

Modern Architecture in Historic Cities

Policy planning and building
in contemporary France

Sebastian Loew



**Also available as a printed book
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MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN HISTORIC CITIES

France has become the principal destination for people interested in contemporary architecture. Unashamedly modern buildings have evolved, particularly in historic areas, and have been accepted as contributions to the continuing evolution of city areas. No other European country has achieved such successful integration of the modern and historic.

Modern Architecture in Historic Cities explores the factors which contribute to the presence of contemporary architecture in historic areas. The author focuses on central topics, including: the crucial involvement of professional bodies, such as the Architectes des Bâtiments de France, and their relationship with elected representatives; the resources available in historic areas; mechanisms for design control; the ideological role of heritage and contemporary architecture as symbols of culture and progressiveness; and the public sector's input in decision-making and its commitment to both conservation and the promotion of new architecture.

Beginning with an empirical review of particular events which have affected attitudes towards heritage in France, this book highlights the continuity in French thinking and the longstanding role of the French government as patron and leader. Planning, conservation and design legislation are examined, highlighting the range of instruments available to government in order to influence results and enhance the role of the architectural profession.

Modern Architecture in Historic Cities illustrates why France has been so successful in combining conservation and modernity, and points to important lessons for other countries which can be drawn from the French experience.

Sebastian Loew has lectured at South Bank University and the Université de Paris, Sorbonne. French born, and qualified as an architect in Argentina and as a planner in London, he currently edits the *Urban Design Quarterly*.

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London and New York

First published 1998
by Routledge
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001
Reprinted 2000

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Loew, Sebastian

Modern architecture in historic cities: policy, planning, and building in contemporary France/Sebastian Loew.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Architecture and history—France. 2. Architecture and state—France. 3. Architecture, Modern—20th century—France. I. Title.

NA 2543.H55L64 1998

720•944•0904—dc21 97–26097

ISBN 0-203-38022-3 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-38639-6 (Adobe eReader Format)

ISBN 0-415-15492-8 (Print Edition)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The people who helped me to develop and complete this work are too numerous to acknowledge individually. Of high priority among them are those who accepted being interviewed, often on more than one occasion. They generously provided me with invaluable material, gave me access to their files, connected me with other people and gave me leads that I would certainly not have found without their help. They are all colleagues working within the French system, whether in local authorities or central government departments, in academic institutions or in private practice. Without diminishing the role of the others, I want to mention a few of them: Beatrice Auxent from the Nord CAUE; Didier Joseph-François, architect in Lille; Claude Vanderstraeten of the Nord SDA; Joseph Comby and Vincent Renard of the ADEF; P.Frier; J.Houlet; J.Lucan; Nathan Starkman of the APUR; Anna Tassou-Redor of Pontoise; Alain Marinos of Quimper; Didier Couval of the Val d'Oise; and Henri Bonnemazou of the Yvelines CAUE. Their generosity allowed me to obtain insights without which this book could not have been feasible. Through repeated contacts some of them have now become friends.

Back in Britain, I wish to thank Dr John Punter with whom I had stimulating discussions early in the gestation of this study. His own interest in the subject helped me to maintain my enthusiasm. Dr Neil Ravenscroft gave me extremely valuable support and helped me to improve the work greatly in the later stages. I also wish to thank my friend Dr George Michell who made pertinent comments on my drafts, particularly at times when work was not going too well, and Dr Bob Jarvis who regularly handed me bits of interesting information.

I wish to thank the Economic and Social Research Council for funding my initial four weeks' stay in France. It allowed me to make the preliminary contacts and exploratory visits which led to the development of this work. Finally I wish to thank my editor Sarah Lloyd and her assistant Valerie Rose, who were always helpful at the end of the telephone.

1

INTRODUCTION

The original motivation for this book came from the observation of the frequent existence of modern buildings in the historic core of urban areas in France. These new buildings are seldom facsimile copies or redevelopments behind retained façades; in most cases they are genuinely modern in that they use the technology, structures, forms and materials of their period and thus give the historic areas an appearance of continuing evolution. This addition of contemporary buildings to French urban areas exemplifies what Lynch (1972: 171) calls 'layering', namely 'the visible accumulation of overlapping traces from successive periods, each trace modifying and being modified by the new additions, to produce something like a collage of time'.

Coming from the British context where the insertion of buildings in conservation areas is a subject of debate in the popular press as well as in professional circles (most recently in Larkham 1996 and in Tiesdell *et al.* 1996), the French situation is intriguing. There appears to be something in the French system which either permits or encourages the presence of contemporary designs in protected historic areas, something special, possibly to do with decision making or processes, and therefore worth investigating. It raises questions about a number of interrelated issues such as the conservation of the historic areas, planning and design control and the relationship between the various professions concerned with the built environment.

Three reasons, at least, justify this exploration: first, at a time of increased European integration and collaboration, it is essential that practitioners in one country understand not just the legislation of others but how this legislation is implemented and who are the participants in the process. Secondly, understanding the practices of another country may help professionals to look again at their own practices, without necessarily copying foreign ones. Authors acknowledge the importance of international comparisons (see for instance Larkham 1996:110) but, for reasons possibly connected with language, France is underrepresented in these comparisons; this is puzzling, particularly considering the geographical proximity of Britain and France, the similarities between the two countries, and their positions in the European Union. Thirdly, for many years and in part fuelled by HRH The Prince of Wales's comments and writing (1989), a debate has taken place in Britain regarding the roles of planners in

design control, and their relationships with architects (see Punter 1993b). An understanding of how the French deal with the issue may inform this debate. An additional reason justifies this work at this particular time: the two main British political parties are showing a growing interest in the design of the built environment. The last Secretary of State for the Environment of the Conservative administration recognized the importance of design issues and launched a number of related initiatives, such as the *Revised Planning Policy Guidance 1* (DOE 1996) and the Urban Design Campaign. Before the May 1997 election the Labour party indicated that in case of forming the next government architecture would play a greater role than it had in the past. Indications are that the elected administration will keep its word; already the heritage ministry has been replaced by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the recently ennobled Lord Rogers is known to be in close contact with the Prime Minister. There is evidence that the results of fifteen years of Socialist presidency in France and the impact of the *grands projets* have been studied by the Labour think-tanks (see for instance Rogers and Fisher 1992).

In the last twenty years France has had a deliberate policy in relation to the promotion of modern architecture, resulting in some spectacular and well publicized schemes. Some of these are prominently situated in the middle of highly protected historic environments, such as the Louvre pyramid, the Pompidou Centre, and the new Opera at the Bastille. They are monuments in their own right, self consciously created as such. They correspond to one of the meanings of the word 'monument' suggested by Choay (1992) in her analysis of the role of the built heritage in Western societies. Choay makes a distinction between the deliberately created monument, built in order to commemorate an event, a person or a rite, and the historic monument which is not created as such but becomes one through a phenomenon of historical selection. Choay further remarks that, through the media, some of these new buildings (she gives Pei's Louvre pyramid as an example) become symbols even before they have been built. Thus these examples are exceptions; they are the result of public patronage at the highest level, in locations of very high profile.

More generally, these schemes are significant in the way they reflect a positive attitude towards architectural creation and are used as models which filter down to other levels; they are admired, even by people who do not necessarily like their architectural style. As a result, cities throughout France have new buildings which are the counterpart of the country's traditional national monuments. Not all of them are as well publicized and as well known as the Parisian examples but, as argued by Belmont, they have a further, complementary role:

Nowadays French architecture is recognized throughout the world. The Parisian *grands projets* have largely contributed to this reputation but they should not make us forget the existence of a 'daily architecture' distributed throughout the national territory which has a role just as important.... They

[the other buildings] give structure to the cities and lead the way for the whole of the architectural production.

(Belmont 1990:7)

This reflects a common view on the architectural renewal that has taken place in France in the past twenty years. French authors such as Lucan (1989) try to explain the reasons for this architectural renaissance in terms of political changes and of changes in architectural theory, in the architectural profession and in the commission of buildings. In particular he pinpoints the role of public bodies in achieving this renaissance as patrons and promoters of new architecture, a point made by other authors such as Boles (1987), Contal (1990) and Goulet (1983). Lucan places the moment of change as the mid-1970s and highlights controversial projects of the time, such as the Montparnasse tower and the redevelopment of Les Halles, as marking the end of an era.

This architectural renaissance has aroused the interest of writers beyond the French borders: British and American architectural critics such as Glancey (1990), Rogers and Fisher (1992), Hillman (1992) and Huxtable (1992) have discussed it, often praising the quality of the schemes. Comments on new buildings frequently reflect the fact that they are judged in relation to the contribution they make to their context, in terms of their physical form and through the meanings of that form in that particular place. The connection between new architecture and historic areas is thus made: the new building is the latest 'layer' in the evolution of the place. The following is an example of this kind of comment; it specifically relates the new buildings to their historic context in Paris:

Through the varied treatment of volumes, materials and colours, the city's public buildings thus assert the specificity of their respective roles, and are easily identifiable within the traditional urban context. They bring life to the *quartiers*, and contribute to the aesthetic renewal of this part of the city's marked classical heritage.

(Godefroid 1988:96–7)

CONTEXT AND PRECEDENTS

The link between new architecture and historic areas is one of the preoccupations of a number of authors looking for an explanation for the role and meaning of heritage in contemporary society. Choay (1992) undertakes a theoretical analysis of the evolution of West European ideas about heritage: she dates the birth of the historic monument at the Renaissance and explores from then onwards the way that successive generations have dealt with their built heritage, and how different periods have been interested in different and selective aspects of that heritage. The consideration of cities, districts or ensembles (as opposed to isolated buildings) as monuments is a very recent phenomenon, reflecting a new

approach towards history and towards space, and requiring a new set of rules. Like Lynch and other authors, she sees the city as evolving through time:

[The architects] remind us that over time styles have coexisted, side by side and articulated in the same city or the same building: the history of architecture, from the romanesque to the perpendicular or to the baroque, is legible in parts of the great European religious buildings: the cathedrals of Chartres, Nevers, Aix-en-Provence, Valencia, Toledo. The seduction of a city like Paris is the result of the stylistic diversity of its architecture and its spaces. They must not be frozen by rigid conservation, but continued.

(Choay 1992:13)

Choay concludes by considering how changes in the interpretation of the concept of heritage result in new attitudes towards conservation, enhancement, modernization and the re-use of buildings. Looking at the future, she wonders whether generations to come will continue to use their heritage as an inspiration for creativity or whether they will turn it into a narcissistic reflection of a desired past.

Similarly, Bourdin (1984, 1986) is interested in the importance given to heritage in contemporary Western society, which cannot be explained through either the interplay of economic forces, government intervention or simple nostalgia. This leads him to investigate, through the analysis of the rehabilitation of old neighbourhoods, the meaning of heritage which he considers has been 'reinvented' as part of society's search for authenticity and roots. He sees the dangers of transforming Western civilization into a vast museum and at the same time losing the meaning of heritage. Although he does not mention new buildings specifically, the implication of his analysis is that historic areas need to incorporate them in order to continue their evolution. The work of Hewison (1987) shows similar concerns in the British context, albeit with different emphases: for him the obsession with what he sees as a sanitized, nostalgic and invented heritage endangers creativity. His implicit and pessimistic conclusion is that without new creative inputs, historic areas will be frozen in an image of a non-existent past. An increasing number of writers have a similar preoccupation (see for instance Sudjic 1986 or Moore 1989).

The evolution of the concept of heritage in France is also the subject of the work of Babelon and Chastel (1980). They describe it as developing in six 'moments' or events, culminating with the present 'scientific moment' in which the concept of heritage is widened to encompass environmental concerns (see [Chapter 2](#)). Their analysis introduces links between ideas about heritage and the practical choices made by successive governments in terms of what to protect and how to protect it. For instance, they relate the legislation to protect historic areas (the 1962 Malraux Act) to the tensions resulting from post-war reconstruction, and they show how one consequence of this legislation has been to make heritage accessible to wider sectors of the population. The links between ideas, legislation

and the administrative structures created to implement it open an additional avenue of investigation.

The issue of new buildings in old neighbourhoods is, therefore, part of a wider theoretical debate about the meaning of the built heritage for society, the choices about what is to be conserved, the interpretation of the past and the effect of conservation on creativity. It is a subject of increasing relevance at a time where rapid changes in society and pressures for development affect the way that people think about their environment. The term 'heritage' has been used, misused and debased in the past few years. It cannot be considered a neutral word; nor, as discussed by Larkham (1996:13–21), can it be necessarily equated with conservation, though the two are often confused. The French equivalent, *patrimoine*, is equally controversial: according to Kerorguen (quoted in Untermaier 1985:40), it owes its origin to *pâtre*, *patrie*, *patron*, *patriarche* and *père* (shepherd, homeland, boss, patriarch and father), all words loaded with contentious meanings. In this book, heritage is what one generation has received from previous ones, to care for in order to pass it on. It is also what the current generation values and leaves to future ones, including present additions as well as heirlooms: what these are depends on societal decisions and therefore requires structures to assist in the making of these decisions.

The link between the theory and the practice of conservation within the French context is made initially by Babelon and Chastel (1980). It is also the subject of Kain's work (1981), in which he finds a justification for conservation in the already mentioned 'collage of time' suggested by Lynch: the best environment for human development is one which shows the traces of successive generations. A further issue, the relation between regulations and physical form, is discussed by Evenson (1981). She deals with the evolution of building control in Paris and indicates that, in spite of modifications in matters of detail, the strict design controls that have existed since the early nineteenth century have ensured a formal stability which gives the city its physical identity. Within this stable environment stylistic changes can be incorporated without difficulty and without disrupting the whole. Like other authors, Evenson (1981) refers to the 1960–75 period as a temporary aberration when building regulations were changed entirely, to accommodate new forms of development fashionable at the time. The resulting large redevelopment schemes which took no account of their surroundings were soon rejected by the population, particularly after the redevelopment of Les Halles and the erection of the Montparnasse tower. As a result, the authorities returned to more traditional regulations.

Jegouzo (1986) looks in detail at the legal instruments dealing with heritage protection and their implementation. He highlights the particularly significant fact that, until recently, the legislation concerned with planning and that concerned with heritage protection have followed different paths with different objectives, the former dealing mainly with urban growth and with socio-economic issues, the latter with the protection and enhancement of the cultural, historic and aesthetic heritage. Jegouzo is interested in the relationships between

the different strands of legislation, in their partial integration since 1962 and in the role played by the participants in the implementation of the laws. Frier (1979) concentrates his detailed analysis on the specific and uniquely French regime affecting the control of building design in the surroundings of listed buildings (see [Chapter 3](#)) and emphasizes the complexity of the French system. Neither of these authors is concerned specifically with the insertion of new buildings in historic areas and for them this does not appear to be an issue which needs highlighting although it is mentioned in relation to specific examples. The interest of their work lies in their view of heritage only as a legal entity and in their concern for the management of the law: for them, whether a new building is inserted in a historic area or not is a matter of how the regulations are applied. They give an insight into the complexity of the French legislation and into the multiplicity of participants in its implementation and indicate further avenues worth pursuing such as the split between the planning and conservation legislations and the administrations in charge of them: among these, the role of the *Architecte des Bâtiments de France* (ABF) stands out as crucial whenever heritage or design is concerned.

Booth (1989) covers issues related to the roles of different actors in the French development control decision making process, and the negotiations between them, explaining how a seemingly very rigid system allows a great deal of flexibility, at least in certain contexts, to those who know how to manipulate it. He concentrates on specific aspects of the French system: he analyses how decisions are taken and by whom, and examines the nature of the transactions that take place between participants to reach those decisions. He tests the effectiveness of the regulatory system, specifically the relationship between the policies and the development control decisions and the effects on the applicant. His examples are taken from the Lyon conurbation and do not deal with historic areas, but they give a different insight into the system from that given by French authors. Punter (1989) also analyses the French system from an outsider's point of view and highlights the importance of the role of the state in urban development as this is a particular aspect which differs from the British system. The role of the public sector as developer does not appear immediately relevant to the insertion of new buildings in historic areas and it tends to be taken for granted by French authors; nevertheless it is an issue which requires further exploration.

Thus, a general survey of the literature concerned with conservation, new buildings and aspects of legislation dealing with both, indicates that the connection between new and old is not a central issue for any of the authors. On the other hand, the specific issue of insertion of new buildings in historic areas is dealt with by texts concerned with aesthetics. Pearce (1989) investigates the practice of conservation in Britain and deals with what he calls 'building in context' which he sees as complex and not easy to resolve. He treats the subject mostly as one of aesthetics but distinguishes it from style. He discusses the relatively recent preoccupation with 'keeping in keeping' which he considers unhealthy, and welcomes new ways of dealing with the insertion of new

buildings in historic cores: this is followed by the analysis of a number of recent British examples from the formal point of view. More general architectural design texts are addressed to the practising architect or planner, showing through examples what are successful ways of dealing with the problem of insertion of new buildings in historic areas. Though authors such as Worskett (1969) and Brolin (1980) do not attempt to be prescriptive or to develop a theory of successful insertion, they do so implicitly and the advice they give reflects the period in which they write: the former confident in the merits of modernist design, the latter more cautious, preferring a ‘keeping in keeping’ approach (see [Chapter 4](#)). An altogether different approach is taken by Tugnutt and Robinson who try to make the link between theories about heritage and designing practice. They suggest that success relates to the attitude of the designer which they call ‘contexture’ in contrast with the fashionable contextualism:

‘Contexture’...involves weaving together the old and the new to create a satisfying living totality.... When this sense of place is allowed to take precedence, its collective nature will need to be understood and underpinned. Change there must be—there is no question of putting the clock back or of setting a particular moment in aspic as being the ‘ideal’.

(Tugnutt and Robinson 1989:101)

Two recent books show that, in Britain at least, there is a continuing preoccupation with the subject of integration of new and old, and a search for ways to produce and judge satisfactory examples. Larkham (1996) summarizes the various approaches surrounding conservation and creativity, contrasting the British picturesque tradition to the arguably more objective approach of urban morphology. Tiesdell *et al.* (1996) cover some similar ground and make the distinction between the respect for the spatial character of an area and that for its architectural character. The legitimacy of design controls is argued very explicitly in additional works by Tugnutt (1991a, b). There is an attempt in most of the texts dealing with the integration between new and old to get away from simple aesthetic judgements, although these exist implicitly if not explicitly in all of them. Their importance lies in the way that they go beyond subjective judgements and try either to establish a method of approaching the problem or to identify those objective elements that can or need to be regulated in order to facilitate better results. At a minimum, the latter include height of buildings, roof line, street alignment and projections on the façade. The literature on architectural design thus rejoins the concerns of that of the planning system.

The same concerns appear in two texts produced under the auspices of the French Ministère de l’Environnement et du Cadre de Vie (1980 a, b). The importance of the first of these lies more in its analysis of the issues involved than in its aesthetic recommendations. The successful insertion of new buildings in historic areas depends fundamentally on the approach to the problem; thus the use of the building and the brief can play a role as important as the design itself.

According to this analysis, the difficulties of integrating new and old are the result of fundamental changes in society, reflected by such things as the increased sizes of urban property parcels, the zoning of activities, the disappearance of regionalism and the changes in urban scale resulting from speculation. The advice is directed to those commissioning new buildings as much as to the designers or the controllers and it reflects this analysis, emphasizing process rather than design solutions (see [Chapter 2](#)). The examples chosen are shown to be successful when they are preceded by a careful analysis. The second text produced by the ministry is the catalogue of an exhibition showing examples of good and not so good practice; as in the previous text, success is not judged simply on the style of the façade but on morphological elements such as the plot sizes. In addition, the book categorizes the buildings shown according to ‘the attitude adopted by the architect towards the future relationship between the new building and its historic built environment’ (Ministère de l’Environnement et du Cadre de Vie 1980b: 9), which goes from indifference to identification.

The insertion of contemporary architecture within urban historic areas and the acceptance and praise that it receives would appear to be a peculiarly French phenomenon. Although various authors mention this phenomenon, none of them attempts to explain it: implicitly there is an acceptance that it occurs and that some kind of system is in place to ensure that this is the case. For an outsider coming from a different environment, this is not so obvious. Popular opinion in Britain may suggest as an explanation the French attitude to culture. The fact that in non-urban areas of France buildings can frequently be found which bear no relation to their surroundings or copy historic styles seems to negate that explanation. The various themes that have emerged from the initial exploration hint at partial and more complex explanations that need further investigation. Someone looking at a similar phenomenon in Britain would assume that the planning and conservation systems had a central role to play which was worth exploring, although, as pointed out by Booth (1989), the mechanistic analysis of the legislation would be of little value: it is the process of applying the legislation, the transactions and relationships, the decisions, that give an insight into a particular system. The transactions central to this book are those connected with the processing of planning applications within historic areas and, more specifically, with the design aspects of the applications. Like some of the authors mentioned above, this study accepts that the professional planner has a legitimate role in the transactions and an effect on the results. The role of the planner in design control is thus a reasonable place to start the investigation in France, bearing in mind the themes emerging from the initial exploration and the fact that, from the outset, the French system appears complex and has a wide range of participants: the ‘planner’ who controls the design of building may be a different person, or even more than one person, according to the circumstances.

The analysis attempts to understand the French system from an outsider’s point of view, asking questions that someone working within the system might not

ask. A review of the French literature indicates that this is indeed the case: the presence of contemporary buildings in historic areas does not appear to be an issue that needs an explanation for the French. In itself, this lack of questioning of a phenomenon which is not frequent elsewhere is intriguing. Furthermore, concentrating on a narrow and specific issue such as this may not allow for generalizations about the whole French planning system, but it can throw light on the methods of operation of such a complex system. From this understanding, further research questions may emerge which could apply to other countries as well as to France.

This exploration started with questions related to general issues: the conservation of historic areas, planning and design control and the relationships between professionals concerned with the built environment. A number of interrelated themes emerged, depending on how the subject was approached. The philosophical or theoretical approach accepts change in historic areas and therefore sees their incorporation of contemporary architecture as part of their continuing evolution. The design approach is interested in methods of successfully inserting new buildings in historic areas and of developing some related body of theory which goes beyond stylistic issues; that the legislation has a role to play in this is hinted at, rather than made explicit. The legalistic approach accepts that laws have a role in ensuring that the right buildings are built, and that the state must ensure that these laws and the way in which they are implemented are effective. Closely related to this is the institutional approach which suggests that it is the interplay of a number of participants combining the legal instruments with other elements which affects the results. The last one is implicit in some of the texts, either in general terms (Booth looking at the functioning of the French development control system) or in relation to a particular issue (Lucan emphasizing the role of the state in commissioning new buildings). It is mainly the last two that are pursued in this book, even though the philosophical and aesthetic approaches cannot be ignored since they are part of the framework within which the legislation is conceived and the planners operate.

METHODOLOGY

The initial observation which triggered this work led to an exploration of various themes and theories. Implicit in this search is the acceptance that the presence of new buildings in historic areas is not an accident but the physical result of a series of transactions which involve a number of participants operating according to sets of rules, their position within institutional frameworks and their own personal behavioural codes or agendas. Furthermore it recognizes the legitimacy of imposing design controls on buildings, and recognizes that the government's intervention, at whatever level, has an effect on the final results. At this stage some questions can be asked in order to structure the research. Who are the relevant participants? What are the rules? What are the agendas? What

instruments are available to the participants in order to mediate in the decision making processes? Where does the power lie?

Thus, initially at least, the role of the planning officers or their French equivalents in the control of design is placed at the centre of the concerns of this book. This relates to a body of research already referred to, which analyses why changes in the built environment occur and who are the main decision makers effecting these changes. Larkham (1996) calls them 'agents of change' and divides them into direct agents or initiators (owners and architects) and indirect ones (planners, committee members, the general public). He specifically discusses the role of the planners and how they affect policy decision from the designation of conservation areas to the management of change within them. This approach follows that of other writers concerned with the relationships between participants in the development process, such as Simmie (1981), Short *et al.* (1986) and Reade (1987, 1992).

But it is Punter's research on aesthetic control in Reading (1985b), which most closely approximates to the aims of this book: it is an empirical study based on the analysis of case studies and participant observation within the operational context of the Borough of Reading, and informed by the British debate on the role of aesthetic control in statutory planning. The organizations in which the various participants operate, their values and the means of communication that they employ are analysed implicitly or explicitly. In particular, the contrast between the perceived importance of aesthetic control and the low priority that it has in practice is shown (1985b:1–9) to affect the operation of the system and the discretion available to the participants in the decision making process. Punter's model for the selection of 'key actors' (p. 106) involves the planning officer, the planning committee, various consultees including amenity groups and conservation societies, the architects and the developers (see [Figure 1.1](#)). A similar choice can be made for France, adjusting it to the different job titles and roles of the French situation. On the control side are the Service d'Urbanisme, the *maire*, the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement and the Architecte des Bâtiments de France. On the production side are the architects and the developers divided between public and private. This list is based on an initial knowledge of the system and therefore incomplete; key consultees, who may or may not be statutory, can be discovered only in the course of the study, when a better knowledge of the system has been acquired.

The first step was an analysis of the rules which govern the decision making process in the granting of planning permission for buildings in historic areas. This involved an understanding of the legislation and of the positions of those in charge of its implementation. An initial review indicated the importance of historical evolution in shaping the legislation. History was therefore an early subject of analysis: it threw light on the present position and suggested other important issues such as well established roles and agendas. Comments made by practitioners and academics on the functioning of the French system and published debates about it gave an insight beyond the purely mechanical aspects

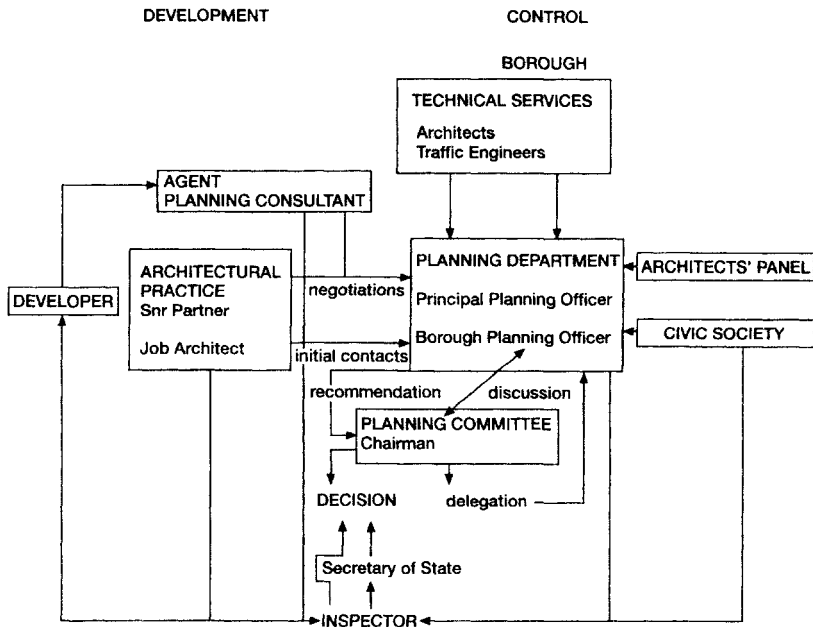


Figure 1.1 Key actors in the development and control processes in Britain

Source: Adapted from Punter 1985b:106

of the legislation. They also helped to identify key players, hidden agendas and problems in the functioning of the system.

While this analysis was iterative and continued throughout the research period, three particularly significant issues emerged. The first was the split between the legislation dealing with planning and that dealing with historic buildings and historic areas, and the merging of the two in very recent times. This meant that two sets of legislation needed to be researched alongside, potentially, two different sets of actors. The second was that there were different types of 'conservation areas'; areas of historic character could be protected in a number of ways by different parts of the legislation. This meant that examples of the various types of areas needed to be analysed. The third important issue was the crucial role of the *Architecte des Bâtiments de France* as decision maker in all matters involving design and the built heritage.

Case studies were seen as a useful vehicle by which to focus the research and to analyse the functioning of the system of design control in historic areas. This approach, also used *inter alia* by Larkham (1996) and Tiesdell *et al.* (1996), is particularly appropriate to illustrate the operation of a system in specific circumstances and to discover the unexpected. The relevant model, Punter's study of Reading, involved the analysis of case files of selected examples, interviews with the key actors and a certain amount of participant observation. A

similar approach was attempted although the characteristics of the French system and the resources available meant that it had to be adapted to different circumstances. For instance, because of the regulatory character of the French planning system, the case files include almost no references to negotiations and no correspondence between applicant and planners, except for the decision letter. Fortunately the system is the subject of several published analyses by lawyers and practitioners, who illustrate their research with numerous examples and confirm that negotiations do take place. The best way of finding out about these was by interviewing those involved in chosen areas. Examples of modern buildings in historic areas had therefore to be selected and, starting with the scarce information on file, the participants could then be identified and interviewed.

From an initial review of the literature it was clear that there were different levels of historic areas within which cases could be chosen: those without any kind of heritage protection, where ordinary planning controls exist on their own; those containing a listed building and affected by the legislation protecting its setting; the traditional French conservation areas, the *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, where a specific legislation applies; and the more recent areas of protection, the *Zone de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain* (ZPPAU), also affected by specific legislation. Since practically all historic urban areas have at least one listed building (at a minimum there is a church), the first category could be eliminated, even though the principles of planning control on their own needed to be reviewed to understand all other areas.

A second factor in the selection of examples was an attempt to cover a variety of urban situations, from small town to large city. Limited resources meant that the locations had to be easily accessible from Paris and that, at most, only a handful of cities could be studied. With these conditions in mind, the following cities were chosen:

- 1 Pontoise, a small city within the Paris commuter belt where there is no specific conservation plan and protection relies on that given by the proximity of listed buildings and on general planning policies.
- 2 Lille, a large provincial city, part of a larger administrative structure, the Communauté Urbaine de Lille, where the historic core is covered by a *Secteur Sauvegardé* and where major changes have taken place in the recent past.
- 3 Quimper, a small provincial town which has pioneered the new form of conservation plan mentioned above (ZPPAU) and as such was recommended as worth investigating by contacts in the Ministère de l'Équipement.
- 4 Chartres, also covered by a *Secteur Sauvegardé*, was added mainly because a particular building caused substantial controversy when it was first built and was written about in the professional press.

5 Paris, because the city offers a great variety of situations which are well publicized and recorded. It is an exceptional case but also an exemplary one, as most of France looks at Paris and follows its lead.

This choice of locations ensures that most of the possible types of conservation policies can be covered as well as a range of administrative structures. For each of the cities information about which agencies dealt with planning consent, who were the elected representatives in charge of planning and what additional structures existed, was gathered in order to pursue the next step in the research. In addition, examples from other cities such as Nîmes and Montpellier are included if they help to emphasize a point, but they are not analysed in the same depth.

The initial sources for the case studies were the local planning authorities who were asked to suggest recent examples of buildings within the historic core which they judged to be of quality. The criteria for selection of the buildings were that they be fairly new (completed in the past fifteen years) so that participants in the process could remember their role; that they be considered by the local professionals, the press or the local people to be of quality and to make a contribution to the historic area; that they be examples of modern design in a historic environment; and that information about them be available. There was no stylistic or other design requirement in the selection, except for the elimination of new developments behind retained façades, replicas of adjacent buildings or obvious pastiches; no such building was in fact suggested by the local planning authorities. Neither was there a need for the buildings to be universally praised: discussing one particular example (rejected only because of its location outside urban areas), a member of one of Lille's advisory bodies commented: 'Some love it, some hate it. That is what good architecture is about; it should not leave you indifferent.'

The examples chosen are a vehicle for investigating how the system works in a range of situations with varying political structures and personalities. They are complementary to the analysis of documents and to the interviews with people concerned with general policy. They are an instrument with which to focus interviews with specific participants in the process and to throw additional light on how the system works in ordinary cases that have not necessarily received national or international coverage.

It would be possible to argue that, by requesting examples in a contemporary design and eliminating those in replica or pastiche, the sample was biased and unrepresentative: they could be the exceptions rather than the rule. It is true that no statistical analysis was undertaken to assess what percentage of new buildings in historic areas over the whole of France were of one kind or another; within the limitations of this work, such a survey would not have been feasible. Nevertheless, the author's observation went well beyond the cities chosen: in numerous trips through different parts of France, examples of modern buildings were found in historic centres. Within the cities chosen as examples, hardly any buildings in replica or pastiche were found and officers interviewed did not

suggest that the buildings selected were exceptional in this sense. In order to further illustrate this point, [Chapter 4](#) includes, in addition to the main case studies, a few other examples of modern buildings in the historic cores of the chosen cities, about which little information was obtained. As the research evolved, the lack of acceptance by the gatekeepers of pastiche and replica design confirmed the fact that the examples shown were not exceptional. Additionally, a review of the professional magazines shows an abundance of contemporary buildings throughout French historic centres, from Paris to Nîmes and from Tours to Montpellier, some of which are mentioned in the text to illustrate particular issues. Finally, it could be argued that even if the cases observed represented only a minority of the total number of new buildings in historic areas, how they came into existence and were accepted would still merit investigation.

On the other hand the case studies are not given as a proof that the French always produce buildings that are successfully inserted in their historic surroundings; other, poor examples of insertion can undoubtedly be found. The aesthetic value of the buildings is important only in relation to their acceptance in the city examined. They have been recommended as interesting examples by professionals working in the area, but in a few years' time the selection might be different as it is undoubtedly influenced by the current climate; this is not necessarily a drawback since the examples are intended to reflect the professional opinion of the time. With hindsight it might have been more interesting to choose controversial schemes but none was suggested; the one controversial example from Chartres came to light precisely because of the stir that it caused at the time it was built, even though today it is praised and no longer controversial.

The investigation thus combines an analysis of the information obtained through interviews and triggered by the case studies, including a survey of the Architectes des Bâtiments de France (ABF; see [Appendix 2](#)), with that of the legislative instruments and of secondary sources. These are the building blocks that allow the eventual construction of an argument to explain the presence of modern buildings in the historic areas of France. It differs from the original assumption that planning is central to the results and shows a much more complex pattern of relationships; in particular it highlights the leading role of the public sector as patron and model.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The text is divided into five main parts. The first aspect analysed is the historic development of the legislation concerning the protection of historic areas and the system of development control. Particular events in history have had an important role in people's attitudes towards heritage and the legislation is a reflection of these. It is, therefore, necessary to analyse the way legislation currently in use was arrived at, and the reasons for the changes that have taken place. This is the subject of [Chapter 2](#) which emphasizes the continuity in French thinking on the subject. For this analysis a number of historical references and existing

publications, including reports of conferences, were consulted, and people involved with the more recent evolution of the legislation, particularly in the ministries, were interviewed. The present system of control of development is the subject of [Chapter 3](#): it analyses the instruments and procedures involved in obtaining permission to build in various circumstances, from ordinary (urban) areas with no special controls to areas protected to a lesser or greater degree for historic or architectural reasons. The main sources of information for this chapter are the legal texts and the comments made about them by academics and lawyers; examples from the cities visited are used to illustrate some of the points.

The cities and the case studies are described in [Chapter 4](#). Files and local references were consulted and opinions were sought from practitioners in the cities visited.

[Chapter 5](#) considers the process by which buildings are produced; who commissions them, who designs them. As the role of the public sector is particularly important, the influence and intervention of central and local governments comprise most of the chapter. Interviews with architects and developers and with members of the various bodies that promote quality in architecture complement written information. The particular situations in the various cities being analysed are given as examples whenever relevant.

[Chapter 6](#) examines the effectiveness of the control system in practice. In particular, the various participants involved in implementing the legislation, the 'gatekeepers', are the subject of analysis. The negotiations and interactions between them, and those with the designers and developers analysed in [Chapter 5](#), lead eventually to the results that can be appreciated. Interviews with a number of people with different roles and at different levels of the official hierarchy were undertaken, in order to understand how the system operated in practice. A large number of texts were consulted, including unpublished reports, case files and articles, in order to obtain different points of view.

The concluding chapter attempts to bring all these strands together and suggests that design control is only one element in the process that produces modern buildings in historic areas. It puts forward the possibility that there is an agenda to promote French culture through contemporary architecture. From this conclusion, some speculative comments about the situation in other countries can be derived and suggestions made for drawing lessons from the French experience.

PROBLEMS OF COMPARISON AND LANGUAGE

Several authors have discussed the difficulties of researchers from one country studying the system of another. Booth (1989) for example has pointed out the problems of language, not only from the straightforward translation point of view but also because of conceptual differences. The subject of this book is no exception in that the direct translation of words does not necessarily express the real meaning. Obvious examples are 'planning' which does not properly translate

as *urbanisme* or *aménagement du territoire*; ‘development’ which badly translates as *aménagement* and is certainly not *développement*; or ‘public inquiry’ which is very different from the *enquête publique*. A related problem is that of names of institutions such as *communes*, or their incumbents (*maire*), and that of legal planning designations such as *Secteur Sauvegardé*. Their translations, in the case of the examples given, as commune, mayor and conservation area, are more likely to hinder than help. The author, being bilingual and having been immersed in both systems, has no difficulties in understanding linguistic subtleties but is very conscious of the confusions that can be created by the language. It was therefore decided to leave all of these, italicized, in the original, and to give a glossary in Appendix 1. All French quotations have been translated by the author, unless a published translation was already available.

THE HISTORY OF PLANNING AND HERITAGE PROTECTION IN FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

French planning legislation and the protection of the built heritage followed separate paths throughout history until some twenty-five years ago. Even though planning acts often contained aesthetic and cultural objectives, their main thrust was the management of urban development and growth, and their concerns socio-economic and political (see Jegouzo 1986, Gohier 1986). Avoiding anarchy, maintaining order and keeping a balance between property rights and societal needs were the main preoccupations of French planning. Alongside, a separate legislation evolved, aimed at protecting areas considered exceptional for their historic and/or aesthetic value and concerned with the building of a national spirit, with education and with the elevation of French culture. The separation of the two strands of legislation was reinforced by the fact that they were the responsibility of two distinct ministries, the Ministère de l'Équipement (previously called Ministère de la Construction et de l'Urbanisme) and the Ministère de la Culture (previously the Beaux-Arts, a branch of the Education Ministry) respectively, often competing rather than collaborating with each other (Jegouzo, 1986:81–2).

The turning point was the 1962 Loi Malraux: from then onwards, bridges have linked the two kinds of legislation, without entirely merging them. Certainly the boundaries between the two are more blurred nowadays, but different administrations still have specific responsibilities for planning and for heritage. This chapter follows the historical separation, dealing first with the planning legislation, then with the protection of heritage and finally with their joint evolution in the recent past. Details of the historical evolution of the legislation are given because they aid understanding of the ideas behind the laws and of how the current situation has been arrived at.

HISTORY OF PLANNING LEGISLATION

Legislation concerning planning (*urbanisme*) as such is relatively recent; the concept, though not the word, appears in official documents only after the First

World War. Previously a number of measures existed concerning aesthetic issues, such as buildings heights and projections, or sanitary and safety issues, such as daylight or drainage, or a combination of the two such as those affecting street alignments.

Before the Revolution

From the Middle Ages building regulations were imposed in order to ensure public safety: they mainly controlled street alignment and projections on to the streets. The most frequently mentioned regulation of the monarchic era is the Sully Edict of December 1607. It regulated the width of streets and the building lines, ordered the paving of streets and prohibited overhanging upper storeys. It was probably the first of the edicts that applied to the whole country and not just to Paris, and it indirectly imposed certain architectural forms. The concepts introduced by it are still in force today, albeit in a very modified form. Successive monarchs introduced other controls mainly affecting Paris: a 1666 ordinance controlled projections on the front of buildings and a 1667 regulation controlled the height of the façades (Sutcliffe 1993). Other cities could for a variety of reasons be subjected to very strict regulations concerning building materials, street alignments and design of elevations. One such was Dieppe following its destruction during a siege in 1694 (Ministère de l'Urbanisme et du Logement 1983:9; see [Figure 2.1](#)), another was Rennes, destroyed by fire in 1720. The fear of fire meant that controls on building materials were gradually imposed from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards. Mostly, successive regulations confirmed and restated previous ones, indicating that these had not been implemented successfully. Under Louis XV, an order of 1765 required owners to follow regulations on street alignments for any new building or reconstruction.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century under Louis XVI, a new plan regulating the street alignment and the heights of buildings in Paris was produced by Verniquet. It was implemented with care and led to the setting up of a bureaucracy to administer the building permit which was required thereafter. It served as a model for subsequent regulations of the same kind, in both the capital and the provinces. Concerns of the twentieth century were established at the time, as illustrated by this comment by Sutcliffe (1993: 66): 'From then on, mass domestic construction would be a prime concern of the authorities and also of the architects, whose task would become to produce the best results within the regulations.'

Overall, French planning legislation up to the Revolution dealt with street widths and alignment, building heights, materials, projections and overhangs. Although all of these were controlled for safety reasons, they resulted in a particular aesthetic that pervaded the whole country (Harouel 1995).

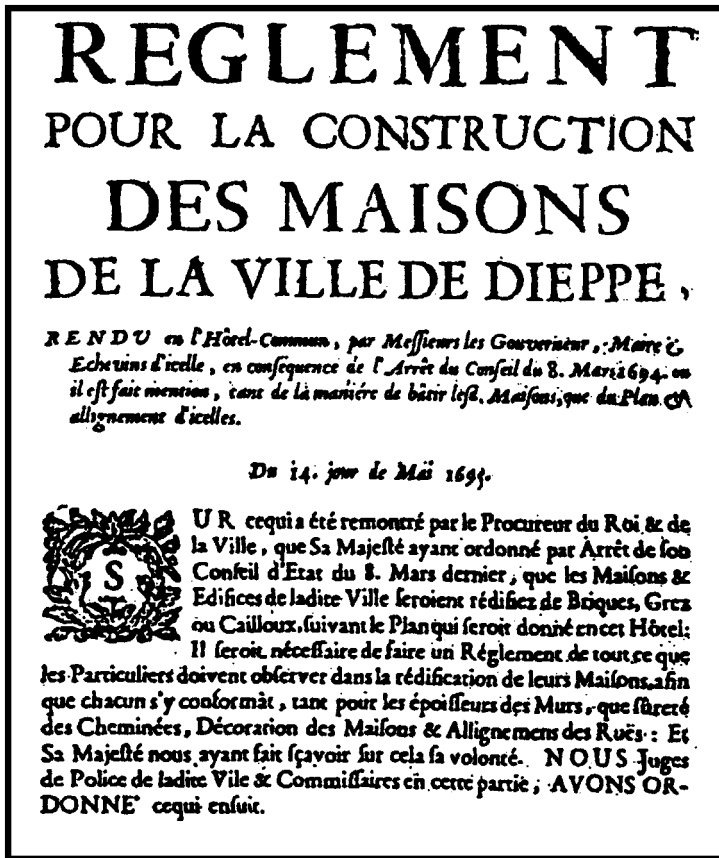


Figure 2.1 Early planning document: regulations for the building of houses in Dieppe, 1695

Source: Ministère de l'Urbanisme et du Logement 1983:9.

The Revolution and the nineteenth century

During the Revolution, Article 17 of the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme* (1789) established the principle that, since property is a sacred right, nobody can be deprived of property, except in cases of 'public necessity', legally proven. The notion of public 'utility' soon replaced that of 'necessity' and it is as such that it was later incorporated into the Civil Code (Hostiou 1986: 70). Also during this period the Constitutional Assembly sanctioned a law in July 1791 which consolidated the sanitary and safety regulations approved under the previous regime. Later on, in 1794, there was an attempt to coordinate the street lay-out of the capital through a general plan, called the 'Artists' Plan', but its effect was minimal.

Throughout the nineteenth century unprecedented population growth and industrialization required new measures mainly to control anarchic expansion of urban areas. During the Empire, the country was divided, for administrative purposes, into ninety *départements*; the *préfets*, representatives of central government, were appointed as their chief executives. With the Civil Code also approved during this period, a highly centralized and regulatory system of administration was established. As early as 1810 the locations of dangerous, insalubrious and inconvenient establishments were regulated. This was the first limitation, though a very timid one, to the absolute freedom to build on privately owned property (Gohier 1986: 18).

The first measure which can be considered a planning one in the contemporary sense was the decree of 26 March 1852 and the ensuing regulations of 1859 concerning Paris, which once again controlled the alignment and width of streets and the heights of buildings and introduced a kind of building permit. It gave the government special powers of compulsory purchase and introduced the concepts of 'zones' and *ensembles urbains*, precursors of development areas. This decree is characteristic of the French government's attitude to planning to this day: protecting property rights with one hand but intervening drastically with the other when it feels it is necessary to do so for the benefit of 'public utility'. It made possible the transformation of the capital that took place during the rule of Baron Haussmann as *préfet* of Paris. Until then, and in spite of the Revolution, the Empire and the changes in society, Paris had hardly changed. It was still a mostly medieval city, representative of the *ancien régime*, with narrow property parcels, narrow streets and undifferentiated urban spaces, and none of the uniform grandeur of the boulevards and the hierarchy of public spaces that we admire today. However, by the latter part of the century, 'two things impressed the observant visitor to Paris...: the magnitude of the physical and structural changes, and the persistence throughout of a single aesthetic' (Olsen 1986: 35–37). The latter was undoubtedly the result of the application of the regulations on alignments, heights and *gabarits*, and of the vast amount of public building that was undertaken during the Second Empire. At this stage, the French state had established two modes of intervention: a regulatory one, dealing as previously with issues of public health and order, and a more direct one through powers of compulsory purchase, both resulting in this 'single aesthetic'.

Gradually, the 1852 decree's regulations were extended to other large cities in order to allow their transformation. Then, in 1884, the law on local government required all *communes* to prepare a general plan showing the alignment and levelling of the streets and public spaces. By then, France had a skeletal planning system which allowed major developments to take place throughout the country. The only other new legislation in the second half of the century was the law of 1887 dealing with historic monuments (see p. 30).

The first half of the twentieth century: the beginning of modern town planning

In 1902 an Act concerning public health introduced a compulsory building permit and required the laying out of drinking water and sewerage networks for cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants (this figure was to be reduced to 5,000 in 1935). Although this legislation made it possible for local authorities to have some form of rational planning, neither elected representatives nor the general public were very enthusiastic and the implementation remained sporadic.

Until the First World War, all of the separate parts of available legislation, each one with a limited concern, relied on negative controls and not on a vision of the future or on constructive action, which would have been needed for long term planning. Members of a moral and intellectual elite called the *Musée Social*, concerned by the anarchic growth of cities, promoted such new legislation which eventually reached the statute books in March 1919 and is known as the Loi Cornudet. Animated debates took place in the *Assemblée Nationale* between supporters and opponents of the sanctity of property rights, particularly on the purchase of land by local authorities and on matters of betterment (Gohier, 1986:19). The concept of urban planning appeared for the first time in this legislation. It imposed on all cities of more than 10,000 inhabitants, all *communes* in the *Seine département* (Paris), expanding *communes*, seaside resorts and a whole list of other categories of *communes* the obligation to prepare plans for their 'extension and embellishment' (Jegouzo, 1986:81). The main preoccupations of the legislators were thus consistent: a fear of anarchy and a related need for order aimed at protecting private property and resulting in the management of urban growth. Design controls were one expression of these concerns.

Although the Cornudet law was a landmark, its implementation encountered severe difficulties particularly in relation to subdivisions of land on the periphery of cities. Not surprisingly post-war reconstruction had much greater priorities than the application of new planning concepts and utopian objectives. A complementary law was therefore sanctioned in 1924, with two more modifications in 1928 and 1935 aimed at avoiding loopholes and abuses. However the economic crisis, lack of specialists and public indifference meant that no great progress in terms of rational planning was achieved during the inter-war period. By 1939, out of the 2,300 cities meant to have an approved plan, only 600 were either in preparation or approved; of these, 273 had been declared 'in the public interest', giving the authorities expropriation rights (Gohier 1986: 20).

Most of the preoccupations of this period were directed towards the expansion of towns into the countryside and were not much concerned with historic centres; redevelopment of these was not a problem and they were seen as capable of looking after themselves.

The war and post-war years

The 1940–44 period encouraged reflection on the future development of France, and the maturing of new ideas. In 1941 a Direction de l'Urbanisme et de la Construction Immobilière was created at central government level with the objective of drafting a new planning law which was approved on 15 June 1943 by the Vichy government. It consolidated previous legislation and introduced two innovations: the *groupement d'urbanisme* for the planning study of a group of local authorities with common interests and the *circonscriptions régionales d'urbanisme*, areas for which studies leading to planning documents would be prepared at the expense of central government. The aim of this legislation, which gave strong powers to central government, was to control once and for all the growth of urban areas but this time within a national policy of population, employment and infrastructure distribution and overcoming the narrow localism of the *communes* (Gohier, 1986:21).

The requirement of a *permis de construire* was generalized by this law, thus giving powers of development control to the *départements*: the representatives of central government in each of these were in charge of delivering it. The legislation followed the fundamental precepts of the French Constitution in relation to private property which had gradually evolved and was no longer considered unlimited and absolute. The machinery for implementing the system however continued to be highly centralized and cumbersome for a number of years.

In the first period after the Second World War, the state planning administration was concerned with reconstruction. This allowed it to develop and evolve methods and instruments which were later applied to other situations and other parts of the country. By 1950 it started promoting a *Plan National d'Aménagement du Territoire*, a national development plan, a strategic framework for regional and local development and investment, to be prepared in close relationship with the national five year socio-economic plan produced by the Commissariat Général du Plan (attached to the Prime Minister's office) from 1946 onwards. From here on planning was split into two strands: the *aménagement du territoire*, mainly strategic and closely related to socio-economic policies; and *urbanisme*, concerned with physical planning, land use and development and including design control.

By the early 1950s, as migrations from rural to urban and peri-urban areas accelerated and as France needed to modernize its economy and its infrastructure, the use of planning schemes, which were implemented rapidly as part of the post-war reconstruction effort and mainly by public agencies, was being challenged as inappropriate; new two-tier plans were advocated to deal with privately induced urban growth. In particular there was a need to find the means to allow local authorities to control private sector development and to acquire land rapidly and, if necessary, by compulsory purchase in order to implement housing policies. Two acts in 1953 (Loi foncière) and 1957 (Loi-

cadre) made things easier in this respect but the main modifications were introduced in the new Constitution of 1958 which created the Fifth Republic.

It was also during this period that the first Code de l'Urbanisme was enacted and the first national regulations, the Règlement National de l'Urbanisme, were published (1955). It established rules for the control of development over the whole of the French territory, to be applied whenever more specific planning documents had not been prepared. Basic design considerations were part of the issues covered by the Code from the beginning. It has been updated a number of times since then, as and when new legislation has needed to be incorporated.

The Fifth Republic

The decree of 31 December 1958 instituted a two-tier system comprising the *Plan d'Urbanisme Directeur* and the *Plan d'Urbanisme de Détail*, the latter being the basis for the assessment of applications for *Permis de Construire*. Other measures introduced by the legislation included the *Zones à Urbaniser en Priorité* (ZUP) and the right of preemption (first refusal to buy land), the associations of property owners, and a reform of the law of expropriation. Another two instruments, the *Zone d'Aménagement Différé* (ZAD) and the *Plan Sommaire d'Urbanisme* were added in 1962.

ZUPs and ZADs are examples of what is called *urbanisme opérationnel*, a notion that appeared at the time and which was characterized by the administration being proactive rather than just regulatory and reactive. The ZUP was the main instrument for the active implementation of planning policies as it allowed local authorities to undertake the compulsory purchase of land and to service it and develop it (mainly for housing), with funding being provided by central government. Its widespread use led to the large developments in the suburbs, the notorious *grands ensembles*, which have in France a negative reputation similar to that of the tower blocks in Britain, but which, perhaps surprisingly, only rarely affected historic centres. The ZAD on the other hand was an instrument to fight speculation and to allow local authorities to build land reserves with a view to future development. Both instruments are characteristic of French *dirigiste* attitudes to urban development, already seen in the nineteenth century: the public sector is given powers and resources to be actively involved in the whole development process.

However, as property values continued to rise and speculation continued uncontrolled, a new law was sanctioned in 1967, the *Loi d'Orientation Foncière*, the main planning act still in force at present, albeit with modifications. It continued with the two-tier planning system and instituted three types of plans: the *Schéma Directeur* (SD), similar to the British Structure Plan, the *Plan d'Occupation des Sols* (POS), which has similarities with the British Local Plan, and the *Zones d'Aménagement Concerté* (ZAC), a kind of comprehensive development area for which a *Plan d'Aménagement de Zone* (PAZ) is usually required (for details see Punter 1989).

The ZACs, replacing the ZUPs, are the current basis for the implementation of positive planning. They rely on partnerships between the public and private sectors. Though they have been criticized (Punter 1989:158) for favouring large developers and by-passing normal planning regulations, they are still extensively used and have produced some of the most impressive developments in France, not only in peripheral areas but in the centre of cities as well. [Chapter 5](#) will deal in greater detail with the ZACs.

The next major laws concerning planning were the 1975 *Réforme de la Politique Foncière* and the 1976 *Réforme de l'Urbanisme* which were sanctioned at a time when environmental concerns had appeared on the agenda as a priority. The law on the Protection of Nature (1976) and the Law on Architecture (1977) were more or less contemporary with these.

Until the early 1970s, post-war planning was mainly concerned with socio-economic issues, housing, transport, the modernization of industry and the control of speculation (Gohier 1986:18–24). Aesthetic preoccupations existed as part of the general concerns of planning but were not high on the agenda. To a large extent, together with heritage issues, they were not forgotten but followed a separate evolution and were seen as the domain of the *Ministère de la Culture* (Jegouzo 1986:93). Planning legislation permitted the use of aesthetic controls but did not impose them; their application was therefore sporadic (see [Chapter 3](#)). By the mid-1970s, growth had ceased to be a major concern and qualitative preoccupations replaced quantitative ones: design quality became a more central concern. The importance of the legislation of this period is that it empowered central and local governments not only to control but also to promote and to act. Before getting involved with heritage, first the state, then the city of Paris and after that other local authorities became concerned with the quality of their urban environment. Their involvement in development allowed them to be patrons of new architecture and to set examples. At this point the legislation concerned with the protection of heritage merged at least in part with the planning legislation. Its separate evolution up to then will therefore be considered before returning to their joint history in the past twenty years.

HERITAGE PROTECTION

The evolution of heritage protection can be placed in the context of the analysis by Babelon and Chastel (1980). In what they consider a chaotic history of French heritage, they distinguish six ‘moments’ or events:

- 1 The ‘religious event’, based on the veneration of relics and by extension of religious buildings.
- 2 The ‘monarchic event’, leading to the protection of objects related to the monarch, e.g. libraries, archives and palaces.
- 3 The ‘family event’, which led to the protection of more palaces but also of documents and objects.

- 4 The 'national event', needed by the French Revolution to define a national domain as 'intangible and explicit'.
- 5 The 'administrative event', which starts with the sanctioning of laws of protection and the institutions to implement them.
- 6 The 'scientific event', preoccupied with knowledge, with environmental problems and with a much more extensive definition of heritage.

The last three events are of greatest relevance to this study as they coincide not only with the setting up of the legislative procedures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century but also with the great expansion of development in the second half of the twentieth century and consequently the need to associate the laws of planning with those of heritage protection.

Before the Revolution

Until 1789 the French monarchy was, by definition, the official custodian of heritage. It was the main patron of the arts, the main arbiter of culture and taste, not only for France but for most of Europe. From the Middle Ages a form of protected heritage existed in the guise of relics, cult objects and religious buildings, which were the destination of pilgrims. Parallels can be noted between the attitudes towards these and our own contemporary concepts, first by comparing tourism to pilgrimage and secondly by recounting how parts of religious buildings under demolition were subsequently reused in the new constructions that replaced them: thus the main Western portal of Chartres cathedral was reused fifty years later in the new façade erected between the towers (Babelon and Chastel 1980:6).

With the establishment of the national monarchy, regal objects such as coronation implements acquired heritage status; but only gradually did these include buildings. The Renaissance and the discovery of Italy by the French marked the beginning of an interest in ancient monuments by the French monarchy: around 1533, François I initiated restoration works on the Maison Carrée in Nîmes and, significantly, ordered the demolition of accretions that in his view hampered the enjoyment of the monument. From then onwards, kings became involved in the selective protection of monuments; scholars followed and supported this interest with studies of historic areas. At the same time kings became builders (*bâtisseurs*), wishing to leave the mark of their reign for their own aggrandizement (see Choay 1992).

The second half of the seventeenth century saw the creation of the Académies, including that of Architecture, where professionals would be formed and standards maintained. The existence of the Académies, the post of Director of Arts (officially the Surintendant des Bâtiments or Buildings' Superintendent), and the institution of the prestigious Prix de Rome (scholarships given to artists to spend a year in Rome) give an idea of the interest taken by the monarchy in the arts, particularly those of the past, Roman and Greek. Babelon and Chastel

(1980:11) emphasize that this interest was that of collectors, of encyclopaedists, and did not necessarily lead to preservation.

French kings were not always respectful of their own dynastic past: new buildings were more important than old ones. Examples of demolition abound and appear to have been justified by two kinds of arguments which have echoes today: the cost of maintaining old buildings considered unsuitable for modern requirements, and a passion for the new (Fermigier 1980:5). Thus, the Bourbon Louis often demolished monuments built in preceding reigns to replace them by their own: Louis XVI demolished the châteaux of Saint Germain en Laye and of La Muette. Those of Vincennes and Blois were saved only by the advent of the Revolution. As monarchs wanted fashionable châteaux, those of their immediate predecessors were often the least suited to their needs and the most threatened.

It is important to note that the state was identified with the monarch and that the concept of heritage was personalized and centralized: only what the court protected was seen as part of the heritage. The country then followed what the court dictated. Nevertheless, by the second half of the eighteenth century, an educated public had evolved and was ready to fight for the preservation of certain 'civic' monuments (e.g. a fountain), already considered part of a nascent collective heritage. As Babelon and Chastel (1980:15) observe, 'Next to the religious monuments...and the monarchic monuments seen as crown property... there is a citizen's heritage, which reflects his civic life in the same way as the public buildings of the urban societies of Northern Europe.' They give examples of campaigns to save such monuments, in particular the astrological column of Catherine de Médicis (1750) and the fountain of the Innocents (1789) both still standing today near the Forum des Halles in Paris. These somewhat sporadic civic campaigns were precursors of the more general movement to save monuments for the nation rather than for the aggrandizement of the monarch.

The Revolution

In order that the kings' history could become that of the people, and the memory could become national, the monarchy had to perish.

(Fermigier 1980:6)

The various revolutionary governments of the last decade of the eighteenth century were conscious of having to assume roles previously filled by the absolute monarch. They were also aware of the responsibilities towards a cultural heritage which now belonged to the whole nation—even though their actions were not always consistent. For example, in 1790, the Assembly set up a Commission des Monuments to establish an inventory of buildings that should be preserved; in 1794, the Commission des Arts, which replaced the first commission, published an Instruction on how to make an inventory and preserve, over the whole territory of the Republic, all objects which can be useful to the arts and to

education (Marot 1980:37). The administrators of the *An II* (1794) were reminded of their roles as 'depositories of an estate for which they would be accountable to the big family' (quoted by Babelon and Chastel 1980:17). Fermigier (1980:6) praises the revolutionary governments which, despite being suddenly responsible for everything and faced with numerous conflicting interests, managed to start a policy of protection of this new 'national heritage'. In 1793 the Museum of the Petit Augustin, later to become the Museum of French Monuments, was created: its collection was to help in educating the people (Chapu 1980:40). On the other hand it is well known that, at the same time, the French Revolution mutilated or destroyed a number of works of art through pillage, through revolutionary zeal or through official incompetence. Numerous examples of the contradictions within the revolutionary heart exist:

On 3 Brumaire [24 October 1794], Romme...pointed out to the Committee that...abuses were taking place 'due to an exaggeration disguised as republicanism or due to a movement more akin to the Vandals than to Frenchmen, leading to the destruction of monuments of the arts, history and instruction'. Nevertheless, a few days later, on 17 Brumaire [7 November], he was designated...to study David's proposal of erecting a monument to the French people, the base of which would be 'made of the debris of the kings' statues taken from Notre Dame's portico'.

(Marot 1980:37)

A year earlier, a deputy of the Convention, the Abbé Gregoire, in order to convince the Revolutionary government of the importance of preserving the heritage, wrote a series of reports to the Comité d'Instruction Publique: in these he first used, with assured political skill, the expression 'Vandalism' to contrast the attitudes of civilized people (the French Republic) to those of Barbarians (the aristocracy, the tyrants): 'I created the word in order to kill the thing,' he later explained (quoted by Marot, 1980). His campaign led to the first measures of protection against uncontrolled demolition: a decree of 1793 threatened those who mutilated monuments with two years in prison; inventories of art objects and monuments were established in a number of *départements* in order to stop their destruction.

Though these measures taken by the French revolutionaries were not very effective and did not yet represent a national policy for the protection of heritage, they indicate an attitude towards heritage, closely linked to education and patriotism, which has had a continuous effect on policy to this day and is one of the main elements that affects legislation. It is particularly strong because it is not discussed or challenged but rather taken for granted.

The nineteenth century

After the gap imposed by the Napoleonic wars, the romantic movement gave new impetus to the preservation movement. Victor Hugo, waging a war against the demolishers, asserted in a speech in 1825 that ‘There are two elements in a building: its use and its beauty. Its use belongs to its owner, its beauty to everyone; its demolition is therefore *ultra vires*’ (quoted by Babelon and Chastel 1980:21).

The government itself was preoccupied by the subject: in 1830, Interior Minister Guizot presented a report to King Louis-Philippe suggesting the creation of a ‘general inspectorate of historic monuments’:

Sire, the historic monuments that cover the land of France are admired and envied by all of learned Europe. As numerous and more varied than those of some of our neighbours, they don’t just belong to a particular period of history but form a complete and uninterrupted series: from the Druids to our time, there is not a single memorable period of art and civilization that has not left on our territory the monuments that explain it and represent it.

