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NB: Captions are mostly taken from text and presented in three languages.

## Abstract

Pierre Laconte shows that Brussels has flourished for centuries under the influences of foreign powers while simultaneously keeping a rich local culture alive. To a certain extent, the city has been determined by external forces, including foreign rulers and planning decisions made beyond its borders. Today's City of Brussels is the heart of the wider Brussels-Capital Region, comprising 19 communes, and of the Central Belgian mega-city. In this respect, Brussels is a microcosm of the present decentralized Europe. The Brussels-Capital Region is the capital of the French and the Flemish language communities, the capital of Belgium, and the host to international institutions and citizens from many nations, while being highly protective of its communes, neighbourhoods, and local traditions. By keeping the strength of its local culture, it has set an example for European unification, proving that ‘diversity in unity,’ the slogan of Europe, can actually exist. The author asserts that it is now up to Brussels to administrate its territory efficiently and to develop its urban destiny through a single regional policy, tying together European and local interests and aims.

# CHAPTER 1

## HISTORY AND PERSPECTIVES ON A CAPITAL CITY

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### Abstract

Bruxelles a pu se développer pendant des siècles sous l'influence de puissances étrangères, tout en maintenant vivace une riche culture locale. En un certain sens, la ville a été déterminée par des forces extérieures, des dirigeants étrangers, des concepts développés au-delà de ses frontières. La Ville de Bruxelles est le cœur de l'actuelle Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, qui comprend 19 communes, et de la métropole centrale belge. À cet égard Bruxelles est un microcosme de l'Europe décentralisée. Aujourd'hui la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale est soumise aux contraintes émanant des autres régions belges. Elle est la Capitale à la fois de la Communauté flamande et de la Communauté française, la Capitale de la Belgique et la ville hôte d'organisations internationales et de citoyens venus de divers pays. Mais elle maintient ses communes, ses quartiers et ses traditions. Bruxelles a été européenisée bien avant la naissance de l'Union européenne. Maintenant la vigueur de sa culture locale. Elle constitue un exemple pour l'unification européenne, prouvant que le slogan de l'Europe « diversité dans l'unité » pouvait exister. L'auteur estime que le temps est maintenant venu pour Bruxelles d'administrer son territoire efficacement et de développer ses perspectives urbaines au moyen d'une politique régionale unissant les intérêts européens et locaux.

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### Samenvatting

Hoewel ze zich eeuwenlang onder buitenlandse invloeden heeft ontwikkeld, wist Brussel steeds een rijke plaatselijke cultuur levendig te houden. In zekere zin werd de stad vormgegeven door externe krachten, vreemde leiders en concepten die over haar grenzen heen werden ontwikkeld. De Stad Brussel is het hart van het huidige Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, dat uit 19 gemeentes bestaat, en van de Belgische centrale megalopolis. Brussel is als het ware een microkosmos van het gedecentraliseerde Europa. Vandaag voelt het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest de druk van de andere Belgische gewesten op haar schouders rusten. Brussel is zowel de hoofdstad van de Vlaamse als de Franstalige gemeenschap, en die van België. Ze opent haar armen voor internationale organisaties en mensen uit allerlei landen. Maar ze blijft vasthouden aan haar gemeentes, haar wijken en tradities. Brussel was al Europees lang voor de geboorte van de Europese Unie. Zonder ooit te verzaken aan haar plaatselijke cultuur. Deze stad is een voorbeeld van Europese eenwording. Ze bewijst dat het Europese credo "diversiteit in eenheid" niet uit holle woorden bestaat. De auteur acht de tijd voor Brussel rijp om haar grondgebied op een efficiënte manier te besturen en haar stedelijke perspectieven te ontwikkelen via een regionaal beleid dat zowel de Europese als de plaatselijke belangen verenigt.

## 1. Introduction

The European Quarter occupies some 3% of Brussels Capital Region's territory, which totals 160 sq. km. Its origin is the 1958 offer of the Belgian Government to its european partners: it concerned the residential area bordering the Cinquantenaire Park, a site which was eventually extended towards Leopold Park and the Luxemburg railway station.

That whole quarter and particularly the Berlaymont building focused international attention on Brussels as Europe's political capital but it also created an image of bureaucratic boredom, which ignored the rich cultural diversity of the nearby existing neighbourhoods.

Some fifty years have elapsed since the decision on the original location. Since 1992 the status of Brussels within the network of european institutions host cities has been confirmed. The time has come for a fresh assessment of the European Quarter and its future, as well as that of other areas that could accommodate further clusters of european activity.

This assessment needs to take into account the urban history as well as the history of the country, which is very much part of its neighbours' history, because of its roundabout character and the interplay of influences on it. This retrospective, followed by plausible perspectives for enhancing its accessibility and its multicultural reality, are the main purposes of this first chapter.

## 2. Brussels before 1789\*

Since its founding, Brussels has been marked by a contrast between Uptown and Downtown. In terms of urban form, both parts of the city were shaped by foreign influences. These outside rulers often provided great development opportunities for Brussels, as exemplified by Eugene Maximilian of Bavaria's role in reconstructing the Grand Place in 1695. The most fundamental transformation of urban form occurred in the eighteenth century, when the Charles V Palace, which seated the Court of Brussels, was replaced with an entirely new district, upon a decision of the Austrian rulers.

### 2.1. Brussels Uptown: Seat of Ducal Power and the Court

The merchant city of Brussels emerged along the banks of the Senne River in the tenth century. Around the year 1000, the ducal power installed itself on Coudenberg Hill. (ILLUSTRATIONS 1 & 2-6)

These views show the location of the Court in relation to the present-day city (Place Royale). Archaeologists for the Charles V Palace Association (asbl Palais de Charles-Quint) have uncovered an underground passage from the Belvue Museum in the Royal Palace to the Beaux-Arts Palace through the former Brussels Court grounds.

In 1355, the daughter of John III, Duke of Brabant, ascended the throne. The population feared that her foreign husband, Wenceslaus of Luxemburg, would become too powerful, and they demanded increased citizen protection against the ducal power. Wenceslaus agreed to submit to these demands, thereby ensuring his peaceable acceptance, the so-called 'Joyeuse Entrée' (happy entry).



Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.

ILLUSTRATION 1: The Court of Burgundy at its height (see also 3-6). These views show the location of the Court in relation to the present-day city (Place Royale). Archaeologists for the Charles V Palace Association (asbl Palais de Charles-Quint) have uncovered an underground passage from the Belvue Museum in the Royal Palace to the Beaux-Arts Palace through the former Brussels Court grounds.

ILLUSTRATION 1: La Cour de Bourgogne à son apogée (voir aussi 3-6).

Ces vues montrent l'emplacement de la Cour par rapport à la ville actuelle (Place Royale). Les travaux récents dans l'ancien palais de Charles-Quint ont permis de réaliser un passage souterrain du Musée Bellevue vers la Place Royale et le Palais des Beaux-Arts.

AFBEELDING 1: Het Bourgondische Hof tijdens zijn hoogtepunt (zie ook 3-6).

Deze uitzichten tonen de ligging van het Hof ten opzichte van de stad van nu (Koningsplein). Door de recente werken aan het vroegere paleis van Keizer Karel V zijn het Koninklijk Paleis en het Paleis voor Schone Kunsten nu ondergronds bereikbaar vanaf het Bellevue Museum.



Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.

ILLUSTRATIONS 2: Portrait of Wenceslaus of Luxemburg.

In 1355, the daughter of John III, Duke of Brabant, ascended the throne. The population feared that her foreign husband, Wenceslaus of Luxemburg, would become too powerful, and they demanded increased citizen protection against the ducal power. Wenceslaus agreed to submit to these demands, thereby ensuring his peaceable acceptance, the so-called 'Joyeuse Entrée' (happy entry).

ILLUSTRATIONS 2 : Portrait de Wenceslas de Luxembourg.

En 1355, la fille de Jean III, Duc de Brabant, monta sur le trône. Craignant que son époux étranger, Wenceslas de Luxembourg devienne trop puissant, la population bruxelloise demanda une protection accrue des citoyens vis-à-vis du pouvoir ducal. Wenceslas accepta de se soumettre à ces demandes, assurant ainsi son acceptation pacifique, dite « Joyeuse entrée ».

AFBEELDING 2: Portret van Wenceslaus van Luxemburg.

In 1355 besteeq de dochter van Jan III, de hertog van Brabant, de troon. Uit vrees dat haar buitenlandse echtgenoot Wenceslaus van Luxemburg te machtig zou worden, eisten de inwoners van Brussel een betere bescherming ten opzichte van de hertogelijke macht. Wenceslaus stemde in met deze eisen, waardoor hij op een vredige manier werd ontvangen - de zogenaamde "Joyeuse Entrée", oftewel de "blijde inkomst".



ILL.3

Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.



ILL.4

Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.

**ILLUSTRATIONS 3-6 : The Aula Magna of Charles V, a European Symbol.**  
The Aula Magna was a symbol of the Holy Roman Empire under Charles V (the Aula Magna was constructed for Phillip the Good, the Duke of Burgundy). The Holy Roman Empire was a predecessor of a unified Europe; thus the Aula Magna might serve as a European cultural symbol for several nations. A larger structure in this neighbourhood, which dates from the sixteenth century and is situated under the current Place Royale, is currently being renovated, thanks to the support of the City and the Brussels-Capital Region.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS 3-6 : L'Aula Magna de Charles-Quint, un symbole européen.

L'Aula Magna fut un symbole du Saint Empire sous Charles-Quint (l'Aula Magna fut construite pour Philippe le Bon, Duc de Bourgogne). Le Saint Empire fut un précurseur de l'Europe unifiée ; ainsi, l'Aula Magna allait servir de symbole culturel européen à diverses nations. Une importante structure dans ce quartier, qui date du seizième siècle et qui est située sous la Place Royale actuelle, est en cours de rénovation grâce à l'aide de la Ville de Bruxelles et de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale.

#### AFBEELDINGEN 3-6 : De Aula Magna van Karel V, een Europees symbool.

De Aula Magna was het symbool van het Heilig Roomse Rijk onder Karel V. (de Aula Magna werd gebouwd voor Filips de Goede, de hertog van Bourgondië). Het Heilig Roomse Rijk was de voorloper van een verenigd Europa. De Aula Magna zou daarom voor verschillende landen als Europees cultureel symbool kunnen dienen. Een grotere structuur in deze wijk, die teruggaat tot de 16e eeuw en zich onder het huidige Koningsplein bevindt, wordt momenteel met de steun van de stad en het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest gerenoveerd.



ILL.5



ILL.6

Credit © GENERIS.

Wenceslaus agreed to submit to their demands, thereby ensuring his peaceable acceptance, the so-called 'Joyeuse Entrée' (happy entry).

In 1430, the Duchy of Brabant passed to the House of Burgundy. As a result, Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, also became Duke of Brabant. The Duke appreciated Brussels' hospitality, notably its agreement in 1431 to build the Aula Magna, a two-story, thirty metre-high assembly hall symbolizing the Duke's power and prestige. The construction of the Aula Magna can be considered the first step in the establishment of Brussels as a capital. The Duke of Burgundy developed a royal court and accumulated important collections of Renaissance art in Brussels.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 3)

Following the passage of the Duchy of Brabant to the House of Burgundy, Philip the Good, a French royal, held two titles simultaneously: Duke of Brabant and Duke of Burgundy. The Duke appreciated Brussels's hospitality, notably its agreement in 1431 to construct the Aula Magna, a thirty-metre high two-story assembly hall symbolizing the Duke's power and prestige. The construction of the Aula Magna can be considered the first step in the establishment of Brussels as a capital. The Duke of Burgundy developed a royal court and accumulated important collections of Renaissance art in Brussels.

Brussels' Burgundy period, which only lasted seventy years, was followed by a long Austrian period. After the early death of Duke Charles le Téméraire (Charles the Rash), control of the Duchy returned to the Austrian branch of the House of Habsburg: first to Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, then to his children, Philip the Handsome and Margaret of Austria, and finally to his grandson, Charles V.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 7)

Emperor Charles V was a person of unusual importance, whose precocity was reminiscent of Alexander the Great. At less than twenty years of age, he was elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, defeating his rival, King Francis I of France. Charles won the 1519 election by bribing the electors, purchasing their votes with a loan (which he never repaid) from the wealthy Fugger family.

In 1523, Charles V decided to invade Italy. At the Battle of Pavia (1525), he captured his longtime rival, François I himself, held him captive, and forced him to sign the humiliating Treaty of Madrid. Four years later, in 1527, his Huguenot troops attacked the Papal States through an alliance with Huguenots and sacked Rome. In 1530, he was officially crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Clement VII in a grandiose ceremony in Bologna. After Hungary had been taken over by the Turks (1526), the Emperor tried to coordinate the Defence of Christianity against the Ottoman Empire. The containment of Suleyman the Magnificent's armies during the siege of Vienna (1529) and in the 1532 campaign stopped Ottoman conquests in Central Europe. Simultaneously, he launched an active diplomacy with the Ottoman sultan, which lead to the conclusion of a peace treaty in 1547. To a broad extent, this fixed the frontiers of the Ottomans in Europe for 170 years. (Servantie)



*Painting by Louis Gallait (presently at the Cercle Royal Gaulois Artistique et Littéraire).*

#### ILLUSTRATION 7: Portrait of Emperor Charles V.

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#### ILLUSTRATION 7: Portrait de l'Empereur Charles V.

L'empereur Charles V fut une personne d'une importance inhabituelle, dont la précocité était une réminiscence d'Alexandre le Grand. À moins de 20 ans, il fut élu empereur du Saint Empire Romain-germanique, ayant battu son rival, le Roi François Ier de France. Charles gagna les élections de 1519 en soudoyant les électeurs, achetant leurs votes avec de l'argent provenant de la riche famille Fugger (qu'il n'a jamais remboursé).

#### AFBEELDING 7: Portret van Keizer Karel V.

Keizer Karel V was een bijzonder belangrijke persoon, en door zijn vroege rijpheid zelfs te vergelijken met Alexander de Grote. Op amper twintigjarige leeftijd versloeg hij zijn rivaal koning Frans I van Frankrijk en werd hij verkozen tot keizer van het Heilige Roomse Rijk. Karel won de verkiezingen van 1519 door zijn keurvorsten om te kopen. Hij kocht hun stemmen met behulp van een lening die hij van de rijke Fugger-familie had gekregen (en die hij nooit heeft terugbetaald).

As Emperor, Charles settled in Brussels. He ordered the construction in 1525 of the remarkable late gothic Grand-Chapel, sometimes compared to the Royal 'Sainte-Chapelle' in Paris. He set up the center of an imperial postal system in Brussels, under the responsibility of the Turm & Taxis family. It conveyed mail with unprecedented speed (for example, from Paris to Brussels in 36 hours) and thus linked all parts of his empire, which covered most of Europe, more closely together. In 1549, he led the grand procession of nobility in Brussels ('Ommeganck'). And it was in Brussels's Aula Magna that he abdicated in 1555, amidst conjectures about his decision. (Soly) With the abdication of Charles V, the Empire passed to his brother Ferdinand and to the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs, while his son

Philip II became King of Spain and remained the lord of the Low Countries.

From the ascent of Philip II to the throne until the Belgian Independence Revolution of 1830, Brussels was ruled solely by delegation, causing it to be marginalized.

The Catholic Philip II could not prevent the progress of Protestantism, which led the northern provinces of the Low Countries to revolt against Spain. The Union of Arras ('Unie van Atrecht') of 1579 confirmed the split between the northern provinces, which committed themselves to founding a new nation, and the southern ones, which retained their allegiance to Spain. 1579 was the founding date of the new nation of the Netherlands, made up of the northern Provinces. For the southern provinces (Belgium), 1579 was a year like any other, and it is largely ignored in Belgian history books.

In 1595, after many years of war between the Protestant northern provinces and Catholic southern provinces, King Philip II attempted to re-establish the unity of the Netherlands by appointing Archduke Albert VII of Austria (known as Albert the Pious) as Governor of the Low Countries. Three years later, upon marrying Phillip's daughter, Isabella, Albert became joint sovereign of the Seventeen Provinces. Albert and Isabella negotiated the Twelve Years' Truce, a peace treaty that brought stability and prosperity to the region, and restored the Court of Brussels' reputation.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 8)

They successfully negotiated a twelve-year truce with the northern provinces. After four decades of war, this brought peace and stability to the region and restored the Court of Brussels to its former glory – at least temporarily.

In 1620, following the expiration of the Twelve Years' Truce, hostilities resumed, provoked by the bellicose Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange. This marked the beginning of the Thirty Years War, a bleak period in the history of Europe in general, and for Brussels in particular. Moreover, because Albert and Isabella had no children, the intended dynasty did not materialize. They were succeeded by a series of Governor-Generals whose terms of office were short-lived.

The glorious years returned briefly in 1647, with Spain's appointment of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm as Governor General. In addition to being a political strategist, Leopold Wilhelm was a great lover of art, particularly Italian painting. Teniers's famous painting, *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Gallery* (1651), gives an idea of the size and prestige of the archducal collection.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 9)

Under Leopold Wilhelm, Brussels experienced a revival of arts and letters, but unfortunately the Archduke left the city in 1656.

As Spain – and, therefore, Brussels – continued to decline, King Louis XIV of France saw an opportunity to extend his conquests to the Low Countries. In his mock-heroic poem 'Le Lutrin' (the Lectern), the French poet Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux describes Louis XIV's expedition: 'at the very



Credit © Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles. Photo: Speltoorn.

ILLUSTRATION 8: Portrait of Archduke Albert.

In 1595, after many years of war between the Protestant northern provinces and Catholic southern provinces, King Philip II attempted to reestablish the unity of the Netherlands by appointing Archduke Albert VII of Austria (known as Albert the Pious) as Governor of the Low Countries. Three years later, upon marrying Phillip's daughter, Isabella, Albert became joint sovereign of the Seventeen Provinces. Albert and Isabella negotiated the Twelve Years' Truce, a peace treaty that brought stability and prosperity to the region, and restored the Court of Brussels' reputation.

