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Against the Plan

The Architecture of European Integration

European integration subverts our common understanding of "the rear view," as it openly rejects planning or finality and, instead, unfolds as a gradual process, exploiting the spillovers and unintended consequences that occur when multiple states come together. The hypothesis of this study is that, within such fragmented system, walking in a straight line, having a goal and knowing where to go undermine the possibility of building. Conversely, the buildings in the limelight result from a zigzag process, driven by contingency and informality. What is purposely designed as a front view tends to remain on paper due to a widespread concern for and distrust in the power of planning and, over time, that space is occupied by objects that respond to the logic of the rear view. The following analysis traces two case studies that illuminate how this tension played out in the early part of the integration process: on the one hand, a set of unplanned buildings that marked the spontaneous entrenchment of Brussels as the primary seat of the European institutions; on the other hand, a set of unbuilt plans for a single European capital on the Franco-German border. This is a unique opportunity to explore how things get shaped and built within our complex, supranational system.

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"There was no master plan for any of this."
Kiran Klaus Patel: *Project Europe: A History*. Cambridge 2020

Although the architectural discourse has often been accused of being too Eurocentric and too politicized, we have mostly ignored the political dynamic that, more than any other, has been transforming the European archipelago over the past seventy years: European integration. Such dynamic subverts our common understanding of "the rear view," because it openly rejects planning or finality and, instead, unfolds as a gradual process, exploiting the spillovers and unintended consequences that occur when multiple states come together.

The hypothesis that I have put to the test is that, in this unique, fragmented system, walking in a straight line, having a goal and knowing where to go – what Le Corbusier regarded as the bases of planning – undermine the possibility of building. On the contrary, the front views of this polity, the buildings in the limelight, result from a zigzag process, driven by contingency and informality. What is purposely designed as a front view tends to remain on paper due to a widespread concern for and distrust in the power of planning and, over time, that space is occupied by objects that respond to the logic of the rear view. My analysis traces two case studies that illuminate how this tension played out in the early part of the integration process: on the one hand, a set of unplanned buildings that marked the spontaneous entrenchment of Brussels as the primary seat of the European institutions; on the other hand, a set of unbuilt plans for a single European capital on the Franco-German border. European integration has been described and interpreted through a multitude of architectural metaphors, starting with Robert Schuman's declaration in favor of "concrete achievements" and against a "single plan." Moving out of the metaphorical dimension and beginning to examine the actual architecture produced by and for this system, there is a new opportunity to observe, through the lens of its most tangible outputs, how the European Union *builds*.

Europe's Rear View

This current issue of *archimaera* defines "the rear view" (*Rückseite*) as the unplanned or previously planned, what has come out of view, what has passed and is left behind. It opposes the rear view to a series of concepts that relate to space, time and the way we move through them: straight line, one direction, destination, goal, plan. But is also pits it against broader social concepts, such as control, efficiency, clarity, visibility, perfection, progress. The editorial board appropriately chose Le Corbusier's famous metaphor of the pack-donkey to introduce such dichotomy.

Over the past year, I have conducted a research project on the architecture of a system that constantly challenges the way we are used to see the terms of this opposition, partly because it was developed in contrast to the *ethos* that underlaid Le Corbusier's theory. In this system, the front view – what has been built and is there for everyone to see – is the result of a process that, ironically, aligns with the description of the pack-donkey's way: "it meanders along, meditates a little in its scatter-brained and distracted fashion, zigzags in order to avoid the larger stones, or to ease the climb or to gain a little shade; it takes the line of least resistance."¹ On the other hand, the rear view – what has been dismissed and forgotten – is a repository of unbuilt plans that "walk in a straight line because they have a goal and know where they are going."²

The way this system is commonly introduced is through its founding statement – a declaration issued by another Frenchman, precisely 25 years after the publication of Le Corbusier's *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*. Its pivotal passage reads as follows: "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single, general plan; it will be built through concrete achievements, which first create a de facto solidarity."³ What is known as the Schuman declaration was delivered on May 9th, 1950, in the Salon de l'Horloge of the French Foreign Ministry in Paris (fig. 1); that day is still celebrated every year as "Europe day." In fact, this statement became the basis for the

DECLARATION OF MAY 9, 1950BY FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER ROBERT SCHUMAN

World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of constructive efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it.

The contribution which an organized and living Europe can bring to civilization is indispensable to the maintenance of peaceful relations. In taking upon herself for more than twenty years the rôle of champion of a united Europe, France has always had as her essential aim the service of peace. A united Europe was not achieved, and we had war.

Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single, general plan. It will be built through concrete achievements, which first create a *de facto* solidarity. The gathering of the nations of Europe requires the elimination of the age-old opposition of France and Germany. The first concern in any action undertaken must be these two countries.

With this aim in view, the French Government proposes to take action immediately on one limited but decisive point. The French Government proposes to place Franco-German production of coal and steel under a common "higher authority", within the framework of an organization open to the participation of the other countries of Europe.

The pooling of coal and steel production will immediately provide for the setting-up of common bases for economic development as a first step in the federation of Europe, and will change the destinies of those regions which have long been devoted to the manufacture of munitions of war, of which they have been the most constant victims.

The solidarity in production thus established will make it plain that any war between France and Germany becomes, not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible. The setting-up of this powerful production unit, open to all countries willing to take part, and eventually capable of providing all the member countries with the basic elements of industrial production on the same terms, will lay the real foundations for their economic unification.

.../...

Fig. 1. Transcript of the Schuman declaration, 1950. Source: Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe.

foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community one year later, triggering the process of European integration.⁴

Written by Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, often referred to as the "architects" of European integration, the declaration is the object of a vast literature. One of its key aspects, however, has been overlooked – an aspect that points directly to the question of the rear view: the first step in the construction of one of the most complex systems of our time was the explicit rejection of any overarching, comprehensive plan. Paradoxically, even though its core message was a statement against planning, the Schuman declaration is often improperly referred to as the Schuman plan.

It is important to remember that the context of this declaration was that of a shell-shocked continent pressed between two emerging powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, that had both embraced planning as a central tool of governance at home and abroad. In 1947, shortly before the establishment of the European Coal

and Steel Community, the Marshall plan and the Molotov plan were put in place almost simultaneously to both provide aid and exert control over Europe's Western and Eastern blocs, respectively (fig. 2).

When a new polity is established, the cornerstone is usually a document called constitution, which, as noted by a multitude of political scientists, acts as a "general plan of government."⁵ European integration never had such a plan and, when the first attempt was made at passing a constitutional treaty in 2004, it encountered major opposition and failed to be ratified.

Throughout the process of European integration, nearly every policy proposal that took the form of a plan, or was simply branded as a plan, ended up being red-lighted: the list includes the Pleven plan, the Spaak plan, the Fouchet plan, the Tindemans plan, the Spinelli plan and the Giscard d'Estaing plan, among others. The latest example is the so-called "Recovery plan" designed to cope with the Coronavirus crisis, which has been taken apart by the European Council.

