

Thirty Years of Urbanism in Quebec City A City Hit By a Traumatism That Ain't the One We Think It Is

Marc Boutin

Numéro 100, automne 2008

Ville de Québec 1978-2008
Quebec City 1978-2008

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/60202ac>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Les Éditions Intervention

ISSN

0825-8708 (imprimé)
1923-2764 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Boutin, M. (2008). Thirty Years of Urbanism in Quebec City: A City Hit By a Traumatism That Ain't the One We Think It Is. *Inter*, (100), 68–71.

(2000) or *Art-Action*, born of the writings of Richard Martel (2005). We also have to mention the many catalogues and quality publications accompanying events such as *Mirabile Visu, L'année photographique à Québec, Trois fois 3 passages, Temporalité, Art d'attitudes, Bonheur et simulacres*, the publications of the editions J'ai VU, DVD's of different editions of the *Rencontre internationale d'art performance* of Le Lieu or the studio art Avatar, and the videos done by La Bande Vidéo, without mentioning the websites and the blogs of today's world.

They stand as the true memory of art actuel in Quebec City, since 1978. They are so rich of details. Others, we can only hope, will be interested to find out more, as soon as you will have dropped the last word of our dialogue...

Thanks for your complicity
Guy

Thursday March 13th
Guy,

I write. And the words help me to think. I have proposed this dialogue to you to destabilize my habits, to destabilize myself, to open doors. And we have succeeded, I think.

You have written: the writing like "dusts on the City"... leaving you to that?

Lisanne

P.S. Thanks for all of this. ■

* **Lisanne Nadeau** lives and works in Quebec City. Historian and art critic, she is the Director of the Galerie des arts visuels de Laval University. Working for many years at the center La chambre blanche, she has coordinated many events, conferences and publications dealing with installation practices and *in situ*. She publishes regularly in various specialized publications and was the coordinator of the *Summary of 20 years of the 196*, in 2004, for the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications. Lisanne Nadeau has been the independent curator for the *Manif d'art 4*, in the spring of 2008.

* **Guy Sioui Durand** is a Huron-Wendat. He is also a sociologist (Ph. D.), art critic and independent curator who has scrutinized Quebec's art actuel scene and given most of his time to the understanding of political art and contemporary native arts. He is one of the founders of the review *Inter, art actuel* and the center for artists Le Lieu: a space dedicated to the art actuel scene in Quebec City. Durand has written for many periodicals and publications. He is the author of three books: *L'art comme alternative: Réseaux et pratiques d'art parallèle au Québec* (1997), *Les très riches heures de Jean-Paul Riopelle* (2000) and *Riopelle: L'art d'un trappeur supérieur. Indianité* (2003). He also has authored articles and chapters in other monographies, such as the recent *Aimitaitu! Parlons-nous!* (2008). Celebrated as a stimulating speaker, his conferences and performances are always greatly appreciated.

THIRTY YEARS OF URBANISM IN QUEBEC CITY

A CITY HIT BY A TRAUMATISM THAT AIN'T THE ONE WE THINK IT IS

BY MARC BOUTIN*

Quebec City's urban history was marked by a major event which is not the Conquest nor the Battlefields of Abraham. It is not to exaggerate to speak here of a cataclysm around which stands the history of many areas downtown. Indeed, it explains the morphology and the structure of the metropolitan region. Its impact on our daily life's organization is from far more important than all other local historical phenomenon of the last 400 years. Nevertheless, our valorous tourist guides are not mentioning it and historians rarely discuss it in this respect. It is, without a doubt, because the stir it has generated is yet to calm down. To say the least, the public as well as experts often mistakes it for its timely corollary, the Quiet Revolution. This event is called "Urban Renovation" (U.R.).

Like a natural catastrophe, the U.R. hit North America without any warning. Each city had to cope with it in its own terms. Younger cities like Winnipeg and Edmonton, in Canada, adapted rapidly. It was for them a form of rapid growth considering their short past and some infrastructures already in place. In 1950, Boston and Toronto, cities viewed as the most dynamic today, resisted the temptation to get rid of their tramways. But Montreal and Quebec City, wanting to be modern, were eager to get rid of it. Today, Toronto is part of the avant-garde with a vast rail network and its costs are easy to absorb. Quebec City is still hesitant to go ahead with a new network which would include structures that existed not a long time ago. It is important to be careful: to be of your own time.

