Research on New Towns
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New towns of the modernist experiment: expectations and experience

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Michelle Provoost is the author of many publications in national and international magazines; she lectures in varous European countries and teaches regularly at Academies of Architecture. www.thenewtown.nl

Summary

New towns of the modernist experiment: expectations and experience

The research project 'The New Town' focuses on the modernistic satellite cities and urban extensions erected all over the world in the post-war period these were the idealistic and pragmatic answer to population growth, war damage, colonization and housing shortage after World War II. The project is an initiative of Crimson and will be coordinated by the office and a variety of researchers will be incorporated in the project: not only architectural historians, but a network of sociologists, architects, urban planners, photographers, politicians, writers and cineasts will contribute as 'foreign correspondents' to the knowledge on 'The New Towns' worldwide. The three main topics are: the original concept and planning, the development since and the influence of local culture and way of living and lastly the future plans for redevelopment. In 2009 the project will be presented in a publication and a (travelling) exhibition, accompanied by a symposium, workshops and design seminars.

This article will provide a glimpse into the New Town project, a research and design project Crimson has been working on for about two years now. It uses a very specific definition of a new town, namely the modernist cities that were built and designed from scratch in the post war period from 1945 to 1975. The sub-heading of the project is 'Past, present and future of the new towns'. Consequently it consists of three different parts:

The past is evidently the most traditional type of research for architectural historians. It starts by analysing the origins of the post war new towns, and traces them back to the pre-war ideas of Howard, Stein and Perry, Christaller and others. This part of the research is aimed at identifying the DNA which all those modernistic satellite cities, new towns and large urban extensions share.

The present is where it becomes interesting. After the urban planners left in the 1960's these new towns have been lived in and used by their inhabitants. They have been adjusted to changes and they have been subject to political and social influences. The instances where the projection of the planners coincides with the local culture of these new towns are rare. This is the subject of our research: the relation between the unplanned on the one hand and the symbolic and representative functions of architectural planning and concepts like collectivity, the neighbourhood unit and the housing unit on the other hand.

The third part is the future. At the moment these new towns are all more or less the same age and therefore experience common problems connected with ageing, even if they are situated in very different parts of the world. They are partly worn out, partly outdated, partly still beautiful. However, the solutions of the policy makers for the modernization of those cities are extremely different and

this is a reason for comparing them. This project can be used as a stage for all designers and policy makers of those cities to come together, discuss their views and exchange ideas. The project is therefore explicitly meant to be an instrument of exchange for cities all over the world, in order to develop design solutions to common problems.

Of course one could ask: why is this important? In Hoogvliet we experienced that at the moment there is not enough reflection about the renewal of these post war new towns. The policy of the designers is often one of large scale renewal: once again blueprints for an unknown future. While many scholars study the original concepts of the modernist designers, the current state of both the physical and social aspects of these new towns remains largely out of focus.
This means that whenever one hears about new towns it is usually in a negative way: riots,

poverty, unemployment and so on. This results in large scale demolition, large scale renewal, tabula rasa plans and other concepts that completely ignore possible qualities of these cities and the urban culture they have developed. Our goal is to put a spotlight on a culture that has developed in the new towns and to use this for their renewal and future.

This research project was initiated by Crimson, but we are not the only ones to execute it. We are building an international network of researchers, scientists, artists, photographers and film makers. The website accompanying the project is used as a platform for the whole network of 'foreign correspondents', as we call them. On this website you can also see the first results of the case studies, of which Toulouse-Le Mirail is one, but also Baghdad in Iraq, 23 Enero in Venezuela, Teheran in Iran, Reston in the USA, Islamabad in Pakistan, Rourkela in India and a number of others. There

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is also a database in which we have gathered all relevant information. This has been growing slowly over the last couple of years. Until now it contains almost 1,700 new towns, all dating back to the period between 1945 and about 1980.

Our New Towns research started with a project we have done in Hoogvliet. This is a typical satellite city of the 1960's with high-rise buildings in a green environment in a repeated orthogonal pattern.

1. Hoogvliet

As illustration 1 shows, Hoogvliet used to look like a very optimistic, modern environment, as was envisaged by the planners. Unfortunately it has deteriorated since, resulting in large scale demolition and the replacement of one third of the houses, which is not uncommon for cities like this. Also not uncommon is the fact that this replacement always follows the same pattern: high-rise replaced by single family houses and social housing replaced by privately owned houses.

