

Saturday, 16 June
9.00-11.45

Track: Comparative Modernities
Room: *National Library, Cupola Hall (Kuppelsaal)*

BUILDING FOR PROSPERITY: PRIVATE DEVELOPERS AND THE WESTERN-EUROPEAN WELFARE STATE

Session chairs: Tim Verlaan, University of Amsterdam
Alistair Kefford, University of Leicester

The period from the 1950s to the 1980s was one of unprecedented urban expansion and renewal in Western Europe, conducted under the aegis of the new social democratic welfare state. Established urban centres were remodeled and redeveloped, while new, planned settlements took shape in satellite and New Towns, and in urban peripheries. The public planning and politics of this wave of post-war urban renewal has been relatively well-documented, but the involvement of private developers in building this 'brave new world' has hardly been addressed. Yet developers played crucial and instrumental roles in the design, financing, construction, and realization of urban renewal projects. In the process they developed lucrative new strategies of urban wealth-creation, produced dramatic new urban forms and structures, and left their own indelible mark upon post-war urbanism, politics and experience. Research into private enterprise in the field of architecture and urban planning has hitherto been left to a small number of real estate experts – whose focus is often restricted to legal contexts and business strategies – or to urban political geographers—whose work tends to assume that private sector involvement in urban redevelopment is a product of post-1980s 'neoliberal' urbanism.

This session aims to embed private sector development and construction firmly within our wider narratives and understandings of post-war urban and architectural history, and does so for a number of reasons. The expertise and financial strength of private developers proved decisive for the execution of development schemes across numerous Western-European towns and cities. A substantial part of the modern built environment has been (co)produced by developers, and this demands more recognition within our treatments of post-war urbanism. Further, as many private developers operated globally, they undoubtedly played an important role in the dissemination of ideas on architecture, planning, and urban form, alongside those more widely-recognized channels of knowledge transfer such as international conferences and academic and professional journals. Finally, government bodies, independent architects and the private sector were heavily reliant on each other, forging powerful public-private partnerships to get building projects of the ground. Examining these hybrid governmental forms and practices allows us to develop more nuanced understandings of the nature and operation of post-war welfare states, and the ways in which they conceived of and provided for the social democratic citizen, while also shedding new light on recent phenomena of internationalization, outsourcing, and privatization of urban planning efforts.

PAPERS:

'Uneasy Bedfellows' Conceiving Urban Megastructures: Breeding Consumer-Citizens in British New Towns

Janina Gosseye, University of Queensland

From its inception, the European welfare state was a contract between three partners: the state, civic society and the private sector. And yet, in most studies on the architecture and urbanism of the European welfare state, the role of the private sector is overlooked, as emphasis is commonly placed on governmental building initiatives and the effects that these had on post-war civic society. An excellent example is Andrew Saint's study of British post-war school building, which – Saint claims – was 'the fullest expression of the movement for a social architecture in Britain [that] ... found its outlet in the service of the post-war welfare state.' However, apart from the public sector, also the

private sector played a key role in designing 'social architecture' that shaped post-war civic society. New towns in particular were sites of experiment. Here, public-private-partnerships forged novel collective spaces, which were hybrid in character and which challenged and redefined precisely what constituted the civic realm. This paper will focus on one such novel type of collective space: the megastructural 'heart' of post-war British New Towns. Combining mass consumption with administrative and civic functions, thereby blending the concepts of 'shopping centre' and 'city centre', these structures perfectly embodied the welfare state's belief that capitalism could neither live with nor without the existence of a pervasive welfare system and vice versa. Individual consumers were seen as a force inimical to totalitarianism and the consumer-citizen, many believed, held the key to the formation of a new post-war society that was devoid of totalitarian overtones. Through the analysis of three New Town megastructures – Cumbernauld Centre, Runcorn Centre and Irvine Centre – this paper will highlight the key role that the private sector played in the development of a novel civic realm, which sought to shape 'consumer-citizens' and (thus) a new post-war society.

Welfare as Consumption: The Role of the Private Sector in the Development of Oslo Satellite Town Centres

Guttorm Ruud, Oslo School of Architecture and Design

In 1950, *Generalplanen for Oslo* (The Oslo Masterplan) established the planning framework for the future expansion of the city as a system of satellite towns containing housing areas and sub-centres. The architects in charge of the planning of the satellite towns were connected to the political power structure of the governing *Arbeiderpartiet* (the Labour Party). A production system of affordable housing for all was already in place, arranging land acquisition, technical infrastructure provision, rent regulations, standards, financing, distribution, and tenure. However, the construction of sub-centres was not secured through a system comparable to that of housing. *Generalplanen for Oslo* left much of the design, construction, and financing of these new urban community centres to market forces and private initiatives, such as the Swedish shopping centre company *EPA* which had a Scandinavian field of operation, providing affordable shopping in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway in the post-war period. Arguably, EPA can be construed as the mass consumption model for what Esping-Andersen categorized as the social-democratic welfare state.

