals and Howard. Bryn, for his part, emphasizes the trouble ahead – urban diseases, alcoholism, relentless population growth, unhealthy work environments – if Norwegian planning does not choose a different path. Unsurprisingly, that path is the garden city template, which he strongly recommends in the capacity of being a doctor with first-hand knowledge of society's health problems. His view on contemporary urban planning in Norway is bleak: “We have speculated on how to cram as many people as possible together in one house, and how many houses we can fit on one

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77 Ebenezer Howard and Halfdan Bryn, *Havebyer og Jordbruksbyer* (Kristiania: Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), 1921).

78 Translated from: “Jeg har i noen år med store glede sett, hvor dypt interessert det norske folk er i «havebybevegelsen», og hvor ivrig mange norske er etter å bringe hovedprinsippene i denne bevegelse til anvendelse under utviklingen av deres eget lands veldige hjelpeskilder.” In Howard and Bryn, 1.

79 Howard and Bryn, 14–15.

acre of land. We have to realize, the sooner the better, that this approach is completely insane.”<sup>80</sup>

A transition was therefore on the cards as the 1920s progressed. The most distinctive architectural change is the transition from brick to timber construction systems. It is generally accepted that Oslo’s Tåsen Garden City (Fig. 12) is the first example of this transmutation. This project was initiated by Harald Hals, designed by the architect Henning Kloumann and completed in 1926.<sup>81</sup> There had been some timber buildings within the English model, but those tended to be exceptions within a brick-based overall concept. And while there are earlier examples of municipal timber housing in Oslo and elsewhere, Tåsen Garden City is the first project that leaned thoroughly on garden city impulses. Many architects, including the creators of Sinsen Garden City, Einar Smith and Edgar Smith Berentsen, looked to Tåsen Garden City for inspiration in the following years.



**Figure 12.** Tåsen Garden City, Oslo, sometime between 1920 and 1929. Photo: J.H. Küenholdt A/S, archives of Nasjonalbiblioteket.

80 Translated from: “Vi har spekulert ut hvorledes vi best mulig kan stuve sammen så mange mennesker som mulig i ett hus og så mange hus som mulig på hvert mål jord. Vi må snarest mulig se til å bli klar over at dette er en rent sinnsvak fremgangsmåte.” In Howard and Bryn, 22.

81 Even Smith Wergeland, “På Biltur i Hagebyen,” *Fremtid for Fortiden*, no. 3 (2015): 43–45.

Even if Tåsen Garden City was a step in a new direction, it was still molded on the English template in terms of its architectural design, its structural layout and housing typology. Besides the timber construction frame and finish, it looked quite like Ullevål. What happened next was a conversion from the baroque and classicist stylistic approach to a simplified “wooden box” architecture, which can be associated with the stripped-down form of neo-classicism that became a trend in Norwegian architecture in the 1920s, as well as the arrival of modernist architecture.<sup>82</sup> When I use the term “simplified”, I am not implying a reduction in quality. I am referring to a more minimalistic approach to decorative details, roof shapes, window types, façade composition and interior organization. In essence, it developed into a form of modern vernacular, with one foot in traditional crafts and one foot in new building techniques and building materials, like reinforced concrete. This happened gradually through discussions on how to revive traditions in Norwegian architecture – a quest which now became linked to modern domestic architecture and the big philosophical question of what is a good home.<sup>83</sup>

The physical and psychological qualities of wood were a pivotal component of that debate and the changes it induced during the 1920s and '30s. The relationship between wood as a building material and the history of Norwegian building practices is absolutely crucial in that sense. Not only is wood eternally associated with the beacons of the national building heritage, like medieval stave churches and national romantic dragon-style ornamentation in the 19th century, it runs through the entire architectural history of Norway. Up until the 20th century, wood was almost unchallenged as the dominant building material, with the exception of inner-city construction in brick, which was enforced by law in the bigger cities from the mid-19th century onwards. Wood has retained its importance, especially in the residential sector of Norwegian architecture, where it remains hugely popular with the general population.<sup>84</sup>

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82 This is an illuminating piece on the “style wars” in Norwegian domestic architecture in the interwar period: Ingeborg Magerøy, “Villaens Viltre Blomstringstid,” *Fremtid for Fortiden*, no. 3 (2015): 114–121.