Our project, which was called WiMBY! (Welcome In My Back-Yard!), was to respond to this sort of standard reconstruction project with a number of alternative projects which were added to the regular reconstruction. Thereby they formed a sort of 'acupuncture' of about 20 projects, aimed at making use of Hoogvliet's qualities, both in a social and physical sense. At the same time the inhabitants' initiatives, which already existed in Hoogvliet, were turned into interesting architectural projects, in order to improve the future of this new town.

Hoogvliet is not unique: there are actually about a 1,000 'Hoogvliets' all over the world. You can find them in Australia, in North Korea, in communist countries, in capitalist countries, in countries very remote form each other. When we discovered this fascinating pattern we decided to turn it into a project: a project to research Hoogvliet's extended family.

What these towns have in common are the principles which date back to Howard and his three magnets of country, town and town-country, i.e. the intermediate, the best of both worlds between town and country. We also encounter his ideas about ordering a city centre in a specific hierarchical way with housing districts surrounding it. The hierarchical ordering, the infrastructure which separates neighbourhoods, the neighbourhood unit, all these ingredients in different shapes and designs are found in new towns all over the world.

Looking across the border, one of the first things that struck us was the extent of the influence of the modernist planning idea. Right after the war there was an enormous boost in the London new towns movement, which resulted in a large spread of that same type of new town around the world. This export has become one of the themes of the New Town project.

Other themes are the effect of decolonisation, the creation of new independent states, the effect of development policies and of hydroelectric damming, which, particularly in Africa and Asia, generated hundreds of new towns and villages.

A very good exponent of this export phenomenon is Constantinos Doxiadis. He is a very well known figure outside Europe and in Greece, but not so well known in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, he is the best example of the export of modernist urban planning to third world countries. How did this come into being and what were the reasons for this export? The answers are quite revealing about the symbolic and political issues

2. *Constantinos Doxiadis*

involved in new town planning.

Constantinos Doxiadis *(ill.2)* was very strongly connected to an American foundation called the Ford foundation. They were a very powerful combination of vision and money. They had an intense relationship with long-lasting consequences for developing countries in the Middle East and Africa. Their cooperation shows how the so-called neutral introduction of large scale development urban planning was anything but neutral. In fact it was heavy with promises of freedom, democracy and prosperity and loaded with ideals of community and emancipation. This was at the end of the 1950's and the beginning of the 1960's.

In the polarized atmosphere of those days, at the height of the cold war, there was not a single American institution not cooperating with the 'war on communism'. The State Department, the CIA, the United Nations, the Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie foundations, MIT and Rice and Harvard Universities all played a role in the cultural cold war. Unravelling these intricate networks by interviewing people and going through dusty correspondence and faded microfilms has been my job as an amateur detective recently.

Constantinos Doxiadis developed an extremely hermetic, theoretical design and engineering system called 'Ekistics', the science of human settlements. It was a rational and scientific alternative to the existing historical cities with their congestion of cars and people. Instead of those, Doxiadis proposed his gridiron cities that would provide a human scale environment. It could be called soft modernism, but it had some harsh aspects. At the same time they should be able to accomodate unlimited growth of the population, money, cars and so on. In that sense they were extremely well suited to any kind of development. Doxiadis was possibly the leading exponent of the explicit application of modernist planning and design models as vehicles for freedom, peace and progress according to a Western model.

Because of his political talents he was able to form an impressive international network of many USA and UN officials, which enabled him to design and build an oeuvre his colleagues could only dream of. He probably constructed more urban substance than all his CIAM-colleagues together. In fact, after CIAM ended, he set up a conglomerate of training and research organizations as well as the Delos conferences, which were clearly meant to take over where CIAM left off. He designed and built new cities all over the world, in Ghana, Zambia, Sudan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq and the US.

How was it possible that this one office built so many large scale cities around the world, while the most eminent urban planners failed? For instance: Jose Luis Sert was never able to realize any of his South American plans and Le Corbusier had to be satisfied with only one, though heroic New Town, Chandigarh. Obviously Doxiadis got to build this empire not only because of his phenomenal charisma or the qualities of his work, but most of all because of the American support he received.

