the Catalan architect Sert, who was an exile in Harvard. He constructed it for the American embassy in the sixties, and it was abandoned when both countries broke their diplomatic relations.

The concrete walls, barricades, bunkers and reinforced cement walls which have deformed and destroyed the landscape of Baghdad, proliferate in the “green zone” as well. This is a city completely divorced from the outer world which tries to act as the capital city of the former Mesopotamia and dominate the “red zone”, as all other neighborhoods in Baghdad are called.

I would like to see Sert’s building because it is one of the few architectural works (from those constructed in the middle of the twentieth century to embellish the city), which have suffered no damage and can still be visited, at least from a distance. First it was King Faisal II and later Saddam Hussein: they encouraged ambitious projects to modernize Baghdad, after the end of the British colonial control and after the Baath Party's coup d'état, respectively. Great international architects were asked for important works: Le Corbusier for a stadium, Walter Gropius for a university campus, Gio Ponti for a ministry, Constantinos Doxiadis for a residential neighborhood, Ricardo Bofill for a large mosque. Le Corbusier's stadium is still open but the Planning Ministry is in ruins and the ideal city designed by Doxiadis became Sadr City, where the poor are packed into their living places. The project of Bofill for a grand mosque was never constructed. That time of Baghdad, city of mirages, city of modern architectural works, was the time when literature and the arts flourished, the time when Iraqi painters were highly valued and excellent magazines of avant-garde poetry were published.

It’s been a long time since the restaurants of the Abu Nauas Street were closed. That was the most pleasant street in the city, with its restaurants in the banks of the Tigris river, where the typical fish was served (the river carp or masguf, which the clients chose from the jets to fry in the wooden fire), and the old cafes between the eucalyptus trees where people used to play trictrac or backgammon. I remember the joy of that street in my first voyage to Baghdad... the end.

Correspondent from La Vanguardia in the Middle East


Caecilia Pieri

This text seeks to recall the milestone stages which led to the structuring of Baghdad’s urban fabric between those two inflection points that were the beginning of the British mandate, in 1920, and the creation of the Development Board (Majlis al a’mar) in 1950: the first one because it opens, out of all regulatory frame, a kind of expansion and urban layout new to Baghdad, that adapts itself to the profile and needs of a colonial strategy; the second one because it matched the firsts overall ‘modern’ planning attempts which led to an international consultation. Thanks to those two events, an arbitrary regulation has given Baghdad that look of a low and regular Garden city it still offers in the city centre. Green, spotted with eucalyptus and palm trees, this monochromatic urban entity, were the brick dominates the scene, is not well-known, because it has been built mainly by unknown builders, and, paradoxically, it has been preserved quite well up until now from the mass destruction known by most large Arab capitals over the last thirty years.

We will also show some elements of a contextualization necessary in order to appreciate what was taking shape just before 1950, the date chosen for this exhibition —such events, which were quite complex due to the myriad breaking-offs that reoriented the path to modernity, had made urban politics and the history of politics intimately coincide in a region of crucial geopolitical coordinates, for Iraq as well as for the covetousness that it raises.

BEFORE 1917: BETWEEN SOCIOCLIMATIC DATA AND SPATIAL-FUNCTIONAL COERCIVE FACTS, A TRADITIONAL URBAN LANDSCAPE.

At a nodal cross between the Tigris and the Euphrates, Baghdad is located over a potential partial floodplain. The supremacy of this river which divides it, like a heart, in two unequal parts, represents a constant concern because devastating floods regularly swept a native habitat of adobe along its way. ‘Ville menacée’ (Vauzans 1962), Baghdad has therefore protected itself by partially spreading along the right bank, sticking out slightly into the river (Al Karkh neighbourhood)
and erecting, to the east of the left bank (Rusafa), equally inefficient dams.

At the start of the XX century, Baghdad is still nothing more than the district head of one of the three Ottoman vilayet of Mesopotamia. Hamlet of about 100,000 inhabitants, it offers the appearance of a traditional medina, that is, a zuqaq –or conglomeration of stacked rooms- crossed by a labyrinth of narrow and winding alleys with a three-level hierarchy of main avenues, secondary streets and alleys. Till 1915, a unique street a little bit larger parallel to the river (An Nahar street, lengthened in 1910), but it was the Tigris which constituted the sole cross traffic axis and it could only be crossed from east to west through two bridges made from ships: one between Rusafa and Karkh, which represents the central core of the city, and another one, about five kilometres upstream, that separates Kadhimiya and Ashamiya, two small towns grown around both sanctuaries. Ashamiya, on the left bank, venerates Abu Hanifa's sanctuary, founder of the Sunni-Hanafiite rite; in front of it, on the opposite bank, towers the sanctuary of the seventh and eighth Shiite imams, under the two golden domes of Kadhimiya's mosque whose silhouette has belonged to the town's customary iconography since the XVI century.

