Henri Lefebvre: for and against the "user"

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What do people do in architecture? What do they do with it? The discovery of the universe of the "user" and the myriads of "almost nothing" which fill up the passing days, was fundamental for rethinking, revising, questioning, challenging, and often rejecting the discourse and practice of modernist architecture and functionalist urbanism in France from the 1950s to the 1970s. While the discourse on use was an integral part of the postwar debates on architecture and urbanism, it was the impulses from critical urban sociology emerging since the 1950s in France that created the context for a critical assessment of the doctrine and practices of architecture and urbanism.

This essay revisits some of the exchanges between architecture, urban planning, and urban sociology, by focusing on the work of Henri Lefebvre and its relation to the studies of Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe. Chombart and Lefebvre met at the Centre d'études sociologiques, a research institute founded in 1946 on the initiative of Georges Gurvitch, a Sorbonne professor, the supervisor of Lefebvre's dissertation, and the theorist of a "multiplicity of social times"—a concept which influenced Lefebvre's understanding of the complexity of social space.[1] Chombart was one of the first in postwar France to translate a program of urban research into an innovative institutional framework, and his Groupe d'ethnologie sociale (GES) was soon complemented by the work of the Centre d'étude des groupes sociaux (CEGS). The Center was a private organization set up to accommodate commissioned research contracts after Chombart's successful study in Clamart where he was working with the architect Robert Auzelle in the early 1950s. In the course of the decade, Chombart and his teams at the GES and CEGS carried out research and interviews in housing estates in Paris, Nantes, and Bordeaux with the improvement of housing policy in view—and continued with commissioned research on worker's housing and new housing typologies.[2] These studies resulted in several recommendations to the architects, by accounting for the preference of the inhabitants of specific typologies of kitchens and baths; voicing the demand to improve sound insulation and to enlarge surface areas; and urging an introduction of public facilities into the new neighborhoods.[3]

Chombart's approach to sociological inquiries prior to the construction of new communities become a common practice in the operation of the Ministry of Construction and French state planning agencies in the course of the 1960s and early 1970s,[4] the period when Lefebvre's engagements with the urban question were most intense. During his tenure at the CES, Lefebvre was studying rural communities in the Pyrenees—a research project which he initiated during WWII—with special attention to the processes of modernization of the French countryside. This led

1
Georges Gurvitch, *La multiplicité des temps sociaux* (Paris: Centre de documentation universitaire, 1958).

2
See the following works by Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe: *Paris et l'agglomération parisienne*, 2 vols (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1952); *La vie quotidienne des familles ouvrières* (Paris: CNRS, 1956); *Famille et habitation*, 2 vols (Paris: CNRS, 1959–1960); *Paris, essais de sociologie 1952–1964* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1965).

3
W. Brian Newsome, *French Urban Planning 1940–1968: The Construction and Deconstruction of an Authoritarian System* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 130–131.

4
Ibid., 134.

him to the study on the new town of Mourenx in south-western France, where he carried out interviews in the late 1950s, marking a shift in his research interest "from the rural to the urban" as the title of one of his omnibuses goes.[5] In 1960 he created within the CES the "Group of Sociological Research on Everyday Life," which gathered several interesting figures including Guy Debord, Christiane Peyre, Georges Perec, but also Henri Raymond and Nicole Haumont. The two last became Lefebvre's close collaborators in the Institut de sociologie urbaine (ISU), founded in 1962 with the aim of carrying out research on the possibilities of urban development northwards of Paris focused on the plateau of Montmorency, with the preliminary study of the 1965 masterplan of Paris in view. The Institut soon moved to other research topics, commissioned by various state planning agencies, including the large study on the practices of dwelling in the *pavillon*, or the suburban detached house, compared with the practices of the inhabitants of the large housing estates, or the *grands ensembles.* The results of this research were published in three volumes in 1966 as *L'habitat pavillonnaire*, *Les pavillonnaires*, and *La politique pavillonnaire*.[6] Together with subsequent work of the ISU, these studies became key contributions to debates about housing architecture in the late 1960s, significantly influencing the debates in French architecture of the 1960s as well as Lefebvre's theory of production of space, published in six books between 1968 (*The Right to the City*) and 1974 (*The Production of Space*).[7]