ILLUSTRATION 8: Portrait de l'Archiduc Albert.

En 1595, après plusieurs années de guerre entre les provinces protestantes du Nord et les provinces catholiques du Sud, le Roi Philippe II tenta de rétablir l'unité des Pays-Bas en nommant l'Archiduc Albert VII d'Autriche (connu sous le nom d'Albert le Pieux) comme Gouverneur des Pays-Bas. Trois ans plus tard, ayant épousé la fille de Philippe, Isabelle, Albert devint également souverain des dix-sept Provinces. Albert et Isabelle négocièrent la Trêve des Douze ans, un traité de paix qui apporta la stabilité et la prospérité à la région, et restaura la réputation de la Cour de Bruxelles.

AFBEELDING 8: Portret van aartshertog Albert.

Na vele jaren van oorlog tussen de protestantse Noordelijke provincies en de katholieke Zuidelijke provincies, probeerde koning Filips II in 1595 de eenheid tussen de Nederlanden te herstellen door aartshertog Albrecht VII van Oostenrijk (beter bekend als Albrecht de Vrome) aan te duiden als gouverneur van de Lage Landen. Drie jaar later, na zijn huwelijk met Isabella, de dochter van Filips, werd Albrecht landvoogd van de zeventien provincies. Albrecht en Isabella sloten het Twaalfjarig Bestand af, een vredesverdrag dat voor stabiliteit en voorspoed in de regio zorgde en de reputatie van het Brusselse Hof herstelde.



Credit © Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles. Photo: Speltdoorn.

**ILLUSTRATION 9: Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Gallery (David Teniers, 1651)**

The glorious years returned briefly in 1647, with Spain's nomination of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm as Governor General. In addition to being a political strategist, Leopold Wilhelm was a great lover of art, particularly Italian painting. Teniers' famous painting, *Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in his Gallery* (1651), gives an idea of the size and prestige of the archducal collection. Under Leopold Wilhelm, Brussels experienced a revival of arts and letters, but unfortunately, the Archduke left the city in 1656.

**ILLUSTRATION 9: L'Archiduc Léopold Wilhelm et sa galerie (David Teniers, 1651).**

*Les années glorieuses revinrent brièvement en 1647, avec la nomination espagnole de l'Archiduc Léopold Wilhelm comme Gouverneur Général. En plus d'être un stratège politique, Léopold Wilhelm était un grand amoureux de l'art, particulièrement la peinture italienne. La fameuse peinture de Teniers, L'Archiduc Léopold Wilhelm et sa Galerie (1651), donne une idée de la taille et du prestige de la collection de l'archiduc. Sous Léopold Wilhelm, Bruxelles vécut un renouveau des arts et des lettres, mais malheureusement, l'Archiduc quitta la ville en 1656.*

**AFBEELDING 9: Aartshertog Leopold Willem in zijn galerij (David Teniers, 1651).**

*Nadat Spanje aartshertog Leopold Willem in 1647 als landvoogd van de Zuidelijke Nederlanden had aangewezen, keerden de gloriejaren heel even terug. Naast een politiek strateeg was Leopold Willem eveneens een fervent kunstliefhebber. Hij had een bijzondere voorkeur voor de Italiaanse schilderkunst. Het beroemde schilderij van Teniers, Aartshertog Leopold Willem in zijn Galerij (1651), geeft een goed beeld van de omvang en het prestige van de collectie van de aartshertog. Onder Leopold Willem beleefde Brussel een heropleving van de kunsten en de letteren. Helaas verliet de aartshertog de stad in 1656.*

sound of his astonishing march/ the Danube shakes, the Tage trembles/ Brussels awaits the deadly blow.' In a letter dated July 29, 1695, Marshall de Villeroy, head of the French army, urged Louis XIV to bombard Brussels, arguing that 'going [instead] to Bruges or to Ghent would be like shooting at a sparrow.' The Grand Place would be the target. The Palace of Charles V (Court of Brussels) would be spared. In his so-called 'ultimatum' to the Governor of Brussels, Villeroy proclaimed that 'His Majesty resolved himself to the bombardment of Brussels with much grief, as the Electress of Bavaria lives there; if you would kindly let me know where in the city she is, the King has ordered me not to fire on that location.' As this letter indicates, the Uptown of Brussels, where the Electress lived, was considered the domain of the aristocracy and enjoyed its privileges.

## 2.2. Downtown Brussels: the location of the communal institutions and of City Hall

In contrast to Uptown, the location of the Court and the aristocracy, the downtown part of Brussels was the location of merchants, the port, artisans, commerce, and communal power. The cathedral was strategically located by the side of the hill, between the two sections of the city. (ILLUSTRATION 10)

City Hall, which survived the bombardment of 1695, was a symbol of civic pride. Destroying it was part of French War Minister Louvois' strategy for 'shocking the Flemish' that year: 'we must not leave them any hope of favourable treatment, we must not risk negotiating with monks and according

privileges.' This explains why the downtown part of Brussels, rather than the uptown, was to be bombarded.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 11)

Destroying City Hall, a powerful symbol of civic pride, was part of French War Minister Louvois' strategy for 'shocking the Flemish.' Louvois was adamant that 'we must not leave them any hope of favourable treatment, we must not risk negotiating with monks and according privileges.' This explains why he chose to bombard the downtown part of Brussels, rather than the uptown.

Louis XIV's attempt to conquer the Netherlands did not succeed. Maximilian Emmanuel, Duke of Bavaria, recaptured the southern provinces and installed himself in Brussels.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 12)

He personally supervised the reconstruction of Brussels. Indeed, the jurisdictional conflicts between local powers – notably the City Magistrate, the Office of Public Buildings ('Chambre des tonlieux'), and the Office for law enforcement ('Ammanie') required his strong arbitration. His first step was to create an Emergency Council, which suspended the monopoly of local corporations by opening the construction market to all qualified enterprises. Next, in order to satisfy the wishes of the bourgeoisie and to stay within the limits of time and cost, he opted to reconstruct the city as a system of standard facades along the former street alignments. This combination of building standards and alignments produced



Credit © Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles. Photo:Speldoorn.

#### ILLUSTRATION 10: View of the Cathedral.

In contrast to Uptown, location of the Court and the aristocracy, the downtown part of Brussels is the location of merchants, the port, artisans, commerce, and communal power. The cathedral is strategically located by the side of the hill, between the two sections of the city.

#### ILLUSTRATION 10 : Vue de la Cathédrale.

*En contraste avec le haut de la ville, où se trouvent la Cour et l'aristocratie, le bas de la ville de Bruxelles rassemble les marchands, le port, les artisans, le commerce et le pouvoir communal. La Cathédrale est stratégiquement située à côté de la colline, au milieu des deux parties de la ville.*

**AFBEELDING 10: Uitzicht op de kathedraal.** – In tegenstelling tot de bovenstad, met het hof en de aristocratie, was de Brusselse benedenstad de plaats van de koopmannen, de haven, de vaklieden, de handel en de gemeentelijke overheden. De kathedraal ligt op een strategische plaats aan de voet van de heuvel, tussen de twee stadsdelen in.



#### ILLUSTRATION 11: Louvois' Plan for the Bombardment of Brussels.

Destroying City Hall, a powerful symbol of civic pride, was part of French War Minister Louvois' strategy for 'shocking the Flemish.' Louvois was adamant that 'we must not leave them any hope of favourable treatment, we must not risk negotiating with monks and according privileges.' This explains why he chose to bombard the downtown part of Brussels, rather than the uptown.

#### ILLUSTRATION 11 : Le Plan de Louvois pour le Bombardement de Bruxelles.

*Détruire l'Hôtel de Ville, symbole puissant de la fierté civique, faisait partie de la stratégie du ministre français de la guerre Louvois pour « choquer les Flamands ». Louvois fut intransigeant : « Nous ne devons leur laisser aucun espoir d'un traitement favorable, nous ne devons pas prendre le risque de négocier avec des moines et leur accorder des priviléges ». Ceci explique pourquoi il choisit de bombarder le bas de la ville de Bruxelles plutôt que le haut de la ville.*

#### AFBEELDING 11: Het plan van Louvois voor het bombardement van Brussel.

*De vernietiging van het stadhuis, een krachtig symbool voor burgerlijke trots, was volgens de Franse oorlogsminister Louvois de ideale strategie om "de Vlamingen te choqueren". Louvois was onvermurwbaar: "We mogen hen geen hoop op een voorkeursbehandeling geven, en we kunnen het niet riskeren om te onderhandelen met monniken en hun overeenkomstige principes". Dit verklaart waarom hij ervoor koos om de benedenstad van Brussel te bombarderen, en niet de bovenstad.*

a simple architecture ('architectura minor'), which was repetitive in size, yet diverse. This 'architectura minor' stood in contrast to the monumental architecture ('architectura major') of a limited number of buildings such as City Hall. A long Palladian façade cloaked the houses of the upper Grand Place in a common dress. This collective façade, which is distinguished by its convexity, stood in contrast to the other, individual, façades of the Place.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 13)

What has been called the 'miracle' of the Grand Place is the harmonious balance between the major and the minor, the collective and the individual.

What accounted for the Duke of Bavaria's fervent interest in Brussels? Following the example of William III, 'Stadhouder' (Lieutenant-General) of the Netherlands, who had

in 1686 ascended the throne of England, the Duke saw himself as the founder of a hereditary dynasty in the Southern Low Countries Belgian Provinces. His success in reconstructing Brussels was to serve that ambition. But in 1706, Maximilian Emmanuel's dynastic ambitions – and his interest in Brussels – were nipped in the bud by the death of his young son.

To sum up, it can be said that the 'miracle' of the Grand Place was largely produced by the Duke of Bavaria, a foreign agent of urban change. Without the Duke's will and vision, it is likely that the reconstruction of Brussels would have been left to improvisation, along the particular interests of the moment. Worse, reconstruction might not have occurred at all, given the fact that the city was marginalized, both politically and economically, as a remote part of the highly centralized Austrian Empire, which took over the southern



ILLUSTRATION 12: Portrait of Maximilian, Great Elector and Duke of Bavaria.

Credit © Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles.

Louis XIV's attempt to conquer the Netherlands did not succeed. Maximilian the Great, Elector and Duke of Bavaria, recaptured the southern provinces and installed himself in Brussels. He personally supervised the reconstruction of the city. At the administrative level, he arbitrated the jurisdictional conflicts between local powers – notably the City Magistrate, the Office of Public Buildings ('Chambre des tonlieux'), and the Office for Law Enforcement ('Ammanie'). He personally oversaw the reconstruction of the Grand Place and of the 6000 houses demolished by the bombs, and can be considered the father of the Grand Place 'miracle'.

#### ILLUSTRATION 12 : Portrait de Maximilien, Electeur et Duc de Bavière.

*La tentative de Louis XIV de conquérir les Pays-Bas ne réussit pas. Maximilien le Grand, Electeur et Duc de Bavière, reprit les provinces du sud et s'installa lui-même à Bruxelles. Il supervisa personnellement la reconstruction de la ville. Au niveau administratif, il arbitra les conflits judiciaires entre les puissances locales, notamment la magistrature de la ville, l'Office des Bâtiments publics (Chambre des tonlieux) et l'Office d'application de la loi (Ammanie) qui exigea son long arbitrage. Au niveau matériel/physique, il supervisa la construction de la Grand Place.*

#### AFBEELDING 12: Portret van Maximiliaan, Keurvorst en hertog van Beieren.

*De poging van Lodewijk XIV om de Nederlanden te veroveren, mislukte. Maximiliaan de Grote, keurvorst en hertog van Beieren, heroverde de Zuidelijke provincies en vestigde zich in Brussel. Hij overzag persoonlijk de heropbouw van de stad. Op administratief niveau bemiddelde hij in de conflicten over alleenvertegenwoordigingsrecht tussen de plaatselijke machten. Vooral de stadsmagistratuur, het bureau voor Openbare Gebouwen (Chambre des Tonlieux) en het bureau voor Ordehandhaving hadden behoefte aan zijn doortastende arbitrage. Hij overzag hoogstpersoonlijk de aanleg van de Grote Markt.*

provinces in 1715 and were governed from 1741 until 1780 by the exceptionally strong willed and talented Empress Maria Theresa.

### 2.3. The end of the Brussels court grounds: a decision by the Court of Vienna

Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and her Imperial Administration governed Brussels from Vienna. They wielded complete control over the city, including the smallest details of urban development. The city's development was governed by imperial decrees. For example, a decree about height limitations around the Brussels Central Park is still in effect today.

The Empress appointed her brother-in-law Duke Charles of Lorraine as the Governor General of the Low Countries (in fact of the southern provinces). His autonomy was rather

limited, but throughout his very long tenure he kept pleasing both the Empress (by not interfering in her politics) as well as the Belgian people. His friendly, fun-loving personality appealed to both the aristocracy and the common people.

In 1731 a fire partially ravaged Charles V's magnificent Palace complex, seat of the Brussels Court.

(ILLUSTRATIONS 14a & 14b)

The famous late gothic Great Chapel of 1525 was spared and reopened for the services of the following Sunday. Clearly, the Palace, in particular the Aula Magna, could have been restored, as it had been after previous fires. Nevertheless, the Imperial Administration in Vienna decided against restoring the Palace, a symbol of the city's bygone glory. Several plans for restoration or partial reconstruction were proposed and discussed, while the Palace was left to



ILLUSTRATION 13: Town Hall and houses Forming the Lower Grand Place.

*Photo © JL. Vandewiele - BITC*

In order to satisfy the wishes of the local bourgeoisie and to stay within the limits of time and cost, Maximilian opted to reconstruct the city as a system of uniform facades along the former lot lines. This combination of building and lot lines produced an 'architectura minor,' an architecture that was repetitive, yet diverse. This 'architectura minor' stood in contrast to the monumental architecture ('architectura major') of City Hall. A long, unified façade cloaked the houses of the upper Place in a common dress. This collective façade, which is distinguished by its convexity, stood in contrast to the individualistic façades that opened onto the lower Place.

*ILLUSTRATION 13 : Hôtel de Ville et maisons formant le bas de la Grand Place.*

*Afin de satisfaire aux souhaits des la bourgeoisie locale et de rester dans les limites de temps et de coût, Maximilien opta pour la reconstruction de la ville avec des façades uniformes dans le style des rangées précédentes. Ce mélange de bâtiments et rangées donna une « architecture mineure », une architecture répétitive voire diverse. Cette « architecture mineure » fut en contraste avec l'architecture monumentale (« architecture majeure ») de l'Hôtel de Ville. Les maisons de la partie supérieure de la Place apparaissent en une longue façade unifiée, avec le même habillage. Cette façade collective, qui se distingue par sa convexité, contrastait avec les façades individuelles qui donnaient sur la partie basse de la Place.*

*AFBEELDING 13: Stadhuis en huizen die samen de lager gelegen Grote Markt vormen.*

*Om aan de wensen van de plaatselijke bourgeoisie te voldoen en de financiële- en tijdsbeperkingen te respecteren, besloot Maximiliaan de stad herbouwen als een geheel van eenvormige voorgevels die langs de vroegere scheidlijn van de verkaveling liepen. Deze combinatie van gebouwen en scheidlijnen resulteerde in de "architectura minor", een architectuurstijl die zowel repetitief als gevarieerd was. Deze "architectura minor" stond haaks op de monumentale bouwstijl ("architectura major") van het stadhuis. Een lange, eenvormige façade gaf alle huizen van het hoger gelegen Markt hetzelfde uiterlijk. Deze gezamenlijke façade, die zich onderscheidde door zijn gewelfde lijn, stond in contrast met de individualistische voorgevels die uitgaven op de lager gelegen markt.*

degrade. The Administration was finally able to realize what was possibly its original intention: turning the whole Court site into a new civic development. It was thus that the former Palace of the Dukes of Brabant, and of Emperor Charles V, was transformed into a standard eighteenth-century rectangular square, church, and uniform rows of graceful private mansions.

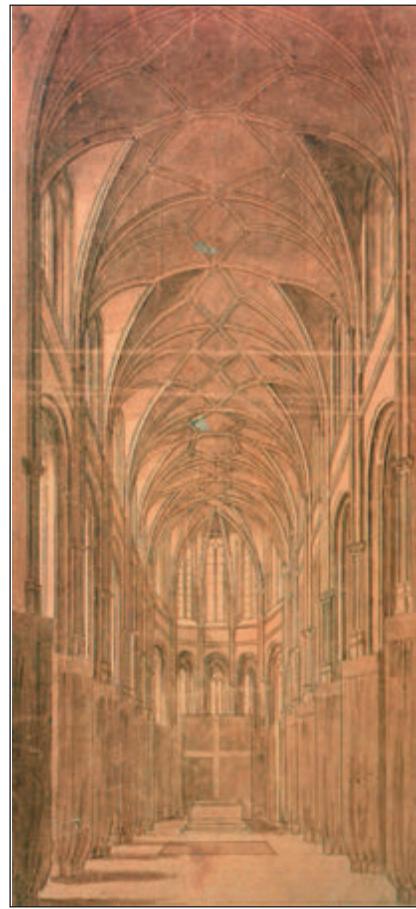
The famous Great Chapel was completely spared and reopened for the services on the following Sunday.

Clearly, the Palace, in particular the Aula Magna, could have been restored, as it had been after previous fires. Nevertheless, the Imperial Administration in Vienna decided against restoring the Palace, a symbol of the city's bygone glory. Several plans for restoration or partial reconstruction were proposed and discussed, while the Palace was left to degrade. In 1774, the Administration was finally able to realize what its original intention possibly was: razing the entire palace grounds, including the Aula Magna and the large gardens, so turning what had been the Palace of the Dukes of Brabant and of Charles V, on the Coudenberg Hill, into a private, highly profitable, development. (Gilot) The hilly site was transformed, through a significant amount of earth mov-

ing, into a standard 18th-century French-style central rectangular square, bordered by a church and rows of graceful, uniform private mansions. It was first named Place de Lorraine, in honour of the Governor General and of Nancy's central square, and later renamed Place Royale. The adjacent Palace gardens became the Park of Brussels, bordered by the buildings hosting the main political and financial institutions, including those of the Brussels-Capital Region. (Smolart-Meynart) A proposed plan by Brussels City architect Claude Fisco, which would have kept the Great Chapel and integrated it into the new district, was ignored by Barnabé Guimard and Nicolas Barré, the architects in charge.



