

**PROMOTING AN URBAN VISION:
LE CORBUSIER AND THE PLAN VOISIN**

by

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Abstract

Urban designers and architects must engage in a promotional strategy for legitimization and implementation of their ideas. Often, they promote their work, not only by demonstrating how the physical design answers the concrete needs of a city's inhabitants, but also by appealing to specific decision-makers through their methods of presentation. The function of the promotional strategy is to effectively make and communicate the interactive relationship between the urban design and existing societal conditions and/or the interests of the audience.

In this thesis, I examine Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin for Paris of 1925, a bold urban design proposal which the designer aggressively promoted. In so doing, I attempt to evaluate the appropriateness of the *content*, as well as the *presentation* of the Plan, given the political, economic, social and cultural context of Paris at that time. I analyze Le Corbusier's methods of promotion—the journal *L'Esprit Nouveau*, the Esprit Nouveau Pavilion at the Decorative Arts Exposition and his book *Urbanisme*—in which he acknowledges, to varying degrees: selected city problems, the popularity of scientific management, the birth of the urban planning profession in France, the architectural preservation movement, and the early relationship between commercial advertising and avant-garde art.

Despite Le Corbusier's efforts, the Plan Voisin was not considered for implementation. This "failure" allows for an evaluation of the project's promotion from a generally unconsidered perspective. I conclude that the promotion of the Plan Voisin was a "success" in terms of promoting: Le Corbusier's career; selected elements of the plan that were later adopted in projects by himself and others; the urban planning profession worldwide; and, the practice of design promotion in general.

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PREFACE

The subject of promotion is rarely addressed in academic literature and program curricula on architecture and urban design; but I believe it is critical to a designer's professional development. Understanding how promotion makes the connection between design, audience and context illuminates important aspects of the *cultural relevance* of our work. We design for a specific site, for specific audiences, and, sometimes, with ends other than implementation in mind. Designers who wish to be recognized for their theories and designs, let alone to have the opportunity to build, know that presentation counts.

I have relied on both primary and secondary sources to write this thesis. Much of the material was available to me here in Cambridge at MIT's Rotch Library and in the Le Corbusier Collection of Harvard's Loeb Library. Francesco Passanti was extremely generous in sharing with me his personal research notes and insight on Le Corbusier. I also spent a number of afternoons consulting the archives at the Fondation Le Corbusier in Paris where the librarians were very helpful. The reader will notice that portions of the text are in French. I have preserved the original version of spoken and written statements because I believe they are most faithfully read and understood as the author intended. Where published translations were available, I included them in footnotes.

I am particularly grateful to four people at MIT for their support of my exploration of the ideas contained in this thesis. It has been both a pleasure and honor to work with them:

Lois Craig, Associate Dean of the School of Architecture and Planning, has been a source of inspiration and encouragement over the past two years. She has offered sound advice in situations of an academic, and more important, non-academic nature. Lois also took me through an independent thesis prep at break-neck speed in February of this year, for which I am forever grateful.

Mark Schuster, my academic and thesis advisor in the Department of Urban Studies & Planning, has been both flexible and supportive of decisions pertaining to my studies. He put his signature to countless permissions, petitions and proposals of academic bureaucracy while making sure I kept on track. Mark agreed to advise this thesis relatively late in the process and contributed much to its methodology and reasoning.

Francesco Passanti, of the Department of Architecture, has had tremendous influence on my thinking this year about architecture (= life) in general and Le Corbusier in particular. I want to thank him for directing me to the majority of research sources used in this thesis and for reading and re-reading the numerous drafts. His understanding of my decisions is greatly appreciated.

Angela Goode, my dear friend and fellow city planning student with whom I pursued this masters degree from core to thesis, has been a constant source of support. She has offered valuable advice, precious friendship, and prevented the process from being a lonely one. Angela also encouraged much-needed study breaks which kept us both from despair.

Outside the MIT community, I would like to thank my parents, Joseph and Betty Jane Shaw, for their unfailing support of all my pursuits; and my brother, Jim, who has been particularly helpful this academic year in Cambridge. And too far away, in Paris, I thank Nicolas Eprende for his participation in this thesis through his emotional support, photographic skills, enthusiasm and concern—and for catalyzing the entire project earlier this year.

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I. PROMOTING URBAN DESIGN: A Hypothesis

Abstraction and Application

At the July 10, 1925 inauguration of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, Le Corbusier boldly stated the theme of his exhibit which ran counter to the title and, one could assume, the goals of the Exposition: "Notre pavillon serait d'architecture et pas d'art décoratif; il aurait même par cette destination stricte, une attitude anti-art décoratif."¹ The moment was an important one for Le Corbusier.

Thousands of people—from Paris and abroad—would visit the pavilion which was a full-scale model of his *immeuble-villa* furnished with mass-produced *objets-types* and Purist canvasses. They would also file past the enormous dioramas of Le Corbusier's urban design projects in a side-wing. Later in his speech, he reiterated, in broad strokes, the ideas he had initially put forth in a series of urban planning articles in *L'Esprit Nouveau*:

Par la reconstruction de nos villes nous nous sauverons du chaos, nous nous donnerons un cadre licite, nous sauverons nos corps de la fatigue et de l'usure. Nous donnerons à nos coeurs de la fierté. Mais si nous voulons savoir aller au fond de la question et jusqu'au bout, nous verrons qu'un acte de volonté claire peut, par la valorisation au décuple du sol du centre des grandes villes, constituer une mine d'inappréciables richesses.²

Le Corbusier hung his 80-square meter diorama of the Contemporary City for Three Million Inhabitants across from his 60-square meter diorama of the Plan Voisin for Paris. The Contemporary City was an abstract, non-site specific vision of his idealized modern metropolis which he first presented at the Salon d'Automne in 1922. The Plan Voisin represented Le Corbusier's attempt to apply the Contemporary City's principles to the Right Bank. North of the Seine, two square miles of the crowded business district and ancient neighborhoods of the Marais, Archives and Temple would be razed to make way for his 800-foot high cruciform skyscrapers sited in a carpet of grass and foliage, uncongested roadways and grade-separated pedestrian paths.

If one imagines a spectrum which places "realism" at one extreme and "utopianism" at the other, the Contemporary City would sit definitively in the realm of utopian urban designs. It was an abstract invention for a new city form, designed for a flat topography devoid of natural features such as hills and rivers. No client existed to place specific demands on the

¹Le Corbusier, *L'Almanach d'Architecture Moderne*, (Paris: Crès, 1926), p. 134.

²Le Corbusier, p. 135.

designer, nor were there any budget restrictions. On that same spectrum, the Plan Voisin may rest only slightly closer to the realm of reality in that Le Corbusier sited the L-shaped intervention in central Paris—a real site—and made an attempt to justify the expense based on his own algebraic reasoning (no real figures) which simply indicated profit. Again, there was no client, just the automobile manufacturer—Voisin—who sponsored the exhibit and lent the plan its name.

Promotion: The Concept

In this thesis I will examine the promotion of an urban design project—the Plan Voisin—in order to demonstrate how a design's content and packaging may reflect the requirements and values of the society and time for which it is planned. Beyond analyzing a promotional strategy for its most obvious purpose—to secure implementation of a specific urban design—I am interested in its potential to support other objectives, whether intentioned or unintentioned on the part of the designer.

In undertaking this study, I began with the following premise: Regardless of the type of power structure in place—authoritarian, oligarchic or participatory—urban designers must engage in a strategy for legitimization and implementation of their vision. Without a comprehensive and well-reasoned plan, the designer runs the risk of his or her ideas—especially inventive, even revolutionary solutions—being labeled and dismissed as utopian. I believe that urban design promotion offers an alternative lens to the study of history—political, economic, social and cultural. It can reveal the public decision-making process in a given time and place, identify the society's power figures whose attention must be captured through appeals sensitive to their interests, and demonstrate the individual aspirations of its designer.

In this thesis, I will utilize a broad definition of the term "promotion" in its application to urban design: a communication—designed, written, spoken, presented, experienced—that the creator puts forth to a targeted audience or the general public in a way that he or she believes will, at best, convince the decision-maker(s) to implement a design or, at least, condition a positive reception towards the ideas contained therein. Urban designers should have a grasp of the larger themes of the times they are designing in—political, economic, social, cultural—in order to create a design acceptable for implementation. In order for a design to be legitimized and implemented, an interactive relationship must be established between any given urban design and existing societal conditions and/or the interests of

those in power. The function of the promotional strategy is to effectively make and communicate that connection.

Audience

In the time of Louis Napoleon and Baron Haussmann, and under any autocratic regime for that matter, the designer, usually working closely according to the wishes of the ruler, only needed to receive approval from one decision-maker. Either he followed the instructions of the ruler explicitly, or he was fortunate enough to have his more personal design intentions endorsed. Naturally, the city—its physical condition and its citizens—did not always benefit from this highly-centralized system.

Today, in many cities around the world, the urban designer must work within the requirements of a system composed of a much wider audience with competing interests and needs. Government officials, private developers, neighborhood groups and coalitions composed of citizens from the wider city, as well as pre-existing laws and economic constraints, present an extremely broad spectrum of programmatic requirements and limitations. Compromise and negotiation are necessary skills in the designer's repertoire. The plethora of decision-makers who must be satisfied or convinced each step along the way necessitates that the designer take care in understanding each segment's interest.

Yet, inherent in the nature of the design profession, is not only a desire to service the varied clients, but also to employ the skills the designer has acquired through education and practice to create something perhaps innovative, even to dare to design in the pursuit of beauty. Inevitably, the personal touch of the designer will appear in varying degrees in the finished work. Regardless of whether the design is achieved through a truly collaborative effort of multiple inputs, or as a more singular statement, the design professional must present his or her work at several stages of the process. With a set of objectives in mind, verbal and visual communications of the design are manipulated to appeal to the powers that be.

Implementation: The Obvious Goal

The subject of promotion with respect to urban design is rarely addressed in a direct manner. Some writers may consider urban design to be a discipline relatively untouched by what they perceive as the more pedestrian realm of marketing. Others, viewing the profession within the constraints of specific political climates and processes, may consider

promotional strategies—in the limited sense of the phrase—irrelevant. I believe it is important to discuss not only promotion as a whole, but also various qualities of promotion in order to understand why one works and another does not.

Most obviously, implementation may serve as the yardstick by which the success of a given promotional strategy is judged. In beginning to think about criteria by which one can evaluate a promotional strategy geared towards implementation, I find it useful to draw upon some ideas put forth in *Lessons from Local Experience*³, a handbook for urban designers compiled for the U.S. Department of Housing under the direction of Robert M. Eury and Gary A. Hack. In the chapter entitled "Keys to Effective Urban Environmental Design", the authors write:

Designers need to learn when a synoptic view is necessary and when only incremental changes are possible. They need to be able to assess the capacity of existing organizations and individuals to carry out schemes and to know where to look for support for proposals and how to structure their schemes so benefits will be apparent to groups they are courting. And much more.⁴

Although it is written for designers working in a more recent context of democratic, participative procedures, I feel it is fair to use six of the guidelines contained in *Lessons* (conditions which the authors found existing in a number of successfully-implemented urban designs in the United States) to apply comparatively to Le Corbusier's promotional methodology. They relate directly to promotion within my broad definition, regardless of differences in time and place:

AGENDA: All initiators of urban design projects formulate an agenda based upon perceived needs or desires in a particular city. Items in the agenda are meant to supply design solutions to a physical environment's shortcomings. Eury and Hack note, "Cities that have been successful at urban environmental design efforts have found ways of coalescing opinion about these items and support for actions addressing them... The logic behind a specific project has to be made clear, along with its long-term 'pay-off'."⁵

³Robert M. Eury & Gary A. Hack, eds., *Lessons from Local Experience*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, 1983).

⁴Eury & Hack, p. 53.

⁵Eury & Hack, pp. 54-5.

RESOURCES (human, financial, physical, political): Every urban design proposal must appear feasible if it is to receive approval. The degree to which resources are presented as truly available is also subject to manipulation for the design's promotion, as evidenced in over-budget projects being the norm as opposed to the exception. *Lessons* does not advocate the manipulation of resource availability, but it does offer a suggestion that may relate to the Plan Voisin: "Where private-sector capabilities... are limited, local government would be wise to contract with private corporations to carry out major ventures."⁶ By thinking about the feasibility of the Plan Voisin, one can evaluate the project as realistic or utopian, as well as speculate as to the seriousness of Le Corbusier's intentions.

CUSTOM-FITTING MODELS: The following statement from *Lessons* is particularly important in viewing the relationship between the Ville Contemporaine and the Plan Voisin:

All models require a certain amount of custom-fitting in order to be fully useful. What works in one place will not necessarily work in another, and it should be assumed that models are only points of departure. Context and needs are different. The size of a place, composition of its population, legislative context, physical surroundings, culture and history are all factors influencing the applicability of a model.⁷

Given that the Plan Voisin was an adaptation of a non-site-specific design—the Ville Contemporaine—to a very real section of Paris, the degree to which Le Corbusier custom-fit the model determined its appropriateness in the eyes of his audience.

CREATING MARKETS: The success of this task is completely dependent on the way in which a design is presented. Because one cannot test a particular, site-specific urban design in advance of resource commitment and construction, decision-makers must be persuaded through the tools of communications. Market demand for the design's provisions must be created. Eury and Hack assert, "Successfully creating a market will depend upon aggressive entrepreneurship, the clarity of image of the improved environment and the degree that consumers are persuaded to adopt new patterns of using the city."⁸

GETTING AND KEEPING PEOPLE EXCITED: Again, the appeal of a communicated image of betterment is relied upon for support. The variable here is "people", whether they

⁶Eury & Hack, p. 56.

⁷Eury & Hack, p. 59.

⁸Eury & Hack, p. 62.

are a small, empowered group or the larger population. Regardless of the size and differences of the audience, however, "Building a sense of inevitability about projects creates an atmosphere in which the many problems cropping up along the way can be solved."⁹

CREATING MANAGEABLE PIECES (Organization): In this section, Eury and Hack warn that rarely have financial and administrative resources been sufficient for large-scale plans to be executed as one synchronized effort. This has proved increasingly true since the demise of autocratic decision-making. They suggest, "The trick is to make a program large enough to develop synergy, yet with small enough pieces so that each can be acted upon with its own logic."¹⁰

Given this set of guidelines for successful urban design reception, i.e., implementation, selected from *Lessons*, it is important to have a notion of the promotional aspects of urban design as distinguished from its physical features. What follows is a basic framework for understanding the appeal of an urban design and its relationship to its promotion. In essence, there are two possibilities that are normally considered:

THE CONTENT PROMOTES THE CONTENT

In this case, the design may attract a supportive audience based on its inherent physical qualities, for example, large buildings that are sited so as not to cast unwanted shadows on residential complexes, or transportation grade separations that protect pedestrians from fast-moving motor vehicles. The designer thus predicts and translates the requirements or desires of the audience into the physical design.

THE PRESENTATION PROMOTES THE CONTENT

In this case, the promotion of the plan is divorced by varying degrees from its physical features. Instead of pointing directly to the design, the promoter communicates idealized verbal and visual images of a desired lifestyle—amiable inhabitants are shown at leisure on clean and sunny roof-top cafes—or of society's latest thematic movement—modern cars and airplanes are portrayed to emphasize a brave, new society, proud of its "progress". The promotional medium itself—exhibit, text, newspaper review or otherwise—may set the tone for an idea's reception, certain media carrying more "clout" than others. This

⁹Eury & Hack, p. 62.

¹⁰Eury & Hack, p. 65.

image-driven scenario seems particularly endemic to 20th century ideas in marketing, public relations and advertising. The audience is left to distinguish for itself between the true potential of the plan's content and the promoted vision.

The Plan Voisin and Alternative Success

I have chosen to study the Plan Voisin because it is an excellent example of the promotion of a dramatically-different urban design proposal for a major city. As such, it offers the opportunity to evaluate the potential for promotion toward implementation. More interesting, however, are the results of the promotion in terms of the influence the plan had on later urban designs, the career of Le Corbusier, the profession of city planning and the use of promotion in the design arts. The fact that it is a historical subject permits this kind of retrospective analysis. In other words, I am suggesting that a third model for promotion exists, which I will discuss in Chapter IV: THE PROMOTION (Content and/or Presentation) PROMOTES ALTERNATIVE RESULTS. This model does not rely on implementation as a measure of success.

During the early 20th century the designer's audience was in transition from a single client to several parties. The case of Le Corbusier and his promotion of the Plan Voisin does not necessarily fit into either the pre-twentieth or late-twentieth century models of urban design procedure. Le Corbusier was working during the early years of the advertising age as commercial culture was beginning to impact every aspect of life in industrialized countries through the explosion of mass-produced consumer products and communications to larger audiences. In step with these changes, Le Corbusier employed the media available to him to appeal to his selected audiences such as periodicals and manifestos widely-read by the European avant-garde and industrialists, and international expositions visited by a diverse cross-section of Parisians and foreigners. He also utilized his newly-emerging status as a member of the avant garde in his personal appeals to industrialists and other sources of financial support.

At the same time, an institutionalized system of citizen participation in urban issues was not in place, decision-making remained in the hands of government officials who had not reached consensus on the need for urban planning, let alone on any particular urban plan, and no strong central authority existed to dictate policy. Despite the attitudes and conditions existing among decision-makers in Paris in the early-1920s, Le Corbusier proposed a bold, new model of urban design.

Thus, in the case of the Plan Voisin, I will demonstrate how the promotional strategy aimed toward implementation; but I will also contend that other important consequences grew out of the effort. Whether or not they were actually considered by Le Corbusier remains a mystery. If we judge the success of the Plan Voisin based exclusively on whether or not it was constructed, the effort was a failure. Viewed from another perspective, however, the Plan may exhibit success.

Outline of Discussion

Chapter II, "Influences and Context" is divided into two major sections. The first is an exploration of the factors in Le Corbusier's life to 1925 that would condition his strategy for promoting the Plan Voisin, namely his education and youth in La Chaux-de-Fonds, his travels and apprenticeships in the studios of Behrens and Perret, and his experience in Paris in the years preceding 1925. The second section undertakes an examination of the factors in Parisian society—political, economic, urbanistic, social and cultural—that would condition the public's and the decision-makers' receptivity to the Plan Voisin. In this section, I discuss the conditions of urban life in Paris for its various inhabitants, the state of the urban planning and design professions as tied to the political situation, the influence of private industry and public budgets, and social attitudes supporting architectural preservation. Here, I also research the cultural setting in terms of avant-garde art and advertising as they influenced each other.

In Chapter III, "The Plan Voisin", I explore the content and the communication of the plan, and evaluate its logic and appropriateness against Le Corbusier's background and the societal context elaborated in Chapter II. In terms of content, the strengths and weaknesses of the plan as a match to societal desires and needs are identified. The sections on communication examine the journal, exhibit and book which Le Corbusier executed to publicize his plan.

In my evaluation and conclusion—Chapter IV—I will return to the criteria outlined in *Lessons*. While attempting to fit the Plan Voisin into this framework, it is important to interpret Le Corbusier's intentions beyond the framework's limitations. This is critical to an understanding of the plan's results in terms of their success and failure. In assessing the efficacy of Le Corbusier's promotional link between plan and audience, I will note briefly the change in Le Corbusier's promotional strategies for the Plan Obus in Algiers, his next

major urban design effort undertaken during the 1930s. As society, politics, economics and urban planning changed, so did Le Corbusier's strategies. In the 1990s, as in the 1920s, urban designs and their promotion must be tailored to specific physical sites, decision-makers, interest groups and other relevant themes in a given society. Furthermore, a variety of less obvious goals may be pursued—directly or indirectly—in the promotion of urban design.

II: INFLUENCES & CONTEXT

A. PREPARATION TO BE HEARD

A survey of the intellectual, social and political influences on the life of Le Corbusier between 1887 and 1920 helps to explain the strategies he would later employ as designer and promoter of the Plan Voisin. From the time of his youth, Le Corbusier was exposed to the forces of change in society as a result of the Industrial Revolution. His art training included theoretical readings and practice on the abstraction of nature and the search for the ideal, a skill that became important in rapidly communicating ideas and products through symbols in the 20th century. In France and Germany, under the tutelage of two mentors of varying design philosophies, he absorbed ideas on the social role of the designer in relation to new materials and machines, and the creation of "types" as a Modern design methodology. His self-expression expanded to the realm of writing, and he was quick to seize the opportunity to publish. His self-awareness led him to custom tailor his image as the situation dictated—businessman, painter, architect, writer. Le Corbusier prepared himself for the vast range of projects he would later undertake in the commercially-charged environment of Paris in the 1920s.

La Chaux-de-Fonds and L'Eplattenier

Le Corbusier was born Charles-Edouard Jeanneret¹ in 1887 in La Chaux-de-Fonds, a small city in the French-speaking region of Switzerland, northwest of Neuchâtel and just a few miles east of the French border. The settlement rests between two ridges of the Jura mountain range, surrounded by cultivated fields and a natural landscape of hills and forest. In its physical design, La Chaux-de-Fonds has followed the pattern of a regularly laid-out grid since a fire in 1794 destroyed much of the town. The city was municipally-engineered to promote values of hygiene and order. Parallel rows of apartment houses, occasionally broken by cross-streets, form the basic long rectangular blocks. Residences are sited on only the northern side of lots in order to preserve the southern side for gardens, light and air.

La Chaux-de-Fonds is a community with a rich political history, its Albigenian and Protestant refugee founders having fled religious persecution in southern France. Le

¹I will refer to Le Corbusier as "Jeanneret", his real name until the end of this chapter (the early-1920s) when he selected "Le Corbusier".

Corbusier was proud of his ancestors, particularly a maternal great-grandfather who died a political prisoner. Philosophers and political theorists such as Rousseau, Bakunin and Lenin visited La Chaux-de-Fonds to observe its unique, self-sufficient home workshops, the productive units upon which the economy was based. The system of worker syndicates provided a model for anarchic ideals.

During Jeanneret's youth, the prosperous and renowned handcrafted watchmaking industry of La Chaux-de-Fonds would suffer due to the influx of factory-manufactured wrist watches from Germany. This economic hardship—a direct result of the Industrial Revolution—impacted the political life of the city, splintering factions into a new political spectrum and stratifying the society. A rupture thus occurred in the relationship between society and the means of production, a phenomenon signalled by the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 in London where machines and industrial products were first presented together in a pre-fabricated structure of iron and glass. In La Chaux-de-Fonds, a new vertical organization of labor was devised with formerly home-based artisans renting stalls in large buildings. Additionally, the distribution of watches became highly centralized with a small number of bourgeois families, who arrived in the late-nineteenth century, reaping new commercial profits.

At the age of thirteen, in 1900, Jeanneret was sent to the industry-financed School of Art to learn the craft of watch engraving. There he was apprenticed to Charles L'Eplattenier, a well-traveled artisan teacher who had studied five years at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. L'Eplattenier, who directed Jeanneret to the study of architecture, encouraged his students to seek inspiration for their art in nature. Following the writings of Owen Jones and John Ruskin, Jeanneret and his peers drew natural subjects as abstractions, patterns and transformations of their true state that were meant to capture the spiritual inspiration of the creative act. (Fig. 1) Le Corbusier would later quote his master's teaching: "Don't treat nature like the landscapists who show us only its appearance. Study its causes, forms and vital development, and synthesize them in the creation of ornaments."²

The thought and design process required of the students to abstract a found form to a purer, more universal symbol was especially relevant at the dawning of our communications- and media-driven epoch. The search for a value-laden graphic, immediately recognizable and comprehensible on multiple levels, has proved an inseparable aspect of much of the

²Le Corbusier, *The Decorative Art of Today*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 194.

twentieth century's fine art and commercial design. A few years later, Jeanneret wrote in a travel journal, "The obsession for symbols that lies deep inside me is like a yearning for a language limited to only a few words."³ This condensing/distilling act would become one of the characteristic traits of his work, not only in architecture and urban design where it surfaced during the 1920s in his creation of "types", but also in his polemical writings where the principle was transformed into rapidly absorbed, memorable proclamations.

This observation is not intended to question the value of Le Corbusier's visual and verbal communications, for their enduring influence attests to their deeper meanings for twentieth century intellectual dialogues. Through his work, Le Corbusier continues to play a vital role in our understanding of the popular and intellectual forces existing in recent western history. Along with his readings of Jones and Ruskin, L'Eplattenier directed Jeanneret to *Les Grands Initiés* by Edouard Schuré and *L'Art de demain* by Henri Provensal, two books which suggested the search for the ideal in art, a task which, according to them, certain people are gifted to reveal. Later, in Paris, he would read *Thus Spake Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche, a text that may have confirmed, in Jeanneret's mind, the creative individual as a prophet/superman for the rest of society. Here, however, the enlightened communicator of architectural and urban design ideas does not base his art on absolute truth. For the rest of his life, Jeanneret's design—particularly his urban design—would be coupled with a vital component of written and spoken manifesto.

Paris and Perret

In 1908, Jeanneret began an apprenticeship to his second mentor, Auguste Perret, who introduced him to a rational design methodology that contrasted sharply with the regional, romantic teachings of L'Eplattenier. Perret's architecture was based on structural rationalism, one of the strands of French architectural theory since the 17th century, which he applied to design with reinforced concrete.

Perret used the latest building material of the age in a limited application, however, relative to the broader design philosophy then espoused by Peter Behrens, who Jeanneret was soon to encounter. Perret envisioned his concrete skyscrapers as additive, restricted to a peripheral or existing part of the ancient Parisian urban fabric; and the cast of his construction was a stylistic perversion of academic precedent. While he did not venture to design a holistic image or system for the modern city, he did present architecture to

³Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 176.

Jeanneret as an active force in society, rationally interacting between progress in industrial materials invention and the evolving built environment.

Jeanneret was deeply impressed by Perret's rationalism, a tendency which would remain in dialectical opposition to L'Eplattenier's inspiration for the rest of his life. It also awakened him to the potential for opposition from society that he would face throughout his career as designer and theorist. In a letter to L'Eplattenier, dated November 22, 1908, he wrote, "I am not looking for quietude, or recognition from the world. I will live in sincerity, happy to undergo abuse."⁴ Any form of reaction to an idea implied that the idea had been recognized by at least some part of "the world"; it is significant that Jeanneret was developing a sensitivity to the existence of public opinion.