In Norway, this Swedish company was one of the stakeholders at *Linderud*, Norway's first car-based shopping centre, and *Tveita*, Norway's first closed shopping centre. These centres are instances of the EPA model, but also outcomes from the interactions between private developers, entrepreneurs, market-minded architects, and the politically anchored planners of Norwegian welfare state production, each with different international influences and goals. The paper describes the diverging interests of the public, civic, and private sectors in the construction of Oslo sub-centres, and theorizes how the private sectors influenced the development of welfare as consumption.

Negotiating the Post-War Italian City: Developers' Strategies, Models, and Visions for the Design of the Ordinary City

Gaia Caramellino, Politecnico di Milano

The modernization of post-war Italy has mainly been observed through the lens of popular classes and public initiative. However, private developers were the main protagonists of the massive building expansion that altered the structure of Italian cities between the 1950s and 1970s. While the construction of Italian cities has been portrayed as the result of one unique project (the city plan), post-war urban development was the result of a fragmented growth and negotiation processes, in which private initiative and forms of public intervention continuously intersected. The 'ordinary' city, made of private buildings and private houses, was built through the stratification of processes, spatial forms, and actors whose relations have rarely been explored. Moreover, architectural historians carefully studied public housing programmes and residential solutions

elaborated by a few outstanding architects, while the 'average' residential production has been considered as the product of a speculation culture, which preferred quantity to quality.

Comparing the strategies, structure, and operating methods of two major Italian developers (INA Assicurazioni and Società Generale Immobiliare), the paper investigates their post-war residential programmes as sites of experimentation, codification, and dissemination of planning and services policies, urban visions, housing codes, residential solutions, building techniques, lifestyles, and social models for the production and use of spaces. Using a number of case studies in Turin, Milan, and Rome, the paper will consider the mutual influence between architectural forms and the dynamics of the building sector in an important moment of its growth, linking the managerial, material, and financial aspects of residential property developments to its qualitative and symbolic aspects. It will contribute to a more nuanced narrative of the forms and phases of urban growth and a more structured view of the boom of Italy, challenging monographic and local historiography, as well as the dichotomy between public and private initiatives, which appear increasingly blurred.

A Trojan Horse for Private Investment: The Manhattan Plan for Brussels, 1962–1967

Sven Sterken, KU Leuven

In the 1960s, Brussels became the capital of the European Community, host of NATO, and the seat of many international companies. By consequence, the city transformed very rapidly from a rather provincial town into a small metropolis. Due to its scale and suddenness, the impact of the corresponding building boom was dramatic and long-lasting. Up to the present day, scholars and writers invariably discuss the large-scale urban interventions of that time as failures and scars that need to be repaired. By contrast, this paper states that fifty years later, the time has come to reassess the planning culture of that period by looking into its original intentions rather than its (indeed often catastrophic) outcome.

As a case in point, we focus on the emblematic so-called 'Manhattan Plan' for the area around the North Station. The brainchild of a tripartite between a powerful local politician (Paul Vanden Boeynants), a ruthless developer (Charly De Pauw), and the then-largest architectural practice in the country (Groupe Structures), it aimed at realizing a state-of-the-art business district that would confirm Brussels in its international status. A genuine urban renewal operation initiated by the public authorities at the onset, the plan quickly became a Trojan horse for the private sector in its search for lucrative real estate opportunities.

This paper seeks to untangle this process of degradation of the Manhattan Plan by looking closely into the agendas of the three aforementioned parties and assessing how their (often conflicting) interests impacted the goals and intentions of the original project. In this manner, we will shed a clearer light on the role of private investment in such large-scale operations and nuance the current perception of the Manhattan Plan as a capitalist conspiracy at the expense of the area's original inhabitants.

Changing the Skyline: How a Network of Developers, Private Enterprises, and Housing Companies Contributed to the Realization of an Architect's Vision of the City: The Case of Léon Stynen (1899-1990)

Bart Tritsmans, Flanders Architecture Institute
Bruno Notteboom, KU Leuven

Léon Stynen was one of the most productive, versatile modernist architects in Belgium. After the Second World War, Stynen's practice (together with his associate Paul De Meyer) developed into one of the most important players in the field. During his career of more than half a century, reaching from the 1920s to the 1970s, Stynen changed the Belgian urbanized landscape with hundreds of architectural designs for houses, shops,

office buildings, cinemas, and cultural centres. However, Stynen's vision of the city was more important than the separate buildings. He considered the city, in Geert Bekaert's words, 'as a beautiful image, a magnificent décor'. Stynen aspired to create skylines and to influence the landscape of the modern city. The case study of the city of Antwerp understands Stynen as a city architect *avant la lettre*, but more importantly, it shows the indispensability of a strong network of private companies, developers, and housing companies.

This paper investigates how the cooperation with a professional network of private developers, government bodies, and housing companies enabled Léon Stynen to influence the urban landscape beginning in his early career. This paper therefore will not only focus on the involvement of private real estate developers in the shaping of the (post-war) city, but also on commercial companies, such as clothing chain C&A, BNP Paribas bank, and British Petroleum, who had a strong presence in the city, often on key sites. It will investigate how Stynen's predilection to create urban ensembles was reflected in his professional network, and to what extent his emphasis on rationality, rigorous proportions, and a bold choice of materials was influenced by the expertise and collaboration with the private sector.