The Concept of Needs and its Limits

It is from within the study on the *pavillon* that the discourse and practice of state-led urbanism in France was challenged by Lefebvre and several members of his team. Lefebvre perceived this urbanism as a realization of the principles of functionalism as formulated by the Charter of Athens (1933). His critique of the Charter and its organizational paradigm, which emphasized flows between production (work) and reproduction (housing, leisure), was a symptom of general disenchantment with modernist urban planning that occurred throughout the 1960s. It conveyed his intuition about the shift away from the social implications of Fordism, rather than accounting for the current debates in architecture and urban planning. In particular, this critique did not register the revision of the modern movement during the postwar congresses of CIAM, which complemented the doctrine of the "functionalist city" by emphasizing the attention to urbanity, monumentality, collective public spaces, historical centers of cities, and which gave more consideration to the views of the inhabitants.[8]

[5]
Henri Lefebvre, "Les nouveaux ensembles urbains (un cas concret: Lacq–Mourenx et les problèmes urbains de la nouvelle classe ouvrière)," in Henri Lefebvre, Du rural à l'urbain (Paris: Anthropos, 1970), 109–128.

[6]
Antoine Haumont, Nicole Haumont, Henri Raymond, and Marie-Geneviève Raymond, *L'habitat pavillonnaire* (Paris: Centre de Recherche d'Urbanisme, 1966); Nicole Haumont, *Les pavillonnaires: étude psycho-sociologique d'un mode d'habitat* (Paris: Centre de Recherche d'Urbanisme, 1966); Marie-Geneviève Raymond, *La politique pavillonnaire* (Paris: Centre de Recherche d'Urbanisme, 1966).

[7]
Henri Lefebvre, "The Right to the City," in *Henri Lefebvre: Writings on Cities*, eds. Elisabeth Lebas and Eleonore Kofman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 63–182; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). For the complex genealogy of Lefebvre's empirical studies, see Łukasz Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space. Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[8]
Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000).

For example, the program of the 7th Congress of CIAM in Bergamo (1949), which was devoted to the "application" of the Athens' Charter, included the declaration of an opening of architecture practice towards a critique, both "rational" and "affective," to which not only the "general public" and the "authorities" were entitled, but also individual "users."[9] At the same time, many architects within CIAM such as André Wogenscky argued for a specific focus on "dwelling," understood not as a normalized function within a grid of others, but rather as an open-ended set of everyday practices which extend beyond the individual apartment towards commercial, health, education, and social and administrative facilities.[10] This was developed in particular by the members of Team 10, including the architects Georges Candilis and Shadrach Woods who argued for an ecological understanding of dwelling, straddling individual practices and collective dwelling culture within the accelerating processes of modernization, both in the French African colonies, where they gained their first experiences, and later in metropolitan France.[11]

This criticism of early CIAM concepts paralleled the emergence of institutionalized urban sociology in France, and the research of Chombart in particular. His work was positioned between state institutions and more theoretically driven interests in urbanism, and this was reflected in his complex understanding of needs: critical and operative, speculative and empirical. In the introduction to *Famille et habitation* (1959) Chombart urged the study of needs related to dwelling in their whole complexity: physiological, psychological, and cultural. He argued that researchers in the social sciences should study needs in cooperation with architects and administrators, so that families could "blossom" in their new accommodation, "freed" not only from their old housing but also from their old habits.[12]

Yet, at the same time, he argued against establishment of universal norms, and thus needs are to be qualified by local, psychological, and cultural differences among the occupants. This means that the concept of need must be extended to accommodate such "needs" as that for space and its appropriation; the need for the independence of each member of a group; the need for rest and for relaxation; the need for comfort and liberation of material constraints; the need for intimacy of the family; the need for social relations outside of the family; and the need for separation of functions.[13] This list comes dangerously close to Borges' Chinese Encyclopedia, with the concept of need losing contours, and in the course of his subsequent work Chombart suggested a superimposition of the scheme of "need, function, ensemble of functions" with a series of other schemes, such as that of "situations—behaviors," "functions—social structures," and "behaviors—needs—aspirations."[14] For Chombart, "aspira-

9
See the "CIAM grid" published in *Programme du 7ième congrès CIAM: mis en application de la Charte d'Athènes* (Paris, 1948); Tom Avermaete, *Another Modern: The Post-War Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2005), 63ff.

10
Mumford, *CIAM Discourse*, 221.

11
Avermaete, *Another Modern*, 134ff.

12
Chombart, *Famille et habitation*, 1: 16–18; Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, *Des hommes et des villes* (Paris: Payot, 1965).