Berlin and Behrens

Following his experience with Perret, Jeanneret moved on to Germany, where he remained from April 1910 to May 1911. He was commissioned by L'Eplattenier and the Art School in La Chaux-de-Fonds to write a report on the alliance of art and industry in Germany. The results of that report, *Etude sur le mouvement d'art décoratif en Allemagne* (1912), was his first published piece. Therein were several observations on the supportive private and public attitudes in German society to the employment of Modern designers in the spheres of product design, industrial equipment, architecture and city planning. The German Werkbund was founded in 1908 to specifically unite artists and industry through a program of education and promotion. Jeanneret learned of the establishment of large financial concerns to develop suburban garden cities for industrial workers, the plans of which were commissioned from Modern architects. The Public Works Ministry advocated simple, harmonious building forms over costly materials and ornament. He was impressed by the naming of designers to public administrative posts formerly reserved to functionaries. In Germany, the designer was designated to a new and important societal role.

Jeanneret essentially witnessed the birth of environmental design promotion in Germany, as well as the reform of typography and graphic design. Expositions and museum exhibits were important in this movement. In Hagen, he visited the German Museum of Art in Commerce and Industry, the showplace for such traveling exhibits as "Art in the Service of

⁴Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, Letter to Charles L'Eplattenier, Nov. 22, 1908 cited in Charles Jencks, *Le Corbusier and the Tragic View of Architecture*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), p. 24.

the Market"; while in Berlin, a city striving in his opinion to be "le type de la cité moderne", he frequented such events as "The General Exposition of the Art of Building Cities".⁵

Most crucial to Jeanneret's exposure to the new role of the designer in industrial society was his five month apprenticeship in the studio of Peter Behrens. Despite the fact that he was critical of Behrens' architecture and admitted "aucun contact, jamais avec Behrens," Jeanneret had the opportunity to study first-hand Behrens' activities as an intellectual and practicing liaison between art and industry.⁶ Behrens had been hired as artistic director in 1907 by Emil Rathenau, engineer-businessman and son of the founder of Allgemeine Elektrizität Gesellschaft (AEG), a large enterprise of 60,000 workers. Among Behrens' responsibilities were the design of factory buildings—his most famous being the AEG Turbine Factory in Berlin—lighting fixtures, commutation switches, furnaces, logos and graphic materials, and hundreds of allied implements, all of which Jeanneret noted were designed "d'un style sobre et pur". (Fig. 2)

Behrens had developed as a widely known artistic personality in Germany early in his career, "within the ambience of the little art magazines that proliferated in Europe".⁷ Originally a painter, Behrens made a break with lyrical art and developed a vast design portfolio that accommodated the reality of modern industrial production. For Behrens, "The architect's greatest responsibility was to design the building type forms for those individuals or institutions that provided or represented the political and economic power of their time."⁸ Behrens extended his imageable architecture doctrine to the realm of urban design, believing that a city of business and industry should assert its character and be understood as such through its corporeality.⁹

For the La Chaux-de-Fonds publication, Jeanneret reacted positively to this new role for the designer:

Pratiques et très actifs, ils exploitèrent les propagandes les plus effectives, ils les créèrent: les expositions de toutes sortes, les journaux d'art, qu'ils transformèrent en organismes foncièrement nouveaux et d'un retentissement profond dans la foule, et ils arrivèrent dans leur réussite miraculeuse—surgis d'une révolution économique et politique—face à face

⁵Maximilien Gauthier, *Le Corbusier ou l'Architecture au Service de l'Homme*, (Paris: Denoël, 1944), p. 31.

⁶Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-même*, (Genève: Rousseau, 1970), p. 38.

⁷Alan Windsor, *Peter Behrens*, (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1981), p. 1.

⁸Stanford Anderson, "Modern Architecture and Industry: Peter Behrens and the Cultural Policy of Historical Determinism", *Oppositions 11*, (Winter 1977), p. 68.

⁹Francesco Passanti, "The Skyscrapers of the Ville Contemporaine", *Assemblage 4*, (October 1987), p.55.

avec les grands problèmes sociaux qu'ils disent vouloir résoudre par l'art, par l'harmonie.¹⁰

Jeanneret concluded his report with a challenge to France—will France reform?: "En France, constate-t-il, on n'envisage que de continuer une tradition éprouvée, tandis qu'ici le problème du malaise des grandes villes est posé, les industriels du bâtiment mis en contact avec les architectes et les ingénieurs."¹¹ Obviously, issues of urban life in industrial society were becoming important subjects for reflection as Jeanneret attempted to synthesize the contrasting philosophies of his mentors. In 1911, while traveling through eastern Europe towards Istanbul, he wrote the following entry observing the cross-fertilization of art between city and country: "The city should not return to the country; it would be as though one were to give to the symptoms the disease itself as a cure. The city must follow its own course and be reborn on its own. It owes it to itself; and besides, it cannot do otherwise."¹²

Jeanneret, during his time in Germany, also wrote an unpublished manuscript on urban design which H. Allen Brooks has explained was a precursor to *Urbanisme*, despite some striking dissimilarities in theory. I mention it here for a telling excerpt which reveals Jeanneret's political formation. (The second sentence is Brooks'.) It bears a striking resemblance to Machiavelli's foreword to Lorenzo the Magnificent in *The Prince*:

This study, written for no other reason than to state the procedures for embellishing our existence in cities, is addressed, especially, to the authorities.' He continued by regretting that the great era of city-building, dominated by rulers from Ramses to Louis XV, is past and has been supplanted by unimaginative administrators whose designs are based on mechanical patterns of straight lines rather than the dictates of landscape or upon human considerations.¹³

The "New Section" and "Dom-Ino"

Upon Jeanneret's return to La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1911, he immediately began working with L'Eplattenier and a group of former students to establish a new art and design faculty, and new workshops—the Nouvelle Section and the Association Indépendante des Ateliers d'Art Réunis—that were precursors to the Bauhaus' synthesis of design arts instruction.

¹⁰Jeanneret, Charles-Edouard, *Etude sur le mouvement d'art décoratif en Allemagne*, (NY: Da Capo, 1968), p. 14.

¹¹Gauthier, p. 31.

¹²Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East*, p. 164.

¹³H. Allen Brooks, "Jeanneret and Sitté: Le Corbusier's Earliest Ideas on Urban Design" in *In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry Russell Hitchcock*, ed. Helen Searing, (New York: Architectural History Fdn./MIT, 1982), p. 281.

Unfortunately, the new section was soon opposed by a coalition of various interests in La Chaux-de-Fonds and it was closed just three years later.

This experience, Jeanneret's first political battle, was to strongly condition his ideas toward democratic, participative theories, as well as the political avenues by which he pursued adoption of his future projects in different contexts.

The art school was attacked not only by the conservative bourgeoisie and the older art school, but also by the socialists and social democratic party, who believed that artisans should remain artisans and not involve themselves in industrial matters. A rumor spread that the students would receive a diluted art education, stray too far from their craft and be incapable of making a living afterwards. Jeanneret wrote over the closing of the school:

Rivalités, calomnies, mensonges, aigreurs. Il m'arrive parfois, maintenant de retrouver, au hasard des carrefours, des hommes qui furent mes élèves. La lutte contre le public sceptique et contre l'Ecole rivale fut âpre. Enfin les socialistes nous déboulonnerent. Pourquoi les socialistes? Ce fut peut-être bien là mon premier étonnement d'adulte.¹⁴

In reaction to the closing, Jeanneret and a few friends from the school produced a pamphlet on the sequence of events entitled *Un mouvement d'art à La Chaux-de-Fonds*. They lucidly expressed their argument and enlisted the support of well-known, established designers such as Peter Behrens and Hector Guimard by including their testimonials to the new section's strengths. In retrospect, Charles Jencks has written, "This third book of Jeanneret's established his skill as the fighter, the acute dialectician who persuades his audience through a series of violent oppositions. Indeed, Le Corbusier's best books were always set against a powerful adversary, a stupid evil force to set off his own brilliance and integrity."¹⁵

During 1914-15, Jeanneret designed the Dom-Ino Project, a scheme for simple column and slab construction that he envisioned for post-war reconstruction. The project also epitomizes his search for an ideal image employing the latest rational construction methods and materials. In the words of Paul Turner, what he designed were the "Ideal Column" and the "Ideal Slab". Dom-Ino paralleled Jeanneret's polemical efforts to wed the romantic, passionate statement to a sequence of logical reasoning. Turner writes, "This technique, in one form or another, became from then on a distinguishing characteristic of

¹⁴Petit, p. 45.

¹⁵Jencks, p. 36.

his work—whether it was a structural system, a housing type, a technological image of some sort, or a whole city that he subjected to this transformation."¹⁶

Paris 1916-1920

In 1916, following his disappointment with the closing of the art school's new section and the completion of a few architectural commissions, Jeanneret left neutral La Chaux-de-Fonds and arrived in wartime Paris. He began work as a consulting architect for the Société d'Application du Béton Armé, a construction firm involved in national defense projects and owned by expatriate Swiss businessmen, among them Max Dubois, a childhood friend. In 1917, they created the Société d'Etudes Industrielles et Techniques, which included a brick factory—La Briqueterie d'Alfortville—in the Parisian industrial suburbs.¹⁸ Jeanneret became its manager. The enterprise was plagued with many financial and production problems, and consumed an enormous amount of Jeanneret's time.

When he was not at the factory, Jeanneret was often studying scientific management—"Taylorism"—at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Although I have not located any evidence of Jeanneret's marketing strategy for the Briqueterie, he did practice a certain product differentiation campaign through his experimentation and production of a new composite brick material. The packaging for "L" Aeroscorie declared, "Resistant, Isolant, Calorifuge, Economique, Pratique... *est le materiau de l'avenir.*" In his authorized biography of Le Corbusier, Maximilien Gauthier remarked that the brick venture was an important experience for a future urbanist:

Le hasard le met à la tête d'une société d'études techniques et industrielles, ainsi que d'une petite usine. Il prend brutalement contact avec des réalités que l'art de bâtir ne saurait méconnaître sans danger: il découvre toute l'importance des problèmes touchant l'organisation rationnelle du travail et des transports, il voit fonctionner, de l'intérieur, le mécanisme de la finance, de l'industrie, du commerce; il sait comment, d'une idée, naît une affaire, et à quel prix celle-ci pourra vivre et prospérer.¹⁹

The Briqueterie d'Alfortville ended in bankruptcy in 1921, but an important aspect of his years as a businessman were the contacts in industry and engineering that he would continue to maintain. Jeanneret had arrived in Paris with an impressive network of business contacts that extended to the governmental sector. Through Dubois, he knew Swiss bank officers La Roche, Dubois and Montmollin, and had access to French government ministers such as Louis Loucheur and Charles de Monzie. During his early

¹⁶Paul Turner, "Romanticism, Rationalism, and the Domino System" in *The Open Hand*, ed. Russell Walden, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), pp. 37-8.

years in Paris, his circle, apart from the avant-garde, grew to include bankers such as La Roche, who would rank among his first clients, and M. Mongermon, the executive at the Voisin Automobile Company who would eventually sponsor the L'Esprit Nouveau pavilion at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in 1925.²⁰

In 1918, Auguste Perret introduced Jeanneret to Amédée Ozenfant, a painter and editor of an avant-garde art journal, *L'Elan*. Jeanneret and Ozenfant shared many similar ideas on the place of Modern art and design in post-war industrial society, the harmonious union of art and the machine. Ozenfant encouraged Jeanneret to paint, and together they quickly developed "Purism" as a reaction to Cubism. "Après le Cubisme", a tract they co-authored, and a December 1918 gallery exhibit they organized of their work, received much attention from the avant-garde and the press. Purism was hailed as the first new tendency in painting since 1914.²¹

Jeanneret signed his paintings "Jeanneret", but wished to keep his identity as an architect separate from that of a painter. Ozenfant explained later in his *Mémoires*: "Il ne voulait entrer dans la peinture que discrètement afin de ne pas risquer de compromettre sa carrière d'architecte, la peinture étant dans l'esprit des clients une activité beaucoup moins sérieuse que celle de bâtisseur."²² Thus, Jeanneret selected "Le Corbusier" as his title in architecture and city design. Several writers have suggested that Le Corbusier's consciousness of his image extended to his incarnation as the "*homme-type*", a kind of generic modern man with standard suit and bow-tie, black, round-framed glasses and bicycle.

Fernand Divoire, columnist at the *Intransigent*, introduced Paul Dermée to Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, a poet who wished to start up a new art review. Le Corbusier found the initial capital to finance the journal as humorously stated by Gauthier:

Ce fut Jeanneret qui en trouva--une centaine de mille francs, recoltés à la faveur d'un déjeuner d'hommes d'affaires amis--convaincus, entre la poire et le fromage, de la nécessité d'ennoblir la profession de financier par quelque placement à fonds perdus, chez les rêveurs.²³

The first issue of *L'Esprit Nouveau*—"Revue Internationale d'Activité Contemporaine"—appeared on October 15, 1920. (Fig. 3 & 4)

Summary

Certain circumstances and events in Le Corbusier's life before 1920 influenced him to be a designer conscious of the importance and techniques of promoting his work. Under L'Eplattenier, he learned how to abstract and condense the meaning of objects in his drawings. The graphic symbol would become a major tool of advertising and product identification, as would the spoken and written slogan, in which Le Corbusier later wed the passionate statement to logical reasoning. Under the tutelage of Perret and Behrens, Le Corbusier understood architecture as a societal force, reflective of the existing means of production, and the artist's role in commercial culture through the alliance of art and industry. During the political battle over the New Section in La Chaux-de-Fonds, he lost faith in democratic, participative politics as a political context for his work, and embraced theories of scientific management when he moved to Paris. His business contacts in Paris and work as manager of the Briqueterie d'Alfortville put him in close contact with the commercial culture and production methods of the city in the 1920s. "Le Corbusier" would define his architecture and urban design career as something separate from his painting and earlier work as Charles-Edouard Jeanneret—a self-consciousness indicative of the importance of his own image.

B. THE PARISIAN CONDITION

Before continuing to a discussion of the Plan Voisin and its promotion, it is necessary to understand the audiences to which it was directed and the historical context in which they lived. In this thesis, I am using the word "context" to mean—in broad terms—the physical, economic, political and cultural conditions in Paris in 1925 that might influence how the Plan Voisin was received by its audience. Following a brief overview of some of the city's statistics and living standards, I explore the period's most influential social science theory—Scientific Management—as it related to industry and government. The early history of urban planning in France, covered in the third section, demonstrates its degree of development as a setting for Le Corbusier's doctrines and also displays the impact of Scientific Management on the fledgling profession. The preservation movement is then presented as a force resistant to new ideas in urban design. Finally, the commercial, artistic and architectural culture of Paris provides insight into the potential reaction of these segments to the Plan Voisin.

The City

During the 1920s, the metropolitan Paris region grew from a 1918 population of four million to a 1930 population of five million. The immediate city—the capital of the Republic of France—comprised an area of approximately 5000 hectares, one-quarter of which was made up of the old fortifications belt. In Europe, Paris ranked number one in terms of density with 370 inhabitants per hectare, ahead of Berlin at 265 and London at 161.¹ For its middle- and upper class residents, as well as its tourists, who could take advantage of the culture, artistic activity and quality of life, Paris was regarded as the world's foremost city.

Unlike most other major cities in Western Europe and North America whose wealthier residents left the inner city to dwell in peripheral suburbs, the Parisian bourgeoisie chose to remain in the city center. Escalating land values during the second half of the nineteenth century drove the working poor to Paris' outskirts to live in marginal suburban settlements and shanty towns. Business offices and exclusive shops were concentrated on the Right Bank, north of the Seine. Artists lived in the Left Bank's Montparnasse neighborhood or to the north in Montmartre. Industry was located along the Seine, east and west of the city

¹Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978*, (New Haven: Yale, 1979), p. 271.

limits. A 1913 report of the Commission d'Extension de Paris noted the city's meager and poorly distributed parkland in comparison to that of London, but because Paris had not spread out in dramatic suburban growth, traditional landscapes were found relatively close to the center.

The Paris of the 1920s remained very much the Paris of Baron Georges Haussmann, Prefect of the Seine from 1853 to 1870, who through a combination of political will—the dictates of Louis Napoleon—and mobilization of credit, carved a system of grand boulevards in the city's largely medieval street lay-out. In so doing, Haussmann transformed Paris into the leading model of nineteenth century urban form. Economically, Haussmann's costly projects were made possible by Louis Napoleon's increase in centrally directed public investment. The theories of Saint-Simon, discussed in the next section of this chapter, had influenced Louis Napoleon.

While the grand boulevards offered spacious and regular circulation for carriages and pedestrians, the planning of the streets was highly segregative in nature. Haussmann actually worsened the slums and plight of the poor by chasing them from the center or cutting their neighborhoods off from communication and transportation routes.

Until 1900, the government—national and municipal—steadily followed the Second Empire's plan; but uncontrolled land values made procurement increasingly difficult and the plan became out-dated. No new ideas were sought or acted upon, however, and even the new Metro of 1900 conformed to Haussmann's street pattern. Having created better links—boulevards—to the outskirts, officials shifted their attention to suburban growth around the turn of the century, leaving the city center unattended.

As a result of the Ancien Regime's (1851-1875) spending of money raised by public bond issues, Paris remained in long-term debt through the beginning of the century. The *franc* was highly unstable and suffered tremendous inflation during the 1920s. A constant state of economic crisis prevailed between the wars. In general, there was opposition in municipal government to undertaking expensive improvements in infrastructure. Numerous debates took place between the commissions for public works and those who sought a balanced budget. Because in this era public works were the backbone of urban planning and Paris was unwilling to invest, it awoke relatively late to the urban planning movement. In France as a whole, the less fortunate suffered due to the government's laissez-faire approach to urban problems: "L'organisation spatiale de l'industrie et de

l'habitat ouvrier est laissée aux stratégies patronales, cités ouvrières ou cités minières, plus ou moins combinées avec la philanthropie."² Only in rare instances did the private side act in supplying worker housing. Michelin & Cie. and Renault were among the industrial enterprises that constructed limited residential projects.

Poor sanitation, disease and overcrowding characterized the living conditions of the urban and suburban poor, yet no major housing legislation would be passed until 1928. Many elected representatives and officials believed the solution was to demolish the remaining unhealthy neighborhoods in Paris—the *îlots*—but little or no clearance took place by the outbreak of World War I due to inadequate financial resources. As early as 1906, Ambroise Rendu, a City Councillor and Royalist stated, "We need to combine the demolition of the contaminated zones with the reconstruction, on the same site, of cheap dwellings, of which some at least should be allocated to the workers."³

In Paris, cholera epidemics killed 18,402 of 786,000 in 1832, and 19,615 of 1,000,000 in 1849.⁴ Tuberculosis became the major plague after World War I and was used as a barometer in determining whether or not a neighborhood was a slum. The Beaubourg *îlot* was among the worst enclaves of poverty within the city limits. City health officials rated 250 out of its 276 buildings uninhabitable due to tuberculosis contamination and the per capita living space on its two worst blocks was equivalent to the size of a telephone booth through the 1920s.⁵ On the outskirts of Paris, shelter was lamentable with approximately 42,000 of "the zone" population living in shanties.⁶ The municipality had acquired the fortifications ring—130-135 meters wide—in 1919, and the surrounding area—250-300 meters wide—after World War II. Not until the 1940s was final removal of the shanties that occupied these rings secured.

As mentioned above, France was late in urban planning, especially in comparison to Germany and Great Britain (an elaborate, comparative discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis). In *Towards a Planned City*, Anthony Sutcliffe suggests its tardiness may be traced to an insensitive middle class, uneager to engage in a massive housing reform movement or to remedy the harmful effects of the urban environment. Sutcliffe opines,

²Georges Duby, ed., *Histoire de la France urbaine*, (Paris: Seuil, 1983), p. 75.

³Anthony Sutcliffe, *The Autumn of Central Paris*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1971), p. 109.

⁴Sutcliffe, *Autumn*, p. 99.

⁵Peggy A. Phillips, *Modern France: Theories and Realities of Urban Planning*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 29-31.

⁶Evenson, p. 206.

"The most sedate, well-fed and bookish middle class in Europe was largely indifferent to sportsfields and playgrounds."⁷ He also notes that despite some strikes and civil disturbances, few doubted the stability of French society. A threat to the status quo was, however, exactly what catalyzed a small group of intellectuals—outside of the public sector—to create the French brand of urban planning: "*urbanisme*", a word not coined until 1910.

Scientific Management

The roots of France's twentieth century technocratic approach to public and private organization lies in the nineteenth century when a number of theories for the harmonious ordering of society—many of them utopian—appeared. They were largely reactions to the eighteenth century *philosophes* who had upset the longstanding political and social order of pre-Revolutionary society by introducing concepts of equality and democratic, participative politics. Following the Revolution and subsequent incidents of civil strife and destruction, many nineteenth century theorists sought to order society based on capitalist production and progress. Underlying their ideas was an inherent acceptance of the inequality of capacities among men.

Saint-Simon (1760-1825) focused his writings on progress through practical achievements—roadbuilding, investment in public works, economic development and public education—to avoid civil unrest and to create acceptable economic and living conditions for all social classes. In shifting attention away from political arguments and parliamentary processes, "He proposed to give power to the *industriels*, i.e. to those who worked, which included all classes, but he expected policy to be formed by the 'most important' of these, the great manufacturers and leading financiers, merchants and agriculturists."⁸

Saint-Simon and other rational administrative reformers prepared French intellectual and power factions in the late-nineteenth century to import the management ideas of Frederick Taylor, an American whose *Principles of Scientific Management* encouraged a close examination of the industrial process and roles of manager and worker in order to increase production and gain for all concerned. Focusing on the mechanics of the capitalist system of production, with the aim of "increasing the pie", shifted attention away from the problem

⁷Anthony Sutcliffe, *Towards the Planned City*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 139.

⁸Theodore Zeldin, *France 1884-1945: Politics and Anger*, (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. 70.

of "how to split the pie", hence from the more fundamental questions of political rights and participation, inequality of opportunity to select one's role in society, and ownership of land and capital. In the words of Mary McLeod, "Taylorism—or Scientific Management, as the more general movement was frequently called—offered an escape from ideological conflict and class divisions: traditional politics would be subsumed by a rational technology of political and economic choice."⁹

Taylorism was particularly attractive to the highly fragmented political spectrum in France which, in parliament, proved a major barrier to enacting legislation of all kinds. The technocratic principles presented a set of ideas that allowed all politicians and industrialists—divided by subordinate issues—to stand united in the preservation of the status quo: the privileged nobility and bourgeois classes would remain masters of the threatening proletariat. As Sanford Elwitt puts it: "In 1894, the journal of the Société d'économie sociale, an association of entrepreneurs and industrial managers, affirmed its position that the best defense against socialism is social reform."¹⁰ Also in *The Third Republic Defended*, Elwitt has written:

Consensus on the primacy of labor/capital relations generated political alliances that transcended divisive economic issues, cultural values and religious alliances...The new conditions [capital and industrial labor] rendered meaningless such labels as 'opportunist', 'radical', 'liberal', 'Progressiste', 'clerical' and 'anti-clerical'... The same patterns extended to the political arena, where the professional politicians, formally divided by parties, acted in concert when high stakes appeared on the table.¹¹

Inefficient government was a source of increasing discontent in the post-World War I years: "Echoes of frustration with the parliamentary government of the Third Republic were, in fact, heard throughout French society. In the mid-twenties the rampant inflation and severe market fluctuations, the general legislative paralysis and the lingering sense that the Great War demanded profound if undefined alterations all contributed to the anti-parliamentary overtones manifest in the resurgent popularity of the Action Francaise."¹² The Action Francaise was a political party which wanted to re-establish an hereditary monarchy. For others, Scientific Management offered a better form of authority: "For conservative reformers closely tied to big business,... social defense could not be entrusted to politicians but should be conducted by businessmen under the tutelage of social

⁹Mary McLeod, "'Architecture or Revolution': Taylorism, Technocracy and Social Change", *Art Journal* (Summer 1983), pp. 133-4.

¹⁰Sanford Elwitt, *The Third Republic Defended*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1986), p. 1.

¹¹Elwitt, p. 290.

¹²McLeod, p. 139.

managers--that is, themselves. Ultimately, they were less concerned with efficiency, rationalization or even national unity than with the entrepreneurs' authority."¹³

The principles of Scientific Management were first employed in industry, an extremely important sector of the French economy by the turn of the century. In 1906, firms employing more than 100 workers employed 40% of the workforce, and one percent of all industrial enterprises employed 50% of the labor force. An accelerated concentration occurred in the sectors of manufacturing, mining and metallurgy.¹⁴ During World War I, state intervention increased in production. After the war, cars, planes and chemistry ranked as three new major industries.¹⁵ Many wanted a return to pre-War production conditions, but progressive industrialists, officials and trade union groups embraced Taylorism. Thus, great interest in Taylorist theories continued during the 1920s. *Le Producteur*, a periodical edited by Gabriel Darquet enjoyed a large readership; and the thinking of Hyacinth Dubreuil, author of the widely-read *Standards* in 1929 and *Nouveaux Standards* in 1931, attest to the popularity of Scientific Management in France.

Though originally a technique of private industry, the efficient and rational reform of capitalism was to eventually go hand in hand with the hoped-for reform of government. Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the intellectual heir of Saint-Simon, had blended rational administrative reform with Social Darwinism. Comte considered social science paramount to any notion of a social contract and individual rights. He believed private property was a justified institution in the nineteenth century as it was a natural form of human behavior in evolution. The Third Republic Chamber of Deputies debated, without resolution, questions of private rights and collective controls on property. This stalemate was particularly damaging to any attempts at instituting urban reform laws. The Right attacked property because of unchecked power of the bourgeoisie over the land they owned; while the Left attacked its by-product of social inequality. Municipal Taylorism appeared as an answer between political disputes in the Chamber: "Leftists such as Henri Sellier, Maxime Leroy and Georges Benoît-Lévy, as well as more conservative spokesmen such as Louis Renault, Pierre Lhande, and Louis Loucheur, all advocated some form of Municipal Taylorism."¹⁶

¹³Elwitt, p. 295.

¹⁴Elwitt, p. 4.

¹⁵Pierre Guinchat, Marie-Paule Chaulet & Lisette Gaillardot, *Il était une fois l'habitat*, (Paris: Moniteur, 1981), p. 65.

¹⁶McLeod, p. 137.