Boston: Our Close Urban Relative

The compact built environment of North American cities, such as Quebec City, Boston, New Orleans and San Francisco served as a first protection against the assault of the U.R. But these cities were fast to understand that a kind of passive resistance would not be enough. Eastern cities like Quebec City, indeed the most directly European, had the most to lose. And even if they were the most vivid in their

opposition to this movement, they have lost a great deal. All proportions considered, Boston is the American city that most closely resembles Quebec City.

In 1950, these two cities had had almost 350 years of history. From an "urbanist" point of view, their two downtown core are similar in their compact quarters. These quarters have clear boundaries, they are socially distinct and densely populated. They cover most of the central territory, to the exception of some great urban parks such as the Boston Common and the Plains of Abraham. This is a distinctive mark of urbanity: each square meter available is occupied, and there is basically no space for random planning. We have to count on filling the surrounding low waters to get more space. At the beginning of the fifties, first in Boston and then in Quebec City, problems started to occur. Narrow streets are congested to the point that commerce is in decline. The pressure for a radical move exists. The U.R., along with the urbanist's response to this pressure, is becoming a panacea for the business world. It is the beginning of the great malls at the periphery of the city – something most daunting for inhabited areas.

The Urban Renewal

In Boston, between 1950 and 1960, urbanists made their first mistakes under the name of the *Urban Renewal*. Scollay Square is central location amongst the most lively and welcoming. It is typical of the open minded and burlesque quarters surrounding it. It was to Boston what was once the Place d'Youville in Quebec City: a popular gathering place. All of it, including its residential neighborhood, was destroyed and replaced by the so-called Government Center, a huge agora in red brick, testimony to a bureaucratic austerity as cold as can be. It is also next to a monumental City Hall that would have made Hitler's architect Albert Speer very proud. Another example which evokes Dufferin-Montmorency: a suspended highway runs through the core of the city. It is indeed the same highway that was transformed into a tunnel for an outrageous cost (16 billions \$US).

Nevertheless, in Boston, resistance has been beneficial. Indeed, most living quarters in downtown, with the exception of the one surrounding Scollay Square, remained intact. Since the 50's, Boston's center is an example of the striking contrast between two styles of urban planning. There is

an exuberant vertical modernity, juxtaposed to a rigorous horizontal residential areas, at once urban and Victorian, among the most beautiful in the world (North End, Beacon Hill, Back Bay). In fact, the public opinion uprising has tempered the renovation endeavors of the "planners", hence protecting downtown's residential life.

A Simple Concept... or Simplistic?

In Quebec City, the U.R. (politicians at the time had associated the idea of progress to the extent that to be against it meant that you were "retrograde") has taken, from 1967 onwards, the forms of a street fight between urbanists feeling entitled to power, and a certain civil society in a desperate plight. Statistics allow [us] to understand the magnitude of these fights, ending in 1978, when tired of these everlasting wars, the City gave up on transforming Saint-Gabriel Street as a way to access Place-Québec. Between these two dates, some 10 000 people had been dislocated, fourteen public schools were demolished or closed, more than 4000 rental apartments were sacrificed. In terms of its demography, the agglomeration literally exploded. Indeed, the average density has passed from 10000 people per Km² to less than 1000, and that, despite the fact that the total population has passed from 365,000 to 620,000 people. It is fair to say that the dimensions of the contrasting zone was multiplied by twenty. No city, with the exception of some third-world megapolis, has suffered such an impact. From the most densely populated city in Canada, Quebec City has now become the most spread out metropolitan region. Even today, we are seeing a few striking contrasts. The Faubourg Saint-Jean, for instance, keeps a density difficult to surpass, at 17,500 people/km² while many suburbs are barely capable of reaching the national average of countries like Belgium – which is 330 people/km². If the average density, before 1950, was to be viewed today on the whole agglomeration, Quebec City would virtually be as populated as Paris with its 8 millions people.

