

# PRESERVATION OF MONUMENTS IN BELGIUM SINCE 1945<sup>1</sup>

## POST WAR EVOLUTION AND FIRST ATTEMPTS TO A MODERN APPROACH IN MONUMENT PRESERVATION

### 1.1. *Reconstruction after World War II*

Ever since antiquity the cultural patrimony has always provided the enemy with a particularly vulnerable and desirable target for psychological warfare. Nevertheless, such deliberate destruction to wound the people in his deepest patriotic feelings, often results in a intensified preservation and restoration movement<sup>2</sup>.

However damage on monuments in Belgium was less extensive than during the first World War, or than in other involved countries<sup>3</sup>, the national survey of 1946 on war damage gave the occasion to inventory and to study historic buildings, remained unknown up to that moment. Also the successful initiatives of restoring and cleaning monuments in London and Paris, directly after the war, had their equivalents in several Belgian cities. This created a renewed concern for monument preservation.

By the same occasion, each municipality had to appoint a town-planner to guide and coordinate the reconstruction projects. This was the first time in Belgian urban history that the government really provided for some coherent planning structure<sup>4</sup>. One was trying

to guarantee an optimal rebuilding of all destroyed places. The care of monuments became integrated within this broader context of repair of war damage and restoration of high qualified districts, while the monument latently received a more expressed function as a bearer of cultural and social values. Those phenomena of concept-extension and the localisation in between townplanning and landscaping already indicated the predominant features in post-war development.

### 1.2. *General physical and socio-economical frame of reference*

The explosion of industrialisation, housing development and technical infrastructures during the fifties and sixties has determined the evolution of monument preservation to a much more constrained extend than rebuilding operations after the war. Specially the powerful stimulus given to social housing by the authorities<sup>5</sup> and new visions on town-planning based on the Charter of Athens of 1933 and the successive C.I.A.M. congresses<sup>6</sup>, gave enough motives for always new interventions. Most of them required demolition of old structures, and very often monuments were broken down under the veil of modernisation or progression. Increasing welfare and mobility, suburbanisation and the functional and social crowding-out of the old centres as a result of economical expansion and land speculation accelerated the potential conflict situations. The social and cultural crisis of 1968 aimed against the consumer society and towards participation at all levels. The economic crises starting in 1972 argued in favour of small-scale projects. Out of

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<sup>2</sup> This apparently paradox was already sensible after the destructions during the French Revolution when protective reflexes resulted in 1835 in the founding of a «Royal Commission for Monuments». Also the first World War destructions (and reconstructions) led to the first international theory agreements on the Athens Conference of 1931. Cfr A. DE NAEYER «Monumentenzorg». Antwerp, 1975, p. 37-64.

<sup>3</sup> H. LA FARGE: «Lost treasures of Europe — 427 photographs». New York, 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Analogous intentions regarding the involvement of town planners existed during the period of reconstruction following 1918, but they were never put into actual practice. Cfr L.P. SUETENS, «Ruimtelijke Ordening — recht en praktijk». Antwerp, 1973, p. 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> Principally through the «De Taeye»-law (1948) which set up the system of «building premiums» and the «Brunfaut»-law (1949) whereby the costs for infrastructural works (roads and sewage) in social housing projects were borne by the State. Although both these laws satisfy a very large number of citizens, they have, precisely on account of the highly attractive possibilities for financing they created, often contributed to the destruction of monuments and sites. The struggle between «hard» financial values and «soft» monumental values was to unequal.

<sup>6</sup> C.I.A.M. — Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne — founded in 1928. C.I.A.M. IV, held in Athens in 1933, on the subject «The functional town», has had a particularly strong influence on the organization and growth of our towns.



Fig. 1. - Louvain — panorama of the town with the gothic tower of St. Gertrude's Abbey restored about 1950 (war damage).

the functional and social ruins of super-projects, there emerged in the late seventies a spiritual renaissance which led to the rediscovery of traditional patterns in society and to the fundamental and existential meaning of life and home.

Those phenomena were similar in all developed countries, all over the world. They resulted in a new concept on the monument: abandoning the very strict historical or aesthetical criteria, they induced the concept of «monumental district» or «ensemble» by extending the «object»-idea to the whole sphere of visual influence. They emphasized also the socio-cultural, the human and even the existential function of the architectural heritage.

Belgium in particular, overcame the negative consequences of those «golden sixties» only slowly, by losing quite unique monuments and sites. This was owed to the complete lack of any tradition in the field of physical planning. Regarding monuments and landscape conservation, Belgium can point to a highly respectable tradition: as far back as 1835 a special «Royal Commission of Monuments» was set up for this purposes, and since the law of 1931 adequate judi-

cal powers also had been added. The first global legislation on Town and Country Planning, however, dates only from 1962.

But this law only stipulates some administrative procedures and provides for the possibility of passive policy instruments<sup>7</sup>, whereas the real abuser in town and country planning mainly results from land speculation (i.e. the direct coupling of the cost of land to the function for which it is destined) and from the amateurism exhibited in planning. This has earned Belgium the reputation of «the ugliest country in the world»<sup>8</sup>.