13
Chombart, *Famille et habitation*, 1: 17–18.

14
Chombart, *Des hommes et des villes*, 145; Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe, "Sciences humaines, planification et urbanisme," *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 91, no. 2 (1960): 194–196; here p. 195.

tions" refer to silence, beauty, rest, familiarity and dignity; and thus imply a stress on the singularity of each individual in opposition to the general character of needs.[15]

In this way, the attempt to fill in the gaps in the list of needs seems to challenge any attempt at completing such a list, and indeed to undermine the concept of need itself. This critique was brought further by Lefebvre from a Marxist position, which contrasted with Chombart's progressive Catholicism. Lefebvre was building upon the Marxist opposition between the use value and exchange value of a commodity: in Marx's value theory the use value is related to the intrinsic qualities of a commodity as an object of human "needs," while the exchange value is related to the relationship of a commodity to other commodities on the market. Lefebvre's rethinking of Marx's understanding of this opposition had been developed since the 1940s, in particular in the three volumes of his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947, 1962, 1981), but it gained momentum in exchange with the arguments of Herbert Marcuse about the reproduction of capitalist relations of production as conditioned by the creation of "false needs" in consumers.[16] This argument finds its rhetorical culmination in the work of Jean Baudrillard—Lefebvre's doctoral student in Nanterre in the late 1960s—and his claim that needs are productive forces of capitalism and that "there are only needs because the system needs them."[17]

This speculative critique was informed by Lefebvre's engagement with the empirical research he carried out and supervised and by his exchanges with postwar architecture culture. A significant step for Lefebvre's critique of the concept of needs was his 1961 review of the project of the new town in Otelfingen in the Furttal valley near Zurich (Figure 8.1). The project was a feat of Swiss functionalist urban planning, developed by a team headed by Ernst Egli, professor of urbanism at the ETH Zurich.[18] The design of the town for 30,000 inhabitants was based on a matrix of seven levels of "human organization" combined with a list of twelve basic needs. In accordance with Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" (1954), which suggested that the satisfaction of basic needs leads to an emergence of more refined aspirations, the authors extended the list of needs defined in the Charter of Athens.[19] Their list of twelve needs included nutrition, hygiene, recreation, nursing, religion, science, art, protection, welfare, politics, administration, and upbringing.[20] They were combined with the levels of social groups (from the family to the city as a whole), and the resulting matrix prescribed the answer to every need on each level of social organization (Figures 8.2a, b, c).[21] This reflected the development of postwar CIAM, including the introduction of the concept of the neighborhood unit in the work of Siegfried Giedion and Josep Lluís Sert (Figure 8.3).

15
Thierry Paquot, „Des 'besoins' aux 'aspirations': pour une critique des grands ensembles," *Urbanisme* 322 (2002): 79–80.
16
See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964).
17
Jean Baudrillard, "The Ideological Genesis of Needs," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (St. Louis, Mo.: Telos Press, 1981), 82.
18
Henri Lefebvre, "Utopie expérimentale: Pour un nouvel urbanisme," in *Du rural à l'urbain*, 129–140; Ernst Egli, Werner Aebli, Eduard Brühlmann, Rico Christ, and Ernst Winkler, *Die Neue Stadt: Eine Studie für das Furttal* (Zürich: Verlag Bauen & Wohnen, 1961). For a discussion, see Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space.*
19
Abraham Harold Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1954).
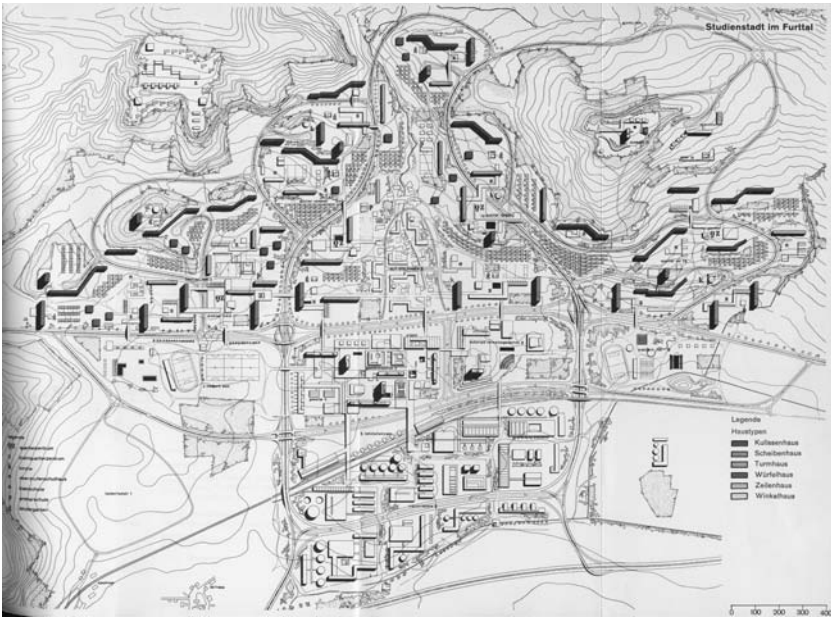20
Egli et al., *Die Neue Stadt*, 25.
21
Ibid., 16, 25.

