Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the 'Pavillon'[1]

In the last ten years or so, analytical and technical thinking has been brought to bear on questions that have been given the name 'town planning' [*urbanisme*]. One function and objective of the human being in his social life has been methodically defined: to house himself, in other words, to own a certain space in which to organize his 'private', individual, family life. We have coined a new word to express this phenomenon: 'habitat'.

Today it can confidently be said of many texts (among which those of Le Corbusier and his school are the best known)[3] that they are specific, tend towards sociological positivism and raise more problems than they solve. The motive behind them rejects what, in our Western culture, was, and still is, called 'depth', in the study of man, the city or society in general. This tendency is not peculiar to sociologists, or experts in architecture and town planning. It is to be found in many other fields, including literature and the social sciences. The rejection of traditional philosophical speculation, without its being used to find new ways of arriving at the many dimensions of the 'human phenomenon', leads to a superficiality that is accepted, deliberate, advertised as such and identified with the predominance of technical and scientific problems.

Sociology that calls itself empiricist and positivist immediately finds itself in a 'revolving door', in other words, a vicious circle. On the one hand, good arguments are made for saying that before people are housed we have to know their needs, and that to study them means seeing individuals and small groups in the context of ever larger entities: society, culture. On the other hand, we come to isolate, within this global context, a number of partial functions, forms or systems, among which habitat, housing, is at the forefront. Going round and round in this circle, a certain sociology that prides itself on being very scientific utters smug banalities on needs, on family life in the home, on neighbourhood life, etc.

Is it by chance, as they say, that during the same period, historians have pored over vanished forms of the City in order to recover their forgotten features? Or that the most 'profound' philosophers have tried to reach a definition of 'habitation'? We are indebted to Gaston Bachelard, in his 'poetics of space', for some memorable pages on the House.[4] And habitation or dwelling [*l'habiter*] plays an essential part in Martin Heidegger's teaching. The earth is the dwelling of man, that exceptional 'being' among 'beings' (those that 'be'), as his language is the Dwelling [*la Demeure*] of absolute Being.[5] This philosopher, who claims no longer to be a metaphysician, and rejects the label 'existentialist', stuck on him by ill-informed readers, asks the fundamental question: 'What does it mean to dwell?' According to him, there is a connection between building, dwelling, thinking (and speaking). Dwelling, in its essence, is poetic. It is a fundamental feature of the human condition, not an accidental form or a determined function. Discussing Hölderlin's fine poem, 'poetically man dwells',[6] Heidegger states that what the Poet says does not in any way refer to present conditions of dwelling. It does not say that to dwell means to house oneself. We are, he says, faced with a double demand and a double movement: to think through the deeper existence of the human being by taking dwelling and the dwelling as our starting-point – thinking of the essence of Poetry as a form of 'building', a way of 'making dwell' [*faire habiter*] *par excellence*.

The Poet constructs the dwelling of the human being, that is, the Being in man. 'If we search for the essence of Poetry, in this direction, we will discover the essence of dwelling.'[7] It could be, says Heidegger, that our dwellings that lack poetry, our inability to take the measure of man and his heart, spring from a strange kind of excess: a rage for measurement and calculation.

The strange, oneiric, unique house Bachelard tells us about, this house that brings together in its unity of the dream the dispersed fragments of the Ego, is a traditional house, a patriarchal dwelling [*demeure*], packed with symbols and full of attics and mysterious corners. The philosopher could say of this house: 'It is one of the strongest forces for integrating man's thought, his memories and dreams ... It keeps man safe through earthly and heavenly storms ... It is body and soul.' This house is disappearing. We no longer have the skills or capacity to build houses like it. It is all too easy to note this disappearance and positivism wins hands down. Heidegger, now, shows us a world ravaged by technology, that through its ravages leads towards another dream, another (as yet unperceived) world. He warns us: a lodging built on the basis of economic or technological dictates is as far removed from dwelling as the language of machines is from poetry. He does not tell us how to construct, 'here and now', buildings and cities.