The extremely liberal and often opportunistic attitude in this matter from the part of authorities as well as individuals, is linked to the country's historical development. Nineteen centuries of oppression by foreign rulers (independence gained only in 1830) and the very early and intense industrialization during the 19th century have generated a legislation which places a central emphasis on free personal initiative and a pronounced respect for real estate (the criterion by which the rank and status of the individual is evaluated). The national history created a lot of indifference and even hostility towards any kind of authority. Fortunately the mentality is changing since recent times<sup>9</sup>.

To understand all recent trends, we finally should mention the existence of two quite different cultural and even ethnic entities within the same small country: the flemish or dutch speaking people, living in the northern half of the country (with german and anglo-saxon roots), and the walloon or french speaking people living in the southern half of the country and more influenced by latin traditions. Related to historical and geographical circumstances, a situation of constant tensions existed since independence, not only regarding the language controversy, but much more the fundamental discrepancy in economic and political treatment of the two peoples. Although the flemish community has demographically always been the strongest; she kept underdog for 150 years. Only during the last ten years, something is changing for a more reasonable equilibrium thanks to decentralisation. The presence of those two different cultures has created different situations in the field of monument preservation. Since decentralisation started at the end of the sixties different policies are followed in both regions. It is remarkable that specially the flemish community is using all cultural expressions to manifest his individuality and his proper identity. Monument

<sup>7</sup> L.P. SUETENS: «Ruimtelijke Ordening — recht en praktijk». Antwerp, 1973, and L. ALBRECHTS: «Evolutie van het procedurele planningsdenken in België sinds 1962», in Extern VIII-5 (1979), p. 245-272.

<sup>8</sup> R. BRAEM: «Het lelijkste land ter wereld». Louvain, 1968.

<sup>9</sup> A. DE NAEYER: «A la recherche du temps perdu — Indrukken over een decennium monumentenzorg en stedenbouw in België», in Plan, nr. 1, 1980, p. 40-42.



Fig. 2. - Brussels: negative example of monument integration during the 1960's.

preservation is certainly one of the topics for a modern and dynamic cultural policy and is positively used for this purpose specially by the Flemish community. This results of course in different systems of administration, listing, financing, protection techniques, etc. in the two cultural regions<sup>10</sup>.

### 1.3. *First experiments to an alternative urban culture*

Some opposition against existing building and planning and first attempts for alternatives came out already in

<sup>10</sup> In the reforms leading to the «federalization» of Belgium a distinction is made between two cultural communities: French-speaking people and Dutch-speaking people; and three zones or regions: Flemish region, Walloon region and the bilingual area comprising the capital Brussels. The «cultural councils» are competent to all Dutch or French speakers, hence also those living in bilingual Brussels, and are dealing with all matters concerning the cultural aspects of society. The «regional councils» look after all other interests (economic, financial, administrative...) of each of the three regions. The splitting-up of Belgium into two parts for some affairs (culture) and into three parts for other affairs (economy...) does not always create such a clear situation.

the middle of the sixties. Quasi at the same moment in different countries and in different cities, apparently independent of one another, a lot of protest against unbridled demolition in historic cities and narrow minded insistence upon substitutional town-planning, resulted in actualisation of preservation activity and protection of the architectural heritage. Those first alternative projects grew up by the initiative of private citizens and private organisms.

The most impressive initiative was the restoration and revalorisation of the Great Beguinage of Louvain by the Catholic University of Louvain. This quarter of mostly 16th-17th century houses doomed to demolition, was saved and converted, under the direction of Prof. R.M. Lemaire, into service buildings for the university and student accomodation. For the first time, the potential combination of monument preservation and a modern practical use was proved. The archaeological and museum-tradition was combined with functional concessions. This work started in 1963 and is now reaching conclusion by restoring the incorporated church building. Although one would approach the matter even more flexibly to-day, this project was



Fig. 3. - Liège: object-directional monument conservation which for a great part is lost by the visual pollution of the district.

of enormous significance as a test-case and training ground for a new urban culture<sup>11</sup>.

In other cities too opposition was organized to combat the senseless demolition and further mutilation of the historic image of the city. In Bruges, as long ago as 1965, the Marcus Gheerards Foundation was set up by a small group of private individuals; inspired by examples in Holland and England, its aim was to go in for restoration on its own initiative<sup>12</sup>. In Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Liège and Tournai, the students and professors of the local architectural schools promoted the alternative approach to city and community life<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> R.M. LEMAIRE: « La rénovation des villes historiques — un cas concret: le Grand Beguinage à Louvain ». Report of the « Economic Commission for Europe », second study cycle. Budapest, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> A. VANDEN ABBEELE: « Brugge, levende stad », in « Wonen » N.I.H., Brussels, n° 1-2, 1976, p. 4-42.

<sup>13</sup> In Antwerp by the National Higher Institute for Architecture and Town Planning (e.g. « Een hart voor Antwerpen L.O. » by Cogge, D'Huyvetter, Jageneau and Toubhans, Brussels, K.A.W.L.S.K.,



Fig. 4. - Ghent: St. Nicholas's Church, one of the most prestigious Scheldt gothic monuments which restoration is taking now already 30 years.