Clemenceau signed a decree in 1918 directing the heads of all military establishments to study new industrial techniques and proposed a Taylorite planning department in each plant. In February 1919, Louis Loucheur, the Minister of Reconstruction, applied organized production methods to the rebuilding of France after World War I. As of March 1924, Loucheur was Poincaré's Minister of Commerce. Stanislaus von Moos has written, "A la fin de la guerre, la France devait se montrer particulièrement réceptive au message de Taylor, du fait de la nécessité de trouver pour son économie un autre pôle de développement que l'industrie de guerre—les documents de Michelin de cette époque en témoignent amplement."¹⁷ Von Moos has also remarked that the celebrity of Ford and Taylor during these years was comparable to the industrial business practices of the Japanese at present. The most important fact to keep in mind is that social science was politically neutral neither in industry nor in government: "It became a powerful instrument for the politics of order, of counterrevolution."¹⁸

Urbanisme: French City Planning

Against the backdrop of industrial production, scientific management and ineffective government, urban planning in Paris began with the founding of the Musée Social in 1894 by a small group of business leaders and conservative reformers. Its aims were to promote enlightened capitalism and class harmony, and "to combat misery and socialism".¹⁹ The Musée Social stood for the belief that the quality of housing influenced family, and thus social, stability. The loss of the industrial workers' ties to the land was perceived to be the root of social ills. The Musée therefore advocated the private funding of small industrial cities in the countryside. New institutions that re-engineered urban life, such as cities of industry governed by industrialists, should be constructed outside established urban centers. Decentralization would weaken labor unrest.

Jules Siegfried (1837-1922) was one of the Musée's founders. Born into the Mulhousian bourgeois society of enlightened paternalism (Mulhousian industrialists had built one of the first Cités Ouvrières in 1853), he later served as Mayor of Le Havre, where he instituted urban reform, and as a deputy in Paris, where in 1894 he authored the first legislation on housing in France.

¹⁷ Stanislaus von Moos, "Dans l'antichambre du 'Machine Age'", in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Le Corbusier et L'Industrie, 1920-1925*, (Zurich: Ernst & Sohn, 1987), p. 17.

¹⁸ Elwitt, p. 298.

¹⁹ Elwitt, p. 156.

A brief outline of urban-related legislation is instructive in demonstrating how slow the French were to take action on urban issues. Concerning physical design: in 1607, Henry IV ruled that buildings in Paris should be aligned in order to create streets. In 1783, Louis XVI ruled on nine meter minimum street widths and a maximum building height of twenty meters for stone and sixteen meters for timber-framed structures. In 1791, after the Revolution, these standards were adopted as law in Paris. Through the 1940s, with just a few modifications, the height limitations of Louis XIV remained intact.

As early as 1807, Napoleon empowered urban authorities throughout France to make physical plans for cities, but few were drawn up. An 1837 law decreed that the 1807 law was unenforceable on landowners where streets did not yet exist—exactly the locations in which the law was most needed! Again, disagreement over the concept of property and its attendant rights prohibited progress on urban legislation.

In the realm of housing reform: in 1894, the *loi* Siegfried ordered the creation of local committees to encourage companies or private developers to construct *habitations à bon marché* (HBM). In return, developers would receive fiscal advantages and new sources of credit; but between 1895 and 1902 only 1,360 homes were constructed.²⁰ In 1906, the *loi* Strauss attempted a revision of the *loi* Siegfried, as did the *loi* Bonnevey in 1912, both pieces of legislation offering incentives in the form of lower interest rates to developers of HBMs. Overall, however, these attempts at worker housing provision were too little and too late to alleviate the crisis.

A third approach to urban-related governmental intervention was the 1902 law for the protection of public health. This legislation prescribed sanitary regulations for each *département* in France, and suggested the demolition of unsanitary, disease-infected buildings; but as noted above, little or no demolition was accomplished before the first world war. Overall, none of the attempts at urban reform—street alignment and building regulations, worker housing, sanitation—amounted to more than piecemeal efforts. All attempts were in reaction to an already serious situation and no one seemed prepared to offer a new model of urban life in anticipation of changing lifestyles and growth.

²⁰Guinchat, et.al., p. 53.

Given the ineffective steps toward the institution of urban planning in France, one might wonder where the urban designers were. In fact, the Ecole des Beaux Arts had graduated a number of competent professionals who practiced urban design as Rome Prize and international competition winners during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—Leon Jaussely, Henri Prost, Alfred Agache, Eugène Hénard, Tony Garnier. "Increasingly aware of their distinctive contribution, these urban designers eventually founded, in 1913, the Société Française des Architectes Urbanistes, precursor of the Société Française des Urbanistes [S.F.U.]"²¹ Ironically, their talents were not invoked in application to French cities, Tony Garnier being an exception in his work under the progressive mayor of Lyon, Edouard Herriot.

At about the same time, in 1913, Georges Benoît-Lévy wrote *La Cité Jardin* and catalyzed the garden city movement in France. He became president of the French Garden City Association, an organization whose platform blended well with the owner-ruled, industrial cities promoted by the Musée Social before the outbreak of World War I.

The first enacted law that one can consider as falling into the category of urban *planning* was the *loi* Cornudet of 1919, which addressed beautification and expansion of towns in the aftermath of World War I. Finally, a law that took into account the physical design of cities was adopted. Following the war, however, reconstruction followed traditional models or pre-existing lay-outs of urban design. The conservative rebuilding has been attributed to a patriotic urge to revive the French homeland and a fear that new modes of industrialized building would promote economic growth in German industry, the source of new construction techniques.²² As for garden cities, only small ones were built until Suresnes, a western suburb of Paris was established in 1928 by a syndicalist-socialist mayor, Henri Sellier. From weakly-applied physical design and paternalistic reform paradigms of the early urban planning profession, the rational paradigm soon became the central focus of *urbanisme* in France, fueled by theories of Scientific Management:

Fundamentally, the idea of urbanism stood upon the assumption that a planner as a social scientist could discover regular norms and patterns of human behavior that accompany the activities of work, leisure, food gathering and so forth, then use that standardized information to alter the physical environment in order consciously to make some of those patterns of behavior more efficient and more pleasant. Just as Taylor dissected the movements of workers shovelling coal into a blast furnace into a dozen micro-motions in the productive process, the urban engineer delineated the different types of trips between

²¹Sutcliffe, *Towards the Planned City*, p. 155.

²²Jean-Claude Vigato, "Notes sur la question stylistique: France, 1900-1940", *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, p. 128.

residences, work sites, shopping and civic activities for members of the community and then allocated the local roads accordingly.²³

Preservation

The preservation movement in Paris began as a reaction to Haussmann's destruction of much of the medieval city, and the 1902 bylaws which advocated demolition of insalubrious buildings. The appearance at the turn of the century of the Art Nouveau style in design also supported the retention of irregular old buildings for their contribution to the picturesque quality of the cityscape. A preservation campaign for the old quarter of Montmartre was successful, an effort which included the participation of many artists living there. Public interest in preservation also increased as a result of the publication of magazines and books. A journal, *La Cité*, was established in 1901, of which fifty issues had appeared by 1923. Historical organizations were founded, such as the Centre de Paris Society (1912), which fought against demolition, and the Tuileries Committee (1911), which protested "excessive" heights. The appeal was obviously to an educated middle class. Preservation was mainly supported by leisured professional people and not followed by inhabitants of the buildings targeted for destruction.²⁴

During the two decades before the first world war, a compromise was reached in Paris between the interests of modernization and preservation. In response to public attention, preservationists moderated their views. Many stressed the double task of conserving older works and planning the contemporary city. Sutcliffe has written, "The support of all sections of the press also helped to make preservation respectable. Most newspapers were not strongly committed to the cause, but any controversy in which individuals opposed blind administrative or financial forces made good copy."²⁵ .

The major reason for the narrowing of the gulf between the preservationist-scholar and the developer-businessman was tourism. The Paris Exposition of 1889 had established the city as a world pleasure center. In 1900, new levels of international, middle-class tourism were recorded, and Paris emerged as the unrivalled cultural tourist capital. The success of the regular international exhibitions and improved international transportation led to a record 300,000 tourists in 1913. Hotels were improving, and suddenly it made sound business sense to preserve the environmental beauty of Paris. Historic buildings were

²³Phillips, p. 12.

²⁴Sutcliffe, *Autumn*, pp. 192-206.

²⁵Sutcliffe, *Autumn*, p. 210.

inventoried between 1917 and 1924 as a coordinated effort between the Prefect, the Old Paris Committee and the Extension of Paris Committee.²⁶

According to Anthony Sutcliffe in *The Autumn of Central Paris*:

Because it [the City] had already admitted that preservation of the city's character and appearance was desirable, it was later able to disguise stagnation and ossification as municipal planning policy. Moreover, the power of private interests to modernize the city centre was also limited in later years as a result of decisions taken before 1914. The year 1902 saw the last attempt to modify the building regulations applying to the city centre in order to allow the larger constructions which the introduction of steel and concrete framing had made possible. If there had been no opposition, height restrictions might later have been relaxed still further. But the success of a movement of public opinion in resisting these small changes meant that a building ceiling which had been established in the 18th century would continue to apply in central Paris. *This, as much as any other factor, ensured that the buildings of Central Paris would remain virtually undisturbed for many decades to come.*²⁷

Commercialism and the Avant-Garde

The Industrial Revolution, among its many impacts on modern life, dramatically changed the ways in which people worked for and spent their pay. A proliferation of industrially-manufactured and prepared consumables appeared in stores that replaced more localized food, clothing and furnishings. The seller was no longer the fabricator. Competing product manufacturers were required to distinguish their products in order to attract buyers. Labels and logos, packaging and advertising developed as illustrated in Peter Behrens work for AEG. Marketing was born and a gulf created between image and product.²⁸ In France, "De 1886 à 1920, le nombre de marques déposées... passe de 5,520 à 25,000, et seule la publicité peut les aider à se faire connaître."²⁹ By the 1920s, "Les marchandises n'étaient pas vendues, elles étaient achetées. Le problème était, non de vendre, mais de produire, non de créer la demande, mais de la satisfaire."³⁰ The impact of this new commercial culture cannot be underestimated in its reach into all facets of 20th century life. Citizens of industrialized countries in the past century have transformed the way they absorb and process information: "Le rôle de la couleur et des formes pures dans la décoration des boutiques, dans les panneaux-réclames, les affiches, le cinéma, fut de

²⁶Sutcliffe, *Autumn*, pp. 296-7.

²⁷Sutcliffe, *Autumn*, pp. 211-12.

²⁸Francois Burkhardt, "Au plaisir des sens", in *Art & Pub*, (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1990), p. 66.

²⁹Anne Saint Dreux, "Un siècle de publicité" in *Art & Pub*, p. 79.

³⁰Saint Dreux, in *Art & Pub*, p. 76.

réaliser une sorte de langage nouveau plus direct, plus rapide que toutes les explications ou les descriptions réalistes possibles."³¹

The precursor to the modern advertising agency was a firm that specialized in buying ad space in major newspapers and journals. In the 1850s in Paris, Charles Duveyrier, a saint-simonien, was the first entrepreneur to offer space-buying services. Agencies limited their services to space-buying and press relations until the 1930s when complete advertising agencies were formed to create ads for marketing mass-consumption products, including creative direction and ad production, media planning and account management.³²

The relationship between art and publicity from the late-nineteenth century to the present was recently the subject of a major exhibit—"Art & Pub"—at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. The commercialization of fine art—star artists, exorbitant prices, gallery business—has proved a topic of concern and discussion, especially during the 1980s; but as early as 1855, Ingres criticized the institution of the Salon in Paris as a market where "l'industrie règne à la place de l'art" and, later, "Gustave Courbet, Auguste Rodin, Edouard Manet utilisent précocement le cadre des Expositions universelles pour, selon la formule de Rodin, 'soumettre au public' leur production."³³

As disciplines, art and publicity design remained separate but harmonious forces during the years of the turn of the century. In 1910, however, a great divide occurred with the collages of Braque and Picasso, which employed clippings of newspaper ads and, consequently, the possibility to interpret their work as critical commentary on commercial culture. From here on, art would critique publicity, and artists would be forced to choose between fine art and commercial design. Art would become increasingly abstract and esoteric as publicity would seek directness and clarity (the current variety of subtlety and sophistication in advertising is a much more recent trend) in its verbal and graphic messages.

No longer could a Toulouse-Lautrec divide his work between poster design and fine art. Some artists, such as Henryk Belewi, a Polish constructivist, chose to focus on commercial design for the freedom of expression it permitted: "La publicité n'était pas une fin en soi; au contraire, je la considérais comme le moyen de faire passer dans la société les

³¹Christian Derouet, "Leger et la publicité, ébauche d'un grand débat", in *Art & Pub*, p. 363.

³²Jacques Lendrevie, "L'Agence de publicité vers l'entreprise de communication", in *Art & Pub*, p.520-22.

³³Anne Baldessari, "Du commerce des signes", in *Art & Pub*, p. 36.

idées révolutionnaires que j'avais alors en matière de création artistique. A cette époque, le public bourgeois s'opposait farouchement aux innovations radicales des arts plastiques."³⁴

Beyond the graphic practices of commercial advertising culture, techniques of promotion were soon adopted by artists allied to a particular movement. The Futurists employed a variety of public relations gestures to reach as wide an audience as possible. Affirming the inevitability of industrial production and modern lifestyles with optimism, they embraced the concept of publicity: "A leurs yeux, l'activité publicitaire n'était pas une forme inférieure de l'art mais bien une nouvelle expression esthétique née dans le cadre de la société industrielle, avec ses formules qu'ils entendaient interpréter sur le plan créatif."³⁵

Among the Futurists' promotions was the publishing of their manifesto on page one of *Le Figaro* on February 2, 1909. They also hosted a series of soirées during which they showed their art, read theoretical tracts and poetry. The scandals resulting from these evenings—especially recitations of *mots libres*—provided free publicity in the next day's newspapers, a precursor of Dadaist techniques.³⁶ Additionally, their writings were spread to larger, popular audiences with anywhere from 2,000 to 20,000 copies sent by mail, thrown from cars and planes. International exposure was sought through translations of their work in different languages.³⁷

In French architecture and urban design between the wars, right meant traditionalist and left meant modernist.³⁸ As we have seen earlier in this chapter, however, left-wing reformers were motivated more by a desire to combat the threat of socialism, than to institute egalitarian social, political and economic conditions in a participative society. As early as 1901, Jean Lahor linked social reform to the development of a modern aesthetic—art *for* the masses, not art *by* the masses—all in order to save art and pacify society.³⁹

The Exposition des Arts Décoratifs was extremely important for Modernism as it not only illustrated the schism between art deco and Modernism, but also represented an official consecration of the movement by its presence and establishment organizers. By 1930, a

³⁴Henryk Belewi, cited by Eckhard Neumann, "De l'enseignement du Bauhaus au métier de graphiste", in *Art & Pub*, p. 307.

³⁵Claudia Salaris, "Le futurisme et la publicité", in *Art & Pub*, p. 180.

³⁶Salaris, p. 181.

³⁷Salaris, p. 182.

³⁸Vigato, p. 126.

³⁹Vigato, p. 126.

second-level gulf would appear between two Parisian Modern architects: Perret who practiced architecture first as construction, a rational function, and Le Corbusier who practiced architecture first as art, a rational aesthetic.⁴⁰ Later in the 1930s, Le Corbusier's architecture would be labelled Bolshevist in opposition to the anti-Modern, nationalistic regionalism advocated by *Art National* and the articles of Camille Mauclair in *Le Figaro*.⁴¹

Summary

In this section, I have maintained that despite the plight of the poor in Paris, the public sector was slow to react and institute corrective and preventive techniques of urban planning. The city had stagnated by following the old plan of Haussmann through the turn of the century, World War I arrested any potential progress during the teens, and the financial crisis created a freeze on infrastructure spending throughout the 1920s. These forces against change were reinforced by confusion over the rights of private property, and a general disinterest in urban problems and the plight of the less fortunate among middle- and upper-class Parisians, and a lack of governmental authority. Responsibility for worker living conditions fell on the shoulders of the industrialists, who rarely took action.

The theories of Saint-Simon and Taylor strengthened each other as forces to maintain power in the upper classes and domination over the workers. They also provided a set of ideas that all political factions could rally around in unison. The Musée Social and other private, intellectual groups preached conservative reform of working class and city conditions more as a deterrent against civil unrest than as a genuine, humanitarian act. When acts of *urbanisme* finally began to be instituted by government, the efforts were piecemeal and reactionary, as opposed to synergistic and forward-looking. France's award-winning urban designers were rarely called upon to suggest new approaches.

The forces of preservation posed a challenge to the demolition of old neighborhoods and new construction. Despite improvements in building materials and techniques, Parisian developers were limited to seven stories. The preservation movement was validated by the increasing tourist trade which led businessmen to agree that preservation made good economic sense.

⁴⁰Vigato, p. 128.

⁴¹Vigato, p. 130.

Industrial production and surplus resulted in new systems for buying and selling goods in the marketplace. Marketing and public relations developed to differentiate products, creating an image separate from reality. While commercial design was and continues to be influenced by avant-garde art, as early as 1910 it was criticized by and isolated from fine art as a separate discipline. Certain avant-garde movements, however, adopted many promotional techniques from the new practice of marketing in order to reach ever-larger audiences. Radically-new ideas, words and images found their way into commercial culture; and for the success of these concepts, promotion was, as it continues to be today, imperative.

III: THE PLAN VOISIN

In this chapter I will examine the Plan Voisin from the dual perspectives of its content and the vehicles used in its promotion. The section on content attempts to gauge the attraction of the plan based purely on its physical design in order to evaluate how well its substantive features fit the needs and desires of its audience. Sections B-1, -2 and -3—*L'Esprit Nouveau*, the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau and *Urbanisme*, respectively—explore Le Corbusier's vehicles for promoting the Plan Voisin. As founding partner of the journal, *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Le Corbusier was in a position to interact intensively with the commercial and intellectual communities in Paris, develop his personal reputation as an avant-garde innovator allied to industry, and write his first published works on urban design and city planning. This activity set the stage for his presentation of the Plan Voisin at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs and in *Urbanisme*.

A. CONTENT

The Plan Voisin was built upon the foundations of the Ville Contemporaine, a city for three million inhabitants that Le Corbusier had first presented at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in 1922.¹ (Fig. 5) At the Salon, he also showed a "Première esquisse du plan d'aménagement du centre de Paris", the Plan Voisin's first incarnation. As a result of the Ville Contemporaine, Le Corbusier enjoyed his first recognition *as an architect* from the architecture establishment in France and the bourgeoisie as indicated by the press coverage he received.² The following year, the Société Française des Urbanistes invited him to the Congrès International d'Urbanisme in Strasbourg where "certaines des rues perspectives qui figuraient le centre d'une ville contemporaine viennent maintenant illustrer la Première Esquisse".³ The Plan Voisin was, therefore, developed over a period of at least three years.

In terms of the bourgeois and avant-garde readership of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Le Corbusier was by 1922 "déjà fort connu pour ses théories" according to Amédée Ozenfant.⁴ He had received many letters in response to the Salon d'Automne and articles in *L'Esprit Nouveau* during 1923-1925. The contents of these letters ranged from potential clients asking for

¹Francesco Passanti, "The Skyscrapers of the Ville Contemporaine," in *Assemblage 4*, (1987), p. 62.

²Francesco Passanti, research notes.

³Jacques Lucan, ed., "Le cas Le Corbusier", *Les Cahiers de la Recherche Architecturale*, (Vol. 5, 1980), p. 11.

⁴Amédée Ozenfant, *Mémoires, 1886-1962*, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1968), p. 123.

house designs (a Belgian sculptor moving to Paris with his wife and child) to more specific requests for information (how to build a roof garden so the roof would not leak).⁵ During 1924, Le Corbusier worked to assemble buyers for the Villa La Roche-Jeanneret property, a rather frustrating process. In general, one might say he was extremely busy between his responsibilities at *L'Esprit Nouveau*, his painting and architecture. It appears amazing that he managed to devote the time necessary to design a new Paris.

Le Corbusier insisted on planning for the city center as opposed to suggesting a new location of activity on the outskirts of Paris because he believed that the center formed the hub of a multi-spoked wheel, lines of almost mystically-symbolic convergence that had not changed through history. He therefore substituted a new center in place of the old center in exactly the same spot. The plan is L-shaped in form and covers approximately two square miles of the Right Bank of Paris. (Fig. 6 & 7) If we begin at the lower-left corner of the plan, it begins at the juncture of Avenue de Marigny and Rue de Rivoli, parallel to the Champs Elysées. From there it can be traced north to the St. Augustin Church at Boulevard Malesherbes, east to approximately the Bourse, north again to Rue Lafayette, east across the front of the Gare de l'Est and traversing the Canal Saint-Martin, south through the Place de la République to Rue de Rivoli, and, finally west along the length of the Rue de Rivoli.

It was basically composed of two rectangles: the western rectangle was to be residential, cultural and governmental in program; the eastern rectangle was to be a centralized office tower district of eighteen skyscrapers, whose footprints would cover only five percent of the land. The regularly-spaced towers were set into a landscape of parks, grass, trees and organically-drawn pedestrian paths. A multi-level (grade-separated) interchange servicing all modes of public transportation—trunk, commuter and subway lines, as well as an airport—would converge at the center of the plan, between the business and residential districts. (Fig. 8) Rarely would people enter Paris from the necklace of *portes* marking the old ring of fortifications. The "door" to the new city would be the centrally located transportation interchange.

In addition to public transportation, the plan was designed for the exponential growth of automobile circulation. Besides an elevated autostrada twenty kilometers in length that would bisect Paris from east to west, a new, rectilinear street system, separated from

⁵Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC), A1 (5) II and A1 (5) 24.

pedestrian routes by grade, would replace the less rational, narrow and curving streets of medieval origin. Le Corbusier thereby sought to prevent danger to pedestrians while providing generously-dimensioned streets to accommodate traffic. In general, he viewed the old "corridor" streets as oppressively narrow, dark and dangerous and wished to open much wider vistas to both walkers and drivers. This may have been perceived as particularly useful given that few driving regulations had by then been codified.

In the business district, "crystal towers", cruciform in plan, would rise 200 meters or approximately 60-stories. Clad in glass, they would be spaced at intervals of 400 meters to avoid the more densely-sited urban fabric of Manhattan. The open space would ensure views from the offices of the landscaping below, and each tower would have roof gardens for lunch and after-work activities. — a new zone for Manhattan skyscrapers

It was the vertical rise of the skyscrapers that Le Corbusier planned to replace the horizontal congestion of Paris. Both density and open space would be achieved. Le Corbusier calculated that the actual density of the land in question would increase from 300 to 1,300 inhabitants per acre.

While the traditional remedy of planners ever since Ebenezer Howard had been decentralization and spread, Le Corbusier proposes concentration and increased densities. He shares with the Garden City Movement a profound belief in the salutary effects of natural surroundings upon urban man, yet he also believes in urban density as the premise of cultural progress, and he thus rejects the reformist trends toward the limitless expansion and multiplication of individual homes... If the modern metropolis no longer works, it should be brought back under architectural control, equipped with proper tools, and remain a cultural and architectural 'whole' clearly distinct from its rural surroundings.⁶

The business district was an affirmation of the central importance of both private industry and the city population's need for trees, lawns, sunlight, air and less noise. Le Corbusier even planned that the earth excavated from the tower construction would be used to create artificial hills in the parks. The architecture's abundance of bays and recesses was designed to provide maximum sight lines to the natural surroundings and to allow ample sunlight to enter work and living spaces.

Intermittently sited between the skyscrapers would be triple-tiered pedestrian malls of stepped terraces. (Subways would connect all the skyscrapers to each other and the larger

⁶Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 191.

city system.) The lower levels would be landscaped with fountains and house sidewalk cafes. The next level up would contain shops, restaurants and clubs, while the uppermost garden terrace would be open to the sky and serve as quiet pedestrian streets. These horizontal complexes between the vertical masses would be designated for entertainment and culture.

It is important to note that built into the Plan Voisin was a strictly-separated housing system that divided the business elites from the workers, most graphically-illustrated in how the inhabitants were expected to pass their leisure time. The *immeuble-villas* of the bourgeoisie were sited in the western, residential portion of the L-shaped plan. This elite housing system, non-profit and cooperatively-owned, was composed of low-rise apartment buildings containing two-story, luxury units. The design of the units ensured privacy similar to an individual, free-standing home; but their assemblage in steel-framed complexes promoted convenience in communal services which Le Corbusier imagined as building maintenance, housekeeping and food shopping. The *immeuble-villas'* proximity to the business, shopping, governmental services, cultural institutions and night life essentially reserved these facilities for the elites.

By contrast, Le Corbusier did not elaborate on worker housing in the Plan Voisin. He did mention that the profits gained from increased central Paris land values would fund new worker housing construction. In the *Ville Contemporaine*, he indicates that workers would reside in collectively-owned *cité-jardins* outside the center. Le Corbusier described garden apartments with lawns for instant access to recreation, sports fields and gardens. The architecture would be designed for factory assembly with a more efficient use of space, i.e., smaller than the *immeuble-villas*. Oversized windows would provide maximum sunlight and ventilation. As noted in Chapter II, many perceived the scarcity of light and air as the source of disease in lower class *îlots*. Given the difficulties of the poor living in Paris, with little or no plumbing, heating and electricity, the new housing was a positive, if unoriginal, aspect of the plan. Le Corbusier imagined eight hours of liberty to contrast with one's more banal eight hours of labor, and wished to provide clubs, concert halls and cafes as alternative places of relaxation. In this sense, Le Corbusier's thinking is similar to Marx's in the search for a more varied and enriching life for workers.

Le Corbusier evidently predicted much opposition to the plan from the preservationists who would be shocked by its scale and the demolition of the old Right Bank neighborhoods. Selected monuments and buildings were, therefore, identified as valuable cultural treasures:

the Louvre, the Arc de Triomphe and the Place de la Concorde, all of which actually remained outside the plan's limits; the Palais Royal; the Place des Vosges, which Le Corbusier admired himself; and, certain townhouses and churches, such as St. Martin and St. Merry. Stripped of their ancient urban fabric, these structures would be preserved like museum pieces in the green carpet of the skyscrapers and low-rises that one would come upon while walking the curved paths of the parks. It is interesting to note that Le Corbusier also defended his work as traditional in the sense that all "great" urban design and architecture brought drastic change and was considered bold in the time of its creation. In this light, he asserted that his Plan Voisin would be in harmony with the past.

Although he seemed aware of the massive effort that would be required to realize the Plan Voisin, Le Corbusier believed that a simple profit motive would convince industrial leaders of his plan. Instead of planning for a public, governmentally-headed development, a private consortium of investors backed by banks and corporations would purchase all the property within the bounds of the plan, raze the existing structures and build the eighteen skyscrapers to replace them. Density was the key. He put forth a basic formula which Robert Fishman has likened to the imaginary accounting of Ebenezer Howard in prediction of windfall gains. Le Corbusier reasoned that if the existing land values equalled "A", and Haussmann's rebuilding at the *same* density resulted in an increase of five times the value, "5A", then his own proposition to build to at an *increased* density would equal "4 x 5A". The surplus profit from increased land values—after paying off demolition and construction—would even pay for the building of the workers' *cité-jardins* .