Is our situation not tragic, both in praxis and in theoretical thinking? On the one hand we have banality, a description of the things sight observes and which confirm its observation and imprison thought in the set of observations known as 'science'; this science deals with the *fait accompli*, and

all it derives from it is a knowledge and a critique that are deliberately superficial. This approach, which amasses and accumulates facts, calls itself 'operative'. It is; its models and concepts are developed in such a way as to permit rapid application, at the lowest cost (of time, space, money and thought). It is easy to construct buildings or 'housing estates' according to the rules of this operative thought. It is less certain that the residents will be 'satisfied', and less still that the life they lead in them is worth living. Would not the worst thing be for them to be satisfied with very little, to adapt? But on the other hand, there is depth, the intimation of a 'total' being of man, but this depth is not put to use. There is nothing 'operative' about it. How are we to get out of this impasse?

The contradiction is all the more difficult to resolve in that it cannot be isolated. It is connected with a more general 'problematic', in steps that are easy to reconstruct. What is the relationship between the new sciences of society and the ancient philosophical tradition? What are the precise relationships between facts, conceptions and theories, in these sciences? And so on.

The study presented here by the *Institut de Sociologie Urbaine* certainly does not claim to solve these problems. But it has an aim. It proceeds from an awareness of the problems and their contradictory terms, not from an option deliberated for such and such of these terms. It thus seeks a route by way of which a solution could be sketched out, to appear on the horizon once the route was opened. And this would enable the bringing together of research and exploration, while in fact they too often diverge, research straying into dead-ends, and exploration endlessly recreating or arbitrarily declaring itself.

First point (or, if you prefer, first step, first statement, first hypothesis). Habitation is an anthropological fact. The material habitation, the dwelling, the fact of settling on the ground (or detaching oneself from it), the fact of becoming rooted (or uprooted), the fact of living here or there (and consequently of leaving, going elsewhere), all these facts and phenomena are inherent in what it is to be human.[8] They make up an ensemble that is both coherent and shot through by contradictions, by virtual or real conflicts. *Homo* (man as species) can call himself *faber, sapiens, loquens, ludens, ridens* or whatever ... He is defined by a given number of attributes, whose denotations and connotations (that is, their significations and resonances) are broad enough to cover the many manifestations of the 'entity' under consideration. The list of these attributes of man as a species may be inexhaustible. Habitation is among these attributes, or as we might also put it, dimensions.

This formulation calls for immediate correction. If we think of *habitation* as an anthropological trait, that does not mean that it comes under a specific discipline, anthropology, which is supposed to study the attributes of the human species (man as a man) as constants and invariables. This conception,

which is quite widespread today, cannot be accepted. For as long as they have led a social existence, i.e. as a species, with their specific traits, human beings have had a habitation. Their modalities have profoundly changed; there is a history of habitation and of habitations. The similarity between a hut and a detached house should not be pursued to the point of erasing their differences.[9] Habitations have changed with society, with the mode of production, even if certain features (the enclosure of a space, for example) remain relatively constant. Habitation has changed according to these totalities, which constitute culture, civilization, and society on a global scale: relations and modes of production, structures and superstructures.

Such are the transformations, that one can now imagine, even experience, the way of life of another human (or rather, superhuman) being, which would amount only to wandering, a worldwide, supra-terrestrial peregrination, a deliberate uprooting after each settling-down. Or, indeed, would find its only dwelling in poetry. Under these rubrics we will continue to exclude both 'sociologism' and an ontology that proffers its eternal verities about man (as human being), it is not in order to privilege it. Every attempt to define the human by a single dimension or attribute fails under attack from critical thinking. Similarly with any attempt to reduce to static combinations the dynamics that make history. Therefore, let no one assume the right to determine the fate of society by setting for its members rules for their habitations, or modes of habitation. Invention and discovery must remain possible. The dwelling is an open place. In a mode of habitation preferable to others, the human being must be able to affirm himself and call himself *faber*, *sapiens*, *ludens*, *ridens*, *amans*, *creator*, etc., in turn. There may be traits that belong to all human beings by virtue of their membership of the species and the condition (for example, the fact of being born weak and naked, of experiencing growth and learning, of maturing, ageing and dying) but the fact and importance of these traits for habitation, their hierarchy, have changed from one society to another, as has their mutual interaction. In other words, the fact of having a specific age and sex is one of the general characteristics of the individuals who make up the human race; but relationships between age and sex have changed in different societies, as has the inscription of these facts in habitation. With these changes relationships were transformed, such as those of proximity and distance (social, within groups), intimacy and estrangement, closeness and separation – relationships that form part of social practice, i.e. habitation, and which are indicated or signified by objects of everyday use.