On an era that has 350 years of history, we have instigated a development model that did not consider how delicate the urban structure in place really was. In terms of the circulation network structuring it, the city has broken away from the stages of the commercial street to invest in the realities of the highway, without

dealing with the intermediary stage of the urban boulevard. Indeed, because of the strong pressure coming from the business world (as if it wanted to get even with a past from which it was always excluded) things had to be done thoroughly and in spite of the built environment and the existing site. And to this day, Quebec City finds itself having only few boulevards. And the ones that exist, for instance Pierre Bertrand, often ends mid-way.

To justify its concept, the City produces a report and turns it into an event. Published in 1972 and written by the firm Vandry-Jobin, under the supervision of the Service d'urbanisme de la Ville, this report is futurist and yet, its projections are presented to the public as a given. After 350 difficult years, Quebec City enters into a well deserved prosperity. The cover page shows a prospective image of downtown becoming, in the year 2000, a small version of Manhattan. And to make sure that this image becomes a reality, a network of highways and roads that would make Los Angeles green with envy, is proposed. It is an insane stretch of cement and asphalt cutting, like in butter, the middle of many residential streets of the downtown core. Saint-Roch being the main target: three highways (Montmorency, de la Falaise and a direct link with Lévis) run through the parish Notre-Dame-de-la-Paix, soon to disappear. And to be consistent, add to this two other highways (Laurentien and Champlain via a tunnel). But the project of building a bridge to Lévy-Lauzon brings controversy, its construction will have to wait the change of mentalities. And what does this report entail forty years later? While only one highway (Dufferin-Montmorency) made its way in the heart of Saint-Roch, forced to face the wall of popular resistance as much as the Cap Diamant, and even if less than 25% of the global network proposed by Vandry-Jobin was completed, the spirit of the report has prevailed. Its elaboration, even partial, has shaped recent history. At the end of 20th Century, the Quebec region has found itself with one of the biggest road networks in the world, considering its population ratio: a total of 145 km, that is 20 km for each 100 000 people. These numbers correspond to twice the average of North American cities showing more than half a million people. Only rural and average cities of the mid-West in the United States (such as Tulsa or Oklahoma City) are comparable to Quebec City in

this regard. And in 2003, our road engineers have pushed further with the prolongation of the Vallon Highway. All things considered, this record which could be in the Guinness, explains at once the spreading, the dependency to cars, the excessive costs of maintenance of such network and the City's low population density. To say the least, when it comes to its relations to the car, Quebec City is ultimately "redneck".

Indeed, today's city has been modeled by the brutal and sudden endeavor of a polynuclear metropolitan structure, one that has a dispersed and weak template. And the whole trauma was enhanced by the fact that the new structure was implemented on its complete antithesis.

Since then, metropolitan Quebec City is made of two antagonistic cities. One of these two cities celebrates its 400th year in 2008, the other will celebrate it in 2370. This dichotomy in the landscaping has had an impact at the electoral level: the first of these cities voted for the Bloc Québécois, PQ and Bourget, at the federal, provincial and municipal level, respectively. And the other, already old in spite of its age, voted Conservative, ADQ and Labeaume in the same levels, respectively. In fact, these two cities were placed in a form of sterile rivalry, because no serious consideration was foreseen, by the fathers of the UR, to establish between them complementary infrastructures. Accordingly, the first serious attempt was the establishment of the bus services *Métrobus* in 1992, by Claude Larose. This autonomous transport network "light on the rails" could, in a foreseeable future, play an important role in bringing things closer. But to do so, it would have to give back to the urban city its lost vitality.

Bipolar Trouble: Urban Renovation Places Urbanity in Half-mast

The U.R. seen as a conservative revolution, is not a vision of the mind. Contrary to other North American cities – with the exception of Kingston in Ontario – Quebec City has lived through radical changes. The most urban city in North America has collapsed under a rural revolution. Maybe this is temporary – but we will have to wait and see. The city of Boston, under similar pressures, was at first casual before it became again conscious of its traditional urban role, amongst all cities in the United States. Boston known as a universal capital and research center. Boston and its

unique residential downtown core, preserved to no end, etc. Urban, in its form and by tradition during the last 350 years, Quebec City became a rural city when the heart of its urban past, that is the Latin Quarter, was destroyed by the tourist industry wanting it to become Old Quebec City.