By initiative of the city of Mons, the « Society of Historic Cities of Belgium » was founded in 1970. This Society would unify all local city-planning departments, worried about the preservation of their heritage. The idea of combined power met with a national response. Some 20 city-governments became a member and the idea of revalorisation of historic districts started his first realisations. In particular, the initiatives taken by the city of Bruges<sup>14</sup>, Antwerp, and more recently Ghent provide an example to be followed. The celebrations of the millenium of the city of Brussels in 1979 and those of the city of Liège in 1980 have also placed a special emphasis on the administration of monuments and urban renewal. Also a lot of

1967 — « Pieter Pot Plan », Antwerp, N.H.I.B.S., 1972). In Brussels, the ARAU (Ateliers de Recherches et d'Action Urbaine, cf. Wonen-TA/BK, nr. 15/16, 1975) and the Saint Luke Archive.

<sup>14</sup> P. DEVOS, L. CONSTANDT, J.P. ESTHER: « Brugge — herwonnen schoonheid ». Tielst, 1975. A. VANDEN ABBEELE, J. TANGHE, R.M. LEMAIRE e.a.: « Brugge — structuurplan voor de binnenstad ». Brugge, 1976.



Fig. 5. Louvain: Great Beguinage: the start of a new philosophy in monument conservation.

smaller cities and even rural centres started very progressive projects.

#### *1.4. Joining of the public authorities to the private and local initiatives*

The success of those small local experiments stimulated also the regional and national authorities. From the early seventies some of them had started to propagate the ideas on a new urban culture. The support by the declarations of respectable international organizations as Icomos, Council of Europe, Europa Nostra, ..., made the sensibilisation of larger population groups easier. This can be illustrated by following events, in approximately chronological order.

1.4.1. In the context of cultural self-government of the Flemish and Walloon people also the Royal Commission for Monuments and Sites became divided into two autonomous sections in 1968.

1.4.2. On about the same moment, the definitive start for a systematic inventory of the architectural heritage for each district of the nation, was given by the Min-

istry of Culture. Up to that moment, only very inadequate or incomplete lists were available, as results of former, partial attempts. The first volume of this «quick inventory» was published in 1971; after 10 years already over twenty volumes are edited. The publication of those inventories and their diffusion on a wide scale are contributing substantially to the whole process of public sensibilization. This scientific confirmation of the artistic, historical or landscape value of his property creates with the owner a favourable mentality for conservation and protection.

1.4.3. A new administration-body was created in 1972: the «State Department for Preservation of Monuments and Sites», with power limited to the Flemish region. Where previously departments dealing with monuments had existed in various ministries, the purpose of this State Department was to centralize all those preservation-sections. It also afforded the opportunity of creating a wider and more efficient governmental department to handle procedures connected with protection and restoration subsidies. The protection of buildings and landscapes had hitherto depended



Fig. 6. Ghent — Graslei: a static series of extremely valuable monuments, the materialization of «urban landscape» as a monument.

on the initiative of the members of the Royal Commission or of the municipal authorities. The municipalities wanted as little interference as possible from government authority, and the Royal Commission only met twice a month. This explained the very long delays to which each dossier was subjected and the impotence of this Commission. Hence in many cases the protection came too late.

1.4.4. Next to the installation of this «State Department for Preservation of Monuments and Sites», the same Flemish Government was worried to adapt the existing «Monument-Act» (1931) and the field of governmental interventions in monument preservation to the modern ideas. The Ministerial Decree of 3 March 1976, gave the Flemish region a very modern instrument for monument preservation: the wider definition-concept was integrated, procedures were simplified, and a better coordination with the Town Planning Act of 1962 was guaranteed. The Walloon Region is preparing a similar Decree.

1.4.5. The efforts of the State Department and the application of the new legislation have gradually made it possible to catch up on the arrears. This is illustrated by the speed with which inventories have been carried out, as mentioned above, but also by the number of monuments protected. Notwithstanding the unusually rich patrimony, in 1972 there were only ap-

proximately 2.500 monuments and sites protected by Royal Decree in the whole of Belgium. From 1950 onwards there was an annual average of approximately 20 to 30 protections. Since the setting-up of the State Department in 1972 Flanders has achieved an average of between 200 and 300 protections a year. In Wallonia, where such State Department was not set up, work continues in the traditional way and at the same pace as previously. As a result of this new policy, the number of protected buildings in 1980 was increased up to  $\pm$  2.600 in the Flanders and  $\pm$  1.300 in Wallonia<sup>15</sup>.

1.4.6. The combined influence of the socio-cultural and economic crisis induced the central authorities (Minister of Public Works) to engage in five pilot projects of urban renewal in which a lot of monument conservation was involved<sup>16</sup>. These projects however got under way slowly and did not all meet with the

<sup>15</sup> In addition with the  $\pm$  100 monuments of Brussels Agglomeration this total of  $\pm$  4.000 protected buildings for the all of Belgium stands very poorly compared with some of our European neighbors: e.g. Netherlands:  $\pm$  42.000; United Kingdom:  $\pm$  270.000; France:  $\pm$  33.000.

