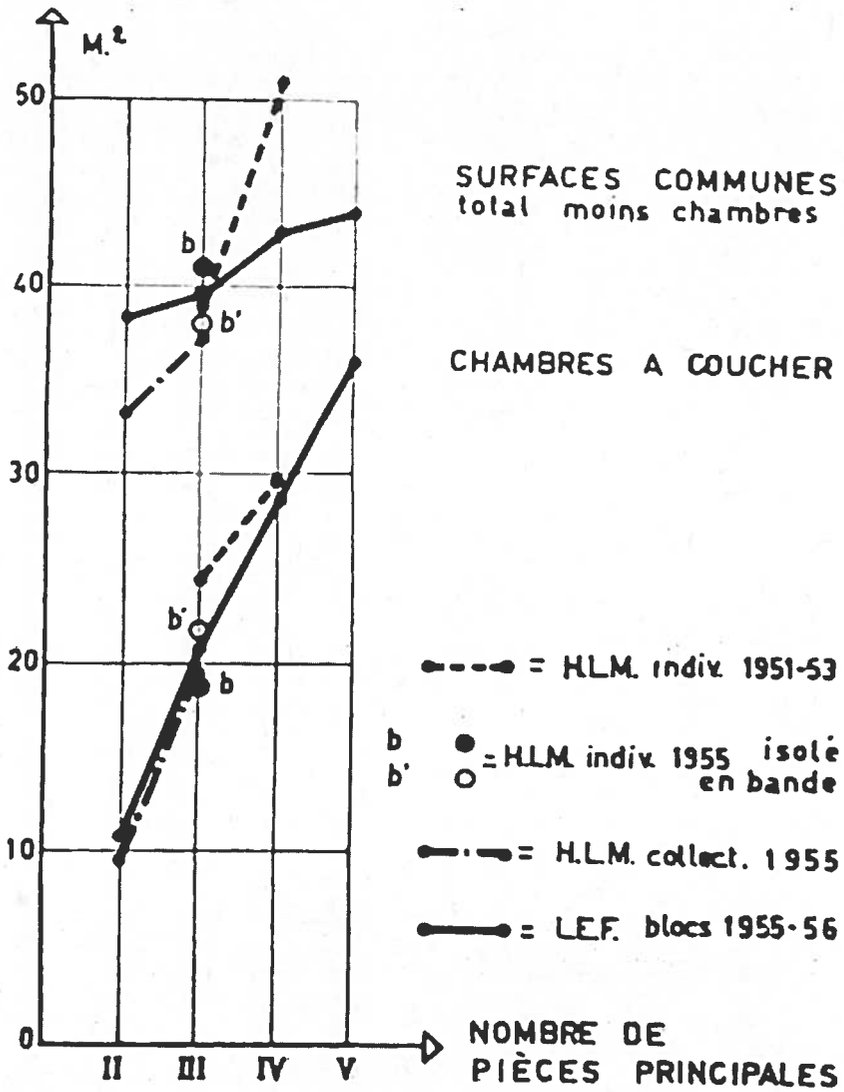

Figure 6.0 The structure of housing types in the agglomeration of Bordeaux, from Lenny, Couvreur and Chombart de Lauwe, 'Logement et comportement des ménages dans trois cités nouvelles de l'agglomeration bordelaise', 1958.

6

WHO NEEDS 'NEEDS'? FRENCH POST-WAR ARCHITECTURE AND ITS CRITICS

Łukasz Stanek

The decision of French authorities in the course of the 1950s to respond to the housing shortage by the construction of the *grands ensembles* – large-scale housing estates, mass produced at the outskirts of French cities – was as much a choice in urban design as a way to stimulate economic development and rationalize building industry in the attempt to modernize the French economy. It was thus a part of a larger restructuring of post-war France, and the discussion about mass housing was from the outset part of general debates about the French welfare state. This chapter takes the concept of 'needs' as a privileged entry point into these debates, and revisits the agency of this concept in the studies by Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe in the 1950s; in the work of Henri Lefebvre and the Institut de Sociologie Urbaine in the course of the 1960s and 1970s; and in the institutional research of René Lourau, Georges Lapassade, and the researchers at the Centre d'Études, de Recherches et de Formation Institutionnelles (CERFI).

Rather than suggesting a common denominator for these thinkers and groups, let alone for other actors participating in the debates around post-war housing in France, in this chapter the concept of needs is posed as a field of dissensus. In what follows, I will map the variety of roles played by the concept of needs in these debates: as a cognitive framework employed in empirical research studies; as a theoretical postulate which describes the deep structures of subjectivity of inhabitants; as an operative concept for architects and urban planners; as a normative tool regulating entitlements of various strata of population; as a critical concept debunking the normalization of these entitlements; and as a political means for a speculation about an evolution of new plural subjectivities 'from users to inhabitants'.[1] In the course of these debates the concept of need was not only qualified and differentiated (with the introduction of 'fundamental' or 'deep' needs, and with the distinction between 'individual' and 'social' needs) but also replaced by a range of other concepts which were expected to uncover the dynamics of the everyday uses of architecture: aspirations, practices, demands and desires. Revisiting these concepts which are sometimes overlapping, sometimes corresponding, and sometimes contradictory, allows us to account for some

of the key controversies in French post-war architecture, and sketch a few trajectories which led beyond that period.