(Guizot 1830)

Thus the ‘July monarchy’ set itself as the champion of historic continuity.¹ At the time of the major rise in the power of the bourgeoisie which accompanied the industrial revolution, ancient monuments established a link with the past which was necessary throughout the romantic movement, and not only in the field of architecture. The bourgeoisie was undoubtedly trying to legitimize its role in society, as keeper of a heritage which was seen as part of the *ancien régime*.

A large number of buildings had been lost after the Revolution (not necessarily, as it is often assumed, only at the hands of the revolutionaries, but also through quarrying and speculation) and during the Napoleonic wars. In a similar way as in Britain, where the vast amount of demolition of the 1960s gave way to a strong conservation movement, so in France in the 1830s there was, among an elite at least, a feeling that in order to maintain historic continuity some monuments needed to be protected from wholesale destruction. Political motives conveniently corresponded to romantic ideals.

[T]he bourgeois monarchy meant to become the geometric centre for the whole of France.... The preservation of historic monuments would glorify at the same time the kings and the founding aristocracy, the monks and the inspiring priests, and the whole of the building people.... It was a matter of using the convergence of the Jacobin rationalism and the romantic sensitivity, in order to place the bourgeois monarch at the geometrical centre of the reconciliation of all the Frances.

(Parent 1980:18)

The first recorded important date in the history of the protection of architectural heritage in France is 1834: it is the date of the sanctioning of the Loi Guizot, following the report quoted on p. 28, which instituted the Service des Monuments Historiques (two previous attempts in 1790 and 1810 had not led to anything). Two years later the writer Prosper Mérimée became its chief inspector and started his survey of buildings. His recommendations to the first Commission des Monuments Historiques, created in 1837 and still in existence, led to the publication in 1840 of the first list of buildings deserving protection and financial help from central government.

A circular sent by central government to the *préfets* in 1837 stated: 'you shall classify them [the historic monuments] by order of importance and you shall estimate the sums that would be necessary to conserve them or restore them' (quoted by Preschez, 1989:14). This classification was originally nothing but a catalogue of buildings deserving governmental attention, which would be held by the Minister of the Interior and could be consulted if necessary (Untermaier 1985: 45). It must be noted that if buildings were privately owned the state could not control what happened to them except, following a law of 1841, by compulsorily purchasing them after a declaration of public utility; this was used in exceptional cases such as the Roman theatre at Orange, to clear buildings erected in it. Furthermore there was no doctrine on what should be included in the catalogue, except what inspectors considered 'exceptional and prototypical monuments'.

Mérimée was mainly concerned with preserving the medieval heritage, truly French and Christian, which had been considered as symbolic of obscurantism during the age of Enlightenment of the previous century. This choice was consistent with the desire to consolidate a national image and to educate the citizens. Heritage protection throughout the nineteenth century must be seen as part of rising nationalism. It was an integral part of the machinery, not always successful, to create and consolidate centralist France, whether monarchic, imperial or republican. In this sense, the policies of the nineteenth century have been strongly criticized in the last few years as being too centralist and deliberately ignoring regional characteristics for the sake of a strong image of France.

By 1840 there were 567 listed monuments. They included major ones such as the palace of Jacques Coeur in Bourges, the ramparts of Aigues-Mortes and the Roman bridge over the Gard. The high quality of work and thought of the Commission had a great influence on future legislation: it established the principles on which, to this day, buildings are listed and funds allocated to their conservation, and the basis for limiting the rights to alter them.

The first comprehensive law of protection of historic monuments was sanctioned in 1887 as a result of pressure from the Commission des Monuments Historiques, though it took seventeen years from its first report to the sanctioning of the law. Previous legislation only protected historic monuments against wilful or criminal damage. The 1887 law extended the protection by offering the possibility of listing buildings in the 'national interest' from the point of view of

historic or artistic merit. As the definition was restrictive, the 'national interest' being difficult to prove, not a great number of listings ensued. In the case of private buildings, the consent of the owner had to be obtained before the buildings could be listed. If this consent was refused the state could initiate procedures of compulsory purchase; this extended to the surroundings of the building when these were threatened by unsightly accretions. These powers were used in few but spectacular examples such as Mont Saint-Michel. Most importantly, works affecting a listed building were henceforth subject to ministerial approval.

Two important concepts were introduced in the legislation by the law of 1887. The first, fundamental though general, was that the 'sacred' property rights could be restricted. The classifying of a building meant that ministerial authorization was needed even by the lawful owner to demolish, restore or modify it. This represented a first form of socialization of property rights and would have significant consequences. Until then, only through expropriation could a building and its surroundings be protected.

The second concept resulted from the application of the law and affected the thinking about historic monuments: the protection of the setting of the building was seen as being as important as that of the building itself. The French texts on the subject talk about the *écrin*, which translates as the jewel case, a visually expressive description: 'the surroundings contribute very often to the enhancement of a monument, they are the jewel case which enhances the jewel' (Cros-Mayrevieille 1907, quoted in Frier 1979:21). This notion would later be included in the legislation and affect the insertion of new buildings in historic environments. Perhaps surprisingly, the implementation of the 1887 law did not encounter major difficulties or serious opposition. It was however used with moderation, particularly until 1905.

The first part of the twentieth century

The separation of state and church (1905) played an important role in the debate about heritage, since all religious buildings became 'public'; churches were placed in the ownership of municipalities (*communes*) while cathedrals and other religious buildings were taken over by central government. This led to the necessity of redefining what should or could be protected since 'religious' was not necessarily equivalent to 'national'.

In 1907 a department of specialized architects was set up within the Service des Monuments Historiques, to deal with the preservation of historic buildings. This was to a large extent in response to the problems posed by the religious buildings. While between 1900 and 1905 an average of 24 buildings were listed per year, the figure increased to 260 per year from 1906 to 1914 with a large percentage of religious ones (Parent 1980:86). The nationalization (or municipalization) and the listing of religious buildings helped to secularize them:

they became monuments (i.e. national, republican) and lost their character of temples (Léniard 1989:30).

Then, in 1913, the main act dealing with the protection of historic buildings was sanctioned. It remains unchallenged, though modified and strengthened, to this day. It established as the basis of protection the *classement* of buildings, in other words their listing, without necessarily obtaining the consent of the owner. The ministry in charge of culture is responsible for the *classement* and it generally, though not always, follows the advice of the Commission des Monuments Historiques. The criteria for *classement* are based on the fairly vague and potentially all-embracing concept of 'public interest from the point of view of history or art', as opposed to the 'national interest' as was the case previously. The law is even more relaxed in the case of the *inscription* of buildings on the supplementary list, where 'sufficient interest' can justify the somewhat weaker protection (Morand-Deville 1986:70).

The 1913 Act marks the end of the nineteenth century evolution of the concept of heritage and its preservation. During the whole of the century heritage led to a socialization and nationalization of the past in order to create an 'official memory' and to consolidate national culture. The 1913 Act is the culmination of this evolution which made historic buildings the privileged places of the 'republican, unitary and nationalist memory' (Léniard 1989:30). From then on, with the acceptance of wider definitions, more subjective criteria for listing would be applied, thus permitting, in spite of the continuing centralism of the system, the increasing preservation of buildings of local rather than national interest. This would gradually reduce the apparent conflict between categories of heritage: the one national and 'major', the other local and 'minor'.

A law passed 1930 concerned mainly the protection of natural sites and monuments and made it possible to list these in the same way as historic ones. It was also the first attempt to protect more than just an isolated building. Regulations could be imposed within a defined perimeter, concerning buildings and landscape, and additional controls imposed on development. A Commission Supérieure des Sites was created, similar to the one in charge of the historic monuments. An important consequence of this legislation was that it could be used to protect the surroundings of a listed building. Article 3 of the 1930 law specifically entitled the authorities to create a protective zone around a monument and to impose constraints on the area, without having to resort to compulsory purchase. The implementation of the 1930 law and in particular its Article 3 encountered difficulties; the procedures were slow and cumbersome and were only worth pursuing in exceptional cases (Frier 1979). Nevertheless the law in a modified form is still in force today.

In 1943 the law of 1913 was complemented by a new one concerning the surroundings (*abords*) of historic monuments. It may seem strange that in the middle of the war and under the Vichy government the protection of the surroundings of historic buildings was a major concern. This however has very plausible explanations. From the ideological point of view *famille, travail, patrie*

was the motto of the Vichy government; there is a very short distance between the words *patrie* and *patrimoine*, the latter being a way of reinforcing the former. Furthermore, the thought process is consistent with the link in the nineteenth century between heritage and nationalism. This ideological relationship gave strength to those in government, namely the Minister of Education who was then in charge of the Beaux-Arts and hence of the listing of buildings, and allowed him to pass a law substantially reducing private property rights, which democratically elected deputies would never have sanctioned. Technocrats interested in the architectural heritage had for some time wanted to introduce some form of protection for the surroundings of listed buildings and this became their golden opportunity. The fact that this law was not repealed after the war was probably partly accidental and partly the result of architectural heritage not being, by then, a major concern. 'After the republican legality was re-established, this law was ratified without difficulty because it was neither political nor wicked' (Houlet 1981:183).

The 1943 law, which became Articles 13a and 13b of the 1913 law, is of fundamental importance in that the insertion of new architecture in historic urban areas is in most cases affected by it. The application of the law was placed in the hands of a civil servant, nowadays the Architecte des Bâtiments de France (ABF), whose *avis conforme* (see pp. 179–81) is required for any work within a 500 metre radius of a listed building. As will be explained later, the ABF has a pivotal role in conservation policies. This 'silly and nasty circle' (Seramy 1982, quoted in Jegouzo 1986:79), of which there are some 32, 000 in the country (around every listed building), led to substantial criticisms and the eventual creation in 1983 of the *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain* (ZPPAU). These will be considered on pp. 69–74.

Up to this point heritage protection was concerned with 'monuments', individual buildings or sometimes groups of buildings, which had intrinsic historic and/or aesthetic value. Changes took place over some 100 years concerning the kinds of buildings that deserved protection and by the 1950s this concept had been widened to encompass all types of buildings and not just national landmarks; now for the first time the surroundings, even if they were not of great value in themselves, were given protection as well, but they were not yet independent of the monument. The idea of a conservation area was about to emerge.

THE LOI MALRAUX

The first real link between the legislation dealing with development and with architectural heritage occurred with the Loi Malraux of 1962, which responded to a particular situation: by the late 1950s the period of reconstruction of the war-damaged cities was coming to an end. At the same time major urban expansion was accelerating: motorization increased with the resulting problems of congestion, the economy was being transformed, and large developments started

to encircle the major cities. The main legal instrument to deal with the potential problems resulting from these changes was the decree of 1958 (see p. 23), complemented by another of 1961, concerning urban renewal. It offered the possibility and, most importantly, the financial means (subsidies) to clear whole areas of insanitary housing (*îlots insalubres*) in the centres of cities, and to replace them with new developments which broke with the existing urban fabric (Soucy 1989:26–7). It corresponded to the contemporaneous policies of slum clearance and comprehensive redevelopment in other countries.

Very soon it became apparent that because of the comprehensive character of the operations made possible by this legislation, ‘good’ blocks were being demolished together with the bad ones. Hence the idea of rehabilitating whole urban areas evolved together with a concern to protect historic neighbourhoods. From these preoccupations ensued the 1962 law, which introduced the concept of a *Secteur Sauvegardé*. A. Malraux, in his speech to the National Assembly to introduce his law, said:

During the last century, the historic heritage of each nation was made up of a number of monuments.... But nations are no longer only sensitive to masterpieces; they also have become sensitive to the mere presence of their past.... To save a neighbourhood is therefore to preserve the exterior and modernize the interior.... Restoration reconciles two objectives which until now may have seemed contradictory: preserve our architectural and historic heritage and improve the living and working conditions of the French.

(Malraux 1962, in Barçon 1989:71–2)

A *Secteur Sauvegardé* can be designated when a neighbourhood has a character of historic or aesthetic value or is such that its conservation, restoration and enhancement are justified. Originally the text of the law was clearly aimed at providing different frameworks and resources for public action, to promote collaboration between private and public sectors and to be a counterbalance to comprehensive redevelopment, a kind of comprehensive rehabilitation.

The decree to implement the Malraux Act, which later was incorporated into the Code de l’Urbanisme, thus officially linking the two kinds of legislation, heritage protection and planning, was published in 1963. It created the Commission Nationale des Secteurs Sauvegardés within the Ministère de la Culture, gave the power of veto over planning applications in the *Secteurs* to the Architecte des Bâtiments de France, and introduced the *Plan de Sauvegarde et de Mise en Valeur* (PSMV). The latter is a detailed ‘master plan’, preceding the *Plan d’Occupation des Sols* (POS) which was not introduced until 1967 (Loi d’Orientation Foncière). It is a land use plan with a cultural ‘vocation’, imposing strict controls on all works undertaken in the designated area, creating obligations for both public and private sectors and opening possibilities for the release of subsidies.

Two important elements of the Malraux Act were, first, its emphasis on the urban built environment which, in theory at least, need not be of exceptional quality to merit conservation and, second, its planning character. New buildings or works on existing ones in designated *Secteurs Sauvegardés* could thereafter be authorized or refused entirely in relation to conservation criteria. This substantially extended the protection and controls existing until then and utilized the value of heritage, broadly defined, as a justification to impose limitations on the rights of property.

CHANGES IN THE LAST TWO DECADES

The last twenty years have seen fundamental changes in the protection of the built heritage, in planning and in attitudes towards architecture. Some of these changes and the consequent frequent redistribution of responsibilities are almost impossible to disentangle. They seem at least in part to be the result of inter-ministerial rivalries and of the expansion and diversification of policies relating to the environment which called for new structures. Although all of these changes need not be analysed, the main developments must be explained.

The motivation for the changes was to a large extent a reaction to past mistakes which hit the national media and agitated public opinion: the large developments of the 1960s such as the Montparnasse tower in Paris, numerous housing estates (the so-called *grands ensembles*) throughout France, and the demolition of the Baltard Pavilions in Les Halles. The legislation on heritage protection 'widened its geographical coverage not only to architectural groups but to increasingly large urban, rural or natural sites. It exploited the growing contemporary sensitivity to the historical continuity of the grain of towns and villages' (Preschez, 1990:2).

Both the events of 1968, with their consequences for architectural education, and the later election of a Socialist government, had a substantial bearing on the evolution that took place from the mid-1970s onwards. By now public opinion had placed environmental issues on the political agenda: the concern for the protection of nature was the counterpart to the increased concern for historic areas, as both urban and natural environments were seen as part of the heritage.

The National Plan approved in July 1975 provided the framework for the subsequent legislation; it indicated that 'development should in the future be more modest, better integrated with its built environment, more respectful of the existing populations and their desires;...in urban areas housing improvement and restoration will be preferred to demolition and rebuilding.'

The law of 31 December 1976 (*Réforme de l'urbanisme et de la politique foncière*) introduced a number of new measures to control design through planning documents: changes in the Code de l'Urbanisme allowed a *permis de construire* to be refused if the architecture proposed was harmful to its environment (which included its architectural context); land use plans (POS) could thereafter have a role in the protection of the architectural heritage; *Zones*

d'Environnement Protégé (ZEP) were introduced mainly for the protection of rural landscapes (including their architecture); the use of the *permis de démolir* was generalized (Jegouzo 1986:82 and Preschez 1989:16).

In addition to the ZADs and ZACs, a new instrument called the *Zone d'Intervention Foncière* (ZIF) was introduced in 1975 giving the local authority wide powers of preemption on the sale of urban land. This allowed local authorities not only to obtain information on land deals but also to build land reserves which could later be used for public works. Altogether these measures confirmed and reinforced the role of the state and the local authorities as potential developers and builders.

The complementary regulations of the POS in the laws of 1977 (and later those of 1983) specifically took heritage into account. Architectural controls to protect an existing character were henceforth available to all local authorities (Règlement National de l'Urbanisme R. 111–21 to 24, L. 123–1, R. 123–21). All of these measures were aimed at integrating heritage protection within urban planning policy and consequently affected the possibilities of controlling the insertion of new buildings within historic environments: past and future heritage were now seen as part of a continuum. In Paris, which is still the model for the whole country, a new POS prepared and approved in advance of the new legislation reintroduced regulations concerning heights, building lines and profiles which had been abandoned in the 1960s (Subileau 1975:66–77). A return to a more traditional view of the urban environment, concerned with its past and particularly its morphology, was apparent.

Elsewhere, another set of policies aimed at improving the quality of life developed from the early 1970s under the title of *Politique des Villes Moyennes*, policies for the medium sized towns. The Sixth National Plan (1971–5) mentioned that better use needed to be made of their potential. Their advantages were emphasized, particularly from the point of view of the environment and quality of life. The first of the measures affecting the medium sized towns was the banning of slab and tower blocks from cities of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, the limits on height and length of blocks and the imposition of a minimum percentage of individual houses in major schemes (Circular, November 1971). Though there was never a specific law relating to the *Villes Moyennes*, the next Minister of the Environment issued a letter to all *préfets* in February 1973, advising them on the objectives of this policy and on what measures to take; this was followed by a Circular in July 1974. The policy seems to have been the result of unanimous requests from local authorities and a desire by central government to develop these cities as counterbalances to the large ones. The means to implement this policy were 'contracts' between the state and the cities concerned, leading to financial help from the former to the latter; their objective was to establish for each city a global and long term strategy to restructure the centres, renew and restore old neighbourhoods and improve housing (Circular No. 74–112).

The government wished to encourage the authorities to prepare programmes for environmental improvements and development which would otherwise not have received central government subsidies: typical examples were pedestrian routes, open spaces, parking and street furniture. Between 1973 and 1978, more than fifty contracts for the Villes Moyennes were signed (Merlin and Choay, 1988:172). The pedestrian areas in the centre of so many French towns and cities were one of the results of these contracts. An important consequence was the related concern for the preservation and enhancement of city centres even when they were not protected by special designations such as *Secteurs Sauvegardés*. Care for the design of new buildings in these areas was part of this concern, which reflected a new attitude towards the urban environment (for an analysis of the Villes Moyennes policies, see Scargill 1983:62–86). A typical example of this kind of action is given by the *Contrat de Ville Moyenne* signed by the city of Douai in 1976, which included the following: the improvement of the banks of the river which flows through the city, a pedestrian area in the centre of the city, improvements to specific buildings, the provision of open spaces, new and improved dwellings and the improvement of a theatre (Douai 1976).

From 1977 onwards the promotion of architectural quality received a significant boost: in 1977 architecture was declared by law *d'intérêt public* (in the public interest). The legislators decided that if good architecture was required, properly trained architects had to be involved; hence most applications (the exceptions being small buildings or works undertaken by the owners themselves) for the *permis de construire* must be accompanied by drawings produced and signed by qualified architects. The Conseils d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement (CAUE) were another innovation introduced by the 1977 Law on Architecture and set up in 1978, confirming the state's commitment to architecture; these advisory bodies were aimed at developing architectural sensitivity in the population as a whole through advice, education and guidance (see Chapter 5).

These changes in the approach to architecture were undoubtedly related to the events of 1968 and the rebellion against the monopoly on architectural education held by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and its academicism (Lucan 1989:24–32). Henceforth,

however diverse, the projects... were to stress the daily spatial experience of transition from the street to the dwelling, a basic component of urban architecture. Integration with the context, regard for urban complexities and links between spaces are now the accepted rule.

(Béhar and Salama 1988:13)

The importance given to architecture was also connected with direct presidential intervention and in that sense shows continuity in French tradition. Giscard d'Estaing, who came to power in 1974 and strongly supported the legislative changes, saw himself as a *bâtitteur*, a builder giving the lead to the nation, just

as the French kings had done. His presidency was in marked contrast to that of his predecessor, Georges Pompidou, who was happy to give free rein to the private sector and whose legacy includes the least loved developments of the capital, such as the Montparnasse tower and the Front de Seine (Lucan 1989:116). One exception, the Georges Pompidou Centre, the first of the major public cultural buildings of the post-war era, was started during Pompidou's presidency but finished under Giscard's; the design was chosen through an international competition; it marked a new beginning for public patronage of architecture and gave architecture political overtones. Giscard's example was to be followed by his successors and by other levels of administration, culminating in a wealth of public commissions in the 1980s. The profession has since acquired a very high profile in political and media circles and therefore in the public eye.

Another result of this renewed interest in architectural quality was the development in the late 1970s of a concern for the integration of new architecture in historic environments. Thus, at the end of 1979 and as part of a national campaign for architectural renaissance promoted by central government and entitled *Les Mille Jours pour l'Architecture*, a major exhibition was presented at the Grand Palais under the title *Construire en Quartier Ancien*. The catalogue shows how the subject was debated at the time, giving examples of good and poor practice. In its introduction the then minister responsible, Michel d'Ornano, stated: 'We must erase the boundary between what we have, in other words what our ancestors have left to us, and the current collective creation of an environment of quality which will be the heritage of our descendants' (Ministère de l'Environnement et du Cadre de Vie, 1980b). The various 'attitudes' adopted by the architects towards the relationship between old and new was the main concern of the exhibition; these attitudes varied from 'level 0 of integration' to analogy, with integration, contrast and invisibility in between. It looked at individual buildings as well as whole neighbourhoods and the examples were not all French: the City of London and Cambridge were included among them.

In the same year, the Ministère de l'Environnement also published a study of the integration of new architecture in historic areas entitled *Intégration Urbaine et Architecturale*, which developed a theoretical framework and critically analysed a number of examples from a multi-storey car park in the medieval centre of Nantes to a block of flats in the nineteenth century area of Lille. The book first looks at the evolution of urban centres from the socioeconomic and morphological points of view; it mentions in particular the role played by the land market in the shape of cities, the importance of both the grain and the status of a building (e.g. a monument is something special), as well as of more usual elements:

To analyse an urban site means comprehending its form together with the social, economic and cultural functions for which it is made. ...These diverse elements are readable, at the level of the spatial organization

(streets, gardens, square, courtyards...) as well as of the buildings (height, volume, rhythm, land division, density,...).

(Ministère de l'Environnement et du Cadre de Vie 1980a:18)

Equally, the insertion of new buildings is not seen as an aesthetic preoccupation in isolation from other urban issues, but on the contrary one that is closely linked to these issues:

Architectural integration is the result of multiple factors: on one side the mode of production, the financial budget, and the brief; on the other the urban and architectural environment. A precise answer can only result from a weighting of these elements, which means a prior analysis. Regulations should insist on the obligation to undertake such an analysis rather than try to define particular rules to be followed.

(Ministère de l'Environnement et du Cadre de Vie 1980a:104).

The book considers that the twenty-five or so years following the war saw a change in the design of cities which has damaged traditional relationships, ignoring human scale, human relations, local cultures and hierarchies. It makes a number of recommendations which start before the design stage: those commissioning new works must consider whether or not their brief, the functions proposed or the choice of site are contrary to the character of the context. Other recommendations are more conventional and relate to building form, technology and detailing; the analysis of the area which takes into account all of its characteristics is seen as the key to success. The above quotes from this book indicate that, although thinking has progressed since its publication, it remains very current. Significantly its aim is not to impose rules or solutions but to encourage reflection.

As if to emphasize the links between heritage protection and planning, the Ministère de l'Environnement et du Cadre de Vie was created in 1978. The Direction de l'Aménagement Foncier et de l'Urbanisme (DAFU) was set up within this new ministry with a number of functions held until then by the Direction de l'Architecture of the Ministère de la Culture. Michel d'Ornano, the minister responsible for this move, is reported to have said, 'I am taking the Greeks to the Romans'. This comment illustrates one important motivation for the changes: groups of civil servants, the French Corps, all of whom have graduated from the same elite educational institutions, the *Grandes Ecoles*, compete with each other and do not easily relinquish responsibilities to non-Corps members (for a more detailed analysis of the conflicts between Corps, see Ardagh 1982:82–92); the Corps which ruled over planning was that of the Ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées (the Romans) and the one responsible for historic buildings was that of the Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques (the Greeks). 'For a century and a half the two Corps manifested such gut opposition to each other that it appeared to be a fact of nature' (Houlet 1989:76). The transfer of responsibilities

from one ministry to the other was seen, mistakenly, as a solution to the conflict; it was hoped that by having both set of professionals under one roof, they would collaborate rather than oppose each other (see [Chapter 6](#)).

At the same time the Services Départementaux de l'Architecture (SDA) were created with, in general, the Architecte des Bâtiments de France at their head. These services were given very wide powers (Decree No. 79-130, March 1979) to veto planning applications, to advise architects, and to influence policy relating to the design of buildings. They were field services in the *départements* of the new Ministère de l'Environnement.

Though this super-ministry was disbanded in 1981, the DAFU survived to become the Direction de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (DAU) and was located within the newly created Ministère de l'Équipement, thus giving it 'cultural' credentials: planning responsibilities remained with Équipement and heritage protection was thereafter shared, in none too clear a fashion, between it and the rival Ministère de la Culture. Equally the SDAs remained in existence as a field service of both ministries and even, for some functions, of the Ministère de l'Environnement (which dealt with the 'green' environment). On the other hand the specific functions of looking after historic buildings, particularly those belonging to central government, always remained within the Direction du Patrimoine in the Ministère de la Culture. After the election of Chirac as president in 1995, the allocation of responsibilities between ministries has altered once again, but the changes need not be discussed here.

The preceding pages give a somewhat confused impression of the situation during this period. This is the result of frequent changes in the allocation of responsibilities as well as incremental legislation covering a whole spectrum of issues. New and interrelated items appeared on the agenda: the environment, quality of life in towns, local heritage, and so on. Additionally the government started to take a lead in the production of quality architecture and became concerned with the relationship between past and future heritages. By the end of the 1970s the new approach to architecture, the modifications of the legislation, the changed administrative structures and a substantial body of studies had prepared the way for the decentralization laws which were introduced by the first Socialist government, further altering the structures.

THE DECENTRALIZATION LAWS

During 1982 and 1983 a series of laws and decrees was sanctioned, aimed at decentralizing the French administration for the first time since the Revolution. They transferred a number of responsibilities to locally elected bodies and, perhaps paradoxically, reinforced the powers of some of the local representatives of central government. The title of *préfet* was replaced by that of *commissaire de la république* (the change lasted only a few years and *préfet* is once again the official name), and the functions of this post changed in that they became solely representative of central government rather than, as hitherto, combining these

with the role of chief executive of the *département* or *région*. The 1982 law gave this latter role to the presidents of the regional or departmental elected councils.

At municipal level the most important changes introduced by the decentralization laws concerned planning. This was recognized as a local function provided that general rules were respected; the locally elected representatives were not meant to forget central government surveillance, exercised by the *préfet*. The main innovation from the planning point of view was that the right to prepare local plans and to grant the French equivalents of planning consent passed from central to municipal government.

Soon after the coming to power of the first Mitterrand government, in October 1980, a conference was held under the joint auspices of the Ministère de la Culture and the Ministère de l'Urbanisme et du Logement. Known as the *Séminaire de l'Arbresle* (from its location) it discussed the surroundings of the historic monuments, particularly the so-called 'silly and nasty circle' of 500 metres. Criticisms of this arbitrary circle had been made for a long time by architects, *maires* and other administrators. Those responsible for the vetting of permits within these circles, the ABFs, were themselves conscious of the criticisms. Furthermore they were worried about their future within a decentralized France in which their role and the legitimacy of their veto might be vigorously challenged. One of the outcomes of this debate was the introduction of the *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain* (ZPPAU), to replace the 500 metre circles. As this measure was part of the decentralization laws, it gave the responsibility for their designation and management to local councils rather than government civil servants.

The details of these fundamental changes will be discussed in the next chapters. However the consequences in relation to the evolution of architectural quality and its integration need to be mentioned here. Throughout France, *maires* suddenly have a level of power which they had never dreamt of before but which also gives them responsibilities and makes them accountable. This is happening at the same time as the image of the city is acquiring a much greater importance than previously in attracting investors. *Maires* are therefore faced with a particularly difficult choice: to promote the heritage of their city and put a brake on innovative architecture, to take the opposite approach or to attempt to combine the two. Each option will probably raise the hackles of certain groups and *maires* are no longer able to blame another administration for 'wrong', unpopular, decisions.

The example of Paris and of what are now called the *Grands projets du président* reflect and exemplify the French situation and have an important effect on the *maires* of other towns. In the same way as London at the beginning of the 1980s saw a confrontation between a Conservative central government and a Labour Greater London Council, Paris had a Socialist President opposing a Conservative *Maire*, who for a while was also Prime Minister. The effects, however, of this confrontation have been fundamentally different, as in Paris both men tried to outshine the other by investment and improvements in the

fabric of the city. New buildings and the renewal of old districts have become an integral part of political manoeuvring.

In France, the changes of the last ten years have to a large extent prepared the path: throughout the country new architecture has appeared in the most diverse styles and contexts. A large proportion of the new buildings are public and represent a city's claim to modernity but without destroying its past. Some examples have attracted substantial media coverage, and show the importance gained by the subject: Nîmes and Montpellier for instance have been competing with each other to show the world (and hence potential investors) that they are cities with a past but also with a vision for the future (Anderton, 1990b). 'Awards are regularly given to the "leader-cities" in communications, such as Nîmes and Montpellier, which are of course also those which are most talked about on architectural subjects' (Chaslin 1991:19).

The flourishing of public architecture has been helped by the Code des Marchés Publics, published in 1986, which regulates the public sector's commissioning: it requires the use of competitions for choosing designs and architects in the majority of cases (see Chapter 5) where public funding of buildings is involved.

A further innovation resulting from decentralization was the creation by a decree dated 15 November 1984 of the Commissions Régionales du Patrimoine Historique, Archéologique et Ethnologique (COREPHAE) with responsibility for advising on the listing of buildings. Presided over by the *préfet de région*, these committees comprise thirty members including locally elected representatives and members of local associations concerned with heritage. The purpose of creating these was to decentralize and make more democratic the selection of buildings to be listed. It continued a movement started in the previous decade of protecting industrial buildings, buildings of regional rather than national interest and nineteenth and twentieth century buildings.

The decentralization laws also affected the development of the *Secteurs Sauvegardés* policies. After the initial period of enthusiasm when some forty-three *Secteurs Sauvegardés* were designated in the first ten years, the policy went through a period of stagnation: seventeen were created between 1972 and 1976 and then none until 1982. Involvement of the local authorities was minimal at the time and the effects of the *Plans de Sauvegarde* very controversial. According to Houlet, they were 'admirable things as far as studies are concerned... at came out of them? Dream cities' (1989:77).

The implementation of these very demanding plans was beyond the means of most authorities and they were gradually put aside. In the initial phase enthusiasm the state, wanting to show what could be done, designated *opérationnels* (operational blocks) within *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and invested considerable sums in their restoration and modernization. The budget was incorporated into that of urban renewal, which did not distinguish until later between renovation within and outside a *Secteur Sauvegardé*. Some spectacular results were obtained in places such as Chartres, Uzès, and the Marais in Paris but they were limited in

scope and seen as elitist; FF6.5 million was spent on the restoration of not quite five hectares in Avignon, 4 million in Chartres, 10 million in the Marais and 870, 000 for half a hectare in Colmar. The cost of the operations and the changes in the government's attitude led to the abandonment of the designation of *îlots opérationnels* by the mid 1970s.

As general democratic control has increased, *maires* who previously had resisted the imposition of a central government mechanism are now taking a more positive approach. Apart from reasons of control, power and economics, the renewed enthusiasm may reflect the fact that the local authorities, the *maires* in particular, are now involved right from the beginning in the studies of the *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and throughout the implementation of the plans, even though the cost is borne partly by central government. Furthermore, though the preparatory studies have become no less exhaustive, they tend to be very different from the early ones and are often prepared by younger architect-planners. As a result the plans are more flexible in their requirements for restoration; they tend to acknowledge much more than earlier ones the possibilities of new constructions, and reflect both the past history and the future potential of the areas. With the renewed concern in the image of cities, the procedure has had a renaissance not expected at the beginning of the decade (Ministère de l'Équipement, des Transports et du Tourisme 1993). By 1995, a total of 88 *Secteurs Sauvegardés* had been designated, 44 plans for these had been approved and 16 were published awaiting approval. Furthermore the ministry now has a waiting list of areas wanting to become a *Secteur Sauvegardé*.

Babelon and Chastel (1980:30) suggest that the democratization and regionalization of the concept of heritage may now allow its value to be discovered by those groups which, until recently, had felt excluded from the mere notion because of its centralism and elitism. Similarly Léniaud, reviewing the changes brought by decentralization and the widening of the definition of heritage, said: 'The republican memory seems threatened by the proliferation of specific memories.... The widening of the field of heritage is nothing but the democratization of the republican values applied to the works of the past' (Léniaud, 1989:35). His view summarizes the transformation that has occurred since the beginning of the nineteenth century: heritage is no longer just what a centralist state chooses as national and republican symbols; it is also what a multiplicity of groups regard as such.

The changes that have taken place in the past ten years are the result of bureaucratic rather than popular debates, although they reflect more fundamental changes in French society. They have created a multiplicity of layers of government and bodies responsible for diverse but often overlapping matters: new structures have been added to old ones rather than replacing them. The consequences of this proliferation as they affect this study will be further discussed in [Chapter 6](#).

CONCLUSIONS

The most noticeable aspect of the history of planning and, even more so, of heritage protection in France is the continuity of its centralist character. Although until very recently the two strands followed separate paths, they both have been part of the machinery to consolidate the state, to ensure the maintenance of order and to balance the rights of property with socially acceptable policies. They additionally reflect a clear and sustained idea of what French culture is. The history of these two converging paths is made up of an accumulation of measures which gradually limited property rights and broadened the concept of heritage; at the same time the state never relinquished its role as both a custodian and a patron.

Two closely related elements have been used throughout French history to enhance the image of the state: architectural heritage and patronage. The first reflects continuity and gives legitimacy; it is selective and elitist, responding to the needs of the government of the day to adopt symbols of a particular historic period. The legislation protecting the heritage must be seen as a consequence of this desire. It has evolved from the protection limited to monarchic symbols to a much wider, more democratic and pluralistic coverage, without losing its original objective.

The second element corresponds to the need of successive regimes to leave permanent marks for posterity. It has led to a planning system which does not limit itself to the control of the private sector but empowers the public sector to intervene directly in development. From the monarchs onwards, the government or its representatives have been builders and have made a direct impact on the shape of urban France both directly through its commissions and indirectly by setting an example and a quality standard. At times, as was the case during the Haussman period or during the past decade, the results reflect a great confidence in the future as the best of contemporary architecture is commissioned.

An additional characteristic which pervades the French system throughout its history is its concern with order. It explains and justifies, at least in part, the weight of planning regulations concerned with aesthetics: continuous street frontages of uniform heights, profiles and materials are the expressions in stone of civic order. Public utility, often a cover for public security, has provided the justification for the state to intervene and impose limitations on private land and on building rights. At the same time legislators have been able to argue successfully that these limitations were a way of protecting private property, anarchy being its worst enemy. Initially the aesthetic issues were not important *per se* but were a disguised instrument of control; however the physical order to which they led (exemplified by the Haussmanian boulevard) became an aesthetic in its own right, equated with the French urban environment.

The last twenty years have seen new developments which have not altered the direction of policies but have widened their scope. Public attitudes towards heritage and architecture have evolved and diversified: they are no longer seen as

the property or the concern only of the central state or of an elite. The decentralization laws have given powers to the *maires* which hitherto were limited to the state and which have awakened their desire to leave their mark on their city. The creation of the local heritage of the future has rejoined the protection of the past and the two have become complementary and inseparable. Aesthetic and heritage concerns are now at the centre of urban planning policy as they are seen as part of, and not separate from, socio-economic issues.

To summarize, two converging phenomena seem to have taken place in France. The first is one of constant centralization: Paris and the monarch/president provide the lead and the example of what is to be done in terms of protection, control and creativity. The mark of quality originates at the centre and radiates from there. The other, more recent phenomenon is the decentralization of at least some decision making and the resulting competition between cities; this does not threaten the power of the centre, it is additional to it. The two phenomena lead to a greater awareness and concern for local and regional heritage, combined with a desire to emulate Paris and to create a vibrant and marketable image for each city.

The history examined in this chapter offers some explanations for the fact that France manages to insert contemporary architecture within historic environments. First, it shows how the French procedures for protecting the built heritage have evolved gradually over a long period of time, thus establishing a mature tradition. Second, it shows that the planning system has evolved and established a degree of acceptance and confidence which allows it to impose aesthetic controls. Third, it indicates how the role of the state as builder and leader has a long tradition and how this role has gradually permeated to other levels of government and influenced taste in architecture: the confidence to commission modern architecture is a direct consequence of this. Finally, it has shown how these various strands have converged and how environmental quality has emerged as a central concern. The next chapter will deal with the legislation as it is today.

NOTE

- 1 So called because Louis-Philippe became king after the July 1830 revolution. His legitimacy was contested because he was not a direct descendant of the last monarch.

CONTROL OF NEW CONSTRUCTION

This chapter analyses the current procedures involved in the control of development in France. It starts with the most general situation where no specific plan exists and progresses through areas with various levels of protection. This information is available in other studies but the selection and the emphasis given here reflect the central interest of the study, namely urban areas with an architectural and/or historic heritage.

CODE DE L'URBANISME

The Code de l'Urbanisme is a major text which includes all the laws relating to planning (articles prefixed with L) and the regulations affecting planning (articles prefixed with R). It specifies the responsibilities of various levels of administration and incorporates the laws dealing with expropriation and preemption, and those dealing with *urbanisme opérationnel*, positive planning, which will be discussed in [Chapter 5](#). All the laws discussed in this chapter have been incorporated in the Code which is updated every so often, as changes in the legislation occur. Development over the French territory as a whole is regulated by these general planning rules, often called the Règles Nationales de l'Urbanisme (RNU). These regulations are however considered as minimal controls and in most cases apply only where there are no local plans better suited to a specific area; a few of the rules, including Article R.111–21 quoted below, remain in force even when there are other plans and can, in cases of conflict, overrule the local plans (Schmit 1995:51).

The RNU controls *inter alia* the location and servicing of buildings, their position on a site, their volume, and their external appearance.

Thus if by their location, their architecture, their size or their outside appearance, buildings or works might interfere with the character or the interest of neighbouring areas, sites or natural or urban landscapes, or the protection of monumental perspectives, the *permis de construire* can be refused or be subject to strict conditions.

(Article R.111–21)

In areas partly built, which have a unified appearance but are not included in renovation programmes, buildings higher than the average height in the neighbouring areas can be refused the *permis* or this may be subject to strict conditions.

(Article R.111–22)

As the above examples show, non-compliance with any of these regulations, which include aesthetic considerations, can lead to the refusal of a *permis de construire* (see pp. 54–6). However these specific controls imposed by the RNU are discretionary: permission *may* be refused, it does not have to be; those in charge of delivering the *permis* can therefore choose to ignore that part of the regulations (on this permissive character of the regulations, see Booth 1985:21 and 1989:87–8). Although it happens infrequently, *maires* have been known to refuse a *permis de construire*, basing their decision entirely on Article R.111–21, because they considered that the appearance of a proposed building would interfere with the character of the neighbouring area.

The following Article was introduced in 1983 as part of the decentralization laws. It places a heavy responsibility on local authorities:

The French territory is the common heritage of the nation. Each local authority, within the framework of its responsibilities, is its manager and its guarantor.

(Article L.110)

Thus the Code brings the concept of heritage protection within the jurisdiction of planning, albeit in an indirect form. Regulations resulting from the laws protecting the heritage are incorporated in the Code as they affect planning documents or building control. They will be referred to later in this chapter. Among the prescriptions of the Code are those affecting the production of development plans, the *Schéma Directeur* (SD) and the *Plan d'Occupation des Sols* (POS), the latter being the most relevant here (Articles L. 123–1 to 12 and R. 123–1 to 36 of the Code).

PLAN D'OCCUPATION DES SOLS

The *Plan d'Occupation des Sols* (POS) is a land use plan at the local scale. It includes a report (*Rapport de Présentation*), a zoning map with additional graphic documents and a set of regulations. Its format is fairly standard as it has to follow the pattern set by the Code de l'Urbanisme, particularly in relation to the various zones and their regulations. These are adapted to the specific local situation.

The zones designated by the POS are divided into two main categories: the U (urban) zones are those which have available services and hence are where building is generally allowed; these zones can be subdivided, for instance

according to land use or character. The N zones are natural ones, generally with no infrastructure, which may not be urbanized either temporarily (NA, NB) or permanently (NC, ND); the reasons for these protections and for changing the zones are specified in the Code (see [Figure 3.1](#)). Of particular interest are the ND zones which are protected *inter alia*

because of the quality of the site, the natural environment, the landscape and the interest, particularly the aesthetic, historical or ecological interest.
(Article R.123–18).

NA zones are those most frequently used for future new development: for instance *Zones d'Aménagement Concerté* (ZAC) are mostly located in NA zones; a special plan for the area, the *Plan d'Aménagement de Zone* (PAZ), is prepared and the zoning is changed, following a specific procedure (see [Chapter 5](#)).

For each of the designated zones, there is a chapter in the POS regulations and each of these chapters includes fifteen Articles dealing with the following:

- 1 Land uses which are allowed or allowed subject to conditions.
- 2 Land uses which are not allowed.
- 3 Access and roads.
- 4 Availability of utilities (water, sewage, electricity).
- 5 Land characteristics (form, area, etc.).
- 6 Siting of buildings in relation to roads and public easements (e.g. rights of way and access).
- 7 Siting of buildings in relation to limits of property.
- 8 Siting of buildings in relation to others on the same property.
- 9 Coverage of land.
- 10 Height of buildings.
- 11 External appearance (shapes, materials).
- 12 Parking.
- 13 Open spaces and landscaping.
- 14 Maximum land coverage (plot ratio).
- 15 Development exceeding the plot ratio.

Not all of these Articles have to be completed for each POS; for example, those relative to the land coverage, height and external appearance of buildings (Nos. 9, 10 and 11) are optional. Among the compulsory regulations are those prescribing land use and the siting of buildings, their relationship with adjoining structures and with roads (article R 123–21 of the Code). Article 11, when it is used, is frequently the longest of the Articles as the regulations may be very detailed. In parts of Lille for example (zone UAa), it regulates materials, the rhythms of the façade, window and door heights, detailing, gables, extensions to buildings,

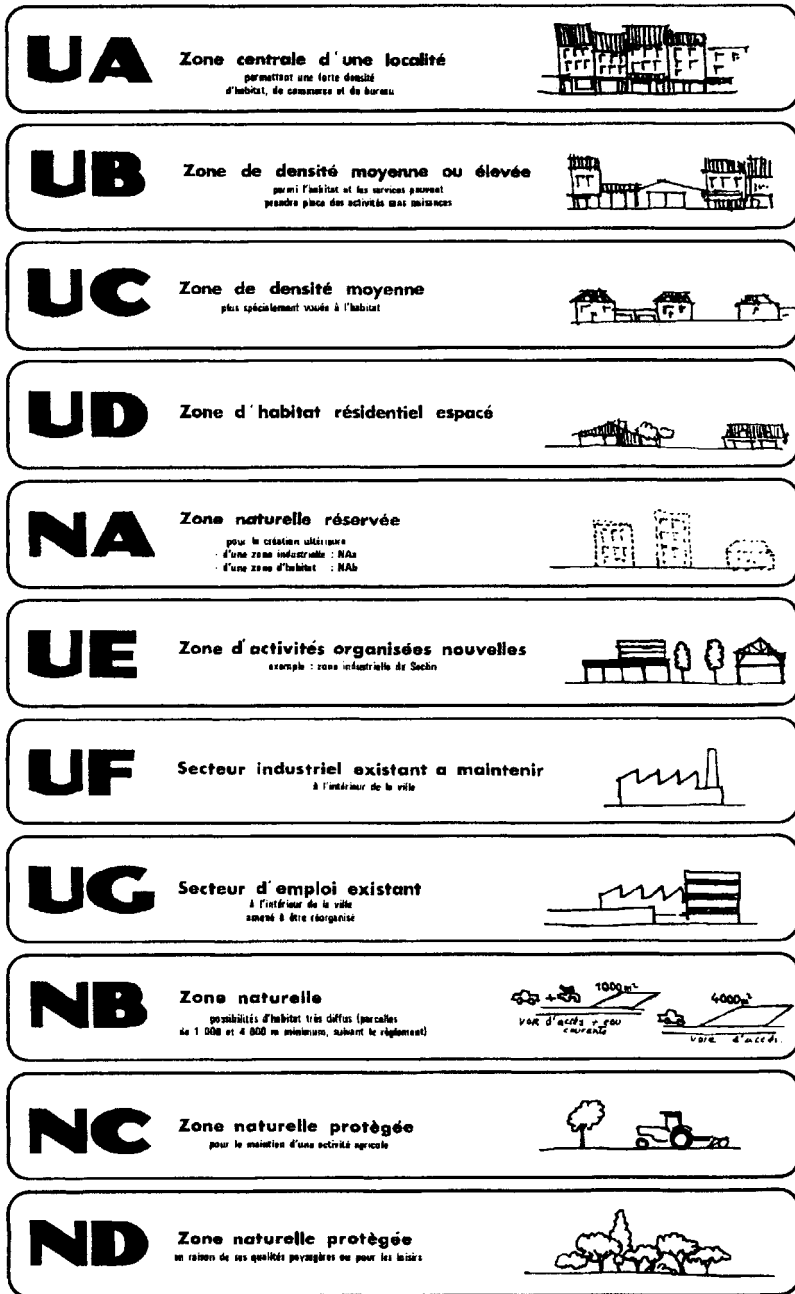


Figure 3.1 The zones of a POS: illustrated examples

Source: Agence d'Urbanisme de la Communauté Urbaine de Lille 1974:38-9

location of oil tanks, gas and electricity meters, fences and enclosing walls, and dormer windows (see [Figure 3.2](#)).

The POS report must analyse the local environment and identify any elements that need to be enhanced or protected by the plan; it provides the justification for the regulations. The thoroughness with which a study of the area is undertaken varies. As will be explained later, in spite of the decentralization laws, most POS are still prepared by the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement (DDE), a central government field service. When *communes* take charge of the preparation, they can be assisted by the Conseil d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et d'Environnement or by the local ABF. Samuels describes the urban morphological study prepared for the report of the POS for Asnières sur Oise: 'since it would be a legally binding document, it had to demonstrate the legitimacy of the prescriptions it was putting forward' (1993: 117). Thus the study includes streets and blocks, plots, building form and elements of construction, and is used to develop the objectives for the area.

Similarly, the *Rapport de Présentation* of the POS for Pontoise recounts the history of the town as it affects its shape, and describes the different elements of the townscape: 'The streets are winding and have very steep gradients as a result of the location. Their width varies greatly, from 3 to 14 metres' (Commune de Pontoise 1987:59).

The graphic documents which accompany the POS can designate, if necessary, those areas or buildings that should be 'protected or enhanced for aesthetic, historic or ecological reasons' (Article R. 123–18); within these, special regulations may apply particularly regarding the demolition of existing buildings. Few local authorities make use of this possibility but the city of Chartres has included some thirty such buildings within its POS: it gives them maximum protection and has the advantage that the implementation of such a policy is entirely in the hands of the *commune*.

If the area covered by the POS includes some form of protected area such as a listed building or its surroundings (see pp. 60–2), these must be included as easement in an Annexe to the POS (Article R. 126–1). In such cases, the Architecte des Bâtiments de France is always involved in the preparation of the plan and the regulations concerning the appearance of buildings are included in the plan. Thus in the Doubs, the POS regulations impose strict measures over the use of regional style, local materials, and so on. Similarly in the Vaucluse, the POS of certain towns

prohibits the use of pastiche of a style extraneous to the region and requires builders to respect the former appearance of buildings. New openings must be similar to those of surrounding buildings and regional materials (roman tiles, stone or rendering in warm colours) must be used. Departures from these can only be permitted when an interesting scheme of contemporary architecture is proposed.

(Frier 1979:60, footnote 48)

LILLE	UAc	UAc	UB	UC
ARTICLE 5 CARACTERISTIQUES DES TERRAINS	Néant	Néant	Néant	Façade : 5 m
ARTICLE 9 EMPRISE AU SOL				
PRINCIPE HABITATION		60 %	50 %	50 %
AUTRES CAS		80 %	80 %	80 %
EXCEPTIONS	Néant	Dépassements autorisés : - Terrain d'une certaine superficie - Rez-de-chaussée réservé à des activités ou équipements - Pour des opérations impliquant un lot complet ou une partie importante d'ilot couvert) ou moins 3 000 m ² - Article 7 § II - 2 - Création de places supplémentaires - Dant creuse - Destruction de bâtiment par sinistre		
ARTICLE 10 HAUTEUR RELATIVE	Néant	H <= L	H <= L	H <= L
PRINCIPE	Néant	H <= 21 m		
HAUTEUR DES CONSTRUCTIONS				
CAS PARTICULIERS	H >= 11 m sur les rues de largeur > 15 m	H >= 11 m sur les rues de largeur > 15 m	> 15 m	H >= 11 m sur les rues de largeur > 15 m Dont creuse
HAUTEUR ABSOLUE	H <= 21 m			

Figure 3.2 Example of a summary table of POS regulations: Articles 5, 9 and 10 from Lille

Source: DDE Nord

The loophole presented by the last sentence is significant in the context considered here. It is found in a number of similar documents.

In Paris, the POS published in 1975 gave details of the maximum permitted heights, varying according to the neighbourhood. For the first time in the city's history these were in some cases lower than in the past. One example is the historic centre where the maximum height has been reduced from 31 metres or even 37 metres to 25 metres (see [Figure 3.3](#)). Additionally, the plan has protected views where limits on heights are even more specific. Reacting against the mistakes of the 1960s this POS aimed at 'maintaining the street wherever it is well established and creating it where it is only a sketch' (Subileau 1975:77).

This means regulating the building lines to ensure their continuity but avoiding excessive uninterrupted lengths. It means analysing and regulating not only the heights but also the profiles of the buildings, called the *gabarit*: depending on the width of a street, the maximum permitted vertical height of the front of the building is significantly lower than the maximum building height allowed (Subileau 1975:66–89). The justification for these regulations is morphological:

Although these recent regulations are sometimes regarded as over-systematic and criticized as symptomatic of a return to the past, they enable the redefinition of tested urban forms. Compliance with the building line was again to provide open spaces within the block, which thus became once more a component of the urban texture. This approach tends towards the differentiation of spaces: street façade/courtyard façade, public spaces/private spaces, etc.

(Béhar and Salama 1988:10)

The occasionally negative consequences of some of these policies, if rigidly applied, can be seen in the example of the block of flats in rue Descartes, described on pp. 105–6.

The revised POS for the city of Lyon is based on detailed studies of the townscape of the city in general and its various neighbourhoods. The new regulations impose severe restrictions on the appearance of buildings, particularly through Articles 10 and 11. Not only is the total height of buildings controlled but also the number of levels and the (minimum) height of the ground floor. Basements, rhythms, roofs and projecting elements on the façades are all subject to regulations (Allaman 1993a). Recent examples in Nancy, Mulhouse, Saint-Pierre-des-Corps and Marly-le-Roy indicate that the new generation of POS follow the same pattern: they start with a careful analysis of the existing forms of the city and use it to justify regulations on the appearance of buildings.

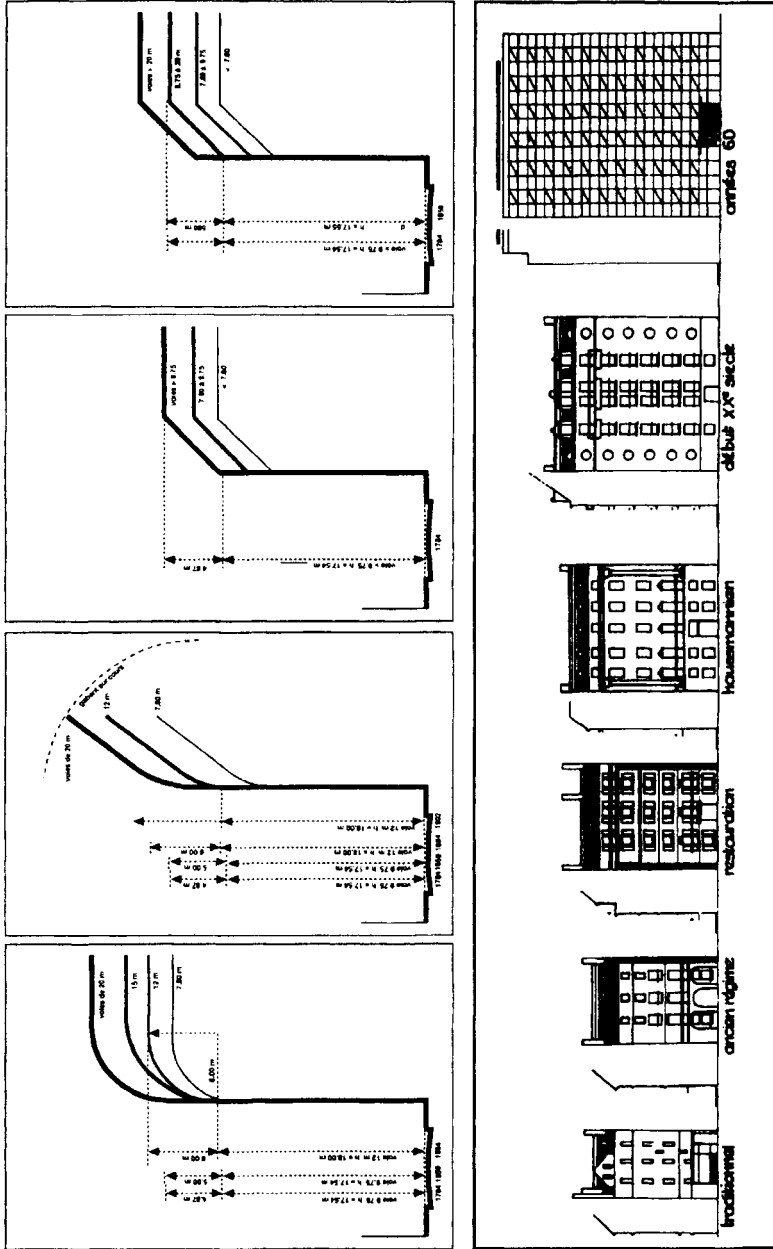


Figure 3.3 Evolution of the *gabarit* in Paris regulations

Source: Paris Projet 13/14

In some cases, the POS may be accompanied by a kind of design guide with no statutory role, similar to the supplementary planning guidance used in Britain. The city of Pontoise, for example, has a *Cahier de Recommendations Architecturales* which complements Section 11 of the POS within the UA zone and is concerned with the external appearance of buildings. It deals *inter alia* with the positioning of buildings, their volume and scale, the use of materials and the roofs. Often in the past this kind of guidance has been provided at *département* level, either by the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement or by the Conseil d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement (CAUE). With decentralization *communes* now tend to assume this responsibility, if their resources allow it.

The POS is a legal document enforceable on third parties: this means that anyone (and not just the applicant) who considers that its regulations have not been respected by the granting or refusal of a building permit can take the case to the *Tribunal Administratif*. As pointed out by Boorh (1989:141): 'The right of redress within the system is founded principally on the accountability of the decision maker before the law.'

The *Tribunaux Administratifs* are special courts set up to make judgements on the application of the law by public officers. A third party may challenge the legality of a decision, not its policy aspects, if they comply with published documents. The *Conseil d'Etat* is the highest court which deals with appeals against decisions taken by a *Tribunal Administratif*. Since 1983 the preparation of a POS has been the responsibility of the *communes*. It is used fundamentally to evaluate applications for development. The *maires* are the decision makers and they are the ones that can be taken to court. On 1 January 1991, 13, 111 *communes*, just over a third of the total, had an approved POS (Schmit 1991a: 44).

PERMIS DE CONSTRUIRE

France has one permit which combines planning and building controls. The basis of building control is the need to obtain a *permis de construire* or building permit. In its present form it dates from 1967 and was incorporated in the Code de l'Urbanisme:

Anyone intending to erect or position a building, whether for residential purposes or not, whether with or without foundations, must first obtain a *permis de construire*. This is also required for works carried out on existing buildings, if the effect of these is to change the building's use, exterior appearance or volume, or to add extra floors.

(Article L. 421.1)

The above applies in general cases. There are situations where additional controls apply and others which are exempt: if for instance a scheme covers an

area of 3,000 square metres or more and is located in an area without a POS, the application must include an impact study. Several operations are exempt from the *permis de construire*: for example, public or private roads, temporary buildings, monuments and statues no higher than 12 metres and less than 40 cubic metres in volume, any work less than 2 square metres in area and 1.5 metres high. Listed buildings on the other hand are subject to a different regime which will be explained on pp. 57–60.

Other types of minor developments and works are subject only to a *déclaration préalable*, or declaration of intent: applicants must indicate what they intend to do a month before starting work. If the local authority (or other responsible authority) does not object within that period, the work can proceed. This includes the cleaning of façades (*ravalement*), technical work needed for the regulation of traffic, work on public utilities and on private open air swimming pools.

An application for a *permis de construire* can only be made by the owner of the land, or someone authorized by the owner. According to the 1977 law on architecture, the applicant must employ an architect to undertake the design of the scheme in question, although there are exceptions to this rule (see [Chapter 5](#)). The application is made on a standard form and must include details of the project such as the height of the construction, the materials used on the façades, the roof and the fences, and their colour. Since matters of design may be taken into consideration when judging an application, they have to be included.

Requests for both a *permis de construire* and a *déclaration préalable* are submitted to the *mairie* (town hall). They are dealt with either by the *maire*, when the local authority has an approved POS, or by the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement (DDE) in other cases. In the latter event the *maire* still delivers the permit but the administrative procedure is conducted in the name of central government. In normal circumstances the permit must be delivered within two months; otherwise the applicant can consider that a 'tacit' permit has been given. Before granting a permit the local authority must consult other relevant services, such as those responsible for roads or the water and sewerage authorities.

These relatively simple procedures apply only in those cases where no special protection exists. In numerous other cases a more elaborate procedure applies, involving central government delegations and departments. The period for delivering the permit is then extended. In addition, a majority of local authorities, even those with an approved POS, do not have a planning department that is capable of dealing with any but the simplest applications. They therefore continue to use the services of the DDE on a consultancy basis, given to them free of charge (see also [Chapter 6](#)).

The flexibility to approve or refuse a *permis de construire* is fairly limited; if an application conforms with the POS regulations, it must be approved and if it does not it must be refused. Discretion on the part of the planning authority is limited to matters of detail and of interpretation. Article L.123– 1 of the Code de l'Urbanisme allows for only minor changes (*adaptations mineures*), needed

because of soil conditions, the shape of a plot or the character of neighbouring buildings. Case law has been used to define the meaning of such a regulation which is often the subject of major debates. Additionally an authority can decide to revise the POS, which entails similar procedures to the production of a new one and which allows the authority to postpone decisions and eventually to approve schemes in contravention of the original POS but in accordance with the new one.

Because anyone who feels aggrieved can lodge an appeal against a *permis de construire*, whether granted or refused, authorities tend to apply the POS fairly strictly. Nevertheless negotiations with the applicants, before official consideration of the applications, can be extensive. On the other hand there is no public participation before a permit is granted: the applications are not normally available for public scrutiny until the decision has been made. Only then do members of the public have the right to take the case to court.

Permits are rarely refused on design grounds alone as negotiations take place in advance between the applicant, the local authority and, if the case requires it, other parties involved. Thus, before the application is submitted, designs have been modified, until the authority is satisfied that a permit can be granted. Schmit (1995:52) confirms that the POS regulations or supplementary recommendations help the negotiating process. This does not guarantee buildings of quality but it allows the local authority to have a say in the appearance of the buildings, which in all cases is a material consideration.

PERMIS DE DEMOLIR

In certain designated areas, demolition can be controlled in the same way as new construction. This means that someone intending to demolish a building needs to apply to the local *mairie* for a *permis de démolir*, independently of the need to have a *permis de construire*. The procedures for the application and granting of a demolition permit are clearly regulated by the Code. They follow closely those for the building permit.

Originally the controls on demolition applied only to listed buildings; they were later extended to particular and limited areas and have since 1983 been extended to many more, including all *communes* within 50 km of Paris. For the purpose of this study, the following areas, which are listed in section L.430-1 of the Code de l'Urbanisme as those where demolition is controlled, are relevant: certain local authorities on a list established by decree; all heritage protection areas such as *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain* (ZPPAU) and the surroundings of listed buildings, and those areas zoned in the POS as worth protecting or enhancing for historical or aesthetic reasons.

LISTED BUILDINGS

The procedures concerning the listing of buildings for historic and architectural reasons have to be considered in relation to their effects on building control. As will be shown, the protection of individual structures has fundamental consequences for the surrounding area.

The 1913 law, still the main statute concerning historic buildings, established two levels of protection: *classement* and *inscription*. According to its Article 1:

buildings may be classed as historic monuments, either in their totality or in parts, by the ministry in charge of culture if their conservation is in the public interest from the point of view of history or of art.

The initiative to classify a building can be taken by a public body, by an association concerned with the protection of buildings or by the owner. The Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles, a regional field service of the Ministère de la Culture, is the first body to be approached. It commissions a report which includes details of the building's ownership, condition, interest, and so on, and to which photographs, plans, sketches and other documents are attached. Comments are made by the Architecte des Bâtiments de France, the Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques and the Inspecteur des Monuments Historiques. The report is then submitted to the Commission Régionale du Patrimoine Historique, Archéologique et Ethnologique (COREPHAE) which gives its opinion on the *classement* of the building. This is duly effected by the ministry in charge of culture (at present the Ministère de la Culture). Normally the consent of the owner has to be obtained; otherwise the *classement* can be done by a decree of the *Conseil d'Etat*.

