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Between shopping malls and *agoras**

A French history of 'protected public space'

Clément Orillard



La Défense, Paris, in 1971: the CNIT (front left) and the dalle (front right).

During the 30 years between the end of the Second World War and the beginning of the oil crisis in the mid-1970s, an intense modernization programme gave birth to a new France, one very different from the pre-war France of the 1930s. This period is known as 'Les Trentes Glorieuses', the 'Thirty Glorious Years' (Fourastié 1979). During these three decades, the state administration grew rapidly and began to engage a number of new domains: one of these was *urbanisme*. After decades of experimentation, a new national urban policy was developed, establishing a significant break with past urban practices.

This break led to the emergence of a peculiar urban and architectural object, among other things, which we refer to in this chapter as 'protected public space'. The word 'protected' designates two characteristics that separate this heterotopian type of space from 'traditional' public space. The first is a physical designation. A protected public space is not an open space but it is a public space that has boundaries, an artificial ground area and a roof. The second designation is a legal one. A protected public space belongs not only to the traditional public authorities – municipal or national – but also to a number of other actors in the city, such as public enterprises, private real estate developers and so forth. The play between the different actors is codified through complex contractual systems quite different from the legal frameworks at work in traditional city centre streets.

This chapter proposes to understand the origins of one type of French 'protected public space', its functioning, its limits and its broader relationship to key discussions in architecture and urbanism.

'Building' public space: La Défense

In the 1950s, urbanism became an important national issue connected with welfare and industrialization policies. After the Second World War, France not only had to face urgent rebuilding demands due to war damage, but it also entered into a period of intense urbanization and rapid population growth. In order to respond to this situation, policies were gradually developed to reorganize the national territory.

The rapidity of this post-war effort gave birth to a paradox: very powerful tools were placed in the hands of a limited number of people who had little experience in dealing with urban issues. These *urbanistes*, mainly architects from 'l'Ecole des Beaux Arts' and engineers from 'l'Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées', had been working closely with the state administration, especially on experimental projects in the colonies. When the question of a national policy arose, the state almost automatically chose to rely upon the expertise of these professionals (Claude 2006).

In this context, experimentation had to be wedded with pragmatism: experimentation, since much had to be invented; pragmatism, because the programme had to go ahead in the absence of intellectual and other resources needed to face the problems of the new society. Lack of experience, however, was compensated by great ambition.

In the beginning, urban policies and practices were concentrated on limited projects, which grew bigger as the power of the state administration expanded. Part of the expanding agenda was the housing programme known as the 'Grands Ensembles' and a number of key urban projects. La Défense is one such exceptional project and can be understood not only as a paroxysmic version of the kind of urban policy developed at the time, but also as exemplary for the moment in which the question of the protected public space first arose. At its origin, La Défense was simply a project to build a national exhibition hall on the outskirts of Paris, but the ambition for the development of this area changed quickly as it became a kind of central business district for the French capital (Lefebvre 2003).

The initial images produced for the first phase of the La Défense development included two objects that blur the traditional distinction between open space and built space. On the one hand, there is the new exhibition space, named the National Centre for Industry and Technology, which is just a floor slab with a thin concrete roof resting delicately on three points. On the other hand, there is the creation of the *dalle*, a new artificial urban ground plane, covering an underground world composed of different levels, one for each type of transport, the top one being reserved for pedestrians. In the La Défense project, public spaces are transformed into buildings and buildings into public spaces. However, as considerations of public space and indoor space open to the public are not yet fully integrated, these spaces have not yet fused completely, producing the type of 'protected public spaces' we are interested in here. To witness the emergence of the object in question we have to jump forward a decade and study the New Towns policy.

A double choice at the birth of the New Towns policy

The New Towns policy constituted a key chapter in the founding of French contemporary urbanism (Murard and Fourquet 2004). It was the most

important catalyst in the emergence of a number of new practices, patterns and actors onto the urban design scene. The New Towns policy of the 1960s sought to counteract three interconnected tendencies: first, the fragmented urbanism created by isolated planning projects; second, the inability of these projects to generate a vibrant urban life; and, third, the uncontrolled sprawl at the urban fringes, in particular in the Parisian region.