Indeed, the key element of this "revolution" is not to find in the likes of "Drummondville", this suburb as vast as can be and heavily relying on cars. This is a city that has given an image of the province, as told "of the ancient limits" from the 1950's. We can find it in the city center, in the so-called *village d'antan* which simultaneously appeared at the Place-Royale as much as within the walls. Laval University established a precedent as early as 1960. It has turned its back to its long urban history by moving to the fields, far from the noises and social diversity of the Latin Quarter of its origins. It built a campus of the pavilion type that could resemble Ohio State or Georgia Tech. To better understand, just imagine that Harvard University is leaving Harvard Square in Cambridge Massachusetts, for the suburbs near the commercial center. Boston would lose its whole identity.

Laval University leaving the neighborhood opened the way to a form of mass tourism that did not ask for that much. Becoming the main tenant of the Latin Quarter was more than profitable in this area, already named Old Quebec City with affection. This move was enough to give wings to any emerging industry. Indeed, two industrial parks, such as an historical Disneyland in the East, a University and a Commercial power center in the West, would dominate the peak of Saint-Louis-Grande-Allée-Laurier Streets, with, in between the two, a parliamentary zone located under the supervision of the Hotel Hilton International. This axial cohabitation of two white zones¹ had an impact on the rural destiny of an "old National Provincial Capital", which, in the end, is very quiet. It would make possible, among other things, Shows as terrible as the *Red Bull Crushed Ice* in the East and the *Budweiser Tail Gates*, so cherished by André Arthur in the West. At the end, we have a city that has nothing to envy the city of Val-Bélair, when it comes to being "redneck".

An Emerging Balance of Power

Until 1967, the search for a consensus served as a working method for politicians in City Hall. By consensus we mean the discreet predominance of the favorable *bour-*

geois point of view. Between each election, the idea of opposition was in itself put on hold. Many meetings of the municipal council, where the rule of unanimity prevailed, were over in less than twenty minutes. The unhappy ones – perceived as frustrated individuals in need of recognition – were doomed to complain to their counselor.

From 1967 and on, dissidence took another shape. It became a question of collective survival, mostly located in the living areas of the downtown core. On the front line, a resisting force took place at the eastern limit of the Faubourgs Saint-Roch, Saint-Jean, Saint-Louis and Cap Blanc. It is along this border which separates the tourist and bureaucratic zones within the inhabited areas, that the strongest urban fights happened, in particular the ones of the îlots Saint-Patrick (called the Faubourg Saint-Louis), Berthelot (the Faubourg Saint-Jean) and Fleurie (the Faubourg Saint-Roch). The exterior limit of these Faubourgs, includes areas such as Montcalm, Saint-Sauveur, Vanier, Limoilou and Maizerets, served as a base supporting this frontline. In a larger scale, we could see how the closed territory formed by these nine quarters as a whole was caught in a stranglehold. Towards the exterior (in the East), this territory had the pressure of the expanding white zone around the walls. This zone includes Parliament Hill, d'Youville Square and the sectors of the new Saint-Roch, of the Palais de Justice and of the Gare du Palais. Toward the exterior (in the West and the North), the pressure comes from the vast suburb at the periphery which continues to expand since 1960. On the one hand, sky-scrapers and big parking lots take over the inhabited spaces. On the other hand, the car invasion regulates the work week, invades empty lots and creates traffic jams on commercial and residential streets.

"Excuse Us, This is Progress!"

