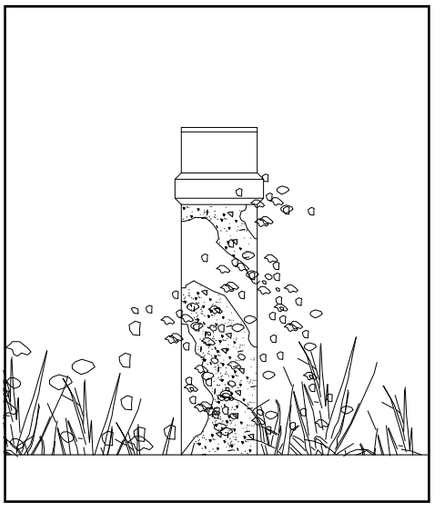
independent group 2020



Gardens of Dialectics

A story of decay and reconstruction.

archive

Jacopo Zani

-ARCHIVE-

A collection of essays, ideas, images and events that influenced the project.
Not an object of contemplation but an open process to engage with.

Contents

Patching up the Belgian Urban Landscape

Bruno De Meulder, Jan Schreurs, Annabel Cock, Bruno Notteboom. OASE N 52

The land of liberalized nonchalance. The near total urbanization of the territory of Belgium surely makes it a special case on the European housing scene. It is a land of laissez-faire, where the cacophonic juxtaposition of designs delivers surprise after surprise, where an intense poetry lurks side by side with a nauseating banality behind the commonplace of everyday habitation. This incredibly chaotic urban landscape seems to lack any coherence whatsoever. The Belgian residential condition also has quite a few favorable qualities, however, as W.-J. Neutelings has observed. They include variety, flexibility and urbanity. C. Weeber goes even further: he promotes the unruly Belgian model as a breath of fresh air after the streamlined and utterly dull housing output of the Netherlands. In the Flanders region of Belgium, people are beginning to see things differently. Especially frustrated members of Flemish architectural circles have long and profusively scoffed at Belgium as 'the ugliest country in the world' (Renaat Braem). It is no secret that many Belgian architects, urban designers and planners go on repeated pilgrimages to our promised land to the north, the Netherlands. There has been a growing conviction among them that planning might be the key to that 'fine' country which appears as soon as you cross the border. So the Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen (RSV, 'Regional Master Plan for Flanders', 1997), now legally ratified by the Belgian parliament, did not just appear from nowhere. It blew in on a north wind and was adapted to the more southerly conditions. Major spatial planning aims of the RSV include protecting the remaining open countryside, limiting the development of new infrastructure, optimizing the existing infrastructure and densifying urban areas and residential

Advertising for a Belgian building firm showing the absence of specificity and stylistic anonymity of belgian suburban housing developments, Bruxelles 1933.

nuclei in the regional outskirts. These principles are nothing new in themselves, but they are a novelty when applied to Flanders. The desired spatial structure is totally contrary to the existing one. The present spacedevouring patterns of settlement are based on a very specific, fine-grained and asystematic structure and will not tolerate systematic densification without further ado. The most sought-after form of housing is almost universally a detached house on its own plot of land. This model will certainly have to be relinquished at anything above the (relatively low) target densities specified in the RSV of 25 dwellings per hectare for urban areas and 15 dwellings per hectare for housing concentrations in the countryside. Both the traditional way of organizing house building (small building firms, traditional building craft and direct relations between the client, the architect and the contractor) and the relatively industrialized turnkey production methods are attuned to individual projects of restricted complexity. The socio-cultural and economic infrastructure within which 'Belgian-style building' has systematically developed over many years relies on countless deep-rooted, subjective arguments to avoid the cool rationalism of planning. It would not be going too far to say that a wide gulf exists between the government's new ambitions and the traditional aspirations of the great majority of the population. Moreover, everyone is aware that the existing planning situation of the 'banlieue radieuse' cannot be transformed in some abstract way into a 'compact city'. Purposeful intervention demands insight. Gaining insight into the logic of Belgian 'wild living' demands an analysis of both the socio-economic mechanisms and the morphology of the landscape. We shall examine both the logic of socio-economic mechanisms and the morphological rationale of the landscape in this essay. The origins of 'wild living' in Belgium and the form it has taken do not quite match the image of it that prevails abroad. The following short account should provide some useful insights to those whose attachment to the prevailing myth is strong.

The Minimal Rationality of Housing Patterns in Flanders' Nevelstad

Michael Ryckewaert. OASE N 60

Few planners or urban developers regard environments such as the Randstad, the Flemish Nevelstad or other highly urbanised areas in Western Europe as one large compact city. Nonetheless, ideas about these different urban areas are determined by the image of the compact city, the city as an independent entity. The compact city continues to be seen as the most 'enduring' pattern of settlement. Within this concept development in the peripheral zones is regarded as its opposite. Unlike 'the city' the periphery is said to be the result of unbridled growth controlled purely by market mechanisms which eventually undermine society. Consequently, the periphery is by definition not urban, even though it may display typically urban features in the way it is used. Others argue that changes in urban use have made it impossible to still distinguish between the two. In their view the traditional dichotomy of city and country has lost its meaning. Instead, it would be more precise to speak of an isotropic pattern of housing, a diffuse landscape without contrasts. In the study of housing patterns in a number of areas in Flanders, which is the subject of this article, a conscious attempt has been made to avoid this discussion because it would be counterproductive. By adopting one viewpoint or another, generic categories are projected onto the landscape in advance, thus clouding the outlook and thwarting an unbiased analysis of concrete spatial phenomena in scattered urban areas. To avoid such prejudice, this study emphatically takes the description and analyses of concrete reality as its starting point. A comparable method of investigation into concrete urban phenomena was started in Italy by Secchi, and later by Boeri, and can be traced back to the morphotypological school of Venice. Francesco Indovina belongs to the same tradition and was the first person to launch the concept of the citta diffusa; he analysed the urbanisation of the countryside and the suburbanisation of housing in the Veneto as a progressive process. Indovina defines interim

Shopping1, the first shoppingmall of Belgium.
Genk, 1968

categories which are neither city nor countryside, but based on the nature and intensity of social developments which give rise to spatial housing patterns. Even an author like John Brinckerhoff Jackson, a master at describing the everyday cultural landscape, advocates abandoning a dual approach to the built-up space, but does not suggest that the distinction between urban and rural has disappeared.s He refers to these two categories as 'ideal' landscapes which in fact do not exist in their pure form. In order to trace the 'minimal rationality of housing patterns in a number of typical 'diffuse city'-zones in the Kempen region in Flanders, we used the hypothesis that three elements are essential to understanding the genesis and modern functioning of these areas, namely, the social economic evolutions which led to the origin and transformation of the areas, the physical system (landscape, soil, hydrology) as a foundation on which urbanisation took place and finally, the planning and concepts of urban development which affected urbanisation.

Internal suburbanisation as diffuse urbanisation

According to Indovina, during the post-war period in the Veneto region, the first wave of suburbanisation coincided with the increase in prosperity of the inhabitants of rural areas. These inhabitants abandoned the agrarian sector and built houses for themselves on their land or that of their parents, or on agricultural land which had dropped a great deal in price. This urbanisation of the landscape was not coupled with a demand for additional facilities, and came into being in configurations which were not planned but grew spontaneously and largely based on the proximity of family. Indovina was the first to introduce the term 'internal suburbanisation' for this form of urbanisation. Similar movements can be recognised along the southern border of the Kempen in Flanders. This rural area has been characterised by poor quality soil since time immemorial. At the end of the Ancien Regime, the area was sparsely populated and large parts of the heath land were still virgin territory. There was only a little, mainly subsistence agriculture. A close examination of historical maps and a dating of the types of development in these areas indicate that suburbanisation started in the same period as agriculture was undergoing a transition to less intensive forms, and that traditional industries and commuting to the mines were developing apace. During the fifties and early sixties hybrid types of terraced housing appeared in ribbons in these areas. In these houses there is a very sharp distinction between the front and back facade. Next to the dwelling there was usually a narrow, open path, thus making it possible to run a small (agricultural) business on the property. These houses consistently occupied the elongated agricultural parcels of land bordering the road. In a subsequent phase detached houses also appeared on large blockshaped plots along the access roads. Sometimes the villas were for the owners of adjacent garages, workshops and contracting firms, or else were not associated in any way with professional activities, and the inhabitants commuted to and from their places of work. These developments caused a gradual increase in the density of the ribbons. This rural evolution can be characterised as an endogenous transition or, in Indovina's words, an 'internal suburbanisation'. The influx of new inhabitants into these areas is only marginally the result of an increased mobility and private car ownership. This internal suburbanisation resulted in former agrarian structures becoming built up or condensed. In addition to these incremental transformations, however, there were also signs of more radical government controlled or institutional transformations in the area from the start of industrialisation in the nineteenth century.

Early industrialisation and infrastructure in the periphery

Initially the earliest industrialisation had very little influence on the environmental structure of the area. The construction of an important railway junction near Aarschot, a town on the edge of the Zuiderkempen, resulted in the advent of a few factories and a speculative working-class neighbourhood near the city centre, but without initiating fundamental urban growth. The railway junction landed up in the rural zone north of the town, where two radial trunk roads with tram lines split and crossed a ribbon of rural hamlets. This produced an alternative centre near the hamlet of Ourodenberg. Marginal housing forms established themselves at a safe and respectable distance from the town, but sufficiently near to make use of urban facilities. This gave rise to a place with inns where voyageurs [travelling salesmen] took up temporary residence to make a living off the arterial roads, where funfair hawkers and the 'hut people' from the cleared temporary housing of World War I were put up in discarded railway carriages/ Besides these 'transient' programmes the infrastructure junction did not lead to environmental transformations of a more permanent character. The discovery of coal in the Kempen at the end of the nineteenth century resulted in a number of different concessions being granted. The exploitation, or not, of these concessions had a decisive effect on urban structures in the area. The exploitation of the coal reserves assumed the character of the colonisation of an underdeveloped part of the country. Mine shafts, garden suburbs, coal avenues, coal trains and a coal port were superimposed over the 'desert like' heath land with its scattered hamlets. The Albert Canal between the Maas and Schelde Rivers changed direction in order to serve this coal basin. Certain hamlets, such as Genk, which had acquired two mining establishments in the surrounding area, Waterschei and

Winterslag, eventually acquired the status of a town, though without any unambiguous central point. In other places, such as Vorst, a hamlet situated halfway between Aarschot and the coal basin, coal exploitation did not get off the ground despite the granting of mining concessions and the fact that the Albert Canal ran through the borough. These zones retained their character of being sparsely populated with inhabitants spread out over a wide area. Nonetheless, the aforementioned phenomena of internal suburbanisation gained in importance. The fact of whether or not areas became involved in the process of industrial development therefore had a fundamental impact on the urban structure of this part of the country. A small mediaeval town like Aarschot degenerated into a provincial nest and was at best no more than a large village, whereas the mine basin underwent a quantum leap from sparsely populated wilderness to network city avant la lettre. Finally, the interim zones became indirectly involved in modernisation with the advent of commuters and internal suburbanisation, resulting in a more gradual yet steady transformation.

The 'Fordist' development of the scattered city

The spatial influence of government action by the construction of infrastructure became very powerful during the post-war period. The expansion of the welfare state was coupled with a Keynesian policy of large-scale public building programmes. Among other things this resulted in the building of an extensive network of motorways in Belgium. The quick succession of slip roads on the motorway guaranteed that even the smallest borough was easily accessible. For example the local road network in the small village of Verst had two roads linking it almost directly with the motorway. Complementary to the motorway network, 'express' roads and ring-roads were built around the cities. As a consequence of the completed section of the ring-road around Aarschot, the periphery (including an industrial zone where, among other things, a multinational battery manufacturer established themselves) also became incorporated into the city. Although this part of the ring-road got hopelessly snarled up in the arterial road and railway junction around Ourodenberg, it nevertheless also very effectively opened up this hamlet. This was important for the funfair hawkers and circus folk who had started to settle down there semi-permanently, as well as those squatting with their caravans on plots in the industrial estates. In Genk the motorways doubled the existing network of coal avenues which served the coal port near the hamlet of Oud Sledderlo. As the activities of the coal mines started to decline, the port had largely fallen into disuse. However, as a result of motorway construction, and because it occupied a peripheral position in the borough, it became a location for new businesses. The Ford offices which were built here became the fitting icon of the Fordist development which replaced the bloodless industrialisation of the coal mine in Genk. During the boom that followed the war, the national government mainly concerned itself with the construction of a large-scale infrastructure, while local authorities. compiled housing programmes which were large-scale by Belgian standards. For the first time outside the city, social housing appeared on the map as islands linked to ribbon roads or enclosed by ribbon development in large inner areas. Near Aarschot, the hamlet of Ourodenburg was extended by the social housing district of Gijmelberg. In Genk plans were made to start building a real satellite city in the vicinity of the hamlet of Sledderlo in 1963. This city would complement the new industrial zone along the Albert Canal.

Crisis and post-Fordist elan

Crisis struck in 1973. The public housing programmes were initially simply continued as they fitted in with a Keynesian policy of combating the crisis with public investment. However, as a result of the enormous increase in the budget deficit, the policy was shelved in the 1980s. The result was that houses continued to be built in social housing districts, but without good access roads or public transport services, nor any public amenities like post offices, day-care centres and schools. These social housing districts were faced with social problems. In the social housing district of Aarschot there were rumours of shooting incidents. In the satellite city of Genk, only a part of the district was developed and enclosed by an extensive pine forest. It was soon dubbed New Chicago due to heroine dealing and the use of drugs. Despite the crisis, other housing patterns proclaiming a new post-Fordist economy appeared on the map from the eighties onwards. These suburban plots gave rise to copies of the same detached house being built everywhere. Under the regime which, together with Indovina, we referred to earlier as internal suburbanisation, the detached house was still inspired by the country villa. However, under the new regime building was less and less on a basis of individual initiative. Housing construction companies took over most of the production. They divided the available land into lots as efficiently as possible so that the house became a standard catalogue product and land division patterns increasingly stringent. Under the influence of the rising price of land, lots became consistently smaller, thereby limiting the degree of freedom on the lot. It was a far cry from the freestanding villa in a large garden. From the nineties onwards a post-Fordist elan appeared to give rise to new developments which further supported peripheral housing development. Peripheral zones which had so far stood outside the field of vision of economic developments now appeared on the map of the global economy. A distribution centre for the multinational sports shoe manufacturer Nike, as well as a container terminal, were built along the Albert Canal in Vorst. The Nike logo, the cranes and the containers appeared as immense Fremdkorper in the unspoilt landscape of the Kempen. A part of the Antwerp inner port had found its way into Vorst. As a small town, Aarschot began to attract the attention of young prospective suburbanites due to a huge rise in the price of land around Brussels and Leuven. This led to intensive land division activity as well as the transformation of traditional structures: The elongated farmhouses of the Kempen were converted into classy country residences. The hybrid types of terraced houses from the first wave of suburbanisation enjoyed a second life. These free peripheral areas formed attractive housing environments for people working in Hasselt, Antwerp, Leuven and Brussels. The daily traffic-jams were something you simply put up with.

Ford Body e Assembly Genk in 1994.

Landscape as a canvas for peripheral urbanisation.

The 'generic' social economic developments outlined here gave rise to a variety of different urbanisation regimes in various places. The differences can be partially traced back to natural, landscape elements such as relief, hydrology and soil. In the example of the town of Genk, the condition of the ground very explicitly determined the nature of settlement patterns. The location of the mines, the garden suburbs and the siting of the infrastructural networks were determined solely by the location of the most successful exploratory drilling. The coal port was built in the lower zone, on the southern edge of the Kempen plateau. This gave rise to a scattered area of places with an urban significance, all of which had to be connected with one another, resulting in Genk's scattered urbanisation. Boundaries of lots, former common land, drainage systems and so on also appeared as fundamental 'political elements' with the important task of regulating the relationship between man and his natural environment. These elements mainly played a role in determining the spatial configuration to be adopted by the 'internal suburbanisation' in the area. One can see this very clearly in the patterns of settlement in Vorst and the northern flank of Aarschot. Both areas have a similar type of landscape, characterised by a succession of east-west facing dunes separated by damp and marshy valleys. Here agricultural activities originated in the transitional zone situated between the damp land and the dry dune crests, in narrow zones with a good water balance. Nonetheless, the soil is rather infertile so that cultivation is only possible through the use of fertilizers. The damp valley land, used in the Ancien Regime as common land, serves as grazing land for cattle which in their turn produce valuable manure. The dryer dune crests are used for wood production. This type of soil produces a very extensive pattern of settlement. The farms are established at regular intervals along the roads following the fertile strips. Wherever these strips are narrow, about as wide as the length of an efficiently cultivable field, as in Ourodenberg and the adjacent town of Langdorp, this produces long ribbons of development. In the wider sections, such as in Vorst, the system is duplicated and transverse connections have been added, thus creating a ladder-like pattern. In both instances the available area is occupied by an isotropic and extensive pattern of housing. This reading of the landscape indicates that the isotropy which some see as characteristic of the modern diffuse city need not necessarily originate in the locational logic associated with placelessness but rather in patterns initiated by the geomorphology of the landscape itself and on the basis of efficient land use. In these areas the ribbon development of 'internal suburbanisation' is simply the condensation of the original development ribbons. The suburban and peripheral developments of the industrial and postindustrial age caused a general increase in density in these areas but remarkably also elements of centrality and concentration in these originally isotropic, narrow patterns of settlement.

Planning in the Nevelstad: the Regional Plans

The aforementioned Keynesian government intervention by building infrastructure was also accompanied by the development of spatial planning. During this period the first law on urban development was introduced and the guideline plans were drafted for use as a basis for drawing up Regional Plans. These regional zoning plans for

different areas or 'regions' introduced modern planning into Belgium. However, they evolved in an atmosphere of political influence and trickery. This, combined with the lax spatial planning culture which followed the laying down of the Regional Plans, causes one to overlook the fact that these plans were based on essential spatial concepts which carried over to a certain extent. A spatial principle implicit in the Regional Plans concerns the concept of compact, concentric urban development. This principle is applied to almost every nucleus of urbanisation, including the smallest hamlet and the narrow ladder-like structure of Vorst and the hamlet ribbon at Ourodenberg. In the isotropic agricultural housing patterns produced by the Ancien Regime , a number of 'nuclei' with a greater centrality had taken shape. As mentioned earlier, in Ourodenberg this had occurred through the advent of the infrastructure junction and in Vorst, through the building of surrounding intersections of important connecting roads at right angles to the ladder-like structure. As far as housing is concerned, in the Regional Plans this concept of concentric development takes the form of a sequence of zones with functions that are intended to control a phased housing development from the nucleus. Contiguous with the centre, housing ribbons and the open spaces separating them are filled in as residential areas. In the following ring the housing ribbons are residential areas and the pieces in between 'residential expansion areas', which are only for future use as residential areas. The housing ribbons that fall outside the imaginary village area are filled in as 'residential area with a rural character', a planning euphemism for the reviled ribbon development. The specific aim of the Regional Plans is therefore to introduce diversification into a landscape that is fairly uniform and homogenous. These function definitions form a framework within which more institutional housing development, social housing and then the suburban lots will come into being as insertions filling in the open squares of the structure.

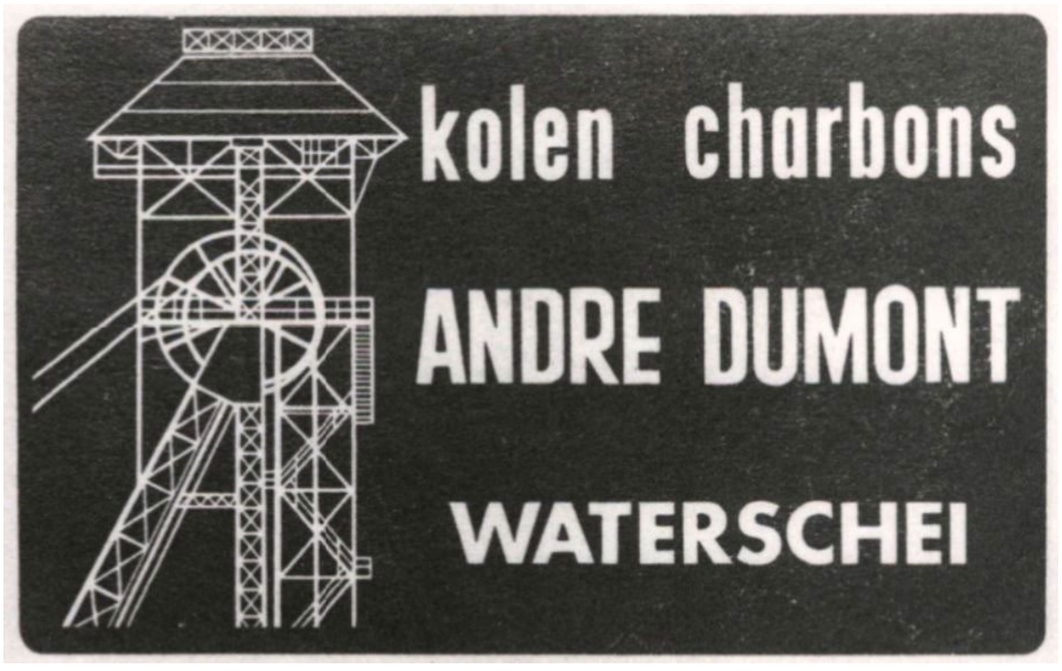
Fragments of urban design

In Genk the planning of the satellite city near Sledderlo started in 1963. With its calling as a city in mind, the expansion of a new urban focus near the industrial development along the canal and former coal port was tackled very ambitiously.The Van Embden urban design firm from Delft was commissioned to design the satellite city.At the same time an extensive study was made of the level of amenities in the district in relation to the population structure and based on an analysis of the neighbourhood and amenity concepts in the British New Towns.A small fragment of the southern lobe of the planned city was built as a monofunctional social housing district. This fragment was, for all that, executed according to a detailed urban development plan by Van Embden which gives the district a coherent spatial structure. The numerous rear access routes, the presence of appropriable intermediate spaces in which fragments of a pine forest were preserved, the arrangement of the housing blocks allowing visual control and regulation of privacy appeared to link up very well with the residents' way of living. Today the problems in community relations have almost all disappeared, largely due to major efforts by the company that manages the district. Although the plans and designs for the satellite city in Belgium are quite exceptional, as it is today Sledderlo is not unique in Flanders' urban landscape. The urban development of the social housing district near Ourodenberg for example, is similar, though slightly less lively, as are many other peripheral social housing districts which nowadays enrich the complex configuration of the Flemish urban landscape. They have similar community problems and parallel living habits. A lack of facilities and poor integration in the urban structure are typical of all of these districts. A few examples of the plan-based thinking of present case studies demonstrate that the body of ideas that is commonly implicitly rooted in functional zone planning is today leading a life of its own. In addition to this, the generic concepts initiated at the time roll like a mist over the reality of what has been built in such a way as to cloud the view. This has resulted in the concrete knowledge of the cultural landscape and its spatial logic being pushed into the background. In Sledderlo the part of the satellite city marked as a housing area and housing expansion area on the Regional Plan is gradually becoming full. Both the layout of private plots and the expansion of the social housing district with a number of smaller houses, completely ignores the reason why the zone with housing areas appeared on the map in the first place. The trajectory of the access road, which was planned but never realised, will definitively be built over and a part of the woodland area forming a buffer around the quarter will be felled. Nieuw Sledderlo's urban development outline, as an independent lobe in the forest, will consequently disappear. However, this does not mean that it would be better to execute Van Embden's plans without further ado. A critical reading of these plans should at least play a role in the way this area of housing districts is being dealt with today, in the phasing to be implemented for the development of the whole and which spatial structures in Van Embden's plan are worth reviving. In Vorst the municipal spatial structure plan is based on two core areas, on which a whole stock of standard structural plan concepts will be unleashed. Gates marking the centres, the creation of through routes and connections between the valley areas by means of corridors are the commonplace elements which are intended to give shape to a policy of core areas. The intentions of the Regional Plan are being further embellished. There is a shift in accent, however, at least in the discourse of the plan, from concentric expansion to contraction (in-fill) and condensation. These core areas have now partly acquired form by filling in the grid squares with a few standard figures - a social housing district here, a private housing estate there. The intended connection between the north and south valleys is extremely artificial and in no way fits in with the character of the existing landscape structure. The east-west connection corridor will in any case continue to act as a barrier between these two areas, and the area of fields on the elevated section between the valleys can hardly be called a natural landscape since the soil has been transformed by centuries of human interference. In Vorst the search for possible locations for economic activity and housing expansion zones is in danger of once again resulting in an expansion of the core area, with construction extending right up to the marshy valley area. The contraction of the core areas, combined with the modern practice of dividing land into parcels, has resulted in a fundamental transition from an open to a closed developmental structure. The extensive open spaces within the grid squares have disappeared. The traditional elongated lots with hybrid terraced houses maintain an important relationship with the areas behind, both visually and physically. The presence of public paths and through routes opens up not only the grid squares but the adjacent valley areas as well. In the simple rhythm of blockshaped parcels of land and broad farmhousestyle homes that are starting to fill up the ribbons as well as the inner areas, this specific arrangement and the relationship with the land behind are disappearing. The open structure is gradually closing. An alternative development of the area might be founded on the basic morphology of the man-made landscape, in which the former field area could be seen as a setting for future housing, while the valley areas can be confirmed as natural landscapes. The development could then spread out in compact strip-shaped clusters over the entire ladder-like structure, thus leaving substantial open spaces, also in the immediate vicinity of the present concentrations of services and facilities. In this way, the entire structure would be able to enjoy a network of open space made accessible by restoring the use of existing roads, thus facilitating recreational use of the valley areas. This survey of social-spatial phenomena in a number of case studies shows that living in the Nevelstad is more than a generic sprawl of ribbon development and residential estates. Similar social developments bring about different rates of spatial development in different places and with varying intensities. On the one hand these developments adapt themselves to the physical preconditions of the man-made landscape where urbanisation takes place, but they are also the result of spatial concepts, of more or less coherent urban designs or of other spatial policy decisions. The generic range of instruments which planning brings to bear on these adopted developments- strict functional zoning, constantly trying to distinguish or shape the nucleus and the surrounding area, or the city and the countryside - ignores the diversity and specific nature of the urban landscape. The detailed analysis of social-economic developments, the landscape and the planning history of a few housing environments is intended not only to reveal the contrast between these generic concepts and the specificity of the landscape but also to identify the qualities of peripheral housing patterns or, to use the words of Bernardo Secchi, to discover its 'minimal rationality'. The identification of this minimal rationality is the first step towards a plan-based handling of these environments.

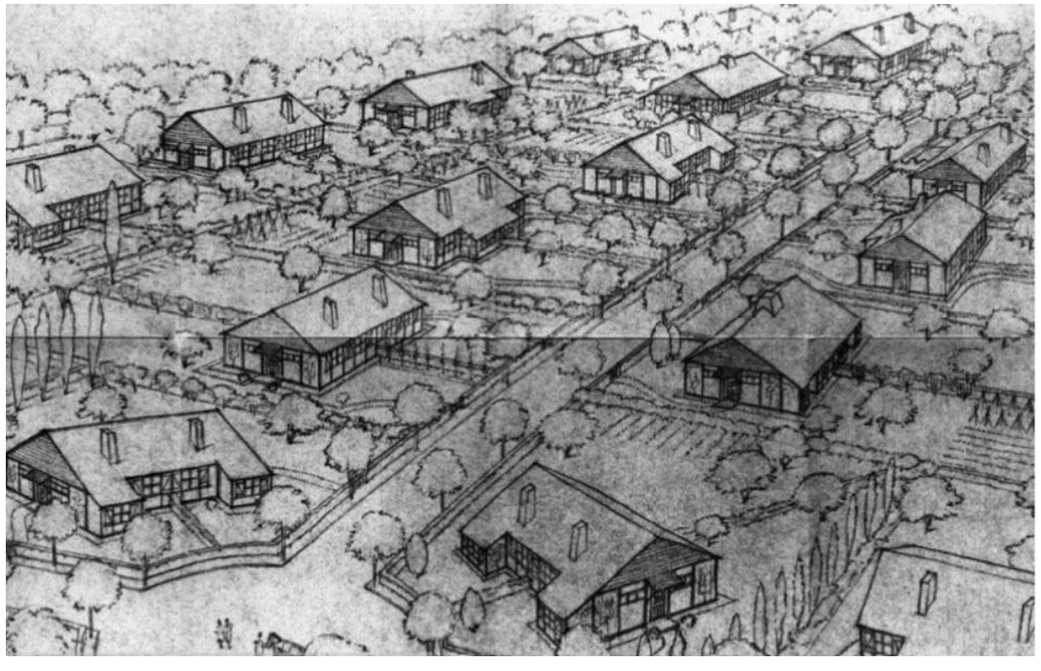
Het Zwarte Goud Van De Kempen

Propaganda documentary, 1951

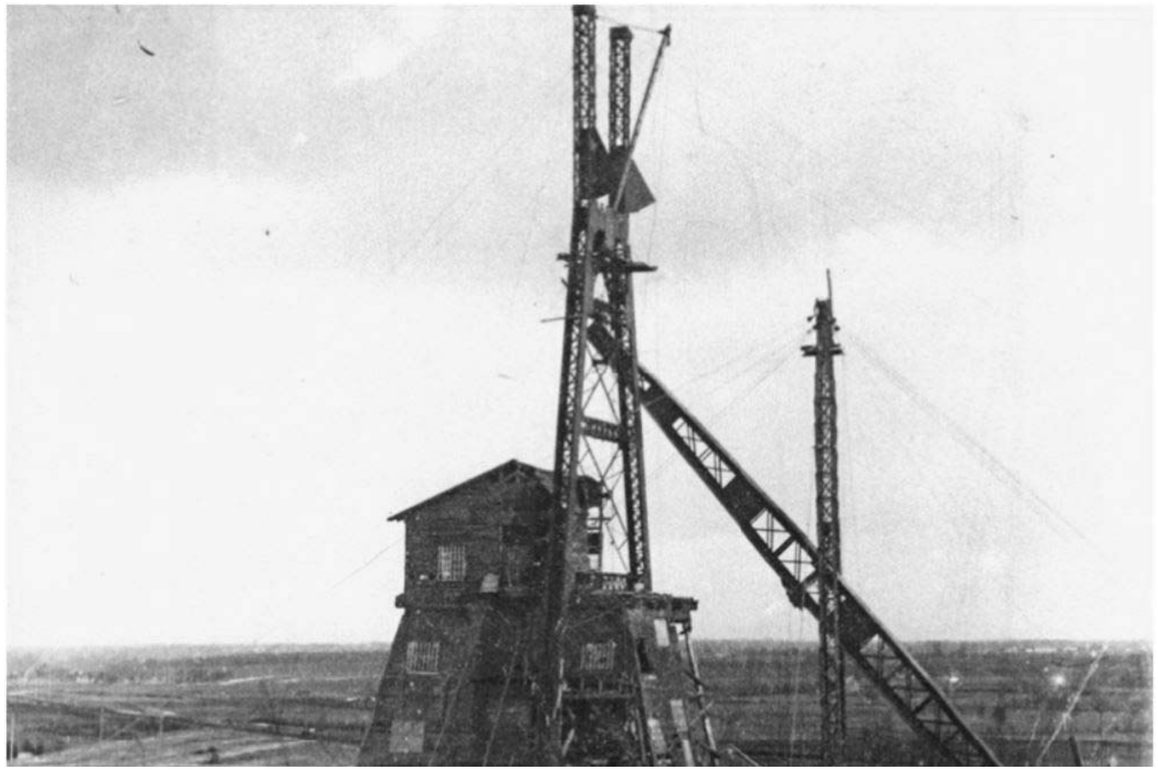
Photographic Archive:
the Mine and the Cité



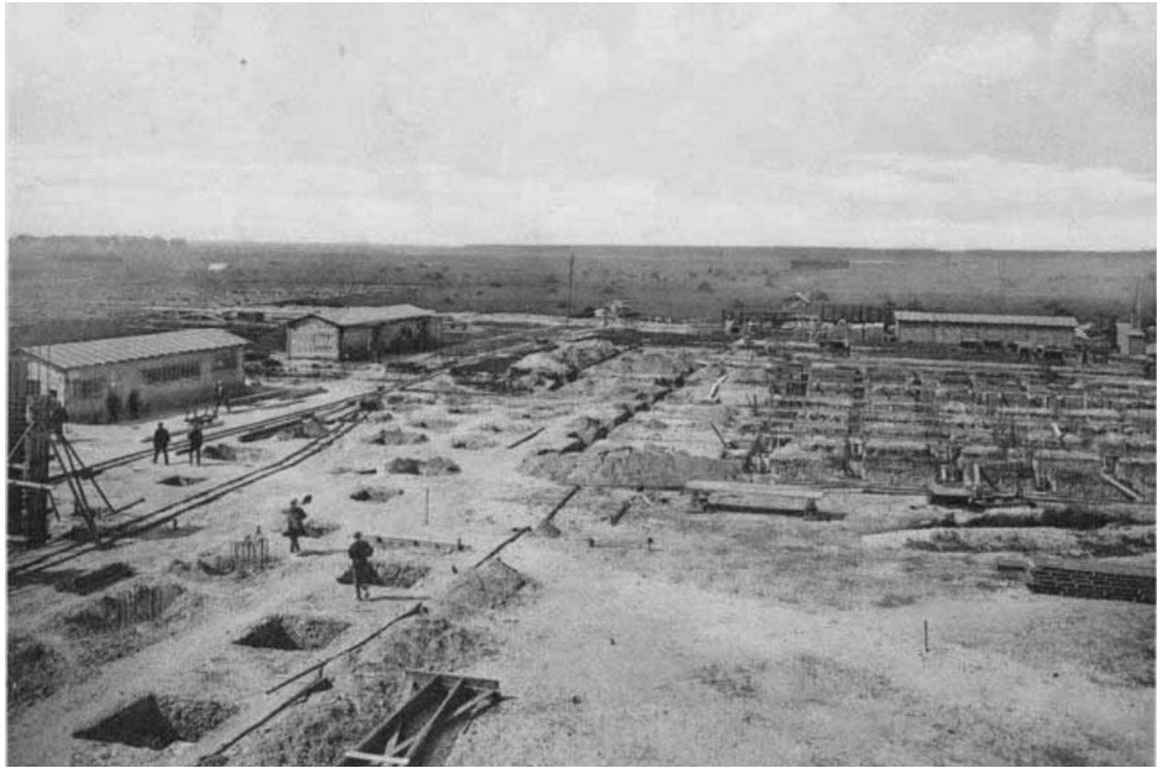
Advertisment of the Mining Company Andre Dumont in Waterschei
Source: HeideBloemke.



Drawing showing the idealization of natural landscape in relationship to the speculative development of worker's housing in the Garden City of Waterschei.
Source: HeideBloemke.



Replacement of the first drilling towers with permanent ones. Watershcei, 1924.
Source: HeideBloemke.



The foundation of the Garden City. Watershcei, 1924.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Mining activities with worker’s Barraks.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Mining works under the ground surface.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Control room in the Waterschei Central Building.
Source: HeideBloemke.

The mine in relation to the landscape and terrils.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Coal heaps and shaft towers in Waterschei.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Cooling towers and the forest.
Source: HeideBloemke.

The mining site of Waterschei.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Miner’s barracks in Texaswijk.
Source: HeideBloemke.