ILL.14A



ILL.14B

ILLUSTRATIONS 14A: View of the Burning Palace – 14B: View of the Great Chapel.

Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.

In 1731 a fire partially ravaged Charles V's magnificent Palace complex, seat of the Brussels Court. The famous late gothic Great Chapel of 1525 was spared and reopened for the services of the following Sunday. Clearly, the Palace, in particular the Aula Magna, could have been restored, as it had been after previous fires such as the one seen here (1674) and the Townhall (1695). Nevertheless, the Imperial Administration in Vienna decided against restoring the Palace, a symbol of the city's bygone glory. Several plans for restoration or partial reconstruction were proposed and discussed, while the Palace was left to degrade. The Administration was finally able to realize what was possibly its original intention: turning the whole Court site into a new civic development. It was thus that the former Palace of the Dukes of Brabant, and of Emperor Charles V, was transformed into a standard eighteenth-century rectangular square, church, and uniform rows of graceful private mansions.

**ILLUSTRATIONS 14A : Vue sur le Palais en feu – 14B : Vue de la Grande Chapelle.** – En 1731, un incendie ravagea partiellement le magnifique Palais de Charles V, siège de la Cour de Bruxelles. L'incendie de 1731 ravagea la Cour de Bruxelles. Le magnifique Palais de Charles V fut fortement endommagé. La fameuse Grande Chapelle fut largement épargnée et rouverte aux services religieux du dimanche suivant. Le Palais aurait clairement pu être restauré, comme il l'avait été après des incendies précédents dont celui figurant sur l'illustration (1674) et l'Hôtel de Ville (1695). Néanmoins, l'Administration impériale de Vienne refusa la restauration du Palais, un symbole de la gloire passée de la ville. Plusieurs plans de restauration ou de reconstruction partielle furent proposés et discutés, tandis que le Palais était laissé à l'abandon. L'Administration fut enfin capable de réaliser ce qui fut sans doute son intention originale : révolutionner tout le site de la Cour en un nouveau développement civil. C'est ainsi que l'ancien Palais des Ducs de Brabant, et de l'Empereur Charles V, fut transformé en un quartier standard du dix-huitième siècle, style classique, complet avec un square rectangulaire, une église et des rangées uniformes d'hôtels particuliers élégants.

**AFBEELDINGEN 14A: Uitzicht op het afgebrande Paleis – 14B: Uitzicht op de Hofkapel.** – In 1731 werd het schitterende paleizencomplex van Karel V, dat dienst deed als zetel voor de Brusselse hofhouding, gedeeltelijk verwoest door brand. In 1731 werd hof van Brussel verwoest door brand. Het schitterende paleizencomplex van Karel V werd waar beschadigd. De beroemde Hofkapel bleef grotendeels gespaard en werd de zondag nadien opnieuw opengesteld voor de kerkdiensten. Het spreekt voor zich dat het paleis opnieuw hersteld had kunnen worden, net als na vorige branden van het hof (hier degene van 1674) en het Stadhuis (1695). Maar de koninklijke regering in Wenen was tegen de beslissing om het paleis te herstellen, dat inmiddels een symbool voor de vergane glorie van de stad was geworden. Er werden verschillende plannen voor een gedeeltelijke of volledige restauratie voorgelegd en besproken. Maar onderussen raakte het paleis steeds verder in verval. Uiteindelijk wist de regering het plan te verwezenlijken dat ze waarschijnlijk al van begin af aan voor ogen had: het volledige paleizenterrein werd omgevormd tot een nieuw bouwproject voor de burgers. Zodoende werd het vroegere paleis van de hertogen van Brabant, en keizer Karel V, omgevormd tot een traditionele, 18e eeuwse woonwijk in klassieke stijl, inclusief een rechthoekig plein, een kerk en gelijkmataige rijen elegante privéherenhuizen.

Nancy's Place Royale, built according to the 1754 'Plan général des deux Villes de Nancy' (specifically Ville-Vieille and Ville-Neuve), by Thomas Belprey, suggests that it was possible to keep existing architectural heritage and link it to a new quarter in the taste of the 18th century. In the case of Brussels, the existing architecture would be the Palace grounds, including the Aula Magna and the Great Chapel. Nancy's Place Royale quarter, entirely pedestrianised in 2004, could have been the model for the Brussels one.

Emperor Joseph II, the enlightened despot who had succeeded his mother Maria Theresa in 1780, saw in the realization of the new quarter an opportunity to ruin the city's religious orders and take possession of their properties and art collections. He forced them to construct several mansions in the new district. This and many other reforms and petty measures, unilaterally imposed from Vienna, made him unpopular with all segments of the population. This resulted in the 'Revolution in Brussels' (or 'Brabant Revolution') in 1789, the same year as the French Revolution, aimed at freeing the Belgian provinces from Austrian rule. This revolution was short lived, however, because of internal divisions amongst the revolutionaries. The Belgian provinces became easy prey for French revolutionaries, who invaded and occupied them. That occupation would last some twenty-five years.

The Brussels Revolution [see J. Polasky's *Revolution in Brussels* (1991)], also known as the Brabant Revolution, erupted in 1789 (the same year as the French Revolution), in response to the arbitrary reforms and petty measures imposed by Emperor Joseph II, from Vienna. To sum up the first part of this first historic overview, the City of Brussels was from its inception dependent on foreign rulers. It was shaped by their respective visions. Of particular importance were the building of the Aula Magna by the City for Philip the Good, the rebuilding of the Grand Place by Eugene Maximilian of Bavaria, and the transformation of the Coudenberg Court complex into a classic town square surrounded by mansions.

It was these rulers' initiatives and the adaptations of the local decision makers that shaped the city's development and urban form in the Ancien Régime.

### **3. The Nineteenth Century: From the Kingdom of the Netherlands to an Independent Kingdom of Belgium**

#### **3.1. King Willem I of the Netherlands, a supporter of the Belgian provinces**

The French occupation of the Belgian provinces did not leave a decisive imprint on Brussels's urban fabric. The fortifications were demolished by order of Napoleon, however, and gave way to boulevards and a section of the Brussels Charleroi canal.

The 1814 Congress of Vienna, which aimed to redefine Europe after the end of the Napoleonic era, was a turning point for the Belgian provinces. They were not represented, whereas the Netherlands were strongly represented by their King, Willem I.

(ILLUSTRATION 15)

The Congress decided to merge the Protestant Netherlands and the Catholic Belgian provinces under King Willem I. Brussels became the second capital of the Netherlands. Once again, a foreign monarch, unsolicited by the Belgians, would develop his own vision for the development of the Belgian provinces and for Brussels.

Once again, a foreign monarch, unsolicited by the Belgians, was to develop his own vision for the development of the Belgian provinces and for Brussels. King Willem I initiated many projects that were favourable to Belgium and Brussels. He encouraged the development of the Cockerill steelworks and of Belgium's industrial bank, the Société Générale. In the field of culture, he reorganized the education system, founded the Universities in Ghent and Liege, and arranged for the return to Brussels of works of art that had been stolen by Napoleon. As for urban development, King Willem I developed, in addition to a Royal Palace for himself, the



Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.

ILLUSTRATION 15: Portrait of Willem I of the Netherlands.

The 1814 Congress of Vienna, which aimed to redefine Europe after the end of the Napoleonic era, was a turning point for the Belgian provinces. They were not represented, whereas the Netherlands were strongly represented by their King, Willem I. The Congress decided to merge the Protestant Netherlands and the Catholic Belgian provinces under King Willem I. Brussels became the second capital of the Netherlands. Once again, a foreign monarch, unsolicited by the Belgians, would develop his own vision for the development of the Belgian provinces and for Brussels.

ILLUSTRATION 15 : *Portrait de Guillaume I<sup>er</sup> des Pays-Bas. – Le Congrès de Vienne de 1814 qui visa à redéfinir l'Europe après la fin de l'époque napoléonienne, fut un tournant pour les provinces belges. Elles n'y furent pas représentées alors que les Pays-Bas furent énergiquement représentés par leur roi, Guillaume I<sup>er</sup>. Le Congrès décida de fusionner les Pays-bas protestants et les provinces catholiques belges sous le roi Guillaume I<sup>er</sup>. Bruxelles devint la deuxième capitale des Pays-Bas. Une fois encore, un monarque étranger, non désiré par les Belges, développa sa propre vision pour le développement des provinces belges et pour Bruxelles.*

AFBEELDING 15: Portret van Willem I van de Nederlanden. – Het Congres van Wenen (1814) was een keerpunt voor de Belgische provincies. Het Congres had als doel Europa na het einde van de Napoleontische tijd opnieuw te definiëren. De provincies waren niet aanwezig, terwijl de Nederlanden sterk vertegenwoordigd werden door hun koning, Willem I. Tijdens het Congres werd besloten om de protestante Nederlanden en de katholieke Belgische provincies te verenigen onder koning Willem I. Brussel werd de tweede hoofdstad van de Nederlanden. Opnieuw werden de Belgen tegen hun zin geregeerd door een buitenlandse vorst, die zijn visie zou uitwerken voor de ontwikkeling van Brussel en de Belgische provincies.

canal system, the Grand-Hospice Pacheco for the ageing, and the 1824 Legislation on ground leases, inspired by English practice. It allowed public authorities to lease land to developers for up to 99 years, to retain ownership of the ground, and to recover both the ground and the buildings at the end of the lease.

Even though King Willem's initiatives were inarguably favourable to the Belgian economy, he was unable to overcome his despotic nature. Willem I was more similar to Joseph II than to Maria Theresa, and his missteps – mainly favouring Protestantism over Catholicism, and imposing the Dutch language against the French – made him unpopular with many of his subjects.

In 1830 a revolution in Brussels, the second in 40 years, led by a group of bourgeois, met with little resistance and resulted in the independence of the Belgian provinces under the name of Belgium. (Witte)

### **3.2. King Leopold I of the Belgians, a German Prince devoted to Belgium**

The candidate that was chosen as king of the new nation by the Belgian newly formed National Congress was Prince Leopold of Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha. He was offered the title 'King of the Belgians,' rather than 'King of Belgium,' and was presented with an especially liberal constitution, which he accepted. The Belgian population unenthusiastically accepted Leopold as their king in 1831. Less than two weeks

later, the Netherlands invaded Belgium. Leopold was caught completely off guard, having neither expected nor prepared for such an invasion. Fortunately, thanks to Leopold's family connections in France, the French army intervened and constrained the Netherlands to a ceasefire. The country was saved, but the war was costly for Belgium. It lost Zealand, the mouth of the Scheldt River, and the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. But despite these losses King Willem I of the Netherlands stubbornly refused to recognize Belgian independence until 1839. He never forgave himself for losing the Belgian provinces, home to two-thirds of his population.

(ILLUSTRATION 16)

Through his international prestige and diplomatic talent, Leopold I confirmed Belgium's right to exist as an independent buffer state. During the first years of independence, Brussels reaped the benefits of the industrial development policies of its former ruler King Willem. This industrial development fuelled the demand for real estate. Notable projects of this period include the construction of the Saint-Hubert Galleries, the eastern extension of Uptown through the creation of the neoclassical Leopold Quarter, and the inauguration of the first continental railroad.

(ILLUSTRATIONS 17)

Furthermore, given the Kingdom's liberal constitution, Brussels became a magnet for political exiles from less tolerant nations, ranging from Louis David to Victor Hugo. Thanks to its liberalism, the city avoided disturbances like those that rocked Paris in 1848.

The reign of Leopold I illustrates how a foreign prince, chosen by the liberal Belgian elite, became devoted to his adopted country and enabled the young nation of Belgium to confirm its independence.

ILLUSTRATION 16: Portrait of Leopold I.

The candidate that was chosen as king of the new nation by the Belgian newly formed National Congress was Prince Leopold of Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha. He was offered the title 'King of the Belgians,' rather than 'King of Belgium,' and was presented with an especially liberal constitution, which he accepted. Less than two weeks later, the Netherlands invaded Belgium. Leopold was caught completely off guard, having neither predicted nor prepared for such an invasion, but his family connections with the French Court ensured a French military intervention that saved the new kingdom.

ILLUSTRATION 16 : *Portrait de Léopold I<sup>er</sup>.*

*Le candidat qui fut choisi comme roi de la nouvelle nation par le Congrès national nouvellement formé fut le prince Léopold de Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha. On lui offrit le titre de « Roi des Belges » au lieu de « Roi de Belgique » et il lui fut présenté une constitution spécialement libérale, qu'il accepta. Moins de deux semaines plus tard, les Pays-Bas envahirent la Belgique. Léopold fut complètement surpris, n'ayant ni prévu ni préparé une telle invasion.*

AFBEELDING 16: *Portret van Leopold I.*

*Het zopas opgerichte Nationaal Congres koos prins Leopold van Saksen-Coburg en Gotha als koning voor de nieuwe natie. In plaats van "Koning van België" kreeg hij de titel "Koning der Belgen" aangeboden. Leopold ondertekende ook de uitzonderlijke liberale grondwet die hem werd voorgelegd. Amper twee weken later viel Nederland België binnen. Leopold was volledig overrompeld. Hij had een dergelijke inval niet verwacht en was er dus totaal niet op voorbereid.*



### 3.3. French influences and the accomplishments of Leopold II, king of the Belgians and an exterior agent of urban change

During the late nineteenth century, Parisian town planning – led by Georges Haussmann – influenced the development of many European capitals, including Brussels. In 1867, the Mayor of Brussels, Jules Anspach, used the outbreak of an epidemic of cholera as an opportunity for urban redevelopment. Anspach convinced the City Council that covering the River Senne would make the city more salubrious and allow modern urban development with rectilinear, Parisian-style boulevards. Anspach realized this ambitious project by expropriating the properties that lined the river. On the one hand, expropriation enabled the subsequent resale of developable plots at market price. On the other hand, it resulted in the destruction of an important architectural heritage, which was similar to that of Ghent or Bruges. The paintings of Van Moer, which are housed in City Hall, give an idea of this loss.



ILL. 17A Credit © Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles.



ILL. 17B Credit © Musée de la Ville de Bruxelles - Maison du Roi.

ILLUSTRATIONS 17A: Saint-Hubert Galleries – 17B: View of Brussels, ca 1850. – During the first years of independence, Brussels reaped the benefits stemming from the industrial development policies of its former ruler King Willem. This industrial development fueled the demand for real estate. Notable projects of this period include the construction of the Saint-Hubert Galleries, the eastern extension of Uptown through the creation of the neoclassical Leopold Quarter, and the inauguration of the first continental railroad.

ILLUSTRATIONS 17A : Les Galeries Saint-Hubert – 17B: Vue de Bruxelles, ca 1850. – Durant ses premières années d'indépendance, Bruxelles récolta les bénéfices des politiques de développement industriel de son précédent dirigeant le Roi Guillaume. Ce développement industriel alimenta les demandes en immobilier. Parmi les projets importants de cette période, nous avons la construction des Galeries Saint-Hubert, l'extension Est du haut de la ville par la création du Quartier Léopold de style néoclassique, et l'inauguration du premier chemin de fer continental.

AFBEELDINGEN 17A: Sint-Hubertusgalerij – 17B: Brussels, ca 1850. – Het zopas opgerichte Nationaal Congres koos prins Leopold van Saksen-Coburg en Gotha als koning voor de nieuwe natie. In plaats van "Koning van België" kreeg hij de titel "Koning der Belgen" aangeboden. Leopold ondertekende ook de uitzonderlijke liberale grondwet die hem werd voorgelegd. Amper twee weken later viel Nederland België binnen. Leopold was volledig overrompeld. Hij had een dergelijke inval niet verwacht en was er dus totaal niet voorbereid.

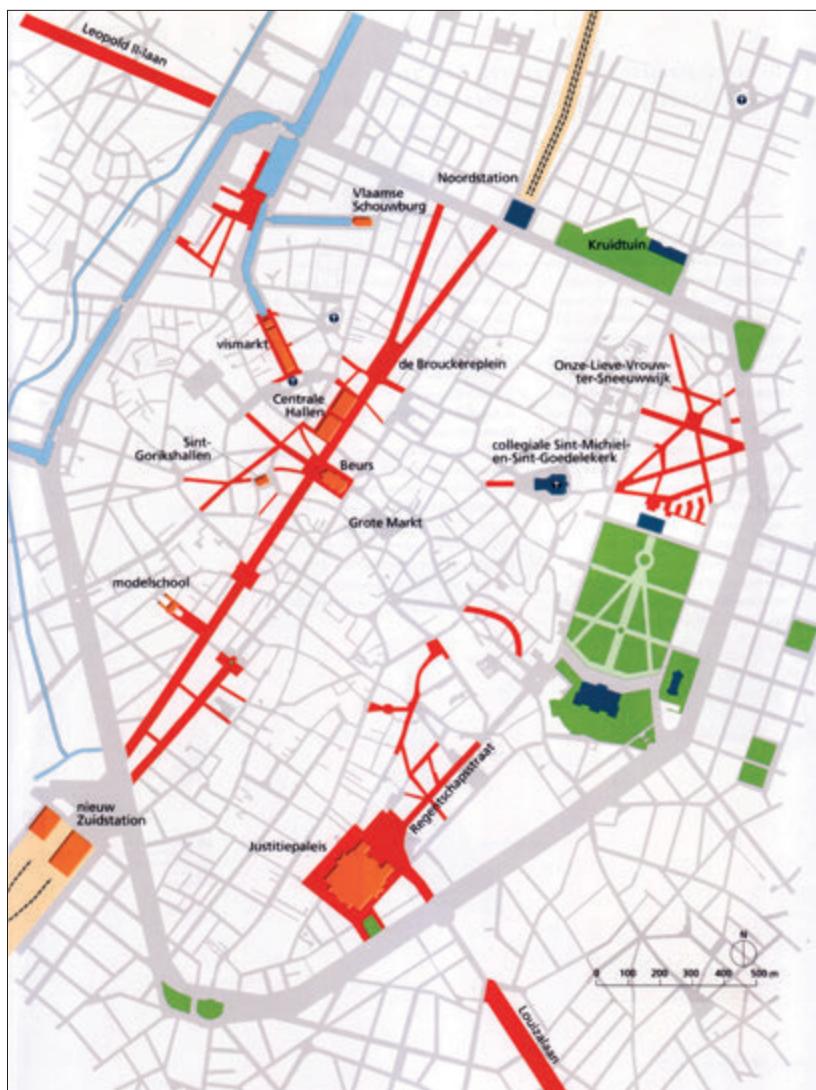
Alternative development sites that would have spared the city's architectural heritage were available, most notably around the Nord and Midi railway stations, where land could have easily been developed. Contemporary developments in other European cities, such as the neo-classical city of Turin and the New Town of Edinburgh, and in Brussels itself (the Leopold Quarter), demonstrated the possibility of urbanizing by extending, rather than destroying, an existing city's urban fabric.