83 Nielsen, “Med Hjem Skal Landet Bygges,” 96–100.

84 Hans Granum and Erik Lundby, *Trehus 1965* (Oslo: Norges Byggforskningsinstitutt, 1964), 11–13.

A widespread use of wood does not automatically make buildings more “Norwegian” than buildings defined by other materials.<sup>85</sup> Wood is a common building material throughout the world, and not all buildings of national importance in Norway are made from wood. But there is a particular affinity for wood that has a tendency to resurface in the evolving reconfiguration of national architectural identity, and that has a lot to do with the idea of wood as a connection to tradition. This is strongly tied to a specific fondness for stand-alone houses. What Norwegians dream about is a single-family residence according to the architect and architectural historian Ulf Grønvold.<sup>86</sup>

The continuing survival of this dream is deeply rooted in debates about housing and life quality in the first half of the 20th century, when single-family homes gained a number of “defense attorneys” in the field of planning and architecture. At a Nordic planning and housing conference held in Stockholm in 1927, Sverre Pedersen defended the garden city model over densification as the ultimate form of future development. This was *possible*, he explained, through modern means like electricity and rapid transport systems, and *preferable* due to its connection with Norwegian traditions.<sup>87</sup> This mixture of modernity and tradition is the core idea behind the second generation of garden cities.

The structural layout of garden cities also changed in the second wave, from row houses and semi-detached houses to individual houses. They would rarely consist of single-family residences only – houses with two, three or four sections were commonplace – but individual buildings were definitely more dominant. This in turn represents a transition of the housing typology, from flats to independent homes. “The people of Christiania are flat-bound tenants. A home of own’s own has been a privilege for the rich”,<sup>88</sup> wrote Hals in 1920, as he summarized a decade

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85 Nils Georg Brekke, Per Jonas Nordhagen and Siri Skjold Lexau, *Norsk Arkitekturhistorie. Frå Steinalder og Bronsealder til det 21. Hundreåret* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2008), 450–455.

86 Ulf Grønvold, “Småhus,” *Byggekunst*, no. 3 (1983): 107, and Ulf Grønvold, “Hus og Holdninger,” *Byggekunst*, no. 2 (1990): 77–78.

87 Tvinnereim, “Internasjonale Byplankongressar og Norsk Byplanlegging 1920–1940,” 236.

88 Translated from: “Kristianiafolk er leiegaardsfolk. Egnehemmet har længe været et rikmandsprivilegium.” In Harald Hals, *Ti Aars Boligarbeide i Kristiania* (Kristiania: J. Chr. Gundersens Boktrykkeri, 1920), 21.

of municipal housing schemes in Norway's capital. From now on, the aim was to turn that trend, and the new garden cities were supposed to become a vehicle for that.

Along with the architectural and structural alterations came the conviction that gardening and agriculture are deeply imbedded in Norwegian culture, hence the title of Howard and Bryn's book, *Garden Cities and Agricultural Cities*. Unlike the English-inspired garden cities, which often had tiny and quirky gardens, the "Norwegian-style" second generation came with proper gardens: large areas for varied cultivation and production. It was almost like a genuine piece of the countryside had landed in the city. In some cases, like Sinsen Garden City, that was true in an actual sense, since the whole area was formerly farmland before it was converted. The agricultural dimension was often used explicitly as a sales pitch for garden city properties, which I will return to in Chapter 2.

