THE POLITICS OF URBANITY - FORM AND KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the search for a more equitable urban environment. In Western Europe, the hope that cities are relevant forms of living and interacting, still exists. In Brussels, in the last fifteen years, the inhabitants formed a unique network of actions that attempts to recapture the city as a place where people have the right to work and live. One must look at the Brussels experience in light of the theories that led to the ideological development of the inhabitants' struggle. Theories, that share with the Brussels movement the search for social justice.

The first part of this work contains an analysis of relevant aspects of Manuel Castells', David Harvey's and Henri Lefebvre's theories, and of Leon Krier's vision.

The second part examines the network of urban struggles in Brussels and analyzes the relationship of the theoretical contributions and the inhabitants' action.

Finally, the conclusion will investigate the responsibility of the architect in the light of Brussels' experience.

Thesis Supervisor: Edward Robbins
Title: Assistant Professor of Anthropology in Architecture
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

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Today, the future of the urban environment is everybody's concern. The city is claimed by all: its inhabitants, planners, architects, social scientists and politicians. The current economic crisis in Western Europe is hurting the cities badly. The brutal shifts in industrial patterns are quickening their abandonment and destruction.

The urgency of urban problems is forcing architects to face their socio-economic and political responsibilities. Ultimately, any social or economic intervention results in spatial decisions. To face the problems of a society, one has to cope with the physical fabric, that a highly urbanized civilization has produced. The search for coherent solutions must consider not only today's realities but also urban history and traditions. The objective of the democratization in the city is subordinate to these issues. The cities exist, they constitute our heritage, and we cannot resolve their problems by suppressing the object. Furthermore, modern cities are not only the result of the needs of an industrial, capi-
talist society, but also a form of human organization, strongly in debt to western tradition. A form that saw the flowering of unique social experiences, the birth of a popular urban culture; a tremendous richness and variety of interactions, ways of organizing and unionizing.

This thesis is directed against the "death-wish" that underlies some of the most prominent urban thinkers. The question here is not finding alternative solutions to cities and let them be strangled by intellectual and political resignation, but developing a lucid analysis of the actual situation, the definition of the problems and the elaboration of strategies on the disciplinary ground of the practice of architecture.

It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of urban history, within the context of a rigorous socio-economic analysis. The search for a more equitable environment comes from both the study of the patterns of production-consumption-distribution, as well as the analyzing of the history and use of the built form. The approach then, is to see our urban heritage as a set of social-spatial and historical relationships.

It is time to take a positive, multi-disciplinary look at cities, that should aim at developing concrete strategies to insure their survival. Cities are not dehumanizing, nor are they relics of a lost "savoir-
faire". Cities are both segregation and interaction, hierarchy and liberty, elitist and popular, and they will probably remain this way for a long time. They are neither free from the laws of capitalist economy nor are they slaves of these laws. The urban does not dominate the industrial or the industrial the urban.

Cities are still places of production as well as concentrations of tremendous human potential. The urban population is conscious, skilled, active in culture and politics.

From the trust in these potentials derives the hope in the relevance of cities as forms of living and interacting.

This belief is still shared. In the last 15 years, the inhabitants of Brussels formed a unique network that attempts to recapture the city as a place where people have the right to work and live. Brussels, where the post, second world-war "rationalization" policies greatly damaged the city's social and physical fabric. Brussels, where post, second world-war planning laws were implemented only to benefit developers and private interests. Brussels, "The Capital of Europe", that, in the process of accommodating the international institutions and corporations, forgot its inhabitants.
These developments caused the rise of public consciousness. A consciousness which saw the urban environment in the broader context of the search for equity. One must look at the Brussels experience in light of the theories that led to the development of the inhabitants' ideologies. Theories that share with the Brussels movement, the search for social justice.

Castells and Harvey both believe that the city is a center of power. The "right to the city" belongs to the citizens, writes Lefebvre. To recapture this right, the inhabitants have to fight by all possible means. The use of planning guidelines and design alternatives is a key strategy, argues Krier.

In understanding what happened in Brussels, it is essential to examine the theoretical bases implicit in the experience. The Brussels urban movement used these contributions and, eventually, went beyond them in a unique, "lived-in" experiment. This struggle also shows the limitations of these theories, particularly in regard to the spatial structure of cities.

Castells and Lefebvre are the social scientists who were the most influential in the Brussels movement. It is also important to look at Harvey's work because his American vision clarifies important aspects of the debate. Leon Krier's vision provided references
that had a strong impact on the design choices made by the inhabitants of Brussels.

Examining the intersection of theories and practices that are the Brussels experience, raises the question of what is the role of the practice of architecture.

The first part of this work contains an analysis of relevant aspects of Manuel Castells', David Harvey's and Henri Lefebvre's theories and, of Leon Krier's vision.

The second part examines the network of urban struggles in Brussels and analyzes the relationship of the theoretical contributions and the inhabitants' actions.

Finally, the conclusion will investigate the responsibility of the architect in the light of the Brussels experience.
chapter one
introduction

In order to understand the Brussels movement, one must examine the theoreticians that inspired its ideology.

Castells and Harvey contribute an indispensable socio-economic analysis of the role of cities; Lefebvre illuminates the concept of urban culture. It is these three that inspired the theoretical side of Leon Krier's work. The contribution of all four was the catalyst that linked urban and socio-political struggles in Brussels.

However, the question is, what is it in their work that helps or hinders the development of strategies for spatial intervention in the urban environment. For example, Castells believes that the urban question is part of an interrelated totality. But, Castells does not address the city's physical structure which is part of this totality. David Harvey shows how cities are essential for the economic ruling class. But he forgets that the urban environment is more than a showplace for the elite. Lefebvre clarifies cities' roles in creating a unique, popular culture, but he
does not propose to us a strategy for defending this "gift". Krier's work brings the analysis of the physical environment in relation with urban history but the alternatives he proposes, remain essentially utopian.

In examining these contributions, I will look at the concepts of centrality and density, social and spatial segregation and at the definitions of urban community.
theoretical contributions

Manuel Castells 1: "The Urban Question" and urban culture.

The "Urban Question", published in 1972 is a critical work for anyone concerned with urban problems. Born from the need for "a critical revision of the traditions of the urban social sciences" 2, this work offers a marxist analysis of the modern urban phenomenon and is a coherent base for thinking about today's cities. Furthermore, it offers a critique of urban ideologies and gives a theoretical framework for discussing the validity of specific strategies in urban struggles.

Particularly pertinent to the case of Brussels is Castells' belief that specific urban problems cannot be treated in an isolated fashion. Rather, problems
of public housing, zoning, and transportation must be viewed in the context of patterns of society's production-consumption cycle and class struggle.

However, there are several facets of the problem that Castells overlooks.

First is his denouncing of the concept of urban culture. Castells feels that urban culture is largely the result of the needs and the organization of the capitalist society. This view ignores the depth of cities. They are more than a capitalist tool. They are also generations of people living together and creating, in the process, a unique popular culture.

Castells feels that high density leads to the "juxtaposition without mixing of different social groups," 3 yet he ignores the fact that this proximity inevitably produces a better consciousness about social segregation. He uses the Chinese cultural revolution as an example of a modern society which turned away from the metropolis model. Yet he acknowledges that the revolutionary struggle was taking place in the cities. Cities are centers of power and as such form a clear target for resistance. Thus, when Castells presents decentralization as an alternative, it seems important to ask how the populus controls the power in this model?

3Ibid, p. 78.
Castells, in analyzing the social cost of big cities, emphasizes their tremendous waste and unproductivity; he argues, citing Havanna, that a socialist society cannot afford these costs. Though these are important concerns, the situation in Western Europe is more complex. There is not way of "abandoning" the cities and simply decentralizing housing, industry and decision making. The history of Western Europe is based upon people living in an urban environment. The working-class struggles are deeply inscribed in urban history. It is essential to confront these historical and traditional aspects in addressing urban problems.