Habitation consists first of objects. They form a characteristic ensemble, or moveable or immovable property. They are the products of practical activity; ensembles, within societies. They exist objectively, or if you will, 'objectally', before they signify; but they do not exist without signifying. The word 'before' indicates a kind of logical priority rather than previousness in time.

We ought to posit habitation as an inherent function of every society, every social organism; but a signifying function is straightaway added to this practical function. Moveable and immovable property constitutes habitation, embracing and signifying social relations.

Second point. The manner of inhabiting, the mode or modalities of habitation, are expressed in language.

That proposition is a truism. What would people talk about, what would language express, if not the way of life, including habitation, of a given society? There is first of all a practical function, let us say, then the addition of significations and meanings. Analysis distinguishes what is given as inseparable; and similarly, in practice, significations and meanings may appear in objects in common use before practical functions. Once the use of objects has been learned, there is no need to think about it, and consciousness focuses on their significations, which tell about social status, the conditions and relations of groups and individuals in groups.[10]

Unfortunately, ways of life are expressed in spoken language, which leaves no traces. Written evidence is thus incomplete, purged of part of what interests us. Language is not solely devoted to expressing habitation. We also find there food, clothing, games, as well as memories of events and remarks on a host of economic and political activities. Language thus encompasses 'systems' that overlap, and that cannot close. Everyday life requires a constant translation into ordinary language of the systems of signs comprised by objects used as habitation, clothing, food. He who does not know how to translate is ignorant or deviant, or a foreigner. At the same time, we can only agree with Maxime Rodinson when he writes, at the end of a very thorough-going and genuinely sociological study of a society as vast and significant as ours, and yet different: 'Man-who-feeds-himself, man-who-clothes-himself, man-the-producer and man-the-thinker do not co-exist.[11] We're clearly talking about the 'same' man, whose activities affect each other. While it is true that notions of globality and totality, of the 'total' man, and of interaction within this totality, are not without their problems, this is not a sufficient reason to abandon them. Partial systems of objects, acts and signs (things and words) are creations of social man. It is the individual members of a society, inserted into praxis, caught in a global whole, who eat, drink, play and inhabit. Individuals and groups form an active, constant link between society as a whole on the one hand, and partial systems on the other, language serving them as medium, intermediary and milieu.

And language? Languages? They can be thought of as systems of systems, but no partial systems can be closed. We thus have to extract them from language (from the language) by means of a series of difficult operations that cannot be performed successfully without a method. This method uncovers a scientific abstraction, in its own way concrete: the code relating to some sensory or verbal message, the one that has as its frame of reference the modes of play, habitation, dress and loving of a given society.

The difficulty arises from the fact that the operation would be precise only if the partial ensemble in question formed a closed system (a 'corpus'). Now, none of the partial systems, let us say, nor all of them taken together, namely language, can be closed. Moreover, relations of production, the (technical and social) division of labour comprehensively dominate the language without quite entering the vocabulary. Only some of the outcomes of these relations enter the vocabulary or the morphology. The biological, for example, enters more easily than the social, properly speaking, paradoxical though that may appear. In language, the social phenomenon par excellence, which 'reflects' social life, essential social relationships remain 'unconscious', or 'supra-conscious', as does the totality of society, culture and civilization itself. They await the knowledge that alone can formulate them by developing concepts. Lastly, if 'man' or 'the total man' presents a problem, it is perhaps because he creates meaning (or seeks meanings).

The great social, ideological and political struggles, and their strategies, do not take place on the level of partial systems that are allowed to enter everyday practice and pass into language. All the more, then, must the linguist or sociologist study the importance of partial systems, and their changing hierarchies.

Third point (or third approach). Habitation expresses itself 'objectively' in a ensemble of the creations, products and things that make up a partial system: the house, the city or the urban area. Each object is part of the whole, and carries its stamp; it testifies to the style (or lack of style) of the whole. It has signification and meaning in the palpable whole that offers us a social text. At the same time, habitation is expressed in a set of words, or locutions.