That support came mostly from a New York institution, the Ford Foundation: it is a private foun-

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dation established in the 1930's by Henry Ford himself, and was remodelled in 1950, during the cold war, to extend its activities outside the USA. Its main goals were formulated under the leadership of Paul Hoffman, formerly the coordinator of the Marshall plan in Europe. In that capacity he befriended Doxiadis, who allegedly used his last dime to show Hoffman Greek hospitality by throwing a party in Athens with a semi-authentic group of Greek dancers.
This proved to be a dime well spent. Hoffman led the Ford Foundation on an ambitious quest for world peace, aiming to better the world by educating the ignorant, increasing their so-called "intellectual capacity and individual judgement" and easing them into democratic western civilization.
They tried to achieve these noble goals mostly by investing in educational institutions, school building and agricultural modernization programs. Although urban planning was definitely not a main priority, Ford spent

5 million dollars on Doxiadis' design and research, the largest sum they ever spent on any private party. Starting with a grant for Doxiadis' design work for the city of Karachi in Pakistan in the middle of the 1950's, Doxiadis and the Ford Foundation became a truly close couple.

This still does not explain why the work of Doxiadis in particular - and not that of Sert, Gropius or Le Corbusier - was judged to fit so well into this consensus of American politics that was symbolized by the Ford foundation. Because the Ford foundation had very strong ties to the American government and all those other institutions, one could say that in fact they were all collaborating on the same project. What qualities did the Ford Foundation detect in Doxiadis' planning that made them recognize Ekistics as a useful instrument in their cold war cultural politics? And what political goals did they attach to his urban planning?

The answer probably lies in the extremely rational character of Ekistics and the way Doxiadis promoted his work as a science. He presented the outcome of his studies and designs in grids, charts, diagrams and schemes, almost like the work of a human computer, completely objectivated, with no aesthetics or personal choices. In this precomputer era there was no possible way to approach computer work any closer.
Doxiadis was definitely not a whimsical arty architect with crayons. He was a trustworthy engineer who could deliver. His Ekistics was a visionary, but nonetheless scientific system in which local data had to be entered and the design solution followed automatically. A touch of local landscape and architecture was inevitable and necessary, but not too much, since this was in contradiction with the universal pretensions of Ekistics.

This objective and rational approach fitted well into the phi-

losophy of the Ford Foundation, which had formulated as its goal the education of non-western people into rational and sensible persons, thereby doing away with mistrust and latent violence. With this goal the Foundation exported in fact one of the most fundamental values of the USA, rational action, civilization equals rationality. And the Americans saw it as their task to raise other nations to a civilized state. When considering urban planning, it would have been hard to find an urban planning theory more rational and more suitable than Doxiadis' Ekistics.

But how to force other nations into a rational civilized state without military action? This has been a difficult question for the Americans ever since. Sometimes this went so far as to exercise control through covert operations. This was indicated by two friends separately asking me to look into CIA-related issues.
One put the question very bluntly: was Doxiadis a spy for

the CIA? The other question concerned a sculpture of Naum Gabo in Rotterdam. It is an abstract metal sculpture, standing on a prominent spot in the busiest shopping street of the city, right in front of a 1950's store designed by Marcel Breuer. My friend assured me that this statue had been financed by the CIA.

At first I thought that it was highly unlikely that the CIA would even bother to get involved in financing works of art in the most pro-American city of the Netherlands. But it proved that the CIA was most certainly involved in manipulating the visual arts scene in Western Europe.
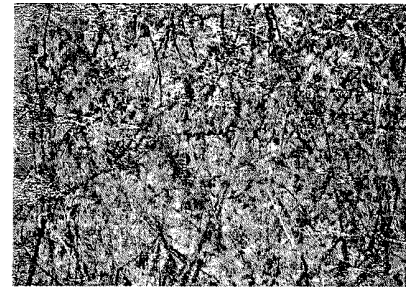
In an exciting 1999 publication the English writer Frances Saunders explained how the CIA perceived an inherent danger in the traditionally leftist art scene in Europe, and feared that they might adopt the communist ideology. They were convinced that, in order to safeguard European culture, it was necessary to win over the cultural and intellectual elite, since they would be in charge of the future. To this end a "Kulturkampf" started immediately after the war, right in the middle of the rubble of post war Berlin, with both the Soviet and allied side competing in a frenzy of concerts, reading rooms, recitals, film showings and art exhibits.