Figure 8.1 Housing typologies in the new city in the Furttal valley. In Fachgruppe Bauplanung der Studiengruppe "Neue Stadt" headed by Ernst Egli, "Projekt einer Studienstadt im Raume Otelfingen im Furttal, Kt. Zuerich," n. p. Courtesy of ETH/GTA Archive.
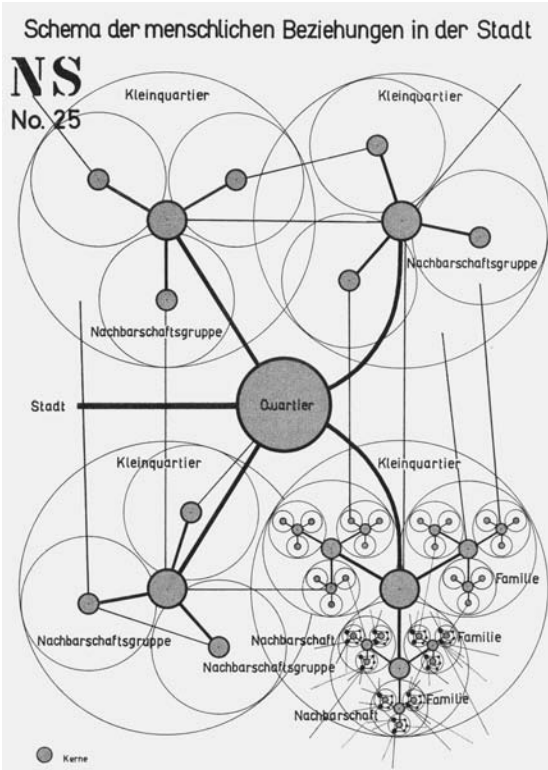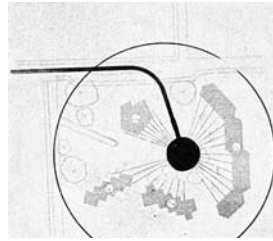

Figure 8.2a "Diagram of human relationships in the city," reproduced in Lefebvre's review of the project in *Revue française de sociologie*. In Egli et al., "Projekt einer Studienstadt," n. p. Courtesy of ETH/GTA Archives.
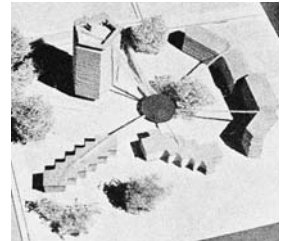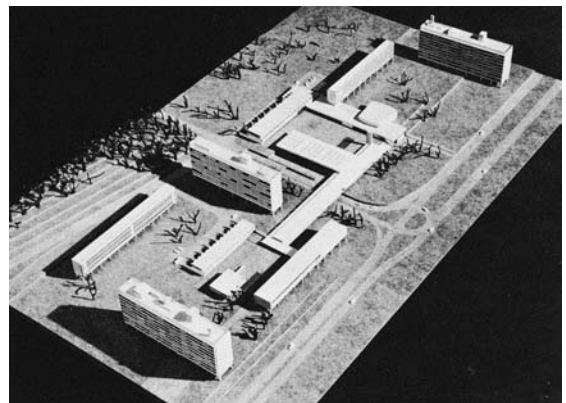
Figure 8.2b and c A center of a neighborhood unit in the new city in the Furttal valley. In Egli et al., "Projekt einer Studienstadt," n. p. Courtesy of ETH/GTA Archives.

Figure 8.3 Neighborhood West, center. In Egli et al., "Projekt einer Studienstadt," n. p. Courtesy of ETH/GTA Archives.

While acknowledging the professional skills of the designers, Lefebvre's review launched a critique of the way the concept of needs is operationalized in the Furttal project, which since then began to be—for better or worse—one of his orientation points in postwar urbanism. Thus, when in the introduction to *L'habitat pavillonnaire* he contrasted the philosophical theorizing of dwelling as a "poetical" practice with "scientific" methodologies aiming at an "accumulation" of facts,[22] the latter repeats some of his comments about the Swiss project. In this sense, the review became a key contribution to Lefebvre's overarching critique of functionalist planning as based on a simplistic theorizing of needs and functions, and thus as prohibiting what a phenomenological account would identify as constitutive for an urban experience: the unforeseeable, the surprising, the spontaneous, the ludic.