The SDAURP, or wishes without means

The first step was a regional master planning effort, the first such effort in French history. The Institute of Development and Urbanism for the Parisian Region (IAURP) headed the planning process for the area around the French capital. This recently founded, small organization was controlled directly by the state in the person of the new 'Délégué Général' for the Parisian region, Paul Delouvrier. Delouvrier had enormous power, the ear of the president, and strong ambitions for France.

The master plan for the Paris region, named the SDAURP and published in 1965 (District de la Région de Paris 1965), reflected this power and ambition by proposing a u-turn in urban design practices: this plan sought

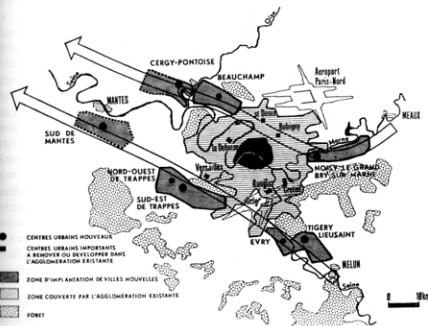


Diagram of the master plan for the Paris region (SDAURP) with the location of the different New Towns.

to integrate different projects into one single strategy and to control the coordination of all urban development. The plan proposed initially seven, which later became five, New Towns around the city of Paris in order to reorganize its suburbs and to steer its development.

Each New Town was supposed to attract the maximum number of people. Their new centres would be of regional importance. Tools were specified for the organization of the global scheme, such as new public transport lines. Little was clear, however, regarding the realization of the centres of these New Towns. The SDAURP of 1965 and its New Town plans were primarily ambitions without means.

Between social utopianism and realism

During the two years following the publication of the SDAURP, the IAURP tried to respond to the challenge of making ambitions a reality. It decided to proceed simultaneously with the development of two different policy directions. Their investigations corresponded to the two main tendencies of the modernization of French society in the beginning of the 1960s: on the one hand, the need for the reorganization of social and cultural public services offered to the new suburban population who came mainly from the countryside; on the other hand, the reality of a growing consumer society focused on shopping (Péron 1993).

Different kinds of shopping centres in the suburbs of Paris suddenly proliferated during this period. In order to control this development, the IAURP chose to produce a new master plan solely for retailing activities (Fournié 1982). Of course, New Towns had to be the places for major regional shopping centres. But because efficiency was needed and the French *urbanistes* had no experience in dealing with this kind of programme, an appeal was made to the American consultants Larry Smith and Victor Gruen.

Even if French society was moving towards a consumer model, an evolution that increasingly escaped state control, the state had a strong desire to culturally and socially organize this new France in the making. Since the 1930s and the birth of the welfare state, the organization of social and cultural facilities had been the subject of many experiments (Korganow 2003). In the 1960s, this question became a central interest of the state administration. The IAURP quickly saw New Towns as opportunities for a great leap forward in the creation of a new generation of such facilities. It charged a group of its urban planners to survey precedents in France and Europe.

These investigations reflected two opposing directions of thought: efficiency versus experimentation, American versus European models and actors, private consultants versus public administration, etc. The New Town centres became the main battleground between two kinds of actors, between two architectural models, between two urban philosophies.

Two kinds of actors, two models

During this period, things had to happen fast, especially in urban development, where the need for an organizational structure was imperative. From 1967, the government began to create new structures, one for each projected New Town. These planning teams, the *missions*, were offshoots of the IAURP. Many employees had in fact worked on the SDAURP. As the IAURP matured, it became a centralized structure coordinating the different *missions*, providing them with studies and other intellectual resources. The overlap between the central IAURP and the different *missions* would exacerbate the struggle between the two approaches to urban planning.

Real estate and the mall

The IAURP chose Larry Smith to help work on its retail master plan for the Parisian region developed alongside the SDAURP (Goldberg and Edouard 1965) and decided a few years later, in 1967, to commission his long-time collaborator Victor Gruen to work on the New Town centres as both architect and planner. The exact conditions of this choice are not totally clear. The link between Smith and Gruen must have played a role, but the main reason probably is the importance and renown of the latter's work. Not only was Gruen the most famous shopping centre architect, but he was also one of its main theoreticians. The French department stores, hoping to expand into the suburbs, but frightened by the idea of moving into yet unknown territory, placed great trust in him.