Unlike the reconstruction of the Grand Place in 1695, the covering of the Senne was a purely local initiative. This essentially speculative operation was lead by intermediary Anglo-Belgian business interests, to which Anspach was secretly linked. The caricaturists of the period were not mistaken on this point, as was recalled in the Royal Library's 2001 exhibition on the history of the filling in of the Senne.

Haussmann's influence on the Brussels scheme is readily apparent, although the city's new public spaces were smaller than those in Paris. The new boulevards improved traffic between the North and South railway stations, without however reserving underground space for a future rail connection between these two stations (the work for this connection

was first decided on in 1909 and lasted some forty years). The boulevards did permit the construction of the Stock Exchange. In addition, they opened a vista onto a new Place (today's Place de Brouckère), by transferring the Augustine Church to Ixelles. (ILLUSTRATION 18)

In 1867, the Mayor of Brussels, Jules Anspach, used the outbreak of an epidemic of cholera as an opportunity for urban redevelopment. Anspach convinced the City Council that covering the River Senne would make the city more salubrious. Furthermore, covering the river would create land on which a network of rectilinear, Parisian-style boulevards could be constructed. Anspach realized this ambitious project by expropriating the properties that lined the river. Alternative development sites that would have spared the city's architectural heritage were available, most notably around the Nord and Midi railway stations, where land could have easily been developed. Contemporaneous developments in other European cities, such as the neo-classical city of Turin and the New Town of Edinburgh, and in Brussels itself the Leopold Quarter, demonstrated the possibility of urbanizing by extending, rather than destroying, the existing city's urban fabric and its heritage.



Credit © Fonds Mercator

ILLUSTRATION 18: View of the Central Boulevards (Billen, p.157). – In 1867, the Mayor of Brussels, Jules Anspach, used the outbreak of an epidemic of cholera as an opportunity for urban redevelopment. Anspach convinced the City Council that covering the River Senne would make the city more salubrious. Furthermore, covering the river would create land on which a network of rectilinear, Parisian-style boulevards could be constructed. Anspach realized this ambitious project by expropriating the properties that lined the river. Alternative development sites that would have spared the city's architectural heritage were available, most notably around the Nord and Midi railway stations, where land could have easily been developed. Contemporaneous developments in other European cities, such as the neo-classical city of Turin and the New Town of Edinburgh, and in Brussels itself the Leopold Quarter, demonstrated the possibility of urbanizing by extending, rather than destroying, the existing city's urban fabric and its heritage.

ILLUSTRATION 18 : Vue des boulevards centraux (Billen, p.157).  
En 1867, le Bourgmestre de Bruxelles, Jules Anspach, utilisa le déclenchement d'une épidémie de choléra pour étudier le redéveloppement urbain. Anspach convainquit le conseil municipal de recouvrir la Senne afin de rendre la ville plus salubre. De plus, le recouvrement de la Senne permettait de créer un réseau de boulevards rectilignes, comme à Paris. Anspach réalisa cet ambitieux projet en expropriant les propriétés qui longeaient la Senne. Des sites de développement alternatif épargnant l'héritage architectural de la ville furent disponibles, plus spécialement autour des stations de chemin de fer Nord et Midi, où les terrains pouvaient être aisément développés. Des développements contemporains dans d'autres villes européennes telles que la ville néo-classique de Turin et la Ville Nouvelle d'Edinbourg, et même à Bruxelles le Quartier Léopold, démontraient la possibilité d'urbaniser, en étendant plutôt qu'en détruisant, le tissu urbanistique existant d'une ville et son héritage.

AFBEELDING 18 : Uitzicht op de centrale toegangswegen (Billen, p.157). – In 1867 maakte Jules Anspach, de burgemeester van Brussel, gebruik van de uitbraak van een epidemie om de stad opnieuw te ontwikkelen. Anspach overtuigde de stadsraad ervan dat het dekken van de rivier Senne in de stad zou verbeteren. Bovendien zou het dekken van de rivier nieuwe bouwgrond opleveren, waarop net als in Parijs een rechtlijnig net van verbindingswegen aangelegd kon worden. Anspach verwezenlijkte zijn ambitieuze project door alle eigendommen die aan de rivier lagen te onteigenen. Er bestonden ook andere stedenbouwkundige plannen, die het architecturale erfgoed van de stad zouden hebben bewaard. Vooral het gebied rond de treinstations Noord en Zuid had gemakkelijk verder ontwikkeld kunnen worden. De gelijktijdige ontwikkeling van andere Europese steden, zoals het neoklassieke Turijn, de New Town of Edinburg en de Leopoldswijk in Brussel zelf, bewezen de mogelijkheden van verstedelijking door uitbreiding (en niet door vernietiging) van de stedelijke structuur en het erfgoed.

Leopold II (ILLUSTRATION 19), in contrast to Mayor Jules Anspach, had a real vision for the city. He wanted it to rank among the great capitals of Europe. His vision concerned the entire city and materialized in Victor Besme's General Plan. (ILLUSTRATION 20)

Leopold II's vision bore upon the entire city and was materialized in Victor Besme's General Plan. The Besme Plan plan covered the periphery (e.g., the 'World City' (Tervueren) and the Boechout Gardens) as well as other cities (e.g., Antwerp and Ostende) cities.

In addition to the communications infrastructure, the Besme Plan called for grand avenues around and across the city, public parks and gardens, and stunning vistas, all this to be realized by foreign planners and architects selected by the king. Indeed, the king had developed a technique for realizing his urban vision, piece by piece: following the construction of basic neighbourhood infrastructure, notably public space, he called upon the private sector to subdivide and develop the land according to precise architectural specifications. This technique was used in the case of the Cinquantenaire Quarter, the Northeast Quarter, and the Louise Quarter, among many others.

The realization of the plans of Leopold II in the 19th century was the work of an outside urban actor, just as the Duke of Bavaria's vision for the Grand Place had been, two centuries earlier. Leopold's vision was not without flaws – it called for several grandiose, unpopular projects, such as Poelaert's Palace of Justice and Maquet's project for the Beaux-Arts Museum, and it. This vision was not limited to the city itself, but dealt also with its extensions into the periphery. Josef Stübben's Avenue de Tervuren, which stretches for more than ten kilometers, is an outstanding example of a peripheral project.

The city's internationalism and openness to foreigners, combined with the demographic diversity resulting from its economic activities, made it a real cosmopolitan centre.

### **3.4. The colonial adventure and art nouveau, a European movement led by Belgium**

Belgium's colonial adventure was driven by royal ambition and was a source of considerable wealth for the Belgian bourgeoisie, which reaped the spoils of the exploitative colonial economy. When it came to art, this class of entrepreneurs demanded a new aesthetic, a break from tradition and eclecticism. In this respect, they were an ideal clientele for Art Nouveau, on the eve of World War I, Belgium, the world's fourth largest industrial power, became the European capital of this new style. Art Nouveau was both specific to Brussels and common to many cities in Europe. The city's importance is evidenced by several buildings of the period, most notably the Maison du Peuple by Victor Horta, and the Stoclet Palace, the masterpiece of the Austrian architect Josef Hoffmann. Industrial and port activities generated architectural masterpieces such as the Tour and Taxis Bonded Warehouse (ILLUSTRATION 21). The Art Nouveau movement thus confirmed the city's internationalism and its openness to foreign cultures.



Credit © Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Bruxelles. Photo:Speltoorn.

ILLUSTRATION 19: Portrait of Leopold II.

In contrast to Mayor Jules Anspach's speculative approach, King Leopold II had a vision for Brussels: he wanted it to rank among the great capitals of Europe. Leopold had a signature technique for realizing his urban vision, piece by piece: following the construction of basic neighborhood infrastructure, notably public space, he called upon the private sector to subdivide and develop the land according to precise architectural specifications. In most cases, the result was a mix of high quality and profitability. The realization of the urban vision of Leopold II in the 19th century was the work of an outside urban actor, just as the Duke of Bavaria's vision for the Grand Place had been, two centuries earlier.

ILLUSTRATION 19: Portret de Léopold II.

Contrairement à l'approche théorique du bourgmestre Jules Anspach, le roi Léopold II avait une vision pour Bruxelles : il désirait qu'elle fasse partie des grandes capitales d'Europe. Léopold avait une technique personnelle pour réaliser sa vision urbanistique, morceau par morceau : suite à la construction d'une infrastructure de quartiers de base, notamment des espaces publics, il fit appel au secteur privé pour subdiviser et développer le pays en fonction de spécifications architecturales précises. Dans la plupart des cas, le résultat fut un mélange de grande qualité et de rentabilité. La réalisation de la vision urbanistique de Léopold II dans le courant du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle fut l'œuvre d'un acteur urbanistique extérieur, exactement comme celle du Duc de Bavière pour la Grand Place qui eut lieu deux siècles auparavant.

AFBEELDING 19: Portret van Leopold II.

Koning Leopold II had een visie voor Brussel die haaks stond op de speculatieve aanpak van burgemeester Jules Anspach. Leopold II wilde dat Brussel tot de belangrijkste steden van Europa zou behoren. Leopold had een heel eigen techniek ontwikkeld om zijn stedelijke visie beetje bij beetje te verwezenlijken. Na de bouw van de fundamentele infrastructuur voor woonwijken op voornamelijk openbare terreinen, deed hij beroep op de privésector voor de verdeling en ontwikkeling van de bouwgrond volgens strikte bouwkundige specificaties. In de meeste gevallen resulteerde dit in een mix van hoge kwaliteit en rentabiliteit. Net als de visie van de hertog van Beieren voor de Grote Markt twee eeuwen voordien, was de verwezenlijking van de stedenbouwkundige visie van Leopold II in de 19e eeuw het werk van een buitenlandse speler.

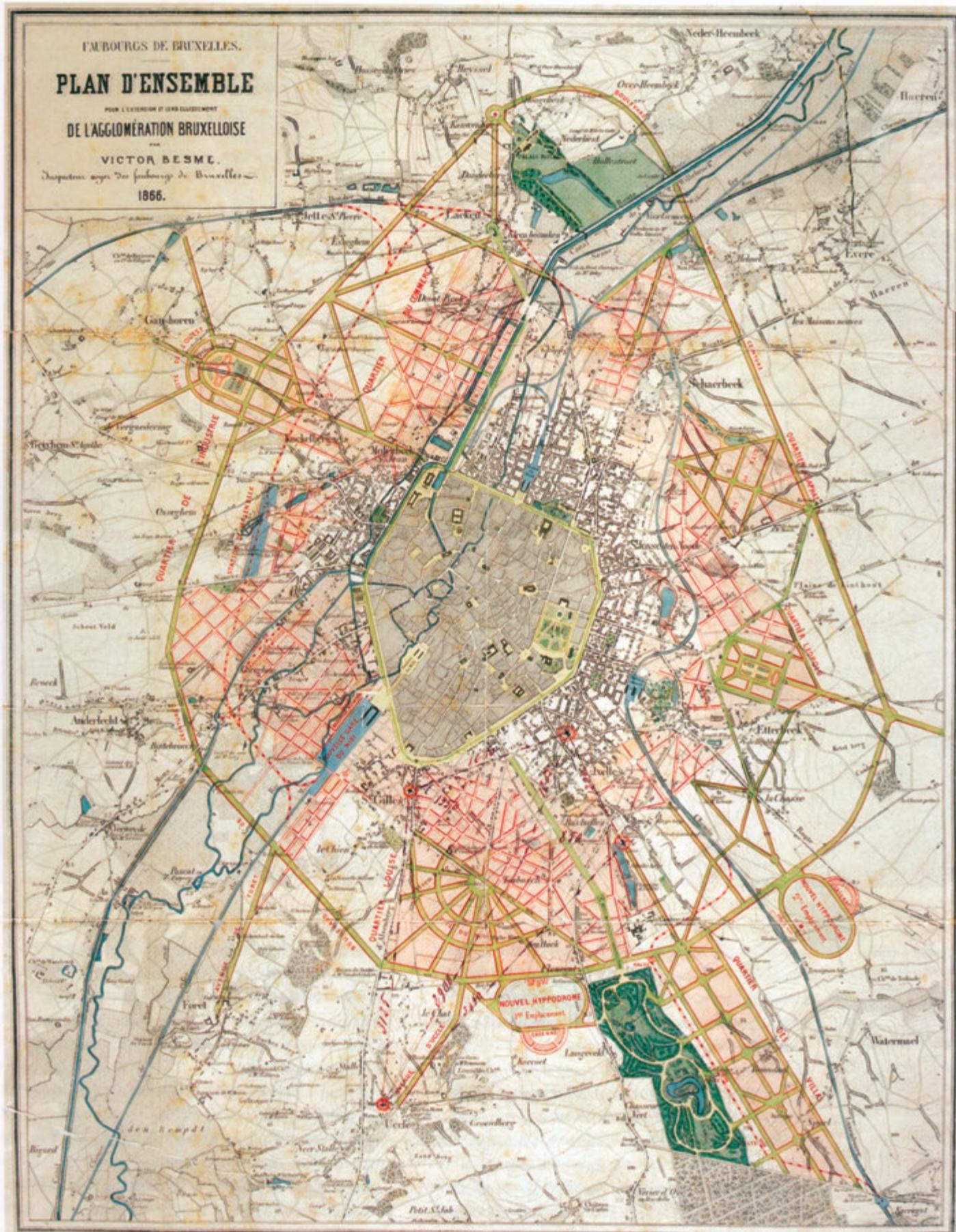


ILLUSTRATION 20: The Besme Plan.

Credit © Fonds Mercator

Leopold II's vision bore upon the entire city and was materialized in Victor Besme's General Plan. The Besme Plan plan covered the periphery (e.g., the 'World City' (Tervueren) and the Boechout Gardens) as well as other cities (e.g., Antwerp and Ostende) cities.

ILLUSTRATION 20 : Le plan Besme. – La vision de Léopold II portait sur la ville entière et fut matérialisée par le Plan Général de Victor Besme. Le plan Besme prévoyait de couvrir la périphérie (p.e. le « World City » à Tervuren et les Jardins de Boechout) ainsi que d'autres villes (p.e. Anvers et Ostende).

AFBEELDING 20: Het Besme-plan. – De visie van Leopold II had invloed op de hele stad en werd werkelijkheid dankzij het algemene plan van Victor Besme. Het Besme-plan besloeg de volledige Rand (zoals de "Wereldstad" Tervuren en de Boechoutse Parken) en een aantal andere steden, waaronder Antwerpen en Oostende.

To sum up this second part of this historic overview, during the nineteenth century the city was developed by King Willem I of the Netherlands, eager to foster his second capital but estranged from its citizens, and by Leopold I, Prince of Saxe-Cobourg Gotha, who became King of the Belgians, eager to serve the interests of his adopted country. During the Belle Époque, Leopold II, King of the Belgians, fostered Brussels (and other Belgian cities) in his own way, and through his personal initiatives and resources gave it the allure of a cosmopolitan capital.

## 4. The Twentieth Century: Internationalist Dreams and European Realities

### 4.1. The Interwar Period and Art Deco: The Golden Age of Urban Life in Belgium

The early years of the twentieth century witnessed a succession of different projects inspired by the idea of an internationalist government (see Chapter 2). As an effect of World

War I these visionary projects were set aside. After the war, Art Nouveau gave way to Art Deco. The Stoclet Palace (1905-1911), which blends these two styles, can be considered a forerunner of the Art Deco movement.

The important urban developments of the interwar period include: Victor Horta's Beaux-Arts Palace (1922), notable from the start for its international activities; the Heysel Exhibition Park (ILLUSTRATION 22), which hosted the Universal Exposition of 1935; and the 'Résidence Palace' (ILLUSTRATION 23), a complex of luxury apartments and services for its residents.

Urban art resumed during the interwar period, as Art Nouveau gave way to Art Deco. The Stoclet Palace (1905-1911), which blends these two styles, can be considered a forerunner of the Art Deco movement. Other notable projects of this period include:

- Victor Horta's Beaux-Arts Palace (1922) (but unfortunately the corresponding project for Quetelet Place, which would have been the visual counterpart of the Basilica, was never adopted).



ILLUSTRATION 21: Tour and Taxis Bonded Warehouse.

Credit © Tour & Taxis.

As we have seen, Leopold II's urban strategy consisted of building new neighbourhoods around anchoring infrastructures, such as public spaces and/or prestigious edifices. This technique was used in the case of the Cinquantenaire Quarter, the Northeast Quarter, and the Louise Quarter, each of which is characterized by public space, beautiful views, and high-quality architecture regulated by precise specifications. The Tour and Taxis warehouses are a perfect example of an 'architectura major' that is complemented by contemporary-style buildings' 'architectura minor.' Today, they are part of the World Heritage inventory. Their recent restoration might serve as the point of departure for a new wave of urban development along the banks of the Canal. Such development would add value to this underutilized area.

ILLUSTRATION 21 : Les entrepôts en douane Tour & Taxis.