According to Article 2 of the same law (as subsequently modified):

buildings or parts of buildings...which, although not justifying their immediate *classement*, offer sufficient artistic or historic interest to make their preservation desirable can be *inscrits*, on a supplementary inventory, by the *préfet de region*.

The procedure to have a building *inscrit* is similar to but simpler than that of *classement*, particularly with regard to the owner's authorization, which is not required.

As a result of the *classement*, no work, demolition, construction or modification can be undertaken on the building without the consent of the Ministre de la Culture. Furthermore work that is authorized is supervised by the ministry's architect. What is remarkable is that the procedures for a *permis de construire* and a *permis de démolir* disappear altogether for a *classé* building: the Ministre de la Culture or his delegate is entirely responsible for deciding whether or not works will be authorized. In addition, no new building can be erected next

to the *classé* building without the minister's consent. The roles of the local authority and of the Ministère de l'Équipement are consequently non-existent where a *classé* building is concerned.

Work on an *inscrit* building must be notified to the Ministère de la Culture four months before the start. The ministry can then decide to change the status of the building to *classé* or to allow the work to go ahead subject to the granting of a *permis de construire* in the normal way. If work is authorized, the owner can use an architect of his/her choice.

Subsidies of up to 50 per cent of the cost may be available for maintenance and conservation works on a *classé* building. The owner also benefits from certain tax incentives. Subsidies of up to 40 per cent (but more usually of the order of 10–20 per cent) may be available for maintenance and conservation work on *inscrit* buildings and tax incentives are also available. The tax advantages in both cases allow owners, for the purposes of income tax, to deduct from their income the amounts spent on repair and maintenance that are directly related to the fact that the buildings are listed. Such deductions are 75 per cent if the building is open to the public and 50 per cent if it is not. The exact definition of what is allowable is often open to debate and the Architecte des Bâtiments de France (ABF) must certify that specific works were necessary.

Frier (1979) explains that although originally *inscription* may have been seen as a second-rate *classement* (more like the grades in the British listing system) it is used nowadays in a different manner: a building can be *inscrit* without the owner's agreement and without financial consequences for the administration. It is therefore a simpler, quicker and more flexible procedure than that of *classement*. Hence *inscription* is a safeguard used for buildings which are not threatened at the time of designation. An additional safeguard, similar to the British spot listing, is the *instance de classement*, to be used in cases where a non-listed building is threatened and urgent action is required. It provides a limited period during which no work on the building is allowed, in order to give the administration concerned time to give the case due consideration and to list it if necessary.

At the end of 1994 there were 13,546 *classé* buildings and 24,757 *inscrits*. The rate of annual listings has declined in the past decade and is now of the order of 75 and 200 respectively but it varies from year to year. The kind of building being listed has evolved substantially in the last twenty years: industrial, scientific and rural buildings of local rather than national interest and modern buildings are now being included in the lists.

The distribution of ownership of listed buildings is interesting as the public sector (central government, local authorities and other public bodies) own more than half (see Table 3.1). Of the *classé* buildings, 6 per cent belong to the state (mainly the cathedrals and a number of important monuments such as the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile in Paris); 61 per cent belong to the *communes* (mainly churches and other religious buildings but also civic and military buildings); 2

Table 3.1 Ownership of listed buildings

	<i>Classé buildings</i>		<i>Inscrit buildings</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
State	690	6	280	1	970	3
Local authorities and other public bodies (incl. unknown)	8,830	68	10,270*	44	19,100*	53
Private owners	3,430	26	12,550*	55	15,980*	44
Total	12,950		23,100		36,050	

Source: Ministère de la Culture 1989:17

* estimated

per cent belong to *départements* and 1 per cent to other public institutions; 26 per cent belong to private owners; and some 4 per cent have no determined ownership. As far as *inscrit* buildings are concerning, about 45 per cent belong to the *communes* and 55 per cent to private owners. This distribution of ownership reflects in part the fact that the owner's consent must be obtained for the *classement* and in part the large number of religious buildings which are in public ownership.

The Ministère de la Culture is responsible for the budget for the built heritage, which for the year 1986 was FF 1,116 million. Most of this (FF 966 million) was allocated to historic buildings, about one-third (FF 395 million) of which went to those not belonging to the state.

These figures compare poorly to the perceived needs: in 1986 it was estimated that FF 6 billion was needed, of which 1.7 billion was needed urgently. In addition the municipal authorities and the *départements* have their own budgets for historic buildings; figures for the former are difficult to obtain but few cities seem to have spent more than FF 0.3 million and most of the funds are used for the *commune's* own historic buildings. The total expenditure of the *départements* was FF 300 million in 1984 (Agnus and Zadora 1987). A 1988 Loi Programme sur le Patrimoine Monumental concerning the built heritage committed state funds to the maintenance and restoration of historic buildings for the five years from 1988 to 1992; for the latter a sum of FF 1,131.9 million was allocated. More recent figures are not available but it is likely that the budgets for historic buildings have declined in line with other public expenditure.

In the procedures involving historic monuments of both kinds a number of bodies are involved: the Conservateur Régional des Monuments Historiques, within the Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles (a field service of the Ministry of Culture); the Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques; the Inspecteur Général des Monuments Historiques, who supervises the budgets of the previous two officials, the Architecte des Bâtiments de France; and the

Commission Régionale du Patrimoine Historique, Archéologique et Ethnologique (COREPHAE). Overall, the legislation on listed buildings is managed and implemented by the Ministère de la Culture. Chapter 6 will consider in more detail the roles of these various bodies and their interactions.

THE SURROUNDINGS OF LISTED BUILDINGS

Perhaps the most relevant and most original part of the French legislation concerning the protection of heritage and its relationship with modern architecture is that dealing with the surroundings of listed buildings. Article 13a of the 1913 law concerning historic buildings (as modified in 1943 and 1966) has been incorporated in the Code de l'Urbanisme which states that

when a building is located within the field of vision of a *classé* or *inscrit* building, a *permis de construire* cannot be granted without the prior agreement of the Architecte des Bâtiments de France.

(Article R.421–38–4)

The same conditions apply to a *permis de démolir*. The field of vision is limited to a circle with a 500 metre radius and the building subject to the permit must be seen from or together with the listed one (co-visibility). Works not subject to a *permis de construire* or a *permis de démolir*, such as those that require only a *déclaration préalable* (see p. 55), are equally subject to the endorsement of the ABF when they are within the field of vision (Article 13b of the 1913 law).

Applications for all of these permits are handled at the town hall since the *maire* is authorized to process and issue them, after consulting all relevant authorities. Consultation with the ABF extends by a month the period within which the application has to be processed and during this period the ministry can call in the application. In a number of cases the *permis tacite*, which is considered to be granted if the local authority has not delivered its answer within the statutory period, disappears. In all of the cases where the ABF intervenes, his/her agreement does not guarantee that a *permis* will be granted; but his/her refusal is absolute.

The importance of this law can be illustrated by the fact that a radius of 500 metres means an area of 78.5 hectares. By comparison the average *Secteur Sauvegardé* covers an area of about 65 hectares. In other words, with 38,303 listed buildings, a substantial part of urban France is protected under this law, granting the ABFs very wide powers of intervention and control. Since most cities contain at least one listed church and often several listed buildings, they also have protected areas around them, regardless of whether or not that area in itself is of architectural or historic interest.

In these cases, the power of veto of the ABFs is limited to the field of visibility: in other words they are not competent, in theory, when a new building is erected within the 500 metre radius but is not visible beside or from the listed

building; the interior of a building is normally not under their jurisdiction even if it is within the 500 metre zone. Furthermore their approval or refusal must be connected to the effects of the proposed development on the listed building and nothing else: the character of the neighbourhood cannot be invoked to refuse a permit. Thus, according to the legislation, the surroundings are not conservation areas as such but must be seen as part of the setting of the listed building. Within these limits, the ABFs can veto a proposal on the grounds that in their opinion it has a detrimental effect on the listed building

Appeals against a decision (positive or negative) of the ABF can be lodged with the *Tribunal Administratif* by the applicant or by any other aggrieved party. The grounds for appeal, however, have to be errors of legality or abuse of power and not of aesthetic judgement: typical appeals have had to deal with whether or not a scheme was in the field of visibility of a listed building, or whether the ABF's decision referred specifically to the listed building or not. [Chapter 6](#) deals with particular examples of this.

The local authorities refer to these courts all applications for *permis de construire* or *de démolir* within the 500 metre radius without necessarily checking whether the schemes are visible or not, as this is the responsibility of the ABF. Frier (1979) estimates that about 15 per cent of all permits in one *département* are within the 500 metre area; in cities with a very rich heritage the percentage can be as high as 90 per cent (in Avignon, Besançon and Versailles for instance). This leads to a very heavy workload for the ABFs who have therefore to establish priorities and to be more careful in some cases than others, even to the point of exceeding their powers. In Quimper, for instance, a maze of streets surrounds the cathedral which is therefore visible or not according to the precise point of view. The ABF, having no time to check each case, generally presumes that all applications are subject to control and is never challenged.

In the case of works which require a *déclaration préalable*, which also needs the ABF's approval, the situation is more varied. In rural areas, works are often authorized without reference to the ABF even when they are within the 500 metre radius of a listed building. Thus unsightly constructions or alterations have been approved. In cities, on the other hand, referral and enforcement are much more frequent and effective. Generally the law seems to have been implemented with much greater care from the mid-1970s onwards (Frier 1979:171).

The ABFs are employed by both the Ministère de l'Équipement and the Ministère de la Culture. They therefore provide a link between the planning legislation and that dealing with the protection of heritage. In the specific case of the 500 metre perimeter, the relationships between the ABFs, the *maires* and the local conservation associations can be fairly stormy as a result of decisions taken. [Chapter 6](#) will consider these in greater detail.

As mentioned on p. 60, above the regulations affecting the surroundings of listed buildings are the most original part of the French legislation on heritage protection. They are also probably the most effective and the most controversial particularly because of the powers given to the ABFs. Frier (1979:190),

defending their role and their independence at the time when these were threatened, stated that the right of veto 'allowed them to block a number of aberrant or destructive schemes'. He quotes André Fermigier (1978) as saying: 'It is the law on the surroundings that made it possible for Michel Guy to prohibit the building of very aggressive law courts next to Reims cathedral and for Jacques Duhamel to save the Orsay railway station' (Frier 1979:190).

It is also worth mentioning that 2.65 million francs of the 1989 budget of the Loi Programme sur le Patrimoine Monumental (see p. 59) were specifically allocated to the surroundings of historic buildings. These very small funds have been utilized mainly to subsidize enhancement schemes consisting of floor surface treatment, landscaping, demolition of unsightly accretions, and improvement of neighbouring buildings. Although the sums are very small and represent only 0.26 per cent of the total budget, they are seen as an essential part of the conservation policies.

NATURAL MONUMENTS AND SITES

The first attempt to protect the heritage through the control of development over a whole area was the May 1930 law (subsequently modified) which established the possibility of listing areas of 'artistic, historic, scientific, legendary or picturesque' interest in order to preserve or conserve them. As with the historic monuments, there are two categories of listing, *classement* and *inscription*, corresponding partly to their merit and partly to whether or not they are threatened.

In practice this kind of protection has been applied mainly to natural areas such as Mont-Blanc and Cap Corse, including man-made landscapes, and natural monuments. In theory however it can also apply to built up areas, particularly in rural environments: it has been used, mainly in the 1970s, to protect some urban areas; at present it is considered that the ZPPAU fulfils this role better (see pp. 69–74).

The law states that each *département* should set up a Commission des Sites responsible for listing them either on its own initiative or following the request of some other body. The report on the proposed site is prepared by the Délégation Régionale à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement (DRAE); it should include *inter alia* an explanation of the reasons for the protection of the site and, if required, restrictive regulations. Before being approved by the Commission, the local authorities concerned are given an opportunity to comment or object. When the site is to be *classé*, a public enquiry takes place under the authority of the *préfet*, before being finally approved by the Ministère de l'Équipement in the case of urban sites and the Ministère de l'Environnement in the case of rural ones.

Within a *site classé*, no work or demolition can take place without authorization from the ministry in charge, acting in consultation with the Commission Départementale or the Commission Supérieure des Sites (central

government). There is a presumption against new development as the listing is aimed at the maintenance of the area in its present state, or its restoration to a previous state. Nevertheless works needed for the maintenance of the site are normally permitted as long as they are well integrated with their surroundings.

Within a *site inscrit*, all works beyond those for ordinary maintenance must be notified to the ABF four months before they are due to begin. This means that the *permis de construire* cannot be delivered without the ABF having been informed. The ABF's comments in these cases are advisory but he/she can suggest to the authority in charge of delivering the *permis de construire* that they use the regulations of the Code de l'Urbanisme, such as article R.111- 21 (see pp. 46–7). Demolitions on the other hand can only be authorized by the ministry concerned.

The 1930 law allowed for the creation of protection zones around the listed sites. These were similar to the 500 metre perimeter around a listed building. Though the designation of new protection zones was abolished by a January 1983 law, existing zones are maintained as long as they are not replaced by a ZPPAU. There are some thirty-five still in existence.

The 1930 law is mentioned here mainly for reference. Its effect on urban historic areas is restricted and other, better adapted, instruments are used nowadays to give protection to urban sites.

SECTEURS SAUVEGARDES

The law of 4 August 1962, known as the Loi Malraux, made possible the designation of *Secteurs Sauvegardés*. As mentioned in [Chapter 2](#) this law appeared in a particular historical context: that of the major urban redevelopment schemes. In reaction to these the new law was meant to channel public funds towards restoration of historical neighbourhoods, thus saving them from redevelopment. It was subsequently modified and eventually incorporated in the Code de l'Urbanisme:

Secteurs Sauvegardés can be designated when an area possesses a historic or aesthetic character, or one justifying the conservation, restoration and enhancement of all or part of an ensemble of buildings.

(Article L.313–1)

The designation of the area is the responsibility of the Direction de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (DAU), until 1995 part of the Ministère de l'Équipement, after consultation with the Commission Nationale des Secteurs Sauvegardés. The local authorities concerned are consulted and, should one object, the final designation is undertaken by the *Comeil d'Etat*. Nowadays it is often the *communes* that request the designation.

Once the *Secteur Sauvegardé* is designated by government decree, an architect/planner is commissioned by the *maire*, after consultation with the

appropriate central government departments, to undertake a study of the area and prepare a plan. The studies are lengthy and detailed; it is estimated that the preparation of a *Plan de Sauvegardé et Mise en Valeur* (PSMV) costs around FF 2 million (1989 prices); the cost is borne by central government.

The area included in a *Secteur Sauvegardé* is affected by special controls as soon as the official decree of designation is published but the precise regime depends on whether or not the PSMV has been published, or is finally approved. Once prepared, the PSMV is first submitted to a local committee, the Commission du Secteur Sauvegardé set up and presided over by the *préfet*. It includes representatives of the local authorities and of central government, the Délégué Régional à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement, the ABF, the architect in charge of the plan and other people considered to have expertise in conservation. Members of the local Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations may be co-opted on to this committee. After consideration by the Commission, the plan is submitted to the local municipal council. Next the plan is considered by a national committee, the Commission Nationale des Secteurs Sauvegardés, and if there are no objections, it is published.

The plan is then subject to an *enquête publique* and consequently amended if necessary. All of the previous participants are once more consulted and the plan is finally approved by central government (*Conseil d'Etat*). However, as mentioned above, the plans need not be finally approved to be effective; as a result there are far more *Secteurs Sauvegardés* in operation than there are approved PSMVs, particularly since the PSMV, until final approval, may be modified without too much difficulty. In December 1995 there were 88 *Secteurs* of which 28 had been merely designated, 16 published and 44 finally approved; 11 were being revised (DAU statistics; see [Figure 3.4](#)).

The PSMV is a derailed land use plan which replaces the POS for the area that it covers; it has to include the same kind of documents as the POS, with similar zonings and regulations for each of them. It establishes for each plot of land the principles of urban design and the regulations aimed at protecting the heritage, while not forbidding new construction. As the Code de l'Urbanisme states:

In particular the plan indicates the buildings or parts of buildings which cannot be demolished, removed, modified or altered as well as the buildings or parts of buildings, the demolition or alteration of which may be imposed by the authorities as and when development takes place.

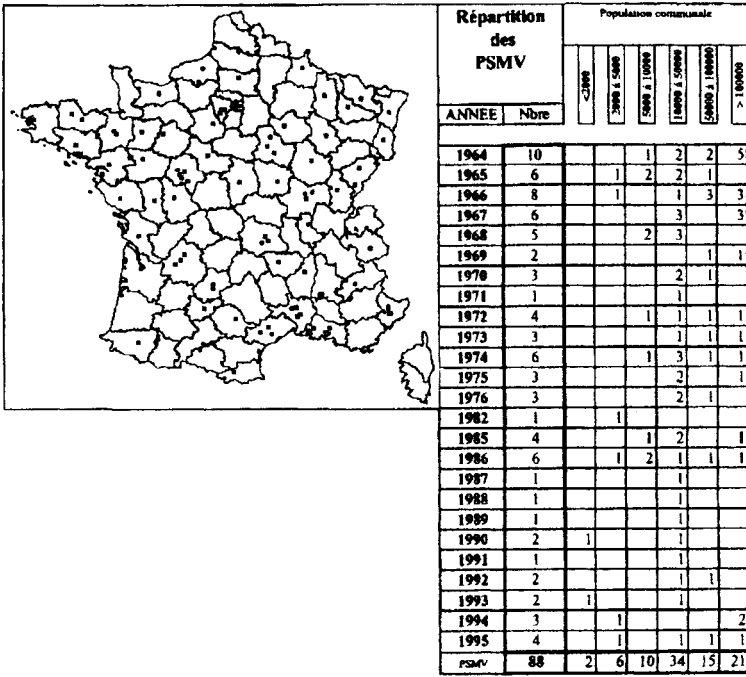
(Article L.313-1)

The Code also indicates that the report should explain how the plan takes account of environmental matters (in the widest sense of the word); the regulations should detail the architectural conditions to ensure the conservation of buildings and of their urban setting (Article R. 313-11).

A government circular of January 1978 explained in greater detail the procedures for the approval and the contents of a PSMV. The documents

PSMV

Éléments statistiques
-> 12/1995



ZPPAUP

Éléments statistiques
-> 12/1995

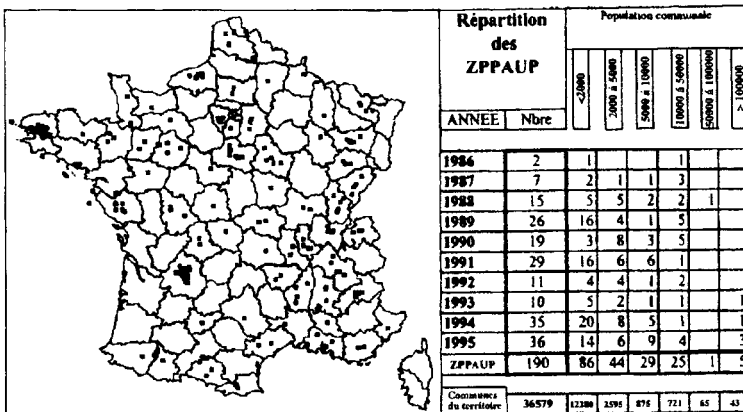


Figure 3.4 Distribution of Secteurs Sauvegardés and ZPPAUs

Source: Ministère de la Culture, 1996

constituting a PSMV are twofold. The first element is a 1:500 map showing the boundaries of the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, the properties where demolition and

alterations are forbidden, those properties which should be altered or demolished, listed or other protected buildings, areas subject to additional special protection, reserved sites, building lines, set back standards, and areas of comprehensive planning (*Secteur d'aménagement d'ensemble*) where a future development may be considered within a specific regulatory framework. This last point is to allow for the possibility of something resembling the procedures for a *Zone d'Aménagement Concerté* (see Chapter 5), which could not as such apply to a *Secteur Sauvegardé*. The second constituent of a PSMV is the regulations concerning land use and site coverage, height of buildings, their appearance, and so on, the same as for the POS. As indicated by Punter, 'the PSMV provides more detailed guidance than even the POS in this respect, often descending to the level of the parcel [individual plot] and defining the exact nature of desirable improvements' (Punter, 1989:197).

The plan is informed by exhaustive studies of the history of the area, its morphology and its physical evolution; the regulations must be seen in the light of this analysis. Schaak (1992) gives examples of the different approaches to the studies which can include the analysis of old documents, research into archives and interviews with local scholars. Melissinos, who worked on several PSMVs, describes the work as follows:

Three or four years of immersion in the city, of discussions with the local elected representatives, the shop-keepers and the inhabitants, in order to place face to face the past and the present, and to comprehend the spatial dimension of the city.

(quoted in Schaak 1992:12)

As soon as the area is designated, all development within it, including demolition, is automatically controlled by the ABF whose role is to preserve the aesthetic character of the area and to conserve the buildings of historic interest. These controls apply to the inside as well as the outside of buildings. Applications for *permis de construire* and for *permis de démolir* are as usual submitted to the *mairie*, and they are delivered conditional upon the ABF's approval. Design becomes one of the main elements, sometimes the sole one, in the judgement of the application. Works subject to a *déclaration préalable* must also be approved by the ABF. If considered necessary, the issuing of a *permis de construire* can be delayed until the plan for the area has been prepared (*sursis à statuer*). The *classés* and *inscrits* buildings within the designated area still follow the special regime concerning them (see pp. 57–60).

Once published the plan, even if it has not been approved, has the weight of a legal document, it is enforceable (*opposable aux tiers*) and replaces all previous plans for the area. Thereafter, applications for development will be judged in relation to the PSMV and its regulations and the ABF will be involved in all cases. Only minor departures from the published plan can be allowed. As is the case for other administrative decisions, the granting or refusal of a permit can be

challenged in the administrative courts, but only if it does not comply with the published plan.

As mentioned in [Chapter 2](#), there has been a renewal of interest in the *Secteurs Sauvegardés* in recent years for reasons related partly to decentralization and partly to financial advantages. The first of these led to administrative changes which have affected the selection of people charged with the preparation of the plans and hence the kind of plans resulting. In particular these people seem to be less concerned with the 'monumental' characteristics of an area and more with local aspects. 'Then we tried to conserve objects; today urbanists aim at finding a meaning within the city and ask questions about its evolution. They protect road layouts..., take an interest in the division of plots, in the sedimentation' (Schaak, 1992:11).

The financial aspects relate to an accumulation of legislative changes which started with the 1976 law (Réforme de l'urbanisme) incorporating the Malraux Act into the Code de l'Urbanisme and ended with a decree in March 1986. These changes made it possible for an association of property owners wishing to undertake a joint urban development (Association Foncière Urbaine Libre; AFUL), to carry out restoration work and to deduct any deficits from their global revenue provided that these deficits resulted from the work undertaken in a *Secteur Sauvegardé* or a listed building. The AFULs have been used successfully to finance conservation work in *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and are undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the renewed interest in these (Soucy 1989:52–4). The city of Bordeaux seems to have been the first to discover the advantages of this instrument and to actively promote its utilization:

Since 1977, the Association pour la Renaissance du Vieux Bordeaux has made use of this remarkable tool [the AFUL] which is perfectly adapted to the process of restoration. Indeed the nature of historic buildings and the characteristics of the act of restoration require a communal land control.

(Morrier 1985:205–6)

The city of Lyon shadowed Bordeaux very closely and since then a number of other cities have followed their example.

The planning instrument that concerns *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, the PSMV, is detailed and imposes strict controls on what can be done in the area, in terms of both existing and new buildings, and obligations on both private owners and the authorities. Not surprisingly, it is used sparingly and for exceptional areas. Nevertheless it is continuing to be a relevant instrument of control and, as originally intended, of public investment in conservation. 'It is therefore as a privileged instrument of a policy that rediscovers at the same time the importance of old cities and the indispensable role of the state in planning matters...that the Malraux Act...still has a future' (Soucy 1989: 56).

New development and modern architecture are entirely compatible with *Secteurs Sauvegardés* provided that the PSMV regulations are respected. This is

a *sine qua non*: the local authority planning services, the ABF, the local conservation societies and/or the DDE will be vigilant in this respect. As developers and architects are aware of this, they will not submit schemes that do not comply with the regulations. The clarity and quality of these is therefore an essential factor as regards the end result. As the plans cannot predict all of the possibilities, flexibility and robustness are needed at the same time. On the other hand, varied interpretations of the PSMV are always possible; hence the ABF's judgement and negotiating skills are other essential elements: his/her right of refusal or approval on aesthetic grounds is theoretically infinite but he/she may be able to negotiate with the various parties involved in order to obtain a satisfactory scheme. ABFs repeatedly comment that they always negotiate until they feel that they have obtained the best possible design from a particular architect (see also Chapter 6). Two of the cities chosen for this study, Chartres and Lille, have an approved *Secteur Sauvegardé*, which will be described in more detail in the next chapter.

ZONES DE PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE ARCHITECTURAL ET URBAIN

Chapter 6, Article 70, of the decentralization law of January 1983 introduced the *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain* (ZPPAU). These can be created 'around a historic building and in neighbourhoods or sites worth protecting or enhancing for aesthetic or historic reasons'. A further law of 1993 extended the protection to landscapes, adding the word *Paysager* (P) to the title, but this book utilizes the original name. Within these zones, like the 500 metre perimeter which they replace, all works affecting the appearance of buildings are subject to the approval of the ABF. The procedures however are different. They are specified in Decrees 84-304 and 305 of April 1984 and Circular 85-45 of July 1985.

The most important consequence of the creation of a ZPPAU is that, within the designated zone, it replaces the protection and controls imposed over the 500 metre radius around a listed buildings, regardless of whether the perimeters coincide or not. On the other hand if for some reason the ZPPAU were later to be repealed, the 500 metre protection zone would be reinstated. Equally, the regulations concerning a *Site Inscrit* are suspended over the area covered by a ZPPAU but this is not so in the case of a *Site Classé* which continues to be controlled by the relevant minister. The same applies to buildings *classés* or *inscrits* inside a ZPPAU: they continue to be subject to their special legislation and are the responsibility of the minister. On the other hand a *Secteur Sauvegardé* and a ZPPAU cannot overlap, though they can be contiguous.

In most cases the decision to designate a ZPPAU is taken by the local municipal council though exceptionally it can be taken by the *préfet de région*. Once the decision is made, the *maire*, in consultation with the ABF, whose role is essential throughout the process, commissions a consultant (architect, planner,

art historian, etc.) to study and produce a report on the area. A working party presided over by the *maire* or an *adjoint* and comprising elected members, representatives of regional and departmental administrations, amenity groups, and other concerned parties monitors these studies, which are less exhaustive than those for *Secteurs Sauvegardés*; this working party also gets involved in discussions about the plan. The type of studies undertaken reflects the purpose of the ZPPAU, which is partly educational, and reflects the recommendations of the 1985 government circular:

The study preceding the creation of a ZPPAU gives the opportunity to reflect, in the widest possible sense, on the heritage, defined as widely as possible.... The consultation of scientific studies, particularly those undertaken by the Direction des Antiquités and the Inventaire Général, is an essential starting point.

(Ministère de l'Urbanisme, du Logement et des Transports 1985: para. 2.1. 1)

The costs of the study, estimated to be of the order of FF 100,000 in 1989, are covered in part (normally 50 per cent of the total) by central government.

Before it can become a legally enforceable document, a number of preliminary stages have to be gone through involving deliberations with the local authority, the public, various departmental and regional administrations (Service Départemental de l'Architecture, Direction Départementale de l'Équipement, Délégation Régionale à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement) and the Collège Régional du Patrimoine et des Sites (CRPS) specially created for this purpose (see [Chapter 6](#)).

A fundamental element in this process is the *enquête publique* to which the public is able to submit comments on both the boundaries and the policies affecting the ZPPAU. Final approval lies with the regional *préfet* but he/she needs the agreement of the local council(s). Once the designation document is signed, the maps and regulations of the ZPPAU are added to the existing POS as easements (Article 123–1 of the Code de l'Urbanisme). They do not supersede it but, should contradictions arise between the POS and the ZPPAU, the rules of the latter prevail and the former has to be revised accordingly.

The reasons for the introduction of this instrument (see [Chapter 2](#)) explain its particularities. It results from dissatisfaction with the legislation on the surroundings of listed buildings and in particular with the arbitrary power of the ABF to veto planning and other applications. As mentioned by the then Minister of Culture, J.Lang:

Should we, on the pretext that people today want to erect a house within the 500 metre radius of a historic monument, veto it immediately and block any type of construction? Or on the contrary, should judgement be applied with understanding, broadmindedness and a willingness to take risks? ...It

is inconceivable that an Architecte des Bâtiments de France, no matter how competent...no matter how honest, can with a dash of the pen say this is good, this is bad.

(quoted by Loriers-Augeard 1981:66)

The aim of a ZPPAU is to provide clearer rules by which to frame the decisions of the ABF and to inform the public of what can be done; to lay down a more rational perimeter, thus justifying their intervention, which is based on the specifics of the area; and to encourage a greater sharing of responsibilities between the local authorities and central government services. The involvement and the commitment of the local authority are seen as essential to the success of the ZPPAUs.

Thus, the area covered depends on the characteristics of the urban and architectural environment and on the objectives sought; a particular aspect of the ZPPAU is that it can be discontinuous, that is, it can include several distinct zones within a local authority area. It does not necessarily have to refer to a historic monument (although most do) and may instead include major vistas, public spaces, the unity of a neighbourhood, and so on. Circular 85-45 states that the main element defining a ZPPAU is 'the architectural, historic, heritage or landscape interest of the area to be protected' (para. 1.1.1).

The same Circular specifies the documents that are needed for an approved ZPPAU: a study report, a plan showing the chosen boundaries, and the regulations. It gives substantial advice on what should be included in the study report: the reasons for the creation of the ZPPAU, its history, the objectives to be attained, architectural advice, and so on. Melissinos (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of the report as explaining the architectural and urban 'logic' of the place and hence the rationale of the regulations and the boundaries chosen.

The Circular also states that each area should establish its own rules and that no set pattern needs to be followed. It emphasizes that a ZPPAU must relate to the economic and social life of the area and sees no incompatibility between well controlled new development, including a ZAC designation, and protection of the urban heritage. Furthermore it suggests that forms of heritage hitherto neglected and therefore not protected by listing may be included in the ZPPAUs.

The regulations can be of three types, all of them concerned with design: prohibitions or limitations on what can be done (e.g. building, felling of trees); obligations to do certain things when planning permission is granted (e.g. landscaping, restoration); and conditions attached to undertaking development (e.g. use of materials, street furniture). The Circular however points out that the regulations should be flexible and should leave a certain margin of freedom for the ABF who should be able not only to refuse permission for something that he/she considers inadmissible, even if it does not disfigure the area, but also to 'approve a somewhat ambitious scheme on a site where audacity would not be out of place' (para 2.4).

As already mentioned, all works undertaken within the ZPPAU (demolition, felling of trees, new building or any modification which affects the appearance of a building) have to be authorized by the ABF. However, contrary to what happens in the 500 metre area, such authorization must be based on and conform to both the plan and the regulations of the ZPPAU. In other words the ABF retains power of control and a level of discretion but within a frame of reference known to all parties concerned. Furthermore, where there is disagreement between the ABF and the *maire*, the case can be referred to the *préfet de région* who, after consulting the Collège Regional du Patrimoine et des Sites, will take the decision instead of the ABF. The minister concerned can also call in an application within a ZPPAU. On the other hand the ZPPAU must not be seen as a substitute for planning regulations: it is not a land use plan, it is supplementary to the POS but does not replace it. Nor does it affect the interior of buildings or lead to subsidies for restoration of affected buildings as do the *Secteurs Sauvegardés*.

ZPPAUs have existed for only thirteen years and it is too early to evaluate their long term effect. The first two were designated in 1986, there were 50 by the end of 1989 and 190 by the end of 1995. Their geographical distribution is uneven: 27 are in Brittany, the province with the highest number of listed buildings, 24 in the Rhône-Alpes, with much lower numbers in other regions; two out of the 22 metropolitan regions have none (see [Figure 3.4](#)). On the other hand, as indicated by the replies to the questionnaire sent to the ABFs (see chapter [Appendix 2](#)), a much larger number are in the pipeline (*à l'étude*), sometimes several in one *département*. This seems to indicate that the interest in this procedure is very much alive.

A number of ZPPAUs have been the subject of articles in the professional press. These show that the instrument has been adapted to the needs of the area and that, in line with the wishes of the legislators, it does not follow a set pattern. In the city of Montbéliard, the ZPPAU declared in 1988 has had a marked effect on the attitude of the inhabitants towards their local heritage. As a result, 'through new shop fronts, rehabilitation of façades and their compulsory cleaning every ten years, there has been a considerable improvement in the aesthetic appearance of the town centre' (Chatauret 1992:34).

In the town of Josselin, the ZPPAU is the starting point for improvements to the public domain: the plan is seen as merely an instrument enabling local people and their elected representatives to develop specific projects in the future. In Villeurbane, a city known for a group of high-rise buildings erected in 1934, the ZPPAU has helped to reinforce the role of the town centre by focusing on these high-rise buildings (Chatauret 1992:35).

Expectations for this new instrument were high at the time of its creation. The complementary characteristics of the ZPPAU and the POS and the hoped for partnership between local and central government administrations led Mesnard (1987:95) to suggest that they would 'get the planners used to writing regulations

with aesthetic and architectural concerns and facilitate the general assimilation of these concerns to planning’.

Similarly Melissinos (n.d.: 4) stated that ZPPAUs ‘give the opportunity to establish documents of urban and architectural culture’. Others were more sceptical about the character of these changes and wondered whether, by involving two levels of administration, a less rigorous control would ensue (Untermaier 1985:50–1). In June 1989, a seminar took place in Angers to evaluate the evolution of the ZPPAU to date. Among the 150 participants, enthusiasts and sceptics coexisted though the latter seemed to have been preoccupied by different factors: M.E.Payen, ABF of the Dordogne, raised a general issue: ‘when you are in charge of 820 listed buildings, of 2 or 3 *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, of 22 state owned monuments and there are only five of you, you can make no progress’ (quoted in Frier 1990:143).

This comment, supported by other participants, reflected the feeling that the ZPPAUs have not had as much impact as they could have had because of lack of resources. According to the speakers, a much greater number of zones could have been created. Lack of enthusiasm on the part of the *maires* was not blamed for the limited results. Insufficient funding available to carry out the studies was mentioned as a more likely explanation (Report of the Debates). Another worry related to the role of the CRPS, the organization specially created to discuss and check the contents of a ZPPAU study. The feeling was that it was not functioning satisfactorily and that it had not achieved its aim of involving wider sectors of the population.

The Finistère *département* has been the most active in creating ZPPAUs and has consequently the most experience on the subject. The attitude of both its ABF and the local elected representatives is unequivocally enthusiastic, to the extent that one of its *communes*, Combrit de Sainte-Marine, tired of waiting for the sanctioning of state subsidies, has decided to finance the entire study for a ZPPAU on its own. The first ZPPAUs were started in this *département* soon after the legislation was approved. The *maire-adjoint* in charge of planning in Quimper, the *département’s* capital, said at the time that for ‘this city of art, particularly sensitive to the quality of its sites and its historic core, [the ZPPAU] appears to be an undisputed improvement’ (quoted in Marinos 1989:6).

The areas covered by the Quimper ZPPAU bear little resemblance to those covered by the previous 500 metre circles; in most cases they are smaller but in a few exceptional cases they are larger. Overall the areas not only make sense with regard to the listed buildings to which they relate but also define areas of specific character. The *département* has produced a booklet relating the experience of thirty-one *communes* and their conclusions about the value of the ZPPAUs. The *communes* claim that the requests for the creation of ZPPAUs correspond to the needs expressed both by the public, who can no longer accept heritage protection centred exclusively on historic monuments, and by the elected representatives. The study within a ZPPAU allows a definition of the heritage that needs protecting: ‘the protected places are the basis of history, they include diverse

buildings, works or constructions with multiple and varied roles'. The study also helps to find the appropriate method to manage the heritage in such a way that the place keeps on living; in particular the method of protection must allow 'innovation in order to enrich the place with contemporary works' (Marinos 1989:10–11).

The *communes* of this *département* have adopted a common format for their ZPPAUs, consisting of a series of 'fiches', A3 or A4 loose leaves concerning specific sections of the area, each with a map, a written analysis and the regulations (see Figure 3.5). The latter relate to heights of buildings, materials, openings, prohibitions, obligations, and so on, always in relation to the existing urban scene. Substantial leeway is given to designers who want to produce a contemporary building within this context and architects have availed themselves of this opportunity. The ABF too is free to interpret what should or should not be allowed. Creating a ZPPAU has, at least in Finistère, the twin objectives of 'leading to a generalized recognition of an *espace patrimoine* (heritage space)', especially through communication and education, and 'encouraging the enhancement of the heritage' (Marinos 1989:15).

The following comments made by a specialist in the field summarize the positive reactions that ZPPAUs have elicited:

If it [the ZPPAU] is used to adapt a perimeter, fine; but maybe this is not the main concern of this procedure. I think that...the main point about the ZPPAU is that the process has been transformed, it is pedagogic. This is totally essential, it makes it possible for the elected representatives, and through them the whole population, to take responsibility for the heritage.
(Frier 1990:171)

Directed just as much at the future project as at the past heritage, dealing with equal interest with the historic heritage as with its insertion on a site, the ZPPAU is a procedure located half-way between heritage and modernism, between architecture and landscape, between cultural scheme and development.

(Brévan, quoted in Allaman 1992:33).

The latter observation is particularly relevant as it emphasizes the link between conservation and new development. Whether in the future ZPPAUs will correspond in every case to this description is difficult to predict, though it seems to be the wish of the legislation. Ultimately it must depend on those in charge of the preparatory studies and the implementation of the regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the French system of planning and heritage protection reinforces the conclusion reached by looking at its history: that it is a highly centralized

system, not necessarily because decisions are taken solely in Paris (this is not the case) but because there are strict patterns, centrally established, to be followed in all cases. Plans and the controls included in them are precise, their pattern is set; the issues with which they can deal are regulated and they have to be applied fairly strictly. All participants in the development process are therefore aware of what the rules are (see [Chapter 6](#)).

Planning control is based on 'building' control and therefore involves the form of the building: design control is at least possible everywhere, even in areas with no special characteristics. Design and the relation between a new development and its surroundings are material considerations in all cases: even in the simplest and least protected environment, planning authorities if they so wish can and do impose design controls covering the form, alignment and height of buildings, the materials and colours used. What does vary is the degree to which planning documents enact these controls. Herein lies the flexibility of the French system and the significance of decentralization. In most urban areas, design controls seem to apply and they become increasingly complex and specific as the historic and/or architectural interest of an area increases. Local authorities have the benefit of being able to combine within the POS not only regulations protecting the heritage and limiting demolition but also design controls and land use planning. For this they can call on the advice and help of specialists and can use a variety of additional mechanisms. If, for instance, a plan is being prepared for an area which includes a listed building, the 500 metre protection zone automatically applies and the ABF is involved in the preparation of the plan. Since most urban areas include at least one listed building and often more, it is seldom possible to obtain a *permis de construire* without its being subject to special design controls.

A peculiarity of the French system is that the listed buildings themselves are protected in a totally different form and fall under a different jurisdiction from all the other buildings: in most cases they are controlled directly by central government. The fact that a high proportion of them are in public ownership contributes to their being placed in a different category from other buildings. They are therefore set apart although, until recently, they were at the centre of most of the limitations imposed on other developments in their vicinity, and were the cause of such limitations.

Areas of protection have existed since 1943 around the 38,000 or more monuments (their 'jewel case'), making the need for legislation dealing with area rather than building conservation less urgent in France than it might have been in other countries. The designation of a *Secteur Sauvegardé* results in strict regulations and can be a burden on property owners as well as the public authorities involved. Not surprisingly, the application of the legislation on *Secteurs Sauvegardés* has been limited and very selective: by December 1995 only eighty-eight areas had been designated even though, in the last decade, there has been a renewed interest in this instrument and a widening of its application to cover more 'ordinary' areas.

A further step in the direction towards decentralization, democracy and transparency has led to the introduction of the ZPPAU, a less arbitrary and more flexible type of conservation area, less exclusively centred on the monument and less costly. In the areas where it has been tried it has been received with enthusiasm by both the public and the elected representatives. The integration of new and old is a central issue in the implementation of the ZPPAU policy and its success may depend on the clarity of the guidelines produced.

All the types of controls that are imposed are based on and justified by more or less detailed studies, including morphological analyses and historic research, which inform what can be done. The most detailed studies are those undertaken for the *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, but morphological and historical analyses are increasingly used to back up regulations in all planning documents. In most cases the studies lead to controls on the division of parcels of land, heights, volume, building footprint and alignment; only exceptionally do they lead to purely stylistic requirements. The importance of the studies cannot be underestimated: they are repeatedly referred to in the literature. They not only justify the regulations but also contribute to the general public's understanding of their environment and help the elected representatives to take decisions. In particular they can contribute to the awareness of the role of modern buildings in the historic continuum of an area.

In general terms, the French system of development control, including the RNU, the POS, the *permis de construire* and the *permis de démolir*, has been effective in protecting areas which may not be of outstanding interest but nevertheless have a character worth maintaining. At the same time, it has allowed cities to evolve and modernize while caring for their heritage. This is partly the result of having a variety of additional instruments, each applicable to a particular situation and adapted to the specific needs of an area; all of these combine to form a comprehensive system of protection which covers most eventualities at least in the historic urban areas. New architecture in these areas is always under scrutiny and in almost every case it is controlled by specific instruments and backed up by precise documents. Nevertheless in most cases a certain level of interpretation and discretion remains, particularly in matters of design. More than one gatekeeper is involved in deciding whether or not a building is acceptable, and not all necessarily arrive at the same conclusion.

The increasing choice of mechanisms explains the greater enthusiasm for the system shown by the *maires*. The degree of commitment and input of them and of other gatekeepers as well as of the design professions is fundamental to the success of the final result in the urban areas considered. The roles of these participants will be the subject of Chapters 5 and 6.

4

CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

The following case studies are complementary to the desk-based investigation into the process of design control. They embrace the whole process from the commissioning of buildings to the obtaining of the *permis de construire* and construction. As mentioned in [Chapter 1](#), they are a vehicle by which to clarify some of the issues discussed throughout this book. They were chosen because they were examples of contemporary, not necessarily outstanding, buildings considered to be well inserted into their historic surroundings and because fairly complete information on the process by which they were arrived at was available.

As stated in [Chapter 1](#), in most cases the choice was influenced by local professionals. The Service d'Urbanisme or the ABF were asked to recommend a few recently built buildings in the historic parts of their area, which they considered to be good examples of contemporary architecture; they themselves, or a colleague, had to have information about the case, and they were asked to provide access to it, the name of the architect and the developer; in a number of cases there was also something published about the building. The selection was therefore not random but neither was it based on specific design criteria, except that buildings in replica, pastiches, or redevelopments behind retained façades were eliminated. The study was specifically directed at finding out the process through which the particular building solution was reached, whether or not there had been objections to the design and whether as a result the scheme had been modified. All of the recommended examples were visited and photographed; none was rejected, though in a couple of cases the information available was too minimal to be of use.

The buildings selected are not the spectacular examples that have had wide exposure elsewhere, such as Pei's Louvre pyramid or Foster's Carré d'Art in Nîmes. Those discussed here are 'ordinary' in the sense that they are everyday buildings which do not grab for attention; neither are they necessarily of exceptional quality. They are considered to be of their period, are not pretending to be anything else, and are making at least a modest contribution to their environment. They also have received some form of local approval. As explained

in Chapter 1, there is a considerable number of additional examples of contemporary architecture in historic areas to indicate that the chosen ones are no exceptions. The quality of the buildings' design is an issue that will be addressed below, with the proviso that any judgement made of recent buildings lacks perspective and that opinions—positive or negative—can change fairly rapidly.

This chapter presents the physical attributes of the examples that will be referred to in the rest of the study. Comments relating to the obtaining of the *permis de construire* are included, but the more complex relationships between the participants will be analysed later.

Evaluation of the buildings

The qualities encountered in the examples chosen vary in level as well as in type. A number of texts can be referred to in order to evaluate these qualities: no single specific model was chosen but elements mentioned by different authors were used.

Groat (1983:59), searching for a systematic way of assessing whether a new building is suitable to its context, offers a checklist which has the advantages of not being limited to façades and of attempting to be value free. It includes the footprint of the building, its alignment, roof line, and massing, as well as its style, colour, and ornament. Alexander focuses his advice on the wide ranging and somewhat elusive concept of 'wholeness' to which, according to him, all buildings have to contribute. His overriding rule is that 'Every increment of construction must be made in such a way as to heal the city.... Every new act of construction has just one basic obligation: it must create a continuous structure of wholes around itself' (Alexander *et al.* 1987: 22). To fulfil this overriding rule there are seven complementary rules relating to scale, the positioning of the building, its entrances, structure, and rhythms.

Bentley is almost entirely concerned with form and its effects on users, what he calls 'visual appropriateness'. He searches for elements which will reinforce the urban design qualities that he appreciates; among the elements he mentions are legibility, variety and robustness. 'To support legibility, we need cues which will be interpreted as relating the building concerned to its context: either reinforcing or standing out from the paths, nodes, landmarks, edges or districts concerned' (Bentley *et al.* 1985:78). He analyses a number of sites and tries to find solutions that respond to their specific context. Unfortunately, the solutions proposed seem to be mainly concerned with façades and give the misleading impression that the aim is to achieve a respectful contextualism.

Bentley follows the tradition of Cullen (1961), Lynch (1960), Alexander (1965, 1977), Worskett (1969) and other authors who are concerned with the relationship between elements of townscape, and with designs aimed at enhancing the excitement of the urban experience. Worskett, for instance, gives advice on how to incorporate new buildings into conservation areas through what he calls the 'design discipline for infilling'. He offers a number of

examples and comments on their qualities, mainly though not exclusively on the basis of their façade.

Brolin (1980) also uses examples to illustrate what he regards as ‘successful fit-ins’; in most cases he praises harmony and keeping-in-keeping rather than contrast. It is interesting to compare his evaluation of two buildings in London, The Economist in St James and the Royal College of Physicians in Regents Park, with that of Worskett. Worskett praises them, while Brolin considers both examples to be a poor fit:

The simplicity and form of the Royal College of Physicians, by Denys Lasdun, emphasizes the intricacy of a Nash house near Regents Park, London.

(Worskett 1969:70)

This is architecture as object, the typical modernist approach which ignores what is to the left and right.

(Brolin 1980:48)

The discrepancies are partly a reflection of the time of the writing. Worskett was influenced by confident and positive attitudes towards redevelopment and accepted that new designs could contribute to historic environments. Brolin, writing after many mistakes had been made, was less well disposed towards contemporary non-contextual additions. One was influenced by a modernist tradition, the other by more recent post-modern thinking.

In the text produced by the Ministère de l’Environnement et du Cadre de Vie (1980b) the various attitudes adopted by a designer towards the relationship between a new building and its existing framework are considered: zero insertion, integration, contrast, irony or precariousness, invisibility, analogy, and a combination of these. The meaning of each of these is explained mainly through examples, some of which are judged to be good, others bad. A significant and valid contribution of this text is that the style of the façade is seen as only one of the elements to be taken into account; the role of the existing road pattern, the plot sizes, and the street blocks are considered just as important but most crucial of all is the attitude of the designer towards the context of the building.

Some issues common to most of these texts can be extracted: street alignment, scale of the building, massing, height, roof line, rhythm, materials, and ornamentation. Significantly, most of these are listed in the French system of design control. The ways in which they are used to achieve a successful environment vary, some authors preferring continuity, some contrast, others in-between approaches. There are no universal rules and each case needs to be considered on its own merits. The comments made about the case studies hereafter are informed by these authors and by the opinions of others—planners, developers, owners or writers—but ultimately the opinions are personal, taking into account not only the physical context but also the period of construction. In

relation to the last text mentioned above, the case studies fall into most of the categories except the first which is characterized by 'indifference to the environment...or a failure to relate to it' (Ministère de l'Environnement et du Cadre de Vie 1980b:9).

As noted, the buildings chosen are recent and their designers have not tried, either in replica or in pastiche, to mimic styles of the past. This does not mean that they are all of a similar contemporary style and there is no attempt to limit the examples to 'modernist' ones.

The locations

A variety of urban locations was chosen in order to cover different kinds of protection for the historic/architectural environment, as described in [Chapter 3](#), and different types of cities. Each one has its specific administrative structures and therefore particular relationships between the participants in the design and control process. Heritage protection varies from the minimum provided by a POS and a 500 metre circle around a listed building, through a ZPPAU, to the maximum given by a *Secteur Sauvegardé*. All locations are covered by a POS and all cities except Lille have a Service d'Urbanisme. Each city is described first, so as to place the examples within the framework of the particular situation regarding planning and heritage protection.

PONTOISE

The *commune* of Pontoise has 30,000 inhabitants and is located some 35 km north-west of Paris on a hill above the river Oise. Its history dates back to at least the ninth century though it is probably of Roman foundation. It has a number of important buildings, some of them listed, but it has no form of protection for its historic environment other than that given to the surroundings of listed buildings.

The *commune* has a *Plan d'Occupation des Sols* (POS) which was revised in the late 1980s. In accordance with the decentralization laws, the *maire* is responsible for the granting of the *permis de construire*. In 1985 the council established a Service d'Urbanisme to deal with these and with the revision of the plan; it is led by an architect-planner, Mme Tassou-Redor.

The report accompanying the POS gives substantial space to the description of the history of the town and the consequences of this for its present shape, which is also described in detail. The POS includes those regulations concerned with the physical character of new developments: street alignments, continuity of the building line, heights of buildings, external appearance. A *Cahier de Recommendations Architecturales* (see p. 54) complements these regulations and has also to be complied with. Topics covered include the positioning of buildings on plots, their volume and scale, roof lines, the rhythm of and openings in façades, materials and detailing. It is a fairly simple but comprehensive 'do and don't' kind of design guide, which is not averse to modern designs:

This booklet does not exclude the possibility of producing contemporary buildings. The city has been made up of successive contributions and our era like any other has its own architectural expression which can be developed in historic quarters. Nevertheless it has to respect certain general principles—horizontal emphasis, respect for the volumes, rhythm, etc....which will ensure a good integration.

(Commune de Pontoise 1987:1)

The following examples which are analysed are located within the surroundings of a listed building. They were selected as successful examples of insertion by the head of the Service d'Urbanisme, who was responsible for processing the applications. The buildings reflect a careful implementation of the POS.

Library, 14 rue A.Prachey

This building was commissioned by the *maire* from a local architect, F. Bader, who worked on several schemes for the local authority and was well known in the area. The request for a *permis de construire* was submitted in September 1984. The file includes a fairly detailed description of the materials and joinery to be used on the façade and a report on the history of the existing buildings on the site, parts of which were retained.

The ABF, who had to be consulted because of the location of the building within a 500 metre perimeter, gave his accord without comment, but the file indicates that discussions had taken place earlier and that a previous design (for which there are no drawings) had been abandoned. The finished result is rather conventional, reflecting the conservative tastes of the client/ adjudicator: one façade, domestic in character, was retained and a new building erected behind it, together with a new building next to it. The latter's façade follows the alignment and rhythm of fenestration of the street, and uses similar materials as neighbouring buildings: it has three storeys plus dormer windows in the roof, making it somewhat higher than its neighbours but within the generally irregular roof line of the street; as the street slopes, the lines of storey division step down. The somewhat mannered arcaded ground floor and the mildly monumental surrounds of the windows indicate that this is a public building in spite of its domestic scale. From the outside, the new building is not obviously linked internally to the retained one: the two parcels of land have kept their individuality and the street's rhythm has been respected. The most remarkable aspect of the building is its pink colour, which was imposed by the ABF on the basis of some historic precedent. The quality of the building resides in the fact that it fits into the street and makes a modest statement without denying its contemporaneity. It is neither entirely 'keeping in keeping' nor a break with its surroundings.

Les Arcades, 4 rue Séré Depoin

This scheme of flats above shops (see [Plate 4.1](#)) was initiated by the local architect, Jean Blasco, who proposed it to a developer: he knew of the possible availability of the land and prepared a feasibility study for it which provided for 1,100 square metres of built area, the maximum possible while respecting the POS requirements. The developer was young and local: he was starting his career, knew the local market well and needed a first development to enter this market. He wanted a *permis de construire* to be obtained in the shortest possible time, in order to sell the development on paper. Once he had accepted the architect's proposals in general terms, he was very supportive and did not interfere with the design at all.

The request for the *permis de construire* was deposited in December 1987 by the architect. The file shows that discussions took place for a while before: a scribbled note dated September mentions 'incoherence between plan and elevation; check proportion and architecture of the dormer windows'. During discussions, the design was modified following requests by the city's planning office and the ABF, involved because of the location of the building within a 500 metre perimeter.



Plate 4.1 Pontoise: Les Arcades, rue Séré Depoin

The resulting building is far from being a brilliant example of modernity but it fits reasonably well in an eclectic street with few outstanding features. Traditional and contemporary materials are cleverly used for a purpose: the building manages to hide its bulk through the articulation of its five storey façade, where flat brick bays ending in a mansard roof alternate with steel and glass projecting bays surmounted by domes. Thus the rhythm of the street

appears to be respected and the impact of the building's mass is diminished. The floor to ceiling height of the new building allows it to have four floors where the adjacent one has three within the same total height; as these variations recur elsewhere along the street, this lack of perfect alignment of the floor heights does not seem out of place. The false arches of the ground floor are its weakest point although the adjacent buildings have a variety of ground floors modified through time without much coherence.

The architect emphasized the importance of early negotiations with the authorities, particularly to agree on the general shape of the buildings. Once agreement was reached, modifications of details (the oriel windows and the domes on top of the bow windows) presented no major difficulties. The head of the Service d'Urbanisme considers the building a success for a city which is scared of innovation. Like the library, it is neither shouting for attention nor entirely 'keeping in keeping'.

LILLE

Lille is a city of nearly 160,000 inhabitants and the centre of a conurbation of over a million. It is the capital of the Nord-Pas de Calais region. Located near the Belgian border, it is 220 km from Paris and only 116 km from Brussels. Originally a Flemish city, Lille only became part of France in the second half of the seventeenth century when a major effort was made to 'Frenchify' it. The city's history and its role as a frontier town of military importance are expressed in its architecture and town planning: the Flemish pattern of development with narrow red brick houses following a medieval street pattern reflects its bourgeois and mercantile society; the French, wanting to impress and to control, introduced baroque planning, grand stone palaces (*hotels particuliers*), wider straight roads and perspectives, leading to the fortified Citadelle.

For long a main centre of coal and textile industries, Lille suffered greatly with their decline. The last fifteen years have seen a renaissance of the city, partly owing to its role as a commercial centre and regional capital, partly as a result of major investments in infrastructure and the building of the adjacent new town of Villeneuve d'Ascq. It is now at the crossroads of the north-south and east-west axes of Europe, the only stop on the fast train between Paris and Brussels, and Paris or Brussels and London. Today Lille is a thriving metropolis which projects an image that combines its rich past with a high technology future. The city is part of a communauté urbaine, a local government structure created for specific conurbations by a 1966 law, in which a number of *communes* (eighty-six in this case) federate to deliver a certain number of services. In the case of Lille, the communauté urbaine is responsible *inter alia* for the production of planning documents, for housing, and for public transport systems, and since 1990 it has had its own Agence d'Urbanisme. This is a planning service dealing with the preparation of planning documents and undertaking research for the communauté urbaine. It is not responsible for delivering the *permis de construire*.

The *Secteur Sauvegardé* of Lille was first designated in 1967; its PSMV was published in 1976 and finally approved in 1980. The area covered by it (56 hectares) is not homogeneous: it includes the medieval Flemish core, the French eighteenth century quarter around the Rue Royale, and nineteenth century additions and modifications. The majority but not all of the 129 listed buildings in Lille are within the *Secteur Sauvegardé* but their distribution is uneven. Reflecting the character of these various areas, the regulations vary from detailed and strict in certain sectors to lax in others. Five distinct zones are defined in the plan. Three of these have the most important architectural characteristics: USA, the French eighteenth century area where the preservation concerns mainly the plot sizes; USB1 and USB2, the medieval core where restoration predominates. The other two zones, URa and USc, are transitional ones linking the historic centre with the rest of the city, where more flexible policies apply.

Within the USB zones, the regulations state *inter alia* that ‘all architecture foreign to the region is forbidden...; the use of imitation materials is forbidden’ (Article 11). The same article also states that:

new constructions must be conceived so as to harmonize with the urban site. They must present a simplicity of volume, a unity of appearance and use materials compatible with the urban landscape and with good economy of construction. The scale of neighbouring buildings, their colour and materials will be particularly important.

(Article 11)

It is noticeable that the language is almost identical to that of Article 16 of the Chartres document (see p. 101), at least for general principles. But in this case the Article 11 regulations are several pages in length and cover all details of the external appearance of buildings.

Article USB-0 specifies, with reference to the accompanying plan, the existing buildings that are protected and the extent of the protection, those that are not protected but may be maintained and improved, and those that should be demolished and are not to be improved.

The position of new constructions in relation to the road and to neighbouring buildings is prescribed on the plan and in the regulations (Articles 6, 7, 8), as is the height of buildings (Article 10) in relation to their neighbours in general cases, and the maximum height in specific streets (15 metres, 17.25 metres, 18 metres, 18.70 metres, 19.25 metres and 20 metres depending on the street). Height controls in some cases include the requirement that the upper floors of existing buildings, which exceed the norms and are not part of the original structure, should be removed (*écrêtement*; Article USB-10). In addition to the general statements on the external aspect of buildings quoted above, Article USB-11 includes specific requirements on the materials to be used when restoring existing buildings.

Hôtel de la Treille

This building is located on an infill site, vacant for years because of the line reserved for a new road (now abandoned), in one of the oldest parts of the city, close to the cathedral; it is in the zone USb1 of the PMSV, due mainly for restoration (see [Figure 4.1](#)). The developer is local and has been working in the area for a number of years but this was his first venture as an independent developer.

The buildings adjacent to the site are on one side 'to be preserved and restored', and on the other 'not protected and can either be replaced or improved' (PSMV plan). Like its neighbours, the new building has two street elevations, reflecting different surroundings: one faces the cathedral close, the other a busy commercial junction.

The *permis de construire* was requested in June 1986 and granted six months later, subject to a number of conditions imposed by the ABF who commented that

although the proposed building is slightly higher than allowed by the PSMV, this is made necessary in view of the layout of the building and in order to maintain its architectural quality;...this will allow good integration in the existing context...which consists of elevations of varying scales.

(Case file)

The case file also shows that discussions between the architect and the ABF led to a number of modifications of the scheme. Interviews with the various participants indicated that at times these discussions were fairly acrimonious (see [Chapters 5 and 6](#)). On the other hand a request by the local amenity society, Renaissance du Lille Ancien, to retain some existing ruins on the site was rejected by the ABF who did not feel that they were worth retaining.