<sup>16</sup> The five pilot projects referred to were: the town centre of BRUGES; Heembeemd neighborhood in MALINES; rue des Brasseurs in NAMUR; the centre of JUMET and Marolles quarter of BRUSSELS.

hoped-for success. The different authorities adopted a positive attitude and through their willingness to contribute actively to the new approach, it now became apparent how many administrative bodies were concerned and how disparately the various departments were spread over the general administration: public health, environmental planning, employment, public works, culture, housing, building funds... Lack of coordination and conflicting interests hindered decision-making and realization.

1.4.7. The «European Architectural Heritage Year» of 1975 crowned the work of three years in stimulating public awareness. This EAHY activated private as well as governmental people and, when it has not always been without any commercialism, it has been an enormous success that created a positive attitude for the «monument-case» in the widest population groups.

1.4.8. The previously mentioned contributions all originated from the central authorities. Mention should also be made of the activities undertaken by the provinces, situated on the middle-level in between the local and central authorities. The provinces have played a smaller but much more continuous part. Apart from the daily control of restoration dossiers, activity in the field of monument preservation rather differs in each province. In most of them it is concentrated on scientific contributions: inventories, monographs and museums.

## 2. SOME TRENDS IN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

### 2.1. «Culturalization» of monument preservation

The federalization-ideas, living by a lot of our politicians have been tested first of all in cultural affairs. Monument preservation was one of the first competences delegated to the independent «Cultural Councils» of the two cultural communities (Flemish and Walloon people). The splitting-up of the Royal Commission in 1968 was the first symptom of this. Since then, Flemish and Walloon people can operate entirely independently of one another regarding preservation. This gave differences in organization, legislation, policies, financing, ...

This «culturalization» of preservation matters is positive for both communities, but is disastrous for the monuments of Brussels. As a bilingual area Brussels belongs to both cultural communities with the result that, in addition to the permanent latent conflict situation, all administrative structures are present in duplicate. The passages to be negotiated by restoration or protection dossiers have become so cumbersome that practically nothing happens<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Apart from this special political-administrative situation, the patrimony of Brussels has been considerably affected by the large-

We have already referred to the great interest expressed in monument preservation within the Flemish cultural community, because of the tendency to interpret cultural autonomy within the widest possible spectrum<sup>18</sup>. But the already important divergency after only 13 years between the two communities mainly results from socio-economic and even ethnological factors. Urban development has been quite different in both parts of the country, mainly because of the heavy industrialization (mining and steel!) in the Walloon part. In the Flemish part the small-scale agricultural economy survived much longer. May be this agricultural tradition together with the continuous stimulus of the government to invest in housing explains the general Belgian concern about a clean, big and private-owned house. This tradition, stronger in Flanders than in Wallonia, caused lots of private renewals and new constructions in the housing sector with very often the destruction of monuments and site-values<sup>19</sup>.

### 2.2. «Governementalization» of preservation in Flanders

Already the decree of 1972 confirmed the ultimate decision-taking by the Minister. The creation of a State Department moreover meant that preservation was placed in the hands of civil servants. Up until 1972 it had only been well-intentioned volunteers who devoted themselves to the task. The new policy option of catching up quickly on the arrears and working on a wider scale was impossible to achieve with volunteers. That is why this switch-over to the civil service became necessary. This naturally entailed the typical risks connected with officialdom. Since it is still a question of a young and dynamic department in full expansion, the results are surprisingly positive; but the present enthusiasm needs to be kept up in the long term and the necessary competency and independence must continue to be guaranteed.

«Politicization» became a particularly real danger. Since policies and strategies are built up within the ministerial cabinet, shifts in priorities resulting from the personal susceptibilities of highly placed officials, can bring about basic changes in the approach towards and the interests of monument preservation. The min-

scale random building explosions which has governed the city since the preparations for the World Exhibition of 1958. Also the nature of the greater part of the patrimony dating principally from the 19th century, has made destruction easy. See: Saint Luke Archive and Dutch Commission for the Culture of the Brussels Agglomeration: «Urgentie-inventaris van het bouwkundig erfgoed van de Brusselse Agglomeratie». Brussels, 1979, p. 9-12.

<sup>18</sup> R. DE BACKER-VAN OCKEN, Minister of Dutch Culture: «Krachtlijnen van het beleid inzake Monument, Stads- en Dorpsgezicht», in «Bouwkundig Erfgoed in Vlaanderen», nr. 38, 1978, p. 1-8.

<sup>19</sup> About 55 % of Belgian families are living in their private owned house. This explains their willingness to invest rather important sums for housing.



Fig. Antwerp: interior of the 17th century «Rockox house», restored by a banking firm.

ister's cabinet also exercises a filtering function. The numerous proposals put forward by the State Department are selected, expedited or delayed according to necessity and to the financial and political possibilities. The recent stringpulling in order to preserve the ideological balance between the political parties on the occasion of renewing the Royal Commission only serves to illustrate that monument preservation is no longer an uncommitted matter, but has acquired party-policy importance. The dangers of abuse in such circumstances are self-evident.