*Comme nous l'avons vu, la stratégie urbanistique de Léopold II consistait à construire de nouveaux quartiers autour d'infrastructures déjà ancrées, telles que des espaces publics et/ou des édifices prestigieux. Cette technique fut utilisée dans le cas du Quartier du Cinquantenaire, du Quartier Nord-Est et du Quartier Louise, chacun étant caractérisé par des espaces publics, des vues superbes et une architecture de grande qualité réglementées par des spécifications précises. Les entrepôts Tour & taxis sont un exemple parfait d'une architecture de première importance qui est complétée par une architecture mineure de bâtiments de style contemporain. Aujourd'hui, ils font partie de l'inventaire du patrimoine mondial. Leur récente restauration pourrait servir de point de départ à une nouvelle vague de développement urbain le long des berges du Canal. Un tel développement donnerait une plus-value à cette zone sous-utilisée.*

AFBEELDING 21: Het entrepot Tour & Taxis.

*Zoals we hebben gezien, bestond de stedenbouwkundige strategie van Leopold II uit het bouwen van nieuwe woonwijken rond verankerde infrastructuur, zoals openbare plaatsen en/of prestigieuze gebouwen. Deze techniek werd gebruikt in het geval van de Jubelparkwijk, de Noordostwijk en de Louizawijk, die allemaal gekenmerkt worden door hun schitterende uitzichten en de kwalitatief hoogstaande architectuur, gereglementeerd door middel van nauwkeurige specificaties. De pakhuizen van Tour & Taxis zijn een perfect voorbeeld van "architectura major", die wordt gecomplementeerd door "architectura minor"-gebouwen in moderne stijl. Inmiddels zijn ze onderdeel geworden van het werelderfgoed. De recente renovatie zou het begin kunnen zijn van een nieuwe golf van stedenbouwkundige ontwikkeling langs de oevers van het kanaal. Een nieuwe ontwikkelingsgolf zou deze weinig gebruikte zone kunnen opwaarderen.*



Credit © Pierre Laconte, 2007

**ILLUSTRATION 22:** Heyzel Exhibition Park. It was the seat of both the 1935 and 1958 World Exhibitions. The 1958 Exhibition was identified by André Waterkeyn's Atomium.

**ILLUSTRATION 22 :** Le parc des expositions du Heyzel, siège des expositions universelles de 1935 et 1958. Cette dernière a été symbolisée par l'Atomium, d'André Waterkeyn.

**AFBEELDING 22:** Het Park van Tentoontellingen. Daar vonden de 1935 en 1958 Wereldtentoonstellingen plaats. Deze laatste werd gekenmerkt door André Waterkeyn's Atomium.



Credit © Fonds Mercator.

**ILLUSTRATION 23:** Résidence Palace (View from the Northeast Quarter). Urban art resumed during the interwar period, as Art Nouveau gave way to Art Deco. The Stoclet Palace (1905-1911), which blends these two styles, can be considered a forerunner of the Art Deco movement. Other notable projects of this period include:

- Victor Horta's Beaux-Arts Palace (1922) (but unfortunately the corresponding project for Quetelet Place, which would have been the visual counterpart of the Basilica, was never adopted).
- The urbanization of Cambre grounds (with the protection of the Abbey).
- The Heyzel Exposition Park, seat of the 1935 World's Exposition.
- The Garden Cities of Floréal-Le Logis.
- The Résidence Palace.

ILLUSTRATION 23: Résidence Palace (vue depuis le Quartier Nord-Est).

L'art urbain se poursuivait durant la période d'entre-deux-guerres comme l'Art Nouveau céda la place à l'Art Deco. La Maison Stoclet (1905-1911) qui mélange ces deux styles peut être considérée comme le précurseur du mouvement Art Déco. D'autres projets notables de cette période sont :

- Le Palais des Beaux-Arts de Victor Horta (1922) (mais malheureusement le projet correspondant pour la Place Quetelet, qui devait être le pendant visuel de la Basilique, ne fut jamais adopté).
- L'urbanisation de la Cambre (avec la protection de l'Abbaye).
- Le Parc des Expositions du Heysel, siège de l'Exposition Universelle de 1935.
- Les cités-jardins Floréal-Le Logis.
- Le Résidence Palace.

AFBEELDING 23: Het Residence Palace (Uitzicht vanaf de Noordoostwijk).

Tijdens het interbellum raaakte stedelijke kunst opnieuw in zwang, en maakte de art nouveau plaats voor de art deco. Het Stocletpaleis (1905-1911) combineert deze twee stijlen en kan worden gezien als een voorloper van de art deco-beweging. Twee andere belangrijke projecten uit deze periode zijn:

- het Paleis voor Schone Kunsten van Victor Horta (1922). (Helaas werd het overeenkomstige project voor het Queteletpaleis nooit verwezenlijkt. Dit had de visuele tegenhanger van de Basiliek moeten worden.).
- de verstedelijking van het Terkamerenbos (met de bescherming van de kloostergemeenschap).
- het tentoonstellingspark Heizel, de lokatie voor de Wereldtentoonstelling van 1935.
- de tuinwijk van Floréal-Le Logis.
- het Residence Palace.



Credit © Archives d'Architecture moderne, Bruxelles.

ILLUSTRATION 24: Jasinski Plan.

The Jasinski Plan, which was inspired by Le Corbusier's Voisin Plan (1922) and proposed razing a large section of the Pentagon, is worth mentioning. Although it was never realized (or even seriously considered), it foreshadowed the modernist projects of postwar era.

ILLUSTRATION 24 : Plan Jasinski.

Le Plan Jasinski, qui fût inspiré par le Plan Voisin de Le Corbusier (1922) et qui proposa de raser une large section du Pentagone, vaut la peine d'être mentionné. Bien qu'il ne fût jamais réalisé (ou même considéré sérieusement), il annonçait les projets modernistes de l'après-guerre.

AFBEELDING 24 : Het Jasinski-plan.

Een noemenswaardig project is zeker ook het Jasinski-plan. Dit project was gebaseerd op het Voisin-plan van Le Corbusier (1922) en stelde voor om een gedeelte van de vijfhoek met de grond gelijk te maken. Ondanks het feit dat het nooit werd verwezenlijkt (of zelfs maar werd overwogen), was het een voorbode van de modernistische projecten uit de naoorlogse periode.

- The urbanization of Cambre grounds (with the protection of the Abbey).
- The Heyzel Exposition Park, seat of the 1935 World's Exposition.
- The Garden Cities of Floréal-Le Logis.
- Michel Polak's Residence Palace (1922-1927).

The Jasinski Plan, which was inspired by Le Corbusier's Voisin Plan (1922) and proposed razing a large section of the Pentagon, is worth mentioning although it was never realized (or even considered); it foreshadowed the modernist projects of the postwar era. (ILLUSTRATION 24)

## **4.2. The Postwar Era and the American Urban Model: The Suburbanization of Urban Life**

The postwar era witnessed a shift in citizens' attitudes toward society in general, and urban life in particular. French historian Marcel Gauchet has referred to this phenomenon as 'mass individualism' (Gauchet, 1985), which is characterized by the increased consumption of 'positional' goods, or goods that position individuals in relation to others – notably free-standing, single-family houses and personal cars. This shift in consumer preferences originated in the United States. It was largely shaped through the common interests of three industrial sectors: the oil sector (which had practically disappeared following the replacement of petroleum lamps by electric lighting), the nascent automobile sector (which was championed by Henry Ford), and the various industries associated with highway construction and suburban development. Together, these sectors became infinitely stronger – in political and economic terms – than the large railroad companies, which had been all-powerful at the beginning of the century but still had to finance their own infrastructure. In contrast, road infrastructure and maintenance were financed by the public sector generally (not by tolls as had been the case throughout history).

## **4.3. The siting of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC): the emergence of a multiple European capital and a missed occasion for Brussels**

In 1952, Belgium was presented with a historic opportunity by an outside ruling power: Europe. All the partners of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) hoped that its capital would be Brussels. But this was stubbornly refused by the Belgian Government, which presented Liège as the only option. On 24 July, after an all-night discussion in Paris, the Belgian Minister Paul Van Zeeland still opposed Brussels 'for electoral reasons, as his mandate was limited to Liège', as reported in Jean Monnet's Mémoires. (Monnet, 433-434) At that point Joseph Bech, the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, sometimes called the Luxembourg Talleyrand, offered to 'let the work start immediately in Luxembourg', that is, let Luxembourg provisionally host the ECSC's High Authority. This was accepted (and soon became irreversible). The ECSC Parliament, on the other hand, was installed in the premises of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, where an assembly hall

was immediately available. This pivotal decision, or 'point of bifurcation,' in the wording of Ilya Prigogine, had important implications for Europe, for Belgium, and for Brussels:

- At the European level, the Belgian government's refusal to host the ECSC led to the emergence of the completely new idea of a multiple European capital. Luxembourg, for example, had never before been envisioned as a seat of European institutions. Even Luxembourg experts recognize that the choice of their city was 'purely by chance' and that, considering the mood of the time, Brussels could very well have become the single European capital. (Croise-Schirtz, 29)
- For Belgium, the government's refusal meant a departure from the nation's age-old tradition of openness to foreign influences and of international hospitality – a tradition that traced from the Dukes of Burgundy's Aula Magna through the twentieth century. This decision was also unprecedented in that Brussels's international role had been thwarted not by a competing host city, but by the Belgian government, which could have been expected to support its capital.
- As for Brussels, this decision was a clear signal – although perhaps not fully understood at the time – which suggested that the city's European development, a natural consequence of its geographic position, would not materialize without a direct link between local actors and European institutions. As Brussels could not count on the national government's support for this development, local initiatives would be pursued in parallel with the national government's relationship with Europe. The siting of the European Parliament is a case in point. A Brussels private sector initiative took the initiative to build a 'Center of Congress' in the Leopold Quarter, which was outfitted to accommodate, at the opportune moment, either a part or the whole of the European Parliament.

## **4.4. The siting of the European Commissions in Brussels and its impact on urban development**

For the City of Brussels, 1958 was a pivotal year. Along with Strasbourg and Luxembourg, it was promoted to the rank of European capital, albeit provisionally (see Chapter 2). Moreover, the European Commissions of the European Economic Community and of EURATOM located in Brussels that year, not by a deliberate political choice, but indirectly: the Treaty of Rome (1957) made provisions for a rotating six-monthly European presidency system based on alphabetical order. Since the letter 'B' was first in the order, Belgium was charged with chairing the Council of European Ministers – a task that required putting offices at the disposal of the civil servants of both Commissions.

(ILLUSTRATIONS 25)

The detailed account of the 'battle for the seats' confirms that no explicit agreement was reached at that time in favour of Brussels (Croise-Schirtz, 29) The decision to locate the Commissions in Brussels was another pivotal decision, or 'point of



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ILLUSTRATIONS 25: View of the first European Commission buildings in Brussels. – The European Commission was located in Brussels, not by a deliberate political choice, as no common position could be found among the member countries, but indirectly: The Treaty of Rome (1957) made provisions for a rotating six-monthly European presidency system based on alphabetical order. Since the letter 'B' was first in the order, Belgium was charged with chairing the Council of European Ministers – a task that required putting offices at the disposal of the civil servants of both Commissions. The Belgian government proposed a building in a residential district across from the Cinquantenaire Park – a district that would soon become the European Quarter. The selection of this site was a pivotal decision that would have a major impact on the form of the city's development.

ILLUSTRATIONS 25 : Vue des premiers bâtiments de la Commission Européenne à Bruxelles. – La Commission Européenne fut localisée à Bruxelles, non par choix politique délibéré, mais indirectement grâce à l'ordre alphabétique. Les discussions sur le projet du Traité de Rome prévoyaient des dispositions pour un système de présidence européenne rotative tous les six mois basé sur un ordre alphabétique. Étant donné que la lettre « B » était la première, Bruxelles fut chargée d'accueillir le premier Conseil Européen des Ministres – une tâche qui exigeait d'établir un secrétariat pour la Commission Européenne, le corps exécutif de l'Union Européenne. Le gouvernement belge proposa un bâtiment situé sur la bien connue rue des Joyeuses Entrées (voir ci-dessus), dans un secteur résidentiel, de l'autre côté du Parc du Cinquantenaire, un secteur qui deviendrait bientôt le Quartier Européen. La sélection de ce site fut une décision pivot qui eut un impact important sur la forme de développement de la ville.

AFBEELDINGEN 25: Uitzicht op de eerste gebouwen van de Europese Commissie in Brussel. – De Europese Commissie werd gevestigd in Brussel. Dit was geen politieke beslissing, maar eerder een indirecte keuze, gemaakt met behulp van een alfabetische rangschikking. De eerste versies van het Verslag van Rome bevatten voorwaarden voor een zesmaandelijk roterend systeem voor het Europese voorzitterschap volgens een alfabetisch systeem. Aangezien de letter 'B' als eerste aan de beurt was, kreeg Brussel de taak toebedeeld om de eerste Europese Ministerraad te organiseren, een taak die meteen ook de oprichting vereiste van een secretariaat voor de Europese Commissie, het uitvoerende orgaan van de EU. De Belgische overheid stelde een toepasselijk gebouw voor in de Blijde Inkomstlaan (zie boven), gelegen in de woonwijk tegenover het Jubelpark – een buurt die al gauw de Europese Wijk zou worden. De keuze van de site was cruciaal en zou een enorme impact hebben op de manier waarop de stad zich verder zou ontwikkelen.



Credit © Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles.

bifurcation,' for Europe, in that it confirmed the decentralization of European functions and institutions.

The Belgian government proposed a building for the European Commission in Brussels on the well-named Avenue des Joyeuses Entrées/Blijde inkomstlaan (see 2.1), in a residential district across from the Cinquantenaire Park (see above) – a district that would soon become the European Quarter. The selection of this site was another pivotal decision, which would have a major impact on the form of the city's development. Following this decision, developers in the know rushed to purchase nearby residential properties, re-develop them into office buildings, and resell them on the commercial market at significantly higher densities and prices. The Belgian Government itself led this effort, transforming the Résidence Palace into offices for the Ministers and acquiring the Berlaymont School (at a hefty price) so as to construct the Commission's headquarters. Its choice of that particular area was favoured by influential developers, and supported by planning advisors close to them, over the North Station area. They saw the profits potentially associated with the transformation of residential plots into office blocks. An additional profit potential was, and still is, Belgium's low property taxes, which encouraged private land banking for deferred development.



Credit © Aéro News, archives C.D.P.

ILLUSTRATION 26: Manhattan Project, Air view. – In the foreground, the World Trade Centre (WTC); in the back, Rogier Place and Manhattan Centre (Sheraton Hotel).

ILLUSTRATION 26: Projet Manhattan, vue aérienne. – À l'avant plan le World Trade Centre (WTC) ; au fond, la Place Rogier et Manhattan Centre (Sheraton Hotel).

AFBEELDING 26: Manhattan Project, Air view. – Voorplan: de WTC torens; op de achtergrond Rogierplein en Manhattan Centre 5Sheraton Hotel).

The North Station area had become available for development with the implementation of the North-South Junction (1950), an underground railway link between the North Station and the South (Midi) Station. This had been made possible through a huge number of expropriations, and did not use all the land secured for it. This excess land, happily located next to the transport hub of the city, could have been used to build a European institutions quarter. The construction of the modernist 'Cité Administrative' (1957) along the North-South Junction demonstrated the potential for developing this area.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 26)

The 'Manhattan Plan,' proposed to this effect by the planning firm Groupe Structures, covered the entire zone surrounding the station. The three concerned communes (Brussels, Saint-Josse, and Schaerbeek) adopted a detailed zoning plan for the area, but the plan was not implemented until thirty years later, because the developers of the new European Quarter had no desire to develop a plan that was in competition with their own projects.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 27)

Planning legislation in 1962 greatly facilitated their projects (see 4.5).



Credit © Archives de la Compagnie de Promotion (C.D.P.).

ILLUSTRATION 27: Master Plan Manhattan Project. – The North Station is on the lower part left, the WTC in the middle of the lower part, Rogier Place on the upper left.

ILLUSTRATION 27: Plan d'aménagement du Projet Manhattan. – La Gare du Nord est située en bas à gauche, le WTC en bas au milieu et la Place Rogier en haut à gauche.

AFBEELDING 27: Plan van aanleg van het Manhattan Project. – Het Noordstation ligt beneden links, het WTC ligt beneden rechts en het Rogierplan ligt bovenaan links.

To sum up, the decision to site the city's European institutions in the residential Cinquantenaire Quarter, where all transportation infrastructures had to be built from scratch, instead of the North Station Quarter, where the transportation infrastructure was in place, may have been regrettable. At least the choice of the Cinquantenaire area allowed the insertion of the European institutions within the urban fabric. This was not the case with the location of the NATO headquarters, for example, which were located at the edge of the Brussels-Capital Region, next to the Brussels cemetery.

#### (ILLUSTRATION 28)

Only now, some fifty years later, and considering the stabilisation of European institution seats, is Brussels drawing up a coherent master plan for the European quarter and its extensions (see Chapter 5).