From 1967 to 1980, opposition is the lot of few organized citizens. They take the streets and use media strategies to convince a split public opinion. Along the borders of this territory, uncertainty is heavy. In this respect, Bush's intelligent bomb labeled "Excuse us, this is freedom" could evoke the *bulldozers* of mayor Lamontagne while they were politely demolishing with their proud credo: "Excuse us, this is progress!" It is indeed a slow war between unequal forces. On the civil side, eight committees of citizens (only three of these are

still in operation today) offered a strong resistance. This resistance has contributed to create the actual urban setting: of the four highways pointing towards Saint-Roch, none was able to cross downtown. The Dufferin-Montmorency highway, solely, was able to do some damage before stopping at Lépine Square, in front of the now famous *ilot Fleurie*. One doesn't count the emerging groups defending rights and services such as Day care, Houses for the youth, coop housings, etc. One of these groups, the ACEF-Quebec (Association coopérative d'économie familiale) regroups few sociologists and social agents which published the EZOP report *Une ville à vendre* (A City for sale) in 1972. This report is a marxist answer to the Vandry-Jobin commission. Its content denounces the two-faced language of the city. It reveals the ramifications linking real estate companies to this trend of Urban Renovation. Its publication will open the way to establish a better structured popular movement. It will see to the creation of a new municipal party, the *Rassemblement populaire* (RP) which will gain power in 1989.

A Cosmetic Urban Planning

This battle will move on to the political scene. For the RP, urban management will become a tool to accomplish the impossible: to please the tourist industry as much as the militant base of the party. Downtown, the great structuring projects are put aside to benefit a type of cosmetic urban planning, one that seeks to restore the most striking mistakes done by the U.R. over the years. We are assisting to few changes: the Saint-Roch mall is demolished, the banks of the Saint-Charles river are made to look more natural, trees are planted, and, an urban complex is built to replace the wall of shame represented by the René-Lévesque Boulevard and to "humanize" the boulevard Honoré Mercier. This recent demolition of the access roads of the Montmorency highway, now obsolete, testifies to the same philosophy.

Such cosmetic projects are simply not enough to give development new directions. Without projects with solid bases, the left, even in power, could do nothing more than repair the mistakes done by the first engineers of the Urban Renovation. Consequently, by the end of L'Allier's years in power, the regional dependence to cars was aggravated. Among the best realizations, the rise of area councils supporting the *Métrobus* network is noteworthy. Also, in the white zone, we see the

emergence of a new Saint-Roch area called of "new technologies" with its park "where we don't want to see any bellies", or, say, its series of giant parking lots often hidden behind an artistic façade (such as La Chapelle Street, behind the Cinéma Odéon, and Saint-Vallier Street, next to the Faubourg elevator).

As far as the citizens projects are concerned, realisations such as the public garden and the sculpture gardens of the *ilot Fleurie*, have survived for a period (and with a very small financial support). They later disappeared to the benefit of green spaces in complete agreement with the new "urbanocratic" correctness. Indeed, if political powers come and go, bureaucracy stays. Nonetheless, some urbanist-bureaucrats which were also artisan of the U.R., were able to keep their positions in the party. They contribute further to the make-over, or the abolishment of their own masterpieces. As the logic prevails, when a wind from the left is rising, bureaucrats are making sure that the "Gift from God" shifts smoothly towards the right.

Ruralopolis

In the Kingdom of lawn mowers, frost metallic fences, tarmac parking lots, golf courses and the likes, the form of the pavilion dominates the architectural landscape. From the smallest bungalow with a garage to the largest airport facilities, one finds cubic or rectangular constructions isolated or surrounded by grass or asphalt everywhere. Austere or simply bizarre, they are disseminated randomly or aligned orderly at the centers of lots of all sizes. They are framed by what Pierre Reveryd calls "the most durable and solid hyphen between beings": the *fence*.

In this magma high in gaz and tarmac covering more than 90% of territory in cities like Quebec City and Levis together, the "architectonic" lines are blended. One doesn't know the difference between a primary school and a water treatment plant, a public high school and a high security jail. From morphological and organizational points of view, what difference is there between Laurier (sic) University Campus and the Laval Commercial Center? As Siamese rejects of the U.R., the two urbanistic landmarks of the suburbs are indeed neighbors, today, in a cozy stretch that the well named Robert Bourassa Highway reaffirms instead of weakening it. Since 1960, this perspective and Sobey's complicity with the University to open an experimental supermarket on the highway's west side goes hand in hand with the industrial complex dominating

Sainte-Foy's core. As a simple sign of growth, the idea of an "academic" food market is only a "natural" step towards the creation of an hyper-campus Pepsi-Laval coming with an integral market. Such campus goes from the PEPS to the CHUL, passing by three market places.