From needs to aspirations: Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe

The post-war work by Paul-Henry Chombart de Lauwe (1913–1998) drew on his previous and diverse experience, including his studies in philosophy, anthropology (with Marcel Mauss), sculpture at the Académie des Beaux Arts in Paris, and participation in ethnographic research, as well as his experiences in the French Resistance and his service as a pilot during the Second World War. His studies on the everyday life of inhabitants of collective housing estates were carried out from the 1950s within two institutions which he co-founded: the Groupe d'Ethnologie Sociale (GES) and the Centre d'Étude des Groupes Sociaux (CEGS). In the course of the 1950s and early 1960s Chombart and his teams conducted research and interviews in housing estates in Paris and other French cities, with the improvement of housing policy in view – and continued with commissioned research on workers' housing and new housing typologies.[2] These studies resulted in a number of recommendations for architects concerning the preference of the inhabitants for specific typologies of kitchens and baths; the demand for better sound insulation and larger floor areas; and the introduction of social facilities into new neighbourhoods.[3]

Chombart's ambition was not only to respond to the request for guidelines by architects and administrators, but also to advance fundamental research. This is how he explained the role of the study 'Logement et comportement des ménages dans trois cités nouvelles de l'agglomeration parisienne' ('Housing and household behaviour in three new towns in the Paris agglomeration', 1957) which offers a glimpse into the concept of 'need' in Chombart's work.[4] The study was carried out in winter 1955 in three (unnamed) recently built housing estates in Parisian suburbs of differing typologies: a neighbourhood of detached and semi-detached houses, a housing estate consisting of buildings of three to eight storeys, and an ensemble of towers of twelve storeys. Based on interviews with 50 families, the researchers gathered data on the occupation of the apartments, their disposition and arrangement and types of housing. The study, as Chombart wrote, 'permits an understanding of the accordance or discordance between the needs of the families and the accommodation which they inhabit'.[5] The researchers evaluated housing typologies against each other (for example, pointing out that the inhabitants of the estates have more opportunities for contact with neighbours, but face serious problems with acoustic insulation) and commented on minimum floor area requirements, confirming the previous recommendations by Chombart and his team. They also registered more general complaints concerning the lack of commercial facilities in the neighbourhood, the materials used for flooring, rooms being too small or too long and narrow for convenient furnishing, and kitchens that were not large enough to contain a dining table.

Chombart's study ended with the list of 'fundamental needs'.[6] They were described as theoretical concepts, formulated by means of a generalization of the interviews with inhabitants. 'Fundamental needs' were conceived by Chombart as a limited set of postulates constituting a deep structure which, supposedly, generated the

specific wishes and demands voiced by the interviewees. They included the 'need for space' which comprised basic surface requirements, but which was also reflected in the specific characteristics of the occupation of rooms, and the 'need for spatial independence of the group within a family' (for example, for parents, adolescents, schoolchildren) which relates to the possibility of rearranging spaces. The 'need for the plan and the arrangement to be adapted according to family structures' required a floor plan which lent itself for rearrangement in such a way that each person was able to find a place in the apartment according to their position in the family (for example, while most families preferred eating in the kitchen during the week, for special occasions they would like to eat in the main, or 'living' room.) The 'need for rest and relaxation' was posed both against the noise of neighbours and as a demand for a possibility of separation from playing children, which also related to the 'need for separation of functions' not only between sleep, food, hygiene, but also between eating and the preparation of food (a number of families complained about the open kitchen). The 'need for liberation from material constraints' was expressed by families who, for example, complained that the high rents prevents them from buying kitchen equipment. The authors discussed also the need for prestige, or of 'being kept in regard', which related to the availability of rooms appropriate for receiving guests. Other needs were theorized as balanced against each other: the need for the separation of the family from neighbours, and the need for social contacts outside the family which were under the control of the family rather than imposed on them involuntarily by others.[7] These conclusions were confirmed by the study 'Logement et comportement des ménages dans trois cités nouvelles de l'agglomération bordelaise' ('Housing and household behaviour in three new towns of the Bordeaux agglomeration', 1958), carried out by the CEGS in winter 1956–1957 in three new towns (Cité Le Prêche in Bègles, Cité Le Jard in Mérignac, and Cité Carriet in Lormont) which offered a combination of collective houses differentiated in height and density, in the agglomeration of Bordeaux (Figure 6.0).[8]

Chombart's studies had much in common with with the work of the architect Robert Auzelle, in particular his design of the housing neighbourhood Cité de la Plaine in Clamart (1947–1967) in the agglomeration of Paris (Figure 6.1). As a writer and editor, teacher and researcher, but first of all, architect and urban planner, Auzelle pursued an individual path in France, paying particular attention to the interdependence between social and spatial morphologies; launching interdisciplinary research with historians, geographers, demographers and ethnographers; and broadening traditional modes of intervention of planning by new institutional and educational mechanisms.[9] The project in Clamart benefited from his previous experience: the renovation projects (late 1930s onwards) for various *quartiers insalubres* which adopted the *îlot* as the basic unit of intervention; the concept of a 'free dwelling' (*logis libre*) which allowed the inhabitants to decide about the arrangement of the interior spaces; and the understanding of the urban plan as a synthesis of the interventions of authorities on various scales, from municipal to national. Since the mid-1940s Auzelle had argued for the necessity for social research related to architectural studies, in particular dealing with *l'habitat défectueux* (the concept of *habitat*, which became essential for discussions in post-war CIAM, was adopted by Auzelle because of its stress on 'the totality of the physical and geographic conditions … of life').[10]