#### **4.5. The 1960s: pivotal years for urban planning in Belgium and Brussels**

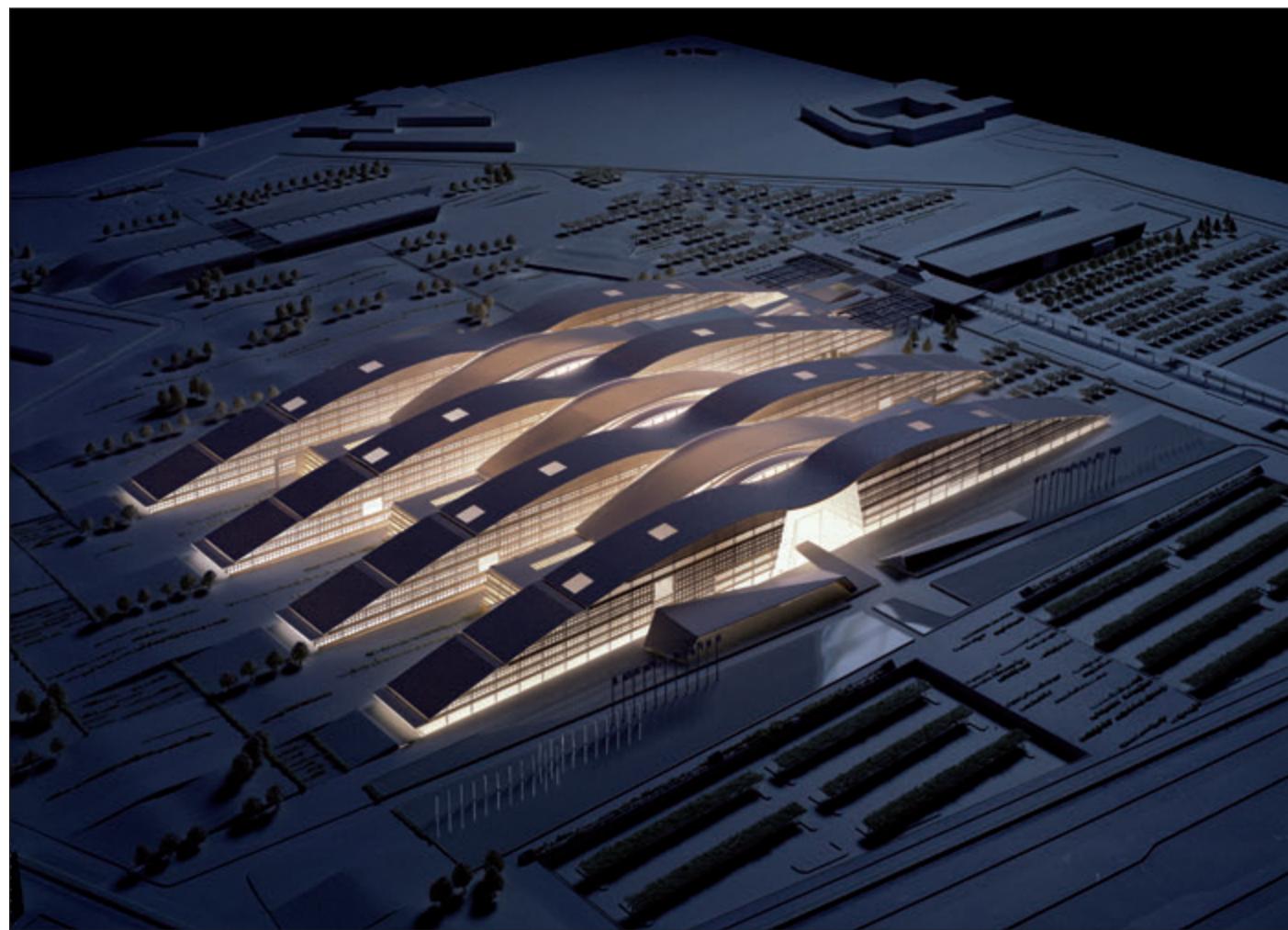
In the wake of World War II, the speedy recovery of the Port of Antwerp and of the Belgian economy in general, combined with the opening of Belgium to international trade, allowed,

among other things, the rapid development of the three influential economic sectors that were shaping American cities: oil, automobile, and real estate. The representatives of these sectors helped fashion Belgian urban policies after the American model.

The International Exhibition 'Expo' of 1958, for example, served as a catalyst for road, oil, and automobile industries to transform several boulevards into urban highways, to the dismay of those who saw the mass event of Expo 58 as an opportunity to create a first Metro line. The Metro was eventually built, some two decades later. In the 1950s and 1960s, the government adopted a number of policies and measures that effectively encouraged both urban renewal and suburban development.

Examples of such policies and measures include:

- The appropriation of funds for highway construction (Road Fund), following the example of the US 1956 Federal Highway Act.
- Expropriation rights for the benefit of developers (developers owning half a block were entitled to acquire the rest of it through public expropriation, thanks to the 1962



Credit © Architect: SOM+ASSAR - Model: SOM

ILLUSTRATION 28: Future NATO Brussels HQ (2013).

ILLUSTRATION 28 : Futur QG de l'OTAN, Bruxelles (2013).

AFBEELDING 28: Toekomstig NABVO zetel, Brussel (2013).

Organic Law on City and regional land use planning). (Laconte 2004)

- The easy granting of permits for the urban development of peripheral agricultural land, that is, rezoning, thanks to a system of appeals and of compensations in favour of developers in case of refusal. (Laconte 2004)
- The ‘De Taeye Law’, which made single-family suburban housing available to a larger segment of the population.
- Policies on housing finance, that encouraged investment in owner-occupied housing.
- Legislation on ‘economic expansion’, which encouraged heavy and light industry alike to relocate to industrial zones (which were located in the periphery and only accessible by car).
- A very generous deductibility of actual commuting costs from personal income tax, a powerful incentive for households to locate in the suburbs and commute by car to downtown offices. This policy entailed the provision of downtown parking, at the expense of other uses of those spaces. The ‘De Saeger’ regulation imposed a minimum number of parking spaces in both office and residential buildings, even if they were next to a station.

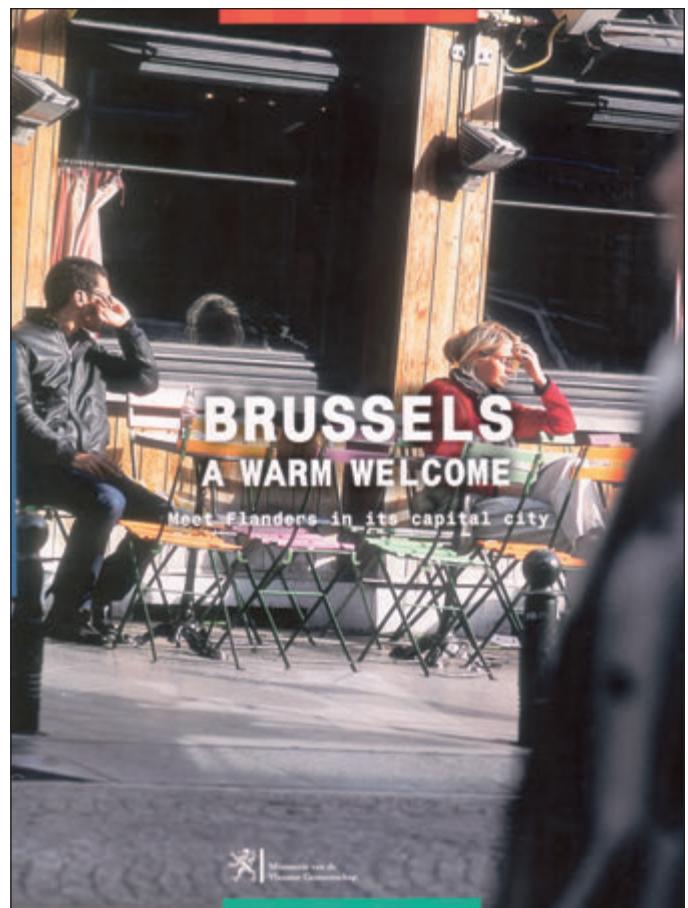
It is interesting to compare the Brussels policies of the 1950s and later with those adopted by the City of Zurich. The City of Zurich was concerned with the flight of population to the suburbs and the increasing traffic congestion that slowed down the speed of its tramways and buses. It established a fully reserved right of way for trams and buses, with a priority at traffic lights. It also restricted free on-street parking to city residents: having made an inquiry about the number of motorists who entered the city each morning, but who lived in the periphery and did therefore not have a voting right in the city, the city authorities decided to limit free parking time in the city streets to 90 minutes, except for city residents, who were entitled to parking stickers on their windshields. The sticker was a powerful incentive for motorists to get resident status, and within a year, the city’s population began to climb back up. The income of public parking structures soared, as did property values in the center city, including distressed neighbourhoods (which quickly ceased to be distressed). An S-Bahn (commuter train) was constructed with the cooperation of peripheral communes, which were looking for an alternative to the car for their commuters.

In Brussels, traffic and transportation policies went in the opposite direction. Urban public transport in Brussels had been taken over by a state-owned company, similar to the railways, while local traffic and parking were managed by the communes. These local authorities were not motivated to give public transport any right of way, or even on-street priority, because it was not part of their political responsibility and because the deficit of trams and buses was paid by the state and not by them.

Yet, as for the postwar urban exodus, Brussels had an even greater interest than Zurich in retaining residents (see 4.6).

#### 4.6. Urban development since the 1970s: toward a Central Belgian mega-city

In the wake of World War II (see 4.2), the resolution of a number of social conflicts ironically opened the way to other tensions, especially between the language communities: the quick revival of the national economy, the social peace, the school legislation that provided subsidies for both private and public schools and appeased the tensions between Catholics and non-Catholics, and the ascent of King Baudouin to the throne appeased the conflict around the personality of King Leopold III and his behaviour during the German occupation. Many Flemish leaders were convinced that the growth and prosperity of Flanders would naturally give rise to a Flemish majority in the country and a dominant position over the whole nation, including Brussels. Another vision gradually took over, however: to develop Flanders as an autonomous entity. This would in effect weaken the Belgian establishment, mostly French-speaking, centred in Brussels. To succeed, this vision required limiting Brussels to its nineteen communes (the Brussels-Capital Region), which is an area of about 160 square kilometres out of thirty thousand. According to a brochure published in 2007 by the Flemish government, ‘We must take measures to ensure that French does not spread across the Flemish communities like oil on water... The first step consists in limiting Brussels to nineteen communes’ (Flemish Government). (ILLUSTRATION 29)

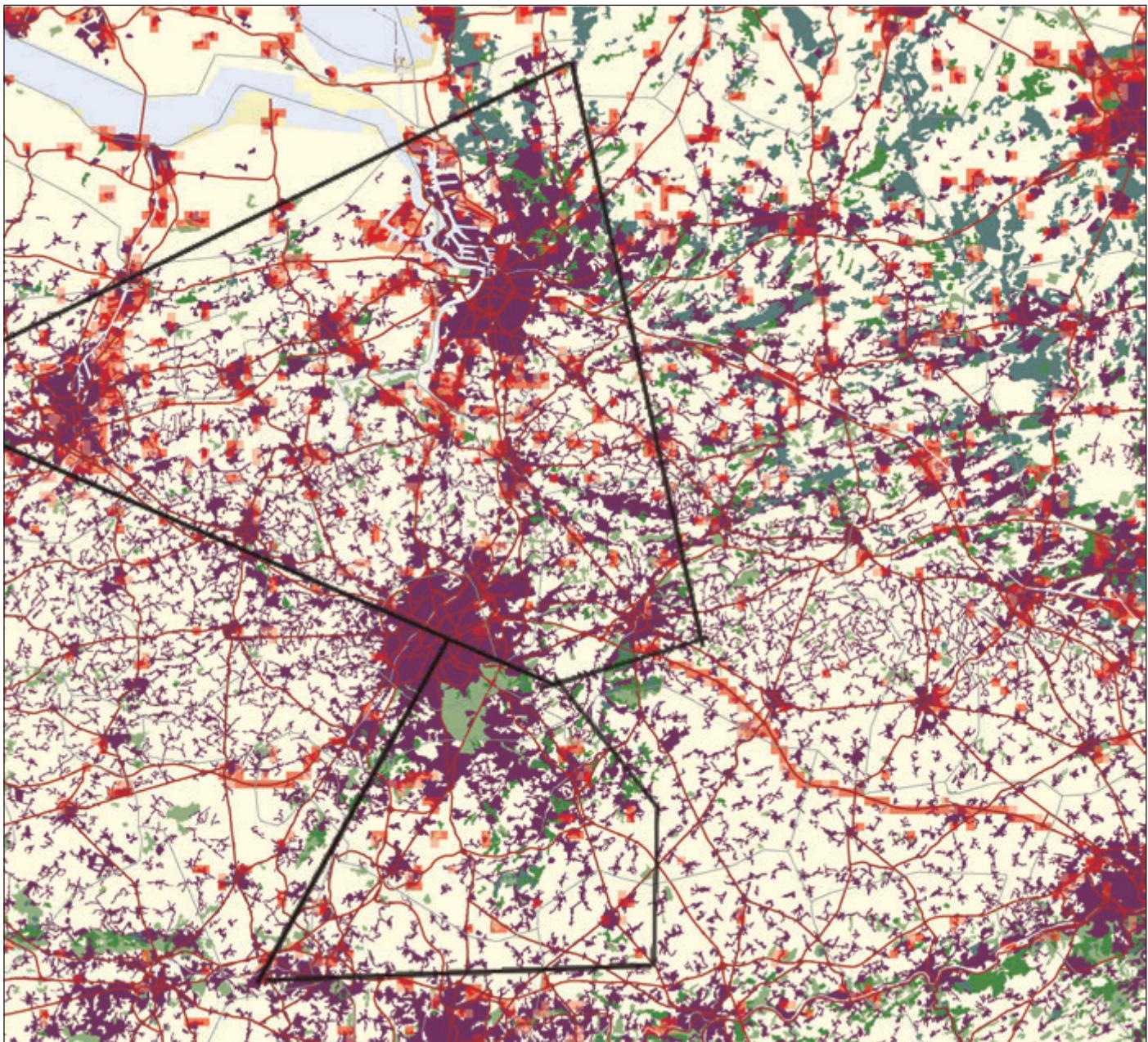


Credit © Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.

ILLUSTRATION 29: Flemish Government (2007). – Brochure about Flemish presence in Brussels.

ILLUSTRATION 29 : Gouvernement flamand (2007). – Brochure au sujet de la présence flamande à Bruxelles.

AFBEELDING 29: Flemish Government (2007). – Brochure betreffende de vlaamse aanwezigheid te Brussel.



Credit © European Environment Agency - Pierre Laconte, 2007.

#### ILLUSTRATION 30: The Central Belgian mega-city.

The satellite images of land cover, analysed by the European Environment Agency (EEA) show the areas of urban growth 1990-2000 (LIGHT ORANGE). They illustrate the fast growth of the triangular/trapezoidal area including Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven and Brussels, and of the area south of Brussels that includes the Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve/Wavre cluster and Nivelles.

#### ILLUSTRATION 30 : La megapole centrale belge.

*Les images satellites de la couverture du sol, interprétées par l'Agence européenne de l'environnement (EEA) montre les zones de fort développement 1990-2000 (orange clair). Elles illustrent la croissance de la zone trapezoidale incluant Anvers, Gand, Louvain et Bruxelles, ainsi que de la zone au sud de Bruxelles qui inclut le pôle Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve/Wavre et Nivelles.*

**AFBEELDING 30: Het Centraal Belgisch mega-city.** De satelliet beelden van het grond gebruik, en hun interpretatie door het Europees milieagentschap (EEA) tonen de groeizones 1990-2000 (licht oranje). Zij illustreren de groei van de "Vlaamse ruit" (trapezium dat Antwerpen, Gent, Leuven en Brussel omvat), alsook de groei van de zone gelegen ten zuiden van Brussel (namelijk Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve/Waver en Nijvel).

The periphery, where more and more Brussels families went to live, became a huge tax base for the suburban communes concerned, which were mostly Flemish.

Indeed, the local share of the national personal taxation pool is based on the number of people registered locally. Belgian language legislation in 1963, which allowed French-speaking households to use French in their dealings with communal administrations, effectively encouraged the exodus of French-speaking households to the periphery. This exodus had the effect of reducing the Brussels share of the national taxation pool.

The centrifugal movement of jobs and population toward the periphery has resulted in the emergence of a Central Belgian mega-city. Several new, autonomous, urban poles emerged outside of Brussels but within this mega-city. Its geographical configuration is often represented by two more or less triangular or trapezoidal forms: one consisting of the urbanized space between Antwerp, Ghent, Leuven, and Brussels, the other one consisting of the southern Brussels periphery,

including Nivelles and Ottignies-Louvain-la Neuve/Wavre, also linked to Brussels. The concept of a Central Belgian mega-city was developed in the monumental 'Polynet' study, coordinated by Sir Peter Hall and published in 2006. It was one of the eight mega-cities across Europe analysed in this study, focusing on 'their physical separation but strong networks, be they visible or invisible'. (Hall) The Polynet Action 1.2. Quantitative analysis of service business connections (Aujean p. 15) concludes "...the division of Brussels into two economic cores resulted in interesting results. North East Brussels appears quite unique, with an extreme concentration of management consultancy firms (located in business parks) and very high international connectivity levels, some considerable in the competition with Brussels-Capital Region". Similarly, the growing polarisation of both the Flemish triangle and the Walloon area south of Brussels by the capital, was analysed by Jean-François Thisse and Isabelle Thomas, also in 2006. (Thisse) Finally, the European Environment Agency's analysis of the urbanization trends in Europe reveals a fast-growing urban spread in the same area. (European Environment Agency, 2006)

(ILLUSTRATION 30)

Two emerging poles outside of Brussels but within the Central Belgian mega-city are good examples of this trend: the urbanizing area between Brussels and Brussels Airport to the north, and the development of the Ottignies–Louvain-la-Neuve/Wavre cluster to the south.

#### **4.6.1. The Brussels – Airport axis**

A portion of the Brussels Airport axis is located within the Brussels-Capital Region territory. The planning of this area, particularly the Josaphat Station site, is under the authority of the Region and the concerned communes (Brussels, Evere, and Schaerbeek). Meanwhile, the planning of the rest of the airport axis, which is located within the Flemish Region's territory, is under the authority of the Flemish Region and the concerned communes (Zaventem, Diegem, and Vilvoorde). Several pockets of development emerged, in particular Vilvoorde, whose long tenured Mayor is Jean-Luc Dehaene, former Prime Minister. It is independent from Brussels but part of the Central Belgium mega-city. (INBOX ABOUT BRUSSELS AIRPORT AXIS AND VILVOORDE, by Prof. Evert Lagrou).