The critical resurrection of the garden city concept was a shared concern for many Norwegian architects and planners in the mid to late 1920s, when a new series of garden city settlements started to sprout. The all-timber Ekeberg Garden City in some ways resembled the newly-completed municipal housing project that lay alongside Valhallveien at Ekeberg, a so-called "colony for the homeless" [*husvilde-koloni*].<sup>89</sup> Whereas the colony only had residential architecture, the ambition was that Ekeberg Garden City would become "a self-sufficient little community";<sup>90</sup> clearly in tune with garden city thinking. It never became as big as the original vision – a "city within the city" of 12,000 to 15,000 people<sup>91</sup> – but it had many large-scale features: a stand-alone building structure, multiple-family houses with a garden, a holistic architectural profile with a touch of individualism (each house had a different color). The blueprint was thereby laid.

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89 Hals, 27–30.

90 "Ekeberg Hageby," *Nordstrands Blad*, January 21, 2008. <https://www.noblad.no/aktuell-historie/ekeberg-hageby/s/2-2.09-1.5116394>.

91 "Naar Skal det Blive Alvor af Ekeberg Haveby?" *Aftenposten*, October 14, 1922, 3.

In Bergen, local architect Leif Grung, a keen proponent of housing for all,<sup>92</sup> was in charge of designing Jægers Minde Garden City. This work commenced in 1930 as a series of stand-alone houses combined with row houses. By the time of its completion in 1937, 58 houses had been built. Two garden cities in the county of Trøndelag show that impulses could sometimes shift back and forth between modernist and traditionalist even within the one concept. Sverre Pedersen was responsible for designing Bjørnli Garden City, which developed in several stages from Pedersen's original plan launched in 1917. This plan – typical for Pedersen's approach – included houses that were already on the site and the next phase of construction, which lasted until the late 1920s. This time span made it possible to incorporate a wide range of architectural styles and residential typologies, all built in timber.<sup>93</sup> A later example from the Trøndelag region, Strindheim Garden City in Trondheim (1948–51), shows that garden city projects in timber continued to have a place within Norwegian residential architecture during the post-war period.

The problem, as the latter example demonstrates, is that the garden city concept was becoming watered-down, much like Hals had predicted. Strindheim Garden City was a suburban neighborhood rather than a city. In Oslo, many examples from the second generation were indeed classified as “garden suburbs”. The planning and distribution of such areas largely followed the location of the suburban railway network, which was constructed precisely to connect the new residential areas with the existing city. This also came with a secondary function, namely to transport inner-city residents to the recreational green areas around the city.<sup>94</sup>

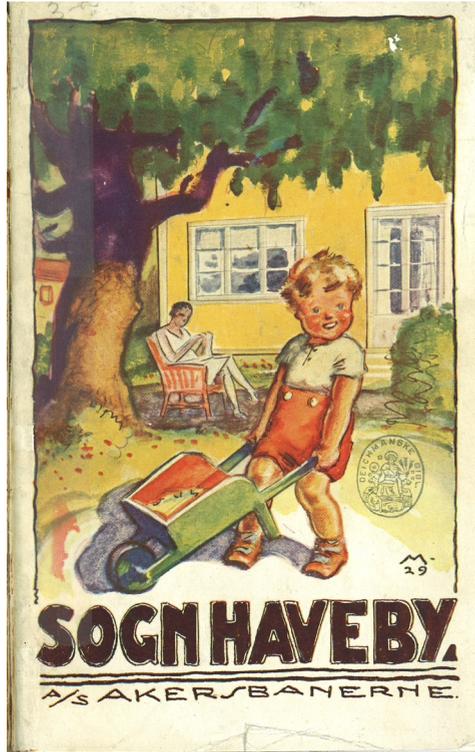
Sogn Garden City (Fig. 13) is the ultimate example of housing and infrastructure combined. The enterprise in charge, A/S Akersbanerne, was a private company that worked closely with the Aker municipality in order to establish rail-based infrastructure in the suburban landscape

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92 “Selvbyggerkolonien på Nymark,” Bergenbyarkiv.no, accessed December 13, 2021, <https://www.bergenbyarkiv.no/aarstad/archives/selvbyggerkolonien-pa-nymark/5045>.