In its advertizing, the University could voice "Register yourself, I am commercial!"

The Ruralopolis is at once weak and strong. Its main weakness comes from the fact that to be able to move, it depends almost exclusively upon a blood stream too large and sucking up too much energy. The road networks, the real blood system of the rural city is to Quebec City what the Olympic Stadium is to Montreal: a vast grey elephant falling apart, showing prematurely its wrinkles. Vast and performing enough to serve a metropolis of two million people, this network has a colossal cost of maintenance (for snow removal, security and renovation, etc) that is three times heavier for a population of 700 000 people. Besides the fact that it doesn't age well, it is like a human being. The ageing process is even more active because the city is young.

The strength of Ruralopolis is in the demographic domain. The great suburb, with its two third of the population, gives the tone to the rest of the region with its conservatism. The success of the « *radios-poubelles* », for instance, is not so much downtown as it is in the suburbs. But the suburb's hold on the region is consolidated by a fictional ties linking it, by popular areas, to the historic core of the city altogether perceived as a playground for suburbia. Indeed, people walk, celebrate, and interact in great numbers with tourists in this "enlarged" Old Quebec City. This includes the harbor, the agora area, Carnaval Place, the bassin Louise, D'Youville Square, etc. Very often during such festivities, the "natives" hide in their homes or simply desert it.

The Postcard City, The Object City

All urbanists have not sold their soul to the city or the tourist industry. Here is a commentary from Jean Cimon³, retired urbanist and artisan of the first urban battles in Quebec City: "As long as there will be a commercial lobbying to use Old Quebec as a merchandise, as if it was an open mine, and as long as the profit will prevail over the aesthetic of an extraordinary city, its future is threatened. And the promoters, when they will have killed the life

within Old Quebec City walls, will go elsewhere...". The diagnostic is clear: free speculation will win over residential life within the walls...

Like in the Arab Emirates, in Dubai, in the Persian Golf, Old Quebec City doesn't tolerate new residents unless they are the richest of wanderers. These enjoy few pied-à-terre elsewhere in the world. This allow them – on the contrary to the latest native person – to escape the snubs associated with the festive local agenda. We think here of the long list of medieval festivals and carnivals. Festivals like the Oktoberfest, the Grand Rire Bleu, the Red Bull, the many national festivities and other costumed parties. All events which give rhythms to the life on each side of the walls, and that, with the help of grants and the likes, stimulate the hospitality industry in America's oldest city.

The white zone (or zone of the hospitality industry) is an extension of the glaze of the fortifications. It runs up to the living limits of the Faubourg and serves as a central tourism district (usually we say CBD, or Central Business District) in the city. It is because of the enclave of the city-between-walls that the white zone has annexed Old Quebec City to itself and that the tourist industry can screen all the festive activities. Until 1970, we celebrated the Carnival in popular neighborhoods, in areas like Saint-Sauveur or the Latin Quarter. With the U.R., the Carnival installations are now closer to Hotel areas and stay there. To submit to room rentals regulations, the event calendar is accommodating scheduled dates (the beginning of February). And, contrary to the Rio or New Orleans Carnivals, Quebec City's Carnival had to break away from the Mardi gras, a celebration which gives full meaning to its historical as well as political aspects. In this regard, the affective relations linking it to downtown residents is also broken. It is too close for certain people, too far for others.

...and its Forbidden City

One task remains and it is breaking the mold left by Quebec City's urban history. The city is a path, and the interventions orienting its development, as massive as they are, are not beyond remedy.

The key to a possible change in Quebec City's urban history may be in one of the seven doors of the city. It is important to know that in the 19th Century, Quebec City walls had seven passages and doors. Behind them were seven churches and seven chapels. Only six of the seven doors coincided with a passage, the

one of McMahon Street. Built later, it never had a door but only a simple postern. The seventh door gives access to the Citadel. It is today the only authentic door that remains. The others have been destroyed or have been simply replaced by stylized imitations.