#### **4.6.2. The 'cluster' of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve/Wavre**

When the French-speaking section of the Catholic University of Louvain was obliged to leave the town of Louvain/Leuven in 1968, it decided to relocate not in the Brussels-capital region, where 80 hectares had been set aside for it by the Brussels Commune of Woluwe-St-Lambert, but in Ottignies, a small Walloon town located twenty-five kilometres south-east of Brussels. This decision brought intensive academic and urban development to the area. (Laconte, 2003) The neighbouring city of Wavre also benefited from that development. Today, Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve constitutes a vibrant pole of services, independent of Brussels, but part of the Central Belgian mega-city. (INBOX ABOUT OTTIGNIES LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE).

## **5. The present situation and perspectives at the dawn of the twenty-first Century: Belgium and Brussels in Europe**

### **5.1. The Institutional Framework**

By virtue of its political framework, which is decentralized in favour of regions and linguistic communities ('federated entities'), Belgium is a microcosm of today's decentralized Europe of twenty-seven states. This institutional decentralization is superimposed on the Central Belgian mega city, which is centripetal, as it polarizes much of the urban development in Belgium (Thisse). Similarly the authors of ESPON Project 1.4.3. Study on Urban Functions, state in their final draft report about Belgium, of october 2006 (Vandermotten, p. 18): "Brussels labour basin (...) covers the whole central part of Belgium (...). This due to the weight of Brussels as first employment core in Belgium, to a very early tradition of commuting and to a strong suburbanisation, in a small country with a very dense transport network and weak urban planning regulations".

The Brussels-Capital Region itself is also highly decentralized, notwithstanding its size (limited to 160 square kilometres). Each of the Region's nineteen communes asserts its autonomy from the tutelary Brussels-Capital Region. The majority of regional ministers are also active at the communal level, which is, in fact, the main source of their political legitimacy.

The dominant political parties in the Brussels-Capital Region have divergent views for the region's future institutional development. Some want to strengthen Brussels-Wallonia ties based on the use of the French language. Others want to develop a specific Brussels multilingual identity, distinct from the Flemish and Walloon identities, but open to cultural links with both of them. Thus, during successive institutional negotiations, the Brussels-Capital Region was unable to present a sufficiently unified front against its federated entities' claims of autonomy, and remains politically isolated. Chapter 5 further describes the effect of these institutional complexities on urban development and urban form.

To sum up, the Brussels-Capital Region is only the central part of the larger Central Belgian conurbation. It is only 160 square kilometres in size but presents a great diversity of local development policies. This territory still has great potential for future urban development. Indeed, the average land occupation in the Brussels-Capital Region is very low, particularly compared to Paris, where it is almost four times as high. (Laconte, 2003 and 2004)

(ILLUSTRATION 31)

Let us examine a few outstanding examples of this potential for future development (5.2 and 5.3).

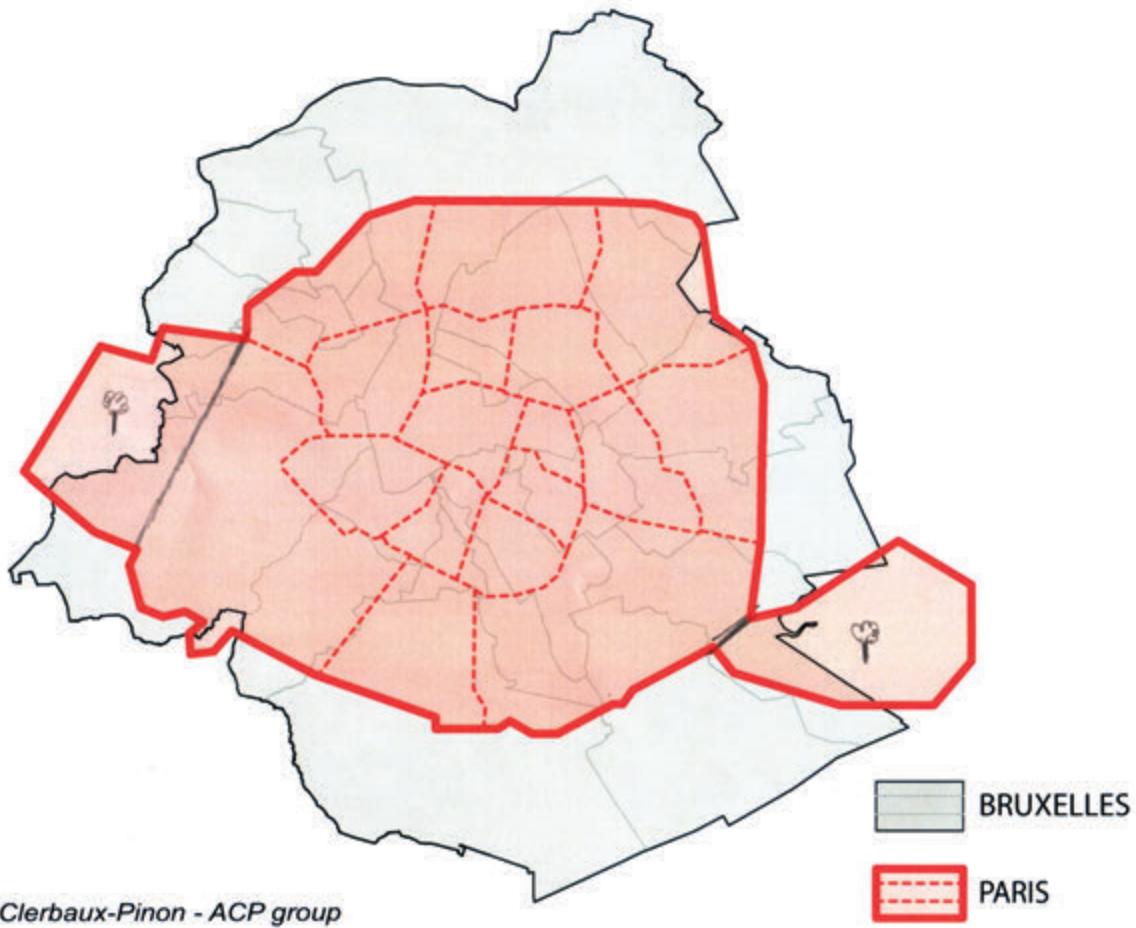


ILLUSTRATION 31: Overlay map of Paris 87 sq kilometres (without the Bois) and Brussels 160 sq kilometres.

ILLUSTRATION 31 : Carte superposée de Paris 87 km<sup>2</sup> (sans les bois) et Bruxelles 160 km<sup>2</sup>.

AFBEELDING 31: Kaarten van Parijs 87 km<sup>2</sup> (zonder de bossen) en Brussel 160 km<sup>2</sup> opeengestapeld.

## 5.2. Perspectives on the European Quarter

Brussels, seat of the European Commission since 1958, was slow to become conscious of its European status and of the benefits it could derive from this status, although that status was provisional. As a result, the city's political establishment let the private sector make most of the siting decisions for European institutions (see 4.4). This laissez-faire approach to development, institutionalized by the 1962 planning legislation (see 4.5), encouraged the formation of a mono-functional quarter dominated by functional and security considerations, without an overall master plan aimed at diversity. State projects involving transportation infrastructure are being pursued, including the renovation of Schuman railway station and a direct underground rail link between the renovated Leopold Quarter station, the Schuman station, and the airport. These investments are presently integrated in a new master plan, pending approval by the Region, which proposes a guiding vision for the European Quarter (see Chapter 5).

## 5.3. Perspectives on other quarters

### 5.3.1. The Museum Quarter

At present, only one in 250 tourists extend their downtown visit up to the Museum Quarter. A master plan for the 'Mont des Arts' (the 'Arts Hill', or Museum Quarter, corresponding to what was formerly the Coudenberg Hill) should be put

together through a collaboration between the various concerned cultural institutions, with the aim of increasing the attraction of this culturally important area. This plan should include a pedestrian link with the neighbouring Sablon Quarter, in the form of a passage through the Royal Library building. It should also include an underground passage linking the Royal Palace and the Palais des Beaux-Arts/Paleis voor Schone Kunsten ('the bozar'), through the former Brussels Court Palace. The future success of the Museum Quarter will largely depend on the reopening in 2009 of the Palace of Congress, which has been closed for renovation (see Chapter 4).

### 5.3.2. The Canal Zone – Tour and Taxis – Curegem

The Canal Zone, which extends along the Canal on each side, is rich in unexploited potential. Located about 500 metres from the business district of the North Quarter (Avenue Albert II), this zone is very suitable for dynamic, twenty-first century development. The area between the North Station and the new Avenue Albert business center (which is the belated implementation of the Manhattan Plan, see above), lies on one side of the Canal. The Tour and Taxis site lies on the other side. It was formerly the Royal Customs warehouses (1906), named after the Turm & Taxis family (see 2.1), and was narrowly saved from destruction as a result of a Europa Nostra campaign led by Lord Soames. Both sides of the canal are now UNESCO world heritage sites.

**INBOX 1 (See 4.6.1.)**  
**Urban development**  
**Brussels-North – Airport and Vilvoorde**

Prof. Evert LAGROU, Chair Vilvoorde Planning Commission

The axis Brussels–Airport–Vilvoorde benefits from a dramatic urban expansion.

The map presents the major projects in the area. (ILLUSTRATION 32)

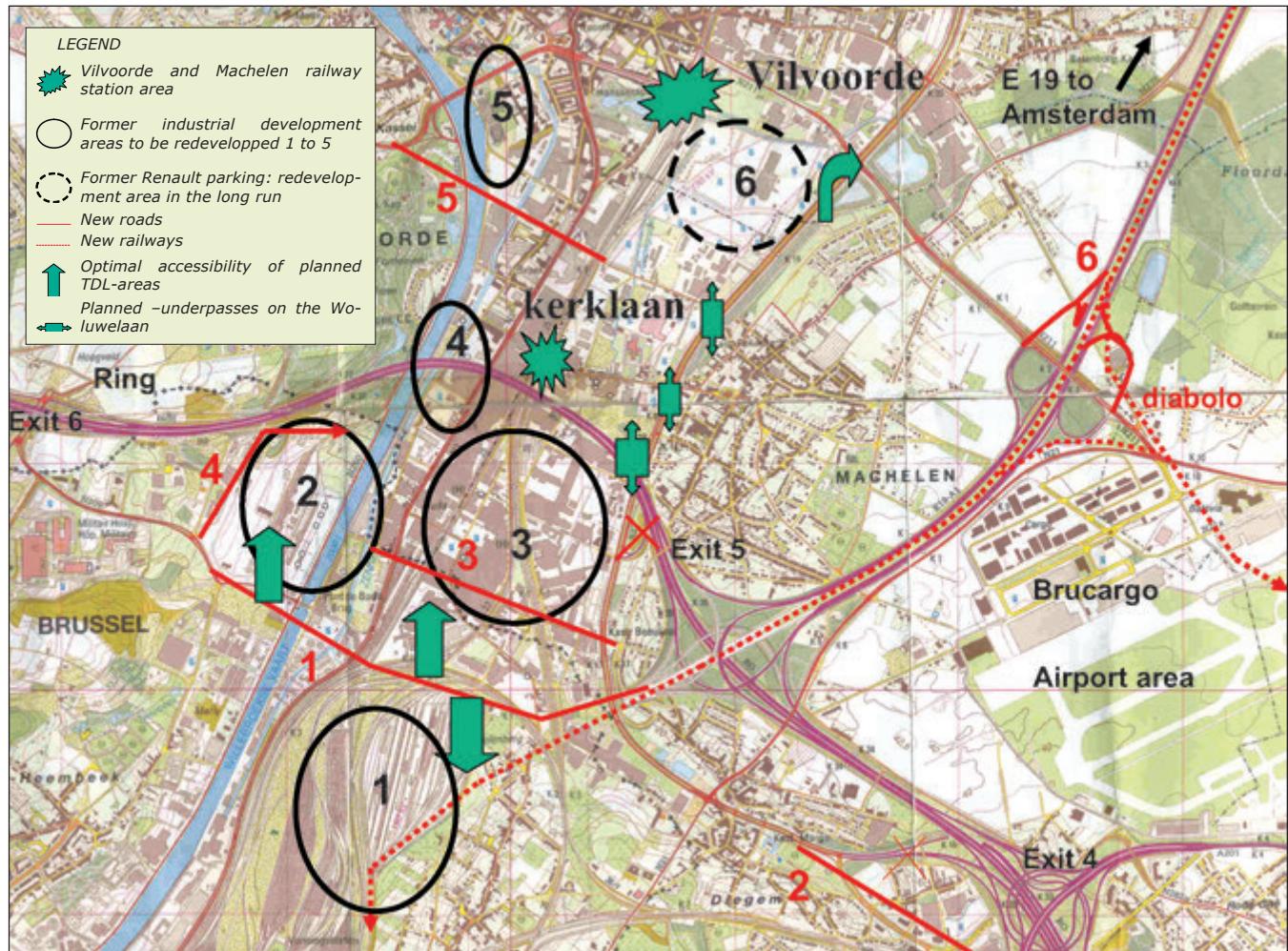
- A new railway link, built under the airport, is connecting the airport directly to Brussels, Antwerp and Lieges.
- Within the framework of the 'Regional Express Network' (Réseau Express Régional – Gewestelijk Expres Net) the Vilvoorde railway station gets an important function as 'tranferium' a transfer point between trains and buses. The surroundings of the station are now being redeveloped for that purpose, with offices and houses. A second, new station, is being considered. A new tramway network on the same axis is also planned (not shown on the map).
- A new road connection, linking exit 6 on the Brussels Ringroad directly to the E 19 motorway (Brussels–Antwerp) and becoming the backbone of the whole area, is now under discussion at the regional level.
- Four former industrial areas on the axis may be redeveloped into new urban districts: 'Schaerbeek Formation', number 1 on the map, in the Brussels-Capital Region, and Vilvoorde (num-

bers 2, 3, and 4 on the map). Their implementation is linked to decontamination and new road infrastructure.

- The central 'campus'-area in Vilvoorde (number 5 on the map) contains a new city park and 100,000 square metres of office space and houses. It is under development through public-private – partnerships including architectural competitions.

The main planning issues for this area seem to be:

- The pressure from the real estate sector to take short-term advantage of the area's opportunities. The public authorities should increase their actions for the availability of 'clean' zones and for better accessibility for both public and private transportation.
- The 'regionalisation' of Belgium into the three Regions (Brussels, Flanders, and Wallonia) has gone too far: no authority in the field of urban and road planning is left to the central government. The result is that important projects are frozen by lack of a federal coordinating authority. All projects on the airport axis are located on both Brussels and Flemish territory. Informal meetings between the planning authorities of both regions seem not to be efficient. It is necessary to revise this institutional situation.



## INBOX 2 (See 4.6.2.)

### A development cluster in the Walloon Region: The new university town of Louvain-la-Neuve

Pierre LACONTE

The decision to build a new university town instead of a mono-functional campus for the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) was made in 1968, as new laws on the use of languages compelled the French-speaking university to move from the city of Louvain, where it had been founded in 1425.

The aim was to recreate an urban and university environment similar to that of classic university towns like Louvain or Heidelberg. After examining several options, including Brussels, where 80 hectares had been set aside by the Commune of Woluwe St Lambert, the UCL accepted the invitation by the small town of Ottignies, 25 kilometres from Brussels, to settle at the periphery of the town. It was able to buy around a thousand hectares of agricultural land there. The then-Government only agreed to finance university facilities. The urban development was achieved through ground leases, according to a Dutch law (see Chapter 1.2.2.).

The UCL set up an Urban Planning and Architecture Office (R. Lemaire, J.P. Blondel, and P. Laconte) to work out a Master Plan and undertake the architectural coordination of the new university town. Each stage of development had to include housing, shops, and university buildings. The first stage grew around the Science Faculty and the Science Library (1972). The second phase was the development of a pedestrian spine (rue des Wallons) towards a new railway station. The Belgian National Railway Company agreed to build a 4 kilometre long junction to the Brussels-Luxembourg railway line. The University, owner of the air rights, financed the building of the railway station and the connected residential and commercial buildings, which opened in 1976.

The urban pedestrian spine developed further as the Main Street (Grand Rue), towards the Main Square (Grand Place). This square includes the main university hall, called Aula Magna, in reference to the assembly hall in Brussels (see 2.1); cinemas; a museum; apartment blocks; and shops. The pedestrian spine was extended towards the Church and the Sports Centre.

Since 2001, the non-university related population has exceeded the population connected to university jobs. This indicates a successful town and gown mix. The non-university population has been attracted by the numerous cultural activities generated by the university. Conversely, the university population often lives outside and can easily commute from Brussels. Thanks to the central location of the station, it became possible for the market to accept high-density low-rise housing. The day time/night time population (2006) is above 40,000, which translates to roughly 100 jobs or inhabitants per hectare in the central part of the town. Because of its high density, traffic in the city centre is mainly pedestrian, often using passages through the courtyards of buildings.

Access to the city from the outside is either by car or via public transportation (direct train or bus connections to Brussels, and direct automobile access via the Brussels-Namur highway). This urban concept - both compact and green - is by far the best in terms of savings in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, since cars are not needed inside the town.