The reason for this, argued Lefebvre, was that functionalist planning conceives the city as a system: a system of functions. This leads to an omission of those of its elements which cannot be included in a functional grid, such as an event, a monument, or a traditional street with its multiple functions and vivid social life. Also, and more fundamentally, by determining the functions by their relationship to each other within a closed system, the reference to the demands they were designed to answer is lost. This was, for Lefebvre, the case with the Furttal design and the city of Mourenx, characterized by an autonomization of segregated functions, which are defined by differences between them. In other words, they are detached from the everyday life of the inhabitants. In response, and in line with his fundamental critique of structuralism—understood as a theory of systems of differences—Lefebvre formulated an alternative research program on the study of the everyday practices of dwelling.[23]

From Needs to Practices: The Study on the *Pavillon*

Michael Trebitsch, one of the best commentators of Lefebvre's work in France, described Lefebvre as "the thinker of 'dwelling'",[24] and nowhere is this more applicable than to the work of the ISU initiated and supervised by Lefebvre. In the study of the *pavillon*, but also in other studies of the ISU from the 1960s and early 1970s, the practices of dwelling were ordered into two broad groups.

First, the researchers focused on operations of marking, limiting, and arranging space, familiarizing oneself with it and transforming it through the manipulation of objects. Marking a space (by building a fence, taking care of the house, or occupying a nook) introduces distinctions between open and closed, clean and dirty, empty and full, seen and hidden, seeing and

22
Henri Lefebvre, "Preface to the Study of the Habitat of the 'Pavillon,'" in *Lefebvre: Key Writings*, 123.
23
Lefebvre, "Les nouveaux ensembles urbains"; Lefebvre, "Utopie expérimentale." For a discussion, see Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space*, Ch. 2.
24
Michel Trebitsch, "Preface. Presentation: Twenty Years After," to Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne 3: De la modernité au modernisme: pour une métaphilosophie du quotidien* (Paris: l'Arche, 1981). Translated by John Moore as *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 3. From Modernity to Modernism (Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life)* (New York: Verso, 2006), xxiv.

being seen—distinctions which cannot be directly linked to social determination and are thus called "anthropological" in Lefebvre's preface to the study on the *pavillon*.[25] The introduction of these distinctions into domestic spaces was, in the course of the 1960s, gathered by the ISU under the general term of "appropriation" of space. Appropriated space is a familiar space; it is a space where the inhabitant feels at home ("chez-soi"). In Lefebvre's words, it is not a matter of "localizing in a pre-existing space a need or a function, but, on the contrary, of spatializing a social activity, tied to a practice as a whole, by producing an appropriated space."[26] This statement reveals how closely Lefebvre's theory of production of space was related to the research within the Institut.

According to the ISU, to inhabit space means that "marked" distinctions become translated into such oppositions as public and private, female and male, work and leisure, which structure social groups in a given society (family, friends, neighbors, visitors). The second level of analysis accounts for practices which introduce these meanings into the domestic space, that is to say socialize it: socialization of space is defined by the ISU as "the capacity of space to receive a network of social relations."[27] The researchers of the ISU describe the socially accepted relationships between these oppositions by means of the concept of a "cultural model" defined in reference to the work of Georges Gurvitch and, in the course of the 1970s, approximated with Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "habitus": a system of durable, transposable dispositions which function as principles generating and structuring practices and representations which conform to socially determined rules without being understood as consciously presupposing them.[28] One of the main arguments of the research of the ISU was that the inhabitant transforms spaces in order to make them comply with his or her cultural model: a sense of what is and what is not appropriate to do in specific spaces in the *pavillon*. This, for example, requires introducing boundaries, thresholds, or spaces of transition between areas expected to be associated with different levels of privacy, from the front garden, the entrance, the dining and living rooms, the kitchen, children's bedrooms, to the master bedroom as the most private place, connoted with nudity and sexuality.