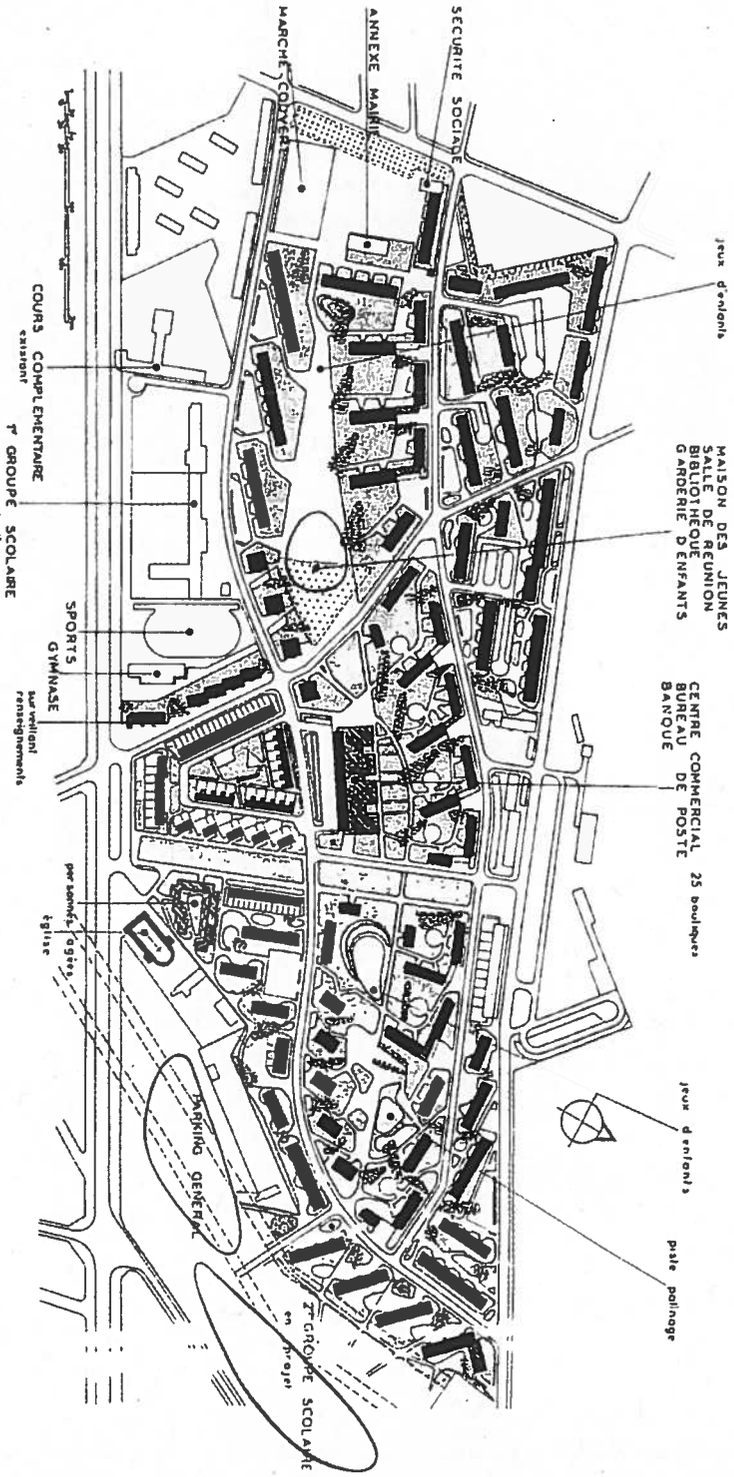

Figure 6.1 Robert Auzelle, general plan of the Cité de la Plaine in Clamart, constructed between 1947 and 1967 (Frédéric Bertrand, Robert Auzelle: l'urbanisme et la dimension humaine, *Paris: Institut Français d'architecture, 2000. Fonds Auzelle. SIAF/Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine/Archives d'architecture du XXe siecle).*

The Cité de la Plaine stood out within French post-war urbanism for the attention to intermediate scale, the differentiation of housing typologies (from detached and terraced houses to five-storey collective buildings), and the careful design of open spaces – qualities which are still discernible on site, in spite of the recent thermal renovation of buildings which resulted in the change of the façades (Figures 6.2–6.4). Even the choice of the brick as the material for the residential buildings made the project unusual, as did the prolonged construction time (1947–1967) which, while involuntary, permitted the arrival of new inhabitants to be phased and eased their integration into the community.[11]