Those risks of political pressure and infiltration stemming from interests foreign to monument preservation have always existed, especially from those advisory bodies in which little or no democratic control can be exercised upon decision-making (e.g. Perma-

ment Deputations of the Provincial Councils, Intermunicipal Authorities, para-statal organisms, financial power groups, ...). The awakening of consciousness at all levels of the population, the considerable finances which are involved sometimes and the number and strength of various local pressure groups cause the decision-making process to be more influenceable and vulnerable.

### 2.3. Decentralization and democratization

The widening in the concept of the monument and the way in which the «European Architectural Heritage Year — 1975» was organized, have increased the significance of monument preservation for local authorities and organizations. The follow-up to these activities, including the «Belgian Year of the Village — 1978» and the «European Year of Urban Renewal —



Fig. 8. - Antwerp: inner courtyard of the 16th century «Draecke house», soon to be restored by a private individual.

1980», kept sensibilization actual. They generated an always better structured network of local pressure groups with an always broader participation impact. Democratization is perhaps an overstatement and participation is often spontaneous (though mainly from below to above) or has to be extorted by crisis situations. Anyway the elitist or intellectual aura which once surrounded monument preservation has considerably faded<sup>20</sup>.

Decentralization is mainly asked by the local authorities and private people. They wish monument preservation should entirely be delegated to the municipality, since they know the best the real aspirations of the people. The institution of «Provincial Sections of the Royal Commission for Monuments and Sites» in 1976 and the organization of the State Department based on provincial sections are the only kind of decentralization for the moment. And of course, it remains relative, while this provincial and even local decision-«making» stands to the final decision-«taking» by the Minister. The «Royal Commission» which had a centralising consultancy and intervention function in the

<sup>20</sup> In spite of all assertions concerning democratization a recent inquiry in the Netherlands has shown that monument preservation there has remained an elitist affair, especially as regards the nature of the objects which are dealt with. Cf. F. VAN ENGELDORP-GASTELAARS and A. DREIMULLER: «Het falen van de monumentenzorg», in «Intermediair», 20 apr. 1979, p. 21 e.v. Although the study has been sharply attacked (cf. G. BRINKGREVE in «Bouw», nr. 26, 1979), and, although the Belgian situation is quite different, it could happen that also our impression has to be moderated.

former administration structure is now reduced to the highest organ for discussions on philosophy and theory of preservation.

#### 2.4. Lack of co-ordination in landscape protection

Landscape protection, is a depressing story. Although the first interventions of landscape preservation date from the 19th century there doesn't exist any tradition neither any functional administrative instrument. Of course, the Monument Act of 1931 was large enough to incorporate also sites or natural landscapes but practice and reality is showing rather poor results. Even the Flemish decree of 1976 could not integrate the landscape aspect because it only mentions «monuments and urban or rural sights». The «nature sites» are leaved behind intentionally. One of the reasons for this is the already mentioned very strong individualism especially in rural communities and totally uncontrolled land prices. Even in the most recent attempts by the government, the agricultural lobby obtained that the protection of «nature sites» or «landscapes» should be treated in a separate legislation, and not together with the monuments and the «rural and urban sights». This ought to be necessary to safeguard agricultural interests!

Actually, the protection and conservation of landscapes is referred to a series of different acts which all are treating some small fragment of the totality (e.g. Monument-Act of 1931, Wood-Act, Acts on Parks and Gardens, ...). The confrontation of all these (parts of) acts gave continuous conflicts, especially in connection with the Town-Planning Act (1962), the Re-Allotment Act (1970) and the Nature Conservation Act (1973). The actual sensibility on public green, and the relation of the monument within his original site, is increasing the confusion. A new decree in this matter is very necessary, and we are happy to hear that this will come very soon<sup>21</sup>.

#### 2.5. Unwillingness or impotence of the juridical system

Hitherto, the judicial system has proved mainly ineffective on town-planning or in conflicts arising from the protection of buildings and landscapes. Sometimes the attitude of the judiciary is hard to understand because the judicial system traditionally tends to stick very closely to the principle of the right of property, laid down in the Constitution. Here, individual property is considered virtually sacrosanct. The same idea is restated in a second principle which determines that a request for protection or a demand for compensation can only be considered valid when one's own personal property is at stake; in other words, an individualized interest is necessary.

<sup>21</sup> M. GALLE, Minister of the Flemish Community: «Het beleid inzake landschapszorg» at the Annual Assembly of the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites. Brussels, 14 may 1981.



Fig. 9. - Bruges — the whitewashed facade of the neogothic «Government Palace» on the Grote Markt.

It is of course particularly difficult to plead private interests in matters concerning the living environment and the quality of the visual surroundings. Whereas in other situations (e.g. animal protection, family protection) it is already accepted that organizations of those concerned should be able to defend the interests of their members, this has not yet happened in cases connected with monument preservation. Land speculation moreover is considered as a normal activity and it is accepted that loss of speculative gains can lead to indemnification.