Plan/Process

The term "plan" has multiple layers of meaning: it can indicate a set of decisions about how to do something in the future; it can designate a drawing from which something is made or built, as in the case of an architectural plan; but it also leads to the concept of planning, which, borrowing the Merriam-Webster definition, refers to "the establishment of goals, policies and procedures for a social or economic unit."⁶

In his seminal book on the origins of modern town planning, Leonardo Benevolo started with a concept that he regarded as a simple truth: "planning is part of politics and is necessary to make any operational programme concrete."⁷ The building endeavors associated with European integration, however, point in a different direction. Partly because one of the defining features of this system is a thinning of the political dimension: Zygmunt Bauman referred to it as a separation between power and politics.⁸ But there is more to it.

Fig. 2. Poster of the Marshall plan, 1950. Source: Marshall Foundation.



Firstly, no attention has been devoted to the connection between the launch of the first European institutions in the 1950ies and what Anthony Fontenot has defined as a “history of non-planning”⁹ – a movement that found its roots in the work of thinkers like Friedrich August Hayek and Bertrand Russell and, following the devastation of World War II, started to reassess plans as instruments of control and domination, associated with modern statehood and, most importantly, with its nationalist degenerations.

One of the most significant instances in which such association came to the fore was the Nuremberg trial, immediately after the war. Notably, the first two indictments were for “participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace” and “planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression.” In fact, the trial started with the pro-

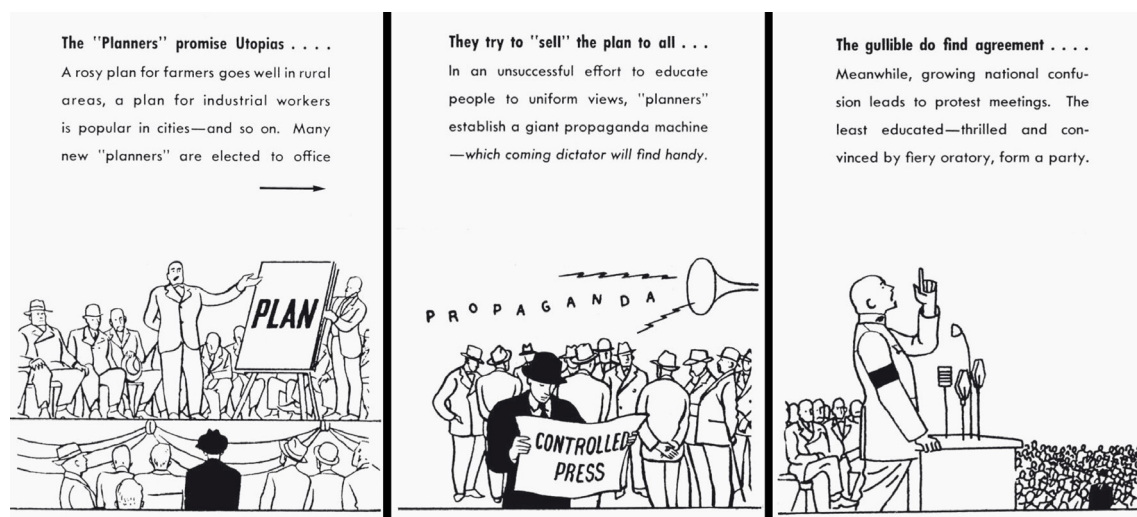
jection of a short film, prepared by the American prosecutors, titled “The Nazi plan.”¹⁰ In many ways, Nuremberg was framed as a process (*Prozess*) against a plan.

In the introduction to *The Road to Serfdom*, Hayek noted that “in order to achieve their ends, the planners must create power – power over men wielded by other men – so that it can be used in the service of a single plan.”¹¹ From his perspective, democracy and freedom were antithetical to any effort to establish a “single plan.” The illustrations that accompanied the book and appeared in *Look Magazine* in 1945 showed a direct correlation between the presentation of a plan and the emergence of a dictator with Mussolinian features (fig. 3).

In the late 1930ies, there was still hope in the possibility of “planning for freedom,” as Karl Mannheim put it. By the beginning of the war, however, the point of view had changed dramatically. In 1940, responding to Mannheim’s thoughts on the role of planning in a democratic society and its separation from the idea of *Gleichschaltung*, John Middleton Murry was rather categorical: “I see no solution except through a painful process of disintegration of our centralized societies.”¹²

As noted by Fontenot, architects and urbanists were very much involved in this reassessment of planning during the post-war period. The 1960ies started with the publication of Jane Jacobs’s reflections on the “failure of town planning” and ended with Robert Goodman’s *After the Planners*.¹³ During

Fig. 3. Illustrations of Friedrich August Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*, 1945. Source: *Look Magazine*.



those years, Reyner Banham, Cedric Price, Peter Hall and Paul Barker collaborated on a manifesto titled *Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom*, which aimed to shine a light on environments that had been spontaneously shaped by their inhabitants.¹⁴ For Banham, the “art of planning” was a “giant wastebin of sumptuously forgotten paper projects.”¹⁵

In *Planning in Postmodern Times*, Philip Allmendinger associated this “growth in anti-planning thinking” with the process of postmodernization.¹⁶ Simultaneously, Peter van Ham published the first book that discussed European integration in relation to “the postmodern condition,” following Robert Cooper’s famous definition of the European Union as “the most developed example of a postmodern system.”¹⁷ Allmendinger argued that, while planning was deeply submerged in the practices of modernity, postmodernization brought about “the more decentered view that we can never represent reality and instead must accept a never-ending chain of signifiers.”¹⁸

The notion of a “never-ending chain” points to a key term: although there are many different interpretations of European integration, the one aspect on which everyone agrees is that it constitutes a “process.”¹⁹ This is far from being a neutral, value-free characterization, as thinking in terms of “processes” relates to specific ideological *milieux*. For example, Daniel Dombrowski and Randall Morris have highlighted the interconnection between process philosophy and political liberalism.²⁰ Furthermore, it relates to contemporaneous developments in technology: with the advent of the digital, every interaction between humans and digital applications started to go through a little machine called “processor,” often referred to as a computer’s brain.

In spite of the reference to “an ever closer union” in the Treaty establishing the European Community, the defining feature of European integration has been the lack of a clear goal. In the literature, this topic is addressed as the issue of “finality.”²¹ As noted by Ulrich Haltern, “the Schuman decla-

ration left the question of Europe’s ends unanswered” and this void was never filled in the following decades.²² In his influential speech *Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration*, Joschka Fischer described the unification of Europe as “a gradual process with no blueprint for the final state,” that is a process without a plan.²³

Unbuilt/Built

Understanding this divergence between the concepts of “plan” and “process” is key to our analysis of European integration and its architecture. We usually look at the lack of planning as an accident or a frustrating shortcoming, but the perspective changes when we start to see it as an underlying condition. The opposition between the front view and the rear view is part of the same tension: what Le Corbusier called the “man’s way” is a definition of planning, while the way his pack-donkey moved can easily be read as a process without a plan.