Castells points out that we have to recognize the spatial patterns that are connected with social behavior. A concept, directly related to the spatial-social relationship is the notion of community. Castells argues that in the metropolis there is "dominance of association over community." 4 (particular groups getting together to defend particular interests). He clearly implies that communities cannot exist in centralized metropolises. He believes that the combination of the development of industrial cities and the concentration of political and economic power results in the lack of participation and the "anonymity" of the inhabitants. Thus, Castells defines the problem in essentially socio-economic terms.

Ibid, p. 78.
and he ignores any "spatial determinism": "The spatial environment is not the root of any specificity of behavior and representation." 5 For architects attempting to use his work, Castells offers a "poisoned present" - a brilliant socio-economic analysis with no tools for those concerned with its spatial implications.

But Castells' analysis is useful when taken with a grain of salt. If we use his ideas in light of particular urban characteristics - cities' cultural values and patterns, in a historical perspective, we get a fuller picture. For example, the problems of historical centers in Western Europe need to be analyzed not only in relation to the socio-economic structure, but also as a "place" of particular problems of heritage, adoption, etc.
David Harvey 6: A Methodology for the Urban Environment.

Social Justice and the City, published in 1973, is a collection of articles analyzing urban problems in North America. Though he focuses on North American cities, his methodology is relevant to any urban environment. Trained as a geographer, he examines the city along the lines of the distribution of income in a spatial system.

For Harvey, cities are the result of the concentration needed for the market society. As they evolved, he sees them as becoming a showplace for the wealthy. To Harvey, the strength of the cities lies in their "technological innovation and the monopoly control ... the history of particular cities can be understood only in terms of the circulation of surplus value at a moment of history." 7

Harvey agrees with Castells on many points. First, both condemn the metropolis as being founded upon "the exploitation of many by the few." But Harvey's work takes a step forward from Castells' by recognizing the importance of the physical and symbolic environment. Harvey's approach towards spatial form is linked to his background in geography. He sees the physical environment in terms of the location of objects: "The physical,
spatial form of a city system is a construction in 3-
dimensional Euclidean geometry. The phenomenon within
it can be conceptualized as: points (retail stores, schools,
hospitals), lines (transport links), areas (constituencies,
territories) and volumes (buildings)." 8 This attempt to
break down the elements of spatial form is limited by
Harvey's system of mapping and locating objects within
a territory. Though his attempt is valuable, it goes too
far in reducing historical and traditional patterns to
mere geometrical expressions.

Like Castells, Harvey believes that the mobility
characterizing modern cities causes disruption of com-
munities. Harvey argues for more balanced and thus
stable, small urban environments which will decentralize
political and economic power, helping to implement
the redistribution of income. However, he also feels
that these small communities should be linked by a
regional government.

Methodologically, Harvey advocates "the emergence of
a pragmatic problem solving approach in which the spatial
aspects of the metropolis are viewed as continuous with
and defined by the processes of urban society." 9 Further,
Harvey argues, quoting Leven, that it is important to
find "some kind of theoretical framework within which
we identify factors which in turn produce some spatial

8Ibid, p. 87.
form in an analytically predictable way."

Harvey's tentative methodology is valuable because it attempts to link spatial and social form. However, like Castells, his non-historical view makes it incomplete. The addition of a historical perspective will help develop a fuller methodological framework.
Henry Lefebvre 11: Centrality and Urban Culture.

"La revolution urbaine", published in 1970, is Lefebvre's most complete work. Assuming a totally urbanized society, he proceeds to analyze the emergence of urban culture - its strengths, weaknesses, potentials and its evolution through modern western society. The assumption of the increasing dominance of the urban society over the industrial leads Lefebvre to analyzed the characteristics of the urban environment in the perspective of its democratization. At the core of his analysis is the "right to the city" - the right to not be excluded from the "centrality". Lefebvre sees "centrality," both human and physical concentration, as the essence of the urban society, and as a basis for all relationships in the city. He argues that in order to explore the possibilities of urban societies, one must accept the contradictions inherent to the "centrality" and explore their dialectical character. Lefebvre acknowledges the contradictions of life in the city, but affirms the dynamic of the urban system. "Lefebvre links the "right to the

Ibid.


city" to a structure where the concentration is "free of all repression" 12 and where "social relations are revealed in the negation of distance." 13 Thus, the logic of the repressive industrial city has to be transformed in the logic of urban culture.

Lefebvre sees the urban environment as subserviant to industrial society, but possessing potentials and richness that could be the base of a more just society. When examining the social segregation provoked by industrial society, Lefebvre argues against Castells, stating that "dispersion would reinforce the fragmentation of the social fabric." 14 The hierarchy in the centers strikingly reveals the contradictions of the society - it's obvious and repressive character. Lefebvre sees this argument as providing the base for further strategies of action. Thus, he bases his concept of community upon spatially and socially defined areas (neighborhoods) - that are the traditionally strong communities organized in a polycentral, dense and interactive city.

Another aspect of Lefebvre's analysis is relevant to our work. He addresses the street and the monument as forms that can be viewed in two ways. The street can be seen as either a display for the consumptive society or as a place of diversity of social inter-
actions; the monument as a symbol of power or the sign of the collective memory. Lefebvre introduces the cultural aspects of urban form and proves the necessity of analyzing the problem on levels of use, tradition and history. He believes that the "urban praxis" is the essential element for discourse about the city. "Only the confrontation of the urban reality with its potentials can define the elements of democracy in cities." 15 Lefebvre sees the emerging urban movements as playing a major role in the democratization of the urban environment. His analysis is crucial for those who want to develop a socially conscious architectural practice.

Leon Krier 16 and the Pre-Industrial Model.

Krier's attempt to present a strategy of architectural practice which consciously evolves from a vision of society and, his close association with Brussels, make his contribution essential to this work. Krier denounces functionalist architecture and planning, stating (they) "destroyed the European city in response to the requirements of the development of the industrial structure of capitalism ... The monopolist economy profoundly disrupted the social structure of cities." 17

Unlike the social scientists who limit their argument to the investigation of the urban phenomenon, Krier uses their analysis to define a disciplinary framework for urban action. Krier shares a common hypothesis with Castells, Harvey and Lefebvre - the industrial, capitalist city is based upon laws of consumption and mobility. Krier finds in Castells' and Lefebvre's approach the indispensable theoretical base for his discourse on the formal transformation of the industrial city. As an architect, he argues that he "is not interested in a critique without a project nor historiography without a vision." 18 Where Castells limits his argument by...
Manuel Castells in "The Urban Question", p. 111.

Krier adopts Castells' socio-economic approach to the design level.

Because Krier associates the development of capitalism with the disruption of the urban environment, he uses the preindustrial city as the model for a more democratic, balanced and enjoyable environment.

"Against the agglomeration of buildings and individuals, the town and its communities" 20: Krier, referring to the preindustrial society uses and the concept of "quarter" (an independent, mixed use neighborhood) as the base of urban organization. "We have to rediscover the forgotten language about the city where formal perfection was achieved in the 18th century; we have to work at its modernization for this language to assume the contradictions of the European, anti-industrial resistance projects ... The concept of streets and places is not a mere fasion but an historical concept, inscribed the European tradition. It is important to imitate, not as style, but as type. 21

The effort of imitation, of "genius loci" of European cities along with the adaptation of the traditional block system is one of the major design guidelines in Krier's work. Thus, the concepts of centrality, heterogeneity, and community blend together to define the city as an
ensemble of dense, mixed use neighborhoods - communities where work, housing, leisure and commercial patterns are strongly intertwined.

This vision is used as a reference to the everyday architectural practice. "The action must be placed within the framework of a specific project for urban democracy ... The intellectuals have to commit themselves to urban struggles at a daily level. We have to participate in urban struggles and develop new architectural means that anticipate a decentralized, self-managed society." 22 Although those statements clearly refer to urban action movements, Krier's work remains essentially a personal vision. The translation of his project to concrete grounds requires the collaboration of people like Maurice Culot 23 (Brussels) who are strongly involved in urban action groups. This aspect poses the question - how does one organize the various disciplines to insure the participation of the inhabitants in the process? This question will be examined further in the case of Brussels.