This does not of course promote serene preservation politics. Well-informed and persevering owners know that a decision is often granted in their favour if they lay their dispute before the State Council, since long procedures and discussions carry a very real risk of one form of fault or another being proved. It is known that the State usually backs down when threatened with substantial demands for indemnification.

The necessary judicial measures are nevertheless available if their use is required. We refer for example, to a case in Antwerp: thanks to the determined energy of the alderman involved, a historic house on the

Market Square was expropriated by the city, because the owner concerned refused to keep it up.

#### 2.6. *Levelling-down of the monument-object and the quality of restoration*

The physical and mental opening of the monument concept caused an important quantitative scale-enlargement of potential monuments. The integration of monument preservation within urban renewal and environmental quality introduced values which were not that common; they lifted architectural preservation to one of the existential conditions of human life. The first experiments practising the traditional restoration techniques on large residential complexes, led to social segregation and new ways of building speculation. They learned that preservation should consider not only the physical structures but also the social structures.

This fact occasioned smaller governmental subsidies (while the available budget didn't increase the same way as the candidates) and sometimes drastic economies with a view to the limited funds of the future user. The exponential rise of building costs, partly because of the lack of traditional materials and

traditional skills, aggravated the situation. All this is mortgaging restoration quality to an unsuspected extent. We all agree on the conservation necessity of the different stages in a monuments life, but it is unfair to use arguments on authenticity or aesthetics while the real ones have a financial character. This happens too much last years.

The quality problem is also encumbered by sometimes very acute conflicts between historians and architects. The traditional archaeological way of restoring is mainly based on art-historian and archaeological criteria; architectural considerations on space quality, structural logic or aesthetics are remaining only latent values. The new monuments offer however is asking much more functional and dynamic integration in modern society and increased the architect's responsibility considerably. But very clean weighting of values is seldom possible; so many times, discussions on the way of restoring become a source of annoyance, specially for architects while after all, they are the ultimate responsables. Only few art-historians involved are sensible to the architectural matters because both disciplines are using different standards. Where theory and philosophy is not open enough, this will result in half solutions which can be worse than hidebound cost-saving mentality. (We are thinking about reproduction of small missing elements in series, correction within certain limits of manifest architectural errors, introduction of modern constructions...).

During passed decades, there surely have been too much «hard» restorations, physical as well as social, but this may not bring the other extreme during the eighties. The putting of quantity before quality and the preponderance of financial arguments may be justifiable in some cases; but there will always exist an «architectura major» which deserves to be treated with due respect. In these cases neither the community nor the monument benefits from a mediocre patched-up job resulting from a lack of courage and sense of responsibility. This way, we should remake the early 18th century situation when during the French Revolution monuments were valued purely on their material and pragmatism. This risk can only be avoided by fixing the monument within a differentiated statute linked with precise specifications on criteria, values and quality of conservation and restoration.

### 2.7. *Confusion and polarisation between monument preservation and urban renewal*

Today the difference between «preservation» and «renewal» is not always that clear. Not the terminology confusion in itself is important, but the consequences it creates in governmental administration. Various departments are involved in urban renewal without a clear demarcation of responsibilities. This is giving a quasi permanent tension between Town Planning Department, Housing Department, Public Works, Public Health, State Department for Preservation of



Fig. 10. Namur: urban renovation in the Rue des Brasseurs.

Monuments and Sites, Economic Affairs, ... The changing mentality on different levels and the recent international actions are emphasising architectural preservation which becomes, with those supports, always more «infiltrated» in related interests as town-planning, public works, etc.

A second type of shift in approach which contributes to the above-mentioned confusion concerns the influences of «governmentalization» and party politics. There has traditionally been a preponderance of socialist-inspired influences in townplanning, since townplanning is essentially a social activity. Cultural policies including monument preservation, have evolved under successive governments within a primarily Christian Democrat sphere of influence. Just as there have been tendencies in Christian Democrat circles to get involved in the field of town- and country-planning via monument preservation, there are tendencies among socialist groups to involve themselves in the preservation and associated sectors, by the way of urban renewal. Of course, we are oversimplifying but this kind of discussions can make protection or resto-

ration dossiers so delicate that nothing happens or deterioration continues.

Such a polarization of notions and tendencies is not really so serious a matter; on the contrary, the more that is done for the existing patrimony the better. It is however necessary that both preservation and renewal should each respect its own objectives and maintain its own executional and philosophical criteria. A strict separation of the available finances is another vital condition for continuing to carry out monument preservation in a consequent fashion. The gradual interpenetration of these two spheres of influence and the confusion in the minds of some of those responsible with regard to the specific mandate of these two activities, could easily lead to the amalgamation of the available budgets without distinguishing between what should go to historic buildings and what should be spent on ordinary sanitation or renewal. It is perfectly clear that, in the case of a non monument-minded administration, conservation and restoration in that case becomes a virtually impossible undertaking.