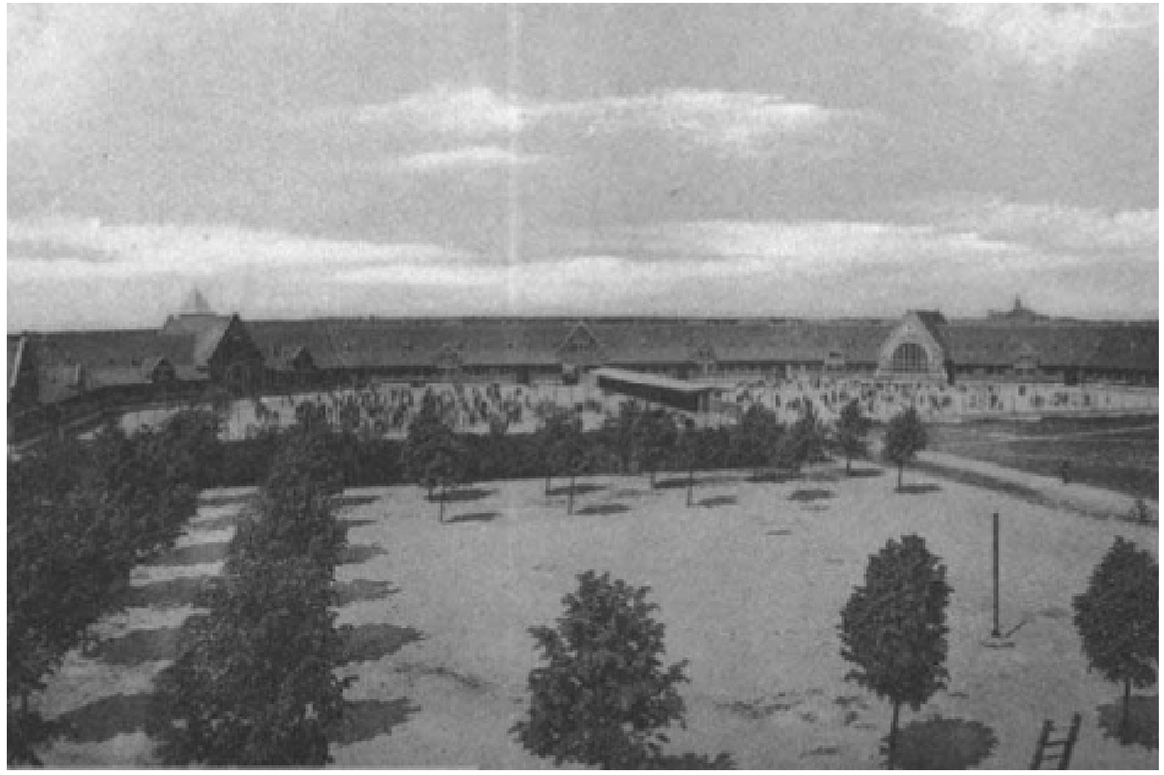
Ruins of an ancient medieval tower transformed into a park. Waterschei, 1930 ca.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Worker’s barracks in Texaswijk.
Source: HeideBloemke.

One of the Engineer’s Villas in the Garden City of Waterschei.
Source: HeideBloemke.

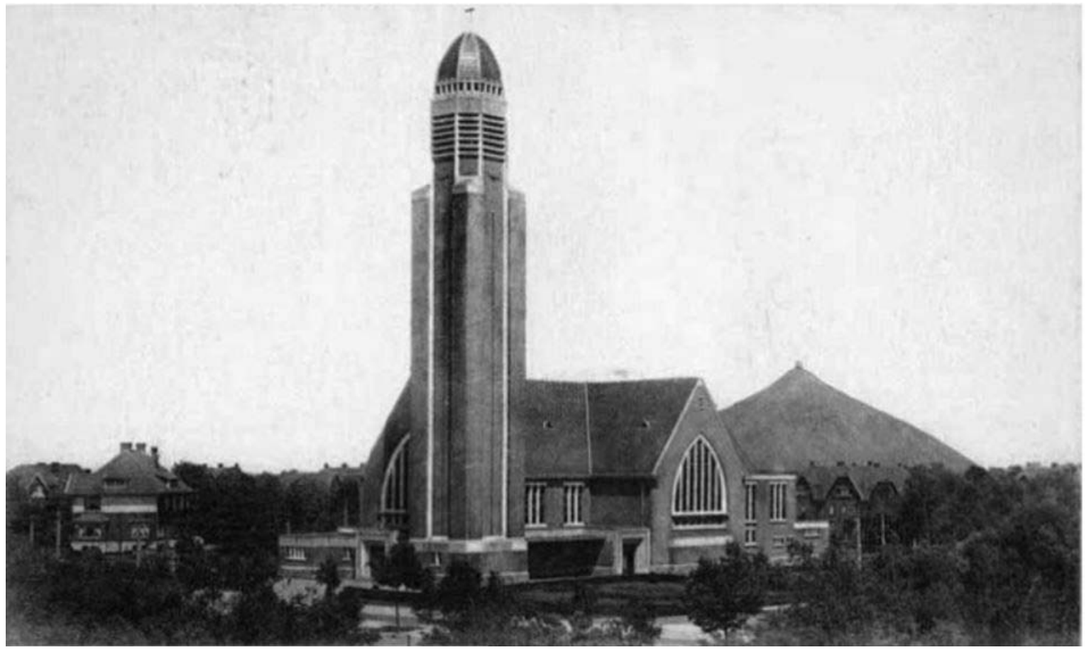
Picture showing a street in the the newly built Garden City of Waterschei.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Worker’s cultural club “De Kring”. Waterschei, 1930 ca.
Source: HeideBloemke.

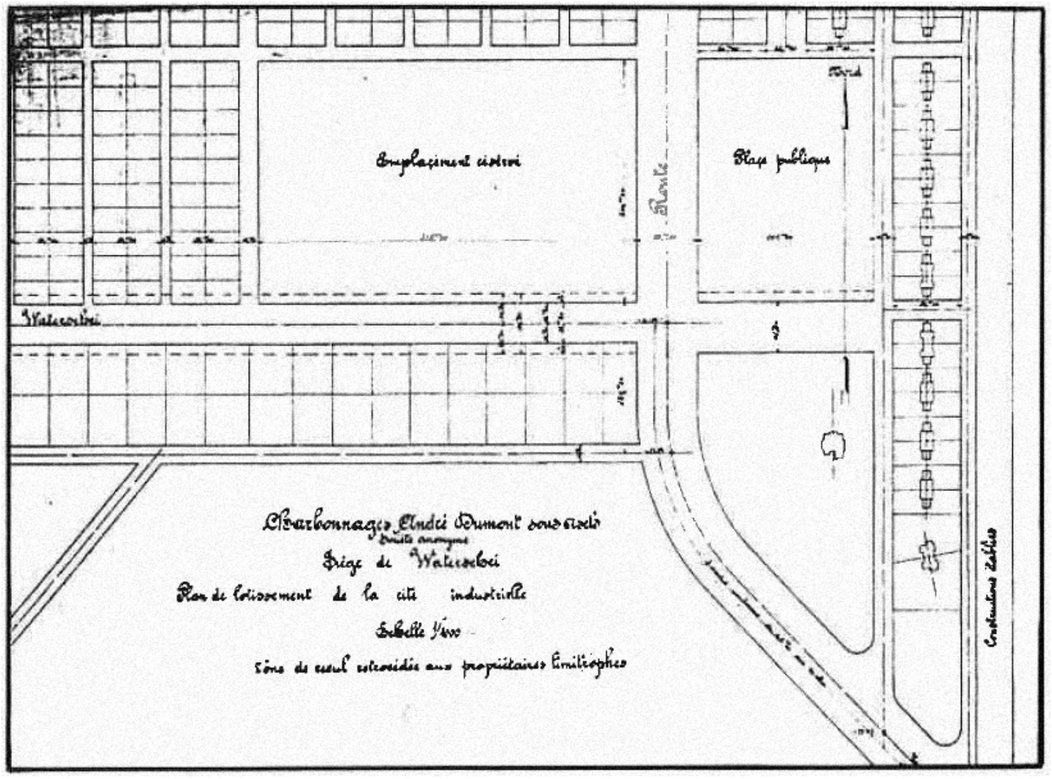


Schools, Cultural clubs and social facilities were all managed by the mining company who had complete control over the social life of the workers..
Source: HeideBloemke.

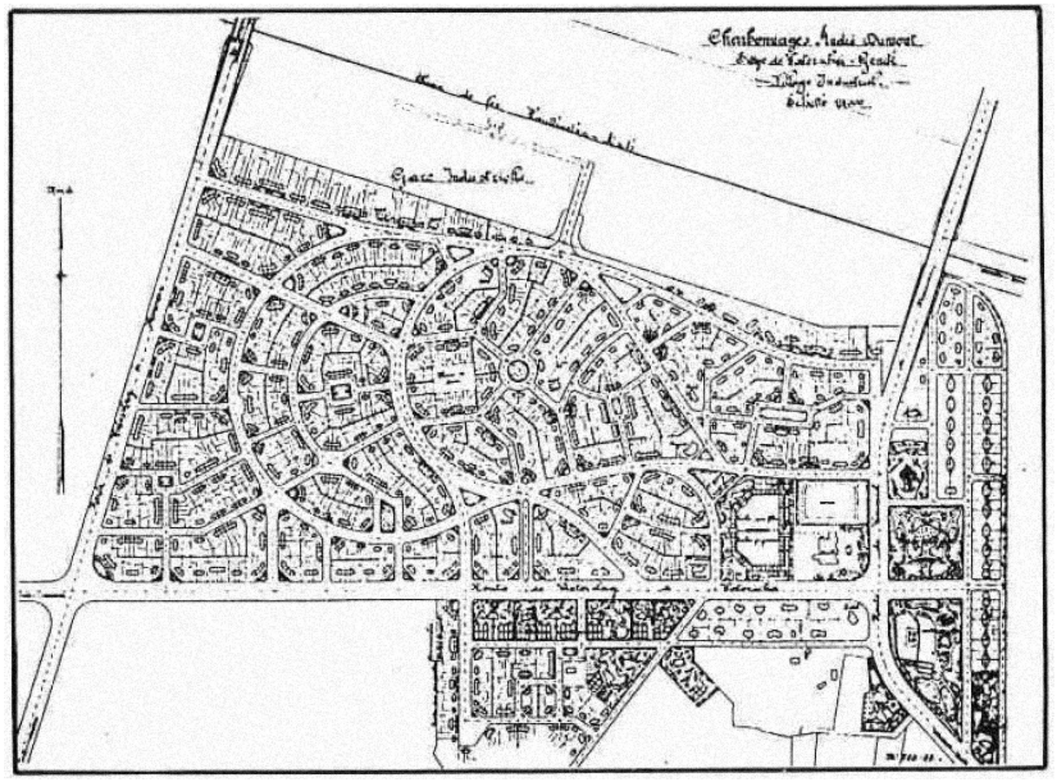
Pine wood plantation in the Campine Plateau.
Source: HeideBloemke.



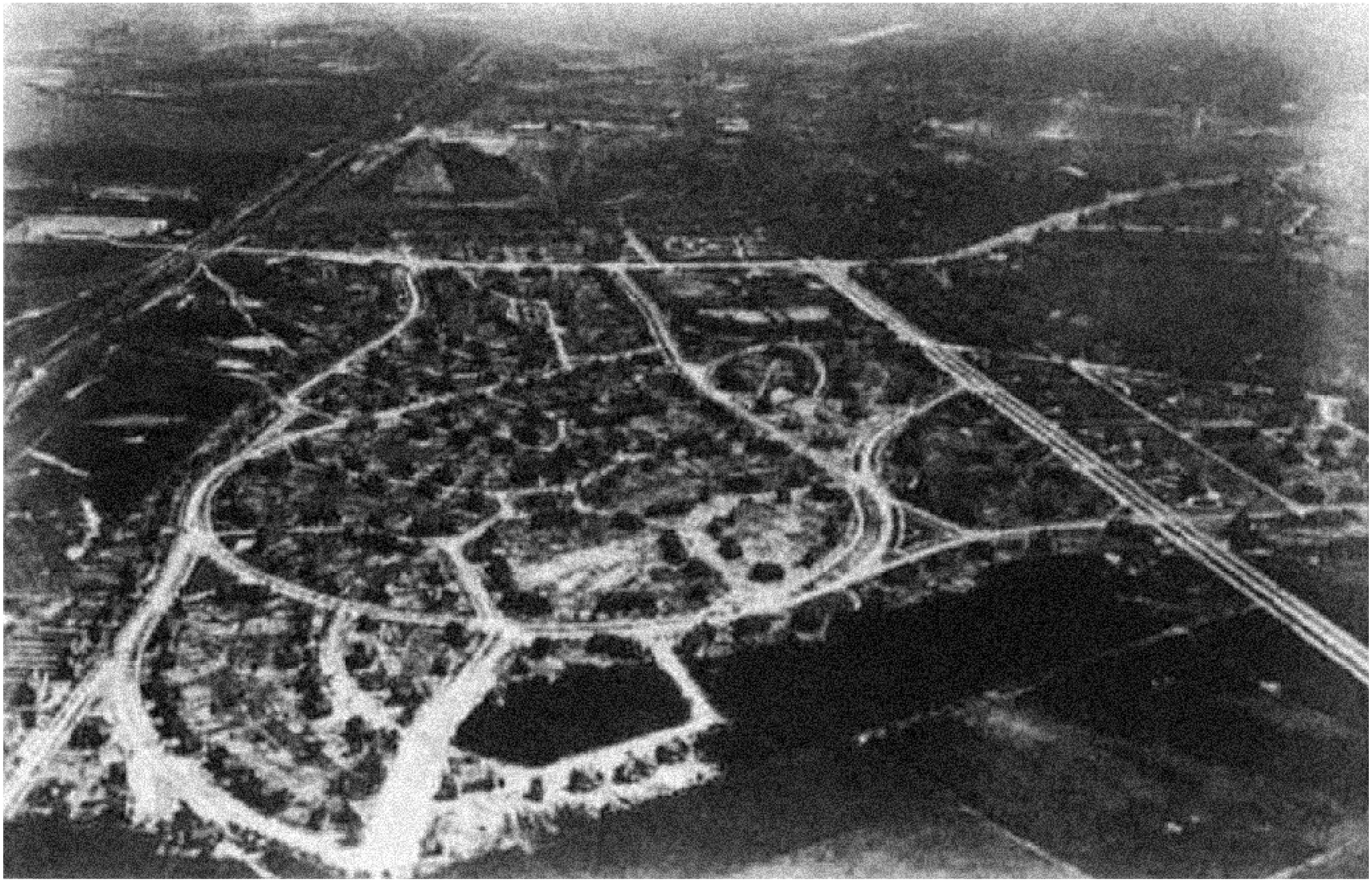
View on the Miner's church of Waterschei, with the slag heap (Terril) in the background.
Source: HeideBloemke.



Initial plan of the Garden City, designed by engineers as potentially expandible grid.
Source: HeideBloemke.



Following modification inspired by the Garden City Movement ideals..
Source: HeideBloemke.



The construction of the Garden City of Waterschei as an imposition of a rational plan over the Campine Landscape.
Source: HeideBloemke.

The City in History

Lewis Mumford, 1961

Paleotechnic Paradise: Coketown

1: THE BEGINNINGS OF COKETOWN

Up to the nineteenth century, there had been a rough balance of activities within the city. Though work and trade were always important, religion and art and play claimed their full share of the townsman's energies. But the tendency to concentrate on economic activities, and to regard as waste the time or effort spent on other functions, at least outside the home, had been growing steadily since the sixteenth century. If capitalism tended to expand the province of the marketplace and turn every part of the city into a negotiable commodity, the change from organized urban handicraft to large scale factory production transformed the industrial towns into dark hives, busily puffing, clanking, screeching, smoking for twelve and fourteen hours a day, sometimes going around the clock. The slavish routine of the mines, whose labor was an intentional punishment for criminals, became the normal environment of the new industrial worker. None of these towns heeded the old saw, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' Coketown specialized in producing dull boys. As witness to the immense productivity of the machine the slag heaps and rubbish heaps reached mountainous proportions, while the human beings whose labor made these achievements possible were crippled and killed almost as fast as they would have been on a battlefield. The new industrial city had many lessons to teach; but for the urbanist its chief lesson was in what to avoid. By reaction against industrialism's misdemeanors, the artists and reformers of the nineteenth century finally arrived at a better conception of human needs and urban possibilities. In the end the disease stimulated the antibodies needed to overcome it. The generating agents of the new city were the mine, the factory, and the railroad. But their success in displacing every traditional concept of the city was due to the fact that the solidarity of the upper classes was visibly breaking up: the Court was becoming supernumerary, and even capitalist speculation turned from trade to industrial exploitation to achieve the greatest possibilities of financial aggrandizement. In every quarter, the older principles of aristocratic education and rural culture were replaced by a single-minded devotion to industrial power and pecuniary success, sometimes disguised as democracy. The baroque dream of power and luxury had at least human outlets, human goals: the tangible pleasures of the hunt, the dinner table, the bed were always temptingly in view. The new conception of human destiny, as the utilitarians projected it, had little place for even sensual delights: it rested on a doctrine of productive exertion, consumptive avarice, and physiological denial; and it took the form of a wholesale disparagement of the joys of life, similar to that necessitated by war, during a siege. The new masters of society scornfully turned their backs on the past and all the accumulations of history and addressed themselves to creating a future, which, on their own theory of progress, would be just as contemptible once it, too, was past—and would be just as ruthlessly scrapped. Between 1820 and 1900 the destruction and disorder within great cities is like that of a battlefield, proportionate to the very extent of their equipment and the strength of the forces employed. In the new provinces of city building, one must now keep one's eyes on the bankers, industrialists, and the mechanical inventors. They were responsible for most of what was good and almost all that was bad. In their own image, they created a new type of city: that which Dickens, in 'Hard Times,' called Coketown. In a greater or lesser degree, every city in the Western World was stamped with the archetypal characteristics of Coketown. Industrialism, the main creative force of the nineteenth century, produced the most degraded urban environment the world had yet seen; for even the quarters of the ruling classes were befouled and overcrowded. The political base of this new type of urban aggregation rested on three main pillars: the abolition of the guilds and the creation of a state of permanent insecurity for the working classes: the establishment of the competitive open market for labor and for the sale of goods: the maintenance of foreign dependencies as source of raw materials, necessary to new industries, and as a ready market to absorb the surplus of mechanized industry. Its economic foundations were the exploitation of the coal mine, the vastly increased production of iron, and the use of a steady, reliable—if highly inefficient—source of mechanical power: the steam engine. Actually, these technical advances depended socially upon the invention of new forms of corporate organization and administration. The joint stock company, the limited liability investment, the delegation of admin istrative authority under divided ownerships, and control of the process by budget and audit were all matters of co-operative political technique whose success was not due to the genius of any particular individual or group of individuals. This holds true, too, of the mechanical organization of factories, which greatly augmented the efficiency of production. But the basis of this system, in the ideology of the period, was thought to be the atomic individual: to guard his property, to protect his rights, to ensure his freedom of -choice and freedom of enterprise, was the whole duty of government. This myth of the untrammeled individual was in fact the democratization of the baroque conception of the despotic Prince: now every enterprising man sought to be a despot in his own right: emotional despots like the romantic poets: practical despots like the business men. Adam Smith in 'The Wealth of Nations' still had a comprehensive theory of political society: he had a correct conception of the economic basis of the city and valid insight into the non-profit-making economic functions. But his interest gave way, in practice, to the aggressive desire to increase the wealth of individuals: that was the be-all and the end-all of the new Malthusian struggle for existence. Perhaps the most gigantic fact in the whole urban transition was the displacement of population that occurred over the whole planet. For this movement and resettlement was accompanied by another fact of colossal import: the astounding rise in the rate of population increase. This increase affected industrially backward countries like Russia, with a predominantly rural population and a high rate of births and deaths, quite as much as it affected progressive countries that were predominantly mechanized and de-ruralized. The general increase in numbers was accompanied by a drawing of the surplus into cities, and an immense enlargement of the area of the bigger centers. Urbanization increased in almost direct proportion to industrialization: in England and New England it finally came about that over eighty per cent of the entire population was living in centers with more than twenty-five hundred population. Into the newly opened lands of the planet, originally peopled by military camps, trading posts, religious missions, small agricultural settlements, there came an inundation of immigrants from countries suffering from political oppression and economic poverty. This movement of people, this colonization of territory, had two forms: land pioneering and industry pioneering. The first filled the sparsely occupied regions of America, Africa, Australia, of Siberia and, later, Manchuria: the second brought the overplus into the new industrial villages and towns. In most cases, these types came in successive waves. [...]

2: MECHANIZATION AND ABBAU

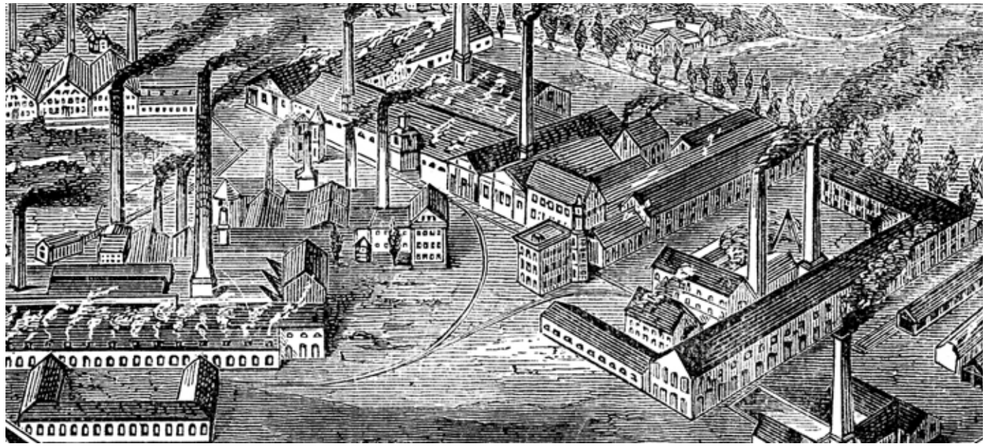
Before we inquire how this vast flood of people found urban accommodation, let us examine the assumptions and attitudes that people brought to the new task of city building. The leading philosophy of life was the offspring of two entirely dissimilar types of experience. One was the rigorous concept of mathematical order derived from the renewed study of the motions of the heavenly bodies: the highest pattern of mechanical regularity. The other was the physical process of breaking up, pulverizing, calcining, smelting, which the alchemists, working with the mechanically advanced mine workers of the late Middle Ages, had turned from a mere mechanical process into the routine of scientific investigation. As formulated by the new philosophers of nature, this new order had no place for organisms or social groups, still less for the human personality. Neither institutional patterns nor

Saltaire village in
Shipley, 1851

esthetic forms, neither history nor myth, derived from the external analysis of the 'physical world.' The machine alone could embody this order: only industrial capital boasted corporate form. So immersed are we, even at this late date, in the surviving medium of paleotechnic beliefs that we are not sufficiently conscious of their profound abnormality. Few of us correctly evaluate the destructive imagery that the mine carried into every department of activity, sanctioning the anti-vital and the anti-organic. Before the nineteenth century the mine had, quantitatively speaking, only a subordinate part in man's industrial life. By the middle of the century it had come to underlie every part of it. And the spread of mining was accompanied by a general loss of form throughout society: a degradation of the landscape and a no less brutal disordering of the communal environment. Agriculture creates a balance between wild nature and man's social needs. It restores deliberately what man subtracts from the earth; while the plowed field, the trim orchard, the serried vineyard, the vegetables, the grains, the flowers, are all examples of disciplined purpose, orderly growth, and beautiful form. The process of mining, on the other hand, is destructive: the immediate product of the mine is disorganized and inorganic; and what is once taken out of the quarry or the pithead cannot be replaced. Add to this the fact that continued occupation in agriculture brings cumulative improvements to the landscape and a finer adaptation of it to human needs; while mines as a rule pass quickly from riches to exhaustion, from exhaustion to desertion, often within a few generations. Mining thus presents the very image of human discontinuity, here today and gone tomorrow, now feverish with gain, now depleted and vacant. From the eighteen-thirties on, the environment of the mine, once restricted to the original site, was universalized by the railroad. Wherever the iron rails went, the mine and its debris went with them. Whereas the canals of the eotechnic phase, with their locks and bridges and tollhouses, with their trim banks and their gliding barges, had brought a new element of beauty into the rural landscape, the railroads of the paleotechnic phase made huge gashes: the cuts and embankments for the greater part long remained unplanted, and the wound in the earth was unhealed. The rushing locomotives brought noise, smoke, grit, into the hearts of the towns: more than one superb urban site, like Prince's Gardens in Edinburgh, was desecrated by the invasion of the railroad. And the factories that grew up alongside the railroad sidings mirrored the slatternly environment of the railroad itself. If it was in the mining town that the characteristic process of Abbau—mining or un-building—was seen at its purest, it was by means of the railroad that this process was extended by the third quarter of the nineteenth century to almost every industrial community. The process of un-building, as William Morton Wheeler pointed out, is not unknown in the world of organisms. In un-building, a more advanced form of life loses its complex character, bringing about an evolution downward, toward simpler and less finely integrated organisms. "There is," observed Wheeler, "an evolution by atrophy as well as by increasing complication, and both processes may be going on simultaneously and at varying rates in the same organism." This held precisely true of nineteenth-century society: it showed itself clearly in the organization of urban communities. A process of up-building, with increasing differentiation, integration, and social accommodation of the individual parts in relation to the whole was going on: an articulation within an ever-widening environment was taking place within the factory, and indeed within the entire economic order. Food-chains and productionchains of a complicated nature were being formed throughout the planet: ice travelled from Boston to Calcutta and tea journeyed from China to Ireland, whilst machinery and cotton goods and cutlery from Birmingham and Manchester found their way to the remotest corners of the earth. A universal postal service, fast locomotion, and almost instantaneous communication by telegraph and cable synchronized the activities of vast masses of men who had hitherto lacked the most rudimentary facilities for coordinating their tasks. This was accompanied by a steady differentiation of crafts, trades, organizations, and associations: mostly self-governing bodies, often legally incorporated. This significant communal development was masked by the fashionable theory of atomic individualism: so it rarely achieved an urban structure. But at the same time, an Abbau, or un-building, was taking place, often at an even more rapid rate, in other parts of the environment: forests were slaughtered, soils were mined, whole animal species, such as the beaver, the bison, the wild pigeon, were practically wiped out, while the sperm whales and right whales were seriously decimated. Therewith the natural balance of organisms within their ecological regions was upset, and a lower and simpler biological order—sometimes marked by the complete extermination of the prevalent forms of life—followed Western man's ruthless exploitation of nature for the sake of his temporary and socially limited profit economy. Above all, as we shall see, this un-building took place in the urban environment.

3: THE POSTULATES OF UTILITARIANISM

In so far as there was any conscious political regulation of the growth and development of cities during the paleotechnic period, it was done in accord with the postulates of utilitarianism. The most fundamental of these postulates was a notion that the utilitarians had taken over, in apparent innocence, from the theologians: the belief that a divine providence ruled over economic activity and ensured, so long as man did not presumptuously interfere, the maximum public good through the dispersed and unregulated efforts of every private, self-seeking individual. The non-theological name for this pre-ordained harmony was laissez-faire. To understand the uncouth disorder of the industrial town one must analyze the curious metaphysical preconceptions that dominated both the scientific and the practical life. 'Without design' was a laudatory term in the Victorian period. As in the decadent period of Greece, Chance had been elevated into a deity that was supposedly in control not only of human destiny, but of all natural processes as well. "The gist of Darwin's theory," wrote Ernst Haeckel, the biologist, "is this simple idea: that the struggle for existence in nature evolves new species without design, just as well as man produces new varieties in cultivation with design." It was by follow ing what they presumed was nature's way that the industrialist and the municipal officer produced the new species of town, a blasted, de-natured man-heap adapted, not to the needs of life, but to the mythic 'struggle for existence'; an environment whose very deterioration bore witness to the ruthlessness and intensity of that struggle. There was no room for planning in the layout of these towns. Chaos does not have to be planned. The historic justification for the laissez-faire reaction needs no demonstration now: it was an attempt to break through the network of stale privileges and franchises and trade regulations that the absolute State had imposed upon the decayed economic fabric and dwindling social morality of the medieval town. The new enterprisers had good reason to distrust the public spirit of a venal court or the social efficiency of the Circumlocution Offices of the growing taxation-bureaucracy. Hence the utilitarians sought to reduce governmental functions to a minimum: they wished to have a free hand in making investments, in building up industries, in buying land, in hiring and firing workers. Unfortunately, the pre-ordained harmony of the economic order turned out to be a superstition: the scramble for power remained a sordid scramble, and individual competition for ever-greater profits led the more successful to the unscrupulous practice of monopoly at the public expense. But design did not emerge. In practice, the political equality that was slowly introduced into the Western polities from 1789 onward, and the freedom of initiative that was demanded by the industrialists were contradictory claims. To achieve political equality and personal freedom, strong economic limitations and political restraints were necessary. In countries where the experiment of equality was made without attempting to rectify annually the effects of the law of rent, the result was a stultification of the original purpose. In the United States, for example, the free bestowal of land upon settlers in 160-acre tracts under the Homestead Law did not lay the basis of a free polity: within a generation the unequal properties of the soil, the unequal talents of the users, had resulted in gross social inequalities. Without systematically removing the fundamental disparities that grew out of the private monopoly of land, the inheritance of large fortunes, the monopoly of patents, the only effect of laissez-faire was to supplement the old privileged classes with a new one. The freedom demanded by the utilitarians was



The Krupp Steal Work in Essen, 1811.

in reality freedom for unrestricted profits and private aggrandizement. Profits and rents were to be limited only by what the traffic would bear: decent customary rents and a just price were out of the question. Only hunger, distress, and poverty, Townsend observed in his commentary on the English Poor Laws, could prevail on the lower classes to accept the horrors of the sea and the battlefield; and only these same helpful stimuli would "spur and goad" them on to factory labor. The rulers, however, maintained an almost unbroken class front on any issue that concerned their pocketbooks as a class; and they never scrupled to act collectively when it was a question of beating down the working classes. This theological belief in pre-ordained harmony had, however, an important result upon the organization of the paleotechnic town. It created the natural expectation that the whole enterprise should be conducted by private individuals, with a minimum amount of interference on the part of local or national governments. The location of factories, the building of quarters for the workers, even the supply of water and the collection of garbage, should be done exclusively by private enterprise seeking for private profit. Free competition was supposed to choose the correct location, provide the correct time-sequence in development, and create out of a thousand un-coordinated efforts a coherent social pattern. Or rather, none of these needs was regarded as worthy of rational appraisal and deliberate achievement. Laissez-faire, even more than absolutism, destroyed the notion of a cooperative polity and a common plan. Did not the utilitarian expect the effects of rational design to appear from the unrestricted operation of conflicting random private interests? By giving rein to unrestricted competition, reason and co-operative order were to emerge: indeed rational planning, by preventing automatic adjustments, could, it was supposed, only interfere with the higher workings of a divine economic providence. The main point to note now is that these doctrines undermined such municipal authority as had survived, and they discredited the city itself as anything more than a 'fortuitous concourse of atoms'—as the physics of the time erroneously described the universe—held together temporarily by motives of self-seeking and private profit. Even in the eighteenth century, before either the French Revolution or the coal-and-iron revolution had been consummated, it had become the fashion to discredit municipal authorities and to sneer at local interests. In the newly organized states, even those based on republican principles, only matters of national moment, organized by political parties, counted in men's hopes or dreams. The time of the Enlightenment, as W. H. Riehl sharply said, was a period when people yearned for humanity and had no heart for their own people; when they philosophized about the state and forgot the community. "No period was more impoverished than the eighteenth century in the development of a common community spirit; the medieval community was dissolved and the modern was not yet ready. ... In the satirical literature of the time, whoever wanted to portray a blockhead represented him as a Burgomaster, and if he wished to describe a meeting of Jackasses, he described a meeting of Town Councillors." Urban growth had indeed begun, from industrial and commercial causes, even before the paleotechnic revolution was well started. In 1685, Man Chester had about 6,000 people; in 1760, between 30,000 and 45,000. Birmingham had 4,000 at the first date and almost 30,000 in 1760. By 1801 Manchester's population was 72,275, and by 1851 it was 303,382. But once the concentration of factories abetted the growth of towns, the increase in the numbers became overwhelming. Since the increase produced extraordinary opportunities for profit making, there was nothing in the current traditions of society to curb this growth; or rather, there was everything to promote it.[...]