For habitation, as for dressing, 'feeding oneself or playing, there is thus a double system: palpable and verbal, 'objectal' and semantic. What is the relationship between the two systems? In principle, they should correspond. In fact, it is unusual for the correspondence to be exact, unambiguous, word for word. Language is not a 'bag of words', or a 'bag of things', on the scale of a partial system any more than that of the whole society and its language. There are always gaps, discrepancies, even hiatuses between the two systems, which prevents our seeing them as two aspects of a single system. They do not develop according to the same law, nor to one that is internal to each of them. Events that alter or overturn society act differently on objects and the language, and on the various partial systems. A given material cause, a given formal (ideological) reason, may change this partial system or that group of words or objects, sooner or later, by acting predominantly on objects or predominantly on words.

It would be too easy to arrive at the semantic system of habitation (words and connected words) by speaking of the seniological system (objects relating to habitation and their significations). None of these messages supplies the code that would enable us to decipher the other, automatically. There are not amongst them reciprocal relationships of code and message, or

language and meta-language. They are two distinct social texts, which have to be studied and analysed as such without thereby separating them, using correspondences that are already traceable and which have been traced.

Another complexity: habitation cannot be looked at globally, even though it has to be studied as a 'whole' (as a partial system). It consists of *levels*, including language. In his study of those societies, as large as ours and sufficiently different to throw light on it, that are grouped under the name 'Islam', Jacques Berque has shown that the Muslim city is a 'city of signs'. The functions of a city according to Islamic ethics, namely exchange and bearing witness, take place in an architectural ensemble of significations, and at the same time, in its economic and political activity and in a hierarchy of proximities around its monuments, the chief of them being the mosque.[12] In an ensemble of that kind, both 'objectal' and subjective, habitation by individuals and families represents only one element: the house. It inserts itself, and is articulated with broader levels. It is essential, but at the same time, subordinate. In order to grasp it, here too we have to extract and abstract a partial system, one element and level in larger systems that are themselves partial, open, never complete, never closed.

This is an indication of how far we have to refine our concepts of 'system', signification, ensemble, totality, etc.

The technique most often used by sociologists, the questionnaire, is not appropriate in a study of this kind. Of course, many precautions are taken and it aspires to scientific precision. But as we know, the questions asked are usually closed ones, to which the respondent answers 'yes' or 'no'. The questionnaire is 'administered' to a sample chosen according to strict rules. After being coded, the data is analysed by machine. Numbers – percentages, correlations – are retrieved. What have we obtained? Is it not the case that the questions asked were formulated within a system of significations (belonging to the sociologist, to another, unseen person), in such a way that the respondent conforms to it when responding by the very fact of responding? The questionnaire is a precise but narrow tool, and may also be suspect. It allows us to call 'scientific' what is an interpretation, and at best, a partial conceptualization. Questionnaires and apparently rigorous data analysis are sometimes authorized in order to match pseudo-concepts to pseudo-facts.

The approaches recalled above have this consequence: only non-directive interviewing can give a proper account of habitation. The people concerned must be allowed to speak, and the interview is oriented towards the specific activity the researcher is studying (in this case, habitation), leaving scope for free expression. The only constraints are the interviewer, an 'absence/presence', and the tape-recorder, another 'absence/presence'.

A major methodological problem arises here. Questionnaires are precise, but not far-reaching. Non-directive interviews give deeper insight into 'human beings'. Who would not grant that? But more than one sociologist would argue that it is impossible to gain knowledge from non-directive

interviews. What lies 'deep' cannot be 'collected'; the methodological conduct of research therefore demands that we avoid it. How are we get out of this bind, which reflects on the methodological level the general theoretical problem of steering a course between metaphysics and positivist triviality?

Here we suggest an approach. The interview, although necessary, is not enough. And printed forms alone, even detailed ones, breaking down the social setting of the interview under headings, would not make it so. Detailed description is important: of houses, moveable and immovable property, clothing, faces and behaviour. Knowledge can only be obtained by comparing, on the one hand, hard data, which the sociologist perceives and ries to grasp as a whole, and on the other, the places, times and things perceived by those concerned. Let us make this point very clear. The objects connected with habitation (as with dressing, or 'feeding oneself') do not form a language, but a coherent sub-category, a group: a (partial and semiological) system. The words linked with habitation form a semantic group. There are two messages: one of words, one of objects. Comparison between them, which does not presuppose the spontaneous or automatic decoding of one text by the other, and rests on scientific experimentation, not on the subjectivity of the scientist, enables us to emerge from the verbal interview with an objective understanding of it. Research is not imprisoned in it, and does not emerge from it in the name of a hermeneutics (interpretation) which would be unable to constitute itself as knowledge but would be an extension of philosophy. A methodological paradox: recourse to the twofold system, the twofold definition of the specific activity being studied – in this case, habitation – enables us to break the circle. The only procedures that get confused by a 'words–things' dualism are those of a unilateral way of thinking. The system of objects enables us to delimit and analyse the system of verbal significations, and conversely.