### 3. ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

#### 3.1. *Forming of a correct theory and differentiation*

Now that so much is in the air, the need is felt in monument preservation for correct and explicit theory and philosophy. This is the most important assignment for the future. We speak about «hard» restorations and «soft» restorations, while considerable difference of opinion remains as to «how» and «why». The current scale enlargement has to be compensated by differentiation. Distinction should be made by «*archaeological preservation*» which should scrupulously observe all the principles of the Charter of Venice, and a «*functional preservation*» where more concessions can be made towards pragmatism and functional requirements<sup>22</sup>. The selection and classification in the first or the second preservation type will be settled by a group of specialists following certain criteria.

#### 3.2. *Co-ordination of administration and policy*

There is still a great deal of incomprehension and opposition from various civil service authorities against the monument preservation administration which they view as a limitation to their own competencies. Co-ordination, not only in administration, but also in policy is absolutely needed. A more intensive use should be made of local authorities and even local groups to control daily the heritage. The responsibilities of every department involved should be clearly formulated and

respected, to prevent preservation people practising town- and country-planning and vice versa.

#### 3.3. *Adaptation of the judicial and administrative instruments*

The existing range of judicial instruments must be amplified and clarified, specially concerning a new definition of «urban and rural sights». These new terms clearly possess a town-planning dimension, which afforded monument preservation people the possibility (or ambition?) of asserting itself in the town-planning field.

The protection and preservation of natural landscapes needs even more urgently an adapted law to realise any effective action.

Finally it would be a good thing if an effective «right» to a healthy living environment for every citizen were inserted in one way or another in the country's legislation. It would then be possible for the judiciary to take action not only where private property interests are involved, but also the interests of the community (e.g. in cases of visual pollution or the destruction of cultural features).

#### 3.4. *Providing the necessary finances*

Since the Monument Preservation Act of 1931, all listed buildings (private as well as public ones) can benefit of governmental subsidy of up to 80 % of all costs in relation with the preservation of authentic building parts. This very favourable system cannot be maintained present days. A new very clear and objective key on subsidisable or not interventions has to be published. The total preservation budget has to be spiced in the same growth as the number of monuments and the subsidy regulations for preservation of residential buildings should be equivalent as those for new constructions.

Other methods of financing (low interest loans, purchase premiums for young families, tax deductible investments...) are in preparation<sup>23</sup>.

Owing to the large-scale protection of historic buildings in private ownership, the risk of subsidy-speculators has in fact greatly increased. An attempt will be made to obviate these potential dangers by the prohibition of sale within a fixed term unless the surplus value in proportion to the subsidy received is paid back to the state. An analogous solution for the increase in rental yields is also being considered.

<sup>22</sup> A. DE NAEYER: «Elementen, voor een nieuwe visie of monumentenzorg», in «Het Ingenieursblad», nr. 11, 1977, p. 301/308.

<sup>23</sup> Cfr H.B. COOLS, J. DE GHELLINCK D'ELSEGEM, A. DE LIGNE, A. VANDEN ABEELE e.a.: «Witboek van het cultureel onroerend erfgoed». Brussel, Koning Boudewijnstichting, 1981.

### 3.5. Neutralization of nefarious aspects and the integration of the architectural heritage in the modern society

During recent years, historic buildings became for some people a highly desirable status symbol. As a matter of fact, this is a rather harmless phenomenon as long as it doesn't destroy some social structures. As harmless are some commercialization exploitations which are using monuments in their publicities. On the contrary, this can promote the heritage and contribute to a further sensibilization of the population.

Still the most essential task of monument preservation

## RESUME

*Un grand besoin de logements s'est fait sentir après la guerre. La création de systèmes de primes à la construction de logements individuels et la prospérité croissante ont fait que la Belgique est devenue un des pays européens ayant le plus grand nombre d'habitations particulières. L'absence de toute politique d'aménagement et la tradition très individualiste alliées à un respect presque absolu de la propriété privée ont peut-être bien mené à une satisfaction quasi générale dans le domaine du logement, mais ceci a souvent donné lieu à une pollution visuelle et fonctionnelle du milieu construit en général, et des monuments et sites historiques en particulier. Les conséquences néfastes d'une expansion économique unilatérale, d'un aménagement urbain arbitraire, et de processus d'élimination (in)conscients au cours des années soixante sont suffisamment connues.*

*Les crises sociales et culturelles de 1968, le démarrage des crises économiques en 1972, et enfin l'année européenne du patrimoine architectural en 1975 ont progressivement favorisé le retour au logement traditionnel et ont justifié la protection du patrimoine selon une approche existentielle de la philosophie du logement. A peu près à la même époque, des alternatives de rénovation ont été tentées dans différents pays. En Belgique, ce sont surtout la restauration du Grand Béguinage à Louvain, la Fondation Marcus Gerards à Bruges, des actions à Anvers, Bruxelles, Mons et d'autres villes qui ont donné l'exemple. Suite à l'année des monuments en 1975, l'autorité nationale s'est aussi associée aux initiatives des particuliers, des villes et des communes.*

*Le principal changement dans l'évolution actuelle se situe au niveau politique et administratif. La présence d'une communauté culturelle flamande et d'une wallonne a donné lieu à la scission de la politique unitaire en deux communautés culturelles. Ceci a eu des conséquences particulièrement destructives pour le patrimoine historique de Bruxelles car la capitale et son agglomération n'ont pas encore de statut défini dans la réforme de l'Etat. Cette scission et les sensibilités acti-*

concerns his integration as an active and dynamic object in the modern society. Nothing promotes destruction as quickly as disoccupation. Their surviving depends entirely on finding newly adapted functions for them. The opening of preservation within the total housing and living environment create the ideal context and motives for this integration. I hope our country will succeed.