Outwardly, the resulting building is reasonably satisfactory though bland: the two façades are different and reflect the transitional location of the site; one is five storey, stone clad and reflects the bulk and presence of a commercial street; it manages, through clever design, to dissimulate an extra floor in a street that normally has four (see [Plate 4.2](#)). The other elevation is four storeys, more modest and domestic in scale, and in brick. None of the parties involved considered it an undisputed success though their reasons varied. The building does not draw attention to itself; it blends with its surroundings without pretending to be old but without making a statement either: the rhythms of the fenestration correspond to those of the surrounding buildings. It is a typical example of *architecture d'accompagnement*. The most satisfying element of the design, according to the ABF, the developer and the architect, is one which is not visible at first hand: the building has an internal courtyard and a link between the front and the back which is typical of traditional buildings in that location as

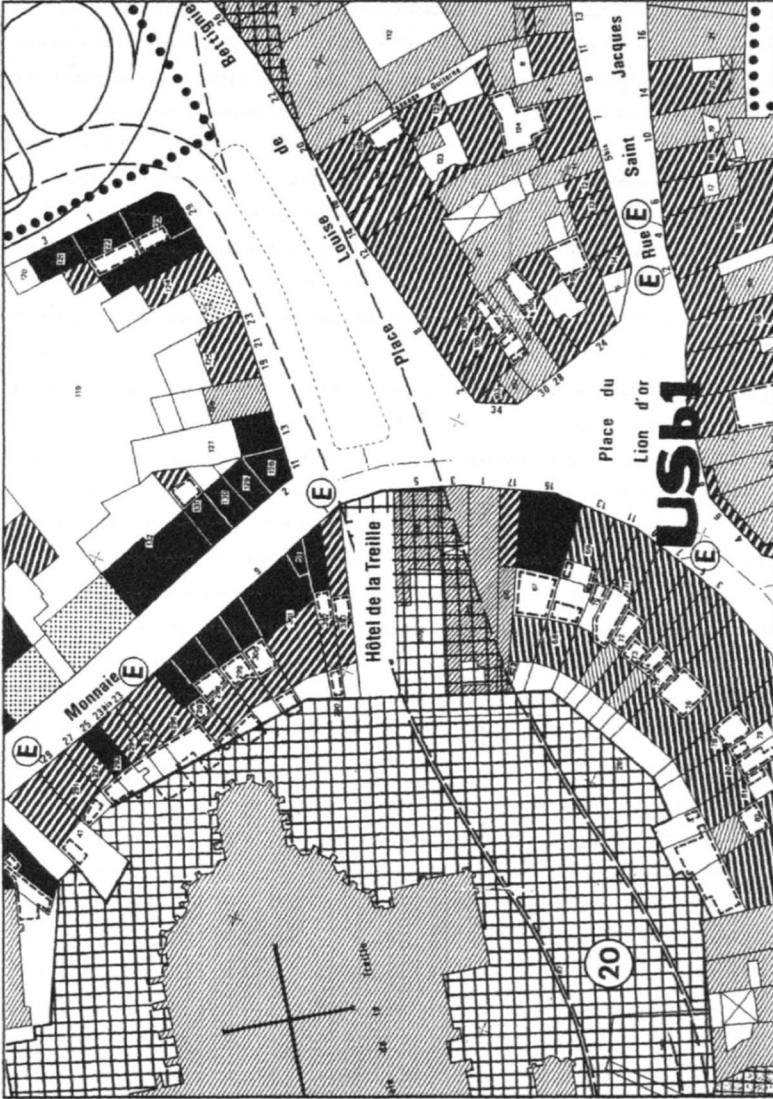


Figure 4.1 Lille: part of the PSMV showing the location of the Hôtel de la Treille

Source: Communauté Urbaine de Lille

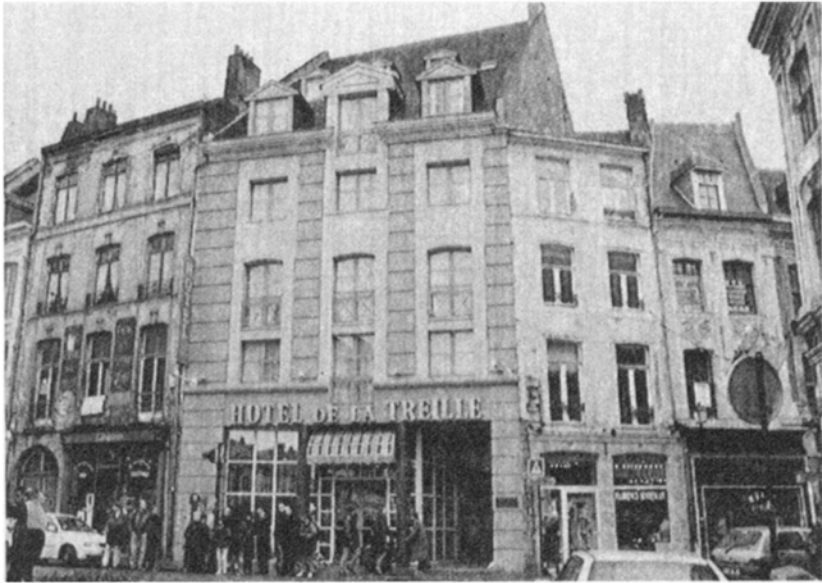


Plate 4.2 Lille: Hôtel de la Treille

shown on the plan of the PSMV; this respect for the area's morphology and history, more than its façades, makes its insertion successful.

Conservatoire de Musique, place du Concert

This building is located on a very difficult parcel of land at the edge of the *Secteur Sauvegardé*: it has a triangular shape with a steep slope; at one end it is adjacent to the old Conservatoire and to eighteenth century buildings while at the other end it is part of the much more recent and more commercial Avenue du Peuple Belge (see [Figure 4.2](#)). The building was a public commission and the subject of a limited competition in 1982–3: six architects were invited to participate, five from Lille and one outsider from Paris.

The winner, the local Philippe Legros, analysed the street pattern and the history of the site before designing his building; he thus realized that the scheme needed to articulate the transition between a medieval street pattern and a nineteenth century one. The *permis de construire* was delivered in July 1985. The case file reveals that the local authority planners intended to apply strictly the PSMV regulations and wanted some modifications to the scheme particularly concerning its slightly excessive height. On the other hand, the ABF thought that the extra height resulted in a better building and considered that the city planners' comments were timid and ill-informed (interview). The *permis* was therefore delivered after waiving minor regulations in the PSMV (*adaptations*



Plate 4.3 Lille: Conservatoire de Musique

mineures): 'In conclusion, I give my approval on condition that I receive the design of the detail of how the building joins the neighbouring one, which is missing from the file' (case file).

The building (see [Plate 4.3](#)) is a complex one and therefore difficult to describe; it is divided into three main parts, two of them brick clad and one stone clad, thus expressing the two different areas surrounding it. The various elements correspond not only to different uses within the building but also to their position in relation to the streets and the surrounding buildings. The building is highly articulated but there are unifying elements such as the barrel roof and the line of the windows. Its quality resides in the way that it adapts to the site, its slope and its diverse surroundings.

The building has been a success with local people, politicians and the Renaissance du Lille Ancien. An article in the local paper, *La Voix du Nord*, praised the way in which the building relates to two very different environments: the wide boulevard of the Avenue du Peuple Belge and the narrow rue Colas in the heart of the Vieux-Lille (Vouters 1987). The ABF is enthusiastic about it for similar reasons: the building manages to relate to its different neighbours, to refer to the memory of the place and to enhance the area, while using a contemporary language. Another sign of approval is the fact that the CAUE has produced a postcard with the building's image as part of a series of interesting new local buildings.

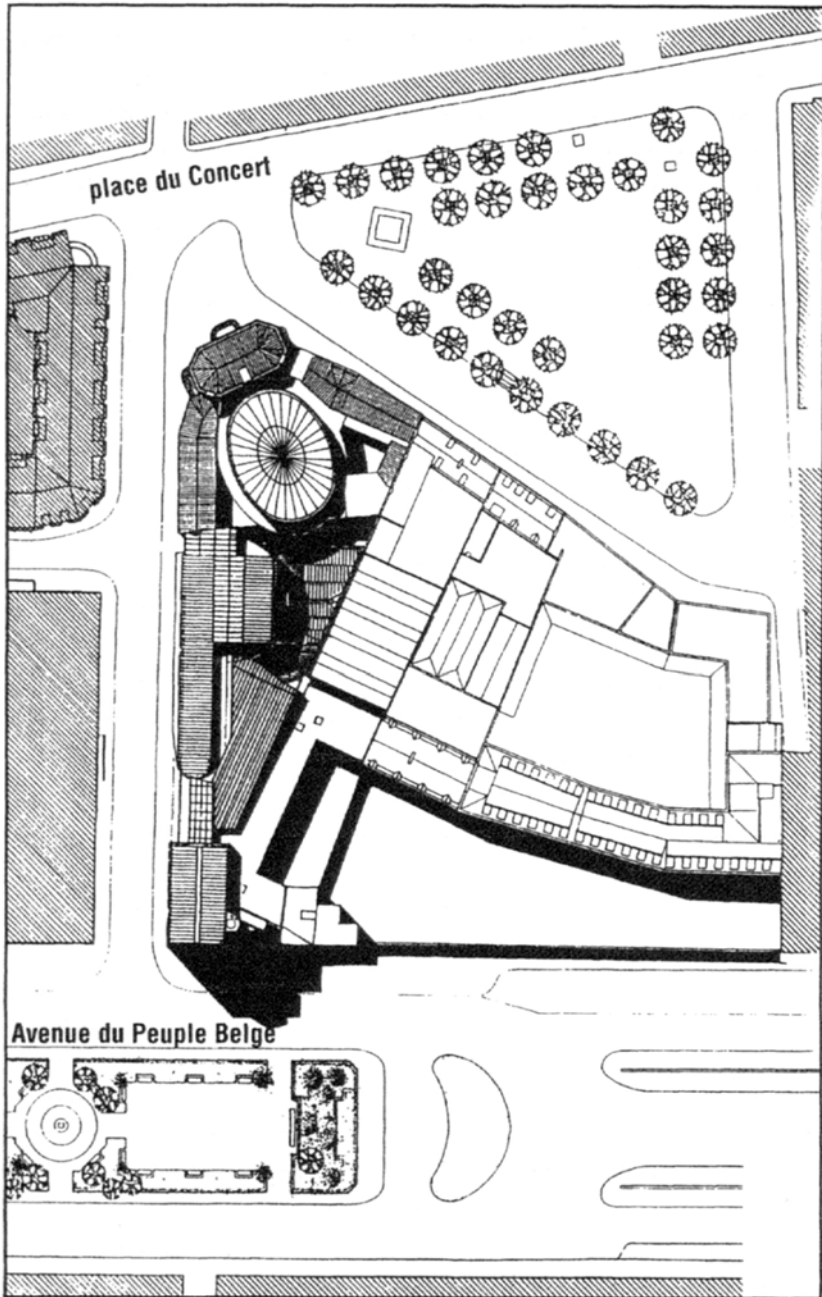


Figure 4.2 Lille: Conservatoire de Musique location plan

Source: Philippe Legros, architect

House on rue Ste Catherine

This is a small private house in the medieval part of the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, zoned USb2 in the PSMV, due 'mainly for rehabilitation'. The owner-architect, Didier Joseph-François, was also the director of the CAUE at the time. The site was a narrow gap between two-storey residential buildings in varying conditions.

The interest of this house lies in the fact that the architect attempted to recreate in a contemporary language the spirit of the old Flemish town houses (see [Plate 4.4](#)). These houses were built in series, all looking the same except for variations in width to reflect differences in incomes, without breaking the unity of the whole. Hence front elevations vary between 5 and 6.5 metres and the windows and spaces between them vary accordingly. Traditionally windows occupied about 60 per cent of the façade to allow for maximum light. These are the principles that the architect decided to incorporate in his design. In addition, he had to respect the requirements of the PSMV: the building line, the cornice alignment and the top of the roof had to follow those of the neighbouring buildings.

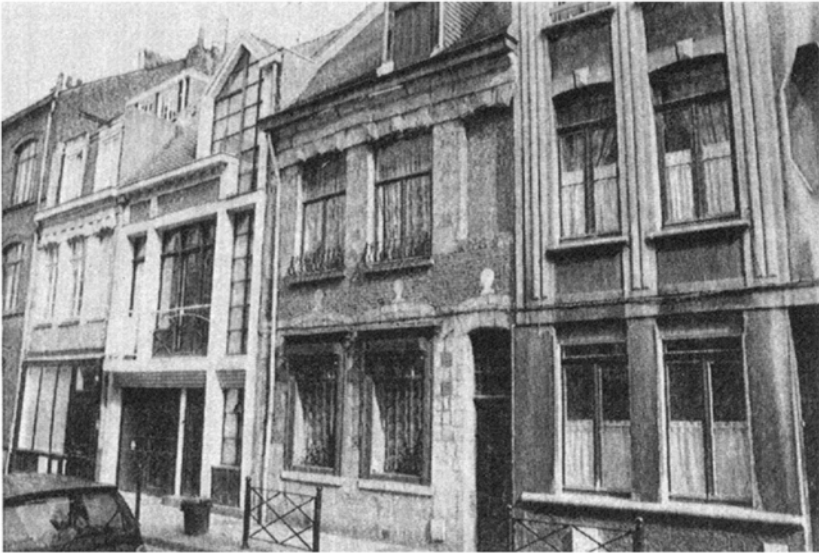


Plate 4.4 Lille: house on the rue Ste Catherine

The ABF was consulted throughout the design process and never objected to any of it. The *permis de construire* was obtained without difficulties. The result is undoubtedly a new building, using a modernist geometry and materials (concrete), yet in harmony with its neighbours and reflecting the area's history and spirit. It is a two storey plus mansard house, like most of the other houses in the street; it follows all of the above prescriptions and produces a very modern house. The façade's geometry is simple and broadly accords with the general

street norm but it does not blend. In particular there is a ‘high-tech’ rounded balcony which distinguishes it from its neighbours. The colours of the materials are the same but stone cladding has been replaced by concrete. Thus respect for a few, albeit important, elements allows for freedom in the language used.

Euralille

Euralille differs from all of the other examples in scale and location; it is one of the provincial equivalents of the Parisian *grands projets*. It is included here because it represents another way of relating modern architecture to a historic city and because it provides an additional example of the relationship between developers, architects and local authorities.

The scheme originated from the wish of Lille’s *maire* and first socialist Prime Minister, Pierre Mauroy, to ensure that the new railway link between London, Paris and Brussels stopped in Lille, thus turning his city into a major European interchange. In order to succeed in this bid, the city had to show that it could offer an adequate site for a development of the importance required by such a scheme. Fortunately, some 70 hectares of land were available next to the existing main railway terminus, itself an important regional interchange and adjacent to the city’s historic core. This land had been occupied by the city’s fortifications, demolished at the end of the nineteenth century; it had been lying mostly empty ever since, in the ownership of the Ministry of Defence and surplus to its needs.

In 1987, Mauroy managed to convince the railway companies and the French government of the attraction of his proposal. He obtained public and private financial backers for the development and launched a competition to choose the architect who would be in charge of the area’s master plan. Rem Koolhaas from the Netherlands was chosen and a *Société d’Economie Mixte* (SEM) was set up in 1990 to implement the project. In addition a panel of experts, the *Cercle de qualité architecturale*, was set up to ensure the architectural quality of the various elements of the scheme to be designed by different architects.

The master plan covers an area of 40 hectares on the periphery of the city; it includes a variety of uses—conference and exhibition centre, offices, hotels, shopping centre, park, auditorium, public space—physically related to the railway lines. The new TGV station, Lille-Europe, and the old railway station, Lille-Flandres, are like two arms of the scheme, representing two areas of technology a century apart. The old one (which was once the Gare du Nord in Paris and was transported stone by stone at the beginning of this century) faces the historic city and establishes the link between it and the new developments. These are all large modern architectural statements which make no attempt to integrate with the historic core (see [Plate 4.5](#)). They aim both to form a functional link between the city and its suburbs and to mark the city’s edge with a series of high towers.

Phase 1 of the scheme is nearing completion. It is difficult to evaluate particularly because the public open spaces which should form the links between

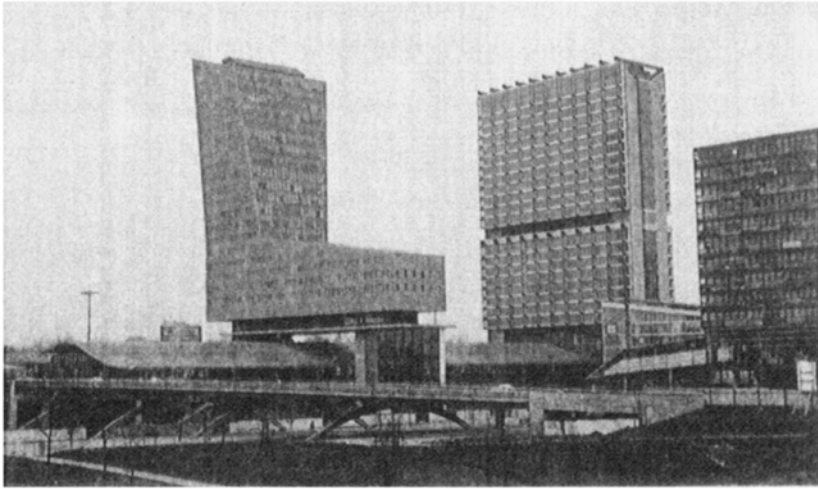


Plate 4.5 Lille: a general view of Euralille

the various parts are not entirely functional yet. The expectation is that the scheme will bring new life to the old city and that people and activities will flow easily between the two. Looking at the plan of the city, there is a clear parallel between the position of the old citadel vis-à-vis the historic core and that of Euralille (see [Figure 4.3](#)). The citadel was constructed at the time of the French extension of the city and the two were carefully linked: straight streets opened up views from the citadel to the city, thus allowing for the control of potentially unruly populations. Euralille's functions are not the same but its integration with the city is equally important: today's links are based on civic activities, such as shopping and commuting patterns, rather than military ones. At present, the design does not make this integration obvious but Buruma has no doubts about its success:

The astonishing thing about Euralille is how this modern development... has revived old Lille. A bold, big, modern architectural development has revitalized a dying old city.... The whole looks magnificent in the vast, webbed, human way of a Gothic cathedral.

(Buruma 1996:47)

QUIMPER

Quimper, the capital of the *département* of Finistère, has a population of about 60,000. Located at the junction of two rivers, it is a typical Breton town which has over sixty listed buildings. It is also an active centre for trade and for tourism. As noted on p. 73, Finistère has taken a lead in the creation of *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain* (ZPPAU), due partly to the

initiative of the local ABF and partly to the commitment of the local *maires*. Around 1983, when the decentralization laws were published, the POS of Quimper needed revising: it was too precise and was creating problems for its implementation. The municipal chief executive, aware of the legislation, felt that the ZPPAU was a useful tool to apply in Quimper at the time of the POS revision. Together with the ABF and some local architects who were also enthusiastic about the new procedure, the chief executive convinced a number of relevant people at municipal and central government level and so the first study for a ZPPAU was launched in late 1983. Quimper's ZPPAU was approved in 1988.

The document discussed in [Chapter 3](#) represents a new, more flexible approach to the control of development in historic areas and the surroundings of listed buildings. Applications are considered jointly by the city architect and the ABF, who discuss most cases before making a decision. They often discuss them with the applicants as well. Criteria for approval are given in the 'fiches' that constitute the main part of the ZPPAU documents (see pp. 73–4).

Place de la Tourbie

This is a private housing development consisting of fourteen flats and three shops. The site is within the ZPPAU, in between what is called the Monumental zone and the Transitional zone, at the edge of the town centre. There is no specific 'fiche' covering the site itself, but there are some for the adjacent area.

The site is an awkward one as it is located between a large early 1970s development and a much smaller nineteenth century house. The original owner offered it for sale by tender. In order to make a successful bid, the developer had therefore to be sure that a scheme would be economically viable and would obtain a *permis de construire*. Hence a first sketch was prepared by the architect, M. Le Coz, and brought to the city architect and the ABF for their unofficial endorsement. Fairly elaborate negotiations ensued, particularly to ensure that the proposed building would satisfactorily bridge the gap between its two very different neighbours and that a building of quality would be obtained for a fairly sensitive and prominent corner. The public authorities knew that they were negotiating from a position of strength since the architect and the developer did not want to risk a refusal and lose their option on the site. Eventually a scheme acceptable to all was obtained: the permit was granted subject to conditions concerning the rendering, materials, colours and joinery.

The building is broken into three elements, growing from four storey plus attic in the vicinity of the nineteenth century house (which has three storeys plus attic) to four storeys plus two attics near the seven storey block of flats (see [Plate 4.6](#)). At the same time it cleverly turns the corner through changes in the roofs and the articulation between the elements of the building. The fenestration subtly balances the proportions of the nineteenth century and the more modern curtain wall. As a result the building makes an almost perfect transition between its



Figure 4.3 Lille: part of the city plan showing the location of the old citadel and of Eurallille

Source: Floriscope

disparate neighbours: only the partly exposed party wall with the modern block of flats is less than satisfactory. All of the participants in the process, ABF, city architect and designer, consider the end product to be a success: it is a contemporary solution to a difficult problem, which enhances its environment.

2 rue Pen-ar-Steir

This site is in the part of the ZPPAU called the *Zones d'abords directs* which surrounds the historic centre. It is a residential area of two and three storey traditional but ordinary houses. The development by a local architect, J. Palaud, includes three dwellings and garages. It is an uncompromisingly, almost aggressively, modernist building but one which manages to adapt cleverly to the complicated topography of the site. It neither attempts to blend with its immediate surroundings nor deliberately tries to be in contrast with them; it responds to its location by maintaining the scale and using local materials. Its ground floor is blind except for a door and an entry for vehicles leading into the garages. This reflects what happens in at least some of the surrounding traditional houses which however have different proportions and geometry. The exposed stone front on the rue Pen-ar-Steir is also characteristic of the area; the rest of the building is finished in white rendering as are other houses in the area. Its apparently flat roof, the elements protruding above it and the horizontal fenestration do not



Plate 4.6 Quimper: flats in Place de la Tourbie

relate to its surroundings, but the building marks the corner in a way that seems to respond intelligently to these surroundings. The scheme was approved by the ABF who was not scared by its modernity and knew that he could trust the architect; he is enthusiastic about the result. His office has not received adverse comments either, which he assumes indicates approval.

Les Halles

This building was erected before the creation of the ZPPAU. It replaces an earlier municipal market which was destroyed by fire in 1976. In 1979, the city launched an architectural competition, the first stage of which was open to anyone. For the second stage, three teams were selected; a local architect, Erwan Le Berre, was the winner. The winning design was subsequently modified after discussions with the developer (the municipal council), a consultant architect advising the city and the ABF. Discussions involved not only the form but also the use of the building: the architect was particularly concerned with the way in which such a prominent building would be integrated in the life of the city.



Plate 4.7 Quimper: Les Halles

The final result is an audacious scheme, using not only traditional materials, local stone, slate and timber, but also a modern language and contemporary technology, particularly in the timber structure (see [Plate 4.7](#)) It is remarkably well integrated with its surroundings in spite of being of an entirely different period. The building occupies a pivotal site in the town and by its positioning and its openings provides for easy circulation through it. The volumes are broken up

to emphasize the openness and to offer transitional spaces. The vast slate roofs reflect the surrounding buildings and the large expanses of glass allow glimpses of these surroundings for those inside the building. Through its positioning on the site, the building encloses and recreates distinct public areas. ‘The architects have played with the façades, breaking them here and there to accentuate the idea of passage, opening it to make people want to enter’ (Anon, 1980:10).

The building is a modern version of the traditional market hall. The architect appears to have studied the site and analysed the forms and the uses with care; he then reinterpreted them in a contemporary language. It enhances this vital part of Quimper, making reference to its history and reflecting the spirit of the place in order to contribute to the present life of the area.

Other buildings

A few other buildings are worth mentioning even though their files were not consulted and no additional information is available beyond photographs. The first is the one partly occupied by the Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP) and located on a strategic corner. One side fronts the river Odet and is adjacent to a very regular and traditional nineteenth century, five storey building; the other side is next to a similarly regular but earlier four storey building (see [Plate 4.8](#)). Through the alignment of certain elements, a clever play with the roof lines and the volumes, and through a very rhythmic treatment of the elevations, the new building manages successfully to make the link between the two frontages and to do so without compromising its modernity.

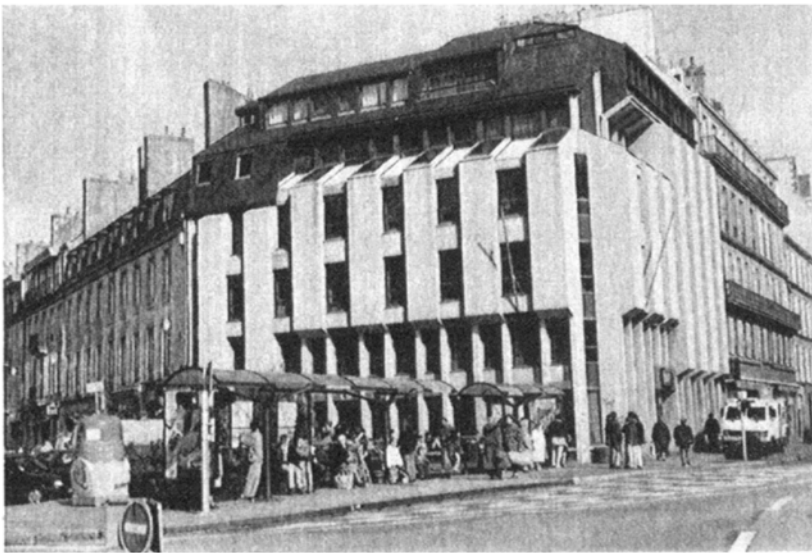


Plate 4.8 Quimper: Banque Nationale de Paris

On the other side of the Odet river, on a prominent site facing the cathedral, public organizations have established their new headquarters: the Maison du Département and the Préfecture. At the same time a private developer has built a hotel and some flats. The result is an interesting mixture of contemporary public and private buildings around a public square facing the river, and adjacent to older structures which have been renovated. Through the use of shapes and materials and the breaking up of volumes, this ensemble, though not all of equal quality, offers a valid modern counterpoint to the historic core of the town on the other side of the river.

CHARTRES

Chartres, located some 90 km from Paris, with a population of 40,000, is mainly known for its cathedral, probably the highest expression of French gothic. A focus for pilgrimages and an important tourist centre, visited by some three million people per year, it is also a lively economic centre.

Chartres' *Secteur Sauvegardé*, which covers an area of 64 hectares, was designated in 1964, the second in the country. The PSMV was prepared at a time when there were no precedents for such documents and was approved in 1971. Guy Nicot, Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques, someone with an established reputation in the field of historic buildings, was commissioned to prepare such a plan. His influence on developments in the city has been felt ever since. He is not particularly interested in modern architecture and the PSMV makes few references to it. The very slim document is mainly concerned with restoration and rehabilitation, reflecting the period when it was prepared. In line with requirements, land use, heights, materials and the positioning of new buildings are mentioned. At the time, the town had a large number of insalubrious buildings and the plan had to take account of this within the philosophy of the period and the means available. It protected a number of important buildings but it also allowed the demolition or renovation of many others. The regulations are relatively few (less than twenty pages) and combine specificity and generality:

Over the whole of the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, buildings must be integrated in the urban site. They must present a simplicity of volume, a unified appearance and use materials compatible with economy of construction and in harmony with the urban landscape. Pastiche of architectural styles foreign to the region is specifically forbidden.

(Article 16)

There follows a long list of materials that are not allowed, such as corrugated fibro-cement, false bricks and false timber panels. On the other hand, façades of new buildings

must harmonize with old façades, through the relationship between voids and solids.... Whatever the methods of construction used, the elements that can be seen from the street must harmonize with the old façades by showing only similar materials.

(Article 16 C)

This plan has allowed the local ABF, supported by the author of the plan who was retained as a consultant, to use a substantial amount of discretion in judging the suitability of development in the city. The document is considered to be outdated and, according to officials in the Ministère de l'Équipement, not a good example of a PSMV: it reflects the period of its conception, when the city itself was seen as a historic monument of a specific age and the plan aimed at recreating an ideal image of the past. It is nevertheless being revised under the supervision of the same architect. The city authorities hope that the new version will be both clearer and more flexible in order to allow the area to evolve while not losing its specificity.

The city has a well established planning office staffed by architects and architect-planners. Its *maire* and councillors are well informed and get involved in planning and conservation matters. They have set up a Groupe Permanent d'Urbanisme (GPU) which involves the city's technical services, elected representatives, the local ABF and officers of the DDE: its role is to supervise the development in the city; it meets every two weeks and discusses proposed schemes with architects and developers. For the areas not covered by the PSMV, Chartres has an adopted POS with specific requirements concerning architecture; the regulations include the designation of some thirty buildings as 'not to be demolished'. This gives them greater protection than under the PSMV and puts them directly under the control of the *maire* and the municipal services (Delatronchette 1993).

House on the river Eure

This is a single family house located next to a bridge (Pont Taillard) on the river Eure, a prominent site in the *Secteur Sauvegardé* (see [Plate 4.9](#)). It was built in 1982 by J.P.Porchon, an architect new to the area at the time. Its design and construction led to great controversy. It has been a landmark in the history of the city's *Secteur Sauvegardé*.

The land was bought from the city by M.Besné, managing director of a Société d'Économie Mixte set up by the city. Both the owner and the architect were aware of the PSMV's requirements for the site, particularly with regard to the positioning of the building on the plot. Having done a sunlight study and an analysis of the relationship between the site, the river and the bridge, M.Porchon arrived at a different positioning for his scheme: it occupies the corner of the river and the street rather than leaving these open. He presented a draft to the various authorities involved: M.Nicot, as architect of the *Secteur Sauvegardé*

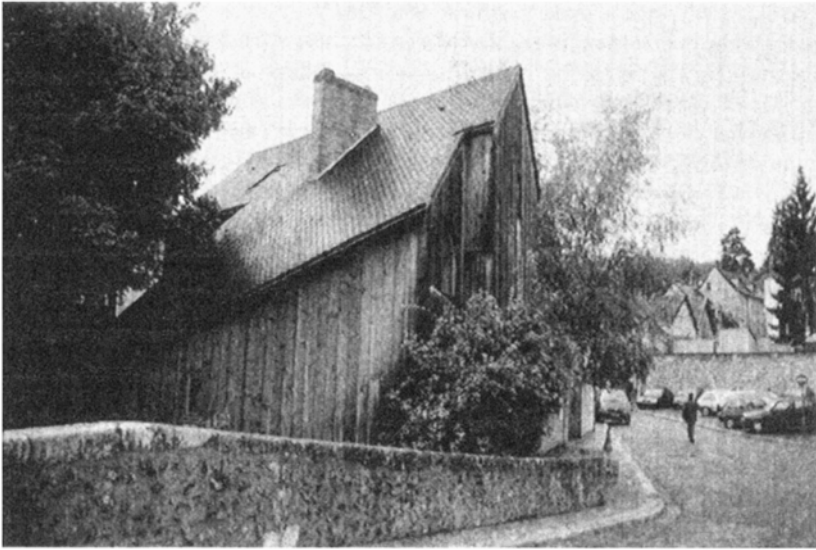


Plate 4.9 Chartres: house on the River Eure

(whose advice is not statutory but very influential), the ABF, the city planning services and the DDE architect. The case file shows that all approved of his proposal and the *permis de construire* was obtained without any opposition.

While the house was being built the local neighbourhood association protested vociferously against it, mainly because of the use of timber cladding. M.Nicot supported the protest: 'I gave my agreement to the scheme, to its volumes and to the materials; but I consider that I was betrayed by the manner in which the materials have been used on site' (quoted by Poirier, 1983). Nevertheless the building went ahead as it conformed to the *permis* given: the authorities could not stop it because the objections to it did not correspond to any breach of regulation (see p. 206 for further discussion of this case).

The controversy has now died down; today the building is considered to be an asset to the *Secteur Sauvegardé* and its owners are both satisfied with it and proud of it. The general volume of the building was never in question: it marks the bridgehead and follows the river bend much better than the proposal in the PSMV. The steep sloping roof is typical of the area but it is treated in a very different way. The timber cladding has aged and mellowed: as the architect asserted at the time, the material is far from being foreign to the area; a number of buildings made of timber existed along the Eure. The lower part of the building has its stone wall exposed, also following tradition. The volumes are timeless and the ways in which the opening relate to the elevation are modernist. The building is therefore historically correct in its positioning, its design and the use of materials. On the other hand there is no doubt that the design is contemporary;

it makes no concessions to historicism, it does not try to hide its modernity. It makes a significant contribution to a high quality environment. The architect reviled by some at the time now has a flourishing practice, working mainly for the city. Ironically, a brochure produced by the *mairie* includes a photograph of the building with the caption: 'An example of the integration of modern architecture in the *Secteur Sauvegardé*'.

Other examples

Other buildings by the same architect and his partner are worth mentioning. One is a single family house in a modest street of almost rural character. The architect has replicated the nearly blind wall and the single dormer window of its neighbours, and has used similar materials, rendering, timber and tiles. The resulting building presents a certain ambiguity: its modernity is not obvious at first but it is modest and yet elegant, and in perfect harmony with its surroundings.

At the corner of the rue de la Foulerie and the rue du Pot Vert, on the other side of the river from the first house built by her husband, Mme Porchon has designed a public sector housing scheme which is 'resolutely contemporary but in harmony with the environment' according to a municipal magazine (Lemoine 1990:6; see [Plate 4.10](#)). The units, somewhat difficult to describe because of their intricacy, follow the subdivision and positioning patterns of the area, its pitched roofs and coloured rendering. The organization of volumes and spaces, rather than the elevational treatment of individual buildings, reflects the spirit of the place.

PARIS

The number of examples of modern buildings being inserted alongside historic buildings is higher in Paris than in most other parts of France. They have received more publicity and more written coverage than those in other cities. The role of Paris as capital means that successive governments have lavished attention and resources on the city.

Apart from the planning office of the *mairie* which, as in other cities, processes the *permis de construire*, Paris has the equivalent of a strategic planning office, the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR). This organization has a special status: it acts as a consultant with a certain amount of independence but its board of directors is chaired by the *maire*. The APUR does all the research leading to the preparation and modification of the city's POS, the documents and plans for the ZACs and other important developments. It participates in the juries for competitions, discusses schemes with architects, and advises on a number of schemes. It has a leading role in heritage protection, mainly through carrying out detailed analyses of the important historic elements of the townscape and using these to inform the regulations incorporated in the planning documents. Through

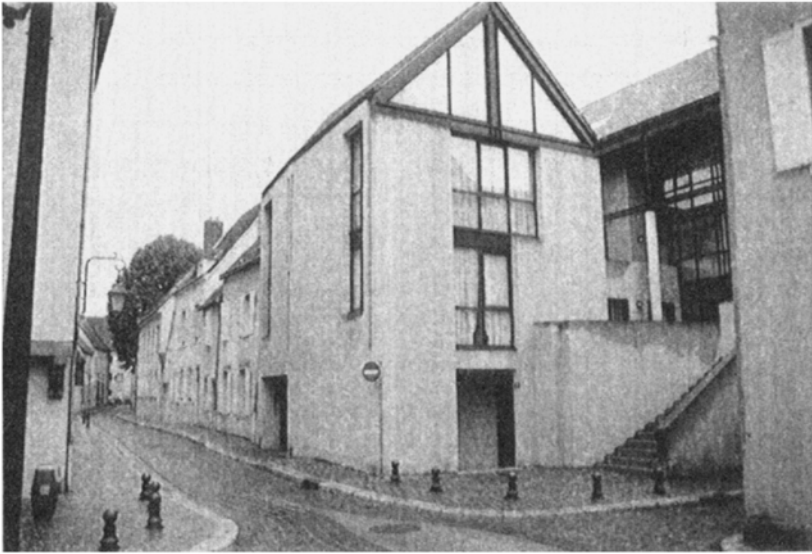


Plate 4.10 Chartres: public sector housing, rue du Pot Vert

its magazine, *Paris Projet*, in which its studies are published, the APUR reaches a wider audience and performs a promotional and an educational role.

Most of the examples chosen in the city have been designed within the constraints of the 1975 POS. This document was a landmark in planning as it abandoned the principles that had regulated development for the previous fifteen years. It returned to more traditional controls based on the existing morphology: the street, the block, the plot. It required buildings to be aligned with their neighbours and abandoned most road widening lines. A careful analysis of heights, profiles and rhythms undertaken by the APUR led to new regulations which were based on historic elements and were adapted to the characteristics of each neighbourhood and even, in certain cases, each street. In particular the street, neglected in the previous POS, was once again seen as an essential element of the urban fabric, needing protection and reinforcement (Starkman 1987:56–62). A recent revision of the POS (1989) has not affected the present examples; changes in the regulations are aimed at a slight relaxation of the controls and for the most part are only adjustments. Aesthetic controls over development can be imposed on 80 per cent of the Paris area because of the effects of the large number of listed buildings (1,200), protected sites and two *Secteurs Sauvegardés*. This means that the APUR often intervenes in specific cases as also do the ABFs of the various *arrondissements* of the city.

Block of flats, rue Descartes

This building is in the heart of the Latin Quarter, within a 500 metre radius of more than one listed building: the Ecole Polytechnique, the Lycée Henri IV and the church of Ste Geneviève. The land belonged originally to a relative of one of the architects responsible for the building. He prepared a scheme in consultation with the city authorities and the ABF and then sold it to a large development company, COGEDIM, which claims to construct only buildings of quality. The company required a building which both maximized the use of the land and expressed its status: 'a COGEDIM façade is recognizable' (interview). The city planners demanded strict conformity with the POS, which meant that the original design had to be modified to eliminate one storey. All involved admitted that the building would have had better proportions had the extra storey been allowed but the city authorities could not afford to contravene the POS regulations and risk an appeal by third parties. The ABF, who originally disagreed with the city on the matter of height reduction, required changes in the design of the windows and in the articulation of the elevations in order to respect the rhythm of the street. Even during construction, the ABF demanded some modifications, which were reluctantly accepted by the architects in order not to waste time.



Plate 4.11 Paris: block of flats, rue Descartes

The end product is noticeable first of all because it is lower than its neighbours and thus breaks the Haussmannian regularity of the streets (see [Plate 4.11](#)). Undoubtedly a seven storey building, like its neighbours, would have been more appropriate and would have avoided blind party walls. Otherwise it is a modern version of the traditional Parisian block of flats. Located on a corner and

adjacent to a 1930s block on one side and a turn of the century one on the other, it manages to make the link without being a replica of either. A very subtle change in the colour of the rendering (demanded by the ABF) is barely noticeable and is intended to blend better with the two different neighbours. The proportions of the openings reflect those of the adjacent buildings, including some projecting bays; the corner unit on the other hand is treated differently, from a glassed ground floor to a rounded dormer at the top. The volumes and materials used reflect the period of construction although, in the words of the architect, the building does not ‘frighten the clients’ by its modernity. It is one example where the strict application of regulations has not been to the benefit of the final result.

Block of flats, Avenue des Gobelins

Located on a wide boulevard of strong Haussmanian characteristics, this is a large housing scheme designed by the Danish architect Henryk Lassen, also for the private development company COGEDIM (see [Plate 4.12](#)). The street is sloped and the adjacent buildings are six storeys on one side and seven on the other. The architect had to reconcile these differences while satisfying three sets of requirements: those of the client, to maximize the use of the site; those of the city, including the maintenance of a good sized open space inside the block; and those (unwritten) of the ABF. The last, consulted because of the site’s location within a 500 metre perimeter, required only one change in the original design which affected the height of the ground floor: Lassen admits that this requirement improved the building and is grateful for the ABF’s observation. The result is a



Plate 4.12 Paris: flats, Avenue des Gobelins

typical Parisian building, perfectly in harmony with its turn of the century neighbours though more reminiscent of 1930s modernism. The floor heights differ from those of its older neighbours but certain lines are continued; the proportions of the openings are different but the relation between solid and void is similar; the most noticeably different elements are the projecting balconies and these, by their positioning, manage to break the façade and reduce its bulk. It is a good example of how the basic concepts of the boulevard have been incorporated in the design without copying any of the stylistic expressions of the surroundings. The building adds something new and qualitative to the street; it is not a timid 'keeping in keeping' structure, but a new layer of development that understands its surroundings and refers to them without subservience.

Housing, 44 rue de Menilmontant

The developer of this block of flats is an association, the Office Central Interprofessionnel du Logement, which provides housing for the staff of firms that contribute 1 per cent of their income to the association. In the past thirty years it has accommodated over 100,000 households. The directors of the association consider that the design of their buildings is an important element in their marketing: their image depends on it. They are therefore particular in their choice of architects but, as this example shows, they are also ambitious and ready to take risks. Gaudin's design for the rue de Ménilmontant respects but is in no way servile to its surroundings; the relationship between the new building and its surroundings is not an obvious one and requires more than just looking at the street elevations. The architect has painstakingly modelled the building, taking inspiration from the site's characteristics, not just in the façade but in its three dimensions (see [Plate 4.13](#)). Every detail appears to have been carefully considered. The result is very individual, utterly modern, even daring, yet it establishes a dialogue with both the nineteenth century buildings that surround it and the nearby church. It is not just the façades that enhance the area but the interesting way in which the imprint of the building adapts to the site and creates internal circulations. The *permis de construire* appears to have been obtained without any problems and without the need to modify the design. Lucan comments on Gaudin's work and in particular on this building:

these spaces open and create a strange world which tries to rediscover the labyrinthine qualities, the 'neighbourhoods', the 'proximities', 'the confused heap' of the medieval city.... The walls swell or slip away to give birth to overhanging columns.

(Lucan 1989:171)



Plate 4.13 Paris: flats, rue de Menilmontant

Homage has been paid to this building by various architectural critics (e.g. Chaslin 1987; Cohen *et al.* 1990) and an entire book has been dedicated to it (Tonka 1987).

School, rue Tandou

This building, also by Gaudin, is an extension for a nineteenth century school, previously extended in the 1950s and surrounded by Haussmanian blocks of flats; it is an infill project within a difficult site (see [Plate 4.14](#)). As with his block of flats, Gaudin has managed here to produce something totally new and original which enhances its surroundings. It fits in so subtly that it defies easy description; no single element can be said to reflect its neighbours and the building is all but ‘in keeping’, yet it is perfectly integrated and appears as part of a historic continuum.

With light swellings, with planes on the slant caught by a column in some places but not in others, thus creating a subtle imbalance of each of the levels on the street elevation, the work on the vertical emphasis of the tiled façade is even more successful here than in the Mémilmontant building.

(Le Dantec 1987:28)

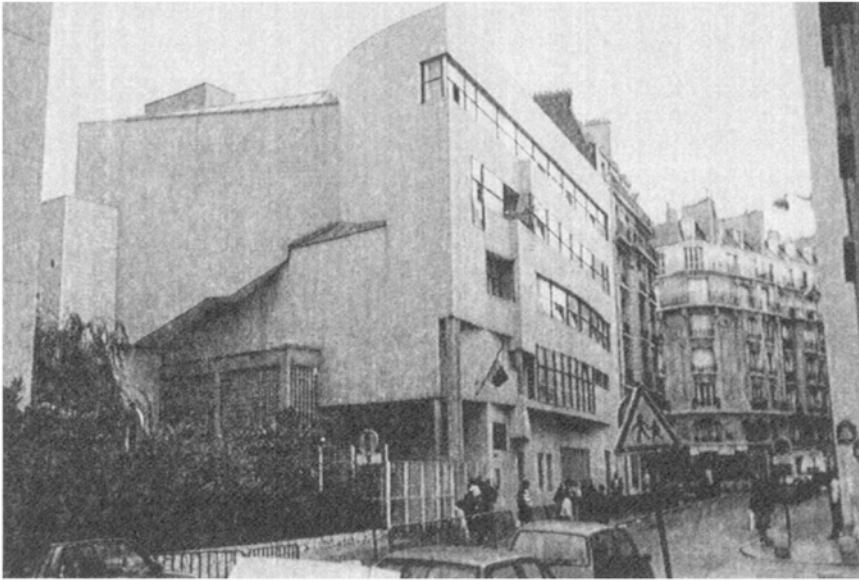


Plate 4.14 Paris: school extension, rue Tandou

Housing, rue des Hautes Formes

This example is not an infill site between two party walls but a housing estate (209 dwellings) owned by the city of Paris, on a very irregular site located between traditional but different streets. Rather than design one building, Christian de Portzamparc, the winner of the architectural competition for the scheme, designed a group of eight buildings with a central square linked to the surroundings by a pedestrian walkway. The proportions of the individual buildings and the creation of public spaces make for the success of the ensemble. Lengthy negotiations took place and some twenty regulations had to be waived before the scheme could be approved but the result has been acclaimed as ‘a landmark scheme, in that it rediscovers urban space, a reduction in scale, a density that allows for interaction, a sociability’ (Schweitzer 1996:21).

The design does not try to imitate a historic style but reflects traditional Parisian spaces such as that of the Place Furstemberg in St Germain des Prés. The scheme was designed in 1975 and finished in 1979. It is therefore seen as one of the precursors of the new architectural movement in the capital. Its popularity has not diminished: it is praised in every architectural book or article that refers to it (see, for instance, Lombardini, 1996).

CONCLUSIONS

With the exception of the last example, all buildings analysed in this chapter were built in the 1980s. As already mentioned, they are representative of their time even though it would be difficult to define a style common to all of them. It is possible to say that their successful insertion into their locations is achieved not through stylistic imitations of previous periods but through the use of a variety of elements expressed in a recognizable language of the 1980s. Sutcliffe (1993:187) calls the architecture of this period 'neo-modern' and describes it as humane and varied. The designs appear to be the result of careful spatial analyses of the locality and not merely of a simple exercise of matching façades; information gathered from the case files, from interviews or from secondary sources confirms this. Elements such as the scale, rhythm, alignment and articulation of the street (or streets, in the case of buildings fronting more than one), and the spatial qualities of the site, including its past history, are reflected in most of the buildings. In some cases (Hôtel de la Treille), the treatment of the façades includes references to adjacent buildings, through the shapes and materials used, but this is only one of the elements used by the architect to make the building respond to its context.

The locations of the buildings vary in their historic character and aesthetic value, and the degree of protection imposed on the areas reflects these differences: at one end of the spectrum, the strong historical context in Lille is protected under a *Plan de Sauvegardé et Mise en Valeur*; at the other end, the less historically important environment of Pontoise is protected only because of its proximity to listed buildings. Nevertheless in all cases (except, as far as could be ascertained, in that of the Hautes-Formes in Paris), the ABF intervened in the process of control and the case files show evidence of modifications to the schemes as a result of his comments. It is also clear that negotiations between the applicant's architect, the ABF and the local Service d'Urbanisme took place early on in the process of design. In at least one case (the house on the river Eure in Chartres), additional non-statutory participants contributed to the discussions.

Fewer than half of the examples chosen were private commissions and the remainder were public and the results of competitions. These differences are not immediately reflected in the designs of the buildings although those chosen through competitions appear more daring. The owners seem to have had a direct influence on the design of some of the schemes more than on others. The sample is too small to make further generalizations. In the next chapters, these case studies and additional examples from other cities will be discussed further.

CLIENTS AND THEIR AGENTS

INTRODUCTION

The process which ends with a completed building involves numerous participants; for the purpose of this book these can be divided into two groups: the clients and their agents, who include architects, on the one hand, and the gatekeepers, who include all those concerned with design control, on the other hand. This chapter deals with the first of these. Since the role and influence of the public sector is fundamental in the process of production, it is considered here as patron and client, the *maître d'ouvrage*, and not as gatekeeper, the subject of [Chapter 6](#). As will be seen, the difference between the two roles is in some cases somewhat blurred, that of the *maire* in particular.

After years of neglect, French presidents, starting with Giscard d'Estaing in the 1970s, took a lead in the promotion of quality in public architecture, just as the pre-Revolutionary monarchs had done. A flurry of activity followed, with exhibitions, initiatives such as a national publicity campaign (*Les Mille Jours pour l'Architecture*), and most importantly, legislation. President Mitterrand went further by directing substantial investment to major public developments and commissioning his own monuments, the so-called *Grands Projets du Président*. Some of these well publicized schemes are examples of an audacious and mostly successful insertion of modern architecture into environments of high historical profile and valued architecture: Pei's Louvre Pyramid, Ott's Bastille Opera House and Nouvel's Institut du Monde Arabe.

In 1981, the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, committed himself and the government to architectural quality well beyond the above spectacular examples and gave it a definite political character:

land...cannot be the object of abusive speculative appropriation; otherwise we will reach the kind of situation which we all deplore, namely high profit construction, detrimental to beauty and to the right that every citizen has to live in a beautiful environment... nothing new and nothing strong

will be achieved by French architecture if we do not change fundamentally the rules of planning and the rules affecting land.

(quoted by Loriers-Augeard 1981:86–7)

The public sector in general has been given instruments that have greater weight than planning controls and allow it to intervene directly in the moulding of the urban environment. Decentralization has in addition given motivation to local authorities to build and promote quality in their area. The image of the city has become a way of attracting investment. *Maires* are very conscious of the role of quality architecture in achieving this image; some have taken their lead from Paris and created their own versions of *grands projets*: the works of Nouvel in Tours, Bofill and Vasconi in Montpellier and Foster in Nîmes are fairly well publicized examples, as is Euralille which was described on pp. 92–5. Numerous, more modest schemes exist in other cities throughout the country. ‘The convergence of a number of reforms and strategies has resulted in architectural production in France being the highest in Europe; in quantity and quality of projects, typological diversity and particularly in specificity to site’ (Contal 1990:44).

The private sector is in turn affected by the lead given by the government. As shown in some of the case studies in [Chapter 4](#), it is generally more conservative, as it has to sell its product, but it understands the value of quality and image. Because of financial and legislative pressures, it often enters into partnerships with the public sector and accepts constraints that go beyond those of planning controls.

LEGISLATION

Law on architecture

The degree of government involvement in architecture is well exemplified by the January 1977 law on architecture. Its first Section (as subsequently modified) states:

Architecture is an expression of culture. Architectural creation, the quality of constructions, their harmonious integration into their environment, respect for natural or urban landscapes and for heritage are all of public interest.

Consequently Section 3 of the law requires that qualified architects be employed to design a scheme whenever a *permis de construire* is sought. There are a number of exemptions (Sections 4, 5) but these would rarely apply to works affecting the exterior appearance of a building in an urban or historic setting. The Code de l’Urbanisme incorporates the requirement of the law, further specifying that

the architectural scheme defines, through plans and written documents, the siting of buildings, their composition, their organization and expression of volume, as well as the choice of materials and colours.

(Article L.421–2)

These Sections point out that the exemptions, which are determined by decree from the *Conseil d'Etat*, do not necessarily apply equally in all cases and to all applicants. Thus the threshold of 170 square metres, below which architects are not needed, applies rarely in protected areas and even less so if the client is from the public sector. Nor surprisingly, all examples described in [Chapter 4](#) were designed by architects.

The legislation regulates the architectural profession and the conditions under which a member of the profession may exercise it. The *Ordre des Architectes*, a body equivalent to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) but with official status, is supervised by the *Ministère de la Culture* (until recently it was the *Ministère de l'Équipement*) and its functions and statutes are established by the same law (Sections 9–29). Sections 6–8 of the law instituted the *Conseils d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement* (CAUE) which will be discussed on pp. 132–4.

The law was part of a deliberate architectural policy initiated by President Giscard d'Estaing to raise the public profile of architecture and, more pragmatically, to satisfy a profession greatly affected by the building slump and becoming increasingly politicized (Lucan 1989). In the same year, 1977, the president instituted the *Mission Interministérielle pour la Qualité des Constructions Publiques* (see pp. 130–2) and announced the creation of a centre for architectural research and study: this later became the *Institut Français d'Architecture*. As a result of this law, architects have not lacked work (at least until the recent recession), particularly in urban areas. In peripheral or rural schemes, however, developers or builders often avoid using architects because the area of individual houses may fall below the threshold at which their employment is required. Even if they do employ an architect to obtain the *permis de construire*, they may use a *Bureau d'Études Techniques* (BET), a design office frequently linked to a contractor or an industrial company, to implement the approved scheme. Where the public sector is the client, or where sensitive negotiations with the authorities on the design of the building are required, architects are mostly employed throughout the process, at least to supervise and coordinate the work of others (Meikle and Hillebrandt 1989:36; Bresard and Fradin 1991:20).

Services Départementaux de l'Architecture

A further decree in March 1979 instituted the *Services Départementaux de l'Architecture* (SDA), field services of central government in the *département*, with the objective of

promoting architecture and urban design of high quality which is harmoniously integrated into its environment.

Article 2 of the decree gives them a number of responsibilities, not least

to ensure that local authorities, administrations and the public are sensitive to the quality of building...to take part in the development of planning documents and to supervise the incorporation of regulations concerning the quality of buildings and the protection of the landscape.

The director of an SDA is appointed by the Ministère de l'Équipement and in most cases is the ABF of the particular *département*, whose responsibilities are therefore widened beyond dealing with historic buildings and conservation (see pp. 176–9). According to one of them

this administrative act recognizes the need for a renewed effort. It completes the mission—limited and conservative—of the Architecte des Bâtiments de France. It confirms a need for the promotion, over the whole national territory, of contemporary architecture of better quality while insisting, without specifying on what basis, on the equally necessary harmonious integration of new buildings in existing contexts.

(Calley 1984:7)

The SDAs get involved in the promotion of quality not only through their statutory role of control in protected areas, which will be dealt with in [Chapter 6](#), but also by advising local authorities, developers and architects and by acting as consultants in a variety of cases, such as competitions, where they may take part in the preparation of the brief and in the jury process (as in the case of Les Halles in Quimper and the Conservatoire in Lille described in [Chapter 4](#)). Their level of involvement varies according to the area, the personality of the ABF in charge and the amount of time they have left after fulfilling their quota of statutory work. Overall the SDA deals with both sides of the equation: the production of buildings of quality and the control of development in protected or sensitive areas.

[Chapter 2](#) mentioned that these services were at different times part of different ministries. In 1996, they were to become a field service of the Ministère de la Culture. These swings have not affected the importance given to architecture, although detailed policy may have varied from one period to another.

INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC BODIES

Mention has already been made of the role of public bodies in architectural production. It is difficult however to appreciate the enormous importance of the public sector in shaping the built environment of French cities. Not only do

public bodies have the means to commission buildings for a great variety of purposes but they can also influence private sector developments through land ownership and intervention in the property market, as well as through planning controls.

Exemplary clients show the way by advertising their confidence in urban architecture; such are the Régie Immobilière de la Ville de Paris which dared to commission les Hautes Formes in 1974 from an unknown architect, Christian de Portzamparc; the Post Office with the recent realizations of Frédéric Borel.... These works are proofs of a new approach to modernity in the traditional urban grain; it allows the city to modernize while remaining true to itself.

(Masboungi, quoted by Stéphan 1996:40)

Preemption rights and expropriation

Various forms of rights of preemption exist in French law. They give the beneficiary the right of first refusal on property that goes on the market. The oldest form concerns the tax authorities in relation to all property transactions: if these authorities consider that the declared selling price of a property (upon which capital gains taxes are calculated) is deliberately low, they can take the place of the buyer and acquire the property at the declared price plus 10 per cent.

Since 1985, for planning purposes, a right of preemption (Droit de Préemption Urbain) has existed in favour of the *communes* whenever they have an approved POS and it applies over the whole area covered by the POS. This enables the *commune* to obtain information on land transactions and, more importantly, to assemble land in order eventually to undertake a planning operation. When applying the right, the objectives must be specified in each case and they must correspond to a rather wide list given in Article L. 300–1 of the Code de l'Urbanisme: to institute a local housing policy, to organize economic activities, to encourage leisure and tourist activities, to build community facilities, to combat insalubrity, to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the heritage and to preserve natural areas (Hostiou 1986: 73). While Article L.300–1 explains the application of the right, Article L.213–3 of the Code extends its use: *communes* can delegate their right of preemption to other authorities, including *Sociétés d'Economie Mixte*. These are public-private companies, with at least 50 per cent public capital, and they are frequently set up by a public authority to undertake major developments. The price of the land in cases of preemption is the market price, but if there is disagreement on this a special tribunal will settle it. Fundamentally, no land transaction in an area covered by a POS is entirely safe from preemption until the sale contract has been signed. And although the right is exercised only in a small percentage of cases, the threat is always there, thus giving the *commune* an important negotiating tool.

In *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, for example, the right of preemption can be used by the *commune*, *inter alia* to ensure the demolition of unsightly accretions (*curetages*) (Circular, April 1965, Art. 2.1). The city of Nantes has utilized the procedure to implement its policies for the *Secteur Sauvegardé* of its historic core: 'The municipality has decided to utilize the right of preemption each time a property on the market appears to offer an opportunity to rehabilitate the sector' (Schmit 1991b:21).

The right of preemption is a powerful instrument, particularly in areas where land for development is scarce, which is almost always the case in historic urban cores. Developers may have to make concessions to a *commune* in order to avoid land being preempted by it. These concessions may be of the 'planning gains' type and they give the public authority an additional lever for improving, through negotiations, the design quality of a proposed scheme.

Expropriation or compulsory purchase is a more drastic and more costly instrument. To be able to expropriate, a public body must first prove that it needs the land to achieve an objective of 'public interest'. The definition of the latter has been widened in the last few years and general planning needs or even the creation of land reserves are accepted as sufficient justification. In particular, expropriation can be used in relation to historic monuments or their surroundings, when for instance an owner objects to the listing of his/ her property, or when buildings adjacent to a listed one are needed for its enhancement. It can also be used as a threat, either to force an owner to restore a building or, in a *Secteur Sauvegardé*, to ensure that a complete group of buildings is restored or maintained. Nevertheless the length of the procedures (rarely less than three years) and their cost (the acquiring body has to pay 25 per cent above the market price as an indemnity) mean that local authorities prefer to acquire land by agreement but utilize this right as a stick for reluctant sellers or neglectful owners.

The difference between expropriation and preemption is that in the former the owners are required to sell against their will, while in the latter the intention to sell has been expressed beforehand; the public authority does not force the sale but merely replaces the buyer. In fact the preempted seller can withdraw from the operation if the price cannot be agreed (Hostiou 1986: 75). Both instruments are used in the last resort; their effect on design quality is neither central nor direct, but they show the potential of public authorities to exert influence by putting pressure on owners outside of their planning control powers. Architects interviewed for this study consistently referred to both their own and developers' fears of the right of preemption and their willingness to negotiate when threatened with it.

Zones d'Aménagement Concerté

The *Zones d'Aménagement Concerté* (ZACs), introduced by the Loi d'Orientation Foncière of 1967, are a kind of comprehensive development area

which plays a central role in shaping French cities. They are defined by the Code de l'Urbanisme:

The Zones d'Aménagement Concerté are those zones in which a local authority or another authorized public body decides to intervene in order to undertake or commission the development of land and the laying of infrastructure.

(L.311-1)

They are the main instrument of *urbanisme opérationnel* (proactive planning) which are available to the *communes* and which involve them together with the private sector. They are most frequently used in areas designated as NA in the POS (see Chapter 3), areas for future urbanization. There are two kinds of ZACs, the public ones where the local authority retains most of the financial responsibilities; and the *conventionnées* which are the subject of contracts between developers and the *commune*. These contracts give details not only of the responsibilities of the participants, for instance in terms of provision of infrastructure, but also in relation to urban form.

The *commune* responsible, in collaboration with other levels of government, has normally to produce a plan for the designated area, the *Plan d'Aménagement de Zone* (PAZ), which follows the format of a POS and must be the subject of an *enquête publique*, after which it supersedes the POS for the area (the NA zoning is changed). Following a number of regulated steps, the local authority may be able to purchase, compulsorily or by agreement, the land in a declared ZAC and subsequently sell it back to the designated developers, private, public or semi-public. These will have to follow a detailed programme, including architectural norms, and sometimes even accept a designated architect or a specific design. In the ZACs *conventionnées*, most of the finance for the development comes from the private sector but the local authority can retain a high degree of control. In all cases, the local authority may not always purchase all land within a ZAC; existing property owners may wish to participate in the proposed programme and accept its conditions, but retain ownership of their land.

Early ZACs were developed during a period—the late 1960s to early 1970s—when *tabula rasa* schemes, breaking with the existing urban fabric, were considered the best way to solve urban problems. They resulted in landscapes reminiscent of those of other countries, including Britain, of the same period: the Montparnasse and Front de Seine areas in Paris or the Part-Dieu in Lyon are examples of which France is less than proud. Such developments, in addition to ignoring their surroundings, were often criticized for favouring private developers and for not achieving social benefits. The case of Citroën-Cévennes, a ZAC covering the site of a derelict car factory in south-west Paris, has been analysed by Acosta and Renard (1993: 147–53): both the private and the public sectors have made profits and the city has gained a 13 hectare park, social housing and other public facilities, but the stated goals of reversing the

depopulation of the area and of achieving a social mix have not been accomplished. More recently cities have used this instrument as a way of avoiding speculation and of achieving social goals; at the same time they have tried to acquire a better image and greater continuity with the past. ZACs have been designated to redevelop and restore run-down historic areas, particularly in the centre of cities. Like other public schemes they are often the subject of architectural competitions and the developers interested in working within the area have to accept the winning team of architects. Frequently the city also appoints a coordinating architect who ensures that the 'vision' conceived for the area is achieved. For the elaboration of this vision (and for the PAZ), the architect normally studies the history of the area and its surroundings. The regulations try to include the lessons learned from such studies and to transmit them to the various participants. The following examples of recent ZACs illustrate how the links with the past are important elements in their conception and development.

The city of Pontoise has a designated ZAC which covers part of its historic core, in the neighbourhood called La Harengerie. It includes derelict sites and buildings which are to be restored or rebuilt; the *commune* aims to restructure the central area, particularly by reinforcing the links between the upper and lower parts of the town, by including *inter alia* some underground parking and by laying out La Harengerie Square and some pedestrianized streets, and it wants the private sector to pay. According to the city's *maire*: 'We wish the ZAC to operate as a restoration of an old neighbourhood, not as a real estate promotion' (quoted by Callandreau 1990). Because the town has an approved POS, it has been able to adopt a simplified ZAC for which a PAZ is not needed (as a result of the 1986 act known as Loi Méhaingnerie). It nevertheless is a ZAC *conventionnée*: a private developer chosen by the *commune* will implement it according to a contract. The selection of the developer followed a competition in which five firms participated and where design aspects were one of the issues to be considered. The ABF and the CAUE have been involved in the various preparation stages of the competition briefs, in the jury, and in the drafting of other planning documents for the area. The chosen firm, a *Société d'Economie Mixte* (SEM), has retained R.Krier as its architect.

The report of the ZAC includes a detailed description of the morphology and landscape of the area (see [Figure 5.1](#)). For example:

The urban landscape is marked by the visual continuity of the building alignments surrounding public spaces, a continuity which can be absolute and opaque without excluding changes of direction or the opening of views towards the inside of the blocks. Churches and monuments provide focal points; street junctions and nodal points indicate the passage from one spatial structure to the next.

La Harengerie Square...has a triangular shape with a steep incline and a retaining wall which takes in this change of level. On the south side it is

bounded by housing, an old print works and an ancient presbytery.... Very picturesque but abandoned, today it is a car park for the surrounding buildings.

(Commune de Pontoise 1990:6, 11)

These K.Lynch inspired comments are meant to be taken into account both by the developers in preparing their schemes for the area and by the authorities in evaluating these schemes. Unfortunately progress on this ZAC has been put in abeyance by the recession but it has not been abandoned.