93 Olav Ree, *Gruvesamfunnet Bjørnli Haveby* (Trondheim: Fagtrykk Trondheim AS, 2018), 31–61.

94 Magne Helvig, Kenneth J. Jones, Helene Kobbe and Ruth Norseng, *Oslo: Planning and Development* (Oslo: Oslo Town Planning Department, 1960), 25–27.



**Figure 13.** A/S Akersbanerne's 1929 sales catalogue for Sogn Garden City.

that surrounded the city of Oslo at the time. Sogn Garden City was thus conceived as an ambitious “tramway town”, closely tied to the route of what is known today as the Sognsvann Line, a rapid transit line on Oslo’s metro system.<sup>95</sup> An important basis for the 1929 sales catalog was the overall plan for Oslo’s rail-based infrastructure, issued in September 1920.<sup>96</sup> This was closely linked to the planning competition for Sogn Garden City, which was announced the same year.<sup>97</sup>

The winner of this competition was architect Kristofer Lange, and the ensuing sales catalog promised a place of beauty, coziness, healthiness,

95 Elin Børrud, “Hagebyen som Forsvant i Funkisen: Historien om Sogn Haveby,” *Byminner* 150, no. 4 (1996): 23–24.

96 Oslo Kommune, *Stor-Oslo. Forslag til Generalplan* (Oslo: Det Mallingske Boktrykkeri, 1934), 143.

97 Børrud, “Hagebyen som Forsvant i Funkisen,” 22–23.

nature, family values and safety. The planning zone was described as “regulated according to the best of principles”<sup>98</sup> and perfectly located between the inner city and Oslo’s green belt, “in harmony between city and nature.”<sup>99</sup> Most important, perhaps, was the idea that Sogn Garden City represented a lesson learned, the “second coming”, in terms of garden city qualities:

Planners and architects will ensure that it [the garden city] is solid, beautiful and picturesque. Our time has taught us how to build such urban facilities.<sup>100</sup>

This could be brushed off as nothing but a sales pitch, but the original plan for Sogn Garden City was equipped with an unusually detailed architecture and garden catalog that made the concept convincing and feasible. The plan also had the scale and ambition of a proper garden city. The Sogn area did not belong to the City of Oslo as it does today, and the realization of the garden city was based on a cross-municipal collaboration. This kind of regional scope was unusual in Norwegian planning at the time. In the early 1930s, when Sogn Garden City was under construction, Sverre Pedersen wrote that “The garden city idea has grown beyond the planning of single organisms in the city. It has taken on entire districts, whole regions in fact.”<sup>101</sup>

An important imperative for planners on both sides of the municipal border was to preserve some of Sogn’s rural qualities as the area made the leap towards urbanization. This was clearly stated in the overall vision, which underscored the value of green qualities as expressed by the individual gardens. The sales catalog contained detailed suggestions on how to organize the gardens (Fig. 14), how to maintain them, and where to place specific trees and plants.<sup>102</sup> The architectural presentation of housing types – designed by a selection of Norway’s leading architects at the time – also emphasized the natural elements, access to light and favorable sun conditions. The inhabitants of Sogn Garden City were going to live their lives shrouded in green.

98 Translated from: “Regulert etter de beste prinsipper,” in *A/S Akersbanerne, Sogn Haveby* (Oslo: Fabritius, 1929), 1.

99 Translated from: “Harmoni mellom by og natur,” in *A/S Akersbanerne, Sogn Haveby*, 3.

100 Translated from: “Reguleringsmenn og arkitekter sørger for at den blir fast, vakker og malerisk. Vår tid har lært oss slike byanlegg,” in *A/S Akersbanerne, Sogn Haveby*, 5.