Suburbia — and Beyond

1: THE HISTORIC SUBURB

Those who led the 'march of civilization' from the eighteenth century on were inclined to be contemptuous of the countryside, the home of backward farmers, shaggy yokels, or pleasure-seeking aristocrats living on their feudal rents, not on profits wrung from trade and manufacture. Yet even among the utilitarian leaders and beneficiaries the impulse to escape from their industrial environment was a common one: in fact to have enough wealth to escape it was a mark of success. Well before the industrial town had taken form the notion of leaving behind the complexities of civilization had become attractive to the European mind once more, just as it had been during the decadence of Rome. For the restless and hardy, there was the conquest and colonization of new lands, mingled with the romantic call of the unspoiled wilderness; for more domestic, reflective souls, there was fishing, rambling, botanizing, going on family picnics or musing in solitude deep in the woods. Without waiting for Rousseau to prove that most of the ills of life were derived from the arid rituals of an over-refined civilization, many Europeans had begun to act on these premises. Country life seemed best; and the farther one got away from the city the more one gained in health, freedom, independence. Most of the salubrious features of the nineteenth-century suburb had in fact already been incorporated in the country town, with greater respect for social mixture and co-operation than it was possible to achieve in the one-class suburban community. The very life insurance tables established the superiority of the countryside in terms of animal vitality: in England the peasant and the country squire had the highest expectations of life. Though the rise of the suburb brought about significant changes in both the social contents and the spatial order of the city, most of the interpreters of the city, until but yesterday, curiously passed it by; and even the few writers who have touched upon the planning of the suburb, notably Professor Christopher ' Tunnard, have treated it as a relatively recent phenomenon. But the fact is that the suburb becomes visible almost as early as the city itself, and perhaps explains the ability of the ancient town to survive the insanitary conditions that prevailed within its walls. (Woolley found evidences of suburban developments in 'Greater Ur' beyond the built-up area—scattered buildings as far as the temple of al'Ubaid, four miles away.) If we are in doubt as to the layout and inner core of the Egyptian city, both paintings and funerary models show us the suburban villa, with its spacious gardens. In Biblical times, we find mention of little huts that were built in the midst of the open fields or vineyards, perhaps to guard the crops overnight when they were ready to pick, but doubtless also to refresh the soul, weary of the baked bricks and the foul smells of the city itself. These frail shelters are still commemorated in the Jewish feast of the autumn harvest. All through history, those who owned or rented land outside the city's walls valued having a place in the country, even if they did not actively perform agricultural labor: a cabin, a cottage, a vine-shaded shelter, built for temporary retreat if not for permanent occupancy. Early city dwellers did not wait for rapid transportation to take advantage of this rural surcease. As long as the city remained relatively compact and self-contained, it was possible to keep a balance between rural and urban occupations, yes, and between rural and urban pleasures: eating, drinking, dancing, athletic sports, love-making, every manner of relaxation had a special aura of festivity in a verdant, sunlit landscape. One of the chief penalties for continued urban growth was that it put this pleasurable setting at such a distance and confined it more and more to the ruling classes. In earlier periods we have seen that new groups and institutions, with larger demands for space than the closely filled-in city could offer, necessarily settled on the outskirts, in little suburban enclaves. Not merely did the Aesclepium at Cos lie outside the city, as Sarton tells us, but the gymnasium and even the academy were often located in the suburbs of the Hellenic city, like the garden we associate with the philosopher Epicurus. In medieval times, we have seen, too, that the monastery often settled outside the city's walls after the twelfth century, before the city, by its further growth, surrounded it. In every case, the suburban pattern was typically an open one: gardens and orchards and shaded walks, not just gaping space, accompanied the buildings. Great universities like Oxford and Cambridge, which grew up in country towns, sought and wrought for themselves the same kind of parklike environment: perhaps indeed their efforts to secure the luxury of space intensified the antagonism between town and gown. The early appearance of the suburb points to another, even more important, fact: the life-maintaining agencies, gardening and farming, recreation and games, health sanatoria and retreats belong to the surrounding countryside, even when the functions they fostered spring from the town's needs or deficiencies. By the eighteenth century, it is true, the romantic movement had produced a new rationale for the suburban exodus, and the increasingly smoky and overcrowded town provided a new incentive. But it would be an error to regard suburbanism as a mere derivative of this ideology, for it had older, deeper roots. What needs to be accounted for is not the cult of nature that became popular in the eighteenth century, affecting everything from medicine to education, from architecture to cookery, but rather the obstinacy with which people had often clung for centuries to a crowded, depleted, denatured, and constricted environment, whose chief solace for misery was the company of equally miserable people. By the time maps and airviews of late medieval cities were made, we find detailed evidence of little huts, cottages, and villas, with ample gardens, springing up outside the city's walls. By the sixteenth century the land so used served for more than summer residence and recreation. As early as the thirteenth century, indeed, Villani reported that the land for a circle of three miles around Florence was occupied by rich estates with costly mansions; and Venetian families were not behind in their villas on the Brenta. From the beginning, the privileges and delights of suburbanism were reserved largely for the upper class; so that the suburb might almost be described as the collective urban form of the country house—the house in a park—as the suburban way of life is so largely a derivative of the relaxed, playful, goods-consuming aristocratic life that developed out of the rough, bellicose, strenuous existence of the feudal stronghold. A few centuries after Villani, Stow noted that outside the walls of London people were laying out little gardens and fantastic summer houses, "like midsummer pageants, with towers, turrets and chimneys," a full two hundred years before anyone began self-consciously to produce the fantastic villas and follies of the gothic revival. There is an allusion to the new type of suburb in The English Courtier.' "The manner of most gentlemen and noblemen also is to house themselves (if they possibly may) in the suburbs of the city, because most commonly, the air being there somewhat at large, the place is healthy, and through the distance from the body of the town, the noise is not much; and so consequently quiet. Also for commodity, we find many lodgings, both spacious and roomethy, with gardens and orchards delectable. So with good government, we have as little cause to fear infection there as in the country; our water is excellent and much better than you have any, on grounds and fields most pleasant." Though the hygienic superiority of the suburb was one of its major attractions, persistently recommended by physicians, something more than this lured men from the city. And just as one finds the earliest evidence of the back-to-nature movement in Piero di Cosimo's paintings,

so one finds an esthetic and psychological justification of suburban development in Alberti's treatise on building. Alberti observed that "there is a vast deal of satisfaction in a convenient retreat near the town, where a man is at liberty to do just what he pleases." That sounds the true suburban note: indeed, it even anticipates the present 'exurban' emphasis on informal clothing, for Alberti insists that "I, for my part, am not for having a [villa] in a place of such resort that I must never venture to appear at my door without being completely dressed." As for the esthetic attributes of both house and site, Alberti's first perceptions might almost stand as the classic last word. "The great beauties of such a retreat are being near the city, upon an open airy road, and on a pleasant spot of ground. The greatest commendation of itself is its making a cheerful appearance to those that go a little way out of the town to take the air; as if it seemed to invite every beholder. . . . Nor should there be any want of pleasant landscapes, flowery mead, open champains, shady groves, or limpid brooks, or streams and lakes for swimming, with all other delights of the same sort. Lastly ... I would have the front and whole body of the house perfectly well lighted, and that it be open to receive a great deal of light and sun, and a sufficient quantity of wholesome air." When he goes on to advocate both round and square rooms, and all rooms possible on one floor, one must ask how much he left for the early twentieth-century architect to invent. The whole suburban domestic program is there. Though the retreat from the city held manifest advantages for health and family life, it was equally an attempt to achieve liberation from the sometimes dreary conventions and compulsions of an urban society: an effort, given the necessary financial means, to have life on one's own terms, even if it meant having it alone: the anarchism of the well filled purse, the heresy of the private individual's seeking to take over within the limits of a private family the functions of a whole community. This applied to both the suburban occupant and his house; and here again Alberti supplies the classic citation, on the difference between town and country house life—"which is, that in town you are obliged to moderate yourselves in several respects according to the privileges of your neighbor; whereas you have much more liberty in the country." To be your own unique self; to build your unique house, mid a unique landscape: to live in this Domain of Arnheim a self-centered life, in which private fantasy and caprice would have license to express themselves openly, in short, to withdraw like a monk and live like a prince—this was the purpose of the original creators of the suburb. They proposed in effect to create an asylum, in which they could, as individuals, overcome the chronic defects of civilization while still commanding at will the privileges and benefits of urban society. This Utopia proved to be, up to a point, a realizable one: so enchanting that those who contrived it failed to see the fatal penalty attached to it—the penalty of popularity, the fatal inundation of a mass movement whose very numbers would wipe out the goods each individual sought for his own domestic circle, and, worse, replace them with a life that was not even a cheap counterfeit, but rather the grim antithesis. The ultimate outcome of the suburb's alienation from the city became visible only in the twentieth century, with the extension of the democratic ideal through the instrumentalities of manifolding and mass production. In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, which caricatured both the historic city and the archetypal suburban refuge: a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless pre-fabricated foods, from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold, manufactured in the central metropolis. Thus the ultimate effect of the suburban escape in our time is, ironically, a low-grade uniform environment from which escape is impossible. What has happened to the suburban exodus in the United States now threatens, through the same mechanical instrumentalities, to take place, at an equally accelerating rate, everywhere else—unless the most vigorous countermeasures are taken. But before we confront this final caricature of the unfettered suburban life, lived according to nature, for the sake of health and child nurture, let us consider more closely the actual development of the suburban container. For we shall see that out of this breakup of the old urban forms, out of the chaotic freedom and spatial looseness of the suburban community, came the first substantial changes in urban structure, which matched, unconsciously, the changes that have been taking place in our whole conception of the cosmos. The open basketwork texture of the suburb bears little resemblance to the solid stone container of late neolithic culture. Though the suburb lacked many of the attributes of the ancient city, it has served as an experimental field for the development of a new type of open plan and a new distribution of urban functions. Thus the suburb has prepared the way for a better order of planning,

Cities of Tomorrow

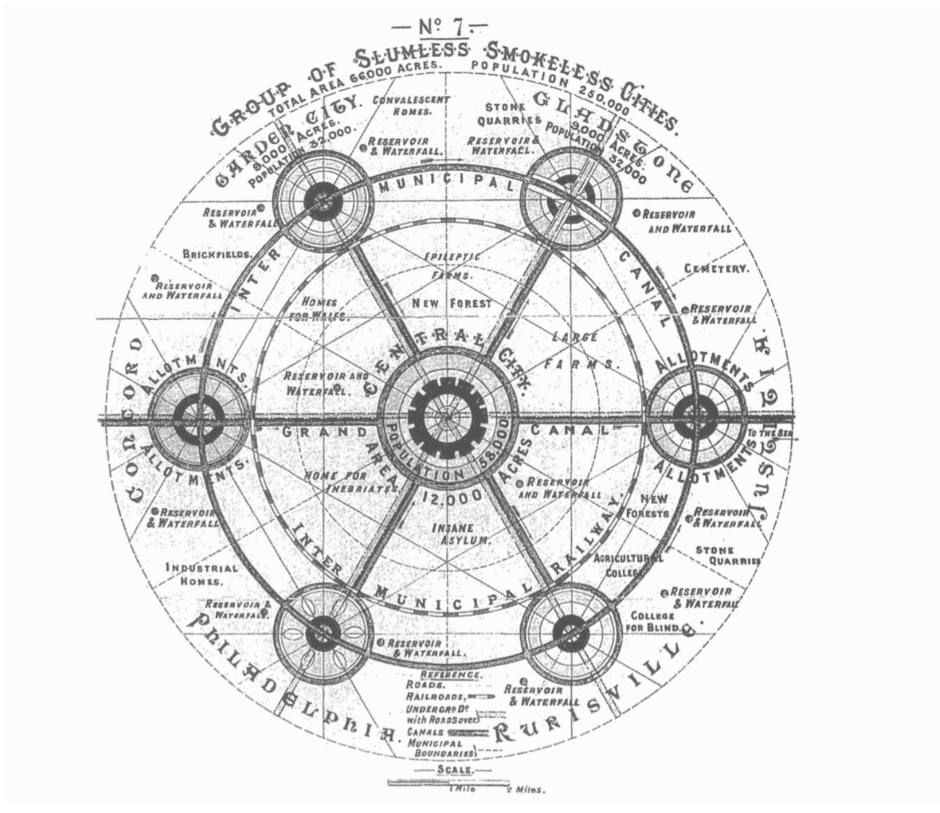
Peter Hall, 1988

It is invidious, but it needs saying: despite doughty competition, Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928) is the most important single character in this entire tale. So it is important to get him right; even though almost everyone has got him wrong. His many self-appointed critics have, at one time or another, been wrong about almost everything he stood for. They called him a "planner," a term of derogation, whereas he earned his living as a shorthand writer. They said that he advocated low-density prairie planning; in fact, his garden city would have had densities like inner London's, which – so later planners once came to believe – needed high-rise towers to make them work. They confused this garden city with the garden suburb found at Hampstead and in numerous imitations – though, it must be confessed, one of his principal lieutenants, Raymond Unwin, was originally to blame for that. They still think that he wanted to consign people to small towns isolated in the deep countryside, while he actually proposed the planning of conurbations with hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of people. They accuse him of wanting to move people round like pawns on a chessboard, whereas, in fact, he dreamed of voluntary self-governing communities. Most mistakenly of all, they see him as a physical planner, ignoring the fact that his garden cities were merely the vehicles for a progressive reconstruction of capitalist society into an infinity of cooperative commonwealths. They cannot claim that he made it difficult for them. In his 78 years he wrote only one book, and a slim one at that. First published in 1898 under the title To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform, it was reissued in 1902 with the title Garden Cities of Tomorrow. This was perhaps catchier, but it diverted people from the truly radical character of the message, demoting him from social visionary into physical planner.

The Sources of Howard's Ideas

Better to appreciate Howard's contribution, he must be set against the background of his time. He developed his ideas in the London of the 1880s and 1890s, the age of radical ferment described in Chapter 1. An eclectic thinker, he borrowed freely from the ideas that were circulating at the time. But there were other, earlier influences. Born in the City of London in 1850 – a fact commemorated by a plaque at the edge of the huge Barbican redevelopment, which almost certainly he would not have liked at all – he grew up in small country towns in southern and eastern England: Sudbury, Ipswich, Cheshunt. At 21, he emigrated to America and became a pioneer in Nebraska, where he met Buffalo Bill but proved a disaster as a farmer. From 1872 to 1876 he was in Chicago, beginning the career as a shorthand writer that he was to follow all his life. We know little about these years, but they must have been important to him. As a farmer on the frontier he had personal experience of the Homestead Act of 1862, which opened up the prairies and the plains to pioneers free of charge, thus establishing an economy and society of prosperous farms and small towns, and an educational system devoted to technical improvement in agriculture and the mechanical arts. Then, as a resident of Chicago, he saw the city's great rebuilding after the fire of 1871. Still, in these pre-skyscraper days, it was universally known as the Garden City: the almost-certain source of Howard's better-known title. He must have seen the new garden suburb of Riverside, designed by the great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, arising on the Des Plaines River 9 miles outside the city.3 Howard always denied that he found his inspiration in Chicago, but the broad outlines of the idea must have originated here. Here too he first found the idea of the planned city in a pamphlet of 1876, Benjamin Ward Richardson's Hygeia, or the City of Health; its main ideas – low population density, good housing, wide roads, an underground railway, and plenty of open space – all found their way into the garden-city concept.4 Back in Britain, he settled himself and his family in a cramped home in a boring street in Stoke Newington,5 and began in earnest to think and to read. A huge agricultural depression was forcing thousands off the land and into the cities, above all the London slums. He joined a freethinking debating society, the Zetetical Society; it already included George Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb, with whom he was soon on good terms. Later, in the book, he was adamant that he had thought out the central ideas himself but that he had then found other writers who supplied the details. But there were certainly plenty of precursors. From Herbert Spencer he borrowed the idea of land nationalization, and then from a forgotten predecessor, Thomas Spence, he discovered a superior variant: purchase of farmland by a community, at agricultural values, so that the increased values, which would follow from the construction of a town, would automatically pass back to the community coffers. But Spence nowhere explained how the people are to appropriate the land – which brought him to planned colonization, advocated in J. S. Mill's Principles of Political Economy, by the Social Democratic Foundation in its pre-Marxist days, by Keir Hardie, and most notably by Thomas Davidson, a Scottish-American philosopher who founded the Fellowship of the New Life from which the Fabian Society split off (as Shaw inimitably said, "one to sit among the dandelions, the other to organise the docks").8 Edward Gibbon Wakefield, 50 years earlier, had developed the idea of planned colonization for the poor. The scheme he had promoted, Colonel Light's celebrated scheme for Adelaide in South Australia, provided the idea that once a city had reached a certain size, a second city, separated from it by a green belt, should be started: the origin of the notion of Social City, as Howard acknowledged, though Raymond Bunker has demonstrated that in Colonel William Light's plan North Adelaide was an integral part of the plan from the start, not a subsequent satellite as Howard imagined.9 Controversy has raged ever since 1986, when Donald Leslie Johnson and his ex-PhD student Donald Langmead argued that Light's deputy, Charles Strickland Kingston, not Light, not only chose the location but was principal designer of the Adelaide plan, adapting a renaissance city template by Pietro Cataneo (1567) to the site. In 2008 they repeated the charge. Robert Freestone caustically records that "While it has not quite resulted in fisticuffs, I have witnessed some terse and heated exchanges in symposia when the issue has been raised (but only in Adelaide)."James Silk Buckingham's plan for a model town gave him most of the main features for his diagram of Garden City: the central place, the radial avenues, and the peripheral industries. Pioneer industrial villages in the countryside, like Lever's Port Sunlight near Liverpool and Cadbury's Bournville outside Birmingham, provided both a physical model and a practical illustration of successful industrial decentralization from the congested city. The economist Alfred Marshall, in an article of 1884, had suggested the idea that there were "large classes of the population of London whose removal into the country would in the long run be economically advantageous – that it would benefit alike those who moved and those who remained behind." His reasoning had been that new technologies would permit this dispersal – an idea taken up by the anarchist Peter Kropotkin in his Fields, Factories and Workshops of 1898, which certainly influenced Howard. And Marshall even suggested the mechanism: the general plan would be for a committee, whether specially formed for the purpose or not, to interest themselves in the formation of a colony in some place well beyond the range of London smoke. After seeing their way to buying or building suitable cottages there, they would enter into communication with some of the employees of low-waged labour. That idea, adopted with enthusiasm by Howard, was based on a critical assumption, as Robert Fishman has pointed out: that workers could find steady employment in a small self-contained city, distant from the metropolis. That proved a prophetic assumption for much of the following century; but entering the twenty-first century, we have returned to the chaotic, flexible job patterns of the 1890s. Charles Booth, wrestling with the problem of his Class B poor, "the crux of the social problem," had a paternalistic version of the same answer: to withdraw them from the labor force by the formation of labor colonies, "an extension of the Poor Law," outside London: my idea is that these people should be allowed to live as families in industrial groups, planted wherever land and building materials were cheap; being well housed, well fed, and well warmed; and taught, trained, and employed from morning to night on work, indoors or out, for themselves or on Government account; in the building of their own dwellings, in the cultivation of the land, in the making of clothes, or in the making of furniture. That in exchange for the work done the Government should supply materials and whatever else was needed. Booth admitted that this solution was draconian: "The life offered would not be attractive" and "The difficulty lies solely in inducing or driving these people to accept a regulated life." His (non-related) namesake, General William Booth of the Salvation Army, was similarly advocating the colonization of the destitute into agricultural smallholding colonies with small-scale industries, within reasonable distance of London but far enough from any town or village to escape the influence of the public house, "that upas tree of civilization,"16 a feature Howard endorsed in his book and then imposed on bone-dry Letchworth, where the Skittles Inn offered rustic pastimes and wholesome conversation over lemonade and ginger beer. Canon Barnett's Toynbee Commission of 1892 had followed the same tradition in calling for "industrial regiments" for the "demoralised residuum," providing "compulsory work under humane discipline"; a solution later embraced by the Fabian Society. But Howard, following Marshall, did not see his Garden Cities as colonies for the undeserving poor. On the contrary: they were to be founded, and managed, by the stratum immediately above – Charles Booth's Class C – who were thereby to be freed from the thraldom of the urban slum. So Howard's proposal derives more from the Society for Promoting Industrial Villages, founded by the Reverend Henry Solly, which flourished from 1883 to 1889.18 His solution was not paternalistic – at least, apart from some residual undertones; rather, it belonged firmly in the anarchistic tradition. By the end of the 1880s Howard had all the ideas he needed, but he still could not bring them together. The real key was Edward Bellamy's bestselling science-fiction novel Looking Backward, which he read early in 1888, shortly after its American publication. He personally testified to the influence it had on him. He began to talk about his ideas to the more progressive London sects, at least from 1892. Every single one of Howard's ideas can thus, in fact, be found earlier, often several times over: Ledoux, Owen, Pemberton,

Buckingham, and Kropotkin all had towns of limited populations with surrounding agricultural green belts; More, Saint-Simon, Fourier all had cities as elements in a regional complex. Marshall and Kropotkin saw the impact of technological development on industrial location, and Kropotkin and Edward Bellamy also appreciated that it would come to favor small-scale workshops. But Howard, attracted as he was to Bellamy's Looking Backward, rejected his centralized socialist management and his insistence on the subordination of the individual to the group, which he saw as authoritarian. His biographer, Robert Beevers, points out that all these major influences came from the English dissenting tradition; none, save Kropotkin, were continental European. More widely, Howard could not fail to be influenced by the Back to the Land movement, which – fueled by urban growth and urban squalor, agricultural depression, nostalgia, quasi-religious motives, anti-Victorian conventions – flourished among the intelligentsia between 1880 and 1914: a genuine alternative movement, similar in many respects to such movements in the 1960s and 1970s. At least 28 such nineteenth-century communities can be traced, all but five or six of which were rural; their inhabitants included utopian socialists, agrarian socialists, sectarians, and anarchists. Few survived for long, though sometimes their settlements do, transmogrified: Heronsgate, established by the Chartists in Hertfordshire after the failure of their political demands in 1848, is today a smart stockbroker community next to the M25 motorway. Behind these manifestations lay a much wider movement, well represented by such writers as Morris and Ruskin, which aimed to reject the grosser trappings of industrialization and to return to a simpler life based on craft and community. So, as Howard wrote, the idea of community-building was everywhere in the air. The Garden City and the Social City The ingredients, then, were far from original. What Howard could claim – and did, in a chapter heading, claim – was that his was a unique combination of proposals. He started with the famous diagram of the Three Magnets. Today it has archaic charm, particularly in the colored version of the first edition. But it packs on to one page a set of complex arguments that would take far more space to say in modern jargon. The Victorian slum city, to be sure, was in many ways a horrific place; but it offered economic and social opportunities, lights, and crowds. The late Victorian countryside, now too often seen in a sentimental glow, was, in fact, equally unprepossessing: though it promised fresh air and nature, it was racked by agricultural depression and it offered neither sufficient work and wages, nor adequate social life. But it was possible to square the circle, by combining the best of town and country in a new kind of settlement, Town-Country. To achieve this, a group of people – necessarily, including several with commercial competence and creditability – should establish a limited-dividend company, borrowing money to establish a garden city in the countryside, far enough from the city to ensure that the land was bought at rock-bottom, depressed agricultural land values. They should obtain agreement from leading industrialists to move their factories there; their workers would move too, and would build their own houses. The garden city would have a fixed limit – Howard suggested 32,000 people, living on 1,000 acres of land, about one and a half times the historic medieval city of London. It would be surrounded by a much larger area of permanent green belt, also owned by the company – Howard proposed 5,000 acres – containing not merely farms, but also all kinds of urban institutions, like reformatories and convalescent homes, that could benefit from a rural location. As more and more people moved out, the garden city would reach its planned limit; then, another would be started a short distance away. Thus, over time, there would develop a vast planned agglomeration, extending almost without limit; within it, each garden city would offer a wide range of jobs and services, but each would also be connected to the others by a rapid transit system (or, as Howard called it, an Inter-Municipal Railway), thus giving all the economic and social opportunities of the giant city. Howard called this polycentric vision Social City. Because the diagram was truncated in the second and in all subsequent editions, most readers have failed to understand that this, not the individual garden city, was the physical realization of town-country: the third magnet. But – though almost universally understood as merely a physical blueprint26 – it was much more than that. The final words under the third magnet, "FREEDOM, CO-OPERATION," are not just rhetoric; they are the heart of the plan. As Lewis Mumford so rightly says in his 1946 introduction to the book, Howard was much less interested in physical forms than in social processes. The key was that the citizens would own the land in perpetuity. The land for each garden city and its surrounding green belt, an area of 6,000 acres (2,700 hectares), would be purchased in the open market at depressed agricultural land values: £40 an acre (£100 per hectare), or £240,000 in all, the money raised on mortgage debentures paying 4%. This land would be legally vested in four trustees. Soon, Howard argued, the growth of Garden City would raise land values, and thus rents. Here was the innovative core of Howard's proposal: rents could and would be regularly revised upwards, allowing the trustees to pay off the mortgage debt, and then increasingly to generate a fund to provide a local welfare state. All this was embodied in yet another colored diagram in the first edition that was subsequently omitted, with dire consequences to the understanding of Howard's message: entitled The Vanishing Point of Landlord's Rent, it illustrates how, as urban land values built up in Garden City, these would flow back to the community. In particular, they would make it possible "to found pensions with liberty for our aged poor, now imprisoned in workhouses; to banish despair and awaken hope in the breasts of those that have fallen; to silence the harsh voice of anger, and awaken the soft notes of brotherliness and goodwill." Howard could thus argue that his was a third socio-economic system, superior both to Victorian capitalism and to bureaucratic centralized socialism. Its keynote would be local management and self-government. Services would be provided by the municipality, or by private contractors, as proved more efficient. Others would come from the people themselves, in a series of what Howard called pro-municipal experiments. In particular, people would build their own homes with capital provided through building societies, friendly societies, cooperative societies, or trade unions. And this activity would in turn drive the economy; 40 years before John Maynard Keynes or Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Howard had arrived at the solution that society could spend its way out of a recession. It would do so, however, without large-scale central state intervention. Howard's plan was to be realized through thousands of small-scale enterprises: every man and woman a craftsman, an entrepreneur. It would call, he said "for the very highest talents of engineers of all kinds, of architects, artists, medical men, experts in sanitation, landscape gardeners, agricultural experts, surveyors, builders, manufacturers, merchants and financiers, organizers of trades unions, friendly and co-operative societies, as well as the very simplest forms of unskilled labour, together with all those forms of lesser skill and talent which lie between." It is a peculiarly American vision: the homesteading spirit, brought back home to industrial England. But it is homesteading harnessed to new technology, to create a new socio-economic order: a remarkable vision, not least for its startling modernity, even a century later. For Howard, communal ownership of land was the essential foundation of his garden city. "But the collective ownership of land was, in Howard's view, as far as things needed to go. Other forms of capital could be privately, cooperatively, or municipally owned. That was entirely up to the people who lived in his new garden city."33 But collective provision also of housing, through the co-partnership tenants' movement, became a central mechanism in Letchworth and many pre-1914 garden suburbs, as well as some industry at Letchworth.



rwing of Hebnezer Howard Garden City Model, showing the city as a collection of defined nuclei connected by infrastructures crossing the green and agricultural land.

Central square at Hampstead Garden Suburb
Source: ocw.mit.edu

Vegetation at Hampstead Garden Suburb
Source: ocw.mit.edu

Utopia

Sir Thomas More, 1516

[…] Under such a system, there's bound to be plenty of everything, and, as everything is divided equally among the entire population, there obviously can't be any poor people or beggars. Each town, you remember, sends three representatives to the annual Lietalk, or Parliament, at Aircastle. There they collect details of the year's production, and as soon as it's clear which products are plentiful in each area, and which are in short supply, they arrange for a series of transfers to equalize distribution. These transfers are one-way transactions, requiring nothing in return – but in practice the free gifts that Town A makes to Town B are balanced by the free gifts that it receives from Town C. So the whole island is like one big household. When they've made adequate provision for their own needs – which they don't consider they've done, until their reserves are big enough to last them for a year, no matter what happens during the next twelve months – the remainder is exported. Such exports include vast quantities of corn, honey, wool, flax, timber, scarlet and purple cloth, rawhide, wax, tallow, leather, and livestock. One seventh of their total exports to any country go as a free gift to the poor – the rest they sell at reasonable prices. This foreign trade not only pays for essential imports – which normally means just iron – but also brings in a great deal of money. In fact, over a long period they've built up incredibly large reserves of gold and silver. So nowadays they don't much care whether they sell for cash or on credit, and nearly all their trade is of the second kind. However, when giving credit, they're not content with private securities, but insist on having a legal contract signed, sealed, and delivered by the local authority of the importing area. When payment becomes due, this authority collects the money from the individuals concerned, puts it in the public funds, and enjoys the use of it until such time as the Utopians call it in – which they practically never do, for they think it unfair to deprive other people of anything that's useful to them, if one doesn't need it oneself. However, if they find it necessary to lend part of this capital to another country, then they do ask for it back – and so they do in wartime, for war is the one thing they have in mind when accumulating all that wealth. You see, it's meant to protect them in the event of any major crisis or emergency. Its chief function is to provide colossal rates of pay for foreign mercenaries – whose lives they risk more willingly than their own. They're also well aware that even enemies can be bribed, if you offer them enough, to betray one another or start fighting among themselves. And that's the only reason why they keep such huge stocks of precious metals. Not that they regard them as precious. In fact, I hardly like to tell you how they do regard them, for fear you shouldn't believe me – a fear which seems all the more reasonable when I think how difficult I'd have found it to believe myself, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. For things always sound incredible if they're remote from one's own habits of thought. Still, I suppose it's rather illogical to be surprised at the way they use silver and gold, considering how different all their other customs are from ours. I'm thinking particularly of the fact that they don't use money themselves, but merely keep it for use in an emergency which may or may not arise. In the meantime silver and gold, the raw materials of money, get no more respect from anyone than their intrinsic value deserves – which is obviously far less than that of iron. Without iron human life is simply impossible, just as it is without fire or water – but we could easily do without silver and gold, if it weren't for the idiotic concept of scarcity-value. And yet kind Mother Nature has deliberately placed all her greatest blessings, like earth, air, and water, right under our noses, and tucked away out of sight the things that are no use to us. Now if they locked these metals up in a strong-room, the man in the street might get some silly idea into his head – you know what a talent he has for that kind of thing – that the Mayor and the Bencheaters were cheating him and somehow making a profit out of the stuff. It could, of course, be converted into ornamental bowls or other objets d'art. But then people would grow so fond of them that, if they ever had to melt them down and pay soldiers with them, it would be a terrible wrench. To get around these difficulties, they've devised a system which, while perfectly consistent with their other conventions is diametrically opposed to ours – especially to the way we treasure up gold. So you'll probably think it incredible until you've actually seen it for yourselves. According to this system, plates and drinking-vessels, though beautifully designed, are made of quite cheap stuff like glass or earthenware. But silver and gold are the normal materials, in private houses as well as communal dining-halls, for the humblest items of domestic equipment, such as chamber-pots. They also use chains and fetters of solid gold to immobilize slaves, and anyone who commits a really shameful crime is forced to go about with gold rings on his ears and fingers, a gold necklace round his neck and a crown of gold on his head. In fact they do everything they can to bring these metals into contempt. This means that if they suddenly have to part with all the gold and silver they possess – a fate which in any other country would be thought equivalent to having one's guts torn out – nobody in Utopia would care two hoots. It's much the same with jewels. There are pearls to be found on the beaches, diamonds and garnets on certain types of rock – but they never bother to look for them. However, if they happen to come across one, they pick it up and polish it for some toddler to wear. At first, children are terribly proud of such Jewellery – until they're old enough to register that it's only worn in the nursery. Then, without any prompting from their parents, but purely as a matter of self-respect, they give it up – just as our children grow out of things like dolls, and conkers, and lucky charms. This curious convention is liable to cause some equally curious reactions, as I realized most vividly in the case of the Flatulentine diplomats. These diplomats visited Aircastle while I was there, and, as they were coming to discuss a matter of great importance, each town had sent its three Members of Parliament to meet them. Now all foreign diplomats who'd been there before had come from places just across the channel, and were therefore quite familiar with Utopian ideas. They knew it was a country where expensive clothes were not admired, silk was despised, and gold was a dirty word, so they'd dressed as simply as they could for the occasion. But these Flatulentines lived too far away to have had much contact with the Utopians. All they knew was that everyone in Utopia wore the same sort of clothes, and pretty crude ones at that – presumably because they'd nothing better to wear. So they adopted a policy more arrogant than diplomatic, which was to array themselves in positively godlike splendour, and dazzle the wretched Utopians with their magnificence. When the legation arrived, it consisted of only three men, but these were escorted by a hundred retainers, all wearing multi-coloured clothes, mostly made of silk. As for the great men themselves – for they were great men in their own country – they wore cloth of gold, with great gold chains round their necks, gold ear-rings dangling from their ears, and gold rings on their fingers. Their very hats were festooned with glittering ropes of pearls and other jewels. In fact they were fully equipped with all the things used in Utopia for punishing slaves, humiliating criminals, or amusing small children. Well, I wouldn't have missed it for anything. There were these three gentlemen, looking terribly pleased with themselves, as they compared their own appearance with that of the local inhabitants – for of course the streets were packed with people. And there was the actual effect that they were producing – so very unexpected and disappointing. You see, from the Utopians' point of view – apart from a few who'd had occasion to go abroad – all that splendour was merely degrading. So they reserved their most respectful greeting for the least distinguished members of the party, and completely ignored the diplomats themselves, assuming from their gold chains that they must be slaves. Oh, but you should have seen the faces of the older children, who'd grown out of things like pearls and jewels, when they saw the ones on the envoys' hats. They kept nudging their mothers and whispering: "I say, Mother, just look at that great baby! Fancy wearing Jewellery at his age!" To which the mother would reply, very seriously: "Sh, dear! I imagine he must be a clown attached to the embassy." The gold chains also came in for a lot of criticism. "I don't think much of that chain," someone would say. "It's so thin, the slave could easily break it. Besides, it's far too loose. He could wriggle out of it any time he liked, and run off scot-free!" But when they'd been there for a day or two, the Flatulentines began to realize the situation. They saw that gold was plentiful, and held extremely cheap – in fact despised as heartily as they themselves admired it. They also noticed that a single runaway slave earned more silver and gold on his person than the three of them put together. So eventually they stopped trying to show off, and, feeling rather ashamed of themselves, abandoned all the finery that they'd been so proud of – especially after a few friendly talks with their hosts, which gave them some insight into local conventions and attitudes. For instance, the Utopians fail to understand why anyone should be so fascinated by the dull gleam of a tiny bit of stone, when he has all the stars in the sky to look at – or how anyone can be silly enough to think himself better than other people, because his clothes are made of finer woollen thread than theirs. After all, those fine clothes were once worn by a sheep, and they never turned it into anything better than a sheep. Nor can they understand why a totally useless substance like gold should now, all over the world, be considered far more important than human beings, who gave it such value as it has, purely for their own convenience. The result is that a man with about as much mental agility as a lump of lead or a block of wood, a man whose utter stupidity is paralleled only by his immorality, can have lots of good, intelligent people at his beck and call, just because he happens to possess a large pile of gold coins. And if by some freak of fortune or trick of the law – two equally effective methods of turning things upside down – the said coins were suddenly transferred to the most worthless member of his domestic staff, you'd soon see the present owner trotting after his money, like an extra piece of currency, and becoming his own servant's servant. But what puzzles and disgusts the Utopians even more is the idiotic way some people have of practically worshipping a rich man, not because they owe him money or are otherwise in his power, but simply because he's rich – although they know perfectly well that he's far too mean to let a single penny come their way, so long as he's alive to stop it.

The story of Utopia

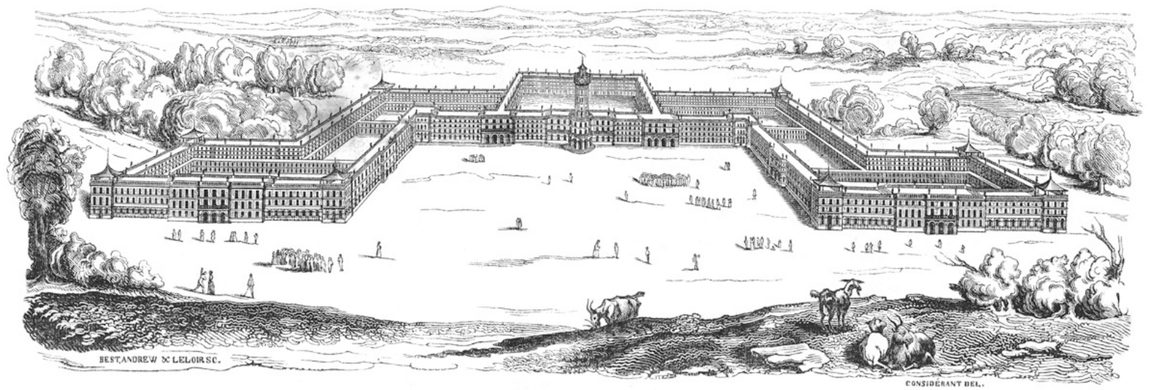
Lewis Mumford, 1922

CHAPTER SIX

How something happened in the eighteenth century which made men "furiously to think" and how a whole group of Utopias sprang out of the upturned soil of industrialism.

