

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO  
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**The garden cities of the nineteen twenties: Bruxelles**

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In this thesis of contemporary architecture entitled "The Garden Cities of the Nineteen Twenties: Bruxelles", I have chosen not to favour a narrow line of enquiry in order to offer a more global vision of the historical event which saw the cultural and experimental concentration of most Belgian architects upon the "Central Garden" model of territorial and social organization which led to the creation, in the Bruxelles area, in the nineteen twenties and thirties, of at least twentysix central gardens.



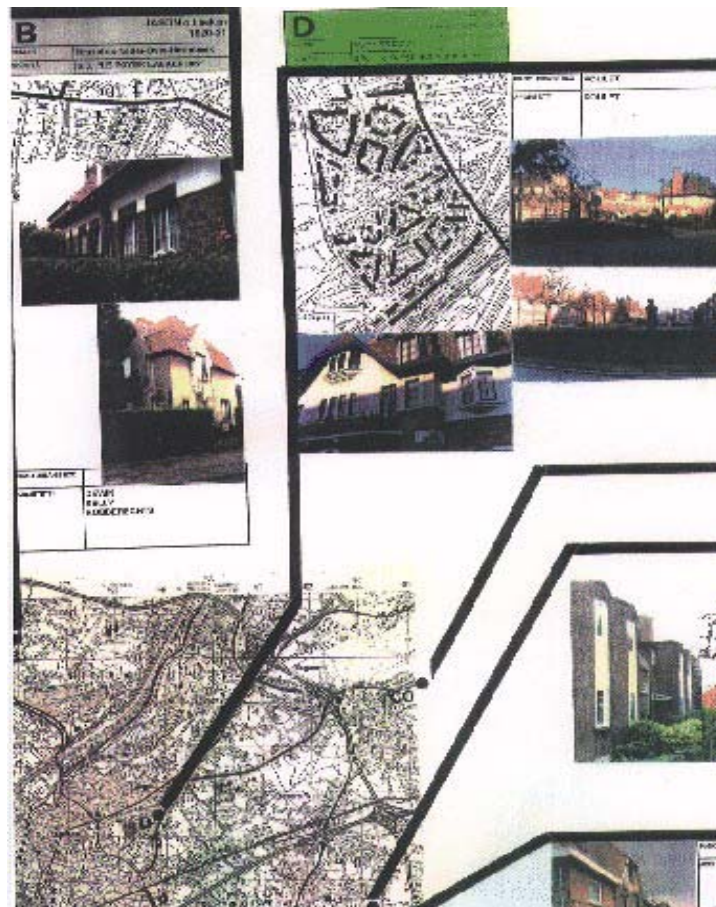
As happened in almost all the rest of Europe near emblematic buildings of the modern movement or near those monumental buildings dedicated to academism, it seems that architectural constructions between the wars emerge from another school; that of "Social Inhabitation". It is within the context of this reality that we will examine the

Central Gardens of Bruxelles. It is perhaps the pragmatism of this architecture, or rather of these styles, which justifies the lack of a unitary architectural typology, for they are composite in their appearance and reality and the buildings which emerge as the most representative of this "movement" must be viewed bearing in mind the directives of the S.N.H.L.B.M., the personal preferences of the mayors of the town councils in which they are found, each architect's own expression and the users' aesthetic and functional necessities.

Since we are not talking here about City Gardens independent of the mother city ó on the English model ó but of entire block gardens which guide the expansion of the historical urban centre. They are thus to be considered along with the latter. I have sought to find a dynamic global theory under-lying the dislocation of the twentysix City Gardens with their finality of orientating urban expansion, and interpreting the socio-biological vision of the city as theorized by the urbanist and landscaper Louis Van der Swaelmen.

The necessity of creating projects coordinated but varied and differentiated within the typology of these units expresses in my submission not only aesthetic stupidity but also the underlying desire to stimulate the "self-determination" of the individual.

This study case has been faced as the pragmatic application of a theory ó "constructed expression" ó of Belgian modernism and point of privileged observation for putting in evidence the cohesion of a movement which reconciles ideological, doctrinal and aesthetic differences.



The identification of a "Belgian City Garden movement" cannot prescind from the dynamics of the formal genesis which are planted on historical conjunctions since it is only through the study of the complexity and multiplicity of their interrelationship that one may arrive at the interpretation of the expressive variety which distinguish them. The time limits are precisely defined by Royal Decree, of the 23rd April 1920, which made operative the "Société Nationale des Logement et Habitations à Bon Marché" (S.N.L.H.B.M.), coordinating organ of the local societies of 'Garden-Quarter', and of the third C.I.A.M. of Bruxelles of 1930, with which the end of the 'City-Garden' model was decreed and the "Ville en Hauteur" was promoted, excluding the "Culturalist" current of the modern Belgian movement in favour of the "technical" approach. This text is articulated in three parts and places its iconographical part in the volume at the end. This ultimate part holds, in the form of descriptive files, documentation regarding the twentysix "Garden Quarters" of the nineteentwenties found in Belgium and includes a specific bibliography.

Several bibliographical files are on the protagonists: Urbanists.

Architects and Landscapers, and a list of the principal modernist magazines, which have seen them the protagonists of avantgard Belgian culture, complete the historical itinerary.

In the final volume the "Garden-Quarter" is put in context: in the work of post-war reconstruction, in the context of the politics of social inhabitation and in the context of the theories of planning on an urban and regional level, all of which have permitted us to interpret the dynamics of the modern movement between "culturism" and "technicism".

Assuming as a principle of key importance for interpretation, architecture as a sociale 'product' puts us on the same storiographical wavelength as that which proposes a non univocal vision of the modern movement, in alternative to the general storiography which puts forward the eloquence of the theoretical debate.

The publication consulted affront, completely or in part, the single legal aspects for the development of the "Garden Quarters" of Bruxelles while the peculiar characteristics of the analysis conducted is that of considering the "groupings" of "Garden Quarters" which is the "Building manifestation" of Belgian modernism.

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