Nowhere is this tension more visible than in the field of architecture and urban design. Even though Umberto Eco famously argued that European integration should “deal with soft, not hard, stuff,” a very significant amount of architectural hardware has been designed for the European institutions since the Schuman declaration.²⁴ In the most comprehensive historical study on this subject, Carola Hein divided this material into two streams: “Imagining built Europe,” which focused on visionary, unrealized projects, and “Building imagined Europe,” which instead addressed the concrete achievements.²⁵

Removing all additional connotations, the fundamental divergence lays between built and unbuilt projects – a classification that can help us understand how the European Union operates (or does not operate) as a builder. Moving upstream through these two lines of inquiry, I have been testing a hypothesis that revolves around planning, or the lack thereof. The architectural and urban ideas that turned into buildings had, for the most part, one thing in common: they lacked a single plan. Those that had one, on the contrary, remained on paper.

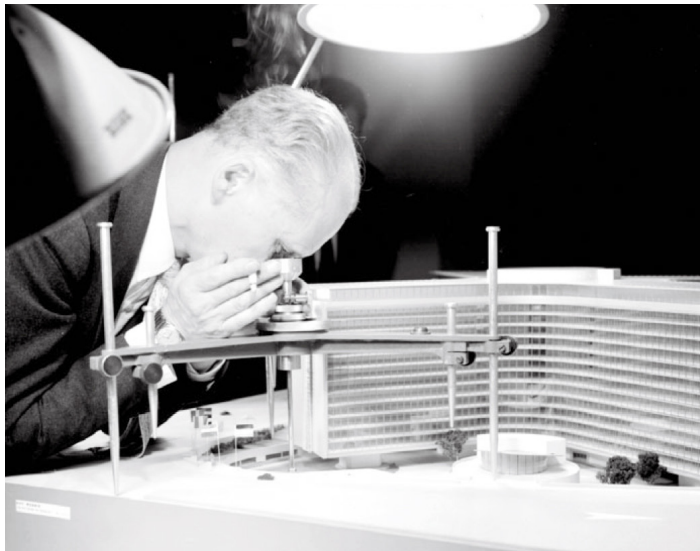


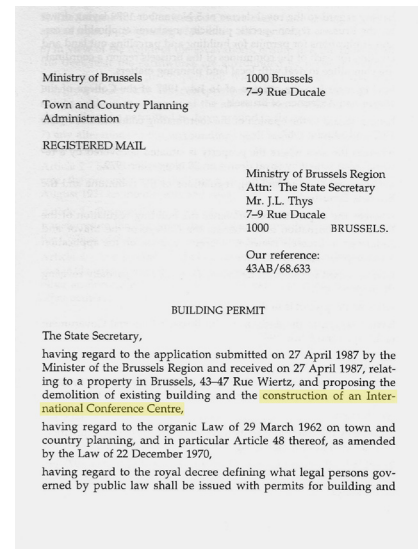
Fig. 4, 5. Design of the interiors of the Berlaymont, early 1960ies. Source: Ministère des Travaux Publics de Belgique (left). Building permit for the headquarters of the European Parliament in Brussels, disguised as an "International Conference Centre," 1987 (right). Source: Alex Papadopoulos, *Urban Strategies and Regimes*.

Brussels

Brussels has been the epicenter of the building activities associated with European integration since the late 1950ies. The headquarters of the two most important supranational institutions, the European Commission and the European Parliament, provide an interesting window into the question of planning.

The Berlaymont, the building of the Commission, originally had an open-plan layout because it was meant to host a Belgian ministry and, as soon as it was completed in 1968, it had to be entirely reorganized in order to accommodate the new European offices, before the detection of asbestos forced a second transformation of the plan a few years later (fig. 4).²⁶ In the case of the Parliament, the plan operated as a decoy: the hemicycle was built under the radar, using the false name "Centre International de Conférences," because the official seat of the Parliament had already been established in Strasbourg (fig. 5). The plan was carefully crafted to make the hemicycle look like something else, namely a regular congress center.²⁷

Shifting the focus from the architectural scale to the urban scale, the history of Brussels as a European capital is characterized by an underlying absence of planning: in his book on Europe's central executive district, Alex Papadopoulos described the city's approach to planning as "nonexistent."²⁸ Even the decision to start using Brussels as a seat for the European institu-



tions in 1958 was not based on a plan, but rather on the fact that it was the capital of the member state that simply preceded all the others in alphabetical order.²⁹

In this early stage, the Belgian government did produce a plan, highlighting multiple locations in which the institutions could be placed. In spite of this, the European institutions ended up occupying one of the few areas that were not indicated in the plan, the Quartier Leopold, following a spontaneous expansion pattern, mostly driven by private developers.³⁰

At the core of these dynamics was a fundamental issue of agency: until the Maastricht Treaty, Brussels (along with Strasbourg and Luxembourg) was only a provisional seat of the institutions, which therefore did not have legal authority to own, finance or design their buildings. Behind this prolonged provisional status was the idea to build, sooner or later, a European federal district on the model of Washington, DC – a plan that was eventually abandoned in 1992.³¹

This vision was known as the "Monnet doctrine," because it had initially been promoted by Jean Monnet, seemingly contradicting the logic of the Schuman declaration and its stance against any centralization of power. In a report written after one of the first Council of Ministers of the European Coal and Steel Community, he put it this way: "I had no preference for one place in Europe rather than another. All that mattered to me was that it should be

the site of all the institutions and that it should become a European territory, the embryo of an eventual federal district. There was nothing utopian about this proposal.⁷³²

Wissembourg

Before Brussels became the *de facto* center of the union, focalizing most of its architectural productions, multiple plans were drafted in response to Monnet's idea. None of these proposals came even close to being built, partly because no political consensus was ever found among the member states on the selection of a single site. As such, this is the ideal testing ground as it pertains to the tension between the presence of planning and the possibility of building.