3

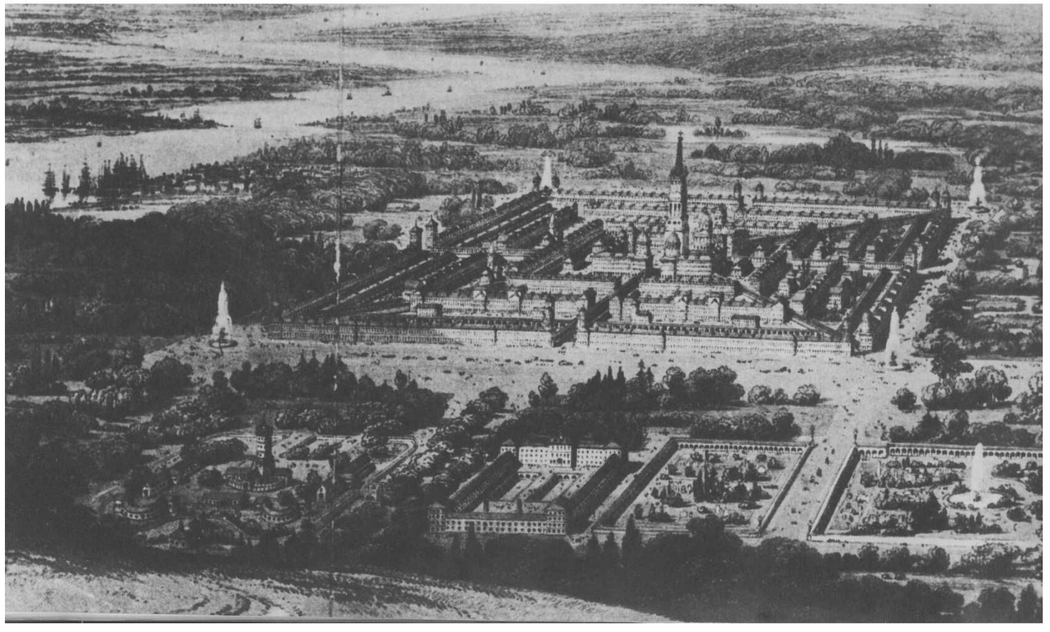
Among the Associationists, the most influential Utopian is Charles Francois Marie Fourier. He was a prolific and incoherent writer, and his Utopia, if the truth be told, exists as disjecta membra rather than as a single work ; but in his case I make an exception to the criterion of selection ; because in every other respect he has a claim upon our attention. This Fourier was a dry little French commercial traveller, whose personal fortune was lost in the French revolution and whose hopes for founding a real eutopia were blasted by the July revolution of 1830, Again and again he transferred himself from one line of goods to another in order to increase the area of the territory he covered and learn more of the workings of society; and so in his writings a wealth of concrete detail goes hand in hand with personal crotchets and the opinionativeness which arises almost inevitably out of an undisciplined solitude. What follows is a distillation of Fourier's thought, with the lees and orts left in the bottom of the flask. Fourier differs largely from the early Utopians in that he is concerned first of all not with modifying human nature but with finding out what it actually is. His utopia is to be based upon an understanding of man's actual physical and mental makeup, and its institutions are to be such as will permit man's original nature to function freely. The motive which draws his community together is attraction; the power which sets his institutions going is "the passions." Under the head of passions—the original biological equipment— Fourier gives a list of tendencies which corresponds roughly with the modern psychologist's list of instincts. Fourier takes these passions as "given"; his utopia is not designed to "effect any change in our passions . . . their direction will be changed without changing their nature." As Brisbane says in his Introduction to Fourier's philosophy, social institutions are to these passional forces what machinery is to material forces. A good community, according to Fourier, is one which will bring all these passions into play, in their complex actions and interactions. As in the Republic, the ideal behind Fourier's utopia is harmony; for man has a threefold destiny; namely, "an industrial destiny, to harmonize the material world; a social destiny, to harmonize the passional or moral world ; and an intellectual destiny, to discover the laws of universal order and harmony". What was at fault with modern civilized societies was that they were incomplete, and in their functioning they created a social dissonance. To overcome this, says Fourier, men must unite into harmonious associations which will give play to all their activities, and which, by erecting common institutions, will do away with the waste arising in the individual's attempts to do for himself all the things which would be done by a complete community. For this perfect association Fourier provides minute plans and tables; but the general plan can be outlined with brevity. First of all, Fourier, too, goes back to the valley section. The initial nucleus of his utopia is to consist of a company of 1,500 or 1,600 persons, owning a good stretch of land comprising at least a square league. Since this experimental phalanx, as Fourier called it, would have to stand alone, and without the support of neighboring phalanxes, there will in consequence of this isolation be many gaps in "attraction," and "many passional calms to dread in its workings." To overcome this, Fourier insists that it is necessary to locate the phalanx on soil fit for a variety of functions. "A flat country, sucli as Antwerp, Leipsic, Orleans, would be totally unsuitable . . . owing to the uniformity of land surface. It will therefore be necessary to select a diversified region, like the surroundings of Lausanne, or at the very least, a fine valley, provided with a stream of water and a forest, like the valley of Brussel or of Halle." This domain would be laid out in fields, orchards, vineyards, and so forth, according to the nature of the soil and industrial requirements. By devotion to horticulture and arboriculture, Fourier figures, an intensive development would supply abundantly the needs of the colony. The main economic occupation of the phalanx would be agricultural—this is perhaps the great distinction between Fourier and later Utopians— but all the arts would be practiced within the phalanstery, since otherwise the association would be incomplete. The principle of the association is concretely embodied in a vast edifice in the center of the domain: "a palace complete in all its appointments serving as the residence of the associates. In this palace there are three wings, corresponding to the Material, the Social, and the Intellectual domains. In one wing are the workshops and halls of industry. In another are the library, the scientific collections, museums, artists' studios, and the like. In the center, devoted to the social element, are banquet halls, a hall of reception, and grand salons. At one end of the palace is a Temple of the Material Harmonies, de oted to singing, music, poetry, dancing, gymnastics, painting, and so forth. At the other end is the Temple of Unityism, to celebrate with appropriate rites man's unity with the universe. On the summit there is an observatory with telegraph and signal tower, for communication with other phalanxes. The phalanx men are associationists; but it follows from Fourier's theory of the passions that they have private interests as well as public ones; and these private interests are permitted to flourish as long as they do not interfere with social solidarity. Thus they avoid the waste inherent in private housekeeping by having public kitchens, where, incidentally, the children are trained from early age at cooking, as they are today in one or two experimental schools : nevertheless it is possible to dine in solitude as well as in company. By the same token, every member of the phalanx is guaranteed a minimum of food, clothing, lodging, and even amusements without respect to work ; at the same time, private property is sanctioned, and each member extracts from the common store divided in proportion to the amount of stock he holds in the association. This dividend, it must be qualified, is considerably reduced by the fact that a system of profit sharing replaces the pure wage system. There is thus a sort of balance between private self-seeking and the maintenance of the public good. In order to manufacture goods economically, large scale production is introduced wherever possible, and the division of labor is forced to its ultimate limits. Fourier takes account of the resulting monotony, however, and suggests that the monotony be corrected by having recourse to changing tasks and occupations from time to time. In commercial exchange, the phalanx acts as a unit; it constitutes a great selfgoverning body which traffics in surplus goods with similar associations, without any middleman, in something of the manner, perhaps, that the Co-operative wholesale Societies do today. By abolishing the individual household, the phalanx gives a new freedom to women; and Fourier does not see how it is possible to mantain the system of monogamic proprietorship once women have a free choice of mates. So the women of the phalanx are not intellectual nonentities; and since they no longer preside over the individual home, they help run the whole community. Is it necessary to add the common nurseries, the common schools, the informal education of the children, and the number of other things which follow from this emancipation? Perhaps one of the most remarkable characteristics of this Utopia is its utilization of a moral equivalent for war, long before Professor William James invented the phrase. One of the great functions of the phalanx is the assemblage of productive armies even as "civilization" assembles destructive ones. There is a fine passage in which Fourier pictures an industrial army of goldenyouths and maidens, "instead of devastating thirty provinces in a campaign, these armies will have spanned thirty rivers with bridges, re-wooded thirty barren mountains, dug thirty trenches for irrigation, and drained thirty marsches." It is for lack of 'such industria armies, sais Fourier, that civilization is unable to produce anything great.



Landscape view of the Phalanstere designed by Charles Fourier.

What strikes us when we put together the fragments of Fourier's utopia—as one might put together a jigsaw puzzle—is the fact that he faces the variety and inequality of human nature. Instead of erecting a standard for men to live up to, and rejecting mankind as unfit for utopia because the standard is far beyond its height, the standard itself is founded upon the utmost capacity which a comunity might be able to exhibit. Fourier meets human nature half-way: he endeavors to project a society which will give regular channels to all its divergent impulses, and prevent them from spilling unsocially all over the landscape. In his statement of this aim there are plenty of weaknesses and absurdities; and I confess that it is hard to take this pathetic little man seriously; but when one has grappled with Fourier's thought one discovers that there is something to take. Fourier died without persuading anyone to give a trial to his scheme of association; and yet his work was not without its practical influence. The Brook Farm experiment in America was a fumbling attempt to plant a phalanstery without paying any attention to the conditions which Ffiurier would have rigorgusly imposed; and the "familistere" of the great steel works of Godin at Guise, in France, is another direct result of Fourier's inspiration. He remains, I believe, the first man who had a plan for colonizing the wilderness of industrial barbarism that existed at the beginning of the nineteenth ceatury, and redeeming that wilderness to civilization.

The name of Robert Owen is usually associated with utopianism; but his work belongs more to the "real' world than to the idola of utopia ; and I pass over him with the briefest mention, for his projects for a model industrial town have more of the flavor of a poor colony than that of a productive human society. Let us grant him good intentions, organizing ability, and moral fervor: without doubt he is a noble figure, even when his attitude is strained and his tone strident. The series of essays he wrote on love and marriage are marked by fine sympathy and common sense; and it is to be regretted that they are not as widely known as his plans for a new moral world. If this little note can repair the neglect, I have done Owen ample justice: as an active figure in English and American public life he is properly a subject for the social historian. With Owen I must also dismiss John Ruskin, who began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century to develop plans for a "Guild of St. George." This guild was to form a little island of honest labor and sound education in the midst of the turbid sea of industrialism; but it did not embrace the whole of society, and it was Utopian only in the sense that the Oneida Community, let us say, was Utopian. While they are full of pregnant suggestions, the plans for the Guild are as fragmentary as the New Atlantis.



The Ideal City of Victoria as imagined by Buckingham in 1849

One of the neglected Utopias of the mid-nineteenth century is that of James Buckingham. James Buckingham was one of those erratic men of affairs which the fertile soil of British individualism produces, and which hard British common sense persistently ignores. Like Owen, Buckingham was acquainted with industrial and commercial affairs from the inside: he travelled widely and wrote upon various matters with that copious, amateurish dogmatism and spirit which marks him, perhaps, as the philistine counterpart of John Ruskin. If the Utopias of the past express the ideals of the soldier, the farmer, and the artisan, the community which Buckingham projected represents the ideal of the bourgeoisie, Buckingham's Victoria is the ideal aspect of that Coketown which in a later chapter we shall attempt to describe. We talk loosely of the individualism of the nineteenth century ; but in reality it was a period that was thriving with associations. The scope of joint stock companies and philanthropic societies had immeasurably widened. Along with the Mudfog Association, "for the advancement of everything," which Dickens satirized, there sprang up a hundred different societies for performing some special function in the industrial system or realizing some particular purpose in society. Buckingham gives us a picture of his contemporaries which is also a criticism: "We have the government of the country itself, passing acts of parliament for the better drainage of towns, and a more ample supply of water and air for ventilation. . . . Hence, too, arise associations of noblemen and others for building model lodging houses for the labouring classes; associations for improving the dwellings of the poor; societies for providing baths and bath houses for families unable to procure such conveniences for themselves; associations for establishing suburban villages for the working classes, and to get them at night at least out of the crowded haunts and vicious atmosphere of the towns. And hence we have Temperance Societies, Tract Societies, Home Missions, Asylums for Repentant Magdalens, Homes for Seaman out of Employ, and Houses of Refuge for the Destitute, with soup kitchens and other modes of temporary relief " What does this all come to? Let Buckingham answer: "They are, after all, mere palliatives, and do not reach the seat of the disease. . . . This can only be done by uniting the disjointed efforts of all these well-meaning but partially curative bodies into one, in order to achieve, by their union of means, influence, and example, the erection of a "Model Society," with its model farms, model pastures, model mines, model manufactures, model town, model schools, model workshops, model kitchens, model libraries, and places of recreation, enjoyment, and instruction; all of which could be united in one new Association." Without inquiring too closely into what a model pasture may be, we may admit that the notion behind Buckingham's proposal was not unsound. The industrial society of his day was in an inchoate, indeed in a chaotic state. In order to sift out the necessary institutions and put them on a firm basis, it was the better part of wisdom to start anew on a fresh area of land and attempt to plan the development of the community as a whole. It is true that in this proposal of Buckingham's there is none of Fourier's brilliant intuitions of a true social order, and none of Ruskin's critical inquiry into what composed a good life: Buckingham took contemporary values for granted. What he sought to do was to realize these values completely, and in orderly fashion. Here are the elements of his proposal. There is to be foftned a model town association, with a limited liability, for the purpose of building a new town called Victoria. The town is to contain every improvement in "position, plan, drainage, ventilation, architecture, supply of water, light, and every other elegance and convenience" Its size is to be about a mile square and the number of inhabitants is not to exceed 10,000. A suitable variety of manufactures and handicraft trades is to be established near the edge of the town; and the town itself is to be surrounded by farm land 10,000 acres broad. All of the lands, houses, factories, and materials are to be the property of the company, and not of any individual ; and this property is to be held for the benefit of all in proportion as their shares entitle them. No person is to be a member of the company or an inhabitant of the town except one who is a bona fide shareholder to the extent of at least twenty pounds, and who is ready to subscribe to a drastic series of blue laws which, while permitting freedom in religious worship and preventing child labor, do away with liquor, drugs, and even tobacco. In addition to these provisions there are to be common laundries, kitchens, refectories, and nurseries ; and medical advice is to be given free, at home or in the hospital, as in the army and navy. Education is to be undertaken by the community. Justice, it should be noted by those who are acquainted with an experiment which has recently been started in New York, is to be administered by competent arbitrators under a written code of laws, without the expense, delay, and uncertainty of ordinary legal proceedings. All members are to sign declarations accepting arbitration and waiving other legal proceedings against members of the company. All these affairs, especially the manner in which the town is to be built, are worked out in considerable detail; thus the size and character of the houses are set forth on the plan, and it is provided that each workingman is to occupy at least one entire and separate room for himself; whilst each married couple without children gets two rooms, and each family in which there are children is to occupy at least three rooms for domestic purposes. I have set down all these details baldly because the plan itself is a bald one; and no amount of fine writing will embellish it. Buckingham's society is not based upon a thoroughgoing criticism of human institutions: the ends for which this

society exists are doubtless those which were held good and proper by the Macaulays and the Martineaus. What is interesting in Buckingham's utopia is the definite plans and specifications, accompanied by drawings ; for this is surely one of the first attempts to put a problem in social engineering on a basis from which an engineer or an architect could work. Buckingham thought that, given a successful model town, the rest of England might in time be colonized by the surplus population, and thus the old centers of black industry would be wiped out. Nor was Buckingham altogether deceived. His utopia was a limited one, but out of his limitations has come success. In 1848 this Utopia was a chimera; in 1898, Mr. Ebenezer
Howard reconstructed it and set it forth in a persuasive little book called Tomorrow, and as a direct result of the plans advocated by Mr. Howard, a flourishing garden city called Letchworth has come into existence; which in turn has propagated another garden city, called Wellwyn ; and at the same time has, by example, paved the way for numerous garden villages and garden suburbs in various parts of Europe and in America. With this mid-Victorian theorist, we pass over from a pre-scientific method of thinking to one which sacrifices the artistic imagination to a realistic grasp of the facts ; and in this passage something is gained and something is lost. Buckingham gains by confining his proposals to what is immediately practicable. He loses by not having the imaginative energy to criticize the ways, means, and ends that are sanctioned by current practise. If utopia begins with Plato's glorious dream of an organic community, the image of the just man made perfect, it cannot end with Buckingham's invention of a shell. Nevertheless, through the nineteenth century the superficial Utopians, the shellbuilders, are dominant; and we must continue to examine them.

CHAPTER TEN

How the Country House and Coketown became the Utopias of the Modern Age; and how they made the world over in their image.

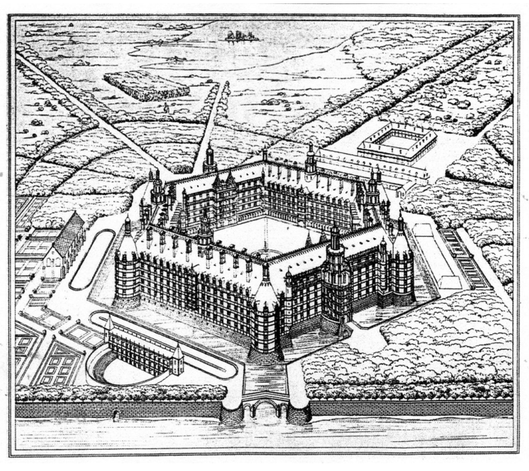
To understand the Utopia of the Country House we must jump back a few centuries in history. Anyone who has ranged through the European castles that were built before the fourteenth century will realize that they were no more built for comfort than is a modern battleship. They were essentially garrisons of armed men whose main occupation was theft, violence, and murder ; and every feature of their environment reflected the necessities of their life. These castles would be found beetling a cliff or a steep hill; their walls and their buttresses would be made of huge, rough hewn stones; their living arrangements would resemble those of a barracks with an almost complete lack of what we now regard as the normal decencies and privacies, except possibly for the lord and his lady; and the life of these feudal bands was necessarily a crude and limited one. Up to the fourteenth century in Western Europe the little fortified town, or the unfortified town that lay beneath the protection of a garrison on a hill, was the only other social unit that competed with the even more limited horizons of the peasant's village, or with the spacious claims for the Here and the Hereafter which were put forward by the Roman Church, To dream of huge metropolises and farflung armies and food brought from the ends of the earth would have been wilder in those days than anything More pictured in his Utopia.During the fifteenth century in England, and in other parts of Europe the same thing seems to have happened sooner or later, this life of agriculture and warfare and petty trade was upset : the feudal power of the reigning nobles was concentrated in the hands of a supreme lord, the King ; and the King and his archives and his court settled in the National Capital, instead of moving about from place to place in the troubled realm. The territories of the feudal lords ceased to be dispersed ; their possessions were confined more and more within what were called national boundaries ; and instead of remaining in their castles the great lords gave up their crude, barbaric ways, and went up to the capital to be civilized. In the course of time money took the place of direct tribute; instead of receiving wheat and eggs and labor, the lord came into possession of a rent which could be figured in pence and pound; a rent which could be transferred to the new trading cities for the goods which the rest of the world had for sale. There is a fascinating picture of this change in W. J. Ashley's Economic History ; and the old life itself is outlined, with a wealth of significant detail, in J. S. Fletcher's Memorials of a Yorkshire Parish. At the same time that this change was taking place in the physical life of Western Europe, a corresponding change was taking place in the domain of culture. Digging about the ruins of Rome and other cities, the men of the late Middle Age discovered the remains of a great and opulent civilization ; and exploring the manuscripts and printed books which were getting into general circulation, they found themselves face to face with strange conceptions of life, with habits of refinement, ease, and sensuous luxury which the hard life of the camp and the castle had never really permitted. There followed a reaction against their old life which was little less than a revulsion; and in that reaction two great institutions fell out of fashion. Men ceased to build castles to protect themselves against physical dangers ; and they left off entering monasteries in order to fortify their souls for the Hereafter. Both the spiritual and the temporal life began to shift to a new institution, the Country House. The idolum of the Country House drew together and coalesced; and as a familiar symbol of this change the colleges at Oxford which date from the Renascence can scarcely be distinguished in architectural detail from the palaces which the aristocracy were building in the same period; while our banks and our political edifices to this day bear almost universally

the stamp of that Roman and Grecian litter which men discovered on the outskirts of the mediaeval city. We do not know the Country House until we realize, to begin with, what its physical characteristics are like. There are a great many descriptions which the reader may consult if he does not happen to live in the neighborhood of a great Country House: but perhaps instead of examining the contemporary Country House it will be well to go back to its beginnings, and see how it was pictured in all its encrusted splendor at the first movement of the Renascence—in the setting which Francois Rabelais, in one of the few downright serious passages in his great work, Gargantua, sought to provide for the good life. Gargantua purposes to build a new Abbey which he calls the Abbey of Theleme. This Abbey is to be in every respect what the mediaeval Abbey was not. Hence to begin with, the Abbey, unlike the castle, is to lie in the midst of the open country ; and unlike the monastery, it is to have no walls. Every member is to be furnished with a generous apartment, consisting of a principal room, a withdrawing room, a handsome closet, a wardrobe, and an oratory; and the house itself is to contain not merely libraries in every language, but fair and spacious galleries of paintings. Besides these lodgings there is to be a tilt-yard, a riding court, a theatre, or public playhouse, and a natatory or place to swim. By the river, for the Abbey is to be situated on the Loire, there is to be a Garden of Pleasure, and between two of the six towers of the hexagon, in which form the building is arranged, there are courts for tennis and other games. Add to this orchards full of fruit trees, parks abounding with venison, and an archery range, fill all the halls and chambers with rich tapestries, cover all the pavements and floors with green cloth—and the furnishing of the Abbey of Theleme is complete. The costumes of the inmates are equally splendid and elaborate. In order to have the accoutrements of the ladies' and gentlemen's toilets more convenient, there was to be "about the wood of Theleme a row of houses to the extent of half a league, very neat and cleanly, wherein dwelt the goldsmiths, lapidaries, jewellers, embroiderers, tailors, gold drawers, velvet weavers, tapestry makers, and upholsterers. . . ." They were to be "furnished with matter and stuff from the hands of Lord Nausiclete, who every year brought them seven ships from the Perlas and Cannibal Islands, laden with ingots of gold, with raw silk, with pearls and precious stones." The women who are admitted to Theleme must be fair, well-featured, and of sweet disposition; the men must be comely and well-conditioned. Everyone is to be admitted freely and allowed to depart freely; and instead of attempting to practice poverty, chastity, and obedience, the inmates may be honorably married, may be rich, and may live at liberty. The liberty of Theleme is indeed complete ; it is such a liberty as one enjoys at a Country House to this day, under the care of a tactful hostess ; for everyone does nothing except follow his own free will and pleasure, rising out of his bed whenever he thinks good and eating, drinking, and laboring when he has a mind to it. In all their rule and strictest tie of their order, as Rabelais puts it, there is but one clause to be observed
— "Do what you please."

When we turn our attention from Rabelais' conceit of an anti-monastic order, we discover that he has given us an excellent picture of the Country House, and of what I shall take the liberty of calling Country House culture. We see pretty much the same outlines in the introduction to Boccaccio's Decameron; it is elaborately described in terms of that most complete of Country Houses, Hampton Court, in Pope's Rape of the Lock ; it is vividly pictured by Meredith in his portrait of The Egoist ; and it is analyzed in Mr. H. G. Wells' cruel description of Bladesover in Tono-Bungay, as well as by Mr. Bernard Shaw in Heartbreak House. Whether Mr. W. H. Mallock holds the pattern of Country House culture up to us in The New Republic or Anton Chekhov penetrates its aimlessness and futility in The Cherry Orchard, The Country House is one of the recurrent themes of literature. This renascence idolum of the Country House, then, is powerful and complete: I know no other pattern which has imposed its standards and its practices with such complete success upon the greater part of European civilization. While the Country House was in the beginning an aristocratic institution, it has penetrated now to every stratum of society ; and although we may not immediately see the connection, it is responsible, I believe, for the particular go and direction which the industrial revolution has taken. The Country House standards of consumption are responsible for our Acquisitive Society.

Perhaps the shortest way to suggest the character of Country House institutions is to say that they are the precise opposite of everything that Plato looked upon as desirable in a good community. The Country House is concerned not with the happiness of the whole community but with the felicity of the governors. The conditions which underly this limited and partial good life are political power and economic wealth; and in order for the life to flourish, both of these must be obtained in almost limitless quantities. The chief principles that characterize this society are possession and passive enjoyment. Now, in the Country House possession is based upon privilege and not upon work. The title to land which was historically obtained for the most part through force and fraud is the economic foundation of the Country House existence. In order to keep the artisans and laborers who surround the Country House at their work, it is necessary to keep them from having access to the land on their own account, provision always being made that the usufruct of the land shall go to the owner and not to the worker. This emphasis upon passive ownership points to the fact that in the

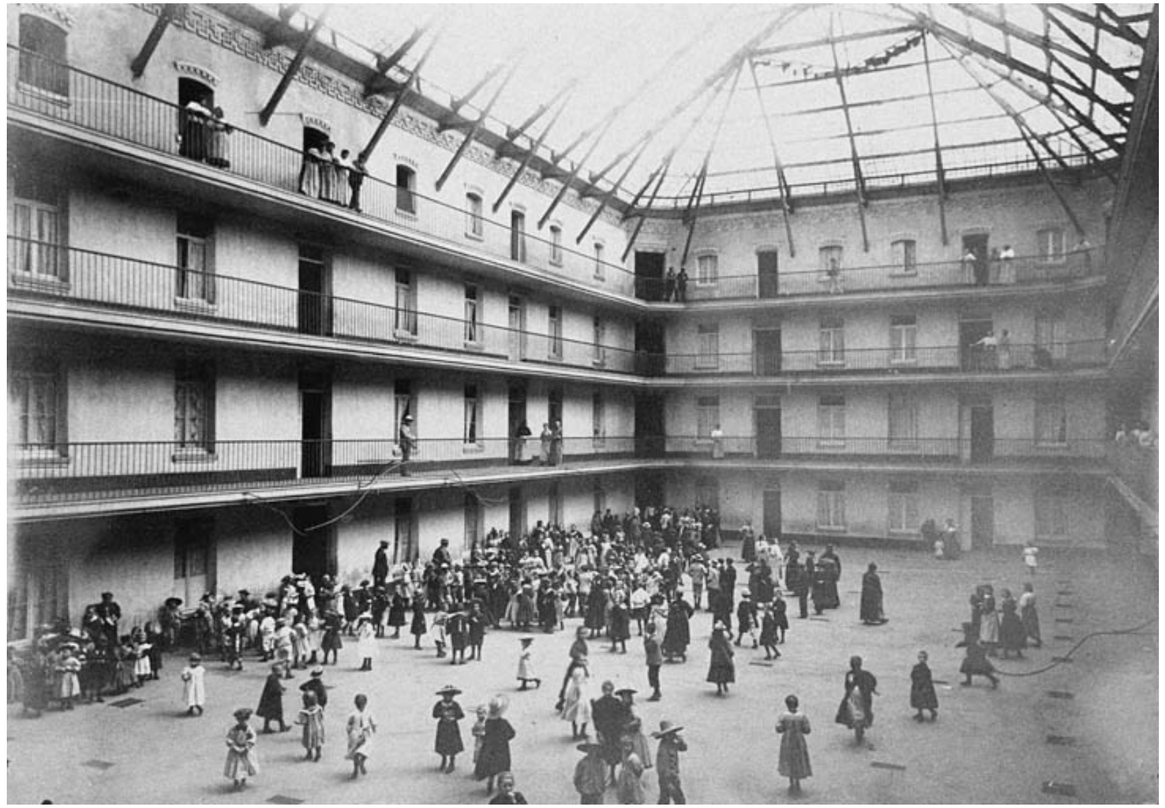
Country House there is no active communion between the people and their environment. Such activities as remain in the Country House—the pursuit of game, for instance—rest upon imitating in play activities which once had a vital use or prepared for some vital function, as a child's playing with a. doll is a preparation for motherhood. The Country House ideal is that of a completely functionless existence; or at best, an existence in which all the functions that properly belong to a civilized man shall be carried on by functionaries. Since this ideal cannot be realized in the actual world, for the reason that it is completely at odds with man's biological inheritance, it is necessary in the Country House Utopia to fill in by play and sport an otherwise desirable vacuity. In the Country House literature and the fine arts undoubtedly flourish: but they flourish as the objects of appreciation rather than as the active, creative elements in the community's life ; they flourish particularly in the fashion that Plato looked upon as a corrupting influence in the community. In the arts, a gourmandizing habit of mind—the habit of receiving things and being played upon by them—prevails; so that instead of the ability to share creative ecstasy, the chief canon of judgment is "taste," a certain capacity to discriminate among sensory stimuli, a capacity which is essentially just as hospitable to a decomposing cheese as to the very staff of life. The effect of this gourmandism in the arts can be detected in every element of the Country House from cellar to roof; for the result has been to emphasize the collection of good things rather than their creation, and there is an aspect in which the Country House is little better than a robber's hoard or a hunter's cache—a miniature anticipation of the modern museums of natural history and art. Observe the architecture of our Country House. If it has been built in England during the last three hundred years, the style is probably that bastard Greek or Roman which we call Renascence architecture ; if the Country House was built in America during the last thirty years, it is as likely as not a Tudor residence with traces of castle fortification left here and there on the façade. On the walls there will be plenty of paintings; indeed a M'hole gallery may be devoted to them. In all probability, however, the paintings have been created in other times by men long since dead, and in other countries: there may be a portrait by Rembrandt, a Persian miniature, a print by Hokusai. Some very fine element in the structure, a fireplace or a bit of panelling, may have been removed piece by piece from the original Country House in England, Italy, or France ; even as many features of the original Country House were quarried, perhaps, from some mediaeval abbey. The very china that we use upon our tables nowadays is a Country House importation which took the place of pewter and earthenware; and wall paper is another importation. From feature to feature everything is derivative ; everything, in the last analysis, has either been stolen or purchased from the original makers; and what has not been stolen or purchased has been basely copied. The insatiability of the Country House to possess art is only equalled by its inability to create it. In the Country House, the arts are not married to the community, but are kept for its pleasure. Let there be no confusion as to either the facts or the ideal we are examining. There is a vast difference between that fine mingling of traditions which is the very breath of the arts, as the lover of classic Greek statuary knows, and the rapacious imperialistic habit of looting the physical objects of art which has been the essence of the Country House method in modern times, even as it seems to have been a couple of thousand years ago in the Roman villa. A genuine culture will borrow steadily from other cultures; but it will go to them as the bee goes to the flower for pollen, and not as the beekeeper goes to the hive for honey. There is a creative borrowing and a possessive borrowing ; and the Country House has in the main limited itself to possessive borrowing. The Country House ideal, in fact, is limitless possession: so the great Country House masters have five or six houses, perhaps, in their name, although they need but a single one to cover their heads. Now the Country House idolum involves a dissociation between the Country House and the community in which it is placed. If you will take the trouble to examine mediaeval conditions, you will find that differences of rank and wealth did not make a very great difference between the life of the lord in his castle, and his retainers ; if the common man could not claim to be as good as his lord, it is plain that the lord shared most of the common man's disabilities, and was, for all the exaggerations of chivalry, just as ignorant, just as illiterate, just as coarse. In the cities, too, the lowest workman in the guild shared the institutions of his masters: the churches, the guild pageants, and the morality plays were all part and parcel of the same culture. The



The abbey of Theleme from Francois Rabelais's Gargantua.
Drawing by Charles Nenormant, 1840.

Country House changed thjs condition. Culture came to mean not a participation in the creative activities of one's own community, but the acquisition of the products of other communities ; and it scarcely matters much whether these acquisitions were within the spiritual or the material domain. There had of course been the beginnings of such a split in mediaeval literature, with its vulgar Rabelaisian tales and its refined romances of the court ; but with the integration of the Country House idolum, this divorcement was accen tuated in every other activity of the community. One of the results of this split was that popular institutions were deprived of their contacts with the general world of culture, and languished away; or they were transformed, as the public schools of England were transformed into restricted upper class institutions. Far more important than this, perhaps, was the fact that each separate Country House was forced to obtain for its limited circle all the elements that were necessary to the good life in a whole community such as Plato described. We shall deal with the effects of this presently. Let us admit what is valid in the utopia of theCountry House. Enjoyment is a necessary element inachievement, and by its regard for the decent gracesof life, for such things as an ease in manners and afine flow of conversation and the clash of wits and a sensitiveness to beautiful things, the Country House was by all odds a humanizing influence. In so far as the Country House fostered a belief in contemplation and a desire for the arts apart from any uses that might be made of them by way of civic advertisement; in so far as it urged that all our pragmatic activities must be realized in things that are worth having or doing for themselves, the Country House was right, eminently right. It was no snobbery on the part of Russian soviet officialism when it opened up some of its Country Houses as rest houses for the peasants and workers, and then insisted that some of the airs of the Country House should be acquired there, to replace the rough usages of the stable, the dungpile, and the field. Ruskin and Samuel Butler were possibly right when they insisted that the perfect gentleman was a finer product than the perfect peasant or artisan: he is a finer product because he is essentially more alive. Even by its emphasis upon appreciation the Country House did no mean service; for it called attention to the fact that there were more permanent standards —standards which were common to the arts of Greece and China— than those which were looked upon as sufficient in the local region. In sum, the Country House emphasized a human best, which was the sum of a dozen partial perfections; and so all that was crude and inadequate in the old regional cultures was brought to light and criticized. All these virtues I admit; and they hold just as good today as they ever did. The fatal weakness of Country House culture comes out all the plainer for this admission. The Country House did not see that enjoyment rested upon achievement, and was indeed inseparable from achievement. The Country House strove to put achievement in one compartment and enjoyment, in another; with the result that the craftsman who no longer had the capacity to enjoy the fine arts no longer had the ability to create them. The effect of an isolated routine of enjoyment is equally debilitating; for enjoyment, to the masters of the Country House came too easily, with a mere snap of the fingers, as it were, and the tendency of connoisseurship was to set novelty above intrinsic worth. Hence the succession of styles by which Country House decoration has become a thing for mockery: Chinese in one age, Indian in another, Persian in the next, with Egyptian, Middle African, and heaven knows what else destined to follow in due order. There is nothing to settle to, because there is no task to be donei and no problem to work out; and as soon as the first taste for a style gets exhausted it is speedily supplanted by another. It would be impossible to calculate the extent to which the Country House has degraded our taste but I have little doubts as to the source of the degradation. The stylicism which has perverted the arts and has kept a congruent modern style from developing has been the work of Country House culture. I remember well the contempt with which a furniture manufacturer in the Chiltern Hills told me about the way in which he produced an original Sheraton : his knowledge of sound furniture design was subordinated to some other person's knowledge of "style" and the miscarriage of the man's innate craftsmanship made him so mordant on the subject that it seemed as though he had been reading Thorstein Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class. It is the same through all the arts. A visit to the industrial sections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York will show how dismally the taste for novelty, which led the Sheratons and Chippendales to find "classic motifs" in one age, causes the designers of the present day to seek the motifs of Sheraton and Chippendale. So much for what happened to the arts when enjoyment and achievement are separated. The industrial bearing of the Renascence ideal is of capital importance. During the Middle Age the emphasis in industry was upon the production of tangible goods ; the craft guilds set high standards in design and workmanship; and the aim of the worker, in most of the trades, was to get a living from his work, and not simply to get enough money to free himself from the necessity of working. This is a broad generalization, I need scarcely emphasize, and there is plenty of evidence of pecuniary interests under the best of conditions; but it seems fair to say that the dominant ideals of the older industrial order were industrial rather than commercial. In the trading ventures that the Country House promoted under its Drakes and Raleighs, ventures which were needed to bring them "Ships from the Perlas and Cannibal Islands," the emphasis shifted from workmanship to sale ; and the notion of working and gambling to acquire multifarious goods took the place of that earlier ideal which Henry Adams so sympathetically described in Mt. St. Michel and Chartres. Thus the good

life, as I have said elsewhere, was the Goods Life: it could be purchased. If the whole community no longer offered the conditions for this life, one might filch what one wanted from the general store, and try to monopolize for self or family all that was needed for a good life in the community. What is the chief economic outcome of this ideal? The chief outcome, I think, is to exaggerate the demand for goods, and to cause an enormously wasteful duplication of the apparatus of consumption. If the limit to one's possessions should be simply the extent of one's purse; if happiness is to be acquired through obtaining the comforts and luxuries of life; if a man who possesses a single house is considered fortunate, and a man who possesses five houses five times as fortunate; if there are no standards of living other than the in satiable one that has been set up in the Country House —"well" then there is really no limit to the business of getting and spending, and our lives become the mean handiwork of coachman, cook, and groom. Our Country House will not merely be a house : there will be a chapel, an art gallery, a theater, a gymnasium, as François Rabelais imagined. As the common possessions of the community dwindle, the private possessions of individuals are multiplied ; and at last, there remains no other community than a multitude of anarchic individuals, each of whom is doing his best to create for himself a Country House, notwithstanding the fact that the net result of his endeavors—this is the drab tragedy and the final thing to be said against it—is perhaps nothing better than six inadequate rooms at the end of nowhere in a Philadelphia suburb. The Country House, then, is the chief pattern by means of which the medieval order was transformed into the modern order. It does not matter very much whether the Country House is an estate on Long Island or a cottage in Montclair; whether it is a house in Golder's Green or a family manor in Devonshire; these are essentially affairs of scale, and the underlying identity is plain enough. The idolum of the Country House prevails even when quarters are taken up in the midst of the metropolis. More than ever the Country House today tries to make up by an abundance of physical goods for all that has been lost through its divorce from the underlying community; more than ever it attempts to be self-sufficient within the limits of suburbia.