Paris would become the world's foremost city of administration. The centralization of business—a brain center—was very much in alignment with prevailing ideas of scientific management and faith in the private sector. Low-rise government buildings were abandoned to the residential quarter, perhaps in anticipation of their hoped-for decreasing utility. The skyscrapers were the headquarters of elite industrialists, those who would administer industrial production to the benefit of all, and dissolve the need for a public sector.

In his logistics for presenting the plan, "Le Corbusier believed his mission was to convert the elite. His plans must reach the heads of the French organizations he then respected most—the large corporations—and inspire the key decision-makers. He began by

presenting the plan for Paris to chief executives of the major automobile companies."⁷ After unsuccessfully attempting to persuade André Citroën and Louis Renault to sponsor the plan's printing and exhibition costs at the upcoming Exposition des Arts Décoratifs, he convinced Gabriel Voisin of the Voisin Aircraft Company (which maintained an automobile manufacturing division, as well) to foot the bill along with Henri Frugès, an industrialist from Bordeaux. The name "Voisin" was particularly fortuitous: not only was the company a manufacturer of modern cars and planes, thus affirming the modern nature of the urban design, but "voisin" also means "neighbor" in French, a word that conjured up ideals of peaceful and pleasant urban living, made of people as well as architecture.

In sum, the physical aspects of the Plan Voisin attempted to balance a rigid, geometrical infrastructure and architecture with a more natural lay-out of parklands. The clean, modern massing of the architecture would not necessarily appeal to a population still wedded to ornamentation and neo-classicism, styles which continued to be built through the 1930s. The division of sectors—business, elite residential, industrial, worker garden city—may have been attractive to Taylorist-minded citizens and those who desired to live and work with their own class. As noted in Chapter II, many French would have concurred. The emphasis on speed and transportation may have appeared cold and machine-like, but the alleviation of traffic and provision of safe pedestrian paths may have won followers. And, finally, the provision of healthy, modern worker housing and abundant natural landscapes would have appealed to the reform-minded group. Thus, while many may have approved one or another aspect of the design, I believe few Parisians of 1925 would have supported the entire package of the Plan Voisin. Le Corbusier would attempt to compensate for this by appealing to specific groups—who he perceived to be the decision-makers—through calculated methods of promotion: the journal, the exhibit and the book.

⁷Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), p. 211.

B. PRESENTATION

I now begin a discussion of the vehicles of promotion Le Corbusier utilized for the Plan Voisin: the journal he co-published and -edited with Amédée Ozenfant, *L'Esprit Nouveau*; the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau which he built for the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs; and, his book on city planning, *Urbanisme*. A number of articles in *L'Esprit Nouveau* written by Le Corbusier—beginning in volume 17 of June 1922 and coinciding with the Salon d'Automne and the Ville Contemporaine—address issues of city planning directly and form the basis for *Urbanisme*. In Part 3 of this section, I will go into some detail on those articles which became chapters. In this part, I wish to analyze the journal, *L'Esprit Nouveau*, for its general character as a liaison between industry and the avant-garde in the commercial context of Paris, and its importance as a promotional vehicle for Le Corbusier's career.

1. *L'Esprit Nouveau*

Twenty-eight issues of *L'Esprit Nouveau* were published between 1920 and 1925. As early as 1920, 249 bookstores sold *L'Esprit Nouveau*: 238 in France; one each in Madagascar and Algeria; four in Tunisia; and five in Morocco.¹ As the journal became more well known, its international circulation increased. Issue #19 (December 1923) printed an impressive world map showing by dots the many global destinations of the journal. The maximum printing of any issue was 3,500, but it usually hovered around 3,000. Twenty-five percent of the journal's approximately 600 subscribers were artists (painters and sculptors), the rest were professionals—architects, engineers, doctors, lawyers, bankers, industrialists—31% of whom Le Corbusier claimed were industrialists. Architects represented a mere 8%. Only between June 1922 and November 1923 was the publication interrupted due to financial difficulties. The journal was funded by its founders aided by outside support, namely Swiss bankers and industrialists like Charles-Edouard Muller, Raoul La Roche, Jean-Pierre de Montmollin, Ernest Gutzwiller and Emile Lafuma, contacts made by Le Corbusier.²

¹FLC, A1 (1), I-VIII.

²Francoise Ducros, "L'Esprit Nouveau: Pages Choiesies, Histoire et Personnalités" in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Le Corbusier et L'Industrie, 1920-1925*, (Strasbourg: Ernst & Sohn, 1987), p. 164.

The fourth issue (January 1921)—following the departure of Paul Dermée from the journal—sported a new subtitle on the masthead: "Revue international d'esthétique" changed to "Revue illustrée de l'activité contemporaine". Below this were listed the following disciplines treated in the journal's articles: "Littérature, architecture, peinture, sculpture, musique; sciences pures et appliquées; esthétique expérimentale, esthétique de l'ingénieur, urbanisme; philosophie, sociologie, économique, sciences morales et politiques; vie moderne, théâtre, spectacles, sports, faits."

Le Corbusier and Ozenfant were the first members of the avant-garde art world to endorse industrial methods. And, "Among French architects of the early twenties only Perret and Garnier, both illustrated in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, shared his [Le Corbusier's] interest in new industrial methods."³ In order to give the impression that more writers than Le Corbusier and Ozenfant wrote on the subjects that interested them, the two wrote under many pseudonyms originating from their respective families: Saugnier, Vauvrecy, De Fayet, Boulard, Caron, Docteur Saint-Quentin.⁴ *L'Esprit Nouveau* did have its proper orientation and Ozenfant has written in his *Mémoires*, "Naturellement, je n'aurais pas imprimé des textes qui eussent nui ou tenté de nuire à notre mouvement."⁵

Ce qu'ils veulent faire, les deux amis, c'est de l'action, et émouvoir le grand public. Dans leurs écrits, les subtilités de la forme ne sont pas, on le voit bien, ce qui les occupe en premier lieu. La maxime, le slogan, les assemblages des mots voyants sont des procédés auxquels ils ont volontiers recours, *comme pour une campagne de publicité*.⁶

Beyond the articles written by Le Corbusier and Ozenfant, however, the list of contributors to *L'Esprit Nouveau* over the years is extremely impressive.⁷ Naturally, the contributors, footnoted below, are people with whom Le Corbusier would have had fairly close contact, either through their submissions to the journal or as encountered previously.

³Mary McLeod, "'Architecture or Revolution': Taylorism, Technocracy and Social Change", *Art Journal* (Summer 1983), p. 137.

⁴Francoise Ducros, p.165.

⁵Amédée Ozenfant, *Mémoires: 1886-1962*, (Paris: Editions Seghers, 1968), p. 130.

⁶Maximilien Gauthier, *Le Corbusier ou l'Architecture au service de l'homme*, (Paris: Denoël, 1944), p. 47.

⁷Aragon, Allendy, Arnaud, Aron, Beauvuin, Breton, Bissière, Basch, Birot, Bernier, Bongard-Poiret, Blumenfeld, Brunet, Budry, Cendrars, Cocteau, Cecchi, Chalupt, Chenevier, Chenoy, Christian, Coeuroy, Colin, Collet, H. de Courty, Darty, Delluc, Dermée, Delaisi, Dermenghem, Divoire, Domenech, Elouard, Faure, Fleuret, Fromaigeat, Gropius, Goll, Hella, Hollebecq, Hertz, Huidobro, Izdebska, Jacob, Jaworsky, Labadie, Lacaze-Duthiers, Laglenne, Laforgue, Labasque, Lededinsky, Lenoir, Lemaire, Lurçat, Le Becq, Lumiere, Lalo, Mancardi, Marinetti, Mallet, Miolner, Migot, Molnar, Monchanin, Neville, Nebesky, Paulhan, Podin, Prunieres, Picabia, Rathenau, Raynal, Recht, de Reynold, Satie, Savinio, Severini, Siblik, Soudeba, Sutta, Thuile, Tokine, Titeano, Tzara, Vuillermoz, Weissman, Winter. This list was found in Ozenfant, *Mémoires*, pp. 129-130.

Mary McLeod has pointed out that Le Corbusier's role as a partner in *L'Esprit Nouveau* was far from apolitical. She lists three inevitably political elements to the journal's objectives: the endorsement of modern technology and accompanying social change; its internationalist orientation; and the commitment to land reform.⁸ Even a separate issue devoted to economics and politics was once published.

L'Esprit Nouveau possessed a non-radical appeal that condoned the social and physical separation of classes. As McLeod has written, "*L'Esprit Nouveau* was unabashedly oriented towards Le Corbusier's future tower occupants."⁹ In stressing material results over parliamentary procedure, the journal was very much in alignment with Saint-Simon and Taylor. In terms of leadership, she has noted, "Throughout *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Le Corbusier alternated between naively wishing for implementation and urging authoritarian control... Almost all political groups voiced in some variation Le Corbusier's demand for a stronger executive."¹⁰

In *L'Esprit Nouveau*, we see Le Corbusier as probably the first architect, and certainly the first urban designer, to really understand the role of the media. He took responsibility for the management of the journal, its financing and relationships to advertisers. During this time, he collected many product catalogues and brochures from automobile, airplane, office furniture, clothing, watch and industrial machine manufacturers. Many photos from these sources later appeared in *L'Esprit Nouveau* and in his books published by Crès. His work at publicizing the journal conditioned him, within the burgeoning commercial society of Paris in the 1920s, to embark upon promotions of his own work in an informed way.

In his agendas, there are several references to "Pub" attesting to his responsibility for selling space in the journal.¹¹ Beatriz Colomina reports that as an interesting strategy, Le Corbusier would sometimes reproduce a product or ad of some manufacturer in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, then send the journal to the company requesting payment! Although this tactic did not always work, it did in some cases result in an advertising contract or other graphic design project, as in the case for the company called Innovation. Here, Le Corbusier was hired to compile a product catalogue for the firm. The contract read: "M. Jeanneret établira lui-même, la rédaction du texte et fixera le choix des images qui devront l'accompagner de

⁸McLeod, p. 137.

⁹McLeod, p. 139.

¹⁰McLeod, p. 139.

¹¹FLC, F3 (3) X, XI.

manière a vous fournir les éléments d'un catalogue pouvant influencer favorablement la clientèle et particulièrement M.M. les architectes."¹²

In many such cases, Le Corbusier would insert his own work for self-promotion. In several ads in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, the architecture of Le Corbusier was used if it contained the product, such as in ads for G. Summer and Euboolith. In taking this strategy a step further, Le Corbusier was even capable of rendering his unbuilt work more tangible. In the *Almanach d'Architecture Moderne* three ads contained photos or *drawings* of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau. This is a remarkable accomplishment in the early advertising age: to make believable through the medium of advertising an idea or product that does not actually exist.¹³

Thus for Le Corbusier, industrial ad takers represented both economic support of the journal and, through association, a multiplying effect due to their name's mass recognition. The new products and ideas in *L'Esprit Nouveau* came to be associated with the name Le Corbusier.

Si Le Corbusier était en 1920 un 'entrepreneur', il l'était surtout en tant que chef des relations publiques de sa revue. Les contacts avec des entreprises en tous genres, depuis les grands magasins jusqu'aux entreprises de construction et aux maisons spécialisées dans les installations de bureaux, en passant par les fabricants d'automobiles, étaient décisifs pour l'édification de cette plate-forme à partir de laquelle Le Corbusier commença à agir comme architecte et comme pamphlétaire aux alentours de 1920.¹⁴

He began to receive many letters from potential clients asking for information or suggesting a possible commission. The increased courting of this professional clientele opened doors for Le Corbusier and contributed to his ebbing interest in continuing to publish the journal. Gauthier has written that eventually, "Jeanneret ne s'intéressant guère, au fond, qu'à faire connaître ses thèses personnelles sur l'architecture, la peinture, la sculpture, l'art décoratif, l'urbanisme. Là, sa responsabilité est entière, et il la revendiquerait au besoin."¹⁵

Between 1922 and 1925, Le Corbusier became absorbed in his work independent from Ozenfant, which, I believe, was largely composed of creating a doctrine of city planning

¹²FLC, A1 (17).

¹³Beatriz Colomina, "Architecture et publicité" in *Le Corbusier: une encyclopédie*, (Paris: Centre Pompidou/CCI, 1987), p. 143.

¹⁴Moos, Stanislaus von, "Dans l'Antichambre du 'Machine Age'", in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Le Corbusier et L'Industrie, 1920-1925*, (Strasbourg: Ernst & Sohn, 1987), p. 22.

¹⁵Gauthier, p. 46.

for the *Ville Contemporaine* and the *Plan Voisin*. *L'Esprit Nouveau* acted as a major forum for his ideas on city planning, and established his reputation as a major architectural innovator, urbanistic thinker and literary force.

Commenting on the end of both *L'Esprit Nouveau* and his relationship with Le Corbusier, Ozenfant wrote in his *Mémoires*:

Si nous avions encore une fois joint nos efforts, nous aurions sans doute réussi à renflouer le journal; mais le plus grave était que cela ne tournait plus du tout rond entre nous. Jusque-là, Jeanneret-Le Corbusier ne s'était guère mêlé de la direction de la revue. L'Exposition des arts décoratifs approchait et il voulait s'y manifester — ce qu'il fit magistralement, malgré de violentes oppositions, avec le Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau. Mais en faisant cavalier seul.¹⁶

¹⁶Ozenfant, p. 129.

2. The Esprit Nouveau Pavilion

The first public exhibit of the Plan Voisin was at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1925. (Fig. 9 & 10) In heretical contrast to the title and supposed goals of the Exposition, Le Corbusier described the program of his Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau as follows:

the rejection of decorative art as such, accompanied by an affirmation that the sphere of architecture embraces every detail of household furnishing, the street as well as the house, and a wider world still beyond both... The Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau was... designed as a typical cell-unit in... a block of multiple villa-flats. It consisted of a minimum dwelling with its own roof-terrace. Attached to this cell-unit was an annex in the form of a rotunda containing detailed studies of town-planning schemes: two large dioramas, each a hundred square metres in area, one of which showed the 1922 'Plan for a Modern City of 3,000,000 Inhabitants'; and the other the 'Voisin Plan' which proposed the creation of a new business centre in the heart of Paris. On the walls were methodically worked out plans for cruciform skyscrapers, housing colonies with staggered lay-outs, and a whole range of types new to architecture that were the fruit of a mind preoccupied with the problems of the future.¹

Upon deciding to exhibit at the Exposition, Le Corbusier embarked upon an intensive effort to obtain financial support for a pavilion, and to enlist the assistance of building materials manufacturers to donate or offer at a reduced rate, their wares. After Le Corbusier failed to convince Citroën and Peugeot, Voisin donated 25,000 francs to the pavilion.

To illustrate the kind of strategic thinking in which Le Corbusier engaged to secure financial support, consider this letter of April 3, 1925, written to the Michelin Company regarding sponsorship of the Plan. He hoped for Michelin's sponsorship because he believed its broader, more popular audience would then visit the pavilion (the Voisin clientele were a much more exclusive group):

La présence du nom de Michelin dans notre étude lui confère un sens populaire considerable et nous permet de remuer plus profondément l'opinion que par les livres de Crès qui s'adressent forcément à une élite; or, dans l'état actuel des grandes villes, et en particulier de Paris, ce qu'il faut, c'est non pas essayer de toucher les personnalités haut placé que n'en veulent pas entendre parler, mais de provoquer un mouvement d'opinion général, venu de la masse et qui, fatalement, pésera sur la décision des pouvoirs publics.²

¹Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complète 1910-1929*, (Zurich: Dr. H. Girsberger, 1937), p. 104.

²FLC, A2 (13).

A standard letter contract written by Le Corbusier to building materials manufacturers—potential collaborators—is worth quoting at length in order to understand just how he maneuvered to realize the pavilion and how much promotional mileage he anticipated—using it in a variety of ways for cost-effective publicity. Unfortunately, only page two of the two-page letter remains in the archives at the Fondation Le Corbusier, but the message of the letter is essentially complete:

Cette publicité qui s'adresse aux innombrables visiteurs de l'Exposition Internationale sera d'autre part rendue plus effective par les moyens suivants:

- a) les Editions de L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU publieront un album spécial complet comportant toute l'analyse du pavillon qui sera répandu par nos moyens de librairie dans toutes les villes de France et de l'étranger. [the *Almanach d'Architecture Moderne*]
- b) La Revue de L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU consacrera plusieurs numéros à l'étude détaillée de ce pavillon; cette Revue touche une clientèle considérable en France et à l'étranger de professionnels et d'amateurs; ces amateurs constituent une clientèle d'élite.
- c) Chaque collaborateur aura droit à un emplacement mural dans le pavillon pour y développer l'essentiel de ses produits de plus, il sera constitué un petit stand de distribution de tous tracts et prospectus, publicité variée à la distribution des collaborateurs.

Enfin, deux sortes d'avantages sont réservées aux collaborateurs:

- 1°) Dans le cas d'une vente favorable du pavillon pour être reconstruit en banlieue, chaque collaborateur aura droit à une certaine ristourne proportionnée à son effort.
- 2°) Lors de la construction du grand immeuble-villa qui comporte une dizaine de millions de travaux, les collaborateurs seront considérés comme privilégiés lors des adjudications.
- 3°) Enfin le pavillon de L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU servant de démonstration à de nouveaux procédés de construire créés par M.M. Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret, architectes, les collaborateurs seront assurés de nouer d'importantes affaires avec le cabinet d'architecte de ces Messieurs.

La firme soussignée se déclare d'accord de participer dans les conditions ci-dessus énoncées à l'érection du pavillon de L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU, pour la fourniture _____ et se tient à la disposition de Mr. Le Corbusier, 35, Rue de Sèvres pour déterminer pratiquement les détails de sa collaboration.

Ainsi fait en double, Paris le ____ Mars 1925³

The following manufacturers, among others, responded: Euboolith (seamless flooring); G. Summer (reinforced concrete engineer); Raoul Decourt (isothermic wall contractor); Solomite (exterior walls and interior partitions); Siegwart (beams); Etablissements Boufferet (marquetry); Ruhlmann et Laurent (painting by spray method); Ronéo (doors); Cie. Lincrusta Wallon (furniture); Baillif, Chapapeaux & Joudoux (painting and

³FLC, A1 (5) 14.

renovation).⁴ (Fig. 11) Le Corbusier cultivated these contacts that in return served him well, not only in fabricating the pavilion but in providing leads to new clients. From at least one such circumstance, Baillif, Chadapeaux & Joudoux passed in a letter of 17 November 1925 written to Le Corbusier the name of a woman, Madame Pau, who visited the pavilion and wished to construct a similar dwelling in Arcachon. Le Corbusier followed up on the lead two days later.⁵

His ties to his building materials vendors is also illustrated in the fact that in 1924, he joined forces with the Ronéo Company to design a system of windows and doors in steel⁶, and with U.P., a series of standard modules of residential furnishings which were incorporated into the pavilion.⁷ In fact, the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs was a particularly appropriate venue to stress the ties between design and commercial concerns. This was the exposition for which André Citroën hired Fernand Jacopozzi to extravagantly illuminate the Eiffel Tower with a dynamic program of over 200,000 bulbs fueled by a 900 kilowatt transformer. On July 14, three sides of the tower were lit.

They include a shower of blue stars which turn into comets, a red flame which engulfs the third platform, the name 'Citroën' spread out over the whole tower, the signs of the zodiac on the pillars of the first platform, the double chevron (the Citroën trademark), and two dates: 1889-1925. The programme lasts for forty seconds and can be seen forty kilometers (25 miles) away, and will be used as a beacon by Lindbergh for his landing in Paris. Although, strictly speaking, not a part of the Decorative Arts Exposition, the tower as illuminated by Jacopozzi, becomes its symbol.⁸

Despite the extensive efforts put forth to create the pavilion, Le Corbusier suffered continual setbacks, mainly from the organizers of the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs. The best-known and most often quoted by Le Corbusier was on May 26, the day after the pavilion construction began. Apparently, the organizers built a six-meter high, leaf-colored fence that completely blocked the view of the unfinished and already mal-sited pavilion. The following day, Le Corbusier wrote a grievance letter to the head of the Exposition noting that two half-dressed prostitutes were, in plain view, offering their services to passers-by on the central speaker's platform of the Exposition, and that perhaps the public, especially foreigners, might be more offended by this spectacle than the on-going

⁴Le Corbusier, *L'Almanach d'Architecture Moderne*, (Paris: Crès, 1926), p.133.

⁵FLC, A1 (5), 77-78.

⁶Jean Petit, *Le Corbusier lui-meme*, (Genève: Rousseau, 1970), p. 58.

⁷FLC, A1 (5), 3-4.

⁸Exhibit Explanation, Eiffel Tower Museum (first platform), Paris.

construction of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau.⁹ Le Corbusier later wrote in the *Oeuvre Complète*:

The Building Committee of the Exhibition made use of its powers to evince the most marked hostility to the execution of my scheme. It was only owing to the presence of M. de Monzie, then Minister of Fine Arts, who came to inaugurate the Exhibition, that the Committee agreed to remove the 18 ft. pallisade it had erected in front of the pavilion to screen it from public gaze. Notwithstanding that the international Jury of the Exhibition wished to bestow its highest award on this design of mine, its French vice-president--though a man of outstanding merit, who had himself been an *avant-garde* architect [Auguste Perret]—opposed the proposal on the ground that 'there was no architecture' in my pavilion!¹⁰

The invitation to the opening of the pavilion announced the presence of Anatole de Monzie, Ministre de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts, which lent the weight of a government official—a sort of official consecration of the pavilion's goals—aligned to the arts, despite the fact that the pavilion was antithetical to the art deco style of the exposition. The wording of the invitation boldly stated: "le Pavillon... est consacré à la réforme de l'habitation" and "principalement, du Plan Voisin". Le Corbusier also listed the illustrious names of avant-garde artists whose works were presented in the pavilion—Braque, Gris, Leger, Lipchitz and Picasso, along with Ozenfant and Jeanneret—thereby encouraging attendance of the art community. To exaggerate the rebellious nature of the pavilion, the bottom of the invitation stated, "Ce pavillon est le plus caché de l'Exposition."

The press was far from forgotten in efforts to attract visitors. Two short press releases were prepared, one stressing the pavilion as a housing prototype that would be sold "par adjudication" during the course of the exposition, the other geared specifically to the urban design wing and *l'urbanisme du centre de Paris*. (Fig. 12)

Le Corbusier, in his opening address for the pavilion, was careful to thank his sponsors, materials manufacturers, labor donors and artists, along with Monsieur de Monzie, for their support. He cited the work of *L'Esprit Nouveau* in first disseminating the ideas that the pavilion embraced. Without missing a beat, he made a plug for his four books published by Crès in the "Collection de l'Esprit Nouveau": *Vers une architecture, l'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui, la Peinture moderne, Urbanisme*. He completed his speech with emphasis on the Plan Voisin:

⁹FLC, A1 (5), 6.

¹⁰Le Corbusier, *Oeuvre Complète 1910-1929*, p. 104.

Avons-nous la force et le courage de construire de nouvelles villes? Les moyens sont là; nous avons les moyens techniques et financiers.

Par la reconstruction de nos villes nous nous sauverons du chaos, nous nous donnerons un cadre licite, nous sauverons nos corps de la fatigue et de l'usure. Nous donnerons à nos cœurs de la fierté. Mais si nous voulons savoir aller au fond de la question et jusqu'au bout, nous verrons qu'un acte de volonté claire peut, par la valorisation au décuple du sol du centre des grandes villes, constituer une mine d'inappréciables richesses.

Monsieur le Ministre je suis heureux que vous soyiez le premier à qui nous puissions remettre notre pavillon et signaler le 'Plan Voisin du Centre de Paris'.¹¹

With an equally ceremonial display of interest and good will appropriate to the moment, de Monzie responded to his audience upon examining the Plan Voisin:

Sachez bien que vous autres inventeurs devez sortir de votre isolement et répudier la méfiance que vous avez en les pouvoirs publics; vous devez rompre votre cercle fermé, vous devez venir à nous. Nous, nous sommes là pour examiner vos propositions, pour les confronter aux exigences du bien public. Nous sommes là pour vous aider...¹²

The Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau was well-planned for the passage of thousands of visitors. A narrow carpet marked the prescribed path through the housing prototype and metal rails blocked visitors from overstepping their path into the display space—both in the apartment and the city planning wing. (Fig. 13 & 14) Furniture, *objet-types* and art work were positioned to create the intentioned effects and views. It was masterfully art directed and frozen in a series of documentary photographs that contrast highly with Le Corbusier's more natural sketches of his envisioned *immeuble-villa* interiors. To accommodate the museum-like quality of the exhibit, furniture was, in some cases, set in less appropriate positions than the architecture would have more naturally ordained.

A number of photographic images of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau were published in the *Almanach d'Architecture Moderne* (1926) and the *Oeuvre Complète*, among other places. Here I would like to note Le Corbusier's mastery in manipulating photographic images for promotional purposes. In *Vers une architecture*, there are numerous examples of his cosmetically altering images to better communicate his points, such as the Villa Schwob photos which indicate subtle changes to the architecture and erasure of the context.

¹¹Le Corbusier, *L'Almanach*, p. 135.

¹²Anatole de Monzie, quoted in *L'Almanach*, p. 136.

I also have reason to believe that Le Corbusier expended tremendous energy in planning how his architecture would be photographed. In his agendas of 1924 and 1925 are several reminders to meet with Giraudon regarding photography of his built work, the Villas La Roche-Jeanneret and the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau. In many cases, Le Corbusier is planning a shot for a particular section of one of the Crès publications; even the page number in the future book is noted. For example, "Giraud photo jardin pavillon p. [pour] livre Urb page 177".¹³ A stunning photo later appeared of the garden on page 215 of the French edition. (Fig. 15) Le Corbusier seems to have planned in advance to multiply the promotional benefits of the actual built projects he was working on and completing. I have also found a page of his agenda from 1925 that contains a series of three sketches of the Villa La Roche that appear quite obviously to be camera angle sketches.¹⁴ The importance of this attention to presentation cannot be understated.

In "Le Corbusier et la photographie", Beatriz Colomina has written of Le Corbusier's early discovery of and apparent distaste for the deception in freezing space made possible by the camera. By the 1920s, Le Corbusier is turning the deceptive potential of photography to his advantage by both careful art direction of subject matter and camera angles, as well as isolation of objects—especially products as demonstrated in his articles and ads in *L'Esprit Nouveau*—in order to force a perspective on the viewer or catalyze a dialogue between words and pictures.