101 Sverre Pedersen, “De Nye Synspunkter i Byplanarbeidet,” *Byggekunst*, no. 6 (1932): 101.

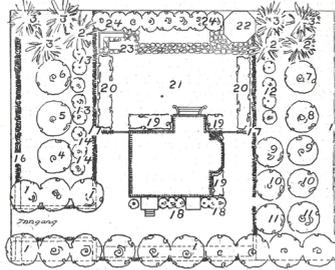
102 *A/S Akersbanerne, Sogn Haveby*, 11–19.



VILLA, BERG

tomten flat, må man vokte sig for å stykke den op med umotiverte veier eller med busker og blomster uten orden. Det hele blir da lett forvirret og meningsløst. Man lager en plan; det er klokt, ja nødvendig, man tenker den grundig igjennom, helst søker man faglig bistand. Men så må man heller ikke glemme å tenke sig, hvordan alt blir når det er vokset til. På en plan kan veiene spille en stor rolle og planter og trær en liten. Men i virkeligheten er det omvendt; der er veiene til praktisk bruk, til å gå på, og der er det trær og planter som ruver, de gir massene, tyngdene. Og man må tenke langt frem. Et tre kan være *satt og yndig* tett ved huset, så lenge det er lite. Om nogen år vil det skygge, og det vil skygge mer og mer, det dominerer allfor sterkt; da ser man at det står galt. Men det skulde man tenkt på da man plantet det.

HAVEPLAN  
utarbeidet ved Akers beplantningsvesen.



BEPLANTNINGSPLAN

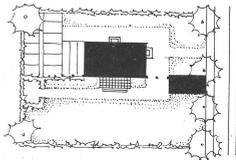
| Nr.                          | Nr.                              | Nr.  | Nr.                     |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Lønn                      | 15                               | 13. Whinhams Industry og Løvets Triumfb, stikkelsber | 5                       |
| 2. Picea pungens glauca      | 14. Bang up solber               |  | 3                       |
| Sølvgran                     | 15. Askerbringebær               |  | 27                      |
| 3. Pinus cembra. Cembra-furu | 16. Caraganaokkca. 5 s. pr. m    |  | 130                     |
| 4. Åkerro Eple               | 17. Ribes alpinum ca. 5 sek.     |  |                         |
| 5. Annie Elisabeth           | 18. Spiraea arguta, brudespiraea |  | 7                       |
| 6. Signe Tillsch             | 19. Stauder og sommerblomster    |  | ca. 18 m. <sup>2</sup>  |
| 7. Transparente blanche      | 20. Stauder                      |  | ca. 32 m. <sup>2</sup>  |
| 8. Siesstaholm               | 21. Pien                         |  | ca. 140 m. <sup>2</sup> |
| 9. Skyggekrebber             | 22. Gammelt lysthus              |  |                         |
| 10. Victoria plomme          | 23. Siteplass                    |  |                         |
| 11. Gatr plomme              | 24. Syrniga rothamagensis        |  | 8                       |
| 12. Rød hollandsk duerrips   |                                  |  |                         |

**Hustype 90 m<sup>2</sup>**, 5 soveværelser, pikøverelse, bad, w.c. og kjøkken, for familie som behøver 3 soveværelser og pikøverelse (4 soverum).

I 1ste etasje, som har en høide av 2,50 m., kommer man gjennom et vindfang med tilstøtende w. c. inn i den lille lyste forstue med garderobe. Fra forstuen som gjennom garderober står i forbindelse med kjøkkenet, fører trapp opp til 2den etasje, og der direkte inn til storstuen, 7,00 x 4,25 m. Denne har kamin på den innvendige langvegg, bred glassdør ut til terrasse, og skyvedør inn til spisestuen. Stuens ene ubrutte vegg gir en utmerket plass for møblering, og med heldig siddfallende lys for malerier etc. Spisestuen, 4,75 x 4,25 m. har likesom stuen en hel ubrutt vegg med særlig sikte på anbringelse av skjenk. Gjennom arretningen står den i forbindelse med kjøkkenet som er helt elektrisk utstyrt, og har ventilert kjøleskap. Fra kjøkkeninngangen på husets bakside er der også nedgang til kjeller.