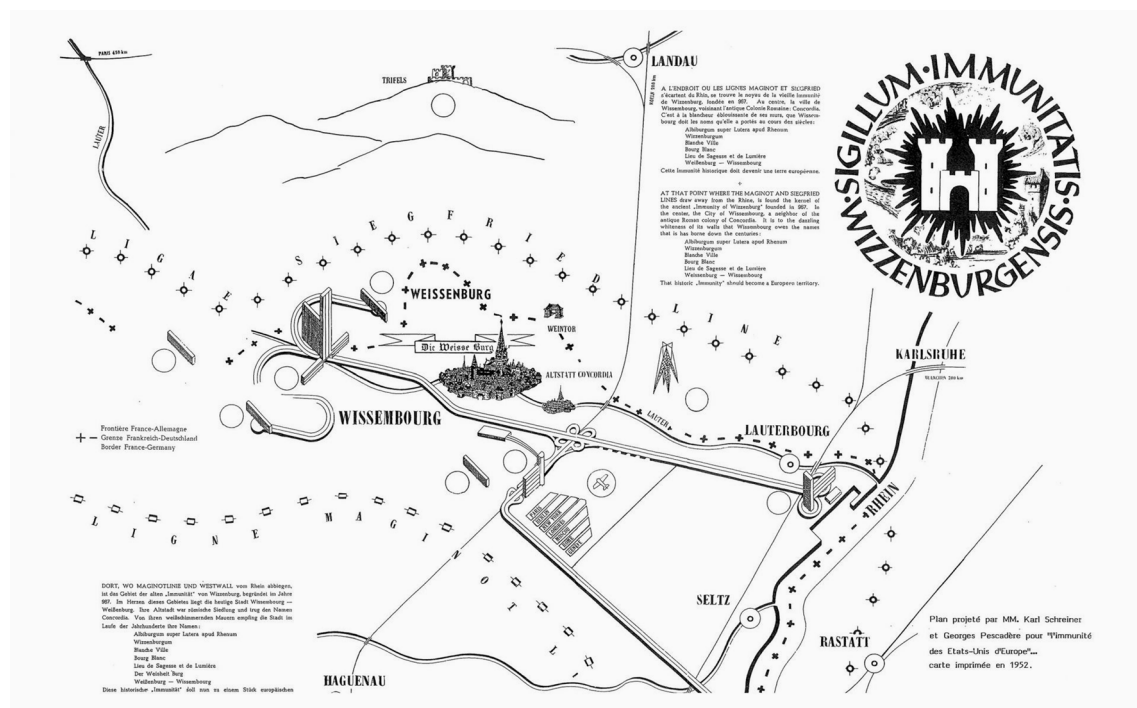
Putting aside the proposals that have little to do with a supranational logic – such as the proposal known as *Paris Parallèle*, which imagined an extension of Paris as the center of a French Europe³³ – three plans produced in the early stages of European integration are particularly significant. They were all developed between the early 1950ies and the early 1960ies, in the space of less than thirty kilometers on the border between France and Germany.³⁴

The first proposal centered on the Alsatian city of Wissembourg. In 1949, the German journalist Karl-Oswald

Schreiner and the French painter Georges-Henri Pescadère, who had met as prisoners of the Nazis during the war, started to work on a plan for a transnational district on the border between their two countries, an area framed by the former Siegfried and Maginot lines – the two lines of fortification that Germany and France had built to combat each other.³⁵ Schreiner and Pescadère were supported by the mayor of Wissembourg, who offered to provide land near the existing city and, most importantly, they obtained funding from the Marshall plan: the United States were very supportive of this type of endeavors because they saw the unification of Europe as a powerful tool in the struggle against the Soviets.

The proposal had a strong symbolic connotation, since Schreiner and Pescadère envisioned this new capital, which they called Weiße Burg/Bourg Blanc (alluding to the idea of a “White Town”), as a materialization of Europe's pacification.³⁶ At the heart of their plan was a major building intended as a place where young people from all over Europe could meet, get to know each other and learn to live together in peace (fig. 6). Nevertheless, the idea was to avoid any form of monumentality, as Schreiner and Pescadère associated the latter with the architecture of totalitarian regimes. From this perspective, the approach was simi-

Fig. 6. Karl-Oswald Schreiner and Georges-Henri Pescadère, plan for Weiße Burg/Bourg Blanc, 1952. Source: Citizens for Europe.



lar to the one followed in the German capital Bonn in the same period.

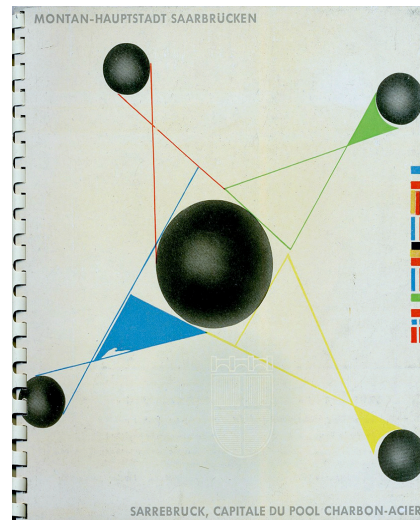
The plan of this “White Town” was evaluated by the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952. In order to make it happen, both Germany and France needed to give up a little bit of land and agree to create a transnational district. In the context of post-war Europe, ceding land was one of the most difficult and problematic actions to take. Neither Germany nor France, for different reasons, were willing to do it. Moreover, shortly afterwards, the funding of the Marshall plan came to an end, effectively closing this window of opportunity.³⁷

Saarland

One year later, however, this endeavor inspired the launch of a competition for the planning of a European capital in the small region of the Saarland, a few kilometers north of Wissembourg on the Franco-German border.³⁸

After having heard the Schuman declaration, the local mayor Peter Zimmer sent a letter to Robert Schuman, offering his city as the site of the new institutions: “I would like to ask the Conference to examine our proposal to choose Saarbrücken as the seat of the institutions of the European Coal and Steel Community and to allow us to submit detailed documentation with plans and supporting proposals for the construction of the envisaged buildings”³⁹ (fig. 7).

Fig. 7, 8. Poster of the letter sent to Robert Schuman by the mayor of Saarbrücken, 1951 (left). Cover of the exhibition catalogue of the Saarland competition, 1954 (top right). Source of both images: Landesarchiv Saarbrücken.



In 1953, even though he never received a response, mayor Zimmer organized a competition, calling for plans to turn the Saarland into a European district, on the model of the District of Columbia in the United States (fig. 8). The competition was overseen by local architect Otto Renner, who had worked in Le Corbusier’s office and collaborated with Albert Speer before the war. Thirty-four proposals were presented, mostly coming from either German or French architects and planners.⁴⁰

The anti-monumental sensibility that had characterized the plan for Wissembourg did not transfer to the Saarland competition. Examining the three entries that were awarded prizes by the jury, the one that stands out was the plan developed by French architects Henri Colboc and Pierre Dalidet, who proposed to group all the new European institutions in an enormous ring-shaped building, three hundred meters in diameter, connected to the existing city of Saarbrücken by a monumental boulevard on a sloping ramp (fig. 9).⁴¹

The reasoning behind the Saarland competition was that, due to its complex history, this region had effectively blurred the border between Germany and France, if only because it had been razed to the ground almost every time the two countries had gone to war against each other. After World War I, the Saarland had become an international territory administered by the League of Nations, until the Nazis invaded it in the mid-1930s and, considering it an important symbolic site, turned it into the capital of the