In order to understand the depth of Krier's approach we will explain his project in Luxemburg.

22 Ibid.

23 Maurice Culot: Born in 1945, architect. Director of the "Archives d'Architecture Moderne"; of the research center and the magazine. Member of the ARAU: "Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaine", an urban action organization. Former assistant-director of the School of Architecture, "La Cambre", in Brussels. Close friend and collaborator of Leon Krier.
Luxemburg

The project for the Common Market neighborhood in Luxemburg represents a synthesis of Krier's concerns and his manifesto. Questioning the chaotic extensions of the Common Market in Northern Europe, this project represents an alternative to the official proposal for the Luxemburg site, designed by Tallibert. Krier's work integrates a critique of the official project, an analysis of the city of Luxemburg, the definition of general strategies for the reconstruction of the European city and finally, an alternative design. The project was presented to the media in November, 1978 by urban action organizations as an example of architectural practice, grounded in the inhabitants' concerns. For that occasion, Maurice Culot wrote, "This action represents the first phase of the get-together of those, who are the first concerned (the inhabitants), and those, who attempt to combine a project for a socialist society with an intelligent approach to the organization of urban space." 22
THE CRITIQUE OF TALLIBERT'S PROJECT.

THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE SKYLINE OF THE OLD CITY OF LUXEMBURG TO THAT OF TALLIBERT'S PROPOSAL.

THE COMPARISON OF PUBLIC SPACES:
THE TRADITIONAL EXAMPLES THE TALLIBERT'S PROPOSAL LEON KRIER'S PROJECT.

PARALLELE DES SILHOUETTES DE LA VIEILLE VILLE ET DU PLATEAU KIRCHBERG AVEC LE PROJET TALLIBERT

La méthode des parallèles qui est utilisée dans cette analyse démontre la nécessité impérieuse de vérifier toute création urbaine et architecturale nouvelle à un système basé sur des mesures, dimensions et proportions connues et vécues : les rues, les places, les quartiers. Cette technique transcende les limites de ces langages scientifiques qui ont servi à imposer, contre la volonté des citoyens, les formes montruessees.

PARALLELE DE QUELQUES PLACES POLITIQUES RELIGIEUSES ET CIVIQUES EUROPEENNES
THE STRATEGIES

SITUATION OF THE CIRCULATION NETWORK.

CONGESTION OF THE HISTORICAL CENTER BY THE TENTACULAR PERIPHERY.

DENSITY OF CAR CIRCULATION.

THE NECESSITY OF THE DIALECTIC BETWEEN COUNTRY AND CITY.

THE FEDERATION OF CITIES: THE PERIPHERY HAS TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO AUTONOMOUS CITIES.
THE DEFINITION OF THE COMPLEX NEIGHBORHOOD IS BASED ON THE MODEL OF THE PRE-INDUSTRIAL CITY.
THE COMMUNITY IS THE BASE OF THE COMPOSITION OF NEIGHBORHOODS.
THE TECHNIQUES OF THE RECONSTRUCTION OF URBAN FABRIC:
REDIVISION OF LARGE BLOCKS
INCLUSION OF PUBLIC SPACES
INTEGRATION OF NEW CONSTRUCTIONS IN A COHERENT SYSTEM OF STREETS, BLOCKS AND SQUARES.
LEON KRIER'S PROJECT:
THE NEW "COMMON MARKET"
NEIGHBORHOOD WILL BE
STRUCTURED AROUND TWO
MAJOR BOULEVARDS, IN
TWO "CITIES" OF
FIFTEEN THOUSAND
INHABITANTS.

Luxembourg, la vieille ville et les nouveaux quartiers de l'Europe.
THE PLAN.

QUARTIER DE L'EUROPE
THE HIERARCHY OF STREETS, SQUARES.
chapter two
introduction

A Brief History of Brussels.

In 1978, Brussels, "the capital of Europe", the seat of the Common Market, a city of one million inhabitants, celebrated its thousandth birthday. Until the 19th century, Brussels remained an essentially medieval town, punctuated by classical 18th century, institutional interventions such as the Royal Street, the Royal Palais, and the Parliament. In the 19th century, along with most European cities, Brussels underwent a radical, though fragmentary, transformation. Motivated both by the functional needs of the developing industry (housing, infrastructure, etc.), as well as the desire to make Brussels a modern capital, the changes were directed toward "rationalization"; slum clearance, construction and layout of boulevards and new streets. In the 1860's, following the model of Napoleon 3 in Paris, Leopold 2, King of Belgium, initiated the construction of the Central Boulevards connecting the North and South railroad stations. Compared to the transformation of Paris, the physical "rationalization" of Brussels in the 1860's was minimal and did not deeply affect the traditional, social and formal fabric of the city. In
The growth of Brussels:

1822 to 1978.

The Marolles

The Marolles was the construction of the palace, only the construction of the Palace

The destruction of a populous, working-class neighborhood, the partial
destruction caused substantial upheaval - the partial

The rail connection between the North and South stations

Exponentially more drastic was the construction of

Tearing nearly parallel to the central boulevards. Tearing nearly

Later that axis became a proving ground for

Neatly sited the housing of the neighborhoods in this

Half a century (between 1900 and 1950) to build, it

Post world war 2 architectural experimentation, until

A permanent wound in the very core

of the city.
THE NORTH-SOUTH RAIL CONNECTION IN 1903 WITH THE EXPROPRIATIONS.

THE NORTH-SOUTH RAIL CONNECTION IN 1959.
Belgian cities have a long tradition of ignoring the 20th century's trend toward zoning laws. The government attempts, first in 1915 and then in 1940, to force the municipalities to draw up general plans were essentially unsuccessful. The regional plan for Brussels (developed between 1948 and 1957) followed the ideas, common to post-war reconstruction policies in Western Europe, of rationalization of traffic and separation of functions. As Francis Strauven points out, "The present day structure of the agglomeration of Brussels was not born from a vision of living together, but from an urge to drive together." 1

In the mid-1950's, in accordance with the guidelines of the Regional Plan, a Master Plan was drawn up for the heart of Brussels. Focusing on the development of office space, the plan sold Brussels as a favorable location for the headquarters of major American and international companies and banks. This approach was justified because Brussels was centrally located, the seat of the European community and reputed for its skilled population.

The 1958 international exhibition sped up the construction of "urban motor ways" around the center city, which were later surrounded by parking lots and covered by overpasses to insure the optimal flow of traffic.
ROAD PLAN OF BRUSSELS: 
THE CITY AS THE TRAFFIC KNOT.
This focus on automobile circulation enforced the major options of the master plan; the clearing of slums for offices and the exodus of the inhabitants to the suburbs.

ZONING OF BRUSSELS:

- Housing
- Industry
- Business District
- Parks
The only opposition to the plan came from the "Ligue Esthetique", a preservation group that criticized the plan's "esthetically shocking" consequences. In the 1960's, the master plan resulted in the construction of disruptive modern architectural developments such as the South Tower, the ITT headquarters and the Manhattan Plan.

THE "MANHATTAN" PLAN.
This destruction of the traditional urban fabric and the failure, both in human and financial terms, of several large scale developments, focused public and media concern on the city environment. In the late 1960's, the city proposed the expansion of the already gigantic Palace of Justice, which would wipe out what was left of the working-class "Marole".

The inhabitants, having to live with the original Palais, vigorously opposed the project, by all possible means - performing theatre and songs in the "Marole" streets, repeatedly occupying the city hall and the mayor's office, distributing leaflets and publishing a neighborhood "gazette", "Le Marolien Renove". The inhabitants, united around a dynamic Marxist Priest, Jacques Van Der Biest, and formed the first neighborhood committee in Brussels. Leading a successful drive against evictions, they developed an exemplary renovation plan for the area. All the aspects of the plan were discussed by the first "Renovation Commission" that brought together both the inhabitants and the municipality.
THE "MAROLE" IN THE PLAN OF THE CENTER OF BRUSSELS.