2den etasje, som har en høide av 2,40 m., har 3 soveværelser, pikøverelse og et rummelig bad som også står i direkte forbindelse med det ene soveværelse. Fra inngangen til det midterste soveværelse er der innbygget oppgang til loft.

Kjelleren rummer foruten bryggerhus, rullebod, matbod og et litet verkstedsrum også rum for centralopvarming og brensel. Der tenkes anlagt en garage med direkte innkjørsel fra gaten og forbundnet med huset ved en enkel pergola med slyngende blåregn. Tørkeplassen på husets bakside er skjermet mot innsyn fra haven ved en pergola med grindverk, likeledes bevosket med blåregn. I tomten nordvestre hjørne er kjøkkenhaven anlagt. Foran huset uttegges en stor gressplen kattet med stauder. Like inn til huset, på begge sider av den brede terrasse ligger rosenbedene. Den hellelagte havegang fører til et firkanter syrinlysthus i havens innerste del.



Arkitekt: Christian Astrup.  
Hanstengst. 2. Telefon 44340.

Figure 14. Drawings of garden plans and housing types featured in the 1929 sales catalogue.

Despite good intentions, Sogn Garden City never quite delivered according to expectations. As Elin Børrud has explained, it did not become a complete garden with all the ingredients once listed by Howard.<sup>103</sup> In reality, it served as a generator of single-family residences and other forms of stand-alone houses: a housing plan rather than an urban plan. There were other institutions too, mostly schools, and small commercial hubs, like the business complex in Nils Lauritssøns vei at Berg, but not to an extent that would justify the term “city”. Another point in the critique is the economic aspect. Sogn Garden City was of little benefit to members of the lower classes and thereby in conflict with municipal priorities at the time.<sup>104</sup> In that sense, the garden cities of Oslo did not live up to the visionary social thinking. “The original ideology became increasingly diluted. The garden cities were mostly populated by the middle classes”,<sup>105</sup> wrote historian Leif Gjerland in 2019.

Børrud draws a similar conclusion: “The garden city gained less significance as a social reform movement than as an architectural expression.”<sup>106</sup> She also suggests that the architectural vocabulary may have fueled a sense of disenfranchisement among the working-class population, since the esthetic profile of the housing catalog was so openly middle-class.<sup>107</sup> What I find less accurate is Børrud’s application of the term “stylistic confusion” [*stilforvirringen*] to the architectural program.<sup>108</sup> I would rather describe the architecture of Sogn Garden City as an eclectic mixture of what was going on at the time in contemporary Norwegian architecture. If a given architect was mixing styles and construction systems, it does not automatically signal a state of confusion. It may just as well reflect a joy in having multiple options.

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103 Børrud, “Hagebyen som Forsvant i Funkisen,” 19–33.

104 Hals, *Ti Aars Boligarbeide i Kristiania*, 10–18.

105 Translated from: “Den opprinnelige ideologien ble stadig mer utvannet. Hagebyene ble for det meste middelklassens populære boform.” In Leif Gjerland, “Byens Anti-revolusjonære Hagebyer,” *Aftenposten*, November 24, 2019, 24–25.

106 Translated from: “Hagebyen som sosial reform fikk mindre betydning enn hagebyen som arkitektonisk uttrykk.” In Børrud, “Hagebyen som Forsvant i Funkisen,” 19.

107 Translated from: “Det hele bærer preg av en målsetting om å skape et hyggelig villaområde for middelklassen.” In Børrud, 29.

108 Børrud, 31.

The one thing that really separates the two generations of Norwegian garden cities in architectural terms is the possibility of individually designed homes. In some cases, like Sogn, there was a catalog in advance, but not every home was built according to that. I therefore find *curiosity* more suitable as a term for the architectural legacy of the second generation than *confusion*. I shall be discussing this issue more closely in the following chapter, alongside some of the other subject matters I have introduced, such as class preferences, economic conditions, and the idea of the garden city as a union of nature and culture.