Attracting main Parisian department stores to New Town centres was a central objective in the strategy of the *urbanistes*. Department stores, key urban elements in central Paris, were expected to quickly establish an urban atmosphere for the centres and offer a high level of services. This need was urgent because the development of the suburbs was very rapid, with a very low density, giving birth to a new kind of retailing system far from the luxury American shopping centre. This new system was organized around the 'hypermarché', an architectural type created in 1963. This gigantic box with the minimal architecture of a warehouse and the commercial motto of 'everything under the same roof' (Jungers 2002) better served low-density urban development, but was unable to constitute an anchor in New Town cores.

The IAURP first asked Gruen to devise strategies that would attract the department stores into these new developments. His contract, however, gave him a broader mandate: he was designated a consultant for the entire design of the different New Town centres. This contract created an ambiguity in which it is very difficult to know who ended up on the losing end of the deal. In the beginning, Gruen, enthusiastic about the SDAURP plans, worked on three New Town centres. He quickly proposed schemes directly taken from his own New Town projects, such as Valencia, or urban

renewal projects, such as Fresno. All were based on one main architectural model of which he is not the inventor but rather the theoretician: the mall (Clausen 1984; Longstreth 1997).

Since the 1950s, Gruen, an architect specializing in commercial buildings (Hardwick 2004), had realized a number of suburban shopping centres with the help of the real estate consultant Larry Smith. Through their different projects, they tried to systemize an architectural vocabulary in order to produce the most efficient retailing machines. The mall became the main element of this vocabulary, increasingly taking the form of a fixed model. In 1960, Gruen and Smith published a book, *Shopping Towns USA* (Gruen and Smith 1960), which set their reputation as the theoreticians of this new architectural type. Their analysis celebrated the mall for its capacity to produce future community centres in the suburbs. If commercial activities were advanced as the key element establishing centrality in an urban context, they proposed to supplement the shopping programme with other urban functions, such as public facilities, and an urban atmosphere.

The mall was presented as follows: a closed and linear pedestrian space open to the use of the public, but cut off from the outside world of cars; in short, the reinvention of the traditional urban element of the street for a suburban society. As the entire American society was engaged in a process of progressive suburbanization, it was easy to see the mall as an integral recipe for urbanism. If the mall succeeded in suburbs by separating 'public space' from car traffic, it could be used to the same end in the core of the city, where retailing progressively disappeared because of problems of congestion or lack of accessibility. For Gruen, 'main street', the key commercial element in the city, had to be turned into a mall in order to survive (Gruen 1964). For the different French New Towns, he proposed schemes designed in that vein only to be confronted by public actors who didn't agree with his point of view.

Public urbanism and the agora

Not only this model, but also Victor Gruen himself, were rejected in the end, somewhat violently, by the *urbanistes* of the *missions*. The conflict was particularly outspoken in the New Town of Evry, which was the most advanced in its development among the New Towns. The main reason for this rejection was the belief that a space first designed for business couldn't also serve the public good. Another problem was that the *missions* never fully accepted Gruen's services, probably perceived as having been imposed by the IAURP.

Nevertheless, the growing opposition inside the *missions* teams of *urbanistes* against Gruen's position and schemes was more than circumstantial. In the case of Evry, the strong insistence on the creation of new kinds of social and cultural amenities can easily be seen as a search for a counter-



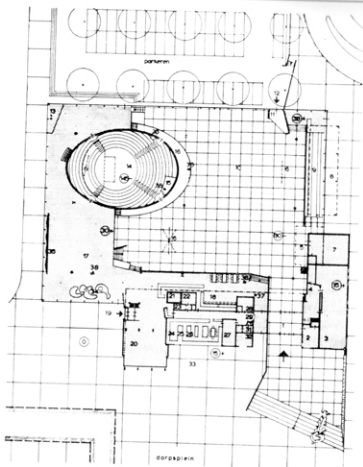
Victor Gruen's 1969 master plan for the centre of Evry, France: aerial view (left); pattern with a mall as the core (right).

model for New Town centres. By chance, the *urbanistes* of Evry discovered the work of Frank van Klingerén in 1968. They went to the Netherlands in 1969 to meet him at his office and visit his projects. The date is very important because it corresponds to a turning point in van Klingerén's work.

Frank van Klingerén (van den Bergen and Vollard 2003) was an engineer by training who became an established architect through his practice. After the Second World War, he specialized in new social facilities combining programmatic elements such as schools and community services. In the 1960s, the Dutch 'poldermodel' provided the context to fully develop this line of experimentation. He designed different projects, all for the new Flevoland polder, all under the name of 'Agora'. All these proposals reflect the same philosophy. However, there are two distinct steps in the development of this philosophy that address two different scales.