Every page of such a study ought to be fully illustrated, the sociologist's scientific discourse referring back to these two texts, which he brings together in a coherent argument: interviews, and hard data (arrangements of places, privileged sites, areas given over to the private and to the social, photographs of surrounding walls and façades, etc.). This illustration would be indispensable, just as the data reproduced have been indispensable for understanding the statements of those concerned. However, this 'objectal' equivalent of verbal statements would still not include time, periods of time and the rhythms of life, of which the division of spaces is the palpable expression. At present, we have no means of illustrating and making palpable the abstract 'times' divided up by analysis.

[...]

Without a doubt, the city has exploded; its classic forms (the ancient or medieval city) are receding in time. That does not mean that the urban area, with its forms and functions, old or new structures, has disappeared. The

'urban fabric' (a rather vague but useful expression) has taken on new forms; it is assuming new functions, acquiring new structures. Among the forms taken by the excrescences springing up on the periphery, which are being added to the centres of cities, when the centre has not disappeared or become too run down, we all know the residential sections, the 'districts' of individual houses, the new developments and housing estates. There are few more striking contrasts than the easily observable one between detached houses and new estates.

Literary authors and sociologists have gone overboard about Housing Estates, which have been, and still are, the subject of many studies. But more how little the *pavillon* has been studied. Writers have usually limited themselves, on aesthetic or ethical grounds, to noting the ugliness and poor planning of residential suburbs [*banlieues pavillonnaires*], mocking the petty bourgeois traits of their residents, and pointing out the slightly ridiculous illusions that the setting so poorly conceals. The 'suburban habitat' seemed scarcely to merit academic study. Guy Palmade's conclusions on 'French attitudes to housing'[13] seemed as final as they were severe. The *pavillon* indicates an essential individualism; its occupants want above all to preserve the 'me', the private personality. 'The contrast between the outside world and the inner world gives housing its meaning.' The image of the detached house corresponds with an ideal involving the wish for protection and isolation, the need for identification and confirmation of the self, the need for contact with nature, in short, the requirement of isolation. A kind of magical attitude idealizes and promotes the *pavillon*; in it, resistance to change and the triumph of individualist isolation take on the status of myth. This leads to condemnation. However, sociological research would seem to show that a majority (80 per cent) of French people of whatever age, status, socioprofessional category or income bracket, would like to live in a *pavillon*. This majority is bigger among manual workers and in lower income brackets than among middle-managers and higher income brackets.

How are we to explain this phenomenon? Is it really nothing but a myth? An ideology? A recrudescence of individualism? A revival of myth? If there is a myth, are we talking about an old reality become mythic, like the patriarchal and predominantly rural house described by Bachelard? If it's an ideology, how and why has it become so widespread? Where does it come from?

Sociologists have hardly ever asked themselves these questions. They usually explained the attraction of the *pavillon* only in terms of the real or imaginary disadvantages of 'housing estates' and 'collective' housing in modern cities overwhelmed by the huge influx of new populations and bursting out into suburbs and peripheral areas.

The chief virtue of the ISU team (and especially of M. Henri Raymond) was not to show contempt for 'suburbanites' [*pavillonnaires*], but to see their way of habitation as worthy of the kind of sociological study that demands

sophisticated methods and technical procedures. What seemed insignificant or trivial revealed a meaning. Might this not be a route to explore?

As we were saying, the contrast between 'the *pavillon* habitat' and housing estates is striking. Let us spell out some aspects of this contrast. In a detached house (no doubt in a small-minded way) modern man 'dwells poetically'. By that we understand that his 'inhabiting' is in some way his creative work. The space in which he is able to organize it according to his own tastes and patterns is somewhat malleable. It lends itself to rearrangement. This is not so with the space provided for tenants or co-owners on an estate; that space is rigid, inflexible. It is difficult, often impossible (and almost always prohibited) to convert it. Space in a detached house allows the family group and its individual members to appropriate to some extent the conditions of their own existence. They can alter, add or subtract, superimpose their own ideas (symbols, organization) on what is provided. Their environment thus acquires meaning for them; there is a system of signification, even a double system: semantic and semiological, in words and in objects.