In this perspective, Henri Raymond—one of Lefebvre's closest collaborators both at the ISU and at the University of Nanterre—argued that the role of the architect is not to answer the predefined needs, but to interpret possible practices. This means furnishing the inhabitants with spaces which they can appropriate: that is to say modify according to the culturally accepted models of sexuality, traditional gender roles, and relations with neighbors. In *Habitat et pratique de l'espace* (1973)

25
Lefebvre, "Preface," 123. For a discussion, see Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre*.

26
Henri Lefebvre, *Espace et politique: Le droit à la ville II* (Paris: Anthropos, 2000), 12.

27
Antoine Haumont, Nicole Haumont, and Henri Raymond, *La copropriété* (Paris: CRU, 1971), 107.

28
See Raymond, "Habitat, modèles culturels et architecture," in *Architecture, urbanistique et société*, eds. Henri Raymond, Jean-Marc Stébé, and Alexandre Mathieu-Fritz (Paris: Harmattan, 2001), 217; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 72.

Nicole Haumont and Henri Raymond stressed the richness of possibilities for the expression of cultural models and promoted an architectural thinking about them, urging architects to "think 'spaces' and less 'functions.'"[29] Along a similar line, the architect Bernard Huet and a transmitter of Italian architecture culture to France since the late 1960s, reflected on the consequences of the ISU studies for design practices and concluded: "we don't want to design houses which materialize the cultural models, but ones which are capable of accommodating them."[30]

The Politics of the User

If the study on the *pavillon* made an impact on French architectural culture in the late 1960s, it was also because it identified several points in which the practice and discourse of architects touched upon the political controversies of the period. Henri Raymond stressed that the research on the *pavillon* falsified the initial hypothesis of the study: that a cultural model can be attributed to a particular class. If "everybody would like to share this way of life"[31] it cannot be identified with the ideology of the petit-bourgeois as it emerged from nineteenth-century struggles around the "housing question."[32]

More fundamentally, the study of the *pavillon* can be seen as inscribed into a revision and rethinking of traditional Marxist concepts in postwar France, in view of the developments of a society becoming, in Lefebvre's words, a "bureaucratic society of controlled consumption." For many Marxist thinkers it became urgent to understand the shifts in the class composition of advanced societies beyond Marx's homogenous categories of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Some of the most prominent theorists in this line were Serge Mallet, Pierre Belleville, and Alain Touraine who argued in the late 1950s that there is a "new working class" emerging in relation to the changes of technology and the management techniques of modern industry, and thus, potentially, replacing the heavy-industry proletariat as the revolutionary actor of historical change.[33]

The hypothesis of the "new working class" was at the center of much of Lefebvre's work from the 1950s, including his paper about Mourenx which was programmatically subtitled "The urban problems of the new working class" (Figure 8.4).[34] Built around one of the most advanced petrochemical plants in France, Mourenx was considered by Lefebvre a paradigmatic example of postwar French capitalism with all of its actors present on the spot: the financing sector, big monopolist companies, and a state-supported developer of housing (Société civile immobilière de la caisse de dépôts et consignations, SCIC) (Figure 8.5).[35] \

29
Nicole Haumont and Henri Raymond, *Habitat et pratique de l'espace: Étude des relations entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur du logement* (Paris: Institut de sociologie urbaine, 1973), 166.

30
Bernard Huet, "Modèles culturels et architecture," in *Modèles culturels Habitat: Séminaire de l'Institut de l'environnement de Nanterre, 4 février 1976*, ed. Institut de l'environnement (Paris: Centre d'études et de recherches architecturales, 1976), 38.

31
Henri Raymond, interview with the author, Paris, autumn 2007.

32
Susanna Magri, "Le pavillon stigmatisé: Grands ensembles et maisons individuelles dans la sociologie des années 1950 à 1970," *L'année sociologique* 58, no. 1 (2008): 171–202.

33
For a discussion and bibliography, see Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space*, Ch. 2.

34
Lefebvre, "Les nouveaux ensembles urbains."

35
Henri Lefebvre, "Mourenx—ville nouvelle," in *15 jours en France ...* (Paris: la Documentation française, 1965), 207.

For Lefebvre, Mourenx became a test case for arguing that with the arrival of the "new working class," the factory ceases to be the site for the socialization of workers, constitutive of their consciousness and self-organization, and becomes replaced by urban space in this role. Lefebvre speculated that it is in urban space that various social groups, which appeared to many sociologists at that time as increasingly fragmented and thus incapable of collective action, become unified around demands focused on the urban everyday. This is how he interpreted the formulation of a common list during municipal elections in Mourenx, which included trade unionists; farmers defending their interests against the state; and teachers of a new college, who demanded autonomy concerning the municipal budget, use of public places, and organization of market places (Figure 8.6).[36] In this sense, the paper on Mourenx was inscribed into a body of empirical work carried out, or supervised by Lefebvre since the 1940s, which aimed at identifying groups resisting the development of advanced capitalism: peasants in Tuscany and southern France; inhabitants of the mass housing estates in major French cities, suburbanites, tenants, and users of public transport in the agglomeration of Paris.[37]