In 1926, Le Corbusier published the *Almanach d'Architecture Moderne* at Editions Crès. In the introduction he wrote that the book's purpose was to:

Rappeler le souvenir de l'oeuvre accomplie en commun, remercier ceux qui nous ont aidés, tel est le but de cet ouvrage. Faire connaître à ceux qui ont vu le pavillon, qui ont lu l'Esprit Nouveau ou les oeuvres de sa collection, la suite ordonnée de ces efforts. Montrer que ce simple auquel nous avons peut-être partiellement atteint, n'est pas indigence, mais concentration, sélection. Nous avons dressé à l'exposition internationale des Arts Décoratifs de Paris un pavillon de 400 mètres carrés. Ce livre est un témoignage de reconnaissance à ceux qui, petitement ou grandement, nous y ont aidés.¹⁵

Again, this vehicle served as valuable reinforcement to the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, long after it was disassembled in November 1925.

¹³FLC, F3 (4), II, 490.

¹⁴FLC, F3 (3), 516.

¹⁵Le Corbusier, *L'Almanach*, p. 4.

3. *Urbanisme*

It was Paul Lafitte who, in 1922, first thought of publishing a compilation of Le Corbusier's articles in book form. Lafitte worked with Jean Cocteau publishing Editions de la Sirène, at the time; and Le Corbusier, seeking a new source of funding for *L'Esprit Nouveau*, contacted Lafitte on the idea of merging with Sirène. Instead of agreeing to merge, Lafitte took an interest in the "Architecture ou Révolution" series of articles which eventually made up *Vers une architecture* (1923). Sirène was, during this time, taken over by Editions Crès and M. Besson assumed responsibility for the Le Corbusier project which eventually resulted in the remaining books in the L'Esprit Nouveau Collection being published.¹ *Urbanisme*, along with *L'Art décoratif d'aujourd'hui* and *La peinture moderne*, appeared in 1925. In the first Crès edition, 5790 copies were published.

The design of the L'Esprit Nouveau Collection books was uniform in typeface, black and white illustrations, organization (subdivided by parts and chapters) and cover lay-out, while the covers sported varying pastel shades and a dramatic, centered black and white photograph or diagram. The cover illustration for *Urbanisme* was a humorous cartoon plan of Paris, with its major access boulevards converging in a cloud of confusion at the city center and only rectilinear pieces of urban design—the île Saint-Louis, the Louvre and Tuileries, the Champs Elysées, the Ecole Militaire and Champ de Mars—visible through the disorder. (Fig. 16)

Urbanisme consists of sixteen chapters divided into three parts. The first part, "Débat général", is ten chapters long, nine of which are articles taken directly from issues 17-24 (June 1922 - June 1924) and issue 27 (November 1924) of *L'Esprit Nouveau*. The first two chapters, "Le chemin des ânes, le chemin des hommes" and "L'Ordre" are functionalist in their approach to urban design. With "Le sentiment déborde" and subsequent chapters, Le Corbusier begins to explore deeper impulses that distinguish rational, engineering minds from more poetic, artistic processes. He suggests that scientific methods of analysis and statistics are the necessary platform from which the creative genius takes off. The poet—read architect/urban designer—then engages in a more generative design process that incorporates beauty in its aspirations. Chapter 9, "Coupures de journaux" is primarily made up of fragments of newspaper articles that support Le Corbusier's warnings on the state of the city.

¹Francesco Passanti, notes.

In the remaining two sections, Le Corbusier returns to his functionalist stance. Part Two, "Un travail de laboratoire, une étude théorique"—three chapters long—presents "Une Ville contemporaine" which he first introduced to the public at the Salon d'Automne in Paris in 1922, then analyzes "L'Heure du travail" and "L'Heures du repos". "Un cas précis, le centre de Paris" is the third and final part of *Urbanisme*. It is the Plan Voisin.

As in his other books, Le Corbusier begins *Urbanisme* with an "Avertissement" of strong assertions. The French word "avertissement" means "warning" in the general sense, and "foreward" at the beginning of books. To English-speakers, it looks like "advertisement". All three meanings might be applied here. One of Le Corbusier's main writing techniques is the use of statements that give the impression of fact and leave no room for doubt. This was also a strategy used often in early advertising and played with by the Dadaists:

La ville est un outil de travail.
Les villes ne remplissent plus normalement cette fonction. Elles sont
inefficaces: elles usent le corps, elles contrecarrent l'esprit.
Le désordre qui s'y multiplie est offensant: leur déchéance blesse notre amour-
propre et froisse notre dignité.
Elles ne sont pas dignes de l'époque: elles ne sont plus dignes de nous.²

A second advertising technique employed in the above quote, and prevalent throughout *Urbanisme*, is the engagement of the speaker; but instead of using "Vous", Le Corbusier uses "Nous" as if we are all in this dilemma of urban planning together, i.e., WE must be concerned and find the solution.

He tries to awaken the reader with a series of optimistic statements implying the time has arrived to do something about the city—"Il vient une heure où une passion collective soulève une époque"³—then switches to a more quiet, personal tone as he recounts how he came to write *Urbanisme*. This brand of reader seduction is quite effective, going from passionate declarations to self-revealing confession. Apparently, he was working on the book in the relative calm of a Paris summer when the turn of the season to autumn was

²ALL TRANSLATIONS OF *URBANISME* TAKEN FROM: Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow*, transl. by Frederick Etchells, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971).

A Town is a tool.

Towns no longer fulfil this function. They are ineffectual; they use up our bodies, they thwart our souls. The lack of order to be found everywhere in them offends us; their degradation wounds our self-esteem and humiliates our sense of dignity.

They are not worthy of the age; they are no longer worthy of us.

³The moment comes when a widespread enthusiasm is capable of revolutionizing an epoch.

made most evident by the onslaught of dangerous, furious traffic that re-invaded the Paris streets which just twenty years before were "ours", i.e., one could walk without danger of getting run over. He skillfully evolves his initial reaction to the situation into awe at the power, speed and dawning of the automobile age. He even admits to the reader in a tone of confidentiality that he, too, once believed in *Sitte* and the picturesque. The *Avertissement* concludes with nationalistic, European-centric statements that bolster European intellectualism against the youthful energy of the United States: "Notre esprit nourri des siècles est alerte et inventif; sa force est dans la tête, tandis que l'Amérique a des bras solides et la noble sentimentalité de l'adolescence. Si en Amérique on produit et on sent, en Europe, on pense."⁴

Already, Le Corbusier has begun to play to his audience: those who share a hatred and fear of automobile traffic—an issue of great concern at the time; those who are quick to agree that something is wrong somewhere—here, it is the city; those who can be touched by a writer admitting he has changed his mind on a subject matter; and last but surely not least, those who share a sense of patriotism or pride in coming from a particular culture (European) that, admittedly, felt a great deal of competition from the rising, young empire of the United States.

"Le chemin des ânes, le chemin des hommes"—Chapter 1—is first a comparison of what Le Corbusier identifies as the curving, arbitrary path of the donkey and the straight, directed path of man. It is interesting to note that fifteen years earlier in an unpublished manuscript on city planning, Le Corbusier promoted just the opposite of efficient, rectilinear streets: the path of the donkey.⁵ Here, he presents the Imperial Roman *cardo* and *decumanus*, and the axial designs of Louis XIV as models, asserting that at certain times in history man aspires to geometrically-driven ideals in city form. Then, "tout doucement, par lassitude, faiblesse, anarchie, par le système des responsabilités 'démocratiques', l'étouffement recommence."⁶ As earlier pointed out in Chapter II of this paper, democracy remained a much-feared political system to the bourgeois class in France. Le Corbusier here implies that democracy results in a lazy and disordered society,

⁴Our spirits, nourished by past ages, are alert and inventive; their strength is in the head, while America's strength is in its arms and in the noble sentimentality of its youthfulness. If in America they feel and produce, here we think!

⁵H. Allen Brooks, "Jeanneret and *Sitte*: Le Corbusier's Earliest Ideas on Urban Design", in *In Search of Modern Architecture: A Tribute to Henry Russel Hitchcock*, ed. Helen Searing (New York: Architectural History Fdn., 1982), p.282.

⁶But imperceptibly, as a result of carelessness, weakness and anarchy, and by the system of 'democratic' responsibilities, the old business of overcrowding began again.

unfocused on maintaining its power. The theme reoccurs often in *Urbanisme* and accounts for its attraction to the largely bourgeois audience that would read the book.

The political inferences do not end there. Le Corbusier equates the straight line and organization with reason, and blames the recurrence of picturesque, curvilinear urban design on the Viennese (German-speaking) urban design theorist, Camillo Sitte. In a second demonstration of nationalism, he states, "Le mouvement est parti d'Allemagne." To fully understand the significance of this, one must know that Germany and France were long-time enemies and the devastation of World War I was far from forgotten: "Un peuple, une société, une ville nonchalants, qui se relâchent et se décontractent, sont vite dissipés, vaincus, absorbés par un peuple, une société qui agissent et se dominant. C'est ainsi que meurent des villes et que les hégémonies se déplacent."⁷

In the next chapter, "L'Ordre", Le Corbusier reassures that curves are German and straight lines are French: "l'histoire latine et particulièrement française est toute de droites et que les courbes sont plutôt en Allemagne et dans les pays du Nord, depuis toujours (le baroque, le rococo, le gothique désarticulé, jusqu'au trace des cités modernes)."⁸ M. Léandre Vaillat, writer for *Le Temps* and critic of Le Corbusier's *Ville Contemporaine*, is here (and elsewhere in the book) admonished for stating the contrary. The tone grows to an uninhibited, emotional conviction in Paris' inevitable destiny:

Paris, magma dangereux de foules accumulées, précipitées, annexées, campement séculaire des romanichels de toutes les grandes voutes du monde, Paris siège d'une puissance, foyer d'un esprit qui veut éclairer le monde, Paris sape et hache dans son maquis et de ses plaies tend vers une mise en ordre, droites et angles droites, organisation nécessaire à sa vitalité, à sa santé, à sa durée, mise en ordre indispensable à l'expression de son esprit qu'elle veut clair et de beauté.⁹

The opening illustration for Chapter 3 could easily serve as an advertisement for its title. "Le sentiment déborde" is accompanied by an exquisite photograph of the interior of the Pantheon. (Fig. 17) The encroachment of a great new epoch continues to be discussed

⁷A heedless people, or society, or town, in which effort is relaxed and is not concentrated, quickly becomes dissipated, overcome and absorbed by a nation or a society that goes to work in a positive way and controls itself. It is in this way that cities sink to nothing and that ruling classes are overthrown.

⁸Latin history, and French history especially, are full of straight lines; and that curves have always belonged rather to Germany and the countries of the North.

⁹Paris is a dangerous magma of human beings gathered from every quarter by conquest, growth and immigration; she is the eternal gypsy encampment from all the world's great roads; Paris is the seat of a power and the home of a spirit which could enlighten the world; she digs and hacks through her undergrowth, and out of these evils she is tending towards an ordered system of straight lines and right angles; this reorganization is necessary to her vitality, health and permanence; this clearing process is indispensable to the expression of her spirit, which is fundamentally limp and beautiful.

with a description of the march of the human race from early man creating a state of primary, inferior equilibrium in his environment, to a disequilibrium period in history when people are developing a culture, to the moment of apogee—the classical epochs when geometry reigns—when man has the strength and lucidity to draw straight lines. Le Corbusier contends that the 18th-century prepared the foundation for reason and the 19th-century experimented with the tools for creation in the 20th-century. He then generalizes on a few items: that the general, the communal, *the rule* must triumph over the disorder of fevered individualism; that we prefer Bach and the Pantheon to Wagner and the cathedral because of their order; that each of us needs a dwelling and a city; and that due to the laborious efforts of our fathers, the pursuance of Modernity is both our inheritance and our duty.

In "Pérennité", Le Corbusier crafts an indirect argument for the architect as savior of urban society by discussing the intellectual limitations of engineers and the wide-angle lens of the poet (I interpret architect). The engineer is compared to a pearl in a necklace that can only see the adjacent pearls, whereas the poet sees the whole necklace. The engineer is needed for his collective efforts, the platform upon which the poet can build, and "Ce sera l'architecture qui est tout ce qui est au delà du calcul." Le Corbusier often, in *Urbanisme* and other books, places two or more images on a spread that interact with each other as well as the text. He illustrates "Pérennité" with a photo of the Pont du Gard, a bridge remaining from Roman times, across from the Pont de Garabit, a steel railroad bridge designed by Eiffel in an arch construction that echoes the ancient stone edifice. As we skim through magazines and advertising without reading the text, so one could page through Le Corbusier's books and derive some idea of their meaning through their illustrations.

In "Classement et choix (un examen)", Le Corbusier distinguishes what is good and bad in the city in very general terms: classicism brings comfort to our eyes; barbarism provokes discomfort. In relating what we see to how we feel, he claims that this dualism has an irrefutable physiological base. As in earlier chapters, he associates his French-speaking readers with the southern, classical tradition, and criticizes the north: "Vers le nord, les aiguilles barbelées des cathedrales ne sont que souffrances du corps, drame d'âme poignant, enfer et purgatoire. Et forêts de sapins sous lumière pâle et brouillard froid. Notre corps [French?] réclame du soleil."¹⁰ He also distinguishes city planning as a

¹⁰As you go North, the crocketed spires of the cathedrals reflect the agony of the flesh, the poignant dramas of the spirit, hell and purgatory; and forests of pines seen through pale light and cold mist.

dignified science in this period of confusion and laments, "O vous, conseillers municipaux qui avez semé le désespoir sur votre ville!"¹¹ In the last paragraph, Le Corbusier suggests that public officials should be guided (by architects and urban designers) in decision-making by a prohibition of injurious forms and a search for beneficial ones.

"Classement et choix (décisions opportunes)" builds on the previous chapter as if established fact: "Ayant reconnu nos sensations, faisons choix, pour notre aise, de méthodes curatives et bienfaisantes." The first remedies are taken from the Abbé Laugier: "Du chaos, du tumulte dans l'ensemble," and, "De l'uniformité dans le détail."¹² Never sufficiently explaining "chaos in the whole" as an urban design guideline, he does offer an interesting social explanation for "uniformity in detail", one which may have worried bourgeois readers: "Le riche aujourd'hui tend à simplifier, le faste extérieur ne comptant plus; le pauvre acquiert des droits incontestables. L'équilibre se fait autour d'une cellule à capacité humaine et l'entreprise imminente de demain (industrialisation du chantier) ne peut agir que sur des éléments uniformes. Les éléments tendront à l'uniformisation."¹³ A retouched photo of the Place des Vosges (surrounding disorderly urban fabric erased) and an aerial photo of St. Mark's Square in Venice (surrounding disorderly urban fabric included) illustrate Le Corbusier's principles of uniformity in detail.

In a footnote of this chapter, Le Corbusier asserts: "Il faut bien se dire que l'urbanisme attend son avenir des délibérations des conseils municipaux; un conseil municipal décide des destinées de l'urbanisme."¹⁴ He laments, "Le XXe siècle est encore dans l'habit d'une humanité prémachiniste. C'est comme si l'économie publique, commerce, politique, finance, était gérée toujours par le courrier de poste, avec son cheval et ses relais."¹⁵ Perhaps having introduced a few disturbing opinions—physical and social uniformity, centralized public authority and primitive business practices—Le Corbusier concludes the chapter by arguing for tree-planting, almost as if an abundance of trees could serve as intermediary between the industrialized, serialized environment in the making and the human scale.

¹¹Oh! Municipal councillors, who have sown despair in your cities!

¹²"Chaos, disorder and a wild variety in the general lay-out" and "Uniformity in detail"

¹³Today the rich man is moving towards simplicity, since exterior show counts for so much less; and the poor man grows more and more established in his rights. Some sort of stability is being established and centres round a cell based on the human scale; and the industrial enterprise of tomorrow which has almost arrived can only be achieved by the use of uniform elements. And these elements tend towards a general uniformity.

¹⁴We must always remember that the fates of cities are decided in the Town Hall; municipal councils decide the destinies of town planning.

¹⁵The twentieth century still wears the clothes of pre-mechanical humanity.

Le Corbusier opens the next chapter—"La grande ville"—with the statistician's table of population growth for London, New York, Paris and Berlin. The numbers are truly impressive with Paris's population growing from 647,000 in 1850 to 3 million in 1910. He stresses the importance of the city for its influence on the countryside and the direction of the whole nation: "Des grandes villes, cellules ardentes du monde, viennent la paix ou la guerre, l'abondance ou la misère, la gloire, l'esprit triomphant ou la beauté."¹⁶ He notes what he considers to be "great works" that happen to have been realized under the reign of autocrats:

*L'esprit, sous le front des roys, conçoit et aspire à réaliser; tentatives magnifiques, éclats de lumière dans le grouillement barbare: place des Vosges, Louis XIII; Versailles, île Saint-Louis, Louis XIV; Champ-de-Mars, Louis XV; l'Etoile et les grandes routes d'accès à Paris, Napoléon. Enfin, dotation magnifique que laisse un monarque à son peuple: travaux d'Hausmann, Napoléon III.*¹⁷

In the spirit of the monarchs, Le Corbusier believes decisive actions must be taken to avoid the paralysis of the city, but three currents act against change: the law of least resistance; the absence of responsibility; and, respect for the past.

For Le Corbusier, the founding of garden cities and suburban development represented the law of least resistance in that urban planners were not addressing the problems in the city center. While he does not critique the existence of the garden city—probably a smart political choice given the interest of the architecture and planning audience—he does resent this focus of the planning profession. The absence of responsibility may be interpreted as a strong critique of the representative government, divided and unwilling to address itself to investment in physical, urban change. Finally, respect for the past, as Le Corbusier perceives it, is the preservationists' resistance to clearing the old for the new.

In this chapter, he also establishes his four points for modern city planning which were incorporated in the *Ville Contemporaine* and the *Plan Voisin*:

¹⁶From the great cities, living cells of the earth, come peace or war, abundance or famine, glory, the triumph of the mind and beauty itself.

¹⁷Men's minds, under great kings, formed their conception and strove to realize it; there were magnificent attempts, rays of light amidst the barbaric stirring; such are the Place des Vosges, under Louis XIII; Versailles and the Ile Saint-Louis, under Louis XIV; the Champ de Mars, under Louis XV; l'Etoile and the main roads leading to Paris under Napoleon. And finally, that magnificent legacy left by a monarch to his people: the work of Hausmann under Napoleon III.

- 1° Décongestionner le centre des villes *pour faire face aux exigences de la circulation.*
- 2° Accroître la densité du centre des villes *pour réaliser le contact exigé par les affaires.*
- 3° Accroître les moyens de circulation, *c'est-à-dire modifier complètement la conception actuelle de la rue qui se trouve être sans effet devant le phénomène neuf des moyens de transport moderne: métros ou autos, tramways, avions.*
- 4° Accroître les surfaces plantées, *seul moyen d'assurer l'hygiène suffisante et le calme utile au travail attentif exigé par le rythme nouveau des affaires.*¹⁸

Le Corbusier also classifies the city inhabitants according to the work role they fulfill and he geographically distributes them inside and outside the city accordingly. It is a class-conscious activity, not at odds with the prevailing class-ridden French society, but unfortunate all the same. As Plato utilized the analogy of precious, semi-precious and ordinary metals, Le Corbusier writes: "Classons. Trois sortes de population: les citadins à demeure; les travailleurs dont la vie se déroule moitié dans le centre et moitié dans les cités-jardins; les masses ouvrières partageant leur journée aux usines de banlieu et dans les cités-jardins."¹⁹

In Chapter 8, "La Statistique", he contends that statistical data are the foundation for poetry (beautiful, rational urban design) for they allow the creator to frame the problem. From his statistics, which he documents with many graphs, tables, diagrams and maps, he concludes that business gravitates to the the city center, overcrowded and tuberculosis-ridden housing must be demolished and automobiles require wider avenues (another kind of street). He declares, "La grande ville moderne dans son état actuel est une absurdité."²⁰

From the "rational" world of statistics, Le Corbusier switches in Chapter 9 to the popular testimony of newspaper clippings in 1923 and 1924. He writes, "Depuis un an on voit l'urbanisme s'insérer de plus en plus dans les colonnes serrées des journaux."²¹ The pages are filled with faithfully reprinted articles and cartoons on traffic, accidents, consequences such as dying trees and polluted air, initiatives and urban programs from *L'Intransigeant*, *Le Journal*, *L'Auto*, *Peuple* et *L'Oeuvre*. This section was not a feature previously printed in *L'Esprit Nouveau*.

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- 181. We must de-congest the centres of cities...
 - 2. We must increase the density of the centres of cities...
 - 3. We must increase the means whereby traffic can circulate...
 - 4. We must increase the area of green and open spaces...

¹⁹So a classification of city dwellers would give us three main divisions of population: the citizens who live in the city; the workers whose lives are passed half in the centre and half in the garden cities, and the great masses of workers who spend their lives between suburban factories and garden cities.

²⁰The great city of today as it exists in actuality is an absurdity.

²¹And latterly, also, town planning has come to take a more and more important place in the crowded columns of our newspapers.

As an argument to counter those who might have believed rebuilding the city center was a utopian feat, Le Corbusier included "Nos Moyens", Chapter 10. He describes the mobilization of resources—international equipment, technological know-how, competent direction and workers—necessary to the construction of a large dam in a remote location as proof that large-scale physical construction can be accomplished. By comparison to modern techniques, he discusses and shows drawings of the tools employed by workmen on the Place Vendôme under Louis XIV and the Boulevard Sébastopol of Haussmann. Charming sketches of the primitive-looking tools accompany a map of Haussmann's boulevards. (Fig. 18) In contrast, impressive drawings of the subterranean infrastructure of New York and London, and photos of subway construction in Paris reinforce the image of technological capabilities. Le Corbusier states, "Nous avons dans les mains l'outillage qui est la somme des acquis humains."²² Still, lacking decisive action from above, he concludes the chapter by placing the ball in the government's court, "Nos Ministères et Départements compétents ne sont-ils pas potentats de droit?"²³ Thus ends Part I of *Urbanisme*.

Part II describes the Ville Contemporaine, the site-less modern city that Le Corbusier designed. Chapter 11 is an overview of its principles which, I have already explained, formed the basis for the Plan Voisin. He describes his laboratory method as proceeding from classification to designation in terms of the population (discussed above), circulation of trains and motor vehicles, location of the central station and skyscraper business district, and provision of park and recreation space. Like a toy in a cereal box, Le Corbusier inserts a 17" x 22" folded poster of the Ville Contemporaine in between the pages of this chapter. (Fig. 19)

Throughout *Urbanisme*, he makes frequent reference to Manhattan as an example of a modern city not to be duplicated. Despite its orderly grid and skyscraper allowances, it does not meet Le Corbusier's requirements of space, sunlight and parks. This comparison to what he considers is possible is reassuring to Europeans, and particularly, Parisians. He juxtaposes images of Manhattan to drawings of the Ville Contemporaine as visual "proof". (Fig. 20)

²²We have in our hands a technical equipment which is the sum of man's acquired knowledge.

²³Are not our Ministers and the Departments absolute rulers?

In "L'Heure du travail", Le Corbusier cites the benefits of working in the skyscrapers—space, light, views, access—and preserves private transit for its elite by providing subterranean parking. Speed and the city of business must go hand in hand, thus the attention devoted to transportation throughout the work. He writes, "Je tranche par ceci: la ville qui dispose de la vitesse dispose du succès — vérité des temps. A quoi bon regretter l'âge des pasteurs! Le travail se concentre, accélère son rythme."²⁴

In contrast to the beautiful simplicity of the X-rayed shell which illustrates the first page of Chapter 13, many of the ideas put forth in "L'Heure du repos" over-program the elites' and workers' leisure hours in the Ville Contemporaine. (Fig. 21) Much of the language and descriptions are extremely amusing in 1991; maybe he thought the lighter, conversational tone might also entertain his readers of 1925. He begins with the just-instituted eight-hour workday and explores how his inhabitants would occupy their remaining eight waking hours. Perhaps the bourgeoisie was alarmed at what the workers might do in their free time? Le Corbusier fills up the proletariat's working hours.

First, he discusses the hazards to health of living in the city as it exists and how the population needs recreation areas and trees. He draws upon the testimony of a M. Forestier, landscape architect/engineer and civil servant. Due to automobile and industrial pollution, Forestier claims the trees of Paris are dying and the third generation of city dwellers—humans—are reproductively sterile. Le Corbusier concludes that, "La pratique du sport doit être accessible à tout inhabitant de la ville. Le sport doit se faire au pied même de la maison."²⁵ He then describes the existing and proposed leisure times of both the garden city worker and the city center elite. While the main thrust of his ideas on how to improve the workers' lives revolves around adequate housing, sports fields and communally-tended gardens, Le Corbusier devotes himself to the organization of the elites' *immeuble-villas* with shared 24-hour housekeeping, shopping and cooking services that render obsolete the *concièrge* and part-time maid. The point is to liberate the elites from more restrictive lifestyles. Apparently they already know how to fill their time with cultural activities, restaurant dining and miscellaneous recreation. A series of drawings and photographs of the *immeuble-villa* and Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau illustrate this chapter and promote his own work.

²⁴One can only come to this conclusion; that the city which can achieve speed will achieve success--and this is an obvious truth.

²⁵The possibility of engaging in sport should be open to every inhabitant of the city. And it should take place at the very door of his dwelling.

The third and final part of the book, "Un cas précis: le centre de Paris" discusses the Plan Voisin. Chapter 14, "Médecine ou chirurgie" is an attempt to convince readers of the futility of preserving the city as it exists while explaining how the Right Bank's monuments and architecture of note, according to Le Corbusier, would be kept and improved upon by their new context. In Chapter 15, he reports the physical description of the city under the Plan Voisin and turns around the argument of the preservationists:

*Je rêve de voir la place de la Concorde vide, solitaire, silencieuse et les Champs Elysées une promenade. Le Plan Voisin dégage toute l'ancienne ville, de Saint-Gervais à l'Etoile, et lui restitue le calme. Les quartiers du Marais, des Archives, du Temple, etc., seraient détruits. Mais les églises anciennes sont sauvegardées. Elles se présenteraient au milieu des verdure; rien de plus séduisant!*²⁶

In a tone of unexpected humility, Le Corbusier finishes the chapter with the following paragraph:

*Le Plan Voisin n'a pas la prétention d'apporter la solution exacte au cas du centre de Paris. Mais il peut servir à élever la discussion à un niveau conforme à l'époque et à poser le problème à une saine échelle. Il oppose ses principes à l'imbroglio des petites réformes dont nous illusionnons nos esprits au jour le jour.*²⁷

The final illustration of this chapter is a scaled drawing of the Plan Voisin superimposed and in contrast to an aerial photograph of a particularly crowded and disorderly section of the Right Bank. The technique was new; the effect is startling. (Fig. 22)

By Chapter 16, "Chiffres & Réalisation", Le Corbusier assumes his more casual tone to explain how his plan will ensure economic rewards for investors by increasing the value of the Right Bank. He envisions that the users of the skyscrapers will pay for their construction and own their space therein. He also encourages an international group of investors to buy space in the towers, thus safeguarding the city against any future wartime destruction because invading armies will want to preserve their nationals' investments. "Ce

²⁶My dream is to see the Place de la Concorde empty once more, silent and lonely, and the Champs Elysées a quiet place to walk in. The "Voisin" scheme would isolate the whole of the ancient city and bring back peace and calm from Saint-Gervais to the Etoile. The districts of the Marais, the Archives and Temple, etc., would be demolished. But the ancient churches would be preserved. They would stand surrounded by verdure; what could be more charming!