The basic element of this ultra-dense urban fabric is a local variant of a central courtyard (hosh) house, an introverted habitat of solid brick walls which directly faces the street. A house with one sole access door. At this room's level, closed around a family cell with an interdependent privacy, the street façade is decorated with shanashils; these carved wood projections, with railings and windows often rounded, which are used to filter light, heat and views from the outside, but also to air, extend and normalize the space of the reception rooms', in comparison to the zuqaq.

Between 1869 and 1872, governor Mihdat Pacha, an Ottoman reformer imbued of European culture, partially demolished the city walls and opened a first entrance at Karkh for the tram drawn by horses' but a new regulation is disclosed without a real future and the urban expansion remains contained within the ancient influence. From 1915-1917, German engineers' open, between the North Door and the South Door, the first big street called ‘New Street’ (today Rachid Street) parallel to the river course. However, the kick off for the first phase of a modern urban expansion won't take place till the launch of the British mandate administration.

**BAGHDAD 'GETS OUT OF ITS WALLS': THE BRITISH MANDATE, OR HOW TO ADAPT A COLONIAL STRATEGY TO THE IRAQI SINGULARITY**

In the months after their entrance to Baghdad, in March 1917, the British built a dam under the directions of hydraulics engineer Sir William Willcocks. This way they prepared the ground for an urban expansion that would serve as a frame and an experimental ground for their takeover of the country by way of a political configuration which wasn't straightforward. Since the Sykes-Picot agreements in 1916, relations between Arabs and Europeans are, effectively, marked by negotiations, counter-negotiations and other sudden changes revolving around multiple power struggles induced by the breaking of the Ottoman Empire. Finally, after a violent Arab uprising in 1920, a local temporary government, pragmatically settled in Iraq by the British, elected Faysal of Arabia in 1921 (thirty-ninth descendant of the Prophet) as king of a country whose borders recover, more or less, those of ancient Mesopotamia. Under a mandate supposedly guiding it to independence, that kingdom is, nevertheless, sovereign on paper, and the Iraqis quickly show themselves hostile even to the idea of the mandate. The British wanted to give a particular air to the erection of Baghdad, capital of this 'newly' reunified country, as a symbol of this singular 'new institutional and political distribution' (Lavagne d'Ortigue); urbanism and architecture want to show themselves as vectors and mirrors of the power, incentives of the economy and means of social control, even societal (Peri 2005). Since the end of the year 1921, two additional objectives are imposed: the political resolution over the control of the existing town and the formal modernization through an innovative town, in its morphology as well as its functionality.

The British mandate inaugurates via an urban expansion ex nihilo the opening of the first site which would become Baghdad: ‘The British are used to stretch their military field, their administrative services and their residences over large expanses of land, clearly different to the areas taken up by the locals’ (Vaumas 1962). New axes are traced, others are lengthened to unite strategic points and make them accessible to carriages: the consulate (A), which will stay at Sinak till the fitting-out of a new residence at Karkh in 1931, the clubs (B), those temples of British socialization, the airfields (C) and the railway workshops (D), vital for the links, and finally the Hinaidi military headquarters (E), unofficial embassy which held most of the political decisions.

The state initiates the construction of the first mass developments, linear ground floor housing or two-level homes,
always with a central patio. In either bank of the Tigris, to the
east along the A-B axis and then following the river bank, an
urban draughtboard, woven of straight streets and a 'clearly
visible layout even before the houses are built' is developed, in
a series of steps, at the end of the 20s. In these rectilinear
streets, the shanashif, which has become essentially decorative,
tends to open itself up as a colonnade-type verandah, and the
façade lives up with balconies and openings which gradually
grow in number. The importation of this new urbanism starts to
reorient the notion of family privacy (Raouf 1985) as it inter-
venes within the interior/exterior relationship. It is the end of
the traditional single-model habitat of Baghdad, 'expression of
the social organization of their inhabitants, that happily illus-
trated the material and spiritual demands common to the Arab
family, in its role of repository of an ancient social tradition' (Al
Ashab 1974); as the house opens up to the exterior, the inhab-
itant evolves as well, as he does not remain as closed off or
protected from the street. Iraqi historiography is not wrong in
this sense, when it generally sees in this phase the first signif-
cicant modernisation 'à l'occidentale' within a previously uninter-
rupted socio-urban process.

