



OBSOLESCENCE and RENOVATION

20th Century Housing in the New Millennium

Conference: 14-15 December 2015

Abstract / Initial Proposal Form:

1. Paper / Proposal Title: _The Big, the Bad and the Ugly? Building the 21st Century City by re-thinking the modernist utopias

2. Format: _Written paper___

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6. Abstract (300 words):

How can high-rise social housing estates become contributors to the re-articulation of the 20th century expansion and urban structure of Brussels and Charleroi? Can these areas contribute to build resilience while coping with the current social and economic transitions? Can new forms of living be invented, where density, intensity and diversity could meet the outlandish and the exceptional without normalizing it? Can the rhetoric

of failure be transcended as to engender renewed roles for these large-scale residential environments? Can the utopias of the past become the ground on which to construct contemporary urbanism?

These are some questions addressed in a design research investigation, looking at large-scale social housing estates in peripheral urban settings of Brussels and Charleroi.

Brussels is the fastest growing region of Belgium. Despite the current economic downturn, the city continues to attract substantial migration waves as a consequence of its role in the global world and leads paradoxically to a growing precariousness as well as to segregation. These issues become poignant when looking at existing large-scale social housing complexes and their critical condition and potential vis-à-vis demographic change, the inaccessibility of the private market, environmental sustainability, etc..

Charleroi development was strongly defined by heavy industry during the first industrial revolution is, in the current postindustrial era, undergoing radical shifts. The city finds its strength in the social sector. It has one of the highest percentages of social housing in Belgium.

The age of the housing, the socio-economic condition of its population and the difficulty to offer everyone access to a dwelling are some of the contemporary challenges.

The paper will articulate design strategies that elaborate potential scenarios of adaptation of large housing estates in view of contemporary urban challenges.

7. Author(s) Biography (200 words maximum for all authors): _____

Viviana D'auria trained as an architect and urbanist at Roma Tre University (Italy) and pursued studies in Human Settlements at the KU Leuven (Belgium) where she also completed her doctoral inquiry. She has been NWO Rubicon fellow at the Department of Geography, Planning and International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam and is currently Assistant Professor in International Urbanism at the Department of Architecture, KU Leuven.

Verena Lenna is architect and urbanist, trained at IUAV, KU Leuven and Parsons the New School for Design, New York. As a PhD candidate in Urbanism (IUAV, Venice and KU Leuven) she is currently focusing on the transformation of welfare and wellbeing as the result of a variety of practices performed in the urban space. She is teaching assistant at the Department of Architecture, KU Leuven.

Jeanne Mosseray trained as an anthropologist at UCLouvain (Belgium), where she dedicated her research on socio-urban issue between immigration and European cities. She pursued studies in Urbanism and Strategic Spatial Planning at KU Leuven (Belgium). She is today practicing as an "urbanist-anthropologist" in an urban design office and is part-time assistant teacher at KU Leuven.