The first step corresponds to his solution for a new kind of community centre for a small New Town, Dronten. The building proposed there grouped together social and cultural facilities around a covered free space intended for use as a marketplace, and for sporting and cultural events. The aim was to concentrate the civic life in one point of the New Town in order to give it an urban atmosphere through a concrete built element that could be put in place from the very beginning. The result, however, was rather strange: a covered public space that was cut off from the outside, cut off from the public space of streets.

When he was commissioned to design the same kind of facility but for the new regional capital of Flevoland, Lelystad, he took a second step in the development of this new typology. In the beginning, the project was a big version of the one in Dronten. But it quickly became very different, while keeping its name, 'Agora'. In Lelystad, he decided to connect the building to the surrounding open spaces and added a great number of



The Agora of Dronten, Netherlands (Frank van Klingeren). Plan of the central, protected public space.

functions, in particular shops. The Agora became a kind of semi-enclosed public space, like a square, surrounded by a flexible architectural structure. This last project was closer to the scale of French New Town centres.

The work of Frank van Klingeren provided the elements for the counter-model that the *urbanistes* of the *missions* were searching for. This model included a spatial figure similar to that of the mall, but at the same time offered a distinctive European point of view by holding on to a set of European architectural types. The mall is linear; the *agora* is central. The mall is disconnected from the open spaces surrounding it: the *agora* has to be open to them. But, more importantly, the mall is primarily for private businesses. The *agora* is first and foremost for the public good.



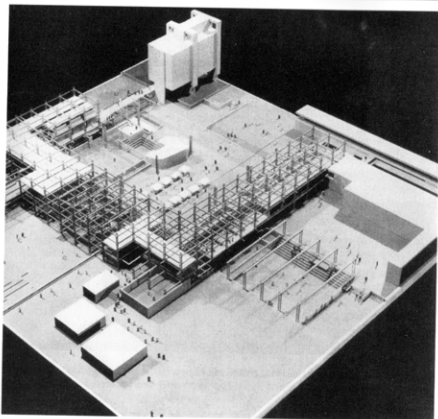
The Agora of Dronten, Netherlands (Frank van Klingeren). In the background a traditional 'outdoor' market, including the shelters, has taken over the protected public space.

As one can see, the pattern of the mall and the counter-pattern of the *agora* were elements of a broader dialogue that brings together the different actors implicated in the making of the city: *urbanistes* and private consultants; the state and real estate developers. Beyond the conflict, the counter-model created an opening for a range of different solutions for New Town centres.

The building of protected public spaces

With the departure of Gruen, a new kind of actor took charge of the issue of retail in the New Towns: the commercial real estate developer. Their role and knowledge naturally limited them to the design of shopping centres rather than entire New Town centres – and so the *urbanistes* of the *missions* finally became the sole designers of New Town centres.

But, in the autumn of 1968, a former banker in real estate development, Albin Chalandon, was named Minister of Urbanism. From the beginning, he was very sceptical about the New Towns policy. Shortly after this



Model of the second layout for the Agora of Lelystad, Netherlands (Frank van Klingeren).

appointment, Paul Delouvrier, the 'inventor' of the New Towns policy, was forced to quit, leaving the *missions* alone to face the government and its new minister.

This new climate pushed the *missions*, gradually transformed into public corporations of development ('Etablissements Publics d'Aménagement', or EPA), to go faster in the realization of the New Towns. Conflicts between the two models for the centres needed to be surpassed. This was the time of elaborate negotiations. In the three main New Towns, this negotiation took different trajectories leading to different solutions and progressively giving birth to the protected public space.

Cergy-Pontoise: the break

Cergy-Pontoise, the most precocious New Town (Hirsch 2000), showed a simple and clear first answer to the conflict between social and cultural

facilities and the shopping centre: a clear break. The development of the master plan shows that this strategy appeared very quickly.

In 1971, the heritage of La Défense was evident in the design of this centre. In the master plan, a *dalle* as a single ground plane supported the different buildings. The scale and its placement in relationship to other buildings made the shopping centre a central component in the development of the city core. However, the shopping centre is broken up into three separate buildings connected by malls designed as open commercial streets. The social and cultural centre, itself organized around an open space, is directly connected to the shopping centre.

