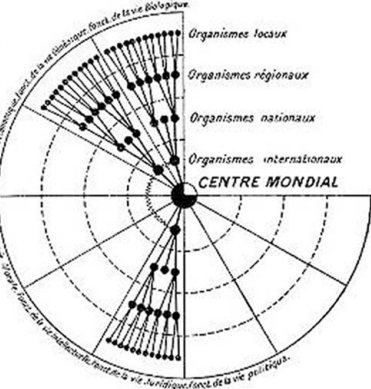


Architecture & Modernity//The Public Realm//studio Brussels
BRUSSELS MUNDANEUM//THE EUROPEAN ARCHIVE.
 RUTGER Aaftink//1311093//10.07.2009//P5

Mundaneum//INFORMATION IDEOLOGIE



The original intentions to invent a system containing all human knowledge and make it accessible to anyone, has a very utopian character to it. Especially at the beginning of the last century, when the Belgian Industrialist Paul Otlet, made an attempt to make this dream come true: the start of the Mundaneum.



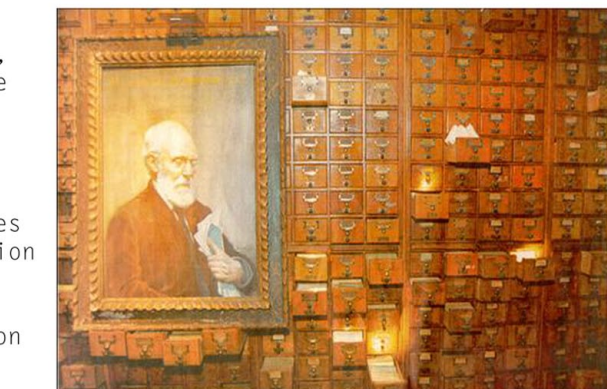
Otlet was aware of the fact that the success of his project fully depended on a classification system. With the technical means of his time and lifetime of work dedicated to information science, the final Mundaneum should be a massive building filled with human history accessible through a mechanical database.



Although the intentions to collect the world in one place did not disappear, Otlets attempt was predestined to fail due to current state of technology and the physical impossibilities of his ideal. An impressive amount of 12 million information cards were created, but that was just a small piece of what Otlet had in mind.



Otlet was convinced his ideal eventually came true, and it did. Unaware of the immense technological developments that would follow, Otlet became the ideological forefather of the internet. With databases like Wikipedia, Otlets vision is now a digital reality, but lost its physical meaning. Leaving 12 million cards as a monumental leftover of a ideal.



A contemporary interpretation of a mundaneum is twofold:
 1. Brussels, als the capital of Europe is a mundaneum in itself. The European quarter should be transformed into a visible, public representation of its purpose, integrated within its historical context.
 2. The Mundaneum has lost its meaning as a physical carrier of information. What is left is a collection of documents and objects from different pasts, stacked on top of eachother as a monument for cooperation. The monument itself becomes a building for new culture in the form of exhibitions spaces, carried by the archive.

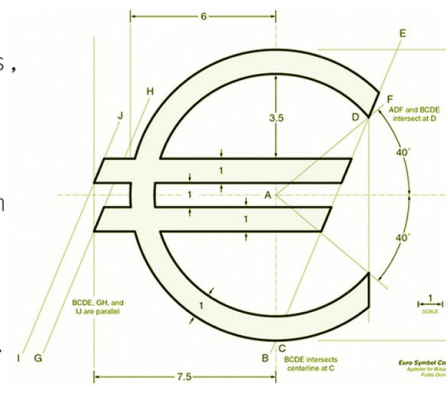
Mundaneum//BRUSSELS



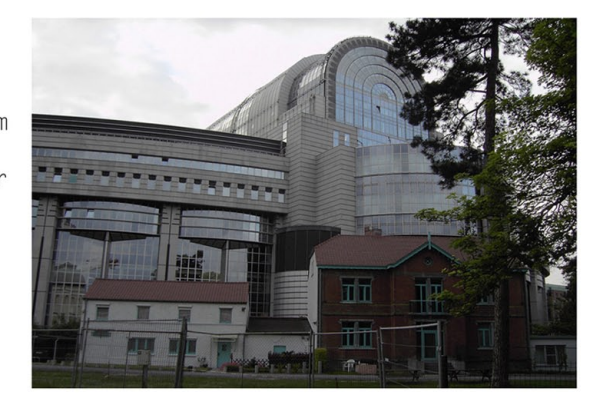
Otlets heritage has been integrated in everyday life, leaving open the question of the physical Mundaneum. Is there today still a purpose for the physical storage of human history? The question of the Mundaneum can still be relevant. If we look at its meaning in a broader sense, how can a physical object, building or city still deal with ideas of the Mundaneum? how can Brussels?



The answer can be found in the current meaning of Brussels, not as the capital of Belgium, but as (a potential) capital of Europe. The idea that Brussels should be the centre of the European Union, has been a struggle, and now that Brussels is the capital of Europe, the way this ideal is implemented within the city forms another ongoing struggle.



But within this struggle, the meaning of the Mundaneum arise again, although in a different form. When a mundaneum is defined as a collection of differences, brought together on one place, the idea of the European Union is exactly that, and Brussels as a whole becomes a Mundaneum.



But the ideal of Europe is still not defined in itself, nor is its part of Brussels. Europe is work in progress, and Brussels European quarter represents that: an incoherent group of buildings within an existing historical context. Europe is an undefined and invisible test case on global and local level, this should be turned around making use of a contemporary form of a Mundaneum.



The European quarter currently is built up not as a center of investment activities, but as a center of investment activities, based on the existing historical context, and the idea of a European quarter. The idea of a European quarter is not a new idea, but a re-interpretation of the existing public space, which should be transformed into a public space, which is not only a public space, but also a public space, which is not only a public space, but also a public space.

As a counterweight to the political meaning of Europe, the European quarter must be a public program, and public program that is not only a public program, but also a public program, which is not only a public program, but also a public program.