All storm water is collected into an artificial lake, which is also an amenity. The University negotiated with the developer Wilhelm & Co, which was initially intending to build a shopping centre just outside the new town, to rather develop a mixed-use project of more than 100,000 square metres next to the station (including shops, housing, offices, leisure, and parking lots). The project was called Esplanade and now belongs to the French Group Klépierre (Paris). The opening took place in 2005. It extends the range of shopping choice for both the residents of the new university town and visitors from all over the area. (ILLUSTRATION 33)

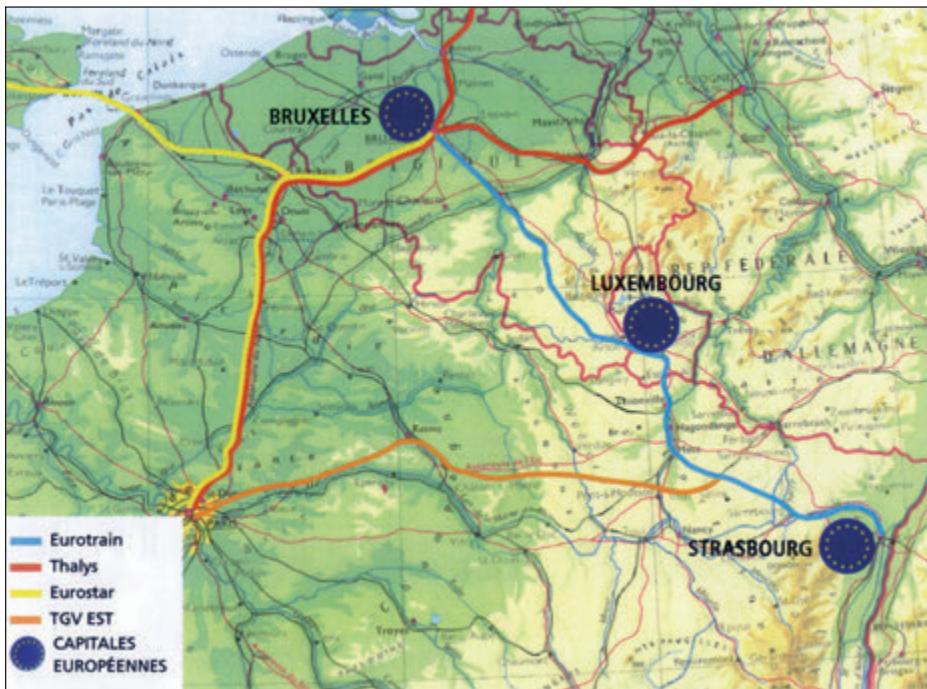


*Credit © Wilhelm and Co.*

ILLUSTRATION 33: General view from the lake. – The Louvain-la-Neuve new university town has been a key element in the development cluster of Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve/Wavre, independent from Brussels but within the Central Belgium mega city.

*ILLUSTRATION 33 : Vue générale depuis le lac - La nouvelle ville universitaire de Louvain-la-Neuve a été un élément moteur du pôle de développement d'Ottignies, indépendant de Bruxelles mais situé au sein de la mégapole centrale belge.*

*AFBEELDING 33: Algemeen zicht vanuit het meer - De nieuwe universiteitstad van Louvain-la-Neuve was een belangrijk element van het groeipool Ottignies onafhankelijk van Brussel, maar gelegen in de centrale Belgische mega-city.*



ILLUSTRATIONS 34 : Project for a Tilting Train between Brussels, Luxemburg, and Strasbourg. – The rail link between Brussels, Luxemburg, and Strasbourg remains weak. It takes around five hours by train. The work planned for the Belgian section, together with the projects that are being promoted by the Grand Duchy of Luxemburg and the portion of the Paris-Strasbourg TGV route that has been realized between Beaudreaut (Metz) and Strasbourg, will constitute an important improvement to the rail link. They will enable the introduction of a tilting train that would reach speeds up to 250 km/hour on the existing tracks, thereby reducing travel time between the three cities by fifty percent.

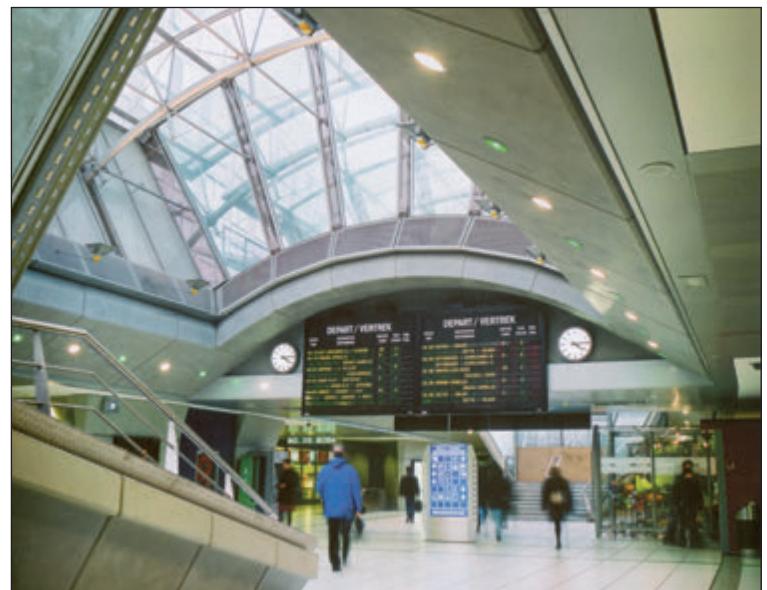
ILLUSTRATIONS 34 : Projet d'un train à grande vitesse entre Bruxelles, Luxembourg et Strasbourg. – La liaison ferroviaire entre Bruxelles, Luxembourg et Strasbourg a des faiblesses. Il faut environ cinq heures en train. Les travaux planifiés pour la section belge, en même temps que les projets qui ont été promus par le Grand Duché de Luxemburg et la portion TGV Paris-Strasbourg qui a été réalisée entre Beaudreaut (Metz) et Strasbourg, constitueront une importante amélioration de la liaison ferroviaire. Ils permettront la mise en place d'un train à haute vitesse qui pourrait atteindre jusqu'à 250 km/heure sur les voies actuelles, réduisant ainsi de cinquante pourcent le temps de voyage entre les trois villes.



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(Laconte 2003 p.14).

AFBEELDINGEN 34: Project voor een kantelbaktrein tussen Brussel, Luxemburg en Straatsburg.

De treinverbinding tussen Brussel, Luxemburg en Straatsburg blijft slecht. De treinreis duurt ongeveer vijf uur. De werkzaamheden voor het Belgische gedeelte van het traject, samen met de projecten die worden gesteund door het Groothertogdom Luxemburg en het deel van het TGV-traject Parijs-Straatsburg (dat tussen Beaudreaut (Metz) en Straatsburg werd aangelegd), zal de spoorwegverbinding aanzienlijk verbeteren. Dit maakt het bovendien mogelijk om een kantelbaktrein in te zetten die op de bestaande rails snelheden van 250 kilometer per uur haalt, en daarmee de reistijden tussen de drie steden met ongeveer de helft verminderd.



Credit © Luxembourg station  
(Laconte 2003 p.101). Photo S.N.C.B.

This remarkable complex could become the focal point for a grand urban vista. A vision for possible projects in this area has been developed by the Berlage Institute of Rotterdam. (Berlage) The Tour & Taxis grounds presently call for several prestigious projects to complement the Royal Warehouses. Implementing these projects will require substantial investments in transport infrastructure that cannot be carried out by the Region alone (see Chapter 5).

Other sites near the canal – Schaerbeek station and the Midi-Curegem Quarter - could also be developed but would likewise require significant transportation improvements (Laconte 2005). Similarly, about 300 meters away from the Midi Station, there is a gaping hole in the urban fabric. This area was the former site of the Veterinary School that was ironically located near the Central Slaughterhouse. Both are gone, leaving the area open for redevelopment.

#### **5.4. The potential for increasing the European accessibility of Brussels**

Brussels's strategic geographic position and its accessibility from other European cities is one of its strongest assets. Indeed, Brussels ranks at the top of the list of accessible European cities, as measured by the number of people with a gross annual income of 30,000 euros who can reach the city by train within four hours. Brussels is presently accessible for 100 million such people. This number is expected to rise to 150 million by 2025 (120 million for Paris).

The Brussels Airport was certainly hurt by the bankruptcy of SABENA, the former national airline of Belgium, but Brussels is still highly accessible by plane. The direct TGV rail connection between Paris CDG airport and Brussels-Midi (around one hour) provides another means of accessing Brussels. The opening of the direct TGV line between Brussels, Antwerp and Amsterdam will similarly augment the city's accessibility through the Amsterdam airport, starting in 2007. Finally, in the southern part of the Central Belgium mega-city, the Charleroi Airport, also known as Brussels South Airport, is rapidly developing, thanks to the rise of 'budget' airlines.

The link between Brussels, Luxembourg, and Strasbourg remains weak. The Brussels-Strasbourg trip takes around five hours by train. This time would be reduced by half by introducing a tilting train that would allow speeds up to 250 km/hour on existing tracks. This opportunity might be made a reality, possibly with the help of private finance, and operated by a private operator within the framework of passenger rail liberalization. (ILLUSTRATIONS 34)

### **6. Conclusion and perspectives**

#### **6.1. The Brussels-Capital Region, core of the Central Belgian mega-city**

From its inception, Brussels' urban form was influenced, and even determined, by foreign-born rulers – the Dukes of Burgundy, Emperor Charles V, Spanish Governors, the Grand Elector of Bavaria, the Court of Vienna, the King of Holland, and King Leopold I. Leopold II was Belgian-born but had his own vision of the city, which he implemented

through his own initiatives and resources. Brussels could therefore be called a 'city at large'.

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the economic development of Belgium, which, by the eve of World War I, had become the world's fourth largest industrial power. Its capital became an international center and was enriched by overseas contributions. This cosmopolitan trend toward openness and cosmopolitanism was embodied by Art Nouveau during the Belle Epoque, followed by Art Deco in the 1920s.

An important 'bifurcation' in the urban form of the city occurred following World War II. A combination of historical conditions and government policies created unprecedented incentives for suburban development. Brussels households were flocking to the periphery, in what amounted to a centrifugal development. At the same time, increased regional autonomy reinforced the non-Brussels character of that same periphery.

#### **6.2. Brussels' assets as European capital**

The siting of the European Commission and other institutions in Brussels (see Chapter 2) also constituted a major 'bifurcation' for Europe, for Belgium, and for Brussels. (ILLUSTRATIONS 35) It is quite telling that, at the international level, Brussels is better known than Belgium, let alone Flanders or Wallonia. The position of Brussels has strengthened despite the fact that the Belgian state does not provide Brussels, its capital and its international representative, with the necessary means to optimize its assets (see Chapter 5). Its truly multicultural character is undeniable. Its population 'has learned to respect, learn, and diffuse bilingualism as a common practice'. (Prodi, 33) (ILLUSTRATION 36) Its very complexity has made it a laboratory of pragmatic solutions for governance problems. It ranks second to London only for the number of its law offices (Taylor), not to mention think tanks. Moreover, its political reality ever and again reminds us it was the city of surrealist painter René Magritte. As a hint of surrealism is not absent in the EU institutions functioning either; perhaps this further justifies their Brussels location.

The multiplication of European institutions and their distribution across some twenty cities (see Chapter 2) has now made Brussels part of a network of host cities, much wider than the initial trilateral one. Brussels can easily reinforce its proactive networking or 'reticulist' role, thanks to its boundary-spanning position and its accessibility. The city's accessibility from European cities will be further enhanced by the activation of new TGV service between Brussels, Antwerp, and Amsterdam; the improvement of the links with Cologne and German destinations; and by the new Eurostar connection to central London, financed by the private sector. Links between Brussels Airport, its main gateway, and the European Quarter, will also enhance the city's accessibility in relation to other European cities.

The travel time between Brussels, Luxembourg, and Strasbourg remains too high, but might be halved by the introduction of tilting train services between these cities (see Chapter 5). As the three EU seats are now confirmed, none of them still has any interest in not making the connection between them as fast as can be.



Credit © S.N.C.B.

ILLUSTRATIONS 35: The European Parliament buildings seen from the existing neighborhood and from the city centre.

*ILLUSTRATIONS 35 : Bâtiments du Parlement européen vus depuis le quartier existant et depuis le centre-ville.*

*AFBEELDINGEN 35: De gebouwen van het Europees Parlement, gezien vanuit de bestaande wijk en vanuit het centrum van de stad.*



Credit © Belga.

ILLUSTRATION 36: Festivals like "KunstenFESTIVALdesArts", "Couleur Café", "Zinneke Parade" and "BRXLBravo" are embodiments of Brussels' multicultural character.

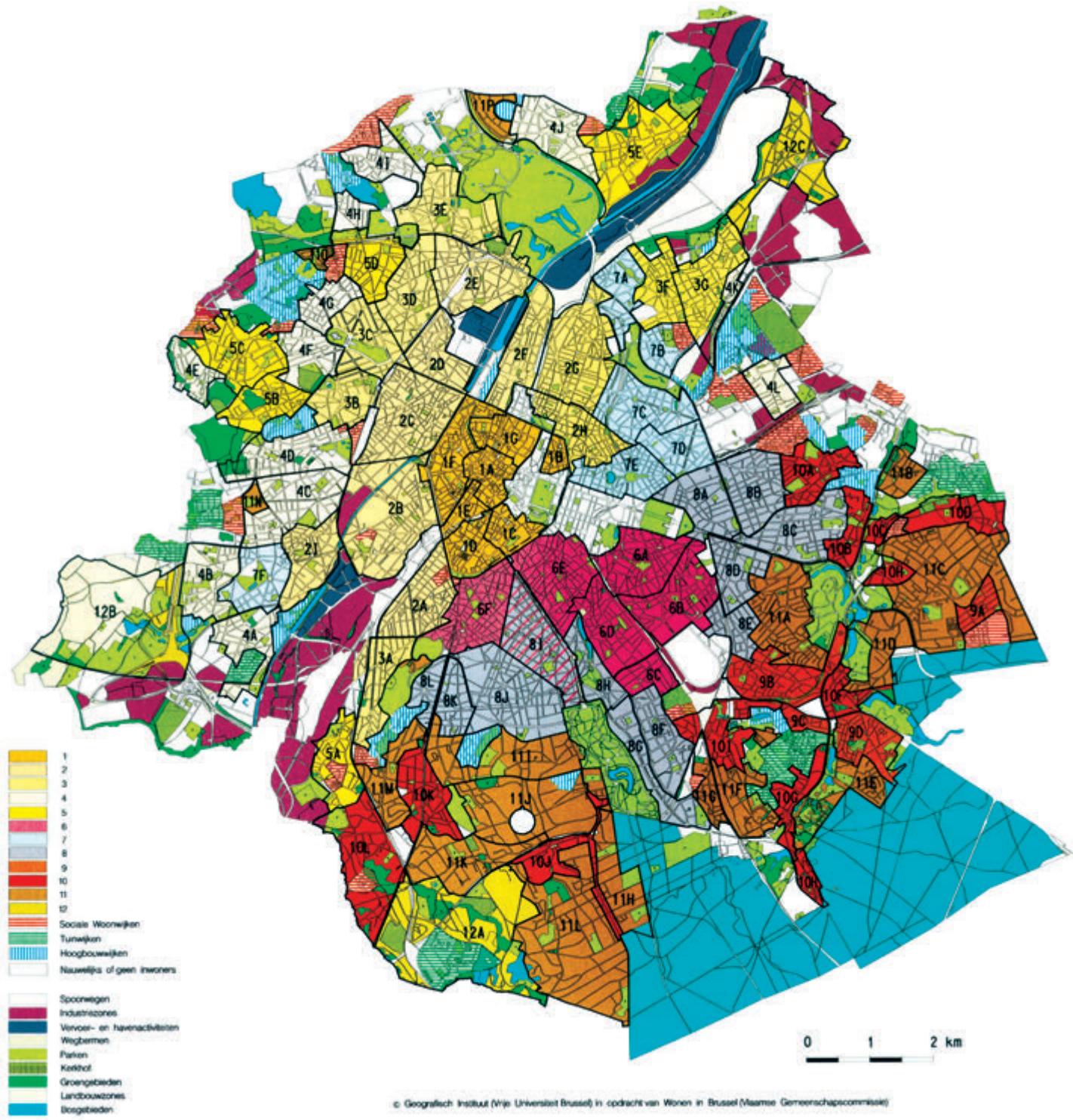
*ILLUSTRATIONS 36 : Des festivals tels que "KunstenFESTIVALdesArts", "Couleur Café", "Zinneke Parade" et "BRXLBravo" incarnent le caractère multiculturel de Bruxelles.*

*AFBEELDING 36: Festivals zoals "KunstenFESTIVALdesArts", "Couleur Café", "Zinneke Parade" en "BRXLBravo" zijn de belichaming van het multicultureel karakter van Brussel.*

The immediate challenge for Brussels seems to be to develop a strategy for its own urban destiny and for the effective administration of its own territory, which is presently underutilized. This strategy should combine regional and communal politics, and should emphasize the city's principal asset: its ability to operate at the European and international levels, while maintaining the local character of its neighbourhoods. (ILLUSTRATION 37)



Credit © BRXLBravo.



Credit © Geografische Instituut Vrije Universiteit Brussel.

#### ILLUSTRATION 37: Brussels, a city of 100 neighbourhoods:

The University of Brussels (VUB), on request of the Association "Wonen in Brussel", with help of VGC (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie,) has produced a typology of the some hundred neighbourhoods (99 in fact) of the Brussels capital Region. The figures 1 to 12 refer to blocks of neighborhoods. The stripes and other colours refer to the land use type within the neighborhoods: social housing, garden suburbs, highrise, few or no inhabitants, industry, port and transport, roads, parks, cemeteries, green areas, agriculture en woods. The full list is available from martine.kockaert@vgc.be.

#### ILLUSTRATIONS 37 : Bruxelles, une ville aux cent quartiers:

L'université de Bruxelles (VUB), sur demande de l'Association "Wonen in Brussel" (vivre à Bruxelles), avec l'aide de la Communauté flamande, a réalisé une typologie de quelque cent quartiers (en fait 99) dans la Région de Bruxelles-capitale. Les chiffres 1 à 12 font référence à des blocs de quartiers. Les hachures et autre couleurs font référence à l'usage du sol: logement social, cité-jardin, immeubles en hauteur, peu ou pas d'habitants, industrie, port et transport, routes et bermes, parcs, cimetières, espaces verts, agriculture et espaces verts. La liste des quartiers peut être obtenue à martine.kockaert@vgc.be.

#### AFBEELDING 37: Brussel, een stad van honderd wijken:

De Vrije Universiteit Brussel, op aanvraag van de Vereniging "wonen in Brussel", met steun van de Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie, heeft een typologie opgemaakt van de honderd brusselse woongebieden (feitelijk 99). De cijfers 1 tot 12 maken referentie aan blokken van wijken. De strepen en andere kleuren worden verklaard in de originele versie. Meer inlichting kan worden verzocht bij martine.kockaert@vgc.be.

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