THE AREA AROUND THE "PALACE OF JUSTICE"."
THE RENOVATION PLAN FOR THE "MAROLE".
In 1969, a seminal meeting took place between Maurice Culot, a young professor from "La Cambre" School of Architecture, Jacques Van Der Biest, from the "La Marole" Committee, and Rene Schoonbrodt from "Habitat Humain". This gathering laid the groundwork for a new network of urban action in Brussels.

Once formed, the network took full advantage of the associative decision making structure established by a general law in 1962 that for 15 years remained "lettre morte".

The struggle to save the urban environment led to major changes: It politicized architectural work and stimulated discussions in schools and city organizations. Three major phenomena influenced the development of the public consciousness. First, is Brussel's geographic limitation. Its firm borders meant that its growth was severely restricted. These rigid borders gave the inhabitants the feeling of living in, and belonging to, a territory.

As the general plan states, "The absurd limitation of the city of Brussels to nineteen communes imposes a strict planification in order to achieve the conservation of work and housing in the perimeter. The plan should prevent the dominance, by the third sector, of the Brussels territory and fight the exodus of the
Document accompanying the "General Plan", established by the "Agglomeration of Brussels" (city body that forms a "super-municipality").

The "Agglomeration" works on the "General Plan" and the municipalities develop the "particular plans".

3

inhabitants."

(Options and directions of the general plan for the 19 communes of Brussels.)

The second aspect is the particular political situation caused by the conflict between the Flemish and French speaking communities. On the national level, different coalitions of the same political parties (Christian Democrats, Socialists and liberals), succeed each other at a fast pace: the political instability, due to the communities' problem being the major characteristic of the national governments. This reinforces the power of municipalities and local pressure groups.

Brussels is a city where small political parties, born from the linguistic conflict, are particularly powerful and largely represented in the local government. It is the role of the different municipalities to rule on environmental questions. In Brussels the "Agglomeration" groups, the 19 municipalities and is in charge of general planning policies. The environmental problems became key issues as the fragile equilibrium of the municipal alliances forced the political parties to be exceptionally receptive to interest demands.
BRUSSELS IS PREDOMINANTLY FRENCH SPEAKING (90%) BUT IS ENCLOSED IN THE FLEMISH REGION
The third and the most important phenomenon was the systematic destruction, started in the fifties, of the traditional urban fabric. In the last 20 years, more than a hundred neighborhood committees sprang up and formed a dynamic federation (Inter-Environment). This group is playing a major role in the coordination of urban action, and in developing the dialogue with the government.

Similarly, the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies saw the birth of groups such as "Habitat Humain" that attempted to link the problems of the public housing to an overall thinking about the urban environment.
the network

The ARAU-Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaine.

The most dynamic of these organizations is the Araw, born from "Habitat Humain" and created in 1968. Its major objective is the democratization of decision making in the organization of space, in order to stop de facto policies. This goal is grounded in the group's belief that the city constitutes an ideal structure for citizens' participation and as such must be recaptured from the power of money.

The Araw constitutes the theoretical branch of the Brussel's urban movement. It attempts to integrate its actions into a broader debate on the political and the social aspects of the urban environment.

For the Araw, the socialist city is the place where the population has the maximum of participation. The existing structure of the city is the seed of the struggles.
To achieve its goals, the Arau uses a diversified strategy: urban education courses, tours of "speculative Brussels", publication of reports and above all, monthly press-conferences. These briefings serve to inform about the state of developments in the city, as well as about alternatives to official proposals. These counter projects were developed, until recently, by students from La Cambre School of Architecture. These alternatives are based on Arau's "Charte Urbaine" that stresses housing, integration of commercial and industrial functions, respect of the existing urban fabric and the possibility of gradual, organic renovation.

Although the Arau works independently from the inhabitants committees, the counter-projects are often used by INTER-ENVIRONMENT as tools to oppose the official proposals.

The situation of Arau of the political scene is complex. The group is attacked by the right for being unrealistic and by the far left for petty-bourgeois reformism. Though it is hard to evaluate the political impact of the Arau, its struggle has helped refocus architectural practice on the city. Arau actions have also encouraged public debate about issues surrounding the urban environment.

In 1978, for example, the annual "Urban School" focused on the development of a coherent renovation policy.
COVER OF THE "ARAU" REPORT FROM THE "URBAN SCHOOL" - 1978.
"FOR A POLICY OF RENOVATION IN BRUSSELS" ARAU'S PROPOSAL.

LA 9ÈME ÉCOLE URBAINE DE L'ARAU.

LA RENOVATION URBAINE A BRUXELLES : QU'EST-CE QU'ON ATTEND ?

L'ATELIER DE RECHERCHE ET D'ACTION URBAINES (ARAU) organisera du lundi 13 au vendredi 17 mars, chaque soir de 19h à 22h30, sa 9ème École Urbaine annuelle centrée cette année sur la rénovation urbaine à Bruxelles, en particulier sur la réhabilitation des logements anciens.
Cette 9ème École Urbaine se tiendra au Cercle de Mérode, 120 rue Blaes, 1000 Bruxelles

"THE RENOVATION IN BRUSSELS—WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?"
REAL INNOVATIONS EMERGE FROM WORKING-CLASS DISTRICTS

For ten years, residents of the Quartier des Marolles have been fighting to have their district reconstructed in accordance with the historic principles of its streets, squares and mixed activities. To continue to live and work in their own area is what they want and they reject the concept of mobility. Residents of working-class districts detest modern architecture as they, more than most, are in a position to judge its alienating characteristics, its inability to resolve complex urban problems and its power to destroy local craftsmanship and popular culture.

Reconstruction project for the Bruxelles district in the Marolles area by G. Busseau.
1980

RECONSTRUCTION OF INHABITED PARTS OF HISTORIC CITY CENTRES

MODERN URBANISM HAS DESTROYED MORE THAN ALL PRECEDING WARS PUT TOGETHER.

Destruction of the historic part of Brussels began at the end of the XIXth century. Whole blocks were demolished in the centre of the city to allow for the construction of a railway linking the Nord and Midi stations. Of 150,000 inhabitants in 1900, less than 40,000 remain today. The ten viable and complex districts which made up the old part of the city were all destroyed, with the exception of a few blocks.

We are convinced that the city is a place of power and that this power should be given to the inhabitants rather than to the multinationals. We thus propose the reconstruction of residential areas in the centre of Brussels, such as the area located between the station and the Grand Place, presently occupied by a huge parking lot.

Project by P. Neirinck, G. Busseau and S. Birkise.
STREETS – SQUARES – DISTRICTS

MAIN ROADS AND HIGHWAYS, NO THANKS!
STREETS AND BOULEVARDS, PLEASE.

For some unknown reason, public works engineers do not perceive the difference between a street and a main road, between a boulevard and a motorway, between a garbage dump and a square, between an open space and a public garden. Instead of motorways, viaducts and urban routes, we challenge engineers to exercise their construction capabilities in providing us with pavements, streets and boulevards.

The counter-project proposes the replacement of the Boulevard de la Plaine (see illustration) with a real boulevard bordered the buildings of a new university area to be erected next to the modern campus of the university of Brussels.

REPAIRING THE CITY

During the euphoric period of the sixties characterized by economic growth, waste and greatest short-term profit, each "boss" of a public or private entity dreamed of personifying the omnipresent red-tape ideal of the civil servant through architectural objects in a "absolutely modern style". Plans in star-shapes, cross-shapes, "en diabolos", reposing-on-piles, curtain-wall-with-prestige-panorama-terraces became the last word and the most common expression in Europe of bureaucratic sublimation. To hell with the site, as long as the captain is drunk at the helm. Banks, insurance companies, union headquarters, employers' associations, provident funds gladly joined in the fray: to result in modern blocks such as the one in the heart of the old part of Brussels.