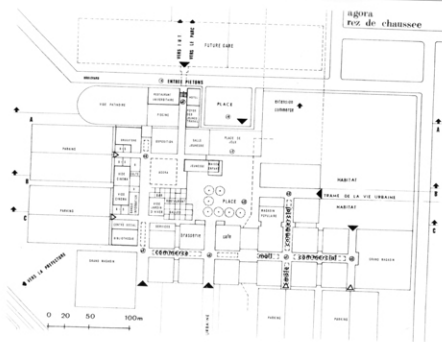
In 1974, the plan took a radically different turn. The shopping centre began to be developed as a closed building, the malls became interior spaces, and the social and cultural centre was moved further from the shopping centre. In 1977, this division became definitive: the closed shopping mall was isolated on the edge of the city core, far from the social and cultural centre realized with a design strongly inspired by the design of Evry's Agora, which we will discuss later in this chapter.

Thus, the conception of Cergy-Pontoise's centre evolved from an integrated design into a divided one. The central part of the town centre remained empty for a long time, a separation between two *dalles* designed as two different worlds: the 'public' part with the different administrative buildings and the social and cultural centre, and the 'private' part with the shopping centre. This break is strange because the real estate developer chosen for Cergy-Pontoise's shopping centre had a track record of working with *urbanistes* and had been ready to work in close collaboration. Moreover, the two main architects of the team of *urbanistes* designed both the shopping centre and the social and cultural centre. But the urgency to move ahead and the lack of experience of the Cergy-Pontoise team probably led to this division.

In the end, there was no real protected public space, Cergy-Pontoise can be seen as the direct heir of La Défense through its *urbanisme de dalle* and the initial ambiguity of its plan has only been resolved by the clear break.

Evry: the association

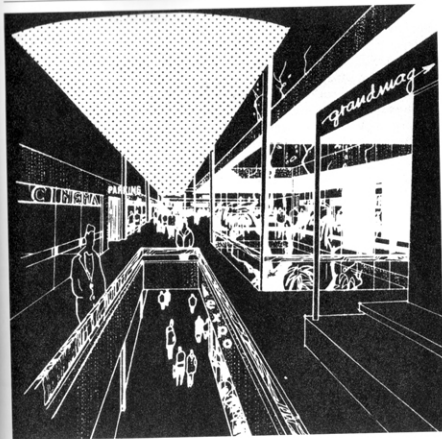
The story of Evry (Fouchier 2000) is more complicated and far more interesting. The conflict between Gruen and the *urbanistes* was nowhere more important than here. The search for a counter-model was the explicit aim of Evry's team. After 1968 and the discovery of Frank van Klingeren's work, the word '*agora*' not only appeared in all the documents, but also a clear description of its functions and its architecture. The Agora was proposed as the main element of the New Town centre, in a manner that directly betrays the van Klingeren model. It concentrated different public facilities around a central covered space, as in a square, to create a lively atmosphere in the heart of the New Town.



The centre of Evry, France, project of 1968: ground floor plan with the Agora (centre) and the shopping mall (bottom).

However, the use of the square versus the notion of the linear mall was confused from the beginning by the fact that the Agora, in turn, needed to be associated with the shopping centre. First, in the proposed T-shaped shopping mall, the Agora was designed to replace a department store as the third magnet. Second, in the definition of the activities that the Agora was supposed to house, a number of these are not only cultural or sporting programmes, but also commercial functions. Even the architecture itself showed an Agora with two levels and a system of signs very close to the architecture of a mall. One can see Evry's Agora as both an act of resistance against, and at the same time a complement of, the shopping mall model. This ambiguity is probably the reason why, despite the evolution of the situation, the idea of the Agora survived and was finally realized.

During the following year, both projects, the Agora and the shopping centre, were the object of intense negotiations that reinforced their mutual association but also led to the improvement of their designs. For instance, the Agora was quickly divided into two parts: the private *agora*, with the commercial facilities, and the public *agora*, with the public ones. The heart of the negotiation between the *urbanistes* and the real estate developers



The centre of Evry, project of 1968: interior impression of the Agora.

was their respective ability to take ownership and organize the activities proposed for the private *agora*, acknowledging the fact that the EPA was not in a position to manage this kind of activity. In order to secure the interest of the commercial real estate developers, the *urbanistes* had to stay closer than intended to the model of the mall.