This cultural manipulation was institutionalized in 1950, when the CIA founded the Congress for Cultural Freedom, just a few years after Truman's doctrine and the launch of the Marshall Aid plan. Together they formed a parallel set of political, economical and cultural measures to prevent Europe from slipping to 'the other side'. The mission of the Congress was to nudge the intelligentsia of Western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism towards a view more accommodating to 'the American way'.

It was a 'battle for men's minds', fought by the Congress with the help of an assorted group of radicals and artists, most of them disappointed in Stalin's totalitarian USSR. They were musicians, writers, painters, actors and included well-known names like George Orwell, Jean Paul Sartre and Jackson Pollock. The Congress organized an impressive cultural offensive, publishing magazines in many different countries and languages all over Europe and the third world. They had 27 offices around the world, organizing a flood of exhibitions of American painters (many in cooperation with MoMa), concerts and congresses.

Especially the position of Jackson Pollock and his fellow abstract expressionists is fascinating: they were adopted as the new cultural mascot of the USA by the Congress, much against the grain of the prevailing taste in that country. But to the Congress the abstract expressionists embodied all virtues an art movement needed to project a new image of America to the old

3. Pollock's painting radiated the ideology of freedom, social realist painting was boy scout and traditional.

European countries; an image that would steer away convincingly from the stereotyped idea of Americans as 'culturally barren, a nation of gum-chewing, Chevy-driving philistines' and would present the American culture as vital and superior to Soviet culture.

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To the American elite Pollock's painting radiated the ideology of freedom *(ill. 3)* and of free enterprise. It was non-figurative and politically silent, it was the very antithesis to socialist realism. Pollock was new, active, and energetic, while social realist art was stiff, rigid and reproducing historical styles. Abstract expressionism was seen
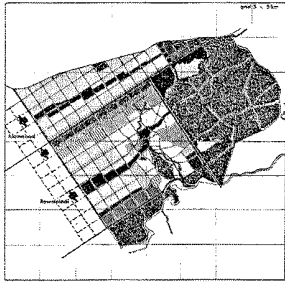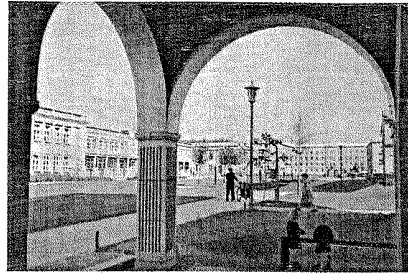

4. The work of Doxiadis was the complete opposite of social realist urban planning and architecture.

as a specifically American invention conquering the world, replacing the old centre of the arts, Paris, with New York. Also Pollock was exactly the right person to oppose the boy scout Soviet painters, who were obediently portraying the collective communist values. Pollock was

a real, masculine and rough American, and a drunk moreover, which was regarded as a proper asset for an artistic figurehead.

Now, returning to Doxiadis and urban planning: although the Congress for Cultural Freedom did not have architecture or urban issues as a priority, Doxiadis was among the very few architects involved in the activities of the Congress. In their important 1955 congress in Milan he was one of the lecturers, speaking about the 'Economic progress in underdeveloped countries and the rivalry of democratic and communist methods'. In

1960 he was a member of a select group that attended the congress on the New Arab Metropolis, together with Hassan Fathy, then a member of his office. These CIA initiated congresses were paid for by Ford. Of course Doxiadis' involvement in the congress does not prove that he was a CIA-agent, but it does allude to a hypothesis on the meaning of his work for the CIA and the Ford Foundation. This would explain their strong preference for Doxiadis' work.

So, in my opinion, to the Americans of the Ford foundation and the CIA Doxiadis was as much a mascot in the field of urban planning as Jackson Pollock was in the art scene. Whereas Pollock was the antidote to social realist painting, the work of Doxiadis was the complete opposite of social realist urban planning and architecture *(ill. 4)*. Until the arrival of Khrushchev at the end of the 1950's, the social realist USSR cities after the war strongly showed the mark of Stalinist planning. Up to 1,000 New

Towns were built all over the enormous country, using a well known and historical repertoire both in urban planning and in architecture. The vista, the axe, the square, the closed housing block, the monumental, palazzo inspired architecture; they all evoked an urban image aspiring to be recognizable and familiar to the common people.