Although little or no destruction took place within the old
quarter, there was an innovation: the British endeavour to
number neighbourhoods (mahallas) and houses. For the first
time, every room has a one-off address if it belongs to an identi-
fied neighbourhood, most of the time due to a tribal regrouping
(Coke 1927). The country's modernization involves the rationalization of the urban space through regulations alien
to local customs, authentic formatting that also, and over all,
gives the social body some control. Over and above its image
value, the urban planning plays therefore a capital role within
the provision of a colonial space, as a product and a socio-politi-
cal strategic or interactive tool (Crimson 2003).

GARDEN-CITY, NEW REGULAR CITY: RADICAL MUTATION
OF URBAN MODEL, RISKS OF THE ARBITRARY

It is bizarre to find out that the breaking-off of urban culture
traces the historical breaking-offs, even in Baghdad, where the
modelling of the urban space is, from the start, an exclusive
prerogative of the central power. Notwithstanding, it is not an
accident that an urban regulation of great importance took
place close to independence, declared in October 1932. In a
capital that has become a powerful focus of attention particular
ly due to the oil peak since 1927, a legislation needs to be
imposed: the fast expansion is the result of a conquest of new
land for development subsequent to the removal of the flooding
threat, a growing internal migratory pressure whose control
represents a major political bet for the current powers, and,
finally, by the administrative unification (unification of Rusafa
and Karkh forming a unique municipality). A law takes control in
1931, but it will soon expire, because it keeps the principle of
division in mahallas, which left every mukhtar (head of mahalla)
free to apply his own rules, and the urban expansion remains
initially slowed down by that traditional cut. Whereas, the
migratory flux intensifies particularly due to a rural exodus occur-
ring at this time and, finally, a law is enacted in June 1935: it is
the Building and Road Law (n° 44, Iraqi Official Gazette).

The introduction of this law marks a crucial change of direc-
tion in the origin of the image that is currently shown in the
centre of all big Iraqi cities, redesigned during the same period,
due to its codification of the residential space: the layout of its
streets, its buildings' heights, building licenses, etc. A crucial
change which is arbitrary and generates new urban and archi-
tectural forms at the same time: therefore it brings in new
practices in town.

It rests upon some essential principles: zoning, ratio of road
routes according to the zone types, alignment (istiqâma) in length
and height, division of plots in six different sizes, from 100 m² to
2,000 m². The nature of the zone is stated according to the plots’
predominant type as well as the coefficient of roads and public
equipments allocated; every municipality is free to adapt the law
to its territory, as long as it respects the basic principles. In this
sense, for example, it constitutes an obligation to ascribe a
minimum length of six metres to main roads, four metres to
secondary ones, and three metres to cul-de-sacs, projecting
shapes are banned in plots of sizes 1 and 2, or not spreading
beyond and over the public road leads in many cases to the
disappearance of the traditional zugag when that municipality
decides to redesign a neighbourhood. Equally, the owner who
wants to fit out or renovate his asset is often forced to transfer
part of the land to the State or to acquire some more so that the
property becomes correctly lined up. As no real compensation is
planned for the former case, and no loan is granted ad hoc for
the last one, the consequence was swift to come, and it repre-
sented a determining factor for the city fabric up until nowadays:
many owners leave their traditional homes to move to the new
neighbourhoods with regular plots of land and lengthy avenues
bursting with detached or semi-detached homes. Besides, by
establishing regulations for the ground occupation coefficient
and setback in relation to the street, the law urges new buyers to
displace their homes within the plot, favouring gardens, the
opening of windows and leaving the hosh aside in the interest of
the covered central hall. The city centre will become impoverished
because the old houses are rented to new occupants, typically
emigrants that have come from all over the country attracted by
the capital: peasants that have left the South or the and central
land, Kurdish and Turkmenish highlanders. Right then, the home
with shanashil undergoes a socio-functional transformation that
gives its actual looks to a whole part of the city core: whole
families live crammed at the upper level while at the ground floor
small stores, wholesalers and workshops are settled.