On the other hand, the commercial real estate developers wanted to obtain the contract for the shopping centre of Evry because yet another shopping model, the 'hypermarché', was beginning to emerge in the low-density suburbs of Paris. The mall model needed more density to be able to compete. The New Town centres were able to offer that kind of density. Given the circumstances, they accepted the move away from the traditional scheme of the mall as requested by the *urbanistes*.

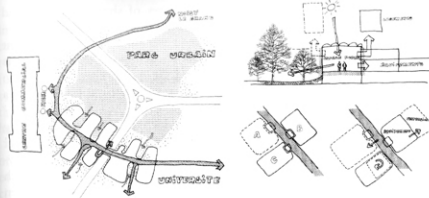
This kind of exchange gave birth to a new kind of architectural object: the 'central mega-complex'. This object is in fact a combination of two different constellations, the socio-cultural centre and the shopping centre, all arranged around a protected public space, not only covered but also closed. The 'central mega-complex' is a town centre in itself and totally blurs the differences between building and open space, but without being a new pattern. This architectural object and its protected public space appeared solely as exponents of the complex negotiations involving the models of the Agora and the shopping centre.

Noisy: the opposition

The invention of a new pattern would finally happen in the design of the centre of Noisy-le-Grand, the first part of the New Town of Marne-la-Vallée. Originally, the *urbanistes* of Noisy had decided to follow the model of Evry. They designed a social and cultural centre, which was a copy of Evry's Agora, just changing its name from Agora to Piazza. The Piazza was a public complex of facilities organized around a central space: a covered square, on two levels, which were directly connected to the shopping centre. The Piazza was located on a pedestrian path, which had already been introduced in the first master plan, linking two parts of the New Town. This initial scheme was fairly quickly replaced by a radically different scheme. This change of strategy might have been a reaction to Evry's complex negotiations, but also reflects the ambitions that the team at Marne-la-Vallée entertained for their New Town, well aware of the fact that it was the largest New Town established.

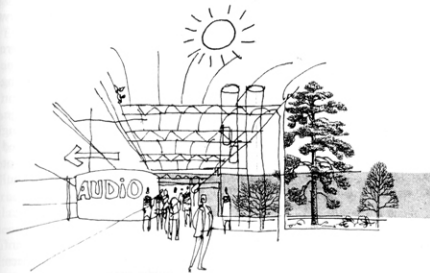
The *urbanistes* proposed a totally new pattern organizing the social and cultural activities not around a square, but along the path itself. From a centred design, the Piazza became a linear design. Strangely enough, it thereby became a new kind of street. The team of *urbanistes* described this change of design as an architecture diametrically opposed to the architecture of the shopping mall as a closed box cut off from public space.

This scheme was developed on the model of the mega-structure that emerged during this period (Banham 1976), in particular in French experimental public facilities (Lucan 2001). First the pedestrian path, equipped with a roof and an artificial ground plane, was transformed into an infrastructure element in and of itself, very different from the traditional street. Small buildings were attached to this structure, each receiving the different functions in a disaggregated architecture open to the rest of the city. The double principle of an integrated infrastructure supporting a composite architecture was so important that the path was designed like one architectural element and some functions were even decomposed into several units to increase the sense of fragmentation and, then, to create a contrast with the unity and scale of the pedestrian infrastructure.



The Piazza, project of 1974: scheme of Noisy's centre with the Piazza opposed to the shopping centre (left); principles of the Piazza's architecture (right).

Here again the main reference for the design of the socio-cultural centre was the shopping centre, even though it was believed to be an outright rejection of this model. Fragmentation was privileged over unity, and flexibility over rigidity, an opening to the rest of the city against enclosure. In following master plans for the centre, the shopping centre was drawn as a single building from which the Piazza was disconnected. This pattern exacerbated



Interior impression of the protected public space of the Piazza.

a sense of opposition between the architectures of shopping centre and socio-cultural centre, the last becoming the real core of the New Town.

Unfortunately this ambitious project was never built. Due to insufficient resources and a slump in the development of the region, the scheme was scaled back, leaving only a bleak shadow of the Agora first built at Evry: the protected public space disappeared and gave way to a proposal for a traditional pedestrian square.