In the suburbs of Paris, the *commune* of Saint-Denis has a designated ZAC covering some 13 hectares in the surroundings of one of the most important gothic monuments of the country, the St Denis basilica. The local authority, working with an SEM in which the departmental Conseil Général has the majority of shares, aims at creating a thriving urban centre of high architectural quality, integrated with the historical core of the town while giving priority to social housing. The area has been divided into a number of parcels of land, each one given to a different developer and architect (these chosen by the SEM), under the supervision of a coordinating architect who is also responsible for the urban spaces between the developments. The plan for the area recreates continuous building lines, a network of public spaces linked by pedestrian paths, regular building heights and a prescribed geometry, but it does not impose a particular architectural style. The vision of the plan is described by the director of the SEM as recreating a medieval atmosphere in the vicinity of the cathedral (Rougé 1989:59). One of the housing schemes designed in the ZAC by R.Simounet and E.Duhart has been praised in the following terms:

R.Simounet took his cue from the old street and plot patterns and recreated a district with its own squares and paths and its own series of complex progressions from public to private spaces.... [References] are subordinated to a reinterpretation of the orders of Gothic architecture and a remarkable sensitivity to the site.

(Cohen *et al.* 1990:164)

Connection with the past is achieved through the sequence of public spaces, the street alignments and the glimpses that pedestrians have of the basilica, not through the style of the buildings or through details which are markedly modern (see [Plate 5.1](#)).

The city of Paris has embarked on a number of ZACs, some well publicized, such as the Citroën-Cévennes or the Bercy examples. The city's planning agency, the Atelier Parisien d'Urbanisme (APUR), coordinates these around major urban projects for which they undertake detailed studies. The most recent one, on the Left Bank near the Austerlitz railway station, has a plan which claims to follow traditional Parisian concepts re-interpreted in a modern idiom:



Terrains libres, parcelles démolies, terrains difficiles et immeubles vacants



INTERET ARCHITECTURAL

- | | | | |
|--|------------------|--|---------------|
| | Très intéressant | | Interet moyen |
| | Intéressant | | Sans interet |



HAUTEUR DES CONSTRUCTIONS

- | | | | |
|--|-------|--|---------------|
| | R | | R + 3 |
| | R + 1 | | R + 4 et plus |
| | R + 2 | | |



ETAT DU BATI

- | | | | |
|--|---------------|--|--------------|
| | Très bon état | | Etat moyen |
| | Bon état | | Etat mauvais |

Figure 5.1 Illustrations from the report of the ZAC of La Harengerie, Pontoise

Source: City of Pontoise

From the first sketches, the design concept of the development has been based on the wish to extend the city, to re-establish the contact between the

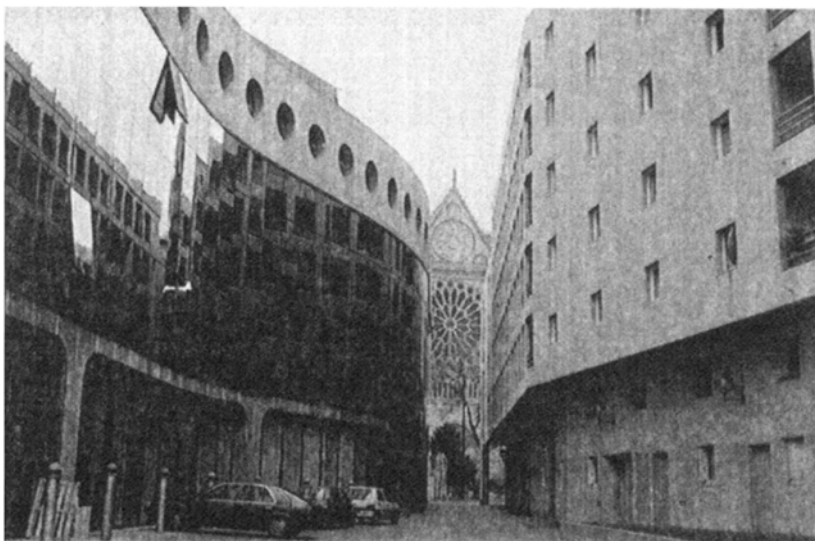


Plate 5.1 Saint-Denis: new buildings in the ZAC, adjacent to the Abbey

thirteenth *arrondissement* and the Seine, and to weld the old and new neighbourhoods.

(Starkman 1990:143)

For the studies of the area advice was sought from the Mission Interministérielle pour la Qualité des Constructions Publiques (see pp. 130–2), whose president, Joseph Belmont, sees the neighbourhood as becoming ‘a city of the twenty-first century’. In addition the city asked five architectural firms to offer their ideas for the structure of the area. The background material, partly published in *Paris Projet* (No. 29) is impressive in its double emphasis on the past history of the area and its future image. It shows a desire to create the right conditions for the design of successful urban landscapes and spaces which respect the spirit of Parisian traditions, without constraining architectural creativity (see [Figure 5.2](#)).

Criticized by some (Punter 1989:158), praised by others (Vilmin 1986: 84–5), the ZAC can be a very powerful, complex and flexible instrument of public intervention. Its effects depend on the negotiating power and ability of the body responsible for its management. The present recession affecting the French real estate market has slowed the progress of a number of ZACs and even endangered their financial feasibility; as a result the future of the procedure is being questioned but the answers are inconclusive (Berthier 1994:20–1; Schmit, 1996: 37–8). In the right hands, it can achieve the successful transformation of historic neighbourhoods without destroying their physical or social character. Admittedly, if wrongly managed, it can be an instrument of speculation and can have negative consequences for the area concerned. In historic areas, the intervention

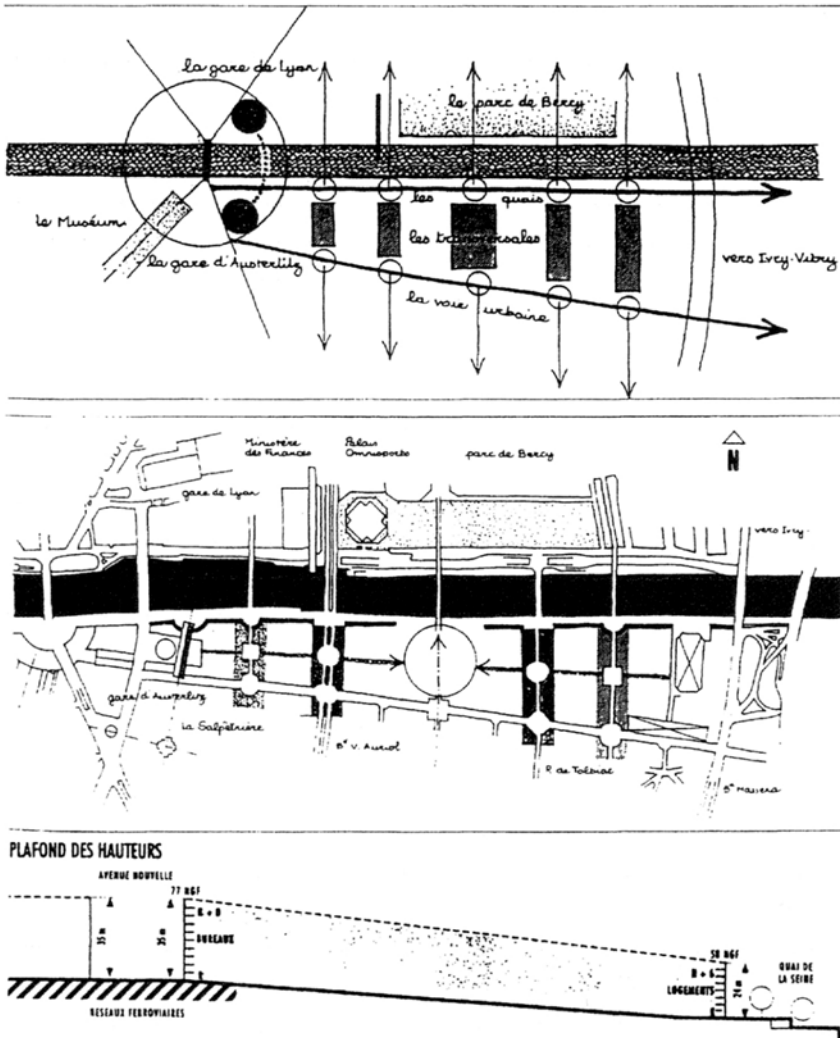


Figure 5.2 Analytical sketches from the ZAC of the Seine Rive-Gauche, Paris

Source: Paris Projet 29

of a variety of offices can act as checks and balances and can limit the possibility of this occurring. All examples mentioned here take the past history of the area as the starting point for its future design, not from the stylistic point of view but from an understanding of the *genius loci*. The integration of new and old takes place on a neighbourhood scale rather than that of an individual building.

Architectural competitions

The architectural competition is based on the idea that a confrontation between several architects is the best way to improve architectural quality.

(Guiheux 1990:11)

Architectural competitions have a long history in France as they were instituted originally as a pedagogic instrument of the Académie in the seventeenth century. Though later abandoned, the practice of using them to select designs for public buildings was re-established by the middle of the nineteenth century: Garnier's designs for the Paris Opera for instance were chosen by competition. The practice has been frequently debated by professionals and administrators, particularly in relation to the legitimacy of the juries.

Its objective is to bring forward the elements of a social debate on space, on the city, on the quality of life—in fact on the way of thinking and of judging. The importance of the procedure is to give the opportunity, in relation to specific projects, for a social reflection leading to establishing ways of thinking and adapting them to the conditions of living.

(Epron 1988:10)

These reflections in part result from the wider use of competitions in recent times, which started with the Pompidou Centre in 1969, developed in the mid-1970s, and was legislated for in the 1986 Code des Marchés Publics. The Code dictates that for any architectural or engineering work involving public funds and with fees in excess of FF 900,000, the design must be subject to a competition; when fees fall between FF 450,000 and 900,000, the architect must be chosen by competition based on a portfolio of work (Articles 108a and 314a). For works with costs below these thresholds, competitions are often used in spite of the fact that they are not compulsory. All of the examples of public buildings described in [Chapter 4](#) involved a competition, either to choose a design or to choose an architect. The competition procedures, payment of competitors, choice of participants, choice of jury, and so on are strictly regulated by the Code. Competitions can be open, in one or two stages, or limited to four to six entrants. In the preparation of the competition briefs, the commissioning body is supposed to consult widely; in the case of local authorities they may ask for advice from other organizations such as the SDA, the CAUE or the DDE.

The abundance of public commissions in recent years, from police stations to schools and from housing to laboratories, has resulted in a flurry of competitions throughout the country. It is estimated that some 1,200 public competitions take place every year and this does not include those organized by private developers. This has in turn led to innovation and the discovery of a whole new generation of architects of quality. Most of the 'stars' among the architectural profession in

France have made their name thanks to competitions organized by the public sector. J.P. Buffi, for example, confirmed in an interview that it was only through competitions that he managed to make a name for himself.

The procedure has been criticized both for limiting the access of new and young designers and for favouring large Parisian firms. This does not seem to be borne out either by people interviewed for this study or by the list of winning teams published by the CAUE of the *département* of Yvelines. In the case of the *département* of Finistère, when calling for a limited competition, four teams are generally selected out of some forty or fifty submitting portfolios; of the four, two are normally from Finistère, one is a young team and only one an outsider. In all of the non-Parisian examples described in [Chapter 4](#), the architects were local, and were mostly well established in the area. This bias towards local architects seems to have developed since the decentralization laws as *maires* want to be seen to be doing something for their area. At the other extreme, competitions have introduced the French public to the work of foreign, often British, architects, as they may be invited to participate mostly for reasons of prestige (as in the case of Foster or Rogers) or because the competition is open to anyone. This has occasionally caused some resentment among French architects, as in the recent case of the Great Millau Viaduct, a competition scheme won by Foster and Partners (Dejevsky 1996). The procedure has also been criticized as open to corruption and not being applied with fairness (fixed choices are often mentioned, though rarely proved), but in general professionals continue to favour it. Ironically, in the case of the Bastille Opera, the jury thought that it was choosing an internationally famous architect, Richard Meier, when in fact it chose Carlos Ott, a complete unknown at the time.

One result of the competition system is that juries, which often include the local ABF and the director of the CAUE, are willing to take risks: they often accept daring modern designs—even in historic areas—provided that the architecture is considered of quality. Indeed the revival of modernism (in the widest sense of the word) can at least in part be attributed to the competitions. Locally elected representatives such as the *maires* would probably be less daring in their choices; both the influence of the professionals involved in the competitions and the lead given by central government diminish the risk that modern architecture may represent for them.

In few other countries has modern architecture retained the social and political urgency still accorded the style in France.... ‘Il faut être absolument moderne—it is imperative to be absolutely modern’, urges Henri Gaudin.... Yet even Ciriani, the archetypal Modernist and Paris’s heir apparent to Le Corbusier, qualifies his allegiance. ‘Look at the context’.

(Boles 1987:69)

The following examples of competitions, from outside Paris, illustrate the above remarks. The first, albeit not a very recent one, is the winning scheme for Les Halles in Quimper, described on pp. 97–9. The winning architect, Erwan Le Berre, while not wholeheartedly in favour of competitions, admits that in this case it was a success. He explains that, once it was chosen, his scheme was substantially modified after meetings with representatives of the clients, including the local ABF (interview). This suggests that competitions are not just a way of choosing a scheme; they are a means of selecting a designer who has the right ideas to offer, or can put forward a number of ideas to be further elaborated. Their importance therefore transcends the immediate goal of choosing the ‘best’ building for a specific site. The scheme has been described thus:

One can decide to be true to one’s time, to show audacity and intellectual courage while keeping one’s feet on the ground. This is the solution that won in Quimper, thanks to the will of the architects and the confidence of the commissioning bodies.

(Anonymous 1980:10)

Another example is that of the Conservatoire in Lille, described on pp. 88–91. The *maire*, as the client, in consultation with the director of the Conservatoire, organized a limited competition in which six architects were invited to take part, five from Lille and one outsider. The jury, which included the *maire* and one *adjoint*, the city architect, the departmental ABF, the head of the Service Départemental d’Architecture (this is one of the few *départements* where this post is not filled by the ABF) and the director of the Conservatoire, was unanimous in choosing the winning scheme. Everybody involved, including the local residents and press, praised the scheme in spite of its using a strong contemporary language. Its insertion in the site and its understanding of the locality were seen as a great success (Vouters 1987).

The whole competition procedure has recently taken on marked political overtones and cities competing for investment use the architectural competition as a promotional instrument. ‘If until now public buildings have constituted the monuments of the Republic, henceforth competitions themselves will fulfil this function of monumental representation. The competition is the real event, more so than the building itself’ (Guiheux 1990:12).

The case of the neighbouring cities of Montpellier and Nîmes, where the *maires* vie with each other for the supremacy of their city in the region, is well documented and will be discussed further on pp. 168–9. The *maires* have launched a number of important architectural competitions and the winning schemes by Jean Nouvel, Norman Foster, Philippe Starck, Jean-Michel Wilmotte, Ricardo Bofill and others have received international publicity, precisely the desired goal. At the same time they have emphasized the historic character of their cities and the links between past heritage and the future. The case of the Carré

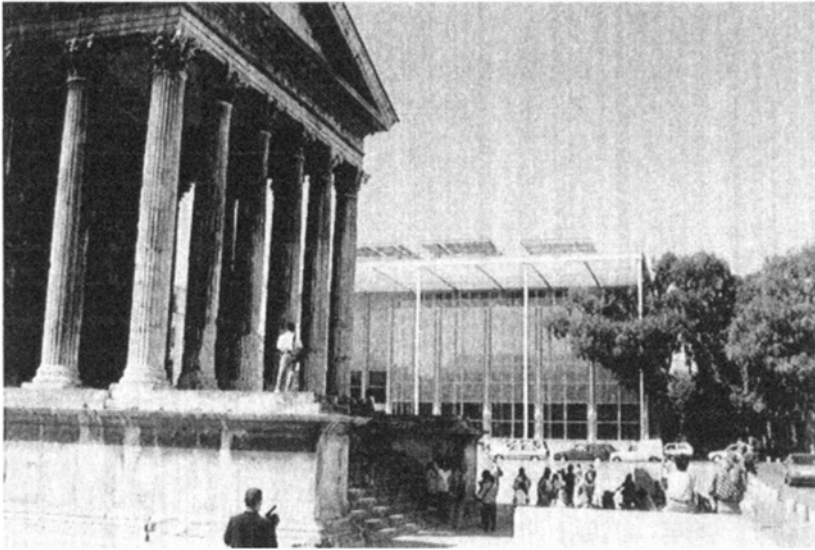


Plate 5.2 Nîmes: Le Carré d'Art and the Maison Carrée

d'Art in Nîmes is particularly significant. This stunningly modern building faces the Roman Maison Carrée, one of France's most celebrated monuments. The scheme, selected through a competition, was very controversial but both the *maire* and the ABF, against substantial opposition, ensured that it was built. The completed building is 'acknowledged to have revived and enhanced an erstwhile forlorn part of the city (Dejevsky 1996:9) and it is generally admired. Its success is an endorsement of the competition system (see [Plate 5.2](#)).

The procedure has also led to various education, information and public awareness campaigns. This is an important consequence of competitions as it widens the debate and involves people who would otherwise probably not be involved. 'A competition is certainly the concern of architects but it is also that of the jurors, the elected representatives and the population at large when an exhibition is organized after the judgement' (Guiheux 1990:13).

In spring 1990, an exhibition was held at the Pompidou Centre in Paris, entitled *Architectures Publiques*, which showed some 100 winning schemes commissioned by central government departments; it also included a number of examples from other European countries. Similarly, in the provinces, exhibitions are regularly organized either by the local CAUE or by the organizers of the competition. All of these events receive media coverage and help in widening the debate and raising the public's consciousness.

An important consequence of public competitions, and one that is indicative of their success, is that they are also widely used by the private sector, often under pressure from the local authority but also increasingly spontaneously. One such

case in the city of Pontoise, the Quartier du Quai de Pothuis, illustrates the kind of situation that can arise.

The site covers nearly one hectare at a junction of the river Oise's embankment, important from the point of view of both traffic and urban design. The city owns a part of the site, which gives it considerable power to influence any future development. A second parcel of land, the largest one, is owned by an elderly lady and cannot be developed during her lifetime. The local authority wishes to retain her house, a nineteenth century mansion, and the mature trees in the garden in any future scheme, even though they are not listed. Two other parcels are owned by the Société Logement et Patrimoine, a subsidiary of a very large developer of middle-income social housing, the OCIL. This company wants to obtain a *permis de construire*, hoping eventually to gain possession of the whole site and develop it for housing and some shops. Because of the importance of the site and the pattern of ownership, the *mairie* was able to press the developer to hold a competition for architectural and urban design ideas. The developer was known in the area but mainly for rehabilitation schemes; this was his first attempt at new building in the town. The firm has had a tradition of retaining young innovative architects, who often develop into professional celebrities, and of building high quality schemes.

The whole site is zoned NA in the local POS which means that it cannot be developed without the production of a master plan agreed by the authorities. The Service d'Urbanisme of the *commune* was therefore involved, together with the ABF and the developer, in the preparation of the brief, in the selection of architects to be invited to compete and in the selection of the winner. Four teams were selected, two proposed by the developer and two by the city. They were all paid a fee of FF 50,000 (about £5,000 at the time) to participate.

The brief was for some 100 dwellings, some 200 square metres of business space and twenty-five public car parking spaces for the city, in addition to parking for the other land uses. As well as a variety of technical requirements, the brief had architectural and urban design objectives, including to give an identity to the neighbourhood; to create an urban façade worthy of the site; to enhance the existing park and its beautiful trees; and to insert the new buildings into the site while respecting the volumes, roofs and materials of the existing buildings. Each team was given a base model of the site and surroundings on which to present their scheme, in addition to their drawings.

The jury had nine members: the *maire* of Pontoise (chairing the meeting) and his *adjoint* in charge of *urbanisme*, another councillor, the head of the Service d'Urbanisme, an architect working for the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement (DDE), the ABF and three representatives of the developer, including their architectural adviser. The deliberations lasted for four and a half hours including a half hour presentation by each of the participants. The discussion was informed and of a high level, dealing fundamentally with functional aspects of the schemes, and with architectural quality and principles

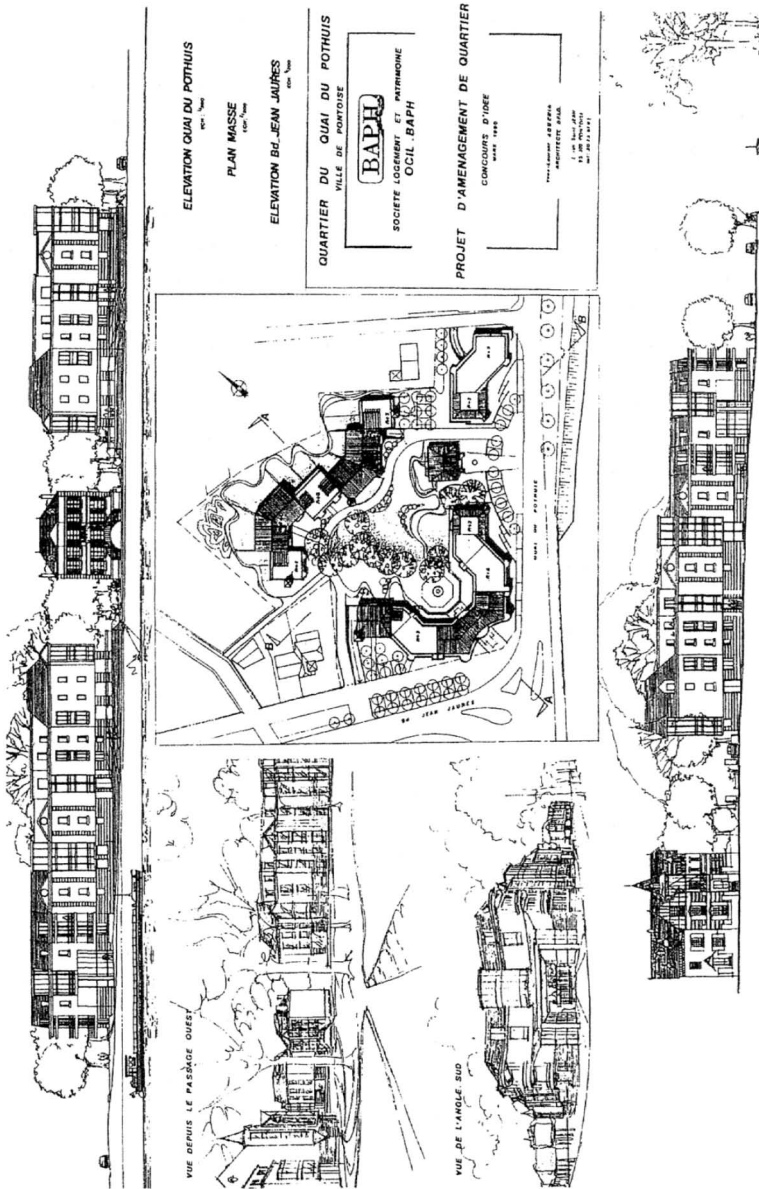


Figure 5.3 Plan of one of the schemes put forward for the competition for the Quartier du Quai de Ponthuis, Pontoise
Source: Aqueinin, architect

rather than style or details. Only one scheme was resolutely modern and very different from most buildings in Pontoise. At first it was not criticized for that, though a discussion about it took place. The ABF thought it the most interesting of the schemes in that it used a modernist language without detracting from the old house, but he acknowledged that the architect had not resolved practical issues properly. All members of the jury agreed with him and found the attempt admirable, but some, and the *maire* in particular, wondered whether Pontoise was 'ready to accept that kind of architecture'. Politicians showed greater caution than professionals but always respected the latter's opinions. Two teams were finally chosen and asked to do some additional work for which they would be paid. Their schemes were very different from each other but both were considered of high quality and appropriate for the site, contemporary though not modernist like the rejected scheme mentioned above. In due course one of the teams is expected to obtain a *permis de construire* for the final scheme (see [Figure 5.3](#)).

In spite of the increasing criticisms of the competition system, few disagree with the fact that architectural quality has been improved and new ideas have come forward as a result. Critics claim that the procedure has become ossified and they call for better regulations and for greater openness but not for the abolition of the system.

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION

Fifteen years ago new construction in a town was seen as a calamity by the citizens. It was considered that a new building would inevitably be worse than the old. Today taxi drivers use the *grands projets* as landmarks and comment, as concerned and informed citizens, about the new projects...nothing will demonstrate more clearly how architecture has once again become part of *res publica*.
(Contal 1990:44)

The increase in popularity of contemporary architecture, illustrated in the above comment, is to a large extent the result of efforts to educate both the people responsible for commissioning buildings and the general public. The initiative has been taken by central government but has filtered down to all levels of the public sector.

Mission Interministérielle pour la Qualité des Constructions Publiques (MIQCP)

This office was created by the Prime Minister in October 1977, the same year as the passing of the law on architecture, with the objective of 'improving the quality of building commissioned by public authorities'. The government

realized that so much of the French urban landscape was shaped by public buildings (schools, hospitals, post offices, police stations, cultural centres, housing, etc.) that these were the first that needed to be improved. By creating an inter-ministerial office, it hoped to influence a wide range of services. It made proposals relating to feasibility studies, building programmes and the selection of developers and architects which were incorporated in the regulations of public procurement and competitions (Code des Marchés Publics). Specifically the director of the Mission was asked in 1982 to analyse and to make recommendations concerning the architectural and technical policies of the Ministry of Health and of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. In 1984 the Mission launched a national programme encompassing eighty schemes and aimed at creating public buildings of quality. 'At the time when the government was about to implement the decentralization laws, it wished to set an example and prove that architectural creation could exist throughout the country' (MIQCP 1989:14).

This has since led to the establishment of a special budget for the *Grands Projets du Président*, among which are the Arche de la Défense, the Louvre Pyramide, the Musée d'Orsay and the Ministry of Finance. They are part of the very determined government policy of promoting French culture and achievements, which, as mentioned in [Chapter 2](#), has clear historic connections. The president himself declared:

Innovation has become a duty.... For this purpose both ends of the chain must be linked: on one side the most modern industrial investment and, on the other, all strands of our social fabric impregnated with the spirit of creation. Our plan stems from the conviction that the industries of culture are the industries of tomorrow.

(Mitterrand, quoted in Béhar and Salama 1988:16)

The MIQCP publishes guidelines, establishes databanks of architects, organizes visits to public buildings, promotes education, and so on. 'Public constructions are at the same time a political, social and economic challenge; they are also a cultural challenge and they constitute tomorrow's heritage' (MIQCP 1989:3). This is the opening sentence of one of its brief guidelines, in this case giving advice on tomorrow's heritage; another deals with the reutilisation of historic buildings and gives examples of successful rehabilitations combined with modern additions:

To work on old buildings does not mean 'to make old'. One can intervene in a contemporary manner on an old fabric, provided one understands it well.... One of the conditions of success is to avoid producing 'neo-ancient'.

(Froidevaux, quoted in MIQCP 1988:7)

This is the profession of faith of one of the architects employed, under the auspices of the MIQCP, to transform an old hospice in Arles into a multipurpose hall, the Espace Van Gogh. It reflects the flavour of various examples shown in the brochure without being a policy statement imposed by the Mission, which remains open minded about the approach taken by individual designers, provided that quality is maintained.

Fundamentally the MIQCP tries to raise the standards and the awareness of the people who commission public works at every level of government, central and local, while avoiding the appearance of an official architecture. It emphasizes the importance of reflection before a building is designed, mainly at the stage of preparing the brief. It is not concerned with style as such but promotes a contemporary language. Members of the MIQCP often act as consultants to other public bodies and offer advice on briefs for competitions, participate in juries, help on feasibility studies, and so on. Their recommendations are not statutory but they have influence on the public buildings where central government intervenes in any way, either directly as a client or indirectly through subsidies. In addition their example is followed by others in both the public and private sectors.

Specific recommendations of the Mission have in the past done away with blue-print briefs and models, and with the monopolies of some architectural firms; they have increased the responsibility and concern of the client for quality and have improved the selection of designers.

The MIQCP constantly fights for more ethical competitions, for fewer competitions and for better organized competitions. It encourages public sector developers to choose their architects carefully. Under its influence the image of public architecture in France has radically changed in the past ten years.

(Guiheux 1990:12)

The last sentence points up what is probably the most important achievement of the Mission.

Conseils d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement

The 1977 law on architecture instituted in the *départements* the Conseils d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et de l'Environnement (CAUE) with the objective of promoting architectural quality through education, advice and information. Their mission is to provide to those wishing to build 'the information, direction and advice needed to ensure the architectural quality of the buildings and their favourable insertion in their local environment' (Article 7 of the law).

They can give advice to private individuals and to various levels of administration if they require it, and their services are free. They are, at the level

of the *département*, what the MIQCP is at national level, and the two tend to collaborate and supplement each other's work. Originally the CAUEs were meant to have a statutory role in judging the *permis de construire*. This was never implemented because of a lack of resources.

The CAUEs are relatively small, non-bureaucratic services and they are independent of other administrative structures. Their boards include representatives of local municipalities and central government nominees, people with expertise and members of local associations; their president is elected from among the first group, thereby giving it local character and control. Their level of activity depends very much on the degree of commitment of the Conseil Général, the *département's* assembly, which has to vote its budget; this is levied on part of the tax on *permis de construire* but it is up to the *Conseil* to decide how to allocate it for this purpose. As a result, the establishment and development of the CAUEs has been uneven: some *départements* have only a basic service, others have a very active one: in the latter category are those of Yvelines and the Val d'Oise on the outskirts of Paris, and of the Nord, based in Versailles, Pontoise and Lille respectively. Their role and activities depend very much on the vision of the *département* and the personality of their director who is appointed by the Conseil Général. These vary greatly from one to the other. Ten years after the creation of the CAUE of Yvelines, its president, who is also the vice-president of the Conseil Général and a local *maire*, described its role thus: 'The CAUE is a catalyst, a hyphen between the local authorities and the professional. It gives technical support to those that commission buildings by establishing the bases of their dialogue with the designers' (Joneman 1989:3).

The CAUEs tend to advise the small *communes* which may not have planning departments capable of dealing with design issues. In particular they may help them to organize competitions, publish design guides or prepare collaboration contracts with other administrations. They can also advise on the suitability of planning applications from the design aspect, although their opinion is non-statutory and their resources for this purpose very limited. They can increase their revenue and their level of activity by undertaking work outside their statutory duties, on a contract basis. For instance they can run specialized courses for professionals, either on their own or together with other organizations.

A number of CAUEs have produced design guides aimed at members of the public or builders who may not be employing architects because the development they want to do is exempt. These guides are normally simple, brief and distributed freely. They can take the form of a single A4 sheet folded in three or of a little booklet and they can concentrate on just one issue (e.g. windows) or on a variety of issues. The CAUE of Yvelines also publishes a magazine, *Voir en Yvelines*, which publicizes successful developments in the *département*, and offers a forum for debate by local politicians and architects around issues such as 'style'. The director of this CAUE comments on its mission: 'We must remember that the essential objective of the CAUE is to work for the

improvement of the quality of architecture and urbanism' (Bonnemazou 1989b: 5).

CAUEs also take part in the annual *Semaine Nationale de l'Architecture*, organized jointly with the *Ordre des Architectes* and the *Ministère de l'Équipement*. During that week a number of events take place throughout the country, such as exhibitions, debates and architectural tours; in addition a number of awards for architectural achievement are distributed and given media coverage. They are aimed at drawing the general public's attention to architectural issues and widening the debate on architecture. Many of the CAUEs see the promotion of modernism as an important aspect of their mission and use these events to make contemporary architecture acceptable and understood. The CAUE of the Val d'Oise also sees education of the wider public as part of its mission: it runs a People's School of Architecture in which half of the students are unemployed architects and the other half are local people; the groups learn from each other during a series of evening classes. The Nord CAUE has established itself as a (free of charge) consultant to the *maires* of small *communes* in the Lille conurbation. It sees its role as 'giving support to the *communes*' innovations, forging a new frame of mind, awakening the sensitivity of the general public and the interest of children in their environment' (Lafontaine n.d.).

From time to time it publishes design guidelines in the shape of very simple leaflets bearing the title *Quelques conseils avant de...* (Some advice before...), followed by...*construire sa maison* or *modifier sa façade* (building one's home, or modifying a façade). It also publishes booklets on traditional architecture of the region and a series of postcards illustrating good examples of new architecture in the *département*, including the Conservatoire in Lille described on pp. 88–91. Together with other organizations it has published thematic itineraries on, for instance, the breweries of the Cambrésis or the buildings of a particular local architect. For the Conseil Général it has undertaken an exhaustive study of the *département's* landscape and made recommendations for its future management. Furthermore it offers schools half-day sessions to introduce children to their regional architecture, to help them to understand building techniques and to introduce them to people who shape the built environment. Finally, this particular CAUE also works through example: its previous director built himself a new house following the kind of ideas advocated by his office (case study on rue Ste Catherine', p. 91).

Palmarès National de l'Habitat

Complementary to the architectural competitions, the Palmarès National de l'Habitat is a compendium of awards for architectural excellence in public housing schemes, given annually by central government in collaboration with regional and departmental authorities. They are aimed at improving quality through the promotion and dissemination of the selection results. In order to

ensure that these are not just aesthetic awards, eligible schemes must have been inhabited for a year and the opinion of the inhabitants is taken into account in the evaluation. The National Selection Committee includes central and local government officers, architects, sociologists and representatives of housing organizations. The criteria for selection include

function and use on the one hand, modernity and innovation on the other, but having in common the balance achieved between an insertion inspired by the detailed analysis of the place and the context, and the architectural convictions of the designer.

(Ministère de l'Équipement 1987:7)

Among the schemes selected in 1986 was one in Chartres, by Mme Porchon (see pp. 103–4) on which the following comments were made:

This original scheme which has managed to take advantage of a difficult site is very well integrated in the existing urban grain. The way the internal spaces are treated and the contemporary character of the external architecture make it an exemplary development.

(Ministère de l'Équipement 1987:31)

Equally, the local residents were enthusiastic about the design. The local CAUE and the Délégation Régionale à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement (see p. 203) participate in the promotion of the schemes.

Promotion of architecture in Paris

The city of Paris has always given a lead to everything that happens in France, particularly in cultural matters. It is an 'example' for the rest of the country at the same time as being exceptional. Because it is the capital it is always given special attention by central government.

Between 1980 and 1994, the particular political situation of the city led to an architectural rivalry between central and local government. President Mitterrand decided that his two periods in power would leave their mark on the capital through major architectural schemes. Not to be outdone, the *maire*, Jacques Chirac, encouraged the construction of quality buildings in the city, largely through its own development agencies, such as the Régie Immobilière de la Ville de Paris (RIVP) and the Habitat Social Français. The city of Paris exercised increasingly its right of preemption, thus becoming a major land-owner and furthermore, either directly or indirectly, one of the main patrons of architecture. The comments made by the architects working in the city (see p. 143–5) show their enthusiasm. 'The Régie Immobilière de la Ville de Paris is the object of compliments too emphatic and too generalized, not to be sincere' (Lamarre 1987: 2).

Such enthusiasm reflects the changes in the city's patronage following in particular the choice of a then young and virtually unknown architect, Christian de Portzamparc, for a housing scheme in 1975, the Hautes Formes, (see pp. 109–10).

The building of the Hautes Formes in a neighbourhood scarred by redevelopment was the expression of a manifesto. A complicity developed thereafter between the RIVP and young architects committed to 'rebuilding the city'.

(Béhar and Salama 1988:10)

After two decades of cynical speculation and functionalist brutalism, Christian de Portzamparc proposed a reinterpretation of certain historic Parisian spaces.

(Cohen *et al.* 1990:174)

The date of this scheme is significant in being contemporary with the new POS for the city (see p. 52) and with the debates preceding the sanctioning of the law on architecture. Since then, the city has consistently employed innovative architects. It has not imposed a style and, within the limits of its budgets and regulations, has given its carefully chosen architects maximum freedom to design (Lombardini 1996).

In order to further promote Parisian architecture, the *maire* set up a shop window for the city which was inaugurated in 1988 in the Pavillon de l'Arsenal under the title Centre d'information, de documentation et d'exposition d'urbanisme et d'architecture de la Ville de Paris:

To understand Paris and its projects, to learn how past and present history leave their imprint on the capital, to realize that the city is always in motion and never finished, these are the objectives of the Pavillon de l'Arsenal.... To present the endeavours of the City of Paris in architecture and planning and to explain their continuity and the evolution of work on the city is a real challenge.

These are the introductory sentences of the leaflet advertising the Centre. It includes a permanent exhibition on architecture and planning in Paris displayed around a large model of the city; a library, archive, and documentation centre; and space devoted to temporary exhibitions. It has an educational purpose; it organizes lectures and seminars open to the general public and it publishes a free monthly journal reflecting the current architectural issues of interest in the capital. The aim of the permanent exhibition... is to situate a number of present-day Parisian projects and concepts within the city's formal and architectural continuum' (Cohen and Fortier 1988:4). Thus the exhibition is organized around themes such as the successive fortifications of the city which have had such an

important impact on its development. Past history and future developments are shown as closely and continuously linked. A touring version of this exhibition, in English, visited London in February 1993, thus fulfilling additional objectives: promoting French culture in general and, in particular, Paris as a top league international city.

An important role for the Pavillon de l'Arsenal is the discovery of new architectural talent: it keeps a register of architects which is used when short-listing participants for a competition in which the city of Paris or its subsidiary companies are involved. This includes a selection of young architects whose work is the subject of exhibitions on the premises. The Pavillon de l'Arsenal has achieved a high profile and claims as a consequence to have increased the awareness of architecture and planning among a wide sector of the population. Its director Mme Ann-José Arlot, a close relative of the then *maire* (now President) and an architect herself, is convinced that it has helped to give the city an image and that the quality of architecture is now a concern of a large part of the population. This seems to be confirmed by the interest taken by the press and by the fact that an increasing number of private developers are following the city's example.

This very didactic architecture centre has been a great success so far, perhaps because it manages to present the ideas developed in the architectural press over the last decade in such a way that they can be read on several levels. Professionals can grasp the overall policies guiding the city's decisions in architecture and planning, while the general public can learn something about the city's history and see good contemporary architecture.

(Duval 1989:42)

The Pavilion de l'Arsenal is one of three architectural centres in Paris. The other two are national institutions, the Institut Français d'Architecture and the Maison de l'Architecture. The former undertakes research, organizes exhibitions, liaises with professionals and with the public; the latter's objectives are to explain contemporary architecture and the role of architects to the general public, and to provide professional information for architects themselves. Both institutions have reference libraries and a programme of publications; they aim to promote French architecture in general, not just that of the capital; nevertheless there tends to be a predominance of examples from Paris in their exhibitions.

The combination of commissions by the city of Paris and by central government has resulted in a burst of architectural activity in Paris, not just the *grands projets* but numerous buildings, varied in type, scale and context, throughout the capital; even private developers have followed the example of the public sector, as shown by some of the examples in [Chapter 4](#). Although it is impossible to speak of a specific style (the 'neo-modern' label reflects a period more than a style), there is a predominance of modernist designs in the capital, as

described in a special 1987 issue of *Progressive Architecture*. In addition, because of the rich and abundant heritage, a mix of old and new happens all the time, is taken on board as a stimulus by the architects and is a constant subject of discussion. Architectural critics see a parallel between the present situation and that of the inter-war period, and talk about a new School of Paris whose practitioners aim 'to regain a specifically Parisian individuality by resorting to a contemporary vocabulary' (Béhar and Salama 1988:13).

That buildings of quality are being produced in the city is confirmed by critics such as Frampton who in 1984 commented on the work of Parisian architects: 'the best now being produced in France...certainly accounts for some of the most beautiful urban architectural achievements in the world'. Equally Béhar and Salama comment:

In Paris a new type of urban architecture is hence being developed, one marked not only by such achievements as the major projects but also by smaller private or public ventures: residential, school, office and other buildings.... While avoiding monumentality, the aim is to regain a specifically Parisian individuality by resorting to a contemporary vocabulary.

(Béhar and Salama 1988:13)

Finally, Sutcliffe (1993:199) praises the level of creativity existing in Paris and admires the successful combination of heritage and tradition with a sensitive modernism; he describes the results as 'above everything, *Parisian* architecture'.

THE ARCHITECTS

Architects are responsible for designing the buildings but they cannot work in isolation. They go hand in hand with developers to produce buildings and they get them approved by the gatekeepers and controllers which will be the subject of the next chapter. A combination of factors is needed for buildings of quality to be produced; they are the result of talented architects being commissioned by developers who trust them; of the same architects, believing in what they do and unwilling to compromise in order to get commissions, being able to convince both client and authorities of the value of their proposals. In the case of historic areas, achieving quality requires in addition a particular attitude and a commitment on the part of the architect and his client. This section investigates how these factors have come together in France.

Changes in the profession

The *annus mirabilis* of 1968 is repeatedly quoted by professionals as being a landmark; in the events of that year the role of university students, and in particular those from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts where architects studied, was

fundamental. As a result both the education of architects and their position in society were dramatically altered. 'With May 1968, the dismantling of the old pedagogy resulted in pluridisciplinarity and the development of a more global reflection about urbanism and planning' (Lamarre 1990:25).

The Beaux-Arts was one of the Académies founded by Colbert in 1671. Closed by the Revolution in 1793, it reopened as the present Ecole after the restoration of the monarchy in 1819 and ever since it has maintained its grip on the architectural profession mainly by strictly controlling admission to the school; as a result the number of qualified architects in France has been very small in relation to its population. In addition the Ecole functioned through a system of *patrons*, or masters, and disciples. A well protected profession based on a highly elitist educational system hardly needed to question its role or its work. Nevertheless, within it there were always rival groups with opposing views of what an architect should be; and outside it there were always numerous critics.

In December 1968, following the riots that had shaken French society, a decree signed by De Gaulle and Malraux, the minister responsible for culture, removed responsibility for the teaching of architecture from the Ecole and replaced it by autonomous units, called Unités Pédagogiques. This resulted in much more open access to the profession, greater democracy and variety in the educational system, the introduction of social sciences into the curriculum, and the abolition of the *patron* system which had created a quasimonopoly for a few figures in the profession. Lucan (1989) analyses in greater depth the events leading to 1968 and the consequences for the architectural profession. There are at present twenty-two schools of architecture in the country with some 14,000 students (1990), supervised by the Ministère de la Culture (until 1996, the Ministère de l'Équipement), as is the professional body, the Ordre des Architectes.

Social issues, the relation between the individual building and its context, the city's history and its form are some of the concerns that emerged from the struggle and have become central to architecture. Most of the architects practising today were studying around the time of the 1968 events and were marked by these and by the ensuing reforms. The combination of these and subsequent events changed the position of architects in society.

The status and legitimacy of architects

A few years after the reforms in the education system, the combination of the Villes Nouvelles (French New Towns), the 1977 law on architecture and the increased number of public competitions created much needed employment for the greater number of professionals and allowed them to innovate and experiment. The large number of public commissions and their visibility in the environment helped to place the profession very much in the public eye. As a result, architects seem to have gained a great degree of confidence which relates to their status and

to the support of public sector clients. 'The architect in France is an artist. He has traditionally been held in high regard as a practitioner of a fine art in a liberal profession' (Collinge 1991:60). Until recently, this comment would have been contradicted by many (see for instance Meikle and Hillebrandt 1989:31) but it is the accepted position today.

The fiasco of the scheme for Les Halles, which started around 1971 and lasted for the rest of the decade, led to a confrontation between the Paris city authorities and central government and made the front pages of the papers: the controversy started with the demolition of the nineteenth century Baltard Pavillons (the old market halls); it then moved to the design by Bofill for new buildings on the site, commissioned by President Giscard d'Estaing but cancelled by Chirac when he became *maire* of Paris with new and extended powers. These events, combined with increasing unemployment among architects, resulted in the politicization of the profession. The government reacted by sanctioning the 1977 law on architecture. In 1979, President Giscard d'Estaing addressed a seminar with the title *Pour une politique de l'Architecture* in which he declared his intention of being the promoter of 'new French architecture' which would rediscover the 'meaning of the city' (Lucan 1989:112-16).

Architects have now become media persons; the names of some of them are known to the general public almost like television personalities, particularly of course if they have been involved in the presidential schemes. Nouvel is even dubbed a 'mediarchitecte' by the media itself (Boles 1987). According to J.P.Buffi, 'architects provide an image; in contrast to what happened fifteen years ago when they were shunned, they are now invited everywhere' (interview).

This status has not been obtained without the professionals proving not only their ability to deal with contemporary social and environmental issues but also their technical competence in dealing with construction problems and understanding new techniques.

They have resisted the eternal demand of the developer for 'cheap and fast' work, undoubtedly sacrificing time and money in the process but giving back to their profession its real dimension. By not neglecting the problems of construction and by carefully studying the details, they have once again become valid and acknowledged interlocutors of the developers.

(Goulet 1983:2)

Lucan (1989) also explains how, from the mid-1970s onwards, a young generation of architects became interested in urban morphology and its evolution, and in particular in that of 'minor' buildings, such as housing. They tried to understand how urban structures evolved, and how changes related to other factors, and they rejected the comprehensive redevelopment attitudes of their predecessors. Thus, for instance, 'A.Grumbach advocates "an art to complete cities", the building of the city upon the city, rejecting any *tabula rasa*' (Lucan

1989:122). Equally, Christian de Portzamparc's Hautes Formes scheme 'is certainly recognized as a triumph of urban insertion;...it proves that, within the framework of social housing and in the middle of an old fabric, it is possible to get away from urban renewal schemes which forget the form of the existing city' (Lucan 1989:127).

Another housing scheme, the Alma-Gare, not in Paris but in Roubaix, was also seen as a landmark which changed the attitudes of clients, authorities and the general public towards contemporary architecture. The first scheme proposed, comprising a number of tower blocks with no relationship to the urban surroundings, was rejected by local people who formed an Atelier Populaire d'Urbanisme in 1974. This group chose the architects Benoît and Verbiest, who then involved the local community in the design of a scheme. It recreates traditional urban blocks enclosing well defined public spaces but using a contemporary language; like the Hautes Formes scheme, it marks a turning point in the design of housing estates.

The new attitudes and professionalism of architects have been rewarded by an improvement in status; once again Lucan summarizes the situation:

Architects are capable of providing precise and pertinent answers to the problems set before them: the result is a new professional legitimacy combined with a noticeable improvement in the general quality of projects.... This image of the professional architect as an expert, an entrepreneur, a manager, is reassuring.

(Lucan 1989:193-4)

Architects as campaigners and negotiators

The example of the Alma-Gare scheme shows that architects have also taken on the role of campaigners for architecture and for those issues they consider important. They are very conscious of the environment in which they build and are willing to argue with their client that their scheme is not isolated: the importance of context is not seen as being in conflict with a modernist tradition. 'Now we think of the city and no longer of the object' (interview with J.P.Buffi). They have therefore taken on an educational role vis-à-vis the developers and the general public. 'I take advantage of all the opportunities provided, all these competitions, to spread the good word as far as possible.... My faith nowadays consists in making acceptable the architecture that I love' (Arène, quoted in Veinstein and Chaslin 1988:34). This beloved architecture is a new form of modernism, for which architects have campaigned, apparently with success. It is the design language that they have adopted, not uniform and not even easy to define, which is repeatedly referred to in interviews and in comments made about buildings.

The yearly *Semaine Nationale de l'Architecture*, where numerous events take place throughout the country, is an example of the campaign launched by the

profession, together with the government, to increase the general public's awareness of architecture. Local initiatives of this kind have resulted (in Brittany for instance) in *maires* demanding higher standards of design and getting involved in the promotion of ZPPAUs. Similarly, a number of CAUEs, confronted with individual design problems, have taken them on as a basis for environmental and social campaigns; the CAUE of the Val d'Oise, for instance, when asked by a *maire* to offer advice on redecorating the *mairie*, ended up by redesigning the building and its setting, after having analysed the functioning of the municipal services and their relationship with the public. The People's School of Architecture run by this same CAUE has already been mentioned (p. 133). Equally the Palmarès National de l'Habitat is a way of promoting architectural quality in public housing and involving the users (i.e. its inhabitants) in its evaluation.

At a more practical level, architects are respected and listened to by developers during negotiations between clients and authorities. Negotiating talent was repeatedly mentioned by interviewed architects as an essential condition for professional success. The refusal of a *permis de construire* is something that no architect wishes. Even more than developers, architects need to cultivate the gatekeepers and be accepted by them; they know that they have to discuss their schemes with the local ABF and/or the *maire* or his officers from a very early stage. The examples described in [Chapter 4](#) (such as Les Arcades in Pontoise, the Hotel de la Treille in Lille, and the block of flats in rue Descartes in Paris) were all the result of such early negotiations. Trusted architects tend to be given more leeway than unknown ones. All architects interviewed confirmed this and some emphasized that they found these discussions very useful, even admitting that they resulted in better schemes.

Negotiations with the authorities are balanced with those with the clients. Developers have become increasingly conscious of the importance of quality in architecture. A number of interviewees confirmed this, explaining that the private sector was slower to take quality on board than the public sector, but that now they had no choice. Architects, as a result of their strength, do not have to submit to all of the demands of their clients, particularly private ones. They can defend their professional integrity and can refuse to modify a scheme purely to increase a developer's profit margins if the quality of the scheme would thereby be compromised.¹

Concern with context and regulations

The changes affecting the profession are reflected in the attitudes of the architects towards the context in which they work, including the regulations and the historic environment. In relation to the numerous existing regulations and administrations responsible for their application, the position of architects varies. In the first instance and somewhat predictably, most of them complain that there are too many rules and controls. They generally accept that some are needed,

particularly to avoid disasters for which they blame their competitors. While they often consider that the ABFs are too conservative, they mostly accept that they are professionals, that they know their business and that they are open to negotiations. None of the architects interviewed thought that either rules or gatekeepers should be abolished, if for no other reason than to protect the urban environment from vandals (always others than themselves). One architect stated that on occasions he had requested the ABF to object to his scheme in order to force the client to reduce his ambitions and hence the height of a building; this use of the regulations and the gatekeepers by architects does not seem uncommon.

The regulations and constraints imposed on new buildings are particularly strict in areas which are protected because of their historic or architectural quality and nowhere more so than in Paris. This is also the city where all ambitious young architects want to work:

the forms, proportions and treatments which now acquired enhanced value in their historic manifestations tended to secure respect from young architects as appropriate to the requirements of Paris.... Conservationists and designers alike were once again agreed that the presence of Paris was a privilege which imposed both a duty and a discipline.

(Sutcliffe 1993:172-3)

The attitude of architects towards the constraints of building in the capital was the subject of the October 1987 issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* which was dedicated to the city ten years after its POS was approved. A number of architects were interviewed by F.Lamarre. The following comments indicate that the level of intellectual debate is high and they repeatedly show that the work of the architects has been greatly influenced by the context and the regulations, without diminishing their commitment to modernism.

Alain Sarfati, a modernist strongly influenced by the Parisian school of the 1930s and who did his experimentation in the New Towns before working in Paris, is in favour

of a modernity permanently enriched by its context, an attentive architecture.... All creations are subject to constraints.... The harder the rule, the greater the liberty and the richer the play on diversions and transpositions.

(Sarfati, quoted by Lamarre 1987:4)

Martin Robain is a member of the Architecture Studio, the team connected with Jean Nouvel in the design of the highly praised Institut du Monde Arabe and of other schemes equally praised for their successful insertion in the historic fabric of Paris. The following is part of his view of working in the city:

The constraints that are typical of Paris are not annoying. Whether they are administrative, urbanistic or political, they are all stimulating: the more numerous the constraints, the freer we feel. The mixture of textures, the ancient one, the Haussmanian and the modern additions, offer strong cultural oppositions which help us in our architecture. The more a place is loaded with history...the more we can accentuate contrasts and emphasize the history of the city.

(Robain, quoted by Lamarre 1987:2)

The Italian Vittorio Mazzuconi caused quite a stir when in 1976 he designed his Matignon Building in the heart of the traditional and expensive business district of Paris (see [Plate 5.3](#)). It is surrounded by opulent and very serious Haussmanian blocks of flats, mostly converted into offices. Not inhibited by these, but understanding their importance, he designed a façade which uses contemporary technology to reflect the memory of the past. The street alignment, the levels, the height and the profile of the surrounding buildings are respected, as demanded by the POS, the elegance of the area recognized and stylistic elements referred to in a non-obvious and rather ironic way. The scheme was approved, but with difficulty: it is one of the cases that was considered by the Commission des Abords (see pp. 194–8) and approved by central government, following the Commission's recommendation. Today it is greatly admired as a skilful example of inserting contemporary architecture into an old neighbourhood. Mazzuconi himself explains:

In the façade of the Matignon Avenue I looked for the face of the city. It appears as an easily recognizable sign of identity. It is the dramatic confrontation of historic Paris with the demands of our times.... I believe that architecture is a-temporal: present, past and future coexist in it.

(Mazzuconi, quoted by Lamarre 1987:6)

Finally Christian de Portzamparc, one of the first young architects who won acclaim through a public competition and is now part of the architectural establishment, states:

Paris is a question of density, of the nature of activities, of affinities. The constraints imposed by the regulations are sometimes difficult (some are acceptable, others impossible), but at least one knows to what kind of space the scheme is destined. For the Hautes-Formes, the gatekeepers were sympathetic.... They know how to transform absurd regulations into a clever framework. The constraints then help to give structure to the work.

(de Portzamparc, quoted by Lamarre 1987:9)

The same issue of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* considered the work of another of the Parisian 'stars', Henri Gaudin, two of whose schemes were described on



Plate 5.3 Paris: offices at 22 Av. Matignon

pp. 107–9. His highly praised designs (see Cohen *et al.* 1990: 184) are unconventional and complement their surroundings in a subtle and not immediately obvious manner. Reflecting on his Ménilmontant block of flats, he comments:

I was lucky enough to be carried away by this very Parisian site, an area that still contained some useful elements.... The Paris tradition that interests me is pernicious, ambiguous, impossible.... We must return to an architecture which relates to the street, to buildings opposite and to itself.

(Gaudin, quoted by Chaslin 1987:32)

While Paris may be considered exceptional, architects in other parts of the country have a similar attitude to the context in which they work. Various architects interviewed confirmed that their designs always took into account their surroundings, not necessarily to mimic them but to learn and get inspiration from them: Philippe Legros, whose scheme for the Conservatoire in Lille (see pp. 88–91) has won praise all around, explained that before designing in a *Secteur Sauvegardé* he has discussions with the head of the SDA and with the ABF to elucidate what is being preserved, ‘what is the city’s memory’ and why it is being preserved (interview). He starts a scheme by making an analysis of the history of the place and tries to reflect and interpret this in his design: ‘Architecture must have its personality and must respond to a dialogue, to its site, its period, its use, to the questions that are asked of it’ (Legros, quoted by Vouters 1987). In the case of the Conservatoire, Legros studied the street pattern and the history of the site before designing his building; he thus realized that the scheme needed not only to articulate the transition between a medieval street pattern and a nineteenth century one, but also to be a new contribution to the area.

The design by Didier Joseph-François for his own house in rue Ste Catherine in Lille (see p. 91) is another example of working within the constraints of an area and being stimulated by them. In order to arrive at the design, he studied in depth the morphology of the traditional house of the area and did a survey of the foundations remaining on the plot, which he eventually re-utilized. On the basis of these constraints, the architect produced a contemporary design which respects *inter alia* the traditional relationship between voids and solids, generally responds to the traditional idea of a local town house of the area, and refers to its surroundings not only through its façade but also through its entire concept.

The architect J.P.Porchon’s first experience of Chartres brings together the various points made in this section: the status of the architect, his skills both as a designer and as a negotiator and his attitude towards the regulations. For Porchon regulations are mostly based on past experience and do not look forward: he therefore ignores them if he considers that they will prevent him from producing a good scheme and instead he negotiates with the gatekeepers. However he thinks that ‘the architect always looks at the context he is working in and tries to provide the best solution to a problem in a contemporary language’ (interview).

Thus, for his design of a house on the river Eure (see pp. 102–3), he took the regulations into account, but only as far as they helped his scheme: the PSMV did not mention timber as a material for the outside of buildings; Porchon interpreted this as being permissive and, having shown that historic precedents existed, convinced the ABF that its use would be in keeping with the spirit of the plan. He ignored other requirements of the PSMV concerning the positioning of the building on the site, which did not take into account sunlight and privacy; Porchon convinced the various authorities (the ABF, the planning services of the *mairie*, the architect in charge of the *Secteur Sauvegardé*) that a different position would afford a better urban solution. On the other hand, he took the site

and the building context carefully into account in his design, 'as any good architect should' (interview). The owner commented that 'the more regulations and restrictions you impose on an architect, the more he develops his imagination' (interview).

The resulting building was something of a landmark in the *Secteur Sauvegardé*: its design is contemporary, unconventional and an apparent break with tradition; nevertheless it is today considered an asset to the city of which owner, designer and planning officers are proud. The way in which it contributes to its setting by emphasizing the bridge end is particularly impressive.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The performance of the private sector in France has been heavily influenced by the activities of the public sector. Within urban areas at least, as a result of shortages of land, preemption rights and the designations of ZACs, developers more often than not must work together with public partners. Their architects, too, depend on public commissions for a lot of their work. Beyond these immediate ways of collaborating, which result from necessity, there is a more subtle influence.

The developers

Within urban areas, applicants for a *permis de construire* for new buildings are mostly *promoteurs*, developers from the private, the public or the mixed economy sector. Without going into details of the French development industry, some of its general characteristics need to be described, as they affect the production and quality of buildings. The *promoteur* cannot be translated precisely as developer, particularly when the expression is used in combination as *promoteur-lotisseur*. These professionals, who are predominant in non-urban France, are subdividers of land. They make their money out of converting agricultural land, through subdivision and the provision of infrastructure, and selling parcels to individuals or to builders who will produce houses, often from catalogues. Over 10,000 *permis de lotissement* are requested every year, leading to more than 110,000 housing units and representing approximately one-third of the country's building activity (Comby and Renard, 1986:201). In spite of their quantitative importance these developers are of little interest to this study as they operate entirely outside of urban areas.

In urban areas, on the other hand, the private *promoteur* normally organizes the package leading to the development, covering land assembly, finance, design, permits, and so on, and sells the finished product (often before completion of the building) without retaining an interest in it (Punter 1989: 160). Long term institutional investment in property development and management is a relatively new phenomenon in France, though it is expanding.

Alternatively the developer is also the owner-occupier: this is often the case in commercial developments.

Sociétés d'Economie Mixte (SEMs) also play an important role in development. These are companies with private and public capital (the public portion must be at least 50 per cent), which are generally created by a public authority in order to develop or rehabilitate part of its territory, or to provide social housing or other facilities. The companies combine the powers of the public sector, in terms for instance of land acquisition (they can have preemption rights), with the harnessing of private sector resources and expertise. Furthermore they are not subject to the same bureaucratic constraints as public authorities, while contributing in terms of design and quality to the image building of the public sector. The development of ZACs and the production of social housing is mostly achieved through the participation of an SEM. A senior official of one such, the Société d'Équipement de la Région Lyonnaise, commented that an SEM can 'play the game on both sides' (Webman 1982). Their actions will be part of public planning without ignoring the private sector's profit motive. The Société Immobilière de Construction de Liévin (SICL), in a decaying mining town of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, was created in 1983 by the municipal council which retained 74 per cent of its shares, the remainder being in private hands. The local *maire*, who is also its president, explained its role:

the SICL is destined on the one hand to answer the needs of the *commune* and other local authorities and on the other hand to promote activities concerning, in the broadest sense, issues of real estate, planning and commercial development.

(Kucheda 1986)

There are at present about 1,000 SEMs dedicated to development and their impact is therefore substantial.

There are large private development companies in France, such as COGEDIM (see pp. 105–7), but a mass housing developer of the Wimpey or Barratt type is practically non-existent within urban areas, unless working with or for a local authority or one of its SEMs. Conversely the small developer with a relatively limited geographical coverage is still common; so, to an extent, is the owner-occupier, building for him or herself, at least in provincial towns such as Lille (see p. 91) and Chartres (pp. 102–3). Perhaps not surprisingly, these two particular examples were architects. Their care for their project and their attention to detail are much higher than that of a speculative developer and during interviews they explained how the issue of integration with the surrounding historic area was a major personal concern.

Concern for quality

Developers of all kinds, whether private, public or semi-public, are concerned with the rentability of their investment and therefore want to maximize their profits. This leads them to try to build the maximum surface on a particular site or to obtain the highest possible plot ratio, but it does not need to decrease the quality of the development, though it requires vigilance from those in charge of control. In all cases the choice of the architect and the relationship with the local authorities are important for the success of their operation.

From interviews with various participants in the development process it would appear that, at least within the historic areas which are the subject of this study, concern for quality is indeed shared by all parties even though what is entailed is not always the same (the situation is different outside of historic areas). The developer understands that in a competitive market quality is an important selling factor but commercial considerations can also result in a bland and conformist kind of design. Members of the Direction de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (DAU) explained that in general developers of luxury housing are conservative, while those of subsidized housing are much more adventurous. Office developers, on the other hand, vary from conventional to imaginative: the Mazzuconi building in Paris was repeatedly given as an example of the latter. Similar comments were made by the head of the Atelier Parisien de l'Urbanisme (APUR), Nathan Starkman, who specified that private developers wanted simple images which responded to something that the market understood: smoked glass for the front of balconies for example, corresponding to high status housing. Confirming this attitude, one of the managers of the Office Central Interprofessionnel du Logement (OCIL), a development company specializing in medium cost housing, commented: 'we do not want architecture that frightens the clients; buyers have a very elementary outlook' (interview). Nevertheless this company employed Gaudin, an avant-garde architect, to design several of their schemes and have widely advertised this fact by, *inter alia*, producing a glossy book on one of his buildings (the housing scheme in Ménilmontant in Paris discussed on pp. 107–8).