After its partial completion, Chombart and his team were commissioned by the Ministry of Construction (1958–1959) to study the Cité de la Plaine in comparison with the Cité Benauge in Bordeaux designed by Jacques Carlu and Le Corbusier's Unité d'habitation in Nantes-Rezé. According to Chombart 'of the architects [Le Corbusier] brought the most attention to people's needs and aspirations' but had a 'somewhat naive view of social classes when he thought he could make them disappear by another organization in the city and accommodations'.[12] By contrast, Auzelle made the effort to think of housing and residential groups that reflected the lives of the people.[13] In retrospect, he argued that the quality of the neighbourhood resulted from the relatively low density of the built areas, an aesthetically considerate choice of materials, the separation of pedestrian paths from traffic, respect for the surrounding architecture and, above all, the structuring of the ensemble into small housing units which 'may not seem like a big deal, but they were very important in contrast to the *grand ensembles* and towers [that] multiplied at that time'.[14]

Figure 6.2 Robert Auzelle, Cité de la Plaine in Clamart, collective housing estates, current state, photographed by Łukasz Stanek in July 2012.

Figure 6.3 Robert Auzelle, Cité de la Plaine in Clamart, individual houses, current state, photographed by Łukasz Stanek in July 2012.

Figure 6.4 Robert Auzelle, Cité de la Plaine in Clamart, collective housing estates, current state, photographed by Łukasz Stanek in July 2012.

Auzelle shared with Chombart not only a progressive Catholicism but also a feeling for everyday urban life, with its vitality, heterogeneity, social mixture and sociability. These were the characteristics of the rue Mouffetard in the 5th arrondissement of Paris discussed by Chombart in one of his TV programmes in 1959, in which he interviewed a saleswoman, a Moroccan student and a bus driver and debated with sociologists, a shop owner and a colourful local leader.[15] Chombart called for the preservation of the social life of this *îlot insalubre* – which he contrasted with the 'anonymous' and 'socially segregating' housing schemes appearing around – while acknowledging that renovation was needed to improve the appalling sanitary and technical conditions of the neighbourhood.[16]

This position of what we might term 'moderate modernization' runs through the work of Chombart, whose respect for the voices of the people was combined nonetheless with an ambition to modernize French family structures by means of housing. He warned that this should not be felt as a constraint by the families concerned but rather as a 'liberation from the old customs and outdated cultural models'.[17] In the introduction to *Famille et habitation* (*Family and dwelling*, 1959), which repeated the list of 'fundamental needs',[18] he urged that needs should be studied 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.[19] Yet at the same time he argued against universal norms, and maintained that needs are to be qualified by local, psychological and cultural differences among the occupants. In his subsequent work Chombart suggested the superimposition of the schema of 'need, function, ensemble of functions' with a series of others, such as 'situations – behaviours', 'functions – social structures', and 'behaviours – needs – aspirations'.[20] For Chombart, 'aspirations' referred to features such as silence, beauty, rest, familiarity and dignity and they thus implied a stress on the singularity of each individual, as opposed to the general character of needs.[21]

From needs to practices: Henri Lefebvre and the ISU

In the course of the 1960s this critique of the concept of needs was politicized within the Marxist critique of capitalism. Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991) was among the first in France to reflect in a critical way about the concept of needs within his broad project of the critique of everyday life: 'the privileged sector of practice in which the needs become desires'.[22] Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947, 1961, 1981) was motivated by his attempt to rethink Marxism in view of the post-war development of capitalism, and this critique was informed by his research in rural and urban sociology, starting with his study of rural communities in the Pyrenees initiated during the Second World War, with special attention to the processes of modernization of the French countryside.[23] The study of the new town of Mourenx in south-western France (1960), together with his review of the design of a new town in Switzerland (1961), marked a shift in his research interest 'from the rural to the urban' as the title of one of his omnibuses goes.[24] As with Chombart, much of this work was developed at the Centre d'études sociologiques, where in 1960 Lefebvre created the 'Group of sociological research on everyday life', gathering an impressive group of collaborators, including Guy Debord, Christiane Peyre, Georges Perec, 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 on the north side of Paris (the research on the plateau of Montmorency was launched as one of the preparatory studies for the 1965 masterplan of Paris). The Institut soon moved to other topics commissioned by various state planning agencies, including the major study of everyday life in the suburban detached house or *pavillon*, as compared with the large housing estates or *grands ensembles*.[25] Together with subsequent work of the ISU, these studies became key contributions to debates about housing architecture in the late 1960s, significantly influencing French architectural culture. They were also essential, if rarely explicitly referred to, for the formulation of Lefebvre's theory of production of space, published in six books between 1968 (*The Right to the City*) and 1974 (*The Production of Space*).[26]

Seen within this larger research framework, a significant step for Lefebvre's critique of the concept of needs was his 1961 review of the design for a new town of 30,000 inhabitants near Otelfingen, a village in the Furttal valley north of Zurich, designed by the team headed by Ernst Egli, professor of urbanism at the ETH Zurich.[27] In the discussion of the project in the book *Die neue Stadt: eine Studie für das Furttal, Zürich* (*The new town: a study for Furttal, Zurich*, 1961), the sociologist Werner Aebli, a member of Egli's team, distinguished three 'fundamental needs': the need for society, the need for community, and the need for freedom. He then went on to distinguish the levels of social organization: from the individual, through the family, neighbourhood, group of neighbourhoods, small quarter, quarter, district, to the city. These levels were combined with a list of 12 needs, namely nutrition, hygiene, recreation, nursing, religion, science, art, protection, welfare, politics, administration and upbringing. The resulting matrix permitted control of the way that every need was answered on every level of social organization.[28]