At Rusafa’s heart, more to the east but always parallel to the
Tigris, a second way is opened between 1936 and 1937:
the King Ghazi Street (nowadays Kifah Street). The principle of
urbanism on concrete piles is imported from Europe over a
distance of more than three kilometres, and, probably, via
colonial models with buildings of one or two levels with a
double function: accommodation upstairs and stores in the
ground floor. But there again, no general layout. Trial raising, this
street prompted the demolition of ancient homes without
redesigning the traditional ‘organic’ fabric: right after the
porticos and the buildings with brise-soleil appear false doors,
rounded bows and other thick balconies of a first and shy
international modernism, the secret homes with shanashil remain
upright in their narrow and somber alleys.

THE QUESTION OF MODEL: A SUSPENDED DEBATE

Generally speaking, the Iraqi historiography is not soft with this
law, considered as ‘extremely mechanical’ [...] and a good
reflection of the lack of expertise that characterized Iraq in
those days, as well as the bureaucractic arbitrariness with which
the State handled urban issues’ (Reouf 1985). We oppose this
modern roads layout, uselessly wide and expensive in mainte-
nance and transports, to the traditional urbanism, the same
way we oppose this new habitat, vulnerable to heat and others’
eyes, to the home with shanashil whose undeniable climatic
and aesthetic virtues allow an idealization of tie-dye nostalgia.
This line of argument, otherwise acceptable, has to be however
replaced within the wider context of the modernity/tradition
debate, which covers, among others, the model question, the
westernization/modernization and the exported urban
planning, the interaction between local initiatives and the
persistent colonial interferences (after independence, British are
still widely dominant within the local economy), the status of
the individual in relation to the group, where the collective
privacy/individualization of the space comes from, etc.

From my side, I am tempted to equally see there, mutatis
mutandis, (and with all the nuances enforced, specially taking
into account those forty years out of step) an effect comparable
to the one the tanzimat could have had in other capitals. If we
take, for example, the new urban regulations enforced in 1891
in Beirut, we can recognize those principles of land classification
in various arbitrary sizes or forced alignments in relation to an
imposed street length, and this redefinition of the territory that
reaches the limit among private space, public space and collect-
ive space becomes apparent as a misappropriation of the public
prerogatives over the private property. In relation to the cul-de-
sacs, for example, basic element for the zuqqa in Baghdad, as
in Beirut, those changes simultaneously show a radical will of
transformation and renewal from the side of the central power,
and its clash with the traditional city practices. ‘This regulation,
widely inspired by the west [...] tackles the question from a
purely technical angle, as only the length of the streets seems to
be a determinant parameter’ (Ghorayeb 2000). Nevertheless, at
the end, the theoretical result would be to remove the cul-de-
sacs due to the imposed widening and to strip the inhabitants
of this space management’. We are in both cases, and even though
the topography of both cities is completely different, faced up to
an extremely regulated urbanism that ‘creates a clear breaking-
off with the former way of space production, that was based on
differing concepts’ (ditto).

RIGHT BEFORE THE 50’S, AN EXACERBATING URBAN
DICHOTOMY

A fourth way parallel to the Tigris, Sheikh Omar Street, is traced
in 1944, at the limit between the inhabited zones and the
urban areas of waste ground under the ancient influence. But
that does not mean that a global plan is considered. To the
contrary, tensions grow between different zones and urban
practices: within the core of the historic quarter, often impover-
ished, the old remain in favour of the shanashil, in the
outskirts’, the new villas are detached or not, counting out the
sarifat*. This division, which nurtures the threat of a dichotomy
close to implosion, is also a phenomenon that Baghdad shares
with other big ex-colonial capitals. The areas that attract the
different local bourgeois strata are from now on structured, in
effect, depending on their adaptation skills to new determining
factors, essentially socio-economic: ‘The denominational segre-
gation cracks up and the Christians start coming to live side by
side with the Muslims, something unthinkable in preceding
times in the ancient Baghdad. [...] well-off populations of all
denominations move from their old, very diverse mahallas [...].
For the first time, the traditional groups are incorporated within
the same group, and it is this phenomenon that is reflected in
a new urban development scheme.' (Al Ashab 1974). On the
other hand, the denominational and tribal factors remain
predominant in underprivileged neighbourhoods, more
widespread and densely populated by emigrants pushed into
the limits of the urbanised world, joining the spiral of an
aggressive urban 'modernization', not harmonious, and choked
by the frights of an up-and-coming active nationalism and an
ardent political instability: all that already foretells the third
world.