Another example is the block of flats on the Avenue des Gobelins in Paris, (see pp. 106–7) which is carefully set in its Haussmanian environment, reflecting its elegance but nevertheless unashamedly contemporary in design. The marketing publicity for it dwells entirely on its historic surroundings. In contrast, other developers prefer a kind of pastiche or 'safe' design and also base their publicity on historic connotations: such is the brochure prepared by Les Nouveaux Constructeurs for their housing development in unfashionable Twentieth *Arondissement* of Paris, significantly named *Le jardin de Richelieu*, and designed to evoke an up-market but invented past.

On the other hand, the cost of quality does not seem to be a barrier. All developers and architects interviewed commented on the fact that when they were known at an early stage, additional costs arising from an improvement in

the quality of the design and construction of a scheme made little difference; a developer would certainly not attempt to reduce costs if it meant lowering the quality of the scheme, particularly since quality was a marketable commodity. These comments must be qualified by the fact that they were made at a time of a boom in the construction industry; they have not been tested during a recession.

Constraints on developers

For the developer, land is the raw material and the regulations are in fact the directions for use of the land.

(Delbar 1987:284)

Several factors affect the position of developers in relation to their planning applications. First of all the fact that planning regulations are legal documents means that for the most part they are not open to negotiation. Booth (1989) has shown how departures from approved plans and modifications of these plans occur more frequently than expected; but his examples are mainly from peri-urban areas and do not involve historic buildings. In cities considered for the present study, only minor departures are acceptable and controls are stricter, particularly if a historic neighbourhood is involved. All parties know in advance what the restrictions are, such as maximum heights of buildings or the plot ratio. They also are aware of the right of third parties to appeal against a scheme that contravenes the regulations, and of the costs of fighting such an appeal. The developer therefore aims for the maximum floorspace allowed but does not waste time trying to squeeze in any more. Negotiations with the authorities then take place in relation to design characteristics and the developer and/or the architect approaches all concerned authorities very early on in order to avoid abortive work. The importance of early negotiations was emphasized by all those interviewed as a key to successful schemes.

In this context the relationship between client and architect is of great importance and, from the cases considered, not always an easy one. It would appear that the architects are often in a stronger position than their clients as they can talk to the authorities more easily and in the same terms. Some developers, particularly independent ones, may resent this and try to intervene more forcefully in the design of their scheme: the architect for the Hôtel de la Treille in Lille (see pp. 86–8) remarked that his client, a local developer, frequently interfered with the design of the building, even during construction; for instance, he took advantage of the architect's absence to change the type of marble used for a column in the front of the building. This was done not to save money but for aesthetic reasons and because the developer wanted to make his own mark on the building. This anecdote was confirmed by the local ABF and similar cases were related in other contexts.

A second factor which affects the position of the developer is the shortage of building land in urban areas and the authorities' right of preemption which threatens all private development until a purchase of land has been sealed. Even in land transactions not threatened by preemption, developers often have only an option to buy the property (*promesse de vente*), which they may lose if they are not given planning permission or if the negotiations are too protracted: this was the situation in the case of the building at Place de la Tourbie in Quimper (see pp. 95–6). As a result of this combination of factors it is quite often architects who take the lead; they find the land, prepare a feasibility study and a design, having consulted with the authorities, and only then do they approach a developer and sell him the whole package. The developer buys, knowing what the profit margins are likely to be and with a reasonable assurance of obtaining all necessary permits. It is not possible to estimate how often this particular sequence of events takes place but examples were found in Pontoise, Lille and Paris.

A Parisian firm of architects, Secquin-Reboul, operates almost entirely in this way. For example, their scheme in rue Descartes in Paris (see pp. 105–6), which was one of their first, was made possible because the land was available to one of the partners through family connections. He obtained a *permis de démolir* for derelict buildings on the site, prepared a scheme and negotiated approval of a *permis de construire* with the city authorities and the local ABF (several aspects of the original design had to be modified, following their requirements). He then sold the whole package, land, design and *permis de construire*, to the developers, COGEDIM. According to M. Secquin, this client wants 'classy' architecture, which is not always the same as good quality. In this case, both architect and developer wished to have a building higher than allowed by the POS; they were supported in this by the ABF but failed to convince the city's planning officers to waive the regulations. Nevertheless the scheme in rue Descartes, in the most traditional part of the Latin Quarter, is considered a reasonable success by all involved, particularly in the way that it makes the link between a traditional Haussmanian façade and a post-war block of flats.

Another consequence of the shortage of land, and one already mentioned, is that private developers have to accept the restrictions imposed by the public authorities in order to have access to it. This explains the fact that, in ZACs for example, developers may have not only to employ the architect designated by the authority but also sometimes to accept a specific design. Otherwise they may not be asked to participate in the ZAC at all. It is also the reason for developers choosing their architects or their designs through competitions endorsed by the local authorities, such as in the case of Pontoise (see pp. 127–9). Though this situation is particularly prevalent during economic boom periods, it continues to exist at other times, within the restricted areas of the historic centres of towns and cities, even though the pace of development may slow down.

A third factor is that so much of the development in urban areas is undertaken by the public or semi-public sector that it sets a standard of quality that the

private developer has to follow. All parties interviewed confirmed that this was the case and that even when initially the private developers did not seek high quality they would accept it if it was required. J.P.Buffi, a successful architect whose earlier career was entirely for public sector clients, confirmed that although the private sector may have trailed behind for a number of years, his clients now accept that quality helps to sell developments (interview). Similar sentiments were expressed by the ABF of Finistère, M.Marinos, referring to the applications he received from private developers. The director of the OCIL added that, as long as the scheme is carefully designed and managed from the start, quality architecture does not increase the developer's costs. He thought that most serious developers would share his opinion.

Local and 'foreign' developers

A different aspect but also worth investigating is whether the origin of the developers—local, regional or national—has an influence on the schemes they commission. Interviewees explained that the quality of designs submitted varied from developer to developer and that the differences were not always associated with its being a local or a 'foreign' company: an outsider may try harder to please the local authorities and be accepted, but may also be less knowledgeable of local traditions, construction methods, materials or design patterns. The fact that there are fewer institutional investors and national developers has already been mentioned. This must be combined with a recognition of the importance of the *maire* and the ABF in the process, in order to understand that good relations with the local authorities are fundamental to the success of a private operation. Local developers strive to establish and cultivate these over the years. Once they have managed to win the confidence of the authorities and are accepted, they will find it much easier to obtain a *permis de construire*. If trusted by the authorities, their schemes will probably be subject to less detailed scrutiny than if they are not. Outsiders who do not understand this can see their schemes barred from the area for years; this can affect their chances even beyond the immediate locality, as their reputation is known. Hence again the need for developers and architects to discuss schemes with all involved from a very early date and to know how to sell ideas; hence also the care with which the developers choose their architects. A Parisian developer wanting to work in Lille, say, will often employ a local firm of architects and rely on them to get the permits through their knowledge of the local machinery.

One of Lille's successful architects, Philippe Legros, commented on the importance of working for local developers who understand the area and on the fact that the local heritage has value, including commercial value. Similarly the developer and owner of the Hotel de la Treille, M.Kindt, explained that he is interested in working only in Lille, a city he knows and loves, and where he can make some contribution; he too employs local architects for his schemes. In Pontoise, the architect responsible for Les Arcades explained how he prepared

both the scheme for the site and the financial package and then offered it to a young and dynamic local developer, who was aware of the market and with whom he knew he could work. In all of these cases, the partnership between local developer and architect has undoubtedly helped in the success of the schemes.

A Parisian ABF commented that even large national firms such as COGEDIM, employing architects of international reputation, who wish to obtain a *permis de construire* without difficulties for work in a highly desirable area, will start by visiting the offices of the authorities concerned, in order to establish a good working relationship and to find out their design criteria, before embarking on a scheme within a protected neighbourhood. For instance, when consulted by these developers about a site on the rue des Boulangers, the ABF demanded a morphological study of the neighbouring areas and a contemporary design which reflected the morphology. He obtained this with no difficulty as the developers were keen to get the necessary permits without major delays (interview).

One of the examples in Quimper illustrates the position of the developers in relation to the various pressures discussed above. The building on Place de la Tourbie (see pp. 95–6) was the first operation undertaken by a ‘foreign’ developer wanting to establish himself in the area. He had both to satisfy the local authority and the ABF in order to obtain a *permis de construire*, and to offer the land-owner, from whom he had a *promesse de vente*, an attractive enough sum in order to obtain the site. He employed a local architect and asked him to produce a commercially viable scheme and one able to satisfy the authorities. Intense negotiations took place mainly between the architect and the ABF before a scheme satisfactory to all in terms of design and costs was arrived at. The building, now completed, is considered to be a success by the various parties involved.

Developers in historic urban areas operate in a very competitive and restrictive market; there is competition for land as well as for clients; there are strict regulations and a limited margin for negotiating; the gatekeepers are careful and the public sector gives the lead in maintaining quality. As a result, compliance with regulations, quality architecture and good relations with the gatekeepers are *sine qua non* conditions for success. No developer can afford to ignore these and remain in the market. This seems to have been generally understood and is reflected in the choice of architects and the schemes on the ground. The exact meaning of quality architecture is not always the same but overall the common desire to achieve high standards affects positively the relationship between new buildings and their historic surroundings.

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined the role of those commissioning and designing buildings within urban historic environments. The leading example of central

government and the fact that it has been followed by local government (see [Chapter 6](#)) and the private sector have been fundamental factors in obtaining good architectural quality. This cannot be achieved by decree. Neither money nor strict regulations can ensure the production of excellent buildings. On the other hand stimulation, education, patronage and example, plus the creation of the right environment, are more likely to raise the general standard. This has been understood by the French government which, in the past twenty years, has given itself the means to provide these, having realized also that the private sector alone would not improve architectural quality.

To start with, the number of public commissions has increased and, while too much work could lead to complacency in the architectural profession, this has been avoided by the use of competitions. The high profile of some of these has in turn increased public awareness and the spread of the demand for quality. Public clients, aided by the legislation, have taken risks which have paid off.

The combination of pressures analysed in this chapter have led to a respect and enthusiasm not just for quality but for modern architecture. 'Modernism is alive and well, and living in Paris': thus starts a special issue of *Progressive Architecture* (1987:67) and it reflects what has been happening in the country as a whole. Initiated by central government with the enthusiastic support of the professionals, this renaissance has permeated to all levels of French society. A number of quotations in this chapter reflect this commitment to modernism which should not be confused with an allegiance to the Modern Movement as a specific style. A better expression, coined by Sutcliffe (1993: 187), is 'neo-modern' since it can incorporate such dissimilar imageries as those of Nouvel, Gaudin and Mazzuconi (to mention just a few) and corresponds more to an attitude towards buildings than to a style (Boles 1987). It has come to be assimilated into French culture (as was indeed the government's intention) and has been promoted in the country and abroad as a symbol of success. Thus any *maire* who wants to show how progressive he and his city are, embraces contemporary architecture, becomes a patron and, as will be shown in [Chapter 6](#), gives permission for the modern designs of others.

The government has helped this change in mentality not only through competitions but also through agencies with a remit of promoting architectural quality. In addition, the public sector in general has played a game of stick and carrot with the private sector, entering into partnerships, sharing development profits, releasing land for development, but demanding quality buildings. It has intervened directly or used its influence to obtain the kind of urban environment that it wants. The private sector has played the game, perhaps reluctantly to start with, but more enthusiastically of late: it not only feels the need to keep up with the public sector but seems to have taken on board the fact that architectural quality is an important element in the commercialization of buildings. A partnership between private and public sectors to achieve quality is not uncommon.

The changes in attitude have affected the way in which designers approach their work. It is remarkable that so many of the professionals interviewed repeatedly mention the favourable insertion of new buildings into their local environment as a major criterion for judging the quality of a design. It is a recurrent theme also in regulations, legislation and advice by government, as shown by a number of the quotations in this chapter. Equally important is the fact that this concern is not limited to the street façades: as shown in some of the examples (ZACs), the link with the past includes an analysis of the area's history and its morphology, and there is an attempt to integrate new and old in a much more profound way.

Architects have benefited from the public sector initiatives but have also influenced their clients both private and public. They have become pivotal in the production of quality buildings in urban areas. The changes in professional education, originated by themselves, have allowed them to redefine their role, to enhance their status and to take a new approach to design. Their professionalism is debated but respected and because work, particularly public work, is abundant they can impose what they see as quality on their clients.

In a country where professionals and experts are highly respected, members of a prestigious profession, such as architecture has once again become, are influential. Their training and the environment in which they work are conducive to experimentation but not at the expense of quality. They consider the surroundings of their scheme to be an important factor in the design, not in order to copy a style, a word hardly used by French architects, but to inform their thought process. Architects are also aware of the other powers with whom they have to interact and fight for what they consider to be quality. Their negotiating skills are seen as fundamental to their success. Although not all of them are equally talented, the general level has improved as a result of the works of a number of very successful professionals. The general public as well as the critics quoted throughout this chapter seem to be satisfied with what they see.

Architecture is now at the centre of the political debate. It is part of the publicity machine of central and local governments. The media are interested in those that commission and those that design buildings. Consequently the public becomes involved in the debate and it is in the historic centres of urban areas that this debate is most intense. In spite of the above, not all architects are good designers and not all developers enlightened. The participants in the process of commissioning and designing buildings have to interact with the gatekeepers in charge of implementing the legislation on development control and heritage protection. This interaction is the subject of the next chapter.

NOTE

- 1 These comments were made in the early 1990s; since then, the recession has taken its toll and architects may have lost some of their influence.

6

PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONTROL OF DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Having discussed in [Chapter 5](#) the commissioning and design of buildings, and the participants involved in that process, this chapter will now look at those in charge of control and of the implementation of the legislation described in [Chapter 3](#). This process sets in motion a whole system of interactions and negotiations, some of which were mentioned in [Chapter 5](#) and which eventually lead to the construction of new buildings.

There is in France a multiplicity of administrations with roles that are not always specific or clear to the users of the services. Even when roles are clearly and narrowly defined, their incumbents use their position to alter them, at least partially. There are therefore certain disparities between theory and practice and roles are not always performed in the same way throughout the territory. As mentioned by Booth (1989), even in the highly regulated French system there is space for interpretation and discretion on how to apply legislation. This is even more noticeable since the 1983 decentralization laws, which have been adopted with different degrees of enthusiasm, and which in many cases have resulted in the creation of additional levels of administration without eliminating existing ones.

The fact that heritage protection is highly compartmentalized (*Secteurs Sauvegardés*, *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural, Urbain et Paysager* [ZPPAUP], historic monuments) adds to the potential complication; this has been discussed by both Jegouzo (1986:90) and Mesnard (1987:94–5). The latter argues that this diversity, which corresponds to the different existing situations, has a logic, ensures that the specific bureaucracies guard their particular subject with greater zeal, and affords a greater choice to the local authorities. However, on the negative side, the specificity of responsibilities means that each organization can neglect everything that is not its particular responsibility. Thus, for example, municipalities with limited resources may not impose aesthetic controls in their *Plan d'Occupation des Sols* (POS) as much as they could or are entitled to, because they see that as the role of the *Architecte*

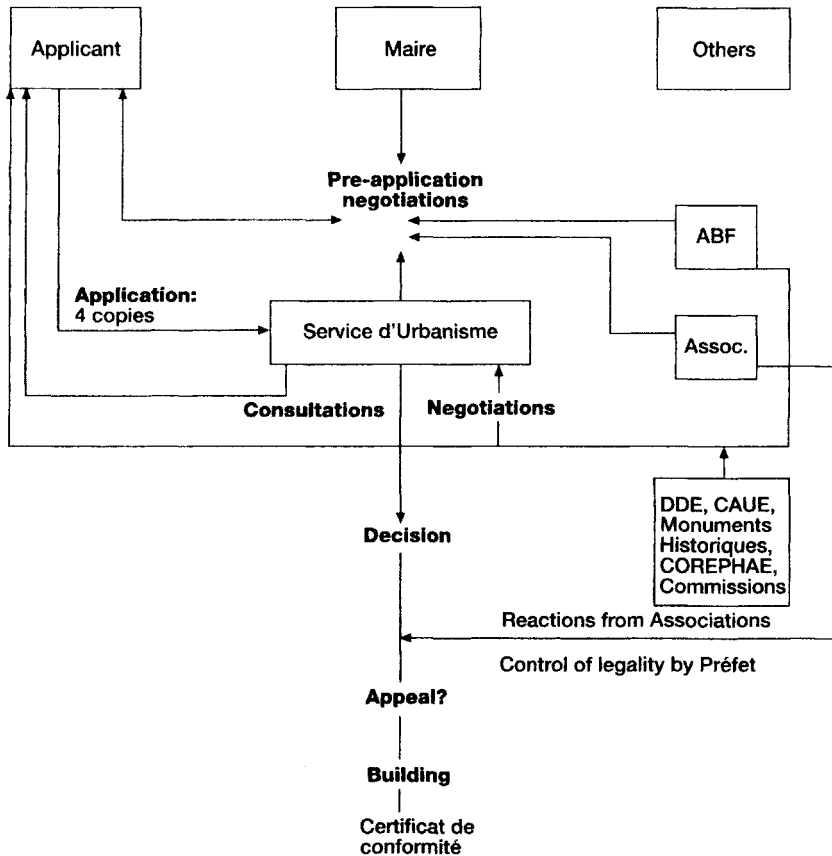


Figure 6.1 Path followed by an application for a *permis de construire*

des Bâtiments de France (ABF) or the Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques. This attitude also allows them to 'pass the buck' in cases of conflict.

Punter (1989:182–7) has explained the general pattern followed by an application for a *permis de construire* and the various participants involved. Figure 6.1 is a modified version of his, applying specifically to cases involving heritage. It is however a simplification and a generalization as few cases follow the path precisely. The participants in the process of control vary from case to case, though a few always have a central role. A particular characteristic of the system is that additional agents may be called to intervene, if it is felt to be desirable by some of the statutory participants, thus changing the balance of power:

it was not always easy to see where the real decision-making power lay, and it is clear that at least in planning the ability of particular actors to control decisions varies from locality to locality.

(Booth 1985:8)

The cities considered for this study are typical in their atypicality: as briefly outlined in [Chapter 4](#), each of them has adapted the structures to fit its needs.

In most cases involving heritage, the applicant—a developer or more likely an architect—will have discussions with the *maire* and/or the local Service d'Urbanisme and the ABF, on the merits or demerits of a proposal. These discussions often start when the architect has a mere sketch; they may be protracted and lead to modifications of the plan. If the scheme is potentially controversial, the applicant may also discuss it with the local association in order to gain its support. Only when a scheme which is satisfactory to all and which complies with the approved plans and regulations has been arrived at, will a request for a *permis de construire* be deposited at the *mairie*. By that time an opinion on the suitability of the design has been formed and a consensus reached. Thereafter the application will follow a path which, depending on the complexity of the case and the location of the site, may involve a smaller or a larger number of organizations; [Figure 6.1](#) shows which these may be.

After the application has been considered, a permit is either granted or refused; in both cases the decision carries the *maire's* signature. The decision is then made public and a two-month period reserved to allow for it to be challenged in the *Tribunal Administratif*: a permit, either granted or refused, can be challenged but only on grounds of legality or illegality. If everything goes well and the development goes ahead, a certificate of conformity has to be obtained at the end of the construction to ensure that what has been built is as described in the permit.

The following sections include as many potential agents as seem necessary for the purpose of this book and explain when and how they participate in the process. They can be grouped in two categories: the first is the controller who may also be, but is not always, the decision maker; this is the *maire*. The second includes the advisers who in some cases are themselves decision makers and occasionally controllers as well: the ABF is the most prominent but others are the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement (DDE) and a number of central government bodies which can either be located in Paris or be field services. Not all of the intricacies of the French local government system need to be discussed here. They have been analysed by, for example, Lagroye and Wright (1979) and, with specific relevance to planning, Booth (1985).

The *maires* are considered first as they, together with the ABFs in protected areas, must be involved in all cases; the relations of these two both with each other and with other participants in the process will be part of the analysis. The *maires'* role is particularly sensitive since they are often patrons as well as gatekeepers. The DDEs are part of this first group as, in spite of decentralization,

their role is still fundamental in most cases. The other groups of advisers with no real statutory role in the granting of a *permis de construire* are combined under the heading of central government since, even when they are located in the *régions*, they are field services. Pressure groups and associations are the last group of participants to be considered. In each case examples from the cities studied are used to illustrate the relationships between the participants and their effect on the finished product.

THE MAIRES

The processing of applications for *permis de construire* starts and ends at the *mairie*, the administrative headquarters of the *commune*. This is the basic unit of local government which in principle, since the decentralization laws of 1982/83, is responsible for land use planning and development control (Code de l'Urbanisme, Articles L.110 and L.421-1).

The *communes* are administered by an elected council, the Conseil Municipal, whose leader, the *maire*, has immense influence in local politics at least: as a result of the possibility of accumulating positions (*cumul de mandats*), many *maires* are also members of departmental or regional councils, are deputies, senators or even ministers. They can have direct access to highly placed politicians and influential administrators in the regional capitals or, better still, in Paris, by-passing normal hierarchical routes (Lagroye and Wright 1979). In the cities taken as examples for this study, two *maires* had been prime ministers: Pierre Mauroy (Lille) and Jacques Chirac (Paris), one has been a minister (Pontoise), another is a deputy and had been a minister (Chartres). A recent Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, is *maire* of Blois and a deputy, and a recent Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, is *maire* of Bordeaux.

On the other hand, there are over 36,000 *communes* in France and their size varies from under 100 inhabitants to (excluding Paris) nearly 1 million. All have similar responsibilities and basic structures though the extent of services they offer depends on size and resources. In larger *communes* the *maire* is normally assisted by *adjoints*, deputies, who deal with specific services; an *adjoint* in charge of *urbanisme* is frequently found in urban *communes*, with the responsibility for planning policy. In those cases the *maire* is normally consulted only for contentious issues. Decisions are taken by the *maire* or the *adjoints* in the name of the Conseil Municipal; their position is pivotal in the development process. The Conseil itself is rarely consulted on individual planning applications; it rubber-stamps the *maire's* decisions. The attitude of a *maire* towards planning and heritage, the interest that he/she has in promoting the *commune* or orienting it in a particular direction, his/her dynamism, political commitment and influence, all are necessarily fundamental in the way that a *commune* evolves. Party politics do not necessarily affect this attitude but the coincidence between local and central government objectives and access to government politicians greatly helps the implementation of municipal policies.

As already mentioned, requests for planning permission are deposited at the *mairie*; their approval or rejection is signed by the *maires*, who are therefore responsible, even though they may not always be in charge of processing the application. Since the 1983 laws, whenever a *commune* has an approved POS (and most urban areas do have one), it automatically becomes responsible for the *permis de construire*. This does not necessarily mean that the *mairie* employs a planning department capable of processing applications. It seems to be mainly large cities that can afford such a department. Most *communes* only have an *instructeur*, an administrator whose main role is to refer the application to other offices which process it. A few have, in addition, a technical office capable of dealing with the application: this is the Service d'Urbanisme which checks that the application conforms with the POS, evaluates the application and collects comments from other parties involved, such as statutory office bearers. It may suggest changes to the applicant and, indeed may have discussed these before the application was submitted. It then prepares a report with recommendations for the *maires* signature. Consultation with other bodies such as the ABF is statutory in cases involving heritage; additional and optional advice can also be sought. A number of *communes* employ outside consultants instead of having an in-house service. Some have set up their own consultants: these Agences d'Urbanisme operate in a similar way and can work for more than one *commune* in the same area.

One of the main reasons for employing either an Agence or a Service d'Urbanisme seems to be to prepare planning documents such as the POS and to deal with ZACs and other forms of *urbanisme opérationnel* (see p. 117) rather than with the control of building: not all Agences deal with the processing of the *permis de construire*. It makes their work more pro-active, involving them directly with development, from brief to design; they are not just acting as controllers. The professionals in all of these services, the *urbanistes*, whether in-house or acting as consultants, work very closely with the *maire* or the *adjoint* in charge of planning, whom they advise. Their background and their role need to be explained.

Urbanistes

The equivalent of the word 'planner' is difficult to find in French: traditionally the translation of the word was *urbaniste* and it correctly represented the profession dealing with planning matters, albeit in a very different way from their British equivalent. More recently a new profession has appeared: that of the *aménagement du territoire* which equally deals with some of the work undertaken by the planner in Britain. The *aménagement* is more concerned with regional and economic planning than with detailed land use; confusingly, in a different context the word can also mean developer and is used as such when reference is made to public sector development (as in *Zone d'Aménagement Concerté*). It is still the

urbanistes who are seen as responsible for the physical aspects of development and who therefore concern us here.

This profession has always been an extension of architecture and although the existence of a separate discipline has been acknowledged since the beginning of the century, it has not been strong enough to gain independent recognition and status. Therefore there is no Ecole Nationale d'Urbanisme, no national diploma and no regulated profession (as the architectural one is). Most *urbanistes* have had an architectural training, followed by a specialization; an increasing number have a social sciences background and have graduated from one of the Instituts d'Urbanisme which have developed from universities' geography departments. There are however associations, such as the Société Française des Urbanistes and the Association pour la Promotion de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche en Aménagement et Urbanisme (APERAU), which try to promote a professional identity and organize training. The number of members, a few hundred, is too small to have much weight and even among them a high percentage are architects by training. A few years ago, a government circular on the recruitment and responsibilities of civil servants mentioned 'urbanism' for the first time in a legal text, thus at last giving it some official status (Circular 84-25, January 1984). More recently, in 1993, and following the publication of a study undertaken by a working party led by the head of the Agence de Développement et d'Urbanisme de la Métropole Lilloise, the Ministère de l'Équipement set up a permanent commission to advise on the best way forward for the education of planners. Entitled the Conférence Nationale Permanente de l'Enseignement de l'Aménagement et de l'Urbanisme, it comprises representatives of numerous organizations and government bodies; its existence increases the independent status of the profession, even though it too is dominated by architects.

Most of the drafting of planning policies, at least those concerned with design matters, and the exercise of development control in or for the *communes* is undertaken by these *urbanistes* who have a strong design grounding. Frequently, their concerns are more oriented to design than to socio-economic policies, though they will not stop at the façade of the building. They are confident in their discussions with the applicants' architects since they have a similar language and come from a similar tradition. This similarity helps both sides in negotiations: there is a basic understanding even when opinions on a particular scheme differ. The *urbanistes* are equally confident when giving advice to the *maire*: as professionals, they are part of the technocratic elite which the French respect. The employment of design trained planners gives the local authorities additional strength in their discussions with developers on aesthetic matters.

These locally employed *urbanistes* are not the same breed as the civil servants who staff the DDE (see pp. 173-6) and who, until very recently at least, had mainly an engineering background and a higher status. The latter's knowledge of and concern for architectural matters has never been great and they have normally delegated the judgements and responsibilities to the ABF—also a civil servant—with similar status.

Working examples

The *commune* of Pontoise is an example of an urban area with sufficient resources to have its own Service d'Urbanisme, headed by an *Architecte-Urbaniste*, who collaborates closely with the DDE and with the ABF. Although the *commune* has an approved POS and is therefore entirely responsible for processing planning applications, it closely involves the DDE as the *maire* finds the endorsement of the state reassuring. Indeed, in the case of an approved *permis* which, after appeal, was considered illegal (as contravening the POS) by the *Conseil d'Etat*, the *maire* could argue that the *permis* had been delivered following the advice of the DDE and that the latter should be held responsible for the error of legality (interview).

According to the head of this Service d'Urbanisme, the elected representatives tend to have conservative tastes: they like old and well known shapes, colours and materials. They are also under pressure from constituents, from their own officers and from the ABF, not always pulling in the same direction. A developer active in the area adds that the *maire* is not a pro-active person, power is diffuse, and the influence of the Service d'Urbanisme is weak, a fact not denied by the head of the service (interview). The examples described in [Chapter 4](#), including the public library commissioned by the city, tend to confirm these comments; they are polite 'keeping in keeping' buildings, in spite of the fact that the city has no formal protection except for the 500 metres surrounding listed buildings. The Service d'Urbanisme sees itself as promoting quality and changing attitudes. It tries to achieve this mainly through negotiation and persuasion both inside and outside the *mairie*; it enlists the support of other professionals, the CAUE, the ABF and the DDE, for this purpose. Most applications are discussed with the DDE and the ABF and whenever possible a recommendation is made to the *maire-adjoint*, which reflects an opinion agreed by all the officers. Additionally, every Friday, the head of the Service d'Urbanisme together with the *maire-adjoint* answers enquiries from potential applicants or discusses their applications. Thus relationships can be established between the *mairie* and developers, which will ease the processing of future applications. This is seen not as leading to corruption or favouritism but as a way of obtaining better quality buildings and saving time in the long term.

The file for one of the examples studied in Pontoise, Les Arcades (see pp. 83–4), shows that negotiations between the architect, the Service d'Urbanisme and the ABF had started at least three months before the application was lodged and resulted in modifications to the scheme. The architect who designed it confirmed that as soon as he had a first sketch for the site he discussed it with the *mairie* services and with the ABF and would not have proceeded without their support (interview).

Another city with a fully established planning office is Chartres, which in addition has created a Groupe Permanent d'Urbanisme (GPU), a working party comprising technical services, the ABF, the architect of the DDE, elected

representatives, developers and applicants. Its main role is to monitor important developments, planning studies and the management of the POS. It meets every two weeks and discusses contentious schemes with applicants, well in advance of the submission of the application. As a result, the time for processing applications has been shortened by a quarter. Such a discussion group can also be used to reduce the power of certain personalities, the architect in charge of the *Secteur Sauvegardé* in this particular case: appointed to work on the original *Plan de Sauvegarde et de Mise en Valeur* (PSMV) some thirty years ago, this architect has had, in the view of the present local administration, an exaggerated and not always healthy influence on development in the city. The GPU is used by the Services d'Urbanisme and by some of the more progressive councillors to counterbalance his influence. As a result new and more contemporary designs, which until recently would have been refused, have become acceptable in Chartres and the draft revised PSMV is more forward looking than the original one. This is a typical example of the creation, on an ad hoc basis, of additional structures in order to change a pre-existing balance of power.

Lille on the other hand, in spite of being a much larger city, has a skeleton Service d'Urbanisme which merely checks applications for conformity with the POS and seeks advice from the statutory consultees, but it has a very strong Secrétaire Général (chief executive) who negotiates and takes decisions for the city. This is an unusual situation since the Secrétaire Général's role is not normally to deal with planning applications; it may be partly explained by the fact that a communauté urbaine (a kind of federation of *communes* with specific responsibilities, see Scargill 1983:37–59 and Comby and Renard 1986:186) exists in the area with *inter alia* responsibility for planning. An Agence d'Urbanisme for the whole conurbation has been in existence since 1990, though it does not process planning applications either: it undertakes a variety of planning studies for the constituent *communes* and prepares the planning documents for the conurbation. Because of the economic boom created *inter alia* by the Train à Grande Vitesse (TGV), and hence the shortage of development land, the city authorities can be very demanding of developers before agreeing a scheme. In the case of Euralille, the *maire* himself became directly involved in the negotiations with developers and in the conception of the scheme. The Secrétaire Général can influence the location of major investments and probably the choice of developers and their schemes. He meets weekly with developers and their architects and discusses schemes well in advance of applications. However, he is not particularly interested in architectural issues and, since a good part of the centre of Lille is within a *Secteur Sauvegardé*, he leaves these entirely to the ABF with whom he also meets regularly.

This attitude was confirmed by the architect who designed the Conservatoire in Lille (see pp. 88–91). Even though the city was the client and the *maire* chaired the competition jury, once the job was adjudicated, there was no interference from the *mairie*, though the ABF was closely involved. On the other hand, the developer of the Hôtel de la Treille (see pp. 86–8) complained about

the laxity of the city in matters of design, and contrasted it with the careful concern of the ABF. This apparent lack of interest in design control seems exceptional for a city as large and as image-conscious as Lille. It may reflect the confidence that the Secrétaire Général has in the ABF and/or his reluctance to take decisions which he could have difficulties in defending. It may also be due to the powerful influence of the Agence de Développement et d'Urbanisme, which initiates schemes within the conurbation and thus has a direct effect on their design.

Maires and other advisers

In smaller *communes*, which rarely have technical services, the applications are referred for processing to the DDE (see pp. 173–6) and the *maire* simply signs the decision. To entice the local authorities to have an approved POS and to take over planning responsibilities, the DDE gives its services for free: it prepares the POS and thereafter processes the applications but in the name of the *maire* rather than in that of the state. This situation, which applies to 90 per cent of the *communes* with an approved POS, creates complex relationships between the *maire* and the DDE officials: in spite of decentralization, the latter have retained the expertise and the information which, in practice, gives them the power to influence decisions; on the other hand the *maire* is their client for other programmes for which they receive a fee and they therefore do not want to alienate him or her; their position can be particularly delicate if the *maire's* instructions are beyond the strictly legal (Schmit 1991a:44). On the other hand the example of Pontoise (see pp. 163–4) shows how the *maires* can blame the DDE for errors of judgement. To add to the complexities, the *maire*, through the possibilities offered by the *cumul de mandats*, may be in a position of power in relation to the DDE (Booth 1989; Wilson 1983). Allaman (1993b:31) suggests that the team leaders of the DDE can in some cases feel like hostages of the *maires* with whom they have worked for a long time: they are torn between upholding the values of central government (which employs them) and serving the local *commune* (to which they feel responsible).

Small *communes* may also ask for advice and help from the CAUE (see pp. 132–4) to produce design guidelines, briefs for competitions or reports to obtain subsidies. Though financed by the *département*, these organizations are seen by the *maires* as independent and therefore trusted. Unfortunately they rarely have the resources that they were meant to have originally and their role is limited: they seldom get involved in individual planning applications. A *maire* can also seek advice elsewhere: Samuels (1993:113–21) has described how a *commune* engaged the Oxford Joint Centre for Urban Design to help to produce the design aspects of their POS and how, following a morphological analysis, this has resulted in a new formulation of the regulations. Their advice cannot extend to the processing of applications for *permis de construire*.

Maires, heritage and image

Most *communes* in urban areas have a protected architectural heritage; it is often their own property (as in the case of churches), and it may impose limitations on development and be costly to maintain. The attitudes of the *maires* towards this heritage vary, depending on their position and their resources. Some are strong conservationists and reluctant to accept any changes in their town, while others consider their heritage as a nuisance and an obstacle to progress. The last few years have seen a diversification and widening of what is considered as heritage by local populations and by the *communes*: buildings or features of local interest, be they industrial or agricultural, of nineteenth or even twentieth century architecture, are increasingly seen as important. Historic buildings need no longer be only the elitist chateaux or the grandiose monuments of centralist France; they increasingly represent local pride and tradition.

The decentralization laws have enabled *maires* who have wanted to do so to take a more active role both in the protection of the local heritage, for instance by suggesting buildings to be listed, and in the control of design through the inclusion of optional regulations in their POS. This last method has been used in Chartres: mention has already been made (p. 164) of the tensions existing between the architect in charge of the *Secteur Sauvegardé* and the city authorities. As a result, some thirty buildings located outside of the *Secteur Sauvegardé* have been designated in the POS as being protected from demolition, using Articles L.123.1, R.123.18 and R.123.21 of the Code de l'Urbanisme; this is seen as giving them better protection than if they were included in the PSMV and, more importantly, gives the *mairie* services greater and more direct control over them (Delatronchette 1993). Another example is that of the city of Rochefort which, in parallel with the POS, has produced an 'Architectural Charter' giving advice on how to build or restore, based on historical, morphological and typological analyses of the city. This document has influenced the POS regulations and is used by the city's services when judging an application for a *permis de construire* (Coussy 1987: 37-141). Equally the cities of Nancy and Mulhouse have taken the opportunity given by the revision of their POS to undertake detailed morphological studies and to draft regulations which 'ensure a better protection for what deserves to be preserved without completely freezing the urban fabric' (Schmit 1993b:20). The use of the POS to protect the heritage has a long tradition in Paris and it has also been introduced in Pontoise where there is no *Secteur Sauvegardé* or ZPPAU.

This interest in heritage is often accompanied by a policy of promoting good contemporary architecture. *Maires* have discovered that good design and architectural quality are important and, in the long run, a good investment. In the words of a CAUE director, 'most *maires* want to be little Mitterrands' and build their own version of the *grands projets*. They want to leave their mark on the *commune* and are keen to improve architectural quality, even if initially it costs more.

Architecture is now engaged in the creation of the image of the city. ...It has become a cultural and political stake of the greatest importance; there is hardly a *maire* who does not dream of realizing some building which will gain for him national or even international recognition.

(Lucan 1989:188)

Chapter 5 noted the renewed enthusiasm for new architecture that started in central government and spread to the whole country. Image conscious *maires* have embraced this enthusiasm, particularly when dealing with their own public buildings. They may be more careful when judging other applicants' designs but, under the influence of their advisers, they do not seem to use modernism *per se* as a reason for rejecting an application. In some cases the opposite is true. The attitude of the *maire* of Versailles illustrates this point; it is particularly interesting because the city that he represents is steeped in history and is far from being progressive:

I disagree with numerous *maires* who think of architecture only in terms of pastiche or of *architecture d'accompagnement*. Thus, they believe, they are taking few risks. Yet they are indeed taking a risk, in that the pastiche may be terrible in relation to its model. I say 'yes' to modern architecture, as long as it agrees to follow the spirit of the city. ...Elected representatives are not necessarily idiots! But they need to be advised, trained, supported. ...I believe that the role of consultant architects...is essential. The elected representative and the municipal staff are rarely competent in architectural matters; on the other hand they are mostly very willing and a dialogue must develop between these professionals and ourselves.

(Damien 1989:13)

Two very image conscious promoters of contemporary architecture are the *maires* of two neighbouring and competing cities, Nîmes and Montpellier, who have received abundant press coverage:

Mayors Frêche [Montpellier] and Bousquet [Nîmes] are mobilizing, with a zeal worthy of the Medicis, all the economic, technological and ornamental means available, and are managing in their different ways to create sunny futures for these two French towns.

(Anderton 1990b:73)

Leaflets produced by the city of Montpellier under the title *Montpellier-Technopole réhabilite son patrimoine* (Montpellier-Technopole rehabilitates its heritage), are typical in showing the city's commitment to both its heritage and its technological future. The historic city centre is protected as a *Secteur Sauvegardé*; not much new development has taken place in it but there have been numerous rehabilitation and enhancement schemes. Immediately outside the

core, there is an abundance of new architecture. In the words of Raymond Dugrand, *adjoint* in charge of *urbanisme*, these mostly public works have been undertaken by winners of competitions

from different backgrounds and schools—local, regional, French and foreign, established stars or young graduates just out of college. But this approach also sets an example and exerts a powerful positive force on the private sector.

(Dugrand 1993:11)

Such is the importance given to architectural patronage by the city authorities, and their pride in it, that they have published a glossy book illustrating their commissions for the 1977–92 period. The schemes shown vary from social housing to a centre for the judiciary, from lycées to the whole new neighbourhood of Antigone; they include privately built houses and private offices, public spaces and gardens.

The newspaper *Le Monde* described the *maire* of Montpellier thus:

He has decided everything, built everything, directed everything. Georges Frêche, socialist *maire* of Montpellier has, in his thirteen year reign, become the absolute master of his city. Whether dealing with the renovation of poor neighbourhoods, with planning policies concerning the historic centre or with cultural policies...M. *le maire* wants it all, and he wants it now.

(Rey 1990:30)

Jean Bousquet, *maire* of Nîmes, operates a similarly dynamic policy and also has strong views on architecture:

Even if there are important constraints, I am convinced that a contemporary architecture of quality, new materials and new techniques can fit harmoniously in an ancient city. ...You must preserve the design of the urban structure.

(Bousquet 1988)

You have to get the message across that you can live in a very ancient town in a very modern way, that you can put the contemporary beside the classical.

(Bousquet, quoted by Pointon 1992:12)

He fought for and obtained approval for Foster's Carré d'Art, a high-tech building right in front of the Maison Carrée, a well preserved Roman temple and one of France's top national monuments (see Anderton 1990b and [Plate 5.2](#)). In spite of substantial opposition, he obtained the support of the Commission des Abords and other influential organizations; the finished building is not only

considered a success but also highly admired both locally and internationally. In a more ordinary environment, Bousquet also supported Nouvel's design for a public housing scheme, the now celebrated Nemausus.

Controversial but important public commissions by Bofill, Vasconi, Meier, Nouvel, Kohn, Fuksas, Kurohawa, and so on now adorn these two historic cities, showing their *maires'* commitment to combining quality contemporary architecture with the enhancement of their heritage. They have succeeded in making modern architecture popular and use it as a marketing tool (Chaslin 1991). The enhanced image of their cities is seen as a way of attracting investment and increasing prosperity. In turn they are able to demand high standards from private sector applicants. Whether this situation will continue through the recession remains to be seen.

Maires and ABFs

A *maire* has to deal directly, or indirectly through his/her officers, with an ABF whenever an area is protected. A working relationship between these two powerful actors is essential in the production of the built environment but it is complex and not always easy. Because of pressure from their electors, *maires* tend often to be more conservative and prudent than the ABFs who are non-elected officers (though the above examples of Nîmes and Montpellier show that this is not always the case). To counterbalance this, *maires*, who are lay persons, tend to yield to professional expertise: ABFs not only are highly trained, confident and respected technocrats but also represent central government. On the other hand, in areas of high unemployment, *maires* do not want to have to refuse permits for schemes which would attract scarce investment and they resent the ABF's vetoes if these are based only on aesthetic grounds and ignore local economic realities. To add an extra complication, some *maires* use the opinion of the ABF, even when this is not statutorily required, in order to be able to refuse permits for schemes that they do not want without getting the blame for the refusal.

In Pontoise, for instance, the relationship between ABF and *maire* was for long a difficult one as the former was seen as blocking development; the ABF vetoed applications that he considered to be of poor architectural quality and not because the schemes were too modern. On the contrary good modern schemes likely to shock the population were favoured and approved by this modernist ABF. He considered that he was doing his job of encouraging good quality architecture, but the *maire* saw it only as obstruction. In the example of the public library described on pp. 82–3, the somewhat *outré* pink colour of the façade was specifically demanded by the ABF, on the basis of some historic precedent. The creation of the Service d'Urbanisme in 1986 has improved matters considerably as, since then, schemes are discussed well in advance by all relevant parties and differences ironed out. Together with the director of the Service d'Urbanisme and the CAUE, the progressive ABF tries to 'educate' the

conservative elected representatives and convince them of the importance of quality and the need to make bold choices. The former claim to have achieved a certain amount of success (interviews).

The areas most likely to cause friction between ABFs and *maires* are the 500 metre zones, where the former's decision is not based on written regulations and often appears to be capricious. In cases of serious conflict between a *maire* and the ABF there is in theory no other solution than to take the case to the *Tribunal Administratif* claiming misuse of power. However, this is avoided as far as possible. Negotiations between the various parties take place, preferably as soon as a developer has shown a scheme requiring the ABF's approval to the *maire* or other officials. As already mentioned, a number of local authorities organize regular sessions where they meet applicants to discuss their schemes well in advance of their submitting an application. Whenever potentially difficult design issues arise, the ABF is invited to participate in the discussions. In examples from Pontoise and Quimper, described in [Chapter 4](#), discussions with the applicant and the ABF had taken place well before the applications had been officially lodged.

Another possibility, used only in highly sensitive cases within the 500 metre zones, is to have the file called in by the Commission des Abords (see pp. 194–8) which then advises the minister who takes the decision instead of the ABF. Depending on their relationship with the Commission des Abords, the *maire* or the ABF might simply ask for an opinion which, though not binding, carries substantial weight regarding the subsequent decision and avoids more cumbersome procedures.

The creation of ZPPAUs was meant to reduce the possibility of friction between ABFs and *communes*. Whether or not they have succeeded in eliminating conflicts is yet to be proven but indications are that they have (Ministère de l'Équipement, du Logement et des Transports 1992a:147). Within a ZPPAU, the role of the *commune* is crucial: the procedures have been described in [Chapter 3](#) and need not be repeated here. Most important is the fact that although all permits within these areas have to have a visa (see pp. 179–81) from the ABFs, they can no longer take their decisions arbitrarily or unilaterally. In cases of conflict, the *préfet de région* will be the arbiter after consulting the *Collège Régional du Patrimoine et des Sites*; no such cases have been reported as yet and M. Marinos, ABF of Finistère, is not surprised: 'this is entirely logical, in view of the fact that the municipal services and the elected representatives have defended the ZPPAU, have committed themselves to it; it is as much their policy as that of the SDA' (quoted by Frier 1990:151).

The case of Quimper and other *communes* of the Finistère *département* is exemplary: the enthusiasm of the *maire* for the procedure was essential for the designation and evolution of ZPPAUs, the first in the country. The relationship between the *mairie* and the ABF was one of close collaboration and mutual support. This may be due in part to the fact that the ABF and the head of the Service d'Urbanisme are of similar background, education and age and that both are very dynamic and work hard on the elected representatives. The negotiations

between the latter and the architect contracted for the study for the ZPPAU were equally fundamental: they put pressure on her to avoid producing a rigid document, similar to a traditional PSMV and establishing rules for every part of the area, which would have curtailed their discretion in granting or refusing planning permission. The *adjoint* of Quimper was involved throughout the document's preparation and presided over numerous discussions involving his staff, the ABF and the architect in charge. By the time the study was completed, his and the *maire's* commitment and understanding were undisputed. When a new and much less experienced council was elected, it requested to be informed as soon as possible on the policies of the ZPPAU, in order to be able to contribute to the debate. The new *adjoint* in charge admits to occasionally consulting his predecessor (of the defeated political party) as he respects his knowledge and opinions on the matter (interview).

Two examples of developments within the Quimper ZPPAU, mentioned in Chapter 4, show the results of the collaboration and confidence existing between the Services d'Urbanisme of the *mairie* and the ABF: the first is the unashamedly modernist building at No. 2 rue Pen-ar-Steir. Neither party was scared by the modernity of the proposal put forward by an architect whom they felt they could trust; on the contrary, they thought that the design enhanced a rather ordinary area, gave their approval with hardly any modification and are pleased with the result. The second example, on Place de la Tourbie, which came about after negotiations and alterations to its design, is satisfactory, to a large extent as a result of the positive approach and collaboration between the head of the Service d'Urbanisme and the ABF. In both cases the ZPPAU documents did not preclude contemporary designs and the controllers also had a good relationship with the architects. This is not always the case: another local architect, when interviewed, complained of the arbitrariness of decisions (both positive and negative) within the ZPPAU, and did not see the collaboration between ABF and Services d'Urbanisme in a favourable light.

In *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, on the other hand, the role of the *maire* has in the past been more marginal, particularly since the PSMV supersedes the POS and the ABF's role becomes crucial. In all cases studied most negotiations relating to applications in *Secteurs Sauvegardés* take place between the ABF and the applicant. The *mairie* is only used as a postbox, unless the council happens to be the developer, in which case the involvement is of a different kind. Since the decentralization laws, *maires* have become more interested and have learned how to use the procedure to their own advantage (political or economic). As a result there has been a renewal of interest in *Secteurs Sauvegardés*. *Maires* now tend to get involved in the preparation of the PSMV and to discuss it with the architect in charge. The case of Chartres has already been mentioned (pp. 100–1): the council has ensured that the revised PSMV for the city is clearer and more flexible than the original one of twenty years ago, that it does not try to recreate an ideal environment congealed in the past, and that it takes into account economic realities. The *maire* of the city makes his view clear: 'If living in the shadow of

the cathedral must always be agreeable, it also should be possible to work there, to create employment, to develop new technologies, in the future as in the past' (Lemoine 1987:17). In other words, he wants to ensure that preservation is not the overriding factor in considering applications within the *Secteur Sauvegardé* and that the document serves the general needs of the city. Therefore the current revision takes a much more flexible approach to preservation and restoration; in particular it no longer tries to return the town to an image of a long gone past. The case of the house on the river Eure (pp. 102–3) exemplifies the progressive attitude of the city's Service d'Urbanisme.

Maires and pressure groups

Maires and *adjoints* have to consult professional advisers but they themselves are canvassed by different pressure groups: builders and developers on the one hand, local associations on the other. They are politicians and they want to ensure that their positions are not endangered by unpopular decisions. In small *communes*, in particular, they are known personally by all of their constituents and, although their power is remarkable, their vulnerability to pressure can also be great.

The following anecdote related by the head of the Service d'Urbanisme of Pontoise illustrates the situation: a restaurateur wanting to have a new frontage for his restaurant discussed it with the head of the Service d'Urbanisme. She felt that the proposal was out of character with the area and suggested an alternative. The POS emphasized the importance of design in the historic centre of the city where the restaurant was located and therefore gave the local authority a right to object to the design. Although at the time the applicant seemed satisfied with the advice, he later went to the *maire* and to other politicians and complained about this 'unnecessary interference', stating that 'next they will tell me how I should cook' (interview). The *maire*, however, does not necessarily accept the applicant's point of view: in this particular case, after discussing it with his advisers, he rejected it. Provided that there are planning documents to back it, the power of the professional in influencing the decision carries substantial weight, even when local pressures exist. Frequently the outcome depends on the confidence of the politicians.

Similarly, the relationship between *maires* and local associations seems to vary according to the political weight of the former and the power of the latter. At the Conference of the Arbresle in December 1981, the municipal elected representatives present 'declared that they listened carefully to the comments and recommendations of the national conservation organizations but were vigorously opposed to the prejudices of the local preservation committees which would want to turn the centre of cities into museums' (Ministère de la Culture 1981: 21).

This point of view may have changed somewhat since the decentralization laws as local heritage has taken more prominence, but the comment is illustrative of

the general attitude of local elected representatives. The risk of *contentieux*, that is, of being taken to the *Tribunal Administratif*, forces the *maires* and the other advisers to take account of the feelings of the associations and to try to win their support. At the Quimper Conference on the ZPPAUs in 1991, the changes in attitude of both the population and the elected representatives towards their heritage was a central element of the debates; the need to protect and enhance this heritage and the desire to promote local culture were seen as major concerns of the population (Ministère de l'Équipement, du Logement et des Transports 1992a:91).

DIRECTION DEPARTEMENTALE DE L'EQUIPEMENT

The ninety-five *départements* into which metropolitan France is divided were created under Napoleon I as rational administrative units through which central government could rule over the rest of the country. They have their own elected assembly, the Conseil Général, and their own powers and responsibilities but none relating to the control of construction or heritage protection. Their involvement in this process is merely as patrons commissioning new buildings and as paymasters of the CAUE (see pp. 132–4).

Relevant to this study are the ministerial field services at the level of the *département*, which are placed under the authority of the *préfet*, the representative of central government in the area. This civil servant has powers of supervision over the *communes* but these have been substantially reduced in the past decade. The *préfet* now mainly controls the legality of the *maires'* actions, but *a posteriori* rather than *a priori* as was the case before, and mediates between various levels of administration. One of the offices over which the *préfet* has authority is the Direction Départementale de l'Équipement (DDE).

The DDE is a field service of the Ministère de l'Équipement, it is part of central government and its officers are civil servants with expertise in planning, housing and transport. The majority of the professionals employed by the DDE belong to one of the well established elite corps, that of the *Ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées*, a fact that creates links and allegiances which cut across official structures (Ardagh 1982:82–92). Until the decentralization laws, the DDE was the main body responsible for the preparation of planning documents and the processing of *permis de construire* and other authorizations.

The complex relationship between DDEs and *maires* was mentioned on p. 165: while not being in a direct hierarchical relationship with the *maires*, DDEs take decisions for them. Since January 1983 their role has changed radically: as already noted, the *communes* are encouraged to prepare, or commission, and then adopt a POS, and thereafter they are responsible for the delivery of permits. As most *communes* do not have the resources to establish their own planning offices, they rely on the DDE to prepare the plans, acting as an unpaid consultant.

Equally, the DDEs often continue to process the *permis* for the *communes*: according to Schmit (1991a:44), of the 13,111 *communes* with an approved POS (on 1 January 1991), 90 per cent use the DDE services for this purpose. This arrangement seems to have advantages for all involved, some of which have been discussed in the section on *maires*. Another important consequence is that central government, through the DDE, keeps a vigilant eye and exerts considerable influence over local planning, even though final decisions are officially made by the *maires*; the DDE itself can perpetuate its existence and even increase its role as the *maire's* adviser. Furthermore as representatives of central government, the DDEs are still seen as important by other participants, including the public and the developers, thus exercising substantial influence. The relationship between DDE officers and local elected representatives is made even more complex by the *cumul des mandats* and by the fact that the officers may also be elected to other political posts in the same region.

Clarification of the decentralization stakes in the eyes of the elected representatives complicates the ambiguous position of the DDE; its double role of locally available service and representative of central government, with regard to the control of legality, is seen as a contradiction which the civil servants confess not to be able to handle very well.

(Salles 1990:23)

The DDEs are not normally concerned with architectural or aesthetic matters. They are mainly interested in the respect for implementation of the regulations (of the POS or other documents) and in the infrastructure, particularly roads, for which they are directly responsible. The POS prepared by the DDE rarely includes the optional regulations concerning the appearance of buildings (Article 11) unless specifically required to do so by the *maires*; equally the DDE is unlikely to apply Article R.111–21 of the Code de l'Urbanisme (see pp. 46–7) which stipulates that approval for a *permis de construire* is conditional upon the effect that a scheme might have on its surroundings. The training of DDE staff, mainly as civil engineers, reinforces their bias as well as the lack of sufficient resources to deal with a large number of applications: only 10 per cent of the DDE's staff are concerned with *urbanisme* (Danan and Pernelle 1990:94). If necessary, they employ a consultant architect to advise them and members of the public on matters of design. This *architecte conseil*, whose opinions are not statutory but carry weight, may get involved both in the preparation of a brief for a competition and in its jury, or may participate with the municipal services in the discussions about important developments.

Nevertheless the appearance of buildings may be precisely the issue on which a *maire* and the DDE clash, as illustrated by the following case in the Nord-Pas de Calais region. The local POS, originally prepared by the DDE, required that buildings with a character 'foreign to the region' be refused permission. The *maire*, having become interested in architecture, commissioned an architect to

design a house for him; the proposed scheme used traditional materials but very modernist volumes. The *maire* was prepared to authorize the *permis de construire* but the DDE, in its capacity of supervising the matter of legality, ordered it to be refused. In such a situation *the préfet* is the arbiter, and he rejected the scheme, pointing out that 'if the applicant had been different, I would have approved it; but a *maire* has to be exemplary' (recounted by the Director of the CAUE). The *maire* has now initiated a process of revision of the POS, in order to modify it and to make his building acceptable.

In the case of the Quai du Pothuis competition in Pontoise (see pp. 127–9), the DDE's architect was part of the jury. Her presence was justified by the fact that a new bridge over the Oise was being proposed by the DDE and its precise location and design would have a significant effect on the site for the competition. Such concern over a highway made the intervention of the DDE essential. Its architect however did not limit herself to matters of road engineering; she looked at the project in a wider, morphological sense and participated actively in the discussions; as an architect, her professional view was respected by the other members of the panel. In spite of having a Service d'Urbanisme to process the applications for *permis de construire*, the city of Pontoise routinely consults the DDE on the applications: thus the DDE's *architecte conseil*, the ABF and the head of the Service d'Urbanisme are used to collaborating.

Although the advice of the DDE's architect is not statutory, it can be used by municipal services to outweigh others. Chartres is a case in point: the architect of the PSMV has close contacts with central government which are seen as an asset, but his rigid views are not, particularly as they influence a rather timid ABF. Therefore the DDE's architect who participates in the GPU and has a much more positive view on contemporary design is frequently called upon by the municipal officers to counterbalance the very conservative views of the ABF. Neither the *Secteur Sauvegardé's* architect nor the DDE's architect has a statutory role in this case; they are both used to support a particular position.

The above examples indicate that although the DDEs still judge a large majority of planning applications, their involvement in matters of design control is mostly optional and dependent on the wishes of other administrations to enlist their support or have another opinion. Otherwise, they deal with *permis de construire* when so required, either by statute or because of the availability of their resources, without giving much consideration to matters of design although always applying the written regulations. In relation to heritage protection and in cases of insertion of new architecture in historic areas, they mostly defer to another departmental office, the Service Départemental de l'Architecture, whose head is normally the ABF. In summary, although the DDE's role has shifted since 1983, it is still a key participant in the planning process. In matters of design it has influence rather than power, but this influence can be important in relation to plan preparation, control of building and policy direction.

THE ARCHITECTE DES BÂTIMENTS DE FRANCE

The role of the ABF has been mentioned throughout this study as being central to all policies of heritage protection in France. *Primus inter pares*, the ABF is an institution unique to France and even within the country the power of the position is unequalled; its existence is therefore often challenged. The almost messianic role of the ABFs has been described thus:

in general terms, following the law on architecture of 1977 which in its first article recognized the 'public interest' of architecture, the ABFs support the government's objective of making the French people love architecture and of promoting the professions that create architecture.

(Robert 1987:5–6)

In most areas, the ABF is the head of the Service Départemental de l'Architecture (SDA) created by decree in March 1979 (No. 79–180) as a field service of central government at *département* level (Lille is an exception in that the head of the SDA is not the ABF). At present these services work for three ministries: the Ministère de l'Équipement, the Ministère de la Culture and the Ministère de l'Environnement. They are not connected, hierarchically or otherwise, to the DDE, even though they work, at least in part, for the same ministry, and they are both under the supervision of the *préfet*. The SDAs (see pp. 114–15) are responsible for the promotion of quality in architecture and planning and its integration with the surrounding environment. They participate in the preparation of planning documents such as the *Schéma Directeur* and the POS, and they are involved with numerous *département* commissions.

The ABF's functions are multiple and wide-ranging: according to decree 84–145 of February 1984, which gave them their present status, they

supervise the application of laws concerning architecture, planning, sites, historic monuments and their surroundings. They give advice to the architects in charge of historic monuments, establish the programme and supervise the repair and maintenance works undertaken on historic monuments privately owned; they are in charge of repair and maintenance of national palaces or buildings owned by the Ministère de la Culture and they are curators of those historic buildings managed by the same ministry.

The ABFs are directly responsible for the maintenance of *classé* buildings, whether publicly or privately owned. This maintenance implies minor works since major repairs and restoration are the responsibility of the Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques (see p. 192). The delimitation of the responsibilities of the two is not always clear and they have to work in close collaboration. More importantly, the ABFs are charged with ensuring respect for all aspects of the law on historic buildings: they ensure that no alteration can be

made on an *inscrit* building without notification from the relevant authority and that works on all listed buildings follow certain criteria. As heads of the SDAs, the influence of the ABFs is much wider still since they are consulted during the preparation of planning documents such as the POS, and they are involved in the juries of architectural competitions and more generally in the promotion of good quality architecture and not just the protection of historic buildings.

The ABFs are civil servants employed by central government but located in the *départements*. Their appointment is the result of a competition, a standard practice in France. Candidates must be registered architects and they generally have a few years' practical experience. Most of them have followed the two-year course at the Centre d'études supérieures d'histoire et de conservation des monuments anciens, normally called the Centre de Chaillot because of its location in the Palais Chaillot in Paris. This course is rigorous, intense and specialized, and deals with all aspects of conservation: history of art, planning, legislation, techniques, and so on. It covers theory and practice and involves the students in field exercises. The competition consists of a written and drawn examination, including architectural design and history of architecture, and an oral examination. Successful candidates then undergo in-house, civil service training, particularly to help them to understand their position in relation to the various administrative services at central, regional and local levels. Only then do they take up their post in the *département* to which they have been assigned and where they normally stay for a number of years. Houlet (1989:74) has commented on the fact that, because all ABFs come out of the same school, they have a way of thinking which is consistent though not necessarily uniform. He also points out that they know, as a result of their training, that if a problem is too big for them, they can send the file in question to the Commission Supérieure des Monuments Historiques or the ministry in Paris.

The very selective character of their appointment means that ABFs are highly qualified, experienced technocrats who see themselves as an elite; it also means that there are not enough of them to cover the potential posts: there are rarely more than two ABFs per *département*. As a consequence their workload can be colossal and multifaceted; they cannot deal with all cases and have to establish priorities. They are under-resourced in terms of both staff and salaries and as they are entitled to continue with a private practice, most of them do so in order to increase their income. Potentially this could create conflicts of interest but as their private work must be outside the *département* in which they are in post, these seem to be minimal: no such case appears to have been reported.

A time sheet with a list of the responsibilities of the ABFs and the time spent on each has been produced for administrative purposes and shows the complexity of their job, particularly since they are accountable to three different ministries, depending on what aspect of their work they are doing. For instance, when granting their visa (see pp. 179–81) for a *permis de construire* in a *Secteur Sauvegardé*, they are part of the Direction du Patrimoine of the Ministère de la Culture; but if the building is in a ZPPAU, they are working for the Direction de

l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme of the Ministère de l'Équipement (until 1996) and if it is in a *Site Naturel*, for the Direction de la Protection de la Nature of the Ministère de l'Environnement. Their allegiance to a particular ministère is therefore a subject of hot debate inside the administration and one of the reasons for producing the time sheer. In 1996 the ministerial responsibilities were reallocated once again, changing some of the relationships mentioned above.

As a result of the multiplicity of roles performed and their connections to three ministries, the ABFs are the essential link between the implementation of planning legislation and that of heritage protection. They embody this link and carry most of the responsibility for making it work.

Avis conforme

For the purpose of this study, the ABFs' most important role is that of granting the *avis conforme* or visa needed prior to building or demolition permits being considered in most protected areas: the 500 metre radius of a listed building, a ZPPAU or a *Secteur Sauvegardé*. Their refusal or approval is conditioned by existing documents in the latter two cases but not in the first one where, at least in theory, the decision need not be justified and can be totally arbitrary. This has been the main cause of conflict between ABFs, *maires* and applicants. On the other hand, an *avis conforme* does not guarantee the granting of the *permis de construire*, which can be refused by the *maire* for other, additional reasons.