The concept of *appropriation* is one of the most important handed down to us by centuries of philosophical discussion. The action of human groups on the physical and natural environment has two modes, two attributes: domination and appropriation. They ought to go together, but are often separated. Domination of physical nature, the result of technological processes, ravages nature while allowing societies to substitute its products for nature itself. Appropriation does not ravage nature, but transforms it – the body and biological life provided, and the time and space – into human property. Appropriation is the goal, the direction, the purpose of social life. Without appropriation, technical domination over nature tends towards absurdity as it increases. Without appropriation, there can be economic and technical growth, but social development, properly speaking, remains nil.

In former times (antiquity or the Middle Ages) the city brought a spontaneous appropriation, limited but concrete, of space and time. 'On the human scale', as has so often been said, space and time become creations that can be compared with works of art. When growing cities exceeded their original 'scale', this spontaneous appropriation disappeared. At different periods there were attempts to replace it with reasoned rationality. Is it not remarkable that since ancient Greece, rational planning should have accompanied both the growth of the city and the decline of urban civilization? Reasoned (rational, or better, rationalized) planning has never succeeded in penetrating the secret of qualitative appropriation of time-space, or of reproducing it to fit the quantitative requirements of what is called 'excessive' urban growth. For over 2,000 years, so-called rational planning has proceeded in sudden breakthroughs, straight lines or quarterings, geometric patterns, combinations of homogeneous elements, abstract quantification. We do not have to look very long at the new estates and their features in order to confirm this statement. Appropriation is disappearing,

while the power of technology, including its power to ravage, increases 'excessively'. And more: the concept of appropriation has become blurred and degraded. Who understands it? The word suggests trivialities. As if any open space whatever could correspond to the agora, the forum, the market, the place of entertainment!

Now, the *pavillon* offers us an example – a trivial one, but never mind – of that 'poetics' of space and time that in different periods, societies and social groups is either allied with social practice or dissociated from it. Appropriation of palpable reality, in other words, is always a social fact, but is not to be confused with the forms, functions and structures of society. It is an aspect of social practice (praxis), but a second and superior aspect, which is translated into language by meanings. The modes of appropriation, their relationship with the whole society and the social groups that make it up are highly dialectical, that is, conflictual, complex, changing. A further example: the street. Who does not acknowledge the attraction of a busy street, its interest for the eye, the imagination and the mind? Furthermore, it is not easy to analyse this attraction. The street is an appropriated, and thus 'socialized' space, within the setting of a city, for the benefit of multiple, open groups without exclusivity or the need for membership.

It is thus not enough to emphasize the relative plasticity of space of the *pavillon*, or to note the way it is arranged. Attention must also be paid to appropriation, describing and showing the reasons for it, picking out its complementary aspects and its meaning. This can only be done using the techniques and methods mentioned above: interviews, the double approach and a comparison between the semiological (palpable objects) and the semantic (verbal).

It is no longer necessary to show the importance for academic disciplines of the concept of levels. But is this term not sometimes used in a vague, that is, falsely precise, sense? In fact, it is used to mean all sorts of things, just like 'structure', 'function' and 'form'. However, linguistics and its related disciplines, semantics and semiology, use these terms, 'level' in particular, with undeniable rigour.

Mme Nicole Haumont's paper defines levels clearly and distinctly: within each level secondary levels, also articulated, appear. The whole set forms a sort of grid. Theory and epistemology, which come later, will add depth to these concepts and show the connections between them.

We can distinguish:

A) *Appropriation of space in the* pavillon, that is, the socialization of individual space and the simultaneous individualization of social space. This specific activity takes place in a remarkable way: affective and symbolic. The ages and sexes take from the available space the part that 'belongs' to them, which then attracts one group and repels the other, which plays a role and in which each person plays a role. Analysis of this level falls into three levels: marking, enclosure, arrangement (to be thought of dynamically: with

movements, and spaces for putting aside or for replacing others). Putting it another way: symbols, contrasts, order. On this level, tendencies and elemental, almost biological drives operate (though subject to a cultural system). They are linked with those semi-constants (modified by society, culture and civilization), that are the province of social anthropology: youth and old age, the masculine and feminine elements of groups and of life. That way, the most individualized and singular aspect of *pavillon* existence reaches broader and more general levels; and it is here that architecture and planning have lessons to learn from studying it. The question, 'What does it mean to inhabit?' remains open.