The members of the planning team saw their contribution as a revision of the Charter of Athens (formulated in 1933, published in 1943) and its theorization of the urban territory in terms of flows between production (work) and reproduction (housing, leisure):

> It is not sufficient to examine the well-known urban functions – housing, work, traffic, taking care of the body and mind – in isolation, just to account for them in an isolated and rigidly theoretical way in urban planning. Rather, we intended to consider them on all levels of the community and organization, and thus to realize them in a much more ramified and overarching form.[29]

Yet in spite of these declarations, the city was planned in a rigid, functionalist manner, with a threefold division into housing, industry, and central functions (administration, culture). All three were linked by an oversized, segregated and crossroad-free traffic system. The introduction of cores of social life reflected discussions in post-war planning of the concept of 'community' and Sigfried Giedion's and Josep Lluís Sert's search for a 'new monumentality'.[30]

While impressed by the conceptual rigour of the Swiss designers, Lefebvre developed a critique of the project which set the tone of his writings on post-war urbanism. He wrote that the project: 'presupposes a simplified theory of needs and

functions. The community is composed with families in the same a way as the functions of the city are composed, with basic needs attributed to different levels.'[31] This leads to an omission of elements which cannot be included in a functional grid, such as an event, a monument, or a traditional street with its playful uses ('the game does not correspond to any elementary need, while presupposing all of them', wrote Lefebvre).[32] In the years to come he would develop this critique in two directions. On the one hand, he would stress the heterogeneity and differentiation of needs, as in the seminar on 'functional needs', which he co-organized in Nanterre (1968–1970).[33] On the other, he would refer to Marx's discussions of 'social needs', which pertain to large social groups which hence are to be satisfied by society as a whole. In his 1972 reading of Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875), Lefebvre attributed to Marx an understanding of an emergence of a 'new need', 'that of the urban life (*la vie urbaine*) of the city', which can be satisfied neither by the market nor by state institutions.[34]

At the same time, Lefebvre targeted the functionalist procedure of translating specific 'needs', conceived as discrete and isolated, into a system of segregated functions, assumed to be complete and covering the totality of social life. He argued that functionalist urbanism aims at an overarching equilibrium constructed according to the matrix of functions. Defined by their balanced relationship to each other rather than to an external reality – the demands of the inhabitants or the urban experience – the masterplan becomes a system of differentiated functions in which the identity of every function is defined by its relationship with every other in the system. Lefebvre argued that this concept of urbanism subscribed to the logic of differentiation which structuralism, dominant in French social sciences and humanities from the 1960s, had proclaimed as common to all sectors of the emerging society of consumption. Hence, in the analysis of Jean Baudrillard, Lefebvre's doctoral student at Nanterre, the objects of consumption do not respond to a 'need' of the consumer but rather are autonomized as differential signs within the social production of codes of signification. For Baudrillard, needs are as essential for the order of production as the capital invested by the capitalist entrepreneur and the labour power invested by the wage laborer: 'there are only needs because the system needs them.'[35] Yet according to Lefebvre while structuralism claimed to have revealed the deep structures of cultural phenomena, its theorizing of societies as stable, self-regulating systems conformed to the ideology of the French post-war state. The underlying logic of differentiation was the exchange economy, where the exchange value of a commodity was established by a relationship to all other commodities on the market, rather than by a reference to its 'use value'.[36]

Taking the Marxist concept of use value as his starting point, during the 1960s Lefebvre aimed to develop an alternative conceptual framework for urban research in general. This was inspired by the studies of the ISU, in particular by the large research project about the everyday life in the *pavillon* or detached suburban house, published in three volumes in 1966 as *L'habitat pavillonnaire*, *Les pavillonnaires* and *La politique pavillonnaire*.[37]

The first level on which dwelling was studied were the practices by which space was appropriated. Appropriation was the term used by the ISU for the operations of marking, limiting, and arranging space, familiarizing oneself with it and transforming it by manipulation of objects. Such activities as building a fence, taking care

of the house, maintaining the garden, introduce fundamental oppositions, like that between open and closed, clean and dirty, empty and full, seen and hidden, seeing and being seen. The approach was not that 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'.[38] Against the nineteenth-century pedagogical project of 'good use' (*bon usage*) and the 'pedagogy' of dwelling in Le Corbusier's *Manière de penser l'urbanisme* (1946), in Lefebvre's writings appropriation is an individualized mastering of space, in response to intersubjective, interiorized mental patterns.[39] Indebted to the discussions in architectural culture of the 1960s, with such books as Amos Rapoport's *House Form and Culture* (1969) and Philippe Boudon's *Pessac de Le Corbusier* (*Lived-in Architecture: Le Corbusier's Pessac*, 1969), Lefebvre theorized appropriation not in terms of inevitabilities and determinations, but in terms of possibilities and constraints.[40]