36
Lefebvre, "Les nouveaux ensembles urbains," 126.
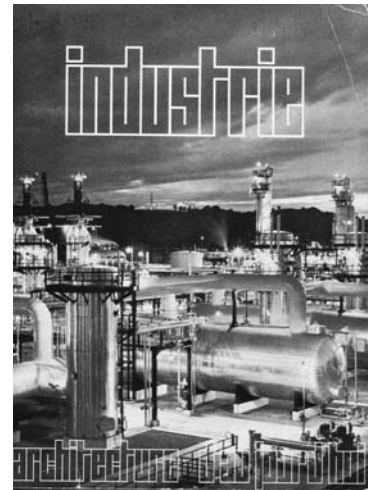37
Lefebvre, *Du rural à l'urbain.*

Figure 8.4 Aerial view of Mourenx. In Bruneton-Governatori, Ariane, and Denis Peaucelle. *Bâtiment A, rue des Pionniers* (Mourenx: Éd. Lacq odyssée, 1997). Courtesy of Lacq Odyssée.

Figure 8.5 The petrochemical complex of Lacq-Mourenx on the cover of *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* 133 (1967).

Figure 8.6 Protest of the inhabitants of Mourenx against the Société civile immobilière de la caisse de dépôts et consignations (SCIC), November 1962. In Bruneton-Governatori, and Peaucelle. *Bâtiment A.* Courtesy of Lacq Odyssée.

This search for urban space as a medium, means, and milieu of a new, collective political subject marked major lines of Lefebvre's research in the years to come, and, for example, in *La survie du capitalisme* (1974) he argued that subsidized housing estates and new urban neighborhoods are meeting points for the new working class.[38] He argued that parallel to the conservative tendencies becoming dominant within the industrial proletariat in France—which he observed in the reactions of the French Communist Party (PCF) to the events of May '68—a global proletariat is emerging, characterized both by its position in the process of production, and by new forms of domination, especially in terms of the social positions of women, students, and immigrant workers distributed in "areas subordinated to centers of power": ghettos, banlieues, peripheries.[39]

The political consequences of these speculations were most clearly drawn in the text "L'espace: Produit social et valeur d'usage" (1976), published in *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, a journal close to the Socialist Party (PS).[40] Written at the time of a rapprochement between the PCF and the PS, the article summarized Lefebvre's understanding of space and its production, and sketched a political program based on refusing capitalist space instrumentalized as a means of production, an object of consumption, a political instrument, and an instrument of class strug-

38
Henri Lefebvre, *La survie du capitalisme* (Paris: Anthropos, 2002), 147.
39
Ibid, 144. For Lefebvre's discussion of the work of such feminist writers as Kate Millett and Betty Friedan, see ibid., 69ff.
40
Henri Lefebvre, "L'espace: Produit social et valeur d'usage," in *La nouvelle revue socialiste*, 18 (1976), 11–20.

gle. Returning to the counterdistinction in Marx between "use value" and "exchange value," Lefebvre embraced the emerging "movement of users" which complements the old revindications of workers and peasants, and which, as he writes, reveals that "space is still a model, a perpetual prototype of use value."[41] Thus, he concluded that the Left needs to give an impulse to these movements, which will translate into nothing less than "the class struggle in space."[42] This implies the formulation of "the right to urban life" and the direct participation of inhabitants in decisions concerning housing, public facilities, and transport.[43]

However, when Lefebvre was formulating these postulates, participation had already become a standard procedure in French urban planning. As Brian Newsome argued in his book on post-war French planning, this process was based upon previous experiences which included, among others, marketing studies about popular preferences concerning living rooms, kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, and laundry rooms, carried out in the course of the 1950s around exhibitions organized by the Ministry of Reconstruction.[44] Newsome links this process to several high-ranking officials among reformist administrators, such as Pierre Sudreau, Charles de Gaulle's first minister of construction, who introduced procedures of representing community interest groups in cities developing new town plans; and François Bloch-Lainé, the director of the Caisse des dépôts et consignations in charge of the SCIC, the organization responsible not only for Mourenx but also for Sarcelles, the *grand ensemble* which became a convenient target for critiques of French postwar urbanism. And yet it was the SCIC which introduced elected councils of residents that would manage sociocultural institutions in the neighborhood and work with SCIC on new additions and changes of the *grands ensembles*, including Sarcelles. In the course of the 1960s these procedures were also instigated in the provinces, where some municipal governments started to involve community interest groups (Dijon, Bordeaux) while others yielded to the demands of such groups (Lille) or were defeated in municipal elections by them (Grenoble).[45]