²⁷The "Voisin" scheme does not claim to have found a final solution to the problem of the centre of Paris; but it may serve to raise the discussion to a level in keeping with the spirit of our age, and to provide us with reasonable standards by which to judge the problem. It sets up principles as against the medley of silly little reforms with which we are constantly deceiving ourselves.

qui pourrait bien intéresser un ministre de la Guerre."²⁸ Le Corbusier also makes an interesting provision for staged demolition and construction of the Right Bank. He proposes that once a skyscraper is complete and occupants move out of their older, low-rise buildings, that quarter will be razed, thus keeping the chaos of change and the space crisis to a minimum.

In the last section of this final chapter, Le Corbusier prepares his defense against detractors and reiterates his plan's strengths. Here are a number of his statements:

Mon rôle était d'ordre technique.

Je ne pars pas bâtir ma ville en *Utopie*. Je dis: *c'est ici*, et rien n'y changera.

J'en suis très éloigné; je n'y ai aucune attache et n'en veux avoir aucune. Je me suis plu à poursuivre un raisonnement plongeant dans l'analyse aussi loin que le permet la théorie pure, et la théorie m'a conduit à une conclusion.

Je ne me sens pas en rupture de tradition; je me crois en pleine tradition. Tous les grands travaux du passé viennent l'un après l'autre confirmer qu'à tout état d'esprit correspond un état de choses.

J'ai bien tenu à ne pas quitter le terrain technique. Je suis architecte, on ne me fera pas faire de politique.

Cette étude n'a poursuivi que le dégagement d'une solution claire; elle vaut ce qu'elle vaut. Elle est sans étiquette, elle ne s'adresse ni à la société bourgeoise capitaliste, ni à la IIIe Internationale. C'est une oeuvre technique.

On ne révolutionne pas en révolutionnant. On révolutionne en solutionnant.²⁹

The last comment on revolution resembles the final two lines of *Vers une architecture*—"Architecture ou révolution. On peut éviter la révolution."—in its content and its appearance as an advertising slogan. Repetition and word manipulation remain etched in the memory. Furthermore, and despite his caveats, his resistance to revolution is inherently political. *Urbanisme* is a book written for the bourgeois—private and public sector—who wish to maintain the existing distribution of wealth and class stratification in

²⁸That should mean something to the War Office.

²⁹My role has been a technical one.

I invent no Utopia in which to build my city. I assert that its proper place is here and nothing will remove it. I am in a position of detachment and a free-lance, and I mean to remain so.

I do not feel I am breaking with tradition: I believe myself to be absolutely traditional in my theories.

I have been very careful not to depart from the technical side of my problem.

The aim of this work has been the unfolding of a clear solution; its value depends on its success in that direction. It has no label, it is not dedicated to our existing Bourgeois-Capitalist Society nor to the Third International. It is a technical work.

Things are not revolutionized by making revolutions. The real Revolution lies in the solution of existing problems.

French society. Furthermore, the final illustration—a drawing of Louis XIV ordering the construction of Invalides—reiterates Le Corbusier's belief in the need for an authoritarian leader to direct the rebuilding of the city. (Fig. 23) McLeod has written, "Almost all political groups voiced in some variation Le Corbusier's demand for a stronger executive."³⁰ Despite its call for revolutionary physical change, Le Corbusier's treatise on urban design was far from a disruption of the Parisian status quo. The language of *Urbanisme* assures its readers that Le Corbusier's brand of city planning will facilitate the functioning of capitalism, and in so doing, the book is a stunning promotion of the city planning profession.

Summary

Beyond engaging in promotion of his Plan Voisin through its physical design (The Content Promotes the Content) Le Corbusier utilized the means and media at his disposal to embark upon a more sophisticated public relations effort (The Presentation Promotes the Content). In *L'Esprit Nouveau*, his articles on urban design were read by a largely bourgeois industrialist and professional audience, and were linked to the journal's machine age image. He expanded his business network and understanding of commercial practices in his role as financial and advertising manager of the journal. He also solidified his position in the avant-garde through relations with contributing writers.

The Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs was an opportunity for Le Corbusier to present his Plan Voisin to a larger, more popular audience. The techniques he employed to fund and construct the pavilion display a savvy business and promotional sense. Though continuing to address his appeal primarily to the industrialists, the exhibit of the plan to a larger public and the presence of a government minister at the pavilion's inauguration prove his recognition of the importance of communicating to other sectors in society. By professionally photographing the pavilion and other built work, as well as drawing attention to his efforts in articles, ads, press releases and books, Le Corbusier planned multiplied publicity for each project he executed.

Urbanisme consolidated his ideas on urban design and the Plan Voisin for the bourgeois, professional and avant-garde audiences. The text and illustrations contained therein appealed to the readers' various concerns over urban issues, to a Taylorist approach to

³⁰Mary McLeod, "'Architecture or Revolution': Taylorism, Technocracy and Social Change" in *Art Journal*, (Summer 1983), p. 139.

remedying problems, and to a sense of French nationalism and pride in their capital city. The language and graphic lay-out of *Urbanisme* demonstrated techniques of advertising, the newly-created dialect of commercial culture. The Plan Voisin was both well-communicated and well-heard. In spite of the promotion, no steps were taken by any public or private group to institute implementation, let alone seriously study its potential impacts on the Right Bank. In the next chapter, I will discuss the Plan Voisin's failure and success.

IV. PROMOTING URBAN DESIGN: An Evaluation

In this final chapter, I will re-examine the promotion of the Plan Voisin, judging it in terms of the qualities of successful urban design implementation expounded by Eury and Hack in *Lessons from Local Experience*. I will then turn to Le Corbusier's next major urban design project—the Plan Obus for Algiers—to demonstrate how he modified his appeals for implementation based on the changing political, economic, social and cultural context of France and Algeria in the 1930s. Finally, it is important to go beyond the more elementary evaluation of success or failure—adoption or rejection—to identify alternative advantages and disadvantages of Le Corbusier's vigorous attempts at promoting his urban designs.

An Unrealistic Proposal

I will first review the list, selected from *Lessons*, of promotion-related guidelines existing in successfully implemented urban design proposals. In using these guidelines, I have assumed that Le Corbusier was in touch with public opinion, but this assumption proves incorrect.

AGENDA: Le Corbusier set his own agenda—a list of urban conditions to change, improve, create or eliminate in response to demand—without seeking input from any contemporary decision-maker, interest group or citizen. He did, however, respond as he saw fit to urban problems—traffic flow, pedestrian safety, housing, light and ventilation—that were of current concern as discussed and written about in newspapers. In directing his agenda to the bourgeois, industrialist class, Le Corbusier included many provisions for "amenities" that were not considered urgent, such as roof-top garden cafes and communally-shared housekeeping services. Indeed, his suggestion that the center of Paris be invested in by foreign sources of capital ran contrary to the more insular and protective tenor of the city following World War I.

Le Corbusier was unable to coalesce opinion on the broad agenda of the Plan Voisin. It was presented as a complete package, not as a series of flexible components. The public's agenda—which was already fragmented given that each segment of the population usually has their own set of priorities—was, most likely, much narrower in scope than Le Corbusier's; and, people were not convinced of the Plan Voisin's long-term "pay-off" neither in terms of money, nor in terms of its promised enhancement of the physical environment of Paris.

RESOURCES: Le Corbusier attempted to convince his audience that the resources necessary to build the Plan Voisin existed—technically, in "Our Technical Equipment", and financially, in "Finance and Realization" (chapters in *Urbanisme*). The fact is, however, that the Plan Voisin would have required an enormous mobilization of money, materials and political will. The public sector was not forthcoming. Interestingly, Eury and Hack suggest going to the private side when the public's means are not sufficient. Le Corbusier did try to interest industrialists in supporting the plan through articles in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, sponsorship of the Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau, and *Urbanisme*. Furthermore, he believed the occupants of the skyscrapers—the private companies—would pay for their construction. Evidently, the private sector considered the commitment of resources necessary to re-build the Right Bank to be too great a risk to their balance sheets, and no institutionalized consortium was in place to coordinate a private investment effort.

CUSTOM-FITTING: The Plan Voisin was the Ville Contemporaine adapted to Paris. Le Corbusier cannot be said to have custom-fitted the model to the extent necessary for implementation in Paris. It was far too alien and threatening an intervention. At the same time, the Ville Contemporaine model/type was meant to be adapted to many cities, and he would have run the risk of compromising this principle if he had further modified it to Paris. The various components of the Ville Contemporaine were meant to function as an interdependent package. Decreasing its scale or altering the design would have rendered it less effective as a total concept.

CREATING MARKETS: Le Corbusier not only supplied a new city type that met the physical needs of the modern city as he perceived them, but invented a whole new lifestyle by predicting patterns of work and recreation for the two social classes. Given the scope of this vision, he had enormous difficulty in creating markets for this highly personal work. To make the situation even more difficult, Paris—always rather content with itself—was not seeking change. Although Le Corbusier executed an impressive effort at designing and disseminating information on the Plan Voisin, he did not succeed in getting people to desire the same image of Paris, nor to use the city differently.

GETTING AND KEEPING PEOPLE EXCITED: I have not been able to determine this. My feeling is that few people would have accepted the entire Plan Voisin unconditionally. At the same time, few would have rejected every aspect of it. There is no doubt that Le Corbusier tried to interest and excite the industrialists. Stanislaus von Moos has remarked

that the plan was the dream of auto manufacturers, in particular.¹ The decision to have corporate skyscrapers dominate the Parisian skyline was antithetical to the existing civic monuments that reigned in central Paris—a drastic change of iconic identification. Additionally, by coopting advertising and public relations techniques, Le Corbusier was speaking the language of industry as commercial culture had created it. I believe that in allying himself so closely to industry and bourgeois interests, Le Corbusier rendered himself incapable of stirring enthusiasm in other sectors of society.

CREATING MANAGEABLE PIECES: Taken as a whole, the Plan Voisin is intimidating. Staged implementation probably would not have lessened the impact. In fact, Le Corbusier did discuss a staged construction plan in explaining how the skyscrapers would be built one-by-one with a minimum of population displacement and discomfort, but this detail was relatively hidden in the final chapter of *Urbanisme*.

Thus, while certain of the criteria in *Lessons from Local Experience* were addressed by Le Corbusier, the Plan Voisin was far too dramatic a proposal for Paris in 1925. Both its physical design (The Content Promotes the Content) and promotion (The Presentation Promotes the Content) did not convince decision-makers to seriously pursue implementation. Paris was not ready to shed its uniquely French character, history and design to become the modern center of international business.

If we judge this urban design promotion solely by whether or not the design was implemented, the Plan Voisin failed. Mary McLeod has rated Le Corbusier's efforts to be, overall, "naive and scattered" with respect to his strategy to appeal to industrialists and politicians.² This is probably true. In terms of the preservationists, Le Corbusier failed miserably. As Anthony Sutcliffe concludes in his book, *The Autumn of Central Paris*, "In central Paris, the cause of preservation has triumphed." Norma Evenson and others have questioned the value of the Plan Voisin with respect to its profitability as a business center.³ If Le Corbusier had felt absolutely compelled to impact the Parisian urban fabric in some way, he would have compromised his holistic vision and city type, scaling down his ambitions to create a more realistic proposal for a small piece of the city fabric, probably on the outskirts. The Plan Voisin was utopian in terms of viability for implementation.

¹Stanislaus von Moos, "Urbanism and Transcultural Exchanges, 1910-1935: A Survey," in *Le Corbusier*, ed. H. Allen Brooks, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 222.

²Mary McLeod, "Taylorism, Technocracy and Social Change" in *Art Journal*, (Summer 1983), p. 141.

³Norma Evenson, *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878-1978*, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p. 174.

The Plan Obus

In 1929, a world financial crisis began that brought tremendous hardship to western capitalist economies throughout the 1930s. To many Europeans, it also signalled the failure of capitalism and private industry to organize society. The rise of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and even Roosevelt's New Deal in the United States were, in some ways, perceived as a strong, new political order that might rescue societies from the failure of uncontrolled capitalist management. Le Corbusier gravitated towards regional syndicalism, convinced that a new political hierarchy, as opposed to private industrialists, would sanction his urban design plans.

Syndicalism was an outgrowth of the earlier French labor movement that stressed aversion to the existing capitalist order, a commitment to the general strike and a decentralized power structure of local economic units directed by the workers. By the beginning of the 1930s and having passed through a fascist phase, syndicalism was no longer popular among workers, but a small group of intellectuals maintained the movement by stressing an organic rationale.

Syndicalism, or regional syndicalism as it was sometimes called, was now in essence an organic movement; political and economic change were to emerge spontaneously, growing from cell to region. The new society, in contrast to the previous utopian vision which focused on the economic unit as the basis of organization, was to reflect natural hierarchies whether productive, geographic, or racial. These 'natural' frontiers would, it was hoped, insure world peace.⁴

Between 1931 and 1942, Le Corbusier focused his energies on urban design, and for Algiers in particular. While lecturing in Algiers in 1931, he became interested in the city for its beautiful site, terrain, and blend of indigenous and colonial/commercial culture. In 1932, he submitted—without a commission—his Plan Obus. Without delving into its physical design, suffice it to say that it synthesized both native and French tendencies in a design sensitive to the mountainous terrain. The plan included many curvilinear elements that were site-specific to the city's topography and vistas. It also maintained intact the Casbah, and provided for individual stylistic preferences in housing units built below a massive, curving viaduct/superhighway. In contrast to his aloof agenda-setting during design of the Plan Voisin, he even sought public input for Obus:

⁴Mary McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers", in *Oppositions 19/20*, (Winter/Spring 1980), p.57.

In preparation for its submission Le Corbusier waged a vigorous publicity campaign with the journalist Edmund Brua of *Travaux Nord Africains*: a public questionnaire for the citizens of Algiers, a series of articles in both the local and architectural press, and the showing of a film on the city.⁵

Sufficient interest was generated by the plan for the mayor of Algiers, Charles Brunel, to follow its development. Le Corbusier's initial appeal was to present Algiers as the head of the African continent, and southern capital of the Mediterranean region. Despite the city council's rejection of the plan—Brunel wrote, "it would be necessary to have an absolute dictator with the property and even the lives of his subjects at his disposal" in order to implement—Le Corbusier continued working on Plan Obus, submitting versions "B" in 1933, "C" in 1934, "D" in 1938 and "E" in 1939. Each version was progressively scaled down in response to the colonial government's reactions. Despite Le Corbusier's demonstrated willingness to modify his plans and attempts to work through the Vichy government in France following the departure of Brunel from power, Obus was never realized. His reputation in Algiers suffered a final blow by the publication of an article allying his Modern architecture to a communist/international Jewish conspiracy. His last plan for Algiers—the Plan Directeur for the *brise-soleil* skyscraper—was rejected eight days after the article's publication.⁶

Le Corbusier's strategy for promoting the Plan Obus demonstrates a certain fluidity and adaptation to the political and economic context of the times. As opposed to the relatively prosperous economy of France in 1925 and faith in the private sector to organize the means of production, the Depression had catalyzed a reevaluation of private-sector power and a search for a strong governmental model. Le Corbusier responded accordingly by dealing first with the public authorities in Algiers, and later through Vichy channels. The design, itself, also reflected the dichotomous social and cultural context of the city, and preserved the indigenous element of the Casbah intact—an attempt at a custom-fit—as opposed to his intentioned razing of the Right Bank of Paris. His own participation in the regional syndicalist movement conditioned his approach to Algiers as a regional capital in contrast to the international orientation of the Plan Voisin.

Again, however, Le Corbusier submitted voluntarily a series of labor-intensive plans without commission. He failed in predicting the quantity of resources the city would be prepared to lay out and the amount of interest necessary to generate commitment to

⁵McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algeirs", p. 59.

⁶McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers", p.79.

dramatically changing the physical environment and use of the city. He did not create new markets for his ideas, even among the business community, in designing an iconic skyscraper for the port area. Even though Le Corbusier was proving flexible in promoting amid the changing context of history, his designs remained utopian for their vision and scale.

Despite this second major failure to have his urban design implemented, the Plan Obus was influential in its results. Stanislaus von Moos has written:

The mission in Algiers ended in a fiasco. But the actual influence of the Algerian projects could hardly have been more far-reaching if they had actually been realized. The last skyscraper project was almost as influential as the Plan Obus itself, which has inspired a number of significant schemes in Brazil and Italy. The drama of the sunbreakers was the harbinger of Chandigarh—especially the Secretariat—while the rhomboidal plan, already used in a project for Zurich in 1932, had a clear impact on buildings like the Pirelli tower in Milan (Gio Ponti, 1958) and the Pan Am Building in New York (Gropius and TAC, 1958).⁷

Results of the Plan Voisin

Perhaps one must exaggerate the vision and scale of an urban design to have a dramatic influence on the course of architecture and urbanism. The *promotion* of the Plan Voisin was not utopian. Taken as a whole, it was a highly realistic effort to disseminate information on a particular urban design, and in this sense, Le Corbusier was rather serious. I believe he successfully promoted ends other than the plan's implementation.

The promotion of the Plan Voisin enhanced the career of Le Corbusier as architect and urban planner. His own writings and exhibit of the Plan reached many people. This was multiplied by newspaper reviews. His reputation was further established and he received more private commissions. Through his built work and paper architecture—the League of Nations, the Palace of the Soviets, the United Nations—his genius was recognized and he remains, in my opinion, the most important and influential architect of the 20th century.

Secondly, many aspects of the Plan Voisin/Ville Contemporaine, taken individually, were later experimented with and implemented in other places, especially in post-World War II reconstruction and urban renewal, when Keynesian macroeconomic theory and infrastructure building were in vogue. For instance, von Moos has noted that it took a few decades for France to catch up with Le Corbusier's international financial center concept:

⁷Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979), p. 206.

"Yet in economic terms, if not in those of urban imagery and planning procedure, the quartier de la Défense north of Neuilly and other recent large-scale developments inside Paris are based on the very forces which Le Corbusier had hoped to put his Plan Voisin into action."⁸

Le Corbusier's massive urban design scale became more accepted. Of course, there is always the negative aspect of stardom, and in disseminating his ideas so thoroughly, he ran the risk of being misinterpreted and incorrectly copied. It is Le Corbusier's misfortune that he is singly blamed for many mistakes made by planners in the urban renewal movement, when large tracts of older city fabric were razed for corporate skyscrapers and large-scale housing projects in Europe and the United States.

A third major influence of Le Corbusier's promotion of the Plan Voisin was its promotion of the urban planning profession worldwide. He argued for the role of the architect and city planner as powerful societal figures and advisors to politicians. I do not know if Robert Moses studied *Urbanisme* (he was a voracious reader), but during his career he became a terrifying embodiment of this character taken to an extreme.

The planning profession began with the physical design and division (land use and zoning) of urban space. In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, a reformist movement began which was characterized by efforts to clean up slum districts, provide sanitation, open space, sunlight and ventilation. The use of statistics and quantitative methods—the rational paradigm in planning—did not become prevalent until the post-World War II era, but aspects of the design, reform *and* rational approaches to city planning are merged in Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin. "Le Corbusier's concepts of physical planning for urban land-use became the most visible and graphic symbols of the widespread implementation of corporatist regulation in France."⁹ Despite the growing influence of advocacy and community-based planning, technocratic procedures, wedded to the physical division of space with reformist intentions still dominate, in training and practice, the planning of towns and cities.

Finally, I believe the promotion of the Plan Voisin contributed to the promotion of design promotion. Surely the effort influenced other architects and urban designers to write tracts,

⁸Moos, "Urbanism...", p.225.

⁹Peggy Phillips, *Modern France: Theories and Realities of Urban Planning*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), p.7.

get their work published and disseminate their message. Some designers who have written and designed, like Robert Venturi (*Complexity and Contradiction*) and Aldo Rossi (*The Architecture of the City*) have developed slicker images in the 1980s, designing housewares for Swid Powell and Alessi, and participating in art jewelry and furniture exhibits. Michael Graves appeared in Dexter Shoe ads; and Robert A.M. Stern starred in his own television documentary series which presented contemporary architecture from a highly-biased perspective, favoring the style of his own work. Others have skipped the contribution to the advancement of the profession to focus exclusively on their images. Urban designers also promote their theories. Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) are examples of urban/suburban design theorists on the lecture circuit, and a continuous stream of articles in popular and trade journals preserve their high profiles. Post-modernism has proved particularly conducive to commercial image-making for many reasons which I cannot cover here.

Le Corbusier was not the first design marketer. Perhaps the most coordinated and successful promotional campaign for an urban design was Daniel Burnham's Plan for Chicago, which included a public relations effort of lectures, pamphlets and eighth grade school textbooks, among other vehicles, all funded and directed by a small group of wealthy businessmen with an aim to creating an attractive and profitable business climate in Chicago. Von Moos has observed, "It is quite unimaginable that the splendid publication of Burnham's Chicago Plan of 1909 should have escaped Le Corbusier's attention."¹⁰ Le Corbusier's intuitive promotional sense would have been attracted to the Chicago Plan's packaging.

Architecture and urban design are highly competitive professions. While most practitioners may be content to work in relative obscurity, those who believe they have something to say in terms of theory, or desire recognition for their designs (or themselves), must pragmatically engage in self-promotion. Designers are not discovered. The designers whose work is seen in magazines and debated in private and public spheres work to be noticed. They submit entries to design competitions and sometimes win, they network for potential clients and sometimes receive commissions, and they send professionally-photographed, art directed transparencies to trade publications that sometimes get published.

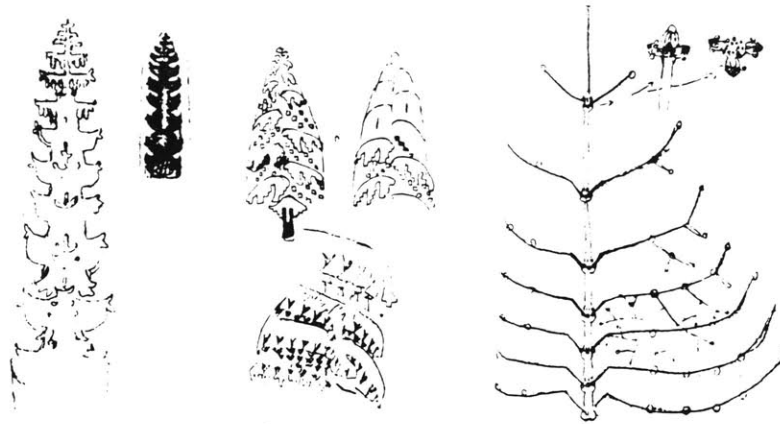
¹⁰Moos, "Urbanism...", p.223-4.

Obtaining a national or international design reputation does not mean one has tremendous talent or invention. Many design careers exist purely by their promotional campaigns. Le Corbusier possessed both design genius and intuitive promotional sense. He seized methods of promotion in early-20th century commercial culture to promote his ideas and, in turn, his career. If he had not engaged in writing and exhibiting his work with such force, he may not have had the opportunity to build and the world would not have shared in his invention. Fully conscious of the effects of his promotional efforts, Le Corbusier wrote the following in *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme* in 1930:

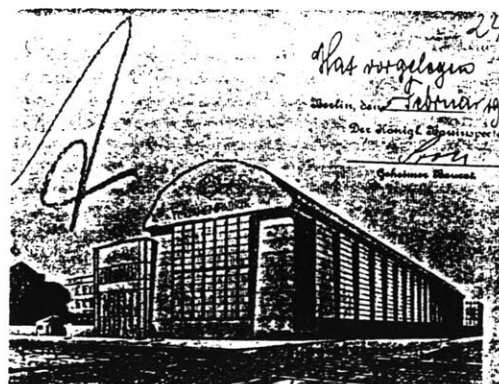
Our "lunatic" ideas have spread:
from 1920 to 1925, by the *Esprit Nouveau*, our magazine on contemporary activity;
in 1925, by the *Esprit Nouveau Pavillon*;
in 1925, by the book *Urbanisme* (today in its twentieth edition);
in 1928, by the same, translated in Germany;
in 1929, by the same, translated in England and America, and being translated in Japan and in the USSR.
An intense elite, dispersed, isolated, each for himself, which thinks it is alone and which is an army, has been convinced.
The press, the big press, the dailies, the weeklies, the magazines, the professional reviews, the seminars have commented on the problem.¹¹

My conclusion is that regardless of whether or not his urban design was constructed—and many are grateful the Plan Voisin did not replace two square miles of Paris—both Le Corbusier and subsequent generations of designers—and thus inhabitants—have been greatly influenced by the dissemination of its message.

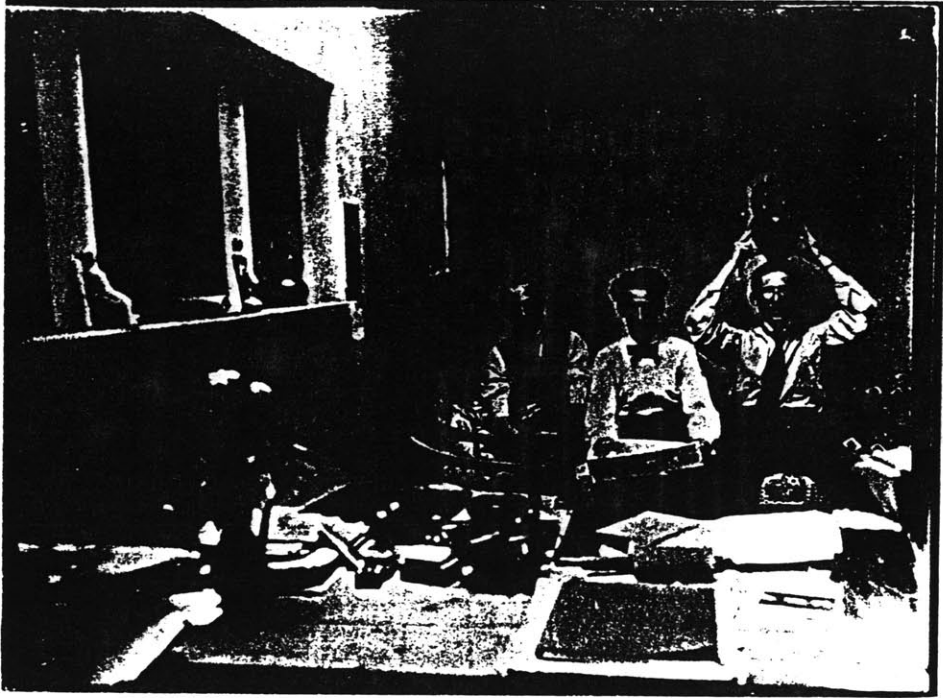
¹¹Le Corbusier, *Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and Urban Planning*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p.191.