In other words, the 'marked' distinctions are always already socialized: translated into those oppositions, such as public and private, female and male, work and leisure, which structure social groups in a given society (for example, family, friends, neighbours, visitors). The second level of analysis accounted for practices in the socialization of space, that is to say practices which introduced these meanings into the domestic space. In order to secure a gradation of levels of privacy, the inhabitants introduced boundaries, thresholds, or spaces of transition: starting with the front garden and progressing through the entrance, dining and living rooms, kitchen and children's bedrooms, ending up with the parents' bedroom as the most private place, with connotations of nudity and sexuality.[41]

To investigate the 'ideology of the *pavillon*' – the third level of dwelling analysed in *L'habitat pavillonnaire* – was in fact the initial aim of the research.[42] However, the initial hypothesis that the *pavillonnaire* way of life expresses the 'ideology of petit-bourgeois' was revised in the course of the research. Thus, the ISU concluded that the preference of the French for the *pavillon* stems from the fact that its spatial layout facilitates the expression of the French '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'.[43] One of the main arguments of the research of the ISU was that the inhabitants transform spaces in order to comply with their cultural model: a sense of what is and what is not appropriate to do in specific spaces in the *pavillon*.

The shift of the research perspective in the ISU studies from the inhabitant as a being of 'needs' to a being of 'practices', and the division of these practices into three broad groups, were translated by Lefebvre into a framework of urban analysis. In his 1966 essay 'Besoins profonds, besoins nouveaux de la civilisation urbaine' ('Deep needs, new needs of the urban civilization'), and somewhat against its title, Lefebvre suggested analyzing urban reality not in terms of needs but in terms of heterogeneous practices. He called for an analysis based on three levels corresponding to those developed in the study of the *pavillon*.[44] The first level was that of the conflict between the constraints (institutional, financial, conventional) and possibilities of appropriation of space. The second level was that of what he termed the imaginary, for which monuments constitute privileged points in the city. In Lefebvre's reading, monuments – not unlike the garden for a *pavillonnaire* – refer to 'a different time, a different place: a utopia'. But the urban imaginary

was also conveyed by the street, with its accidental encounters, signs and symbols. Finally, the third level was that of ideology, in particular the ideology of the state, manifested in the urban voids: parade squares or large avenues. 'One reads the city, its writing, on these three levels, their juxtapositions and their interferences', he wrote, proposing that this conceptual framework would also be useful for designers.[45]

From needs to desires: institutional analysis and CERFI

Commissioned by state planning agencies, the studies of the ISU were indicative of the increasing absorption of critical research into French state urbanism in the course of the 1960s. Within the more general process of institutionalization of critique by the modernizing French state, the established position of critique (including Marxist critique) as external to its subject was destabilized. In this context, critical concepts were short-circuited into the discourses of all political actors, so that slogans such as '*changer la vie, changer la ville*' ('change life, change the city'), first associated with the radical left, could subsequently be found at any point in the political spectrum.[46] This included concepts coined by Lefebvre himself, and when publishing his books on space between 1968 and 1974, he witnessed the incorporation of critical concepts into the increasingly self-critical French state planning discourse.[47]

A case in point was the question of participation of the inhabitants in the development of their neighbourhood. As Brian Newsome has shown, in the course of the 1960s participation became an increasingly standard procedure in French post-war urbanism. What began in the 1950s with polls concerning users' preferences carried out around exhibitions organized by the Ministry of Reconstruction, led to the introduction, during the next decade, of elected residents' councils that would co-manage socio-cultural institutions in the neighbourhood and participate in the decisions about the housing estates.[48] While Lefebvre saw 'permanent participation', together with collective ownership and management of space, as an essential aspect of a new political project,[49] he was highly critical of the ways participation was put in place in French urbanism: as a means to enforce consensus on inhabitants, a 'mystification of pseudo-democracy'.[50]

The institutionalization of participation procedures was soon recognized by critical social scientists and activists as a way to normalize the demands of those concerned. This is because, as Georges Lapassade and René Lourau argued in 1971, an institution is not only a medium for messages which over-determines what can be said and what must remain unsaid, but also a message itself, that about social hierarchy.[51] In contrast to Chombart and post-war applied sociology, rather than isolating the 'users' in order to examine their 'needs', Lapassade and Lourau argued that what should be subjected to critique was the social condition which produces the very concepts of 'users' and 'needs'. Against mainstream Marxist discourse in 1960s France, they aimed at a critique of social dynamics from within, addressing the sequence of decisions which resulted in the commission of the analysis in the first place.

This approach was essential to the project of institutional analysis developed by Lapassade and Lourau in the late 1960s and 1970s. Both had been colleagues of Lefebvre at Nanterre (Lourau was in fact a PhD student of Lefebvre, who contributed

to the 'invisible college' of institutional analysis in the early 1970s).[52] Drawing from psycho-sociology, socio-analysis, Marxism and psychoanalysis, Lapassade and Lourau argued that to analyze a firm, a hospital or a trade union from an institutional point of view means revealing the social forces at work in an institution seemingly ruled by universal norms and supposedly assigned with specific functions.[53] This approach was developed in numerous interventions which were commissioned by the management of commercial, educational or administrative institutions.