In opposition to this misplaced bureaucratic stupidity we propose repair of the existing urban fabric by localized intervention, in order to recreate the familiar aspect of the streets and squares, such as the counter-project illustrated above.

Project by Caroline Misrop and the Atelier du Bateau d'Elie.
THE NICE TRAMWAY

A GOOD TRAM IS A TRAM WHICH HAS
A FRONT AND A REAR.

An urban zoning policy is not the answer to the
problem posed by traffic, for which the only solu-
tion is a global plan aimed at permitting citizens to
live and work in their own particular districts.
The unrestricted mobility of individuals postulated
by modern architecture and the C.I.A.M. (Congrès
Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) is not a
sign of progress, but on the contrary a sign of
alienation.

We energetically restate the priority given to mobility,
as the infrastructures presently planned for public
transport by the various European city authorities
will destroy those cities just as surely as the routes
are constructed.

THE CASE OF BRUSSELS.
The public transport system in Brussels has in the
last ten years undergone some profound changes:
construction of an underground transport network,
a tramway with long articulated cars and, perhaps
soon, a "lightweight metro", similar to a real train,
which will traverse the surface of the city.
The disadvantages of this policy, which favours
capital at the expense of work, are already measura-
table: irregular and arbitrary service, totally inade-
quate for the users as a whole; disembowelment of
many areas, loss of jobs, etc. A project which in fact
merits further extends the already saturated
national motorisation policy of the sixties.

Faced with this failure, it has become urgent to
envision a truly urban collective transport system
consonant with the needs of working-class areas. As a
counter-measure to the present policy, we propose
the hypothesis that a sure solution to the transport
problem would be a system based upon the multi-
plification of small tramways servicing the city at fre-
quent intervals at all hours of the day and night.
THE QUARTIER NORD OPERATION
OR THE APOTHEOSIS
OF INDUSTRIAL STUPIDITY

WHEN COMPUTERS OF THE WORLD DO NOT UNITE

The city can no longer be used as a field for experiment by architects. Fifty acres of the city destroyed, 10,000 inhabitants evicted, billions wasted, three columns bankrupt. Such is the balance sheet of the «Quartier Nord» operation which was to have seen the construction of sixty skyscrapers three hundred feet high.

Naturally, the politicians and architects responsible get off scot free and the failure is blamed on the economic crisis and lack of comprehension by the inhabitants.

Now that bankruptcy is an accomplished fact, the Quartier Nord must be reconstructed using old parts of the city as a model. Post-modernist irony, which has implanted itself today as a philosophy, only makes the mess worse, adds to the confusion, provides no real pleasure and merely bores and disgusts us.

Project for the reconstruction of the Boulevard Jacques-Cœur by S. Birkbye, G. Buisseau and P. Neirinck.
SMALL JOBS MAKE GREAT ENGINEERS

PROLIFERATION OF SMALL JOBS

The proliferation of the small jobs which increase comfort in various districts is also a means of undermining the structure of industrial production. Repairing and maintaining a pavement is more important than designing and constructing a main road. It demands a more imaginative approach as the problems created by use, management and construction are much more complex.

An exhausting political battle had to be conducted by the residents of the Rue de Careghen in order for the repair of pavements and planting of several trees to take place, when it should be simply a service rendered naturally and spontaneously by the authorities to the inhabitants.

Project by B. D'Hell, P. Neirinck, M. Verlieben.
INTER-ENVIRONMENT.

Born in 1971, "Inter-Environment" encompasses a number of inhabitants committees as well as environmentalist organizations. Inter-Environment-Bruxelles is the structure where the inhabitants gather to discuss the problems of different neighborhoods and develop common actions. Inter-environment provides them with information about other environmental issues and establishes the contacts with other urban groups.

Inter-Environment is associated with the work of Renovation Commissions and thus participates in the development of renovation projects in the different neighborhoods.

The Brussels section works closely with the Arau under the common presidency of Rene Schoonbrodt. In recent years, I-E has expanded its activities and publishes a magazine, "The City and its Inhabitants". This year, I-E organized a conference about the reconstruction of public spaces in Brussels based on inhabitants suggestions for re-design.

6 Rene Schoonbrodt: Doctor of Philosophy in Social Sciences, Instructor in "Urban Sociology" in the School of Architecture, "La Cambre". One of the leaders of the ARAU.
RENOVATION DES ESPACES PUBLICS A BRUXELLES
"THE CITY AND THE INHABITANT": MAGAZINE PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY INTER-ENVIRONMENT.

UN MENSUEL AU SERVICE DES LUTTES URBAINES:

LA VILLE ET L'HABITANT

BULLETIN DE LIASON DES COMITES D'HABITANTS DE L'AGGLOMÉRATION BRUXELLOISE

"A MONTHLY MAGAZINE FOR THE URBAN STRUGGLES INFORMATION ABOUT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN BRUSSELS ,THE WORK OF INHABITANTS COMMITTEES..."
"THE CITY AND THE INHABITANT": MAGAZINE PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY INTER-ENVIRONMENT.

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LA VILLE et L'HABITANT

UN PERIODIQUE AU SERVICE DES LUTTES URBAINES

BULLETIN DE LIAISON DES COMITES D'HABITANTS DE L'AGGLOMERATION BRUXELLOISE,
edite par l'a.s.b.i.
INTER-ENVIRONNEMENT-BRUXELLES.

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La rue du marché couvert.
Extrait du projet d'aménagement des abords de la gare du Midi à Bruxelles.

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COVER OF INTER-ENVIRONMENT REPORT: "CITIES TO LIVE IN".
"La Cambre" (Ecole Nationale Superieure d'Architecture et d'Arts Visuels) was founded in Brussels in 1927 by Henry Van Der Velde as the continuation of the pedagogy of the Weimar School. In the beginning of the seventies, under the impulse of the director, R.L. DeLevoy, the school became a technical instrument at the service of the Brussels' inhabitants' organizations.

Essential to the work of the Arau and I-E was the support of students and professors from the institute of Architecture (La Cambre).

Grouped around Maurice Culot, Rene Schoonbrodt, Annick Brauman and others, a significant part of the student body dedicated their work to the urban struggles. In the early 70's, they started to collaborate with Arau and neighborhood councils providing design support.

As Culot points out, "The consciousness of the destruction of the environment, the contribution of work of: Christopher Alexander (The City is not a Tree...), Henri Lefebvre (The Right to the City), the Arau and Leon Krier, decided the engagement of students and faculty in the urban struggles."

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8Maurice Culot: architect, director of the "AAM" - Archives d'Architecture Moderne. Assistant director of the "La Cambre" school. Member of the "ARAU" and promoter of a pedagogy that is based upon the urban struggles.
ETUDIANTS,
ALLEZ PLUTOT ETUDIER LE PARTHENON
(ET LES VILLES PRE-INDUSTRIELLES)

"AAM" MAGAZINE: "STUDENTS SHOULD RATHER STUDY THE PARTHENON AND THE PRE-
INDUSTRIAL CITIES": A PROVOCATIVE PAGE CRITICI-
ZING THE PICTURESQUE OF KROLL, POST-MODERNISM OF VENTURI AND ROUCH, AND
THE ISOLATED ATTEMPTS OF P. CHEMENTOV.
The AAM - Archives d'Architecture Moderne.

At the same time, Maurice Culot was broadening the AAM activities. Founded in 1968 as a reference center for Belgian architecture, the AAM quickly expanded into publishing and research. When exhibitions were organized by "La Cambre", AAM published the catalogues: "Bruxelles 1900", "Antoine Pompe", etc. 9

In 1975, the AAM started to issue a quarterly magazine, a militant tool for action and reflection about architecture and society. The AAM magazine became a tribune about urban action in Brussels, publishing the alternative projects, printing provocative editorials and relevant research. Above all, the AAM was aiming for the overall definition of action for the reconstruction of the European city, and as such keeps close contact with a large international group of architects and scholars involved in the same movement: Pierluigi Nicolin in Italy, Leon and Robert Krier in Luxemburg and London, Bernard Huet, Antoine Grumbach, Fernando Montes and Philippe Pánerai in Paris.