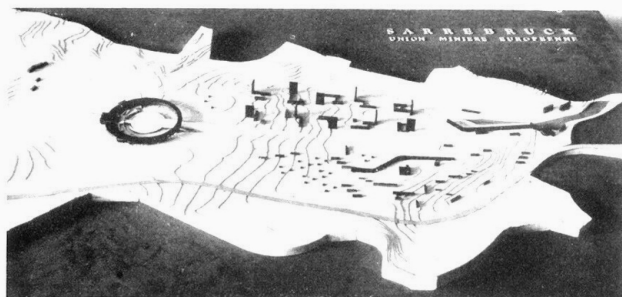


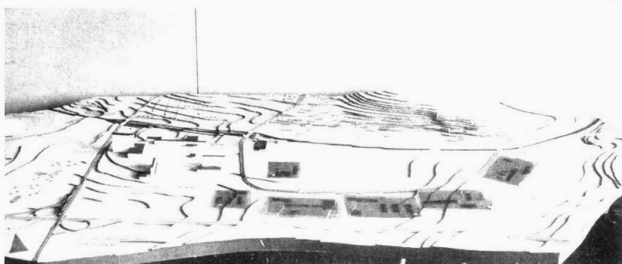
Bild 1. Ein erster Preis: Architekten Henri Colboc und Georges Philippe, Paris

Wettbewerb Montanunionstadt Saarbrücken

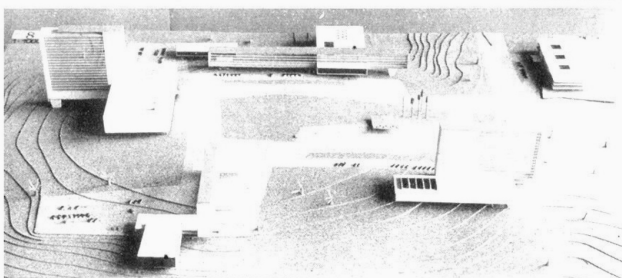
Bilder 2 bis 4. Zwei ebenfalls mit ersten Preisen ausgezeichnete Arbeiten: Professor Rudolf Krüger, Saarbrücken, und Oberbaurat Erich Stoll, Stuttgart (Bild 2); Dipl.-Ing. Gerhard Kilper, Stuttgart, Architekt Kurt Baldauf, Dillingen, Architekt Erwin Klein, Saarlouis, und Architekt Klaus Hoffmann, Saarlouis-Fraulautern (Bilder 3 und 4). Bild 4 zeigt ein Ausschnittmodell



Bild 2



Bilder 3 und 4



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In diesen Wochen des politischen Kampfes steht naturgemäß ein städtebaulicher Wettbewerb, der sich mit der Zukunft des Saarlandes und seiner Hauptstadt Saarbrücken als Sitz der Montanunion befaßt, im Vordergrund auch des fachlichen Interesses. Die Unterlagen des Wettbewerbes wurden von Oberregierungs- und Baurat Dipl.-Ing. Jäger und Architekt Dipl.-Ing. Otto Renner bearbeitet, fachliche Preisrichter waren Professor Werner Hebebrand, Hamburg, J. P. Oud, Rotterdam, G. A. Pingusson, Paris, Annibale Vitellozzi, Rom, aus Saarbrücken Fritz Ahammer, Wilhelm Feien, Hans Hirner, Ernst Höfer, Otto Renner und Bernhard Schultheis. Über das Ergebnis hat die Bauwelt in Heft 25/1955 berichtet, hier folgen Bilder der ersten drei Arbeiten. Wir entnehmen dem „Bau-Anzeiger für das Saarland“ (Heft 26/1955) die folgenden Beurteilungen.

★

Ein erster Preis (Bild 1):

Henri Colboc und Georges Philippe, zwei Pariser Architekten, haben in der Mitte der von Hügeln eingerahmten Talmulde zwischen Tabaksweiher und Metzger Straße einen ringförmigen Baukörper als Dominante vorgesehen, der den ganzen Raum beherrscht und ihm seinen Stempel aufdrückt. Der von diesem Rundbau eingerahmte runde Platz übertrifft in seinen Ausmaßen noch den Petersplatz in Rom. Das Gebäude schafft durch seine konzentrierte Baumasse einen wesentlichen Kontrast zur aufgelockerten Stadtrandbebauung von Saarbrücken.

Ein erster Preis (Bild 2):

Professor Rudolf Krüger, Saarbrücken, und Oberbaurat Erich Stoll, Stuttgart, lassen die Verwaltungsgebäude der Montanunion dadurch besonders hervortreten, daß sie auf einer Anhöhe innerhalb der Talmulde großzügig und großräumig angeordnet werden. Diese starke städtebauliche Dominante findet in der Zuordnung der Verwaltungsgebäude für die übrigen europäischen Einrichtungen eine naturgemäße Fortsetzung sowohl nach Westen als auch nach Osten. An diese Einrichtungen schließen sich die Wohngebiete an.

Ein erster Preis (Bilder 3 und 4):

Dipl.-Ing. Gerhard Kilper, Stuttgart, Architekt Kurt Baldauf, Dillingen, Architekt Erwin Klein, Saarlouis, und Architekt Klaus Hoffmann, Saarlouis-Fraulautern, setzen die Bauten der Montanunion als Kopf der Anlage auf die höchste Bodenerhebung und ordnen die anderen Institutionen entlang dem geschwungenen Höhenzug bis zum Tabaksmühlental an. Es bleiben nicht nur große Grünanlagen und Wasserflächen frei, sondern es wird auch Raum für eine Ausdehnung der Stadt Saarbrücken gewonnen.

BAUWELT 1955 HEFT 42

Fig. 9. *Bauwelt* report on the Saarland competition, 1955. Source: *Bauwelt*.

so-called Westmark region. Then, after it was devastated again during World War II, the Saarland became part of the French occupation zone in Germany.⁴²

In both post-war periods, Germany and France laid claim to this territory by developing and partly implementing grand, comprehensive plans for Saarbrücken, approaching it as a blank

slate and building representations of their dominant presence. While the German plans of the late-1930ies were defined by a monumental neo-classicism, the French plans of the late-1940ies were explicitly modelled after Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse and aimed to "modernize" the city.⁴³

Given the difficulty of positioning the Saarland in the geopolitical order that

had emerged after the war, in 1954 the German and French governments started to discuss the idea of turning it into a supranational, European territory, and shortly afterwards asked the local citizens to decide on it. At a referendum held in 1955, however, the majority of the citizens of the Saarland voted against such proposed Europeanization and, as most of them had a German background, asked to be annexed by Germany.⁴⁴ As soon as Saarbrücken became a German city again, the planning competition, which was about to enter its second stage, came to an end. For obvious reasons, the capital of a new united Europe could not be located on German soil.

Lake Europa

After the abortion of the plans for Wissembourg and the Saarland, in the late-1950ies a third proposal started to take shape in the same area, this time in Luxembourg, near the city of Schengen. This plan not only relied on American funding, like Schreiner's and Pescadère's "White Town," but it was also developed by an American planner: James Marshall Miller. A professor of planning at Columbia University, Miller elaborated a highly symbolic proposal for a European capital called "Lake Europa."

With the support of the American committee of the International Federation for Housing and Planning and funding from the Ford Foundation, he made several trips to Europe in the 1950ies and became deeply involved in the cause of European integration.