Since each such commission originated in a response to a crisis, Lapassade and Lourau explained that in order to understand this crisis, institutional analysis needs to start with the analysis of the commission (*commande*) and the implicit 'demand' (*demande*). In this way, the analysis is always a 'situation' during which the analyst encourages unfettered speech of the participants and confronts them with their positive and negative references to groups, categories, ideologies. This situation must be constructed as self-managed in order to make all participants discover their real place in the social organization.[54] As explained by Lourau, 'to instigate self-management (*autogestion*) is, above all, to break the individual resistance or that of a group, together with hierarchies, small or big secrets, and the division of labour institutionalized as normal, rational, and eternal'.[55] In this way, the analyst becomes an 'animator', whose aim is 'to liberate social energy in the group and mobilize the liberated energy for the collective activities, to make it circulate and to furnish it with occasions of investment'.[56] This is only possible by allowing discourses of various orders, both theoretical ones and 'micro-discourses' relating to everyday life and space, to 'communicate transversally'.[57] In the specific context of an analytical situation, this meant a radical openness of conventions, where everything is up for debate: the spatial arrangement, the length of each session, and the time of its beginning and end; this also included a negotiation about the remuneration of the analysts who, by putting this to debate, accepted the risk of not being paid at all.[58]

This concept of a 'critique from within' was a response to the increasing lack of a critical perspective stemming from the institutionalization of critical research. This changed condition of critique was also the starting point of the work of the Centre d'Études, de Recherches et de Formation Institutionnelles (CERFI). Between 1967 and the early 1980s CERFI constituted a shifting network of researchers and political activists which offered a platform for an extra-academic encounter between psycho-analysis and social and political movements of the period.[59] In the introduction to the 1973 themed issue 'Les équipements du pouvoir' ('The facilities of power') the editors of the journal *Recherches*, published by CERFI, argued that after the events of May 1968 the separation between professional and activist life was intolerable. While some activists opted for an exit from the capitalist system and established communities on the basis of an agricultural and pre-capitalist economy, the members of CERFI aimed at an 'urban community' based on what is 'as capitalist, as bureaucratic as possible'. They accepted state research contracts and argued:

> Far from fleeing money or bureaucracy, we wanted to plow into it, to come to grips with issues of power and internal sclerosis by using the money we earn as a tool and as a reality-check that connects us to the actual mechanisms of capitalist society: we call this laudable ambition "collective analytic undertaking," and we see it as a new ingredient of the activist ideal, although this makes most leftist activists sneer: let them sneer![60]

While CERFI agreed with the Marxist argument that theory is a moment of social practice, 'practice' for them was not only political or economic, but, above all, a 'libidinal practice' which traverses all 'practices' as distinguished by Marxism. 'Every militant practice is, first of all, a libidinal practice, which brings into play a certain type of unconscious forces, a certain regime of desire …', they wrote.[61]

The starting point for the analytical work of CERFI was the post-war, state-led urbanization, seen by the members of the group as a part of a long process of material techniques of mastering the individual.[62] In order to write the genealogy of this process, the researchers examined social facilities from the mid-eighteenth century, including housing, road networks, prisons, hospitals and schools. In line with the work of Michel Foucault on discipline and, from the mid-1970s, on biopolitics, the *cerfistes* (as they became known) refused to see these facilities as answering to a pre-existing, objective needs (shelter, mobility, security, health, education), since needs manifest themselves socially only according to the possibilities offered to their satisfaction ('in the way that a new product produces the need for itself'[63]). Rather than answering a need, the objective of social facilities was the normalization of the population. Hence, each facility produces its proper person: the school produces a child as a social category; the care home, the old; and the prison, the criminal.[64] In the words of François Fourquet, the 'collective need (of education, of health, etc) which a [collective] facility was supposed to answer, is nothing but an illusion, a post-factum rationalization of a political operation of public order'.[65]

CERFI called for a redefinition of concepts referring to the production of space. Accordingly, architecture should not be restricted to discrete objects but, rather, understood as a means of territorial organization; the city should be addressed as a network of social facilities; and the instrumentality of urbanism in the territorial distribution of populations should be revealed. Writing specifically about French post-war urbanism, Jacques Dreyfus (not a member of CERFI but close to the group) developed a fundamental critique of urban planning as a set of operations which reduce social complexity, in particular desire, the unconscious and sensuality. Much in the vein of Lefebvre, Dreyfus argued that the concept of needs as operationalized in urbanism implies their autonomy, their stability over time, their hierarchization, and the understanding of humans as a sum of their needs. Yet, he stressed, needs were interdependent, implied by one another and constantly changing. This is why the concept of need should be replaced by that of desire, which was always free and anarchic, and urbanism should be posed as the 're-territorialization of desire'.[66]