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*vées tant nationalement qu'internationalement autour de la protection du patrimoine architectural ont manifestement renforcé les risques d'étatisation et de politisation. D'un autre côté, ces mêmes forces ont déclenché des processus de décentralisation et de démocratisation. Les difficultés et les imperfections de l'organisation administrative se ressentent de façon aiguë. Les conflits entre la respectable Commission Royale des Monuments et des Sites et le « Rijksdienst voor Monumenten- en Landschapszorg in Vlaanderen » (Office des Monuments et des Sites de la région flamande) en sont un exemple. Les problèmes les plus importants sont l'absence d'une législation adaptée à la protection des sites naturels et la façon fort réticente dont la justice traite toute limitation du droit de propriété, même en ce qui concerne les monuments et sites historiques.*

*La prise d'importance et la modification des conceptions autour du problème des monuments et de la philosophie de la restauration ont conduit en Belgique aussi à l'insécurité et à la résistance dans les milieux s'occupant traditionnellement du patrimoine architectural. Le danger de nivellement n'est pas imaginaire, l'élargissement à la problématique générale de rénovation urbaine mène à la polarisation, la confusion et à des mécanismes de défense.*

*Pour trouver une solution à cette « confusion des langues », il est nécessaire de différencier restaurations « archéologiques » et « fonctionnelles ». Au niveau administratif, coordination et adaptation sont nécessaires d'un point de vue organisationnel, juridique et financier. Les réalisations les moins élégantes disparaîtront d'elles-mêmes avec le temps dans notre culture matérialiste, suite à l'intérêt actuel pour notre patrimoine architectural. La mission la plus importante pour le futur reste sans aucun doute la nécessité d'une intégration dynamique du patrimoine historique dans la société. C'est là une tâche importante pour les autorités, et pour les architectes et les urbanistes.*

Fig. 1. - Louvain — panorama contenant la tour gothique de l'abbaye Sainte-Gertrude reconstruite aux environs de 1950.

Fig. 2. - Bruxelles — exemple négatif d'intégration du monument pendant les années soixante.

Fig. 3. - Liège: protection du patrimoine orientée vers l'objet qui est gâchée par la pollution visuelle de l'entourage.

Fig. 4. - Gand: église Saint-Nicolas: on restaure déjà depuis plus de 30 ans ce prestigieux monument du gothique de l'Escaut.

Fig. 5. - Louvain: Grand Béguinage: le point de départ pour une nouvelle philosophie dans la protection du patrimoine.

Fig. 6. - Gand: Graslei: une majestueuse série de monuments particulièrement précieux, matérialisation du « paysage urbain » en tant que monument.

Fig. 7. - Anvers: intérieur de la « maison Rockox », datant du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle et restaurée par une société de banque.

Fig. 8. - Anvers: cour intérieure de la « maison Draecke », datant du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et bientôt restaurée par un particulier.

Fig. 9. - Bruges: la façade nettoyée du « Palais du Gouvernement » sur la Grand'Place.

Fig. 10. - Namur: rénovation urbaine dans la Rue des Brasseurs.

Fig. 1. - Lovaina — Vista panorámica del centro de la ciudad con la torre gótica (reconstruida alrededor de 1950) de la Abadía de Santa Gertrudis.

Fig. 2. - Bruselas: ejemplo negativo de integración del monumento durante los años sesenta.

Fig. 3. - Lieja: conservación de monumentos dirigida hacia un objetivo, pero que en gran parte se pierde por la polución visual del entorno.

Fig. 4. - Gantes — Iglesia de San Nicolás: desde hace más de treinta años se está restaurando uno de los monumentos más prestigiosos del gótico típico del Escalda.

Fig. 5. - Lovaina: Gran Beaterio: el inicio de una nueva filosofía en la conservación de monumentos.

Fig. 6. - Gantes — Graslei: una serie solemne de monumentos de valor excepcional, materialización del « paisaje urbano » como monumento.

Fig. 7. - Amberes: interior de la « casa Rockox » del siglo XVII, restaurada por una compañía bancaria.

Fig. 8. - Amberes: patio interior de la casa « Draecke » del siglo XVI, que dentro de poco sera restaurada por un particular.

Fig. 9. - Brujas — La fachada limpiada del « Palacio de Gobierno » en la Plaza Mayor.

Fig. 10. - Namur: renovación urbana en la Rue des Brasseurs (Calle de los cervecedores).