-Later the "AAM" will publish: "L'espace de la Ville", by Rob Krier, "Rational Architecture", "La Declaration de Bruxelles" and "Counter-Projects".
The network.

The vision of the architect working for the community was translated into practice when a large number of graduates from "La Cambre" began to work in municipalities, environment protection groups, public housing organizations and Inter-Environment. Around 1978, the network was fully in place. This network took full advantage of the citizen's participation structure set in the sixties. As groups of "public interests", the Araw and I-E entered the planning process along with the municipalities.

In Brussels, the "Agglomeration de Bruxelles" prepares reports and is consulted about major decisions dealing with the urban environment. Also, the Agglomeration develops general plans that reflect the municipalities' urban policies. Although the Agglomeration is officially a neutral support structure for the city, in the last 10 years, it has taken a progressivist turn, because of the influx of La Cambre graduates. This situation gave the Araw and I-E access to the Agglomeration information: tips on plans, projects and on negotiations in progress.
The Legal Structure of decision making in Brussels.

It is important to explore the legal context in which the network operates. In 1962, a law concerning the "organization of town and country planning" was adopted. It institutionalized a procedure which forced all the municipalities of Belgium to draw up general plans. Those plans were to reflect diverse interests of authorities, developers, designers, advisory groups and public opinion.

Under certain conditions, the law enables the public to formulate its own comments about the general and local plans, by way of public hearings. This legislation generally served the developers. Because the general plan never took effect, the local plans were used to justify the construction of office towers under the guise of the public good. The public enquiry process was usually organized too late and under unrealistic conditions. The law facilitated cooperation between the private sector and the government, leaving out the public. One of the most disastrous examples of this collaboration is the "Manhattan" project, which ultimately resulted in the destruction of a neighborhood,
the expulsion of ten thousand people and an enormous hole. (4 towers out of 50 were completed.)

With the rising public consciousness, the 1962 law was exploited by groups such as the Arau and I-E to promote citizen participation in the planning decisions. Because of proving strength, groups like the Arau and I-E ultimately had to be recognized as partners in the dialogue about planning decisions. This encouraged the inhabitants to organize in order to put their voices' weight forth.
THE "NETWORK": A CHART OF LINKS.
The Conflict in the School of Architecture.

In 1978, "La Cambre" was cheering its fiftieth anniversary. The school had established its crucial role as the technical support wing of urban struggles in Brussels as well as for the movement for "The reconstruction of the European city." In November, 1978, an international conference, organized in the school by the AAM culminated in the presentation of the "Declaration of Brussels" document signed by the participants (Krier, Huet, Pannerai, Montes, etc.), establishing a manifesto for the reconstruction of the European city. One year later, Maurice Culot and thirty-four other professors were banned from the school. "In a few months, from August to October, 1979, fifty years of history, ten years of work on the city are reduced to nothing ... The structure of the program, the originality of the school disappears, the professors involved in the urban struggles are dismissed ... These radical measures aim to eliminate a center of resistance to the domination of technocracy." 11

10 "La Declaration de Bruxelles": A manifesto for the "Reconstruction of the European City", stressing the relevance of urban struggles and the necessity for the architects to engage their work in the direction of the reconstruction of the urban environment.

11 Maurice Culot and Philippe Lefebvre in "Declaration de Bruxelles", 1980, "Archives d'Architecture Moderne".
An essential element of the network was disrupted. The Ministry of Education pressed by the professional organization of architects (Ordre des Architectes), dismantled the school. Six months of strikes and public action attempting to save the institute failed. With amazement, the students and faculty realized that they were politically and professionally isolated. None of the traditional political parties supported the school. "L'Ordre des Architectes" used the media to attack the curriculum of the institute as overly politicized, excessively oriented toward social sciences and unprofessional.

"L'Ecole pour la Reconstruction de la Ville Européenne" was an ephemeral attempt by excluded faculty and a group of forty students to prolong the experience inside a parallel pedagogical project. After six months of shaky existence, the school collapsed under financial and legal pressure.

What is left from the experiment is the presence of former "La Cambre" students in the Araw, AAM, I-E and the urbanism section of the Agglomeration.
ECOLE D'ARCHITECTURE POUR LA RECONSTRUCTION DE LA VILLE
BRUXELLES

ANNEE ACADEMIQUE 1979 - 1980

PRESIDENT: Robert L. DELEVOY
DIRECTEUR: René SCHOONBRUDT
ADMINISTRATEUR: Herve CRUCHEE

Professores / Professors

Professores invités / Guest Professors
Guido Carlo Apia (Rome), Jacques Anne (Bruxelles), Bernard Baines (Bruxelles), Georges Beaug (Amiens), Jean Claire (Paris), Jean Delhaye (Paris), Jean Debl (Bruxelles), Philippe De Kercher (Bruxelles), Bernard Hut (Paris), Leon Krier (London), Paulette Lelou (Milan), Philippe Panet-Overall (Versailles) René Pehere (Bruxelles), Francis Peyrel (Rome), Fernand Ronet (Paris), Jacques Lassac (Paris), Roger Sottile (Bruxelles), Francois Souchon (Amiens), Charles Vandenhove (Liège), Jacques Van Der Beke (Bruxelles).

Studens / Students

"The label for the Reconstruction of the City has the aim of continuing the teaching and the research carried out by the former architecture school. It is intended for a group of professors and students, a group that has recently found it impossible to carry on with its planned missions. At its creation, as a new institution, it can develop further the trend commenced and brought to fruition by the Région Institut d'Architecture de la Campise with a view to undertaking research and work on the city from a new vantage point, and to contributing to a comprehensive urban project that is radically opposed to the model of elevated industrial society. It questions the present system of organisation for large projects and the mode of production, of young designers to an original teaching project where the work of reflection, of critical analysis and of research, stimulated to a deep-rooted awareness of the past, is accompanied by practical work and projects produced in close connection with the residents' associations and consumer groups concerned." (article 1 of the statute)

Admissions
All those who are in possession of a diploma of architecture to higher education are admitted. The fees for the year 1979-80 are fixed exceptionally at 2,006 Belgian francs.

The courses
Preparation for an exam in the fourth year. They place the accent on construction, the human sciences, history and the theory of architecture. Teaching is organized in the hands of Philippe Larivière.

The work-shop projects
The projects deal with architecture and building in relation to the context of the repopulation of European cities. They portray problems that have begun to take shape, of communication within and between the districts of the city, of the relation of the district to the mode of production and the social division of work, and finally of the urgent way of thinking about reconstruction.

Courses in construction
"Vues de la ville" have been organized for September 1980 in the mouth of France and in Japan. Under the direction of the architects François Spier and Philippe Nattier.
The present situation.

In the past fifteen years, Brussels was the site of the development of unique supports for urban action involving the inhabitants, the authorities, the architects and planners. The liquidation of the School of Architecture and the worsening economic crisis threatens the outcome of this experiment. As M. Chaumont points out, "We are forced to believe that a criticism even pertinent, is hardly bearable when the economic and social machine is upset ... At the end, it is the will to reinforce the logic of traditional economy that dominates the new social demands." 12

The inhabitants of Brussels have lost the resource of a group of students and faculty committed to their problems. Today, the AAM concentrates on publishing and the counter-projects have to be developed by the Arau and I-E. The economic crisis shifted urban problems to the realm of a fight between the two
communities over industrial subsidies. This displacement of concerns highlights the fragility of the public participation structure. The "Agglomeration" work emphasizes the economic future of Brussels. This pause in the urban debate is an opportunity to reflect on the Brussels experiment in an economic and political context and try to learn from the fragility of urban movements, as well as evaluate their positive impact on planning policies and architectural practice.
the politics of urbanity-brussels

The Struggle for the City is the Struggle for Power.