This focus on desire emerged from the researchers' interest in institutional therapy and from the very first commission of CERFI in 1967 they focused on psychiatric institutions. In response to this commission, the *cerfistes* and the participating architects (Americo Zublena and Antoine Grumbach) opposed the government's proposal of gathering the mentally ill of the five new towns around Paris into one central psychiatric institution. Instead, the group recommended a set of smaller institutions, and rather than focusing on the buildings proposed studying the relationship between staff and patients. In a later contribution to the designs of the psychiatric institutions

in Evry and Marne-la-Vallée, the authors argued that a unit consisting of a kitchen and five rooms is all they need in terms of an architectural programme.[67] Influenced by Felix Guattari, at that time co-managing the La Borde clinic, and Gilles Deleuze, CERFI understood desire as a force working in the social and political domain, a flux between people and groups which does not have a code and is manifested in a negative way: as lapsus, revolt, refusal; but also as love, project, hope. Yet when these forces become inscribed onto the social body in a material-social process, oppression and alienation are inevitable.[68]

It was this refusal to ossify the flux of desire that motivated CERFI to envisage the micro-politics of subversion. When commissioned to study new public facilities or urban renewal projects, the members of the group suggested constructing situations for the collective analysis of desires. In the introduction to the first (and last) issue of the journal *Parallèles*, the editors called for an invention of 'underground institutions' which would 'reactivate the play of energies and collective knowledges'[69] and thus the only architecture the authors want to imagine is one 'sweated by the body, continually disseminated by the gestures, looks [*regards*], contacts'.[70] Another example was the experience of the rue des Caves in Sèvres, where the socialist-communist municipality offered to allow a group of young people to move into an old building until it was demolished. The participatory research of CERFI described this experience as a mobilization without an aim, without a program, without community (as the editors of *Recherches* wrote, it was not a 'communitarian experience' because 'the "community" is already a spectacle').[71]

Perhaps the most telling was the story of the Petit Séminaire, a neighborhood in Marseille designed by the architectural partnership Candilis-Josic-Woods. It was completed in 1959 as a part of the 'Opération Million', carried out between 1958 and 1960, which aimed at reducing the production cost of two-bedroom apartment to one million francs, half the standard cost.[72] The rehabilitation of what had become an immigrants' neighbourhood was carried out between 1975 and 1986 by the group CERFI-Sud (Marseille). The first phase of the project (1976–1979) started with the attempt to include all the inhabitants in the process of renovating the neighbourhood. Hence, the researchers discussed with the inhabitants various proposals for changing their apartments, both to add quality to them and to transform the image of the neighbourhood and thereby the image which the inhabitants had of themselves. After a test case comprising seven apartments, the second phase of the intervention (1980–1981) focused on the impossibility of representation: nobody is represented, everybody speaks for himself or herself. With the rejection of the idea of representation, the analysts focused on the social bond, encounters, vitalities, interactions between inhabitants, and the verbalization of problems, questions, stakes; mediations of conflicts.[73] During this phase, conflicts among the inhabitants came to light, as well as the hidden hierarchies in the neighbourhood. Working closely with the architects, the inhabitants focused on shared signs (while 'leaving out the signs of poverty') and differentiated details such as entrance areas or balconies. This comprised the third phase (1981–1985), with an almost complete reworking of the apartments, façades and common spaces. In this phase, the analysts understood themselves as mediators, working on the interface between the inhabitants, the contractors and others involved.[74] The architects were interpreting the free speech of the inhabitants, providing them with

both common signs and the possibility of individual interventions: in the words of the leader of the group, Michel Anselme, 'the inhabitants speak, the architects interpret'.[75] This approach resulted in the effacement of the original design, much to the despair of architectural historians appreciating the original design by Candilis-Josic-Woods.[76] Yet in retrospect, Anne Querrien, one of the leaders of CERFI, saw the failure of the project elsewhere: in the very fact of the ending of its financing and in the abandoning of the continuous programming of the social spaces in the neighbourhood.[77]

Conclusion

In this way, the work of CERFI appears as a point of intersection between several trajectories in post-war French architectural culture oscillating around the concept of needs from the 1950s to the 1970s. During this period, intense exchanges between architecture and social sciences facilitated a renewal of architectural culture, critical both of the discipline's position within the social division of labour and about its political agency. What started with Chombart's moderate reformism targeting specific housing typologies, was extended towards a critique of the incompleteness and alienation of the political order in its *longue durée*, and a speculation about a prospective collective subject, the 'inhabitant', which would transcend the fragmentation and complexity of a society moving beyond Fordism. While often highly speculative, abstract, and general, at its best this critique historicized modernism by showing architecture as an agent of normalization within the modernizing post-war state, whose genealogies reached back to the eighteenth century, as the *cerfistes* demonstrated. What started as a 'productive' relationship aimed at specific recommendations for architects and administrators, became a resource for a critique of architecture, from Lefebvre's undermining of the specific conceptual framework of post-war architectural discourse, to CERFI's fundamental questioning of the materiality of the architectural object, which it saw as an empty shell when it ceases to spark interaction, debate, disagreement. Yet discourses such as the one by CERFI, with its references to French post-structuralism, were increasingly taken over by the architectural neo-avant-garde.[78] Hence, from the late 1990s, architects, critics, and theorists on both sides of the Atlantic have gone back to the writings of other protagonists in this chapter, in particular to Lefebvre, in order to rediscover both the ordinary rhythms of the everyday and the possibilities of a critical position within an engaged architectural practice.[79]

Notes

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