A pacifist and fervent anti-communist, Miller was an enthusiastic supporter of the integration process.⁴⁵

After it had been introduced to an audience of planners at a seminar in The Hague in 1958, the project for "Lake Europa" was published in an eponymous book, produced by Miller himself in 1963,⁴⁶ while the construction of the Berlaymont in Brussels had just begun. This was certainly the most radical and symbolic proposal for a supranational capital. Its name referred to the idea of building a city on the shores of a new artificial lake, created at the juncture of Germany, France and Luxembourg – a lake that was to be supplied by the water of all the major European rivers (fig. 10).

Despite the naïveté of the proposal, Miller's book addressed in great detail every aspect of its development, even the most technical, utilitarian issues, as if it was an ordinary endeavor. For example, a section of the book was devoted to explaining how the construction of "Lake Europa" could be funded.

Miller imagined the creation of a semi-public corporation called "Lake Europa Development Authority" that could manage the project and draw the necessary financial resources. As the project required thousands of kilometers of pipes in order to transfer water from all over Europe, the idea was to ask major producers of pipes and oil companies (which possess "both the equipment and the skilled workers" necessary to lay said pipes⁴⁷) to invest in this enterprise.

Fig. 10. James Marshall Miller, plan for Lake Europa, 1963. Source: James Marshall Miller, *Lake Europa. A New Capital for a United Europe*.

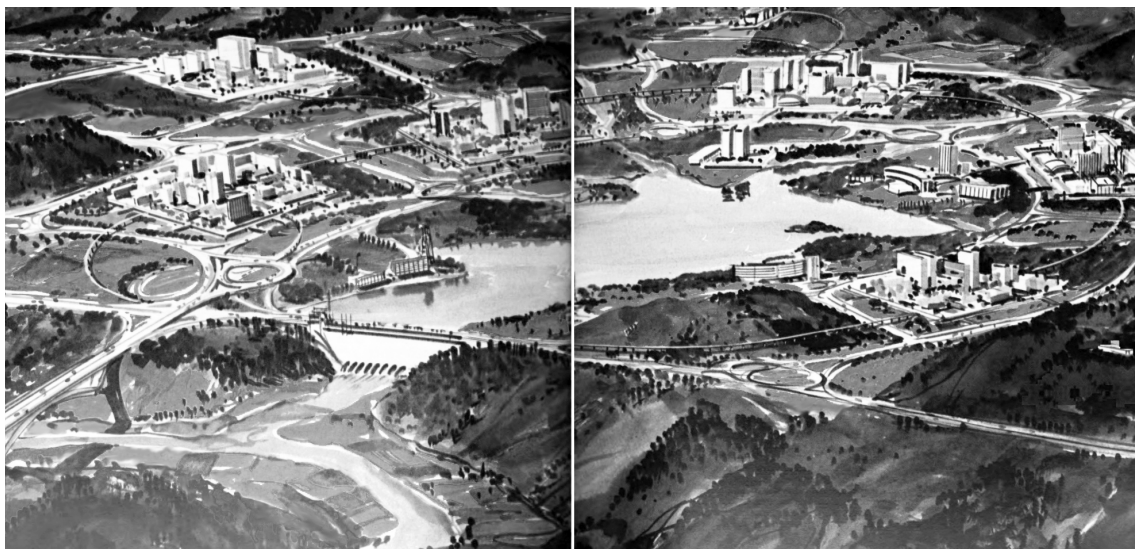




Fig. 11. James Marshall Miller at the "pre-dedication ceremony" of Lake Europa, 1961. Source: James Marshall Miller, *Lake Europa. A New Capital for a United Europe*.

Even though Miller attempted multiple times to pitch his idea to the European institutions, no one took him seriously. Nevertheless, on September 8th, 1961, followed by a small crowd of local residents, a few American associates and a journalist from Luxembourg, Miller organized a ceremony for the laying of the first stone. He described it as a "pre-dedication ceremony at the site of the proposed new European capital."⁴⁸ The participants assembled a few blocks of stone to form a make-shift altar, on which Miller attached a sign that he had brought from New York, which simply read "Lake Europa." (fig. 11)

The Power of the Front View

Although the first sentence in the preface of Miller's book stressed that the objective was not to "outline a plan" but rather to "set forth an idea,"⁴⁹ his proposal – like those for Wissembourg and the Saarland – had all the features of a plan: it indicated a destination and, however unrealistic and naïve it may have been, a straight line to get there. In addition to being unbuilt, these proposals shared a similar approach: they "solved" the problem with a single gesture, they laid out an omni-comprehensive vision of the site at hand, they were not amenable to be modified and, fittingly, they were mostly drawn in plan. Moreover, they all reflected a clear vision of what Eu-

ropean integration was and had to become: the capital city was designed to act as a materialization and a symbolic representation of that political idea.

Other equally, if not more utopian plans had been elaborated in the first half of the twentieth century. In the second half of the 1920ies, for example, Herman Sörgel had famously put forward a radical proposal to restructure the entire continent (Panropa), going as far as to suggest draining part of the Mediterranean in order to claim new land and facilitate the connection with Africa.⁵⁰ What is different about the unbuilt proposals of the post-war period, however, is the fact that, rather than responding to a generic, ill-defined pan-Europeanism with marginal reach and influence, they were entrenched in a process that had actually started to change Europe. They responded to an idea that, although it was rapidly overcome by a more pragmatic, functionalist approach towards integration, had played a key role in its definition and activation: the idea of building a form of United States of Europe.⁵¹

In Carola Hein's study, the "urban visions and architectural symbols for a united Europe" that were developed in the two decades following World War II are associated with the emergence of "a strong trust in the power of planning."⁵² While this trust was certainly at play in the post-war efforts of other systems, both to the West and the East of the old continent, the way European integration moved forward revealed, instead, a deep concern and apprehension about the power of planning. From this perspective, the case of the Saarland is particularly emblematic: having already experienced the power of planning on multiple occasions throughout their history, the Saar citizens voted against a proposal that, once again, involved a comprehensive, top-down plan that would have radically transformed their lives.

Jean Monnet himself was very familiar with these dynamics. Immediately after the end of World War II, he was appointed Commissioner-General of the French National Planning Board and was responsible for elaborating the plan for the economic reconstruc-

Fig. 12. Aerial view of the European district in Brussels, 1999. Source: Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe.



tion of his country.⁵³ But European integration operated in a different way: its underlying sentiment was a profound distrust towards planning.

Because of its complicated history, Brussels aligned perfectly with this change of pace. As noted by Ian Buruma, for much of its history, Brussels was occupied by oppressive empires and, when Belgium finally became independent in the nineteenth century, it found itself in the difficult position of being the capital of a fragmented nation, made of three very different linguistic and cultural communities.⁵⁴ In this framework, no single, centralized plan could ever be accepted and implemented.