While Pollock proposed a completely new direction in painting, and freed himself from historical precedents and iconography, Doxiadis' Ekistics posed a completely new system in urban planning. He liberated it from formal design and replaced it by organizing the urban area in ever enlarging grids and systems, eliminating monumental composition and replacing it with schemes for unlimited growth and change.
The neighbourhood unit, known from the English New Towns, was stretched and repeated and put in an endless spaced-out grid, until every reference to existing urban settings had vanished.

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Ideologically it was important that the state imposed collectivism of social realist planning was replaced by an emphasis on bottom-up communities.

Moreover, the ideas of change and growth without boundaries and of technological solutions for every possible problem, from demographic growth to energy shortage to pollution to economic backwardness to ethnic and social unrest, all this made Doxiadis' vision the perfect vehicle for the development ideology of the USA.
His studies could pave the way for a different lifestyle, western, efficient and peaceful, and help the third world countries to become rational civilizations and to grow towards a well deserved autonomy. In this sense it is not an exaggeration to call Doxiadis' work part of western cultural and economic imperialism in the developing countries.

The focus of Doxiadis' work was on the Middle East. Of course, the Middle East was located right

below the soft underbelly of the USSR and therefore a main stage for Cold War activities. It was virtually a playground for American architects in the 1950's.

Doxiadis did a lot of work in Iraq. Amongst others he made

5 and 6. Extension plan for Baghdad, Sadr City, by Constantinos Doxiadis.

the plan for Baghdad *(ill. 5 and 6)*. First he was hired to design a modern national housing program, Baghdad included. And Doxiadis showed what he was capable of: practically on his own he brought in a complete ministry of housing, planning,

architecture, and architecture training.

Gropius' office was struggling to get the designs for the Baghdad University built, and only succeeded in realizing one tower twenty years later, while Frank Lloyd Wright saw his grandiose plans for the Baghdad Opera thrown out of the window when the revolutionary regime took over from King Faisal in 1958. But Doxiadis did not have any problems: his multidisciplinary team made surveys, wrote re-

ports, designed tens of thousands of houses and was able to build them as well.
Still, the official architectural history has shown a disproportionate interest in the failed designs of high profile architects like Gropius, Frank Loyd Wright and others, neglecting the far more influential work of Doxiadis.

Unknowingly everybody has seen the results of his work on CNN. By the end of the 1950's Doxiadis had built areas in Iraqi

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towns which bear the now well known names of Mosul, Basrah and Kirkuk.

The largest number of houses was realized in Baghdad, on the east bank of the Tigris; the endless repetition of square neighbourhood units is easily recognizable on any satellite image. This is the area called Sadr City.

By now Sadr City is mostly known as a nightmarish ghetto and a gruesome background for war footage. The area has been a hotbed of resistance against the Americans, inhabited by two million mostly Shia Iraqis. It consists of endless areas of low rise but high density development, with narrow alleys and cul-de-sacs, grey concrete slums and small row houses. Sadr City even has the questionable honour of being featured in a multiplayer computer war game on Internet, called Kuma War: Mission 16, Battle in Sadr City.

Sadr City was designed by Doxi-

adis as part of his 1958 master plan for Baghdad. His design follows the Ekistics rules and is practically identical to his other contemporary urban designs, be it Islamabad, Tema or Khartoum.

Doxiadis encased the historical centre of Baghdad in an orthogonal grid extending on both sides of the Tigris/Euphrates, composed of 40 sectors of some 2 square kilometres each, separated from each other by wide thoroughfares. Each sector was subdivided into a number of 'communities', with smaller neighbourhood centres and housing areas served by a network of cul-de-sacs. Each community centre consisted of a modernist composition of market buildings, public services and a mosque.