The Arau formed itself on a basic conviction that, "the city is a center of power; the power the city generates must be returned to the inhabitants." 13

The basic analysis of the city done by the Arau is rooted in Castells' work. The Arau agrees that, "the city is the road to power for the ruling groups." 14 Thus the Arau struggles against capitalist, economic structures and fights for the democratization of the political institutions.

Echoing Castells, Rene Shoonbrodt argues that the process of industrial production requires control, over the cities by the capitalist structure. "The survival of financial monopolies is based on the capacity of bureaucratic management ... Those bureaucratic structures will, spontaneously, choose the urban environment because it allows external economies (private and public ammenities are free.)." 15
Thus, the city is an essential element of the industrial machine. "It is through the structure of the city that the monopolist control of the social fabric can be implemented." "The city is a factor of the reinforcement of economic power of the political and cultural." Thus urban struggles, aiming to recapture the tool that constitutes the city, merge with the workers' struggle for the control of economic life. For the Arau, it is necessary to show that, "The urban struggles have to be integrated in the class struggles." 16

The attempt, by the Arau to become a "groupe de fusion", linking neighborhood committees, trade unions and political parties, presents the group's greatest challenge. For the Arau to achieve its goals, the torch must also be carried by the traditional left and progressivist unions. The same is true of "grass-roots" movements in the United States; As Castells notes, "Unless the progressive forces of the U.S. are able to develop a major movement with enough social and political support to rectify the dominant trend in the forthcoming urban policies, what could emerge from the current urban crisis is a simplified and heightening version of the exploitative metropolitan model." 17

The Arau must face the inhabitants' committees and their unwillingness to subjugate their neighborhood

16 Ibid.

problems to society's vision. It is important to realize that the organizations that form the Inter-
Environment group, range from movement protectionists and ecologist intellectuals to the inhabitants' committees, that are mostly middle-class. Thus, there is a difference in political goals within the group. Where Castells states the necessity of the political "fusion", he does not propose any method for its fusing. R. Schoonbrodt acknowledges that "workers and inhabitants are not convinced about the solidarity that unites them." 18 But, at least, the Arau attempts through information and education (urban schools, seminars, etc.), to raise the consciousness of the inhabitants.

Another obstacle to the merging of struggles is the "anti-industrial" image of the Arau's counter-projects. Traditionally, the working-class is suspicious of little industries that break union solidarity and the feudal craft structure. Today, when the major concern is the conservation of employment, the "right to the city" is a secondary objective for the traditional workers' organizations.

18 Rene Schoonbrodt in "AAM" number 12, p. 3.
The Right to the City.

In the last ten years the work of H. Lefebvre was widely publicized in Brussels. In 1974, the movie, "The Right to the City" was shown by the Arau and the School of Architecture to different neighborhood committees. The major contribution of both the movie and Lefebvre's writings was the development of a general consensus which viewed the city as a positive tool, to be reclaimed by the inhabitants. The Brussels' urban movements developed the role of the city as the place of information and exchange, that has to benefit the population.

The Arau and Inter-Environment believe that the exodus of citizens to the suburbs is not necessarily the consequence of modern society, rather, it is an attempt to deprive the inhabitants of their right to the city; "He who has to abandon the city will be deprived of information channels, of the communication structures without which, one is not in a position to take part in the whole, collective evolution." 19

19 Rene Schoonbrodt in Wonen TA/BK, number 15/16, page 23.
"The political meaning of present day practice of town planning comes down to give the places of political and cultural power to the socio-economic groups, while the others are robbed of these same advantages, and that, under ideological pretexts such as fresh air, the green and the peace of the countryside..." 20

Thus the right to live and work in the city is the inhabitants' top demand. "The city should, by its potentials, free the creative capacity of man." 21

Following Lefebvre, R. Schoonbrodt argues that the city should be, "The city of proximity, everywhere centrality: There are no suburbs, no periphery. The edges are already city and the center remains city, not a giant shopping center." 22

Arau and I-E used these arguments as the theoretical base of their designed counter-proposals.
"To present the city as a tool for development, and consequently, as a revolutionary tool, makes sense only if we define which city we are talking about. It is the everyday city, improved without doubt, that holds the most strength of conviction." 23

Thus, for Rene Schoonbrodt, certain forms of spatial organization provide more liberty to the user. Arau debunks "open urbanism" because it increases the level of social control. Schoonbrodt argues that the "visibility of behavior" diminishes local solidarity because "the inhabitants have the tendency to avoid strongly controlled groups." 24 Thus, traditional urbanism is considered consistent with the political goal of recapturing the urban tool. "To this project, the mass of workers can adhere; that is the only thing that counts."

The Arau further argues that the monopolistic organization of the economy, supported by the developers, results

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23 Rene Schoonbrodt in "AAM" number 12, page 3.

24 Ibid.
in single use, monolithic development as opposed to the inhabitants mixed-use scenario.

"The Arau, gradually, became convinced that the historic structure ... gives better guarantees than any other known model, for the participation of inhabitants, during the production process as well as in use. The treatment in phases of clear, small-scale unities, structured with familiar patterns and building elements, allows a real contribution of the inhabitants." 25

This conviction was enforced by experiences like the renovation of the "Marole" where the inhabitants defined their proposals according to the traditional urban image of streets, squares, public and private spaces.

The emphasis within the project formulation was on improving the inhabitants' understanding of the architectural process. The use of familiar patterns and materials along with the respect of traditional elements of the city, united divergent groups like "La Ligue Esthetique Belge", and the Arau. But, the "anti-industrial" image of the counter-projects alienated traditional leftist forces as well as the architectural profession that retained only their antiquated utopian nostalgia. The profession attacked "La Cambre" students who worked on the counter-proposals, accusing them of being idealistic dreamers instead of conscious practitioners. The

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25 Francis Strauven in Wonen TA/BK, number 15/16, page 47.
voracity of these attacks reveals the strategic importance of the counter-projects. However, Arau's strategy of publicizing the proposals in the media, developed a positive image amongst the population; that of a group that fights against speculative projects with concrete and constructive actions.

Leon Krier's successful effort in Luxemburg to stop an official development project convinced the Arau and Inter-Environment of the usefulness and efficiency of designed alternatives.

Although the symbolism of some of the counter-projects can be criticized, the introduction of design as a tool to democratize the decision making process is very positive. Even the "Agglomeration", that for years, confined itself in "mapping", adopted the use of design to illustrate the conclusions of their reports.
learning from brussels

The analysis of the Brussels experience gives us insight into the role of social-sciences and architectural practice in the context of urban struggles. The experience shows that the social-sciences bring an integrated view to urban problems. In Brussels, Castells and Lefebvre's work underpinned the Arau's attempt to unite the political, economic and cultural struggles. Although Castells and Lefebvre do not propose precise methods to implement these links, they frame the discourse upon which Arau's actions are based. But, the case of Brussels provides a relevance that the theoretical approaches cannot match. A real life experience, it explores in a specific setting the limits of citizens' participation in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it highlights the complexity of the post-industrial society, showing that the city is particularly sensitive and receptive.
to changes in socio-economic patterns. Finally, it questions the basis of architectural practice and the architect's ability to use urban history and tradition as a reference for socially conscious design.

The counter-projects in Brussels further explore the relationships between social and spatial form. By doing this, the inhabitants' organizations confront the problem of the production of space and therefore the architectural practice. Their action shows that architects and planners' work is inherently political. In Brussels, the majority of the professionals feeling that their "neutrality" was being threatened, accused the inhabitants' committees of setting up "a regime of terror." 26

By resorting to a political attack, they refuted once and for all, the "innocence" of our professional practice.
I tried, in the introduction, to point out the context in which the formal aspects of the urban problem are, in depth. Through the analysis of the theoretical contributions, I attempted to extract the essential concepts that link social relationships to the spatial organization of cities. In the case of Brussels, I showed how those concepts are expressed in a particular context of struggles for the re-appropriation of the urban environment.

What I want to discuss here, derives thus from a personal experience: The confrontation of an intellectual itinerary with the involvement in a particular practice of architecture.
The responsibility of the architect.