According to Pier Vittorio Aureli, since the establishment of the European institutions “absolutely no official plan has ever existed” regarding their urban and architectural integration in Brussels.⁵⁵ Philippe Van Parijs described the entrenchment of Brussels as the capital of Europe as a “massive snowball process.”⁵⁶ From this point of view, Brussels can be read as the unsung antithesis to the eminent planned capitals of the 1950ies, from Chandigarh to Brasília. Maristella Casciato and Stanislaus von Moos have described these efforts as “the twilight of the plan.”⁵⁷ But no attention has been paid to the fact that, while the European, modernist approach towards urbanism was having its twilight overseas, with Le Corbusier leading the charge, the new capital of Eu-

rope was being built in a diametrically different fashion, navigating the problems as well as the opportunities of the unplanned.

Nevertheless, Brussels has unequivocally become the front view of the European Union (fig. 12). The Berlaymont is a fitting example: it is hard to find a news story about European integration that does not include images of this building – one that was constructed without even knowing what type of institution it would host. Aptly, in the mid-2000s, when the European Commission had to develop a logo – the quintessential front view – the choice fell on a stylized image of the silhouette of the Berlaymont.⁵⁸ In the end, a building that had been shaped by national agendas and private speculations, without any comprehensive, long-term vision, ended up representing the “visual identity” of the supranational institution *par excellence*.

Utopia/Topia

As previously noted, Monnet used to claim that his vision of a European Washington, DC had nothing utopian; echoing this belief, Miller wrote that his lake-city was “far from a utopia.”⁵⁹ That being said, there is a deep connection between the concepts of “plan” and “utopia.” In his seminal book *Ideology and Utopia*, Karl Mannheim set up a particularly significant dichotomy, looking at utopia from the perspective of its opposite, which he called “topia,” meaning the

existing reality: in his reading, topos is any conventional system and utopia is any plan for its replacement.⁶⁰

At the center of this opposition is the aforementioned question of finality. Building on Mannheim's theory, Manfredo Tafuri touched on this issue in *Architecture and Utopia*, which, fittingly, was first published in the journal *Contropiano* (which is Italian for "against the plan"). He defined utopia as "the prefiguration of final and universal models."⁶¹ From Tafuri's perspective, the crisis of utopia and the crisis of planning were two faces of the same coin.

This association relates to an ambiguity that has always characterized the definition of utopia, going back to Thomas More's dissertation. The word "topos" derives from the Greek τόπος (place) and can be accompanied by two possible prefixes, which mean different things but are pronounced in the exact same way: οὐ (no) and εὖ (good).⁶² Hence, this concept is built on the ambiguity between the idea of a place that does not exist (ou-topia) and the idea of a good place (eu-topia) – a form of negative dialectics that suggests a certain irreconcilability between possibility and positivity. For example, in his critique of utopian thinking, Theodor Adorno made the case that it is impossible to know "the shape and features of a better society."⁶³

In this framework, the rift between the utopias outlined in Wissembourg, Saarbrücken or Lake Europa and the reality of Brussels is not only a rift between unbuilt plans and unplanned buildings, but also a rift between unbuildable plans and unplanable buildings. In the fragmented, supranational system that has transformed Europe, how could it be possible to build something that aims to transform a totality through a singular, albeit sometimes collaborative, goal-oriented input?

On the other hand, what gets built is the result of dynamics that zigzag, move forward without a plan and do not have a finality. As such, they do not threaten anyone and, through small steps and spillovers, they are amenable to be turned into concrete achieve-

ments. Over time, these "pack-donkey buildings" spontaneously emerge as the front view of the system.

Yet the utopian dimension is essential, because without the prospect of one day reaching the "promised land," a prospect associated with the idea (some say the myth) of a united Europe, the prosaic, bureaucratic process of European integration would not have started and would not keep going.⁶⁴ In this framework, the question raised by Brussels as well as by the other unplanned front views of European integration is one of both method and content: once the possibility of a single plan is negated *a priori*, how does a process produce architecture?

Notes

- 1 Le Corbusier: "The Pack-Donkey's Way and the Man's Way." In: idem: *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*. New York 1987 [1925], p. 5.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 The full text of the Schuman declaration, along with the preparatory drafts and a recording of the speech, is available at the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe: <https://www.cvce.eu/en/>.
- 4 For a comprehensive historical overview of the process of European integration, see Desmond Dinan: *Origins and Evolution of the European Union*. Oxford 2006, and Ivan Berend: *The History of European Integration*. London 2016.
- 5 William Barclay Allen and Kevin Cloonan: *The Federalist Papers. A Commentary*. New York 2000, p. 27.
- 6 "Planning." In: *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/planning>.
- 7 Leonardo Benevolo: *Le Origini dell'Urbanistica Moderna*. Rome 1974 [1963], p. 10 (translated by the author).
- 8 Cf. Zygmunt Bauman: *State of Crisis*. Cambridge 2014.
- 9 Anthony Fontenot: "Notes Toward a History of Non-Planning." In: *Places Journal* (2015).
- 10 Cf. Telford Taylor: *The Anatomy of the Nuremberg Trials*. New York 2013.
- 11 Friedrich August Hayek: *The Road to Serfdom*. London 2008 [1944], p. 165.
- 12 Jonas Kurlberg: *Christian Modernism in an Age of Totalitarianism. T. S. Eliot, Karl Mannheim and the Moot*. London 2019, p. 79. Mannheim's reflections on this subject were published in the posthumous book *Freedom, Power and Democratic Planning*. Oxford 1950.
- 13 Cf. Jane Jacobs: *The Death and Life of Great American Cities. The Failure of Town Planning*. New York 1961, and Robert Goodman: *After the Planners*. New York 1971.
- 14 Cf. Reyner Banham, Cedric Price, Peter Hall and Paul Barker: "Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom." In: *New Society*, 20 March 1969, pp. 435-443.
- 15 Reyner Banham: *Los Angeles. The Architecture of Four Ecologies*. Los Angeles 2009 [1971], p. 119.
- 16 Philip Allmendinger: *Planning in Postmodern Times*. London 2001, p. 4.
- 17 Peter van Ham: *European Integration and the Postmodern Condition. Governance, Democracy, Identity*. London 2001, p. ix, and Robert Cooper: *The Postmodern State and the World Order*. London 1996, p. 24.
- 18 Allmendinger 2001 (see note 16), p. 20.
- 19 Cf. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Eds.): *European Integration Theory*. Oxford 2004.
- 20 Cf. Daniel Dombrowski: *Process Philosophy and Political Liberalism*. Edinburgh 2019, and Randall Morris: *Process Philosophy and Political Ideology*. New York 1991.
- 21 Christian Rieck: "Quid est Europa? Myth, Finality, Utopia and the European Dream." In: Report of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, Berlin 2006, s. p.
- 22 Ulrich Haltern: "On Finality." In: Armin von Bogdandy and Jürgen Bast (Eds.): *Principles of European Constitutional Law*. Oxford 2009, p. 205.
- 23 Joschka Fischer: *From Confederacy to Federation. Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration*. Speech delivered in Berlin, 12 May 2000. European Commission – Documentation et Recherche sur les Questions Institutionnelles Européennes: <https://ec.europa.eu/dorie/cardPrint.do?cardId=192161>.
- 24 Umberto Eco: "Soft Capital." In: European Commission: *Brussels, Capital of Europe*. Final Report, October 2001. European Quarter Fund: http://www.fondseuropesewijk.eu/Brussels%20capital%20of%20europe_final_report.pdf.
- 25 Carola Hein: *The Capital of Europe. Architecture and Urban Planning for the European Union*. Wesport 2004, p. 2.
- 26 Sven Sterken: "Le Berlaymont et la Transformation du Quartier Leopold." In: *Journées du Patrimoine Région de Bruxelles-Capitale* 15 (2009), pp. 102-117.
- 27 Cf. Ludovic Lamant: "Ceci n'est pas un Parlement." In: idem: *Bruxelles Chantiers. Une Critique Architecturale de l'Europe*. Montreal 2018, pp. 117-142.
- 28 Alex Papadopoulos: *Urban Regimes and Strategies. Building Europe's Central Executive District in Brussels*. Chicago 1996, p. 15.
- 29 Cf. Philippe Van Parijs: "Why did Brussels become the capital of Europe? Because Belgium starts with letter B." In: *Bxl Connect* 9 (2014), pp. 6-8.
- 30 Cf. Michel de Beule (Ed.): *Bruxelles, Histoire de Planifier. Urbanisme aux 19e et 20e Siècles*. Brussels 2017.
- 31 Cf. Koen Lenaerts and Kristien Vanvoorden: "The Legal Status of Brussels as European Capital." In: Roel De Groof (Ed.): *Brussels and Europe*. Brussels 2008, pp. 127-152.