The row-housing was organized in such a way that the smallest communities each had a 'gossip square', an intimate open meeting space inspired by existing local Iraqi customs. Although these small oases could be interpreted as contextual elements,
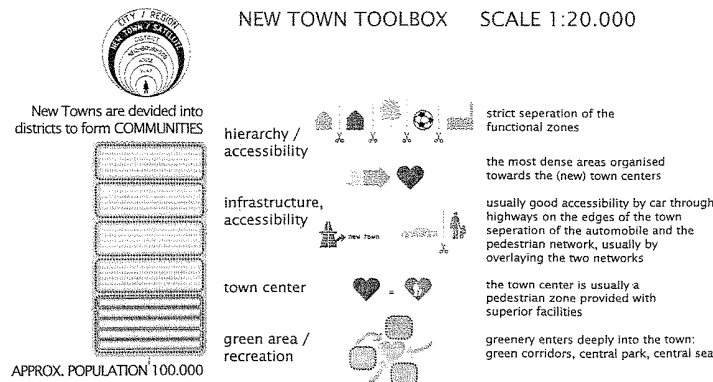
the extension of Baghdad as a whole was a generic, universal system Doxiadis thought appropriate for almost any developing city with a hot climate.
The architecture was also generic with some local touches; a restrained modernist architecture with decorated panels in a pattern slightly reminiscent of Arab motives, built with local materials, but not in any outspoken vernacular style. Local influences had a very limited, technical meaning to Doxiadis: it meant using local techniques and building methods, but it did not involve using local identity or cultural traditions.

For his American patrons and the Ford Foundation in particular, the most appealing feature of Doxiadis' plans was the emphasis on community building. Something to be avoided at any cost was the cities having an alienating effect on the millions who were often the first in their families to lead a modern urban lifestyle. After all, alienation would lead the population

to turn in frustration to communism or to revert to archaic traditions of superstition and violence. We could therefore regard the cities designed by Doxiadis with their small scale urban design of gossip squares, small streets and community centres, as precisely tuned "emancipation machines". This emancipation was part of the modernisation package, which included democratic institutions and economic reforms to create a free market.
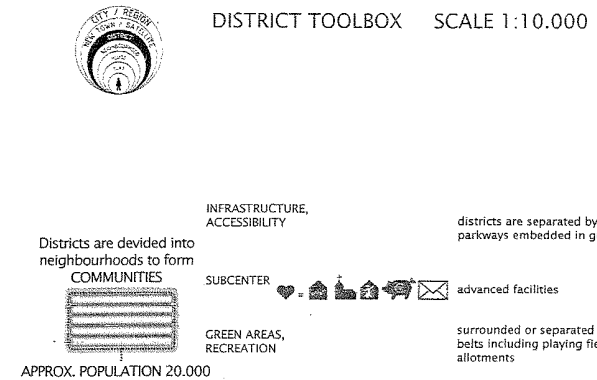
From Doxiadis as an example of our research themes we now turn to the database and the drawings we are making to analyze the case studies. Our method of visualizing the spatial analysis is demonstrated by the example of Toulouse-Le Mirail.

NEW TOWN TOOLBOX   SCALE 1:20.000

New Towns are devided into
districts to form COMMUNITIES

hierarchy / accessibility — strict seperation of the functional zones

the most dense areas organised towards the (new) town centers

infrastructure, accessibility — usually good accessibility by car through highways on the edges of the town seperation of the automobile and the pedestrian network, usually by overlaying the two networks

town center — the town center is usually a pedestrian zone provided with superior facilities

green area / recreation — greenery enters deeply into the town: green corridors, central park, central sea

APPROX. POPULATION 100.000

DISTRICT TOOLBOX   SCALE 1:10.000

Districts are devided into
neighbourhoods to form
COMMUNITIES

INFRASTRUCTURE, ACCESSIBILITY — districts are separated by wide parkways embedded in green belts

SUBCENTER — advanced facilities

GREEN AREAS, RECREATION — surrounded or separated by green belts including playing fields, allotments

APPROX. POPULATION 20.000

7. Toolbox to visualize new towns on different levels.

8. District toolbox with colours and symbols

We have developed a toolbox to describe, analyse and visualize new towns on different levels *(ill. 7)*. On the circular shape in the left corner there is the hierarchy of new town planning, starting with the city in the region, then indicating the town, the new town level, the district, the neighbourhood, the house, the flat and finally the person. For each scale we have devised symbols to describe their characteristic features. We use them in the drawings of every new town in order to make them comparable.

This illustration *(ill. 8)* shows the district. The pink-grey shape on the left represents the number of people living in the city, which is to a large degree uniform in all these new towns. The new town often has about 100,000 inhabitants, while each of the districts comprising the city has a population of 20,000. The neighbourhoods have approximately 5,000 people. Again it is the infrastructure, the neighbourhood centre and the green areas that are being analyzed and visualized.
One of the reasons why we have

systematized it as meticulously as this, is because we work with an international network. We have put the system on our website and all our foreign correspondents can just pick the manual-like documents off the web and use them in their specific countries.
Toulouse-Le Mirail is a big and impressive city, if only because it played a main role in the riots in November 2005. These riots were especially shocking because this type of modern city was meant to be a democratic, open city, encouraging a

democratic and open mentality among its inhabitants. Obviously, something went wrong...