Both the theoretical contributions and the experience of Brussels, examine the role of those who, in the end, make planning and design decisions.

Castells and Lefebvre analyze how the production of urban spaces is dictated by the economic functions of cities. Castells, when he attempts to grasp the logic behind the planning of the British new towns, the urban renewal in the U.S.A., and the "reconquest" of Paris says, "The operations of urban planning studied develop the capitalist structural logic and respect the limits thus imposed ... The social significance of an intervention may come not from the intervention observed, but from the extent of this intervention in relation to another domain of the social (for example, American urban renewal as a means of political struggle against black militants). 1

1 Manuel Castells, "The Urban Question", page 322.
Henri Lefebvre, when analyzing "the urbanistic illusion", writes about the planner; "Ignoring what is happening in his own head, ignoring his own basic concepts, ... it happens that the technocrat precisely organizes the repressive space without giving up his good consciousness because he does not know that the space is related to an ideology. He ignores that apparently objective urbanism is a class urbanism and responds to a class strategy (a particular class logic)." ²

For Leon Krier and Maurice Culot, "Those who experience every day the destruction of their cities know that the administrative and artistic neutrality is a lure and that the technicians (architects and engineers) play an important role in the promulgation and the generalization of destructuring models." ³

As for the Brussels urban action, Maurice Culot writes in Lotus; "The most important consequence of this protest has been the revelation to the general public of the political nature of architectural and town planning activities. This revelation has had a more immediate and radical effect than any of the writings of the most avant-garde critics on architectural theory and practice." ⁴

Being a responsible architect has implications. The conscious professional must evaluate the outcome of traditional practice. This necessitates the examining of the validity of the building process.

² Henri Lefebvre in "La Révolution Urbaine", page 208-209.
³ L. Krier and Maurice Culot in "AAM" number 14, page 3.
⁴ Maurice Culot in Lotus, number 18.
To build or not to build.

"Today, there is no hope for the most conscious architects to relate a progressivist ideology to a professional practice. To the process of the destruction of cities can only be opposed: On one side, the urban action that realistically, can only aim to prevent further destruction ... on the other side, the theoretical work that supports this action ... It is thus impossible to be at the same time, in the camp of architects-constructors and in the camp of architects-theorists." 5

"Maurice Culot warned me several years ago that a responsible architect cannot possibly build today. I then had to experience for myself that involvement in fragmentory battles to build this or that is not only useless, but distracts from the most urgent work, which is the one of the reconstruction of the global theory ... Considering the magnitude of destruction, and the theoretical confusion which agitates the most enlightened professionals, I have come to realize that building today can only mean a greater or smaller degree of collaboration in a civilized society's process of self-destruction." 6

5 L. Krier and M. Culot in "AAM", No. 14, p. 3.

6 L. Krier in "Counter-Projects".
Paradoxically, these social scientists who, like Castells, refuse to deal with formal issues because of their subordination to the economic structures and, those architects who, like Krier, are strongly deterministic in their spatial vision of a more democratic society, come to similar conclusions. Both groups agree that professional practice is a dangerous compromise. Although ideologically, this view makes sense, practically, we have to acknowledge that it dangerously limits one's options.

The systematic condemnation of those who "compromise" prevents the development of a concensus around strategically important projects. Some of the former students of "La Cambre" school understood that it is important to promote and publicize certain key built alternatives. For example, work done by offices such as "Ausia" 7, based upon consultations with the inhabitants, represents an opportunity to illustrate the adequacy of integration in the traditional urban fabric and of the construction by phases.

These attempts are supported by recent writings of H. Lefebvre, which give us useful insights; "Although
architects and planners operate in the existing framework of production, it is upon them that lies the future of carrying the statement that the space holds a "use value" and not only an "exchange value." 8

Another source of hope is the urban struggles. By the methodical setting of a process for decision making and planning, the struggles laid the groundwork for a more democratic production of space.

8Henri Lefebvre, "Espace et Politique", p. 158.
Architects - Civil Servants.

The work done by the "Agglomeration" and the municipalities was crucial, because it institutionalized the inhabitants' major objectives. The establishment of general plans was Arau's most significant victory. These plans represent a major tool for the translation of policy choices into the production of space. In Brussels, the discussions and confrontations about the "sector plan" led to the establishment of important planning guidelines. In the "Options and Directives for the General Plan of the 19 Municipalities" 9, we read:

- The city is at the service of man: It is above all a community of men. Furthering the interest of man and of the urban community in which he lives are the basic criteria for urban policy choices.
- The plan has to promote the densification of housing and its integration into a lively and diversified urban fabric.
- After the inventory of what exists, of what has to be conserved, restored, rehabilitated, the plan will

\(^9\) Agglomeration de Bruxelles - Plan General d'Amenagement des 19 Communes - Options et Directives - Last version of the planning guidelines for the Brussels region (1980).
guarantee the integration of all types of housing in order to fight social segregation.

- The plan should prevent the further specialization of the city in the territory sector.

- The plan will fight the exodus of its inhabitants, and all tendencies leading to the specialization of neighborhoods.

- The plan will aim at discouraging the speculation over public decisions and will favor the redistribution of both the fiscal burden and the surplus value.

This document established by the public authorities, represents a major change in official policy choices. If the plan is implemented, it will be a major tool for those who are reclaiming their urban environment.

The plan gives over crucial areas in the center of Brussels to public housing and public services. Thus, the plan forces a developer of office space to build low-cost housing. Not only has the plan been the result of 15 years of struggle by inhabitants of Brussels, it was also made possible by significant contributions "from the inside". Starting in 1974, several "La Cambre" graduates joined the urbanism section of the "Agglomeration" and worked on the preparation of the plan in cahoots with the Arau and the inhabitants' committees. Their presence allowed the inclusion of important
policy choices - counteracting zoning, favoring mix-use areas, promoting housing in the center, into the plan. This victory shows that conscious professionals in a city's bureaucracy can have a major impact on policies.

On the municipal level, architects participate in developing "particular plans", specific design guidelines for small-scale areas. These plans are strategically very important because under certain conditions, they can diverge from the guidelines of the "sector plan". In the past, they were often used by the developers to avoid some of the general directives and regulations.

Thus, the construction of this "legal" framework, constitutes a major task that will help define, within the general policies, the practice of architecture.
The Practice of Architecture and Traditional Urbanism.

Both the social sciences, the architects and the urban action movements address the question of what is the proper role of urban tradition.

The relationship between the traditional city and the contemporary practice of architecture can be discovered through the case analyzed in this work. The choice of traditional urbanism is a strategic choice; "When one wants to mobilize the public opinion, one has to be understood." 10

The traditional city represents a "familiar" image in the context of European urban environment. The opposition to the disruption of the city, to the segregation of functions, means an opposition to the forms and architectural models that promote them. It is crucial to show the relationship between the "content" and the given form.

"Today, time has come to use an already known language in order to facilitate the understanding of
spatial relations ... From the accumulated experience of the city, its public spaces and built typology; from the relationship between monuments and houses; between public, semi-public and private spaces, we can extract the intentions and the significations of forms that, independently for social reasons and motivations, are useful for resolution of permanent problems of squares, avenues, streets, houses, ... inside a continuous layout related to the existing fabric of the city." 11

The traditional city is the best reference for urban intervention. Familiarity of image and logic of an historical organization of space provides the people with a shared language to discuss the formal evolution of their cities.

This approach is supported by a large body of work. Philippe Panerai's study of the rationalization of the traditional block in the last 150 years, allows us to understand a socio-economic process underlying formal solutions as well as today's use of these spaces. 12

These academic contributions will help citizens define - within the framework of their struggles - the formal choices that are essential for a more democratic city.

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11 Miguel Garay in "AAM", number 15, page 78.

12 J. Casfex, J. Ch. Depaule, Ph. Panerai: "Formes Urbaines: de l'ilot à la barre" is a useful tool to understand the progressive opening of the block and the resulting omoginization of spaces as well as the inhabitants' attempts to recover the differentiation of public and private spaces.
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