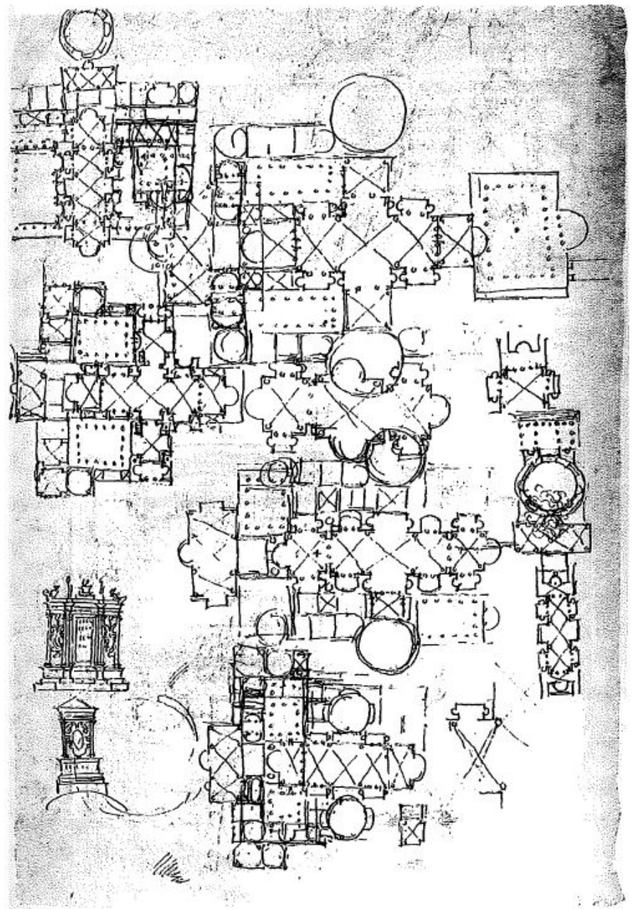
The Familistere of Guise
by Jean-Babtiste André Godin

The Possibility of an absolute architecture

Pier Vittorio Aureli, 2011

THE GEOPOLITICS O F T H E IDEAL VILLA: ANDREA PALLADIO AND THE PROJECT OF AN ANTI-IDEAL CITY

In 1944 Rudolf Wittkower published two essays on Andrea Palladio's architecture . The essays, later included in his bookArchitectural Principles in the age of humanism, featured eleven schematic drawings of Palladio's villas that Wittkower used to reinforce his argument for reading Renaissance architecture in terms of irreducible rules or principles. The series of drawings showed that architectural artifacts such as Palladio's villas were not merely episodic formal studies but were systematic variations of the same compositional logic. Architectural principles were thus implicitly proposed as an intellectual framework for architectural form, superior to the functional, programmatic, or aesthetic goals to which architectural hisroty was then still bound. As a core component of architecture's emerging historiography, Wittkower's reading of Renaissance architecture quickly proved to be influential far beyond academic historical scholarship. Within postwar reconstruction in England, for example, his project established a point of reference for a generation of architects searching for formal legitimacy beyond the technocratic impetus of functionalist modernism. In particular, his drawings, reducing Palladian villas to propositional and spatial schemes, offered the possibility of denning a more profound rationality than could be provided simply by technology. This commitment to seeing and interpreting a contemporary condition through a Renaissance precedent was reinforced five years later (and more radically still) by Colin Rowe, whose "Mathematics of the Ideal Villa" famously established a comparison between Palladio's Villa Foscari in Malcontenta and Le Corbusier's Villa Stein in Garches. While Wittkower's impact on a wider, contemporary architectural discourse was as unsuspected as it was unintentional, Rowe's iconoclastic comparison of two villas-one from the sixteenth century, the other from the twentieth-seems to have been a deliberate attempt to interfere with the trajectory of postwar architectural modernism. This desire to subvert is seen not only in his argument for the comparable nature of Renaissance and modern architecture , but also in his pointing to the possibility of a rigorous close reading of architectural form independent of its historical circumstances. For this reason, Rowe deliberately extrapolates the villas of Palladio and Le Corbusier from their geographical and political context; he even argues that the architects' lyrical site descriptions celebrating their best-known villas-"La Rotonda" and the Villa Savoye at Poissy-offer too easy a point of entry for comparison. In this way, Rowe's text reinforces Wittkower's radical denial of Palladio's site specificity, apparent in the removal of the barchesse (barns) in his schematic drawings of the villas. These adjoining loggias were adapted from local Venetian agricultural sheds and were an essential component of Palladio's villas, providing both a sense of context and a semiotic distinction that allowed these buildings to be classified as villas rather than palaces. The barchesse , in this sense, are Palladio's geopolitical context because they figure as the key metonymical register for the whole typology. Palladio's villas themselves were commissioned at the high point of widespread social and economic reforms advanced by the Serenissima Republic in the sixteenth century, and their particular formal composition -a central palace flanked by two barns-is deeply embedded in the political, social, and formal impetus of these reforms. If, as James S . Ackerman has argued, the villa is one the most radically ideological architectures because it hides its economic dependency on the city by claiming self-sufficiency within the countryside, then Palladio's palace -plus - barchesse composition openly signals the villa's relation with its regional and agricultural economic context. This immediately suggests an alternative interpretation of Palladio's architecture to the ones advanced by Wittkower and Rowe. This counter position does not define Palladio's relevance to contemporary discourse in terms of proposition or the "mathematics" of its architectural composition, but reads the villa as one element within a larger, latent project. Rather than taking Palladio's "ideal" as a model for an equally ideal urban configuration, it views the geography and politics of the villa as a framework for rethinking and retheorizing the significance of Palladio's work as a project for an anti -ideal city. First, however, let's deal with the name, Palladio-bombastic and slightly ridiculous in its overloaded pretension. This was the name conferred on Andrea della Gondola when he was already in his thirties, having completed a long apprenticeship in a stonemason's workshop . The man who named him-the Renaissance poet, humanist, and diplomat Giangiorgio Trissino-was making clear from the outset that Palladio was invested with a program. For Trissino, this program was the reinvention of Vicenza as a model for an imperial Roman city-that is, in his classicist terms, a new Italian civilization finally liberated from the Goths, whose ascendancy, he believed, had paralleled the decline of the Roman Empire and Italy's descent into political and cultural chaos. Drawing inspiration from Trissino's classicist urban ideology, Palladio's early architectural designs include a classical facade for a series of city houses and a proposal for the Palazzo Civena-austere, simple, and thus repeatable prototypes, ready to be disseminated within the Gothic fabric of Vicenza. The palazzo was fused with the more modest merchant house to form a new quasi- bourgeois domus . The centrality of the house and thus of secular domestic life, along with the systematic recovery of Roman architecture, provided the core of Palladio's attempt to define a universal formal grammar for the city. But Palladio's first intellectual mentor was politically at odds with the Venetian republic. Trissino saw the fragmented city as a symptom of the larger political, cultural, and social fragmentation of the nation after the collapse of the Roman Empire . Like Dante in De monarchia, he called for a universal civic government, identifiable in Palladio's time with the singular figure of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. This universal government was to represent a new Roman Empire, a secular power free from both feudalism and ecclesiastical authority. Fundamental to these aspirations, the city and its architecture remained a key priority, and set against the Gothic fabric of the medieval city, Trissino promoted Roman architecture as the appropriate language for his political project. Palladio made four research trips to Rome with Trissino as exercises in generating form through firsthand experience. The careful study of Roman antiquity was the express goal of this research, and the drawings Palladio made during these visits would become the source book of his architectural grammar. What is important to note here is Palladio's drawing method. Influenced by

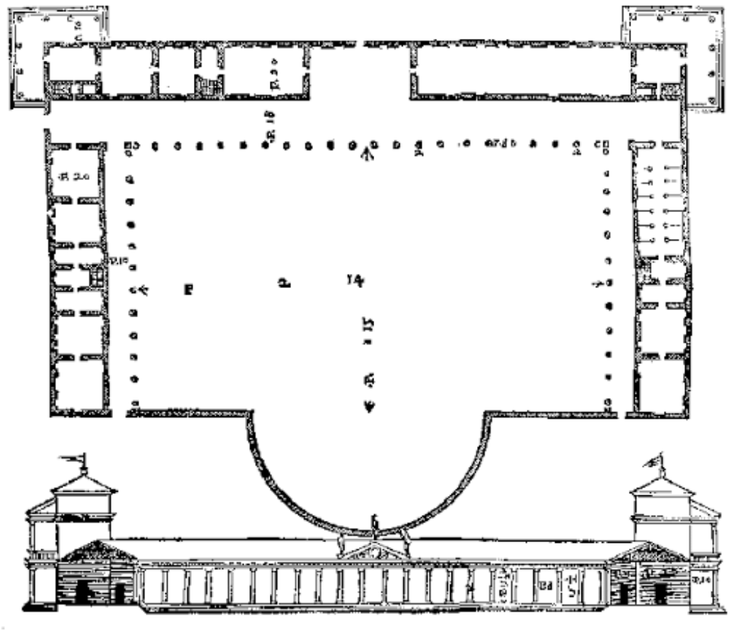


Notebook of Andrea Palladio with sketches of the Roman Baths of Diocleziano

Villa Capra “La Rotonda”, in a picture from Colin Rowe *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*, 1976.

Raphael’s recommendations about the depiction of ancient ruins, he avoided pictorial perspective and instead used a flat orthogonal technique that anticipated modern conventions of orthogonal projection-a method that contributed enormously to his systematic approach to the architecture of the city. Architecture was not visionary and picturesque but scientific, the product of carefully defined rules. This fundamental distinction enabled the original form to be reconstructed out of the ruin, emancipating it from its reality as a fragment and givmg it a new status as a component in a potential imperial city in Vicenza, and later across the Veneto. Palladio’s last trip to Rome in 1557 provided the material for two books, one of them a guide to the city’s antiquities that would remain the standard reference for tourists for the next two centuries, the other a curious guide for pilgrims that documented Rome’s many churches.9 Whereas Roman antiquity offered the source for Palladio’s universal architectural grammar, the mapping of churches-many of them located in typically suburban and depopulated, fragmented context-enabled him to present the city as an archipelago of monuments . These unite, autonomous artifacts carried a highly charged ritualistic geography, even when presented in isolation. But Palladio went beyond this by ordering the descriptions of the churches according to the pilgrim’s peripatetic approach to the city. The guide does not describe these churches as monumental forms removed from their context, but addresses them within site - specific patterns of an urban itinerary. In addition to his study of antiquity, therefore, Palladio’s interest in compiling a pilgrim’s guide is of exceptional interest because it signifies his familiarity with the geographic symbolism of the city. And it is precisely this act of locating and marking that seems to underpin Palladio’s ability to denne the city through its architecture. The heroic mission of Trissino and Palladio to recast Vicenza as a latter-day imperial city was prompted, somewhat more pro saically, by a fleeting celebration of religious authority: the entrance of Cardinal Ridolfi to the city in 1543. For this occasion, Palladio designed a sequence of temporary markers to delineate the cardinal’s procession toward the cathedral. Two of the most exempla1y urban landmarks of the Roman city-the triumphal arch and the obelisk-symbolized the veritable analogous Roman city generated by this circuit; Palladio considered them to be ideal and instant devices for urban reinvention, radically transforming the Gothic form of the city into a classical landscape. The theme of the triumphal procession also highlights the city as a contested field of directions to be mapped and manipulated by a series of punctual interventions. Palladio’s approach to the city, then, as his tempora1y installation for Vicenza makes clear, is based not on an overall urban plan but on the strong formal continuity and universalism evoked by his classical references . Yet, in contrast to the Roman city model, Palladio’s universalism is defined by the concrete figure of architecture as a clearly circumscribed artifact, distinct from the ground of the city spaces surrounding it. Palladio’s mapping of Roman churches and his processional installation for Vicenza together anticipate his later maste1y of the programming of architectural sequences. The variety of contexts in which he operated-the city of Vicenza, the Veneto countryside, and the Venetian Lagoon-offered an array of urban situations of various scales in which he could test the seamlessness of an architectural lang1rnge against the inexorably fragmented nature of a city. The strategic link between the two extremes-continuity and discontinuity-is precisely the core dialectic of Palladio’s urban design methodology. In the sixteenth cenury Vicenza was one of Italy’s most violent cities. Infighting among the most important families and political turmoil among the populace made it a theater of almost perpetual mayhem and murder. “ The physical manifestations of this violence also unfolded within a larger conflict involving the local oligarchy, the colonial power of Venice, and the adversarial relationship between the church and the Veneto (at that time, Vicenza was the Italian epicenter of Calvinist and heretical sensibilities). Given this context, Trissino and Palladio’s attempt to recast Vicenza as a model for an imperial city that evoked the Pax Romana seems a very obvious and deliberate provocation-or, conversely, an attempt to use the unifying architectural language of classicism to project a self-harmonizing sense of civic calm. The grammar of this classicism lay in Palladio’s impeccable use of the five orders as a way to make architecture intelligible as form, in contrast to the irrational patterns of the medieval city. There is an interesting parallel between Palladio’s systematic use of the five orders and Trissino’s political vision, based on the idea of a unifying secular government. Trissino (ever the poet and diplomat) was especially concerned with the reform of the Italian language, as evidenced by his letter to Pope Clement VII about the urgent need to address vernacular or colloquial Italian, and by his translation of Dante’s De vulgari eloquentia . In many ways, Trissino’s interest in the idea of grammar as a metahistorical political tool can be seen as the inspiration for Palladio’s systematic approach to architecture , for Palladio used classicism not simply as a means of representation and authority but also as an ordered set of repeatable elements whose influence could extend beyond the construction of buildings to embrace the whole manifestation of the city itself. However, in order to be established, a grammar relies on clear examples. It is not by chance that Palladio’s debut as an independent architect, under Trissino’s mentorship, resulted in a design for the most impmiant public monument in Vicenza: the completion of the Palazzo della Ragione, a vast civic hall built in the fifteenth century, and significantly renamed by Palladio as the “Basilica.” Palladio’s intervention was

nothing more than a lintel- arch-lintel device, stacking two serliane orders built in white stone so that they wrapped the existing hall and shops underneath. The irregular structure of the existing building was absorbed by varying the length of the lintel without altering the arches. The building was thus conceived as a didactic display of the orders and their ability to support, correct, and mask the existing irregular Gothic structure. Moreover, his restructuring of the Basilica placed classicism at the heart of the civic space of the city as the hegemonic and universal architectural language of a long-desired civitas . The Basilica, like many of Palladio's buildings, would not be completed during his lifetime . A permanent state of instability defmed by wars, economic crises, disease, and, more spectacularly, the tormented vicissitudes of the families for whom Palladio worked, delayed or prevented their construction. It is easy to imagine that a desire to counteract this flux was the key impulse behind Palladio's I quattro libri dell'architettura (The Four Books on Architecture), which sets out all of his projects in order and according to his original design, regardless of alterations made during their construction. The four books, in this sense, suggest the emancipation of the idea of architecture from its material realization. Confronted with an unstable and complex environment, the language of building cannot tame the city in all its manifestations, but can only insert exemplary forms into its unstable body. As with his experiment for the triumphal route for Cardinal Ridolfi, Palladio's confidence in the city is revealed by the way he positions a building, even if he never proposed any ideal urban scheme. The architectural historian Franco Barbieri has suggested that although Palladio never predetermined the site of his projects, the location of his buildings seems to follow the Roman axial grid that was still legible in medieval Vicenza (it remains legible today-the intersection of a north-south cardo axis and an east-west decmnanus is provided by the Corso Palladio and the route that goes from the ruins of the Roman Berga theater to the Pusterla bridge on the river Bacchiglione) . " Trissino's utopian vision of Vicenza as a Roman city thus seems to be carried out in Palladio's insistence on this layout as the ordering principle of his interventions . If we follow this hypothesis diachronically, we find along the decumnanus the highly abstract forms of the Palazzo Chiericati (1550), the sophisticated facade of the Casa Cagollo (1559-1560) and the Palazzo Pojana (1560-1561). Nearby was the intended site of an unrealized project for the Palazzo Capra (1563-1564) and, at the end of the decumanus, directly opposite the Palazzo Chiericati, another Palazzo Capra. Following the perpendicular cardo, we start at the ruins of the Berga theater (itself a strategic precedent for Trissino and Palladio in their vision of resurrecting Vicenza's latent Roman plan) and then pass the bridge of San Paolo (which in the sixteenth century was believed to be another Roman structure), before arriving at the loggias of the Basilica and the Capitaniato at the intersection with the decmnanus . The cardo would then lead us to two of Palladio's most impressive buildings-the Palazzo Montano Barbarano (1569-1570) and the Palazzo Porto (1549) . Finally, we would end up at the Casa Bernardo Schio (1565-1566) . Following the streets that nm parallel to the cardo, toward the east we would fmd the Palazzo Da Monte (1541-1545) , Palazzo Thiene (1545-1546) , a project for a palazzo for Giacomo Angarano (1564), and a fragment of the Palazzo Pojana (1555) . Similarly, following the streets that run parallel to the decwnanus, on the north we would fmd projects for the Palazzo Trissino (1558) and a palazzo for Giambattista Garzadori, along with other minor but significant works such as Palladio's youthful interventions during his apprenticeship at the Pedemuro workshop with the church of Santa Maria in Fora (1531) and Vicenza's cathedral (1534-1536). Collectively, these interventions can be summarized as the mediation between two opposite forces which constitute the two major ingredients of all of Palladio's projects: on the one hand, an abstraction of the orders, proportion, and symmetry; and on the other, a site specificity, with each building being carefully inserted into the tight and complex medieval fabric of the city. The proj ect that most fully a1iiculates this mediation is the Palazzo Chiericati. Strategically located on the edge of the Isola (the beginning of the decumanus and thus at the city gate approaching from Padua and Venice), the main facade of the palazzo consists of two superimposed loggias powerfully framed by the orders. But what is most striking about this design is that for the first time in the Renaissance the composition of the facade is rigorously projected into the interior. The elevation thus becomes a veritable index of the workings of the plan and section. At the same time, the space onto which this utopian architectural language is projected is far from ideal-the loggia is directly at odds with the narrow and long form of the site, derived in turn from the city's complex topography. Forcing the building to fit into its unlikely site generated an unprecedented compression in the plan, which reads as a kind of sixteenth-century barcode, with its sequence of compressed versions of atria, internal loggia, and a garden. ' Moreover, within this logic, the facade's classical form may be understood as a clear political maneuver. Expanding the building's transverse section by only a few meters, the loggia occupies a portion of the Isola, not only creating a noble public gesture in one of the city's most important civic spaces, but also projecting a highly formal grammar. The generative principle of the building (the rule) and the peculiarities of the site (the exception) are thus intrinsically linked and mutually reinforced, producing a paradoxical combination of formal abstraction and radical site specificity. It is precisely Palladio's mastering of the dialectic between continuity and discontinuity that theatrically emphasizes the urban role of his buildings as civic actors within Vicenza's analogous city- a dialectic also perfectly depicted by Canaletto in his own analogous city in the form of the painting he made of the Rialto Bridge. Rather than the actual bridge, Canaletto shows the bridge as desigiged by Palladio and presented in his Quattro libri-a synthesis of two buildings, the Basilica and the Palazzo Chiericati, through a singularity of language and absolute forms. These forms are therefore precise in their paradigmatic integrity and yet disposable, to he used and combined according to the geogrnphy of the site . More than his bridges and palazzos, however, the villas in the Veneto region are the most celebrated of Palladio's work. What is impressive about these buildings is not so much their architectural quality as their quantity. With the exception perhaps of Frank Lloyd Wright, no other architect has offered a portfolio filled with designs of such impressive continuity. The penchant for villas, a patrician typology of the Roman Empire , was revived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In a rural economy, the villa's reappearance marked the transition from feudalism to the economic power of the estate . Fueled by this succession, Palladio assigned the villa a position of exceptional impmiance in his Quattro libri: five chapters of the second book are devoted to the architectural principles of this type, which is treated with the same attention to detail as other crucial city types such as palaces and religious buildings. By the time the Quattro libri was published, Palladio had already designed a large number of villas, and the serial nature of the solutions he developed (akin to the repeating rules he employed in his palaces in Vicenza and churches in Venice) had allowed him to defme a consistent formal lexicon. Although made up of very few principles, this language was very strict in its application-notably, a clear symmetry of plan, an abundance of loggias in the form of helvederes and barns, the unconventional use of pediments, and the spatiality of imperial Roman baths (Palladio's most striking typological cross- contamination for rural buildings) . A number of historians have addressed Palladio's mixing of classical motifs, discussing his use of vernacular elements and his villa typology as providing b oth a country retreat and an economically and culturally productive rural hub. Much, too, has been written about his use of the pediment, which, but for one exception, had previously been confmed to religious buildings (with the implied argument that temples and houses share the same origin). Much less , however, has been said about how the interior space of Palladio's villas appropriated the spatiality of the imperial baths which he obsessively mapped, drew, and reconstructed during his field trips to Rome, and whose organization-a sequence of monumental spaces juxtaposed along axes of symmetry-lent his countryside villas a quintessentially metropolitan air. In many ways , the theatrical spatial complexity of the Roman bath offered an indoor miniaturized city. It is thus possible to speculate that Palladio's appropriation of the imperial bath and the pediment, and the conflation of these typologies with an agricultural context, are part of a strategy that goes



Villa Emo, Andrea Palladio, 1570.

beyond erudite references to Roman classicism and the accommodation of the material demands of the estate. Instead, it seems to have more to do with the idea of figuring the ground as an assemblage of metropolitan structures where the political and economic power of the Venetian archipelago (until then constituted by the sea) is projected analogically that is, via the example of imperial Rome-toward the Veneto countryside. It is precisely this complex of analogical appropriations that made Palladio's architecture so successful and influential as an urban model. Underlying all of Palladio's architectural output was the biggest crisis then facing the Serenissima Republic. Founded some time during the first decades of the eighth century and developed as a mercantile city-state, Venice's raison d' être had been economic transaction in the form of maritime commerce. Throughout its early history, this trade was bolstered not only by the city-state's geographical position at the edge of the Adriatic and the defeat of other maritime republics such as Genoa, but also by the influence of the Byzantine Empire, which helped to establish Venice as a privileged economic hub linking the Mediterranean basin with commercial routes toward the east. However, Venice's impetuous rise came abmptly to an end with two maj or events. The first was the War of the League of Cambrai (1508-1516), when the most important European superpowers-Pope Julius II, Emperor Maximilian I, and King Louis XII of France-united against the Serenissima in order to limit its land expansion. The second decisive event, whose consequences would only slowly become apparent over the course of the sixteenth century, was the discovery of the New World and the consequent shift of maj or maritime traffic from east to west. Confronted with this crisis, the Serenissima's oligarchy became convinced that they were about to enter a period of decline. What is interesting about their response is that they accepted the prospect of their diminishing fortune and, rather than seeking to reverse what seemed inevitable , they did something politically and conceptually far more radical: they attempted to slow down the decline , so that instead of precipitating a sudden collapse, the republic's waning influence could be tamed and governed as a utopian condition of "duration." Their response consisted of a complex series of strategic maneuvers, all of them predicated on a shift of Venice's economic basis from the sea to the land-from maritime commerce to agriculture. Within this transfer, the ground or terra firma suddenly took on the status of a territorial project-one that included land reclamation, cartographic mapping, and the hydrological control of the network of rivers that descended into Venice from high in the Alps . And so, rather than projecting itself solely toward the sea as a stato del mar, Venice turned inward, toward its territorial lands- a (re)discovery of its more earthly influence that must be seen as the defming context for Palladio's unprecedented succession of countryside villas, each commissioned by patricians of the Serenissma regime, and which would ultimately give Venice's project of duration its most enduring historical form. Offering a kind of theoretical legitimacy to this shift from sea to land were the ideas of the theorist and patron of the arts Alvise Cornaro (14 84-1566), who argued, in particular, for the promotion of agriculture as an alternative to Venice's existing mercantilist economy. Author of La vita sobria , a treatise on the virtue of living in the countryside, Cornaro was one of the most active political thinkers during the Veneto's economic crisis. His ideas largely concerned the reclamation of land and the promotion of agriculture over trade as the basis for a more solid relationship between power and territory. Before Cornaro, country life (of which the villa was the most idealized form) was typically un -derstood as radically antipolitical because it turned its back on the political space par excellence, the city. After Cornaro, however, this image was subverted. Rather than being predicated on the fundamentally apolitical ideas of disinterest and denial, the countryside became highly politicized by its promotion of a new formal model and its explicit rejection of the existing one-Venice. To represent his vision of civic life , Cornaro built his own analogous city near Padua, Palladio's bhihplace. In the 1520s, he commissioned the Paduan painter Giovanni Battista Falconetto to produce a garden loggia, and a year later a stage was built next to it to host the performances of a famous local dialect actor, Angelo Beolco (better known by his pseudonym, Ruzzante). In Cornaro's garden it is possible to see an attempt to elevate the rustic countryside to the level of a new, cultivated civic condition-one that lay beyond the city's monumental spaces but had a competing measure of cultural and social charisma. Falconetto's loggia-the first example in the Veneta of architecture alla romana-was clearly built as a highly symbolic prototype, an example. Its key feature is the formal theme of the loggia itself, with its generous openings, didactic exposition of the orders as a new lingua franca of civic life, and theatrical framing of the garden, which made the loggia both the scenery and the spectators' tribune. This compositional dialectic between subj ect and object, between a point of view and a space framed within it, would be the basis of Palladio's own unique approach to landscape. In all of his work, the encircling territory is not a passive ground waiting to be activated by the imposition of a figure, but a specific site made of existing natural and a1iificial elements of which the object-the villa-becomes a theatrical frame. In this sense, Palladio's villas are not simply objects enclosed within a reconstructed context (like the Medici villas in the Florentine hills or Pirro Ligorio's Villa d'Este) , but are specific objects that frame and redefine the existing landscape as an economic, cultural, and political counter to the city. The Villa Emo in Fanzolo (1556) perhaps best shows the radicalism of Palladio's approach to the relationship between the villa and its immediate landscape. It is his simplest and most obviously minimal villa, and yet its structure, like all the others , is based on the clear juxtaposition of the casa dominicale (palace) with the flanking barchesse, which served as storage and as a covered gallery passage between the central body and the symmetrical colombare along its two sides. Unlike his other villas, however, this juxtaposition is revealed along the same frontal plane, a device that accentuates the Villa Ema's perpendicularity against the horizontality of the surrounding Veneta plains. In its simplicity, the villa heightens the importance of directing the landscape, not by imposing on it a new, meticulously regulated ground arrangement, but by figuring it through the simple act of framing. Palladio does this by developing one side of the villa as a continuous row of loggias and the other side as a row of windows, thereby establishing, in a very powerful way, the experience of front and back within the vastness of the building's landscape. With the Villa Emo we see the classic Palladian paradox of a building that has been designed according to its own compositional logic (typically based on symmetry), yet at the same time is also inflected so as to react to its specific site condition. This paradox is further radicalized in Palladio's most famous (and most bizarre) building, the Villa Capra, or La Rotonda (1567). In the Quattro libri , this villa is included in the section dedicated to urban palaces, an aspirational characterization that further reveals Palladio's attempt to transform a building in the countryside into a veritable civic form. Palladio's equation of city and countryside is already visible in the very obvious formal similarities between his rural villas and civic palaces (apart from the absence of the barns, the palaces are the same as the villas- for example, the Palazzo Antolini in Udine bears a striking similarity to the Villa Pisani in Montagnana). And yet at the Rotonda, the unity of city and countryside is further radicalized, as if the building were a kind of manifesto. Situated on a hilltop just outside Vicenza, the villa was clearly designed as an ideal "observatory" of the landscape (a conceptualand iconoclastic program revealed by the long description of the site that prefaces this project in the Quattro libri) . The vastness and variety of this landscape is exemplified in the form and peculiar composition of the villa itself: it is a rather small building with four huge porticos made up of colonnades, pediments, and ramps. As is well documented, this unusual form for a house was inspired by the temple at the top of the Sanctua1y of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina, a building Palladio had visited while in Rome. Yet with the Rotonda, the monumentality and depth of the villa's porticos appear exaggerated against the scale of the actual building-a contrast that suggests that rather than being grand entranceways into the villa, they are actually oriented outward, toward the surrounding countryside. Thus, the porticos act more like theaters for a spectacle that predates the building: the landscape all around. If we follow this reading, then the classical view of Palladio's Rotonda as a pyramidal composition in which the building forms the pinnacle of the hill is subverted, if not inverted: the diagTam of the villa is not about a conventional architectural relationship in which the outside is drawn toward the inside but is a relationship in which the inside is always pro jecting outward. The formal symmetry of the building is thus an index of the Rotonda's territorial site specificity. Moreover, the fact that the building's symmetry required all four sides to have a portico, and Palladio's placement of a dome over them (the first time such a detail was used in a residential building), convey not a unidirectional aspect but a roundness that suggests an analogy with the infinity of the landscape outside. The result is that the Rotonda subverts both architectural convention, with its inversion of the dominance of the building over its site, and the conventions of Renaissance drama and the rigidities of proscenium front-to-back projection. Fundamentally, then, the building is as radical theatrically as it is architecturally.

Waterschei

Boumediene Belbachir, 2018

Reason's Adventures: Naturalism and the City in the Century of the Enlightenment

Manfredo Tafuri in Architecture and Utopia: Design and capitalist development, 1973

To ward off anguish by understanding and absorbing its causes would seem to be one of the principal ethical exigencies of bourgeois art. It matters little if the conflicts, contradictions, and lacerations that generate this anguish are temporarily reconciled by means of a complex mechanism, or if, through contemplative sublimation, catharsis is achieved. The whole phenomenology of bourgeois anguish lies in the "free" contemplation of destiny. It is impossible not to be confronted continually with the perspectives opened up by that freedom. In this tragic confrontation it is impossible not to perpetuate the experience of shock. The shock derived from the experience of the metropolis, which I shall try to analyze in this book, is in itself a way of rendering anguish "active. Munch's Scream already expressed the necessity of a bridge between the absolute "emptiness" of the individual, capable of expressing himself only by a contracted phoneme, and the passivity of collective behavior. It is not just by chance that the metropolis, the place of absolute alienation, is at the very center of concern of the avant-garde. From the time the capitalist system first needed to represent its own anguish—in order to continue to function, reassuring itself with that "virile objectivity" discussed by Max Weber—ideology was able to bridge the gap between the exigencies of the bourgeois ethic and the universe of Necessity. In this book I will also try to outline the stages by which compensation in the heavens of ideology ceased to be of use. The bourgeois intellectual's obligation to exist can be seen in the imperativeness his function assumes as a "social" mission. Among the members of the intellectual "avant-garde" there exists a sort of tacit understanding concerning their position, and the mere attempt to expose it arouses a chorus of indignant protests. Indeed, culture has identified its own function as mediator in such ideological terms that—all individual good faith aside—its cunning has reached the point where it imposes the forms of disputation and protest upon its own products. The higher the sublimation of the conflicts on a formal plane, the more hidden the cultural and social structures actually expressed by that sublimation. Attacking the subject of architectural ideology from this point of view means trying to explain why the apparently most functional proposals for the reorganization of this sector of capitalist development have had to suffer the most humiliating frustrations—why they can be presented even today as purely objective proposals devoid of any class connotation, or as mere "alternatives," or even as points of direct clash between intellectuals and capital. It should be stated immediately that I do not believe it to be by mere chance that many of the new and recent ideas on architecture have been gleaned from an accurate reexamination of the origins of the historical avant-garde movements. Going back to these origins, situated precisely in that period when bourgeois ideology and intellectual anticipation were intimately connected, the entire cycle of modern architecture can be viewed as a unitary development. This makes it possible to consider globally the formation of architectural ideologies and, in particular, their implications for the city. But it will be necessary to recognize also the unitary character of the cycle undergone by bourgeois culture. In other words, it will be necessary to continually bear in mind the entire picture of its development. It is significant that systematic research on Enlightenment architecture has been able to identify, on a purely ideological level, a great many of the contradictions that in diverse forms accompany the course of contemporary art. The formation of the architect as an ideologist of society; the individualization of the areas of intervention proper to city planning; the persuasive role of form in regard to the public and the self-critical role of form in regard to its own problems and development; the interrelationship and opposition—at the level of formal research—between architectural "object" and urban organization: these are the constantly recurrent themes of the "Enlightenment dialectic" on architecture. When in 1753 Laugier enunciated his theories of urban design, officially initiating Enlightenment architectural theory, his words revealed a twofold inspiration. On the one hand, that of reducing the city itself to a natural phenomenon. On the other, that of going beyond any a priori idea of urban organization by applying to the city the formal dimensions of the aesthetic of the picturesque. Laugier declared:

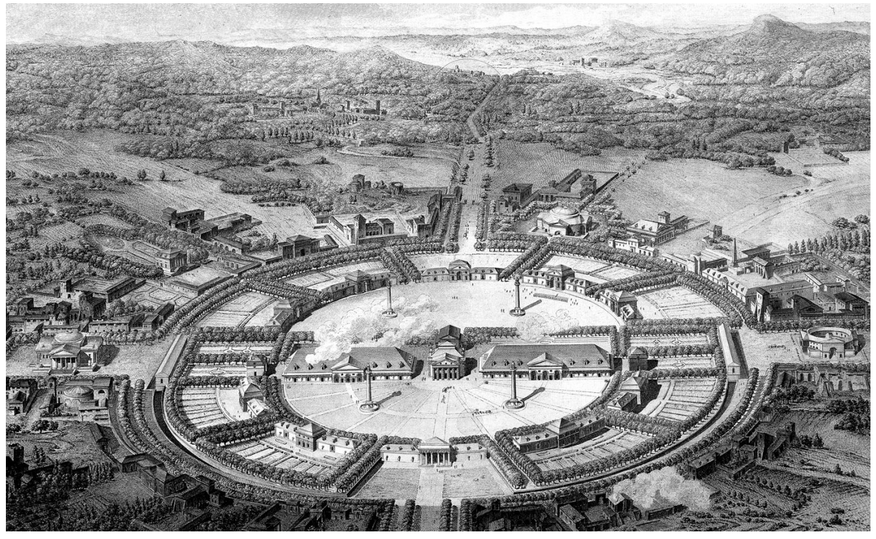
Whoever knows how to design a park well will have no difficulty in tracing the plan for the building of a city according to its given area and situation. There must be squares, crossroads, and streets. There must be regularity and fantasy, relationships and oppositions, and casual, unexpected elements that vary the scene; great order in the details, confusion, uproar, and tumult in the whole.