In other words, when writing some of his most militant paroles in favor of the participation of users in the decisions concerning urban planning, Lefebvre was facing the translation of principles of participation into procedures of representational bodies. More generally, when publishing his books on space between 1968 and 1974, Lefebvre witnessed the incorporation of critical concepts into the increasingly self-critical French state planning discourse. This included concepts he had himself coined or shaped, such as the postulate to grant the "right to the city" and "centrality" to the "inhabitants" and "users" by accounting for their "appropriation of space" in "everyday life." [46]

41
Ibid., 16.
42
Ibid., 17.
43
Ibid., 19.
44
Newsome, *French Urban Planning*, Ch. 7.
45
Ibid.
46
Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space.*

Written from within this context, Lefebvre's books adopted a polemical mode of argumentation, constantly reformulating the meanings of concepts, shifting demarcation lines, and developing connections between phenomena his opponents would rather keep apart. While pointing out the danger of the "normalization" of subversive ideas, which are "reintegrated into the existing order,"[47] Lefebvre argued that the introduction of critical concepts into broad public discourse does not necessarily dismantle them, but can be used to broaden the discussion and advance political goals. Already in the mid-1950s—when protesting against the pontifical use of Marxist concepts by the PCF while being still a card-holding member of this organization—Lefebvre argued that by "becoming worldly," a concept stakes out a field of political discussion in the course of which this concept can be critically fathomed.[48]

Much of this is true also about Lefebvre's engagement with urban debates in the course of the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in response to the institutionalization of the procedures of participation in urban planning, he stressed that participation must be based on the principle of self-management rather than representation ("Without self-management, participation does not have any sense: it allows for manipulation, it becomes an ideology"—he wrote in *Le survive du capitalisme*).[49] This critique was strengthened in his comments on the implementation of participation as a means to enforce consensus on inhabitants, for example in the case of the Toulouse le Mirail housing project.[50] Similarly, when referring to the concept of the "user" in *The Production of Space* to define "spaces of representation," Lefebvre put it into quotation marks in order to signal his distance from the planning discourse.[51] Lefebvre returned to this position in a 1979 lecture given in Belgrade, when he argued that the concept of the "user," once conveying progressive claims for "use value" as opposed to "exchange value," had been increasingly rendered meaningless.[52] It was exposed to the danger of depoliticization (with the "user" replacing the "citizen"), functionalization (by reducing "use" to services), and normalization (that is to say the definition of the "users" according to the average within a "target group").[53]

Lefebvre's critique in the Belgrade lecture reveals the potentials which he saw in the concept of the user; indeed a "project" of a user developed from within his work in rural and urban sociology since the 1950s. First, if Lefebvre protests against the depoliticization of the concept of the user it is because his work on the practices of dwelling in the *pavillon* and the *grands ensembles*—together with his earlier studies on peasant communities and petroleum workers—was launched as a contribution to rethinking the class composition of postwar France. While not

47
Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life, Volume 3*, 105.
48
Henri Lefebvre, "Marksizm i myśl francuska," *Twórczość* 4 (1957): 26. The French original text could not be found in the *Twórczość* archives in Warsaw. The French translation appeared as "Le Marxisme et la pensée française," in *Les Temps Modernes* 137–138 (1957): 104–137.
49
Lefebvre, *La survie du capitalisme*, 135.
50
"Urbanose 15: Entretien avec Henri Lefebvre," dir. Michel Régnier, 1972.
51
Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38–39.
52
Henri Lefebvre, "Le nécessaire et le possible dans la formation du mondial," www.archive.unu.edu/unupress (accessed June 2010).
53
Ibid.

everybody is a user, not always, not all the time, and not forever, the negotiations around this concept were seen by Lefebvre as contributing to the theorizing of the possibility of a new collective, political subject. Second, in Lefebvre's protests against the functionalization of use reverberate not only his critique of postwar urbanism, but also, more importantly, his attempt to expand the understanding of use beyond the domestic interior and to think of it as a way of addressing the urban society as a whole. Finally, when Lefebvre opposed the normalization of the concept of the user, he not only opposes the transformation of this concept into a biopolitical tool of population management, but also embraces the focus on the everyday use of space as processes of differentiation which cannot be captured within the capitalist system of differences.