Of course this never was the intention back in the 1960's. Toulouse-Le Mirail had been built according to a winning design by Candilis, Josic & Woods in 1962. In 1971 the Team10-meeting was held in Toulouse-Le Mirail and they had themselves pictured triumphantly in the middle of a shopping centre in the first newly developed part *(ill. 9)*. The person in the middle is George Candilis. Others are

9. Team X, gathered on the Dalle in Toulouse le Mirail, 1971.
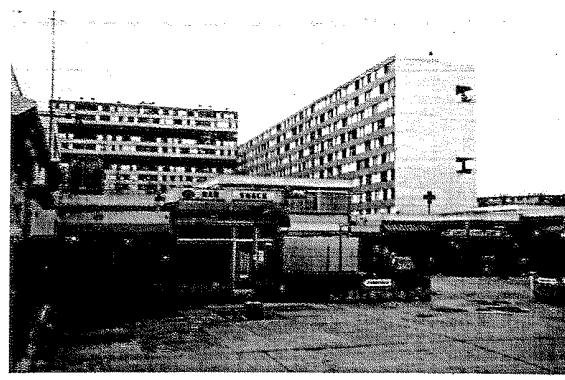

10. The same spot ten years later.

11. The same spot now.

Bakema, Giancarlo de Carlo, Peter Smithson and Aldo van Eyck. Everybody was there, celebrating the success of Toulouse-Le Mirail as an example of Team10 architectural and urban planning.

One important aspect of the Team10 mentality was not to zone the different functions of the city in a horizontal way, but to stack them and thereby create a more lively environment, with the vivaciousness and activity of traditional cities. This was aimed at by introducing an elevated street called the Dalle, which is a very important fea-

ture in Toulouse-Le Mirail. It connects all buildings and was the symbol and means of separating pedestrians from cars. Therefore the Dalle was the ideal background for the portrait of Team 10. Ten years later *(ill. 10)* the same spot had already been abandoned, and by now it has been torn down *(ill. 11)*. It is quite tragic to see what happened and it is symbolic of the demise of the ideas this city was based on. The Dalle was to have been the most lively place, the place that would replace the French square, where locals would sit and eat their croissant,

QUARTIER BELLEFONTAINE
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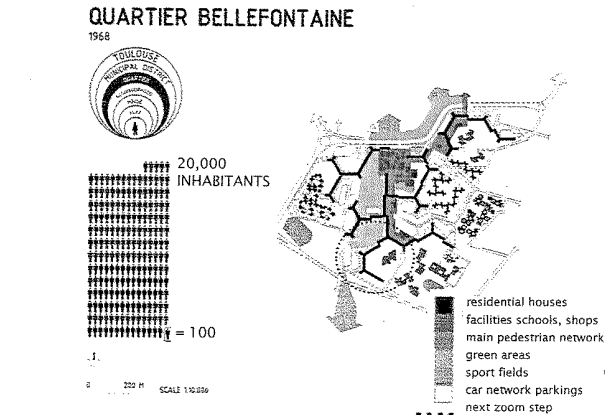
12. Plan Toulouse-Le Mirail.

where children would play and generations would mix. It is an elevated, elongated square like in a traditional city, where chil-

dren could play or ride their bicycle.

For Toulouse-Le Mirail the same analysis has been made *(ill. 12)*,

picturing the connection with the region and with its mother city Toulouse. The target population is shown, as well as the timeline. The Dalle is coloured pink, showing the large pedestrian area. On a smaller scale the interaction between the Dalle, the green and the buildings can be seen. This is the most intimate level of the neighbourhood.

Every building was accessible via the Dalle and it also had elevated streets. All elements of a traditional city were incorporated in this megastructure.