Laugier's words are a penetrating summary of the formal reality of the eighteenth-century city. No longer archetypal

Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Ichnographiam Campi Martii Antiquae Urbis,* 1757.

schemes of order, but instead the acceptance of the antiperspective character of the urban space. And even his reference to the park has new significance: in its variety, the nature that is now called upon to form part of the urban structure does away with that comforting rhetorical and didactic naturalism that had dominated the episodic continuity of Baroque layouts from the seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. Thus Laugier's call to naturalism is an appeal to the original purity of the act of designing the environment, and at the same time it shows an understanding of the preeminently antiorganic quality of the city. But there is still more. The reducing of the city to a natural phenomenon is a response to the aesthetic of the picturesque, which English empiricism had introduced as early as the first decades of the eighteenth century, and which in 1759 was given an extremely elaborate and coherent theoretical foundation by the English painter, Alexander Cozens. To what extent Laugier's ideas on the city could have influenced Cozens' theory of landscape painting, or Robert Castell's considerations in The Villas of the Ancients, is not known. What is certain is that the urban invention of the French abbe and the theories of the English painter have in common a basic method, in which the tool for a critical intervention in "natural'-reality is selection. We see that for the eighteenth-century theorists there was no question that the city falls within the same formal area as painting. Selectivity and criticism therefore signified the introduction into urban planning of a fragmentation that places on the same level, not only Nature and Reason, but also natural fragment and urban fragment. The city, inasmuch as it is a work of man, tends to a natural condition. Thus, like the landscape painted by the artist, through critical selection the city, too, must be given the stamp of a social morality. And it is significant that, while Laugier, like the English Enlightenment theorists, had an acute grasp of the artificial character of the urban language, neither Ledoux nor Boullee, in their works much greater innovators, ever really gave up a mythical and abstract idea of nature. Boullee's controversy with Perrault's acute anticipations of the artificiality of the architectural language is highly indicative in this regard. It is possible, but not certain, that Laugier's city like a forest had no other model than the varied sequence of spaces that appear on the plan of Paris drawn up by Patte, who brought together in a whole the projects for the new royal square. It is, however, certain that these conceptions were referred to by George Dance, Jr., in his project for London, a project that for eighteenthcentury Europe was surely very advanced." I shall therefore limit myself to registering the theoretical intuitions contained in Laugier's words, which one can see as all the more pertinent when one recalls that Le Corbusier was to rely on them in delineating the theoretical principles of his ville radieuse." What, on the ideological plane, does reducing the city to a natural phenomenon signify? On the one hand, such an enterprise involves a sublimation of physiocratic theories: the city is no longer seen as a structure that, by means of its own accumulator mechanisms, determines and transforms the processes of the exploitation of the soil and agricultural production. Inasmuch as the reduction is a "natural" process, ahistorical because universal, the city is freed of any considerations of a structural nature. At first, formal naturalism was used to make convincing the objective necessity of the processes put in motion by the pre-Revolutionary bourgeoisie. A bit later, it was used to consolidate and protect these achievements from any further transformation. On the other hand, this naturalism has a function of its own, which is that of assuring to artistic activity an ideological role in the strictest sense of the term. And here it is significant that, in exactly the moment when bourgeois economy began to discover and invent its own categories of action and judgment, giving to "values" contents directly commeasurable with the dictates of new methods of production and exchange, the crisis of the old system of values was immediately hidden by recourse to new sublimations, rendered artificially objective by means of the call to the universality of Nature. Thus Reason and Nature now had to be unified. Enlightenment rationalism could not assume the entire responsibility for the operations that were being carried out, and its practitioners felt the necessity of avoiding a direct confrontation with their own premises. It is clear that, throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such an ideological cover was encouraged by the contradictions of the ancien regime. Incipient urban capitalism was already clashing with those economic structures based on precapitalist exploitation of the soil. It is indicative that the urban theorists did not make this contradiction evident, but rather covered it up, or, better, endeavored to resolve it by relegating the city to the great sea of nature, concentrating all their attention upon the suprastructural aspects of the city. Urban naturalism, the insertion of the picturesque into the city and into architecture, as the increased importance given to landscape in artistic ideology all tended to negate the now obvious dichotomy between urban reality and the reality of the countryside. They served to prove that there was no disparity between the value acredited to nature and the value acredited to the city as a productive mechanism of new forms of economic accumulation. The rhetorical and Arcadian naturalism of the seventeenth century was now replaced by a widely persuasive naturalism. It is, however, important to underline that the deliberate abstraction of Enlightenment theories of the city served only at first to destroy Baroque schemes of city planning and development. At a later date, it served to discourage, rather than condition, the formation of global models of development. It is therefore not surprising that such a gigantic and avant-garde operation as the reconstruction of Lisbon after the earthquake of 1755 was carried out, under the guidance of the Marquis di Pombal, in a completely empirical spirit, devoid of theoretical abstractions.6 Thus, deviating decidedly from Enlightenment criticism in general, architectural thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played a mostly destructive role. Not having at its disposal a mature substratum of production techniques adequate to the new conditions of bourgeois ideology and economic liberalism, architecture was obliged to restrict its self-criticism to two areas.For polemical reasons architecture exalted everything that could assume an anti-European significance. Piranesi's fragmentation is the consequence of the discovery of that new bourgeois science, historical criticism, but it is also, paradoxically, criticism of criticism. The whole fashion of evocations of Gothic, Chinese, and Hindu architecture, and the romantic naturalism of the garden landscape, in which were immersed the jests—devoid of irony—of exotic pavilions and false ruins, are related ideally to the atmosphere of Montesquieu's Lettres persanes, Voltaire's Inginu and Leibniz' caustic antioccidentalism. In order to integrate rationalism and criticism, the Europeans confronted their myths with all that which could, by contesting them, confirm their validity. In the romantic English garden the time-honored perspective view was nullified. The aggregation of little temple structures, pavilions, and grottoes, which seem the meeting places of the most disparate testimonies of human history, signified something other than mere evasion in the fabulous. Rather, the "picturesque" of Brown, Kent, and the Woods, or the "horrid" of Lequeu, made an appeal. By means of an architecture that had already renounced the formation of "objects" to become a technique of organization of preformed materials, they asked for an authentication from outside architecture. With all the detachment typical of the great critics of the Enlightenment, those architects initiated a systematic and fatal autopsy of architecture and all its conventions.Even though its properly formal role had been placed in parentheses by the city, architecture still offered an alternative to the nihilist outlook apparent behind the hallucinating fantasies of Lequeu, Belanger, or Piranesi. By renouncing a symbolic role, at least in the traditional sense, architecture—in order to avoid destroying itself—discovered its own scientific calling. On one hand, it could become the instrument of social equilibrium, and in this case it was to have to face in full the question of building types—something that was to be done by Durand and Dubut. On the other hand, it could become a science of sensations. This was to be the road pursued by Ledoux, and in a much more systematic way by Camus de Mezieres. The alternatives were thus either the study of the forms assumed by different building types, or architecture parlante: the same two concepts brought into erupting contrast by Piranesi. But, instead of leading to a solution, these con cepts were to accentuate architecture's internal crisis throughout the nineteenth century. Architecture now undertook the task of rendering its work "political. As a political agent the architect had to assume the task of continual invention of advanced solutions, at the most generally applicable level. In the acceptance of this task, the architect's role as idealist became prominent. The real significance of that utopianism which modern historical study has recognized in Enlightenment architecture is thus laid bare. The truth is that the architectural proposals of eighteenth-century Europe have nothing unrealizable about them. Nor is it accidental that all the vast theorization of the philosophes of architecture contains no social Utopia to support the urban reformism proclaimed at a purely formal level. The introduction to the entry on "architecture" written by Quatremere de Quincy for the Encyclopedic methodique is, in fact, a masterpiece of realism, even in the abstract terms in which it is expressed: Among all the arts, those children of pleasure and necessity, with which man has formed a partnership in order to help him bear the pains of life and transmit his memory to future generations, it can certainly not be denied that architecture holds a most outstanding place. Considering it only from the point of view of utility, it surpasses all the arts. It provides for the salubrity of cities, guards the health of men, protects their property, and works only for the safety, repose, and good order of civil life. Enlightenment realism is, in fact, not even disproved by the gigantic architectural dreams of Boullee or of the pensioners of the Academie. The exaltation of scale, the geometric purification, and the ostentatious primitivism— the constant characteristics of these projects —assume concrete significance when read in the light of what the projects really were intended to be: not so much unrealizable dreams, as experimental models of a new method of architectural creation. From the excessive symbolism of Ledoux or Lequeu to the geometric silence of Durand's formally codified building types, the process followed by Enlightenment architecture is consistent with the new ideological role it had assumed. In order to become part of the structure of the bourgeois city, architecture had to redimension itself, dissolving into the uniformity ensured by preconstituted formal systems. But this dissolution was not without consequences. It was Piranesi who carried Laugier's theoretical intuitions to their extreme conclusions. His ambiguous evocation of the Campo Marzio is the graphic monument of that tentative opening of late Baroque culture to revolutionary ideologies. Just as his Parere sull architettura is its most sensitive literary testimony.8 In Piranesi's Campo Marzio the late Baroque principle of variety is completely rejected. Since Roman antiquity is not only a recollection imbued with nostalgic ideologies and revolutionary expectations, but also a myth to be contested, all forms of classical derivation are treated as mere fragments, as deformed symbols, as hallucinating organisms of an "order" in a state of decay. Here the order in the details does not produce a simple

"tumult in the whole." Rather, it creates a monstrous pullulation of symbols devoid of significance. Like the sadistic atmosphere of his Careen, Piranesi's "forest" demonstrates that it is not only the "sleep of reason" that conjures up monsters, but that even the "wakefulness of reason" can lead to deformation: even if its goal be the Sublime. Piranesi's critical interpretation of the Campo Marzio was not without a prophetic quality. In this work the most advanced point of Enlightenment architecture seems precisely and emphatically to warn of the imminent danger of losing altogether the organic quality of form. It was now the ideal of totality and universality that was in crisis. Architecture might make the effort to maintain its completeness and preserve itself from total destruction, but such an effort is nullified by the assemblage of architectural pieces in the city. It is in the city that these fragments are pitilessly absorbed and deprived of any autonomy, and this situation cannot be reversed by obstinately forcing the fragments to assume articulated, composite configurations. In the Campo Marzio we witness an epic representation of the battle waged by architecture against itself. The historically developed language of building types is affirmed here as a superior principle of order, but the configuration of the single building types tends to destroy the very concept of the historically developed language as a whole. History is here invoked as an inherent "value," but Piranesi's paradoxical rejection of historical, archaeological reality makes the civic potential of the total image very doubtful. Formal invention seems to declare its own primacy, but the obsessive reiteration of the inventions reduces the whole organism to a sort of gigantic "useless machine." Rationalism would seem thus to reveal its own irrationality. In the attempt to absorb all its own contradictions, architectural "reasoning" applies the technique of shock to its very foundations. Individual architectural fragments push one against the other, each indifferent to jolts, while as an accumulation they demonstrate the uselessness of the inventive effort expended on their formal definition. The archaeological mask of Piranesi's Campo Marzio fools no one: this is an experimental design and the city, therefore, remains an unknown. Nor is the act of designing capable of defining new constants of order. This colossal piece of bricolage conveys nothing but a self-evident truth: irrational and rational are no longer to be mutually exclusive. Piranesi did not possess the means for translating the dynamic interrelationships of this contradiction into form. He had, therefore, to limit himself to enunciating emphatically that the great new problem was that of the equilibrium of opposites, which in the city finds its appointed place: failure to resolve this problem would mean the destruction of the very concept of architecture. **Essentially it is the struggle between architecture and the city, between the demand for order and the will to formlessness, that assumes epic tone in Piranesi's Campo Marzio.** Here the "Enlightenment dialectic" on architecture reached an unsurpassed height; but at the same time it reached an ideal tension so violent that it could not be understood as such by Piranesi's contemporaries. Piranesi's excess—as otherwise the excesses of the libertine literature of- the era of the philosophes —becomes, just through its excessiveness, the revelation of a truth. But the developments of Enlightenment architecture and city planning were quickly to hide that truth. The unmasking of the contradiction, as an act that in itself might offer a ray of hope for a culture condemned (the expression is Piranesi's)' to operate with degraded means, is utilized by Piranesi with remarkable results. And not so much in the formal bricolage of the eclectic architectural images of his Parere (rather, in this case the contradiction is absorbed and recomposed, and rendered inoffensive), as in his two editions of the Carceri. It is in the Carceri d'Invenzione, and in particular the edition of 1760, that Piranesi reveals the consequences of the "loss" announced in his Campo Marzio. In the Carceri the crisis of order, of form, of the classical concept of Stimmung, assumes "social" connotations. Here the destruction of the very concept of space merges with a symbolic allusion to the new condition being created by a radically changing society. (Piranesi's "Romanity" is always matched by an awareness and concern that is European.) In these etchings the space of the building—the prison—is an infinite space. What has been destroyed is the center of that space, signifying the correspondence between the collapse of ancient values, of the ancient order, and the "totality" of the disorder. Reason, the author of this destruction—a destruction felt by Piranesi to be fatal—is transformed into irrationality. But the prison, precisely because infinite, coincides with the space of human existence. This is very clearly indicated by the hermetic scenes Piranesi designs within the mesh of lines of his "impossible" compositions. Thus what we see in the Carceri is only the new existential condition of human collectivity, liberated and condemned at the same time by its own reason. And Piranesi translates into images not a reactionary criticism of the social promises of the Enlightenment, but a lucid prophecy of what society, liberated from the ancient values and their consequent restraints, will have to be. By now there is no other possibility than that of global, voluntary alienation in collective form. Constriction is the new law that it is absurd to question. Resistance to this new law is paid for with torture. It is not without significance that the tortured person is drawn as a superhuman being, around whom gathers an indistinct mass. In the totally alienated society the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century libertine has no longer any escape. His "heroism" is condemned with indifference even by Piranesi. With Piranesi the experience of anguish makes its first appearance in modern form.



Bird's eye view of the Royal Saltworks of Arc-et-Senans, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux

The *Primitive Hut* of Marc-Antoine Laugier.

Photographic Archive:
Ruins, Demolitions, Reconstructions

Empty plot between Oud Waterschei and the Garden City.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Abandoned worker's barracks in Texaswijk.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Abandoned worker’s Cafe in Texaswijk.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Abandoned worker’s barracks in Texaswijk.
Source: HeideBloemke.

The demolition of the abandoned worker’s Barraks in Texaswijk. Watershcei, 1990 ca.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Construction of the new “De Kring” building next to the abandoned Cultural Club.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Demolition of mining buildings in Waterschei 1987.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Demolition of mining buildings in Waterschei 1987.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Tabula Rasa before the construction of Nieuw Texas in 1995.
Source: HeideBloemke.

The construction of Nieuw Texas in 1995.
Source: HeideBloemke.

Refurbishment and construction works in Winterslag in 2014.
Source: Jimmy Kets.

Touristic infrastructure in the periphery of Genk.
Source: Jimmy Kets.

Subtraction

Keller Easterling, 2014

Methods for demolishing, imploding, or otherwise subtracting building material are not among the essential skills imparted to architects in training. Believing building to be the primary constructive activity, the discipline has not institutionalized special studies of subtraction. In fact, for architects building envelope is almost always the solution to any problem. The demolition plan, one of the first pages in a set of constuction documents, provides instructions for the removal of building material, but only building material that presents an obstacle to more building material, the material of a new, superior design. Architectural authorship is measured by object building rather than by the admirable removal of material, and the general consensus within the discipline is that architectural efforts should be visible in photographs.

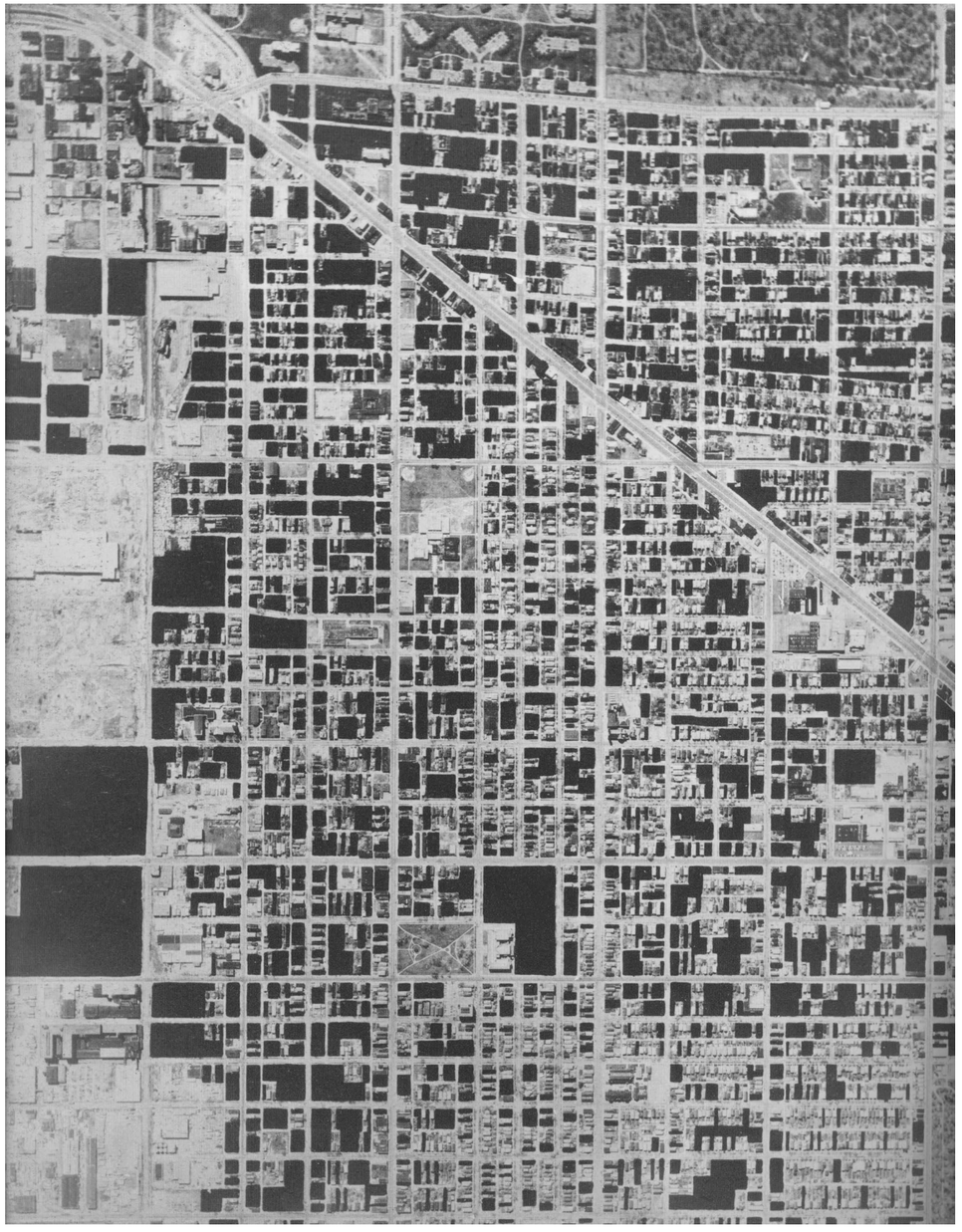
The positive rather than negative components of space making are not only currency in the architect's career; they constitute an economic indicator, a mass of material weighed and measured in the market as well as the world of banking and finance. The expenditure of money is counterbalanced by the substance of this mass, and the bankability of the mass increases with duration. The arduous task of piling one thing on another in hopes of engaging gravity with stability becomes a more satisfying exertion when the object is considered durable or even permanent. When accepted as a tool, subtraction can be part of that architectural ethos that promotes essentialist values, an economy of means, or the removal of some excess that does not provide utility or beauty. Or the architect can play the role of sensitive (or brutish) artist who uses subtraction soulfully to "carve" positive shapes within space or excise material to initiate the performance of light. Although immaterial, light, as an ordained tool of the discipline, is often understood to be the drapery or enhancing accompaniment to a positive figure. Still, the use of darkness or lack of light as a means of erasing spatial boundaries, figures, or orientation is more rare. Again, custom requires that the results of even subtractive techniques be visible in photographs. From Haussmann to Le Corbusier to all those self-styled around a succession of similar heroes, tabula rasa is the mode of subtraction most compatible with architectural desire. Like the demolition plan, tabula rasa is a clearing of architecture so that better or corrected architecture can be piled without obstruction. At mid-century, hundreds of architects removed their special-order Corbusian glasses (for an extra degree of insincerity) and gestured to a presentation drawing where the words "tabula rasa" were written in cursive under a cartoon soleil. This clearing and subtracting of fabric, usually deemed a necessary surgery on the ugly and diseased, was only meaningful if the void was immediately refilled with a refined or updated architecture, with monuments to modernity. The architects who then inherited this rearranged landscape of highways, tall buildings, and parking lots declared the leftover voids diseased sites of ugliness and vacancy and offered their own, corrected architecture to fill them with yet more buildings. Believing themselves to be gentle where their predecessors had been ruthless, these architects spoke, with characteristic horror vacui, of stitching up the wounds of the city with a spatial syntax of buildings from another moment in history. The tabula rasa is almost always accompanied with this delusion of superiority, a kind of seizure or conquest rather than a strategic removal. Koolhaas's 1991 project for La Defense in Paris inverted the customary methods for producing tabula rasa by subtracting not the oldest, densest, or most dilapidated but the most recent fabric of the city, in sequence by decade. This iterative technique used subtraction as a space-making tool, yet it also inherently maintained a dialogue with ancestral heroes about tabula rasa as a means of conquest, a means to seize the floor with the next in a succession of spatial aesthetics. Accumulation or accretion generally signals growth, and subtraction generally signals loss. Yet in most active organizations (e.g., biological, financial) gains and losses, additions and subtractions are considered part of the normal constitution of any network or system exchange. Similarly, in urban organizations every building construction is a subtraction or a replacement, an alteration of an existing field of space. Geology and psychiatry, disciplines that previously organized information according to physical artifacts and visual records, gradually developed a vocabulary for both visible and invisible processes that might be described with infinitive expressions rather than artifacts. Relative to these, architecture's fascination with object and morphology over activity might be viewed as somewhat more primitive. Not only is the absence of material difficult to perceive, but the processes and tools of subtraction, its instruments as well as its instrumentality, are not part of an architectural repertoire. Yet the subtraction of building has arguably been at least as important as the making of building in the last half century. Although it is the favorite weapon in the aesthetic generational wars between architects, the aggressions of the tabula rasa are but one means of subtraction. Buildings and urban formations themselves are often instruments of subtraction, broadcasting fields of blight or altered real-estate values that begin a process of attrition. The same buildings are not only economic indicators but volumetric reflections of volatile markets, part of a rapidly changing economy of elastic or disposable spatial formats. These ecologies have arguably accelerated an animation of building making and unmaking within which an ephemeral desire or slippery corporate fortune has the power to level buildings. Shifting political climates may also delete ownership, value, or physical property. Although any of these means of subtraction may hide within the folds of legalities, they may be no less violent than the deliberate aggressions of warfare or the catastrophes of natural disasters. Whatever mobile territories are really at stake in the wars between the world's empires, buildings and cities are still spectacular targets, and building deletions, whether as warfare, urban corrective, or staged explosion, have become cultural spectacles that are all executed with similar engineering techniques. Constructing tall buildings, dams, highways, and other large public-works projects involving dynamite and large-scale movements of material has traditionally provided building spectacles in culture, yet currently it is the deletion of housing towers, bridges, sports arenas, and convention centers that provides cultural theater. And in the post-Cold War era, not invisible espionage but the explosion of physical targets provides more satisfying effects for a media-sawy style of warfare, one that merges with its Hollywood counterpart. If subtraction is part of a system of exchange, a function of an active organization of construction and destruction, it is also a positive tool of space making. In the spectacular landscape of aggressive deletions and tabula rasa, as well as the working landscapes or Landschafts of deletion that cultivate the systemic removal of material, subtraction may be a kind of harvest. However productive, insidious, or even violent these deletions may be, the space of the subtraction itself is always a potent new mixture of ingredients previously separated- a new translation of contradictory information. The space of subtraction is always terra incognita, an unknown site capable of rewiring an existing ecology or introducing a new instrument in culture. Many of the twentieth century's building projects generated not only an initial clearing or erasure but several additional waves of subtraction in their life span. For instance, housing towers and highways both require an initial subtraction or reformatting of land, removing its existing attributes and calibrations and making a kind of vacancy or new territory in the tradition of the tabula rasa. Since new approaches to housing or transportation are often treated as successive advances in a progressive technology, both forms are part of an economy of obsolescence and replacement. The legal designation of land zoned for a specific program of housing or highways constitutes the reduction of multiple owners to a single owner and the reduction of the multiple programs of an urban field to a single program. Once built, these organizations, perhaps because of their resistance to an existing urban condition, frequently produce a subtractive field of negative real-estate values. Urban planning as housing and highway machine was practiced in postwar planning programs all over the world, but America's episodes are representative. "Tower in the Park" high-rise housing initially sponsored the subtraction of existing tenement housing, and the 90 percent site coverage found in tenement fabric was typically reduced to just over 10 percent in, for instance, the Bunshaft model for public housing in New York City. Bunshaft's Sedgwick Houses (1950) demonstrated that added floors did not significantly increase construction costs, but decreased costs associated with greater site coverage. Liberal political rhetoric laundered the arrangement as a new model of efficiency. Although it may have been regarded as efficient to avoid entry duplications in these high-rises, the reduction of redundancy in entry was the least efficient arrangement of communication between the tower's residents, and one that weakened their resilience. Any user, dealer, criminal, or maintenance problem affected the entire tower through the core, the unavoidable space of circulation. The towers were exactly the kinds of structures that an epidemiologist would describe as highly susceptible to contagions: without multiplication and redundancy of entry the environment was unable to form alternative networks of association and was vulnerable to failed maintenance and crime. The towers were in no position to resist an extremely addictive drug like crack, and their weakened chemistry radiated reduced real-estate value in the surrounding fabric, leaving more and more abandoned buildings, arson, and demolitions. Many of these towers were so crippled that they had to be demolished, inaugurating not only a third wave of subtractions related to housing but also a new wave of spectacular subtraction in culture. The first and most notorious of the high-rise housing implosions was Pruitt-Igoe in St. Louis in 1972. Designed by Minoru Yamasaki and built in 1955, this wildly dysfunctional housing sustained vacancies of 30-40 percent, and was imploded after only seventeen years. Images of this implosion were made famous in the slide shows of countless postmodern architects who used them as a polemical tabula rasa, or a means of clearing the preceding modernist agenda. Since the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, hundreds of thousands of high-rise housing units have been razed. From Baltimore to Chicago to Newark to Detroit municipal governments have voted to replace the high-rise warehouses with mixed-income housing, sometimes imploding the buildings before

replacement units have even materialized. In 1996 Chicago projected the implosion of 15 percent of its public-housing projects by 2002. Most of the towers destroyed were less than forty years old, or close to the life expectancy of roofing material on a singlefamily house. Camilo Vergara's successive photography of subtractive housing fields in the South Bronx, Detroit, Newark, and Camden illustrates a relatively rapid timelapse animation of subtraction. Vergara calls these subtracted sites "green ghettos" because the vacant lots gradually began to fill with vegetation. Demolishing areas deemed blighted is a long-standing municipal practice used to revalue property or recalibrate parcels to be large enough for, for instance, the imaginations of convention center designers. Not unlike the mid-century clearings that made way for highways, the current subtractions of derelict or dangerous structures often launder space for a concoction of public works, construction contracts, and real-estate deals packaged in a new program conglomerate. In his 1991 project "Erasing Detroit" Dan Hoffman marked areas of recently razed housing in the city, as well as areas adjacent to urban highways, noting that "unbuilding has surpassed building as the city's major architectural activity." Philadelphia is currently clearing fourteen thousand row houses and cleaning up vacant lots, preparing a new real-estate product for the development market. In large cities like Detroit and Philadelphia, subtraction constitutes the bulk of public building projects. The limited-access highway, with its continuous rights-of-way, produced a network of subtraction as well as a shifting field of real-estate values. Thirty-foot-wide rights-of-way occupy about forty acres per mile of roadway, forming a most unusual subtraction. As a mathematical field whose dimensions are a function of traffic volumes at a particular speed, it is a true vacancy, an abyss into which people might furtively drop something as small as a tissue or abandon something as large as a car. Mid-century architects and politicians declared the spaces "ugly" and prepared guidelines to immediately fill them in with shrubs and bluebonnets to relieve the persistent ailment of "visual monotony." Beyond the 30 feet, shifting real-estate values formed an even more extensive field of influence. From the moment the routes were designated, urban highways generated declining real-estate values-a decline instrumental in reducing the purchase price. For exurban areas, land values increased 200 to 500 percent within a half mile of the roadway and continue to increase within about a mile of the roadway. Although thinly spread, the webbed network of right-of-way vacancy is among the largest public landholdings in the United States, contacting and affecting the value of the most diverse properties and ecosystems in the country. Though perhaps the result of corrupt political ambitions or the deployment of selected legalities, housing and highway vacancies are also positive, if mysterious, territories that produce not only new building sites or green open space as a default.

High-rise demolitions constitute a great building project in and of themselves, producing not merely sites for the next generation of reformed and corrective housing stock but also a sobering new landscape within the city. Like the housing vacancies, the web of highways is an unknown territory that could be instrumental in reconditioning any site it touches, acting as differential or format translator between the highways and other linear networks, from rivers to railroad corridors. Building envelope is closely tied to economic and logistical formulas for optimizing the consumption of goods or entertainment and can be as volatile as the market, as slippery as municipal tax structures, as subject to change as the fortunes of large corporations, or as ephemeral as the desires surrounding fashion and entertainment. A retailer like Wal-Mart might abandon its 250,000-square-foot footprints because customers were forced to walk a half mile for a loaf of bread and a carton of milk. The company would then quickly develop both an optimal 200,000-square-foot footprint and a smaller 40,000-square-foot footprint to absorb any stray desires for consumption. For structures like resorts, hospitals, or stadia housed in a figural space or multistory building, changing technical or programmatic needs generate rapid cycles of obsolescence. Yet, remarkably, all that is needed to topple a building, whether it offers constrained or generous dimensions, is a new wrinkle in consumption logistics or an ephemeral desire in the styling of entertainment. Concurrent with a more volatile ecology of buildings is the emergence of a new technique for deleting them that relies on their relative youth and strength. This new technique of implosion, which can only be performed on structures with at least five stories, works by removing lower supports, leaving a top-heavy structure to collapse by gravitational force. Perhaps not surprisingly, this method of subtraction was developed by one of the engineers who helped demolish Pruitt-Igoe and began imploding buildings that very year as the founder of Controlled Demolition Incorporated, now a global company with offices and affiliates in major cities around the world. In addition to deleting housing, old factories, department stores, and obsolete equipment of the Cold War, GDI and other demolition experts remove spatial products that have rapidly lost their currency. As the mirror image, or negative engineering, of recent structural achievements, implosion indexes a specific economy of obsolescence, because only those buildings with height or particularly coherent structures respond well to its technique of self-destruction. Often the largest and most expensive buildings, such as highrises, sports stadia, convention centers, and resorts, are deleted by implosion, usually in less than thirty seconds. CDI describes its implosions as "awesome public relations opportunities that would otherwise cost clients hundreds of thousands of dollars" and that will "create instant visibility for their new development projects." CDI has done effects for films like Lethal Weapon 3, Demolition Man, and Enemy of the State, yet its most visible publicity has been in conjunction with the city of Las Vegas and developers like Steve Wynn. The eighteenth-century Caribbean pirate village, part of the themed Treasure Island resort, ordinarily sinks a British frigate as the finale to its hourly staged gun battles. In 1993 CDI staged an implosion in which the cannon fire from pirate cast members appeared to bring down the whole of the Dunes Hotel across the street. In 1996 Las Vegas celebrated the New Year by imploding the Hacienda hotel and casino for a huge crowd and a live satellite broadcast. Typical of resort aggregations around the world, those in Las Vegas must be able to schedule a program cocktail that absorbs all potential consumption. In Las Vegas, CDI imploded the Sands, Landmark, Aladdin, El Rancho, and Desert Inn, and it has also imploded resorts from Guam to the Caribbean to Dubai. Most of the imploded hotels are in their fifties, slightly older than the average age of the imploded housing towers. In Las Vegas the demolished hotels are replaced with mega-resorts, typically with 100,000-square-foot casinos and anywhere from fifteen hundred to four thousand rooms. These gigantic Jerde or Disney-style megaresorts are among the most rapidly changing spatial products. Like blockbuster summer movies, they must not only merge resorts with theme parks but also generate enormous enclosures that simulate a world or an environment, a city or a microclimate. In Koolhaas's end-of-the-century redrawing of Venturi's Las Vegas figure/ ground, the vast expanses of parking area on the strip have now been filled with a new formula for spreading building enclosures and conglomerate programs. The expense, monumental size, and structural heroics of sports arenas make them especially satisfying subjects of deletion. They represent temporary stabilizations of the fortunes and allegiances of ball clubs, the ephemeral chemistry of a new municipal tax, rent from a sports organization, and revenue from the operation of the arena itself. Upon completion, they are almost immediately at risk of obsolescence, because their large figural space cannot simply be inflated-it must be broken and recast to introduce new capacity or program. However massive the construction, and although structurally built to stand for hundreds of years, some stadia are torn down in just over twenty years. When it was built in 1976, Seattle's Kingdome exhibited especially ingenious feats of engineering and was made to last for hundreds of years. Its implosion in 2000, like most of the others, was a live urban spectacle as well as a media event. In Microsoft's 3-D-enhanced cyber-coverage of the implosion, chunks of concrete and dust appeared to fly toward the viewer, who was able to repeatedly reactivate the implosion with a mouse click on the dome. Despite its perversity and expense, obsolescence in large public-works projects produces a harvest of jobs, revenue, and campaigning power that are boilerplate ingredients in municipal politics. Convention centers and malls join the list of demolition subjects, demolished at an even younger age than housing towers or stadia. A twenty-year-old mall in Pasa-dena fell to the ground while broadcasting Also Sprach Zarathustra and releasing a flock of doves. An arena imploded today might have cost $500 million when it was built, with $200 million contributed by the sports organizations and $30 million per year recouped by the city in tax revenues from the operation of arena. In some cases extra values accrue from perceived revitalization of older downtown areas. The implosion of these structures is also a multimillion-dollar job, and most of the stadium projects today will be rebuilt for approximately $1.5 billion. Some cities still owe money on the buildings they implode. Yet politicians will invariably attach themselves to a stadium or convention center boondoggle, and a city will invariably court sports teams who threaten to shift their loyalties to another city with a better stadium offer. The members of the architecture profession who speak about permanence and firmitas in annual meetings of the AIA or RIBA are also overtly harvesting work in this field of subtraction. All over the country new sporting facilities are going up, built by firms like HOK, NBBJ, HNTB, Ellerbee Beckett, and HKS -names styled in the contemporary patois of the acronym. By specializing, these professionals bring expertise to the table and ensure that the game will be played as it was the last time. Yet it is the improbability of this gamble with subtraction, its comedic stakes, and its leveraging power that makes it a potentially penetrable tool of urbanism. The implosion of the Desert Inn in October 2001 was a bit more somber than some of the previous Vegas events, in part because the startling similarity between these staged implosions and the implosion of the World Trade Center. Both produced the same cloud of fine dust and the same scenes of instantaneous destruction. [...] Catastrophes like tose in Chernobyl or Bhopal, however, are treated as if they were natural disasters rather than a kind of insidious or accidental warfare against a population deemed expendable. These environmental disasters may be especially cruel, since they do not register their effects on a city or a landmark and require no long-standing effort to rebuild. In response to subtraction, architects are typically prepared with a disaster plan, one that, in the tradition of the tabula rasa, suggests the construction of their own magnificent idea, usually a restorative or corrective plan. For some the void is only a building site. Other self-appointed architectpirates of subtraction, like those in the Earth Liberation Front, counter subtraction with subtraction. As habitats and species disappear and islands sink into the ocean, ELF battles in one theater of that environmental war, inflicting hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of corrective damage on suburbia by burning or defacing homes. Other architects are able to see, even in disaster, the production of a new and unknown site.

Frederick Law Olmsted's descriptions of the aftermath of the 1871 Chicago fire are remarkable in that they do not begin with the desire to restore or usher in a new system of urban parks. Rather, they simply measure the space of the subtraction, evaluating its constituent parts and cross-referencing the section it cut through social classes and differentiated enterprises in the city. While a cry to rebuild would only restore existing information, Olmsted permitted the new information introduced by loss. The desire to remain intact, to reduce or preserve existing ihformation and eliminate evidence that contradicts the prevailing power or threatens its security, may be the greatest violence. Subtractions and reactions to subtraction both potentially reflect this motive, however gentle or preserving the tone of the rhetoric. There are so many species of subtraction, each with different causes or motives and each resulting in very different harvests. Some subtractions erase information, some release a flood of information and association. Some gradually recondition a space, whereas some deliver debilitating attrition. Some provide resistance or relief, whereas others crush resistance, insurgency, or diversity. Subtraction may be one of the primary activities of building and making space, and its field of deletion is not an example of architecture in failure, architecture without permanence and therefore without worth. Just as one would cultivate crops or use one microorganism to counteract another, subtraction may be a productive technique for changing not only the shape but the constitution of space. Architects might view the phenomenon of subtraction as an operative of practice rather than as a by-product of destructive forces. It is both a tool and a new territory. Whether part of a violent or gentle ecology, subtraction can be growt.

An abandoned house in Detroit.
Erasing Detroit, Dan Hoffman, 1991



Aereal View of Detroit.
Erasing Detroit, Dan Hoffman, 1991

Splitting

Gordon Matta Clark, 1974

Somewhere City:
Een stadportreit van Genk

Pascal Verbeken, Photos: Jimmy Kets, 2013

Because Zwartberg is partly outside my city map, I first go to Waterschei. The mining quote, one of the country's most charming Garden Neighborhoods, is a dense labyrinth of green, car-free streets, avenues and squares. Even with the overview of a map, the district is difficult to figure. Because all the streets turn, I see few street corners, which turns off my orientation ability and above all the cite has the privacy and intimacy of a nest. Whoever comes from here can never be elsewhere. When the coal mine was still running, the cite was much more of a world in itself, Jef the old bus driver, remembers. You didn't have to take the quote out to go to the hospital, cinema or the theater. The mine took care of everything. She built the church, the St. John's school and even ran the comunity life. My father was a drum player in the mine band. They rehearsed in the classrooms, which of course belonged to The Mine. Thor Waterschei was a mining team with players from the Cité who worked in the mine during the week and were on the football field during the weekend. The mine and the Cité were the beginning and the end of everything. They provided our work, an identity, a pride. Jef grew up in the avenue de l'Indipendence, on the west side of the Cité. "Rue de l'indipendence", he says. Because that was the name of the street before the Second World War. The independence avenue reminds me of the Cité Jardins from the films of Jaco Van Dormael. A pleasant oasis. The morning sun falls on the dalilahs in the front gardens. Cradle sheets on washing threads. Garden sprinklers keep the grass green. Jef lived at number 64, half of a two-family house with a side gate, like all the other houses in the street. In the backyard there was a forest where he played with the other children. Untill his father, drum director in the band of the mine, blew his clarion to call everyone in [...].