- 32 Jean Monnet: *Memoirs*. London 2015 [1976], p. 369.
- 33 Cf. Claude Parent, "Paris Parallèle." In: *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 138 (1968), p. 17.
- 34 For an overview of these plans, see Carola Hein: "Urban Visions and Architectural Symbols for a United Europe, 1945–1968." In: idem 2004 (see note 25), pp. 39–66.
- 35 The documentation for this case study is available on the platform Citizens for Europe: <https://www.citizens-4-europe.eu/index.php/en/themes/capital-for-europe>.
- 36 Cf. Karl-Oswald Schreiner and Georges-Henri Pescadère: *Die Weisse Burg: Wissembourg en Alsace – Weißenburg im Elsaß*. Paris/Bad Godesberg 1952.
- 37 Cf. Bernard Weigel: "Wissembourg: Le Projet du Bourg Blanc, 1952–1954." In: *L'Outre Foret* 60 (1986), pp. 28–36.
- 38 The documentation for this case study is available in the Open Gallery of the Landesarchiv Saarbrücken, Staatskanzlei des Saarlandes: <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/das-saarland-eine-europ%C3%A4ische-geschichte/wQjUon8c?hl=de>.
- 39 The letter that mayor Peter Zimmer sent to Robert Schuman on 11 June 1951 is available at the Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe: https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/letter_of_application_of_the_city_of_saarbrucken_to_house_the_community_institutions_saarbrucken_11_june_1951-en-6f8eec29-6f25-4da2-b48a-3eb54c32092e.html.
- 40 Cf. anon.: "Wettbewerb Montanunionstadt Saarbrücken." In: *Bauwelt* 42 (1955), p. 838.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Cf. Wolfgang Behringer and Gabriele Clemens: *Geschichte des Saarlandes*. Munich 2009.
- 43 Cf. Marlen Dittmann: "100 Jahre Stadtplanung in Saarbrücken." Institut für Aktuelle Kunst im Saarland: <http://institut-aktuelle-kunst.de/kunstlexikon/aspekte-100-jahre-stadtplanung-in-saarbruecken-1818>, and Dietmar Kolling: "Saarbrücken, Pingusson, Aufbauplan und Französische Botschaft." Institut für Aktuelle Kunst im Saarland: <http://institut-aktuelle-kunst.de/kunstlexikon/saarbruecken-pingusson-aufbauplan-und-franzoesische-botschaft-1977>.
- 44 Cf. Bronson Long: *No Easy Occupation. French Control of the German Saar, 1944–1957*. Rochester 2015.
- 45 Cf. Philip Wagner: "James Marshall Miller, Champion of Transatlantic Urban Planning." In: *Transatlantic Perspectives*, 17 December 2013, s. p.
- 46 James Marshall Miller: *Lake Europa. A New Capital for a United Europe*. New York 1963.
- 47 Ibid., pp. 81–84.
- 48 Cf. Robert Philippart: "Mittelpunkt eines geeinten Europas: Als Schengen Hauptstadt Westeuropas werden sollte." In: *Tageblatt Lëtzebuerg*, 24 July 2019: <https://www.tageblatt.lu/headlines/mittelpunkt-eines-geeinten-europas-als-schengen-hauptstadt-westeuropas-werden-sollte/>.
- 49 Miller 1963 (see note 46), p. 1.
- 50 On Herman Sörgel's plan for Panropa, also known as Atlantropa (after 1932), see Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson: *Eurafrica. The Untold History of European Integration and Colonialism*. London 2015.
- 51 While this term had been circulating for decades, it took on a different meaning after World War II. For example, in a consequential speech delivered in 1946, Winston Churchill explicitly argued for the formation of "a kind of United States of Europe" (International Churchill Society: <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/united-states-of-europe/>). But the real force behind this idea was the federalist movement, led by Altiero Spinelli, who played a central role in laying the foundations of the integration process.
- 52 Hein: "Urban Visions" 2004 (see note 34), p. 39.
- 53 Cf. François Duchene: *Jean Monnet. The First Statesman of Interdependence*. New York 1994.
- 54 Ian Buruma: "In the Capital of Europe." In: *The New York Review of Books*, 7 April 2016, pp. 36–39.
- 55 Pier Vittorio Aureli (Ed.): *Brussels, a Manifesto. Towards the Capital of Europe*. Rotterdam 2007, p. 37.
- 56 Van Parijs 2014 (see note 29), p. 8.
- 57 Cf. Maristella Casciato and Stanislaus von Moos: *Twilight of the Plan. Chandigarh and Brasilia*. Mendrisio 2007.
- 58 European Commission – Visual Identity: https://ec.europa.eu/info/resources-partners/european-commission-visual-identity_en.
- 59 Monnet 2015 (see note 32), p. 369, and Miller 1963 (see note 46), p. 88.
- 60 Cf. Karl Mannheim: *Ideology and Utopia*. London 1936 [1929].
- 61 Manfredo Tafuri: *Architecture and Utopia*. Cambridge 1976 [1973], p. 53.

62 Cf. Ruth Levitas: *The Concept of Utopia*. Bern 2010.

63 Nina Rismal: *The Ends of Utopian Thinking. Marx, Adorno, Bloch*. PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2017; Rismal argues that Adorno, in the context of Critical Theory or, as he called it, *Materialismus*, put forward a form of *Utopieverbot* ("ban on utopia").

64 Cf. Peter Burgess: "What's so European about the European Union? Legitimacy between Institution and Identity." In: *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2002) pp. 467-481.