* 

The town planners—the agency of Minoprio, Spencely and
McFarlane (United Kingdom), and then Konstantin Doxadis
(Greece)—then had to confront a contrasting, potentially
explosive situation when they were summoned by the Development
Board from 1952 onwards to conceive the first real master
plans. However, after the last big floodings of the Tigris in
1954, the erosion of the Wadi Tharthar depression and the
construction of Samarra's reservoir (1956) upstream from
Baghdad, it was possible to be optimistic with regard to how
the river control would mark the kick-off of an urban peak
definitely clean of its main physical threat. But the growing
political state of unrest of the 50's, which would end in
the revolution of 14th of July, 1958, will make these plans outdated.
It will be necessary to wait for the PolService and the 1970's to
see a specific start of siteworks of a master plan.

Head of editorial projects at the Centre des Monuments
Nationaux, Paris, researcher on Middle-East urban history

SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Coke 1927: Richard Coke, The City of Peace, London, Butterworth,
1927.

Vaumas 1962: Étienne de Vaumas, «Introduction géographique à l'étude de

Ashab 1974: Khalil al Ashab, Urban Geography of Baghdad, thesis,
Newcastle (UK), 1974.

Fethi 1982: Ihsan Fetih and John Warren, Traditional houses in Baghdad,

Raouf 1985: Layth Raouf, 'Tradition and continuity in the Baghdad
district', Ur, #1, London, 1985

tribale, siège de gouvernements assiégés », Monde arabe

Ghorneby 2000: Marlene Ghorneby, La transformation des structures
urbaines de Beyrouth pendant le mandat français, thesis, Paris VIII,
Institut français d'urbanisme, 2000.

Crison 2003: Mark Crison, Modern Architecture and the End of

Pier 2005: Caecilia Pieri, «Baghdad 1921-1932, entre tutelle coloniale
et souveraineté nationale », Architecture coloniale et patrimoniale,

Fejic 2006: Ognjenka Fejic, DEA memory's supplement, Paris I, 2006 :
Développement urbain de Bagdad, des origines à nos jours.

Pauligné Lavagne d'Ortigue, « Connaître l'architecture classique
et l'urbanisme colonial/Découvrir l'Orient et l'architecture islamique,
Rêver d'une ville moderne et syncretique », in M.-E. Châtelet et I.
Gadoin, (dir.), Rêver d'Orient, connaître l'Orient, Lyon, ENS, (not yet
published)

Notes

1. PhD in progress: "Urban modernity of an Arab capital: Baghdad,
1921-1958", co-tutored by the Ecole des hautes études en sciences
sociales, Paris (director: Pr. Jean-Louis Cohen) and the Amman
University, Jordan (director: Pr. Ihsan Fethih).

2. To underline this astonishing state of preservation, which I
personally verified in 2006, doesn't try to minimize the often alarming
state of buildings due to numerous causes and, over all, the current
disfigurement of the city caused by the location of concrete
obstacles which block the access to certain streets for security reasons,
and even the view.

3. 'Threatened city'.

4. The sharashul is the Iraqi version of the projecting window that can
be found in similar socio-climatic contexts throughout many
countries of the Arabic-Muslim world.

5. To unite pilgrims from Kadhimiya to Bab al-Nawwab, near the
bridge from which they will soon reach the Shorja central market.

6. British rivals in Iraq since the 19th century, the Ottomans were allies of
the Ottomans and invested in technical establishment. Their most
celebrated project, which remained unfinished, was the 'Berlin-
Baghdad Bahn', Baghdad's railway.

7. This is Pierre-Jean Luizard's expression (to collate bibliography).

8. The first ones drew up the region's distribution between British
sovereignty (Iraq, Palestine, Transjordan) and the French (Lebanon,
Syria).

9. Oral statement of Naim Kattan, Canadian writer of Jewish Iraqi
origin born in Baghdad in 1928. He first remembers date back to the
beginning of the 30's.

10. Marked by an agrarian reform unfavourable for the peasants (Land
and Settlements Law, 1934).

11. The traditional cul-de-sac could drop up to two metres.

12. The government architect is, for the first time, an Iraqi, Ahmad
Mukhtar, recently qualified in the United Kingdom, and the
adoption of European models seems logic. But the impossibility to
access the administrative sources on the spot, due to security
reasons, has not allowed me yet to determine a precise ground for
this choice.

13. Some secondary sources mention a first attempt of general layout
led by two Germans between 1936 and 1937; but my research on
the exact names, complicated by the problem of German
patronyms' transcription into Arab and then their retranscription
into English has proved itself fruitless for the time being.