The official procedure is that once an application has been received in the *mairie*, its planning office, in whatever form it exists, sends a copy of it to the ABF, whenever his/her visa is required. This normally extends the period for the processing of the application by one month, though in some cases the extension can be longer. ABFs do not relish refusing an *avis conforme* and negotiate with applicants to try to arrive at a compromise. They therefore encourage architects to bring their schemes to them as early as possible and well before submitting their application. Negotiations are started from a position of strength on the part of the ABFs, and both architects and developers know it. After a while they tend to establish a rapport with particular architects whom they know they can trust and, in the same way as the Services d'Urbanisme of the *mairies*, thereafter control them less meticulously than unknown ones or those whom they consider mediocre.

One example of early negotiations affecting the design of a building (les Arcades) was described on pp. 83–4. In the example of the building in rue Descartes (see pp. 105–6), the ABF of the Fifth *Arrondissement* was involved as it was located within the 500 metre radius of several historic buildings. He was consulted from very early on in the design process and he suggested the breaking up of the façade in order to respect the street's rhythm. During construction the ABF demanded some more, minor modifications: the architect in charge of the scheme considers that the ABF was exceeding his powers, but as he and the developers did not want to delay the scheme, they were reluctant to appeal to the

Tribunal Administratif. They also knew that they would have to work with the ABF again in the future, and did not want to sour their relationship with him. In addition, they had to comply with the height restriction imposed by the POS regulations, which the ABF would have been willing to waive but not the city authorities, who felt that the POS had to be applied strictly. By way of contrast, the architect for the block of flats in the Avenue des Gobelins (see pp. 106–7) praised the same ABF for having suggested a couple of modifications to this building, helping to achieve a better design (interview).

When detailed plans exist, such as in *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, ABFs sometimes waive certain requirements (*adaptations mineures*) ‘in the interest of good architecture’, something that other officers might be scared to do. Lille’s previous ABF, who used this power fairly liberally, admitted acting sometimes on the margins of legality, but had not found himself in trouble because of it (interview). His negotiating abilities, recognized by all those who had to deal with him in the ten years he was in the post, were probably his main asset and the reason why he always avoided being taken to the *Tribunal Administratif*. He knew most of the architects and developers working in the area and was proud of the way that he managed to influence their work. He also admitted having had stormy relationships with some of them and cited the design of the Hôtel de la Treille in Lille and its developer Kindt as an example. This scheme, on a difficult site in the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, was modified several times, because of the ABF’s demands. The case file reveals that some of these were contrary to the PSMV but that he felt that they improved the design as a whole (see pp. 86–8). The developer, with his own design ideas, managed during construction to modify some details. The ABF was not entirely satisfied with the result but admitted that in the circumstances it was the best design that could be obtained. He was pleased with the architect’s understanding of and respect for the area’s morphology, even if some of the façade details are not right. The ABF would have preferred a more determinedly modern design while the developer tried to have something that would blend more with its surroundings; both of them compromised to arrive at an acceptable scheme. Another example, also from Lille, is that of the Conservatoire (see pp. 88–91) where the competition’s winning scheme contravened certain policies of the PSMV. The ABF commented on these but concluded that the overall result was better because of them and imposed his will on the city’s authorities, more timid but less interested in architectural quality.

In Quimper, within the ZPPAU, the ABF working in collaboration with the Service d’Urbanisme of the *mairie* manages through negotiations to have schemes modified, particularly if they are located in sensitive areas. In the case of the building in Place de la Tourbie (see pp. 95–6), the ABF, knowing that he was negotiating from a position of strength (the developer needed a consent as rapidly as possible) and working with an architect whom he could trust, managed to obtain a better scheme than the original one, particularly in the way that the building relates to its neighbours.

These examples are typical of the negotiations that take place between ABFs, Services d'Urbanisme, developers and architects in cases which are of local importance. In the questionnaire sent to all of mainland France's ABFs (see [Appendix 2](#)) the questions referred to their involvement in protected areas, to their collaboration with other offices and associations, to their participation in policy making and to their personal views on the insertion of modern buildings in protected areas. A specific question asked them how many permits they refused per year and what percentage of the total applications this represented. ABFs responding to the questionnaire (about 65 out of 95) confirmed the views expressed in interviews. Their returns show that refusals of *permis de construire* and *permis de démolir* varied between zero and 30 per cent; however a number of those giving percentages above 10 per cent qualified it by commenting that in most cases the refusals were a tactical move, hopefully leading to modifications of the project and an eventual approval. This appears to be the general pattern. It also broadly corresponds to the statistics published by the Ministère de l'Équipement (1986a) concerning *permis de construire* and others. The latest published figures are for 1984: in metropolitan France 630,054 applications for *permis de construire* were received and of these 76,017 (12 per cent) were referred to an ABF for an *avis conforme*; 5,344 were vetoed by ABFs and this represents only 7 per cent of the referrals but 18 per cent of the total number of refused *permis de construire* (29,854). The positive *avis conformes* (70,673) represent 12.5 per cent of all granted *permis* (565,121). For *permis de démolir*, the number of referred applications was 4,080, or 26.3 per cent of the total (15,495). Only 256 were vetoed by the ABF and this is virtually the same as the total of refused applications (260) (Ministère de l'Équipement 1986a). In other words the influence of ABFs on refusals of demolition permits is fundamental.

The above figures do not include additional applications referred to the ABFs for an *avis simple*: their comments in these cases have no statutory value in that the *maire* or authority responsible for granting the *permis* can choose to ignore them, but they rarely do and the ABFs are therefore influential. In most cases, the *maire* has voluntarily asked for the ABF's comments because he/she feels the need for additional professional advice on architectural matters. In this category 21,338 requests were referred to ABFs during 1984, bringing the total of referrals to 15.5 per cent of the total applications; 94 per cent of these were given a favourable visa.

ABFs and new construction

One of the questions in the questionnaire sent to the ABFs was 'what is your opinion on the integration of new buildings in areas of historic or aesthetic character?' This was a deliberately open question aimed at obtaining subjective opinions. The very varied answers are difficult to categorize; they show the different attitudes and interpretations of the respondents. One group defends the 'historic buildings tradition' and tends to be suspicious of modern architecture in

historic contexts, preferring pastiche or fairly neutral, bland architecture (*architecture d'accompagnement*), which it understands and feels will offend no one: 'Personally I like excellent pastiches as stylistic exercises but my administration preaches opposition to it'; 'Stylistic continuity rather than break'; 'Favourably if there is harmony and no break with the past'. Some 23 per cent of the respondents fall into this category, even though the way in which they express their views is not always clear cut.

Other ABFs are much more confident in the possibilities of incorporating modern buildings in historic areas and encourage it, in preference to pastiche. 'In essence, avoid pastiche and counterpoint.' 'Contemporary expression. Volume relationship. Scale relationship. Materials relationship. Not through mimicry but through consistency, structure, ratio between void and solid, etc.' 'All buildings have at some point been new in an older neighbourhood; it's pretty obvious. The problem is not new construction but how to respect a culture or the expression of a culture in the continuity of a language and a vocabulary.' 'Contemporary with connotation in the reading (plot subdivisions and façades).' 'Neither pastiche nor modernist provocation. ...A contemporary architecture which respects the scale of the neighbourhood and of the street.' Some 26 per cent of the respondents expressed some commitment to a contemporary language though this is sometimes qualified as shown in the last quotation.

One example of a convinced modernist is C.Maj, ABF of the Val d'Oise, who promoted the work of his old friend H.Gaudin, one of the most original of the French contemporary architects. His reply to the questionnaire does not reveal such a clear commitment to modernism: 'each case is specific and needs reflection'. It does however show an open mind and the rejection of received ideas. In the same vein, a large proportion (some 40 per cent) of replies avoided generalizing and showed a concern with quality overriding all others and a surprisingly flexible attitude. 'Integration rests upon a good morphologic (and semiologic) analysis as well as upon the mastering of the workmanship: techniques and materials, ad hoc procedures, quality of the labour.' 'It depends on the context, on the scheme and mainly on the quality of the architect. I prefer a good building which is in keeping to a bad contemporary one (and they are legion). NO SYSTEMATIC OPPOSITION [sic].' 'Without pre-conceptions. The main thing is to preserve an "atmosphere", not a particular type of architecture.' 'May go from a well understood pastiche (learned architecture) to contemporary architecture which incorporates the following notions: respect for urban morphology and in particular the scale of the property subdivisions; respect for scales, rhythms, profiles, continuities,...; looks for some roots or at least some compatibility. In summary an architecture which is referential but not deferential.' 'Favourably if they are conceived with talent.' 'The question is one of architectural quality and not one of references to a particular period.' 'It all depends on the size of the new building and on the homogeneity of the old neighbourhood in which the new building is proposed. There is no rule.'

ABFs recognize that with certain architects the chances of obtaining a good scheme are limited unless they design it themselves; in those cases they will accept the least harmful scheme. The city architect and the ABF of Quimper agreed that a private housing development in the rue Rouget de l'Isle which they were considering was 'a banal design in a regional postmodern style' (interview); however, having asked the architect to alter his design three times, they felt eventually that they would not obtain anything better and recommended approval, as a damage limitation action. Similar feelings were expressed by a number of respondents (some 10 per cent): 'We have to deal mainly with *architecture d'accompagnement*, passable or mediocre, because of a lack of good contemporary schemes.' 'Possible if the architect has integrity...which is rare.' 'Difficult because the developers and the architects have little training and even less sensitivity to this problem.' In contrast, as shown by another example in Quimper (rue Pen-ar-Stier; see pp. 96–7), ABFs know when they can trust an architect.

Most respondents to the questionnaire mention morphological considerations (plot size, scale, solid-void relationship) that go beyond the façade of the buildings; styles are practically never mentioned. All ABFs personally interviewed expressed their general opposition to blending architecture and emphasized their encouragement of good contemporary design. They also mentioned their need to compromise.

To complete the picture of ABFs' attitudes it is worth mentioning again the competition for the quai de Pothuis in Pontoise (see pp. 127–9) for which the ABF, C.Maj, was one of the nine judges. His presence was justified because an old building (not listed) central to the site was to be retained. During the jury's debate the ABF was the only member who defended the most resolutely modern of the four proposals being discussed, as he felt that, regardless of style, it was better architecture than the others. This example confirms the fact, repeatedly mentioned by interviewees, that the ABF's principal role is to promote quality architecture.

Relationships between ABFs and others

The attitudes of others towards the ABFs are complex. They are criticized as a Corps because their decisions seem to be ad hoc (in the case of the 500 metre perimeter in particular) and do not follow a coherent pattern; developers complain that their intervention leads to an extension of the processing period for an application; more generally their immense power is resented by some *maires* and by architects in particular.

The power of veto held by the ABF is subject to criticisms. ...The mystery, the esoteric character of their criteria is more worrying because the experts are not ready to share their knowledge, which tends to make elected representatives grumble.

(Morand-Devillier 1986:79)

As was noted in the case of Pontoise, the establishment of a planning office in the *mairie*, headed by an architect-planner, has helped the relations between *maire* and ABF. In Quimper where ABF and city architect are of similar age, education and ideologies, they work hand in hand and are listened to by the *maire*. These two examples indicate that when negotiations and dialogue take place, the esoteric aspect of the ABF's work disappears and his/her intervention is easily accepted. In Lille, on the other hand, the *mairie* has abdicated responsibility towards design matters and defers almost entirely to the ABF who, because of his personality, has won the respect of local architects and developers, even though his decisions are sometimes resented.

Within the hierarchy of civil servants, the position of the ABFs is exceptional. In the case of a 500 metre perimeter their opinion cannot be overruled by anyone, not even the minister, unless there has been an abuse of power or a misuse of the law, for instance if the proposed scheme cannot be seen together with the listed building in question. Even in a case like this, there must be someone willing to take the ABF to the *Tribunal Administratif*, which is rare but not impossible. An example in the New Town of Villeneuve d'Ascq, near Lille, indicates the complexities of trying to challenge the ABF's opinion. The Château de Flers is an *inscrit* building; within a 500 metre radius of it, consent for a housing scheme was given, with the ABF's approval. A local association, the Comité de Défense de Flers-Bourg, challenged the consent in the administrative courts, arguing that the *préfet* (who at the time was still responsible for delivering the permit) should have refused the permit as the scheme would negatively affect the *inscrit* building. The local *Tribunal* agreed with the association and revoked the permit, but the developer, together with the ministry, appealed to the *Conseil d'Etat*. The latter ruled that there had been no error of legality in granting the permit and, furthermore, that the professional judgement of the ABF regarding the quality of the proposed scheme was not subject to challenge (Jurisprudence case No. 19530, published in the *Journal Officiel*, 1981): in other words, whether or not the new development had a negative effect on the Château was a matter for the ABF to decide.

A more recent case in Paris had a very different outcome and received coverage in the national press: it concerned the redevelopment of a mediocre post-war building in rue de Rennes, within the 500 metre radius of the church of St Germain des Prés, and the construction of a block of luxury flats for the developer COGEDIM. The proposal re-established an old passage way, a courtyard and the equivalent of an eighteenth century porch, all of which respected and enhanced the morphology of the area and satisfied the ABF who gave his approval. The façade, though, displeased the local association (Association de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et de Préservation des Conditions de Vie dans le Quartier Saint Germain des Prés), as well as the architectural correspondent of *Le Monde*, who described it as 'a mixture of

pastiche and false picturesque' (Edelman 1992:13). They took the case to the *Tribunal Administratif*, contesting the permit on the basis that the ABF had not taken into account how the scheme damaged the surroundings of St Germain des Prés. The *Tribunal* considered their case valid and required COGEDIM to redesign the building's façade, though retaining the other aspects of the design (see Figure 6.2). This case has now been taken to the *Conseil d'Etat* which could of course reverse the decision once more.

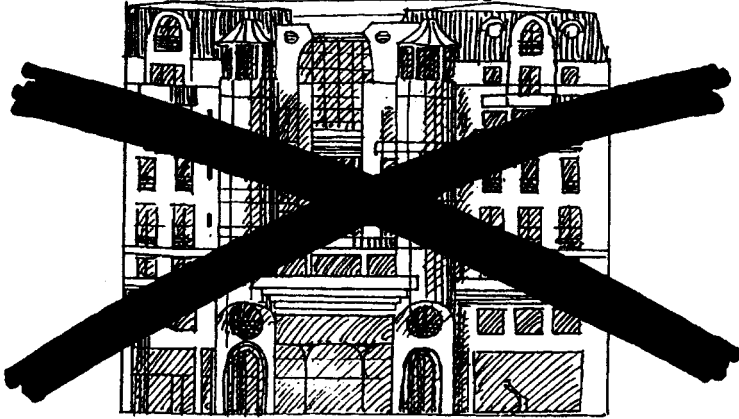
The only way in which a minister can intervene in cases of conflict is by calling in (*évoquer*) the application in advance of the ABF's decision, as explained by Frier (1979:120–1) and regulated by the Code de l'Urbanisme (R. 421–38–4). In this case, the minister takes the decision instead of the ABF, substituting rather than overruling him/her. In practice, however, sanctions can be taken against an ABF who is seen to be taking too many arbitrary decisions or ones that create too much controversy in the area. Ultimately the *préfet* is the hierarchical superior of the ABFs and he can ask for their transfer or even sack them.

With all their power, the ABFs complain that their position is a very lonely and unsettling one, particularly since they have almost no doctrine to base their judgement upon. When faced with a difficult decision, ABFs can ask for advice from colleagues such as the Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques or the Conservateur Regional or from the Commission des Abords at central government level (see pp. 194–8). When dealing with a particularly difficult 'political' problem (conflict with a *maire*), they may simply ask the Ministère de la Culture to take the decision. However, ultimately the ABFs are responsible, and, as shown by the case of the Château de Flers, as long as they act within their powers, their opinions on the quality of architecture are beyond question.

The 1981 Symposium at the Arbresle, about the surroundings of historic buildings, had as its main theme the role of the ABF. Numerous papers were presented on the subject, showing the degree of preoccupation and disquiet existing at the time (Ministère de la Culture 1981). On the defensive, the ABFs denied that their intervention increased real costs or the delays in the delivery of permits, except in a very small percentage of cases which they could justify because of the particular circumstances. A number of suggestions were made in order to improve their work and to make it better understood by other participants in the process. One of the proposals was the greater use of the Commission des Abords as an arbiter in cases of conflict within a 500 metre perimeter, and to create some sort of doctrine which could be followed. The creation of the ZPPAUs was a direct result of the discussions at the Symposium.

Within a ZPPAU, if there is a conflict between the *maire* and the ABF, the regional *préfet* is the arbiter but he has to consult the *College Régional du Patrimoine et des Sites*. This has not been necessary until now. The ZPPAU is itself the result of an agreement between the local authority and various central government offices, primarily the SDA, but also including the DDE, the Délégation Régionale à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement (DRAE) and the

Saint-Germain échappe au supplice



La COGEDIM ne pourra pas réaliser la façade projetée au coeur de Saint Germain des Prés 50, 52 rue de Rennes (ancien cours Désir . Immeuble Uniprix) qui portait atteinte à notre quartier. Suite à notre recours, le Tribunal Administratif de Paris vient d'annuler le permis de construire de cette opération qui aurait défiguré notre environnement. Appuyée par toutes vos signatures, notre action a été couronnée de succès. Nous veillons à ce que l'élaboration du nouveau projet architectural s'instaure dans le cadre d'une concertation pour tenir compte de vos préoccupations.
Merci encore de votre soutien.



ASSOCIATION DE PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE ARCHITECTURAL
ET DE PRESERVATION DES CONDITIONS DE VIE DANS LE QUARTIER
" S A I N T . G E R M A I N . D E S . P R E S "
Association régie selon la loi de 1901 . 14, rue du Dragon . 75006 Paris . Tél (1)45 49 40 12

Figure 6.2 Poster celebrating the rejection by the *Tribunal Administratif* of a building near the St Germain des Prés Abbey, Paris

Source: Association de Protection du Patrimoine et de Preservation des Conditions de Vie dans le Quartier 'St Germain des Prés'

Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles (DRAC) (Circular No. 85-45). In

this case the ABF is part of a team and not the only decision maker; this helps in diffusing potential conflicts and makes the ABF's position more acceptable.

The position of the ABF today seems to be somewhat different from that of fifteen years ago, partly as a result of the decentralization laws, and partly because of changes in attitude. First of all, it appears that, when confronted with a strong *maire* with clear policies, the ABF will yield at least some way rather than risk confrontation. On the other hand a *maire* with over-stretched resources will often be delighted to leave all aspects of architectural judgement to the ABF. In spite of conflicts, ABFs' relations with the *maire* on one hand and with other professionals on the other seem to be constructive and positive in the majority of cases.

Criticisms are mostly accompanied by accolades addressed to the quality and efficiency of their work. ...And above all everybody agrees in estimating that the intervention of these enlightened experts, generally on the basis of perfectly reasonable criteria, has avoided countless disasters.

(Morand-Devillier 1986:80)

Almost all persons interviewed for this study expressed their respect for the local ABF, even when occasionally they disagreed with his/her opinions. Most other participants in the development process thought their intervention not only useful but essential to achieve good results. In some cases they were used to help in negotiations between other partners or to justify decisions; for instance, unofficially an architect would solicit negative comments from an ABF in order to put pressure on a client and so improve a design; or a *maire* would use the ABF's veto to reject an application which he did not want to approve but would find difficult to reject otherwise. In a number of cases architects dismissed the influence of the ABF by saying that they themselves took great care in integrating their new buildings with the surroundings, 'as any responsible professional would' (interview with Porchon); thus not negating the ABF's role in cases where there were irresponsible applicants! But more positively and surprisingly, a number of architects thought that their schemes (Les Arcades, Pontoise; Hôtel de la Treille, Lille; block of flats, Avenue des Gobelins, Paris) were improved as a result of the ABF's intervention, and elected representatives always respected their professional competence, even when they resented their decisions. The following is probably a somewhat optimistic view but it reflects the general feeling about ABFs:

Administrative practice has from the beginning relied on the action and the taste of the ABF. Taste being as diverse as sensitivity, disparities from one *département* to another were feared. To these variations in taste could be added those of courage, of professional responsibility, of concern for a career. Schemes that have to be judged are sometimes supported by politicians to whom it is difficult to be in opposition. In spite of these

causes of conflict, the way the system has functioned on the ground has been generally satisfactory.

(Houlet 1989:74)

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

As a result of centuries of centralization, most major decisions in France are taken by central government. The evolution and increasing complexity of legislation has been accompanied by an increasingly complicated bureaucracy. The decentralization laws of the last decade have not necessarily resulted in a reduction of the state machinery: new decentralized structures have been created without reducing the number of existing central ones. The newly created *régions*, like the *départements* before them, do not have an active role in building control or in heritage protection; but they have a planning responsibility in that they prepare a regional plan which runs in parallel with the national plans and is the basis for negotiating with central government the funding of infrastructure (*Contrat de Plan*). They also have an important role as clients and patrons, commissioning new buildings to fulfil their functions and house their bureaucracies.

The distribution of responsibilities in relation to heritage, planning and architecture reflects rivalries and internal wars within the bureaucracy (referred to in [Chapter 2](#)), particularly between the *Ministères de la Culture* and de *l'Équipement*. The multiplicity of services and the often narrow definition of their tasks complicate matters for users and are often criticized as unnecessary bureaucratization. How much and when they intervene is not always clear or officially regulated: there may be informal consultations, statutory interventions or both. The initiative may come from below or from above and the motivations for involving a particular service may be very diverse.

Central government's field services are in most cases the first instance of potential intervention beyond the *commune* and, in the case of the SDA and ABF, they are part of more than one ministry, thus adding to the complexities. Similarly the DDE is an example of a central government field service which in some cases, but not all, has a clear statutory role regarding the delivery of the *permis de construire*. No equivalent service exists at regional level but funding for a variety of public works can be channelled through the *régions*, thus giving them influence, for instance through their intervention in competitions. Other field services, at both regional and departmental level, are mostly advisory. All of these services in *régions* and *départements* are placed under the authority of the *préfet*, the representative of central government who coordinates and supervises their activities in accordance with government policies, and, when necessary, acts as the arbiter in conflicts between bureaucracies.

In addition to the ministries and their various *Directions*, there are a number of Commissions which advise and can have a significant role in policy making. Their weight however depends on the commitment of the minister and his wish

to consult them: this has changed periodically. Just as the central administrations have their field services in the *régions* and *départements*, National Commissions also have local equivalents. Central government also has an important role in education, in influencing the attitudes of the general public and in raising the quality of architectural design in general, through such bodies as the Mission Interministérielle pour la Qualité des Constructions Publiques. This was covered in [Chapter 5](#) where it was seen as more relevant. The following analysis covers a number of central government institutions involved in the control of development and in heritage protection, not all of which will be called on to intervene in all cases. In 1996, the allocation of responsibilities between the Ministère de l'Équipement and Ministère de la Culture were changed; architecture is now dealt with by the latter but *urbanisme* remains with the former. The situation is somewhat confused; by the end of the year, no new administrative flow charts had been produced and, as a result of the May 1997 elections, the situation could change once again. The following pages are based on the pre-1996 situation.

Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication

The Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication is in charge of the legislation on historic monuments and their surroundings. It was created in 1959 by André Malraux and took over these responsibilities from the Education Ministry which had traditionally held them. Given importance and cabinet status from the beginning (Malraux was a close friend of De Gaulle), it has retained a high profile ever since. Sir Richard Rogers claims to have heard President Mitterrand reflecting that 'Culture was the fourth greatest vote catcher in France' (unpublished Urban Design Group lecture 1993); Mitterrand's Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, was the most popular and perhaps the most controversial member of the cabinet.

[Figure 6.3](#) shows the organization of the Direction du Patrimoine which is part of this ministry: its role is 'to study, protect, conserve and enhance' all elements of French heritage (Ministère de la Culture 1988:4). In order to perform this task it has four sub-sections, including the Sous-Direction de l'Archéologie which deals with archaeological sites and need not be detailed here.

The Sous-Direction des Affaires Générales et des Constructions Publiques deals with the general management of the Direction and with the new buildings of the Ministère de la Culture; as such it commissions new constructions and recognizes its responsibility in promoting architecture and creating tomorrow's heritage. Two recent examples of commissions are the dance school for the Paris Opera at Nanterre and the Eyzies museum at Tayac, both resolutely modern buildings. Like all public bodies in France, it chooses architects through competitions (see [Chapter 5](#)). The Sous-Direction is important

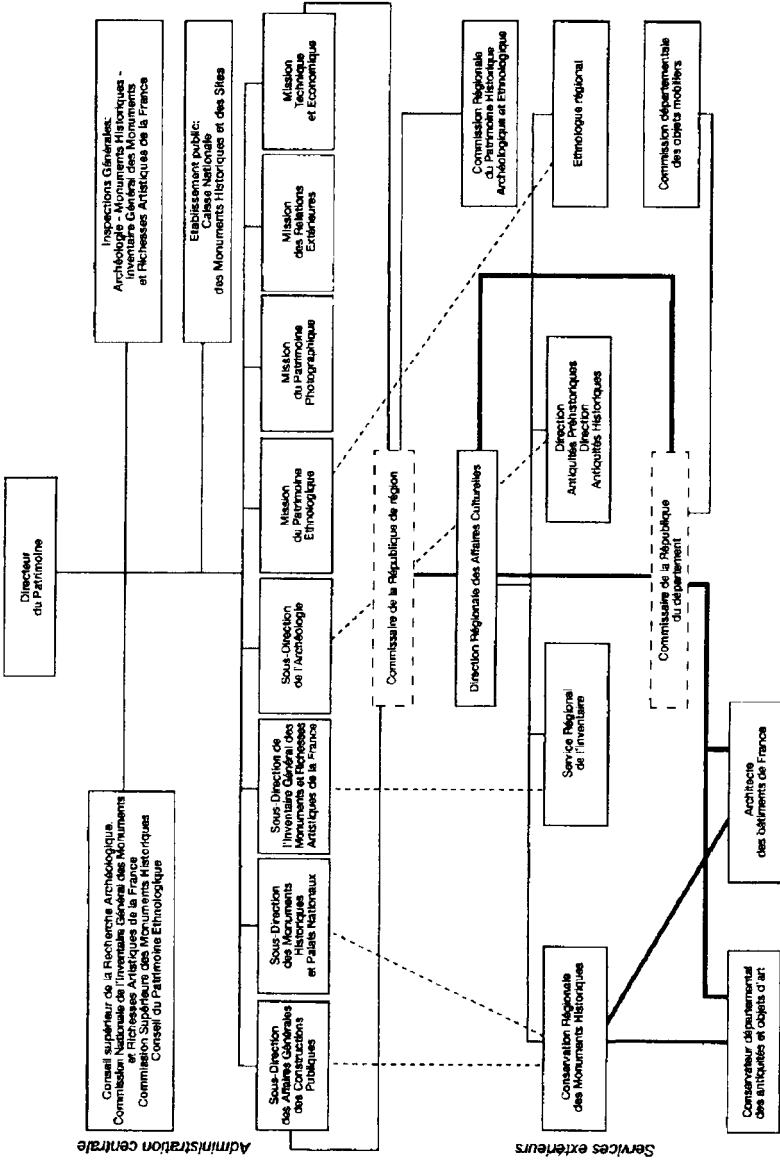


Figure 6.3 Administrative organization of the Direction du Patrimoine
 Source: Ministère de la Culture, Direction de Patrimoine, 1988:6

in that it sees its role as a patron giving a lead in taste through examples of quality architecture.

The Sous-Direction de l'Inventaire Général has the responsibility of recording and studying the artistic and historic heritage, and disseminating information about it. One of its objectives is to increase awareness through greater accessibility of information on heritage. Its records are in computerized data-banks and on microfiches; its Centres de Documentation open to the public are in a number of regional centres. The Inventaire, as the service is known, is regularly consulted on listings and on buildings within *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and has an input on policy through the information it selects and provides. It is not directly involved in the relationship between new and old, but can certainly have influence when the demolition of a building is being questioned.

The Sous-Direction des Monuments Historiques et des Palais Nationaux is specifically responsible for the protection, preservation and enhancement of historic buildings. It processes all reports concerning potential *classé* buildings and supervises those for *inscrit* buildings which are decided at regional level. It manages the funds devoted to works on state-owned listed buildings, and, through the Directions Régionales des Affaires Culturelles (DRAC, see below), distributes among the regions the funds devoted to non-state owned ones. It supervises the works commissioned by the Conservateurs Régionaux des Monuments Historiques and undertaken by the Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques (see below). It directly manages some 250 listed buildings belonging to the state. Through its field services and wide networks, the Sous-Direction is influential on policy matters concerning heritage protection and new architecture in the vicinity of listed buildings.

Field services

With the exception of the ABF and the SDA, which are shared with the Ministère de l'Équipement, the field services of the Ministère de la Culture are not central to this book; they are mentioned here because they are staffed by experts who can be called on to express an opinion in specific, delicate cases, and who are influential because of the position they hold. They exemplify the complexity of the French system where non-statutory participants can have as much weight as the statutory ones.

The Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles (DRAC) implements the national cultural policy within its region and represents the ministry and its various services, including the Direction du Patrimoine: heritage is thus one aspect of the cultural concerns of the Direction. A request to list a building has initially to be lodged with the DRAC, which will then consult other bodies. Equally any alteration to or restoration of a building *classé* or *inscrit* must in the first instance be notified to the DRAC. The directors of these offices have influence on local cultural policy in general through their contacts with elected

representatives in the region, such as the *maires*. Figure 6.4 shows the rather complex relationship between this and other services.

Working in close collaboration with the DRAC are the Conservateurs Régionaux des Monuments Historiques, in charge of all matters concerning historic buildings. They supervise the application of the legislation on historic monuments, including the approval of budgets and tenders and the control of work undertaken on the buildings. They survey the area and prepare reports on buildings to be listed which are submitted to the COREPHAE (see below). They also collaborate with the Architecte en Chef des Monuments Historiques and the Architectes des Bâtiments de France. In theory the Conservateurs have no direct involvement in the judging of a new building; however, because of their wide experience and involvement and their extensive contacts, they are consulted, at least when proposals are in the vicinity of historic buildings, and their opinions are taken into account. They tend to be conservative in their views.

The Inspection Générale des Monuments Historiques is a technical service attached to the ministry with inspectors assigned to particular areas of the country. They give technical and scientific advice to the DRAC, particularly on matters of protection and restoration. The importance of this service is once again the result of its influence and opinion-making rather than its statutory power: Inspecteurs are in contact with ABFs and with various departments of central government, they participate in all kinds of discussions concerning the heritage, they teach at the Centre de Chaillot and are considered the top experts on matters of historic buildings. Reports to the Commission des Abords (see pp. 194–8) are normally written by Inspecteurs. The frequently quoted Houlet is one of the Inspecteurs who has exercised substantial influence over a long period of time, not only on issues of heritage protection but also on matters of insertion of new buildings in historic areas and on general policy.

The Architectes en Chef des Monuments Historiques are appointed directly by the Ministère de la Culture and employed by the Inspectorate. They have the status of civil servants but are paid through fees based on the cost of the works they undertake; they are entitled to maintain a private practice. Although this ambiguous system appears to be open to corruption, it works well as the total fee that an Architecte en Chef can receive per year is not controlled by him/her. They give advice on the listing of buildings and on the maintenance of the buildings already listed. Equally they give an opinion on works proposed by owners of listed buildings. They are automatically site architects for all works undertaken on *classé* buildings if these are taken in charge by the Ministère de la Culture, or if they are subsidized by central government. Their role in relation to restoration and conservation is considered essential (Houlet 1985b). The training of the Architectes en Chef is similar to that of the ABFs: after qualifying as architects and often working in practice for a while, the candidates take a two-year course at the Centre de Chaillot. They then compete for the vacancies available and are assigned to a particular region. They are however entitled to work outside of the region as well. In general terms the Architectes en Chef are

specialists in the restoration and conservation of historic buildings and are not concerned with new ones unless they are attached to a listed one. Like the Conservateurs, because of their expertise and their wide contacts they often have an input into the control of new architecture when it affects a listed building.

The influence of the Architectes en Chef can go far beyond their official role. The majority of PSMVs have in the past been prepared by Architectes en Chef and, although in recent years there has been an attempt to give this work to professionals from more varied backgrounds, the Architectes en Chef still dominate (Soucy 1989:36). This fact gives them a position of power and influence well beyond simply preparing the plans. This is illustrated by the case of Chartres (see pp. 100–1) where in the early 1960s one of them, Guy Nicot was entrusted to prepare the *Plan de Sauvegarde* for the *Secteur Sauvegardé*. Once the plan was approved, he was retained by the local authority as a consultant to give (non-statutory) advice on applications; he used this position to exert a virtual right of veto over any planning application within the *Secteur*. The ABF, impressed by the prestige of this man, did not risk taking decisions without consulting him, and local architects often took him as a partner, in order to ensure the approval of their schemes. He was finally challenged by an outsider to the town, the architect J.P.Porchon, and since then his influence has somewhat diminished. Nevertheless he is a nationally renowned figure through his involvement in the development of the Grand Louvre in Paris, and he has been reappointed to revise the Chartres PSMV.

Commissions and other services

The Direction du Patrimoine is additionally helped by a Commission and two other services. The Commission Supérieure des Monuments Historiques advises on listing and on conservation and enhancement works on listed buildings and their surroundings, which pose particular problems from either the technical or the policy angle. The Commission is divided into seven sections, each with specific responsibilities detailed by decree No. 85– 771 of July 1985. Of major relevance to this study is the second section concerned with the surroundings of listed buildings, known as the Commission des Abords, which has had a chequered history. Originally created in 1967, it was at the time dominated by creative architects rather than by conservation specialists: ‘Nothing was modern enough for this forum, where the conservationist was put in the dock’ (Houlet 1989:75).

At the time the Commission considered that buildings of quality, no matter their type or style, could always live together. For example, a scheme in the immediate vicinity of Reims cathedral was submitted to the Commission; according to Houlet (1993), ‘it was hideous and in total conflict with the superb gothic architecture adjacent to it.’ The Commission approved it because of its modernity but the minister did not follow its advice. As ministers took fright at the Commission’s unpopular decisions, they at first consulted it less and then, in

the late 1970s, decided to change its balance by adding representatives of conservation societies. Thereafter nothing new was acceptable to the Commission and as a result it was simply not consulted for three years.

The July 1985 decree turned over a new leaf and set up a new 31-member Commission. It is presided over by the *Ministre de la Culture* or, if he/she is absent, by the Director of the *Direction de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme*, significantly not a part of the same ministry but of the *Ministère de l'Équipement*. The secretariat of the Commission is also provided by this latter ministry. Other members include *Inspecteurs Généraux*, civil servants from both ministries, academics, representatives of associations concerned with architectural heritage and of the various ministerial field services. The Commission's staffing, which includes members of two ministries, places it in a privileged, though sometimes difficult, position to exert influence. It seemed to operate reasonably successfully for a number of years, though Houlet still had reservations:

We must recognize that the objective of the Commission—to reconcile the respect for an environment and for traditional forms with the creative impetus of contemporary architects—is extremely uncomfortable as long as the latter have not re-learned to design in the context of that environment.
(Houlet 1989:75)

Although whether it is consulted or not may depend on other people's decisions, the Commission des Abords is influential because of where it is, who its members are, who is served by it and to whom it relates. It not only gives advice on matters of integration but also, in cases of conflict, acts as arbiter on whether an ABF has acted within his/her powers. It meets on average every two months and examines two or three cases at each meeting. The members often visit the site and discuss the scheme with the designing architect after which a fairly detailed report is prepared.

In cases where ABFs perceive a potential conflict when confronted with a request for a *permis de construire* within a 500 metre perimeter, they can ask for advice from the Commission before taking a decision. ABFs who are under conflicting pressures from developers, owners, local associations and city authorities may ask for help from the Commission. Equally, a *maire* or a local association can ask for a case to be judged by it. The decisions of the Commission are not published officially but they are known among the relevant professionals and tend to create precedents. Whether these constitute some form of doctrine is a matter of debate: they were considered to do so when the Commission was first set up and even today they are the only source of doctrine on the matter of integration between new architecture and historic areas. The 1981 Symposium at Arbresle debated, in relation to the role of the Commission, whether a doctrine can exist or whether each case is so entirely unique that only a code of practice can be established (*Ministère de la Culture* 1981:14). Certain

Commission decisions have been *causes célèbres* and have received substantial publicity: for example, the Bofill scheme for Les Halles, which it rejected, and the Mazzuconi façade for 22 Av. Matignon (see pp. 144–5) which it approved.

Two other cases which the Commission dealt with and which also received a substantial amount of coverage are worth mentioning to illustrate the way that it operates. The first relates to the building of a business centre near the Roman arena in Nîmes and abutting a neo-gothic church. The scheme was first welcomed by the various local services involved, although there were reservations. However, the Ministère de la Culture, considering it a case of national importance, called in the scheme before it was finally approved and so it went to the Commission for advice. The reports to the Commission in January 1987 made an exhaustive analysis of the site, its surroundings and those of the proposed building:

To my mind, it is the progressive profile of heights which is important to restructure the square (in front of the building) and to diminish the impact of the buildings on the left of the church of Sainte-Perpétue. On the other hand...an additional study of the crowning of the façade is needed and has been requested from the architect. ...The most important problem is the corner of the office block which at present has a blind wall.

(Prevost-Marcilhacy, in Commission Supérieure 1987a)

In fact, this is not so much a matter of finding some kind of integration with old architecture (roofs, openings, rendering, etc.) but rather of associating on either side of Ste Perpétue two architectures which, most of all, will have to be complementary.

(Autheman, in Commission Supérieure 1987a)

These two quotations give a flavour of the elaborate reports presented to the Commission by members of the Inspection Générale. In the event the Commission gave 'unanimous approval to the scheme, subject to seeing a modification of the design for the corner of the building' (Commission Supérieure 1987a).

The second case is that of the surroundings of Amiens cathedral, one of the most important gothic monuments of France. In 1983 the local authority organized a competition for the restructuring of a 5 hectare area adjacent to the cathedral. Robert Krier's scheme won the competition but the Commission, which had been involved from the beginning because of the importance of the site, was asked to give its opinion. What was being presented was not a detailed architectural design but a master plan which would be built by a number of different architects. As in the previous example, detailed analyses were presented to the Commission, with an emphasis on the relation between the proposals and existing buildings.

The choice of scale, which reproduces the spirit of the old land subdivision, contributes to a successful adaptation and harmonious link with the existent fabric, while at the same time eliminating the brutal separation existing between the city on the South side and its suburb in the North. ... However, the layout of the *parvis* does not deserve the same compliments and worries me.

(Boiret, in Commission Supérieure 1985)

These examples offer a glimpse of the work of the Commission des Abords; it receives reports by the best experts in the land, most of whom are part of other governmental bodies or their field services, which analyse in great detail how a proposed scheme will affect an existing historic area. As the above quotations illustrate they deal with the morphology, the history and the character of the whole area, not with architectural style. The Commission has the leisure to debate the case, to call in the architects to present their case, to weigh the merits and demerits, and so on. It can then reach conclusions, independent of any other pressure. However, the minister who has asked for its advice has no obligation to follow it. Houlet summarizes the position of the Commission:

The Commission des Abords has been able to find solutions to difficult problems and these solutions have given satisfaction to all the legitimate interests which were confronted. But all of the members of this Commission know that they are condemned, because of the nature of the problems they have to deal with, to walk a razor's edge and that their errors will not be forgiven.

(Houlet 1981:186)

As if to confirm Houlet's worries, the Commission's fate changes regularly: of late it has been consulted less and less, and met only twice during 1995.

In addition to the Commissions operating at national level, there are others at regional level, which are also complementary to the work of a particular ministry. Such is the case of the Commissions Régionales du Patrimoine Historique, Archéologique et Ethnologique (COREPHAE), created by decree in November 1984 to advise on regional policy concerning the heritage. They include local elected representatives, members of associations and central government nominees, and are presided over by the *préfet de région*. They are consulted on all matters concerning the heritage and particularly in relation to the listing of buildings: in the case of *inscription*, their advice is crucial; in that of *classement*, they express an opinion to the Commission Supérieure des Monuments Historiques which in turn advises the ministry. In addition 'they can put forward local heritage to be protected on a thematic basis and a quantitative evaluation [number of cases, budgets] of the actions needed in relation to the protection of the heritage' (Ministère de l'Urbanisme 1985:4.1).

Mesnard (1985:281) suggests that the creation of these regional Commissions could be seen as a form of democratization of the whole system of heritage protection, but that it is probably no more than a form of decentralization. Shortly after their creation these Commissions were in fact hailed as a major step in the direction of democratization; since then they seem to have had a varying role depending on the enthusiasm of the *préfet de région*.

One such *préfet* from the Haute Normandie considers the actions of the COREPHAE as extremely positive for three main reasons: the debate that takes place before a decision on listing is made, which involves a wide participation; its pedagogic role, since specialists need to explain clearly and simply their proposals to the elected members; and the COREPHAEs have looked at enhancing and promoting specifically regional heritage. 'The COREPHAE has acquired a particular credibility by having an overview of regional heritage and by undertaking specific studies, well chosen and well supported' (Groussard and Quyollet 1989:40).

The COREPHAEs have at least the possibility of debating issues such as the effect of new buildings in historic areas, and they can express an opinion on the matter. They have started to establish themselves and to consolidate their role. Members of COREPHAEs appear at relevant conferences such as the one on ZPPAUs in Quimper in 1991, and participate in the national debate. Potentially they can be influential and opinion forming: by giving reasons for listing buildings, and widening the choice of historic monuments, they can affect the way that new buildings are seen in relation to them.

The last organization attached to the Direction du Patrimoine is the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques et des Sites. Its main role is to organize the opening to the public of some 100 historic buildings owned by the state and visited by some seven million people per year. In combination with this function it publishes books and a magazine, promotes visits and tours, and develops educational activities (e.g. the Classes du Patrimoine in which pupils and teachers live for a week in a historic building). Although it has no official role in judging the impact of new buildings in historic areas, it may offer its opinion as a main user of historic buildings, particularly in cases where a proposed development has a direct impact on these. In addition the Ministère has a number of 'Missions' specializing in particular aspects: the photographic heritage, the ethnological heritage, building techniques and materials.

In summary, the Ministère de la Culture and its various services are more concerned with heritage protection than with new buildings, but the impact of the latter on the former justifies their involvement; in addition they see themselves as having a significant role as patrons of new architecture. Even when they are not directly the decision makers, they participate in the national debate on the role of new buildings in historic areas. The Ministère de la Culture exerts an influence over a wider field and is frequently consulted on the quality of architecture, either through its field services or through the position of its employees.

Ministère de l'Équipement, du Logement, des Transports et de la Mer

The Ministère de l'Équipement, du Logement, des Transports et de la Mer (the precise name varies from time to time) is responsible *inter alia* for the legislation concerning planning, the *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, the ZPPAUs and the urban *Sites*. The main department dealing with these is the Direction de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme (DAU) which works additionally with the Ministère de la Culture in relation to the surroundings of listed buildings and with the Ministère de l'Environnement in relation to natural sites. This Direction, under a slightly different name, was for a number of years part of the Ministère de la Culture. In 1996 it was split up with responsibilities being redistributed between the two ministries, Culture and Equipment. The changes in the allocation of responsibilities between ministries has been described in detail by Pattyn (1990: 28–32). They need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that some of these responsibilities seem to be a political football between the Ministères de la Culture and de l'Équipement and as a result are rarely clear cut. During the central period covered by this study, its role was defined by decree in 1985:

The Direction de l'Architecture et de l'Urbanisme develops and implements the policies for the promotion of architecture and for the enhancement and planning of urban space.

(Decree 85.659, 1985, Article 7)

Figure 6.5 shows the complexity of the activities of this Direction (it predates changes that took place in 1996). It undertakes or commissions research, gives advice, organizes seminars. It develops land use regulations and supervises their implementation. It intervenes in cases of litigation and of expropriation, and in ZACs and other forms of *urbanisme opérationnel*. It regulates and supervises the architectural profession and its education. It is responsible for the policies regarding most protected areas but not for listed buildings which are the responsibility of the Ministère de la Culture (but it deals with their surroundings). Its influence, either directly or through its field services (DDE, SDA), is therefore all embracing.

Members of the DAU—within the Sous-direction des espaces protégés—supervise and are involved in the preparation of all the plans for the *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and the ZPPAUs. Within these areas they may also be invited to discuss specific schemes put forward locally by architects. In that sense they advise the ABFs and/or the local *maires* and their advice can create unofficial precedents, particularly since they are always members of the various Commissions, such as the Commission des Abords. They are also on occasion, and if the importance of the scheme seems to require it, invited to participate in the jury of an architectural competition. Staff members of the DAU are frequently *en mission*, visiting an area where they have been called to give their

opinion on a scheme. Alternatively, architects or staff from other administration levels and from all over France visit the offices of the DAU in Paris, to discuss their schemes or ask for advice.

Since the DAU is informed of all building permits, it keeps a vigilant eye on what happens on the ground, and through its numerous contacts it may give informal opinions. Normally the DAU will not intervene in the consideration of a request for a *permis de construire*, except in an advisory capacity as described above. It will do so in exceptional cases where the application is particularly problematic or there is a conflict between authorities. An example of the latter may occur in a ZPPAU where the *maire* may wish to grant a permit refused by the ABF. The ministry may call in the application which will then be processed by the DAU. Within the surroundings of listed buildings, ABFs can be substituted by the ministry if the case requires it; this must happen before the ABF has taken the decision as he/she cannot be overruled *a posteriori*. The intervention of the DAU is limited to exceptional cases: as the then minister wrote in a Circular of August 1977: 'You will only ask me to call in an application within the surroundings of historic monuments in cases which are very delicate or very important' (Frier 1979:154, note 89).

The DAU has two budgets, one for undertaking studies, such as for ZPPAUs, and one for works in similar areas. Each of these budgets is in turn divided into two: the larger part to be spent by the central administration and the other to be distributed in the regions. The latter tends to be very small, a fact resented by the regional administrations.

One of the services attached to the DAU until 1994, the Service Technique de l'Urbanisme (STU), had the 'mission of participating in the elaboration, development and dissemination of knowledge, methods and technical instruments' concerning *urbanisme* (Danan and Pernelle, 1990:95). It was responsible for the publication in 1980 of the book *Intégration Urbaine et Architecturale* aimed at advising professionals on how to deal with the insertion of new buildings in existing urban areas. This text (discussed on p. 38), based on the analysis of a number of existing examples, tried to define some criteria for the successful insertion of new development in urban areas. It contributed significantly to the debate and to the change of attitudes of the last decade.

The STU also analysed and published information on planning, the *Recueil d'Informations Statistiques sur l'Urbanisme*, known as the RISU (Ministère de l'Équipement 1986a). It covered the production of planning documents, the delivery of permits, the locations of certain uses, planning taxes, and so on. Figures quoted in the section on the ABF are extracted from this publication. In 1994 the STU was renamed Centre de Documentation d'Urbanisme and its responsibilities were changed. Its *Editions Villes et Territoires* continue to publish relevant texts but statistics have not appeared for a long time, apparently as a result of decentralization.

Field services

The two most important field services of this ministry, the DDE and the SDA, have been discussed elsewhere in this chapter as their role is statutory. Other offices have a relatively minor role. The Délégations Régionales à l'Architecture et à l'Environnement (DRAE) are a field service of two Ministries: the Ministère de l'Équipement and the Ministère de l'Environnement. They supervise the implementation of national policies concerning Sites and Natural Reserves. They get involved in the procedures for the approval of the PSMV in a *Secteur Sauvegardé* by participating in the local Commission concerned with it. They play an important role in the allocation of subsidies distributed by central government for various forms of conservation and new construction. They have a role in the promotion and public awareness of architectural quality (Danan and Pernelle 1990:94). They can also act as a lobby and a source of information. The Nord-Pas de Calais DRAE in Lille, for example, published a bulletin *Infos Drae* which publicized aspects of conservation concerning their *région*; one issue was dedicated to the *Secteur Sauvegardé* of Lille, a project they were originally involved with.

A separate service, the Direction Régionale de l'Équipement (DRE), has mainly an economic and statistical role and very little direct involvement in detailed planning or heritage protection. Nevertheless some of them have taken initiatives in partnership with other levels of administration, to promote architectural quality and the rehabilitation of historic areas. They distribute awards for the design of subsidized housing (Palmarès régional de l'habitat) and promote good practice through publications. One example of the latter is a brochure, *Centres Bourgs, Coeurs de Villages*, showing twelve schemes subsidized by various levels of administration where 'the improvement works have enhanced the heritage and the traditional environments' (DRE Centre 1990a). Another example is the publication by the DRE Nord -Pas de Calais of a book analysing the types of housing in the region, *Mémoire de l'Habitat*, which is accompanied by an interactive video aimed at elected representatives, schools and the general public. The effect of such initiatives is to raise awareness, particularly among elected representatives, of the importance of quality architecture. They are complementary to the work of the CAUEs with which the DREs normally collaborate.

Commissions

Two commissions are attached to the DAU and have specific functions: the Commission Nationale des Secteurs Sauvegardés (also attached to the Ministère de la Culture) puts forward proposals for the creation of *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and advises the ministry on policy aspects concerning these; in particular the *Plans de Sauvegarde* are submitted to this Commission for advice before they are approved by the minister (Code de l'Urbanisme, Articles R.313-1 to 313-9

and 313–21). Similarly the Commission Supérieure des Sites is consulted in relation to the *classement* of sites and gives advice on policies for the protection of natural monuments, sites and urban or rural landscapes (decree 70–288, 30 March 1970). Both these Commissions have their equivalent at local level whenever a Site or a *Secteur Sauvegardé* exists.

At regional level, the Collèges Régionaux du Patrimoine et des Sites (CRPS) were instituted by decree in April 1984 following the decentralization law of January 1983. They comprise between 12 and 18 members, who are experts in matters of heritage, professionals (architects, planners) and representatives of associations. They are appointed by the *préfet de région* and constitute a sort of committee of wise men/women. Their role relates specifically to the ZPPAUs: they give advice on their creation and they arbitrate where there is a conflict between an ABF and the *maire* concerning an application for a *permis de construire*, within a ZPPAU. Potentially this role could be crucial: their opinions when arbitrating between such major participants can create precedents and influence public and official opinion. At the seminar on ZPPAUs that took place in Angers in June 1989, the functioning of the CRPS was discussed: it was mentioned that they had not yet acquired sufficient experience or found their proper role (in particular they have not yet had to arbitrate), but that they were meant in the long run to play an important part in heritage protection (Frier 1990: 149–51). By the time of the 1991 Conference in Quimper, their role seemed to have evolved and was a matter of debate. The CRPS were criticized by some, for delaying the approval of ZPPAUs, but praised by others. The general consensus was that they should get involved in the early stages of the studies for the ZPPAUs. The fact that they were poorly resourced was a cause of concern and the appointment of their members by the *préfet* caused some suspicion among elected representatives (Ministère de l'Équipement, du Logement et des Transports 1992a).

THE ROLE OF ASSOCIATIONS

France does not have associations which defend the heritage *per se*, such as the British Victorian or Georgian Societies or the Civic Trust. To a large extent this role is seen to be the responsibility of the government. Nor does France have a strong tradition of public participation; this may be due to the level of centralization and to the closer relationship between local elected representatives, mainly *maires*, and their constituents. The decentralization laws have increased slightly the level of participation but it remains relatively small. There are pressure groups concerned with social issues of all kinds but they tend to be separate from those dealing with heritage protection which are being considered in this section. The architectural profession itself, or factions within it, have at various times acted as pressure groups and concerned themselves with both social problems and architecture or urban design (e.g. the group Banlieu '89).

On the other hand France has powerful lobbies at national level, which represent the owners of listed buildings, and try *inter alia* to obtain government help for their upkeep. Such are the Demeure Historique, created in 1926 with nearly 15,600 members who are owners of listed chateaux, and Les Vieilles Maisons Françaises, founded in 1958 with 18,000 members, not necessarily owners of listed houses; they publish a magazine, each issue of which is devoted to a particular *département*. Both of these associations have local chapters and exercise pressure at local and national level. They are selfinterested by definition, basically conservative and not particularly concerned with modern architecture unless it affects their property. They have won significant battles with central government particularly in relation to taxation: a law of January 1988 allows the exemption of death duties for privately owned listed buildings, if the owners commit themselves to opening them to the public for at least 80 days per annum (Breteuil 1989:49–51).

Other national associations concerned with the preservation of heritage are not related to ownership, such as: the Ligue Urbaine et Rurale, the Société pour la protection des villes d'art, the Association nationale pour la protection des villes d'art, and the Conseil National des Villes d'Art et d'Histoire (Bady 1985:116). It is difficult to say whether these numerous associations have an impact on national policy. As their members are mostly part of an elite which is more generally influential, it is likely that they are listened to. It appears that they are consulted on specific matters by the various national and regional Commissions and on occasion some of their members are coopted on to these. Additionally, there are a number of local associations, some concerned with the protection of just one building, others with a whole town centre. To name a few: Renaissance du Lille Ancien, Renaissance du Vieux Lyon, Les Amis de Vetheuil, Renaissance du Vieux Bordeaux, Sauvegardé du Vieux Troyes, Renaissance du Vieux Limoges.

On the basis of French law (*opposition aux tiers*), any individual or association can challenge a public decision, such as the granting of a *permis de construire*, in an administrative court (*Tribunal Administratif*) if they think that the law has not been applied properly, the regulations not respected or the scheme being built is not in conformity with the permit granted. Thus these associations have the potential power but they need also to have the relevant and correct information in time, and the resources, to mount a campaign against a scheme. There is no automatic access to the files relating to a planning application until the case has been decided, positively or negatively, and the decision is published in the *Journal Officiel*. At that point the associations have two months to challenge the decision. They therefore need to be very vigilant (sometimes by obtaining information beforehand) and to mobilize themselves rapidly. A number of challenges have failed because the cases were not prepared in time or not properly documented.

The case of the house on the river Eure in Chartres (see pp. 102–3) exemplifies the powers and limitations of local associations. The members of the

local association, the Comité Saint-Pierre, on seeing the house being built (but not before), were outraged because they considered that the materials being used were alien to the spirit of the *Secteur Sauvegardé* of Chartres and contrary to the *permis de construire* granted. The architect and his client correctly argued that the *permis de construire* listed the materials and had been approved by all the necessary authorities, and furthermore that the regulations of the *Plan de Sauvegarde et Mise en Valeur* did not ban the materials being used. The association lost its case, in spite of having the support of the architect responsible for the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, and the project went ahead as planned. On the other hand the Comité could probably have won its case if, within the two months after the *permis de construire* had been granted, it had attacked for allowing the siting of the building in a position that did definitely contravene the PSMV. It either did not notice this 'error of legality' in time to challenge the *permis*, or felt that it was justified in spite of the contravention. A different result—and a surprising one—is that of the case of the rue de Rennes in Paris (see pp. 184–5) where a very small association, with hardly any means but with the very important support of a national journalist, managed to reverse a decision taken by an ABF and the city authorities.

The possibility of an appeal in an administrative court has an influence on the way that decisions are made. Not surprisingly, neither a *maire* nor an ABF likes to have to fight a case; this is even less desirable for a developer because of the time it takes (three or four years are not unusual). Associations are therefore consulted in advance, even when there is no statutory requirement for this consultation, and their support sought in order to avoid a subsequent challenge. The architects involved in schemes in Pontoise (Les Arcades) and in Quimper (Les Halles) emphasized the importance of getting the local associations on their side, not only to avoid later challenges but also to get the *maires* consent for their scheme. Nevertheless a number of cases are referred to the *Tribunal Administratif* and some have been known to take a long time to be decided.

In spite of the frequent use of the word Renaissance in their title, most of the associations are preservationist and against any new building. They often play an active role as vigilantes, denouncing to the responsible authorities any abuse against listed buildings. But they also promote listings, campaign to make the general public aware of the local heritage and put pressure on authorities to ensure that new buildings fit in better, in their eyes, with the local environment. Typical of this kind of association is the very active Renaissance du Lille Ancien, which is mostly concerned with the protection of buildings within the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, organizing visits and publishing a bulletin, and which probably represents only a very small sector of the population. The bulletin, which comments on developments in the city, often attacks the city authorities and the ABF for granting permits or promoting a particular development. The Association intervened in the case of the application of the Hotel de la Treille in the *Secteur Sauvegardé*, fundamentally to request that some archaeological remains be retained. This was not considered important enough to stop the

scheme from going ahead as planned. On the other hand the Association praised the scheme for the Conservatoire as a good example of modern design in the *Secteur Sauvegardé*. Ironically the ABF at the time was himself a member of the Association. He did not think that many schemes were modified as a result of the Association's intervention, but this may have been because it was consulted before designs were finalized.

Some associations are progressive and understand the role of modern buildings; such is the case of the Patrimoine Rhônealpin, a regional organization based in Lyon and serving as umbrella organization for several more local associations, whose president made the following enlightened comment: 'We must stop setting designer against heritage; they must walk hand in hand, particularly since today's designers are producing tomorrow's heritage' (Neyret 1986:20-1).

As expected there are a number of associations in Paris, the best known and most active being SOS Paris, created originally to fight the urban motorways planned by President Pompidou. Since then it has established a network throughout the city and is concerned with all aspects of planning in the capital. It lobbies for the listing of buildings which are neglected by the establishment (e.g. a baker's shop in rue Mouffetard) and tries to keep track of new constructions in the vicinity of listed buildings. It has developed a close relationship with the ABFs and the municipal authorities which consult them on relevant schemes. It is considered fairly elitist but effective in protecting buildings and their surroundings (interview).

Other groups may be concerned with different aspects of the heritage: the Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris for instance has been preoccupied for a long time by the effects of the renovation of the Marais on the economic activities existing in the area. It therefore commissioned studies which have been used to influence the city authorities and the Ministère de la Culture, responsible for the *Secteur Sauvegardé*:

A conservation and enhancement plan which only dealt with architecture would soon empty a neighbourhood of all its economic wealth for the mere pleasure of renovating façades and gaining gardens.

(Boyer 1985:31)

To ensure that the Marais is not transformed into a national museum, one must be able to protect both its architectural heritage and its economic one.

(Boutmy 1986:18)

This concern with socio-economic issues is relatively exceptional and reflects the fact that the Chambre de Commerce is not a 'preservation society'. It is also likely to be neutral in cases of new buildings in the area, as long as they do not affect its economic vitality. Another example of this concern is given by a non-Parisian association: the Renaissance du Vieux Lyon (RVL) fought for the

'intervention of social housing societies (HLM) in the old neighbourhoods, in order to prevent too radical and too rapid sociological upheavals' (Neyret 1985: 115).

This concern is also reflected nationally through the work of the Agence Nationale pour l'Amélioration de l'Habitat (ANAH) which provides social housing through the restoration of old stock. Its work is very important from both the social and the heritage points of view but it need not be discussed here since it does not deal with modern buildings. Another, supplementary role of local associations concerned with heritage is that they are sometimes put in charge of the restoration and management of listed buildings in their locality, thus having a direct and active impact on what happens to them.

Reflecting the preoccupation with the relationships between associations concerned with heritage, *maires* and ABFs, a seminar took place in Fontainebleau in 1987, bringing together the various parties. The problem of integration of new and old was one of the subjects discussed:

In general the associations were very critical of the contemporary architectural insertions and deplored the lack of good examples. ... Contemporary creation finally poses the problem of man fearing the severance of the link which attaches him to his ancestors. It is important that he should be able to continue evolving in a changing environment and not let himself be tied down by objects.

(A.ABF 1987:70-1)

During the same seminar examples of fruitful collaboration between associations and ABFs were cited and the problems involved in this collaboration discussed. The attitude of either side towards the other was mostly positive and frictions were seen to be the result of external pressures. It was hoped that with increasing decentralization, ABFs and associations would unite to put pressure on *maires* who neglect their local heritage. Mention was also made of the ABFs' limited resources: their case-load has increased substantially while their resources have remained static. A particular point of collaboration mentioned was a result of the ABF's status as a civil servant: 'the ABF has no right to raise the alarm to the media...the associations can' (A.ABF 1987:76). In other words, an association can use the media to put pressure on authorities, for instance to save a building, in a way that the ABF cannot; the civil servant thus uses the association to mount a campaign on his/her behalf.

The relationship between ABFs and associations was one of the issues investigated through the questionnaire sent to all ABFs (see [Appendix 2](#)). Asked how they saw that relationship, 63 per cent of responding ABFs made consistently positive comments, even though they admitted not always being in agreement with the associations: 'constant and constructive'; 'good and efficient, support for the ABF'; 'excellent'; 'mutual information'; 'warn him, inform him, look for an ally'; 'variable but generally good (I don't always agree with them)';

'cordial though sometimes critical'. The least enthusiastic comments seem to relate more to the frequency of the contacts than to their quality: 'occasional'; 'weak and cordial'; 'medium'; 'good but infrequent'.

Some of the respondents (about 20 per cent) gave more elaborate answers indicating specific roles for the associations: 'Collaboration from briefing to the realization of the works'; 'They are the eye of the citizen on the ABF's work'; 'Role of warning bells'; 'Point out works undertaken without authorization; check on the correctness of administrative decisions'.

In a small number of cases (some 10 per cent), the ABF seems to collaborate closely with the associations either as a member of or an adviser to them. 'Regularly invited to their meetings, seminars, AGMs; on their mailing list for publications. They point out interesting buildings and works that they find objectionable. They induce the *communes* to improve the level of public debate and of street furniture.' 'We are in constant touch with the associations. The ABF is the technical adviser of some of them.' 'Organization of study days, intervention on specific problems.'