B) *The world of the* pavillon *as utopia*. What do those who live in it expect from it? Nothing less than happiness. Many people experience it like that, forgetting the disadvantages, arguing them away. This happiness, in which fiction and reality are as thoroughly mixed as water and wine in a glass, ought to be attained via nature, a healthy and regular life and normality, all connected in this utopia with the *pavillon*.

In her analysis, Mme Haumont avoids using words such as a *magical* attitude. It is a question of significations, connotations, added to a form of praxis, a mode of social existence, and to the affective and symbolic appropriation of space.

This is why, in the 'world of the *pavillon*' more than elsewhere, every object is an element in a system. The object is not only loaded with symbols, it is a sign. Rather than being functionally adapted for use, it is caught in the system of signs. This is equally true of the garden, the lawn, the flower-pot, as the decoration of the façade, or of furniture and ornaments.

Here the focus turns to the curious problem of presence-absence, which haunts research on systems of significations. A system or sub-system, whether of objects or words, both is and is not self-sufficient. It is self-sufficient; it is complete whole. Each element refers to all the others. It looks as full as an egg. Look at it a bit longer and a bit more closely: see, it empties itself. A host of questions, posed technically by linguists and tragically by philosophers, now arises. We ask: Who? For whom? Why? How? The system is not self-sufficient. This 'whole' is partial, and open. It refers to 'something else': purpose, **on** the one hand, and the 'subject', on the other, and beyond these two terms lies the totality and the meaning. Every occupant of a *pavillon*, every 'subject' (individual and family) believes they find in objects their own thoroughly 'personalized' microcosm, and their own happiness. But these microcosms, these 'systems' share a strange resemblance. The same suppliers sell these goods, these objects, these houses in the 'Normandy', 'Basque' or 'modern' style. Every subject could move somewhere else and feel just as comfortable. He would experience the same happiness, half imaginary, half real. Everywhere, the goal – happiness – is presented in the same way, that is to say, it is indicated, signified, but indicated in its absence: reduced to signification. What is signified – happiness, the person – is eluded or elided,

and appears only as nature or 'naturality' (fountains, flowers, the sun and the sky, etc.).[14] Work (and creativity), material production and its relations (and the activity that produces created works) are put into suspension, put aside. Meaning equals absurdity. In 'naturality' we find, recreating themselves in an odd sort of walking dream, 'lived' happiness and the consciousness that lives it, the illusion and the real. This walking dream is the discourse of the owner of the *pavillon*, his everyday discourse, poor as others see it, but rich for him.

Time disappears from this illusory microcosm, as it does from all systems. Or rather, it loses its point and cutting edge, its menace. It turns into safety. In a detached house, the occupant does not feel himself age. Time goes by gently, naturally. For each member of the family group, time is identified with the physical house, spaces marked out and allocated, some beneficial, others unfavourable. Relationships between members change into relationships between objects, and are 'naturalized'. One such privileged object (the television set) governs the little world of objects and relations within the group.

To a greater extent, and better than elsewhere, in the *pavillon* the resident consumes significations. In its way, this 'world of the *pavillon*' is abstract, while he is so concrete on the affective and symbolic level. At the utopian level, it is very modern, while he seems a little old fashioned. At the utopian level, the consumer of the detached house is intensely absorbed, not by things, but by signs. Sociological study cannot proceed without a thoroughgoing analysis of this misunderstanding (a veritable denial) of a reality that is both signified and left out (present-absent). Here everything is real and everything is utopian, without a clear difference; everything is nearby and everything is far away; everything is 'lived' and everything is imaginary (lived in the world of the image and the sign). These tendencies are especially marked in the 'world of the *pavillon*' in contrast with the 'world' of new housing estates, where everything is combinative, in series, neat and tidy, where the image and the imaginary emerge against a background of rigidity.

This utopian level could be called 'mythic' since it involves constant reference to 'naturality', i.e. a myth of nature, a naturalization of the human. As Roland Barthes says, we naturalize the cultural.