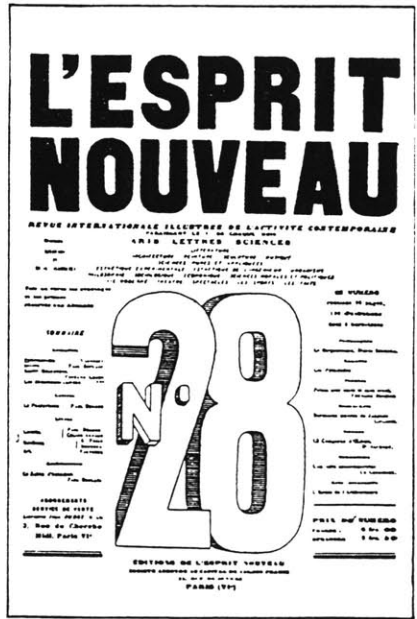
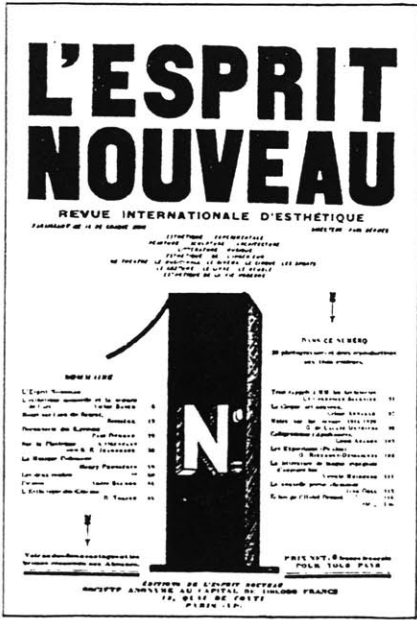
1. Drawings of Jura fir trees (1905) by Jeanneret demonstrate L'Eplattenier's teaching on the abstraction of nature into symbolic motif. (Moos, *Elements*, p. 24.)



2. Poster, logo and architectural design executed by Peter Behrens for A.E.G. (*Art & Pub*, pp. 154-5.)

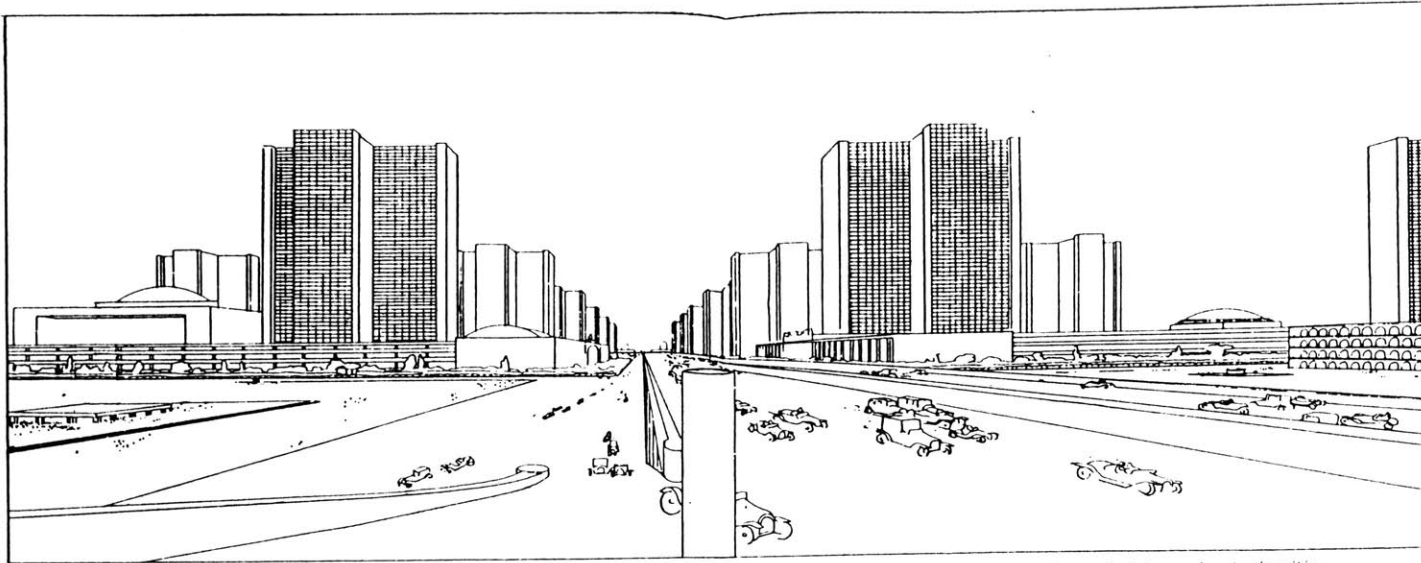


3. Le Corbusier shoots a photograph of himself with Ozenfant (at left) and Albert Jeanneret in 1920. (*Le Corbusier et l'Industrie...*, p. 2.)

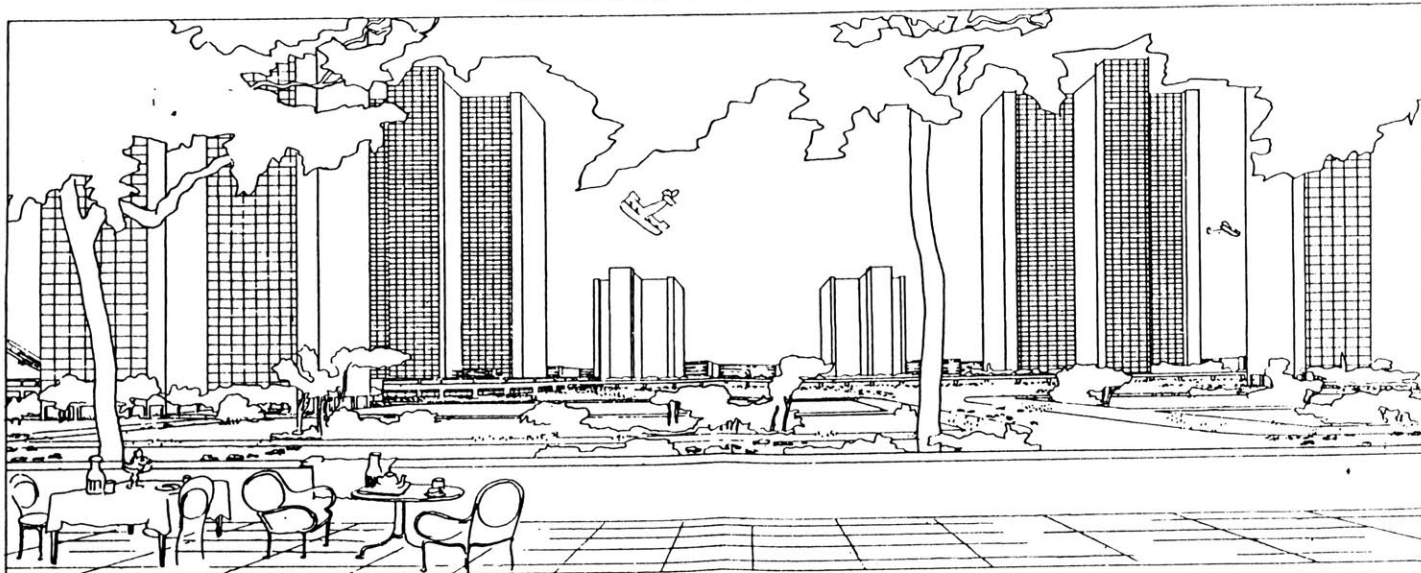


4. The first and last covers of *L'Esprit Nouveau*. (*Oeuvre Complète*, p.33.)

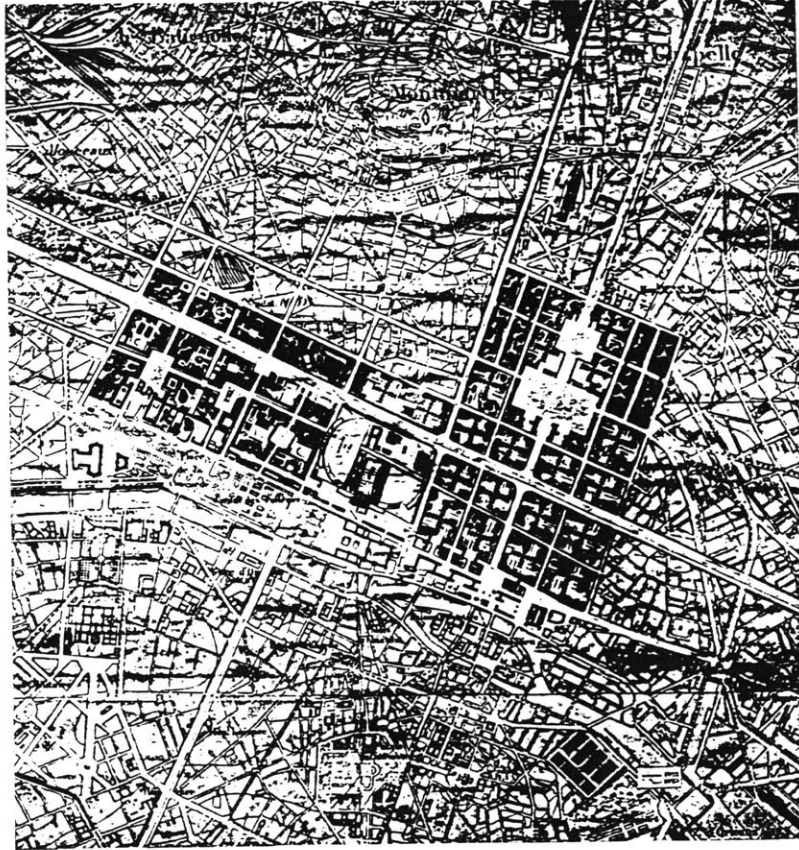
5. Perspective drawings of the Ville Contemporaine from *Urbanisme*, p. 234-5.
 Note the use of automobiles and airplanes.



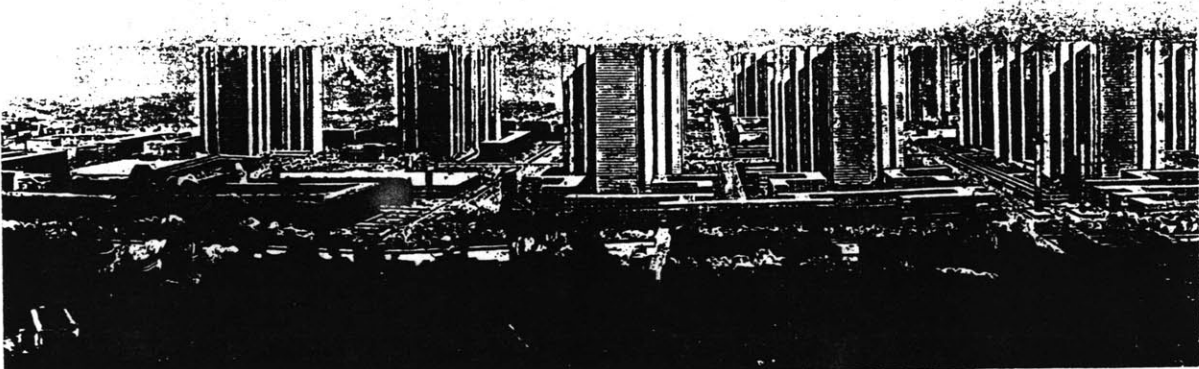
Une ville contemporaine: la Cité, vue de l'autodrome de « grande traversée». A gauche et à droite, les places des Services Publics. Plus au fond, les musées et universités.
 On voit l'ensemble des gratte-ciel baignés de lumière et d'air.



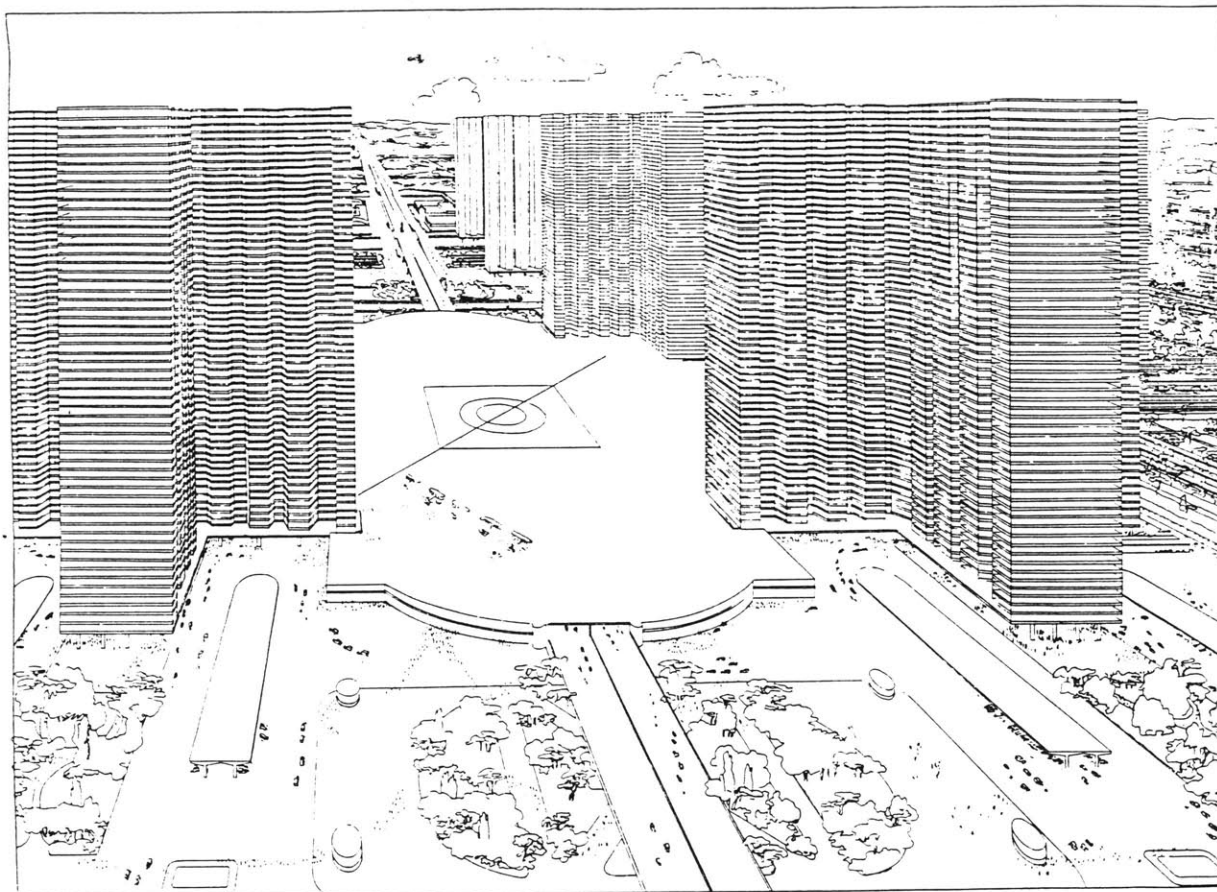
Une ville contemporaine: Le centre de la Cité vu de la terrasse de l'un des cafés à gradins qui entourent la place de la gare. On voit la gare entre les deux gratte-ciel de gauche, peu élevée au-dessus du sol. Sortant de la gare, on voit l'autodrome filant à droite vers le Jardin Anglais. Nous sommes au centre même de la ville, là où la densité et la circulation sont les plus fortes; l'espace est immense pour les recevoir. Les terrasses des cafés à gradins constituent les boulevards fréquentés. Les théâtres, salles publiques, etc., sont parmi les espaces entre les gratte-ciel, au milieu des arbres.



6. The L-shaped Plan Voisin placed into the fabric of the Right Bank.
(*Urbanisme*, pp. 274-5.)

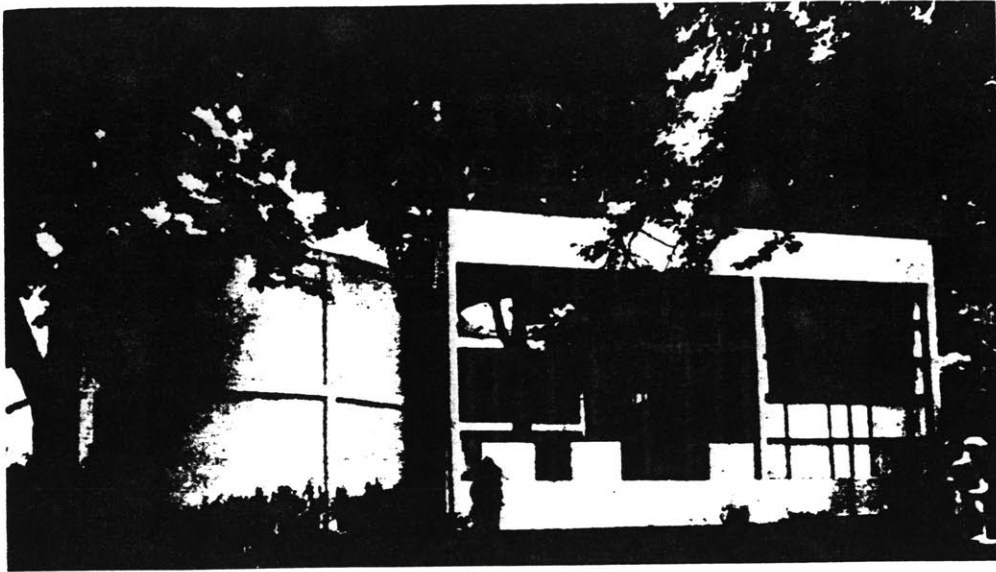


7. Part of the Plan Voisin diorama presented in the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau.
(*Oeuvre Complète*, p. 115.)



Vue de la gare centrale, flanquée de 4 gratte-ciel
L'autodrome passe sous l'aéro-port. On aperçoit le rez-de-chaussée libre des gratte-ciel, et les pilotis de ceux-ci.
On voit les garages abris. Tout à droite, les cafés, magasins, etc., au milieu des verdure

8. The central transportation interchange of the Plan Voisin.
(*Oeuvre Complète*, p. 109.)



Vue de face (1)

LE PAVILLON

DE

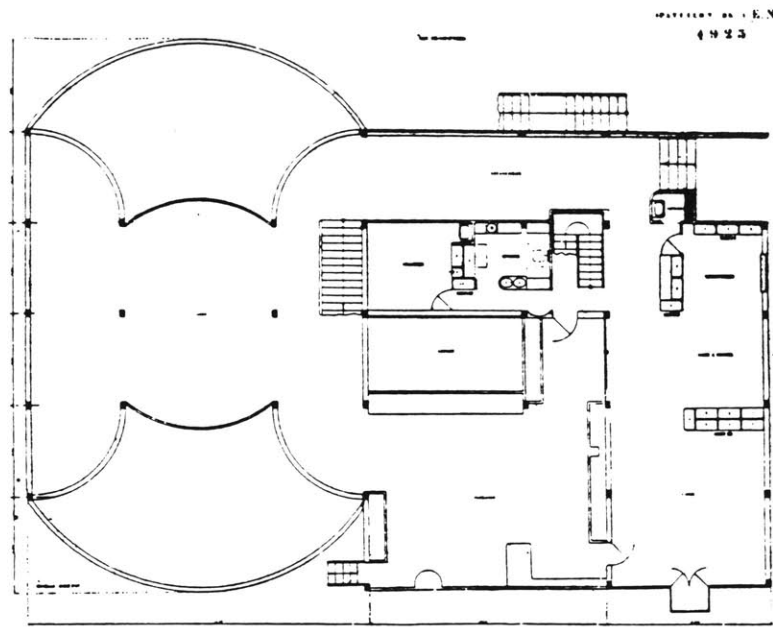
L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU

(la conception de ce pavillon et sa réalisation sont de LE CORBUSIER et PIERRE JEANNERET.)

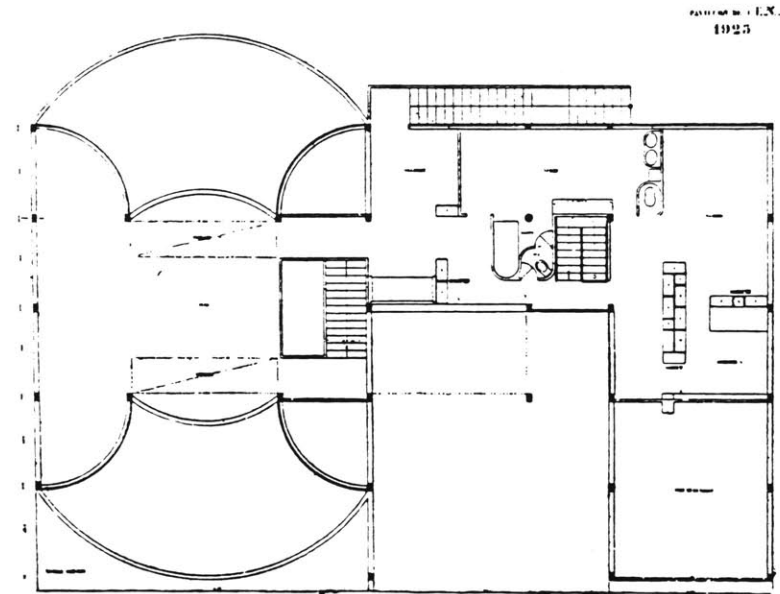
Le pavillon de l' « Esprit Nouveau » est entièrement construit en éléments standard.

(Le Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau était situé dans l'une des parties les plus retirées de l'Exposition ; il était lui-même nettement caché par les pavillons le séparant du Cours-la-Reine. Ainsi de nombreux Parisiens et étrangers l'ont-il cherché en vain. On s'inquiétait à vouloir discerner les raisons certainement savantes du tracé d'implantation des pavillons d'alentour.)

9. A view of the pavilion's facade in the *Almanach*, p. 139.

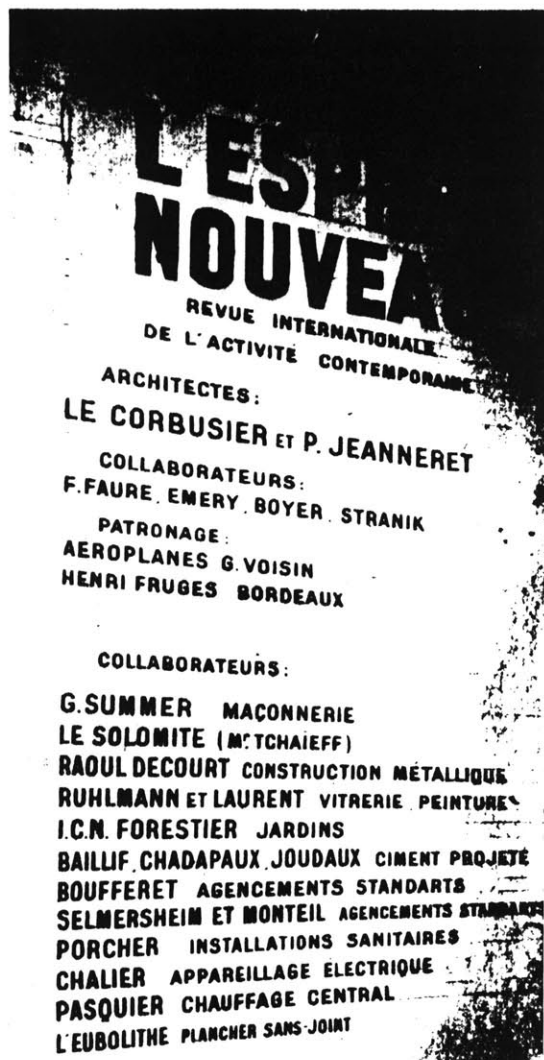


Les Dioramas d'urbanisme. Une cellule d'immeuble-villa
 PLAN DU REZ-DE-CHAUSSÉE



Les Dioramas. Une cellule d'immeuble-villa.
 ÉTAGE

10. The plan of the pavilion, urban design wing at left.
 (Almanach, p.143.)



11. Entry panel, contributors credited.
(Almanach, p. 141.)

TELEPHONES
ELIMÉES } 14-96
 } 14-98
 } 14-97

L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU

LE NUMÉRO FRANCE 8 FA -
ÉTRANGER 7 FA 50
ABONNEMENTS FRANCE 70 FA -
ÉTRANGER 80 FA -

REVUE INTERNATIONALE ILLUSTRÉE DE L'ACTIVITÉ CONTEMPORAINE

80, RUE PASTEUR
PARIS (VI)

Le

EXPOSITION DES ARTS DÉCORATIFS DE 1925.

PAVILLON DE "L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU"

SOCIÉTÉ ANONYME

REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE L'ACTIVITÉ CONTEMPORAINE

Situation: Jardin du Grand Palais sur le Cours la Reine.

Le développement subit de l'automobile a provoqué la crise de circulation de la grande ville.

L'AUTOMOBILE A TUE LA GRANDE VILLE

Si l'automobile ne se préoccupe pas de la transformation qu'il faut apporter au centre des grandes villes, l'industrie automobile périlitera, en un mot, il faut que:

L'AUTOMOBILE DOIT SAUVER LA GRANDE VILLE

Le Pavillon de l'ESPRIT NOUVEAU, à côté des questions d'industrialisation et de standardisation du chantier exposées dans la note annexe, fera la démonstration de l'urbanisation d'une grande ville de 3.000.000 d'habitants et celle de l'urbanisation du centre de Paris.