These reactions seem to be underlined by the results of a survey undertaken at the Fontainebleau seminar, where 65 per cent of ABFs were satisfied or very satisfied with their relations with associations and found this collaboration useful; 52 per cent thought that the associations were competent (19 per cent did not and 29 per cent did not know) and 65 per cent thought that they were not acting selfishly.

Since the decentralization laws and the institution of such bodies as the COREPHAE, the role of local groups has become increasingly significant. Specifically a COREPHAE must include representatives of associations among its members. They are consulted whenever there are proposals to list buildings. More generally *maires* accept the necessity of consulting associations during the preparation of plans such as POS or PAZ (when a ZAC has been declared) and developers inform them before embarking on schemes that may affect a locality. Although there is hardly a tradition of public participation, some councillors organize public meetings in their constituencies where local issues of general interest are discussed. Officers interviewed mentioned that, for the time being at least, heritage is only rarely an issue during these meetings.

CONCLUSIONS

Buildings are the result of interactions between a large number of participants; for the purpose of this study these are the architects and developers (analysed in [Chapter 5](#)) on one side, and the *maires*, ABFs and additional advisers on the other. A characteristic of the French system is that, depending on the importance and complexity of a scheme, either fewer or more participants get involved. With the multiplicity of bodies dealing with matters of architectural heritage and new building, the possibilities of intervention are multiplied. It does not always mean that every level of administration gets involved in a particular scheme but the

potential is there. Positive action will often depend on the will of the parties involved at any particular level, from the minister to a local pressure group. Furthermore, if called to intervene, additional participants may use their position to influence policy beyond the specific case. It is therefore difficult to summarize the process in simple or diagrammatic form since a number of participants may fulfil different roles according to the circumstances or have more than one role in a particular case: for instance when dealing with a public building, the ABF may be asked to advise on preparing the brief for a competition and be part of its jury, and later on to fulfil his/her statutory role in granting the *avis conforme*. Table 6.1 shows a number of hypothetical examples indicating the potential participants relevant in each case.

In the simplest case and one which probably occurs rarely in reality, the participants are the developer and the architect as applicants, the *maire* and the municipal officers as controllers. As soon as the site in question is in any kind of protected area, such as the 500 metre radius of a listed building, a *Secteur Sauvegardé*, a ZPPAU or a *Site*, the ABF is statutorily involved. And if the *maire* has no Service d'Urbanisme or has one with insufficient skills, the DDE is asked to deal with the application. Thus far the reasons for intervention are fairly clear and emerge directly from the legislation. Even so, the relationships are already complicated, as exemplified by the very complex *maire*-DDE relationship analysed on pp. 165–6 or the sometimes stormy *maire*-ABF one (pp. 169–72). Neither of these is clearly a hierarchical relationship: both parts have influence upon each other's decisions and they can use the other's decisions to relinquish responsibilities.

Since decentralization, the role of the *maires* and their officers is central in all cases. They have become not only decision makers with real powers—though not always with sufficient resources—but also promoters of their cities. The importance of design control and the relationship between local heritage and new building are influenced by the *maires'* policies and attitudes; they can choose whether to use their powers or not. Of all the participants involved, the *maires* are the only ones elected, a fundamental point which gives them legitimacy but also exposes them to pressures and makes them careful: modern designs may not be popular but they may signify progress; the heritage may be a hindrance but it may give cultural credentials to the area. At the same time, the *maires* are highly respectful of professional advice and reluctant to go against it. Having a Service d'Urbanisme which directly advises them gives the *maires* more support and power and reinforces their position and credibility; in difficult cases they may also consult other professionals in order either to obtain firmer support for a decision that they may have doubts about or to get a 'better' decision. If they consider that architecture and heritage are part of their political baggage, they may also become patrons and commission buildings to embellish their city and attract investment. They are no longer only gatekeepers; they give a lead on what good quality architecture should be in the town. *Maires* who have taken this

Table 6.1 Examples of intervening groups in different cases of planning applications

Case 1: a private development within the 500 metre perimeter of a listed building. The application is deposited in the *mairie*.

The ABF is asked to give his *avis conforme*, without which the *permis de construire* cannot be granted.

The *commune* has no POS: the application is processed by the DDE.

The *commune* has a POS but no Service d'Urbanisme: the application is processed by the DDE.

The *commune* has a POS and a Service d'Urbanisme: the latter processes the application.

Case 2: a similar development but a major one or with considerable impact on its surroundings.

The *mairie* and/or the ABF feel the case is too big for them to handle on their own. Alternatively the local Association may be campaigning because of the importance of the scheme.

Outsiders' opinions are solicited by any of the above and/or by the architect/applicant. The Commission des Abords, the DAU, the CAUE, an ACMH, the COREPHAE, may be asked to get involved and give an opinion.

Case 3: the development is within a *Secteur Sauvegardé*.

The ABF is involved from the start. He was probably consulted before the application was deposited at the *mairie*. His opinion is vital but he has the PSMV to back it up.

He may feel, if the case is complicated for whatever reason, that he needs outside help to decide. He may then bring in other participants, as in the previous case.

Case 4: the development is within a ZPPAU.

The situation is similar to the previous one but the *mairie* and the ABF are on an equal level. If there is conflict between the two, the CRPS can be called to arbitrate.

If any of the above examples are in close proximity or contiguous to a *classé* or *inscrit* building, the local *Conservateur* can also be called to give his opinion.

Case 5: the development is a public one.

A number of the participants mentioned in the above examples as 'controllers' intervene on the part of the client, are involved in the commissioning process, preparing the brief and being part of the jury for the competition to choose the building's design.

Additional participants in this case may be, depending on the importance of the scheme, the CAUE, the MIQCP, the architect in charge of the ZAC, the DRAC or the DRE. If the Ministère de la Culture is the client, additional participants may be the Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques or the Sous-Direction des Affaires Générales et des Constructions Publiques.

route have in some cases become national figures and seen their influence spread well beyond their cities.

To a large extent, the *maires* are protected from making mistakes and from blame by the various other bodies involved in design control; most of these are part of the central government machinery to supervise local government (*tutette*). One of the officers who can take the blame away from the *maire*, the ABF, is absolutely pivotal in all cases involving heritage and often beyond. He (or she) is at the same time a protector of the heritage and a promoter of quality architecture. His power and influence cannot be overestimated and the acceptance by all participants of his authority can only be explained by the general respect of the French towards professionals. He is recognized as a highly trained specialist and, although his decisions are not always popular and many architects both envy and resent him, he is rarely challenged.

Central government's involvement is extensive even though, or perhaps because, it is split between two ministries: the Ministère de la Culture fundamentally concerned with heritage protection but also interested in promoting new architecture and with aesthetics at the centre of its preoccupations; and the Ministère de l'Équipement interested in land use and development and the quality of the end product. Both therefore are concerned with the promotion of quality but arrive at it through paths based on different philosophies.

The DAU of the Ministère de l'Équipement, particularly through its field services, the DDE and the SDA, has a direct and statutory role in relation to all matters involving policy, the promotion of architecture, the control of development and heritage protection. From the point of view of *urbanisme*, it is perhaps the most powerful and influential department at central government level; because of its statutory role and its network of officers, it influences and supervises the activities of most other actors, including the education of architects. Specifically it can intervene or be asked to intervene in cases of difficult applications in protected areas, and through advice, decisions and publications it can create a doctrine with wide ranging repercussions.

Of the various Commissions mentioned, the most relevant, and the one with a statutory role in important cases of new architecture in the proximity of listed buildings, is the Commission des Abords. Its position is peculiar, though not unique, in that its advice is of great importance and influence beyond the specific case; but whether it is called to intervene or not depends on the will and attitudes of others, beyond its control.

Other participants have roles determined by statute; their reasons for intervening can be clear and specific, or wide ranging and ill defined. The COREPHAE for instance (see p. 198) have a very clear role in relation to listing buildings; less clear are the consequences of this role in relation to specific developments. They are not involved in judging applications but their choice of buildings for listing and the debates that take place during the process of listing have *a posteriori* consequences on applications in the surroundings of that building; they are aware of it when they take their decisions.

Some participants can have a crucial role in the decision to approve or refuse an application even though they have no statutory role as such: the ACMH (especially in a *Secteur Sauvegardé*), the ABFs when asked for an *avis simple* outside of a protected area (as in the competition in Pontoise), the DDE even when not directly processing the application, the CAUEs through their education and promotional activities, and the MIQCP for similar reasons. It can be speculated that since all of these are part of the central government machinery, their influence over local decision making is indicative of the limits of decentralization: at least in matters of design, most *maires* are neither sufficiently confident nor entirely trusted and so central government retains considerable leverage.

The local associations concerned with heritage also influence decisions. They have no statutory role during the processing of an application but exercise their influence through contacts, lobbying and pressure and by the threat of appeals if the 'wrong' decision is taken. Their influence is backed by their intimate local knowledge. Their effectiveness and their point of view depend very much on their active members, and although a general pattern of conservatism seems to emerge from their publications and actions, there is also a recognition among a number of them that good quality architecture, even when modern, is acceptable and may make a contribution within a historic context.

Finally but very importantly, all of the participants mentioned may get involved not only in judging applications but in the preparation of planning documents such the POS or the PSMV, and in a variety of promotional and opinion-forming activities such as publications, exhibitions or distributions of awards. The fact that there are so many bodies and that some of them participate as of right in some cases, and only as non-statutory advisers in others, makes it difficult to determine who exercises the real power. This is made even more complex by the fact that most of the participating bodies are not in clearly hierarchical relationships with others. Some of the agencies are brought in as checks and balances when potential conflicts appear between the central partners. Who decides to invite an additional participant and who is consulted in each particular case can be of great importance to the end result. This is not a matter clearly and rigidly codified as others are in France and as might have been expected. Significantly all participants, with the exception of the *maire*, are professionals and the vast majority are architects or *architectes-urbanistes*. Discussions about a scheme are carried out almost entirely among design trained people and therefore concern mainly design matters. The politicians' role is therefore diminished unless, as seems frequently to be the case, they specifically make use of the potential antagonisms between the professionals in order to achieve their own objectives.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the design of all buildings considered for this study underwent some modification following the intervention of one or other of the controllers and their advisers, mainly the ABF and the Services d'Urbanisme. More surprisingly, the end product was in all cases considered more satisfying as

a result of these interventions, even by the architects themselves. Another significant point is that a number of controllers—statutory or not—act as patrons as well, therefore having direct impact on the historic environments and first-hand experience in the creative process as well as the control of buildings.

It would be satisfying to identify clearly the parties responsible for the insertion of quality modern architecture in urban historic environments, but it would be misleading. There is no clear pattern and no written doctrine. It can only be said that the *maire* is central but not always influential; that professional architects have an important, influential and respected role which can be enhanced by their understanding of the system and their ability to negotiate; and that the ABF has a crucial and unique role in almost all cases. Central government influences all decisions either by direct intervention or indirectly, through a number of networks. Beyond that, the intervention of a number of other participants can influence the decisions. It can be speculated that the complexity of the system is in itself a contributor to the quality of the results.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

INTRODUCTION

This book has followed a number of avenues to try to understand by what processes new buildings were incorporated in the historic areas of French cities. The situation was observed from the outside, from the point of view of someone familiar with the British experience. Thus the investigation was based on a British model of the planning profession; the theoretical framework was informed by it and by the questions that the planners in the British context have regarding their role and position, particularly the influence they have on design matters. It assumed that the frequent presence of new buildings in historic areas in France was not an accident but the result of a number of transactions, and that the design control of buildings was a legitimate activity of the public sector which had an impact on the final results. Punter's attempt to understand how aesthetic control operates and the impact it has had on the built environment in Britain, by analysing the role of planners in the design of offices in Reading (1985b), served as initial model for this work.

When applied to the French context, however, a number of significant differences emerged which affected the way in which the study developed. Firstly, the planners are not the only professional advisers, nor are they the most relevant in design matters, the ABF's role being more important. Secondly the rules of the game—the legislation and the plans—are much less flexible; the scope for negotiations is much narrower and as a result more focused, particularly on aesthetic issues. Thirdly and most importantly, the role of the public sector as patron, leader and developer is not part of the British equation. Punter's analysis (1985b) is based on the assumption, correct in the British context, that there are two clearly defined sides in the development process and the negotiations: the (private) developer on one side, the (public) gatekeeper on the other. This aspect of the model is inapplicable to France where, frequently, the developer and the gatekeeper are both part of the public sector and have similar objectives.

The analysis has provided a clear understanding of a system which combines a number of factors to ensure the presence of contemporary architecture in the

historic urban cores of French cities: it is the result not only of transactions revolving around design control, but also of specific political objectives of both central and local government which use all the means available to achieve them. For central government the objective is to promote, both at home and abroad, an image of French culture simultaneously rooted in the past (heritage) and progressive (modern architecture). For the *maires*, the objective is to promote their cities on the same basis. The public sector as builder gives the lead and shows by example what can be done; the private sector follows. As a result of their education and professional training, civil servants and officers in charge of implementing the policies are imbued with the same view of French culture and of the role of architecture: they encourage innovation while protecting the past. The normally conservative general public is gradually won over through education and promotion campaigns, and by the government's careful use of professional opinions.

This chapter starts by recapitulating the main conclusions of the previous chapters. Although similar research has not been undertaken for Britain, an attempt is made to compare the French situation to the British one. Next, some questions are asked regarding the French system, which may lead to further research. Finally it suggests that the French system, although far from perfect, can be the source of inspiration for other countries such as Britain.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The analysis of the historical development ([Chapter 2](#)) indicates that all elements that affect the system today have been present for the best part of the last two centuries. Heritage has a well established and continuous position at the centre of French culture, both as a means to unite the country internally and to promote its values externally. As a result historic buildings have long been part of the cherished urban environment, accepted as the national heritage, publicized and valued as such. The French government has been concerned with the protection of historic buildings since the beginning of the nineteenth century. At the time, this interest in monuments was closely linked to the need to consolidate national unity and republicanism: heritage was, and still is today, an instrument for enhancing the image of the state. The selection of monuments to protect has changed according to the needs of the government in relation to their symbolic value; thus in recent years it has become more diverse, more local and pluralistic, corresponding to the efforts made by the state towards decentralization and democratization.

The interest in historic buildings in Britain also dates from the nineteenth century but, in contrast with France, 'the only action was that initiated by informed opinion' and that of local 'protectionist' associations created up and down the country (Middleton 1987:78). The British legislation originated from the efforts of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a voluntary body trying to protect buildings from the destructive effects of restoration;

pressure for legislation came from an elite of amateurs concerned about old buildings and not from the government. The Ancient Monuments Act of 1882 introduced limited powers of control which imposed constraints on property rights, in order to preserve buildings for the common good (Pearce 1989:16), rather than to consolidate national unity. The Royal Commission on Historical Monuments was established in 1908 to set up an inventory. But it was not until 1944, by which time war action had destroyed a large number of buildings, that this interest was translated into a law giving general protection to listed buildings (Town & Country Planning Act 1944).

The extension of protection to whole areas did not enter the statute book until the 1967 Civic Amenities Act and it provided much weaker controls than its model, the Malraux Act of 1962. The genesis of the British conservation legislation was lengthy; again, it was not initiated by the government but was the result of pressure from amenity groups, led by the Civic Trust which used pilot schemes such as the one for Magdalen Street, Norwich, to show the legislators the advantages of conservation policies (Civic Trust 1967). Both the British and the French Acts were a reaction to the rapid and wide ranging redevelopment that was taking place at the time, threatening historic areas (Larkham and Jones 1993:19) but the significance and role of these areas were different. Rather than a national heritage shared by all, Britain has had, and still has, different types of heritage: the 'high culture' buildings often in the ownership of the National Trust, although visited by many, are seen as belonging to an elite and not to the general public (Hewison 1987:79); and others, considered less important, whose protection has to be fought for (there are exceptions, such as Stonehenge).

In France, concern about the heritage of the past has always been accompanied by a preoccupation with building today's heritage for the future. Protecting the past gives legitimacy and confirms continuity; building tomorrow's heritage is a sign of power, of progress and, most importantly, the best way of being remembered. Thus, at least since the sixteenth century, French rulers have been builders and have ensured that their monuments have left an imprint on the country. One of the cities chosen for this study, Lille, is a typical example: having conquered this Flemish city at the end of the seventeenth century, Louis XIV had it extended following a typical French classic urban plan. It thus showed the power of the monarch, the transfer of the city from Flanders to France and the permanence of French culture. Today's *grands projets* are the continuation of this tradition. As argued by Glancey, Mitterrand's presidency will be remembered above all for its monuments:

It was a way, too, of ensuring that the French capital would be more than a match for up-and-coming Berlin at the turn of this century and beyond, and, above all, a stamping of the name Mitterrand into the stones of Paris.

(Glancey 1996:8)

Similarly, the historical evolution of the country's approach to planning shows a strong level of continuity over time, particularly in relation to design control. Planning originated *inter alia* from a concern for public health, for the control of urban growth and for amenity. Based on the republican need to balance property rights with public interest, it incorporated a continuous preoccupation with order and the avoidance of anarchy, the latter being the worst enemy of private property. Thus a tight system of intervention and control developed, leading to a particular aesthetic which expresses in stone the concern for public order. This gives French cities, and Paris in particular, the harmonious appearance best exemplified by the Haussmanian boulevards. Sutcliffe (1993:202–5) establishes the beginnings of this French 'classic' aesthetic, based on a few rules of mass, height, alignment and rhythm, in the sixteenth century and shows how, through gradual modifications, this has allowed the city to incorporate changing styles and designs. He has no doubts that even today's strikingly modern schemes fit into this continuing aesthetic.

Although Sutcliffe's work is limited to Paris, his analysis is equally applicable to other cities: the ascendancy of the capital over the rest of the country is another characteristic which has existed throughout French history. The objectives of consolidating the state, promoting French culture, and protecting property rights and civic order have always been considered too important to be left to local politicians. Not only has the legislation always originated from Paris, but its implementation has been tightly supervised by central government bodies. As a result, the centre has had no need to impose an aesthetic: the country followed the lead from Paris, even though different regions may have adapted a general set of rules to the characteristics of their area. The changes introduced by the decentralization laws of the early 1980s have given local authorities unprecedented powers and responsibilities. In urban areas this has frequently resulted simultaneously in an increased interest in both the local heritage and the image of the city. It has allowed *maires*, who wish to leave their own mark, to invest in the promotion of their cities' own heritage and image. But significantly, this has not meant the abandonment of the role of central government as a custodian of historic areas or as a patron; nor has it reduced the overriding importance given to national French culture. Typically, the creation of new decentralized structures has not led to the disappearance of the existing ones, even though responsibilities may have been reallocated. Thus, even after decentralization, the centre as leader and trustee maintains a high degree of influence over aesthetic matters.

Planning in Britain had origins similar to its French counterpart though the country was more preoccupied with urban growth and amenity than with anarchy. The strong tradition of *laissez-faire* combined with custom law means that the planning system has never become a regulatory one in the way that the French one has. It also means that policies have fluctuated according to the government in power; only a few, such as the Green Belt policies, have shown a degree of continuity similar to the French ones. Centralism, which is common to both

countries, also developed in different ways: municipal independence in Britain, which has at times produced and protected the local heritage, has dramatically declined since 1980. In France the same period has seen the biggest increase in municipal independence since the Revolution. Although today central government in Britain tightly controls the activities of local authorities, London has never been the example to be emulated by other cities in the way that Paris has and still is. Further-more the British crown has rarely given a lead in the embellishment of the capital city.

DESIGN CONTROL

Planning control in France is based on ‘building’ control and therefore includes the form of the building. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), design can be, and in most situations is, an element to be considered when judging an application for a *permis de construire*: a choice of instruments exists to control the design of buildings in accordance with the specific characteristics of an area. Even in the least planned areas the French national rules indicate a minimum of design aspects which may be considered in judging an application. In areas covered by a published *Plan d’Occupation des Sols* (POS), this includes at least a minimum of design policies and, potentially, regulations covering the form, alignment, height, materials and colours of buildings. In the case of major new developments or redevelopments, such as in *Zones d’Aménagement Concerté* (ZACs), briefs include detailed design requirements. Most of all, in protected areas design considerations can become central to the decisions to approve or refuse an application.

The built heritage is protected through a number of legal instruments which, although not hierarchical, offer different degrees and different methods of control according to the circumstances: over 36,000 listed buildings, which create a 500 metre radius protected area around each of them, *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, and ZPPAUs. In all of these, conservation and design become primary concerns in the evaluation of new developments, and the ABFs play a crucial role in this evaluation.

[Chapter 3](#) also explained how the French system was codified and left relatively little discretion to those preparing plans and applying their regulations: all POS follow a similar pattern and *permis de construire* have to be granted or refused on the basis of what is written in the approved plan. The degree of discretion, particularly in urban areas and even more so in protected ones, is limited to within a narrow band of interpretation. Furthermore, all design regulations in POS, *Secteurs Sauvegardés* and ZPPAUs are based on careful historical and morphological analyses undertaken by specialists. These studies not only justify the regulations but also inform the general public and assist the decision makers; they contribute to the understanding of an area’s evolution and therefore to the potential role of a new building. Thus, regulations have the weight and confidence that comes from both their legal status and their professional backing. Applicants know in advance what they are entitled to do in

terms of land use, plot ratio, height and alignment; they need not waste time arguing about these. Those elements that ensure the continuity of a particular tradition of scale, streetscape and character are not negotiable. Detailed treatment, on the other hand, can be negotiated and it is here that the use of contemporary design may be encouraged by those applying the regulations.

In Britain, the attitude towards design has been one of the continually contentious issues of planning legislation; though every so often lip-service is paid to it, it has never had until very recently (1996) the status of ‘material consideration’ that it has in France. Only in conservation areas (see p. 222), and even there in a weaker form than in their French counterparts, are design issues seriously considered. ‘Many commentators on aesthetic control have been under the persistent misapprehension that the control of aesthetics in development is a primary goal of planning. Nothing could be further from the truth’ (Punter 1985a).

Local plans, the main basis for planning control, vary greatly from area to area, even in the coverage of subjects. Their design policies can be more or less precise, flexible or robust and can be moderated by other material considerations. Although the situation is changing, the rules are neither definitive nor transparent; almost everything is negotiable and the results of a planning application may depend on market forces, political expediency or pressures from factors external to planning (this was particularly true in the 1980s). Few local authorities have the resources to undertake extensive studies to back design policies and make them acceptable; they therefore resort to what Punter (1993a: 1010) calls ‘motherhood’ statements such as ‘there shall be a high standard of design’. Neither the applicant nor the local authority has clear rules to play by and this leads to uncertainty, to bargaining and to bluffing:

Developers, especially housebuilders, complain that planning authorities often operate to a hidden agenda on aesthetic matters. Where there is no design guide or pre-existing design brief they may be confronted by objections after the event. They would rather have known about the council’s view in advance.

(Hall 1990:15)

Although superficially the British approach to conservation appears similar to the French one, a closer look indicates significant differences. The Grades I, II and II* used in the classification of listed buildings in Britain are subtly more qualitative distinctions than the French categories of *classé* and *inscrit* as explained in [Chapter 3](#). More significantly, although the legislation includes a requirement to protect the setting of a British listed building, there is no statutory protection of a specifically determined area around them that can be compared to the 500 metre radius of the French case. As far as conservation areas are concerned, a British local authority has the power to designate them without doing much more than placing a notice in the *London Gazette* and a local paper. This is a weak and loosely defined obligation as it has no time limit or prescribed

format. Similarly, the implementation of conservation policies depends almost entirely on the local planning authority and on the availability of resources. The fact that Britain has about 8,000 conservation areas and 600,000 listed buildings indicates a wide popularity for the built heritage, but it has led a number of authors to question the merits and disadvantages of such high figures, particularly the potential conflict between the quantity and the quality of the protection (see, for example, Mynors 1993b:6–10; Morton 1991:5–8; Larkham and Jones 1993:23–4).

As a result of these concerns and of a number of celebrated appeals in the High Court, tighter advice has been issued by central government through *Planning Policy Guidance 15* (DOE 1994) and documents such as *Conservation in Local Plans* produced by English Heritage. An increasing number of local authorities are now producing conservation areas reports, which assess their character, and publishing Supplementary Planning Guidance on design and conservation issues, related to policies in their statutory plans. But with so many conservation areas there can be no uniformity in the depth of studies or care in the implementation. Although an exact parallel cannot be made, most British conservation areas are probably more similar to the French protection zones around listed buildings than to the other kinds of protected areas in France: in both cases the designation is not necessarily followed by clear regulations, there is a wide margin of discretion, and no uniformity of application; in addition, in both cases the protection is limited to the external appearance of buildings. The main and fundamental difference lies in the power of the implementor which will be discussed below.

In spite of its apparent central role in planning philosophy, British design control has always had to fight for its place and has generally played a secondary or minor role in decision making. Only in conservation areas has it had any significant role, though here too the approach to these is fundamentally different to that of France.

THE GATEKEEPERS

The effectiveness of the design control system depends on how it is implemented. Decentralization and the continuing involvement of the ABFs and of other central government departments makes it difficult to generalize on who takes the decisions. Gatekeepers vary depending on the importance and complexity of the scheme. The *maires* are the only elected representatives involved and they are profoundly influenced by the opinions of professional advisers; however, they can call on additional non-statutory advisers to gain support for a decision.

As stated in Chapters 3 and 6, all applications which involve protected areas, with the exception of those affecting the *classé* buildings themselves, need the approval of the local ABF in addition to that of the planning authority. These two gatekeepers are totally independent of each other but the former has a right of veto against which there is no appeal. Employed by central government, the ABFs have enormous powers, unequalled in French administration, which are

legitimized and reinforced by the whole system. They are architects first and foremost and they consider themselves as 'heritage and planning experts' (Stahly 1987:21), as designers and as arbiters of taste: this is implicit in their job description. They are representatives of the minister responsible for culture and therefore custodians of the French national culture: their views are those of the educated and technocratic elite which gives the lead in cultural matters. As their opinions are respected, they are often called upon to give advice on cases where they have no statutory responsibility. Other participants in the process, from the applicants to the elected representatives, accept the ABFs' expertise and therefore reinforce their power. This accumulation of background, status, position and power gives the ABFs a confidence that allows them to make bold decisions. They feel equally comfortable with modern buildings as with historic ones; they believe that they can judge a contemporary building on its merits and are not frightened to do so.

The regulations have to be applied no matter who is in charge of processing the applications. Within the limits of the regulatory system, negotiations take place between the applicants—developers and/or designers—and the officers in charge of control. As the controllers have the upper hand, the architect and the developer are willing to negotiate from an early stage; their relationship with the gatekeepers and their negotiating skills can be crucial to the success of their application. The ABFs start from a position of strength; they know that they can yield on matters of design, if for instance there are overwhelming economic issues at stake, but that they can also apply the rules quite rigidly. They must be skilled negotiators, gauge the quality and the strength of an applicant and react accordingly. As a result, ABFs are able to modify designs until they arrive at what they consider to be a satisfactory solution.

In Britain, development and design control, whether in or outside of a Conservation Area, is entirely a matter for the local planning authority, subject to appeals to the Secretary of State. There is no equivalent to the ABF: officers only make recommendations which can be overruled by the elected councillors. In the more committed authorities a Conservation Officer prepares policies and gives advice specifically on design matters; otherwise the matter simply adds to the workload of the development control officer in charge of the case (Shacklock 1993:15). Conservation Officers come from a variety of backgrounds: in the best of cases they have trained as architects and as planners, and have a postgraduate qualification in conservation. In other more frequent cases, they have a planning degree and an interest in conservation, but no formal training in design.

As a result the British development control officers, supported only by vague policies, rarely have the courage to make bold design judgements which may be difficult to justify and to explain to lay committees. They therefore are much more timid than their French counterparts and prefer 'comfortable', non-controversial schemes. This situation is not helped by the clashes between the architectural and planning professions which, in contrast with France, come from totally different backgrounds and speak different languages. The two professional

bodies, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), have attempted several *rapprochements*, the last in 1991, but the debate does not seem to have waned as evidenced by the reactions to the 'Before and After Planning' exhibition at the RIBA in early 1993 and by regular letters in the professional magazines.

If *maire* and ABF disagree on a particular application, they may enter into negotiations and call on additional participants, from other administration levels, to support their cases. These additional participants are always architects and mostly specialists in conservation. They have no statutory role but their professional status, or their official position within the administration, can give significant weight to their opinions. The debate can therefore become one between design and conservation specialists employed by diverse bureaucracies.

Negotiations also take place in Britain and additional participants may be brought in to give an opinion, either before a consent is granted, or after if it has been refused and there is an appeal: English Heritage, the various amenity societies (Victorian, Georgian, etc.), the Royal Fine Arts Commission and local pressure groups can play an important role in the decision making process, particularly through influence. Most of them rely on volunteers to support their cases and few employ paid professionals. Of all of the groups, only English Heritage has a statutory role but, even then, its comments are simply additional material considerations for the specific case and they do not establish a doctrine. The weight of these bodies varies from area to area and case to case, depending upon the power of the planning officer, the committee members and the political attitude of the minister (Punter 1985b:135–49).

Closely linked to the above is the role of central government in decision making: in France, the state establishes the ground rules and makes sure that they are respected; but it does not interfere in policy made at the local level. Appeals against planning decisions (positive or negative) can relate only to their legality and are dealt with by an independent tribunal with no policy remit and certainly no views on design matters. As long as the decision by the *maire*, the ABF or other controller applies the law and follows the regulations, it cannot be overturned by central government. This limits the powers of the gatekeepers in that they have to keep strictly within the boundaries of the regulations; but it also frees them to negotiate everything that is not prescribed.

In Britain, on the other hand, a disgruntled applicant can always appeal to central government hoping that a refusal of planning permission will be overturned on policy grounds. In the case of an appeal, central government has almost total discretion in taking the final decision and it will consider a number of factors which until recently did not necessarily relate to the local plan and could often go beyond it. Results of appeals have a strong influence on subsequent decisions by local planning authorities: 'Thirty thousand such appeals were lodged in England in 1989 and thus Central Government can strongly influence decision making at the local level' (Punter 1992:3).

In addition to appeal decisions, Secretaries of state use other methods to interfere with local policy: Planning Policy Guidance, circulars with threats or rebukes and editing of local plans can reflect the attitude of the day towards planning issues. In the years preceding the arrival of John Gummer as Secretary of State, frequent changes of incumbent in the post led to unnerving changes of policy direction and consequent uncertainty among local authorities and applicants (Hillman 1990). The situation has improved since the introduction of Section 54A in the 1990 Town & Country Planning Act, which gives planning documents precedence over other material considerations and the publication of the *Revised Planning Policy Guidance 1* (DOE 1996) which gives greater status to design matters. As a result local authorities are starting to include more complex and sophisticated design policies in their plans and in supplementary documentation. Indications are that the present Secretary of State will follow the policies of his predecessor. The creation of the Department of Culture with a minister responsible for architecture is encouraging though it remains to be seen how these responsibilities and those of the Secretary of State for the Environment are reconciled. The recurrent conflicts between the equivalent French ministries are an aspect of the French system not to be emulated.

The status, training and confidence of British control officers also affect the way that they negotiate. They are fearful of developers threatening appeals and claims for compensation if they do not get a positive answer. Admittedly, skilled negotiators have achieved improvements in schemes, particularly when backed by written policies and supportive Councils; but their success often depends on the local and national political and economic climates rather than on their power as professionals. The status of the technocratic elite reflects a fundamental and deep-seated difference of attitude between the two countries. The following comment summarizes this difference:

The supervisory machinery provided by the courts allows the French safely to entrust the details of government to the experts, while in Britain the cult of the amateur in the jury system, on local councils and in various tribunals, reflects a distrust of officialdom and a need to provide some checks on their actions.

(Punter 1989:52)

PATRONAGE AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

The public sector's involvement in the production of contemporary buildings, often of high architectural quality, is an issue that had not been considered at the start of this investigation. It emerged as crucial when it became apparent that the majority of the modern buildings in historic urban cores were public commissions. The leadership of central government is not limited to the control of development: its roles as patron and model are at least as important. In order to improve the standard of architectural design, central government has given itself

the legislative and financial means to provide stimulation, education, example and patronage. It has not hesitated to intervene directly or indirectly to obtain what it considers a better urban environment and it has succeeded in having local government and the private sector follow this lead. The extensive use of competitions, the creation of bodies such as the MIQCP and the CAUEs, the control of architectural education, the various requirements of the law on architecture (such as that all applications for *permis de construire* for developments of over 170 square metres be designed by an architect) are some of the means used by the government, not only to enhance quality but also to raise the awareness and expectations of the general public and to draw attention to French architecture.

The presidential *grands projets* are the most visible examples of the government policy of promoting contemporary architecture: as mentioned in [Chapter 5](#), the competitions to choose the designs have become media events attracting international publicity. Not surprisingly, the government's support for architecture is seconded enthusiastically by the professionals; but it has also permeated other levels of French society. Following the example of the presidential *grands projets* local authorities have seen the benefits of using architectural quality as a way of promoting a city. *Maires* compete with each other by commissioning buildings which embellish and bring publicity to their cities, their own *petits projets*. Significantly, they also understand the value of their heritage and combine its preservation and enhancement with a vision of the future of the area: frequently their historic cores are the most celebrated parts of their cities and therefore the most visible places to display signs of progress. The *maires* of many French urban areas have embarked on schemes which involve their historic cores by utilizing all the means given to them under the umbrella of *urbanisme opérationnel*. Legislation allows them to intervene directly, not merely through planning and buildings control: the ZACs in particular are powerful instruments, and so is the possibility of utilizing preemption rights; architectural competitions help them in obtaining quality designs as well as in gaining publicity.

The promotion of architecture has also affected the private sector, either through schemes realized in partnership with local authorities, or because it needs to follow the example of the public sector to satisfy its clients. The enhanced status of architects has enabled them to put pressure on their private clients and make them accept standards of design more similar to those of the public sector. The fact that the control officers in the public sector speak the same language, come from a similar professional background and are part of the same elite has helped them to succeed. Finally, modern architecture has been accepted not only as something to aim for and to be proud of but also as being commercially sound.

Having become part of the political agenda, the concern for contemporary architecture has also been taken on board by the media and as a result the general public has become involved. A few architects have become television

personalities and public projects are extensively debated. The government has achieved its aim of making contemporary architecture a subject of general interest to the French nation, something to be proud of as a symbol of the country's achievements.

The situation in Britain has always been different but since 1979 the difference has been accentuated through a reduction in public sector intervention in general and the weakening of local government in particular. In the past there have been periods when the British public sector has used quality architecture either to educate or to show civic pride (Victorian town halls and libraries and Frank Pick's London Transport are two examples). But apart from a few exceptions and in spite of a budget of £3.5 billion for new building (MacCormac 1992:21), the promotion or production of quality architecture has not been a concern of central or local government. This has placed architects in a very different position from that of their French colleagues. Their clients, almost entirely private ones with no lead from government, are prepared to take few risks: they want to get planning permission as quickly as possible and to sell their buildings without difficulties. Modern, untried designs militate against these goals and therefore are not considered suitable in historic areas: 'what the market wants' is interpreted as pastiche and buildings that fit without offending, sometimes redevelopment behind retained façades. Even during the boom years of the 1980s, when architects had abundant work, they only rarely managed to break out of this mould. Interviewed on a BBC radio programme and asked to compare the positions of British and French architects, R.Gough, one of Britain's best known architects, made the following comment:

I am a typical example. I am 45 years old, exactly the same age as Jean Nouvel. I have never ever done a public building in England; I have not been asked to. ...It is quite bizarre, really, their [the government's] notion of patronage: it doesn't even stretch to daring to go to somebody as pretty un-outrageous as our firm.

(Appleton 1992)

A similar grim picture is given by a discussion document on architecture produced by the Arts Council (Coonan 1991). A corollary of the lack of government commitment to the promotion of architecture is the general rejection of modernism. Punter has described the British attitude towards modernism as one of 'strong antipathy' (1992:28) and traces its origins to the 1930s and its reinforcement following what were seen as the 1960s disasters, with which the modern movement is associated. Authors such as Hewison (1987) and Wright (1993) explain this attitude and the related nostalgia for the past as, at least in part, a reaction against change in the real world, which is too fast and too frightening. Preserving an image of an idealized happier past is reassuring, even if this image is as artificial as a stage set. The consequences for creativity are serious: 'Imaginatively deprived in the present, we turn to images of the past,

either in reactionary revivalism, or in a spirit of ironic quotation that emphasizes the distance between the source and its recycled imagery' (Hewison 1987:133).

The contrast between the Louvre pyramid and the Sainsbury wing of the National Gallery may be an extreme example but one that clearly illustrates the different paths followed in the two countries: not only was the former publicly funded and the latter privately sponsored but also the Sainsbury wing had to overcome the criticisms levelled at preceding schemes for the site and thus be inoffensive. The Prince of Wales' comments on this particular scheme had a decisive role, not only by annulling the original competition but also by creating a general feeling among architects that to be accepted, their design had to please His Royal Highness. Furthermore his opinion probably reflected the mood of the country at the time.

Finally there is no effort by the government in Britain to inform and educate the public and to make it appreciate, judge and enjoy contemporary architecture. The dissemination of information is left to the market; hence it is mainly headline-catching news items that get aired by the media and these are rarely conducive to enlightenment. The Arts Council discussion document points out that 'Public tolerance of an openness to architectural advances may depend on improving the level of support for education, for events and exhibitions and for other measures which help create a receptive climate for the practice of architecture in Britain' (Coonan 1991:2).

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Before drawing lessons from the French system, a number of questions regarding it can be asked; they may offer the chance to reflect on the British system. First of all, the ABF as an institution is totally unique to France as is the enormous power of the individual ABF in design matters in the various types of protected areas. This study did not find them to be wholly responsible for the presence of new buildings in historic areas, but established that their influence is powerful not only as gatekeepers but also as taste formers. Both the respect for the ABFs' opinions and their confidence raises issues in relation to the position of professionals in general: the self-doubts expressed by Anglo-Saxon planners (as, for instance, in Krieger 1975 or Reade 1987) are not apparent in the French context. Is the questioning simply suppressed or is the lack of it the result of a more narrowly and precisely defined professional role? Discussions about the powers of the ABFs, their workload, and the quality of their training and opinions have been mentioned in this book. They hint at least at some concern about the legitimacy of the ABF's role, even though this concern originates mostly from outside the profession. At a recent seminar on the *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, the ABFs asked for more powers and more resources (Ministère de l'Équipement, des Transports et du Tourisme 1993). Further research is required on their position, on their relationships with other professionals and with elected representatives, and on their legitimacy. More generally, the approach to

professionalism, the training, status and specialization of professionals involved with the built environment are additional issues that need exploring in order to understand better the role of professionals in any context.

The selectivity of the protection of historic areas and the resulting hierarchy is another matter for further consideration and one which already preoccupies authors such as Mesnard (1985) and Schaak (1992). The French concentrate their efforts and their care in specific historic urban areas: design control is highly regulated almost exclusively in these areas. Until now, ex-urban areas, peri-urban areas, and even urban areas not considered of sufficient interest have tended to be neglected. The results can be seen in the sharp contrast between lovingly restored city centres such as those of Chartres and Lille or the preserved character of cities such as Quimper and Pontoise and the suburbs that surround them and many other French cities. This raises complicated issues of democracy and of distribution of resources, and although the selectivity does not appear to have been challenged, it requires further explaining and justifying. It may be the only possible choice for a country with an already wide number of protected areas, but the question remains of who makes the choice and by what mechanisms. The matter is of interest for any country which has to make similar choices and wishes to learn from the French example.

Other related issues require further research and not just within the French context. The first of these is the role of heritage and the attitudes of the public sector towards it. Closely related to this issue is the public sector's attitude towards contemporary architecture and the influence that it has on public taste and on the schemes produced by the private sector. This book has emphasized the French government's commitment to architectural quality combined with its more general role as patron, leader and role model. The issue is one frequently debated in British professional circles as illustrated by comments made by authors such as Hewison (1987) and Wright (1993) and architects such as R.Gough (quoted by Appleton 1992) and R.MacCormac (1992); the French example can inform this debate. Issues of design ideology, relating the appearance of buildings to the ideologies of patrons and gatekeepers, as raised by Reeve (1993) require further exploration as well. The French context and in particular the work of Choay (1992) and Morand-Deviller (1992) can provide a starting point for this research.

Understanding the French system also opens the possibility of questioning its future development. The success of France in achieving international notoriety through the *grands projets* and other architectural schemes is reflected in the number of publications dedicated to the subject, which appear inside and outside of France. The 'mediatization' of new architecture and in particular of the public projects is one element that already worries French commentators (Chaslin 1991) and raises questions: has the message become more important than the object? Is the French public sector building the right thing in the right place or has it been carried away by the publicity machine? Is it perhaps building purely for its own aggrandizement? The controversy surrounding the last of the presidential *grands*

projets, the French national library, has raised precisely these issues (see, for instance, Beri and Leclercq 1991 and the numerous letters on the subject that followed the publication of their article).

The role of the public within the French system also raises important issues. At present, there seems to be a general acceptance of the new architecture but this is not confirmed by any systematic study; it is more the reflection of a lack of protest. Some mechanisms exist for the public's intervention in the process: public enquiries before the approval of plans and the right of appeals against decisions. But the procedures are so complex and potentially involve so many participants that few members of the public can understand them. As a result, decisions made by technocrats are difficult to challenge. Furthermore, an enormous amount of responsibility rests with the individual ABFs and the success of the system relies heavily on their judgement, their abilities and their resources. This concentration of power and responsibility can alienate all those who see themselves excluded from the process. The present schemes appear to correspond to the popular taste of the moment, but how can we be sure that this is the case? The reaction against major public developments in the early 1970s (see Chapter 1) indicates that public acquiescence should not be taken for granted.

Another issue which merits further analysis concerns the costs of ensuring the protection of historic areas and the incorporation of contemporary buildings. These costs relate to the whole machinery of government required for it, and to the public investment needed to achieve such visible buildings which may not always reap benefits for the area, or at least not equal benefits for the whole of the population. The complexity of the system and the related bureaucracies are issues that have concerned French professionals and elected representatives (Mesnard 1987; Jegouzo 1986), particularly in relation to the accessibility of the procedures to members of the public. The division of powers between the Ministère de l'Équipement and the Ministère de la Culture and the collaboration between the two in matters of planning, heritage and architectural creation have been matters of concern for a number of years (Houlet 1989). The transfers of responsibilities between the two that have taken place during 1996 prove that the situation has not been resolved. Decentralization has highlighted these concerns by increasing the responsibilities of local elected representatives with little experience and understanding of the system.

A number of national workshops have taken place in the last few years to debate *inter alia* the future of *Secteurs Sauvegardés*, the functioning of the ZPPAUs and the effects of decentralization on the *permis de construire*. The costs of the heritage protection procedures, the collaboration between ministries, the workload of the ABFs, the need to simplify the system and to make it more accessible to the public, are among the subjects raised during these debates (Conseil d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme et d'Environnement des Côtes d'Armor 1994; Ministère de l'Équipement, du Logement et des Transports 1992a; Ministère de l'Équipement, des Transports et du Tourisme 1993), emphasizing their

current importance. The questioning attitude, the lack of complacency and the concern to improve the functioning of the system which emerge from the reports of these workshops are encouraging, even though their effectiveness in improving matters is not known.

Finally, the period covered by this book coincides with one of almost uninterrupted economic growth of the French economy. The visible results of French policies of this period are the *grands projets* and the *petits projets*, the careful restoration of historic centres and the numerous examples of contemporary architecture mentioned in this study. These are successes which have attracted praise from all over the world and of which France is rightly proud. How far the buoyancy of the economy made these investments in the urban environment possible, whether they would have happened equally during a period of recession, and whether in turn the success of these projects contributed to the growth of the economy are matters that, at this stage, can only be speculated upon.

LESSONS TO BE DRAWN

The concerns outlined in the previous section indicate that the French system is far from perfect. Nor is it immediately transferable to other countries and other cultures. Nevertheless ideas have always been exchanged across the Channel, albeit on different matters: for example, the British Single Regeneration Budget was inspired by the French Contrat de Plan; Kent County Council and the Nord-Pas de Calais region have been collaborating, exchanging staff and discussing policies. At present, the British government seems to be receptive to new ideas. With regards to the insertion of contemporary architecture in historic areas, the French experience can be a source of inspiration and debate for Britain and other countries with similar concerns.

Commitment to quality

One of the most significant pieces of French legislation is the 1977 law on architecture. Without necessarily requiring legislation, a similar high-level commitment is needed in any country that wishes to improve architectural quality. Recently, and after years of neglect, the British government has given an indication that it is moving in that direction. The Department of the Environment has launched a Quality in Town and Country initiative and an Urban Design Campaign, both rather timid in that the resources available are small, but they are steps in the right direction. The *Revised Planning Policy Guidance 1* (DOE 1996) is another important sign in that it enhances the importance of design in planning and recognizes that

They [the new buildings] are matters of proper public interest. The appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its

surroundings are therefore material considerations in determining planning applications and appeals. Such considerations relate to the design of buildings and to urban design.

(Section 13)

As a result it gives greater powers to development controllers to deal with design matters. Other design initiatives had been promised by the previous administration and the newly elected government appears to want to continue in the same direction. The climate seems to be right for achieving a long term commitment to quality. Whether this could extend to a requirement to employ architects to design buildings, at least within certain areas, is probably doubtful but the idea needs to be considered.

Urban design studies

An essential lesson drawn from the French system is that discretion in design control needs to be reduced if not eliminated. If design is to be taken seriously and not judged simply on the basis of personal taste, control policies must be backed by appraisals undertaken by design trained professionals. As already mentioned, a number of British authors have expressed concern about the process of designation of conservation areas and the lack of related character studies. Suddards and Morton (1991) have shown how the lack of description of the character of a particular Conservation Area, or in some cases of the different characters within it, weakens the policies that apply to it. Morton criticizes the fact that authorities do not publish the appraisal report prepared in order to designate a Conservation Area, and indeed often do not even prepare one; as a result 'the public and applicants, and possibly even present planning staff, cannot know officially what character the authority was trying to preserve or enhance when it originally designated the Conservation Area' (Morton 1991:6).

Larkham (1996) laments the lack of townscape studies as a tool for the management of change in British historic areas; Millichap (1993), Graves and Ross (1991) and the Royal Town Planning Institute (1993a) all reiterate these concerns.

Even if the British planning system is to remain uncodified (and there are many in both the public and the private sectors who advocate a more regulatory system), published townscape appraisals would allow the various parties involved—developers, control officers, councillors, the general public—to understand the rationale behind the policies. Section 4.4 of *Planning Policy Guidance 15* (DOE 1994) emphasizes the need for a clear definition of an area's special character to back development control decisions and enhancement policies. Although this Circular deals with conservation areas, there is no reason for limiting the approach to them; indeed Annex A to the revised PPG1, dealing with all areas, states that

Policies should be based on a proper assessment of the character of the surrounding built and natural environments, and should take account of the defining characteristics of each local area.

(A1)

Design policies

A deeper understanding of the meaning of character should result in clearer and more robust policies and allow controllers to make bolder decisions. The so-called ‘motherhood’ policies (Punter 1993a:1010), that is, meaningless generalities frequently found in British planning documents, are of no help to either potential applicants or controllers. In England’s historic areas in particular, these policies tend to result in the safest ‘keeping in keeping’ designs. A possible approach is presented by the French example of policies which are more or less precise depending on the character of the area: from *Secteur Sauvegardés*, through listed buildings’ surroundings and ZPPAUs, to ‘ordinary’ areas controlled by POS regulations. They are precise where they need to be, on street alignments, heights, materials, plot sizes, setbacks, and so on, but allow much greater freedom in relation to those issues that are not mentioned.

In the past seventeen years, most British planning authorities have been reluctant to include prescriptive design policies in their Local Plans (there are exceptions, such as Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Guildford); indeed for most of this period, they have been discouraged to do so by government circulars and appeal decisions. Most of the published arguments about the appropriateness or otherwise of a particular building, because they are based on the vague policies mentioned above, seem to relate to the style of its façade, and not to more fundamental design issues (Hall 1990:14–15; Punter 1992:30). In fairness, this may hide the fact that control officers, at least in some of the more enlightened authorities, consider wider issues, but it is an indication of the general level of debate permitted. More recently the attitudes of both the developers and the government have changed: at a joint RTPI/UDG conference on Design Codes, Briefs and Guidelines (October 1996), the private sector representatives were the ones asking for clearer design guidelines and even for codes. As a result of Section 54A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, the role of plans in decision making has been enhanced, but in order to take advantage of ‘plan-led planning’ the policies must be clear and robust and must be incorporated in the local plans (see Hall 1996 for an approach to design control policies); if necessary they can be complemented by a Supplementary Planning Guidance but this always needs to refer back to the statutory plan. The *Planning Policy Guidance 1* (DOE 1996) gives further advice on the matter. A recent study commissioned by the Department of the Environment and aimed at the production of a ‘Good practice guide on design in the planning system’ is a major step in the right direction. It should clarify many of the issues mentioned

above and give encouragement to local authorities wishing to allow modern designs in historic areas.

The control officers

A closely related point is the status of the control officers: they need to be respected and be properly trained for the job. It is unlikely that any country other than France would create positions with powers similar to those of the ABFs and it would not be desirable. Nevertheless, some of their characteristics could be emulated. Fundamental among them is the need to improve the design training of planning officers. Since architectural and planning professions are separated, there is little cross-fertilization in the education system of either, nor is there great sympathy between the two. Architects do not accept that planners have a role in design control on the basis that neither planners nor the lay committees have any design training. As a result, negotiations between the development control officer and the applicant's architect are adversarial. Fewer and fewer authorities employ architect-planners (Punter 1993b:10) and their conservation officers are rarely specifically trained for the job; as a result many find it safer to be 'preservation' minded and to reject modern architecture which presents more risks. There is a need for properly qualified urban designers in planning departments in order to prepare design control criteria and to implement them through negotiations with applicants. The education of planners needs to include design skills, and greater incentives should be given to obtain joint architecture and planning qualifications. The language of design must be an integral part of planners' vocabulary: they must be able to confer with developers or architects without being intimidated, which means that they have to know the design issues as well as the latter do. Equally they must be able to show their committees that their opinions are informed and relevant (Punter 1993b).

A better trained planning officer should be able to command greater respect. At the moment conservation officers are often in junior positions and unlikely to progress easily within the local authority hierarchy (Insall 1991: 31; Shacklock 1993:15–16). In contrast the ABFs are often feared and resented, but they are always respected as professionals giving their best advice.

Architectural patronage

France puts this country to shame with a series of prime ministers and mayors who have understood the role which public building can play in the creation of intellectual ferment, a modern rather than nostalgic society and confident cities.

(Hillman 1992:4)

The French experience shows that, although clear regulations and well educated design controllers help, quality architecture is not obtained by decree. Architectural patronage by the public sector is undoubtedly one of the main elements in the success of the insertion of new architecture in urban historic areas. Overall the British government has not promoted architecture and has made little effort to improve the quality of public buildings produced by others in the public sector; it has been more concerned with financial control: 'The public sector is being told repeatedly to cut corners. The success of an architectural commission is determined by the cheapness and the speed with which a new public building is completed' (Glancey 1990:19).

One major change has taken place recently in Britain as a result of the money available for capital investments from the Lottery. Suddenly organizations which for a long time have languished in obsolete premises are able to commission new buildings. The majority are sports or cultural institutions, which in France would be part of the public sector, and they wish to make a statement: therefore many more schemes are chosen through architectural competitions, the outcomes of which are much more daring than could have been expected a few years ago. Central government itself has launched a competition to redevelop its own Marsham Street sites. On the other hand cities such as Birmingham and Manchester seem to have understood the potential of contemporary architecture as a way to improve their image and attract investment. Nevertheless a lot more needs to be done, particularly at the level of the 'ordinary' building: for instance, competitions could be made compulsory for publicly financed buildings, and, as recommended by the Royal Fine Art Commission, a Central Unit on Architecture, inspired by the French MIQCP, could be created at the highest level of government to advise ministers and promote architectural quality in public works (Hillman 1992).

Competitions and the media attention they get have been an important element in the promotion of contemporary architecture in France. The controversies that surrounded some of these have helped to increase the public's awareness. Whittam-Smith (1996), commenting on the rows surrounding British literary and art prizes, suggested that 'controversy is an essential part of the formula' and that it helps the arts as well as the related businesses. British architecture has rarely had the same kind of media attention, although the first competition for the National Gallery's extension which gave the Prince of Wales one of the first opportunities to voice his opinion on architecture, is one example where it did; at the time, public interest in architecture surged for a while. Other recent examples are Hadid's Cardiff Opera House and Liebeskind's extension for the Victoria and Albert Museum, both of which show that contemporary architecture is not easily accepted.

Public awareness

Very little is done in Britain to make the public understand and enjoy new architecture, which is given a mostly negative image in the popular media. Television programmes on architecture are now more frequent than they used to be but they still seem to be addressed to a specialist audience. Again the French system can be a source of ideas, in particular the work of the CAUEs, the MIQCP and the various architectural organizations (see [Chapter 5](#)): national events with local initiatives such as the *Semaine de l'Architecture*, work with schools and with amenity groups, architectural advice to local elected representatives could all be developed relatively easily. The success of the Open House Day when hundreds of buildings are open to the public for free, an event which originated in France and has now been adopted by the whole of Europe, is an indication of the existing potential.

The Prince of Wales' television programme in 1989 attracted record audiences and the exposure it gave to architecture has been welcomed by most professionals, even if they disagreed with the contents (Punter 1990:10). Its popularity could have been exploited to a greater extent by professional bodies to enhance people's awareness of architectural design and to fight prejudices against modern buildings: the RIBA, the RTPI, the Arts Council and the Civic Trust are some of the organizations which could, possibly with government assistance, help in making the public understand contemporary architecture. In addition Britain has numerous amenity societies, an asset that France does not have, which could be an important vehicle for spreading information. At present the Twentieth Century Society is the only one which specifically promotes contemporary architecture.

The acceptance of architecture by the general public needs to be accompanied by a better understanding of the meaning of architectural heritage. The work of authors such as Hewison (1987) and Wright (1993) analyse the problem existing in Britain: a nostalgia for the past results at least in part from a reaction against change in the real world, which is too fast and too frightening. Preserving an image of an idealized happier past is reassuring, even if this image is as artificial as a stage set. The consequences for creativity are serious: 'Imaginatively deprived in the present, we turn to images of the past, either in reactionary revivalism, or in a spirit of ironic quotation, that emphasizes the distance between the source and its recycled imagery' (Hewison 1987:133).

French local authorities have shown how there need not be a conflict between preserving the past and building the future, and how both can be used to promote the image of a city, emphasizing simultaneously tradition, progress and continuity. Central government has done the same at national level: arguably, Pei's Louvre pyramid embodies all of the issues mentioned above. It is a strikingly modern structure in the middle of one of the most historic and best known areas of the country; the design was chosen through an international competition, the result of which was highly controversial; the controversy was

seized by the media, making the building famous even before it was built; it is now at the same time a monument in its own right and part of the historic ensemble of the Louvre. Furthermore it has become a symbol of Paris almost as much as the Eiffel Tower or the Pompidou Centre, both highly controversial when first built. Britain has a number of famous architects working throughout the world, including France. They and their clients need to ensure that the public at large appreciates modernity not in opposition to but together with the heritage of the past.

APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY

Aménagement du territoire Planning at the strategic scale, dealing mainly with social and economic issues, major investments in infrastructure and regional land policies.

Certificat de conformité This document certifies that a building has been completed in accordance with *the permis de construire* given. It is needed before the building can be occupied.

Commune The basic tier of local government. There are over 36,000 *communes*; each one has a council and a *maire* elected for six years. Until 1982 they were closely controlled by central government through the *préfet*. Since then they have become more independent in budgetary and planning matters. Almost a third of *communes* are so small (fewer than 200 inhabitants) that they lack resources to take advantage of the new powers.

Conseil d'Etat Highest administrative court which deals with appeals for the *Tribunaux Administratifs* and advises central government on legal and constitutional matters.

Département Middle tier of local government. There are 95 of them (plus four overseas ones), each with an elected council, the *Conseil Général*. Until 1982, the executive and the leader of this council was the *préfet*, who was not elected but was appointed by the government. Now the *conseil* has its own president who has executive powers but is supervised by the *préfet*. The budget and the powers of the council are limited.

Droit de préemption This allows a public body (e.g. a local authority) to take the place of the buyer in a land transaction.

Ecrêtement The removal of floors added to a building, which are not part of the original structure. Regulations in a *Plan de Sauvegarde* can request this removal if the top additions alter the character of the buildings or of the street.

Enquête publique The equivalent of a public enquiry in Britain. When an *enquête* is announced, objectors to a plan (POS), development, expropriation, etc. can present written comments to a *commissaire enquêteur* (inspector) appointed by a *Tribunal Administratif*; there is no public debate as there is in Britain. After reading all of the submissions, the *commissaire* prepares a report and the *Tribunal* decides on the issue.

Gabarit Profile of a building which is regulated by the *POS*; street alignment, height of the street elevation, and height of the roof line are generally specified by the plans.

- Immeuble classé and Immeuble inscrit* Listed building; the protection and controls are more stringent in the case of a *classé* building than in an *inscrit* one.
- Lotissement* Subdivision of land and provision of infrastructure, generally used to convert agricultural land into urban use. A *permis de lotir* is needed to undertake this.
- Maire* The leader of the municipal council of a *commune*. *Maires* can hold several posts in other tiers of government (deputy, senator, minister, etc.). Although they are the leaders of the majority party, their powers are not just party political. Their authority and influence is much greater than that of leaders of a council in Great Britain and they often stay in power for many years. Since the decentralization laws, they have specific planning responsibilities. They are helped by their adjoints or deputies.
- Permis de construire* Permit needed for any building operation. It is similar to the British planning permission but includes building regulations and does not include change of use.
- Permis de démolir* Permit needed to demolish a building. It is required in all protected areas, in medium sized and large towns, within an area of 50 kilometres around Paris and in additional, specified areas.
- Plan d'Occupation des Sols (POS)* Basic planning document which regulates land use at the individual property level and defines areas for development or those to be protected from development.
- Plan de Sauvegardé et de Mise en Valeur (PSMV)* Planning document similar to the POS and replacing it in *Secteurs Sauvegardés*. It is more detailed in terms of design, alterations to buildings, demolitions, etc.
- Préfet* Representative of central government in the *département* who supervises and directs the field services of central government and controls the actions of the *communes*. From 1982, the official title became *commissaire de la République* but the connotations of this title made it unpopular and the original word, *préfet*, was reinstated. *The préfet* of the *département* in which the regional capital is located is also *préfet de région* with wider responsibilities.
- Région* Top tier of local government since the decentralization laws of 1982. There are 22 *régions* created by the amalgamation of one or more *départements*. They have their own elected council, the *conseil régional*, and their own budget. They have strategic planning responsibilities and they channel investment and subsidies.
- Secteur Sauvegardé* An area of historic or aesthetic character which is to be conserved, restored and enhanced. The designation was introduced by the 1962 legislation known as the Malraux Act. Once designated, a *Plan de Sauvegarde et de Mise en Valeur* must be prepared, and the area is subject to special restrictive controls.
- Société d'économie mixte (SEM)* A company with public and private capital, which can raise money on the market and has public sector powers such as the right of preemption or of compulsory purchase.
- Tribunaux Administratifs* Appeals by aggrieved parties against a planning decision are dealt with by these special administrative courts. They consider the legality of the contested decision and its compliance with regulations.
- Zone d'Aménagement Concerté (ZAC)* A type of comprehensive redevelopment area. The designation gives powers of compulsory purchase and facilitates

agreement between the public and private sectors to implement the redevelopment of an area.

Zone de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain (ZPPAU) Area of historic or architectural interest, given a different protection from the *Secteur Sauvegardé*. The legislation dates from 1983 and is aimed at replacing the controls imposed within the arbitrary radius of 500 metres around a listed building. Since 1993, landscape (*Paysager*) has been added to the title, turning it into ZPPAUR

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO ARCHITECTES DES BÂTIMENTS DE FRANCE

ÉTUDE SUR LA PROTECTION DU PATRIMOINE ARCHITECTURAL ET URBAIN

1 II y a-t-il sur le territoire dont vous êtes responsable:

- | | | |
|--|------|---------|
| un Secteur Sauvegardé? | | oui/non |
| une ZPPAU? | | oui/non |
| d'autres zones de protection où vous intervenez? | | oui/non |
| des monuments classés? | Nos: | |
| des monuments inscrits? | Nos: | |
| d'autres zones de protection où vous n'intervenez pas? | | oui/non |

2 II y a-t-il des documents de diffusion (plaquettes, manuels, etc.) donnant des conseils sur la façon de construire en quartier ancien dans votre département?

En cas affirmatif, pourriez-vous en indiquer le/les titres?

3 II y a-t-il des associations de protection du patrimoine dans votre département?

En cas affirmatif, pourriez-vous en donner une liste?

Quel est leur champ d'action? national, régional, local?

Quel est leur rôle?

Quelle est leur relation avec le bureau des Architectes des Bâtiments de France?

4 Quelles administrations ou organismes des collectivités locales sont le plus souvent en contact avec vous?

5 Etes-vous consulté régulièrement lors de l'élaboration de plans d'urbanisme?

Etes-vous consulté lors de l'octroi de permis de construire en quartier ancien sans protection?

Pourriez-vous estimer le nombre de permis de construire et de permis de démolir que vous refusez et le pourcentage que cela représente du total de permis demandés?

6 Comment voyez-vous l'intégration de bâtiments neufs dans des secteurs a caractère historique ou esthétique?

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