Analysis thus breaks the utopian level down into secondary levels. Arrows point to invisible 'realities', half real and half imaginary: the status of happiness, safety and rootedness, personality and naturality. These are the latent contents, in the social 'unconscious' or 'imaginary', of the great dream pursued by people living in detached houses, as interviews show. It is a dream that is all the more constant because it is in its way rationalized, and because objections to it are foreseeable.

C) *Ideology*. That there is an ideology of the *pavillon* – of that there is no doubt. That it coincides with the other levels, that is, determines life in the *pavillon* in general, that it creates symbolism and utopianism – the work presented to the reader here forbids us to admit. The ideology of the

occupants of such houses and of those who prefer them to other ways of inhabiting, is an ideology, i.e. a set of representations. Nothing more, nothing less. A set of representations justifies, explains, completes a way of social living; it cannot create it in practice, and does not coincide with it.

The currency of this ideology in France poses new problems. Does a different ideology rule in the residential suburbs of Britain or the United States? Are we talking about cultural phenomena? Or models (patterns)? Or the 'basic personality' of a society and a country where such a model holds sway, tends to become implanted and to mould people, for better or worse?

The ideology of *pavillon* living involves a consciousness of property and the property-owner that may conflict with other forms of consciousness (in particular with 'class consciousness', in the frequent cases where the owner is working-class). Usually, this conflict remains in the latent state. Nevertheless, it has an effect. The 'bourgeoisie-proletariat' contradiction turns into the oppositions: 'poor-rich' or 'small-big' (property-owners).

This ideology presupposes a confusion, even an identification, of individual and family consciousness with property. It is therefore never without a form of alienation, and at its limit, 'reification.' Alienation and its extreme case, reification, here belong less to things than to a signification that receives from the ideology an addition, an 'over-determination', as the psychoanalysts say. The added signification here comes from the figure of the Owner-occupier, which completes that of the consumer, the suburban dreamer. This ideology of property does not exclude the concrete appropriation of time and space, at the affective and symbolic level. It indicates and sets its limits, enabling us to understand how those involved do not see their boundaries, the narrow limits of their horizons. It does not seem to suburbanites that they are stuck in social isolation; they have not chosen it. Instead, it seems to have a rather nice name: liberty, as envisaged in the Civil Code, where it is more or less completely identified with property.

It is possible that the ideology preceded the other aspects and levels of the '*pavillon* world'. It is probable that it created them without actually coinciding with them. In this microcosm, it represents a globality or a totality: contemporary society. It is here, and in this way, that Mme N. Haumont's study spills over into ideological and political history.

Psycho-sociological and thus sociological study has discovered the common denominator of Suburbanites [*Pavillonaires*], the thing that virtually or actually links them together. It has revealed their microcosm. It emerges that 'suburbanites' do not form a social group or a homogeneous ensemble. Lastly, it emerges that the social existence of sectors (or 'districts') of detached housing varies according to the urban area with which they are associated, their distance from the city centre, their amenities, and their function, when it is more than purely residential. They cannot be studied sociologically apart from the city and without a study of its problems. Psycho-sociology leads to sociology, without which there is a theoretical or methodological rupture. Are

we to blame the ISU team for not starting from sociology? To go from the more homogeneous to the less, from unity to differences, from less marked differences to the more notable, is not an approach that can be faulted on epistemological grounds. The important thing is to begin.

Mme Marie-Geneviève Raymond's research partly fills this gap, and at the same time goes further into the historical and sociological study of the phenomenon of detached housing than the above propositions. The history of the detached house and its ideology that she presents is a highly original contribution to the political, social, economic and ideological history of France. In it, we read how the *pavillon* and its image and 'values' were literally launched before the appearance of the methods of 'launching' currently used by advertising. For reasons of high politics (itself linked with ethical values) the '*pavillon*' brand has been the subject of market research *avant la lettre*, and of intense and successful propaganda. A political strategy has produced an ideology, which was given a more (or less) complete 'reception', for different reasons and motivations, by different groups and classes. Its impact was such that it introduced a contradiction into French society: a conflict between the individual and the social (the 'collective'). This conflict appears in fields and sectors other than habitat, where it takes a particularly acute form.

French society is thus seen, on the global scale, in a new light. Political history and the history of ideas, psycho-sociology and the sociology of habitation, converge in a movement towards the acquisition of new knowledges.

[...]