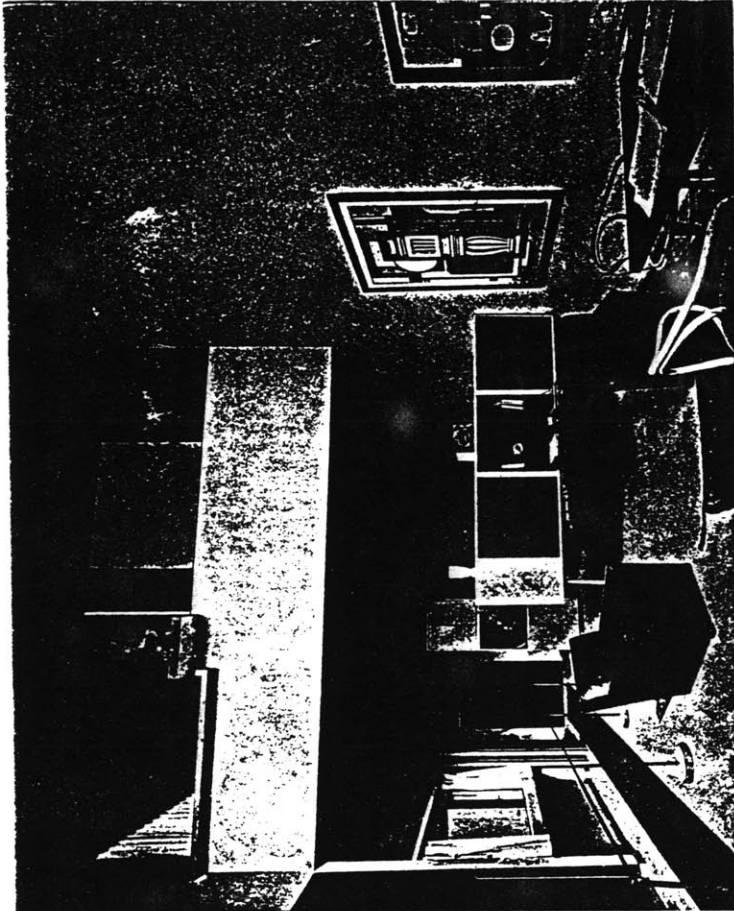
Le vieux Paris du centre est pourri; on le rebatit chaque jour par fragment, sans modifier le réseau des rues, il est temps de rechercher les bases d'un plan de Paris qui soit un véritable programme de présent et d'avenir et qui soit établi avec la grandeur de vue, la loyauté et la rigueur les plus exactes, répondant aux nécessités de l'heure. L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU a étudié ce Plan de Paris.

Nous avons posé à Monsieur Mongermon cette question:

"La Maison VOISIN veut-elle doter Paris du PLAN VOISIN DE PARIS?"

Notre proposition consiste à offrir à la Maison Voisin de patronner le Plan de Paris qui sera exposé, en l'appelant "LE PLAN VOISIN DE PARIS".

12. Press release for the pavilion's urban design annex.
(Almanach, p. 131.)



La salle

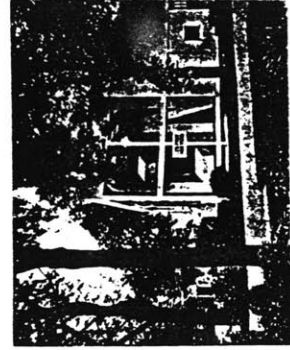


Détail du « Pavillon »

À droite: La salle avec la soupente au premier étage, le boudoir.

En bas à gauche: La salle à manger. Polychromie: Plafond bleu, mur gauche blanc, mur de droite brun et blanc, les caissons jaune.

Le Pavillon



Le boudoir

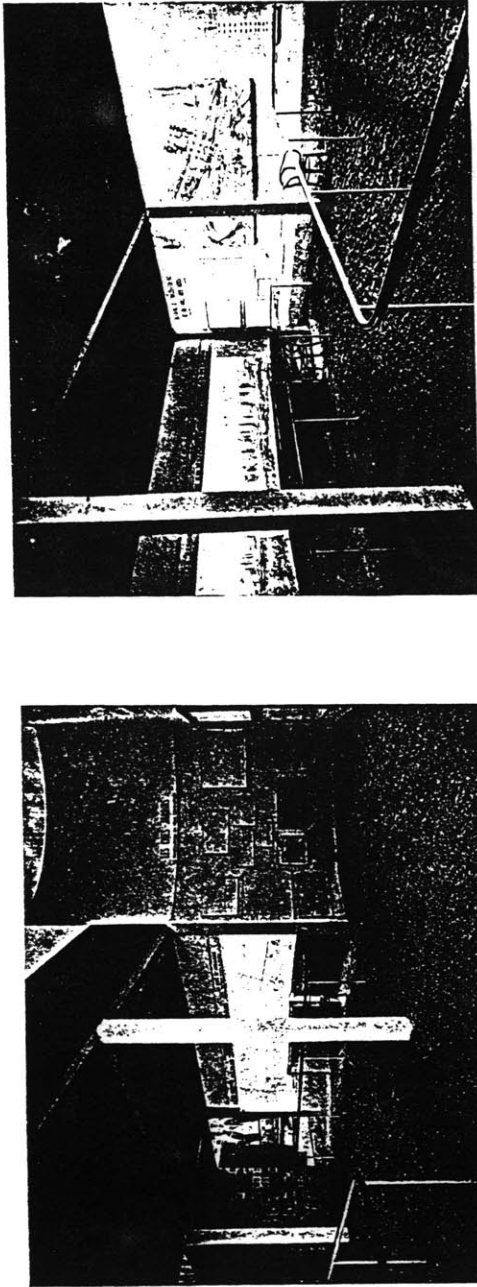


La salle

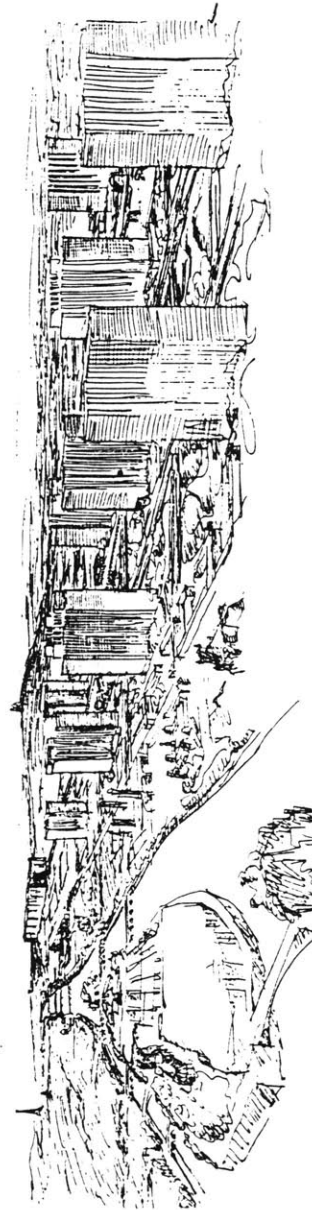


13. Exterior and interior views of the pavilion. Note the bold signage, and metal rail and carpet directing the visitor's path. (*Oeuvre Complète*, p. 101.)

« PAVILLON DE L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU » 1925



Le Stand d'urbanisme du Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau à l'Exposition des Arts Décoratifs à Paris. Au fond le « Plan Voisin » de Paris et les études de circulation, de lotissements, d'immeubles nouveaux, etc. A droite le Diorama d'une Ville Contemporaine de 3 millions d'habitants; à gauche, le Diorama du « Plan Voisin » de Paris (peintures de 80 m² et de 60 m²)



1925. Croquis du « Centre de Paris »

108

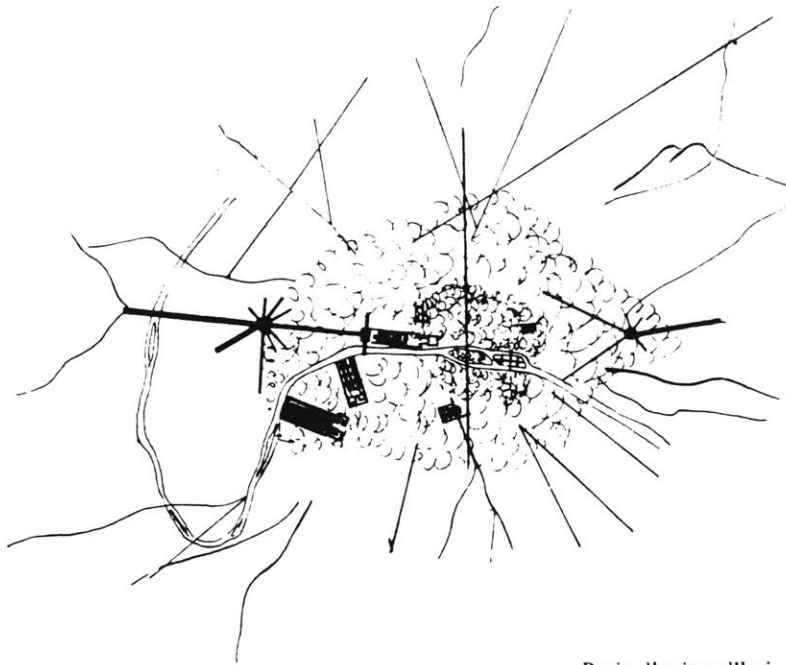
14. Views of the urban design annex and drawing of the Plan Voisin placed in the center of Paris. (*Oeuvre Complète*, p. 108.)

15. The terrace of the pavilion. (*Urbanisme*, p. 215.)



« Lotissements fermés à alvéoles. »

L'un des jardins suspendus de chaque appartement, à 5, 10 ou 20 mètres au-dessus du sol.
(Réalisé au Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau à l'Exposition des Arts décoratifs de Paris, 1925.)



Paris d'aujourd'hui.

2

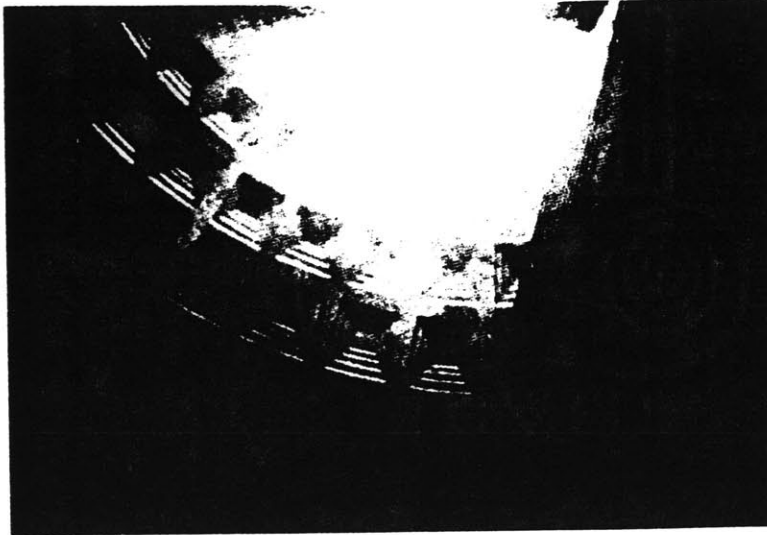
L'ORDRE

La maison, la rue, la ville, sont des points d'application du travail humain; elles doivent être en ordre, sinon elles contrecarrent les principes fondamentaux sur lesquels nous sommes axés; en désordre, elles s'opposent à nous, nous entravent, comme nous entravait la nature ambiante que nous avons combattue, que nous combattons chaque jour.

* * *

Si j'ai l'air d'enfoncer des portes ouvertes (on me l'a fait dire à propos de mon livre *Vers une Architecture*, 1923) c'est qu'il

16. The cartoon which introduced Chapter 2, "L'Ordre", of *Urbanisme*, also served as the cover illustration of the first French edition. (*Urbanisme*, p. 15.)



Coupoles du Panthéon à Rome (an 100).

3

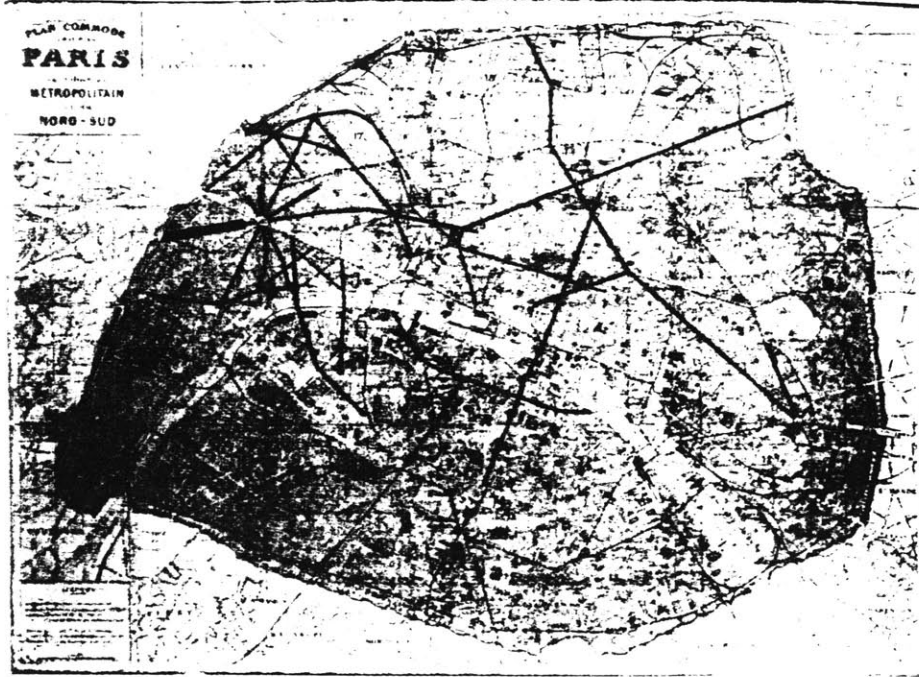
LE SENTIMENT DÉBORDE

Les Barbares avaient passé, s'étaient installés sur les ruines et leurs masses innombrables commençaient sur tous les pays d'Europe, la vie rude et l'ascension lente des peuples. De l'antiquité il ne restait que les puissants vestiges des constructions romaines.

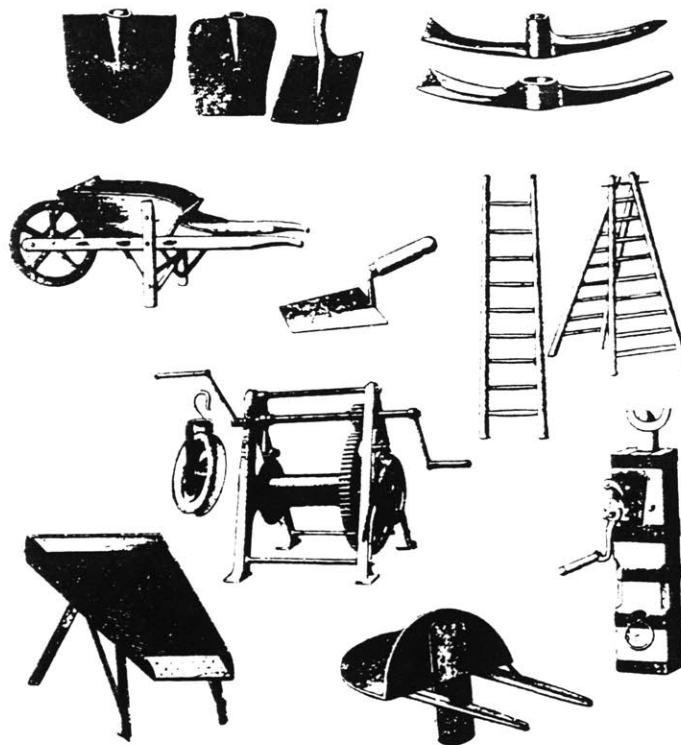
Du chariot ambulant, il va falloir passer au temple et à la ville. Le ciment romain a conservé les grands dômes, les berceaux, les voûtes monolithes dont un pan s'est écroulé dans l'incendie, mais dont l'autre moitié demeure suspendue sur le vide. Voilà le modèle : le charbon hirsute du Nord est face à la culture antique!

Pour ses édifices il prendra le modèle tout fait. On n'aborde pas de plain-pied, quand on est un sauvage, le fruit étranger de la

17. A photo of the Pantheon's interior introduces "Le Sentiment Déborde".
(*Urbanisme*, p. 29.)

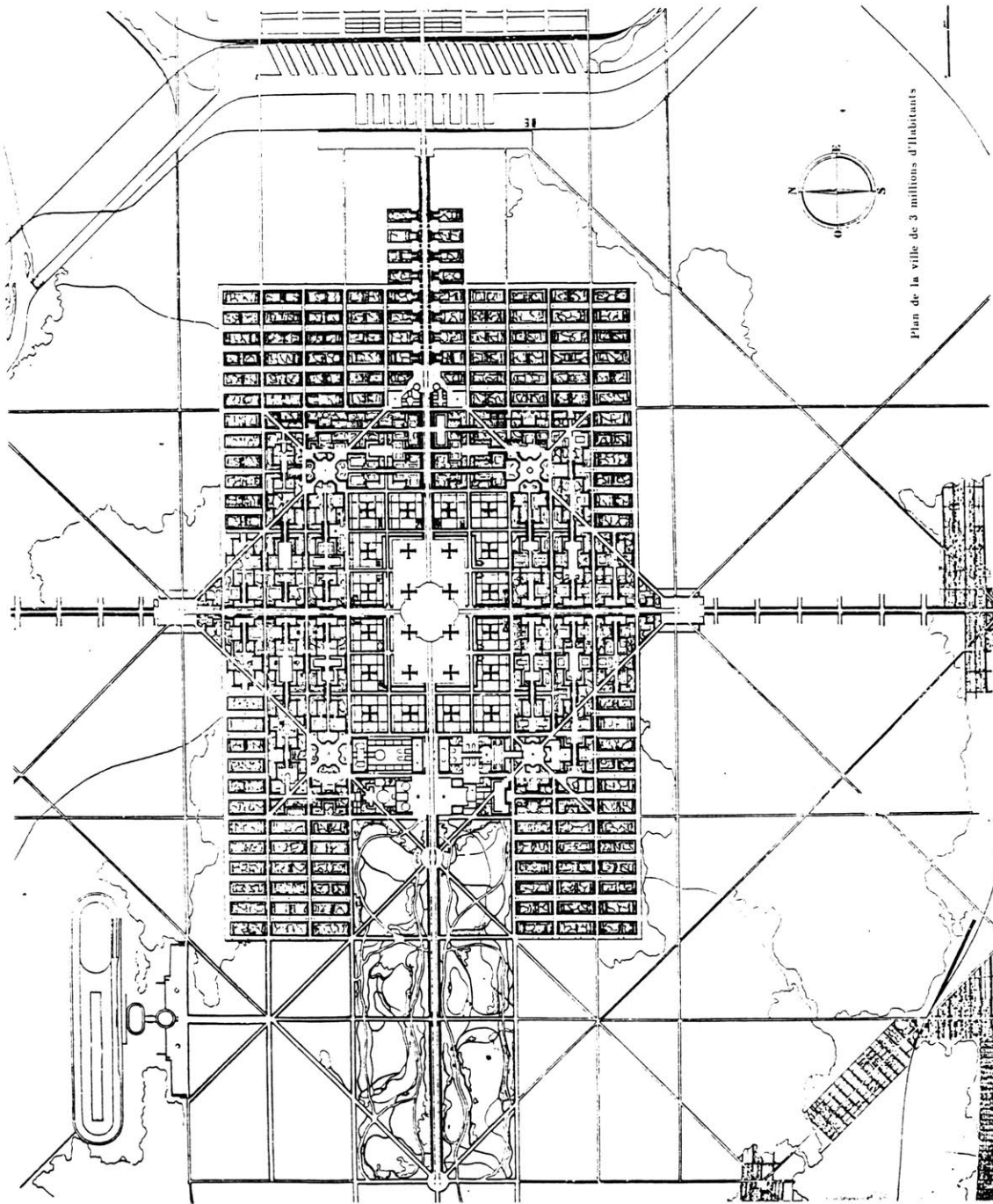


Les principales saignées d'Haussmann.



Les moyens d'Haussmann.

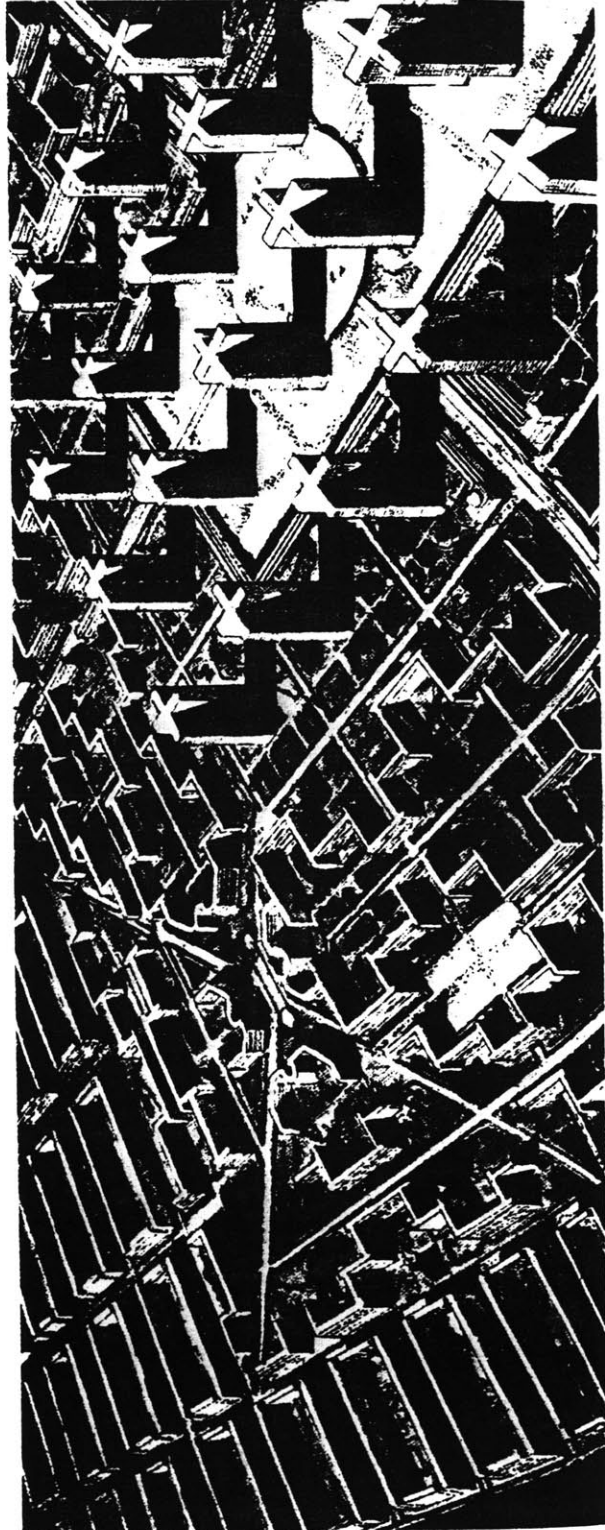
18. The boulevards and construction tools of Haussmann.
(Urbanisme, p. 150.)



19. This plan of the Ville Contemporaine appeared as a fold-out poster in *Urbanisme*.



A même échelle et sous un même angle, vue de la *Cité* de New-York et de la Cité de la « Ville contemporaine ». Le contraste est saisissant.



20. An aerial photo of southern Manhattan and a drawing of the *Ville Contemporaine* shown at the same scale are meant to juxtapose order to disorder. (*Urbanisme*, p. 164.)

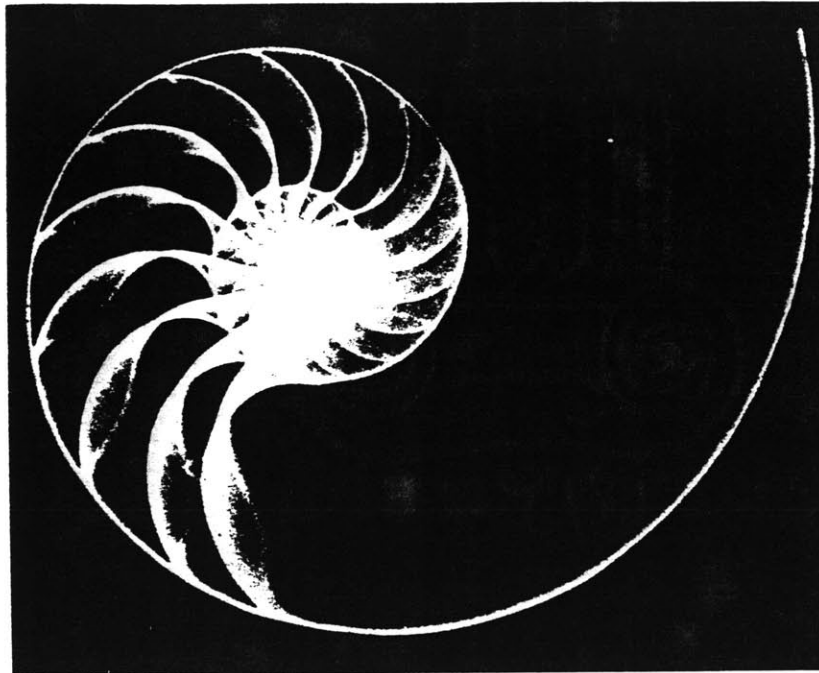


Photo « Wendingen ».

Telle pourrait être l'une des images de la parfaite harmonie.

13

L'HEURE DU REPOS

Les « huit heures ».

Peut-être même les « six heures », un jour.

Des esprits pessimistes et angoissés se disent : le gouffre est devant nous. Que faire de ces heures libres, de ces heures vides ?

Les remplir.

Il tombe sous le sens que c'est ici un problème d'architecture : le logis ; d'urbanisme : l'organisation des quartiers de résidence, la machine à souffler. L'heure du repos, c'est l'heure de souffler.

Déjà, sans attendre que l'architecture et l'urbanisme s'organisent, le sport est entré dans notre vie. A l'action nocive, la riposte salubre.

* * *

21. The opening photo of Chapter 13, "L'Heure du Repos".
(*Urbanisme*, p. 189.)



Telle est l'emprise proposée par le « Plan Voisin » de Paris. Tels sont les quartiers qu'on projete de détruire, tels sont ceux qu'on projete d'édifier à leur place
(Ces deux plans sont à même échelle.)

22. The Plan Voisin superimposed, at the same scale, onto the existing fabric of the Right Bank. (*Urbanisme*, p. 274.)

Louis XIV ordonnant la construction des Invalides



Hommage à un grand urbaniste.

Ce despote conçut des choses immenses et il les réalisa. Le rayonnement de sa gloire est sur tout le pays, partout. Il avait su dire : « je veux ! » ou : « tel est mon bon plaisir. »

(ceci n'est pas une déclaration d'«Action Française».)

23. The concluding illustration to Chapter 16: the autocrat, Louis XIV, commanding the construction of the Invalides. (*Urbanisme*, p. 285.)

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