We decided to link all our data to Google Earth *(ill. 13)*, because it is a free and accessible medium for people around the world. The symbols on the Google Earth image point to the pictures that have been taken in Toulouse-Le Mirail. When clicking on them the corresponding picture and a short comment are shown. Hundreds of places have been photographed.
Furthermore, the different plans for the development of
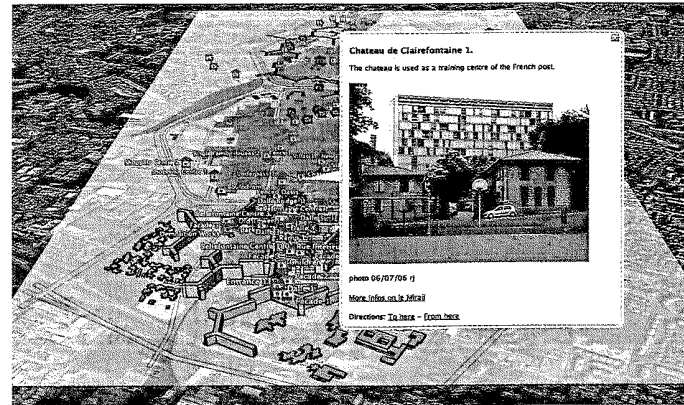
13. Presentation of Toulouse le Mirail on the website *(Google earth, original plan and present photographies)*.

14. The remnants of the former Dalle.

Toulouse-Le Mirail have been drawn as three-dimensional images and projected on the Google earth image. That way the development of the city can be seen in relation to its present situation.

The grand projet de ville, which was initiated in France in 2002, made new plans for Toulouse-Le Mirail. The most striking feature of this renewal plan is that the Dalle will be demolished. The whole principle of elevating pedestrians, while cars stay underneath, has been dropped.

The execution of this plan has proceeded quite far already. On the picture the remnants of the former Dalle *(ill. 14)* can be seen. A small part of the Dalle still exists but the lower level looks more like Baghdad than it looks like a normal city.

The grand project de ville is a plan on a very large scale, which projects a kind of ideal image of a city on something already existing. It works from a 'tabula rasa' point of view, and begins by demolishing important features of the city.
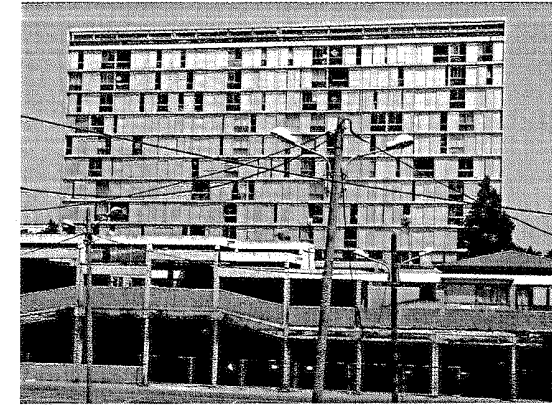
The fact that Toulouse-Le Mirail exists 40 years already has been overlooked. As a consequence, a kind of local culture and local shops and businesses have developed. However, they were developed under the Dalle *(ill. 15)*, not on top of it, as was meant by the Team10 designers. It is easy to guess why: it was too expensive to start a business on top of the Dalle.

So underneath there is a secret thriving world, which has developed during the last decades. After the demolition of the Dalle
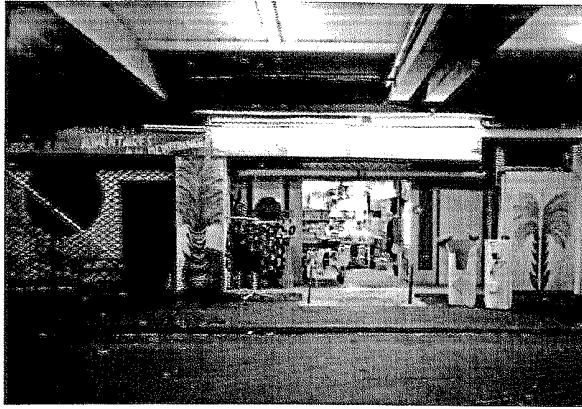
15. Businesses have developed under the Dalle.

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this part of local culture has also disappeared.

In our opinion it is a complete waste to spend all this money and create all these cultural buildings and new infrastructure while destroying the local initiatives and culture, which are, after all, at the core of this city. Using existing sources of economic and social strength should be at the core of any renewal project. New town research should focus more on initiatives like this, and on exploring the possibilities of local businesses, rather than on

old fashioned top down planning models. Hopefully this will be something we can explore through the new town platform.