So, from Cergy to Noisy, we see the way in which the New Town planning process gave birth to a new object: the protected public space. But this object had no clear architectural configuration. From its inexistence in Cergy-Pontoise to its elaborated version in the second design for the Piazza, each configuration depended in a fundamental way on the negotiations between the two main actors: the commercial real estate developers and the *urbanistes*. In turn, the protected public space enabled the forced integration of the competing interests of these main actors. The history of the New Towns policy shows how this protected public space is a strange hybrid between traditional urban open spaces and the shopping mall, producing a friendly monster, with remarkable transformative capacities.

When the protected meets the unprotected: Les Halles

During the 1960s, and parallel to the New Towns policy, the government launched a complementary policy of urban renewal in the main city cores to build modern metropolises. At the end of the 1970s, this process led to projects that directly reflect the experience and insight gained in the New Town experiments.

Nowhere is this clearer than in the projects for 'Les Halles' in the centre of Paris. Indeed, the first phase of the project was built by the same commercial real estate company and EPA architects that built the shopping centre at Cergy-Pontoise. The use of a word like *forum* – the Latin translation of *agora* – as a name for the project of 'Les Halles' also betrays this heritage. In 'Les Halles', the same combination of functions returns: a shopping centre, further shops, social and cultural facilities, and a similar protected public space holding these functions together. 'Les Halles', however, is not an exceptional case. The same pattern can be found in Lyons' 'Part Dieu' and Marseille's 'Centre Bourse'.

The renewal policy consisted mainly in the transplantation of the mega-complex pattern experimented with at Evry in a totally different milieu – the core of the city. This transplantation, by connecting two different worlds that normally excluded each other, old urban fabrics and modern urban design devices, ended up producing a public space that is far more fragmented than is the case in the New Towns.

This latent conflict between the creation of the mega-complex and its integration into an existing urban fabric led to a compromise: the mega-complex was built underground. Because a metro station cut the site into two parts, the project had to be planned in two phases, each housing different functions and designed by different architects. The protected public space of the operation had therefore to be divided. To make the connection to the main commuter train station, yet another underground public space had to be added.

The project of 'Les Halles' was part of a big renewal project for the centre of Paris, which included the Centre Georges Pompidou. The main principle of the adopted renewal strategy was to exclude cars from this part of the city in order to create a big pedestrian zone. This caused an unanticipated fragmentation of the public space system in the centre of the city. Already in the early stages of the development of the 'Les Halles' project, one sees a far more complex equation at work than a simple opposition – 'protected' versus 'unprotected' public spaces.

In reaction to this growing fragmentation of publicly accessible spaces, the municipal authority tried to legally unify all public space: it retained ownership of the whole system of pedestrian circulation, even that of the shopping centre. All of these spaces were given the same legal status: they are streets of Paris that continue in the underground level. It would, however, quickly become clear that the municipal authority was unable to manage the circulation spaces of the shopping centre. It left the management company of the shopping centre to do this, while holding on to its property rights. The 'streets' of the shopping centre were 'privatized' and managed like malls.

Even an ally of the municipal authority like the RATP, the public metro enterprise, would begin to function as if its spaces were not public property. During the last ten years, the RATP decided to make the commuter train station more profitable by taking advantage of the sheer numbers of people who pass through this station every day. It started to operate like a private enterprise, renting spaces for shops and substantially increasing the control of access.

In 'Les Halles', we see the culmination of the fragmentation of public space through the articulation of different kinds of 'protected public spaces'. This heterotopian pattern proves to be the most flexible and fertile construction that enables the complex dance of public-private development relations that shape our contemporary cities. But in this protected experimental world, a new urban culture has also been constructed: an urban culture that, after it first conquered the suburbs of our cities, has most effectively transformed the core of the old metropolis, and continues to do so. It is not a question today of celebrating or rejecting this model, but rather of our absolute need to carefully study different cases belonging to

this heterotopian pattern in order to understand, in a more realistic way, what is meant by the notion of 'public' in our contemporary urban society.

Note

- * This chapter builds on a research project undertaken as part of the 'Programme Interministériel d'Histoire et d'Evaluation des Villes Nouvelles Françaises': Alexis Korganow (ed.), Tricia Meehan and Clément Orillard, *L'Équipement socio-culturel en Ville Nouvelle. Réception et adaptation de la formule innovante de l'équipement intégré*, Paris: Ministère de l'Équipement, 2005.

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