Photographic Archive:
Gardens

Demolition of rowhouse in Oud Waterschei, 2010.
Source: GoogleEarth

Reclamation by wild plants, 2019.
Source: GoogleEarth

Earthworks and forest in the outskirts of Waterschei.
Source: Jimmy Kets

The walls surrounding the mining site of Winterslag.
Source: Jimmy Kets

Concrete fence enclosing a private garden in Genk.
Source: Jimmy Kets

Wasteland next to a private garden in Genk.
Source: Jimmy Kets

Abandoned rowhouse and reclamation by wild plants. Waterschei, 2019.
Source: GoogleEarth

Mullhouse Dwelling with garden in Waterschei.
Source: Jimmy Kets

Wasteland in the industrial area of Genk South.
Source: Jimmy Kets

Cafe-Hotel in Sleddreloo.
Source: Jimmy Kets

Allotment Garden next to the former railway track, “Kolenspoor”.
Source: Google Earth..

Abandoned plot between rowhouses in the proximity of Oud Waterschei.
Source: Google Earth.

Friedrick Law Olmsted and The Dialectical Landscape

Robert Smithson, Artforum, 1973

The landscape-architect Andre formerly in charge of the suburban plantations of Paris, was walking with me through the ButtesChaumont Park, of which he was the designer, when I said of a certain passage of it, "That, to my mind, is the best piece of artificial planting of its age, I have ever seen." He smiled and said, "Shall I confess that it is the result of neglect."

Frederick Law Olmsted
The Spoils of the Park

Imagine yourself in Central Park one million years ago. You would be standing on a vast ice sheet, a 4,000-mile glacial wall, as much as 2,000 feet thick. Alone on the vast glacier, you would not sense its slow crushing, scaping, ripping movement as it advanced south, leaving great masses of rock debris in its wake. Under the frozen depths, where the carousel now stands, you would not notice the effect on the bedrock as the glacier dragged itself along. Back in the 1850s, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux considered that glacial aftermath along its geological profiles. The building of New York City had interrupted the ponderous results of those Pleistocene ice sheets. Olmsted and Vaux studied the site topography for their proposed park called "Greensward." In Greensward Presentation Sketch No. 5 we see a "before" photograph of the site they would remake in terms of earth sculpture. It reminds me of the strip-mining regions I saw last year in southeastern Ohio. This faded photograph reveals that Manhattan Island once had a desert on it-a man-made wasteland. Treeless and barren, it evokes the observations of "the valley of ashes" in F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1925), "where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens .... " Olmsted, "the sylvan artist," yearned for the color green as "Nature's universal robe" (see James Thomson, The Seasons, 1728) and the "Sharawaggi" parks of England. (He wanted the asymmetrical landscapes of Uvedale Price in the middle of urban flux. Into Brooklyn he would bring "the luxuriance of tropical scenery ... gay with flowers and intricate with vines and creepers, ferns rushes and broad leaved plants." This is like having an orchid garden in a steel mill, or a factory where palm trees would be lit by the fire of blast furnaces. In comparison to Thoreau's mental contrasts ("Walden Pond became a small ocean"), Olmsted's physical contrasts brought a Jeffersonian rural reality into the metropolis. Olmsted made ponds, he didn't just conceptualize about them. The origins of Olmsted's view of landscape are to be found in 18-century England, particularly in the theories of Uvedale Price and William Gilpin. Price extended Edmund Burke's Inquiry into the Origin of our ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757) to a point that tried to free landscaping from the "picture" gardens of Italy into a more physical sense of the temporal landscape. A tree, for example, struck by lightning was something other than merely beautiful or sublime-it was "picturesque." This word in its own way has been struck by lightning over the centures. Words, like trees. can be suddenly deformed or wrecked, but such deformation or wreckage cannot be dismissed by timid academics. Price seems to have accepted a side of nature that the "formalists" of his times would rather have excluded. Some of our present-day ecologists, who still see nature through eyes conditioned by a onesided idealism should consider the following quote from Price.

The side of a smooth green hill, torn by floods,may at first very properly be called deformed; and on the same principle, though not with the same impression, as a gash on a living animal. When a rawness of such a gash in the ground is softened, and in part concealed and ornamented by the effects of time, and the progress of vegetation, deformity, by this usual process, is converted into picturesqueness; and this is the case with quarries, gravel pits, etc., which at first are deformities, and which in their most picturesque state, are often considered as such by a levelling improver.

Three Essays on the Picturesque, 1810

And from William Gilpin's Observations Relative to Picturesque Beauty (1789): "A piece of Palladian architecture may be elegant in the last degree, but if we introduce it in a picture it rmmediately becomes a formal object and ceases to please."

Price and Gilpin were, for Olmsted, "professional touchstones," whose views he esteemed so much more than any published since, as stimulating the exercise of judgment in matters of my art, that I put them into the hands of my pupils as soon as they come into our office, saying, "You are to read these seriously, as a student of law would read Blackstone." Inherent in the theories of Price and Gilpin, and in Olmsted's response to them, are the beginnings of a dialectic of the landscape. Burke's notion of "beautiful" and "sublime" functions as a thesis of smoothness, gentle curves, and delicacy of nature, and as an antithesis of terror, solitude, and vastness of nature, both of which are rooted in the real world, rather than in a Hegelian Ideal.' Price and Gilpin provide a synthesis with their formulation of the "picturesque," which is on close examination related to chance and change in the material order of nature. The contradictions of the "picturesque" depart from a static formalistic view of nature. The picturesque, far from being an inner movement of the mind, is based on real land; it precedes the mind in its material external existence. We cannot take a one-sided view of the landscape within this dialectic. **A park can no longer be seen as "a thing-in-itself," but rather as a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region-the park becomes a "thingforus." As a result we are not hurled into the spiritualism of Thoreauian transcendentalism, or its present day offspring of "modernist formalism" rooted in Kant, Hegel, and Frchte.** Price, Gilpin, and Olmsted are forerunners of a dialectical materialism applied to the physical land. Dialectics of this type are a way of seeing things in a manrfold of relations, not as isolated objects. Nature for the dialectician is indifferent to any formal ideal. This does not mean one is helpless before nature, but rather that nature's conditions are unexpected, like Price's hill torn by the flood. In another sense Olmsted's parks exist before they are finished, which means in fact they are never finished; they remain carriers of the unexpected and of contradiction on all levels of human activity, be it social, political, or natural. An example of this can be found in Paul Shepard's excellent book, Man in the Landscape:

His (Olmsted's 1 report) proceeded to note that Europe could not be our model. We must have something better because it was for all "phases of society. The opulent, he continued, should be induced to surround the park with villas, which were to be enjoyed as well as the trees by the humble folk, since they "delight in viewing magnificent and imposing structures." A kind of American doubletalk reconciling villas with democracy and privdege with society in general had begun.

The maps, photographs, and documents in catalogue form and recently on exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art are as much a part of Olmsted's art as the art itself. The catalogue's illustrative portfolio by William Alex, and an informative text by Elizabeth Barlow make one aware of the ongoing development of Central Park as a dialectical landscape.[3] Here the documentary power of the photograph discloses a succession of changing land masses within the park's limits. The notion of the park as a static entity is questioned by the camera's eye. The portfolio brings to mind Dziga Vertov's documentary montages. and suggests that certain still photographs are related to the dialectics of film. For example, a photograph on page 78, Tunnel carved out through Vista Rock for Transverse Road No. 2 at 79th Street could be a still from a hypothetical film by Vertov on the building process of Central Park. In the photograph there is no evidence of the trees that would in the future screen the sunken roadway from the park proper. The photograph has the rawness of an instant out of the continuous growth and construction of the park, and indicates a break in continuity that serves to reinforce a sense of transformation, rather than any isolated formation. We notice in this photograph that nature's development is grounded in the dialectical, and not the metaphysical. An example of a metaphysical rendering of a "tunnel" may be seen in John Martin's mezzotint, At the Brink of Chaos (1825). Born into England's industrial revolution, Martin translated engineering efforts into visions of cosmic doom. He substituted a tunnel for Milton's bridge in Paradise Lost, and in so doing retreated into the metaphysical.4 In this instance the more dialectical aspect of the picturesque is shrouded in a sentimental gloom that has its origins in the Puritan religion. Modern day ecologists with a metaphysical turn of mind still see the operations of industry as Satan's work. The image of the lost paradise garden leaves one without a solid dialectic, and causes one to suffer an ecological despair. Nature, like a person, is not one-sided. Another factor to note is that Olmsted's tunnel is in the real world, whereas Martin's is a pictorial representation derived only from the mind. Olmsted's view of the landscape was lost sight of around the first part of this century, what with the rise of the "antidemocratic intelligentsia" that included Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and T. E. Hulme.5 Although Pound and Eliot did maintain traces of the picturesque in their poetry, they theoretically scorned it. "Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel," wrote Eliot in The Waste Land, "There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home." But Eliot's picturesque was a nostalgia for church authority, it ceased to be the democratic dialectic between the sylvan and the industrial that Price and Olmsted worked toward. Instead they stressed a neoclassical formalism, and T. E. Hulme, who exerted great influence on all three, was drawn to the "abstract" philosophy of Wilhelm Worringer. After World War II, when fascistic motives were revealed, various liberal critics moved in to pick up the pieces-among them Clement Greenberg. He tried to graft a lame formalism

to a fuzzy Marxist outlook. Here is Greenberg upstaging both Lewis and Eliot:

Eliot has called Wyndham Lewis "the greatest prose stylist of my generation perhaps the only one to have invented a new style." I find this exaggerated, but even if it were not, Lewis would still have paid too dearly for the distinction.

-Clement Greenberg, "Wyndham Lewis Against Abstract Art," Art and Culture, Boston, 1961

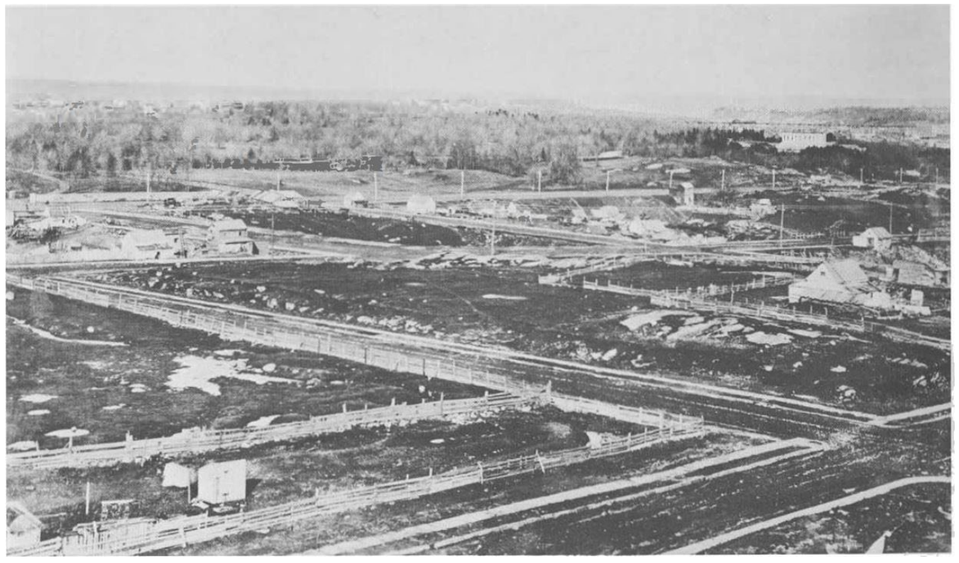
This is a smart way to subsume authority, but the rest of the article sheds no light on "abstraction." My feeling is that they all missed the boat. Turning to France, a sense of the picturesque results in Paul Cezanne's Bibe'mus Quarry (1895), but his direct encounters with the landscape were soon to be replaced by a studio-based formalism and cubistic reductionism whish would lead to our present day insipid notions of "flatness" and "lyrical abstraction." The general direction of this tendency begins in 1914 when T. E. Hulme, lecturing on "Modern Art and Philosophy," talks about reducing trees to cones. [7] Representations of "stripes" became the logical outcome. Any discussion concerning nature and art is bound to be shot through with moral implications. Once a student told me that "nature is anything that is not manmade." For that student man was outside the natural order of things. In Wilhelm Worringer's Abstraction and Empathy (1908), we are told that Byzantine and Egyptian art were created out of a psychological need to escape nature, and that since the Renaissance our understanding of such art has been clouded by an undue confidence in nature. Worringer locates his "concept" of abstraction outside the sensuous anthropomorphic pantheism of Renaissance humanism. "The primal artistic impulse," says Worringer, "has nothing to do with the renderings of nature." Yet, throughout his book he refers to "crystalline forms of inanimate matter." Geometry strikes me as a "rendering" of inanimate matter. What are the lattices and grids of pure abstraction, if not renderings and representations of a reduced order of nature? Abstraction is a representation of nature devoid of "realism" based on mental or conceptual reduction. There is no escaping nature through abstract representation; abstraction brings one closer to physical structures within nature itself. But this does not mean a renewed confidence in nature, it simply means that abstraction is no cause for faith. Abstraction can only to be valid if it accepts nature's dialectic. In The New York Times (Sunday, March 12, 1972) Grace Glueck's column has a headline "Artist-in-Residence for Mother Earth," and a photograph of Alan Gussow captioned "A sort of spiritual caretaker." Reading the article, one discovers what might be called an Ecological Oedipus Complex. Penetration of "Mother Earth" becomes a projection of the incest taboo onto nature. In Theodore Thass-Thienemann's book, The Subconscious Language, we find a quote from a catatonic schizophrenic, they should stop digging (now shouting petulantly in rage) down inside the earth to draw metals out of it. That's digging down into Mother Earth and taking things that shouldn't be taken. Simone de Beauvoir has written in The Second Sex, "Aeschylus says of Oedipus that he 'dared to seed the sacred furrow where he was formed'." Alan Gussow in The New York Times projects onto "earth works artists" an Oedipus Complex born out of a wishy-washy transcendentalism. Indulging in spirtual fantasy, he says of representational landscape painters in his book (A Sense of Place: Artists and the American Land, published by Friends of the Earth) What these artists do is make these places visible, communicate their spirit--not like the earth works artists who cut and gouge the land like Army engineers. What's needed are lyric poets to celebrate it. Gussow's projection of the "Army engineers" on what he imagines to be "earth works artists" seems linked to his own sexual fears. Paul Shepard in his Man in the Landscape points out, Those army engineers seem to be at the opposite extreme from esthetes who attempt to etherealize their sexuality. Yet, the engineers' authority and dominance over land carries the force of sexual aggression and perhaps the guilt as well. An etherealized representational artist such as Gussow (he does mediocre Impressionistic paintings) fails to recognize the possibility of a direct organic manipulation of the land devoid of violence and "macho" aggression. Spiritualism widens the split between man and nature. The farmer's, miner's, or artist's treatment of the land depends on how aware he is of himself as nature; after all, sex isn't all a series of rapes. The farmer or engineer who cuts into the land can either cultivate it or devastate it. Representing nature once removed in lyric poetry and landscape painting is not the same as direct cultivation of the land. If strip miners were less alienated from the nature in themselves and free of sexual aggression, cultivation would take place. When one looks at the Indian cliff dwelling in Mesa Verde, one cannot separate art from nature. And one can't forget the Indian mounds in Ohio. [9] One wonders what the likes of Gussow would make of America's first "earthwork artist"Frederick Law Olmsted. Perhaps, if Gussow had lived in the mid-19th century, he would have suggested that Olmsted write "lyric poetry" instead of moving ten million horse-cart loads of earth to make Central Park. Artists like Gussow are the type who would rather retreat to scenic beauty spots than try to make a concrete dialectic between nature and people. Such an artist surrounds himself with self-righteousness and pretends to be saving the landscape. This is not being an ecologist of the real, but rather, a spiritual snob. This kind of spirituality mentioned in the preceding paragraphs is what Rollo May in Power and Innocence calls "pseudoinnocence," which can only lead to pseudospirituality and pseudoart. May speaks of an" ... insulation from the evil in the world." The authentic artist cannot turn his back on the contradictions that inhabit our landscapes. Olmsted himself was full of contradictions; for instance, he wrote his wife his reaction to the California desert, "the whole aspect of the country is detestable." In the 1862 photograph it is interesting to see the arrested construction of a water system for draining and filling a Central Park lake-five sunken pipes, guide lines, half-formed walls, dirt roads, and general rubble. All of the roughness of the process rises out of the park's earlier condition; as Elizabeth Barlow indicates. The political quagmire was matched by the appearance of the park itself, which was rubbish-strewn, deep in mud, filled with recently vacated squatters' huts, and overrun with goats left behind by the squatters. Until they were eventually impounded, the rampant goats were a great nuisance, eating the foliage of the park's few trees. All of this is part of the park's dialectic. Looking on the nature of the park, or its history and our perceptions of it, we are first presented with an endless maze of relations and interconnections, in which nothing remains what or where it is. as a thing in itselft, but the whole park changes like day and night, in and out, dark and light- a carefully designed clumpo of bushes can also be a mugger's hideout. The reason the potential dialectic inherent in the picturesque broke down was because natural processes were viewed in isolation as so many classifications detached from physical interconnection and finally rplaced by mental representations of a finished absolute ideal. Bilious books like The Greening of America present one with a notion of consciousness without substance. Central Park is a ground work of necessity and chance, a range of contrasting viewpoints that are forever fluctuating, yet solidly based in the earth. By expanding our dialectic outside of Central Park to Yosemite National Park, we gain insight into the development of both park sites before they were turned into "parks". The site of Cental Park was the result of "urban blight- trees were cut down by the early settlers without any thought of the future. Such a site could be reclaimed by direct earth-moving without fear of upsetting the ecology. **My own experience is that the best sites for "earth art" are sites that have been disrupted by industry reckless urbanization or nature own devastation.** For instance, The Spiral Jetty is built in a dead sea, and The Broken Circle and Spiral Hill in a working sand quarry. Such land is cultivated or recycled as art. On the other hand, when Olmsted visited Yosemite it existed as a "wilderness". There's no point in recycling wilderness the way Central Park was recycled. One need not to improve Yosemite, all one needs is to provide access routes and accomodations. But this decreses the original definition of wilderness as a place that exists without human involvement. Today, Yosemite is more like an urbanized wilderness with its eclectical outlets for campers and its clothes lines hung between the pines. There is not much room for contemplation in solitude. The new national parks like the Everglades and the Dinosaur National Monument are more "abstract" and lack the "pictoresqueness" of Yosemite or Yellowstone. In many ways the more humble or even degraded sites left in the wake of mining operations offer more of a challenge to art, and a greater possibility for being in solitude. Imposing cliffs and unimproved mesas could just as well be left alone. But as the nation's "energy crisis" mounts, such places will eventually be mined. Some 5.5 millions of acres, an area the size of New Harnpshire, is currently being bought up in North Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana by mining companies. "I think," says Interior Secretary Rogers Morton (Newsweek, October 9, 1972) we can set the standard for a new mining ethic so that the deep seams can be mined and closely followed by an environment program that is compatible esthetically and with proper land use." One can only wonder what his notion of "esthetics" is. The precedents set by Olmsted should be studied by both miners and ecologists. Returning to Yellowstone, which celebrated its centennial last year, we see a combining of Europe's "intoxication with ruins" with America's newly discovered "natural ruins" at the origin of the park's development. David E. Folsom, a wealthy rancher, who viewed Yellowstooe in 1869, wrote in his diary "a huge rock that boreresemblance to an old castle; rampart and bulwark were slowly yielding to the ravages of time, but the old turret stood out in bold relief against the sky. ... " As Paul Shepard has pointed out, John Ruskin never visited America because it lacked castles. Nevertheless "Castle Rock" has become a name for many natural formations throughout the West. New York in the 1870s yielded to different kinds of ravages. Olmsted was dismissed from his job in 1874. In a document privately printed in 1881 called The Spoils of the Park: With a Few Leaves from Deep-laden Note-books of "A Wholly Unpractical Man," we get a glimpse of Olmsted's conflicts with city politics. Under Boss Tweed the Park Department deteriorated into a shambles along with serious unemployment, violent labor protests, and financial panic, causing Olmsted to write in 1877 that New York City was "essentially under martial law." The Park Department was also being turned into a social welfare agency; in Olmsted's words the Park Department had become "an asylum for aggravated cases of hernia, varicose veins, rheumatism, partial blindness, and other infirmities compelling sedentary occupations."

When Charles Eliot Norton said of him (Olmsted), towards the close of his career, that of all American artists he stood "first in the production of great works which answer the needs and give expression to the life of our immense and miscellaneous democracy" he did not exaggerate Olmsted's influence.
-Lewis Mumford, The Brown Decades

Entering the park at 96th Street and Central Park West, I walked south along the western side of the reservoir on a bridle path. The upper part of the park that includes Harlem Meer, The Great Hill, and the North Meadow (now filled with ball fields) was planned for lateral and horizontal views, in Olmsted's words it should be "bold and sweeping" as opposed to the lower park's "heterogeneous" character. One has the sensation of being in a sunken forest as well. A sense of remoteness was present in this region. This sense of engulfment deepened as foliage suggested the harmonies, tonalities, and rhythms of Charles Ives' music-Three Outdoor Scenes, Central Park at Night, and The Unanswered Question, subtitled A Cosmic Landscape, in particular. At Bank Rock Bridge is an entrance to The Ramble. On the bridge stood a sinister looking character, who looked like the type who would rip off cameras. Quickly I vanished into The Ramble-a tangled net of divergent paths. Just the day before I had been looking at stereopticon photos of how this place looked before 1900, before the vegetation Olmsted planted had grown up. At that time, the shores of The Lake still had the look of a rock strewn quarry. Olmsted had wanted to plant "rhododendrons, andromedas, azaleas, kalmias, rhodoras," but his plans remain only partly realized. Olmsted was attracted to this place before he did anything to it, because it was "exceedingly intricate" with "sweet gum, spicebush, tulip tree, sassafras, red-maple, black-oak, azalea, and andromeda." The network of paths he twisted through this place outlabyrinthed labyrinths. For what really is a Ramble, but a place to walk aimlessly and idly-it is a maze that spreads in all directions. Now The Ramble has grown up into an urban jungle, and lurking in its thickets are "hoods, hobos, hustlers, homosexuals," and other estranged creatures of the city (see John Rechy, The City of Night). Olmsted had brought a primordial condition into the heart of Manhattan. A small rock bridge crosses a miniature ravine, connecting tangle with tangle. Beneath leafless tree limbs the windings grow more complex, and seem to turn on themselves, so that the walker has no sense of direction. Autumn leaves smother the pathways as they lead one deeper into an infinity of curves. Flowing through The Ramble is The Gill, a stream of water which appears to be a cross between a brook and a pond, and apparently having its source in a cave under a heap of boulders. Tiny valleys and hills are scattered in such a way as to maximize seclusion and solitude. The Lake borders The Ramble; in it is a small flat island of rock. Moving up a wooded incline, I approachedVista Rock Tunnel near Belvedere Castle. Water was seeping and dripping over the carved rock surfaces of the tunnel and falling on the rockwalled trench. At this point I was chased by three wild dogs. Later, I found out that there are other packs of dogs roaming the park. Also I discovered that the squirrels are rather aggressive fat dynamos rather than suburban scrawnies. A series of steps curved right into the bedrock, leading to the castle which is also a weather station. From there one looks out over Belvedere Lake and the Great Lawn, once the Croton Water Works. Walking east, I passed graffiti on boulders. Somehow, I can accept graffiti on subway trains, but not on boulders. On the base of the Obelisk along with the hieroglyphs there are also graffiti. Suddenly, one encounters the construction site of a new tunnel near The Metropolitan Museum of Art-a gray compound with a towering orange derrick in the middle. On the gray walls are more graffiti of an "ecological" sort: "Concrete and trees do not mix." "Let's not turn Central Park into an Asphalt Jungle." "Decentralize the Met!" "Save the Park!" "The Met is not good for trees and other flowering things." "Does the Met smell as nice as a tree?" "Preserve Wildlife." Olmsted's own view on buildings and museums in The Spoils of the Park is:

> The reservoirs and the museum are not a part of the Park proper: they are deductions from it. The Subways are not deductions because their effect, on the whole, is to enlarge, not lessen, the opportunities of escape from buildings.

Passing under Glade Arch and into the Glade, I came to the Conservatory Water Pool; the overall shape of its concrete banks being an interplay of curves and right angles. The Pool had been drained, and this provided one with a vista of graceful desolation a sea of autumn leaves. The bare trees that surround the pool rose from the ground like so much smoky lace. Here and there people sauntered in and out of the haze and sunlight, turning the area into a phantom world. As I continued southward, near Fifth Avenue, I passed a "kiddy land," one of the latest incursions into the Park. Designed by Richard Datter in 1970, it looks like a pastiche of Philip Johnson and Mark di Suvero. A sign on the fence that surrounds it exhorted one to "Enjoy." Even cuter is the "kiddy zoo," with its Disney-type Whale. In the Old Zoo some caged workmen were installing an artificial habitat. In the spillway that pours out of the Wollman Memorial Ice Rink, I noticed a metal grocery cart and a trash basket half-submerged in the water. Further down, the spillway becomes a brook choked with mud and tin cans. The mud then spews under the Gapstow Bridge to become a muddy slough that inundates a good part ? The Pond, leaving the rest of The Pond aswell with oil slicks, sludge, and dixie cups. Maintenance on The Pond seems long overdue. The mud should be dredged out. This maintenance operation could be treated in terms of art, as a "mud extraction sculpture." A documentary treatment with the aid of film or photographs would turn the maintenance into a physical dialectic. The mud could be deposited on a site in the city that needs "fill." The transportation of mud would be followed from point of extraction to point of deposition. A consciousness of mud and the realms of sedimentation is necessary m order to understand the landscape as it exists. The magnitude of geological change is still with us, just as it was millions of years ago. Olmsted, a great artist who contended with such magnitudes, sets an example which throws a whole new light on the nature of American art.



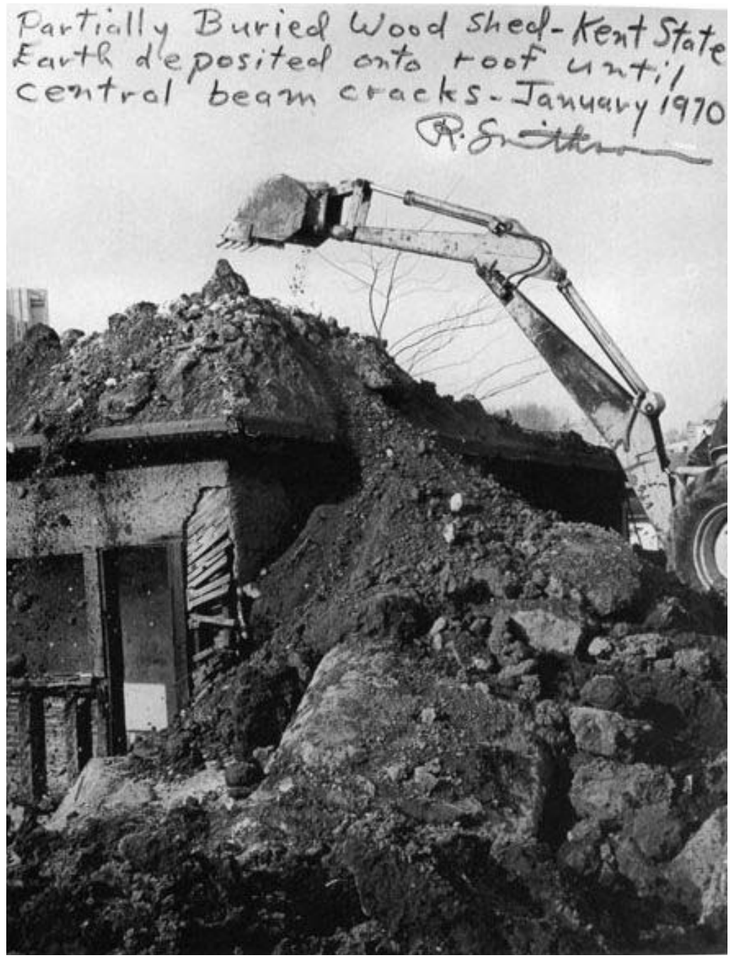
Central Park, 1885, looking northwest from Park, Avenue possibly around 94th or 95th Street.

Central Park, 1972, construction site with graffiti behind The Metropolitan Museum of Art. All 1972 photographs by Robert Smithson and Robert Fiore.

Spiral Jetty by Robert Smithson. Great Salt Lake, Utah, 1970.
Smithon refers to the *Arcadia* of Poussin with the sentence “Et in Utah Ego”.

Les Bergers d’Arcadie, Nicolas Poussin, 1637-8, Musée du Louvre

Robert Smithson, *The Sand Box Monument* (also called *The Desert*), from 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic', 1967.



Robert Smithson, *Partially Buried Wood Shed*, 1970.

SubUrbanism and the Art of Memory

Sebastien Marot

The essential features of our current knowledge about the art of memory as It was practised by the ancients, and about its evolving status in the history of western culture up to the seventeenth century, were exposed by Frances Yates in a book that remains the major reference on the subject.

SPACE AND MEMORY: THE REDISCOVERY OF A FORGOTTEN ART

'Few people know that the Greeks, who invented many arts, invented an art of memory which, like their other arts, was passed on to Rome whence it descended in the European tradition. This art seeks to memorize through a technique of impressing "places" and "images" on memory. It has usually been classed as "mnemotechnics", which In modern times seems a rather unimportant branch of human activity. But in the ages before printing a trained memory was vitally important; and the manipulation of images in memory must always to some extent involve the psyche as a whole.'5 Yates's book reveals the degree to which the art of memory, far from being merely an annexe to the edifice of classical culture, played a crucial structural role, Interrelated with all the other major divisions of rhetortc. As a practice, It was so pervasive that its importance tended to go unstated in the texts, with the result that it can be easily overlooked by the contemporary reader, who no longer makes use of It. In our day, the philosophy student will no doubt consider it a curiosity that certain of Plato's works depict individuals capable of reciting, from beginning to end, a dialogue overheard and then memorized. While the references are rare and their interpretation is not always crystal-clear, we do have a few relatively concordant sources that allow us to reconstruct the mechanism of the ars memorativa as it was transmitted from Greece to Rome. The major ones are the anonymous treatise *Ad Herennium*, Cicero's *De Oratore* and Quintilian's *institutio Oratoria*. By analysing these treatises, and comparing them to other canonical texts from the history of philosophy - whose interpretation she thereby clarifies - Yates is able to describe the general principles of the art of memory: 'The first step was to fmprint on the memory a series of loci or places. The commonest, though not the only, type of mnemonic place system used was the architectural type. The clearest description of the process is that given by Quintillan. In order to form a series of places in memory, he says, a building is to be remembered, as spacious and varied a one as possible, the forecourt, the living room, bedrooms, and parlours, not omitting statues and other ornaments with which the rooms are decorated. The images by which the speech is to be remembered... are then placed in the imagination on the places which have been memorized in the building. This done, as soon as the memory of the facts requires to be revived, all these places are visited in turn and the various deposits are demanded of their custodians. We have to think of the ancient orator as moving In imagination through his memory building whilst he is making his speech, drawing from the memorized places the images he has placed on them. The method ensures that the points are remembered in the right order, since the order is fixed by the sequence of places in the building.' The sources give similar recommendations on the rules to be observed for the formation of the places (their number, proportions, lighting, etc.) and for the fabrication of the Images (size, expression, etc.). They differentiate between images according to whether they involve the memorization of things (notions or arguments of the speech) or the memorization of words (expressions or even sentences that will be used to evoke the things). One after another, they outline the framework of a mnemotechnics founded on a spatial and figurative metaphor of speech (describing its movement, its moments). Yates has demonstrated the consistency between this metaphor and certain major assumptions of ancient philosophy, such as the primacy given to the sense of sight - perceptible in the very etymology of idea, which in Plato designates the essence of things, or in the Aristotelian thesis holding that 'the soul never thinks without a mental picture'. Indeed, classical rhetoric and sylloglstics, as codified by Aristotle, seem to be profoundly governed by this assimilation of logos, or speech, into a space that has been structured into places (topoi) that represent so many 'problems' or 'common' debates, whose identification and description is the concern of topics. Stretching the metaphor to insist on the coherence of ancient thought in this regard, one could say that topics, the theory of the commonplaces of discourse, provides a map of this mental space where the orators construct their edifices of memory, each according to his own will.

FROM ARCHITECTURE TO THE ARS MEMORATIVA, AND BACK AGAIN

Concerning the nature and operations of these memory places, the reading of the sources yields as many questions as answers.

1. - First of all, as we have seen, the most common systems of mnemonic places are systems of architectural places, i.e., groups of spaces constructed or planned by man.7 The example most often given is that of a house, with its articulation of open or closed rooms, but there are also references to public buildings (baths, for example), building complexes (an abbey), urban sequences or cities. Quintilian even speaks of a long road. Crucially, the configurations and relations between the places are in each case established and governed by one or several fixed itineraries. This seems from the outset to eliminate less structured spaces - spaces man is less likely to have organized - where the relations between places are not determined in advance. In short, artificial memory calls for a landscape that itself is relatively artificial.

2. - On the other hand, the memory of places precedes that of images, for which it serves as a framework and a support medium. It is a memory that 'helps another memory'. As a syntactic schema of structure and order, the articulation of places therefore must be easily distinguishable from the furnishings of images or figures that will be lodged there according to the orator's needs. Even if a place of memory is not just a 'void' defined by structural limits, but rather a place that decorative elements can help to identify (statues, for example), one can still suppose that the principle of convenience again tends to eliminate nonarchitectural spaces, where the distinction between structure and object (place and image) cannot be clearly assigned. A question arises, however, as to the possible correspondence between mnemonic systems of places and mnemonic series of images: could affinities be established between kinds of places and kinds of speeches? We are told that orators could make use of several systems of memory places, and this permits several hypotheses. Did they do so to memorize a number of speeches simultaneously? Did one need more or less expansive and complex buildings, adapted to speeches of differing length and sophistication? Could a building become too small and be saturated by overuse? Did the orators feel the need to store certain series of images inside the buildings to which they had initially been confided, and to distinguish the new ones by the choice of other places? All these hypotheses are no doubt simultaneously plausible.9 But it is equally possible that the possession and mental manipulation of several systems of places may have gradually answered the need to assign different types of speech to different spaces, and that an affinity of tneme or genre may have governed this division. One can then imagine that forms of correspondence, administered by conventional rules, may have been sought between the places and their furnishings of symbolic figures, opening the door to a differential semanticization of places according to their nature (house, public building, district of a city, outskirts, countryside), and reciprocally to a contamination of the figures by their frames. This hypothesis would lead us to examine the role that the art of memory may have played in distinguishing scenes (tragic, comic, satirical) and genres (pictorial, literary, etc.) by their appropriate decor. In any case, one clearly sees how the common practice of the ars memorativa must have led to a form of encrustat/on of the images in the memory places.