14. Adhamiya and Kadhimiya were administratively annexed to
Baghdad in 1943.

15. Those outskirts make up what today is known as central Baghdad.

16. Shanty dwellings of earth huts: this informal rural habitat proliferates
in waste grounds, further away from the dars, but also in the
middle of the city, close to the rich neighbourhoods with which they
often set up a complex interdependence. Due to its extent, this phenomenon represents a separate issue which is impossible to deal with within this article's framework.

17 Coup d'état pro-German of Rashid Al Gaylan, reoccupation of Iraq by the British forces (1941), washbaq (uprising) of

To build a stadium: Le Corbusier's project for Baghdad, 1955-1973

Rémi Baudouin

The commission's context

The commission apparently took place during the first semester of 1955. It was probably a direct commission from the minister of the Development Board and Ministry of Development, Nadim Pachachi. From the start, while the site of the future facility was currently under discussion by the Town Planning Consultants, the program included a stadium for 50,000 spectators, which contained a football stadium and athletics tracks; a 50 metres swimming pool and some adjoining ones for 5,000 individuals, a gymnasium for 3,000 individuals...

The Iraqi context that embraced this project was that of the start of the reign of the young king Faisal II, who had reached his age of majority in April 1953. Despite the difficulties -riots of 1952 due to the renewal of the agreement between the Iraqi Petroleum Company (IPC) and the Iraqi State, a difficult agrarian situation, and an important dissatisfaction of the working class-, the existing exterior policy was clearly focused in the direction of the West, especially to the U.S.A. and U.K., and opposed to the Soviet Union. Under the insistance of the U.S.A. and the U.K., Iraq joined, with the U.K., Turkey, Pakistan and Iran, in an equal defensive coalition, whose objective was to ensure their collective security against the Soviet Union. This constituted Baghdad's agreement, undersigned in 1955.

The regime's orientation seemed to be particularly reflected in Baghdad's municipality, which had been deliberating on strategic urban planning and had been aiming to achieve an orientation resolutely marked in favour of modern architecture. The Ministry of Development was the driving force behind all of these plans being set into motion. In 1956, the moment when Le Corbusier's assignment for Baghdad's municipal stadium took administrative form, the Catalan José Luis Sert was hired by the U.S.A. to build their embassy in Baghdad. In 1957, the architect Walter Gropius will see himself hired to design Baghdad's new university by Iraq's first minister, whose son, Nizar Ali Jawdat, had been Gropius' pupil. In 1963, architect Carlo Ponti finished the construction of the Ministry of Development. The new opera house would be designed by Frank Lloyd Wright right before his death. Finnish architect Alvar Aalto was commissioned the museum's construction...

Le Corbusier's interests in a project of this nature

Everything seems to show that between the decision taken by the Iraqi party and Le Corbusier's acceptance, at least, more than one year had passed. That was not due to the architect's lack of interest for the project. Several reasons should be mentioned here:

In the first place, and without any doubt, Le Corbusier's firm had an agenda full of commissions. The year 1955 remained committed to the construction of Chandigarh's city in India, the works at the Spinners' Association palace and the museum of Ahmedabad, and the cities of Shodhan and Sarabhai. It was also the time when the commission for the National Museum of Western Fine Arts of Tokyo was shaping up. And, in respect to French commissions, Le Corbusier's firm hands in the church of Notre-Dame-du-Haut at Ronchamp that same year, it finishes Jaoul's housing and l'unité d'habitation in Rézé-les-Nantes, it builds the Home of Brazil within the campus of Paris University, and it manages the site works of the monastery at La Tourette. It also receives the commission to make some studies to build a ville radieuse in Meaux and the stadium and cultural centre of Firminy, as well as the unité d'habitation of Briey-en-Forêt. This represents an extremely heavy program, which justifies, from 1956 onwards, a reorganization of work conditions between Le Corbusier and André Wogenscky, head of his firm promoted to associate.

Then, there is a suspicion from Le Corbusier's side of any commission that does not translate itself into facts or a financial agreement, which would somehow validate the seriousness of the proposition. The financial argument represents an important motive for Le Corbusier. He regularly complains of not having any money and being dispossessed of his own work by all kinds of selfish misers. In May of 1954, he tells in his notebooks what he thinks he has heard about himself: 'He has always been a very wealthy man'; and he immediately adds, this time without quotation marks: at 67 years of age I lead a terrible life to be able to... support the younger ones (who are my family). This 'victimization', which cannot be taken seriously, must be ignored, bearing in mind the information we now have in our hands in relation to his personal fortune.