While the U.R. transformed the whole agglomeration from top to bottom, the Citadel, perched on its pedestal, remained intact and haughty as if it was not part of the City. Its strategic and operational functions being obsolete since Frontenac's time, the military people play roles similar to characters in a light opera staged in a surrealist décor reminiscent of *Rivages des syrtres*¹. So, why should we not make of such a space a liberating utopia? Some monumental constructions are imposing by their rigor to the extent where getting rid of them is becoming a necessary step towards the conquest of our terrestrial autonomy. Since 1608, Quebec City passed from a military governance to another, from a governance of spirits to another: from the French Regime to the British Empire; from the domination of the Church to a kind of market tyranny. And in 2008, in terms of the liberation of the minds, things are not that much better. Isn't our most recent tyranny assumed by many as if it was a form of "freedom"?

To break this chain of servitude, civil society could take possession of the Citadel – like some have done with the Bastille. It would not be to destroy the useless fortress but break away from a taboo. People could inhabit it. They would inhabit it like we would in a modern urban area with people walking and no cars. This green area would not contribute to further spreading of the city. It would be utterly devoided of speculation, composed of social housing for families and children. We would inhabit it in more inventive, intelligent and enlightened ways than what the Governor General has proposed. Let's think seriously about it before the tourist industry, financed by some rich emirates, takes it over. The Citadel could become our next Saint-Gabriel Street².

The Story of M. Keuner

Let's end with a story authored by Bertold Brecht. An emissary from the government arrived at a man's house and this man "had learn to say no." He asked to requisition the man's house, and food, and asked him: "Would you like to me be at your service"? During 7 years, the man put him to bed, covered him, stayed late with him and obeyed him. But

whatever he did, the man never pronounced a word. When the seven years were over, while the emissary was drinking, eating, got bigger, slept, and gave orders, he died. The men covered him, threw him out of the house, washed the bed, painted the walls, took a breath of happiness and said: "No".

Theoretical Summary

The formulas *Quiet Revolution* and *Urban Revolution* are popular expressions. They have been recycled to no end in Quebec to serve political agendas, by public relation agencies known to make announcements which are the opposite of what is to come, in order to move the attention away from what is really happening. If we look at facts, the Quiet Revolution was not revolutionary, nor was it quiet. The Urban Revolution, at least in Quebec City, was in no way renovating or urban. We can speak, in the first, of a form of *rattrapage* (or reform) evidently more agitated than quiet. In the second, we can see a form of reversal, indeed devastating, but absolutely not reforming. We could qualify it as anti-urban to the extent of naming it a *Rural Revolution*.

The Urban Revolution is the spatialization of the Quiet Revolution, the latter being the "temporalization" of the other. Spatial formations have been part of the Quiet Revolution. They had an impact on the dominant values of today. Indeed, there was a first phase of planning that dominated the pseudo-urban revolution. It has produced and reproduced the consumerist and individualist postmodern values of today. Another form of planning (dominating the past in Quebec City, and these days on the defensive mode or withdrawn since the Urban Revolution) tends to foreclose and offer similar values. The first is said to be *rural* or *industrial*. The second is *urban*. The first relates to the so-called lucid vision of Quebec City. The second is a vision showing solidarity.

Rural economy relies on material production and global markets. Urban economy is driven by social reproduction and valorizes self-sufficiency and local autonomy. A rural type of planning (say albertan) tends to isolate the different functions to better disperse and regroup them by categories. The residential is found in the peripheral and vertical sleepy suburbs. The commercial takes place in the halls, the industrial in the parks, the academic in the campuses, etc. An urban type of planning (say utopian) tends, on the contrary, to fragment

all functions to mix and regroup them according to their variety. It wants to unite them like Lego blocks of varied colors. The Albertan (or the citizen) moves daily from one role to the next on a regional scale. The utopian, on the other hand, waits in his or her neighborhood that all functions split and come closer to his or her area.