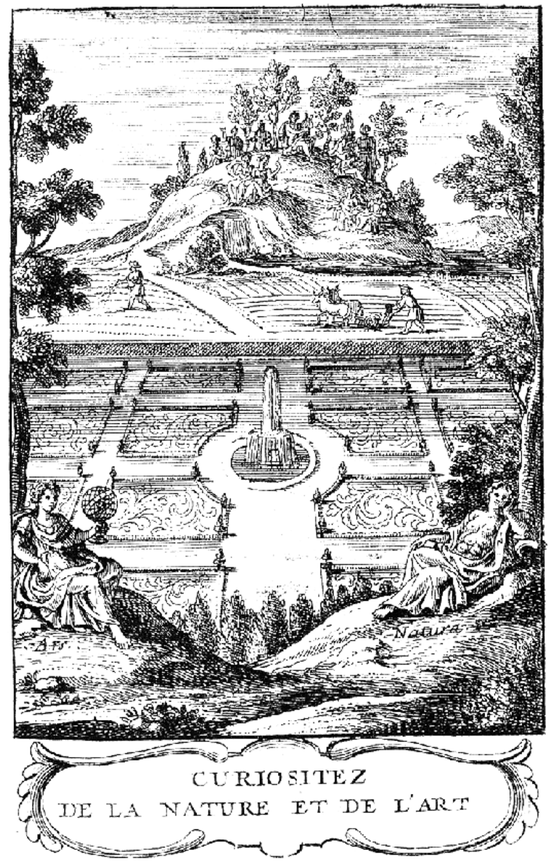
3. - Additionally, the mnemonic places could, according to the sources, be either real or Imaginary: either articulations of existing spaces that the orator has first chosen, then patiently observed and memorized, or fictional articulations that he has mentally conceived and constructed at his convenience, following the rules that the authors recommend concerning the number, proportions, distances and lighting of these places. Most plausible is the idea that the systems of mnemonic places would have been a little of both, and most often would have consisted of real arrangements revised and corrected by the imagination - enlarged, simplified, connected - In order to satisfy the orator's needs. Thus one can picture the built reality of the cities of antiquity being continually rebuilt, recomposed in the imagination of their inhabitants and repopulated with symbolic figures and landmarks of memory. This daydream opens up important questions: what relations did these analogous cities and buildings entertain among each other and with the real clty? One can indeed wonder what influence this practice of artificial memory, which makes the orator not only an imaginary stroller but also an imaginary architect or urbanist, may have had on the reading and conception of real places. To ask such questions Is to reflect on the reciprocal borrowings between classical rhetoric and classical architecture.

4. - Finally, this artificial memory is principally described as a technique that individuals exploit at will, choosing their own places and shaping their own images. Yet one can easily imagine how the generalization of this practice and the diffusion of its teaching through scholarly exercises, recommendations and examples must have led to the gradual constitution and transmission of a stock of conventional images and places. This form of standardization or partial collectivization of mnemotechnic tools, which obliges us

to enquire Into the relations between the art of memory and the descriptions and productions of art In the strict sense (literature, painting, sculpture, architecture), is In any case a major feature of what Yates calls 'the medieval transformation of the classical art of memory'. Christian culture, as she explains, brings about a profound mutation In the ars memorativa, shifting it from the domain of rhetoric to that of ethics. The Christianization of the art of memory can be seen at work in the texts of thinkers from St Augustine to Albertus Magnus and St Thomas, who elevated memory from the rank of a faculty to that of a virtue (a subdivision of Prudence). The result was to transform a technique used by the orator to recall that which he wished to remember into a didactics designed to impress upon the soul of the faithful that which they ought to remember. Artificial memory, whose classical rules are revived and readjusted to this end, is mobilized in the service of the contemplation, meditation and observation of Christian doctrine. Hence the places and images, referring as they do to the discourse of revealed truth that forms the communal tie, now take on the status of shared symbolism ('a system of Images') and almost of a language serving to commune in this truth, and to impress upon the souls the notions or intentions that are to govern their conduct in this world. The conception and fabrication of the mnemonic devices no longer simply appeals to the secret recipes of an orator, but becomes part and parcel of the representation and communication of speech itself. In this way, all the conditions are present for these mnemonic places and images to begin existing concretely - to be described, painted, sculpted and finally constructed. 'And though one must be extremely careful to distinguish between art proper and the art of memory, which is an invisible art, yet their frontiers must surely have overlapped. For when people were being taught to practise the formation of images for remembering, it is difficult to suppose that such inner images might not sometimes have found their way into outer expression. Or, conversely, when the "things" which they were to remember through inner images were of the same kind as the "things" which Christian didactic art taught through images, that the places and images of that art might themselves have been reflected in memory, and so have become "artificial memory".'2 As Yates herself demonstrates, in several examples, this hypothesis of an overlapping of the art of memory and the art, architecture and imagery of the Middle Ages proves fruitful for enlarging and renewing our understanding of the period. Yates thus casts new light on the supposed predilection of the Middle Ages for the grotesque and the bizarre in painting, statuary and manuscript illumination, which may only be an effect of the classical mnemotechnic rules recommending the use of expressive images, because they are easy to remember. She completely renews the interpretation of literary monuments such as The Divine Comedy, inviting us to read the spatial arrangements they describe (Hell, Paradise) as mnemonic systems. Finally, and most importantly, she offers new frameworks for appreciating the structure and decoration of constructed edifices, extending Erwin Panofsky's hypothesis of a polnt-by-point correspondence between Gothic architecture and scholastic philosophy (basilica of St Denis = Summa Theologica),— and thereby lending new pertinence to Victor Hugo's famous phrase, 'Ceci tuera cela' ('the one will kill the other'), which designated the printed book as the gravedigger of the built book, I.e., the cathedral.

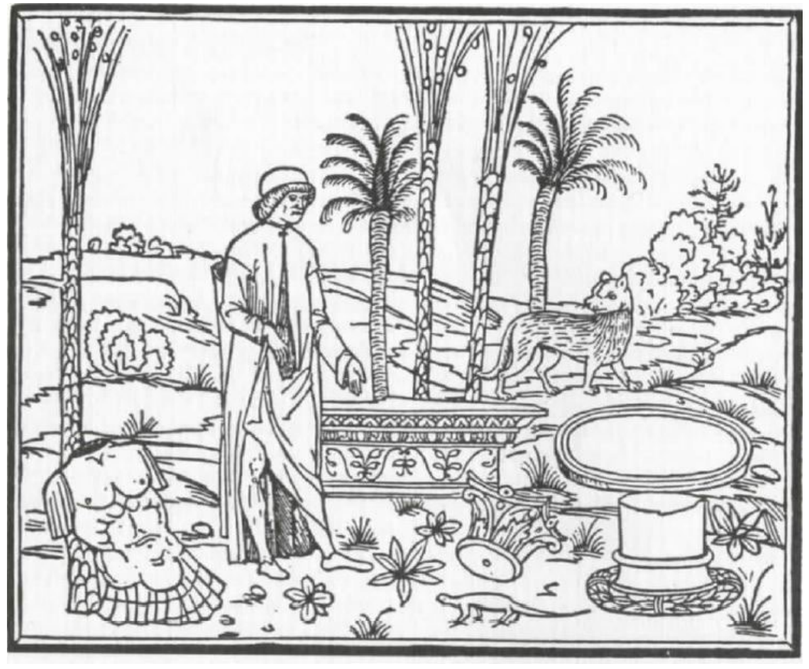
ART OF MEMORY, ART URBAIN, ART OF GARDENS

Since the publication of Yates's book, other research has confirmed how fertile the hypothesis of overlapping can be, and in particular how stimulating it is to extend it beyond architecture, to those other dimensions of the making of places: urbanism on the one hand, the art of gardens on the other. As to art urbain first of all - so as not to leave the Middle Ages too abruptly behind - one can wonder whether religious processions are not to be interpreted as a collective practice of ars memorativa. The city could be likened to a mental map, where the relative localizatior of the consecrated places and the itineraries of the processions themselves inscribe landmarks and mnemonic schemata. In an essay entitled 'The City As Temple',- Andre Corboz does not formulate this hypothesis explicitly, but lends it very powerful arguments by showing how the analysis of many medieval city plans and their cartographic representations reveals the in situ Inscription of trinitarian, cruciform or other such configurations whose significance quite plausibly involves religious schematization. But the history of cities and of urbanism, enlarged to other epochs and contexts, undoubtedly furnishes many further examples in support of a vision of urbanism as an art of collective memory, applied to bring order and orientation Into the urban settlement, that confused, saturated and living theatrum memoriae. By taking advantage of what the histories of ideas and of rhetoric have taught us, and articulating it with what modern sociology has learned about the 'social frameworks of memory', we should be able to understand cities better: no longer only as passive, conditioning memories (that is, as particularly dense accumulations of traces and recollections), but also as active and conditioned memories - as systems of constructed mnemonic places. And this also holds, to a certain extent, for the landscape in general. Which brings us to the question of gardens. The theme of the ars memorativa can open up rich perspectives for the hermeneutics of gardens, as the recent publication of the symposium 'The Garden as Art and Place of Memory' has amply demonstrated.' Let us note that the tradition of the pleasure garden presents it as both the privileged domain of schole (a place for leisure



Frontispiece to l'Abbé de Vallemont's
Curiositez de la nature et de l'art, 1705.

as well as meditation) and the territory of choice for strolling, for a pathfinding that articulates and associates places. This combination alone would allow us to suppose that the art of memory must have found a particularly appropriate terrain of expression in the garden, and even that the great historical transformations undergone by the ars memorativa (as well as its various offshoots) could be distinguished behind the major periods or the different 'styles' that the history of gardens teaches us to recognize. Indeed, from the medieval hortus conclusus to the creations of the baroque period and beyond, one can cite numerous examples of parks and gardens whose symbolic, emblematic and figurative apparatuses resemble systems of mnemonic images. Their scenographic arrangements may derive directly from the theatrum memoriae, as in Boboli and Valva, or from a sophisticated itinerary through situations whose every aspect (location, pavilions, statuary, choice of trees) helps charge them with more or less abstruse meanings, as in Bomarzo. Indeed, this close relation between the ars memorativa and the art of gardens is confirmed by the number of spiritual fathers their respective family trees hold in common. From Democritus to Petrarch or Colonna (author of Hypnertomachia Poliphili), one is continually struck by the way these authors distinguish themselves in both domains, thus revealing the profound affinity that links the art of cultivating one's memory to the art of maintaining one's garden. Thus, It becomes quite tempting to propose a more fundamental explanation of the phenomenon, drawing attention first to the ancient definition of the garden as ars topiaria, the art of place." As shown by the historian John Dixon Hunt in his interpretation of the humanist concept of 'third nature', the pleasure garden was conceived, until the seventeenth century at least, as an art of representation whose referent is the territory, In a state of 'intact' nature or of nature transformed by man for his immediate needs. We should understand that the art of gardens, relatively free of the obligation to satisfy any need other than pleasure, would consist of the in situ representation or imitation of the elements, motifs and patterns of wild or transformed nature as they were found in the territory surrounding the site. Certain engraved views from the baroque period bring explicitly into relief this process of transposition or translation, whereby a wood corresponds to a forest, a fountain to a spring, a grotto to caves, a canal to irrigation ditches, and the parquetry of flower beds to the divided plots of cultivated fields. Understood in this way, the garden appears as a medium for the semanticizatlon of the land, lending to nature the status of a landscape organized into spaces. Thus, too, an imitation could gradually become a model, as is shown by gardens such as Versailles. By offering themselves as an abbreviated map of a given state of the larger territory in the process of being designed, literally informed, gardens were also seen as both the laboratories and the focal points for this physical transformation. It Is clear that the garden has long been understood as a place where the geography of the mind meets that of the earth, just as the art of gardens has been conceived as a conscious elaboration of this encounter, to the point where one could retrospectively describe the underlying stakes of ars topiaria as the interplay and reciprocal formation of topics and topography. From the early Middle Ages at least, the garden has not only been a privileged domain where systems of mnemonic images found a space in which to develop, but also a major space where the art of memory, threatened with marginallzation in the overall economy of knowledge, found both a refuge and a possibility of renewal. In the perspective I am adopting here, the territory's transformation into landscape, as effected in the art of gardens, can be compared to the project of constituting systems of places and making them available for individual and collective memory. Ars topiaria seems to have been this great laboratory for the semanticization of the territory: an art 'applied to making the earth more habitable',20 easier to appropriate by language, transforming it into something like a palette - or a stage - where thought can lodge its own signs and display the full range of its different states or moods. According to John Dixon Hunt, the idea of the garden as a theatre of memory disappeared quite naturally when the art of gardens ceased to be explicitly conceived as an art of representation, that is, when, with the English picturesque, it began to dream of identifying itself with nature or with the landscape 'as is'. Which does not mean that the question of memory has abandoned that of the garden - nor thata new discipline or art of memory could not be reinvented there today.



Drawing from *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili,*
Francesco Colonna, 1499.

Second Nature – A Manifesto

Hannah Schubert, 2015

We are surrounded by history, by time and by changeability. Nothing stands still: growth and decline are inextricably linked. The Second Nature exhibition is an invitation to look at the built environment from a different perspective. A view that is not colored by thinking about how those beautiful, dilapidated buildings could be repurposed, or that demolition is necessary to realize something that is profitable. One should look with a look of wonder to see the beauty that lies in the gradual takeover of nature. Undoubtedly there will come a moment when nature takes over and recaptures itself. As soon as a crack appears in the smooth, dense concrete, even the smallest plant takes its chance. Hairy roots bore through the material in search of nutrients. They eagerly push up the hard surface, which first shows bumps and then cracks. The more cracks occur, the more substrate settles in the fractures. Pioneers settle in the cracks, and within five years there will be wildflowers, shrubs and small trees. The building as a 'host' will remain visible for decades, perhaps hundreds of years. But the intermediate phases that arise bring about a continuously changing spatial reality. This manifesto is an exploration of a natural, slow transformation in which natural time is allowed. After all, the ultimate fate of any building is that - if man withdraws, it transforms into a landscape again.

Reason

When the Lehman Brothers went bankrupt in 2008, this heralded a global credit crunch. The economic recovery is slow. It is therefore not surprising that the stagnation in investments has had and has had a major impact on the spatial planning of the Netherlands - and on real estate. In the Netherlands, more than nine hundred buildings are vacant for a long time. Industrial heritage, offices, government buildings, business parks, churches and monasteries. The millions of square meters of office space have not yet been included in this. What these buildings have in common are the often hopeless views. They are too big, too dated, too expensive and are in the 'wrong place' - they are buildings that have failed to retain their value in economic and social terms.

A call for 'do nothing'

There are different scenarios for buildings that are confronted with vacancy. If renovation is not an option and repurposing is not possible, demolition will follow. Or vacancy. And decay follows long-term vacancy. Accepting decay contrasts sharply with our culture of growth and progress, as we have known since the industrial revolution. Partly because of this, 'failure' and decay are no longer a self-evident part of our system. Certainly in the Netherlands it usually does not come to the point that nothing is done, and a building slowly decays. Decay is something we experience as negative. Decay stands for degeneration. And when we talk about degeneration, we always mean decline. In other words, decay confronts us with the failure of a system, an idea, a history. Decay is impermanence. Instead of seeing empty buildings as objects that should be earned, the shelter may give rise to a different way of thinking. Instead of perceiving vacancy or imminent decay as failure, emptiness and its 'unprogrammedness' can make an important contribution to society - by allowing it and giving time and nature space, instead of fighting it. The Netherlands has extremely few unplanned places. Few magical places. Where are our 'secret gardens'? Pearls can arise in the shelter: it is up to us to recognize them and cherish them.

Time for an alternative approach

Despite the negative connotation, decay has been very attractive for centuries. The motif of the ruin is etched in our collective memory, and has inspired countless painters and poets over the centuries. The Romantic Thought - in which man is seen as part of a large system, which eventually overcomes and overgrows everything: (divine) nature - has in no way lost its validity and appeal. The classical ruins as we know them from old paintings and holidays form special habitats in the landscape. The materials used, such as lime-rich joint mortar, allow plants to thrive that do not occur in the surrounding landscape. The ruins thus form valuable oases in the landscape. Nature introduces a new, poetic, landscape layer in a building. What values arise when 'time is given space and space is given time'? This is deliberately not about yield, but about beauty, natural values and ecological values. Who have just as much, or perhaps even more, right to exist. This requires a different way of thinking, also from 'experts'. Artist Louis le Roy has influenced an entire generation with his vision:

"The contemporary urban environment is a pre-formed environment. Man is a spectator, not a participant. He lives disconnected from space and time. How can a natural system develop within this limited ecosystem of the city, a complex environment in which time is given space and space is given time. That development would mean a fundamental change that runs counter to the current structures of politics, money and rules. "

Second Nature is not a call for decay. It is a call for a different way of transformation, as an alternative to demolition: with less money, with space for time and nature, whereby a gradual process of acceptance is initiated. Second Nature is a research project that is about time, about decay and growth, about a small wilderness, about a hybrid form between architecture and landscape. About a new reality, creating a value that goes beyond what can be expressed in economic returns. So that 'green monuments' can arise, which are of value simply because they are there.

Braakliggend terrein in Genk

Lara Almarcegui, 2014

The area between the Jaarbeurslaan and Europalaan is an area that will be fallow in the coming years. This project has the conservation of a vacant lot as a goal. It let exist of a piece of land where no design has been used. Here nature can freely run its course, influenced only by wind, rain, sun, planting, spontaneous use and litter. Waste lands are unfilled places that are open to the imagination. Because they “are not”, everything remains possible and everything can be expected. Genk has several wastelands areas. But this area will stay, also when most others will be built.It will remain a place where arbitrariness and the imagination get all the space.

USE OF THE LAND

Because the site was not built and not protected by a nature reserve, the visitor still has all the options for using it. Due to the lack of boundaries, you can easily leave the paths. You can simply go there for a walk or walk the dog. But also shouting, singing and playing are allowed, you can build a tree house or occupy one already existing, create a vegetable garden ... different interpretations of the space are possible and allowed.

ECOSYSTEM

This wasteland is a green island amid motorways and waterways where the nature has been able to develop undisturbed for several decades. The terrain stands out away from other natural or urban areas parks due to the presence of three different biotopes: the swamp, the forest and the allotments. The mutual struggle and mixing of these three biotopes generates a unique habitat. Originally, the area was a swamp with a typical bank vegetation. Through the canalization of the Stiemerbeek became the site drained and the authentic habitat disappeared. On the one hand, the planting of a forest accelerated poplars dehydrate the soil and the other enriched the leaves of the poplars also the soil quality so that it grows bushes and nettles. For about the entire length of the river there is a row of trees of American Cherry developed autonomously. However, the developing of these trees is threaten to affect the entire area. Local residents created there, numerous allotment gardens laid out on the grounds, almost all of which since it’s been abandoned. The

allotment gardeners have an ingenious channel system built to avoid that the river water mixes with the swamp water. We find spread out on the property as well wild rose bushes, strawberries and plum trees from the abandoned vegetable gardens.

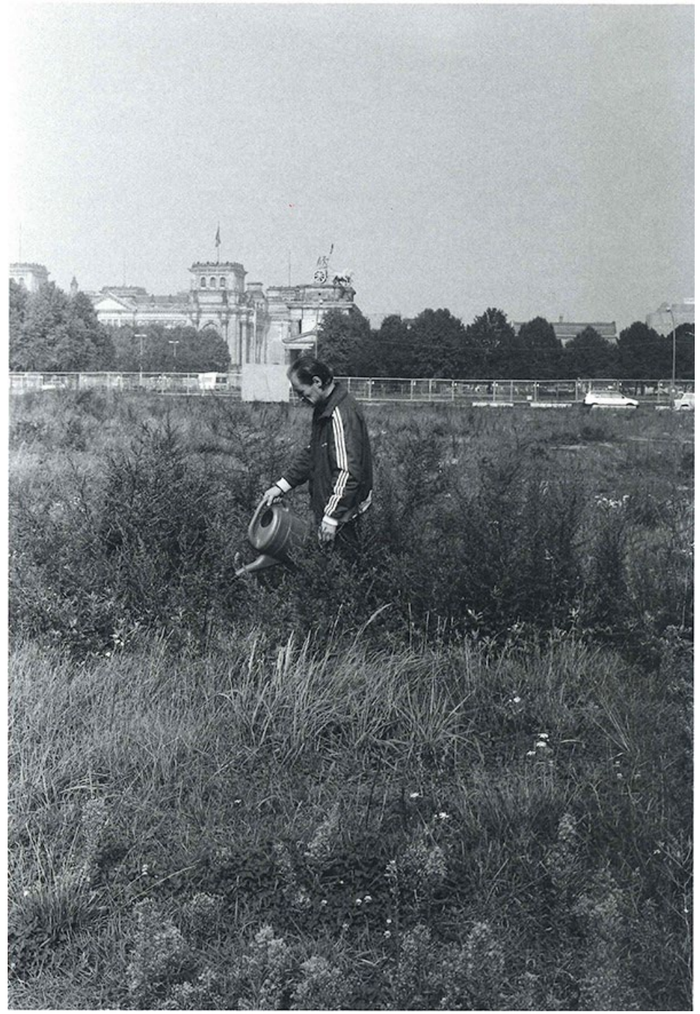
A WALK ON THE LAND

On the Jaarbeurslaan, just behind the Stiemerbeek, you will find the entrance to the site. On both sides of the path that splits further are acacias. All paths lead to the zone where the allotment gardens located. Only one of them is maintained, other vegetable gardens have been abandoned and feral. You will find water reservoirs, benches and sheds abandoned from recuperated materials. Everything is gradually becoming overgrown through the vegetation of the three biotopes. All around the original allotments you will find several channels and a swamp. To the site from here you have to leave despite the bridges present jump in different places. Along the swamp grows reed, alder, willow and the typical swamp vegetation. This section refers strongly to the character from a nature reserve, but the surrounding ruins break through the idyll. Behind the poplar forest there is another lagoon that is located in the authentic state before the reclamation of the terrain. On the bike paths that surround it the soil is visibly poorer and grow a variety of flowers.

Lois Weinberger: The Three Ecologies

Tom Trevor, March 9, 2014

There is a photograph by Lois Weinberger of a typical run-down area of urban space – an abandoned parking lot perhaps – in which the rectangular concrete slabs that were once employed to flatten and 'subdue' the earth have been split apart and bisected by a long line of wild plants, vigorous and healthy-looking, in full flower. The urgency of growth, of reaching up to the sun, has driven these humble botanic insurgents up through the solid surface of the city, tilting and cracking the concrete cap imposed upon them like some inconsequential crust. We know these vegetable subversives all too well. They are the ever-present underclass of the plant world, the 'multitude' constantly threatening to rise up and disrupt the orderly regime of the city. If the persistence of their insurgency represents the irrepressible life force that drives the growth of plants, often in direct confrontation with the fantasy of order and stability imposed by human society, then this is the same radical, destabilizing energy that flows through the work of Lois Weinberger. Weinberger has described his practice as being "against the aesthetics of the Pure and the True, against the ordering forces." He is a champion of "PLACE / WHERE THE LIVING REVEALS ITSELF ABOVE THE ORDERLY."The 'living' is in a permanent state of transition, it is a dynamic principle of flux, and Weinberger's interventions, sometimes referred to as 'gardens', simply take the form of a "perfectly provisional area"3 where greenness is left to enact its inexorable cycle of growth and decay, heedless of human society.



Stalker

Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979

Paradise

Hamed Khosravi, 2011

The word Paradise, as the very image of a celestial garden, ultimately entered most European languages (cf. French paradis, German Paradies, Italian paradiso, Latin paradisus) via Greek παραδεισος [paradeisos]. However, its Persian origin is more of a political concept rather than its later (religious) derivations. Etymologically, the very root of the word can be traced in the Old Persian term pairi-daêzã. It is combined of two parts: 'pairi' (cf. Sanskrit pari, Greek περι), which literally means 'around', and 'daêzã' as 'pile or heap'. The second part, however, is the origin of the words "دز" [dezh] or 'diza', in modern Persian all stand for 'fort' or 'enclosure'. 'Daeza' also has another root in the Indo-Iranian verb 'dhaizh' that originally means 'to construct out of earth', and the noun 'dhaizha', 'that which has been built out of earth'.

This definition implies on the presence of the 'wall' constructed out of earth; a fortified space surrounded by formidable walls. It exactly matches the Persian translation of the Avestan word 'pairi-daêzã' (in Vendidad, Fargard 3 sec. 18) as 'چينه' [chineh], which literally means 'clay wall'– used to mark a territory or land belonging to someone, like the wall of a garden, village or a city. It implicitly indicates the non-defensive characteristics of this wall; it separates to define it. However there is an historical and archaeological evidence of topological differences between this kind of border and the defensive wall. This 'enclosed estate' occurs only once in the entire Avesta, but that occurrence is an extremely significant one. It is where Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord/ God) describes an earthly place: There, on that place, shall the worshippers of Mazda erect an enclosure, and therein shall they establish him with food, therein shall they establish him with clothes, with the coarsest food and with the most worn-out clothes. That food he shall live on, those clothes he shall wear, and thus shall they let him live, until he has grown to the age of a Hana, or of a Zaurura, or of a Pairishta-khshudra.

This can be summarised in three points: paradise literally (and originally) means 'walled (enclosed) estate;' it insists on the idea of the wall as the 'divider of space' when it defines what does and what does not belong to the dominant power (the owner). The wall here is not a defensive wall; the word 'daeza' is literally rooted in a verb that means 'to construct from the earth' or 'to be made of clay'. It divides and separates therefore it produces space. The original description of paradise in the Avesta explicitly illustrates an image of an earthly place. "It signifies and has the sense of a dwelling place, earthen enclosure, of those intimately associated with death:" the place where you should eat and wear clothes, the place that you should live in: the city.

This idea of city for the Persians was firmly bound to the ultimate goal of creation, which according to Mazdaean-Zoroastrian ideology is 'happiness for mankind' (cf. Old Persian šiyāti martyahyā); the word šiyāti (happiness) appears in Modern Persian as شادی [šādi].It is the divine power (the sovereign state, the emperor),which should re-establish this happiness throughout the empire by literally constructing the perfect model. This 'ideal state of peace", appears in the form of the walled estate, by preventing the main three evil forces: enemy, lie and famine. It is in a way the restoration of the ideal moment of creation. Therefore, Paradise is "a space of re-creation in the most precise and most profound sense. The surviving descriptions of paradeisos consistently emphasize their exquisite beauty, their abundance of water, and the profusion of plants and/or animals with which they were filled: that is, the elements which constitute the sustenance—and, more important—the happiness of mankind." Consequently, Paradise becomes an apparatus to divide the evil form the good, enemy from friend and the city from the rest of the territory, to fundamentally build the state of well-being. Thus, it becomes the archetype of power to expand the empire, to expand peace and happiness in such an extent that "the earth would become part of the empire, the empire would become paradise."

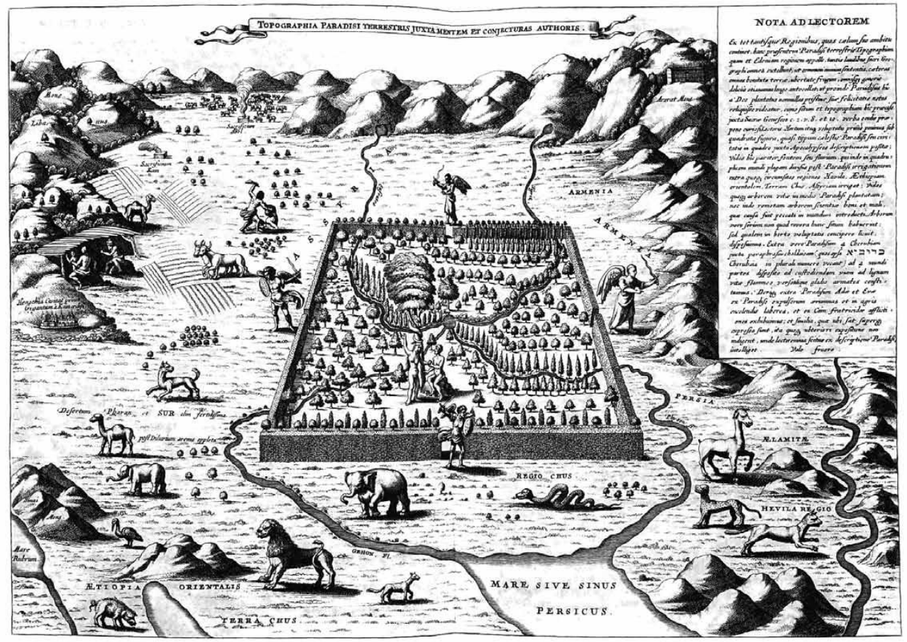
Paradise as a Garden

The quest for the most privileged place to live is usually associated with the idea of Paradise. However, the conventional understanding of the word–Paradise as the sacred garden–does not resemble any earthly dimension. While through these searches the idea of the terrestrial Paradise has been differentiated from its celestial image, these two dimensions still overlap in some crucial narratives. The very root of the word pairi-daêzã, nevertheless, does not carry any image of a holy secured garden. However, it is extensively promoted and supported by religious beliefs. Jewish, Christian and Islamic texts have signified Paradise as the utmost sacred and protected place. It has been mostly described as the place which has been promised to the righteous and faithful people as the reward after their death. These narratives employ the most ambitious earthly elements to illustrate the heavenly scene, offering geographical codes which indicate some possible historical locations in which the holy garden was actualized.

In one of the strongest physical representations in Athanasius Kircher's Arca Noë the earthly image of Paradise is illustrated as a walled domain located between the rivers of Tigris and Euphrates in the Mesopotamian-Persian territory. It is formed as an enclosed square-shaped estate; four gates, which are guarded by four angels, face the cardinal directions. In the middle of the domain two bodies of water meet and the Tree of life is located. It is where Adam and Eve are illustrated by the Tree of knowledge positioned in the bottom-left corner of the Terrestrial Paradise.

The image, apparently, follows the description of the Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis. Originally, it is in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, in which for the first time the idea of paradise coincided with the image of garden. J.F. Driscoll (1912) in the Catholic Encyclopaedia under the term 'Terrestrial Paradise' writes: "The association of the term [Paradise] with the abode of our first parents does not occur in the Old Testament Hebrew. It originated in the fact that the word paradeisos was adopted, though not exclusively, by the translators of the Septuagint to render the Hebrew for the Garden of Eden described in the second chapter of Genesis. It is likewise used in diverse other passages of the Septuagint where the Hebrew generally has 'garden', especially if the idea of wondrous beauty is to be conveyed."

One of these comes in the Song of Solomon, roughly contemporary with Xenophon, which describes a royal garden in fabulously sensual language and images: "a large and beautiful paradeisos, possessing all things that grow in the various seasons" and another as "a large and beautiful paradeisos, shaggy with all kinds of trees." In fact, it was by the Greek authors which the image of Persian (or in that time Achaemenid) pairi-daêzã represented as an exotic planted oasis. However due to the hostile landscape of the Persian territory, pairi-daêzã (the city) was an exceptional estate. Various trees, animals and irrigation system are parts of the microcosmic model of the imperial economy, where all manner of goods and resources flowed from the provinces to the center. The wall (pairi-daêzã) can be re-evaluated as the managerial tool in which the central power uses to define the territory.



Topographia Paradisi Terrestris,
Atanasius Kircher, 1675.

Fraternité ouvriéres de Mouscron

Accattone N. 6, 2019. Drawings by Eva LeRoi.

Les Fraternites ouvrieres is an association created by Josine and Gilbert Cardon in 1969 at their home, Rue Charles-Quint in Mouscron. Today it represents several fruit and vegetable gardens, free gardening courses and a grain library of nearly six thousand varieties of seeds. Their garden at home is a narrow jungle, a truly experimental garden maintained by Gilbert until recently. All permaculture lovers in the north of France and Belgium, all those who want to join the social and natural aspect of gardening come to this place, to rub shoulders with Gilbert's pugnacious spirit and his lush garden.1 On 6 June 2019 we visited the garden with artist Eva Le Roi, whom we challenged to represent the wilderness of nature in contrast with the clear lines of the architecture she is used to illustrate. She created a series of five black and white drawings, here reproduced at their original scale. Ignace Bruneel, an old friend of Gilbert who gives regular courses on gardening, led us through the garden, permaculture, domestic economy and seeds.

'If you have a greenhouse, put large cans of water in there,' Ignace explains as we step into their Californian greenhouse. 'There are two advantages to this: one it will moderate the climate inside and two, you will a lways have water at the right temperature for your seedlings. Water that is one degree colder or warmer can inflict great stress on young shoots, causing them to attract fungus.' 'Ah yes,' he exclaims as he opens another door, 'here we have the seedling room for the plants that can't take the cold very well ... Except the tomatoes.' He shuts the door and lead us back into the garden. 'Apricot trees, kiwis, khakis, in the garden there is a Little bit of everything you need. Gilbert, over there - Ignace points - is sitting under a Triloba lemon tree. It gives very small fruits but it's a type of lemon tree that can handle down to minus 30 degrees; we have grafted all our citrus on thi tree.' A rich leafy tree meets the eye as we follow Ignace's finger in the air as he continues 'There above the chestnut trees we have a European walnut, and here we have an American one, you can see the difference if you look at the nuts and the bark. One for us, another for biodiversity! Almost everything here is edible. The mulberry tree produces small fruits, which look like blackberries and we pick its leaves to feed the silkworms. Over here we used to have a square of pear trees but then we planted all kinds of cherry trees. They are grafted onto a rootstock that keep them small, three or four metres maximum. And here you have lemons hanging down.' We are surrounded by fertile mass, in parts unruly in parts humbly serving our walk 'Here is the original undergrowth even if the whole garden is becoming undergrowth, here especially it has become difficult to grow vegetables because the foliage blocks out too much of the Light. The undergrowth is oriented northeast to cut off cold winds and ensure a proper microclimate. Gilbert planted smaller types of aJl the fruit trees on that side - plums, cherries and so on - to make a barrier against the cold winds. Then he noticed that the wind was blowing under the crowns. With lines of raspberries and gooseberries the wind was definitely stopped ground level. There was a difference of three or four degrees.' 'Here, see the apricot trees invaded by a vine, brambles, of course.' Ignace turns and adds, 'In this garden there are 400 varieties of apple trees and 250 pear trees, serving both biodiversity and taste, following Gilbert's principle: striving to have as many varieties as possible from the same family, whether fruits, vegetables or trees.'

Patterns in the garden are as organic as its visual appearance- we ask if the different varieties are grouped together but Ignace shakes his head and says they are pread around

'The garden was never designed, it evolved over a period of 50 years, it's the work of a half life. In the early 1980's there were a lot of vegetables here, and there were fruit trees at each end because at the time Gilbert had a large family to feed. Now there is only the two of them, but since that time he has continued to develop his urge for trying thingd. So every time he found a new variety of apple tree, he would buy it and look for a place in the garden to plant it'.

Gilbert is a real collector of species ... we follow Ignace further through the greenery and onto a little bridge

'The pond here is important for biodiversity too; in and around we have amphibians, insects and birds. It's important to give them water; they won't come and eat as much fruit if they have that. Wasps come too. We should be nicer to wasps, they are important carnivores that level the amount of insects ad pollinate just as much as bees.' 'Oh, and this is wild hop.'

We look at the plant Ignace points out but it's impossible to tell what's wild or not: the symbiosis is complete, at least for un untrained eye

'What is important for Gilbert is to see how plants evolve- to observe them. It is not a productive garden. There is a lot, but a lot goes back to nature, to the ground. It is didactic, and it is also very difficult fo Gilbert to pick a salad; he prefers to see it grow. The garden is never laboured, it is only cut; nothing is ever ripped out of the ground.

In this way the roots remain in the soil, letting air and water circulate easily. Gilbert hasn't used any fertilizer in the garden for 40 years. He started at the age of 35 by reading, listening and experimenting by himself and with the help of all the people who have passed by over the years. He's a self-taught man.'

The self-taught man and the self reigned garden ... is a wild plant the opposite of a domestic plant?

'Wild plants come naturally. They are plants no one has sown.' As if considering their use, he continues: 'But everything that has been alive becomes fertilizer.'
'Look, a peach tree, a vine peach, that comes from a peach pit, it lets the light through, so you can put a vegetable garden underneath ... and here an almond tree ... Let's keep going a little further.'
'Ah, gooseberries, when left alone, can climb five meters high.'

In the midst of the domestic wilderness we stop in front of a drystone wall.

'We are interested in giving cavities to insects and other animals, for example provide voids underneath for the hedgehogs ... and the top as a seedling table. The Hosts here are eduble plants ... and look here the gooseberries hanging above our heads.' 'The garden is never watered: the plants are forced to go deep down with their roots. In my own greenhouse I never water the tomatoes, for example. I don't have to because when i plant tomatoes I make a deep hole, about 25 cm, that I fill with water and cover with wild herbs.

The Garden Of Mouscron.