The Quebec country road, or rows of before the Quiet Revolution, is an example of urban country side. The space is divided in productive lots. Each lot is identified to a home in order to facilitate a familial self-sufficiency where each farm could diversify its production to the maximum. Since thirty years, this form of road network is largely disappearing. The farms exist in groups. They submit to monoproductions and industrial agricultural norms which tend to eliminate what is considered "residential". The country side in Quebec is becoming rural again. By doing so, it follows the same geographical patterns than its capital. Quebec City's urban planning has French origins and progressed until 1960, thanks to the extended parochial networks. The sky-scraper connected by highways to sleepy suburbs while passing by the inevitable malls – here is the perfect rural trio. The urban city in itself shrinks around mixed commercial streets such as Saint-Jean, Saint-Joseph, Saint-Vallier, 3e Avenue, Cartier, Maguire, Bégin, Racine, Royale, Trait-Carré, etc. Similarly, the fact that cities become bigger doesn't imply that they become more urban. In the 20th Century, masses of people running to slums and sleepy suburbs have not lost their rural characters by magic. Contrary to current opinion, the 20th Century was not the one for the "urbanization" of societies. It was rather one of urban decline, of massive and adamant "ruralization" of cities. ■

Notes

- 1 Terms which designate parks and industrial spaces where residential functions are excluded.
- 2 Dixit Jean-Paul L'Allier.
- 3 Author of the book *Mémoires d'un piéton*, Sillery, Septentrion, 2007.
- 4 See Jean Cimon, in Daphnée Dions-Viens « Avenir du Vieux-Québec: l'heure est à la réflexion » in *Le soleil*, February 24th, 2008.
- 5 *Novel* by Julien Gracq, published in 1951.
- 6 This a street in the Faubourg Saint-Jean in Quebec City. It was supposed to become an access road to the highway, but all houses were preserved and transformed into coop housing.

Legends

- > Map 1 (Page 34) **The wall**. Although it is cut off from its historical core (D'Youville Square), the Faubourg Saint-Jean was able to maintain a strategic position for an inhabited quarter, as a high ground of urban resistance. When you are at the corner where the streets Saint-Jean and Saint-Vallier meet, the white zone is narrower. But the skyscrapers, with the wind tunnels that it generates, and the suspended highway are obstacle to overcome for the pedestrians. The separation between the bourg – Old Quebec City where urban life, is distressing – and its Faubourg is physical as much as it is psychological.
 - > Map 2 (Page 35) **Quebec 2008: a white zone downtown**. The urban renovation has created a non residential zone (see in white on the map). It encloses the city within the walls. Linked to Ruralopolis by 4 access roads (the Montmorency, Laurentien, Charest and Champlain highways), the zone has become a kind of strait jacket regulating the whole metropolitan region. Its principal functions are: 1) recreative (it serves as a playground for the quiet suburbs) 2) industrial (it confines the forced city in its main touristic role) 3) repressive (it maintains the Faubourg and the inhabited areas downtown, far from the St-Lawrence River and the most interesting historical sites...)
 - > Map 3 (Page 36) **Ruralopolis 2008**. In black, the quiet suburbs; in squares, the services zones with their multiple functions. In squared, the urbanised zones before 1950, that we can examine on the map 4, and, in white, insular zones or to be developed (non residential). To note: the four highways confronted by the passive or active resistance of the urban milieu. Contrary to what the thinkers of the Urban Revolution had wished, they could not cross the heart of the city.
 - > Map 4 (page 36) **Quebec 1948**. This map and the previous one have the same scale. When you compare both of them, one can see the amplitude of the urban spreading. We can qualify it as non urban and rural.
 - > Map 5 (Page 38) **The west frontier of the white zone: the emergence of a balance of power**. It is along this frontier that separates the tourist and bureaucratic zones from the residential area where we will see urban battles unfolding, in particular the ones of the îlot Saint-Patrick (Faubourg Saint-Louis), Bertholot (Faubourg Saint-Jean) and Fleurie (Faubourg Saint-Roch). The territory formed by popular neighborhoods is caught in a kind of stranglehold. On the one hand, sky-scrapers and big parking lots take over the inhabited spaces. On the other hand, the car invasion regulates the work week, invades empty lots and creates traffic jams on commercial and residential streets.
- * **Marc Boutin** has a B.A. in Architecture and a Ph. D in Geography. He has been involved as an artisan-architect in the popular neighborhoods of Quebec City. He is an agent of social change at the Comité Populaire Saint-Jean-Baptiste and a journalist at the popular neighborhood newspaper *Droit de parole*, where he has been writing articles on urban culture and city planning for the last 30 years.